



# Invisible Beauty

Iker Arrue | Ai Do Project Dance Company

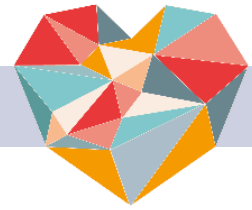


Dementia  
in Cultural Mediation



With the support of the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union

# The activity



## Name of the activity

Invisible Beauty.

Series of creative seminars utilising contemporary dance to stimulate cognitive responses and memory recognition in people with Alzheimer's disease.

The three types of activities carried out within this initiative are:

- Seminars:

The *seminars* are the main activity of the project.

Participants; people with Alzheimer's disease.

Includes visits to the association beforehand.

- Movement workshops:

Participants; people with Alzheimer's disease.

- Open seminars:

Aimed at relatives of people with Alzheimer's disease and the general public carried out as an activity to raise awareness of the disease.

## Summary

Ai Do Project is a professional dance company based in San Sebastian, Spain.

In addition to the creation and distribution of dance works, the company develops the **Invisible Beauty** socio-cultural project in collaboration with AFAGI - Association of Relatives, Friends and People with Alzheimer's and other dementias of Gipuzkoa.

*Invisible Beauty* is a series of psycho-stimulation-cognitive activities aimed at people with Alzheimer's disease, the ultimate goal of which is to delay the degenerative effects of the disease through dance and music.

The original project was created to be carried out in AFAGI's facilities, but after the excellent response from the participants, two important elements were integrated into the project: a contemporary dance performance adapted to the abilities of people with Alzheimer's and a pedagogical programme aimed at music and dance students.

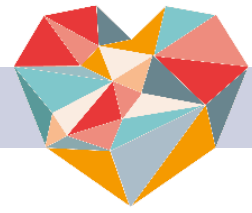
The main activity of the project are the *seminars*. This activity is presented to the attendees as **an approach to a contemporary dance creation**. The seminars combine the live performance of

dance pieces with sequences and movement exercises related to the objects used in the choreography that has been performed for them. Some of the objects used are; glasses, balls, sticks, percussion instruments, wooden blocks, pilates cushions, ropes...

Each seminar is based on a specific theme (such as Russian classical music composers, film music, painting, sculpture, etc.) and people with Alzheimer's are presented with a series of exercises, music and activities related not only to the object mentioned before, but also to this theme. The aim is to stimulate both their physical and emotional memory.

In addition to the satisfaction of watching a dance piece, the fact of being able to reproduce movements that were difficult for them at the beginning of the session gives the participants a **sense of autonomy**. Participants leave the activity with a positive feeling. This has a direct impact on how the participants relate to their environment and family members afterwards.

# Content



## Target group

The project was created to be developed with AFAGI members, people with Alzheimer's in the early stages of the disease.

The project is integrated within the programme of psycho-stimulation-cognitive workshops already offered by AFAGI throughout the year. Therefore, the participants of the *Invisible Beauty* seminars attend the activities on a voluntary basis. This means that their willingness to take part in the proposed activities is high.

In general, the *Invisible Beauty* seminars and workshops are carried out with two different groups of participants: a first group in the early stages of the disease and a second group of people, more advanced in the disease (reduced mobility, limitations in terms of comprehension and reproduction of movement, wheelchair use, etc.).

The activity has shown to create a greater impact when it is carried out in a dance space (theatre, auditorium or rehearsal space), so whenever possible the activity will be carried out in this type of space. In cases where there is no such a space close to the headquarters of the collaborating association, the company offers assistance in the form of a free bus service to the participants. The distance or the organisation of the relatives and caregivers should not become an obstacle for the attendance. The bus service covers the distance from the headquarters of the AFAGI association to the auditorium/theatre (return journey).

The structure of the *Invisible Beauty seminars* is flexible and the activity can involve more or less participation depending on the profile of the people it is aimed at.

The implementation of the project in Costa Rica has enabled the Costa Rican National Dance Company to offer this type of activity in two of the country's day centres, which also proves that the service can be easily adapted to the characteristics of each participating organisation.

## Objective

The main goal of the project is to stimulate the **physical**, **musical** and, above all, **emotional** abilities of people with Alzheimer's disease.

It is a project that involves the participation of different entities. The project therefore seeks to meet the needs of each of the entities participating in the project. The specific goals of the project include:

- To delay the degenerative effects of the disease.
- Re-integrate this group of people into cultural life.
- To offer AFAGI new tools on balance and musicality for their inclusion in the daily routine of AFAGI users.
- The development of the Pedagogical Programme aimed at music and dance students offering:
  - A work alternative to that of the *performer* as we normally understand it.
  - Understanding for interacting with people with Alzheimer's disease.
- Raising awareness of the disease among the general public.

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## Partners

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### Management:

- AFAGI, Association of Relatives, Friends and People with Alzheimer's and other dementias of the region of Gipuzkoa.
- Ai Do Project, Dance Company (San Sebastian)  
[www.afagi.eus](http://www.afagi.eus) / [www.aidoproject.com](http://www.aidoproject.com)

### Supported by:

- Grants from public entities: Basque Government (annual calls).
- Subsidies from private entities: Kutxa Foundation (annual calls).

