

Fabbrica Europa

PLAY

by Alessandro Sciarroni

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From an ancient game to a contemporary performative practice

In **PLAY**, a creation produced by Fabbrica Europa, which originates from the ancient game of the *Pallone al bracciale*, the Italian artist **Alessandro Sciarroni** revisits in a contemporary way, through a performance/live video installation, the concepts of time and duration, bringing the performers to measure themselves with dedication, endurance, energy.

The *Pallone al bracciale* is a game that was practiced during the Renaissance and that is still played in Italy in special facilities called Sferisteri. The game is based on the players' ability to control and direct a leather ball with a "bracelet" (bracciale) – a heavy wooden cylinder fitted by pyramid tips that covers the hand – and throw it with precision and vigor from one side to the other of the playing field.



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PLAY was presented on September 11, 2021 at the Sferisterio delle Cascine in Florence. In the 80 meters long and 18 meters wide field, a man – a professional player – is alone in this huge space. With the heavy wooden “bracciale”, he relentlessly throws the leather ball against the wall. The lightness and agility in the feet and legs and the strength in the arms create a dynamic movement that becomes almost a dance.

Along the wall, three cameras that capture the details of the effort, of the flow of movements, of the ability to control the mighty blows. The images projected on the high wall let the viewer enter the game, returning the subjective view of the performer.

Microphones pick up and amplify the impact of the ball on the

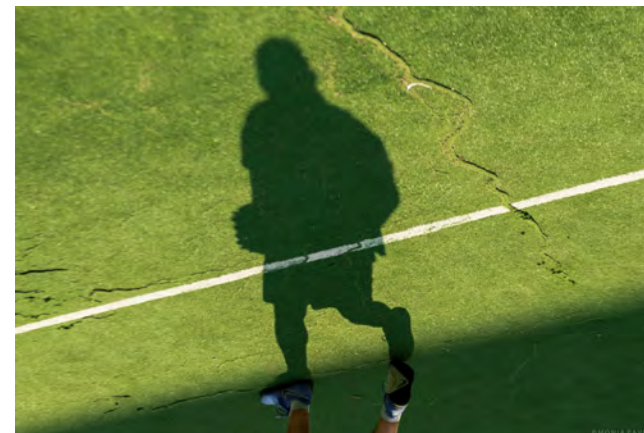
“bracciale” and on the wall, or on the ground. A hard and increasingly loud sound that intertwines with the original sound composition created by Aurora Bauzà and Pere Jou (Telemann Rec.) to accompany the action. The *Pallone al bracciale*, an ancient team game, is depicted here in a solitary dimension. A lonely man in a huge space plays his own game. The solitude of a body that challenges its limits and expands the void, filling it with powerful echoes and resonances. A contemporary artistic experience that wants underline the sense of belonging to this centuries-old tradition of a small but active community committed in Florence, as well as in other parts of Italy, to keeping this ancient game, and the spaces in which it is practiced, alive.

ALESSANDRO SCIARRONI

Alessandro Sciarroni is an Italian artist active in the field of Performing Arts with several years of experience in visual arts and theater research. His works are featured in contemporary dance and theater festivals, museums and art galleries, as well as in unconventional spaces and involve professionals from different disciplines. His works have been performed worldwide: Europe, South and North America, Middle East and Asia. In 2019 he was awarded the Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement in Dance by the Venice Biennial.

His work starts from a conceptual Duchamp-like matrix, making use of a theatrical framework, and he can use some techniques and experiences from dance, as well as circus or sports. In addition to the rigor, coherence and clarity of each creation, his work tries to uncover obsessions, fears and fragilities of the act of performing, through the repetition of a practice to the limits of the physical endurance of the interpreters, looking at a different dimension of time, and to an empathic relationship between the audience and the performers.

Alessandro Sciarroni is associated artist at CENTQUATRE-Paris and at Triennale Milano Teatro 2022-2024. His shows are produced by Marche Teatro in collaboration with various national and international coproduction partners depending on the projects. He is artistic director of corpoceleste_C.C.00#.



PLAYERS

LUCA GIGLI

Luca Gigli, twenty-five years old, comes from Treia in the Marche region. He plays the game of *Pallone al bracciale* from the age of 12. He discovered the passion for this discipline when he was at the middle school during a school tournament. In 2015 he played and won the first Italian championship, to which three more followed. From 2019 he is in the team of Macerata, carrying on the tradition of this game.



RODOLFO SORCINELLI

Rodolfo Sorcinelli, born in 1995 in the Marche region, bears the name of one of the great champions of game of *Pallone al bracciale* of the past. Following in the footsteps of his father, he enters a sferisterio since the first months of life. During the fifth year of the primary school he started practicing this discipline, covering all three roles of the game. Coming from Mondolfo, he lives in Molinella in the province of Bologna, and currently plays for the CS Firenze team.





