

BODIES OF

DANCE:



Aspects of Dance as
Cultural, Political, and
Art Work in Yugoslavia
and After



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Foreword

Nika Arhar and
Jasmina Založnik

The book *Bodies of Dance: Aspects of Dance as Cultural, Political, and Art Work in Yugoslavia and After*, created within the EU project (Non)Aligned Movements, is the result of the Nomad Dance Academy's collective work, researching different contemporary dance practices in Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, and North Macedonia, since the beginning of the 20th century. It is the result of extensive efforts by the Nomad Dance Academy network and its local organizations to provide the conditions for the historicizations of regional contemporary dance on the basis of different historical documents, and not only on the pre-existing and partial historical interpretations, anecdotes, and memoirs. Because of the lack or even absence of systematic research and historicization, the work is not so much a historiographic contribution as it is an organizational, methodological, and systemic achievement. Our intention is connected with the efforts to establish common and interrelated archival hubs in the four post-Yugoslav states in order to facilitate work with the materials that could serve further research and historicizations.

The historicizations in the region of the former Yugoslav states tend to be segregated and nationalized in the cemetery of the once common space. The regional historical materials on dance and their interpretations tend to be fragmented and not publicly accessible, privatized and over-controlled by protagonists of different dance paradigms, or, in some rare cases, 'captured' by institutions. These are all reasons that speak to the various difficulties and obstacles in researching and archiving, throughout the entire process; detecting the materials and documents, gaining the insight into the desired materials and the possibility to work with them. It is a process that requires detection and, at the same time, diplomatic skills, along with a sensibility that supports contextual readings of the materials that leads toward the prospect of what we understand as the public time of dance.

We strive for a relational consideration of practices, spaces, cultures, historic periods, and contexts beyond the presentistic cultural practices that pretend to appear from scratch. Publicizing in dance still means to come somewhere, to spend enough time there to be able to experience something. The traces that are left—personal, individual, or material—are the ones that researchers work with and interrogate, while trying to find out what has been forgotten or not yet articulated, relations that were not yet discovered or ones we have not been aware of. The public time of dance is the conviction that bodies contain each other, that they go beyond the present and are evidence of the broader cultural landscapes and developments. It is also a belief that bodies themselves contain much more than what is obvious or evident from their encoded surface appearance.

This book, with its historical-theoretical position, provides the political, cultural, and artistic framing in which dance practices in Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, and North Macedonia emerged on various occasions. It's the first attempt at articulating a selection of potent features that have been addressed by or appear in and through dance practice(s). The group of researchers—Slavcho Dimitrov, Milica Ivić, Tea Kantoci, Igor Koruga, Biljana Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski, Rok Vevar, and Jasmina Založnik—collectively discussed these topics during group gatherings (residencies, events, and online meetings) and subsequently outlined the book's structure. The chosen topics were approached from various perspectives with the aim of acknowledging coexisting shifts and differences in various time frames as well as between the mentioned countries. Regardless of the many differences, we tried to balance the attention given to practices and processes from all of the countries, yet accepting the difficulty of this attempt and the necessity of presenting a selection of examples and materials. Therefore, the issues that we agreed upon, supported by examples, outline a possible entry point into the wide scope of dance work that spans over a century and across four countries, laying the ground for further research.

Before presenting the examined histories in the book, we introduce the complexities surrounding the processes of dance archiving and historicization in the region, along with the Nomad Dance Academy, the informal network and platform, and give space also to an 'outside' voice (Gal Kirn), helping the reader to better understand the context of the former Yugoslavia and its major innovative structural elements, which are still inspirational for many scholars and practitioners, and also vivid in the actual working modes and organizational models.

The main body of the book consists of three chapters. The first, *Plurality of Bodies and Their Voices*, traces the perspective of the Other as a symptom of the patriarchy and its order. Such a perspective consequently addresses marginalized position of dance and points out its struggle toward shifts and changes of the existing order, thinking beyond the prevalent mechanisms of performance. The chapter outlines otherness beyond aesthetic tendencies and searches for the instruments and logic of embodying, where dance moves toward life, while emphasizing the everyday, strategies of extending the body beyond form, including work with various social groups and disabled bodies in dance practices, as well as thinking of feminism as an engine of contemporary dance and opening perspectives of queer choreography. In the second chapter, *Dance Formations*—referencing Raymond Williams's term 'formations' that the cultural theorist uses to describe the configurations of organizing and self-organizing communities in the arts and culture—we adapt the term to the dance landscape in the region to show diverse forms of organizations, schools, spaces, initiatives, and festivals, their ever-changing configurations and different reinventions, also with the urgency to practice solidarity within and beyond the scene. In the third chapter, *Reshaping Spaces of Art and Culture*, we observe dance, choreography, and the body as mediators of

change. We examine dance in and through other artistic mediums as well as its presence in public spaces as an important endeavour within the public sphere.

This book is, first of all, a living document of the efforts of numerous individuals and groups who built our dance histories up to the present. It is also a reflection of our—the researchers’—mutual affinities and differences, and the result of a complex and lengthy process, which we wanted to demonstrate through collective writing, to share our knowledge by digging into local specificities and searching for soft tissues to relate and constitute a common ground, where that was possible. The book does not aim to totalize but rather to open up some possible ways of thinking about dance, of archiving and historicizing it, while at the same time building a reflective theoretical ground that could help us and other researchers to direct our potential/possible future interests. Regardless of the difficulty of this process, which required additional research on various scales and necessary fine-tuning between individual researchers, and therefore moved many more times backward before it moved forward, it is necessary to stress that the knowledge and experiences that each of the contributors to this book gained, are priceless. It is exactly through such processes that we are confronted with our own blind spots, lack in certain field(s) and perspectives, while at the same time energized to continue with our collective aspirations. Moreover, such processes easily remind us of the erosion of communality, which was violently converted into local perspectives and nationalized more than three decades ago. In that regard, the book should be perceived as an open work, a contribution to understanding dance, its resilience and resistance, which managed to persist in an ongoing search for new modes of being together, thinking, learning, researching, creating, presenting, advocating, maintaining, shifting, directing, sensibilizing, becoming.

Nomad Dance Academy (NDA)

Nomad Dance Academy (NDA) is an informal contemporary dance network or platform that is active since 2005 in the field of dance education, creation and production, artistic and interdisciplinary research as well as presentation and advocacy. Through its cultural activism it seeks to strengthen the various creative and artistic forces in the local and national contemporary dance contexts of the post-Yugoslav and Balkan region, in order to overcome the challenges connected to local and national cultural politics, improve conditions for professional work, develop new production models, and create an overall dynamic and fluid common cultural space in this part of Europe. The members of NDA consider the work in dance and of dance through the levels of different systemic elements: education, creation, production, research and reception as well as theorization, historicization, and archiving. They understand contemporary choreography as an artistic and social function, methodology, or practice that deals with the (working) conditions of creating, composing, constructing, performing, presenting, perceiving and thinking of various presences, absences, or representations of the human body and its actions (in the individual or collective sense), as well as its traces, indications, and potentialities in the past, present, or future.