### Other collaborators:

- Professional Conservatory of Music of the Basque Country, MUSIKENE.
- Professional Dance Conservatory of Madrid, CSDMA.
- San Sebastian City Council - Open presentations.



# Practical

## Venue

Type of venue depending on the activity carried out:

1) Seminars:

Theatre or rehearsal space (audio equipment and lighting appropriate to the activity).

2) Movement workshops:

In this case, the headquarters of the AFAGI Association.

3) Open seminars:

Auditorium or theatre.

### **Ideal setting of the venues:**

1) Seminars:

In this activity, physical work is combined with the performance of short dance and music pieces.

**\* Technical requirements of the venue:**

- Scenic space of dimensions 8m x 8m (performers and participants on the same level).
- Dance floor.
- Audio and lighting system adapted to the room (as close as possible to the theatrical experience).
- Projector and screen.
- Chairs for participants (without armrests, to facilitate seated movement).

**\* Access:**

- Space without architectural barriers + access to toilets.
- Bus service to and from the venue provided by the organising company for participants. It is important to provide a **parking space** so that users can get on and off the bus in peace and quiet.

2) Movement workshops:

The workshops are sessions in which only physical work is carried out (specific exercises with objects, gestures, manipulations...).

**\* Technical requirements of the venue:**

No special needs are required. The idea is to adapt the activity to the headquarters of the Association.

3) Open seminars:

Open seminars are organised once or twice a year where the company shares with the audience the work carried out throughout the year with people with Alzheimer's disease.

**\* Technical requirements of the venue:**

- Scenic space.
- Dance floor.
- Audio and lighting system.
- Projector and screen.

**\*Other:**

The company offers free tickets to AFAGI users and their family members as an incentive to attend the event, in which live dance pieces are also performed.

## Day, time & duration

Approximate duration of the activity:

Seminars:	90min.
Workshops:	60min.
Open seminars:	75min approx.

Schedule of the activity:

Seminars:	Morning schedule.
Workshops:	Morning schedule.
Open seminars:	Afternoon (theatrical event).

Number of events recommended:

Ideal: 12 events per year (one per month).

Number of events per year carried out by this entity at present: 6.

Total number of activities (groups reached) by this entity per year: 24.

1 intervention = 1 movement workshop + 1 seminar.

1 workshop = 2 groups (6 interventions x 2 workshops = 12 workshops per year).

1 seminar = 2 groups (6 interventions x 2 seminars. = 12 seminars per year).

## Group size

Number of groups per event:

Ideal: 2 groups, divided according to the level of affection.

Optional: 1 group.

Number of participants per group:

Ideal: 8 people (more than 5 and less than 12 participants per group).

Optional: The number considered to create and maintain a group dynamic.

A smaller number of participants than recommended, although possible, does not generate such an emotional impact. On the other hand, it allows for a permanent focus on the participant. A larger number of participants than recommended makes it more difficult to maintain the group dynamics.

## Supervisors and hosts

Recommended number of people for the activity:

1 person for every 2 participants.

Profile of those responsible for the activity:

- Presenter of the activity (1 person).
- Person in charge of the collaborating association, AFAGI (2 people, including trainees).
- Performers of the dance pieces (musicians and dancers, between 2 and 5 people).
- Students (dance or music).
- Other guest artists: costume designers, lighting designers, composers, actors, painters... (1 person).
- Volunteers (optional).

The number of people running the activity should be equal to or less than the number of participants. It is important that participants feel that they are in a private and intimate environment.

The activity, with the exception of the open exhibitions, is carried out exclusively with people with Alzheimer's disease. Family members are not allowed to attend the workshops and meetings.

The activity is very dynamic. The presenter of the activity (a person with experience in the field) sets the pace and duration of each exercise/sequence/part. Volunteers, dancers and students learn how to interact with the participants through the experience. This experience is initiated through *previous visits to the association*. Under the pretext of inviting them to the activity to be carried out, the dancers/students learn how to interact with people with Alzheimer's disease. The visit is again used as an opportunity to perform an excerpt of music or dance, thus generating a first approach between dancers/students and people with Alzheimer's disease.

## Materials & facilities

The technical requirements of the venue have been specified in the *Practical/Venue* section.

Examples of the materials/objects used to carry out the activities are:

Cups, balls, short and long sticks, percussion instruments, cork or wooden blocks, cushions, ropes.... (pictures of these references will be found in the end of the document).

The objects are introduced through the choreography presented. For the sessions, the dancers create choreographies that require the use of an object. Once the participants have seen the choreography and the object manipulation integrated into it, they are invited to reproduce some of the movements performed by the dancers.

Some of the exercises are done individually, but whenever the object allows it, we work in pairs (one participant with one person in charge). This way, the stimulation of spatial perception (terms and concepts such as above, behind, around, below, turn...) is more effective, with the obvious benefit obtained from this stimulation.

