

la palen4

a work by

**BallArte
Ensemble**

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About the project

“The Whale” is a 70-minute show for four performers on stage. Based on an original story written by Giulio Tanasini, this musical and performative piece brings together baroque instruments, digital synthesizers, live projection and performance.

Developed by Ballarte Ensemble in 2025, the show came to fruition thanks to several artistic residencies in Switzerland (Musikerwohnhaus, October 2023) and Spain (AMEE, May 2025; Adar Festival, July 2025). The show premiered at the 33rd edition of the Cisternúsica Festival in Alcobaça (Portugal), immediately followed by the Adar Festival (Asturias, Spain).

The flow of artistic languages allows the story on which it is based to be staged, constantly playing with the fine line that separates the abstract from the representational. The performance explores the power of storytelling, oral tradition, and humanity's relationship with its surroundings and with the extraordinary that permeates everyday life.



Sinopsis

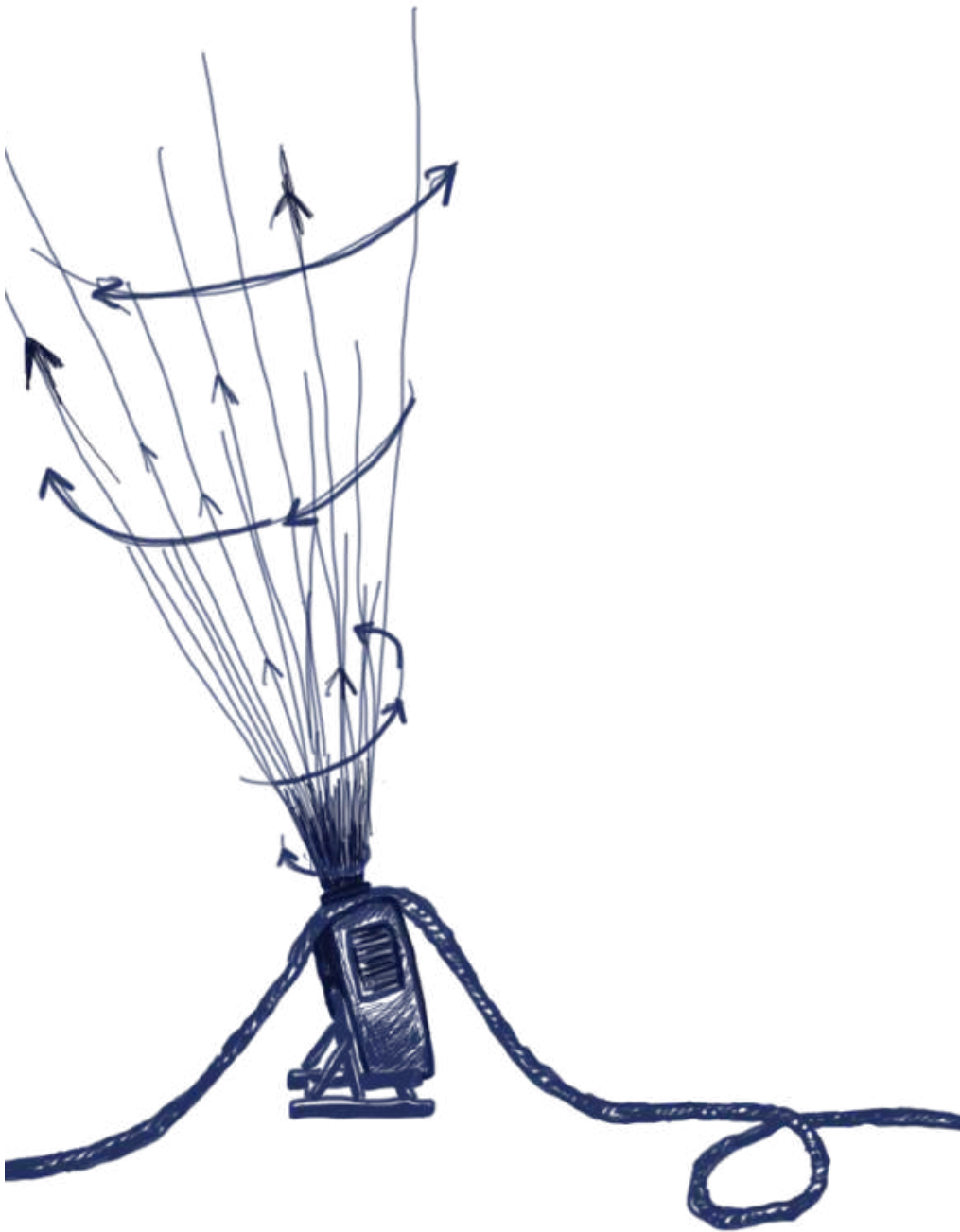
«It was the morning of July 26 when the whale appeared.»