Partners of NDA

FOUNDING PARTNERS

Brain Store Project (Sofia, Bulgaria)

Fičo Ballet (Ljubljana, Slovenia)

Lokomotiva – Centre for New Initiatives in Arts and Culture
(Skopje, North Macedonia)

Station Service for Contemporary Dance / Stanica Servis za savremeni ples
(Belgrade, Serbia)

TALA Dance Center (Zagreb, Croatia)

Tanzelarija (Sarajevo, Bosnia and Hercegovina)

DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

Nomad Dance Academy Bulgaria (Sofia, Bulgaria)
 Nomad Dance Academy Croatia (Zagreb, Croatia)
 Nomad Dance Academy Macedonia (Skopje, North Macedonia)
 Nomad Dance Academy Slovenia (Ljubljana, Slovenia)
 Kino Kultura – Project Space for Contemporary Performing Arts and Culture
 (Skopje, North Macedonia)

CURRENT PARTNERS

Antisezona (Zagreb, Croatia)
 Garage Collective (Sofia, Bulgaria)
 Lokomotiva – Centre for New Initiatives in Arts and Culture
 (Skopje, North Macedonia)
 Nomad Dance Academy Croatia (Zagreb, Croatia)
 Nomad Dance Academy Slovenia (Ljubljana, Slovenia)
 Object of Dance / Objekt plesa (Zagreb, Croatia)
 Station Service for Contemporary Dance / Stanica Servis za savremeni ples
 (Belgrade, Serbia)
 Tanzfabrik (Berlin, Germany)

Organization of NDA and Working Principles

NDA is a platform of individuals and organizations. It is organized horizontally in order to experiment and sustain an imaginary perspective of creating different options of being and working together. All programmes, collaborations, and exchange were developed through a format of the so-called Decision-Making Body (DMB) consisting of individual members of NDA that together shape its visions, and plan further steps, politics, and actions. Organizations from the region led by some of the DMB members have been used as legal entities through which the actions and programmes have been implemented. Besides the DMB, which took decisions regarding the overall workings of NDA, at certain periods there was the Coordination Office and the Artistic Body, which functioned on a principle of rotation and were dedicated to developing and implementing the agreed upon perspectives. Due to several concerns, among them a possible production of vertical hierarchies, the DMB decided to reshape these bodies and their function into various Task Groups. These are temporary bodies which are formed for taking care of individual tasks on an on-going basis.

The course of the creative, production, and artistic work of NDA, which is organized horizontally and does not envisage a vertical or pyramidal way of decision-making, is enabled by the following principles: the Principle of Balance (including the Rule of Three), the Principle of Invitation and the Principle of Open Space. The Principle of Balance suggests that every artistic and production initiative of NDA should include a consideration of gender, contextual, inter-communal, and partner balance, which should prevent any closing-off and paralysis of interests and knowledge. The Principle of Balance is a principle that fundamentally erodes the inertia of any life and work form of the one (the unit) and presupposes the creative handling of the uncertainty of differences. The Rule of Three, included in this principle, refers to the minimum number of people needed to form a basic creative group or collective, where a third member of

the unit provides reflection. The Principle of Invitation replaces the selection method in the work of NDA. An invitation is an affirmative form of selection, with the inviter handling the invitee thoughtfully, sharing the responsibility. The Principle of Open Space is a tool that assumes that not all things or forms of creative life can be predicted in advance. Therefore, with material, temporal, and spatial means, it creates a space for what is not there yet to arrive. In its work, NDA uses a range of improvised or permanent work tools, which transform production, creative, and artistic work into a lively and playful work process.

The Beginning of NDA

NDA was established as the Balkan Dance Network when a group of dance artists, producers and theorists from the former Yugoslavia and Bulgaria first gathered at International Network for Contemporary Performing Arts (IETM) in Belgrade in 2005. With the help of their colleague and friend Nevenka Koprivšek (1959–2021), producer and artistic director, as well as founder of Bunker Institute in Ljubljana, they received a five-thousand-euro grant, which marked the initial push for meetings, discussions, and collaborations. Under the initial name, the diverse Balkan Dance Network exchanges were held in the region in 2005, and an international conference *Professional Status of Contemporary Dance in the Balkans* was organized in December 2006 in the new cultural centre Magazin in Belgrade by Station Service for Contemporary Dance and Lokomotiva – Centre for New Initiatives in Arts and Culture as partner organizations, opening questions about cultural, political, and aesthetic positions of contemporary dance in the Balkan region, as well as potentials of the Balkan Dance Network for further development and promotion of dance—the potentials that came into existence under the new name of the network in 2007, Nomad Dance Academy (NDA).

NDA Educational Programme, 2008–2010

In 2008, with a grant from the Swiss Cultural Programme for the Western Balkans, the network launched a three-year educational dance and choreography programme under the name NDA Educational Programme which provided groups of regional and international dance artists with a multi-month travelling study programme, which included various theoretical and studio dance practices, organized by partners in different Balkan cities (Sofia, Skopje, Belgrade, Sarajevo, Kanjiža, Zagreb, Ptuj, and Ljubljana). The partners invited some of the most outstanding regional and international dance pedagogues, artists, dance theorists and historians, philosophers and thinkers. Between 2008 and 2010, the educational programme concluded each time with a series of artistic productions and performances which took place at various locations around Ljubljana as the Short Cuts festival (Kratki rezi). During those years, 45 students and their educators created a base for a resilient and tenacious dance community, from which all subsequent NDA projects have developed. In 2013, the Swiss Cultural Programme for the Western Balkans awarded NDA with a prize for the best project.

From 2010 until 2011, NDA declared ‘a resting body’ status, dedicating time to reflection and accumulation of materials and ideas for advocating further needs. They worked on a publication during this time, and in July of 2011, the ImPulsTanz – Vienna International Dance Festival invited NDA to a festival residency, where NDA presented, among other things, the publication which summed up its first five years of work. At that time, NDA started to think about diverse advocacy actions as the need for spaces, formal education and

sustainable support for dance were not recognized from the policies in most of the republics. Among other initiatives and actions, Go Out and Dance (under the aegis of UNESCO) was inaugurated in 2010 by Goran Bogdanovski, then a member of NDA's DMB, with an aim to promote contemporary dance and raise its visibility in the cities of the Balkan region on International Dance Day (29th of April). In order to learn more about the development of policies and dance, NDA representatives were invited to visit Stockholm in December 2010 with the support of the Swedish Cultural Institute to see the contemporary dance production conditions in the country and establish contacts with local organizations.

Nomad Dance Institute (NDI), 2011–2019

In February 2011, an NDA Task Group designed a proposal for a new research and education programme, Nomad Dance Institute (NDI), focused on knowledge production. In September 2013, the inaugural meeting of the Institute happened within the frame of CoFestival International Festival of Contemporary Dance at the Museum of Contemporary Art Metelkova in Ljubljana. The new perspective of NDA was All is Education! with which all members wanted to acknowledge that through all of the diverse activities of NDA knowledge is generated and produced as the basis of all processes, practices, and initiatives. At that meeting, each participant—member of NDI had a chance to propose an idea for collaborative joint action that was presented in front of all participants who were able to invite the most engaging ideas to be co-organized and co-financed in the frame of the NDI programme in the future. The invited ideas for which participants had the most interest were supposed to produce knowledge that could be shared with the entire network in different formats and ways. This is how several still ongoing activities were initiated, such as Archiving, the Co-Teaching format, Advocacy Actions (Nomad Dance Advocates), etc.

Nomad Dance Advocates started in 2012 and became a permanent programme of advocating for a more stable position and work conditions in the field of contemporary dance within the Balkan region. Advocacy events take place in various cities throughout the region and gather artists and policy-makers (representatives of ministries of culture, city administrations along with representatives of other decision-making and funding bodies, dance curators and artists) with the intent to enable them to meet directly, communicate (also through the help of performative and less formal communication and discussions, games and artworks), and exchange experiences around the field of contemporary dance and the related policies. Advocacy events have taken place in Skopje (November 2012), Sofia (May 2014), Belgrade (October 2017), Ljubljana (April 2019), and Zagreb (November 2024).

Starting as an idea from the NDI programme, NDA has been developing the programme of Archiving as practice of archiving dance and dance-related practices in the post-Yugoslav region. One of the results is the first digital dance archive of our region that will be launched in November 2024. The (Non)Aligned Dance Archive is intended to be a digital platform for permanent collecting, researching and archiving contemporary dance material from our region. It allows access to hundreds of photos, videos, documents, catalogues, programmes, articles, books, magazines and other material that tell stories about dance: its development, resilience, resistance, collaborations, experiments, and try-outs that have brought us to the current regional dance scenes.

Another important project initiated by NDA and realized since 2013 is the mentoring programme Critical Practice (Made in Yugoslavia). The Critical Practice programme is oriented towards empowering discursive reflections on

contemporary performing arts while enabling access for a wider public. In contextual terms, it is focused on but not restricted to the post-Yugoslav region. Among the reasons for such an orientation are, on the one hand, a lack of continual and publicly visible critical writing about contemporary performances and performing arts events in the region and, on the other, the strong recent development in performing arts theory coming from this context.

In August of 2017, NDA organized a summer dance school in Ohrid (North Macedonia) under the name Nomad Dance Academy Summer as a space for sharing of diverse knowledge in the field of dance.