## Costs



The activity is free of charge for participants, including travel costs (when necessary).

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## Name tags

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No name tags are used during the activity. The participants are part of already existing working groups, so it is not considered necessary.

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## Memento

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The activity is not always recorded/photographed but when it is, all the material is sent to the directors of AFAGI, who decide in which cases they share the material with the participants.

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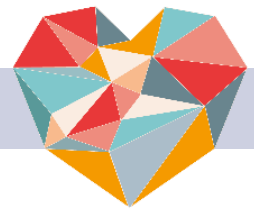
## Afterwards

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Consent to publish photos of people with Alzheimer's is a contentious issue, as many of the family members or the participants themselves do not give their consent to do so.

The consent is a document signed by both parties, which is processed between the management of AFAGI and the relatives. Under no circumstances is the publication of graphic material permitted without AFAGI's prior consent. This is specified in advance to all project partners.

The material that may be published is shared on the social networks of the different entities participating in the project.



## Communication

The communication to contact the participants is done by the association AFAGI, as the participants are members of the association. The reason why the workshops are carried out with members of the association is that the project seeks an intimate environment in which the participants feel in a familiar/known atmosphere. For this reason, activities are not carried out through open calls, although the characteristics of the project offer the possibility to do so.

The activity is communicated on the one hand and directly to the users of the association (people with Alzheimer's disease) and on the other hand to the relatives or carers (in writing).

The communication to the users is carried out in the following way: "pre-visits" are made to the association two or three days before the *Invisible Beauty* meeting. With the excuse of inviting them to an **"approach to a contemporary dance creation process"**, the dancers come to the association and show each group a small extract of one of the pieces they will perform on the day of the meeting. A flyer is also designed and printed with information about the event (without details of time and day for members, with specific details for family members) and is handed out to members and relatives.

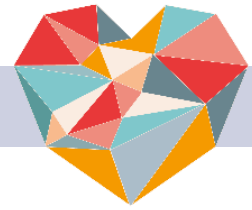
Possible dates are agreed on with the association's management, so that the seminars do not coincide with other activities organised by the association. Two weeks beforehand, the first reminder is sent to the relatives and the same week of the meeting, visits are made to the different groups in the association.

## Registration

Registration for the activity takes place directly at the association.

On the day of the session, participants meet at the association's headquarters (a place they already know). From there, accompanied by two or three workers from the centre/association, they are taken to the space chosen for the activity (preferably on foot). Otherwise, the journey is made by bus - private service). It is therefore important to confirm their participation the day before the activity.

# Description & Program



The days prior to the seminar, the projections that will serve as a visual guide for the performance of the proposed exercises are designed. During the two or three weeks prior to the seminar, the dancers rehearse or create the pieces that they will perform live the day of the seminar. The exercises and the interaction between musicians or other guest artists and dancers are then defined and rehearsed.

The day before, the technical set-up of the space is carried out: projector and screen, audio, lighting, placement of the dance floor, scenery and arrangement of the chairs for the participants.

On the day of the activity, the dancers go directly to the space to warm up and do a final rehearsal of the pieces, while the workers of the association travel with the participants.

## Structure of the seminar

### 1) Welcome:

A first interaction takes place as part of the welcome; a pianist playing a musical theme or an actor in their role perform as participants enter the room... participants are invited to approach the artist to experience a first contact. Gradually and while this first informal encounter is taking place, they are assisted to take off their coats and sit on the chairs, which have previously been placed in a specific way in the space.

### 2) Introduction:

A very brief verbal introduction is made and the participants are reminded of the reason why they have been invited to the venue: to share an approach to a creative process of a contemporary dance piece. This is followed by the live performance of the first dance piece of the day.

### 3) Content:

Each of the artists in the room is then introduced. Some of the key elements of a choreographic creation are then shared with the participants (for example, how the dancers create movement) and they are directly invited to experiment, with the help of the dancers, the exercises or movements from the choreography.

The use of objects (also integrated in the choreography) for the reproduction of movement has proved to be an appropriate tool. The exercises are always accompanied by music, thus working on the sense of rhythm. For each meeting, a specific theme is defined and a selection of music is made around it: Russian classical composers, cinema, 80's... The music chosen will be, whenever possible, familiar to the participants. This way, a greater impact is achieved (higher emotional stimulation).

Respecting their concentration capability, series of exercises are interspersed with additional performances of dance and/or music pieces

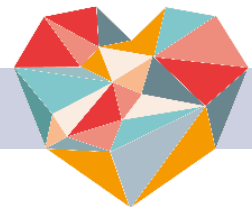
### 4) *End of seminar:*

The seminar ends with a final dance performance. Immediately afterwards, the dancers encourage the participants to join them for an improvised group dance. Again, the music chosen for it will play an important role for their involvement in the *group dance*. Before leaving, a group photo is taken as a souvenir (and as a record of the activity) and the participants are accompanied to the exit.