This is how the story on which “The whale” is based begins; from the very first second, the audience is caught up in an absurd situation: a whale suddenly appears on top of a hill, disrupting the routine of the area.

The set design is minimal: the action takes place in the center of the space, with the audience watching from the four sides of a central stage. A thirty-meter-long rope crosses the floor of the entire room, supported by a projector pointing from the center of the scene toward the ceiling. In this way, minimalist elements can make a whale appear literally and allegorically on top of a mountain anywhere.

Four performers combine different disciplines (musical performance, electronic sound manipulation, performance art, and singing) to tell a story, creating a dreamlike world full of textures, sounds, and visual games.

The show concludes with a spoken and electronic piece in which the story is finally read in its entirety: this provides the key to interpreting and navigating all the evocative elements that permeate this work from the beginning.



Sound space

the story an the whale as a starting point

In the 17th century, whales, heirs to the mystique surrounding medieval creatures, were viewed with suspicion, speculation and fear. Four hundred years later, the noise of machines seeps into the seabed, disorienting them and expelling them from a habitat that no longer seems to be theirs.

Baroque instruments and digital synthesizers are the tools that allow us to weave together the elements of surprise and strangeness in the text through popular songs, granular synthesis, ostinato bass lines, live loops and medieval cantigas, creating a dreamlike world full of textures, sounds and stories.

The juxtaposition of such distant eras brings to light a common thread capable of uniting chronologically distant languages, all in the service of a contemporary form of storytelling. The musical arrangements of the pieces performed are all original.



The Ensemble



Ballarte Ensemble was founded in 2020 with the aim of exploring the theatrical possibilities of Baroque and contemporary music through its dialogue with other disciplines such as theatre, dramaturgy and dance. Its interdisciplinary team is made up of musicians, dancers, playwrights, technicians and actors. In just five years, the ensemble has produced nine original musical creations for the stage: *Dream* (2021), *The Banquet: the musical* (2021), *The Liberation of Francesca Caccini* (2021), *Sueño-verso* (2022), *El gran sarao del mundo* (2022), *Silencio en la sala que el fuego va a hablar* (2023), *Murmuros* (2023), *Transhumancias* (2024), *A Room Of Our Own* (2025) and *The Whale* (2025).

Their creations have been performed in Spain, Switzerland and Portugal, and have received support from institutions such as the Spanish Embassy in Switzerland and Swisslos Fonds Basel Stadt. Ballarte Ensemble was awarded first prize in the Young Aragonese Creators competition in 2021, was a finalist in the Rema Awards in the 'Cross-Border Project of the Year' category in 2022 and has been selected for the EFFEIA European artistic residency programme in 2024. In March 2025, their show '*El gran sarao del mundo*' was part of the FIAS (International Festival of Sacred Art in Madrid) programme; '*The Whale*' premiered that same year at the Cisternmúsica Festival in Alcobaça (Portugal).

Berta Ares

Berta Ares (Madrid, 1994) is a violinist and violist specialising in early music. She began her musical training at the age of three with the recorder and later took up the violin. She studied at the Arturo Soria Conservatory in Madrid, the Zaragoza Conservatory of Music and the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis in Basel, where she specialised in historically informed performance of the repertoire from the Renaissance to the Romantic period with Professor Amandine Beyer. She has also studied vielle and medieval performance with Baptiste Romain. She has participated in numerous musical projects in Spain, Switzerland, France, Italy and Germany. She has performed as a soloist with the Capriccio Barockorchester (Switzerland), Le Concert Idéal (France) and ARTEK (New York). From a very young age, she combined her interest in performance with cultural entrepreneurship and is co-founder of the ensemble Acciaccatura (2014-) and the Monzón Chamber Music Festival (2017-2019). Together with Nacho Laguna and Ramón del Buey, she has co-organised the five editions of the Ballarte Festival, a creative platform that has featured numerous artists and from which the Ensemble Ballarte emerged.





