Springback Annual 2019



Explore dance

Springback Explore dance across Europe Magazine

Springback Magazine does things differently.

We cover contemporary dance across Europe – and we care about our coverage.

We do not chase the mainstream, but actively follow the many streams within the rich but often overlooked network of smaller-scale dance productions that criss-cross the continent.

We swim against the current when necessary. In an era of online ephemera and informational overproduction, we place a premium on hands-on editorial guidance, and on looking after and nurturing our contributors.

Springback Annual 2019



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Sanjoy Roy Editor
Ka Bradley Associate editor
Marie Pons Associate editor
Clàudia Brufau Communications
Oonagh Duckworth Springback Academy
John Ashford Publisher

springbackmagazine.com
editorial@springbackmagazine.com

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Springback Magazine



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dance across europe



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Opening words

Those of you who are creators, performers, producers or programmers will know the feeling well: those opening-night jitters when, ready or not and come what may, you first present your work to an audience.

A year ago, I felt the same. We were due to launch Springback Magazine online at the Spring Forward festival in Sofia, Bulgaria. Instead of a launch, I had taken to calling it an unveiling, and finally, an undressing. Then we flicked the switch, and were exposed in public.

Public exposure, I soon realised, is exactly what we are about. We had begun with an observation: there is a network of contemporary dance across Europe that is daring, inventive, experimental and mobile; that is the foundation for the future of the art form; and that is largely absent from wider public media. Could we help to expose it?

The answer was already there. Backed by Aerowaves, a hub for new European dance, we already had a network of writers, thinkers and influencers who had come through our intensive annual writing programme. The magazine became a means to join the dots between artists, presenters, producers, communicators and the public.

One year on, now accustomed to public exposure, we are gathering the magazine into an annual edition, exclusively for Springback Members. Why?

Because we think the annual affords a longer, wider view. Online publishing is valuable currency, but the technology itself can make it feel passing or piecemeal. Put the separate texts together though, and you begin to see a bigger picture. Instead of the brief glow of a good review or the twitterstorms of publicity, you get a sense of the climate of contemporary dance, across Europe and over the year.

So please take this annual as a companion to the current contemporary dance videos that we make available online, exclusively to Springback Members. Videos offer one view of the current climate; words offer another. For words open own windows. They can afford views, give visions of their own. Words can even open up worlds.

When you open this book, then, I hope that you will not only look at it, but look *through* it – through those windows onto the world that these words open up.



Sanjoy Roy

Editor, Springback Magazine

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ARTICLES



Christos Papadopoulos: Opus
In search of the dialectics of music and movement



Anastasio Koukoutas
25 March 2018

A textual exploration of a performative exploration in sound, meaning and time

Photos © Patroklos Skafidas

In his new work *Opus*, **Christos Papadopoulos** has taken his experiments in movement a step further by using familiar motifs such as repetition and the elemental positioning of an individual within a group, and by gradually amplifying and intensifying his choreography through the prism of Bach's music. Indeed, for this particular choreographer, rhythm is not only a structural unit upon which movement is based, but is essential to the unfolding of time, rendering sound spatially constituted.

Papadopoulos, in quest of the dialectic between duration and movement, essentially offers an insight into the significance of discontinuity in the articulation of time. Four musicians (violin, cello, flute, bass clarinet), and four dancers embodying the role of each instrument, pursue a live dialogue on stage. The imprinting of the rhythm on the dancers' bodies – made visible through sharp movements, focused primarily on the upper torso, the pelvis and the arms – demonstrates the formation of melody through single elements of sound, or correspondingly, illustrates how fragments of movement are shaped into choreography. But this process doesn't evolve instantaneously; the 'hesitating' of time, resulting from the gaps in music and the halts in motion, invites the viewer into an experience of deep listening, into a vacuum where time becomes the centre of creation.

As if they were strings, the dancers' bodies begin to pulsate, imitating the production of sound; each member suspends to a halt after moving, reaching a lifeless equilibrium until the next stimulus. Our ears pick up the sound vibrations, but our eyes – through the movement of the dancers – turn them into moving material. Sound does not disappear into itself or dissolve into immaterial abstractness; it becomes tangible by being embodied, it is visually carved as multiple trajectories in space, confirmed through the body's muscular reactions. Each dancer becomes the equivalent of a musical instrument, the visible memory of music in space, thus making apparent the dialectic between time and duration. It is a peculiar transcription – that of the embodied sound – which becomes not only visible but also unmasks our often muted vision, echoing deeper in our souls.

What about the qualities of pure sound? How are they attributed to movement, captured in visible forms and possibly in meanings? If we are talking about the fleeting nature of sound, an 'echo-system' shaped according to the rules of harmony and eurythmics, then, is movement limited to rendering the external form of music? Could movement ever convey that spirituality found in listening? Could it ever translate the breadth and variety of sound stimuli into choreography? In fact, Opus makes this challenge even more palpable: on the one hand, music is embodied and sensed in movement; on the other, pure sound seeks to overcome the visible, to break free from any content and representation, to be sensed in its totality, as an expression of inner freedom.

There's no point in comparing the finiteness of movement to the limitless context of references music offers. Applying

movement to the score doesn't degrade music; by making sound its core element, movement strengthens the sensory input of music. Therefore, when dancers perform the score it is not only visually transformed but also kinaesthetically reformed. The music does not cling to its autonomy, but instead co-exists with a kinetic content preformed and clearly given as a score: extending the arms, rotating the head, lightly bending the torso, all aiming at the coupling of music and movement. We do not discern a hierarchical, cause-effect relationship, nor are we experiencing a mere byproduct of repetition, variation, contrast and intermediation.

Here lies the contribution of both choreographer and dancers: Papadopoulos does not attempt to interpret Bach's music by highlighting its effects in order to appeal to our senses, nor does he treat it conceptually in order to map the undiscovered cosmos of our emotions. His choreography reflects the function of pure sound, before it is invested with any emotion, before it is charged or imbued with any imagery. His approach encourages us to watch movement as if watching the traces of harmony and melody in space. The dancers dissociate themselves from music, but they remain within its realm, where sound becomes time and time is lived and enlivened, in every beat, in everyone.

The rhythm thus suggests a unique, personalised sense of time, a duration which could be measured in terms of its quality. The rhythmic repetition inscribed in the movement becomes evident as body postures vary in space and time. As we are gradually led to distinguish between fragments of time, chasing its continuous flow, we are finally introduced in the concept of movement in relation to rhythm. Rhythm then exists only to the extent that it is performed, embodied, or as Merleau-Ponty says, our body is not 'in' space and time, but it resides in space and time.

As moving trajectories converge and musical dialogue flourishes towards the end of the performance, a community of bodies arises; individuals coexist by reaching a deeper level of expression. The latter refers directly to the spirituality of Bach's music, in which the spiritual emerges as a collective expression, a moment of transcendence in the polyphony of a group. Something similar, despite the sophistication of its craftsmanship, arises from *Opus*. •



This text was first published in Greek on **dancepress.gr**



'Like a human portrayal of a natural distaster.' Luke George's *Public Action* at Keir Choreographic Award, Melbourne, Australia. Photo © Gregory Lorenzutti for Dancehouse

How to like dance

Audience clubs are on the increase – why? Luke Forbes on his experience of a workshop in Melbourne

Luke Forbes
25 March 2018

It's a Sunday afternoon in Melbourne's busy inner-northern suburbs and I'm wandering around empty dance studios at Dancehouse. The lights are switched off throughout Carlton Hall, a former community centre-cum-dance hub, and I can't spot a sign directing me to the first session of the How to Like Dance workshop. I finally find the facilitator, theatre critic and author **Alison Croggon**, alone in the back-of-house office, sitting at a conference table and unsuccessfully trying to turn up the volume on her PowerPoint slide show. The six remaining participants are yet to arrive.

How to Like Dance (HTLD) is a collaboration between Dancehouse and the **Keir Choreographic Award** (KCA), facilitated by online theatre magazine *Witness Performance*. It's delivered by *Witness* founders, Croggon and the theatre all-rounder, **Robert Reid**. The workshop consists of two three-hour, Sunday afternoon dance appreciation workshops, a ticket to each of the KCA's two weeknight programmes, a further one-hour discussion group after the second programme, and a free glass of wine.



Branch Nebula's STOP-GO, at Keir Choreographic Award.
Photo © Gregory Lorenzutti for Dancehouse

KCA, now in its third edition, is Australia's most prestigious (and only) contemporary dance prize, and has quickly asserted its place and mission in the Australian dance field by 'promoting innovation, experimentation and cross-artform practices in contemporary dance'. It biennially commissions eight new works by Australian dancemakers, and the eight finalists vie for a AUD 30,000 grand prize and AUD 10,000 audience prize.

HTLD forms part of a larger public programme accompanying the KCA, including choreographic workshops for the local dance community led by the KCA's international jury members Meg Stuart and Eszter Salamon; a dance documentation activity, Scribe, for recording audience reactions; and a range of panel discussions on timely, hot-button topics, featuring academics and local and international dance professionals.

There seems to be a growing interest in dance appreciation and audience engagement and development programming worldwide. For example, *Springback* editor Sanjoy Roy wrote about his 'dates with dance' experience, and in 2014 I had the opportunity to tailor dance appreciation activities for the festival temps d'images in Düsseldorf, Germany (as part of a small team of dance researchers). Why might this be? My best bet is that as contemporary dance becomes progressively less like normative ideas about dance – that is, virtuosic, codified movement set to music and presented on stage to an audience – spectators are increasingly pondering how to respond, and whether they're doing it right.

As I have teased out at length elsewhere, the works presented by the KCA have even left many Australian dance critics scratching their heads. Conventional critical criteria in dance have become obsolete almost across the board in contemporary dance, and spectators and commentators can no longer assess performance quality on the basis of stretched feet, innate musicality, dramatic expression, and so on.

Despite the KCA's prestige and value, anxiety about dance literacy appears to be an ongoing issue for it. In 2018, as in previous editions, some of the works shown challenged theatre conventions, for example, by emphasising the spectators' role as co-participants in the performance event. **Bhenji Ra**'s *The Wetness* projected live video of the audience onto a large, heart-shaped screen. **Branch Nebula**'s *STOP-GO* relied on the audience performing a chaotic, chorus-like score, where tasks ranged from banal (clicking fingers) to sadistic (sniffing strangers' shoes). **Luke George**'s *Public Action* featured performers crashing through the seating area in nail-biting slow motion, like a human portrayal of a natural disaster, punctuated by performers politely asking stubborn audience members to clear the quiet storm's path. With so many questions begged – Who's the performer? Who's the audience? Why are we on stage? Why are the performers in the auditorium next to us? – HTLD was presumably programmed to address spectators' unease.

> **This perspective – with humans as extras, not actors – is so different from theatre; from the drama, indeed, of our daily lives.**



Spot the performer?
Bhenji Ra's The Wetness at
the Keir Choreographic Award
in Melbourne, Australia.
Photo © Gregory Lorenzutti for Dancehouse

HTLD's blurb proposed that:

> *Every work of art is an invitation, but sometimes we don't know how to respond. We have expectations about what art is and what it expects from us, often without being conscious of them, that get in the way. Fully responding to work can be a process of unlearning, putting away our expectations so we can get closer to our own experience.*

HTLD is also an invitation. Unlike the spectacles of contemporary dance themselves, this sounds like a call-out for a formal, instructional, 'dance for dummies' lecture series. It leaves me asking if 'liking' contemporary dance is the most meaningful way to engage with it. Might that outlook in fact be at the root of disappointment accompanying the realisation that contemporary dance tends to probe and irritate spectators' sense of time, place, and self? Surely, I think, contemporary dance literacy is a more valuable goal than fandom. So I am relieved to discover early on that the title is just a misfit. Like most recent examples of dance appreciation programming, HTLD allows (dance) writers and dramaturgs to occupy a new space in the borderlands between dance production and reception. It's a space for mediation between dance makers and spectators, with a helping hand from those 'in the know'.

> **‘I don’t care if your arm does that,’ she says, and rolls her eyes.**

As workshop participants arrive one by one and we do a round of introductions, they all seem to be seeking a more extensive and nuanced vocabulary to talk about dance. Many agree that contemporary dance is ‘baffling’ and feel that dance makers ought to put more effort into ‘teaching’ the audience the language used in performance. They have the impression that ‘experimental’ dance doesn’t provide access points and is gratuitously puzzling. ‘I presumed that there was this whole intellectual layer I didn’t have access to,’ is just one of many complaints about not being privy to dance’s insider jokes and allusions.

Perhaps because of the facilitators’ own professional pursuits – poetry and other literary fiction, theatre making and criticism – the workshop belies its own instructional title. It ditches dance history and analytical tools, and instead encourages us to draw upon our own experiences and expertise. Trusting our own experience of dance is suggested as the ‘way in’. Over three hours, we chat informally about the meaning of dance and choreography, without being introduced to any technical or theoretical understandings of the terms. We watch some videos and share our impressions of them. Some of the participants describe their best and worst theatre and dance experiences.

Convincing audience members to disregard the traditionally rigid, single-sided ‘sharing of knowledge’ by theatre experts (for example, in artist talks) is often a hard task; here, it was surprisingly easy. Why? I think because the HTLD cohort was primarily, and unexpectedly, made up of theatre (not dance) lovers, doers and makers. The drawcard of Croggon – well known from her Theatre Notes blog – was enough to convince enthusiastic and articulate theatre and Croggon followers to try out a new camp. It’s a form of audience development that poaches from existing communities of theatre goers, much to the benefit of popular dance discourse.

While this emphasis on personal experience certainly engages the group, I have to conceal my concern that it sidelines the possibility of ‘unlearning’ commonly held thoughts about contemporary dance. For instance, when participants echo many popular (mis)understandings of dance performance, they remain unremarked and unreflected. At its best dance is said to provide entertainment, have ‘exciting’ movement, emotion, and feature captivating performers, while at its worst, it is described as self-interested. Referring to dancers who languidly move and observe their limbs in the name of performance, one participant comments ‘I don’t care if your arm does that,’ and rolls her eyes.

In counterpoint to the freely structured form of the workshop, we are nevertheless given some guiding questions to redirect focus away from knee-jerk criticism and value judgements: Where and who are you in the space? What do you want? A week later, Reid similarly refers us to theatre scholar Elinor Fuchs' 'EF's Visit to a Small Planet', a questionnaire for theatre appreciation.

At the end of the workshop, one enthusiastic participant and regular theatre-goer comments:

> *I came in with the expectation of being schooled on dance history and also given a framework of intellectual ways to look at dance. It was actually surprising and really valuable to be told your reaction is valid. All of us are just having reactions and we can talk about them. I realised I can read work in a way that doesn't involve huge intellectual outlay or academics or historical awareness.*

It's terrific that a few more theatregoers feel at ease watching dance. I'm a firm believer that acknowledging each audience member's own expertise as a frame for viewing dance is a necessary project.

Still, dance appreciation workshops such as HTLD provide two valuable opportunities to enhance participants' future encounters with dance. Firstly, to channel their desire to discuss and explicate dance through an appropriate and (gently) moderated frame. On this count: douze points to HTLD. But secondly, to familiarise them with choreographic and dance methods and questions. My own dance background and bias quietly lament the blurred focus on the latter. HTLD rarely broaches conversation about the ways those fleshy bodies on stage occupy space and move through it. Yes, bodies are socially constructed, and dancing bodies are frequently representational. But it appears to me there needs to be an equal emphasis on a dance-specific practice of audience development and engagement. For example, how do the performers dance? What corporal 'archive' do they draw upon? Addressing these questions doesn't negate the importance of an audience's ability to make sense of it through language and symbolism alone.

Another initial aim of this pilot project, summed up by Reid and paraphrased by me, is to grow theatre foyer conversations by placing them within a more formal and legitimised frame. Through HTLD, Croggon and Reid are giving the dance and theatre-going community permission to discuss works in detail outside of the sensitive public forum of the theatre foyer itself. They're also binding participants together through an informal contract: you can share thoughts, experiences and associations without any grave repercussions. It appears to me this is where a workshop like HTLD excels. It isn't overtly instructional, it distances itself from print media performing arts criticism, and supports the idea that the best conversations represent a breadth of voices.

In this spirit, HTLD will live on under the name Live Nights, a series of discussion groups that take place after performances. It's an ongoing and developing project – and I warmly welcome the change of title. •

The naked stage of Sanna Kekäläinen

The empathic subversions of Finnish choreographer Sanna Kekäläinen, and the inversions of her 2017 piece Whorescope



Sanna Kekäläinen in
Vieras-Främling-Stranger (2019)
Photo © Kristiina Männikkö



Sanna Kekäläinen,
with Maija Karhunen in
HAFED – Collage of Differences and Fragility (2016).
Photo © Lilja Lehmuskallio

Riikka Laakso
25 March 2018

A naked woman standing on stage.
The blond hair is tied in a messy topknot,
and she's not wearing any make-up.
Her lean body is simultaneously alert and
relaxed, the strongly grounded feet turn
slightly outwards, but without forcing.
The woman looks straight to the audience.
She doesn't smile.

Sanna Kekäläinen's presence contains something eminently recognisable, something she emanates in every performance. The studies in European contemporary dance schools in London and Amsterdam, her beginnings in performance groups like *Homo $*, and dancing for Finnish choreographers like Ulla Koivisto or Ervi Sirén in the 80s, form a base for this corporeality. But above all, Kekäläinen's over 70 creations as a dancer-choreographer have enabled an endless expedition into her own body, an immersion to its sediments: into the materiality and movement. This stage presence has been cultivated for over 35 years, and now all thought and motion explored during her entire artistic career flourishes in the body, revealing a remarkably unique poetics of dance.

Kekäläinen belongs to the wide and heterogeneous group of choreographers intrigued by an avant-garde approach to dance: an alternative to the dance of figures constructed by the classical ballet's techniques, or to the dynamic bodies produced through the methodologies of modern dance. Dance and life started to

converge in the 60s, when a variety of Judson Dance Theater choreographers found inspiration in everyday movements (walking, sitting, running) or employed common people in their performances along with professional dancers. This new dance or postmodern dance promoted an existential approach to movement, and the interest in experience and presence led to working through processes, where theatrical representation was substituted by presentation of movement on stage.

When new dance reached Finland, Kekäläinen was clearing the road for this new art form in the 80s and 90s. The established working patterns of dance were questioned, when the independent choreographers interested in this novel dancing didn't found a traditional dance company, but rather an alliance named Zodiak Presents:[1] a community offering networks, structures and peer support to its founder members, as well as a certain artistic and political credibility. Still, Kekäläinen decided to go her own way already in 1996 by founding Ruumiillisen taiteen teatteri (Physical Art Theatre), and the same artistically unconditional work currently continues under the name Kekäläinen & Company.

Kekäläinen divides her artistic career in two periods, where the early-Kekäläinen period develops from the early choreographies until the piece *Puna-Red-Rouge* (2007). Through this performance, a way of 'redefining without defining' and 'making space for difference and the uncanny' appeared; a need to challenge familiar and safe social conventions, and to agitate normalised patterns of thinking.[2] From this point of inflection onwards, the work of Kekäläinen could be described as a subtle essence, a sort of poetry of undressed movement – usually performed naked – where a multilayered thinking coalesces in a private but extremely political presence.

Kekäläinen's stage is undressed as well: a plain white linoleum. The mise-en-scène may consist of a simple table, or a couple of white chairs, maybe Kekäläinen's often-used old-fashioned orange tent, or a lonely inflatable boat. Her stage is a laboratory of physicality, where a variety of meanings is explored through movement, words and objects.[3] During the last years the work of Kekäläinen has also gone though a visual undressing, when the impressive stage-images elaborated through lightning in *Onni-Bonheur-Happiness* (2009) or *THE BEAST – A Book in an Orange Tent* (2011) have been replaced by a Dogme-like technical solution, where the choreographer herself partly manipulates the lights and sound on stage. By revealing these theatrical resources, and integrating them as actions on stage, the technique fuses with Kekäläinen's artistic manifesto of rejecting the spectacular and the artificial.

The political tension inherent to a female body, its position as the 'other' of our patriarchal society, has been at the core of Kekäläinen's art for some time. Since the beginning of her career she has been inspired both by feminist writing and by insurgent and subversive female figures. The mythic and erotic Lilith taking over her own body and sexuality by abandoning Eden, Santa Teresa de Ávila's ecstatic

The work of Kekäläinen could be described as a subtle essence, a sort of poetry of undressed movement



Sanna Kekäläinen & Janne Marja-aho
in *Hullut* (*Insane*) (2018)
Photo © Uupi Tirronen

Its power is directed towards the cruelty of capitalism, the perversions of the society of spectacle

encounter with God as an allegory of a female orgasm or the experiential being of the hysterical women are present in several Kekäläinen's performances. These self-determining and independent women reveal a strong contact with their own corporeality and sexuality, confronting the traditional understanding of beauty of their times: the female bodies are not pleasant images, but impudent flesh composed of ecstasy, lust, obscenity, exaltation and destruction, of grotesque and hysterical essence. In a society habitually placing a female body to feed a (masculine) sexual desire, to nourish it at the cost of the woman's own desire, the experiential stage-images of Kekäläinen are immersed in this subversive corporeality; in a presence of flesh that penetrates the existence of these women.

Kekäläinen's stage is loaded with wounding intellectual dynamite. Its power of explosion is directed towards the cruelty of capitalism, the perversions of the society of spectacle, towards gender as a disciplinary action or relations to otherness and the other – particularly when that 'other' is oneself. Kekäläinen is guilty of cutting the mainstream's spectacular images into pieces, of exploding them, so that the silent and innocent knowledge residing under the image – in the body itself – can be revealed.

A second skin: Whorescope

> Whorescope, whorescope
> I never knew how to sell myself,
> and I never wanted to.
> I hope you love me.
> – *Sanna Kekäläinen: Whorescope*

Yet if Kekäläinen's research on the body's materiality is often based on nakedness – on a vulnerable and honest approach – in the performance *Whorescope* (2017) her way to reveal the body changes radically. Her breasts are covered with bandage, and she's wearing light brown underpants. When the performance proceeds, Kekäläinen scrawls with a marker pen two black spots at the height of her nipples and a couple of trembling lines over her pubic area, concretely drawing new and caricatured signs of gender for her own body. And this simulated body is offered to the audience, placed in front of the spectator, as the etymology of the word 'prostitute' reveals: its origin in Latin is *pro-statuere*, something set 'before' the eyes, to expose something – for selling. The offered body is re-imagined and re-described, now a spectacle-body shown to the audience. Thus, in *Whorescope* Kekäläinen no longer is a naked and honest 'herself'. Her biological body is protected from injuring gazes, but also from thoughtful, observing and open contemplation. To offer and sell her body, Kekäläinen places a second skin in front of it to protect her privacy.

Whoroscope is Samuel Beckett's first poem (published in Paris in 1930), where the understanding and interpreting of time through a horoscope is described as an absurd and multi-layered perversion of time. Kekäläinen's version, *Whorescope*, centres on the female body and the way a woman is gazed upon: on the scope as an instrument of looking. Being under a gazing eye creates a paradoxical need, an awkward necessity, to turn everything visible into spectacle, including the transformation of a multifaceted female body into a limited object – and a dancing woman into a beautifully moving figure.

The last scene of *Whorescope* develops along with Bach's *Goldberg Variations*. Kekäläinen takes two buckets, one of them filled with water, and calmly pours the water several times from one to the other. Putting the buckets on the floor, she then places herself in a crawling position, with her right hand in an empty bucket, and the left inside the one filled with water ('the beginning of life'). She puts a tomato ('a fruit of the earth') in her mouth, and an electric fan placed in front of her blows air ('oxygen') on her face. Simultaneously a solitary spotlight ('the sun') slowly lights up to illuminate the composition. With the eyes closed, Kekäläinen's body brings together all these symbols of life, turning itself into an instrument of nature, where all life circulates.

But the image also hides an acid sarcasm: the wind caressing Kekäläinen's face turns out to be 'the kiss of all foul and sweet air' of Beckett's poem. The composition resembles an elaborated banquet, whose centre is a corpse holding a fruit of the earth in the mouth. The main course of

To offer and sell her body, Kekäläinen places a second skin in front of it to protect her privacy

> It is sublime but at the same time shoddy, a work of art but also deformed by the spirit of consumerism

this dinner is Kekäläinen, prepared to be served to the guests; to the spectators of the performance. Her body is once more *pro-statuere*, set and exposed for enjoyment, and in this ritual the audience is invited to devour her with their gazes. Her body is the wine and bread of The Last Supper, a Eucharistic body, also the symbol of an eternal life, and 'So we drink Him and eat Him' as Beckett describes in his poem. But Kekäläinen's simulated body, transformed into a spectacle with a re-drawn caricatured gender, turns out to be 'watery Beaune and the stale cubes of Hovis'; a ruined and low-priced product, emptied from all sacred and beauty.

This final composition of *Whorescope* crystallises several central elements of Kekäläinen's work. Her body is simultaneously terrestrial and naked, but also penetrated by an abstract and sacred way of being: visible and hidden, under the gaze but intensively connected to an intimate and private corporeality. It is sublime but at the same time shoddy, a work of art but also deformed by the spirit of consumerism. In *Whorescope* Kekäläinen balances between a sacred ritual and a capitalistic prostitution of the body, identical to Beckett's poem's paradoxical 'Porca Madonna', materialised in the last scene. She gives an ironic wink of the eye at the entire tradition of representation, particularly at the field of dance, whose relationship to the female body is especially vulnerable to (visual) prostitution.



Sanna Kekäläinen, *Whorescope* (2017)
Photo © Lilja Lehmuskallio

The knot of paradoxes constructed in *Whorescope*'s last scene swirls around itself once more when the *Goldberg Variations* continue with a recording of Glenn Gould rehearsing Bach's demanding composition. The music is constantly interrupted by mistakes, wrong notes and the pianist's comments on his own playing. Still, the sounds transmit an extreme sensitivity and tenderness, a special dedication when touching the keyboard. Gould ceased giving concerts when at the peak of his career, wanting instead of a virtuous musical spectacle to offer an intimate sonorous experience to the listeners: music recorded at his home, something *The Goldberg Variations* are part of as well. When the imperfect but remarkably sensitive music fills the space, Kekäläinen opens her eyes, washes her hands in the bucket, and eats the tomato she has been holding in her mouth. In a fraction of a second, the commodity becomes a consumer, a practical and slightly confused human being, who bathetically picks up her clothes and abandons the stage.

An open body, penetrated by thought and being, is Kekäläinen's device to construct a world of her own on stage. Although her thinking ironically criticises the patriarchal and capitalistic society, her body also radiates a humble beauty. The emanating fragility and sensitivity on stage isn't always created through visible dancing: 'That's not moving, that's *moving*,' Beckett reminds us in *Whoroscope*, and this poetry of minimalistic motion is itself a manifesto in a (dance) world that commonly worships virtuosity, endurance and extreme situations.

Materiality turns political in a society whose mainstream imaginary consists of these transparent and 'perfect' bodies, constantly becoming thinner up to a complete disappearance. The presence of an organic, unfinished and vulnerable body in Kekäläinen's art is a statement against the polished bodies in media and advertisements, whose Teflon surfaces resist the impact of time and space. When her body escapes from a univocal understanding, it allows the present to coexist with the past and future, with dreams and fears. By opening this singular, extremely personal but simultaneously universal and shared place in society, art can contemplate what humanity in general, and femininity in particular, signify to us. •

1. The forerunner of today's Zodiak – Center for New Dance in Helsinki.
2. Hannele Jyrkkä: *Tanssija haluaa erilaisuudelle lisää tilaa*. Helsingin Sanomat 16.5.2014.
3. Kekäläinen & Company's own space, The Physical Art Theatre at Cable Factory (Helsinki), accentuates the impression of a laboratory of physicality: the white linoleum extends into the space through the whiteness of the walls, so that the dancer (or dancers) seem to be inside a blank box. In other theatrical spaces this linoleum is placed in the middle of pre-existing structures - like the grey cement of the industrial Pannuhalli or the modern red walls of Kiasma Theatre – where the white linoleum frames a sacred space for investigating the physicality.



This is an edited extract from Riikka Laakso's 'The Routes of a Nymph: a shaping body in the poetics of Sanna Kekäläinen', published in *Body, Meat and Spirit – Perspectives to the Work of Sanna Kekäläinen* (2018), a bilingual (English/Finnish) 96-page anthology of six chapters by Riikka Laakso, Olli Ahlroos, Maria Svanström, Teemu Mäki, Anu Laukkanen and Janne Saarakkala.

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The wilderness within

What happens when dance takes nature as its stage? A festival in the northernmost town in the world leads to a changed sense of self, culture and existence



An outdoor dancer with joik singers in Hammerfest, Norway
Choreographer: Elle Sofe Henriksen
Photo © Zbigniew 'Ziggi' Wantuch



Sanjoy Roy
25 March 2018



The four horsemen of Keðja 2010, Iceland. Photo © Toggi

We are sitting in a circle, some thirty of us, around a log fire. The *gamme*, a conical hut of tarred logs, shields us from the wind, but the top is open to the sky. Mikkel Sara, a reindeer herdsman, is singing a *joik* – a muttering chant that resonates deep between belly and throat. Joiks are traditional songs of the Sami peoples from Finnmark, a territory that stretches from northern Norway, where we are now, across Sweden, Finland, and into Russia. Mikkel sings the joik of his dead grandfather, but joiks can summon the spirits not just of people, but of animals or places. Many evoke nature or the weather: sea, forest, sun, wind. Nature, says Mikkel, gives us everything that is good and vital: food and water, beauty, light. Life itself. It can take it all away too, and make us suffer, even die. And the weather is not all outside, you know. We have weather inside us, too. Sometimes it is good. Sometimes, bad. That simple truth – more valuable than any amount of psychologising – stays with me as we go outside to find a sky stained by a milkiness so slight it might be a trail of mist. My first, faint glimpse of the Northern Lights.

The arc of this evening reminds me of a dance performance we had watched a couple of nights back. We are here in Hammerfest – 'the northernmost town in the world', as the brochure proudly proclaims – for the **Barents Dance Festival** and the annual meeting of **Keðja**, a Nordic–Baltic dance network. Coming up by coach from the airport, three hours' drive to the south, we had stopped to walk up a hillside where we formed a kind of human henge around a log fire. Inside were two joikers in reindeer coats, and three dancers, wrapped up good and warm, who dipped and quaked to the music's murmuring rhythms. The night sky dwarfed us, and the wind flayed our skin as it swept past.

It was a strangely touching performance but I, newly arrived, was still full of the city and the south, and wondered what it was worth. Now, it seems like a foreshadow of this magical evening: joiks, a fire, an enclosure made not of tarred logs but our own bodies. We had left more quietly than we arrived, the coach trundling northwards until we saw the faint lights of our destination: houses, a harbour, oil works.

Usually we see dance indoors, within a controlled climate. What is it like to take it outside, to create on a stage as wide and as open as the landscape itself? In Hammerfest, I put the question to **Elle Sofe Henriksen**, choreographer of that hillside performance. She says that you can only make simple, clear movement. Detail and complexity get lost: nature is too big and we are too small. It strikes me that the circle we formed was not only a way of watching, but a means of demarcating a stage: nature without, culture within. Outside, says Elle – well, you can't control the landscape, the weather. So you have to allow for it. It is very different from the closed climate of theatre.

I also meet **Ólöf Ingólfsdóttir**, who had directed a different kind of outdoor performance for Keðja 2010, in her native Iceland. She and co-director **Steinunn Knútsdóttir** choreographed a kind of

Photo © Jenni Pystynen



Of Family and Deer by Janina Rajakangas.

nature trail along which the audience travelled in buses, stopping for a series of walks into the surrounding terrain. At different stages they saw horsemen silhouetted on hilltops like centaurs, listened to choirs at twilight and picked paths through pits of bubbling clay. Their first stop was among disused mines where they could see, on crags and in crevices like living extrusions from the earth, human bodies. Naked bodies.

Is there an indelible connection between nature and naturism? Ólöf doesn't disagree, but her intent had been to juxtapose the roughness of rocks with the frailty of flesh. And any Icelander, she adds, would also think of the *Huldufólk*, the Hidden People who live invisibly in the landscape. They are like us, but better: more beautiful, more powerful. They can be beneficent but also dangerous, especially when crossed. Like nature, I think. Also: how seamlessly the natural merges with the supernatural. Both are bigger and beyond us. Both out there, somewhere.

Out there, the human figure is already dramatic. And the Icelandic scenery (Ólöf can't help but chuckle) is so very scenic. When nature is your stage, she says, you better think of the frame first. Try to make yourself the source of importance, and you'll fail. Better to move slowly, simply. Or simply be still. You can add yourself to nature, she says, but you can't add nature to yourself. That doesn't really work.

This perspective – with humans as extras, not actors – is so different from theatre; from the drama, indeed, of our daily lives. Yet it has dramatic effects. Many people find consolation in nature, says Ólöf, but it can also be profoundly unsettling, even frightening. We face our fragility, our insignificance. I can picture that in a heartbeat: when the earth simmers and clouds lower, when centaurs descend from hilltops and Hidden People emerge from rocks, we cannot but recognise that our lives root, and flower, and fade, all within the topsoil of this earthly existence.

The Wilderness Project is a Keðja initiative founded on the belief that dance – that art, that human creation – can illuminate and be illuminated by what lies outside it: the wild. In Hammerfest, I meet one of its participants, Finnish choreographer **Janina Rajakangas**. Unlike Elle and Ólöf's works, hers was made for the indoor proscenium. She had begun creating at the edge of the wild, in a rural community in Latvia, where she was interested in embodying the emotions of everyday experiences: work, home, love, family. 'The usual,' she says, with a smile.

This perspective – with humans as extras, not actors – is so different from theatre; from the drama, indeed, of our daily lives

The wilderness changed all that. While making the piece, she and her performers travelled to Stamsund, Norway, where it was to have its premiere. They climbed a mountain and looked at a landscape stretching to the horizon and beyond. They waited at bridges for the wind to abate, lest their car be blown clean away. They drove to a village called simply Å – the last letter of the Norwegian alphabet – on the tip of a promontory where the land finally cedes to the sea. When they returned to the studio, Janina could not return to the same piece. The human concerns that felt so close had lost their scale. There was so much beyond.

The piece, *Of Family and Deer*, ended up in two parts. The first was an evocation of human feelings and fortunes. The weather within. Then a curtain lifted and the performers became trees and deer. They were naked. Why? Janina tells me that she had tried costumes, but any clothing at all carried a human story, a cultural imprint that got in the way. So nakedness it was. In any case, the piece proceeded more by exposure than by narrative development. The second section reframed rather than resolved the first. Janina goes further: when the lights came up and audience turned to leave – that was the start of the third part. Beyond any stage, there is always an outside.

