



WORKSHOP WITH
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L'ESPACE IN PALERMO

Natural Dance Movement and Zhineng Qigong

A NEW APPROACH TO DANCE
FOR THE SOLUTION OF TENSIONS AND
THE EVOLUTION OF THE HUMAN BEING.

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WHAT IS DMN:

DMN, Danza Movimento Naturale, is a method that concerns the human being, his movement and the consequences of it.

This method was born in Palermo, in an ancient place, rich in history and tradition, in a historical moment when dance was moving towards new forms and contaminations with other arts, moving away from its primordial substance; this method proposes itself today as a formative and changing instrument to enrich the world of dance.

The DMN method was born from the research and studies of the Palermo choreographer Giovanni Zappulla, who, on his return to Italy after ten years' experience in France, began a personal journey merging previous knowledge with that gathered from the study of human movement. Zappulla questions all the aspects that make up the human being and to which we do not normally pay proper attention: the mind and the emotions, the energy and the relationship between the interior and the exterior, through a holistic vision that includes the body in its material and kinetic complexity. Starting from the assumption that the body is a perfect instrument that, on and off stage, is partially experienced, Giovanni Zappulla proposes a training aimed at stimulating and awakening the normally dormant and unrecognised faculties of the human being, in order to be able to release all the potential available to reach high performative and artistic levels.



WHAT IS DMN

In order to better understand the starting point from which the method develops, it is necessary to take into account certain historical and philosophical considerations that have conditioned dance over the last century. One of the most significant of these is the Platonic and Aristotelian vision of existence, which created a widespread culture of splitting the aspects of the human being, in which the body and its mental part are considered separately.

Indeed, as early as the fifth century BC, Plato sanctioned a discrimination between the body and the soul, relegating the body to an inferior substance capable of elevating itself only through its purest part, the soul, and Aristotle, a century later considered the two aspects as inseparable but with different functions.

The legacy of the Greek philosophers contributed to a vision of dance that was partially linked to the body and focused on its performative capacities. Thus, over time, the study of dance has been oriented towards a need to achieve almost otherworldly formal and aesthetic ideals, moving away completely from the more substantial aspects related to the individual and his feelings. Thus, the dance produced is increasingly moving away from pleasure as the dancer is often confronted with a profession that leads the body to wear and tear, making it fragile, forcing the artist into an early retirement from the stage. This is particularly true of classical dancers who are unfortunately forced to interrupt their artistic career at too early an age. Their gracefulness on stage, their smiles and delicate gestures, often hide hours of hard and tiring work, in tight clothes and uncomfortable shoes, which transform the body, sometimes ruining it permanently. By forcing the body and mind away from pleasure, it is difficult to be satisfied when feet are bleeding and joints are aching. Yet through dance, dancers give pleasure to the audience and find pleasure and personal satisfaction in performing virtuous movements that bring them closer to otherworldly entities, climbing to the pinnacle of success but paying a very high price in terms of health and well-being.

So why not achieve these goals through a less painful and less exhausting method of training that takes into account the human being and its functions according to nature? A good example is Chinese martial arts and more specifically Taijiquan, a discipline that enhances the characteristics of the individual through exercises that strengthen the body's connections, keeping it healthy and capable of efficient movement into old age.

So what is the real pleasure of dance?

WHAT IS DMN

The objective is a dance understood as an emotional thrust that comes to life through the body which, invaded by pleasure, expresses its substance, entering into empathy with the users and investing them with well-being. Those who observe a natural dance can find fluidity, strength and above all the desired harmony as the awareness of an organic functioning, which obeys its dynamic balance.

The aim of DMN is to make the dancer strong through dance itself and thus able to express and experience pleasure through a re-education of the body that takes into account its nature.

Dance can therefore be natural, incredibly rich, our bodies can go far beyond questions of technique and style,

movement has its own truth that must be protected and enriched.

What contemporary dance has been doing for a little over a century is giving the body the possibility of following its own natural history, of expressing its essential movement according to its real balance thanks to studies on movement analysis and kinesiology, thanks to which it has been discovered that in each gesture, from the simplest to the most articulated, extremely complex processes are involved, rich

in a considerable number of dynamic transmissions that take place according to the laws of physics that govern creation. But are we really listening to these laws? But do we really listen to these laws? Do we let them act? Do we let our body express its own rhythm? How do we follow its natural mechanisms to really move, regardless of the effect to be produced, the result to be achieved? How can we move slowly or quickly, without imposing an artificial functioning on ourselves, without dissociating ourselves, without fragmenting our being? Technological progress and the advancement of science have contributed to shrinking the space-time

in which we receive an innumerable amount of information, so what happens to individual space-time? Humanity has done great things, conquering space, but perhaps we should first deal with the personal microcosm, starting with the discovery of our own bodies.