In April of 2018, Kino Šiška Centre for Urban Culture as a partner member of the European Dance Network (EDN, now European Dance Development Network), with the help and collaboration of NDA, organized the Encounter Balkans nomadic bus trip to Ljubljana, Zagreb, Belgrade, Skopje, and Sofia. The Encounter Balkans was the first step of the EDN's extension toward the Western Balkan region and a possibility for producers, curators, and managers from the Western dance houses to get to know the dance scene in the region better. As a result, Station and Lokomotiva joined the network in the following years.

The Festivals of the Partners of NDA, 2008–

Already at the beginning of their activity, the partners of NDA committed to the establishment of contemporary dance festivals, which would strengthen the local contemporary dance contexts through their artistic, educational, and advocacy programmes, as well as enabling each partners' continuation with production, and the strengthening of ties and collaborations in the region and internationally.

Among the partners, an already existing festival was Platforma HR, established in 2000 by TALA Dance Center from Zagreb as the Platform of Young Choreographers.

The festival programme which concluded the yearly educational programme of NDA, entitled Short Cuts (2008–2010), was accompanied with a few other performances in the new Pleskavica festival in 2010 in Ljubljana. After the Anti-festival format of Pleskavica in 2011, the newly established CoFestival International Festival of Contemporary Dance brought together the following festivals in 2012: Ukrep Festival of Dance Perspectives produced by the Ljubljana Dance Theatre (Plesni teater Ljubljana), Pleskavica in the production of Fičo Ballet and NDA Slovenia, and the International Contemporary Dance Programme Modul-dance, created by an international consortium of dance institutions supported by the European Commission with the Culture 2000 programme, which was joined by Kino Šiška Centre for Urban Culture. Today CoFestival is produced jointly by NDA Slovenia and Kino Šiška.

The LocoMotion Festival for Contemporary Dance and Performance in Skopje was founded and created by Lokomotiva between 2008 and 2015. With the opening of Kino Kultura Project Space for Contemporary Performing Arts and Culture (2015–2020) in a former cinema house in the centre of Skopje, the programme of the former festival was transformed into a year-round artistic, cultural, advocacy, and educational programme. Between 2020 and 2023 Lokomotiva initiated a dance programme within the Young Open Theater festival (MOT) and in 2023 established the Performance Platform Festival.

The Kondenz Festival of Contemporary Dance and Performance in Belgrade was founded by Station Service for Contemporary Dance in 2008. It has grown into one of the most relevant performing arts festivals in Serbia with its cutting-edge artistic programme and critical and activist practices of advocating for contemporary dance spaces and policies in Serbia.

The Antistatic International Festival for Contemporary Dance and Performance was founded by Brain Store Project in Sofia in 2008.

The ZVRK Interdisciplinary Art Festival was founded in Sarajevo by Tanzelarija as a Festival of Contemporary Dance Arts, Dance Theatre and Performances in 2008. It was the first of its kind in Bosnia and Hercegovina in the period when Tanzelarija was part of NDA. Due to the large-scale emigration of cultural workers from Bosnia and Hercegovina, the established relationship between NDA and the festival ended in 2010 when Tanzelarija changed its profile.

Current projects

(Non)Aligned Movements (NAM) is the latest NDA large-scale project designed to enhance the creative and collaborative potential of contemporary dance in the Western Balkans. It reinforces the social impact of Balkan contemporary dance by raising its capacities for action and collaboration, promoting its heritage and inscribing it in future discourses and cultural practices.

The NAM project wants to share the experiences of self-organization, horizontal organizational structures, balance, and openness with various dance and performing arts actors. With NAM, NDA is creating the (Non)Aligned Dance Archive to introduce contemporary dance as an important cultural heritage of our region and reinforcing programmes in the region to enable the mobility of dance professionals and to better connect the regional dance festivals. NDA organized the Nomad Summit programmes in Belgrade, Struga, and Berlin as meetings, as well as international school and discursive programmes. Within the project, the network had also invested in a two-year-long research project by NAM ChoreoLab bringing together artists from four different regional countries (Ana Dubljević from Serbia, Viktorija Ilioska from North Macedonia, Dražen Dragojević from Slovenia, and Sonja Pregrad from Croatia) that resulted in the performance essay *Such as Rhymes with Non* (2024). The research process with public presentations took place in all the partner's cities, and the performance toured around the region.

Partner networks

Jardin d'Europe 2008–2013

Life Long Burning 2013–2026

Dance On, Pass On, Dream On 2016–2024

DanceMap 2025–2028

The Future to Come

The NDA network has gone through many changes and challenges throughout its two decades, especially regarding its insistence on horizontality in decision-making. Nevertheless, the network and its members are staying open to new challenges, planning on creating certain further shifts and programmes of togetherness in the future. They understand the network as a common space where the members of the network collaborate, discuss, critically (self)reflect, advocate, research, archive, curate, dance, rest, grow together, depart and arrive, moving beyond and forward while enjoying their diverse or agonistic approaches. They perceive it as a self-refreshing organizational model, where the creation of tools and the presentation of contemporary dance is understood as a social practice, an intensive programme for the production and distribution of knowledge, and least but not last, a home.

The Archiving and Historicization of Contemporary Choreographic and Performative Practices by NDA

Within Nomad Dance Academy (NDA), historiographic and archival desires began to develop with the need to provide the students of the educational programme, between 2008 and 2010, with some insights into the regional history of contemporary dance. Rok Vevar, the dance critic at the time, was invited to teach dance history in the period when different artists, producers, and other workers in the field of contemporary dance in the region recognized a lack of historiographic research, connected to non-existing dance archives in the region and the largely dispersed and not publicly accessible archival materials. The regional performing arts magazines *Maska*, *Frakcija*, and *TkH Journal* edited a few issues that dealt with regional dance histories, facilitated some funding in the frames of EU projects (East Dance Academy), and started researching and building a referential choreographic net with some re-constructions of significant performance works. Responding to the lack of archival materials, Vevar founded the Temporary Slovene Dance Archive (TSDA, *Začasni slovenski plesni arhiv – ZSPA*) in his apartment, in 2012, which became an important and recognizable programme of NDA Slovenia, in 2013, providing the TSDA continuous financial and organizational support and enabling its growth.

In September 2013, NDA reconceptualized its activities with the founding of the Nomad Dance Institute (NDI) at the CoFestival, International Festival of Contemporary Dance, in the Museum of Contemporary Art Metelkova in Ljubljana. In accordance with some procedural rules, the invited guests, along with the members of the NDA's Decision-Making Body, had an opportunity to propose different projects and, at the end, to invite some of the presented proposals to become the basis of the NDI programme under the motto *All Is Education*. Angelina Georgieva, from Bulgaria, suggested that the archiving of contemporary dance become a programme line of the NDI. Artists and cultural workers from different states decided to join the group and to engage in the developmental

effort. After the initial consolidation of the team, the first small funding for the common project was provided by Allianz Foundation in 2016. With additional local funding, the series of case studies were made and published in the *Maska, Performing Arts Journal* in the summer of 2017. The issue, entitled “Autonomy to Dance. Case Studies of Contemporary Dance Practices in Former Yugoslavia,” gathered texts written by Slavcho Dimitrov and Biljana Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski (North Macedonia), Milica Ivić and Igor Koruga (Serbia), Rok Vevar and Jasmina Založnik (Slovenia), Iva Nerina Sibila, Katja Šimunić, and a guest contributor, Ivana Ivković (Croatia). Except for the Croatian team, the above-mentioned researchers have continued to work on the archiving and historization of dance until today.¹