I go outside, alone. Up the hill to where Mikkel's gamme sits. Some of us had come here last night to watch the Northern Lights, stronger than they had been before: twisting streamers of phosphorescence hanging like ribbons over the horizon; a long arc that flew and faded like the trail of some passing space-dragon. Tonight they are different again. Luminous skeins plume and warp, and smudges daub the sky as if an unearthly finger were smearing mist from the dome of the world, letting in light from the cosmos.

Outside nature, there is another wilderness – beyond the sky, trillions of times vaster and more unknowable than we can ever imagine. These wilderness dances, then, what do they do? I had thought that they gave us a view – no, a vision – of the world and our place within it. Now I wonder if all art, if all culture, does not so much show the truth as shield us from it. Just as the naked eye cannot hold the sun in its gaze, the spirit can only grasp the wilderness at one remove. These steps, these songs, these stages that we make are like pinhole cameras through which we can bear to look at the world. Culture is clothing, a protection from the outside which, if we even tried to hold within us, would surely incinerate our merely human souls.

Next day we depart before dawn, our little capsule of a coach inching towards the airport through a landscape of haunting emptiness. White-coated mountains rear up to bear a sky now sealed with cloud. They loom ahead, rise to the side, and fall behind as our river of road winds southwards between their slopes – one immense cold shoulder after another, each one monumentally indifferent to our passing. •



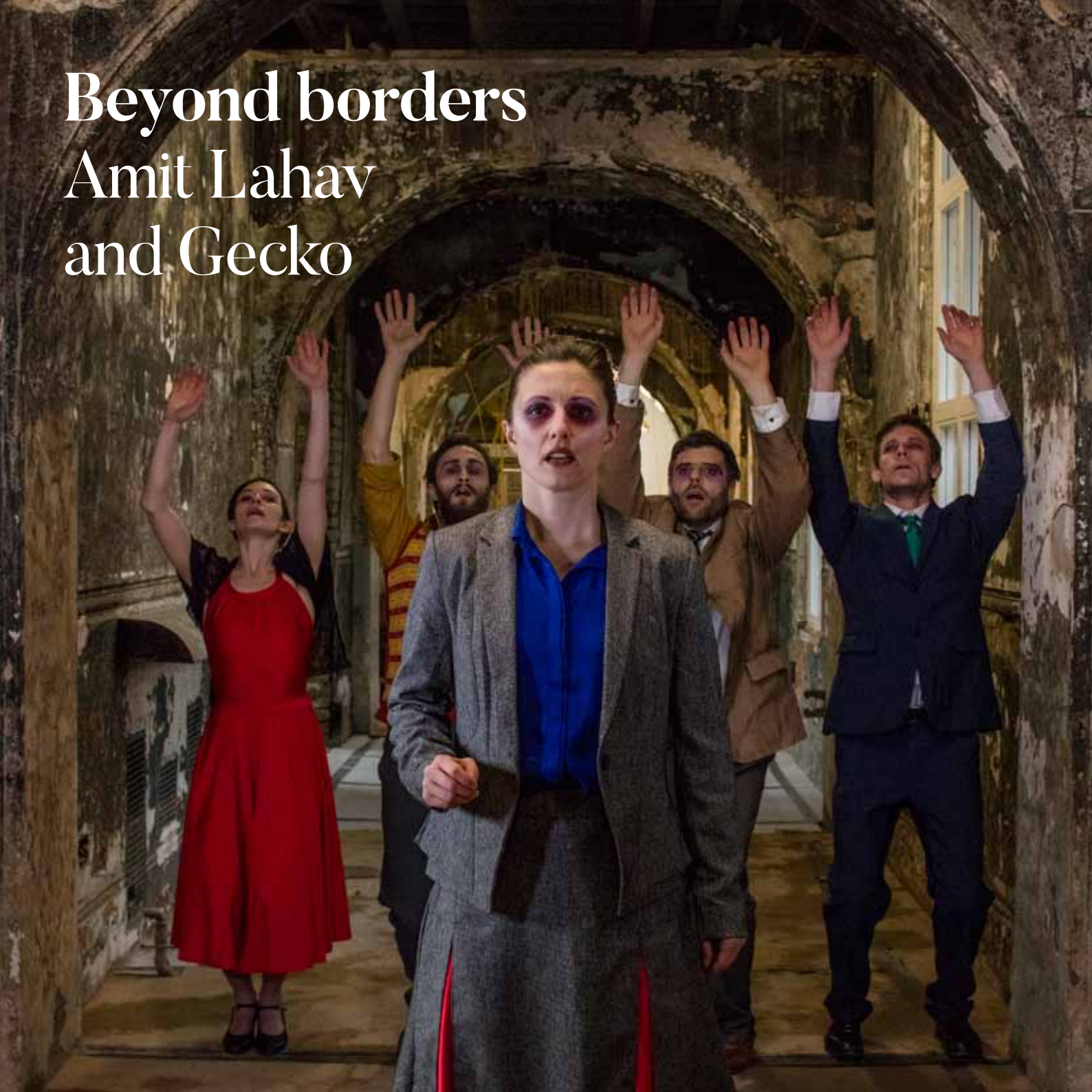
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View over Hammerfest, Norway
Photo © Zbigniew 'Ziggi' Wantuch

Now I wonder if all art, if all culture, does not so much show the truth as shield us from it

Beyond borders
Amit Lahav and Gecko



Daniel Pitt
04 September 2018

Gecko's Amit Lahav talks to Daniel Pitt about straddling genres, insularity and internationalism in British theatre – and being pummelled with love

On Friday 13 March 2015, physical theatre company Gecko were mid-run for their celebrated show *Missing* at London's Battersea Arts Centre (BAC) when the company's lighting designer, working on set in preparation for the evening's performance, noticed a fire. He raised the alarm and the venue was evacuated – but the fire caught hold, completely destroying the roof and main hall of the beautiful heritage building, along with the entire set of *Missing*.

Amit Lahav, Gecko's artistic director, had been in a café across the road. He tells me he remembers kneeling on the pavement, thinking: 'It's all over.' All his touring belongings – laptop and all – were inside BAC, and the show was due to tour to Mexico as soon as the London run had finished. But then, in this moment of crisis, the director's skills kicked in. 'As a leader, what the hell do I do?'

The days that followed, Lahav says, turned out to be one of his 'favourite weeks of life'. There was a huge public outpouring of love for both BAC and Gecko. They were 'battered with love – and pummelled – battered and pummelled'. The overwhelming support promised them that 'you are not going to fall to your knees' over this. The support came from the theatre industry in the form of crowdfunded cash donations from individuals, as well as contributions from organisations including the National Theatre, who donated their facilities to re-build the set in just eight days, in time for the Mexico tour to go ahead. The company wrote the names of everyone who donated to the crowdfunder



on the back of the set, and those names remain there as a reminder of the love (and money) that Gecko received, whenever the show is toured.

Much is made of crowdfunding as a funding stream for the arts, but this was a unique case, and the kind that you'd never, ever want to engineer; nor does Lahav see crowdfunding as a magic fix for the future of arts funding. Nevertheless, it was an extraordinary, heartfelt show of support for a company loved not just by their industry friends and the younger companies Lahav has supported coming up, but by audiences around the UK and, unusually for a British company, around the world.

Left: Gecko's *Missing*, in the East Corridor of Battersea Arts Centre Grand Hall.
Photo © Morley von Sternberg

Above right: The Grand Hall of Battersea Arts Centre after the 2015 fire. Photo © Jake Tilson

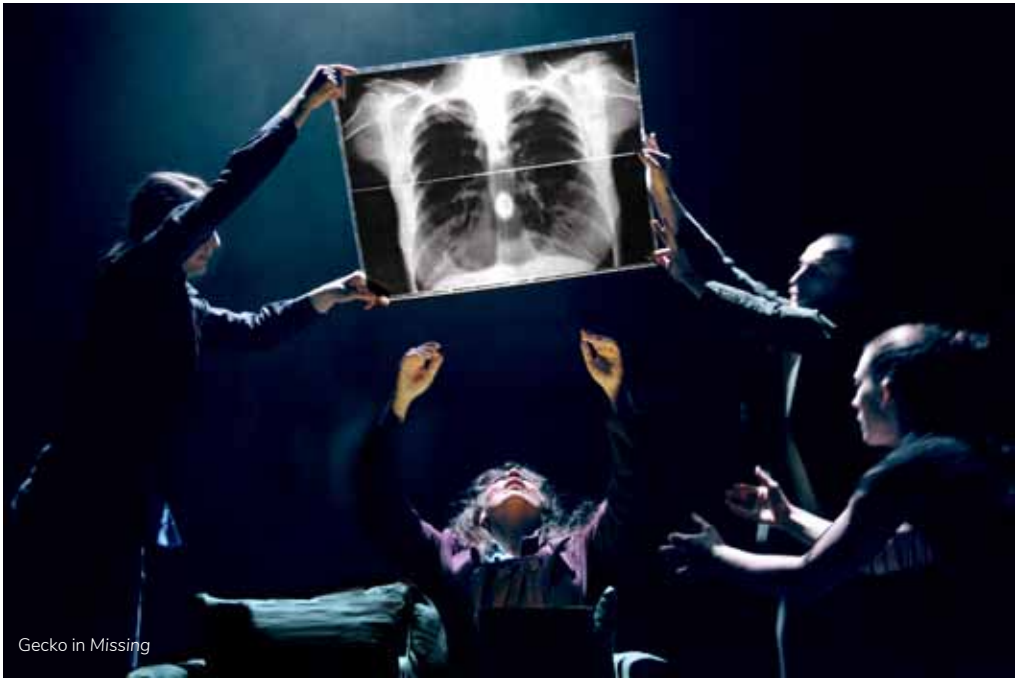

Amit Lahav

Lahav talks a lot about relationships: it's human connections that have made his work speak to audiences across the world. Lahav's unique blend of narrative dance and theatre has made them one of the UK's most successful international performance exports. They have just finished a tour of East Asia with Institute (2015) and The Wedding (2017), and are just back from presenting Missing in Thessaloniki Forest Festival, Greece: three different shows touring at once. *Missing* (re-)opens BAC's Phoenix season from 6 September, celebrating the refurbishment of the beautiful Grand Hall, before heading off to York Theatre Royal, Nottingham Playhouse, and then to Valencia, Spain.

Gecko plays both dance and theatre festivals internationally, and make their work with regular Ipswich hometown production support from both dance house DanceEast and the plays and musicals-focused New Wolsey Theatre. Whether it's called theatre, dance or physical theatre, for Lahav is just a matter of marketing, not of art. Lahav comes from a theatrical background, having trained at London's Rose Bruford College, but all the performers that he currently works with are 'world class contemporary dancers'. In terms of technical set-up, Lahav concedes that Gecko probably produces theatre rather than dance, but we agree that part of the reason they are so successful internationally and in straddling both forms is that Gecko shows tend 'not to hammer in the narrative – it's an experiential thing.' They use a multitude of snippets of languages, hinting at narrative to provide just enough for the audience to see their work as a 'mirror that you see yourself inside', but leaving space for interpretation. It translates across borders, cultures and language boundaries by never fully translating, because the meaning is never entirely clear. In that context, they draw on dance – a form that I love because of its abstract freedom of interpretation and uncertainty, particularly considered alongside British theatre, which is unfortunately still too hung up on text and narrative.

It's telling then, that many of the UK's most interesting companies find wider success abroad. Lahav namechecks Complicité and DV8 Physical Theatre as comparisons: international ensembles garnering international acclaim and touring the world, straddling the borders of theatre and dance, and always eschewing the British 'stiff-upper-lip' acting tradition. The UK's current performance ecology, Lahav believes, favours the export of great hyper-naturalistic, solo Hollywood-style actors, rather than expressive and innovative ensemble touring theatre. In this era of insularism, it's even more vital that companies like Gecko are exporting contemporary internationalism from Britain and connecting with audiences across the world.

Lahav is also famous for never considering his shows to be finished. He's always changing parts, re-choreographing, to 'strengthen, clarify or even de-clarify': if a scene has begun to mean something too fixed, then work needs to be done to allow space for interpretation again. He changed two sections of choreography in Thessaloniki recently, and there's



Gecko in *Missing*

Photo © Robert Golden

another couple more that he'll be 'making completely new for BAC', to 'clean the metaphors' and 'not make it singular'. This might sound like directorial tyranny but he assures me that the performers like it – and I can see why, with such extended touring schedules. Whether Lahav is in his shows also varies: Missing was made with him performing, before he stepped out for future tours, but he'll be back on stage again for the forthcoming, homecoming BAC run and 'can't wait'.

Looking to the future, Gecko are in the early stages of the long R&D process for a new show, plus a new collaboration with Mind The Gap, England's largest learning-disabled theatre company, creating an integrated cast – an exciting step to explore the stories that all of our bodies tell. But in the short term, unsurprisingly, Lahav can't wait to get back into the beautifully refurbished Grand Hall and to meet the audiences, myself included, that missed seeing *Missing* last time round. 'I'm massively into it. It'll be a real celebration, a two-week party' for a company and a venue that are both deeply loved, and whose fates have been both sadly and joyously intertwined. •

Whether it's called theatre, dance or physical theatre, for Lahav is just a matter of marketing, not of art



Premier Stratageme, *Forecasting*
Photo © Yelena Remetin

Shape of YouTube

Jelena Mihelčić
12 September 2018

Two danceworks beg the questions: How does YouTube shape dance? And how do you shape YouTube?

How did we ever live without YouTube? It has saved my day many times with do-it-yourself tutorials, it also helps me with cooking, yoga and education of all kinds. Mostly I watch recordings of dance performances, which I can do for hours. But only after seeing a live performance of *Forecasting* by **Barbara Matijević & Giuseppe Chico (Premier Stratagème)** in 2013, during Platforma HR Festival in Zagreb, did I start paying attention to choreographic patterns in non-dance YouTube videos. I saw *Forecasting* again at Spring Forward 2018 in Bulgaria, alongside **Núria Guiu Sagarra**'s *Likes* – which is when I started seeing social media patterns in dance performances.

Forecasting focuses on amateur videos. The first part is inspired by tutorials so Barbara Matijević is handling different appliances and sex toys, stirring eggs, chopping carrots, shaving. Likes on the other hand focuses cover dance videos – a phenomenon originating from Korea, where fans imitate the moves of their favourite pop singers – and on various forms of yoga classes. Here Guiu Sagarra demonstrates typical cover dance moves such as pumps and curves, followed by basic yoga positions like warriors, triangles, twists and bends.

This particular kind of content sees the body always trying to 'improve' physically, mentally and practically. It seems there's no human issue YouTube cannot help you solve. That's an enormous amount of knowledge right at our fingertips – and I imagine YouTube as an extended body part which is always there when we get stuck..

This idea is central to *Forecasting*, a duet between Barbara Matijević and her laptop that can be viewed as a hybrid human-machine solo. Her body is an extension of the screen image.

YouTube is also a window to a bizarre world of rare skills, no matter how ridiculous they seem. The second part of *Forecasting* is inspired by animal videos, with people performing stunts with their pets so now Matijević's choreography gets more 'acrobatic' by playing guitar with a bird, showing off tricks a hamster can do, kissing a gecko, or lying still while a dog licks her all over. As the piece progresses the images become even more eccentric, with massage by stiletto heel, dismembering of dead animals, and gun shootings. Dramatised in this manner, video clips make us think about the lunatic human image that YouTube will leave for future generations (hence the title *Forecasting*).

There's the vanity issue of course: the amount of likes grows exponentially when the bodies shown are beautified, cute-fied and sexy-fied. So we go from showing off our knowledge and skills to showing off our physical attractiveness. The last part of *Forecasting* draws its inspiration from self-promo videos so Matijević is singing, performing experiments and crafting strange objects. At the beginning of *Likes*, Guiu Sagarra explains her interest in the relation between body image and the content's popularity, and so was studying the physical activities on YouTube that generate the most audience likes.

Even though dramaturgically very different, both pieces in their structure mimic the

way we consume social media. The images in *Forecasting* are short and interrupted, skipping from one to another, just as we scroll through our timelines. Audience engagement rates on social media jump in proportion to the amount of skin, cleavage or muscle shown. Similarly, *Likes* gradually and craftily transforms from a formal lecture-demonstration into a kitschy peep-show. First Guiu Sagarra sits at her laptop, scientifically explaining her research interest and methodology derived from anthropology. Then she juxtaposes the two movement sources – yoga and cover dancing – until they becomes seamless. Meditative yoga poses turn into sexy look-at-me showing-off, lip-synching to Ed Sheeran's 'Shape Of You' and seeking audience encouragement to go nude.

After watching *Forecasting* and *Likes* you will certainly never watch YouTube content with the same eyes again – and you might even wonder about the influence of your own lives and likes on contemporary dance creation, production and backing. •



Núria Guiu Sagarra, *Likes*

Photo © National Kaohsiung Center for the Arts (Weiwuying)

I imagine YouTube as an extended body part which is always there when we get stuck



Photo © Andreea Tufescu Photography

Dansathon
An international dance hackathon

Sanjoy Roy
16 October 2018

A report from the first 'international dance hackathon', a joint venture between Liège, London and Lyon that is more than just a competition

What is Dansathon?

Dansathon was a dance and digital technology hackathon that took place simultaneously in Liège, London and Lyon (I list them in merely alphabetical order) over the weekend of 28–30 September 2018, jointly organised by **Théâtre de Liège**, **Sadler's Wells** and **Maison de la danse**. In each city, five multidisciplinary teams, selected by application and variously coached, mentored and facilitated, were formed to come up with dance-tech project ideas and prototypes, which they presented to a a jury in each location. Each winning team was awarded €10,000 to go forth and develop their project.

Prizes, places, pitches – I got the general idea: a kind of artistic-geekout session in the format of one of those TV shows where hopeful entrepreneurs present startup ideas to fearsome judges – except (this being art, not TV) with less gladiatorial intimidation and more touchy-feeliness. Still, there was one word I didn't understand. What is a 'hackathon'?

To find out, I asked the first likely person I could collar when I arrived in the sparsely efficient conference space of the Plexal Centre in east London. And lo: Gonçalo Lopes, a software engineer turned neuroscientist and one of the Dansathon mentors, not only knew the answer but explained it for me. A hackathon, he said in his fast-talking, synapse-buzzing way, is a short, intensive and fluid gathering of people to brainstorm ideas and techniques in the hope of producing at least one of two outcomes, both unpremeditated: to come up with something that wasn't even thinkable before; and to break taboos – or at least disrupt convention.

A view from London

Uncertain of what's new and what's taboo in the dance-tech field, I can't judge how the event measured up as a hackathon – but I can tell you what I saw. My overriding impression was that while technology is often perceived as alienating, impersonal or non-corporeal, several projects focused on making it connective, interpersonal and sensorial. One team used an EEG (electroencephalogram) to visually represent brain activity within fluctuating states of being – calmness, agitation, flow – with the aim of increasing interpersonal awareness and responsiveness. Another had the idea of monitoring and amplification to use technology as a kind of 'umbilical' connection between bodies to increase empathy and intimacy. Again, a device would pick up signals from inside the performer's body (heartbeat, breath) but instead of generating a representation, they would be transmitted to someone else wearing a receptor so that they could feel the sensations physically. The technology was designed to connect body to body: both source and destination of the signal were internal.

If these two projects were concerned with physical experience, others had a more familiar focus on screens. An idea for a mobile app gave a new spin to the term 'dance routine' by tracking actions through daily life and producing a screen-based dance representation of your day. Another project – an impressively thought-out

package, in fact – proposed a public park installation, where people walking by would find themselves duetting with a dancing avatar, generated through continually updated machine-learnt movements taken from all and any bypassers: adults, children, pram-pushers, cyclists, even dogs.

The last project used a 'playground' of coloured balloons to produce a kind of score which could be used to compose choreography – similar in some ways to Merce Cunningham's use of software for dance, but using real people's playful behaviour as the input source.

So who won?

Not so fast! First, I want to mention another issue that came up that was not to do with dance or technology, but rather with idea of competition itself.

Do winners mean losers?

Competitions have winners. So they have losers – don't they?

It's a truism, yes. But I think a more interesting question is not what a competition is, but what it does. Because the process can sometimes be as valuable, if also as unpredictable, as the outcome. First of all, it can stimulate creation. Each Dansathon event generated five project



Photo © Andreea Tufescu Photography

The Digital Umbilical team's project: How can technology be soulful?

> **A more interesting question is not what a competition is, but what it does**

> **Arts research lab? Great for insiders – but for outsiders, a teeny bit of a yawn**

ideas where before there were none. Does the winning idea take it all? Not necessarily. For example, I thought that the team with the walk-past park installation (who – spoiler alert! – didn't win), ended up with a package that they could very well submit to developers or backers, with a good chance of it being taken up.

Second, as facilitator Sarah Levinsky pointed out to me, whenever you get a group of people together, your ultimate resource is not their ideas and skills, though it includes that: it's the people themselves. And people are complex, contradictory, thinking, acting, feeling and often frankly unfathomable beings, sometimes compatible, sometimes not. Part of the unpredictability of the process is not who wins but what results from the encounter. And you can't legislate for that. All you can do is create a conducive environment.

The competition format also attracts a degree of public attention. Arts research lab? Great for insiders and valuable in its place – but for outsiders, a teeny bit of a yawn. Whereas with a competition, people immediately ask: who won, why, what was the prize, what happens next? No doubt there are downsides. The competitive mentality, I think, rarely produces the best results – but then I think it's up to the participants to pay attention to the project more than the prize.

Ultimately, a competition is many things and only one of those is about the prize. Of course, only a idealist – or a publicist – would spin the line that everyone is a winner; nevertheless, there's a bigger picture than just winners and losers.

And with that in mind...

The winners are...

I quote from the jury reports because (not least because I was only in London) who am I to judge?

Liège
Cloud Dancing: 'Take a break: connect now, watch here, feel it!'

Cloud Dancing is an immersive and interactive dance performance that combines dance and virtual reality, created by Sophie Caron, Julia Houdin, Emily Kirwan, Guida Mauricio, Aurélien Merceron, Roman Miletitch and JY. Specta(c)tors can experience and watch the choreography that brings together dancers and 3D images whilst either being present at the theatre or whilst being in a different location such as a café, with friends or on the sofa at home. All at the same time and in different countries! Even if they are not dancers themselves, spectators can interact with dancers either live – on stage – or via their smartphone and a virtual reality headset, and have an impact on the choreography in real time.

London
Digital Umbilical: How can technology be soulful?

The winning team was made up of Salome Bazin, Lara Buffard, Simon Haenggi, Katelyn Notman, Jon Rowe, Adam Seid Tahir and Renaud Wiser. They created a project that aims to humanise technology. The team was looking to create a connection between strangers and build a shared experience through the senses



Photo © Andreea Tufescu Photography

and new technologies. In a one to one experience, wearable technology worn by both audience member and performer was used to create a soundscape from the breath of the dancer and the pulse of the spectator. The ability to experience the physicality and emotional state of another human is a way of positioning the human at the heart of this technological experience.

Lyon
Vibes: « Une Trans-vibes partout dans le monde » (A worldwide vibe)

Created by Xavier Boissarit, Romain Constant, Deral, Eric Minh Cuong Castaing, Ana'is Nisimov and Anals Tardivon, Vibes is a game that connects individuals with groups and dancing communities located in other cities. This project allows people who are geographically isolated to connect and cross borders via technology and thus enjoy a shared dance moment.

What next for Dansathon?

The hope – according to Jean-Jacque Garon, managing director of BNP Paribas Foundation, which created the whole project – is that Dansathon will become a regular event. That's the hope; the plan is that the outcome of the prizewinners' development period will be made public at a date yet to be confirmed. We'll post an update online here when we know, or you can keep an eye on the Dansathon website. •

Maison de la danse, Lyon, France. Sadler's Wells Theatre, London, UK. Théâtre de Liège, Belgium.

Created by the BNP Paribas Foundation in partnership with Maison de la danse, Théâtre de Liège and Sadler's Wells. Full details at dansathon.org.

Favourite jumper
Igor & Moreno: Idiot-Syncrasy

Ka Bradley
13 November 2018

Caring but not careful – who knew an hour of jumping up and down would touch so many people in so many ways?

Photos © Alicia Clarke



At a one-night-only showing to celebrate the 100th performance of **Igor and Moreno**'s *Idiot-Syncrasy* at The Place, London, I feel like a stranger at a home game who has never seen a football. The bar is full of people remembering the first time they'd watched the show, or who are here because they missed it somewhere else. First performed in 2013 at The Place, where Igor Urzelai and Moreno Solinas have been associate artists since 2011, *Idiot-Syncrasy* has since toured to more than 10 countries across Europe, as well as further afield to the USA, South Korea, Japan, Chile, Mexico and Zimbabwe. Tonight's performance, to continue the football metaphor, feels like an 'It's coming home!' moment for the audience – and I am eager to find out what the buzz is about.

Here's what I see. In a white space, the two men, dressed simply in jeans and jackets, begin by singing, with startling tunefulness, a traditional Sardinian song (Moreno is Sardinian; Igor, Basque). They begin to jump up and down. They remove their clothes, jumping up and down. They move across the stage, jumping up and down. They pour each other a drink, jumping up and down. They pour audience members drinks, jumping up and down. They traverse the audience itself, still jumping up and down. The audience gets so used to the joke – and there is a strong element of humour – that when the movement starts to include, seemingly as a cautious experiment, spins, then spiralling limbs, darker lighting, a rumbling sound from the speakers, a tempestuous agitation to the previously simple bounces, we don't realise how much the energy has changed, and how deeply we have invested in the process.

It is precisely the intensity of this investment that makes the work feel so fresh and unexpected. The empathy and engagement it elicits still feel profound.

'I think the repetitive elements and the whiteness of the space were part of a wave,' says Moreno when I meet the pair a couple of days later, but it's another quality that he identifies as key: vulnerability. They put themselves in a place of fragility to create a place of empathy for the audience. 'I'm not looking for an experience as a performer,' he explains. 'It's about opening up a channel with the audience.'

Indeed, the sense of risk inherent in so much jumping, and performing action while jumping – however unfazed the two performers seem to be – carries with it a strong sense of vulnerability. In a stripped-back piece focusing on detail and diversion, even the act of pouring a drink into a shot glass becomes imbued with a breathless tension. It is testament to the performers' control over such tension that Igor bouncing off stage and returning, triumphant, with four more bottles for the audience, elicits a spontaneous cheer. At its heart, *Idiot-syncrasy* is a remarkably kind work: the performers appear to care for, and be interested in, their audience, and in return the audience summon a great deal of care, sympathy and engagement.

'Care is an element we work with,' Igor adds. 'Not being careful, but caring. We have to invite people into a vulnerable place without putting ourselves in a dangerous place.'

Nothing illustrates this more clearly than the gracefully managed switch from humorous and direct to a complex, darker and more



intimate mood. After the audience has grown so used to the hopping and bobbing, the introduction of spins, sweeping arms and legs swinging through interrupted lines feels surprisingly intense. Having set up the ground rules, Igor and Moreno break them, bringing their audience with them into an exploration of synthesis and attachment that has a quality of subversion.

'People come to watch the piece for different reasons. Every audience member will bring their own baggage. It's a mirror for people who are watching.' They see a lot of value in this – it allows for more possibilities, for a freer emotional and intellectual reaction. Many people come away feeling they have watched a piece 'about' a romantic relationship. Critic Nicholas Minns saw the 'effort and grind of generations in [the Basque region and Sardinia] to achieve and maintain their goal of political autonomy'. Our editor Sanjoy Roy was reminded of being a fraternal twin, a dual relationship that's both given and filled with minute-by-minute negotiation. Me? I felt I had watched the dance equivalent of Sheila Heti's question *How Should a Person Be?*, as two men cut from very similar cloth offered versions of selfhood and ways of being before turning towards one another to share their similarities.

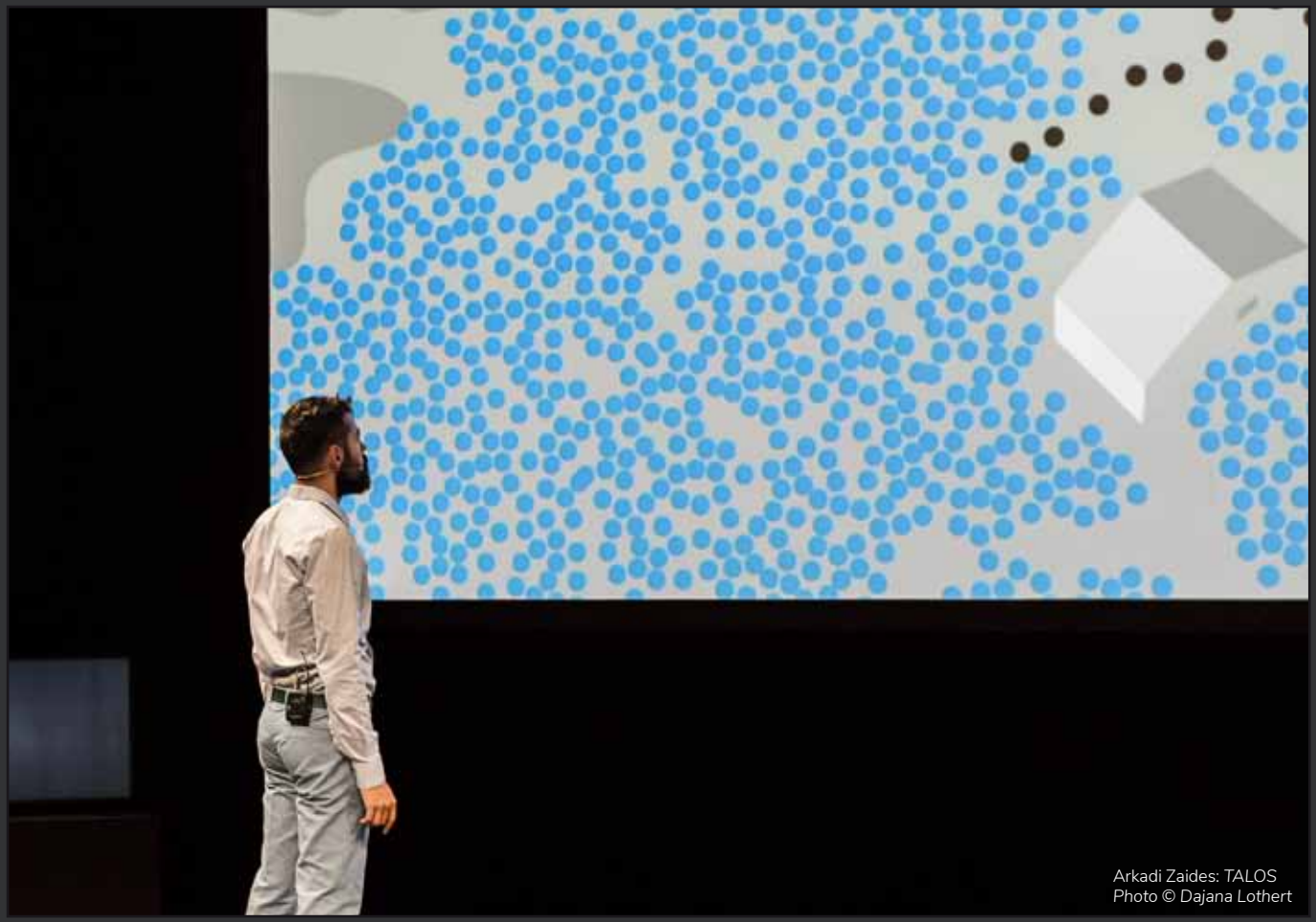
It is a quiet relief that such a resonant piece about care continues to open that direct line of communication

Was it hard to move on from such a popular piece? They were keen not to make *Idiot-Syncrasy* all over again: there is, Igor explains, an important difference between developing their own language and understanding their own interests and practice, and simply repeating what they know works. Their subsequent works both used a strong element of repetition, but *A Room for All Our Tomorrows* (2015) saw them yelling non-stop for the first 20 minutes, while their 2017 quartet *Andante* explored synaesthesia between sound, sight and smell. Currently they are creating their next piece, with the working title *Can't* – a solo for another dancer, which will have its initial showcase in early 2019.

In the meantime, *Idiot-Syncrasy* continues jumping. 'We're interested in performing it, but we're not going crazy overbooking it!' says Igor. 'It's still a challenge and it's still relevant. What we were trying to say then, we're still trying to say now.'

'I don't think we would have made it as we are now, but it is still important to us,' says Moreno. 'Some older work can feel like it was made by a different person, but not this.' In a rapidly changing world filled with confusion, uncertainty and distrust in the figures we have elected to care for us, it is a quiet relief that such a resonant piece about care continues to open that direct line of communication between Igor, Moreno and us. •

Towards the ‘ironic spectator’



Arkadi Zaides: *TALOS*
Photo © Dajana Lothert

Anastasio Koukoutas
27 November 2018

Apathy as activism: what has become of political art and a politicised audience?

How many times can you see the same picture without getting bored? But what if the picture in question captures a glimpse of our stumbling world, a moment of someone else's suffering? We may as well say that boredom is an inescapable fact, a condition that goes beyond all troubled stories and images as we enter an irreversible mode of complacency in a world gone bad.

How many of these images do you consume on a daily basis, while ordering your fair-trade latte, or while waiting on the platform for the next train to arrive? Yes, of course, we live in a hyper-mediated and technologically saturated world, which produces tons of images, videos and data that swiftly circulate via the internet, creating just another type of apathy – or just a minuscule, self-contained lament about the current situation. It's okay, swipe your screen and move on to the next chapter; after all, our culture is primarily a consumerist culture.

Though irony has always been part of an ethical understanding of our world (Greeks used it in ancient theatre plays and Socrates used it to reveal the ignorance of his co-speakers), in our mediatised, private-screen world, irony tends to suggest that we appropriate too easily and trivialise too often issues which demand a long-term and more dedicated understanding.

This shift is also palpable within the arts world. How else would you explain the abundance of critical concerns now offered in performances, combined with the total absence of political action? When was the last time a performance you saw sparked a great political debate and made people around you look for a solution? All these rhetorical questions are not about moralising our reaction towards the arts, but more about re-evaluating our benefit of doubt, our blind trust that art could also be about world justice and political awareness.

To raise this issue more specifically, I will focus on two recent performances I have had the opportunity to see during the Athens & Epidaurus Festival. Both of them – *TALOS* by **Arkadi Zaides** and *La Plaza* by El Conde de Torrefiel – evolve around the problematic reality of Europe today, urging us to tackle the current, frail political state more consciously, even daring to present it as a matter of collective responsibility.