While the AFAGI workers return to the association's headquarters with the first group and then return to the venue with the second group of participants, the dancers reset the space and get ready for the second group.

Once the second intervention is finished, the space is dismantled while the AFAGI workers return to the association's headquarters with the participants of the second group. From there, each participant returns to their homes.

## Evaluation



During the workshops and seminars, the AFAGI employees (psychologists and social workers), **observe** the reactions of the participants.. After each seminar, an evaluation on the responses that each section of the workshop has generated in the participants is made. Depending on what is observed, the content, pace or structure is modified and the parameters to be explored in the next workshop are defined.

In the weeks following the workshops and seminars, AFAGI employees informally ask the participants what they remember about the workshops and the interaction with the dancers and musicians. This helps to find out which aspects of the activity have had the greatest impact. The result so far has been surprising, as many of the users were able to recall some of the activities even months later. It is worth noting that in 2017, some of the participants were still remembering and describing aspects of the first seminar, which took place in 2013.

Family relatives are also part of this evaluation stage. They are asked informally about the response they have been able to observe in the participants after their attendance in the workshops and seminars.

Through the participation in this DCUM project, the Matia Institute has shared its LIBE scale, an assessment instrument designed by Cristina Buiza, Álvaro García-Soler, Pura Díaz-Veiga, Enrique Arriola and Elena Fernández (2020) through which, from now on, a record of the impact generated by this activity can be made.

# Checklist, when to do what



## One month before the activity

- Confirmation with the management of the AFAGI association that the activity will take place.
- Coordination of the set-up and dismantling times with the venue where the activity will take place.
- Specification of the music to be used in the activity so that, in the case of live musicians, they have the necessary time to rehearse.
- Coordination of the transport or displacement of the scenography necessary (if necessary) for the day of the seminar.

## Three weeks before the activity

- Start of the dance choreographies creation process.
- Design and printing of the flyers to be given to the users of the collaborating association, AFAGI.
- Purchase of the necessary materials for the development of the exercises.
- Separate rehearsals; musicians, dancers and artists invited to the activity.

## Two weeks before the activity

- Reminder of the activity is sent to the relatives.
- Separate rehearsals; musicians, dancers and artists invited to the activity.
- Design of the projections that will serve as a visual guide for the performance of the exercises proposed during the seminar and movement workshop.

## The week before the activity

A *Movement Workshop* is held at the headquarters of the collaborating association (AFAGI). This activity serves as motivation for them to attend the main activity, the seminar.

If it is not possible to carry out a *movement workshop + seminar* as part of the same event, the movement workshop will be replaced by the previous visits that will take place the same week of the seminar. Ideal situation; *movement workshop + previous visits + seminar* are held.

## The week of the activity

- Previous visits* to the association.
- Joint rehearsals of musicians, dancers and artists invited to the activity.

### The day before the activity

Technical assembly of the venue.

Tech-rehearsal with the musicians, dancers and artists invited at the venue.

Reminder of the event.

### Day of the activity

Last rehearsal with the musicians, dancers and artists before the arrival of the participants.

Realisation of the activity (seminar).

Dismantling and storage of the scenography and venue.

### The week after the activity

Evaluation of the activity.