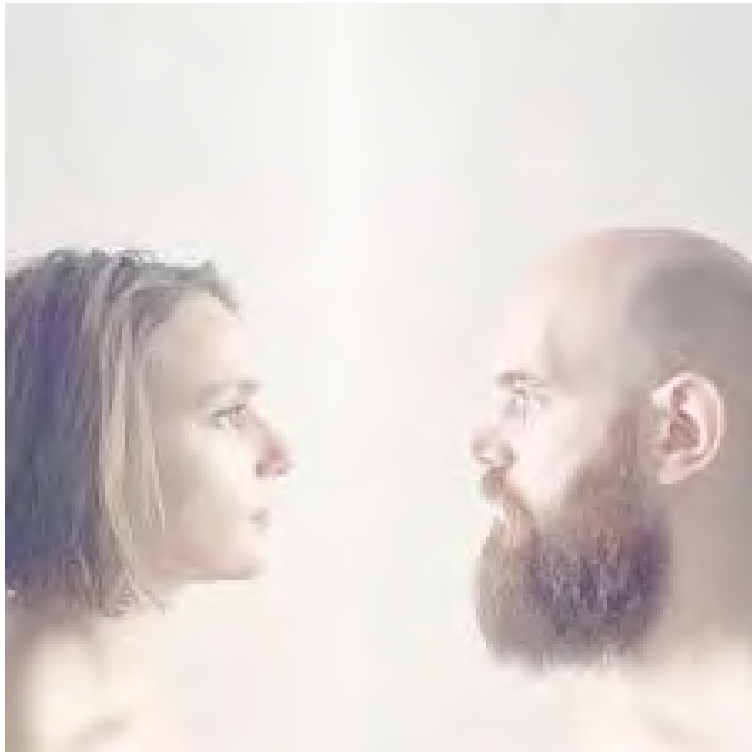
NOTES BY ALESSANDRO SCIARRONI

When Fabbrica Europa asked me to work on one of the traditions of the Tuscan territory, I discovered, through historical documents and the meeting with the community of players who still practice it today, this ancient game of *Pallone al bracciale* that immediately intrigued me. Compared to other practices and disciplines that I have explored, I was struck by the fact that the *Pallone al bracciale*, in addition to being a very beautiful sport, has elements that recall dance. After meeting the players who practice it in Florence, at the Sferisterio delle Cascine, I understood how this sport, which is practiced not only in Tuscany but throughout Central Italy, is like a family system, a community that keeps it alive, teaches it to the new generations and respects it with a moving, almost touching love. It is perhaps this element of survival that has characterized the path of my research, that almost melancholy aspect that led me to focus, more than on the team play, on the individual player, on what he can do in a contemporary dimension of solitude, of resistance, of stubbornness.

NOTES ON THE PROJECT

Fabbrica Europa has entrusted Alessandro Sciarroni with a project that originates from the game of *Pallone al bracciale*, a tradition which, starting from the Renaissance period, has had great importance in Tuscany and Florence. An artistic creation that moves from historical memory and the Florentine tradition to trace new perspectives and visions: a contemporary reinvention of a legacy of knowledge and practices, gestures and codes, to give life to a mechanism for reviving the ritual of a collective experience. The research process resulted in the creation of the performance/ live video installation **PLAY** that was presented at the Sferisterio delle Cascine in Florence in September 2021. Fabbrica Europa intends to carry on the project by proposing it also in other Italian regions, such as Emilia Romagna and Marche, where the *Pallone al bracciale* has an important tradition and continues to be practiced even today.

TELEMANN REC. Aurora Bauzà, Pere Jou



Telemann Rec. has become a place where we explore the limits of music as interdisciplinary language. Maybe accompanying a film, or taking part in the dance or theater scene, music plays a fundamental role in creating meaning and generating emotion. Educated in classical music, we both share our passion for electronic and pop music and find ourselves in constant research of new musical horizons, immersing ourselves over and over in the magic relationship between music and emotion.

Aurora Bauzà

Pianist, musicologist, and Master in Music as interdisciplinary art, Aurora Bauza has centered her career in music creation for both scenic and audiovisual languages. In 2015 co-founded Telemann Rec., in order to channel her interest in music as interdisciplinary language. She has worked in many scenic and audiovisual projects composing, producing and performing their music. At the same time she is developing her own music projects in scenic arts.

Pere Jou

Countertenor, sociologist and audiovisual communicator, Pere Jou has spent the first 10 years of his professional career composing and producing pop music, performing with various bands, and leading his own project, Quart Primera. In 2015 takes the leap to scenic arts, which has driven him to work as a composer and performer for a lot of artists, choreographers and directors. He currently combines his work as a composer with his role as contemporary dancer and performer.

THE *PALLONE* *AL BRACCIALE*

The *Pallone al bracciale* has Greek-Roman origins, but it is in the Renaissance period that it has its greatest development. In the 16th century it was practiced by princes, lords and aristocrats, so much so that in some Italian courts there was the “master of balls” who trained those who wanted to play it. In 1555 Antonio Scaino published the *Trattato del giuoco della palla* (Treatise on the game of the ball) which contained drawings of the wooden “bracelet” used for the game as well as a description of the rules.

The game, initially practiced in the courtyards of noble palaces, then moved to the squares and large open spaces of the streets, played by bourgeois and commoners. However, due to the need for a lateral support wall, the spaces close to the city or castle walls became the most suitable.

At the end of the 1700s and the beginning of the 1800s, with the construction of special facilities (the *sferisteri*), the organization of matches and the birth of professionalism, the game became a national sport, acquiring fame and popularity. The players were stars loved by the public and the matches of *Pallone al bracciale* game became like public shows.



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invention **Alessandro Sciarroni**

with **Luca Gigli, Rodolfo Sorcinelli**

music **Aurora Bauzà e Pere Jou (Telemann Rec.)**

project development and production **Maurizia Settembri**

lighting design **Valeria Foti**

technical direction **Mattia Bagnoli**

artistic collaboration **Fabio Novembrini**

executive production **Alice Chiari**

video production **Alfea Cinematografica**

video direction **Enrico Re**

advisors on Pallone al bracciale **Stefano Sani, Paolo Petruzzi**

Club Sportivo Firenze

production **Fondazione Fabbrica Europa**

with the support of **Comune di Firenze**

in collaboration with **corpoceleste_C.C.00#, Marche Teatro**