TALOS is a performance-lecture on the biopolitics and necropolitics applied in austere border controls. It examines how human lives are managed and which of these lives are worth saving, taking an EU-funded initiative as its starting point: the robot system *TALOS*, designed to detect and prevent illegal border crossings.

Zaides is centre stage and in his placid manner attempts a choreographic analysis of crowd handling. His body language and his tone of voice are contained, avoiding an emotional interpretation of the array of facts he is giving us; he adopts such a polished, neutral stage presence, reminding us of a CEO presenting the new generation of tech devices. However, for the Greek audience, these are more than mere facts. As Greece is among the countries that have suffered an 'invasion' of refugees, facts are not only envisioned in a remote, dystopian future

as the performance suggests, but are also deeply felt, reminding us of the collective trauma caused by the loss of hundreds of people trying to cross the borders. This form of witnessing the political failure of EU to overcome the prejudice towards the Other is creating a huge contrast with Zaides' analysis. The irony doesn't lie in the interpretation attempted by the artist himself, but in the way we participate in the sharing of these facts.

Instead of investigating the political choices behind the problem, the performance is oriented around the manipulation of our personal reactions or even emotions. Video fragments showing robots trained as guards, refugee camps seen from above so individuals become indistinguishable, propagate the emotional value of the images but fail to invite us to think of the facts which have brought us here. If the performance is giving an account of the suffering Other, this Other always remains distant, disguised in statistical data, applied policies and artistic practices. Lacking a face, thus lacking an identity that might provoke us into action, the Other becomes the ideal format for our momentary criticism of injustice. Zaides carefully draws hypotheses on what will happen if these border controls are applied, but he never refers to whom these controls will be applied, assuming that we all know, that we should all know or that – when the moment arrives – we will all know.

Will we? By disguising recent crises under the label of 'frail human condition', we are called to witness the suffering of the Other, as long as the Other isn't one among us.

This kind of exclusion positions us in an ethical dilemma: if we, as an audience, are more and more conscious and aware of the situation leading to the suffering of the Other, what can we do to prevent this dystopian future becoming a reality? Is there any room left for action? Is art calling us into action?

The second example I am examining is **El Conde de Torrefiel**'s performance, *La Plaza*, a piece that mixes text, rhythm and choreographed frames of action into one. The performance tackles what could be called the micropolitics of conflicts: controversies and discussions, which remain hidden under the surface of daily discourse. *La Plaza* is a sophisticated choreography made of fragments of images

Is even the hardest of cases is trivialised when the sole responsibility of the individual is reduced to an hour-long performance?



Arkadi Zaides: TALOS
Photo © Dajana Lothert



Photo © Els de Nil

El Conde de Torrefiel: *La Plaza*

contained in our daily lives: faceless dancers entering and exiting the stage, grouping into fleeting tableaux vivants, resting in pose for seconds, just enough time for the eye to behold the 'truth' of the image. Meanwhile, a written text is projected on a video wall, as a heterochronous comment of what we have just witnessed. The introverted dialogue follows the gaps and uncoordinated jumps of our conscience, creating tension between the scenic action and the suggested commentary offered by that inner voice. There's no violence on stage, yet this voice is a proof that language is a form of representation, which allows us to 'see' violence when/where it's not always visible — such is the case in daily life. For example, an action insinuating a sexual assault – if one could really draw a separating line in these cases – acquires a different reading when language becomes a form of testimony. However, we are still in our comfort zone as Westerners, reluctant to act, to protest against what we witness. This rhetorical text overlaying the staged action appeals to our typical self-conscious guilt: we see but we fail to act.

So in terms of functionality, how is this performance rated? If it is meant to address everyone in the audience and no one in the audience reacts, what purpose could we say that the performance fulfilled? Would you admit then that even the hardest of cases is trivialised when the sole responsibility of the individual is reduced to an hour-long performance?

Maybe we are all guilty as charged: until someone has stepped out of the auditorium and into an engaged reality, generalisations of this kind are also part of a new dramaturgy of conscience. Your feelings are not an adequate way to respond to the world's problems, just as your fair-trade latte milk won't save the environment. As long as our commitment is confused with a self-reward stance towards the problems of the world, then our emotional reaction will always be an insufficient strategy to change or protest against things. We are all trapped in a regime of 'ironic spectatorship.' We are not passive any more, but we grant ourselves the illusion of participating in changing the world, which might also be as frightening as remaining passive.

I am not blaming theatre *per se*, not even in its worst, commercialised version; after all, market gurus say that wherever there's

Have we reached the exhaustion of political meaning within the arts? Have we entered in a state of 'ironic spectatorship'?

demand, there's offer. Or is it the other way round? Pure ideology makes us think that we are demanded to offer; we are expected to be sensitive about global warming, be pro-feminist and hashtag #metoo, be anti-Trump, be vegetarian-friendly, maybe LGBTQI-friendly as well, proud of our rights but not so proud to fight the crimes threatening those rights.

But who's to decide which themes artists should draw upon to avoid this crude trivialising of the political issues around us? We wouldn't like to reach a dead end by adopting the nihilistic opinion that performing arts are purely a form of spectacle – and thus condemned to deal not with 'reality' itself, but with its constant (false) representations. Nor would we like to subdue politics to transferring the 'right message' to the audience, which would only mean that we are exchanging politics with an evangelical speech that announces the actions necessary in every circumstance.

If we are constantly adhering arts to an emergency, to a hot topic that deserves our attention, then we might not be allowing any conscious elaboration to surpass the present time limit. Actions to envision a long-term future reformation are exchanged for our '15 seconds of sympathy.' We feel bad, okay, but unfortunately there's nothing more to be done, other than maybe give ourselves the chance to make a status update and let everyone know what we know already: we are in a mess.

Think of the following in relation to Zaide's performance-lecture *TALOS*: it's not about raising the question 'What could we do with the threatening and inhumane measures of national border security?', but instead answering 'Why do we build borders?' in the first place. People should always be reminded: 'Why are you here?' If it is because we are able to show mercy, this already grants that we are in a position of privilege. Should this privilege make you uncomfortable? If mercy is a form of politics, then it is based on the spectacle of the vulnerability of the Other. However, if the Other appears only as vulnerable, with no alternatives other than the humanitarian aid of the Westerners, then he is totally dependent on our actions, our sympathy and mercy.

Have we reached the exhaustion of political meaning within the arts? What is the political significance when one is faced with the troubled realisation during a performance that 'I have seen that already'? Is 'already' related to the consumption of aesthetic ideas? Have we entered in a state of 'ironic spectatorship'? If the latter is prevailing, thus making gradually more evident the appearance of the 'ironic spectator', then we should constantly be reminded why art is still important today, why it still might matter. It is not about finding an answer, alas, but posing the right question to you, the spectator. •

Polyphony, playing and politics The many voices of Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui

Sanjoy Roy
06 December 2018

On voices, parts, and playing parts in the many-limbed choreography of Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui

Polyphony as a compositional mode

Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui has a long-standing interest in and love of polyphonic vocal music. In his early piece *D'Avant* (2002), it was a shared love of this music that brought the four performers together. Since then, he has frequently worked with the Corsican vocal group **A Filetta**, for whom this style is a hallmark.

Here, I'd like to use the idea of musical polyphony to illuminate Cherkaoui's choreographic work.

The word *polyphony* literally means 'many voices', though it can be applied to instrumental as well as vocal music. It combines voices of different registers and tones to create a composition where the whole is greater than the parts, yet each part is both distinct and essential. It implies many different voices. You can contrast it with a more familiar compositional style called monody, where there is a principal voice to which other voices serve as accompaniment or support. Different again is homophony, where all the voices are essentially singing the same tune or harmonies, for example in a choral chant.

I like the analogy of 'voice' in dance because it invokes a live, human presence that can be communicative in a non-verbal way. Extending that analogy, we could ask: what kinds of choreographic composition might correspond to these vocal ones? For monody, we might think of a characteristic classical ballet composition: principal dancers with accompanying corps. Examples of homophonic choreography might include the 1930s film musicals of Busby Berkeley, where the dancers form mass ornaments; or the synchronised



Shantala Shivalingappa and Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui in *Play*
Photo © Koen Broos





Photo © Maarten Van Den Abeele

A composite body in Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui's *Babel*.

displays you see in Olympic ceremonies; or a chorus line of show dancers.

Here, I would like to look at Cherkaoui's work as a kind of polyphonic choreography: dancing with many voices. I mean this in a number of different ways.

Is Cherkaoui a single person?

First, there is the simple sense that Cherkaoui has produced such a large range of work, in so many genres, that he seems to have too many voices to be a single person. Here are some examples.

There is of course the large body of contemporary dance choreography, through which I know his work best. But he has also worked many times with ballet companies, including *Memento Mori* and *Mea Culpa* for the Monte Carlo Ballet, the *Boléro* for the Paris Opera Ballet (with Damien Jalet), *The Firebird* for the Stuttgart Ballet – and

more. He has also worked on Cirque du Soleil's Michael Jackson tribute show *One*. On several operas, including *Les Indes Galantes* (Bayerische Staatsoper), *Pelléas et Mélisande* (Opera of Flanders, with Damien Jalet). He has worked on several plays, including Bunkamura Theatre's manga-inspired *Pluto*, Joe Wright's production of Aimée Césaire's *A Season in the Congo*, the Barbican Theatre production of Hamlet; on Joe Wright's feature film *Anna Karenina*. And his music videos have included Sigur Rós's *Valtari*, and Beyoncé & Jay-Z's *Apes**t* (as an aside, may I add that it's nice to see Beyoncé commissioning rather than plagiarising a Belgian choreographer!).

That is an indicative not an exhaustive list, but you get the point: it seems like the work of many people, but actually it's one person, many voices.

Different voices, different idioms

Of course, unless you just choreograph solos for yourself, in silence and without an audience, choreography is never a singular art: it involves at the very least one other dancer – or if you like, another 'voice'.

Cherkaoui seems to have a fondness for compound bodies – where two or more people form a hybrid being, sometimes to humorous effect. I think of the split personality in *D'Avant* with one person as the upper body, another as the lower; or the three-headed, six-armed creature forming a kind of 'unholy trinity' in *Apocrifu*; or the many-headed, multi-limbed transformer in *Babel*, like a comic-strip cyborg. **JS Bach**, the most well-known musical polyphonist, wrote pieces that he called two-part and three-part inventions, and I like to think of Cherkaoui's composite creatures as two, three or multi-part 'inventions' too.

It's also striking how often Cherkaoui's other 'voices' also have different idioms. I think of the tango dancers in *m¡longa*, the kung fu monks of *Sutra*, and the African dancers who thread through *A Season in the Congo*, as well as the duets with flamenco dancer María Pagés (*Dunas*) or with kathak dancer Akram Khan (*Zero Degrees*). Sometimes, of course, he works with performers with no codified style, whether they are actors, singers or performers without formal training. Cherkaoui's choreography is not only a polyphony of voices but the voices themselves often have different idioms. *Babel*, the title of one of his works – named after the story about the origin of the multiplicity of languages – might be an apt label for his body of work as a whole.

The many media of performance

Let's not stop, though, with dancers. You can think of the media of performance itself as a set of 'voices' that register and communicate with the audience: light, sound, set, costume, perhaps video, text and so on. Cherkaoui often uses these different media not as support, accompaniment or scenic element, but as active voices within the theatrical whole: you notice how they play their part. I think of several pieces where boxes become not just props but players: in *Sutra*, *Babel*, *Puz/zle*; of the digital video interacting with



Photo © Sebastian Bolesch

Body doubles? Damien Jalet and Luc Dunberry in Cherkaoui's *D'Avant*.

> If we consider social realities as the organisation of human material, we can think of them as kinds of composition or choreography

the dancers in *TeZuka* or m¡longa, the many pieces were singers dance, dancers sing, and sets move around the stage.

The players in Play

By way of illustration, I'll use *Play*. It's a work from 2010 and I use it only because it is the piece I saw most recently. It is a weave of stories, languages, voices and media – polyphonic in many dimensions.

At first sight, you might think that *Play* is a duet for two dancers with very different voices and idioms: Cherkaoui himself, and kuchipudi dancer **Shantala Shivalingappa**, who mimic, exchange and extend each other's styles. But it is so much more than a dance duet. The musicians are central to the piece – literally so: they are in the middle of the stage. They too use different idioms, including medieval European and Japanese kodo, in both instrumental and vocal forms. The set moves around, and the musicians move through the dance and vice versa. And there are several scenes – for example when rhythms are created by clapping choreography, or everyone plays a part on the piano – where musicians and dancers are clearly no longer performer or accompaniment, but distinct and active voices within the performance itself. In *Play*, all the parts are players and everyone plays a part.

Artistic and political polyphonies

Different compositional styles have their own beauties, ambiguities and evasions, and I think it would be a grave mistake to reduce them to social or political realities. Yet we can put forward an analogy: if we consider those realities as the organisation of human material, we can think of them as kinds of composition or choreography.

So, returning to our point of departure: what kind of social patterns might correspond to those vocal compositional modes? An example of one kind of monody might be dictatorship: the domination of many voices by one voice. Fascism, to continue the analogy, might be thought of as a kind of homophony: the unification of many voices into a single harmonic chord, which can be called 'the voice of the people'.

Today, Cherkaoui is receiving the 'New Theatrical Realities' Award of the Europe Theatre Prize. Yet the very phrase 'new realities' feels ominous right now. For when I think of new realities – not just in Europe, but across the world – I cannot help but think of the rise of dictatorial figureheads and identitarian nationalisms. That is, of monodic and homophonic forms of human organisation.

If we are to move to a more pluralist human world then it will be to a more polyphonic mode – one that gives space to dissonance as well as harmony, and where different registers, themes, idioms and ways of being are incorporated rather than excluded or suppressed. So I would like to end, then, with a suggestion and a plea: that we think of this prize to Cherkaoui not as an award for a new reality, but towards one. •

This is an adapted text of the speech given by Springback editor Sanjoy Roy on the presentation of the New Theatrical Realities Award for the Europe Theatre Prize to Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, St Petersburg, Russia, on 16 November 2018.

Trash aesthetic
Meet The Symptoms



Lena Megyeri
14 March 2019

What is waste? Who is trash? Réka Szabó and Dániel Szász of The Symptoms speak about recycling a street performance

Photos: The Symptoms' 2017 revival of *You Trash! – Big cleaning in the big outdoors*.
© Csaba Mészáros

Founded in 2002, **The Symptoms** are among the most important independent dance and theatre companies in Hungary. Their pieces often raise awareness about burning social issues. Lena Megyeri met up with artistic director Réka Szabó and founder member Dániel Szász to reflect on the idea of sustainability – particularly in relation to their street performance *You trash! – Big cleaning in the big outdoors*, first performed in 2008 and revived in 2017. Filled with humour and melancholy, it drew attention not only to the ongoing global crisis of waste, but also to the trashed lives of people no longer needed by society.

How did You Trash! originally come about?

Réka Szabó: One of the theatres in Budapest commissioned five companies to create pieces in connection with eco sustainability. Many members of The Symptoms feel a deep connection to nature and the environment, and we watch with great concern what's happening to the earth right now. After we had started rehearsals, the theatre backed out of the production – then I decided to do it on our own. We premiered in Moscow Square [since 2011, Széll Kálmán Square], which I think was probably the best location in the history of the show.

You weren't only interested in material waste and pollution, but also in trashed human lives.

RSZ: It's very interesting to see what a certain society considers waste – how they use things and how they get rid of them when they are of no use anymore. I think that today's society handles things and people very similarly: their worth depends on what you can suck out of them, and when there's nothing left to suck out, they are simply thrown away.

Dániel Szász: There's a scene at the end of the performance, where István Gőz [a senior company member] is reaching out from under a pile of trash. The meaning of this is not only that we are covered by waste, but that an elderly person gets buried under waste and becomes waste himself. It was Réka's idea that elderly people, who are associated with being worn out, are handled by society like waste – it is an unsettling, raw and sad thought. We ourselves were raised to respect elderly people and perhaps people are still raised like that today. But you don't really see that in society any more.

What were the reactions to the piece back then?

DSZ: After our first performance there was a fantastic immediate response: some members of the audience grabbed brooms and helped us clean our 'props', our waste, as we make a lot of mess during the show.

RSZ: I have an even more powerful memory from the first revival performance at Móricz Zsigmond Square. There were two homeless people who genuinely scared us in the beginning. There is a scene where the performers interact with the audience with the help of dustbins, and these homeless people had a very aggressive and disparaging attitude towards what was happening. Then after the performance, they came up to us with

tears in their eyes and apologised for their behaviour. They were so touched and surprised by what they experienced.

In a theatre, the audience is already filtered, and there's a certain agreement between the performers and the spectators. But these rules don't exist in the street. It's not your usual audience that shows up for a 20–25 minute street performance – you have to be able to grab the attention of passers-by who are constantly running somewhere. In Hungary, street performance is appreciated very differently from a theatre show, while it's also part of our artistic work. When we took *You trash!* to Germany, we were surprised by how different their attitude was – we felt that they considered it an important piece of art.

Why did you revive the work in 2017?

RSZ: The French Institute in Hungary wanted us to perform the piece at their conference on eco sustainability. At first we said no, as the original dancers weren't available, but they asked us again next year. The Café Budapest Festival was interested as well, so we decided to go along. I had other commitments at the time, so Dániel was commissioned to rethink the piece, together with director and choreographer Máté Czakó.

DSZ: The basic philosophical background of the performance remained unchanged, but we created a few new scenes and a new musical atmosphere. I think that the company needs this kind of performance, as it is easy to take to festivals. Sometimes there is no possibility or money to travel with our theatre shows.





We are always sweeping our mess to the parts of the poor, the oppressed and the less developed

Ten years on, what do you think has changed about both eco sustainability and 'human waste'?

RSZ: I think it's getting worse and worse. There's a scene in the piece where the space is divided into four parts. There's a performer in each part, and they are all trying to sweep their mess into each other's parts. In my opinion this is exactly what's happening in the real world as well: we are trying to get rid of our mess, and we are always sweeping it to the parts of the poor, the oppressed and the less developed – when in fact we should join forces and stop producing so much mess.

DSZ: It is interesting to see that the performance had a currency back in 2008 and it has a currency now, while a lot of things have changed. For example, selective waste collection was not very prevalent in Hungary in 2008, while it is fairly prevalent today. But progress is very slow, and economic destruction much faster.

RSZ: There's nothing in today's society that forces us to restrict our consumption It is not considered a merit, but I think it is key to humanity's future.

DSZ: As for the human side of things, in our new piece [*The Symptoms reality in the basement*] we are trying to deal with the fact that we are starting to feel worn out ourselves.

Is this a sense of burnout or something imposed on you by society?

RSZ: We've been talking about these things for the past 3 months and we don't have a definite answer, but it's a bit of both. The current situation of the performing arts scene in Hungary is exposing us to a lot of difficulties. But it's not only us – for example, the value of academics is also questioned. The very values that we built our work on – tolerance, the importance of debate, democratic values, intellect, creativity, the possibility of progress based on talent – are questioned.

In the constant struggle for survival we are forced to work at a pace that burns us out. The sustainability of the artist's work is an important topic as well. Emerging artists have a lot of opportunities: residencies, conferences, scholarships, meetings, but there should be opportunities for artists in later periods of their careers as well, when they need to recharge. Looking around our generation I see a lot of artists being tired, in a bad condition. In Western Europe, academics have the institution of the sabbatical that they can use to recharge. I think it comes from the recognition that scientific and artistic work cannot be pursued 24/7 for years on end. But this point of view is completely absent in Hungary. •

REVIEWS





Vero Cendoya: La Partida



Clàudia Brufau
25 March 2018

Beautiful as dance can be, is it really any match for the beautiful game?

Photo © Martí E Berenguer

Can contemporary dance 'steal' followers from football and transform them into its audience? Premiered in 2015 at Fira Tàrrega as an outdoors spectacle, *La Partida* is Vero Cendoya's bold attempt to engage a new audience for dance, by adapting the king of sports' codes and ritual into choreography. Dancer, choreographer, actor and illustrator, Cendoya always seeks to find a common ground between disciplines and styles in her pieces. Inspired by the film *L'Arbitro* by Paolo Zucca and using texts by Eduardo Galeano, *La Partida* brings together, poetically and buoyantly, original music by Adele Madau played live by a brass band, and participants who embody the followers.

The electrifying buzz and thrill of stadiums before a match fill the theatre as the five male footballers of one team and the five female dancers of the other are announced. The game kicks off and confrontation triggered in beautiful harmony. Men kick a real ball, women an imaginary one; the feminist vindication bubbles up. There are moments that recall Jerome Robbins's Jets vs Sharks: races from one side to the other, acrobatic duets burst seeking a goal. The playful choreography is enhanced by the stark and effective lighting design. From cartoonish to melodramatic, the tone shifts with every move, but the hilarious bits are saved for the referee and his Almodóvarian solos. Jon López's with his Greco-like figure epitomises Galeano's description of the referee as an 'abominable tyrant with operatic flourish'.

> The referee is an 'abominable tyrant with operatic flourish'

In this festive atmosphere, Cendoya makes her point without being dogmatic. For instance, when one of the dancers feeds her baby, we hear the infamous declarations of a Spanish female CEO: 'I prefer not to hire mothers'. Cendoya overlaps bits of daily life, humour, dance, sport, words in a feminised game; an epic gathering in which confrontation vanishes to be replaced by a mutual acceptance of who we are.

The bottom line: Cendoya wins this game, as the audience seem ready to drop sport for dance – at least for a little while.

Mercat de les Flors, Barcelona, Spain.
Reviewed: 24 Feburary 2018

Direction and choreography: Vero Cendoya / Music direction: Adele Madau / Dancers: Xaro Campo, Linn Johanson, Natalia d'Annunzzio, Dory Sánchez, Tina Halford / Football players: Babou Cham, Adrian Nieto, Reynaldo Zerpa, Carlos Molina, Enric Auquer / Referee: Jon López / Baby: Zoe Molina Johanson/ Musicians: Adele Madau, Elena Zanzu, Andrea Martínez, Gràcia Camps, Laia Rovira / With the special collaboration of Blanca Portillo / With texts by Eduardo Galeano / Costumes: Kike Palma, Esther Muñoz, Viviane Calvitti, Myriam Ibañez / Lighting: Sylvia Kuchinow / Administration Joan Fabregat / Production Isabel Bonilla Besset / Acknowledgements" Blanca Portillo, Rafató Teatre, Anna Sanchez, VARIUM / Co-production Cia. Vero Cendoya, Fira de Teatre de Tàrrega 2015, Graner arts factory, Carovana SMI Association (Cagliari, IT), ICEC Institut Català de les Empreses Culturals

Arkadi Zaides: TALOS

Oonagh Duckworth
24 March 2018

Arkadi Zaides' detatched demonstration of surveillance, digital simulation and border infringements



Photo © Dajana Lothert

Headless 'jiving' humanoids, four-legged Meccano-type machines hopping over fences like at the finals of Crufts; we're watching archive footage of prototype robots being tested in action. It's the only moment of relative light relief, of dance, in fact, during Arkadi Zaides' lecture-demonstration performance *TALOS*.

TALOS is also the name of an EU-funded research project: a mobile robot surveillance system intended to prevent illegal border infringement in Europe. The discovery of this chilling, real-life science fiction is what impelled the politically engaged Israeli choreographer to out the scheme on stage.

The influence that borders have on the movement of 'organic elements', or the choreography of refugees fleeing war zones, if you will, is what Zaides describes, with the cold detachment of an automaton, in a keynote demonstration that uses computer graphics to represent human movement with dinky blue or black dots that scuttle about the screen.

Although not a dance performance, there is a verging-on-cynical concession to choreography that reflects the bleakness of the subject material. It's detectable in Zaides' own mechanical circling of the stage and the acceleration of his voice as he enumerates the various human-like reactions the 'devices' would be developed to possess: response to aggressive gestures, ability to negotiate obstruction, heat sensing and so on.

We cut back again to the screen, but this time the computer graphics are spliced together with aerial images of an Israeli checkpoint. One side of the border: black and blue dots. On the other: disorientated, distressed human beings.

Not so incidentally, TALOS is also the name of a bronze giant from Greek mythology whose role was to guard and protect Europe's borders. 'Many European projects take their names from Greek mythology,' explains Zaides. 'It adds an epic quality and fits a certain social narrative.'

The TALOS system has not yet been implemented, because, ominously, its creators are seeking further funding...

The bottom line: Art or not art seems an irrelevant question to ask about Zaides' piece; what do we do with the bombshell he drops on us is the one that burns.

La Raffinerie, Charleroi Danse, Brussels, Belgium.
Reviewed: 18 March 2018.

Team: Claire Buisson, Jonas Rutgeerts, Youness Anzane, Nienke Scholts, Effi & Amir, Gabriel Braga, Arkadi Zaides, Amit Epstein, Thalie Lurault, Etienne Exbrayat, Simge Gücük / Performed by: Arkadi Zaides / Lara Barsacq / Co-produced by: Les Subsistances, La Maison de la Danse, K3 - Zentrum für Choreographie, Tanzplan Hamburg as part of Together Apart project, funded by the German Federal Cultural Foundation, TanzQuartier Wien, NEXT Arts Festival, Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai, CSS, Villa Manin, CDC Toulouse, Wiesbaden Biennale, Teaterhuset Avant Garden, CCNN – Centre Chorégraphique National de Nantes

Mette Ingvartsen: 21 pornographies

Sebastian Kann
25 March 2018

Assuming the position is at the heart of this physical exploration of erotica

Mette Ingvartsen – the choreographer and sole performer of *21 pornographies* – takes an extraordinarily plural approach to the body. Although we are eventually treated to some pretty rad dance moves (there's an excellent foray into '60s gogo), don't buy your ticket expecting an evening at the Bolshoi: this is definitely choreography in the broader sense of 'a body negotiating a plan', and Ingvartsen's plan brings us far beyond the conventional.

In fact, a lot of the movement in *21 pornographies* is performed by absent bodies in imaginary spaces, verbally described by Ingvartsen with deliberate assurance. Culled from an extensive pornographic corpus dating back to de Sade, the scenes she invites us to imagine tend to marry eroticism, violence and various incarnations of state power – not light fare, but certainly absorbing. When she shifts deftly into the roles she's describing, now channeling a horny marquis, now a chocolate-covered starlet, the gravity of her transformation is arresting and often genuinely disturbing.

21 pornographies is meticulous and intricate, and despite the multiplicity of Ingvartsen's clamouring to take the stage – Ingvartsen as articulate narrator, as exhausted corpse, as porous material, as posing mannequin, as a bark in the dark – her precise and deliberate choreographer persona never loses its grip on the situation. My favourite moments occurred when the body itself seemed to exceed the narration, persisting in its transformed state far longer than strictly required for illustrative purposes. These curious moments linger like openings to something beyond or beside the thick layer of pornographic fantasy that Ingvartsen conjures.

The bottom line: A complex and intelligent take on the intersections of sex, power, media, and loneliness. So much for the joys of masturbation.



Photo © Marc Domage

Kaaitheater, Brussels, Belgium. Reviewed: 9 March 2018

Concept & Performance: Mette Ingvartsen / Light: Minna Tiikkainen / Sound: Peter Lenaerts / Set: Mette Ingvartsen & Minna Tiikkainen / Dramaturgy: Bojana Cvejic / Technical director: Hans Meijer / Assistant choreography: Dolores Hulan / Assistants production: Manon Haase & Elisabeth Hirner / Sound technician: Adrien Gentizon / Company Management: Kerstin Schroth / A production of Mette Ingvartsen / Great Investment / Co-production: Volksbühne, PACT Zollverein, Kaaitheater, NEXT festival / Kunstencentrum BUDA (Kortrijk), Les Spectacles vivants – Centre Pompidou, Dansehallerne, BIT Teatergarasjen, Julidans, CCN2 – Centre chorégraphique national de GrenobleChorégraphique National de Rennes et de Bretagne & Kustenwerkplaats Pianofabriek

Hodworks: Sunday

Lena Megyeri
25 March 2018

Hodworks' Sunday begs the question: in the age of the selfie, what separates the person and the persona?



Photo © Márton Mónus



> **It seems that a generation of dancers and choreographers wants to talk – more than anything else – about themselves**

It seems that lately, Hungary's young and mid-generation of dancers and choreographers wants to talk – more than anything else – about themselves. Perhaps it shouldn't come as a surprise in the age of selfies and Instagram. But in art, self-expression often goes together with self-reflection and even self-doubt, and that is where it gets a bit more complicated

Hodworks' performance *Sunday* asks existential questions about contemporary dance, while reflecting on dancers' lives and the company's former pieces. It opens with the performers talking about the rehearsal process and their experiences on stage. Some of what they are saying is probably true (like Csaba Molnár's cynical account of his parents' reaction to his art), some of it is clearly a joke (like Zoltán Vakulya thanking the choreographer, Adrienn Hód, for the extra rehearsal time in her bathroom). But we can't be sure of what is true and what is not, and so the fine line between the private person and the onstage persona is smudged.

Then Molnár theatrically announces: 'Let the dance begin!', and the performers start with taking their clothes off. Hodworks is no stranger to nudity and while it isn't always sexual, this time there's no mistaking the eroticism in the way with the bodies intertwine, slide, bounce and pulse. But a sudden shift in mood sees them behaving more like dancing machines, the only aim of their frantic movements being to wear themselves out. As the tension rises (underlined by a thumping live DJ-set), screams and roars burst out of them, they spray-paint each other and sprinkle fake bodily fluids all over the stage. While all this madness is supposed to have a strong effect on us, ultimately it feels like we have seen it all before.

Where do we go when we are running out of taboos on stage and the shocking has ceased to be shocking? Hodworks has gazed into the mirror, but hasn't found the answer yet.

The bottom line: The working title of the piece, 'Dirty Dancing', is meant quite literally – but even dirtiness seems sanitised.

Trafó House of Contemporary Arts, Budapest, Hungary.
Reviewed: 16 February 2018

Choreographer: Adrienn Hód / Performers and co-creators: Emese Cuhorka, Csaba Molnár, Lemić Marin, Jessica Simet, Zoltán Vakulya / Light: Miklós Mervel / Music: Ábris Gryllus / Costume and props: Csenge Vass. Dramaturge: Ármin Szabó-Székely / Management: Lilla Eredics / Special thanks: Lívia Fuchs, Péter Tóvay, László Kürti, PIM-OSZMI (The Hungarian Theatre Museum and Institute) – Dance Archive / Co-producer: Trafó House of Contemporary Arts / Supporters: EMMI, NKA, OFF Foundation, SÍN Cultural Centre, New Performance Art Foundation Partnership with Workshop Foundation

Ligia Lewis: Minor Matter

Louise Tanoto
25 March 2018

Black matters in Minor Matter, a powerful encounter with the myriad concepts of blackness

Minor Matter is part two of a triptych by **Ligia Lewis** about blackness. Dense with the interplay of light, sound, and text, this is a layered work that claims the power of self-representation. With heart, Lewis boldly draws attention to and away from what it is to be black, bringing into parity a shared history.

The lights rise to reveal the space, a heavy cloud of smoke hangs in the air as three figures emerge in a slow presentation of heroic postures. Suspended, the mist acts as a portal and we journey from battle drumming through to classical music and to the baroque courts, as history is brought into the present.

Three performers wrestle, charge, flock, pile and beat out the music. Their bodies fall from and their words caress the edges of the space, as they reach and climb towards discreetly placed microphones. They share stories and the guttural sounds of these stories, with the desire to exist both at the margins and the centre. It is clear that Lewis isn't interested in merely presenting movements and words. Instead she, Tiran Willemse and Corey-Scott Gilbert incarnate them through their bodies and the material of life; bone, muscle, story, skin and sweat, bathed in hues of pink and red.

Lewis encounters blackness in the theatre space confidently. The intermittent rising and lowering of light illuminates the public, questioning the anonymous gaze; it shines on these performers that reject the aesthetics of neutrality. Yet, as the work progresses, more is revealed of the devices of creating: the impressive lighting, the rules behind the games, the virtuosity of the bodies. Everything is shown and in return something is lost in the texture and potency of the experience.

If *Minor Matter* is something between 'love and rage', then the result is explicitly neither but peppered with the timbres of battle. And I am reminded of bell hooks's words that 'love is the heroic journey'.

The bottom line: Don't just watch it, watch it watching you.



Photo © Martha Glenn

Kaaitheater, Brussels, Belgium.
Reviewed: 9 March 2018

Concept & Choreography: Ligia Lewis / Creation with performers: Jonathan Gonzalez, Hector Thami Manekehla replacement: Tiran Willemse, Corey-Scott Gilbert / Musical dramaturgy: Michal Libera / Sound design: Jassem Hindi / Styling: Alona Rodeh / Lights: Andreas Harder / Dramaturgy: Ariel Efraim Ashbel / Assistance: Martha Glenn / Press & Production/Distribution: Nicole Schuchardt – HAU Hebbel am Ufer / Co-production: HAU Hebbel am Ufer / Funded by the Governing Mayor of Berlin – Senate Chancellery – Cultural Affairs and Fonds Darstellende Künste e.V.

Jasna Vinovrški: Lady Justice

Jelena Mihelčić
25 March 2018

With witnesses, evidence and judgement – is a dance performance a bit of a trial?

Galerija SC, Zagreb, Croatia

Choreography, performance: Jasna L. Vinovrški / Stage, artistic advice: Clément Layes / Music: Nina Simone / Light design: Catalina Fernandez / Production: Ilja Fontaine / Supported by the Berlin Senate Cultural Affairs Department and Goethe-Institut Montréal / Coproduction Théâtre de la Ville, Paris.

I have always been sceptical about jury trials. The thought that verdicts are reached by a group of ordinary, easily manipulated people scares me. The court room is a stage and the outcome depends not on the truth but on the performance of the lawyers. The suggestible nature of the judiciary system, shared by theatre and art, are put on trial by **Jasna Layes Vinovrški** in her latest piece *Lady Justice* (part of 2017 Dance Week Festival in Zagreb). *Lady Justice* tackles the issues of control over an art piece in an easy-going and humorous solo.

Restricted to the space of a single corridor, Vinovrški's movement is cramped. She balances piles of paper on her head, as with the books of her previous piece *Staying Alive*. The structure of the piece follows a typical strict trial procedure. The artist is the defendant; the art piece is the prosecutor. There's the usual introductory statement followed by testimonies of both parties. Then Vinovrški brings to our attention to the audience's role as jury, by making us active participants of the performance. She hands out 'evidence' for us to question, so we rattle with chains, toss a globe, eat chocolate hearts and examine different objects representing the lyrics of the 60s human rights movement song by Nina Simone, 'I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel to Be Free', which she reads out loud.