## Corona

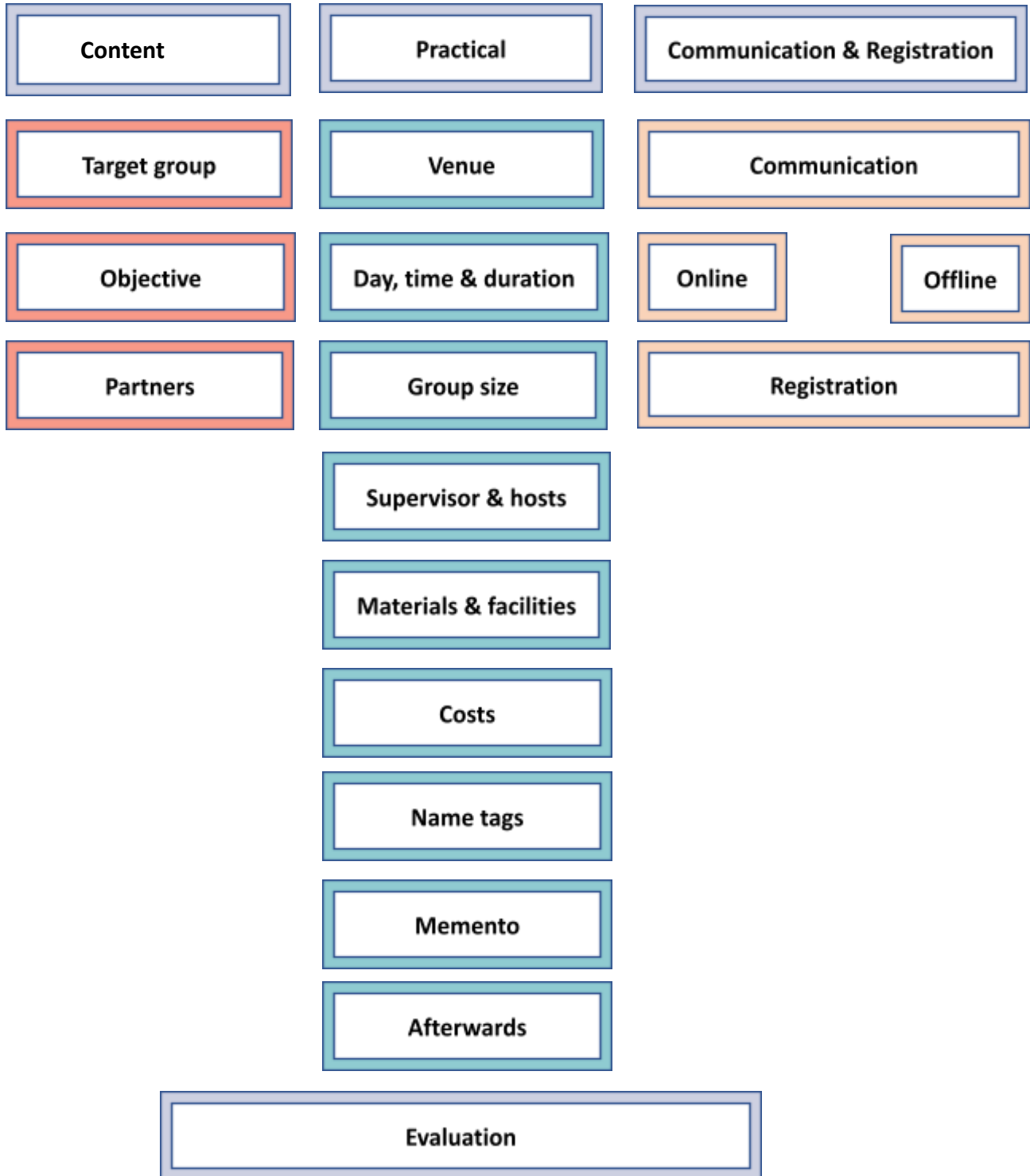
The activity has been affected by Corona, as the main activity takes place in a theatre space and access to these has been restricted during the pandemic.

Due to COVID-19, it was not possible to hold the seminars in auditoriums. However, a hybrid between the seminars and the movement workshops has been offered in order to develop the activity in the different delegations of the AFAGI association. Despite the obvious limitation of space, this has led to an increase in the number of participants, as it has not required any travel on the part of the participants. Physical contact has been avoided in the activity and all the required measurements have also been taken (security distance, use of mask, disinfection...).

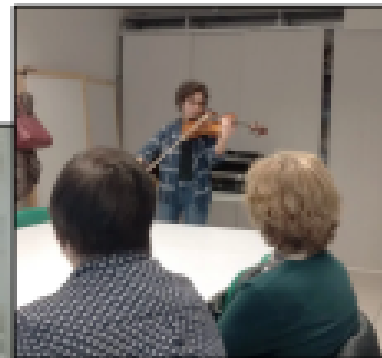
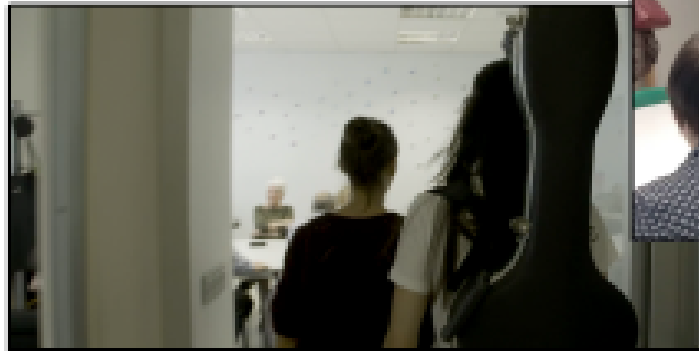
In order to offer an activity to the relatives and people with Alzheimer's (AFAGI users) during the absolute closure due to Corona, a small experiment was elaborated taking as a reference what was learned in the presentation of **Isabel Vermote (Koninklijke Musea voor Schone Kunsten van België, Brussels)** during the webinar of the 16th of June of this DCUM project: *In order to choose the works that will be shown to people with dementia during the guide in the Koninklijke museum, the managers send out a series of cards (with several images on each of them) and ask the participants to choose their favourites. The managers then design the visit through the museum on the basis of the answers received from the participants.*

For the preparation of the *Invisible Beauty* seminars, the same system was implemented and the participants' answers were used to choose the photographs through which to create movement sequences. Grouped into 6 different themes 20 cards were designed (aerial views, sculpture, painting, cinema, everyday situations and San Sebastian), with 4 photographs in each. During the period in which no workshops were held, AFAGI users were sent one card a week by ordinary mail, in which they had to indicate, on each card, which of the photographs they liked the most. They were asked to keep the cards so that they could return them to the association. Once the workshops were underway again, all the information was collected and the process of sealing and designing the content of the following seminars was started taking into account the participants' responses. The management of *Invisible Beauty* has decided to permanently integrate this aspect of the activity into the project.