The membership of NDA Slovenia in the Dance On, Pass On, Dream On (DOPODO) Creative Europe project enabled the co-financing of some singular projects such as the books *Day, Night + Man = Rhythm: Anthology of Slovene Contemporary Dance Criticism 1918–1960 (Dan, noč + človek = ritem: Antologija slovenske sodobnoplesne publicistike 1918–1960, 2018)* and a monograph *Ksenija, Xenia: The London Dance Years of Ksenija Hribar 1960–1978 (Ksenija, Xenia: Londonska plesna leta Ksenije Hribar 1960–1978, 2020)*, both edited and written by Rok Vevar and published by Maska, Institute for Publishing, Production and Education, the Republic of Slovenia Public Fund for Cultural Activities, and NDA Slovenia, along with some small-scale exhibitions, events, and conference programmes. When Station Service for Contemporary Dance from Belgrade joined the DOPODO project in the second cycle (2020–2024), the work expanded in different forms, among others with the exemplary performance *The Desire to Make a Solid History Will End Up in Failure (Želja da se napravi čvrsta istorija završiče se neuspehom, 2023)* by Igor Koruga that uses documentation and testimonies of Serbian (contemporary) dance history through and with some of the most visible dance artists that have been active since the 1980s. Another possible way into the historicization and theorization of bodies’ performativity can be found in Slavcho Dimitrov’s PhD research, transformed into the book *Anarchic Bodies: Corporeal Materialism, Affects and the Political*, published by Kontrapunkt Skopje in 2025. Forthcoming is also a book chapter, “Archive of Queer Performative Bodies in North Macedonia,” by Slavcho Dimitrov and Biljana Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski, published in the book *Contemporary Art in the Post-Yugoslav Space: Case Studies in Hauntology*, edited by Jasmina Tumbas and Jonathan Blackwood, which will be published by Routledge in 2025. The chapter is based on their research that was first presented as an exhibition, *Ecstatic Bodies: Archive of Queer Performative Bodies in Macedonia*, in the Museum of Contemporary Art Skopje in 2022.

In 2021, the regional network NDA received financial support from the European Cultural Cooperation Projects in the Western Balkans for the (Non)Aligned Movements project, which would, to a great extent, focus on the digitalization, historicization, and archiving of regional dance histories. Among its main activities, the project enabled and enforced the establishment of the (Non) Aligned Dance Archive, a digital database dedicated to dance and performing arts in the Western Balkans, the first extensive exhibition of the choreographic practices in the former Yugoslav states (Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, and North Macedonia) *Dancing, Resisting, (Un)working – Aspects of Dance as Cultural, Political, and Art Work in Yugoslavia and After*, and this book. Besides these activities, the book *Claiming the Space. New Performative Art Practices in Yugoslavia (Zavzemanje prostora. Nove*

izvedbene umetniške prakse v Jugoslaviji), written by Jasmina Založnik and based on her PhD research, with a desire to contribute to the collective historicization, was co-financed within this project and published by the Maska Institute in 2024.

Here, the (Non)Aligned Dance Archive (www.nada.nomaddanceacademy.si), a digital database of documents connected with contemporary dance practices in the region, as well as with the different cultures of dance that usually surround them, represents a major collective effort on the part of NDA. This ground work is based on more than decade-long research and is the first digital database in the region, which presents documents in local languages and in English. The documents are interrelated, which enables a better insight into the links and connections between protagonists, dance practices, producers, venues, etc. It is created with the aim of providing dance scholars, researchers, journalists, and the wider public interested in dance access to a repository of documents, which are often lacking in the process of dance historicizations.

The exhibition *Dancing, Resisting, (Un)working – Aspects of Dance as Cultural, Political, and Art Work in Yugoslavia and After* considers the art of dance as a system of (artistic) labour and explores an extended notion of dance (and choreography) as an (artistic) function, methodology, or practice. It explores dancing bodies that shatter the political regimes and logics of operativity in the Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav contexts by crossing borders, travelling through geopolitically marked territories, pushing the boundaries of bodily and gendered norms, moving with the unruly pulses of desire, materialising new collective forms of co-existence, and challenging the codes of aesthetics and its divisions. The exhibition aims to present contemporary dance practices that engage with the potentiality of the body and its materiality, stemming from its interactions with the political, social, economic, environmental, and other realms. The exhibition will open at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Zagreb on the 20th of November 2024 and will travel to the Museum of Contemporary Art Metelkova in Ljubljana in March 2025. Another line of this ongoing research is the book *Bodies of Dance: Aspects of Dance as Cultural, Political, and Art Work in Yugoslavia and After*, which is, on one hand, related to the exhibition and, on the other, a standalone publication.

Rok Vevar: Temporary Slovene Dance Archive

I declared the establishment of the Temporary Slovene Dance Archive (TSDA) in my apartment in Šiška, Ljubljana, shortly after having moved into it in 2012. During that period, I began to systematize the materials which had been piling up for years from various donations, due to my interest in the research of historical and theoretical work in the field of contemporary dance and contemporary performance practices, produced outside of public cultural institutions. As interested users of the materials began to turn to me, I realized that the collections were being turned into an archive.

In 2011, I systematized the materials in the library of the Republic of Slovenia Public Fund for Cultural Activities, which Neja Kos, a retired independent expert advisor in the field of contemporary dance at the Association of Cultural Organizations Slovenia (Zveza kulturnih organizacij Slovenije (ZKOS), 1945–1996), now the Republic of Slovenia Public Fund for Cultural Activities (Javni sklad za kulturne dejavnosti (JSKD), 2000–), had been collecting since she began working there in 1977. This is the institution that, during a certain period, most constructively made up for the institutional deficit in the field of contemporary dance. When the employees of this institution began to throw away systematized materials, Neja Kos, Nina Meško, the new independent expert advisor for dance, and I decided to move them to my apartment. Soon after, I brought home the materials that Maska, Institute for Publishing, Production and Education wanted to get rid of when relocating from their joint offices with the Exodos Institute. In 2012, I received materials from Tanja Sciama, the sister of Ksenija Hribar, the

¹ The initial archival group consisted of Rok Vevar and Jasmina Založnik (Slovenia), Ljiljana Tasić (Serbia), Angelina Georgieva (Bulgaria), Biljana Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski and Slavcho Dimitrov (North Macedonia), Iva Nerina Sibila, Katja Šimunić, and Ivana Slunjski (Croatia). In 2016, Milica Ivić and Igor Koruga (Serbia) became part of the team and, in 2021, Tea Kantoci and Nina Gojić joined from Croatia. Some have left the team. Current members of the archival group: Slavcho Dimitrov, Milica Ivić, Tea Kantoci, Igor Koruga, Biljana Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski, Rok Vevar, and Jasmina Založnik.

choreographer and founder of the Dance Theatre Ljubljana. After several work visits to London, where Hribar worked between 1960 and 1978, I used the acquired and donated materials to create an extensive collection of Ksenija Hribar's materials.

Between 2012 and 2017, I organized individual and group guided tours of the archive in my apartment, as well as short lectures on the history of dance. Ida Hiršenfelder, a contemporary sound artist, curator, and archivist who came to one of these lectures at the suggestion of Zdenka Badovinac, the director of the Museum of Modern Art and Museum of Contemporary Art Metelkova (MG+MSUM) at the time, took care of the digital Web Museum (Mrežni muzej). They invited me to move the TSDA to the Museum of Contemporary Art Metelkova. In this institution, the TSDA opened in April of 2018 as a temporary artwork, which is open to the public once a week.

I never planned to found the TSDA and, therefore, at first decided not to manage it in any way other than as a private interest and then to develop it further. It seems that, once it had entered the symbolic sphere and started to circulate as information, the TSDA took on a life of its own. It grew into something much bigger that I could have ever planned myself. Besides its materiality, the TSDA is like a fishing net strategically thrown into the sea of cultural lacks and needs that recognize it and feed it. In recent years, it outgrew its initial location. One could never ask for more.

Gal Kirn

* This article is a synthesis of Gal Kirn's lecture *How to Deal with the Partisan Legacy: Yesterday and Today* at TRIGGER, a platform of contemporary independent performing arts, developed by Glej Theatre in partnership with Moment, Bunker Ljubljana, Pekinpah Association, Mladinsko Theatre, Maska Institute (The New Post Office programme) and City of Women Association, held on 15th March, 2024, and an update of Kirn's older research on the cultural frame of Yugoslav film and culture (Kirn 2014).