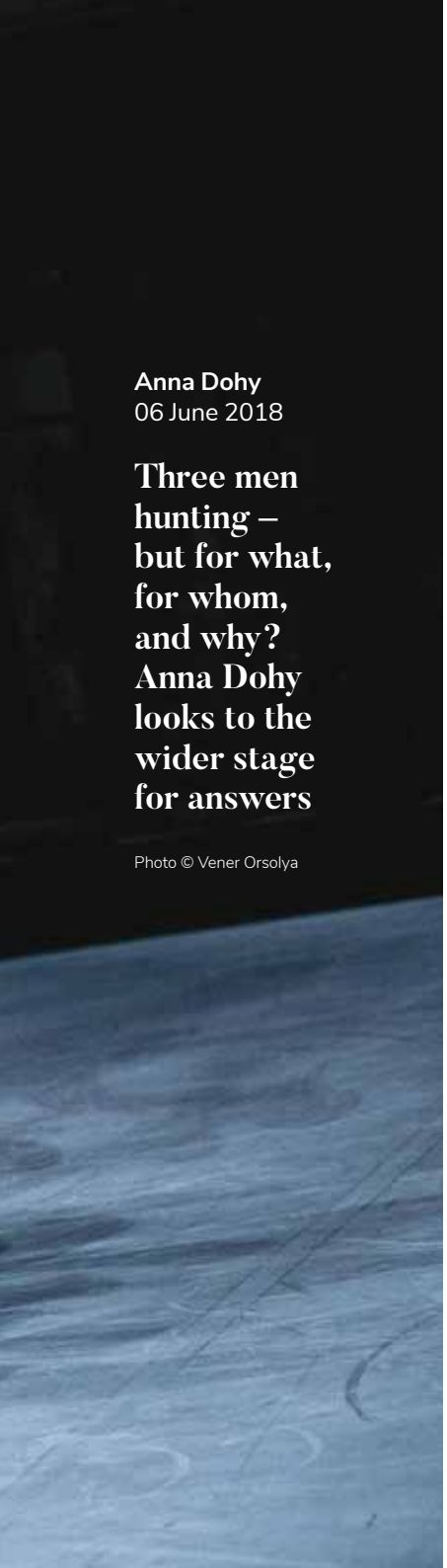


Photo © kmarinac

By the end of this seriously hilarious show, we are left wondering who has really won the case – the artist, the art piece or we as an audience?

The bottom line: Considering the evidence, I would have to pronounce Jasna Layes Vinovrški guilty of good art.





Timothy and the Things: Hunting

Anna Dohy
06 June 2018

Three men hunting – but for what, for whom, and why? Anna Dohy looks to the wider stage for answers

Photo © Vener Orsolya

Uncertainty and discomfort seem to be constant components of **László Fülöp**'s work. In *Hunting*, light bulbs hanging over a clear white stage might – with a bit of imagination – be seen as trees. Who are the three men we see? Rough and determined movements express masculinity, but are they brothers? Enemies? They appear in so many roles that it is hard to decide who they are.

Jarring, out-of-tune music accompanies the rough movements of the dancers. The choreography builds on waves of uncontrolled limbs and civilised gestures such as a hug, tuning a guitar or an awkward attempt to get involved in a game. The dancers clap, spin and climb like playing children – determinedly, but without charm or compassion. Slow but aggressive movements inflame the skin; a light touch causes a disproportionate response. Is this just a game, or do they want to harm each other? Evasion and constant pseudo-aggressive gestures organise the dynamics of the group.

Because of the seriousness and crudeness of the movements, *Hunting* seems almost like a parody. But it is not funny at all: ignorance and insecurity arouse aggression, and this makes the performance feel very current in Hungary. Suddenly we hear someone knocking on a door – we do not know who it is, but the three men react instinctively with fear and anger to the unknown. They may have a lot of disagreements, but a common enemy forces their unity.

Premiered just before the Hungarian parliamentary elections, when the news was full of politicians' luxury hunting trips on one side and man-hunting against migrants on the other, it was almost impossible to separate *Hunting* from its wider context.

The bottom line: Go hunting for meanings – but be careful what you might find

Trafó House of Contemporary Arts, Budapest, Hungary. Reviewed: 28 March 2018.

Performers: András Déri, Patrik Kelemen, Kristóf Várnagy / Sound: Vince Varga / Light: Orsolya Pete / Costume design: Emese Kasza / MeiKawa / Choreographer: László Fülöp / Production partners: SÍN Culture Center, Trafó / Supporters: Thelien Kft., NKA, [DNA] DEPARTURES AND ARRIVALS

They may have a lot of disagreements, but a common enemy forces their unity

Katerina Andreou: BSTRD

Anastasio Koukoutas
06 June 2018

Can a solo stage dance create that much-needed room of one's own?

Photo © Patrick Berger

The solo holds a unique place in the western dance tradition, as it exemplifies personal signature, movement style and self-expression – the three core elements of authorship in dance. However, many choreographers have attempted and managed to undo the logic of authenticity bound to self-expressiveness and liberate the performing body from the fundamentals of the modernist tradition.

Katerina Andreou is a rare case of dancer/performer who, despite only recently venturing into the field of choreography, has managed to create a distinct movement vocabulary which isn't merely seeking originality for originality's sake. Her solo *BSTRD* – an acronym for the word 'bastard' – not only debunks the dogmas of authenticity in dance by appropriating freestyle movements from the nightclub scene, but also manages to create a stage presence affirmative to feminine empowerment. Alone on a wooden platform that looks like a ring, Andreou seems to fight against the stereotypes of 'being' rather than 'becoming' on stage.

As soon as music kicks in – a beat that forces itself on both performer and audience, who nod repeatedly to the pounding of the rhythm – Andreou assumes the tempo of a fiercesome dancer; she is charged rhythmically and her body is now electrified. However, face and body are somehow desynchronised; her facial expressions seem confusing, reluctant to investigate any emotional state; or more accurately, they resist acquiring any emotional significance. Her manic elation erupts into short pauses – one might think that she's catching her breath – but everything is neatly calculated, even when she takes her falsely sweated t-shirt off only to reveal that several layers of t-shirts are hidden underneath. Her presence is purely staged, an echoing question to all emotional precepts of her movements.

For Andreou the stage is a zone of possibilities rather than a temple to worship one's true identity, an in-between space where she can enter or exit at will, without making any existential statement, other than that one should exercise the freedom to render perceptible the body's endless transformations and appropriations.

The bottom line: To dance like a BSTRD, to become what you imagine...

Onassis Cultural Centre, Athens, Greece.
Reviewed: 21 May 2018

Choreography and performance: Katerina Andreou / Sound design: Katerina Andreou in collaboration with Eric Yvelin / Light design: Yannick Fouassier / Outside Eye: Myrto Katsiki, Lynda Rahal / Sound engineering: Tal Agam or Eric Yvelin / Production: Mi-Maï / Bark / Production, bookings : Elodie Perrin / Coproducers: Atelier de Paris / CDCN, Onassis Cultural Centre/Stegi, Centre Chorégraphique National d'Orléans, Centre Chorégraphique National de Caen en Normandie, La place de la danse CDC de Toulouse, Ballet de Marseille



Florentina Holzinger: Apollon

Róisín O'Brien
06 June 2018

Dance gets down and dirty – but is it worth the gross-out?

What is the last taboo in theatre? Clearly not nudity; that bar has been surpassed, not least in contemporary dance. Defecating on stage? It's certainly nauseating but in **Florentina Holzinger**'s *Apollon* it seems simply the result of a show staunchly ripping into any notion of feminine delicacy and restraint.

The six naked women of *Apollon* slap each other, pull balloons out of their vaginas, and career around as manic cowboys. Whether their self-inflicted mutilations are always real is irrelevant: revulsion supplants curiosity This is particularly nasty when the performers interact with the audience (G&T through a straw that has been passed between a performer's nose and mouth, anyone?). Many audience members laugh, perhaps relishing the performers' provocation – yet there is also a tension in being close to and complicit in the violence, a humiliation in receiving a spectacle far more gross than anticipated



Apollon's strongest moments reveal an inherent savagery or absurdity in gendered behaviour, through exaggeration and distortion. In one section, the performers lounge around the rodeo bull (the centrepiece of the stage), eating the 'faeces' produced earlier. 'Is it vegan?' an electronically altered voice enquires, perverse in its child-like pitch.

But the scattershot onslaught of scenes can result in meaningful consequences or clear conclusions being lost, and while Balanchine's neoclassical ballet *Apollo* is certainly aped through wince-inducing props and flamboyant gestures, this perfunctory parody risks boring even those who enjoy the original.

Breaking a taboo can cause unwritten yet oppressive social rules to come to light and potentially be redressed. While I am impressed by the performers, and respect the disgust they force me to endure (a departure from most theatrical performances that aim to please or inform), the violence is shocking but not revelatory.

The bottom line: Shit-stirring shocker leaves little room for thought

Tramway, Glasgow, Scotland.
Reviewed 16 May 2018.

By: Florentina Holzinger / With: Renée Copraij, Evelyn Frantti, Florentina Holzinger, Annina Lara Maria Machaz, Xana Novais, Maria Netti Nüganen & Stephan Schneider / Sound design: Stephan Schneider / Dramaturgy: Sara Ostertag & Michele Rizzo / Scenography: Nikola Knežević / Production: CAMPO / Co-production: Frascati Producties/Amsterdam, La Bâtie – Festival de Genève, steirischer herbst/Graz, Münchner Kammerspiele, Sophiensaele/Berlin, Mousonturm/Frankfurt with the support of MA7 – Kulturabteilung der Stadt Wien

Oona Doherty: Hope Hunt and the Ascension into Lazarus

Claire Lefèvre
06 June 2018

A riveting portrait of the disadvantaged white male that meshes beauty with damnation



Photo © Simon Harrison

A car pulls up in front of Tanzquartier Vienna, blasting rowdy electronic music. An androgynous figure in baggy clothes (**Oona Doherty**) tumbles out of the boot and breaks into a disarticulated bop. The driver, head shaven and wearing anonymous sportswear, nonchalantly rolls a fag, only joining in the occasional synchronised fist bump. At times, Doherty ferociously stares down audience members, or hugs them with heartwarming enthusiasm. She eventually herds everyone back inside the theatre, yelling orders with a thick Irish accent.

The space reeks of cheap cologne. One corner is littered with beer cans and pizza boxes, a shrine to pre-gaming and brutal hangovers. With both grace and rage, Doherty throws herself around the space, spitting out garbled sounds which become words, which transform into broken sentences, which disintegrate into incomprehensible grunts. This struggling train of thoughts is sometimes interrupted by the deepest chain-smoker cough, reiterated until it evokes drum'n'bass beatbox MCs.

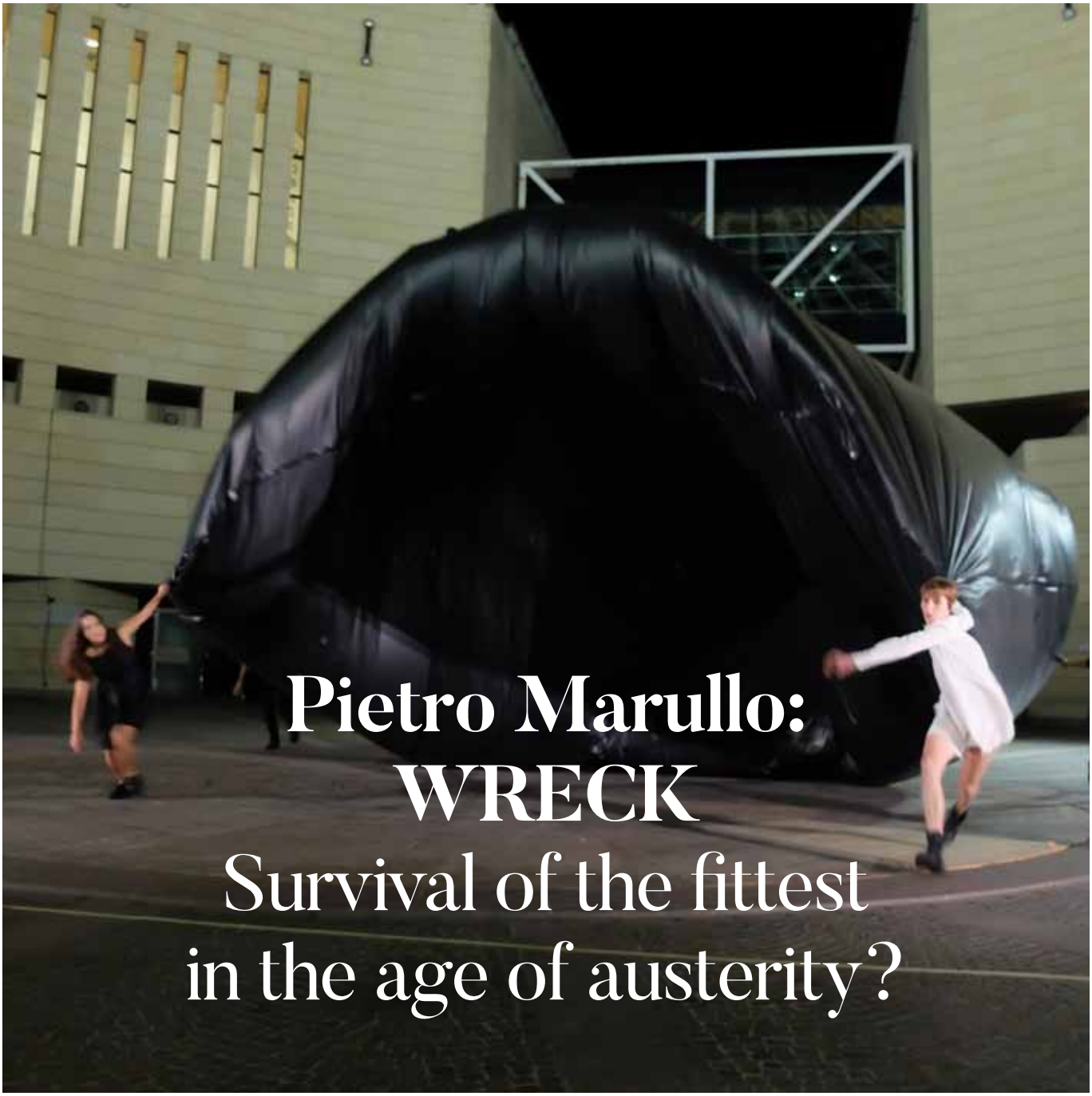
Doherty's character is the disadvantaged white male, and she incarnates his mannerisms with such accuracy that it becomes uncanny, triggering and riveting. Briefly, she invokes an estranged uncle who 'used to take them to cultural events and shit', compellingly confronting us with the blatant privilege it is to be in Vienna's Museumsquartier, a major European cultural institution. Like a white-trash chameleon, she transforms from British wasted raver, to Italian macho football fan, to French cat-caller, reminding us of the global plague which is toxic masculinity.

Yet as she strips to a white Adidas tracksuit, the music morphs into canticles interwoven with verbal abuse. Shining a hallowed light on the boorish hetero male, Doherty constantly layers beauty with damnation such that *Hope Hunt* transcends stereotypical portraiture to attain an elevated, even exalted perspective. Amen to that.

The bottom line: Like the love child of Louise Lecavalier and Charles Bronson, on a school outing from the trailer park to visit the Sistine Chapel.

Tanzquartier Vienna, Austria. Reviewed 4 May 2018.

Choreography and performance: Oona Doherty / Lighting: Sarah Gordon, Oona Doherty, Simon Bird



Pietro Marullo: WRECK

Survival of the fittest in the age of austerity?

Photo © Betrand Nodet

Yasen Vasilev
16 June 2018

Pietro Marullo's 'elastic performance' is a staging of the struggle to survive in a precarious environment – and an example of it

By the time **Pietro Marullo**'s *WRECK: a list of extinct species* was presented in my hometown of Sofia, Bulgaria, at the 2018 Spring Forward festival, I already knew it had made the final selection of two other big international open calls. It had just opened the Arte Lagune Prize at an official ceremony at the Arsenale in Venice, and was scheduled for Danse Élargie in June, the Paris-based award for live art pieces that expand and transcend the notions of dance.

Moving between contemporary dance, performance art, visual art and installation, *WRECK* is what its Italian-born, Brussels-based author calls an 'elastic performance'. This is not only a reference to the material of the large black balloon that looms over the audience and dancers for most of the show, but also to the flexibility contemporary artists have to acquire if they want to survive in an increasingly precarious job market in an age of austerity. Marullo manages to do just that, without artistic compromise.

The huge balloon slowly floats over the stage, revealing one by one a series of single naked human bodies in various positions, then groups of people fossilised in mid-action, as if interrupted by a major disaster. The black cloud allows us a series of glimpses into this 'list of extinct species' as the relationship between the bodies and the black mass slowly develops: the frozen bodies become active, start to resist, even manage to take control of the balloon, whose mechanism is revealed and whose single nether crevice is reminiscent of both a vagina that gives birth to the naked dancers, and a supermassive black hole that could suck the whole stage and audience into itself. If the programme notes refer to the balloon as a new Leviathan, its relationship with the dancers also makes us think of forthcoming natural disasters provoked by human-induced environmental destruction – or maybe it's the next financial crisis, threatening the frail stability of global neoliberal capitalism?

WRECK is certainly a perfect sale for various European festivals. Visually fascinating, open to interpretation and borrowing from various artistic disciplines, it is easy and inexpensive to transport (the balloon can probably fit in a backpack), can be adapted to various spaces and locations (theatres, galleries, outdoors), and performed by both the original professional dancers or local performers trained for a short period of time (in tune with the push for more engagement with local communities and art as social work). And it can be adjusted to different political and social contexts: for example, the dancers can be fully dressed in circumstances where the naked body might still cause a problem.

A smart, struggling artist using the disadvantages of the system to serve his own aims, Marullo shows it is possible to outwit the exploitative system that approaches artists as circulating products. Yet WRECK should also make us think: are less adaptable dance artists on the list of potentially endangered species? •

Director and choreographer: Pietro Marullo / Assistent: Noemi Knecht / Sound design: Jean-Noel Boisse / Light design: Julie Petite Etienne / Soft scultpure and costumes: Pietro Marullo & Bertrand Nodet / With: Helena Arraju, Adrien Desbon, Noemi Knecht, Paola Madrid, Anais Van Eycken, Paola Di Bella / Produced by: Insiemi Irreali Company / Coproduced by: Festival Internazionale Danza Oriente Occidente, Mart – Museo Di Arte Moderna E Contemporanea Di Trento Etrovereto, Théâtre Varia De Bruxelles, La Coop Asbl



Bausch rebooted
Veza Fernández
Wenn Auge Mund Wird

Photo © Sarah Sternat

Claire Lefèvre
16 July 2018

Vienna-based Veza Fernández refracts Bauschian Tanztheater through a contemporary prism

Tanztheater. This performance genre, once revolutionary and now classic, was developed by German choreographer Pina Bausch in the early 1970s. As a form, Tanztheater mixes dance and choreography with theatrical elements such as text, songs and acting, and moves away from a linear narrative to focus instead on interwoven scenes and images. Bausch famously said about her work: 'I'm not interested in how people move, but in what moves them.' So what moves us in 2018?

More than 40 years after Bausch's innovation, another woman proposes her own version of this hybrid genre. Like Bausch's rebellious punk daughter, Vienna-based **Veza Fernández** seems to have inherited a taste for spectacle, a courageous tendency to romanticism and emotional oversharing, as well as an undeniably kitsch and yet delicately beautiful sense of aesthetics.

References to Bausch's body of work are sincere and palpable in Fernández's Tanztheater, as if this traditionally German/Austrian theatre form had been resurrected through choreographic lineage. Indeed, Fernández says 'there are so many things that I find extremely interesting about Bausch's work, like the concrete that becomes universal, the poetics, the collages that make sense, the expressivity. All of it is relevant today – maybe not so common any more, but still relevant.' Yet her contemporary version of Tanztheater also marks a drastic departure from Bausch's, and it is this constant oscillation between referencing and updating which makes her recent *Wenn Auge Mund Wird* (*When Eye Becomes Mouth*) so fascinating.

The stage is covered with a sea of pastel tulle – reminiscent of Bausch's expansive sets that carpet the stage with a single material: soil in *Rite of Spring*, water in *Vollmond*. Bausch also loved flowers: witness the mountain of delicate crimson petals in *Der FensterPutzter* or the field of powdery pink carnations in Nelken. Fernández takes this vintage floral romanticism and catapults it into the 21st century: her flowers are made of plastic, and sprout from white lace panties. Dancers are transformed into colourful life-size bushes by being tied up in tulle. They wear pretty floral dresses but also ripped denim and leather boots. We are miles away from Bausch's Wuppertal and its ensemble of ballgowned, hair-whipping women.

Slightly reminiscent of Bausch's 1978 *Kontakthof*, in which twenty men and women in evening attire get in line to perform seductive gestures towards the audience, *Wenn Auge Mund Wird* also begins with a striking lineup: nine of the eleven performers hold hands, standing still, facing the audience. Their focus is turned inwards – in fact, all their eyes are covered by a variety of delicate headgear, from paper masks to glitter beanies to upside-down lace panties, so it's with their hands that they must explore, sense, touch. Eyes wide shut and ears wide open, they connect. Curious fingers palpate flesh, clutch pearls, stroke fur and caress skin, carefully feeling out the textures of one another's body and costumes.

> A radical contrast with Bausch's usual dualistic portrayal of gender

This delicate sensory start gives us time to become familiar with the cast, which is composed solely of women and non-binary performers – a radical contrast with Bausch's usual dualistic portrayal of gender. In *Kontakhof* for example, the entire piece portrays cis-gendered heterosexual men and women in opposition to each other, in a succession of quarelling and flirting scenes, always within the promise of (more or less consensual) sexual encounters.

Aesthetically and formally, Fernández 'wouldn't reject anything from Tanztheater' but she finds its 'strict separation of what it means to be a woman and a man rather problematic'. Here, she has chosen to work with individuals who can both challenge traditional gender roles as well as depict a wide landscape of possibilities. Queer people, non-binary individuals and hetero women share the stage, finding a common poetic language. Women are not defined in relation to a male counterpart, but rather build their own constellations. If patriarchy is at least in part what Sarah Ahmed describes as 'women as existing only in relation to men; women as female relatives'[1] then we see it deeply ingrained in Bausch's work where women – whether daughters, lovers or sacrificial virgins – are constantly portrayed in affiliation with men. By removing cis-gendered males from the equation, Fernández seems to escape this fatal polarity and allows for intimacy to replace opposition: her performers weave a hybrid somatic practice of togetherness. Thus binary power struggles are replaced with a deep sense of care and communion. 'I am fascinated with what happens when people engage with each other in relation to a vast theme or image,' says Fernández, 'when they become an extended version of each other.'

Furthermore, Fernández chose to challenge the 'representation of women as eternal victims' in Bausch's work in her own approach to Tanztheater. Channelling Riot Grrrl culture – a sub-cultural movement that combines feminist consciousness with punk style and politics – the performers show not an ounce of martyrdom. They are brutally soft,[2] defiantly loud, subtly provocative. Strumming electric guitars and shouting audacious melodies, the eleven sisters always seem to empower each other, as they literally dance to the beat of their own, live drums. 'Are we roses or flowers?' they chant, repeating the question like a feminist mantra or a poetic antifa ear-worm. 'Look at my tongue!' orders Marta Navaridas in a bilingual monologue, opening her mouth wide for the audience to watch her inside and out. Andrea Gunnlaugsdóttir, already in vertiginous stilettos, balances on the shoulders of Teresa Vitucci, still demanding: 'Make me higher, I should be more elevated!'

In Fernández's Tanztheater, patriarchal fairytales aren't just exposed and criticised, as in Bausch's interpretation of Blaubart, where women are pinned to the wall like a collection of dead butterflies; they are rewritten, transcripted for a new era. In 2018, not being male doesn't equate with being a damsel in distress and in *Wenn Auge Mund Wird*, the protagonists are also poets, negotiators, stand-up comedians and



Photo © Caroline Haberl

lovers. ‘Small, crooked, strong, covered in snow,’ we hear punk singer Denice Bourbon say, as she retells the story of a girl who was locked up for being too loud. But in this bone-chilling lullaby, little white houses do not forecast a naive happily-ever-after ending, and the protagonist of this story, who was turned into a block of ice, finally transforms into a deadly knife.

In celebrating the hybridity of the theatrical genre as well as that of the cast, Fernández and her performers manage to morph the traditional German form into a bold political statement upon gender and togetherness. In their hands – and in their bodies and their beings – Tanztheater becomes relevant, and timely. •

1. *Living a feminist life* by Sarah Ahmed
2. *salt* by Nayyirah Waheed



Miet Warlop, *Fruits of Labor*
Photo © Remi Angeli



Potsdamer Tanztage or 3 × 3 = 8

**When does 3 × 3 = 8?
When our Berlin Three
go to three performances
each at Potsdamer Tanztage**

David Pallant
Evgeny Borisenko
Annette van Zwoll
18 July 2018

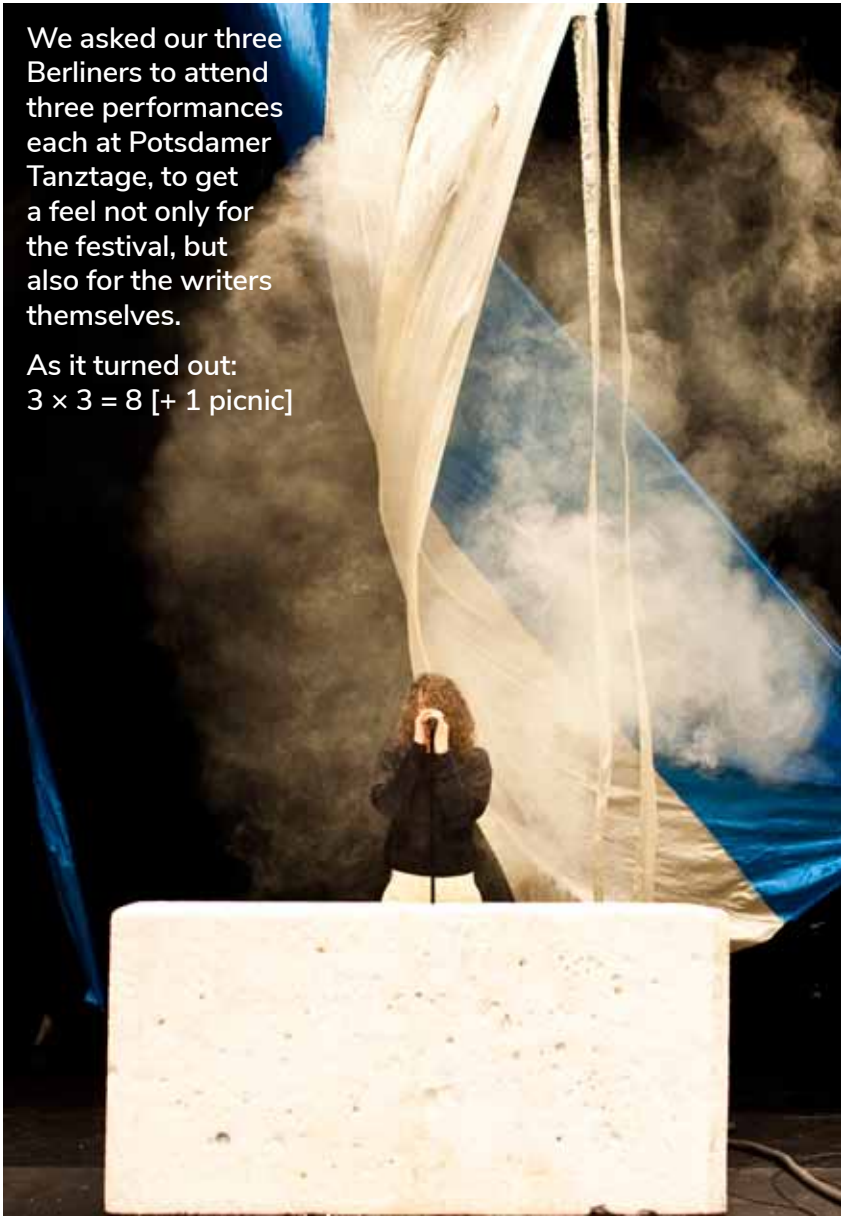


Photo © Remi Angeli

David Pallant

Friday 1 June, 19.30, fabrik Potsdam

As I enter **Miet Warlop**'s *Fruits of Labor*, I'm handed a pair of earplugs. Ominous or promising? The grunge music played by four musicians at the start is gentle enough, Warlop standing on a rotating disc at the back, a glittering catsuit transforming her into a human disco ball. But as the lights go up, all hell breaks loose. What follows is a raucous blend of high-concept rock concert, wacky performance art, and physical theatre parody. Think Spinal Tap meets Salvador Dalí. (If you're struggling to picture that, imagine trying to describe it.) The performers pelt us with a barrage of bizarre gems, aided by a truckload of props; a polystyrene block and set of drumsticks are put to particularly ingenious use. The 'band' exuberantly thrash out everything from screeching rock to melodramatic opera, grinning and gurning, using jets of coloured liquid to make an almighty mess of the stage. The technical trickery is impressive, but treated with a certain nonchalance as though, in this strange world, the normal rules of physics simply don't apply. Each fragment is compelling, yet fleeting – why, after all, spend too long on an idea, when five others are waiting eagerly in the wings? There are plenty of absurdist pieces around, but Warlop's extraordinary creativity elevates this above most.

Left: Miet Warlop, *Fruits of Labor*
Above right: Yasmeen Godder, *Simple Action*
Above far right: Louis Vanhaverbeke, *Multiverse*.



Photo © Tamar Lamm

Saturday 2 June, 18.00,
Kirche Am Neuendorfer Anger

For **Yasmeen Godder**'s *Simple Action*, I find myself in a draughty old church, audience sitting in a circle with the six performers. One stands, offers her hand to the man sitting next to me, and leads him to the centre. She murmurs something, they embrace, and she lowers him gently to the ground. And that's it: the eponymous simple action. An action which, in various roles and couples, we all execute at least once over the following hour. Set to Tomer Damsky's haunting voice, soaring over a drone produced by a sort of accordion-in-a-suitcase, it takes on a meditative, ritualistic quality, as we form a continuous loop of slowly crumpling bodies. As a dancer myself, the physical experience was less of a revelation, but watching the pleasure, discomfort, even liberation of my fellow audience members was fascinating. By intelligently dismantling traditional performer/audience dichotomies, Godder offers an authentically immersive, inclusive work with great power to touch.



Photo © William Vandervoort

Saturday 2 June, 19:30, T-Werk

Louis Vanhaverbeke's *Multiverse* is very much a one-man show. Vanhaverbeke sits rapping beside a ring of seemingly random household objects, his lyrics flitting between earnest and ironic. Running around his DIY henge, he grabs and disposes of items, building them into temporary structures, using them to act out theatrical vignettes. Portable record players provide a whimsical soundtrack, then serve as spinning cogs in precarious installations. The imaginative potential of normally functional objects is explored with a lightly-worn inventiveness that's easy to appreciate. However, at one point Vanhaverbeke gets lost amongst the props, and the focus of the piece blurs. Hints of pathos to his performance lead us to search for meaning, yet none emerges. His attempt to show the nuanced 'multi' nature of everything, engagingly unconstrained at first, becomes aimless. Multiverse's many stand-out moments shine brightly individually, but require a stronger centre of gravity to keep them in orbit.

A question for David

Evgeny: David, you've recently performed as a dancer in Potsdam yourself, and now you are here as a critic. Has your dance background influenced the way you watch, and conversely, has your newly grown critical eye informed the way you dance?

David: I would definitely say that I suffer from the same curse as many dancers, which is that it's sometimes difficult to enjoy dance performances on an instinctive level – you end up fixating on the movement in a way which makes it harder to just be swept along by the work as a whole. Perhaps counterintuitively, attending performances as a critic has helped me move away from that: when you know you have to communicate what you've seen and felt to other people, you have no choice but to see and feel things more fully. As for my work as a dancer, it still feels quite separate from my critical writing. Let's say that performing resides in the subjective side of my brain, and dance criticism in the objective. They're neighbours but, for now, there's not much community spirit.



Photo © Bora Arts

Above: Bora Kim, *Tail Language*
Right: Manuel Roque, *Bang Bang*
Far right: Martine Pisani, *Undated*

Evgeny Borisenko

Tuesday 5 June, 19:30, fabrik Potsdam

This slightly unbalanced yet imaginative double bill by Bora Kim Dance Company starts with a mesmerising solo performed by **Bora Kim** herself. *A Long Talk to Oneself* is a powerful dedication to the choreographer's grandmother, supported by an intimate video by Jae-Hyung Joo and Antony Hegarty's vibrant rendition of 'Knocking on Heaven's Door'. Dimly lit and clad in a beige, paper-textured leotard, Kim slowly slides to a statuesque mike stand, where she attempts a speech. But no sound comes from her stiff lips, only slimy liquid that drips onto her shivering tendril-like limbs as she executes her dark, fragile confession. In this short and graceful solo, Kim's charming fragility meets her compelling dramaturgical skills to astounding effect. The second piece, *Tail Language*, certainly seems weak in comparison. An eight-strong team of dancers languidly perform odd animal movements to a bombastic violin-fuelled music score. They interact with white sculptures set on a white dance carpet, which also waxes into a sculpture at the end. This overblown take on 'wild world' choreography offers a wide range of conventional but nonetheless crowd-pleasing moments: how one could not like the serpentine of waltzing spectres, scathing silhouettes, and weeping music? But this show severely lacks any motive, and leaves the audience craving something more.

> **Roque is a commanding crowd pleaser. And he knows it!**



Photo © Marilene Bastien

Thursday 7 June, 19:30, T-Werk

Vigour, repetitive stomping, endurance, clever use of light and music – **Manuel Roque** delivers a crowd-pleasing and somehow predictable solo in *Bang Bang*. He is an able dancer, and showcases his skills perfectly, rhythmically punching the stage with his feet, jumping, jogging and literally swirling around the stage space. He further breaks the pace with hasty runs, heavy-breathed surrenders and embracing run-arounds, as if the stage were too small for all his jumping and bang-banging. His physical resistance and endurance are admirable, and the piece is set to a very likeable yet random music selection: Debussy, Chopin and minimal house. But what is the purpose of this jumping routine, of Roque's sweaty display of endurance? Roque fails to outstrip his own self-evident choreography. To strive for a powerful message while being held back by one's own actions is a trap into which many have fallen. Roque may be no exception, but he is a commanding crowd pleaser. And he knows it!