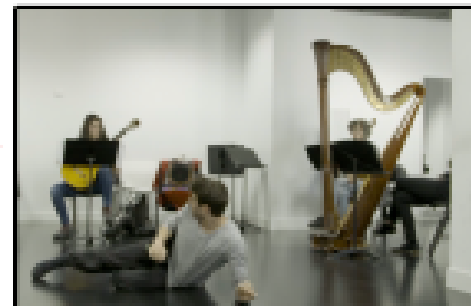
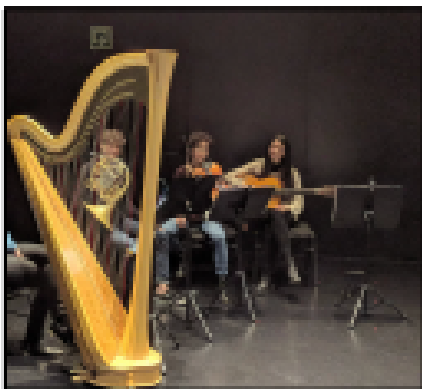
# Points of attention



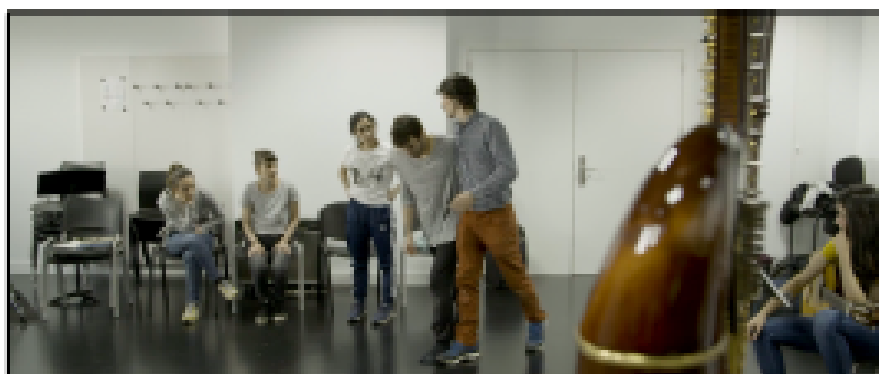
Previous visits to the association.



Students of the *Music Conservatoire of the Basque Country* collaborating in the project.



Rehearsal, musicians and dancers.

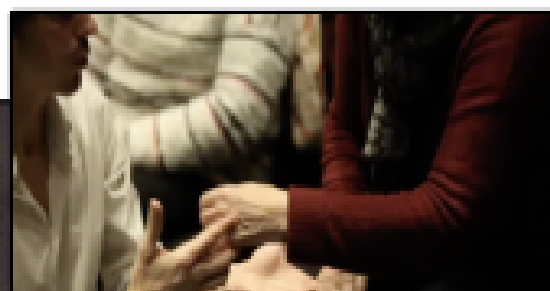
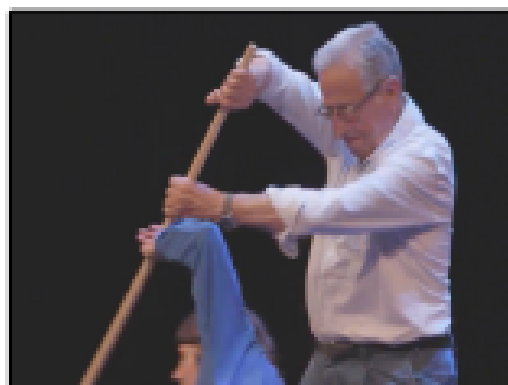
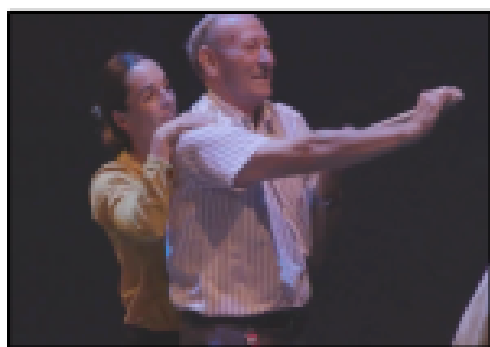
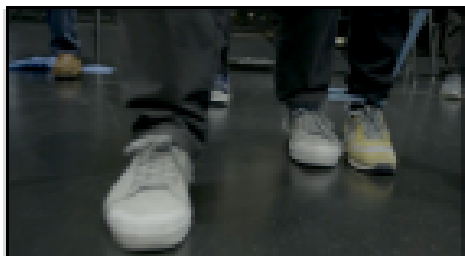


Working with the dancers in an interaction with the participants of the upcoming seminar.

