Mentee: Rachelle Anaïs Scott
Mentor: Ihsan Rustem
Project Title: In the Unseen

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The initial proposal for this mentorship centered on the development and production planning of In the Unseen — a multidisciplinary work I was preparing to produce through my non-profit performing arts association, C.A.R.E (Cultural Arts & Research Exchange). The project was envisioned as a large-scale collaboration uniting dance, live music, and visual art, bringing together international collaborators and Swiss-based dancers while exploring layered cultural narratives.

At the time of applying, I was standing at a significant threshold: transitioning from dancer into the expanded role of producer and choreographer. The mentorship was designed to support both the structural and artistic development of In the Unseen — from shaping a concept dossier and funding strategy, to building venue partnerships, constructing budgets, and navigating the freelance landscape in Switzerland.
Over the course of the year, however, the process itself became the most profound teacher.

As we examined what a project of this scale truly requires — financially, administratively, logistically, and creatively — it became clear that the original vision needed to be recalibrated. Rather than pushing forward unchanged, we chose to reshape it. The insights gained around scope, sustainability, timing, and long-term positioning within an emerging choreographic career proved essential.

With Ihsan's guidance, I engaged deeply with the practical architecture of a production: drafting budgets, mapping timelines, analyzing funding ecosystems, and clarifying artistic intention. Just as importantly, we stepped back to reassess these structures. We considered what can realistically be achieved in the short term, what must unfold over time, and seeing In the Unseen in relation to my current career phase allowed me to move forward with clarity.

Perhaps the most transformative aspect of the mentorship was learning not only how to realize a project, but how to discern its right timing, scale, and context.

Beyond structural development, this year coincided with a period of deep artistic inquiry. I was grappling with questions of process, translation from studio research to performance, and how to situate my work within broader institutional frameworks. Ihsan met these questions with rigor and generosity. Together, we unpacked ideas, tested assumptions, shifted direction when necessary, and examined both conceptual and pragmatic layers of the work.

Witnessing the full spectrum of his practice — the balance between creative vision, administration, leadership, and long-term strategy — broadened my understanding of what it truly means to sustain a career in this field. It illuminated the unseen labor behind artistic output and strengthened my respect for the discipline required to carry ideas into reality.

The year-long continuity of the mentorship made depth possible. Without that sustained exchange, many of these structural and artistic challenges would have remained abstract. Instead, I leave with greater strategic awareness, confidence in

pacing my ambitions, and a more grounded approach to shaping future projects.

On a personal level, the experience was equally meaningful. Ihsan is someone whose career I have long held in deep esteem, and to work closely alongside him over this extended period was a true privilege. The mentorship exceeded my expectations — supporting my professional growth while reinforcing resilience, discernment, and courage within my practice.

Programs that foster this kind of intentional and sustained pairing are rare. I am sincerely grateful to have been part of it and will carry the impact of this year forward as I continue to develop my work.