Photo © Margarida Ribeiro

Thursday 7 June, 21:00, fabrik Potsdam

Imagine you're a choreographer with a dozen pieces behind you. Wouldn't you want to put them all together, gather all your former and current dancers and play a game? **Martine Pisani**'s *Undated* plays this parlour game with her ten dancers to a hermetic result – with an empty white stage, colourful street wear and silence as a backdrop. Performers exchange small papers with, one might guess, indications to repeat a gesture from one of Pisani's previous pieces. The show begins. Or rather, a spare hour-long scenario put on stage with a remarkable economy of means. The dancers exchange friendly taps, push each other, execute short runs, and seem to be quite happy and enthusiastic before the baffled Potsdam crowd. This self-indulgent surrealistic parade is as joyful to watch as an 'exquisite corpse' game played on stage. The patchwork of funny gestures and stand-up poses may well be reminiscent of Pisani's always intricate and demanding œuvre. But if we are not her die-hard fans, what can we take from it other than a nonchalant refreshment, however welcome in the Potsdam summer heat?

A question for Evgeny

Annette: Evgeny, you recently started working professionally as a critic in the dance field, alongside your career as a human rights lawyer. Do you find similarities in the way you approach art and law? How do they complement each other?

Evgeny: It's true that my professional legal writing has mainly consisted of words like 'necessary in democratic society' or 'proportionate to the legitimate aim pursued'. First, I found it amusing to keep this cold logical approach to dance performances. I was then surprised to find out that many good shows are in fact dissectible in this way, which probably means that they were imagined with the same tools with which an attorney drafts a brief. Now I'm trying to be a spectator rather than a judge in my reviews, however difficult that may be. And certainly, shows which blow away my rationalist hat, and take me aback instead of reassuring me in my judging and reviewing capacities, help a lot.



Clément Dazin/
La Main de L'Homme:
Humanoptère
Photo © Dan Ramaen

Annette van Zwoll

Saturday 9 June, 15.00, on the banks of the Tiefer See

It's a sultry summer day when I make my way to the former factory where the Potsdamer Tanztage is based. I arrive early, lay out a blanket and enjoy a picnic and a little nap by the waters of the Tiefer See – only to find that that the performance I was planning to see is being presented on the other side of town. And that's how I miss Begüm Erciyas's Voicing Pieces, a 'journey to the world of resonance'. Oops!

Saturday 9 June, 19.00, T-Werk

I do make it to **1.7,** by Hungarian **Zsuzsa Rózsavölgyi**. *1.7* is the current birth rate in Europe, and with this decreasing number in mind Rózsavölgyi explores femininity in contemporary society. When we enter she is fully covered with long, satin cloth, reminding me variously of a ghost, a burka and a priest. The cloth is peeled off, revealing a refreshingly recognisable female body, with a slightly flabby belly and strong thighs. Naked, she sits on hands and knees and sweeps her long brown hair in circles on the ground. The supporting song is by a man extolling the natural beauty of black girls' hair: 'Let my fingers run through your natural hair.' 'NO', I want to shout. 'Black girls (or any others) don't need to be empowered by men glorifying their beauty. NOO, beauty is not the core of their existence and NOOO, you cannot run your fingers through their hair because it's theirs and you don't have any ownership of it!' The piece works best when Rózsavölgyi keeps it close to home. We see how online Hungarian 'information' on abortion spreads lies about death rates, diseases and more. The most confrontational moment is when she confides her part in keeping the birth rate low. She tells us about her abortion. She tells us about her second abortion. And she tells us about her third abortion. And I can't help but think: can't you just use some birth control?! Then: 'NOOOO, it's her body. I don't have any ownership of it!'

Saturday 9 June, 20.30, fabrik Potsdam

Humanoptère by **Clément Dazin/ La Main de L'Homme** starts with six men waving in the wind, like grain, moving diagonally in darkish blue light. The sound of wind and thunder brings an exciting atmosphere, but on stage all is serenity. The six break up, each finding a spot to sit on their knees. They take out juggling balls and rhythmically repeat an energising phrase. It's an enticing and poetic start but it doesn't hold up. The soundtrack and light design are consistent and thought-through, but the presentation of bodies is not. After the abstract start, the piece disintegrates: some of the performers fall into comedy, others try to act, while others keep a certain abstraction or communicate with symbolic gestures. The juggling continues to fascinate, and that is where the strength of the performance lies. But the lack of focus doesn't bring the core of this performance to its full realisation. •

A question for Annette

David: Annette, you work a lot with dance in a professional capacity, as a dramaturge, project initiator, programmer, text writer etc but the performances you saw in Potsdam also provoked a very personal reaction. Do you consciously decide how much distance (or not) you take from a work, or is it something instinctive? Does it change depending on the role in which you watch it?

Annette: It's a conscious and political choice to be personal. On the one hand my writing is a method of disrupting the claim of neutrality of a critic (that in our context is usually a white, highly educated and therefore very specific voice). On the other hand, I find reflecting on myself as well as the performance as an insightful way of laying bare certain blind spots and mechanisms we – me included – all fall into. The acknowledgement of discrepancies between certain responses and emotions and our value systems can trigger us to define what we really stand for.

Danse Élargie 2018: Big opportunities, bigger ambition

Anna Chirescu
20 July 2018

Beatboxing, b-boys, a beach and a balloon expand our concept of 'dance' in the fifth edition of the multi-disciplinary choreographic competition

Théâtre de la Ville, Paris, France



Kwame Asafo Adjei's *Family Honour*.
Photo © Laurent Philippe

Since 2010, Danse Élargie, a Paris-based biennial international competition 'open to artists from all disciplines', has fostered young artists and springboarded its winners to bigger stages and networks, and greater recognition. Co-founded by the Musée de la Danse – National Choreographic Centre in Rennes, and Théâtre de la Ville in Paris, Danse Élargie was created to push the boundaries of dance performance, inviting other disciplines to join the field and mingle, embodying an expanded (*élargie*) vision of dance.

Over its five editions, Danse Élargie has become something of a benchmark for multi-disciplinary performance and collaboration. It is a trial by fire for the artists invited to perform at Théâtre de la Ville before international jury members, with a packed audience who are free to stay or leave throughout the day.

The rules are simple: applicants must propose an original piece, not longer than 10 minutes and with at least three performers. This year there were 460 applications from 70 countries, with 18 selected for the first round, and 10 for the second day. The final pieces showcased some intricate hybridisations of movements and styles, especially by a new generation of urban dance choreographers.

Danse Élargie 2018: top three prizewinners

Family Honour, a hip hop theatre piece inspired by the personal story of British artist **Kwame Asafo-Adjei**, which garnered enthusiasm from a moved audience won first prize. The piece throws us into a tense atmosphere: a couple sitting on each side of a table start a virulent dialogue of sharp and precise motions enhanced by organic sound, and emphasised by a barely lit beatboxer. Soon other dancers, all dressed in black, join them. Their silhouettes manipulate the central duet as if they were puppeteers. Individual images come across (family, prisons, visiting area, fights) and the interweaving of story with dance, sound and lighting make for a cinematic experience. *Family Honour* is performed by breathtaking movers, jolting, twitching, bursting in space, telling what reads as a violent story.

Second on the podium was *MUR/MER* by French-Belgian artist **Elsa Chêne**, with a completely different aesthetic. The stage slowly fills with people with commonplace beach gear: flip-flops, inflatable toys, towels and swimsuits. As if weighed down by the heat, they take their place on stage in a lethargic manner, all turned away to face the horizon in the shape of a dully lit scrim. But the idleness of vacation grows imperceptibly awkward. As the stage fills with more performers, some of them slowly curl up and twist into disturbing positions.

The calm and peaceful horizon transforms into a destroying sea, ejecting wreckage and bodies onto the stage. Subtly thought-provoking, *MUR/MER* (which translates as 'wall/sea') echoes the murmur of the sea and its devastating promise for many migrants, a topic more important than ever.

Third prize went to French artist **Ousmane Sy** and his crew of seven skilled female hip hop dancers who literally took over the crowd. Conceived as a celebration of female hip hop, *Queen Blood* introduces a group of Amazonian dancers, pushing the borders of their own physical limits, challenging the audience, moving to stirring music. Sy shows here the unique choreographic language he has developed over the years: a mix of house and Afro-house styles, enhanced by the personal touch of his performers. It was an undeniable public success, winning both the third prize and the technicians prize after it received huge applause and transformed the room into a dance floor.

Danse Élargie 2018: also watch out for

Perhaps the judges made too obvious a choice with this crowd-pleaser, yet their top three were certainly very contrasting pieces. Still, I regret that *Apaches*, by star French b-boy **Saïdo Lehlouh** won neither the jury's nor public's favour. *Apaches*' stunning hip-hop performers, moving in a constellation-like format, was exquisite and a change from the usual battle space of breaking.

Among other finalists worth mentioning were the visually impressive *WRECK: List of extinct species* by Italian **Pietro Marullo**, its astounding black balloon creating captivating moments; the mesmerising spiral of running naked bodies in *All-physical poem of protest* by Norwegian **Mia Habib**; and the more conceptual *France-Croatie* by **Natacha Steck**, a dance-theatre story of a football game told through haka-like movements which, though inspired by the 1998 World Cup semifinal, also – should we have betted? – prefigured the 2018 finalists by a full month.

Danse Élargie once again served as a vital platform for experimentation and artistic statement. Its deliberate nurturing of group pieces is particularly valuable in a landscape too often dominated by solos and duets, presumably due to lack of funds. With generous cash prizes (from €1500 to €15,000) that can buoy emerging careers, touring opportunities and the promise of visibility from a wide network of professionals, Danse Élargie has become a reference point in the artistic calendar. Bold ideas defended with fervour, cadenced by the cheers of the audience and a final performance, called Crash Test and featuring all the participants, also make this a one-of-a-kind event, where the stage atmosphere expands to fill the whole theatre – and beyond – with an enlarged spirit of collective collaboration. •



MUR/MER by French-Belgian artist Elsa Chêne. Photo © Laurent Philippe

> **Nurturing group pieces is particularly valuable in a landscape dominated by solos and duets**

Gisèle Vienne: Crowd

Evgeny Borisenko
24 July 2018

Is dance raving mad to look to the rave scene for inspiration?

Volksbühne, Berlin, Germany.
Reviewed: 15 June 2018

Choreography, costumes and set design: Gisèle Vienne / Light: Patrick Riou / Dramaturgy: Gisèle Vienne and Dennis Cooper / Edits and playlist selection: Peter Rehberg / Sound diffusion supervisor: Stephen O'Malley / Production and touring: DACM, Alma Office, Anne-Lise Gobin, Alix Sarrade and Camille Queval / Administration: Etienne Hunsinger

Imagine an open-field rave party: empty beer cans and plastic bags scattered in mud, stomping beats mingling with irregular light strobes. The crowd partying as if this night were their last. The rave is a treasure trove of uncanny dance sequences and anarchic power, which contemporary dance has too long left unexplored. But instead of celebrating the unifying spirit of rave, in Crowd, Gisèle Vienne explores the hallucinatory violence underlying the throbbing communion.

Fifteen sporty dancers clad in colourful bomber jackets and t-shirts haltingly progress onto the stage, defying the hasty beats of the deep techno tracks. The ritual begins straight away with cautious sidekicks, GIF-stuttering repetitive holds and brutal twirls, all inspired by the rich vocabulary of club dance. But there is a darkness to this feast, as if this is the last party before a post-apocalyptic hangover.

The dancers each have a character and a personality, but they all fuse in a long common pulsating revelation: sacrifices, hook-ups, farewells. Stories vibrate and bodies shiver, but none of it brings affection: kisses are refused, caresses seem unclaimed, kicks are deliberate, beer bursts into the mud that carpets the stage. Just as in Vienne's previous works which explore rape, scathing cruelty and child abuse, the implicit violence surfaces. Vienne is a master of Hollywood-scale theatricality (a foggy forest in *This Is How You Will*



Photo© Mathilde Darel

Disappear, a huge spaceship lighting tube in *The Pyre*, or a snowstormed rock gig in *Kindertotenlieder*), but here she excels at hypnotising the audience with as little as a blurred rhythmic deviation: Peter Rehberg's careful selection of speedy 90s techno anthems, spanning from Underground Resistance to Jeff Mills, is set against slow undulations, frozen tableaux and liquid duos. The roaring rhythm is set aside, and relationships are obliquely suggested. Dancers quell their agencies only to explode into frenetic solos and languid duos. Despite the superfluous darkish glitter reminiscent of her earlier works, and tongue-in-cheek spiritual allusions, with *Crowd* Vienne offers a sparkling show full of gloomy frenzy and candour. Her masterful consecration of revelry and splendour is a fierce rollercoaster – you'd better fasten your seatbelts.

The bottom line: A rave in a time of plague, the heart of darkness is beating on the dancefloor

Rocío Molina: Grito Pelao

Clàudia Brufau
30 July 2018

They say that Mother knows best, but does she know how to turn that into a performance?

Teatre Grec, Barcelona, Spain.
Reviewed: 24 July 2018.

Original concept: Rocío Molina / Art direction: Carlos Marquerie, Rocío Molina, Sílvia Pérez Cruz Dramaturgy: Carlos Marquerie / Choreography: Rocío Molina / Musical concept: Sílvia Pérez Cruz / Music and lyrics: Sílvia Pérez Cruz / Flamenco composition: Eduardo Trassierra / Sound space design: Carlos Gárate / Stage space: Carlos Marquerie (concept and sketches) / Antonio Serrano (design and materials), David Benito (animation and visual projections) / Lighting design: Carlos Marquerie / Assistant to the director and choreographer: Elena Córdoba / Costume design: Cecilia Molano / Costume assistance: Esmeralda Dias, Emilia Ecay

'My baby is the size of a mango now,' remarks an amused Rocío Molina. 'I have an app that compares the foetus to food.' The iconoclast *bailaora* (flamenco dancer) confides that she has longed to become a mother and eventually became pregnant through IVF on 28 March 2018. Premiering at the Festival d'Avignon, when the foetus was the size of an avocado, *Grito Pelao* (bare cry) is an ephemeral show that will die when Molina gives birth. It delves into her pregnant body to reveal intimate fears, doubts and, above all, yearning.

The spectacle – open-air in Barcelona, as at Avignon – begins with Molina on a chair touching her belly, wrapped by the sound of a heartbeat, as if in a womb. Next to her a small pool shines, and upstage a foetal echocardiogram is projected onto the giant rock of the Montjuïc hill behind. From this allegorical scene the show unfolds into a personal journal: it becomes a casual sequence of anecdotes, dialogue, *baile* (flamenco dance) and live music braided with a flawed and shallow dramaturgy.



Photo © Christophe Raynaud DeLage

Catalan singer Sílvia Pérez Cruz wavers between caring midwife and narrator roles, whilst the petite figure of amateur dancer Lola Cruz, Molina's mother, brings an adorable fresh air to the stage. The stark contrast between Molina and Pérez Cruz's energies can be electrifying; Molina's Iberian dynamism bursts into flaming zapateados; the singer's supple Mediterranean voice and languid presence spread like cream. But all too often, they break this spell when they talk or when they engage in unfunny gags.

This feminine collaboration triggers gripping images, yet the absence of the father figure sourly throbs throughout the performance – the singer serenades us with Sylvia Plath's poem 'For a fatherless son', before she and Molina melt and sink to the floor. The bailaora and her mother cuddle, their bodies sculpting an endearing inverted pietà. Long anticipated, Molina finally dips naked into the pool.

In this overly stretched performance, Molina's tale gets lost in self-absorption, as if her yearning holds her back from moulding individual desire into a universal cry.

The bottom line: When does a personal story become universal and when is it the perfect subject for a TV talk show?



Taneli Törmä: COVER – A symphonic poem in three movements

Riikka Laakso
16 August 2018

A merger of choreography and sound installation, Finnish artist Taneli Törmä's COVER sensitively explores the kinaesthetic experience of sound

Photo © Morten Arnfred

How to choreograph sound? Finnish artist Taneli Törmä faces the question in *COVER*, a triptych exploring the kinaesthetic experience of sound through space, costume and music.

The first composition is performed by 48 valves controlling drops of water, an idea developed with scenographer Kasper Hansen, constructed and composed by Søren Lyngsø Knudsen. A solitary dribble drums the floor, creating a rhythmic baseline for other trickles, each with a unique intensity. The empty room transforms into a sound box: from a chaotic bebop into a massive symphony, where sudden synchronizations evoke certain satisfaction. Our ears become sensitised to nuances – a knocking or hollowness when water reaches the linoleum – that awaken sonic memories guarded in our bodies, in my case recalling rainy days from my childhood.

Törmä begins the second movement striking a noble pose on the floor in a costume by Sophie Bellin-Hansen: a golden leotard covered with 212 bells – huge jingle bells, brass bells, old-fashioned cowbells. The armour transforms his body into an instrument that reacts to both voluntary and involuntary gestures, to inner and outer movements. A deep breath causes a tiny tinkle, while a single muscle tensing initiates a wave of tintinnabulations. During a controlled butoh-like sequence, all motion is perceptible for the ear: movement made audible. This sound installation plays with chance, gravity and movement, like a John Cage inspired 'prepared body'.

In the third scene, we sit comfortably on the floor in a penumbra of intimate lightning by Petri Tuhkanen. As musician Laura Folch caresses her cello strings, at times releasing a note or two, a hypnotic conversation develops between the instrument's and musician's body. The real-time playing is reproduced by 10 speakers placed in a circle around the audience, forming an orchestra that sound designer Esa Mattila conducts. Sequences appear and disappear like unruly echoes seeking to extend the notes' passing existence. The sound travels creating a turbulence, ocean waves, a floating without gravity, a balsamic lullaby. Enchanted by these siren calls, many of us closed our eyes, becoming absorbed in the experience without needing to think or understand. And isn't that just what many creators of abstract or extended choreography desire?

The bottom line: Extending the choreography into sound: a vibrating performer, a sincere collaborator, an intense presence that soaks through the skin.

Teater Momentum, Odense, Denmark.
Reviewed 4 August 2018.

Artistic direction, concept and choreography: Taneli Törmä / Concept, scenography and costume design (part 1 and 2): Kasper Hansen / Composition and technical solutions (part 1): Søren Lyngsø Knudsen / Costume (part 1): Sophie Bellin-Hansen / Cello: Laura Folch / Concept and sound space design (part 3): Esa Mattila / Lighting design: Petri Tuhkanen

Jo Bannon: We Are F*cked

Anna Kaszuba
07 September 2018

Doubt and disturbance come to a climax in Jo Bannon's powerfully penetrating performance



Photo © Paul Samuel White

There's something wrong.

Three women are insouciantly occupied with a measuring tape, a roll of cable and a vacuum cleaner – but there's a hum to this humdrum. A barely audible background hum that rises and falls. More unnervingly, there's the rattling of those bodies and props quietly shaking: subtle, small and rhythmic, as though releasing spores of timeless female grievances into the air. I can't decipher if it's the sound of a neighbour's lovemaking – headboard gently knocking on the wall – or some mounting fury that might culminate in a public uprising.

Either way, the sense of voyeurism or discomfort cuts unassumingly yet painfully in **Jo Bannon**'s *We are F*cked*, exploring 'personal, psychological and political penetration'. Bristol-based Bannon, a founder member of the artists' collective Residence, probes the question with an unobtrusive yet powerful female energy often overlooked in our society. 'This is what's happening,' she seems to say. 'Are you okay with that?'

Am I? Doubt pricks me, and this feels like the worst violator of all. Periodically, I question my intuitive responses to the action on stage, my confidence becoming weaker as the performers look on with indifference. Should I enjoy watching the tape measure lengthen to a point of climax, before it falls flaccidly over and over; or fear being hurt when a cable reel is swung violently around? Should I snigger at the vacuum cleaner's passionate love-bites? Recoil from the performers' piercing screams?

The piece's crescendo, an ethereal cacophony of women's tones interrupted by the physical jangling of their throats, is both disarming and disturbing as they attempt to be understood. Until one clear voice rings out loud – peaking, at last, in a way that feels right.

The bottom line: If We Are F*d, then let's take pleasure in being on top.

Arnolfini, Bristol, UK.
Reviewed: 1 September 2018

Artist: Jo Bannon / Performers: Rosana Cade, Louise Ahl/ Dramaturg: Nic Green / Outside eye: Sue Palmer / Sound design Yas Clarke / Lighting design: Jo Palmer / Production manager: Mark Munday / Mentor: Claire Cunningham / Producer: Mayk / Audio description: Rationale Productions / Captioning: Talking Birds

[8:tension] at ImPulsTanz Vienna 2018

Claire Lefèvre
08 September 2018

The [8:tension] choreography platform: don't expect the new to be comfortable

First created in 2001, the [8:tension] Young Choreographers' Series has since become a staple of ImPulsTanz's colossal summer programme. Every year, up to 12 dance makers are hand-picked by a curatorial team with the aim of highlighting new formats and offering fresh perspectives on the field of contemporary dance. The emerging artists perform twice each, and all are nominated for the ImPulsTanz Young Choreographers' Award.

This year's winner was *B.B.* by **Ofelia Jarl Ortega** (Sweden), a multi-faceted duet exploring the eroticised young female as a queer figure. The jury (Johann Ebert, Lisa Hinterreithner and Astrid Kaminski) celebrated her 'exploration of viewing habits and undertaking of the power dynamics of seeing and being seen', which they qualified as 'subtle, critically affirmative and ambiguously self-confident'.[1] Ortega does indeed challenge our gaze, stretching the timing – and at times our thinning patience – as she and Alexandra Tveit grind languorously to Patrik Patsy Lassbo's music, in self-defined sexualisation. The choreographic stance here is clearly audacious, banking on the provocative movement material – a valid way to confront the viewers. While the purpose of Ortega's piece is to challenge the viewers instead of pleasing them, this statement-making approach makes it difficult for the audience to stay engaged.

Indeed, several of the selected works are provoking and at times tedious, but this may be an inevitable by-product of inventing new forms of performance: the unknown is not comfortable. Curators Christine Standfest and Michael Stohlhofer are conscious of this, seeing themselves as mediators between the artworks and the audience. Rather than choose works that the audience will surely like, they aim to convince the public of their relevance, and look for proposals that say to them: 'I wouldn't know about this if it weren't for this show'.[2] And indeed some works undeniably gave the uncanny feeling of experiencing something truly unique.

I ride in colours and soft focus, no longer anywhere by British maker **Jamila Johnson-Small** is a stark example of this bold curatorial approach: the piece is an overload of the senses, a pluri-disciplinary take on 'noise over silence, now over yesterday and pleasure over doing it right'.[3] Johnson-Small's music tracks are all originals with her own vocals, while she also dips into visual arts, working with objects and astonishing video work, juxtaposed with intricately crafted dances. She clones her silhouette on screen, reinventing herself over and over again. She keeps with this kaleidoscopic tactic as three female acolytes then join her in a softly joyful whacking rave, or by inviting the audience to accompany her on stage. It is ambitious and complex, and frankly does not make our life easy as viewers – but why

should it? If I wanted a safely entertaining evening, there are plenty of (pre)historical crowd-pleasers programmed in the festival.

Still, in the midst of the biggest dance festival in Europe, a certain viewer's fatigue can creep in, which is perhaps why stricter formats such as lecture-performances seem to offer a pleasing respite to the public. Two outstanding examples of the genre were created by **Silke Huysmans & Hannes Dereere** (Belgium) and Jaha Koo (Korea), both of which discuss catastrophic events. In *Mining Stories* Huysmans and Dereere give a platform to plural perspectives on a singular topic – the 2015 Minas Gerais mining disaster in Brazil – and show what being strong allies to a cause might look like in a performance context.

Using her body and an ingenious installation of loop pedals and video-projected surtitles, Huysmans becomes the metronome and prism through which to orchestrate imaginary conversations between several protagonists – the real virtuosity here perhaps being her standing alone on stage and yet not making the drama about herself.

Jaha Koo's *Cuckoo* on the other hand is absolutely autobiographical: a solo with three rice pressure-cookers that tells the story of the 1998 Korean economic crisis and its ramifications, which he cleverly subtitles as 'a society under pressure'. Koo weaves personal memories of the time with the country's fate via video and audio archive material: a recollection of his grandmother putting a plastic bag on his

> **It does not make our life easy as viewers – but why should it?**



Challenging the gaze – and at times our patience. Ofelia Jarl Ortega and Alexandra Tveit in *B.B.*

Photo © Karolina Miernik



Photo © Palais de Tokyo/Atelier Diptik

Human ventilators on wheels:
Alex Baczynski-Jenkins's *Us Swerve*

head before leaving the house to protect him from teargas, is layered with images of street riots. The Cuckoos – staple rice cooking appliances in Korean kitchens – also discuss the crisis (with subtitles), philosophically debating happiness algorithms, or revolting against 'white American bullshit'. Koo is masterful at giving the right weight to his sensitive topic: it's bleak but humorous, simple but efficient, and most of all full of information but easy to digest. Like well cooked rice.

Finally, in the blazing heat of Vienna's summer, there was an undeniable sensual pleasure in sitting on a cold concrete floor to watch the three performers of *Us Swerve* swirl across the room on rollerblades, brushing past us like human ventilators on wheels. As they embark on this three-hour epic by 2018 Frieze Artist Award winner **Alex Baczynski-Jenkins** (UK/Poland), we settle into the repetitive format of the work and let our ears tune in to their voices, murmuring fragments of poetry to each other. Words are tasted and reciprocated, sentences reconstructed, morphing over and over again, in a playful interpretation of poems by Eileen Myles and Langston Hughes, among others. Like siblings or lovers able to finish each other's sentences, the skating performers invite us into a (safe-)space of 'friendship, desire and queer alliance'.[4]

If [8:tension] is in fact an accurate representation of the future of choreography, then the next generation of makers is most definitely in touch with their times: the works are complex, thoughtful and queer, with an urgent search for alliance, pleasure and pluralities of perspective. Something to look forward to. •

1. Jury statement by Johann Ebert, Lisa Hinterreithner and Astrid Kaminski.
2. Christine Standfest and Michael Stohlhofer in conversation with ATLAS participants. Special thanks to Philippe Riera for the invitation to join the meeting.
3. Jamila Johnson-Small, programme notes.
4. Alex Baczynski-Jenkins in conversation with Kathy Noble for Kaleidoscope Magazine 29, Spring 2017.

Rosas: The Six Brandenburg Concertos

Evgeny Borisenko
14 September 2018

A workbook choreographic exercise builds to an exhilarating finale in De Keersmaeker's Six Brandenburg Concertos

Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker's works have often been labelled both challenging and compelling, both brainy and dramatic. Yet the surprisingly straightforward *Six Brandenburg Concertos* (her fifth piece to music by J.S. Bach, aptly premiered in Berlin) proves to be – until its jaw-dropping final scenes – an uneven and at times laborious take on one of Bach's most luminous œuvres. Led from the pit by B'Rock Orchestra conducted by Amandine Beyer (already present on stage in De Keersmaeker's *Partita 2*), the work is rigorously divided into six parts, separated by silent interludes. The feel is methodical, as if De Keersmaeker's workbooks have been voluntarily left wide open.

The piece opens with sixteen dancers, in black against the pastel-lit stage, solemnly marching back and forth on the bass line of the First Concerto. Suddenly the minuet pace breaks, each dancer now embodying an instrument, a chord progression: notes turn into twists and cursory stumbles, arpeggios into gracious twirls with arms aloft. Vibrant solos and odd polyphonic scenes ensue and, rather randomly, a leashed dog appears on stage to the sounds of hunting horns. This piece does not want



you to crack any codes, but instead simply flows nonchalantly through zigzags and circular step patterns, skilfully illustrating the harmonies of each concerto. Short pauses between them are stamped with memorable shadowy solos reminiscent of De Keersmaeker's earlier works, and gently build the show towards its catharsis.

The Fifth Concerto's unabated virtuosity swiftly explodes the otherwise arduous display of controlled refinement: Thomas Vantuycom's unfeigned solo to the harpischord cadenza, coming right after three other dancers' violin-fuelled dramatic whirlwind, leaves the audience breathless. De Keersmaeker reaches dizzying heights in the last scenes, when the sixteen dancers reinvent the marching progression from the First Concerto in the dazzling finale, shortly before rushing off stage – and suddenly, her edifying method gains all its significance, and all its emotional force.

The bottom line: In the end, De Keersmaeker's workbook studies of Bach's harmonies come off the page with a bang.

Volksbühne Berlin, Germany. Reviewed 12 September 2018 (world premiere)

Choreography: Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker / Music director: Amandine Beyer / Musicians: B'Rock Orchestra / Created with and danced by: Boštjan Antončič, Carlos Garbin, Frank Gizycki, Marie Goudot, Robin Haghi, Cynthia Loemij, Mark Lorimer, Michaël Pomero, Jason Respilieux, Igor Shyshko, Luka Švajda, Jakub Truszkowski, Thomas Vantuycom, Samantha van Wissen, Sandy Williams, Sue Yeon Youn / Music: Johann Sebastian Bach, the Brandenburg Concertos, BWV 1046–1051 / Costumes: An D'Huys / Set and lighting design: Jan Versweyveld / Dramaturgy: Jan Vandenhouwe / Musical advice: Kees van Houten

Photo © Anne Van Aerschot



Michikazu Matsune: All Together

Claire Lefèvre
20 September 2018

Recollection, reflection and re-enactment make for a memorable evening in Michikazu Matsune's piece about people both present and absent

Schauspielhaus, Vienna, Austria.
Reviewed: 10 August 2018

Concept & Artistic direction: Michikazu Matsune / Performance: Michikazu Matsune, Frans Poelstra, Elizabeth Ward / Rehearsal assistance & Feedback: Dorothea Zeyringer / Supported by the Cultural Department of the City of Vienna/MA7

The artist is present. The art is about those who aren't. In Michikazu Matsune's new work *All Together*, the Vienna-based Japanese choreographer, joined on stage by Elizabeth Ward and Frans Poelstra, deals with absence, encounters and remembrance.

MAYA, RUBY, TONYA: names are projected onto the back wall as the performers discuss who these people are and why they couldn't make it to the show. In Matsune's signature minimalist style, the rules are crystal clear, leaving space for humorous details and nostalgic anecdotes to emerge out of the simple structure. The dry architecture of the work is sprinkled with goofy dances and casual chatter to keep things flowing easily.

With each new name, we gain a piece of information about the story-tellers, and as the recollections get gradually more vivid, including mimicking gestures and imitating voices, the revelations also get more intimate. Childhood friends, family members and estranged lovers are remembered, but so too are random strangers and art world celebrities. Biographical stories meet obituaries in a meticulous exploration of togetherness, or perhaps a new form of yellow pages poetry. Eventually the performers' own names appear on the screen: they recall their first meetings (Matsune shares his impressions when seeing Frans dance naked 14 years ago on that exact same stage, while Poelstra re-enacts the nude solo), their mid-life crises and philosophical beliefs (they all



Photo © Maximillian Pramatarov

join Elizabeth in her techno-witch-ballet practice) and quirky individual ways of thinking (Michikazu eats a burger and proceeds to skip around the stage, suggesting we imagine it bouncing around the room in his body).

As they call out names to see who's around in the audience ('Do we have an Andrea in the room?'), we are invited into the web of connection they weave between themselves, those who are here, and those who aren't.

The bottom line: Bouncing burgers and absent protagonists: this is a minimalist ode to the invisible.

Les Brigittines International Festival 2018

Oonagh Duckworth
Francesca Pinder
Yasen Vasilev
25 September 2018

Contrasting takeaways at Les Brigittines, Brussels, reflect the genre-crossing styles of the festival itself

Les Brigittines, Brussels, Belgium.
17 August – 1 September 2018

Salva Sanchis: Radical Light

Oonagh Duckworth

I've come to trust my own internal lie detector: shivers run though me and the hairs on my arms stand up if what I'm watching is really doing it for me. Salva Sanchis's *Radical Light* provoked one such moment of truth.

They say that once you let up on something you've been grafting away at, things slip into place. At his own admission, Sanchis has been taking work very seriously for the last two decades, and *Radical Light* was announced as his swansong. The idea of combining his musical, structural and improvisational acumen with the pleasure of getting-on-down on the dance-floor came to him while listening to the Red Hot Chili Peppers. The resulting fine-tuned marvel has five dazzling dancers, one woman and four men including Sanchis himself, immersing us in movement generated and synchronised through a choreographic version of Chinese Whispers, on 120 beat-per-minute electro score. We are in communion with their action for the whole hour: the piece confirms how wonderful abstract dance can be.



Photo © Bart Grietens

Salva Sanchis, *Radical Light*:
How wonderful abstract dance can be



Photo © Elina Giounanli_



Photo © Arne Hauge

> **Is all this cluttered stash just flash?**

Euripides Laskaridis: Titans

Francesca Pinder

'Choreographer' in Greek literally means 'writer of dance'. In Euripides Laskaridis' *Titans*, 'writer of space' might be more fitting. Every aspect of the performance is space and prop-centric – plastic flowers levitate when watered, unsuspecting bins spray jets of water – and each action and scene reacts to them. The stage is an eclectic toy box: carpets, fake flowers, polystyrene, ironing boards, swings and bins litter the space. And it's these objects that rule this crazy court, while our pantomime host, a mismatched figure with an engorged head, prosthetic nose and clip-on tits, welcomes us to an after-party.

The wacky mix of magic and the mundane provide some nice imagery, but at some point is all this cluttered stash just, well, flash? A constant supply of cheap slapstick and manic, high-pitched laughing quickly turns these inventive quirks into gimmicks.

During his post-show talk, Laskaridis revealed that one of his studio rules was to always feel as happy as he did when he was a child performing on stage. Fine for the child – but *Titans* left me feeling more like a disgruntled babysitter than a doting parent.

Simon Mayer: Sons of Sissy

Oonagh Duckworth

Thigh slapping, yodelling, willy waggling... snippets of Simon Mayer's *Sons of Sissy* might lead you to believe that the performance is a jocular romp incorporating country-dancing and bromance. It does have us chortling at times, but the core of this work is far from lightweight.

Mayer, an Austrian-born musician-choreographer began digging into his roots during a period when he felt he was 'losing his direction home'. *Sons of Sissy* is the second work in which he seeks to reclaim and transform the Austrian folk traditions that he learnt as a child. His wish is to liberate them from their dubious historical connotations and rigid gender roles, and craft a contemporary ritual that is as cathartic to watch as it seems to be to perform.

The four men dance naked for at least half of this one-of-a-kind piece: an irrefutable avowal of similarity, difference and vulnerability. Mayer has made a really personal work that nevertheless touches several of our current universal malaises.



Photo © Axel Perez

Man Drake/
Tomeo Vergés:
Que du bonheur (?)