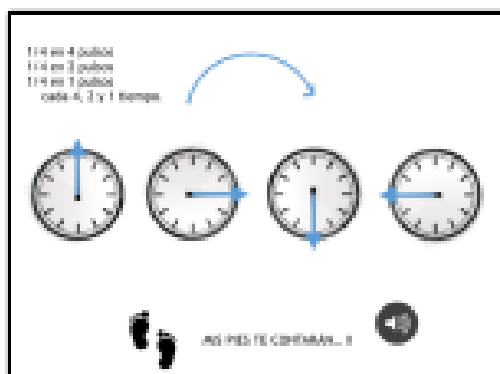




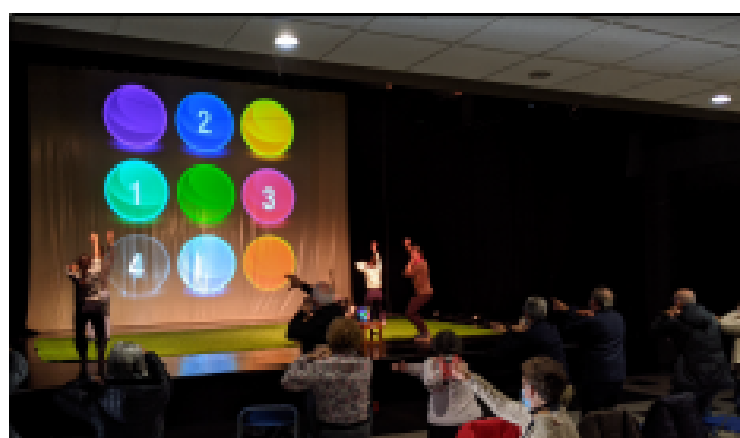
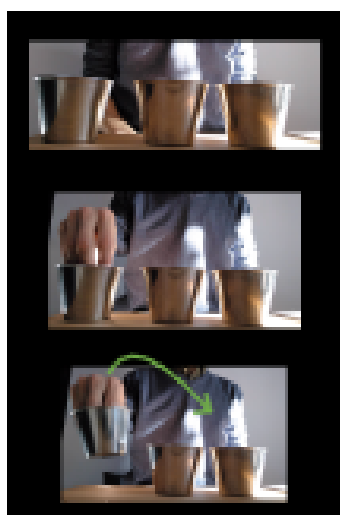
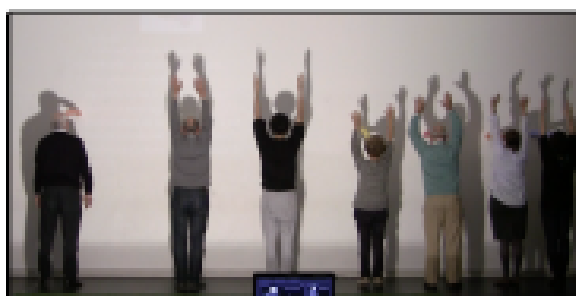
Interactions between dancers and participants.