A Return to Yugoslavia's Emancipatory Resources: Can There Be Self-Management Beyond the Neoliberal Frame?*

Introduction: Partisan Ruptures as Emancipatory Resources

I depart from a simple epistemic point: history has never been only the history of the victors, as well as that history is not already written in the stars, thus deciding for us all that was and all that will be. To simply accept the status quo today means to eliminate our future and normalize the apocalypse. Walter Benjamin was one of the rare thinkers of the first 20th century that despite criticism engaged in recovering traces of the ‘tradition of the oppressed.’ The aim was not only theoretical—to salvage the discipline of cultural history—but also political: Benjamin’s insistence in changing the way we think about the world and the urgency to change the world too. In the post-Yugoslav context, a similar gesture has been evoked by a group of authors, artists, cultural workers and even some political workers when returning to the project of Yugoslavia. But why would that still interest us in a time of capitalist democracy and ethnically cleansed states? Why would anyone be interested to insert some critical and collectivist legacy, a legacy that juxtaposes radically into the present ether of neoliberalism, individualisation, and an increasing war perspective? The answer might be more banal than you expect: it is only through a collective project that any of those sacred and proclaimed democratic values will be saved and regained, and also, it is only when we rediscover that the future, and also the past, still hold and held then an emancipatory promise that our resigned attitude, despair, and feeling of hopelessness towards the present will change. Because in the post-Yugoslav context we have experienced early on—as in the former East Europe—a great degree of historical amnesia, erasure, revisionism, destruction of heritage and memory connected to Yugoslavia, returning into the Yugoslav and self-management past is an important part of our collective upbringing and politics of care. When our political and cultural leaderships moved to increasingly more nationalist, even fascist, realities on the capitalist horizon of catastrophe, our stance can only be antifascist memory that calls to a new round of socialisation.

Returning to socialist Yugoslavia first means to return to its beginnings: Yugoslavia was born out of the partisan liberation movement during WWII. The Partisan movement was mainly organized by the Communist Party of Yugoslavia—banned in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia since 1921—and became the only movement not ethnically exclusivist and inclusive to all people coming from different religions, nationalities, and was also open to women. In more than one respect, the People’s Liberation Struggle (PLS) became a political infrastructure and movement marked by intersectional and revolutionary dimensions.¹ The PLS cannot be thought of without the cultural revolution that created an imaginary of a new, federal, and socialist future that differed radically from the fascist occupation and old Kingdom of Yugoslavia, both based on ethnic exclusivity and racialized hierarchies of new Europe. Yugoslav partisans were one of the rare few successful popular movements that were based on their own forces that succeeded to liberate their own country. This political autonomy and enthusiasm gave major legitimacy to the Communist Party, and also fuelled the reconstruction and revolutionary process in the aftermath of the hardships of war. However, due to the shifts in geopolitics and the plans of a Balkan Socialist Federation, a major split took place in 1948: the fallout with Stalin meant that Yugoslavia was facing collapse and international isolation, both from the East, as well as from the West. It was only due to the resilience, political capacity of the old partisan/communist leadership, and the strong popular support that Yugoslavia remained set on its

independent road to socialism. I claimed that two major ruptures followed after the split with Stalin: externally, Yugoslavia moved into a completely new arena and helped create the (Non)Aligned Movement and ruptured with the Cold War Bloc politics; then internally, as a critique of Stalinist ‘socialism’ and state nationalisation of the means of production, Yugoslav communists developed their own brand of socialism, i.e. self-management. Despite the various contradictions—the workers’ self-management (councils) was launched from above, the (Non)Aligned movement presented a political compromise between extremely different economic and political state formations—I argue that the new Yugoslavia cannot be understood without the radicality of the three partisan ruptures: the People’s Liberation Struggle, self-management, and the (Non)Aligned Movement. This is the revolutionary core of the Yugoslav project, which cannot be nostalgically only conserved and frozen in the past, but rather in its own way experimented with and recreated in new circumstances today. Perhaps one of the unique ways to tackle the present is through engaged cultural activities, and here self-management policies and infrastructures could give some guidance that goes beyond national culture (state funded) and market driven cultural industries today.

Self-Management and Cultural Policy of Technology to the People

Self-management in Yugoslavia was a complex system that combined capitalist and communist elements and underwent various reforms. The market reform in the 1960s had both positive and negative consequences (Kirn 2019). In the early stage of socialism, culture was marked by a policy of Technology to the People, and repairing and constructing infrastructure in the 1950s and onwards. In order to present the many complex changes in a condensed manner, I will refer to the overview provided by Katja Praznik. She focuses on the central changes in the institutional frame and shifts within cultural organizations in a following way:

- Until 1948, cultural matters were strictly regulated by the “Federal Ministry of Culture and each republic’s Ministry of Education” (Praznik 2013, 108). This also meant a very centralized funding system with strong ideological control.²
- Between 1953 and 1974, new political authority was installed moving out of the central authority to expand on lower levels to “councils and commissions for education and culture, where the president and some of the members were appointed by the government, while others were delegated to associations and cultural institutions” (Praznik 2013, 108–109).
- From 1974 to 1989, the regulation was under the control of the municipal cultural community and the cultural community of each republic, where members were elected through the council of (cultural) users and producers, instead of a municipal committee and republican council (Praznik 2013, 109).

Along with the above categorization, the cultural field was initially closely linked to state regulation and the Ministry of Culture, which led to the saturation and the impregnation of all cultural products with propagandistic and ideological means. However, during the Writer’s Congress in 1952, Croatian writer Miroslav Krleža called for a clear rejection of socialist realism. This intervention is referred to as the opening up to a socialist aesthetic modernism, which promoted the independent cultural path of Yugoslavia into socialism (Goulding 2002).

¹ For a more historical overview and conceptual details on rupture and the partisan movement see first chapters of Gal Kirn’s book *Partisan Ruptures* (Pluto Press, 2019).

² See also Gabrič (1995) and Goulding (2002).

In 1946, the Party implemented a cultural policy called Technology to the People, which had unforeseen consequences. The socialist authority established a special institution, the People's Technology Society (Narodna Tehnika), which focused on amateur and informal radio,³ as well as photographic and film infrastructure and other activities. At that time, the Ministry of Culture was responsible for larger investments, infrastructure development, and ideological control. In the 1950s, it was replaced by the municipal and local communities. The latter were expected to be involved in building the cultural infrastructure in such a way that would enhance the familiarity of technology among people. Ana Janevska's recent study noted that the main aim of the Technology to the People policy was to "organise, sponsor and promote various amateur activities. Even though they were under the 'political' control of the centre and were hierarchically organized, they were mostly left to their own devices as peripheral 'amateur reservations'" (Janevski 2012, 4). From the late 1950s onwards, this 'hierarchical' and 'political' control loosened, and the agit-prop commissions were disbanded.⁴ This does not mean that the Yugoslav political leadership no longer attempted to set certain guidelines discursively, but it would be erroneous to speak of an atmosphere of total repression and the absence of freedom.

Specific Self-Managed Political Forms in Culture: Between Improved Institutional Frameworks and Privileged Access to the Financial Circuit

The aforementioned study by Katja Praznik clearly illustrates that cultural policy and the framework, as well as the capacities of cultural institutions, were constantly changing, even if the tendency towards the production of an autonomous cultural field remained a driving feature in the socialist period. If this general tendency is true, I would like to highlight some specificities that, in the period after the market reform, and especially in the 1970s, relatively improved the institutional framework, and even 'democratized' the decision-making process. What unfolded in the 1970s was the material transfer of financial capacities to lower levels of cultural institutions. Thus now instead of the Ministry of Culture at the level of the republic distributing the budget, it was necessary to take into account the Communities of Culture which were institutions of cultural users and cultural producers, and which were primarily responsible for the basic outlines and decisions regarding the financing of cultural institutions and, ultimately, the selection of programmes. This would then branch out both in terms of specific cultural activities and in terms of regional territorialization. In addition to these communities and commissions, there were also influential 'congresses of cultural action,' which were various meetings on how to self-manage cultural activities. Here, the representatives of the ministries and municipalities explained how the financial system worked and how the work was organized, and then reported with statistical data that were prepared. There was also a network of Offices for Culture, which researched the system and finances of the cultural field.