Photo © Andrea Macchia

Daniele Albanese:
Von Solo

'THIS IS NOT DANCE'

Yasen Vasilev

In *Que du bonheur (?)* by **Man Drake/ Tomeo Vergés** (France/Spain), Sandrine Maisonneuve moves sideways back and forth between the two ends of a white stripe to the rhythm of a metronome for the whole 30 minutes of the performance. Yet it doesn't get boring: based on repetition and distortion of everyday movements, she metamorphoses from an uptight lady to a warrior diva, losing all inhibitions in the process and making fun of the stiffness of our social behaviour. Is it an issue that in commenting on the absurdity of female gender roles, she remains a performer for a male creator and director? Whatever the case, her theatrical delivery, using a variety of facial expressions and techniques, is fascinating.

It is also in stark contrast to the other solo on the double bill – the 18-minute *Von Solo*, a hypnotising, pure dance triptych for a male body moving from fluidity to convulsions, sometimes obscured by too loud noise music. Conceived and performed by **Daniele Albanese** (Italy), this visceral, energetic, intuitive, sometimes even ecstatic 'dancey' dance refuses to deal with content or to comment on society, and instead focuses entirely on the subtle influence of movement.

It made me think. In the last few years I've heard a line numerous times, from various people in different contexts, as a first reaction to a piece: THIS IS NOT DANCE. On the one hand, programmers often seem divided as they struggle to comprehend and classify an increasingly complex scene. On the other, artists feel their work sometimes has difficulty finding venues if it doesn't fit conservative expectations of the genre. A show mixing movement and text might end up being rejected by both theatres and dance houses, each using the same argument: THIS IS NOT THAT.

Personal taste is an erratic guide, so defined criteria can certainly be useful – yet isn't it time to think beyond genre and bring the conversation to the quality of the work, and then articulate, position and defend our choices? Les Brigittines have done it on this contrasting double bill, and rightly so. They self-describe as 'a playhouse for movement' – a territory that should be open to the richness and variety of movement in contemporary performance, no matter its background or technique. •

> **Isn't it time to think beyond genre and bring the conversation to the quality of the work?**

Jefta van Dinther: Dark Field Analysis

Sanjoy Roy
02 October 2018

Two men embark on an expedition inside the body and beyond the mind



Photo © Ben Mergelsberg

In the 1966 movie *Fantastic Voyage*, an experimental technique that can miniaturise matter, for up to one hour, is used to shrink a team of people to the size of single cells and inject them into the body of a brilliant scientist, on a mission to a relieve a blood clot in his brain.

Strip out the retro campiness, add a shot of David Lynch weirdness, and you have the feel of *Dark Field Analysis* by 'Swedish-German dance nerd' Jefta van Dinther, in which two men, each wearing nothing but a microphone, take us on an expedition into – um, the human bloodstream?

Even at the beginning it's perplexing, but at least we know where we are: watching Juan Pablo Cámara and Roger Sala Reyner sitting naked on a mat below a suspended square of light, talking cryptically about getting 'inside' themselves – through memory, through imagination, through blood...

Disorientation sets in from there. Minna Tiikkainen's fitful lighting fractures into red and green, as if through 3d lenses. David Kiers' sonic environment throbs like blood in the ear. Smoke fogs our vision and Reyner takes up a growling, psychedelic chant that might be coming from him, the sound system, or both.

And then there's the blackout – total, and just too long for comfort – and by the time the ghostly light returns, we're someplace else. The men crawl blindly in strange, stop-motion spasms, their pallid bodies – antibodies? – looking creepily cellular or dendritic. They hunch and flinch, and scan us unnervingly. Cámara gouges up the floor, Reyner continues a long snarl of song, and together they clamber and scrabble, more corpuscular than corporeal. In this strangely primordial innerspace, such dislocations of sound, sight and scale get inside us.

Can we get out? Cámara climbs onto Reyner's shoulders, reaching upwards as if towards normality. The hour-long performance ends, and we emerge from the theatre blinking at familiar streets, back to normal yet feeling weirdly out-of-body. It's been quite a trip.

The bottom line: In-body or out-of-body? A fantastical, sci-fi trip into both inner and outer space

Lilian Baylis Theatre, London, UK.
Reviewed: 14 September 2018

Choreography and direction: Jefta van Dinther / Created with and performed by: Juan Pablo Cámara, Roger Sala Reyner / Lighting design: Minna Tikkainen / Scenography: Cristina Nyffeler / Sound design: David Kiers / Songs: based on PJ Harvey's The Slow Drug and Horses in My Dreams / Text: Jefta van Dinther, Juan Pablo Cámara, Roger Sala Reyner / Assistant choreographer: Thiago Granato / Artistic advice: Gabriel Smeets, Felix Bethge / Technical coordination: Bennert Vancottem / Art direction: Martin Falck / Co-production: Tanz im August/ HAU Berlin, Tanzquartier Vienna, Sadler's Wells London, PACT Zollverein Essen, Centro Cultural Vila Flor Guimarães, Dansens Hus Oslo

Tanz im August: talkabout

Springback's Berlin Three – Annette van Zwoll, David Pallant and Evgeny Borisenko – went to four performances at the Tanz im August festival, then met up afterwards to talk about what they had seen.

Annette van Zwoll
David Pallant
Evgeny Borisenko

Politics both corporeal and national at Berlin's Tanz im August season

Part 1
12 October 2018

Bruno Beltrão: Inoah

Two male dancers stand in near darkness, an electrical hum droning through the speakers. The sound glitches and they take it into their chests, echoing the discord with jerking spasms. The stage slowly brightens and larger groups of dancers are illuminated. They ramp up the energy until ten men are flipping and skimming across the stage with breathtaking agility. In INOAH, ostensibly a reaction to the recent corruption scandal in Brazil, Bruno Beltrão takes hip-hop pyrotechnics and dresses them in the more muted trappings of contemporary dance, inviting us to view his firework display from behind a soundproofed window.

David: I think we can say that the combination of street dance, breakdance and hip-hop with contemporary dance was a major focal point of this piece. Did that work for you?

Annette: The combination was aesthetically pleasing, you could see the roots of Beltrão and his dancers' training. They were referencing it, without using typical hip hop movements.

David: And the dancers themselves were extremely impressive.

Evgeny: They executed the choreography very well, but there was a lack of intention, of the political agenda set forth in the programme.

David: Yes, the unrelenting virtuosity of the dancers distanced me from finding the search for meaning within the piece. If you aim to show these political themes on stage, especially if the piece doesn't involve more concrete elements of communication, such as text, the movement needs so much intention behind it.

Annette: Because the programme notes describe it as a political piece, it means we go in with a certain expectations. What I saw didn't add up with the information I was given. Everything on stage also changed very quickly, without making these constant changes part of a choreographic strategy. The phrases were short with a lot of repetition, and they didn't seem to go anywhere. The dynamic was quite flat. There were hints of aggression for example, or intimacy, or defeat, but they were never pulled through.

Evgeny: It was so testosterone-fuelled and so 'masculine', as if Beltrão wanted to escape his own fragility. It was only about power and sweat for me.



Photo © Bruno Beltrão

David: There were moments that could be read as showing fragility, but I think that connects to what Annette said about this lack of dynamics. The powerful, testosterone-fuelled dancing was so much the main point of the piece that all the parts in between felt like waiting. I wanted more subtlety, or surprising moments where I could think, "There's something going on here, I want to know what it is."

Evgeny: But I felt there was a gesture to moving towards something more subtle. Beltrão stamped the show with these silent interludes, using as little music or video projection as possible. I felt that he had intended to bring hip-hop onto the big stage, to inject an artsy 'contemporary' feel into it. But at the same time, it was very crowd-pleasing. The dancers throw loads of energy into the audience and execute crazy hip-hop sequences. In that sense, it was masterfully made.

Annette: Although I saw that energy on stage, I felt at a distance from it. I linked this to their use of intricate micro-movements. On a big stage, with those movements improperly internalised, its hard to communicate a certain energy, emotionality or meaning. I wonder if his work might be more effective on a smaller stage, with closer proximity between the dancers and the audience. Then you could feel the sweat, and you could see the dancers' bodies and their hard work.

David: And their bodies were so conventionally beautiful, you couldn't escape that. It went some way to breaking the convention of similar pieces, which put even more emphasis on these impressive



bodies. But I'd still rather see different bodies on stage, or bodies presented from an entirely different standpoint. There were moments that worked but, in the end, they really felt just like moments – they stood out because, as a whole, the piece didn't sweep me along.

Silvia Gribaudi: R. OSA_10 exercises for new virtuosities

Claudia Marsicano enters the stage in a bathing suite. She is big. Fat. She takes us, the audience, through several exercises, singing, talking, and dancing. In two exercises she makes us stand up and move with her. The movements of her face, neck, arms, hands and fingers are articulate and her presence full of charm. Half way, she takes off her bathing suite and continues in underwear. She invites us to look at her.

Note: we have made a decision to use the word 'fat', embracing the argument it is a merely descriptive word and not a slur or a term that contains moral judgement.

Annette: What were your first responses when Marsicano entered the space?

David: It felt unavoidably like a statement, or a subversion. She has the sort of body you don't usually see in dance or, when you consider how revealed it was, in our society in general. I did feel fairly quickly that we were invited to view a body, not a fat body. She was very charming and personable, spoke to us directly, laughed and invited us to laugh.

Evgeny: The first scene positively shocked me. It was entertaining but also dark somehow, how she slowly moved on the stage, stood in profile and started singing Dolly Parton's 'Jolene'. I was quickly drawn to her face, which contained so much charm that it absolutely distracted me from her body. This charm, however, also negatively affected me. The performer was very nice, smart, talented and entertaining. When installing a place for fat people on stage, why do they have to be cheerful, nice, entertaining and smiley?

Annette: I just read that 'Osa' means 'dare' in Italian. I found her courageous, but Marsicano didn't present herself as being courageous. She seemed to feel comfortable in her body, and already being surprised by that reveals how we unconsciously assume how fat people should feel and behave. She also sang Britney Spears's 'Toxic'. Both Parton and Spears were sex icons, and both were shamed for their bodies when they couldn't keep up the sex icon posture anymore. In the same way, fat people are often shamed in our society, and are expected to feel shame. Marsicano was on stage for an hour, inviting us to watch, without embarrassment or shame.

David: There was a constant contrast with the norms. Not only her physical appearance, but also how that affected the movement. For example, when she referenced classical dance, doing a long sequence of 'floaty' ballet arms to a piece of Baroque music without a hint of irony or parody, the traditional movements looked new because they were being executed by such a different body.

Evgeny: She used tropes often used in a one-woman show. She interacted with the technician, someone we couldn't see,



Silvia_Gribaudi R. OSA:
10 Exercises For New Virtuosities
Photo © Laila Pozzo

and also with us, the audience. She had a lot of space to question that form, as well as to question the theme – but she didn't. The piece was very entertaining. I had a nice time, but for me its effects will disappear quickly.

David: Yes, I think it's hard to describe it as anything other than 'feel-good'.

Annette: Which we shouldn't underestimate. It is a trap to consider everything that is dark or torturous to be deep and of quality.

David: We were confronted with some of our expectations and assumptions around body types and beauty norms, but it was subtle. We saw a woman enjoying herself, and inviting us to enjoy ourselves. I appreciated that a lot, but I agree that it's not a piece which called for revolution.

Annette: It might also be a different way of engaging with the political. It was revolutionary to have this non-normative body taking space, visible and demanding attention.

David: And being confident, and being joyous. If I were to consider this piece as a whole, I would say it set itself very modest and achievable ambitions, but achieved them completely.

Inoah: 29 August 2018, Haus der Berliner Festspiele. R. OSA, 31 August 2018, HAU 3. Berlin, Germany.

Inoah
Artistic direction: Bruno Beltrão / Assistant to artistic direction: Ugo Alexandre Neves / With: Bruno Duarte, Cleidson De Almeida 'Kley', Douglas Santos, Igor Martins, João Chataignier, Leandro Gomes, Leonardo Laureano, Alci Junior Kpuê, Ronielson Araújo 'Kapu', Sid Yon / Lighting Design: Renato Machado / Costume Design: Marcelo Sommer / Music: Felipe Storino /

R.OSA
Concept, choreography, artistic direction: Silvia Gribaudi / With: Claudia Marsicano / Lighting design: Leonardo Benetollo / Costume design: Erica Sessa / Artistic consultance: Antonio Rinaldi, Giulia Galvan, Francesca Albanese, Matteo Maffesanti

Part 2
25 October 2018

Nora Chipaumire: portrait of myself as my father

Inside a roped-off boxing ring, Nora Chipaumire stands tethered to another performer, while a third plays the hype man, bounding around outside the perimeter. The performers' voices provide a soundtrack of narration and commentary as they encourage, insult and roar at each other and us. Outbursts of movement, when they come, are frantic, as the three performers slam their feet against the floor, spines curling and hips snapping. portrait of myself as my father explores the point where colonialism, blackness, and masculinity meet, with confrontational playfulness and a visceral intelligence.

David: Racial politics and the black experience are so integral to this work that I think it's important to acknowledge the lens we view this piece through, as three white Europeans, and the effect that has. Because Chipaumire is dealing with with huge topics, like race, gender, decolonisation…

Evgeny: And she's speaking about decolonising herself, letting go of the colonial past brought to her through the performer we assume represented her father, to whom she's literally tied throughout the piece.

Annette: The image of her carrying her 'father', was very telling. Through her history, through her father's history, she lays bare the colonial past and the ways it lingers; the ties that link them are white, and they must exist in relation to that whiteness. Her father represents the limitations imposed on black men: the options seem to be 'fight, run, fuck or die', and the limitations imposed on him are still in her body, as all of our histories are there somewhere in our bodies and brains.

David and I found the form unconventional, and at times difficult to grab on to, but you didn't, right Evgeny?

Evgeny: Usually when I see a piece I try to find yardsticks, or markers. In this case they were formal elements like the stage design suspended from the lighting rig, the two performers tied together, and the 'animalistic' movement of her 'father'.

Annette: This animalistic movement touched on stereotypes around black people, but there was also a sense that the performers owned or were empowered by it. There was so much layered imagery that it sometimes made the meaning 'ungrabbable' for me – when I thought I understood it, it shifted again.

David: I was made very aware of my own lack of tools to fully understand the piece, through the difference of my experience, through my lack of knowledge of non-Western traditions and forms of expression. It was a challenge at times, and I think the piece was unapologetic in the sense that it didn't try to translate things for us. The onus was placed on us to do that work, which made complete sense considering the overall themes of the piece.

Evgeny: I found the first part of the piece quite overstretched, it used mostly the

> **The options seem to be 'fight, run, fuck or die'**

> It's our nature to look for resolution or answers

same rules. But this moment when she was attacking her 'father', pushing him into the corner of the boxing ring, telling him to 'Fight!', it felt as the piece had become dramatic when it wasn't supposed to. There was something terribly raw and true in that short scene. And when she says 'You'd better run', and then they all start to run and pull apart the boxing ring until it fell down, it felt so very cathartic.

Annette: This emotional ending, when she said 'This is a manifesto about me, and about my father', it was a moment of catharsis.

Evgeny: I found that a bit over the top probably, for me it was already personal and crystal-clear from the outset. It felt almost too Hollywood, like it must end with something dramatic.

David: I saw the ending as anchoring the piece back into reality. Very nuanced and complex issues were presented in very nuanced and complex ways – *portrait* didn't give any easy answers, neither for the performers examining their identity or us, in the audience, with our white guilt. But it's our nature to look for resolution or answers, and perhaps this 'dramatic' ending is Chipaumire stating the manifesto that helps her to continue to deal with all these complex issues.



Photo © Gennadi Novash

Nora Chipaumire, *portrait of myself as my father*

Noé Soulier: The Waves

Six dancers calmly advance onstage to an irregular rhythm of a percussion duo, only to explode into a series of frenetic jumps, aborted throws, leg kicks and sudden dashes. Cut with intense low-to-the-ground duos and flurrying solos, the swirling group dances seek to embody unassuming desires, long-vanished affects and overwrought angst – all led by jagged percussion composition. The performance is punctuated by moving excerpts of Virginia Woolf's The Waves, read by the performers. Bodies continue to ricochet and scatter, arms cut the air, intricate solos irrupt rigorous group patterns, building the show to its abrupt finale in an assuredly wavy fashion.

Evgeny: Let's start with some personal impressions. It was a very moving piece for me, although cold and rigorous. Hard to get into, but surprisingly soothing once inside. What did you feel?

Annette: I'm on the same level as Evgeny, and I think the codes of the world they've created were quite clear. It was very gestural and rhythmical. It was a proposal that you could step into or not. It didn't reach me on a very emotional level but I felt comfortable sharing the space with them.

David: I agree that there was a coldness and detachment, and that instead of trying to grab your attention, the piece just created a comfortable environment. But I didn't manage to connect to it on any level. It felt very old-fashioned, in terms of form, style and aesthetics. Movement phrases were repeated, cut up and pasted together in different ways: unison, solos, duets. They're pretty basic choreographic tools and, instead of being questioned or subverted, or serving as a jumping-off point, they were the substance of the piece.

Evgeny: True, there was a certain lack of ambition. What's happening inside this choreographic scaffolding? Another counter-example might be Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker, with her mathematical approach to the choreographic structure, never questioned but always present.

Annette: Her structural approach has always been clearly communicated through movement. Here it was much less transparent.

David: Exactly. De Keersmaeker takes it to the nth degree, but this was sort of in-between: it was well-structured, but it neither went beyond the structure, nor pushed the structure to its limits.

Evgeny: I also found the first duet so refreshingly beautiful with its odd limb holds; was it a love story or a childhood memory? And later, another scene with a dancer approaching other performers one by one and staring into their eyes. These quiet moments set off the otherwise very rhythmical group pace and become all the more startling, with dancers being so aware of each other.

David: I agree, the attention paid to the dancer's gaze made the piece very subtle. There was a very clear relation to the audience, to the space around them, to each other, to the imaginary objects. In that sense the dancers' intentions were very clear.

> **A very moving piece, although cold and rigorous**



Noé Soulier, *The Waves*
Photo © Pierre Ricci

portrait of myself as my father, 17 August 2018, Sophiensaele. The Waves, 31 August 2018, HAU 2. Berlin, Germany.

portrait of myself as my father
Artistic Direction, Concept, Choreography: Nora Chipaumire / Original Music & Sound Score: Philip White / Extra Sound Score & Text: Nora Chipaumire / With: Nora Chipaumire, Pape Ibrahima Ndiaye a.k.a. Kaolack, Shamar Watt / Lighting & Costume Design: Nora Chipaumire / Technical Direction & Stage Management: Philip White

The Waves
Choreography: Noé Soulier / With Stephanie Amurao, Lucas Bassereau, Meleat Frederikson, Yumiko Funaya, Anna Massoni and Nans Pierson / Music: Noé Soulier, Tom De Cock and Gerrit Nulens / Interpretation: Ensemble Ictus (Tom De Cock and Gerrit Nulens, percussions) / Light design: Victor Burel / Production: ND Productions

Evgeny: Do you remember this excerpt from Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* recited twice onstage: 'I begin to long for some little language such as lovers use, broken words, inarticulate words'? At that moment I grew more attentive to the clumsiness of some stumbling dance patterns. This broken language described by Woolf was very well performed.

David: For me, *The Waves* seemed like an odd choice. There's such rawness and urgency to Woolf's language which was completely absent from the performance. And with the words spoken neutrally, by a dancer standing still or making some very clear, contained movements, I missed the sensuality; it fell flat. What I craved, in the end, was a melody, some sense of poetry.

Annette: And more of an outburst! •

Black and blue at Festival Les Plateaux

Marie Pons
15 November 2018

Ana Pi and Calixto Neto take on 'black dance' on their own terms

The four-day Festival Les Plateaux at La Briqueterie in Vitry-sur-Seine, France, is a good opportunity to discover makers and companies from Europe and beyond. This year, two solo works caught our attention by bringing a vital question to the fore.

Where are black artists in the dance field? In the French arts sector the question has slowly arisen, in the light of a handful of dance pieces. Ana Pi and Calixto Neto's solos, presented in the same bill during Les Plateaux, address this question. Both are performers and choreographers from Brazil who now live in France. Pi has worked and toured extensively with the duet François Chaignaud and Cecilia Bengolea (*Twerk*, *Le tour du monde des danses urbaines en 10 dates*). Neto has worked for many years with Brazilian choreographer Lia Rodrigues and recently Volmir Cordeiro. Now both creators of their own work, they tackle representation of the bodies that are sorely absent from stage.

Ana Pi's solo *Noirblue* plays on the concept of a 'blue dance' that speaks to 'black dance', danse noire. Dance performed by black dancers is historically the only form of dance that has an adjective stuck to it. Pi explains that in many cultures and languages there used to be no word for 'blue'; when something cannot be named it doesn't exist. On the other hand when the adjective 'black' is apposed to dance, the colour is made extra-visible. *Noirblue* navigates these notions of visibility and invisibility.

It starts with a blue glow in the distance. A figure stands with its feet up and head on the ground. The blue halo comes from the LED light-up shoes the figure is wearing, the only source of light in the darkness. They begin a mesmerising dance where the legs become tentacles, swaying and floating. When a brighter light is turned on, we discover Ana Pi's body, her black skin and indigo costume. She sketches several dances, never insisting on a gesture but passing rapidly through corporealities. She alternately evokes Tuaregs, wrapped in indigo; an oceanic, ultramarine body; and a body on which exoticism, carnival, tribalism is often projected. Her body is also that of a young, black, flexible, woman, and a body in struggle. Pi embodies and softly conjures up these images, slipping into the movements as if trying different costumes which she discards immediately.

The blue she evokes is 'feeling blue', the blue of melancholia and sadness, Pi singing, 'My only sin is in my skin,' from Louis Armstrong's 'Black and Blue'. But it is also the bright and hopeful blue of Afrofuturism, where the voices of marginalised people will be heard, will have the right to exist. Shades of blue and shades of black dialogue in creating an imagery, peeling off layers of prejudices, cliches, projections and fantasies. Pi puts white round stickers all over her body naming a shade of blue for each – and asks us to pitch in. Turquoise, midnight blue, azure… in between royal

Legs become tentacles in Ana Pi's *Noirblue*



Photo © Daniel Nicolaevsky



Photo © Calixto-Neto

Calixto Neto's ***oh!rage*** – both 'storm' and 'rage' contracted in the same word

Festival Les Plateaux at La Briqueterie, Vitry-sur-Seine, France.
Reviewed: 28 September 2018

Noirblue
Choreography, dramaturgy, costumes and objects, interpretation: Ana Pi / Original soundtrack: Jideh High Elements / Lights: Jean-Marc Ségalen / Preparations for this dance with Taata Mutá Imê, Samuel Mwamé, BesreKè Ahou, Ousmane Baba Sy / Production: Ana Pi & Météores | Plateforme chorégraphique / Co-productions & partners: Théâtre de Vanves, Centre National de la Danse, Das Plateau aux Ulis – Espace culturel Boris Vian, ROSA ass. 1901, Festival Circular – Vila do Conde – Portugal.

oh!rage
Choreography and performance: Calixto Neto / Lighting design: Eduardo Abdala / Sound creation: Charlotte Boisselier / External views: Carolina Campos, Isabela Fernandes Santana, Marcelo Sena / Executive production by Météores / Co-produced by CND Centre national de la danse, La Place de la Danse – CDCN Toulouse / Occitanie

and sky blue when she proclaims 'colonial blue' and the mood darkens. In French, bleu also means a bruise, and the image is irresistibly one of a body covered in colonial bruises. A black light is turned on so that the stickers glow in the dark. Pi is now a floating figure, the white dots moving around in a brief ghost-like dance. The black body is now dematerialised, totally absorbed into the surrounding darkness.

For the first minutes of *oh!rage*, **Calixto Neto**'s first solo, his face is turned away from us. We grasp the colours of his costume first – green shorts, orange top, black sneakers – then the undulating movements of his bare arms. Waves reverberate throughout the whole body, conducted by a mobile spine. The hands, fluttering in a constant motion, start to speak. Two fingers momentarily form the shape of a gun. They search the thickness of the frizzy hair then make their way down to explore the mouth, fingers rummaging inside as if to extract a word. When finally he turns towards the audience, Neto's fingers frame his distorted face, stretched like an elastic dough, shaping a forced smile. This is the first mask of many.

oh!rage has both 'storm' (*ourage*) and 'rage' contracted in the same word. Both are sources of great energy and power, both have tangible and ungraspable elements. Neto's solo deals with powerful forces fiercely alive but invisible, or more precisely invisibled by context. His piece addresses the deconstruction of a colonial body and its representation in a Western context.

Neto draws a pink parallelepiped on the ground. The frame of the shape becomes a public space that the performer enters and exits, a projection space on which we are invited to read the many bodies he conjures there. Neto embodies figures and characters, summoning them by explosive sounds, jerky, precise and sudden moves. He criss-crosses the space to the sound of a repetitive rhythm he produces with his mouth. After each rhythm sequence a gesture, a grimace, an explosion of joy, a dance step reminiscent of samba or gwara gwara is called into the space. Neto is a beggar, a woman, a soldier. We are in the street, inside the carnival, inside madness, at the margins, at the heart of violence. He oscillates between figures of strength – flexed muscles, furrowed brows, military marches – and fragility, bodies weakened in their postures. All images last a few seconds. It is up to us to decrypt and reflect on these bursts of dance.

Ani Pi and Calixto Neto give us one body inhabited by many, taking space for those who cannot. 'Peripheral dances' blooming in the margins, in contrast with those who occupy the centre, is a point of great interest in both works, enticing the audience to dig deeper within the field of contemporary dance. Choreographically, both works are fascinating, and both have waves that ripple out from the performance. •

Ani Pi and Calixto Neto give us one body inhabited by many, taking space for those who cannot

Ivo Dimchev: Som Faves

Alexandra Gray
22 November 2018

A maniacal movement manifesto upends audience expectations

Chisenhale Dance Space, London, UK.
Reviewed: 10 November 2018

Concept/Text/Music/Performance: Ivo Dimchev / Co-production: Tanz Im August (Berlin – DE), DasArts (Amsterdam – NL), European Cultural Capital Linz 09 (Linz – AT), O is not company (Linz – AT), Royal Conservatoire/Artesis University College (Antwerpen – BE), O Espaço do Tempo (Montemor-o-Novo – PT)

Ivo Dimchev is talking through gritted teeth, his lips pulled back into a snarl. 'If you want me to be your mother...' he repeats, every word somersaulting off his lips. Dressed in shorts and glittering belt, his shirt open to the waist, and with a bad 'curtains' hair-do, he looks like a member of a 90s boy band. In fact, singing is predominantly what Dimchev does these days, dirtying-up pop culture with original songs and wryly intelligent, wildly creative music videos, even infiltrating the banal world of the *X Factor* talent show this year.

Tonight he revisits his 2009 work *Som Faves* for a buzzing, expectant crowd. The vibe is amateur and chaotic, but I catch myself double-taking continually – technical accomplishment is evident everywhere.

In a hilarious monologue to a wooden cat who's on hunger strike, Dimchev builds his frustration to eye-popping intensity, every sinew strained and quivering with rage. The terrible hair-do turns out to be a wig. Dimchev flips it over and wears it as a bad-ass Mohican. A technical sound fault is brilliantly incorporated into the apparent madness, adding to the anything-could-happen atmosphere. Vocally he's a virtuoso, with incredible breath control and the range of a counter-tenor. The bizarre and meandering lyrics to his songs are a deliberate juxtaposition to his formal prowess.



For his audacious finale, Dimchev jabs a needle into his arm, draws his own blood into a syringe and squirts it onto his face, all whilst singing, fulfilling the unnerving ditty about 'blood on your face' that he's sung several times during the piece. It is an astonishing ending to what has felt like a physical essay on form and content, in which Dimchev succeeds in making sense of them both while declaring that neither of them have to make any sense at all.

The bottom line: Justin Timberlake on LSD: warbling wild-card peddles pop songs and t-shirts while acing his own performance art manifesto

Oktoberdans, Bergen: Minorities dance for a majority audience

Yasen Vasilev
29 November 2018

Two programmes at Scandinavia's largest dance platform navigate the exclusivity of 'inclusivity'

Oktoberdans (Bergen, Norway) is Scandinavia's largest contemporary dance festival. It functions as a laboratory that brings together as many international acts as it co-produces local ones, while remaining curious about newcomers from the region and beyond. It also curates an extensive discursive programme – Positions – that aims to provide a theoretical base for experimental practices. The programme had several thematic focuses this year, among which I found two particularly powerful: Beirut Day & Night and Re:Gender.

Beirut Day & Night presented different artistic approaches from the Middle East. These so-called 'under-represented' artists are often exoticised in Europe, expected either to criticise the oppressive political regimes they work and live in or to show off some partially endangered, interesting traditions. Opening with *Everything you ever wanted to know about the Middle East and were not too embarrassed to ask*, an in-your-face non-politically correct performance-lecture by **Abdel Rahem Alawji**, the mirror was turned on Europeans – who 'travel, meet, eat and discuss how art can help people who can't travel, meet and eat'. Alawji calculates the amount of money the Norwegian consulate makes per month through visa fees before giving us a short overview of each country in the Middle East, concluding every time 'everything's fine, people are happy'. Sarcastic and angry, the show ends with Alawji announcing he's looking for a Norwegian to marry for citizenship. Is any further comment needed?

Sina Saberi's *A basis for being* asked how can we dance today in Iran after 40 years of banned dance: its development halted, its National Ballet dissolved and its artists forced to flee or go underground. This 40-year gap is a professional and personal identity crisis, rendering Persian dance empty for lack of reference points and connection to tradition. In order to continue one needs first to go back. Through archival footage from before the Islamic Republic, Saberi embodies the physical memory of dance and finds a totally different and unknown Iran that existed in the past – one where Persian dance deals with desire, pleasure and sex – and the concept of gender binary had not yet been borrowed from the West. This material is distributed in four chapters, forming a dialogue between the dancing body on stage and the dancing bodies from the past.

71 Bodies.1 Dance, **Daniel Mariblanca Sirmans**' ode to the trans experience, is a central moment of the festival's Re:Gender programme. A huge project consisting of an installation, exhibition, extensive research, interviews, lecture and eventually a dance solo, it has been years in development. As a transgender person, Mariblanca has personal reasons to approach the topic, but his work goes beyond simple self-expression and/or representation. What



Photo © Kimia Rahgozar

Sina Saberi



Ode to the trans experience: Daniel Mariblanca Sirmans' *71 Bodies.1* Dance

is fascinating in his intuitive embodied externalisation of the memories of 71 meetings with trans people across Europe, is the way the movement opens up the possibility to think of the trans experience as peeling off layers of meaning imposed on our biological sex – a process that all of us can go through, no matter how we self-identify. Working with his own naked body and minimum light and music, Mariblanca structures a visceral, fragile piece that is more performance than dance.

There is no fixed choreography and the journey between the points he needs to reach is different in every showing. The slow breathing in the beginning is subtle and fascinating to watch, as it starts to reveal the ribs and re-shape the body. This unconscious automatic yet crucial bodily function is the bare essence of life, and is explored as a motivator for movement – inhale, exhale, female, male – these polar opposites between which the performer is constantly in flux. The harmonious breathing soon turns into jittery, shaky, twitching trance under strobe lights and loud noise before dropping the spectacle altogether and addressing the audience directly, in order to talk about the piece. These switches between extreme alienation and a deeply confessional tone reveal both a tension and an extreme urgency to share under a constant fear of sanction. Where the language fails, the body steps in and Daniel says this piece is an attempt to 'caress the scar, or even heal it'.

The scar is not a metaphor in *Life is hard and then you die*, in which **Juli Apponnen** chronicles a gender re-assignment surgery and its ensuing series of complications. Evaluated numerous times by psychiatric institutions which find 'neutral mood, no anxiety, relatively feminine clothing'

> **Where language fails, the body steps in**

and diagnosed with 'gender identity disorder', 9 surgeries and 250 stitches later, 'I wake up and it feels strange that I'm alive'. This perfectly crafted non-linear narrative has recurring elements intercepting the fragmented stories of body transformations – astrological readings of the planet positions, a series of sex dreams, description of the deaths of childhood pets, demonstrations of cuts in the body with pen and paper. A traumatising account of an experience that left a person living half of her conscious life in pain, the text is delivered in cold blood with a stoic discipline, making it even more powerful and painful to watch and listen. This overabundance in shocking detail might be seen as a reaction to both the politicisation and the stigmatisation of gender and sexuality – all needs to be spoken out once and for all so that we can move on.

Princess by Filipino artist **Eisa Jocson** is the highlight of Re:Gender. On a first level, cleverly using lines from Disney's *Snow White* in combination with repetitive movements, organised in a precise and exhausting physical score, the piece reveals the absurdity and horrific stereotyping of female characters reproduced by the American movie industry and fed to children globally. On a second level, it comments on racism and colonial history: Filipino citizens are not allowed to work as main characters at Hong Kong's Disneyland because of their skin colour. The piece involves deeply unsettling interactions with the predominantly white audience which makes it both intimidating and entertaining. A complete deconstruction of the fake, gendered world of animation that prepares kids to be passive consumers, the key here is to look at it not as an attempt to make Disney more 'diverse' or 'inclusive' towards non-white people but to scrap it altogether.



The highlight of the Re:Gender programme: Eisa Jocson's *Princess*

Photo © Jörg Baumann

Both Beirut Day & Night and Re:gender should not be read through the lens of more inclusivity, tolerance and visibility for minorities, but as a wake-up call for the majority – all of us who are still clinging to harmful and limiting concepts and stereotypes and who are not participating in a meaningful way in our collective and personal lives. These performances do not aim to represent life and experience but want us to reconsider our own lives and experiences right here and now. •

> **Not an attempt to make Disney more 'diverse' but to scrap it altogether**

Oktoberdans, Bergen, Norway.

This text was written as a part of the project Dance Critic Movement (Dansekritikerrørsla) with support from the Norwegian Arts Council

DanceLive Aberdeen 2018

Róisín O'Brien
03 January 2019

DanceLive combines a productive dance platform and a conscious aim to connect with non-dance audiences

As winter itches to get going, Aberdeen sees a festival solely dedicated to contemporary dance take over its granite landscape. Spanning three weekends in October, DanceLive organised by Citymoves, the regional dance agency for North East Scotland, is now in its thirteenth year.

The line up includes local and international artists, as well as the behemoth that is Matthew Bourne's *Swan Lake*. I speak to Kathryn Spence, one of the organisers, about the line-up. Two strands emerge: Citymove's emphasis on programming work a non-dance audience will want to see, alongside her commitment to making DanceLive a productive platform for artists.

