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Lindsay Marie Morris

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BLOG

Nunzio Impellizzeri: Sculpting Space Through Dance

November 4, 2024

Tags: [art](#), [dance](#)



Choreographer Nunzio Impellizzeri

Dance is yet another medium to paint, sculpt, and transform spaces, says Sicilian-born choreographer Nunzio Impellizzeri. The former visual artist founded **Nunzio Impellizzeri Dance Company** in 2014 with a mission of offering audiences unique perspectives and experiences as well as a way to dissect and question social behavior.

The company's work has been internationally recognized, with performances in theaters and at international festivals in Switzerland, Germany, Russia, Italy, Poland, Finland, Denmark, Chile, Spain, and North and Central America.

They're currently gearing up for the November 20 premiere of **PINK CARPET**, which explores the boundaries between reality and imagination. The piece coincides with the company's tenth-anniversary celebration.

I recently caught up with Nunzio to learn more about his journey to choreography and the company's productions.

WHERE DO YOU LIVE, AND WHERE ARE YOU AND YOUR FAMILY FROM?

I live in Zurich, Switzerland, but my roots are in Acireale, a baroque city in Sicily, where my family still lives. This keeps me very much connected to my land and its culture. I left Italy in 2003 and traveled around Europe for my dance career. In 2008, I moved to Switzerland, where, later, in 2014, I founded the Nunzio Impellizzeri Dance Company. Looking at today, Zurich is the place where I've lived the longest.

CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT YOUR JOURNEY INTO THE WORLD OF DANCE AND CHOREOGRAPHY?

My journey started in the visual arts. I studied art history, sculpture, and costume design, but I always felt something was missing. It wasn't until I stumbled into a rehearsal and observed a choreographer working that I felt that "click"—suddenly, I knew that movement was the language I was searching for. Dance gave me a way to sculpt space with the body, to paint with motion. It opened up possibilities that static art forms couldn't.

In 2008, an injury—the breaking of my knee during a performance—became a turning point. That moment was pivotal because it forced me to reflect on what I really wanted. It was a hard period, but in the midst of that challenge, I saw an opportunity to pursue my dream of choreography. In 2009, I was selected for the SIWIC platform for young choreographers, and that was the confirmation I needed. By 2014, I had founded the Nunzio Impellizzeri Dance Company to explore the infinite relationship between the body and space and create a dialogue that connects us all through movement.

Our company now works closely with internationally renowned dancers and collaborators, and we've had the privilege of performing at theaters and festivals around the world—from Switzerland and Germany to Chile and North America. What I'm most proud of is the way our work resonates with audiences, offering them a new perspective on dance and movement.

HOW HAS YOUR BACKGROUND IN VISUAL ARTS INFLUENCED YOUR APPROACH TO CHOREOGRAPHY AND DANCE?

Visual arts is the foundation of how I think about dance. I don't just see movement; I see structure, space, and texture. For me, choreography is like architecture in motion. The body sculpts the space it moves through, and that interaction creates a dialogue not just with the audience but with the air, the light, and the ground. Every piece I create is designed with that in mind. Lighting, set design, and costumes aren't just accessories—they're extensions of the movement itself. I often design the costumes because they're integral to the concept of the creation.

The body is a living canvas, constantly generating energy. That energy moves beyond the physical; it moves the soul and creates connections. Dance allows me to see beyond what is in front of me. It keeps me connected to life in a visceral way, and it shapes how I perceive others and how I relate to the world.

YOUR WORKS OFTEN REFLECT SOCIAL PHENOMENA. TELL US HOW YOU CHOOSE THE THEMES FOR YOUR PRODUCTIONS.

My inspiration often comes from everyday life—things we see but don't necessarily pay attention to. Sometimes, it's something I've ignored for a while, and then it suddenly captures my interest, almost obsessively. From there, I dig into it—researching through lectures, films, art, philosophy, mythology—until I form the framework for the piece.

The themes I choose often come from observing human behavior in social contexts. Dance is such a powerful way to explore identity, silence, and connection—things that deeply resonate with our current times. I believe dance can move not only the body but the mind and soul. It challenges people to reflect on the world around them and to question and see things differently. My goal is to create works that spark dialogue and inspire reflection.

HOW DO YOU INTEGRATE ELEMENTS LIKE SET DESIGN, LIGHTING, AND COSTUMES INTO YOUR CHOREOGRAPHY?

These elements are not separate from the movement; they're intertwined. The body moves, it stirs the air, it transforms the space. Set design, lighting, and costumes amplify these dynamics. For me, it's about creating a holistic experience where everything works together to heighten the audience's perception.

Much like an architect designs a building to interact with its surroundings, I design my sets and lighting to interact with the dancers' movements. Costumes, too, play a key role—they're not just what the dancers wear but a part of how they move and inhabit the space.

TELL US ABOUT MORE PINK CARPET.

This piece is very personal to me. It delves into the boundary between reality and imagination, inspired by my mother's experience with Alzheimer's. The carpet itself becomes a symbol—a bridge between the tangible and the intangible. It's a deeply emotional journey, both for me and, I hope, for the audience.

WHAT ELSE IS ON THE HORIZON?

2024 has been very intense with many projects. I recently finished the creation of CIRCOLANDO as a guest choreographer for a Swiss dance company, and now I'm also looking forward to FLAM.ME.U.M, premiering in Germany at the Anhaltischen Theater Dessau in January 2025. This piece explores the evolving concept of identity, something I feel is more relevant than ever. Both pieces reflect my ongoing exploration of how personal experiences can resonate universally, connecting us through the unpredictable flow of life.

CAN YOU SHARE A MEMORABLE MOMENT OR EXPERIENCE FROM YOUR CAREER THAT HAS SIGNIFICANTLY IMPACTED YOU?

Creating **SCH.NEE** in 2022 was a turning point for me. The challenge of working with silence and minimalism forced me to push my boundaries as a choreographer. The process required a level of focus and simplicity that I hadn't explored before. Seeing how deeply it resonated with the audience reaffirmed my belief in the power of art to connect people on an emotional level. It was a moment that opened up new dimensions for me as an artist.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO ASPIRING CHOREOGRAPHERS AND DANCERS?

Stay curious, stay open. Dance is about more than just movement—it's about communication, about connecting with people on a deep level. Your body is a vessel for telling stories, sharing perspectives, and moving the souls of others. Embrace the challenges, and don't be afraid of failure—it's all part of the process.

I work with dancers who have strong technical skills, but I also value individuality. I want performers who can bring their own unique qualities to the stage. My advice is to stay true to yourself while remaining open to collaboration. Success, both as an artist and as a person, comes from that balance. Every creation is an opportunity to grow; each experience will shape you in ways you can't predict.

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