Commissions, and above all the cultural communities were other names for the 'self-managed interest groups,' that also practiced 'double representation' in the apparatus of social and cultural services. This would mean having delegates from different parts of the cultural field and orchestrating constant communication

between producers and users in order to avoid top-down directives from a 'centre' and funding without consultation. Lev Kreft, a philosopher of aesthetics, who has been active in the drafting of official cultural policies since the 1970s, describes this as one of the positive tendencies of self-management in the cultural field. At the start of the 1970s, the Ministry of Culture (of the Republic) allocated less and less financial resources, says Kreft (2014):

"The economy of culture became of a much better quality when the financial components and discussions were transferred to the self-managed communities of interest. In the field of culture, these self-managed communities of interest functioned quite well in the 1970s, both at the republican (Slovenian) level and in Ljubljana, because they could afford to cover not only a large part of the national cultural institutions, but also the majority of what was then alternative, non-institutional culture in Ljubljana. At that time, the functioning of cultural activities, both in terms of open, democratic, and transparent discussion as well as in terms of financing, was better organized than in the 1960s, and also better than after the transition in the 1990s."

We must also keep a critical distance from the institutional and legal aspect of self-management, which in its ideal form unquestionably strived to improve and extend self-management rights from the sphere of production to the sphere of reproduction and non-economic activities. However, it should not be forgotten that in political practice the plurality of forms of self-management did not always correspond to the letter and spirit of the law. In reality, this meant that there was a strong privileging of the mainstream institutions of national culture, and Čopič argues that there was a "mix of interests between users and producers" (1997, 73) where partial interests rather than the general interest were discussed. Moreover, at least for many independent cultural workers there was a highly "unequal access to public funding" (Čopič 1997, 80). If one belonged to one of the major theatres or other elite cultural institutions, one had a structurally privileged position compared to those who belonged to the sphere of non-institutional and alternative cultural agencies. Despite the fact that the initiative was progressively transferred to the level of 'self-managed individuals' and cultural collectives, the amount of financial resources allocated to culture remained the same. As Praznik notes, at the end of the 1970s in the Socialist Republic of Slovenia it amounted to around four percent of GDP (2013, 105). Moreover, the cultural institutions did not always have an active and constantly debating group of delegates. To sum up, if it is true that, in the 1970s in particular, the sphere of cultural activities had been institutionally improved and was wheeling between the state, self-managed interest communities and the market,⁵ in its material policy the accessibility and level of public funding for culture remained limited. There was more influence on the discussion and the distribution of funds and there was the possibility of 'self-contributions' from citizens.⁶ However, with the growth of the cultural field (the number of associations and cultural workers grew steadily), there was a strong pattern of reproduction as far as privileged cultural institutions were concerned.

3 *Nek se čuje i naš glas* (1971) is an amazing short documentary by Krsto Papić, which shows that the period of the 1960s was marked by a creative proliferation of pirate radio stations developed in the countryside, where people were broadcasting on a diverse range of subjects, from music and recipes, to shows and political discussions. This popular activity came into conflict with the official licensing authorities who were in charge of allocating frequencies.

4 See also Aleš Gabrič's (1995) study *Socialistična kulturna revolucija: Slovenska kulturna politika 1953–1962* on the specific ideological contours of cultural policy.

5 There is also an extensive study by Stevan Majstorović (1980), which addresses some of the key issues of cultural policy and cultural activities in Yugoslav self-management.

6 There were often different referenda that were organized on the building of social infrastructure at the local/municipal level, and citizens could then also decide on their contributions to help the financing of such projects. Contributions, or 'self-contributions' as they were called, were more formalised means and opposed a sort of charity that is often associated with the rich or better situated people.

So far very little scholarly attention has been given to the precarious conditions of the cultural worker in socialist times apart from a few observations made by Boris Buden (2009) and Pavle Levi (2007). The perspective of the cultural worker is particularly relevant because it embodies a specific case in the more general system of socialist employment. Susan L. Woodward (1995) has pointed out that Yugoslav economic policy focused primarily on those who were employed in the public sector, i.e., those with a regular salary and all social benefits, while ignoring the private sector and forms of seasonal, temporary and/or flexible employment, and above all unemployment, which became a serious problem from the 1960s onwards. The cultural worker, in a sense, internally subverted or anticipated the figure of the self-manager as a flexible and precarious worker with few securities that was so well explained in the literature of (post-)Operaist thinkers, such as Toni Negri, Paolo Virno, Sergio Bologna, and others. Here I would like to highlight that in the cultural sphere, and particularly in the case of film, the more flexible labour relationship became a reality as early as the late 1950s. In the words of Pavle Levi:

“Workers’ councils were thus introduced as decision-making bodies overseeing the production, distribution, and exhibition of films, while the creative personnel associated with the process of filmmaking (directors, cinematographers, screenwriters) were given the status of freelance professionals” (Levi 2007, 15).

This freelance status was formally granted to some artists and cultural workers by the Ministry of Culture. However, we can speak of a proliferation of cultural associations and independent cultural workers only in the late 1970s and 1980s. The freelance status evidently did not only mean a (flex)secure and autonomous position that would be emancipated from the state, but had to do with an intensified precarious position that did not enjoy the same social benefits as other regular jobs, which meant lower pensions and often unpaid holidays (Praznik 2013, 95-101). This precarious status affected socialist cultural workers in various collaborations, ranging from amateur cultural associations to more established galleries, academies, and bigger cultural institutions. The result was what is now known as irregular project work, and in this respect, there is no difference between the features from the post-socialist epoch and their Western counterparts; that is, cultural work consisted of seasonal and intensive work in some periods, and periods of unemployment in others. Apart from this, one could say that amateur and alternative cultural institutions enjoyed a higher degree of autonomy and a relatively solid material subsistence.

Conclusion

This text sheds some light on the frame of self-management in the field of culture, and how surprisingly, despite the many retrospective illusions, in the era of socialism cultural activities prospered and cultural infrastructure was created that was made accessible to largest possible audiences. Much more investment was given to the sphere of culture compared to what is given in the post-socialist times. Furthermore, against a certain romanticisation, I also showed that already during socialism the sphere of culture saw the rise of more flexible and project-based employment and financing that allowed a certain form of marketization and a precarious dimension to enter its sphere. Despite legitimate criticism of certain proto-capitalist tendencies following the market reform of 1965 that resulted in a widening of the gaps between the ‘North’ and ‘South’ in Yugoslavia, I nevertheless see many of the changes in the cultural sphere as positive. There was

a conscious move and cultural praxis that wheeled towards the empowerment of self-managing communities of interest (see also Jakovljević, 2021). In this process, we can detect the expansion of workers’ culture, such as workers’ colonies and amateur cultural activities, and we can safely argue that all of this contributed to the empowerment of everyone involved in the sphere of culture, thus, there have been self-management effects beyond the ideological contours of the political authority or reproduction of cultural elitism. Many workers moved from being passive consumers to active amateur cultural producers and organizers, in their free time. All these moves and changes enabled a far more transparent and democratic system of funding (and discussion) of the cultural activities. Yet again, despite this institutional flexibility, the system still reproduced general inequalities within the cultural sphere (i.e. dominant cultural institutions versus alternative ones) and did not address the growing precariousness of many cultural workers.

Nowadays, faced with an increasing individualisation and neoliberalisation of all fields of society, and deeply framed within ethnic lenses and futureless horizons, such investigation into the past offers an insight into the importance of engaged culture, both in times of the partisan struggle, as in constructing socialism and self-management. This is not only a lesson for the state’s perspective on how to introduce cultural policies and more democratic decision-making launched from above, but also part of the legacy of all those that had fuller access and possibilities to become engaged in cultural activities in their free time, part of what would be called the realization of self-management and true praxis that helped to realize the human being beyond the self-realization and optimisation of neoliberal apparatuses.



Aleksandar Georgiev, *The Power of S*, 2021. Photographed by Martin Atanasov. Courtesy of Aleksandar Georgiev.



Aleksandar Georgiev and Dragana Zarevska, *Madness Runs in the Family (Ludiloto e del od semejstvoto)*, 2013–2015. Courtesy of 2014 Lokomotiva – Centre for New Initiatives in Arts and Culture.



Milana Broš/KASP, *Event 13 (Događaj 13)*, 1975. Photographed by Velizar Vezović. Courtesy of Maja Đurinović.



Joséphine Evrard and Irena Z. Tomažin, *Out of Discord (Splet okoliščin)*, 2010. Photographed by Nada Žgank. Courtesy of Maska Institute.