The solution is to 're-unite', to see the individual as a single substance composed of two identical modalities, mind and body, to lose the obsession with 'thinking the body' and dominating it, to discover instead what the 'body thinks', to listen to its sensory memory and to circulate its language; only in this way will the dancer be able to express himself or herself harmoniously and develop his or her skills.

WHAT IS DMN

In order to better manage the functions of the body and to strengthen all its aspects, the method is based on the ancient oriental knowledge of traditional Chinese medicine, integrating Taijiquan and Qigong, especially the Zhineng Qigong style, systems based on internal movement, coherent with human nature in its biomechanical, energetic and psychic aspects. These two disciplines are integrated in the training of the dancer precisely because they form fundamental aspects aimed at reconstructing the heritage of connections of the human being aimed at harmony, well-being and artistic expression. Qigong works at the most subtle level of the mind by training concentration, deep listening and the study of energy, Taijiquan trains the connections of the body, the transformation of movement and strength. All of these elements work together to create a conscious dancer, with precise movement, a healthy body and a mind that is fully connected to the present moment.



The image features a decorative border at the top and bottom, consisting of a series of small, stylized illustrations of people performing various Qigong exercises. The figures are depicted in traditional Chinese clothing, with some in red and black, others in green and black. They are shown in various poses, including standing, kneeling, and performing specific movements like Tai Chi or Qigong forms. The background of the border is a light, textured yellowish-brown.

What is Zhineng Qigong?

Qigong is the set of techniques that allow the cultivation of Qi in the body.

The term Qigong literally means energy work and comes from the combination of the characters 气 - Qi - energy and 力 - Gong - work; it first appears in the early 20th century in a training manual for Shaolin monks, *The Orthodox Shaolin Methods* (1910). Prior to this period, there was a series of practices involving body movements, breathing and sound, which were passed on and performed to maintain health. Traces of these practices can be found as early as 2000 BC in bronze writings that record dances capable of "eliminating the stagnation of liquids in the body" or in inscriptions on jade coins dating from the sixth century BC;

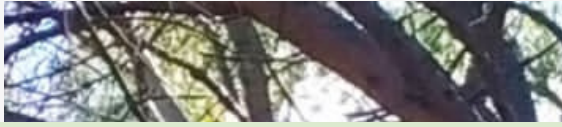
the *Neijing Suwen*, an ancient treatise on traditional Chinese medicine attributed to Huangdi (476-221 B.C.), provides guidance on how to lead a healthy life through proper breathing and exercise. (476-221 BC), on how to lead a healthy life through proper breathing and exercise. In the 3rd century BC, the Taoist physician Hua Tuo created a system of Qigong which he called *Wuqinxi*, "the game of the five animals", and Zhuang Zi (c. 369 BC - 286 BC), described in his book a technique he called *Daoyin* which explains how to move the body to strengthen the Qi. The first illustrated representations of these exercises, found in *Mawangdui*, date back to 206 BC.

What is Zhineng Qigong?

These are paintings on coloured silk showing forty-four figures in different positions relating to specific exercises, accompanied by captions explaining the action on the body. This type of practice, which has always been considered a method of preventing and curing disease and therefore closely related to medicine, has also become over time an integral part of martial arts such as Shaolinquan and Taijiquan, precisely because of the energy-enhancing function fundamental to the martial artist. In this respect, different types of Qigong have been classified and are used according to their objectives: Soft Qigong with slow movements and postures; Hard Qigong with vigorous external movements; Taoist Qigong to achieve longevity; Confucian Qigong to increase memory and concentration; Medical Qigong with therapeutic objectives; and Martial Qigong to increase physical strength and develop the ability to direct Qi outwards.

Today, Qigong is widespread all over the world and in China; since 1989, after a debate that lasted for years, the Chinese government officialized it as a medical treatment belonging to TCM and fundamental in the treatment of diseases, using it in hospitals and including it in the national health plan.

In Italy there are timid examples of the use of these disciplines, but the only aspect of TCM that has been formalised in Western medicine is acupuncture. Within the method, Giovanni Zappulla proposes a series of practices that refer to a particular type of Qigong, Zhineng Qigong, born from the fusion of medical and martial knowledge of Professor Pang He Ming. 3rd century BC, the Taoist physician Hua Tuo created a system of Qigong which he called Wuqinxu, "the game of the five animals", and Zhuang Zi (circa 369 BC - 286 BC), described in his book a technique he called Daoyin which explained how to move the body to strengthen the Qi. The first illustrated representations of these exercises, found in Mawangdui, date back to 206 B.C. They are paintings on coloured silk showing forty-four figures in different positions relating to specific exercises, accompanied by captions explaining the action on the body. This type of practice, which has always been considered a method of preventing and curing disease and therefore closely related to medicine, has also become over time an integral part of martial arts such as Shaolinquan and Taijiquan, precisely because of the energy-enhancing function fundamental to the martial artist.



