

It Must Have Been Love

by Renan Martins

Report on the residency at CC-Heidelberg

From June 16 to 27, 2025, together with fellow artist Mar Grifoll, I undertook a two-week residency at CC Heidelberg as part of the development of our ongoing project *It Must Have Been Love*. This period proved to be immensely fruitful and went beyond our initial expectations, both in terms of artistic growth and the supportive environment the residency offered.

The residency provided us with the invaluable opportunity to pause, reflect, and clearly define the direction of our work. Having dedicated time and space to focus solely on our creative process allowed us to advance our research with a depth and clarity that would have been difficult to achieve under different circumstances. This focused intensity proved essential in shaping the conceptual and physical foundation of the piece.

During the first week, our work concentrated on the exploration of texture and tension, particularly in response to the continuous and entrancing music of composer Julius Eastman. Rather than using his compositions as the sole soundtrack, we approached his work as a conceptual and emotional departure point. His music informed our movement



choices but ultimately led us to explore a broader range of musical and physical textures.

We simultaneously investigated a set of dance materials combining urban dance footwork styles with ballroom-inspired partner dances. These explorations were largely influenced by *forró*, a traditional Brazilian genre known for its intricate steps and intimate, circular movements. This physical dialogue helped us build a choreographic vocabulary that merges

grounded rhythm with flowing connection.

The second week of the residency saw a shift toward textual exploration. We drew inspiration from the chapter “Romantic Love” in Bell Hooks’ seminal book *All About Love*. Her writing served as a lens through which we examined personal narratives and emotional memory. Through exercises including recorded interviews and shared storytelling, we developed a collage of love songs—both spoken and sung—that formed a new emotional layer to the work. These experiments opened up rich intersections between text, music, and movement.

A key moment in the residency was the showing held on June 25. This informal presentation allowed us to share a structured excerpt of our process with an invited audience. We were deeply moved by the way the work resonated with viewers and incredibly grateful for the thoughtful feedback we received, as well as the generous post-show discussion facilitated by the CC Heidelberg team. Having the chance to reflect on that feedback and then spend two additional days in the studio helped us reconsider and refine key aspects of the project's direction.

An important and enriching element of the residency experience was the opportunity to share the space with other resident artists. Although working on separate projects, the informal exchanges and daily interactions fostered a strong sense of community. Artistic conversations that extended beyond the studio proved inspiring and nourishing, reinforcing the value of residencies not only as a space for creation but also for connection.



In conclusion, our time at CC Heidelberg was pivotal to the development of *It Must Have Been Love*. We leave with a renewed sense of purpose, a more defined artistic framework, and a deep appreciation for the generosity of the team and the community that supported our journey.