In terms of audience, DanceLive wants to 'take pieces that might push people out of their comfort zone but also pieces that they might like… so it pushes them out comfortably,' she explains.

An excellent example is **Reckless Sleepers**' *A String Section*, an outdoor performance in the newly developed Marischal Square (surrounded by mostly empty office blocks and sheltered by a transparent ceiling in the likely event of rain). Five vacant chairs wait, before five female performers march ceremoniously in, each holding a saw. They appraise their audience as they sit, allowing the tension of expectation and incongruity of setting to play out.

Eventually, they start sawing their chairs. Their resigned and determined expressions, and frequent, silent questioning glances to each other and the audience means the sawing seems enforced, not voluntary. The performers appear trapped together, but disconnected.

Visually and temporally, the piece suits a space that people pass through casually. Audiences are momentarily pulled in, emphasising the odd inevitability of the piece: yes, they are sawing until only stumps remain. For Spence, 'I think it's really important to make sure the pieces you are putting outside for people to engage with that aren't always engaged with dance are appropriate. Reckless Sleepers are perfect… because they're not dancing all the time. They are dancers, and they end up in wonderful positions… but there's something unusual, which means people's attention is grabbed.'

One of Citymoves' outreach projects is Project Strive, funded by National Lottery and the Scottish government's CashBack for Creativity Scheme. The scheme sees money recovered through the Proceeds of Crime Act reinvested back into communities to benefit Scotland's young people. Speaking of **Oona Doherty**'s *Hope Hunt (and the Ascension into Lazarus)*, Spence explains the piece 'is about representing disadvantaged young males and finding a voice for them in society… As soon as



Reckless Sleepers, DanceLive 2018
Photo © Sid Scott

I saw that piece, and started working on Project Strive, I thought – this is the same thing, we really need to try get that happening.'

Citymoves organised a private showing for the 45 community participants of *Hope Hunt* on Thursday at their central studio (Spence was wary of holding it in a community space which might accidentally exclude participants from other areas or communities), and after the performance the participants enthusiastically stay on to dance to a set from the show's DJ.

The following evening, I see *Hope Hunt* for the second time, and it easily rewards re-watching. Doherty seamlessly transitions between different states, between anger and fear, joy and overdose. Movement morphs into dialects, accusations and poetry. While the intimacy of the studio means some of the lighting's grander aspects are dimmed slightly, it allows a closeness to Doherty's expression that is captivating.

> **Movement morphs into dialects, accusations and poetry**

Professionally, for Spence, having a festival focused just on contemporary dance 'validates the art form'. DanceLive includes workshops from performing artists, and Spence highlights the festival's term-time scheduling: 'as a freelancer, holiday times can mean freedom'. In the future, she is keen to have an open call; currently 'it depends on what work we have seen… we just weren't at capacity this year'.

Local acts include a tender duet from *Curated Moments* by **Katie Milroy**. Building outward from a closely wrapped embrace, the piece avoids a soft-focus filter because of the dancers' strength when lifting each other and the breaks in tempo that see the dancers brace against each other until, neatly in sync, they fall through and disengage. Watching a duet in this public setting, I am reminded of 'POP-UP Duets', a piece from Scottish-based choreographer Janis Claxton who sadly passed away this year, which was and is a great loss to the Scottish dance community.

I also catch **Claricia Parinussa**'s alien, bendy, and swaying solo, *Untitled (labyrinth)*. Uncertain, yet open and curious, Parinussa's searching gaze maps out Marischal Square's reflective, unseeing glassy environment. Her body caves in, hands swim across the floor, and knees warp into sinewy bends, in a solo that nicely counterpoints Milroy's duet.

The closing party takes place at the Anatomy Rooms, a building previously used by the university and recently acquired by Citymoves. 'It was lying derelict, but… it's a listed building, so they've had to look after it and make sure the temperature is



Photo © Sid Scott

Curated Moments by Katie Milroy at DanceLive 2018

correct, which is perfect for us,' enthuses Spence. She hopes the Anatomy Rooms will increase the opportunities that Citymoves can offer, and attract a new audience.

It's a glowing final evening, with many of the weekend's pieces performed again and adapted to the space. *A String Section* appears oddly faster, as if the officialdom of the performance space exacts a different impetus from its performers. As the dancers fall still, one audience member claps but her declaration is not taken up. She laughs, nervously. A few happily strained minutes later, the dancers unchanged, the audience finds the collective courage to applaud. It's a closing moment that embodies a festival of testing, openness, and a willingness to share. •

Pal Frenák: W_all
Rita Góbi: Snapdragons

Lena Megyeri
08 January 2019

Veteran Pál Frenák and newcomer Rita Góbi stay within known territory

Within a couple of days, Budapest's dance enthusiasts were treated with new productions of two choreographers with very distinct styles. To those who know their creators, both performances delivered exactly what they would have expected. Whether that's a good thing is probably up to each audience member to decide.

'When I get involved in something, it shows,' says **Pál Frenák** in a report about the rehearsals of his company's new show, *W_all*. Indeed: although it was long advertised that Frenák will give full scope to his dancers and only serve as their mentor during the creation process, the show is not much different from his classic pieces. By now, 61-year-old Frenák has his own fanbase – no small achievement in the world of contemporary dance. Fans expect some artists (writers, musicians, choreographers) to always reinvent themselves, while others they 'only' expect to deliver the well-known and well-loved. Of course it depends more on the artist than on the fans: some of them are keen to explore new ways of expression from time to time, while others cling to their signature style. Whether the reason for the latter is lack of inspiration or whether these creators just do what they can do best, I guess is up for discussion in each case.

Once-radical Frenák has spared his audience big surprises for a while now, and *W_all* is no exception. Although the 11 performers come with very different backgrounds and abilities, and the list of inspirations on the show's bill is long and diverse, it looks much like anything Frenák has done in the past few years. As in many of his shows, the scenery is defined by gigantic objects: this time it's gym-class mattresses that can serve as walls as well. The dancers' outfits are typical for the company too: underwear, black suit-jackets, kneepads and stilettos. Some scenes – dancers jumping on the mattresses, almost flying above each other; acrobatic duets and trios with vehement physicality that verge on violence – could have been borrowed from any of his recent works.

As for the context behind the form, the company wanted to talk about 'diversity seen as difference, individuality seen as degeneration' and question the limits of art and everyday life. But Frenák has built his whole career on being different and unique, and has often worked with dancers with extreme or at least unusual physicalities. If we were shocked (and were we at all?) by a man in a red leotard and pointe shoes dancing to Saint-Saëns' *The Dying Swan*, by a deaf girl singing or a performer in a wheelchair, that wouldn't be at one of this company's shows. Difference has always been normal in Frenák's world, and this time he doesn't even do much more than show up these unusual characters, without giving them context or thought, which makes it hard to reflect on them.



Difference has always been normal in Frenák's world (Pal Frenák's *W_all*). Photo © Gergely Dobos

Still – most walls have breaches that let some rays of light through; and just like that, *W_all* has its own rays of light. It's easy to be amazed by Milán Maurer's incredibly loose joints or his artistic swimming on the floor and through the air (a reference to Philippe Lioret's movie, *Welcome*); to become uncomfortable during a duet, in which Emma Lőrincz, throwing her stilettoed feet easily to her head, is clearly an abused woman, yet never seems weak or lost; and be puzzled by Fanni Esterházy's maniac and robotic solo. The scene where amputee Tamás Kónya floats in, strapped up in the height of his missing legs, and slow-dances with Emília Polgár, has provoked mixed audience reactions – to me it was just touching. These bits and pieces let the performers' individuality shine through – but paradoxically they are mostly shadowed by the company leader's unmistakable touch.

Rita Góbi's *Volitant*, premiered in 2017 and selected as part of that year's AerowavesTwenty, was the masterpiece of a long-experimented and crystallised movement language. Of course, Góbi is at a much earlier stage in her career than Frenák, but *Volitant* is still a very important station on her artistic road; it's exciting to see where she goes next. Her newest piece, *Snapdragons*, shows that for now, she still lingers at this station. It has a lot in common with *Volitant*, involuntarily making the latter into a reference point as well. But there are differences too, of which the biggest is that this time Góbi choreographed for other people rather than for herself. The six female dancers are all very young, emerging performers, and the show feels a bit like a demonstration of Góbi's teaching method and artistic style, or a first step towards building a company.

> **Fans expect some artists to reinvent themselves, while others they expect to deliver the well-known and well-loved**

People tend to open then close up, shine then wilt



Rita Góbi's *Snapdragons*. Photo © Gábor Dusa

After the bird-like creature of *Volitant*, Góbi once again let herself be inspired by nature, this time choosing flowers as her 'protagonists'. She works with the same collaborators as well: lighting designer Pavla Beranová conjures coloured shadows for the snapdragon-girls on the back wall, recalling both a beautiful summer field and an art installation. Dávid Szegő once again creates more a vibrant soundscape than music, consisting of curious, unidentified noises. Similarly, dance is not really dance either, but then why would it be: what we see is not humans expressing emotions through dancing, but the instinctive movements of natural beings. Góbi's language is quite made for that: repetitive, almost involuntary gestures (like repeatedly sticking out tongues), angular forms, micro-movements and the isolation of even the smallest body parts have become her trademarks now. In some of the postures that the performers take up, we don't even recognise the human body any more. Every body part is equally important and even the smallest gesture (like the rolling of eyes) is planned, which evokes ancient Oriental dance styles as well.

Although there are six people on stage, they don't really dance with each other – yet there is a kind of natural force that keeps the whole composition together. Just as in nature, the snapdragon-girls go through a slow unfolding that progressively turns into wild and boisterous blooming. This, according to the choreographer's concept, is what connects them with human nature as well: just like snapdragons, people tend to sometimes open then close up, shine then wilt. Wouldn't it be great to preserve some of that playfulness that these flower-girls bring to the stage as well? Apart from a few uncertainties, the young dancers deliver Góbi's rigorous choreography precisely, practised to perfection. Although Góbi is a unique and charismatic performer, this piece shows that her movement language works without her on stage as well. And still I find myself wondering about that next station of her career. •

W_all: Trafó House of Contemporary Arts, Budapest, Hungary.
Snapdragons: Bethlen Theatre, Budapest, Hungary.

W_all
Dancers: Anibal dos Santos, Fanni Esterházy, Jarrett Benjamin, Zoltán Deák (Studio M), Tamás Kónya, Emma Lőrincz, Eoin MacDonncha, Milán Maurer, Tímea Mázló, Emilia Polgár (M Studio, Latasha Pugh (DJ Mahogany), László Szekrényes) Studio) / Choreographers: Péter Agárdi, Anibal dos Santos, Benjamin Jarrett, Eoin MacDonncha, Mi_MA / Director: Pál Frenák / Director: Fanni Esterházy / Music: Gryllus Ábris – Miklós Farkas / Alpine Technology, Stage: György Zoltai / Light: János Marton / Voice: Attila Hajas

Snapdragons
Choreography: Rita Góbi / Dancers: Rebeka Anna Frank (OKJ student at Nemes Nagy Ágnes Művészeti Szakgimnázium), Viktória Jambrovics, Flóra Lévay, Zsófia Sinthavong, Ildikó Szeles, Viktória Takács Sz. / Music: Dávid Szegő / Lighting design: Pavla Beranová, József Pető / Costume design: Marie Gourdain / Choreographic assistant: Zsófia Sinthavong / Production assistant: Liliána Maros / Creative producer: Ágnes Bakk / Supported by: Ministry of Human Resources, National Cultural Fund, Workshop Foundation, SÍN Cultural Centre, MOHA – Mozdulatművészetek Háza/Orkesztika Alapítvány, gaborgobi.com / Coproduction partner: National Dance Theatre Budapest, Hungary

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Jan Martens: Passing the Bechdel Test

Marie Pons
15 January 2019

Jan Martens' choreography is a canvas that interweaves the action and speech of teenage performers with an impressive array of feminist texts, figures and thoughts

La Condition Publique, Roubaix, France, NEXT Festival.
Reviewed: 20 November 2018

By: Jan Martens / With: Isabel Braamkolk, Noor Caestecker, A. Claassen, Renée De Coninck, Luna Glowacki, Bente Govaerts, Noor Hollemeersch, Birgit Lesage, Marie Libens, Hannah Peiren, Celina Vercruysse, Yanou Van Dessel & Mirren Vandenberk / Artistic assistance: Kimmy Ligtvoet / Dramaturgy: Peter Anthonissen / Advice: Rudi Meulemans / Lighting design: Elke Verachtert / Costume advice: Lotte Stek / Surtitling: Erik Borgman / Production management: Teresa Wouters & Sylvie Svanberg / Distribution: Vincent Company / International distribution: A Propic/Line Rousseau & Marion Gauvent / Thanks to: Renée Copraij, Fransien Van Der Putt, Moos Van Den Broek, Simone Atangana Bekono & Siska Baeck / Produced by: fABULEUS & GRIP / Co-produced by: tanzhaus nrw & STUK / with the support of: the Flemish Government & City of Leuven

In Jan Martens' *Passing the Bechdel Test*, the title is an action plan. If author Alison Bechdel coined her test in the 1980s to point out narrative sexism, the Belgian choreographer's new piece is produced in a time where the whole of patriarchal society needs to be observed through giant Bechdel test glasses.

Thirteen youngsters between 14 and 19 years old are in charge. They handle the lighting desk, sound controls and take it upon themselves to deliver two-hours' worth of feminism in action. They are here to speak out about gender, sexuality, consent and intersectionality while growing up in a post #metoo era. One by one, they sit on a chair facing us and state what they are or are not, what they like or dislike. Except we rapidly sense that their surnames are interchangeable, and the words might be borrowed from others. The choreography resides in the finely woven canvas of many voices, past and present: the words of Virginia Woolf, Toni Morisson or Monique Wittig, Ellen Page or Ellen Degeneres, as well as the performers' own.

Martens' previous pieces pushed at the physical limits of performance (*The dog days are over*, *Rule of three*), but here the physical action focuses on sitting, rearranging, walking to the front or standing aside to let someone else speak. The minimal amount of movement opens a clear space for us to listen and let copious amounts of information sink in.



Photo © Clara Hermans

The result is a choral speech, mixed from literary excerpts, slogans and anecdotes, that creates a shared knowledge which beautifully supports the performers' right to exist as queer, lesbians, intersex, transgender, females. Passing... opens up a safe space and a place of resistance at the same time, that we can only hope will overflow the theatre space. The performative action of collecting, learning, embodying and delivering those words is a statement in itself. Taking two hours to talk the talk and walk that walk, the piece allows spectators to grasp that bigger picture. The thirteen performers are extremely good. They have the floor, the light, the knowledge. Time's definitely up.

The bottom line: Feminism 101. One very clever way to march forward

Taiwan Dance Platform 2018

Sanjoy Roy
29 January 2019

The 2018 Taiwan Dance Platform was 'made in Asia', but international in scope

Kaohsiung, Taiwan.
4–11 November 2018

Photos © National Kaohsiung Center for the Arts (Weiwuying)

I was refreshingly disorientated by the second Taiwan Dance Platform (4–11 November 2018). Though housed in the vast, spanking new National Kaohsiung Centre for the Arts (also known as Weiwuying), its programme was not pegged around the kind of big-name, prestige productions you might expect to find in such a grand venue, but instead showcased smaller-scale, independent dance. The kind of programme that's not far in spirit from Aerowaves' annual Spring Forward festival (with which the Taiwan platform has entered a three-year exchange programme), or the Nordic Ice Hot platform – the difference being that most performances were, as the festival title had it, 'made in Asia'.

Or to give its full title: 'Made in Asia?!' – complete with question mark and exclamation mark slapped on the end. Where the previous 2016 platform, titled 'Whose Steps Are We Following?', deliberately but straightforwardly raised the question of non-western cultural identities within the world of contemporary dance, this punctuation on this year's title felt almost like a riposte to its own question as if to say: made in Asia WTF?!

For me, two pieces exemplified contrasting approaches to what festival director Chien Wen-Pin called 'the clash and the merging of the East and the West' – both, unsurprisingly, duets. **I-Fang Lin**'s *En Chinoiseries* was a montage of scenes set against video backdrops of (stereo) typical Chinese imagery – night markets, TV karaoke shows, patterned silk dresses, the Taiwanese national anthem – through which wandered a contrasting couple: Lin herself, Taiwan-born but long resident in France, and French musician **François Marry**. For some of the young Taiwanese I spoke to, the cheesy clichés and touristic images were too much to stomach, but I, being a Londoner, was much less directly affected: it wasn't about me. For me, the piece was by no means a simple 'clash and merging' between East and West, or even between the performers' other obvious differences (gender, age, one a musician, the other a dancer). Instead, I saw two people navigating the cultural spaces and physical means between them, sometimes in alignment, sometimes in conflict, often isolated and often exchanging or sharing their roles as dancer and singer, leader and follower, performer and witness. True, the burden of cultural stereotypes fell on her shoulders rather than his, but this still felt like a nuanced encounter, rendered subtle by understated performances. To discover, later, that it was a response to Mathilde Monnier's 1990 piece *Chinoiseries* (for dancer Monnier, with whom Lin worked for many years, and musician Louis Sclavis) simply added another layer of resonance.

Together Alone – another duet performed by a Taiwanese woman and a European man (**Chen-Wei Lee** and Hungarian **Zoltán Vakulya**) – served as a striking counterpart. Instead of accumulating layers,

it worked by stripping them away, its bareness evident not only in its empty stage and minimal set (just a few neural squiggles of light), but most obviously because its performers were naked throughout. The piece worked in three parts. The first saw the two in an evolving loop of continuous touch, every part of the body playing a part: wrist touched nape, stomach touched rib, crown of head fitted fold of elbow, tongue pushed towards tongue. It was an astonishingly intimate yet also asexual relationship. Or better: presexual, like Adam and Eve, before sin.

An odd lindyhop interlude – contact still kept through the hands – led to an even more intimate coupling as the pair knotted together on the floor like twins in an invisible womb, as closely linked as they were inexorably separate. And that, ultimately, was the point of this deeply affecting piece. Where *En Chinoiseries* navigated through layers of culture, identity, media and memory, *Together Alone* pushed past such temporalities towards a core conundrum of the human condition: our necessary co-existence, our inescapable solitude.

Of course, most dance happens somewhere between the poles of the temporal and the existential, the cultural and the corporeal. **Ching-Ying Chien**'s *Vulture* had some similarities to the above duets – a female Taiwanese dancer with a male European musician (guitarist **Joseph Ashwin**) – but it was hard to discern its aim. A remarkably strong and supple dancer, Chien emerged from beneath a black cloth, splaying as if newly hatched before gaining command of her own body, flexing limbs like wings. But the combination of Ashwin's moody music and her own exceptional physicality failed to spark into something more.



Together Alone, Chen-Wei Lee and Zoltán Vakulya

Perhaps nearest to the existential, corporeal world of *Together Alone* was *Matou* by Japanese artist **Ruri Mito**, in which she placed her own body as a kind of painfully contorting sculpture on a pedestal, jutting bones and twisting sinews forming an exoskeleton for some chafed spirit within. There was psychological ambivalence in more conventional dance form in





Po-Cheng Tsai's *Split*, which turned the stage into kind of uncanny valley of polished, white-clad avatars in odd virtual reality – part physical, part simulation.

A number of other works were more obviously 'made in Asia', though each was strikingly different. **I-Chin Lin**'s *The End of the Rainbow* was a guided walk through different zones representing a body's journey at the point of death, replete with Taiwanese funeral songs, ritual enactments, conjurings of ghostly spirits; yet I lacked the cultural knowledge, and felt its subtleties were wasted on me. Curiously, **Goblin Party**'s *Once Upon a Time*, which drew on traditional Korean folk tales, costumes and customs, was more widely accessible, perhaps because of its physical slapstick, mischievous attitude, and its playfully inventive use of cloaks, hats and fans.

Fighters, led by Taiwanese choreographer **Nai-Hsuan Yang**, was a mashup of more familiar elements – kung fu, superhero figures, a TV-show format – that nevertheless escaped my grasp; unlike *Along* by Hong Kong artist **Bruce Cho**, a basic but boisterous entertainment for seven guys doing kung fu stunts and showy martial arts moves. Altogether closer to my own turf was **Ryuichi Fujimura**'s *How I Practise My Religion & How Did I Get Here?*, a low-key reflection on his long-standing devotion to contemporary dance class, as an amateur enthusiast. With both warmth and humour, Fujimura demonstrated a whole series of moves (moving in lines, leading with different body parts, claiming the space, use of gesture, and so on), combined with a rueful but affectionate acceptance of his own ageing body and his non-dance career.

Not all the performances were actually made in Asia. *Hydra* was a composite of three pieces by **Yuval Pick**, put together in France and invited to this platform presumably because it was designed to draw an outside audience into the interior of an impressive building. Its opening male trio in the big outdoor plaza served as the draw – attention-grabbing but not choreographically complex – that led the audience into a foyer area where two women formed distorted mirrors of each other's breathy actions, and thence into the Concert Hall, where a quartet surged and ebbed like waves breaking and tugging, the vast spaces of the hall vaulting high above them like an architectural sky.

Núria Guiu's *Likes* was made in Spain but looked at a global phenomenon: YouTube videos and Facebook likes as vehicles for

A rueful but affectionate acceptance of his own ageing body and his non-dance career

yoga fusions (with Pilates, voguing and all sorts) and cover dances for international pop hits. By turns witty, provocative and disturbing, it also offered easy transnational recognition – one reason, presumably, why the Taiwan platform selected the piece from Aerowaves' 2018 Spring Forward festival, as part of their three-year exchange agreement with Aerowaves.

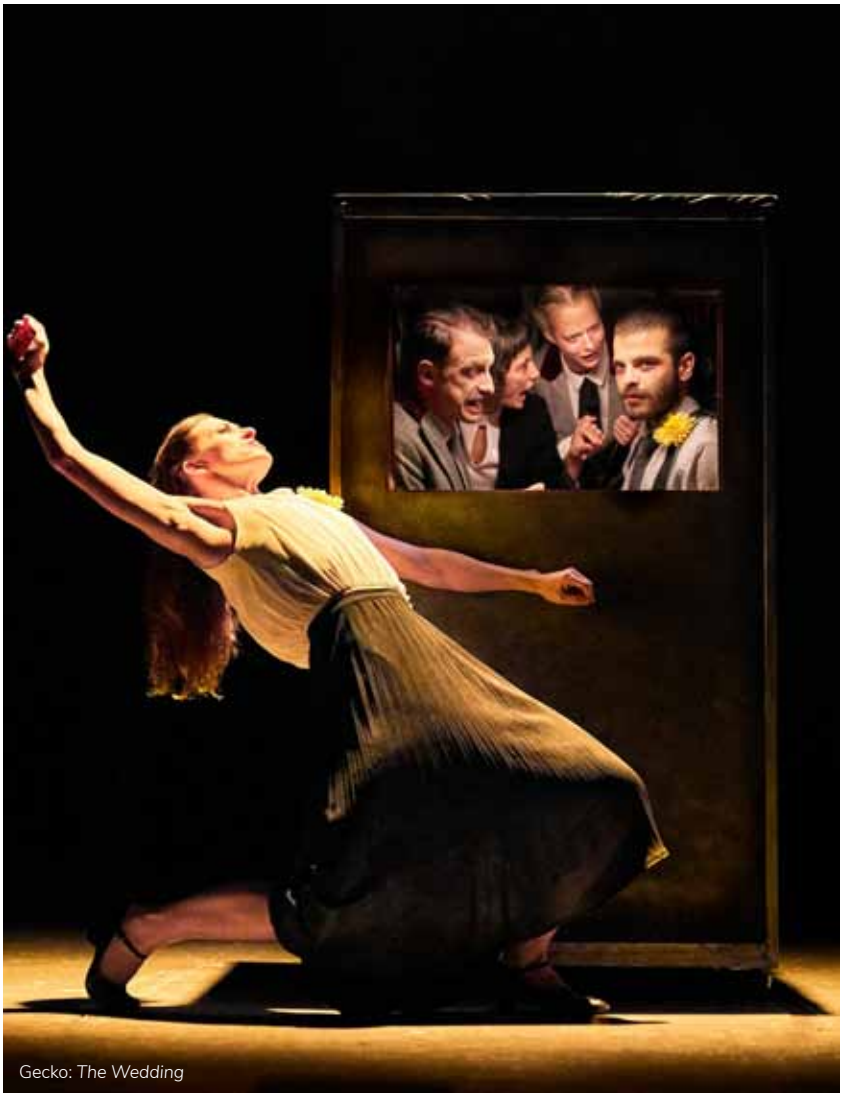
In return, Aerowaves selected a piece from the Taiwan platform for the next Spring Forward in April 2019, in France. *Medium*, by Indonesian-born, Japan-based artist **Rianto**, draws on his training in the Javanese dance form *lengger*, incorporating its gender-crossing performance style, as well as ritual and devotional aspects, and an interplay between dancer and musician. Accompanied by the raw vocals and percussion of musician **Cawhati**, Rianto moulded the style to his own ends while still connecting to its traditional roots and formal qualities – as if he were the medium and it was the spirit. It was a powerful, eerie performance, and well worthy of selection, but perhaps it also helped that it could readily be labelled 'made in Asia' – no disorienting question mark or exclamation mark required. •

Far left: Po-Cheng Tsai, *Split*
Left: Yuval Pick, *Hydra*
Below: Rianto, *Medium*



London International Mime Festival 2019

Photo © Richard Haughton



Gecko: *The Wedding*

The London International Mime Festival, revitalising the city's stages every January after a stodgy season of panto and *Nutcrackers*, provides such a capacious and innovative interpretation of mime that first-time audience members are often baffled by what the word might mean. Expressions of astonishment – 'But they were speaking!', 'Why weren't they wearing Pierrot face paint?', 'Why did no one get behind a desk and pretend to walk down the stairs?' – are fertile grounds for discussion, even for seasoned festival goers.

Among the companies featured in a month-long programme were three returners – UK-based Gecko and Theatre Re, and Belgian company Peeping Tom. All three companies use language as well as physical theatre in their pieces, though in the case of **Theatre Re**'s *Birth*, the dialogue is performed almost inaudibly below a joyous music box soundtrack that, in the climactic tragic birthing scene, turns atonal and frightening.

Following three generations of women grappling with motherhood, daughtership, raising children and losing pregnancies, *Birth*'s sharp-eyed observations and interpretations of ordinary rituals – setting tables, brushing hair, arguing – make compelling watching, and director Guillaume Pigé blends his montage of scenes seamlessly. Sadly, the overall narrative arc suffers from the very ordinariness it strives hard to represent, and ultimately gives in to sentimentality, at its

Ka Bradley
12 February 2019

Using language and losing language: Theatre Re, Gecko and Peeping Tom

worst during the most purely 'mime' sections – a baby, for example, inching towards life before dying at birth, represented by an actor in a Pierrot suit crawling along a line of light.

By contrast, **Gecko**'s *The Wedding* takes symbols from ordinary life and staples them to storyboards that echo and mimic without entirely reflecting reality. *The Wedding*, performed at the Barbican, comes a few months after Gecko's triumphant return to Battersea Arts Centre with *Missing* (the show that burned down in the BAC's 2015 fire), and it sparks with a surprisingly revolutionary flame. Performers are birthed from a chute into a pile of teddy bears and ceremonially wed to their new jobs, starting in creamy satin wedding dresses but eventually graduating to grey and white office wear.

Working at wheeled cubicles, they move with a rapid, unbending uniformity, but individual stories break the rhythm. A man, miserable in his role, turns to alcohol and floats across the stage in a fuggy, loose-limbed fugue, his tie, coffee cup and telephone suspended around him like tiny ghosts. Two women, frantic for some other dimension to their life, crawl out of the office and lose themselves in a chest-pounding, stamping, spinning ritual of private rebellion. The energy of this rebellion carries over to the effervescent finale, which sees the workers destroying their office – and presumably seizing the means of production.

The symbol of the wedding – and so of duty, unconditional loyalty and binding contracts – is potent, and while Gecko's interpretation is elastic enough to resist narrative exactitude it can also be frustrating. Nevertheless, the individual characters that rise out of the densely emblematic imagery have clarity and charisma. Most striking are the family of buskers who live literally out of suitcase – poking their heads out of its zips and flaps to engage with the audience and one another. Though the international performers use their native languages when required to speak, the energy of conversation, of wheedling, of flirting, of pleading, of joking, of arguing, is unmistakeable, and exact translation is unnecessary.

Peeping Tom utilise the same technique in *Father (Vader)*, set in a retirement home where nurses, inhabitants and visitors melt in and out of one another's roles, energetic compères banter in Chinese and Japanese, outraged sons reprimand Flemish fathers, and groups of pearl-clutching retirees scream in the universal language of terror. A multilingual audience might feel themselves tuning in and out of perfect linguistic comprehension, as if twiddling the knob on a radio and hearing bands of clarity over the static. In fact, when director Franck Chartier wants his London audience to understand exactly what's going on, he errs on the side of rhetorical caution and has his performers use English. So why not pick one lingua franca and stick with



Photo © Oleg Degtiarov

Leo De Beul in Peeping Tom's *Father*

it throughout? Because prioritising language over movement goes against the point of mime; Chartier (and Gecko's director Amit Lahav) use of multiple languages actually upends the narrative authority of words. *Father* is a deeply surreal masterwork that explores father figures – despotic, pathetic, overbearing, dying, mysterious, ridiculous – and the quiet terror of ageing, of losing influence over one's own narrative, even one's own perceptions, and one's own body. Language locks in meaning, but the body echoes it and is bent by it: to a confused old man, a shouting face that freezes into rictus can carry more weight that the words themselves; summoning memories and sensations as tableaux is infinitely more expressive when language begins to lag.

Losing language also has its own surreality. Yi-Chun Li's extraordinary backbends, and Maria Carolina Vieira's gymnastic floor routine, which sees her tying herself into knots attempting to put a shoe on, turn the body uncanny. The dramatic extremes their bodies describe are pitched perfectly for the atmosphere, and their bodies become a part of the weird world of the retirement home, with no separation between the strangeness of the self and the strangeness of the place it has arrived in.

Father is both funny and deeply upsetting, and the contrast between the bravura calisthenics and, for example, performer Simon Versnel scared and naked on a hospital bed while a nurse sponge-washes him, does so much more than mere dialogue. Peeping Tom's use of the bizarre, of acrobatics, and of black humour and the hyperrealistic is at the furthest end of a scale occupied at the other end by Theatre Re's *Birth*. It presents the extraordinary with such conviction and persistence that it persuades its audience, for an hour and a half, that this is what reality looks like. •

Language locks in meaning, but the body echoes it and is bent by it

Yukiko Masui: Falling Family Léa Tirabasso: The Ephemeral Life of an Octopus

Ka Bradley
19 March 2019

A double bill that contrasts mental anguish with physical recklessness


Yukiko Masui, *Falling Family*

Photo © Cam Greenwell

A spotlight illuminates a single figure, battling an invisible downward pull. Her fists jab out, push away; her body jerks and curves, resisting whatever bonds are dragging her. In staccato bursts, she enacts an endlessly delayed, endlessly opposed fall.

Yukiko Masui's delicate *Falling Family* is a cinematic meditation on the act of falling or resisting a fall. Four dancers – seemingly representing a family, headed by Yumino Seki's captivating, damaged matriarch – appear in spotlit scenes across the stage, like bright photos in the dark pages of a family album. Sometimes they are energetically engaged in falling or resisting the tug of gravity helping or troubling one another, bursting into spins and shoves. At other times they are laying down multi-coloured dominos, building tenuous structures that inevitably collapse.

Exploring emotional shock like mental breakdown or death within a family unit, *Falling Family* has an overall minimalist, contemplative aesthetic. Its sudden scenes of panic and pain are therefore exactly as startling as they should be, but its meditative pace tends to let the narrative structure sag.

Léa Tirabasso's *The Ephemeral life of an octopus* is, by contrast, all vivid colours and energy. A quartet of performers strip to



Photo © Bohumil Kostohryz

Léa Tirabasso
The Ephemeral Life of an Octopus

jolly neon underclothes and begin a wobbly cross-stage boogie to Brahms. They move as if their bones are made of jelly; there's a newborn quality to their every stagger.

Tirabasso boldly lets ungainliness run rampant; we feel amazed by the reckless animal flesh that houses our souls. *The Ephemeral life...* is a vibrant, if occasionally overstretched, reckoning with the shocking wildness of the body. As three of the performers tangle a fourth (Catarina Barbosa) in the wires of a microphone, tipping her upside down as she breathlessly tries to sing 'Henry Lee', we are also reminded of the sheer helplessness of our bodies in the chaotic process of life. Tirabasso splits individual movement apart to reveal a shaky, vulnerable core of humanity.

The bottom line: Masui's intricate, cerebral exploration of mental trauma dramatically contrasts with Tirabasso's gleeful portrayal of bodily vagaries

The Place, London, UK. Reviewed: 02 March 2019

Yukiko Masui: Falling Family
Choreography: Yukiko Masui in collaboration with dancers / Performers: Julie Ann Minaai, Annakanako Mohri, Daniel Phung, Yumino Seki / Composer: Ezra Axelrod / Dramaturg: Arne Pohlmeier / Lighting designer: Ben Moon / Costume designer: Guilia Scrimieri / Producer: Sarah Maguire / Associate producer: Vasanthi Argouin / Artistic mentor: Hetain Patel

Léa Tirabasso: The Ephemeral life of an octopus
Choreography & direction: Léa Tirabasso / Performers: Catarina Barbosa, Alistair Goldsmith, Joachim Maudet, Rosie Terry Toogood / Music: Martin Durov / Lighting designer: Nicolas Tremblay / Scientific advisors: Adeola Olaitan, François Eisinger / Philosophical advisor: Thomas Stern / Animal transformation coach: Gabrielle Moleta / Project manager: Mathis Junet

SCENE ON SCREEN



A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night

Ka Bradley
13 July 2018

Dancing home alone before going out to do what vampires do. A moment of dance in the movie A Girl Walks Home Alone At Night

https://youtu.be/flrpSlGfm5M

In *Carmilla*, Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's 1871 novel about a seductive female vampire, Le Fanu's innocent girlish narrator describes Carmilla:

> *She was slender, and wonderfully graceful. Except that her movements were languid – very languid – indeed, there was nothing in her appearance to indicate an invalid.*

Ladies with languor return in Bram Stoker's 1897 novel *Dracula*. Lucy Westenra, drained night by night by the bloodthirsty count, eventually succumbs to death and undeath, and her vampiric corpse entices her former fiancé in a graveyard:

> *She still advanced, however, and with a languorous, voluptuous grace, said, 'Come to me, Arthur.'*

Lazy, lucid languor, at once sensual and mocking, is the lascivious heart of a female vampire's physical appeal. But these examples, from nineteenth century male writers, are tinged with a voyeuristic eroticism; in Ana Lily Amirpour's 2015 vampire film *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night*, the vampire – only ever identified as The Girl – dances with a languor that is private, self-possessed and, above all, coolly disinterested in the viewer.

