



# CLOUD

**INTERGENERATIONAL COMMUNICATION  
IN THE DIGITAL AGE**

## INTRODUCTION

Today's youth are constantly connected. That affects not only how they view and experience the world, but also their relationships with other people. They spend less and less time in the real world, as they are too preoccupied with virtual friends, virtual conversations, and virtual communities. In this techno-dominant era, how can parents and grandparents relate to the younger generation, pass along their values, life lessons and inspiration, and, inversely, pick up some lessons of their own?

These are the questions that choreographer Perrine Valli explores in her dance production *Cloud*. In her choreography, a group of 10–15 children join professional dancers on stage to create a visual and musical representation of technology's impact on relationships between generations – and how these generations can accommodate an intruder: the smartphone.

## FOSTERING COMMUNICATION THROUGH DANCE

How our bodies move as adults is shaped by the rules and codes we are molded to comply with as children: stand up straight; write between the lines; sit still; walk, don't run. And modern technology serves only to complicate things, as we spend hours slouching behind a computer or bent over our smartphones. But dance lets us break free from those social conventions and liberate our bodies to move naturally, blurring the lines between child and adult, conformity and freedom of expression.

That untapped energy is what makes *Cloud* an effective vehicle of communication. The performance is divided into three parts. In the first, we see a young girl with her mother, and the young girl is "captured" by a headset – a metaphor for a smartphone. In the second, the girl joins other children of her age, who have also been taken hostage by a headset. The arrival of the girl's grandfather, who comes to save the children, marks the transition to the third part. Ironically, he's the one who describes the future – the world that his and his children's generations are leaving for the girl.

The performance also serves as a catalyst for bringing generations together, whether on stage or in the audience: children, parents, and grandparents can enjoy the show together and then afterwards discuss their thoughts, interpretations, and reactions.

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER DURING THE PERFORMANCE

*Cloud* aims to encourage communication among generations and help young people adapt to a world where technology is ubiquitous. The goal is to give youth the tools to become aware of, and subsequently reject, the isolation and technology trance that connected devices can induce. Questions you could ask students to consider during the performance include (using wording suited to their age group):

- **How has technology changed how we perceive the world around us?**
- **What values is technology reinforcing? Eroding?**

- How has technology changed the way we communicate with our parents? Grandparents? Friends?
- What does “the cloud” represent for computers? For those of us who use computers?
- What are the threats and opportunities being presented by new technology?

## ACTIVITY IDEAS FOR AFTER THE PERFORMANCE

Here are some activities that can help encourage dialogue and motivate students to think about the issues raised during *Cloud*.

1. Ask students how they typically communicate with their parents and grandparents, and highlight the range of their answers in a colorful table or diagram.
2. Ask students to describe (orally or in writing) what they felt as they watched the performance, and discuss as a group. You could also have them create a storyboard of pictures that describe what they felt.
3. Ask students to design their own poster for the performance, and then ask them the reasons for the various choices they made (images, colors, key words, etc.).
4. Ask students to write a review of the performance, as if for the Arts & Culture section of a newspaper.
5. Have students watch one of the films that inspired the choreography for *Cloud* – François Truffaut’s *The Wild Child* or one of Hayao Miyazaki’s films – and then ask them what parallels they see.