Zhineng Qigong

A method founded in 1980 by Professor Pang He Ming, who condensed all the most effective techniques of the various pre-existing Qigong methods into a single system of practice and theory. techniques of the various pre-existing Qigong methods into a single system of practice and theory, including medical and philosophical Qigong.



To make it more complete, he drew on his knowledge of martial arts, Taoist, Buddhist, Confucian and Hindu theories. He created one of the most effective methods to improve health according to traditional theories, and to nourish the human being with the vital energy of the environment. Thanks to this method, he founded one of the largest and most famous "drug-free" hospitals, the Huaxia Zhineng Qigong Training and Recovery Centre, in Hebei province, where a large number of patients have been healed and thousands of instructors have been trained. The literal translation of Zhineng Qigong is "The Qigong of the Cultivation of Intelligence", because according to Prof. Pang Ming in the human being there are aspects of potential super-intelligence that allow him to heal himself by specific means and practices. In Zhineng Qigong, the practice is based on the exchange between the Qi of the individual and the Hunyuanqi which is the Qi of the universe, the whole of physical matter, Qi and "information".

Zhineng Qigong

Hunyuanqi is formed when Taiji transforms into Yin and Yang but is not yet differentiated, which allows for the healing of any energetic imbalance, and therefore, theoretically, any disease. Indeed, the Hunyuanqi, penetrating the body, can transform into both Yin and Yang depending on the deficiency present in the individual. We therefore understand the great healing potential of this method. Human Hunyuanqi is the combination of innate Qi (Yuanqi, innate Jingqi) and acquired Qi. Human Hunyuanqi has the characteristic of "working" with the Yi, the intention, by moving with it. The Yi manipulates the energy and channels it to where the mind wishes, the important thing being that the individual actively uses the intention with a deep awareness of his or her own thinking. In Zhineng Qigong practice, the consciousness mobilises the primary Hunyuanqi, absorbs it and uses it to nourish the human Hunyuanqi. When the fullness of Hunyuanqi is achieved, all organ functions are regulated, diseases disappear, health is strengthened and wisdom is gained. To achieve this, Professor Pang Ming has created a series of exercises, which he divides into six stages:

1 Exercises that work with the outer Hunyuanqi: Qi from the inside is brought to the outside and the outer Qi is collected inside. In this way, not only can the normal functions of life be strengthened and the state of illness be overcome, but special intellectual faculties can also be triggered.

2 Exercises that train the Hunyuan of mind and body: Based on the first step, qi is guided into the skin, muscles, tendons, veins and bones in order to further strengthen the vital functions of man and thus exceed the standard level.

3. exercises that train the "real" Hunyuan of the organs: by focusing attention on the Qi of the five organs, we train them in correlation with the activity of the psyche. As a result, there will be an overall increase in the faculty of self-control over vital bodily activities.

4 Hunyuan Central Channel Exercise: It trains the link between the "central channel" and the Qi of the whole body in order to merge them into "one whole".

5 The Central Line Exercise Hunyuan: Coagulates and refines the Qi of the central channel with a central line that goes beyond the sky and penetrates the earth.

6 Fusion and return to the One: the fusion of man and nature into a whole.

Zhineng Qigong

Each DMN session begins with a Zhineng Qigong practice, precisely because it works the body deeply and focuses the mind, allowing for fine tuned listening and attention during the dance. In addition, it is fundamental that before each performance we practice some of the exercises created by Prof. Pang Ming to collect Qi and focus in order to better invest our energies on stage. Normally, after a Qigong practice, in which Dantian energy has been accumulated, it is necessary to circulate it throughout the body and Taijiquan is a valuable discipline that, in addition to fulfilling this purpose, warms up the muscles and joints, restores the body's connections and trains the movement organically.





The Workshop

The workshop can be of various lengths, from a one-off experience of a few hours to more structured work over two or three days of three hours each to an intensive intensive two-week work of five hours per day.

Our idea is to structure an experimental training based on the holistic vision of the human being and on a dance model founded on the union of mind-body and deep connections.

DMN (dance natural movement) is born from the union of three disciplines that allow the individual to know his true potential, making the body elastic and durable, the mind strong, sensitive and creative able to create an expressive and innovative artist, just through the practice of dance.

This course would be an important first step towards the creation of a fruitful collaboration between our company and the artists of the project's host countries.

The Structure

Topics:

- **Qigong - predominantly Zhineng Qigong**

- History of Zhineng Qigong
- Theoretical foundations (Concept of field, Yishi, Yuanti, Hunyuanqi)
- First level practices

- **Traditional Chinese medicine**

- Theory Yin/Yang
- Wu Xing
- San Tiao
- San Bao
- Jing Luo

- **Taijiquan Chen style**

- The five rules
- Basic techniques

- **Natural Dance Movement (30 hours)**

- History and principles
- Preliminary to DMN (floor work)
- Movement analysis
- Technique
- Improvisation





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