The Girl lives in a basement flat, its flaking walls plastered with the faces of rock and pop stars. The Girl may need blood, but she loves music (a deleted scene from the film sees her lying, fully clothed, on her bed, next to a young man named Arash; they reel off the names of their favourite musicians, eyes dreamily fixed on the ceiling). This scene catches her in a quietly ecstatic, languorous celebration of a song, Farah's 'Dancing Girls'.

The camera bounces gently as it zooms in on The Girl, giving the impression that we are actually walking towards her. But The Girl doesn't look up or even flinch. Her chin is tucked in, looking down – she is not here to seduce us. Her neck rolls and sways. She moves with the sinuousness of a creature stirring from a long sleep. Body, hips, neck and arms, drift and fall. Each arcane loop

The inward celebration has come to an end, and she has to go out into the night...



Sheila Vand as The Girl in Ana Lily Amirpour's *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night* (2015)

of wrist or ribcage curls back towards her centre, the silent heart that is given over to the music. Her dreamy almost-saunter has no outward destination. Every roll of her shoulder – long, long rolls that draw curving lines across the screen – every gentle bob or slouch is the manifestation of an interior exhilaration. They are like waves from an enormous sea crashing on a shore; we do not know the depths of the sea but we note the foaming on the beach.

The Girl doesn't meet the face of the camera until the hypnotic synth cuts out and Farah starts to murmur over the percussion. Deliberation starts to steal into her movements as she lines her eyes with kohl and blocks her lips out with lipstick (though she still drifts with a languid vagueness that sees her overfill her upper lip). The inward celebration has come to an end, and she has to go out into the night, to do the things that vampires need to do at night. •

Dirty Dancing

Alexandra Gray
30 August 2018

Alexandra Gray on her first time watching Dirty Dancing – and why Baby's first time on the dancefloor stays with her

https://youtu.be/ijK0WTB_-RY



The first dance: Baby (Jennifer Grey) and Johnny (Patrick Swayze) in Emile Ardolino's 1987 classic *Dirty Dancing*

Everyone remembers their first time: the awkwardness, the excitement, the uncertainty. For better or worse, the first foray onto a dance floor is something you remember. For many, it's among the first occasions when you start to sense where, and with whom, you belong. A time when you really believed something different might happen, and when you hoped that this dance, with that boy or girl, might finally change your life forever.

The first time I saw the 1987 film *Dirty Dancing*, it was that electrifying dance floor scene, 20 minutes in, which stayed with me. The doors to the staff quarters burst open to reveal a seething den of sensuality. The Contours' 'Do You Love Me' poses the essential question as the camera pans across the hips of couple after couple, locked in the rhythm of the music, pelvises asking and answering each other, back, forth, up, down, swinging and swaying

What will happen, now that she can dance?

with luscious abandon. You can practically taste the sweat – apparently director Emile Ardolino filmed during a relentless heatwave. As the camera eyeballs undulating bodies, it becomes clear how much fun the dancers are having. Oblivious to the camera's gaze – and to protagonist Baby (Jennifer Grey), who stands, mouth agape, in the doorway – they smoulder and smile, hands lovingly lingering on bare backs, arms clasped around necks. Dancing like no one's watching.

Baby is watching though, and as she shuffles across the floor, lumbered with that watermelon (surely the most unsexy dance partner imaginable) we follow through her eyes and feel her awkwardness as she inches past grinding couples. They're mostly too absorbed in each other to notice her, but a few cast glances of suspicion, or worse, pity. With shoulders hunched and eyes cast down, she seems to shrink with embarrassment as more and more lovers loom into shot.

As she hovers at the side lines her future teacher and his partner charge into the scene. To whoops and cheers they spin into the centre of everything and fly into an exuberant duet. Cynthia Rhodes as Penny is just a little too polished – the stiff carriage of her head and upper back belong more in the ballroom than the backroom, but she's a riot of skirt-swishing pink and has legs extensions to die for. As for her partner Johnny, well, he's Patrick Swayze. The fervour of their performance builds to Otis Redding's 'Love Man'. A close-up of feet nails you to the beat, Penny's gold sandals tapping as she and Johnny strut and thrust down the gangway formed by the other dancers.

Johnny notices Baby's envious gaze, and with a glint in his eye, he beckons her over. He gently presses her into bent knees; she tries to copy his rhythm, swivelling awkwardly. Baby isn't only following the beat, she's following the sexiest guy in the room. She's stiff at first, but at the moment she stops trying, she starts dancing. Here she discovers that she has a body, as well as a mind. The shy girl with a watermelon crept in as a naïve teenager, full of idealistic dreams about changing the world. Pressed against Johnny, she discovers that a person can change her world.

Suddenly, he ducks under her arm, spins her around, and slinks into the crowd. The song fades but for a moment she's still lost in the music, a riot of movement. No longer shy, her stance is wide and earthy. She wiggles her hips, shakes her hair, and stumbles – thrown off balance by the intensity of this first, wild dance with a stranger. What will happen, now that she can dance? •

Little Miss Sunshine

Anna Kaszuba
18 September 2018

For the win! Why artlessness triumphs in the dance scene from 'Little Miss Sunshine'

https://youtu.be/xtVmfXnJM80



'Let Olive be Olive.' Abigail Breslin in the dance scene from Valerie Faris and Jonathan Dayton's 2006 movie *Little Miss Sunshine*

No matter the miles, seven-year-old Olive's dysfunctional family are taking a road trip to California to fulfil her dream of winning the Little Miss Sunshine beauty pageant. Like a fawn that's walked into a circus, Olive prepares to perform alongside her candy-sleeved, teeth-parading counterparts. An air of inevitable failure fills the screen. Dressed in a top hat, oversized tie and untucked shirt, Olive (Abigail Breslin) begins a dance with her back to the audience, her arms wrapped around her, miming the snog-in-the-playground joke. For thirty seconds she seems to be winning the hearts of the mummies and daddies in the audience. Until the butt slaps… the sassy catwalk… and the pièce de résistance trouser strip.

> *'I'd like to dedicate this to my grandpa, who showed me these moves.'*

Jaws drop and brows furrow as Olive beams proudly, oblivious to the shame she has triggered in her adult onlookers with a joyful pelvic thrust. Because this is what we're really talking about in Valerie Faris and Jonathan Dayton's 2006 comedy-drama: shame.

Somewhere, somehow, along the unmarked road into adulthood we said 'yes' to an oversized rucksack of should nots and 'no' to the featherlight trailer that is I am. But in her performance, Olive instinctively communicates that this is what she is, this is how she feels, and she feels good.

Now down to loose fitting red hot pants and black glittery leotard, Olive spins as children do, stopping only through giddy excess. Her carefully rehearsed choreography to Rick James's 'Super Freak' – unmastered yet precise – allows for loopholes of pure, sensational delight. In one particularly endearing moment, she sprints on the spot, hands running over her scalp and hair, teeth gritted in bodily bliss.

She'll never be Little Miss Sunshine, but Olive wins. Any attempts to stop her – by the judges, the compère and even her own family (who end up supporting her on stage in an anarchic mash-up) – serve to highlight her untouchable happiness. She continues to leap in a circle with yawning arms, and the uplift is ecstatic even if her feet barely leave the ground.

She wins at allowing herself to experience her body's capabilities. No judgements or censorship can be traced in her breathy roaring, her crawling lion imitation. She wins at being sensual without being sexual, instantly untangling the knot that so often binds adults. She wins at rousing the spirit of the watcher into desiring a taste of unrestrained pleasure. The very artlessness of Olive's dance is a triumph.

Olive may not win the beauty pageant, but she succeeds in reminding us of the natural jubilance available to us if we would only bathe in our own sun. •

American Psycho

Róisín O'Brien
30 October 2018

Is that a raincoat or are you just glad to see me? On the choreography of a murder...

https://youtu.be/OgrpqHHSI-M



A quick dance before death? Christian Bale points out that 'It's hip to be square' in Mary Harron's American Psycho (2000)

American Psycho (2000), a perversely comic horror film based on the novel by Bret Easton Ellis, introduced us to homicidal investment banker Patrick Bateman, played by Christian Bale. The absurdly irrelevant concerns of the powerfully rich form both the backdrop to and motivation for Bateman's psychopathy and murderous frenzies.

In an infamous scene, Bateman invites his rival Paul Allen back to his flat. Allen has clearly had too much to drink. He is sprawled on the couch, his voice slurs. He is indifferent to the music of Huey Lewis and the News, unlike Bateman, who proceeds to lecture him.

'Their early work was a little too new-wave for my taste,' Bateman states as he paces across the room, his steps measured and calculated. A geometry of corporate pinstripes, he pauses, legs reorganising under sloping shoulders, hands gesticulating at mid-body height. His body language seeks to inform, oddly persistently.

A quick turn afoot and he dashes out of the room. It's a room excessively carpeted with newspapers, and eerily lacking any noteworthy characteristics bar extreme

wealth. Bateman continues to articulate, explain, propose, extrapolate the band's brilliance as the camera follows him into the bathroom and he dons a raincoat in front of the mirror. He pops a pill and for a moment he is still. Body poised, his eyes bore back at him; he is focused, not presenting, and we wonder what he is planning.

And he's back! He reverses into the living room, a jolting switch back to his earlier emphatic state as one arm swings upward to initiate a loose backwards moonwalk, discombobulatingly jolly. The other arm holds then places down an axe (an axe?). 'Is that a raincoat?' a blithe, scornful Allen asks. 'Yes it is!' Bateman's face distorts into a painfully keen expression.

Bateman eagerly glides back to the shelving unit to press play. You can almost hear the 'ping!' as his hand circles round and reverbs as it hits its final pointing position, the deciding spin on Wheel of Fortune. We cut to a longer shot and Bateman breaks into dance as he praises what is, in his opinion, the band's greatest hit, 'Hip to Be Square'. It's both a thoroughly weird and highly infectious moment, Bateman squeezing out every drop of insistent normality from this culturally prevalent dance move, through each hip slice, elbow jab and ass shake. Looping back round behind Allen, he is poised on the brink of something, some diabolical act (or possibly another shimmy).



'HEY PAUL.'

Snap. An irredeemable swing and the axe sinks into Allen. Bateman's head flicks up, carnivorous. The mood has broken, and an animal now inhabits the screen, its adrenaline-strained limbs result driven and zealous as it hacks away and screams: 'Try getting a reservation at Dorsia now, you fffucking stupid bastaard!'

Hair undone but gaze clear, Bateman's breath heaves as he contemplates his work. Purged and seemingly momentarily unburdened, he calmly removes his raincoat and sits down. His suit remains immaculate. He lights a cigar, crosses his legs and leans back in the chair, a position he might just as comfortably assume at his club, a hunk of meat in the foreground. 'Hip to Be Square' continues on, insistently. •



Still from Childish Gambino's 2018 music video 'This is America'

Down in one! The single-shot music video

Daniel Pitt
06 November 2018

The appeal and the achievement of the one-shot music video

The dance-based single-camera-shot pop music video is a classic form. There's something thrillingly real and live, yet bizarrely staged about them that creates a sense of 'could-never-do-it' awe or 'have-a-go' accessibility for the viewer, depending on the example.

What is it about the single-shot music video that is so enduringly appealing? A lot of it is down to the camera-led experience, which mimics our experience of watching live performance – and the excitement and intimacy that comes with it. We watch life in one single shot, and because these videos are filmed (or appear to be filmed) in one take we know they're real, that they were live, that the whole choreography actually happened at least once like that – and we can feel in awe of the rehearsal required (and then maybe even rehearse the moves ourselves).

The 21st century has produced the best of this single-camera-meets-dance form. There's a captivating adaptability to the form that means it keeps being re-invented while retaining its impact (and 'shareability'). They've come a long way: the **Spice Girls** made their hotel party meander 'Wannabe' in 1996 but the choreography is only worthy of the school playground, and thankfully most of us have moved on. (Some might say that it's a good thing

> **OK Go made those who couldn't dance dream up choreography**



OK Go's viral hit 'Here It Goes Again'

that pop-stars like Beyoncé now nick their moves from contemporary dance royalty like Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker.)

In 2005, American garage-rock geeks **OK Go** taught themselves an impressive if choreographically clunky routine on four treadmills for their video to 'Here It Goes Again', which became an internet hit. Its deliberately clumsy, kooky choreography speaks of the truth of the effort. The band combine walking, treadmill-waiting and jumping with cheesy classic slides; it's not virtuosic movement but it's captivating and impressive because it's in unison. In the early days of social media, those watching can relate: these 'dancers' are dressed in preppy casualwear, performing with smug honest faces expressing of the concentration it truly requires. People made their own versions and tributes: OK Go made those who couldn't dance dream up choreography.

Released two years later, **Feist**'s '1234' took the one-shot format to new levels, building both the scale of production and incorporating the camera as part of the choreography. The camera rises, spins, spirals, pans and zooms in unison and contrast to the large cast movements, playing an integral role in the images created and drawing the viewer in. There's a joyous simplicity to the movement – big, expressive, party-like – and once again a sense that, with enough friends, you could do it yourself.

Robyn's 'Call Your Girlfriend' (2011) sees Robyn alone, singing and dancing for herself (with disco lights). Though she's aware of the camera, there are moments that we feel like the camera, in contrast to earlier examples, is prying on her personal dance of cathartic expression. Robyn slips between choreography and what seems like personal down-time: we watch her psych herself up for the more difficult routines. An angry punch or head-in-hands expression both lead into and disrupt the less 'natural' movements; it feels like she is performing segments of routines that she's learnt, but in the heat of the emotions she can't get her limbs around the transitions. It's the staged equivalent of bedroom/kitchen emoting: there's something human about the OTT movements, sexiness for one's self, and sadness. We've been there.

There's nothing 'real' about **Kiesza**'s synchronised sidewalk bop journey in 'Hideaway' (2014), but its stylish advancing grind is infectious and pulls the audience in as much as it pulls the passers-by into the choreography. The camera leads us on a journey, always slightly ahead of the protagonist, but this is light-hearted dance purely for those good old reasons, joy and flirting.

In May 2018, postmodern polymath **Childish Gambino** (Donald Glover) released the video for his single 'This Is America'. Filmed in (what passes for) one take in a huge warehouse, it's a scathing yet stylish commentary on the contemporary African-American experience in the USA, with Glover and a huge cast distinctively dancing through stereotypes and atrocities. As the best videos are released as 'events' now, it premiered on the American late-



Personal down-time: still from Robyn's 2011 music video 'Call Your Girlfriend'

night variety show Saturday Night Live, rooting it firmly in the realm of satire, and immediately went viral, provoking a deluge of critical response.

The single camera experience gives a sense of closeness, narrative urgency and panning socio-historical survey. The camera wavers and leads, knowing more of what's coming than Mr Gambino and the audience, swinging between staged scenes in the warehouse. Choreographer **Sherrie Silver** has concocted a relentless contemporary fusion of African popular dances including Ghana's Azonto and alkayida (noted for side to side moves), South Africa's gwara gwara, and black America's nae nae and shoot dances – and Silver will happily teach you on Youtube to dance them all and recreate the video. It's a remarkable ethnographic study made both addictively enthralling and satirical; a sprawling combination of choreographic cultural references performed with such flair that it deliberately attempts to distract us from the horror that surrounds it, a political comment on the structural racism that that permeates American society while at the same time both celebrating and appropriating black cultures.

'This is America' is the most sophisticated of the dance-based single-camera-shot videos, narratively, cinematically and choreographically, representing a peak for the form. There are more examples than this article's sample, for sure, and there'll be more. It's a simple, effective technique that makes a video hugely watchable, draws attention to the dance, and warrants re-watching. However, as the choreography gets better and the situations more complex, it does unfortunately make it harder and harder to copy in the bedroom. •

Dead Poets Society

Stella Mastorosteriou
20 November 2018

Show, don't tell! A teacher's lesson on conformity from an embodied perspective

https://youtu.be/nJ_htuCMCqM

In an unusual lesson given to his literature class, John Keating (Robin Williams) appears to teach no less than an improvisation class. He uses walking as a metaphor for conformity: when in a group we tend to synchronise our pace. He asks three students to just stroll around the yard and unmistakably, they soon march in unison.

'We all have a great need for acceptance,' he explains. And then, much like any improv class, he opens up the space for research and experimentation, inviting the young men to find their own walk, to shed the self-criticism and swim against the stream. 'You don't have to perform – make it for yourself,' Keating prompts. The boys go about, hopping and striding, stumbling and lingering.

Is their movement special or admirable? Not really. But it is an embodied introduction to a theoretical concept which, Keating hopes, will speak to them more profoundly than simply conversing about it, as they live it in their flesh and bones. His students are not just thinking about how to be themselves, they are actively experiencing their own way of moving. Even the sceptical student who chooses to not walk is making his own choice against conformity; and that is, in Keating's book, a success.

Dead Poets Society, released in 1989, may be seen as sentimental, but it is still a source of inspiration to countless students, creatives and romantics. There is an undeniable appeal in Keating's passionate lectures. He loves his job at this expensive private boys' school in Vermont. He cares about his students, though his methods are unconventional and attract the disapproval of the school authorities. He wants to engage the boys in the learning process, to commit to their dreams and live extraordinary lives. He sees poetry as a necessity for these lives. He is the teacher we would have loved to have as high school students; the teacher we want our educators to be.

Even as movie viewers, we are absorbed by his lectures. Watching the boys discover new ways of walking, don't you wonder what your own individual walk might look or feel like? Their movement – kind of clumsy, kind of joyous, kind of comical, with the humour of teen awkwardness – lets them express exactly what they are: adolescents, unsure about the future, curious to explore the unknown.

Keating's methods are of particular interest to dancers and dance teachers because of his focus on embodied learning. His methods, unorthodox for a literature class of the 1950s, are relevant in a



Free-moving = free-thinking? John Keating (Robin WIlliams) in Peter Weir's 1989 *Dead Poets Society*

dance/movement context of any decade. Every exercise or metaphor Keating proposes is translated into an embodied experience. From ripping pages out of poetry books to standing on desks in order to change one's point of view of the world, embodiment is the key to free thinking and claiming one's own voice.

To paraphrase one of his catchy quotes: 'No matter what anybody tells you, words and ideas can change the world.' They are even more powerful when they can be taken, embodied and lived.

Embodiment is the key to free thinking and claiming one's own voice

Mauvais Sang

Anastasio Koukoutas
11 December 2018

An intoxicating scene from Leos Carax's Mauvais Sang embodies the headlong rush of youthful love, and the mystery of its memory

https://youtu.be/gt2KlkBUgXA



The headlong rush of modern love. Denis Lavant in Leos Carax's *Mauvais Sang* (1986)

There are songs, movies, actors that mark us indelibly during our youth. Even though we can't process those marks profoundly while rushing deliriously into the adult world, they keep coming back, like some sort of somatic memory or reflex.

I saw Leos Carax's 1986 film *Mauvais Sang* some time in the 1990s. Though a far cry from being a true cinephile back then, watching that movie was a pure blessing for it carved in me a long-lasting triangle of love: the film director, the actor Denis Lavant and, of course, David Bowie.

You might have already sensed the relentless trouble of youth found in the film if you had spotted that the title makes reference to the eponymous *A Season in Hell*, a poem by the tragic, emblematic rebel Arthur Rimbaud. Like the poem, the film is a free-fall into the inner depths of the characters, also revealing the two major influences of Carax's early oeuvre, the hardcore intellectualness of Jean-Luc Godard and the spiritual sensibility of Robert Bresson.

Denis Lavant, in the role of Alex, a young man who becomes the accomplice of an aging gangster (Michel Piccoli), is hired to steal the antidote to a virus called STBO. He soon finds himself drawn to Anna (a very young Juliette Binoche), who is the mistress of his boss.

The film's opaque colours, chosen to depict the psychological greyness of the characters, are heightened by splashes of luscious reds and oceanic blues that hint at the emotional turbulence of Alex towards Anna. But what makes this movie remarkable – even through the nostalgic lens of my adolescence – is the way the director manages to shift abruptly from the kinetic frenzy of a scene to a standstill of empathic proximity, or in reverse.

Take the scene in which Alex bursts out into the street, running to the music of David Bowie's 'Modern Love'. During this almost one minute of linear camerawork, a flood of emotions kicks in. Who wouldn't identify with Alex running, cart-wheeling, jumping, without recalling the drunkenness of a first kiss, the intoxication of adolescent love, which had the world surrender momentarily to our will?

The scene insinuates the impossible lovemaking of the two characters: Alex's initial stumbling, as if he has been kicked in the stomach by love, transforms into a frantic allegro sequence. The movement escalates, climaxing into a small 'thanatos'; there's distress and pleasure, Alex's arms clumsily reaching up to the sky or buffeting at himself, his body arching now and then as if hit by thunder. He is still running, hurdling over imaginary obstacles, losing his mind to a point of no return. He tries to reach something, to run away or get closer – who knows? – accelerating even more, speeding up to an unavoidable hiatus.

Alex runs back to Anna only to find her body-shaped mark on the mattress. Their love signs – if there are any – are like forensic evidence: a hair on the red sheet, a cigarette left burning, a blue wrinkled napkin and a room of inconsolable solitude. After all, 'though love be a day and life be nothing, it shall not stop kissing.'* •

* e.e. cummings, 'Thy fingers make early flowers of all things'

Alex's initial stumbling, as if he has been kicked in the stomach by love, transforms into a frantic allegro

Joe Wright's Anna Karenina

Lena Megyeri
22 January 2019

A pivotal scene in Joe Wright's Anna Karenina is wordless, its drama of love, transgression and death distilled in dance

https://youtu.be/9yUAzBRnZkI

All the world is literally a stage in Joe Wright's 2012 take on Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* – and every movement is dance. Officers file papers to unison beats, the barber prepares for his job with the *paso doble* steps of a matador, and even the street sweeper floats away gracefully to a 3/4 rhythm on a street that is not actually a street, but rather the auditorium floor of a theatre. This highly choreographed reality is the work of **Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui**, chameleon and all-round artist of the contemporary dance scene. Throughout the movie, his unique touch creates a heightened atmosphere that rises above the ordinary.

The emotional whirlwind of the story intensifies through the crescendo of the ballroom scene, and particularly during the waltz where Anna and Vronsky's fates are sealed: it's lavish, it's over the top, it's decidedly meant for effect – and you can't help but be swept away by its dramatic force. This is more than just a dance scene; it's a key moment where so many things happen without a single word being spoken. Although Anna and Vronsky (Keira Knightley and Aaron Taylor-Johnson) are dancing the same choreography as the others in the room (which is not quite your traditional waltz) – hands touching shoulders, arms gently intertwining, feet swiftly gliding from one end of the room to the other – their movements still feel different because of the instant chemistry between them. Watching their waltz is like being witness to something much more intimate. And indeed, when Vronsky lifts Anna high up in the air, we hear a sigh that seems to come from outside their current space and time – a moment that is later mirrored in the first lovemaking scene, which has its own choreography as well.

As if it's their dance, and only theirs, other couples freeze mid-movement around them. For a while we find them in a single spotlight on a dark, empty dancefloor, like competitors in a TV dance show – seemingly alone but still watched and judged by many. And while they never overstep the limits of the social dance with their movements, they still break one important rule. As the whole room spins faster and faster, we see an increasingly distressed Kitty (who had hoped Vronsky would propose to her that night) dancing with several different men, and it becomes clear: Anna and Vronsky never change partners. This is only the first of Anna's public mistakes (as, obvious for this era, it's always considered her mistake, never his), but it's enough to set off her decline. 'I'd call on her if she'd only broken the law,' proclaims one countess towards the end of the movie, 'but she broke the rules.'

Finally Kitty (Alicia Vikander) breaks free from her partner and, gasping with exhaustion and fury, watches Anna accusingly. With a sudden self-consciousness, Anna walks off the



dancefloor so that Kitty can dance with Vronsky – but it's a very different dance: more duel than duet, where arms cut the air like swords and bodies never touch.

The last of the forebodings of the scene comes when Anna tries to rush away from the ball, but is faced with a mirrored door. Suddenly, behind her desperate reflection we see not the commotion of the ball, but a train approaching threateningly. A tragic story encapsulated in three minutes of waltz; a dance of love and death.

Anna (Keira Knightley) and Vronsky (Aaron Taylor-Johnson) in the ballroom scene of Joe Wright's *Anna Karenina*, choreographed by Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui

Watching their waltz is like being witness to something much more intimate

Luca Guadagnino's Suspiria

Jelena Mihelčić
01 March 2019

Toil and trouble brews in a cavernous, covenous dance company

https://youtu.be/eQIII8V3SLU

Popular dance movies seem to be following a pattern. There's always a young dancer, on a mission, trying to succeed against all odds. Usually it's a woman and a goody-goody, and the dance itself is there merely as a decoration to fill out the script. A typical example, and the pioneer dance movie in the form we are now familiar with, is *Flashdance* (1983), where dance is incorporated as MTV-style scenes, with no real connection to the ideas in the movie.

Suspiria (2018) might initially seem similar, as it is about a young dancer rising to the top of a dance company, but it has two important twists. The first *Suspiria*, directed by Dario Argento in 1977, was set in a classical ballet school and did not have much actual dancing, while the remake's director **Luca Guadagnino** gives an important role to contemporary dance, here choreographed by **Damien Jalet**. Not only is the dance not pretty, let alone



Dakota Johnson as Susie in Luca Guadagnino's 2018 *Suspiria*, choreographed by Damien Jalet

> It provokes primal emotions and embodies feminine power

flashy, but the main female roles are far from your typical dance movie goody-goodies: they are witches.

It's the 70s in Berlin, terrorised by the radical leftist Red Army Faction. Susie (Dakota Johnson), raised an American Mennonite, arrives to join a prestigious dance company led by a coven of witches. Their intentions – to choose and sacrifice a young dancer – are announced during Susie's audition.

The audition takes place in a claustrophobic room with no windows, its walls plastered with vertical mirror that distort her body. She dances as if the two sides of the room have grabbed her and are tearing her apart, possessed, animalistic, breathing heavily. The arm swings cut through the air, and fists punch the chest. She falls down to bounce her head back decisively. She crawls to the dark, squirming, then spins to the front light again. Her arms and torso pulsate, she rapidly kicks her leg as if pushing something away. She finishes in a long dizzying spin.

By the nods and looks of the teachers we can sense they're up to no good, but through Susie's dancing we can clearly see she's a much stronger character than suggested up until that moment. She seems to also have something up her sleeve, but we still don't know what it is (no spoilers if you were expecting one). By the end of the movie these individual elements intensify to the point that speech can no longer communicate what's happening and dance almost takes over completely.

Besides **Mary Wigman** and her deliberately ugly and wild dances (*Witch Dance*), another German dance icon, **Pina Bausch**, seems to have influenced the movie, specifically in the character of Madame Blanc (Tilda Swinton). She is the company's charismatic choreographer, wearing long dresses, always holding a cigarette in her hand. The piece they are rehearsing is reminiscent of Bausch's version of *The Rite of Spring*, with its frenetic rhythm and orgiastic climax, but without all the dirt. The group sequences form ritualistic geometrical shapes and repetitive trance-like actions. The movement in the entire movie is energetic and harsh, contrasting the gravity-pulled floorwork with jumps; fierce turns with the details of swirly wrists. It provokes primal emotions and embodies feminine power. In contrast to most popular dance movies, Guadagnino's *Suspiria* gives space to the expressive power of dance. •

ABOUT



Contributors

Editorial board

Sanjoy Roy London, UK
Editor
Sanjoy Roy has written on dance for the *Guardian* newspaper since 2002, and has contributed to many other publications including the *New York Times*, *New Statesman*, *Dance Gazette*, *Dancing Times* and *Dance International*. He keeps an archive of his writing at sanjoyroy.net.

Ka Bradley London, UK
Associate Editor
Ka Bradley is an editor at Granta Books. She reviews dance and theatre for the *Observer*, *Time Out*, *Exeunt* and *The Stage*. Her fiction has appeared in *Granta Magazine*, *The Tangerine*, *Somesuch Stories* and *Catapult*, among other places.

Marie Pons Lille, FR
Associate Editor
Marie Pons writes for *Mouvement*, *Ma Culture*, *LM Magazine* and is editor-in-chief of *Les Démêlées*, a paper publication focused on dance criticism. She is producer for *All we can do is dance*, a web project combining film and dance, and has been in charge of documenting European projects such as Dancing Museums (2016–2017) and Migrant Bodies (2018–2019).

Clàudia Brufau Barcelona, ES
Digital Manager
Clàudia Brufau writes for *Revista Musical Catalana*, *Núvol*, and coordinates the dance section of the Performing Arts Critics in Catalonia (*Recomana*). She collaborates with private and public institutions in Catalonia, and is currently communciations manager at Aerowaves.

Oonagh Duckworth Brussels, BE
Springback Academy
Oonagh Duckworth is director of Springback Academy. She also manages different cultural initiatives – artistic, socio-cultural, participatory, performance, writing and dance orientated – from her own organisation, The Tinderbox, based in Brussels.

Contributors

Evgeny Borisenko Berlin, DE
Evgeny Borisenko is a Berlin-based dance and theatre critic, playwright and human rights lawyer. He has been a freelance reporter for the Russian «Театр.» theatre magazine and numerous French online resources, and collaborated with Maria La Ribot.

Anna Chirescu Paris, FR
Performer Anna Chirescu has worked in France and abroad for different companies notably the CNDC Angers Company directed by Robert Swinston, with whom she has performed and developed pedagogical workshops since 2013. As a writer she co-funded the media cccdanse.com. She now develops her own performative projects with visual artists.

Anna Dohy Budapest, HU
Anna Dohy has written about dance, theatre, literature and exhibitions since 2014, and contributed to Hungarian dance journals including revizoronline.com, *Színház*, *Táncélet*, *Prae*, and *Ellenfény*. She is currently a student at Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design in Budapest.

Luke Forbes Melbourne, AUS
Luke Forbes is a PhD researcher at Monash University who has also contributed to *Dance Australia*, *Dance Europe*, *TANZweb*, *Time Out Melbourne*, and *Dapper Dan*. His dance journalism and research build upon extensive dance training and a professional career in Switzerland and Germany.

Alexandra Gray London, UK
Alexandra is a freelance dance writer for everything-theatre.co.uk and seeingdance.com. She has been a teacher of yoga and relaxation since 2010.

Sebastian Kann Brussels, BE
Sebastian Kann is a contemporary circus maker and performer. He also works as a dramaturg for other artists, both in circus and in dance (notably for Vera Tussing and Emile Pineault), and does theoretical research at KASK School of Arts Ghent.

Anna Kaszuba Bristol, UK & Dublin, IE
Anna Kaszuba is an independent dance artist, and has worked with Fabulous Beast Dance Theatre/Teac Damsa (IE) since 2011, as well as Still House (UK), United Fall (IE) and Scottish Dance Theatre (UK).

Anastasio Koukoutas Athens, GR
Anastasio Koukoutas is a dance theorist working in the field of dance dramaturgy and dance writing. He has been a contributor and publishing editor, for art institutions and organizations in Greece, and a frequent collaborator with the websites *dancepress.gr* and *artivist.gr*.

Riikka Laakso Barcelona, ES & Helsinki, FI
Riikka Laakso is a freelance choreographer, dramaturg and scholar. She received her PhD in Performing Arts at Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona. She currently collaborates with independent choreographers Sanna Kekäläinen (Kekäläinen & Company) and Marina Mascarell (Korzo Theater, Göteborgs Operan), and develops research for University of the Arts Helsinki, Zodiak - Center for New Dance, and Artistic Doctorates in Europe (ADiE).

Claire Lefèvre Vienna, AT
Claire Lefèvre is a French choreographer and performer based in Vienna, Austria. Her works have been showcased in several festivals internationally. Claire also teaches concept-writing to movers and makers.

Stella Mastorosteriou Thessaloniki, GR
Stella Mastorosteriou is a dance artist and dance educator, with a background in architecture. In 2012 she co-created KINOYME dance studio in Thessaloniki, where she teaches and choreographs for kids and adults.

Lena Megyeri Budapest, HU
Lena Megyeri manages and facilitates independent theatre projects in Hungary. Currently she works as the artistic manager of the Mozsár Műhely theatre space in Budapest. She has contributed to several publications including *Ellenfény*, *Tanckritika*, *Színház* and *dancefeed.org*.

Jelena Mihelčić Zagreb, HR
Jelena Mihelčić is a journalist, dance writer and a public relations consultant. She has been writing about dance and making dance related videos since 2002. She was also head of marketing and communications for the Croatian Dance Network.

Róisín O'Brien Edinburgh, UK
Róisín O'Brien is a choreographer and writer with an academic background in English Literature and Film Studies. Her work has been performed at several festivals in the UK. She contributes to *The Skinny*, seeingdance.com, and is a 2018 Scottish Review of Books emerging critic.

David Pallant Berlin, DE
David Pallant is a contemporary dancer and performer, and has worked with National Dance Company Wales, Club Guy & Roni, Iván Pérez and Compagnia Zappalà Danza among others. He also writes about dance in Berlin for *tanzschreiber*.

Francesca Pinder Brussels, BE
Francesca Pinder worked at the IETM International network for contemporary performing arts, and as the communications assistant for Aerowaves. She is currently production and communications manager for the Flemish theatre society ROBIN.

Daniel Pitt London, UK
Daniel Pitt is a curator, producer and occasional dramaturg. He is currently director of Chisenhale Dance, London and artistic director of In Your Way, Cambridge.

Louise Tanoto Brussels, BE & London, UK
Louise Tanoto is a performing artist and writer based between Brussels and London. She currently performs with Kabinet K, Eszter Salamon, Daniel Linehan and Charlotte Spencer Projects.

Yasen Vasilev Sofia, BG
Yasen Vasilev is a writer and performance-maker. His work received awards, residencies, publications, readings, workshops and productions internationally. Since 2015 he has been working on the physical solo *NUTRICULA*. Since 2018 he has also been the co-artistic director of Small Season festival at Sfumato theatre in Sofia.

Annette van Zwoll Berlin, DE & Utrecht, NL
Annette van Zwoll is an independent dance dramaturg, international project developer and text writer. Among others she is co-initiator and programmer of What You See Festival, artistic associate of Bitter Sweet Dance/ Liat Waysbort, and advisor for the Dutch Performing Arts Fund.

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