CHAPTER 1

PLURALITY OF BODIES AND THEIR VOICES



Natalija Vladisavljević with Olivera Kovačević Crnjanski, Saša Asentić, and Alexandre Achour, *Dance in the 21st Century (Ples u 21. veku)*, 2021. Photographed by Marija Erdelji. Courtesy of Per.Art.



Iskra Shukarova, *The Red Swan (Crveniot Lebed)*, 2008. Courtesy of Iskra Shukarova.

Dance and Other Bodies

Beginning with the modern age, when different performing arts practices in the territory of the Yugoslav states turned into artistic practices in opposition to their former entertaining function or a handy media for national emancipation, contemporary dance paradigms evoked certain discomfort in the regional public. Non- or less-coded forms of performing, stage acts that had not communicated anything as precise as the signified in literature or drama, and the bodies busy with their particular modality of actions were foreign performing phenomena, as was the case in many other cultural contexts. As such, contemporary dance has always been ‘the other bodies’ themselves.

“The Ljubljana’s public is sceptical toward the modern art of dance; people find it too lyrical, problematic, incomprehensible and—let’s not deny it—dull,” writes Fran Govekar (Vevar 2018, 86), a writer, journalist as well as dance and literary critic, in *Morning (Jutro)* daily in 1926. We cannot exclude the possibility that in some cases the public was right about the latter but, at the same time, we cannot overlook the fact that throughout the Yugoslav states at different periods the public never ceased to find contemporary dance of different paradigms equally problematic because it was incomprehensible for them and therefore dull. The anxiety with perceiving anything non-coded and favouring representational theatre forms was an additional push for the progressive artist to oppose conventional theatrical procedures and voice their critical stance toward the socialist system. It gave artists creative momentum in different forms of alternative stage-making including dance and performance art where the body had become the central interest. Therefore, we found it constructive to historicize a wide range of less-coded forms in a wide scope of performing arts in Yugoslav states throughout the 20th century. Otherwise, the historization of contemporary dance arts in the region stays fragmented, partial, and insufficient.

However, looking back on the century of dance we have to recognize certain periods in which contemporary dance forms in the region became immensely popular. Those were periods of social and political transitions and instabilities in which the public understood that the times, along with their social and cultural forms, also change. In the cases of modern dancing at the events of partisans’ meetings during WWII, some members of the public witnessed not only dance but also any artistic or cultural event for the first time in their lives. Their affective reactions were beyond anything expected and posed a question to the production orthodoxy of contemporary audience building.

Dance and Radical Otherness

To understand contemporary dance practices in the former Yugoslav region, it is necessary to emphasize that dance developments here have not evolved as rapidly as in countries where the art of dance would have developed in classical forms, institutions, or markets.

Except for the Croatian ballet, which marked its beginning in 1876¹ as part of the Croatian National Theatre, most of the ballet institutions were established either after WWI (Belgrade, Ljubljana) or after WWII (Rijeka, Split, Osijek, Novi Sad, Skopje). Therefore, it is hard to see contemporary dance acting against the rigid institutional system and breaking with existing dance paradigms, as it was mostly developed parallel to ballet. The other way around was true as, in Slovenia, the ballet institution acted against contemporary dance relatively continually from the period after the 1960s onward. Established as a kind of cultural front, it actively prevented developments in the field.

Nevertheless, important and referential ballet figures in the region were progressive artists who understood the art of dance as an artistic field to be developed and changed: Mia Čorak Slavenska and Mercedes Goritz Pavelić (Croatia); Pino and Pia Mlakar, Lidija Wisiak, and Václav Vlček (Slovenia); Smiljana Mandukić and Georges Skyrgin (Serbia), and Mira Sanjina (Croatia/Serbia); Olga Milosavljeva, Jagoda Slaneva, and Emilija Dzipunova (North Macedonia), etc. They were seeking their way out to international contexts and trying to discover new ways of dance-making (Čorak Slavenska from Croatia, Wisiak, Vlček, Mlakars, and Ksenija Hribar from Slovenia, Duška Sifnios from Serbia, etc.). For this reason, regardless of their background and official position, these artists would have to be re-historized as dance modernizers at some point.²

Because of the lack of institutionalization—especially in the case of contemporary dance practices—the art of dance had to affirm different ways of dance-making, aesthetic affinities, and regimes of spectatorships that in most cases happened in the liminal production space between elements of other dance systems (theatre-making and post-production, festivals’ extensions, occasional networks and practices, etc.) and to advocate for establishing conditions in the potentially extended and developed models of existing cultural systems.

This is the reason why Otherness in the history of dance in the region may not have been only connected with concrete dance works or aesthetic tendencies of creating choreographic oeuvres but in the events, traces,

1 In 1876, the director of the Opera, Ivan noble Zajc, engaged a prima ballerina from Amsterdam, Ivana Freisinger, to choreograph the ballet numbers for the world opening night of the opera *Nikola Šubić Zrinjski* and, for the first time, the ballet scenes and names of dancers were mentioned in the theatre leaflet. This date is considered as the beginning of Croatian ballet, although it continued to be part of the Opera (within the Croatian National Theatre) for many years.

2 In the Yugoslav region, there was no developed touring dance market that could sustain itself as an established touring network as in some countries in the US or Western Europe. Touring was a succession of singular and sporadic events and festivals and may have witnessed developments in limited periods during the 20th century but would have disappeared after unstable political periods. In that regard, it is impossible to recognize any stability or continuity in the touring networks.

and aberrations of acting beyond the art of dance with the instruments and logic of embodying that have been closely connected with dance or the extended notion of choreography and dance-making: not so much in terms of life creating dance but more of dance acting onto life.

Some practices could be perceived as dance, that is, as the only possible *l'écriture* of subjectivities and situational demands in the given historical, political, or cultural circumstances; bodies as the instruments or potentialities of physical uttering (embodied 'language' or 'speech'), a possible form of reaction and activity in the circumstances when verbal expressions were not sufficient; or the tools and procedures of composing and constructing dance in situations when all the other procedures turned out to be insufficient.³

At the crossroads of different cultural practices from the mid-1970s to the end of the 1980s, practices that subverted social norms were occupying not so many stages but rather different auditoria where the new public took its stage in the concert venues, student campuses, dance clubs, and public sites. Dance culture and the new expressive bodies took on the public spaces and turned them into battlefields of cultural struggles and provocations. In these circumstances, different artistic and cultural practices become intertwined to the extent that it is impossible to tell them apart.

Dance and the Everyday

All these are also reasons why the profanization of formalised dance, trained bodies, and composed dance works, and the introduction of procedural kinetic acts, had not been practiced in the field of dance in the Yugoslav cultural landscape before the 1980s, except in some rare cases. Some documentation of the Chamber Ensemble of Free Dance (Komorni ansambl slobodnog plesa – KASP) from Zagreb suggests that its founder Milana Broš may have been the only choreographer, busy with choreographic tasks, scores, principles, and commands, giving up intentions of pre-composed structures already in the 1960s and early 1970s (her fascination with Anna Halprin's work after her Zagreb performance in 1963 and introduction of the aleatoric composition principles were a consequence of meetings with foreign composers including John Cage at the Music Biennale Zagreb). An approach similar to those systems and countries in which radical art opposed elitist, hierarchic institutional systems could be found in the theatre (see chapter about dance and theatre), which was hyper-systemic and therefore impenetrable for revolutionary generations of the 1960s and 1970s. First, the profane entered the stages and galleries in performance art and theatre to oppose the overprotected cultural systems, while in dance mostly not before the 1980s and 1990s. In the post-Yugoslav period, dance turned toward the everyday or profane—which included a wide spectrum of movement possibilities and a heterogeneity of bodies—in different contexts for different reasons. Conceptual dance appeared as a criticism of constant cultural acceleration or perpetuation of non-problematicized dance athleticism but also as a need for sensitization of the gaze.

In that regard, the writing of Judith Butler could serve as a reference. In two of her books, *Precarious Life* (2004) and *Frames of War* (2009), Butler

conceptualizes corporal vulnerability as a universally shared human condition of generalized precariousness of the body that is both “constitutively social and interdependent” (2009, 31) and individually experienced. Moreover, the bodies' vulnerability is unequally distributed (some bodies are more violable than others). Vulnerability in such a conceptualization is both a bodily ontology (we are all vulnerable due to our human bodies being dependent on each other for support), and an epistemic frame (through vulnerability we can know), resulting in a clear ethical mission of response-ability and aiming not to hurt another human. Still, as feminist theorists like to stress, some bodies are more vulnerable than others, which is a vehicle through which political assemblies are described. If dance had aimed to be political, it had to turn in this direction and search for assemblies in a wide spectrum of bodies, including notions that remained undetected before.