Maria del Buey Cañas

She is an artist and researcher. She works regularly with the Ensemble BallArte (The Whale, 2025; Silencio en la Sala, 2023) and is a researcher in the Department of Philosophy at the Autonomous University of Madrid (2023-2027). She studied MFA Art in the Contemporary World (2018-2020) at the National College of Art and Design in Dublin, is a curator and restorer (2014-2018) from the UCM, and graduated in Professional Music Education (2011-2017) from the Arturo Soria Conservatory of Music in Madrid. Since 2022, she has been developing the research and performance project "transestéril" with Stef Assandri and is a member of the board of directors of the Spanish Electroacoustic Music Association. She has also participated in the "Prácticas Colectivas de la Incertidumbre" (AZALA, 2022) curated by Rebecca Collins. Her work has been supported by the Spanish Embassy in Belgium (Ventanilla Abierta) and Samenschool Antwerp (2024), the Musikerwohnhaus Basel (2023), IN-SONORA (2022), the Cervantes Institute in Dublin (2021), Medialab-Prado (2019), and the National Library of Spain (2018). She has also worked as co-director of the Catalyst Arts gallery (2021) in Belfast, United Kingdom. She has participated in group exhibitions at the Goethe-Institut Irland (2019, 2020), Ormstone House in Limerick (2020), and Temple Bar Gallery + Studios (2020).

Nacho Laguna

Nacho Laguna is a theorbo player, guitarist and sound artist, trained at the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis (Switzerland). As a theorbo player, he has worked and continues to work regularly as a continuo player with ensembles such as Gli Incogniti, Artaserse, Les Musiciens du Louvre, I Gemelli, Le Consort, La Ritirata and artists such as Amandine Beyer, Philippe Jaroussky, Francesco Corti, Théotime Langlois de Swarte and many others. He has toured extensively in Europe, America, Asia and Africa, performing at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, the Opéra Royal de Versailles, the Tokyo Opera City, the Hong Kong City Hall, the Arsenal de Metz, the Opéra de Angers-Nantes, the Teatro Real in Madrid, the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam and the Bozar in Brussels, among others. He has recorded for record labels such as Harmonia Mundi, Aparte, Nüve, Mediaphore Japon and Warner Classics, as well as for various radio and television stations, including BBC Radio 3, Radio Nacional Clásica, TV France and RTVE. His latest solo work, Ferrarese, was recently awarded 5 Diapasons by the French magazine Diapason. His interest in interdisciplinarity led him to found the Ballarte Festival and organise five editions, to found the Ballarte Ensemble and the Acciaccatura Ensemble, and to collaborate with artists from disciplines such as theatre, circus, dance and performance.





Giulio Tanasini

After completing a master's degree in double bass in Italy, Giulio Tanasini studied viola da gamba with Paolo Pandolfo at the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis. He is currently pursuing a Master's degree in Performance in 2019 and a Master's degree in Specialized Performance in Early Music. He plays both instruments throughout Europe and collaborates with ensembles such as Gli Incogniti (Amandine Beyer), Il Pegaso Ensemble (Evangelina Mascardi), Los Elementos (Alberto Rouco), and Musique des Lumières, with whom he has performed in some of Europe's most prestigious concert halls. He is a member of the Ballarte Ensemble, with which he explores alternative forms of musical performance to the classical concert format, presenting his original works throughout Europe. He works with composer and singer-songwriter Francesca Gaza as a solo gambist in her ensemble and, since 2021, with the Maxim Theater (Zurich), where he performed in Michael Ruf's *Die mittelmeeer monologe*. He collaborates with the ensemble Le Sommeil, with whom he has performed in the music season of Freunde Alte Musik Basel and at the Wilanów Palace in Warsaw. In his solo career, he has developed programs such as *Le città invisibili* (Ballarte Festival, Flimsfestival, and Altrisuoni, Combin en Musique, and Modulazioni). Since 2023, he has been working as a program designer for the Ballarte Festival, and his interest in contemporary music led him to perform as a soloist in the *Musica riservata* concert at the Venice Biennale Music Festival in 2024.