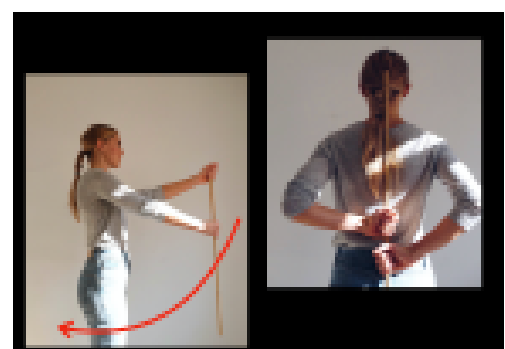
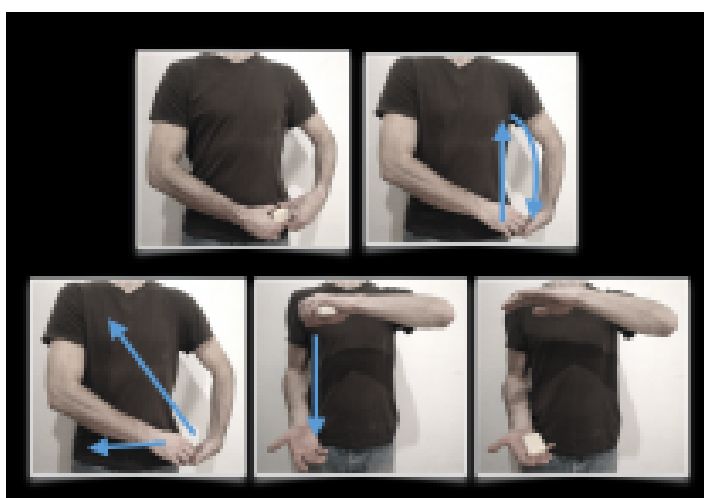
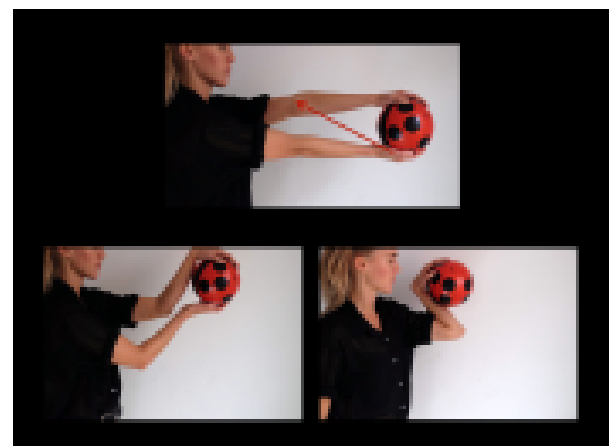
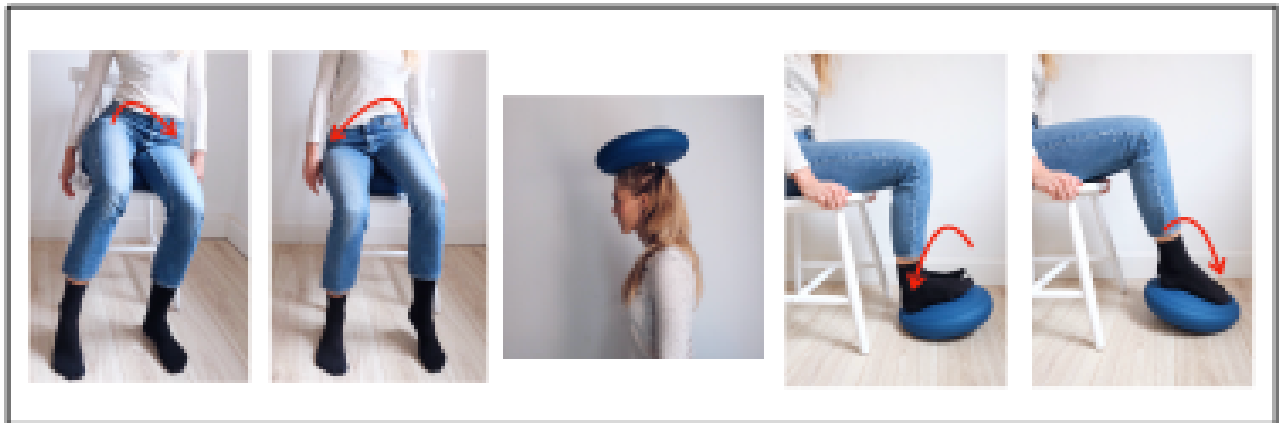
Examples of objects, tools and exercises performed during the seminars.



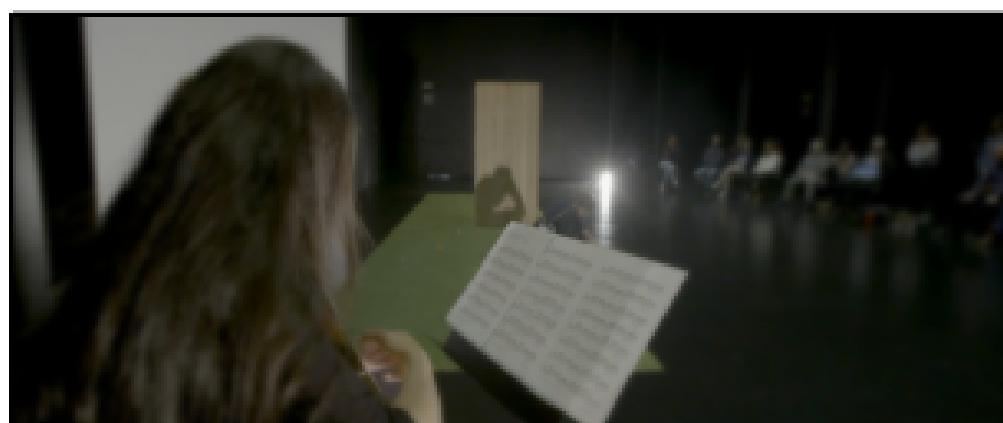
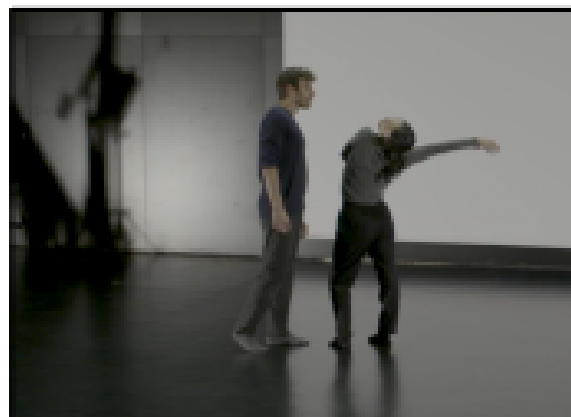
Examples of objects, tools and exercises performed during the seminars.



Examples of objects, tools and exercises performed during the seminars.



Examples of dance performances during the seminars.



## Open seminars for general audience