Especially after 2000, contemporary dancers and choreographers around the globe could be identified through their ongoing research of dance dispositifs, extending dance beyond their embodied knowledge and techniques toward the everyday, also including non-professionals into their work. Autobiographical elements were introduced, collaboration with different social and minority groups entered the works, participatory performances counted on the inclusion of non-scored elements in the formats, and interest in choreography widened.

All these elements and aspects entered the cultural contexts of the former Yugoslav states. This coincided with dance's interest in looking beyond its formal or aesthetic parameters, which were a dominant part of modernist paradigms, and to include social, material, spatial, or other singular aspects of embodying into its field in order to extend it. In this period the notion of choreography or dance as an extended practice assumes a bigger presence on both the international and regional level. The former Yugoslav cultural space contributed extensively to those phenomena with its original dance theorizations. Circles of theoreticians and publicists around the performing arts journals *Maska* (Ljubljana), *Frakcija* and *Kretanja/Movements* (Zagreb), and *TkH Journal* (Belgrade) were producing original and inventive theorizations that became attractive to and recognized in the international performing arts landscape. Along with other, even more globally recognized theoretical schools, like Ljubljana Lacanian School, and the Praxis School of philosophy, etc., the former Yugoslav region became a global theory generator in the 1990s and after.

Strategies of Extending the Body Beyond Form

In the region of the former Yugoslavia, various strategies and tactics were implemented to transgress or extend the modalities of codified physicality of modern societies and dance. Besides occasional appearances in specific historical moments that could be interpreted as a consequence of chance (already mentioned Paulin-Brina's partisans' dances) or of specific non-scored political urgencies (Vukićević), they have been gradually and methodologically developed more so in the 21st century.

Some of these strategies, developed from the formalistic and methodological aspects, include works constructed with extensions of different media: technology in the work of Barbara Matijević and BADco. from Croatia, Snježana Premuš in *Amplified Body* (*Ozvočeno telo*, 2001) or *Dolly my Body* (*Dolly – moje telo*, 2009) from Slovenia, the TikTok compositions by Igor Koruga from Serbia, and the merging of dance and AI in the works of Marko Milić; objects (Jasna Knez, Mateja Bučar, and Jan Rozman from Slovenia, Nikolina Komljenović, Silvia Marchig, and Sonja Pregrad from Croatia, and Dragana Bulut from Serbia); or voice (Irena Z. Tomažin from Slovenia, selma banich and Lana Hosni from Croatia, and Dragana Zarevska from North Macedonia, etc.).

³ Examples of these various notions include: Marta Pulin-Brina (Slovenia), Mira Sanjina (Croatia/Serbia), or some other dance groups performing at the cultural meetings of the Yugoslav Partisan army during WWII; Jasna Knez's (Slovenia) persistence in dancing and taking the freedom to perform as a female dancer at any possible cultural manifestation and site during the 1970s and the 1980s; the activist work of Sabina Potočki in Slovenia and selma banich in Croatia that extended dance logic into other social and political activist struggles; Boris Čakširan's silent queering in the dance context in Serbia; Sonja Vukićević's dance performances at the protests against Milošević's regime in the 1990s; as well as numbers of collaborations, networks, and initiations that extended to the broad cultural space from the field of dance.

Some of these strategies are products of formalistic demands of dance morphologies (different regimes of composing dances) like in the work of Magdalena Reiter or Mala Kline from Slovenia, Ana Kreitmayer or Petra Hraščanec from Croatia, Dalija Aćin Thelander or Ana Dubljević from Serbia, the work by Aleksandar Georgiev from North Macedonia as well as his international collaboration within the artistic team STEAM ROOM. Or they may be induced by necessities to emancipate and affirm the Other body as a constitutive element of every subjectivity: Nataša Živković's debut *First Love's Second Chance (Prva ljubezen, drugič, 2009)* created with her mother, and Dragana Alfirević's creation of a platform for intergenerational exchange in the ongoing practice of *Silver Gold (Srebrno zlato, 2021–)* from Slovenia, *Madness Runs in the Family (Ludiloto e del od semejstvoto, 2013–2015)* by Aleksandar Georgiev and Dragana Zarevska from North Macedonia, Mila Čuljak and her work *Down, By Law (2018)* from Croatia, or Dalija Aćin Thelander in *Who Would Want a Mum Like Mine (Ko bi hteo mamu kao moju, 2010)*, which the choreographer developed with her daughter, from Serbia. Also, we can find strategies to (de)singularize exceptions, especially present in Slovenia in the work of Federacija Collective (Tkolektivnost project, 2010–2013), Andreja Rauch Podrzavnik's performance *Time Body Trio (Čas Telo Trio, 2014)*, *Labour Day (Praznik dela, 2023)* by Teja Reba and Špela Trošt, and in Serbia in the Temporaries project (2011–2013) by Dušan Bročić, Ana Dubljević, Igor Koruga, Marko Milić, Jovana Rakić Kiselčić, and Ljiljana Tasić, etc.

The ones that are largely absent throughout the region are choreographic opuses with continuous developments or methodologies that would also be a product of extensively financed research.

Inclusion of Disabled Bodies in Dance Practices

In Britain, the late 1960s marked the time when dance was explored also with persons with disabilities, first by dance instructor Hilde Holger who taught dance to her son with Down syndrome. They created a performance that was publicly presented at London's Sadler's Wells Theatre in 1968. However, the inclusion of disabled bodies in dance practices stayed under-recognized until the late 1980s and 1990s when it gained a higher profile through the work of Candoco Dance Company (1991–) and its co-founder Celeste Dandeker.⁴ While the inclusion of disabled bodies in dance practices tends to approach the artwork by looking at the abilities of disabled dancers as additive rather than an obstacle, its major contribution was to challenge the conceptions of dance. In some countries, where there is recognition of potentialities of dance practices for sectors beyond the arts and culture (health, education, social work, etc.), such forms of dance have been integrated into social and cultural policies, yet this cannot be claimed for the countries of the former Yugoslavia. Consequently, the integration of disabled bodies in dance practices is only a minor part of the dance systems; it mostly depends on the individual interests of dancers, choreographers, and dance pedagogues and can't be compared with countries in which it is incorporated in sustainability policies and therefore enhanced by various funding bodies.

Although a few choreographers are working in this domain in the region, only three companies with a longer track record exist in the entire Western Balkan region: Per.Art from Novi Sad (1999–), Dance Collective Magija from Rijeka (2006–) and Divert – Inclusive Dance Collective from Zagreb (2012–). We can

also mention the collaborative work between Veternica Collective and Trisomy 21 – Skopje (The Association of Citizens for Assistance and Support of People with Down Syndrome), since 2018, and the Group "Let's..." ("Hajde da...", 1999–) from Belgrade, working with different vulnerable groups, including people with disabilities, along with the dance practices of wheelchair dancers Tamara Bračun (Croatia) and Urša Urbančič (Slovenia) and work by deaf-mute dancer Stojan Simić (Serbia). Urbančič is also a founder of Limitless Movement, Institute for Performing Arts, without Exclusion, which continuously collaborates with the Slovenian Association of Disabled Students and teaches regularly at the ImPulsTanz – Vienna International Dance Festival while creating her performances and getting commissions. In the region of the former Yugoslavia, there were/are also two festivals dedicated to artists and art with and without disabilities: Off Frame festival (Van okvira, 2011–2020), dedicated to dance and theatre practices with different groups in Belgrade, and preOKRET – Inclusive Scene Festival (Rijeka, 2016–).

Outside of the systemic interest, these practices are developed through links and relations between choreographers (and theatre directors) and members of the disability community. In general, two possible orientations could be distinguished: one has a therapeutic function (art through therapy—MA programme at Faculty of Education in Ljubljana and Osijek) and is presented through individual and collective sessions, (regular) classes or workshops (where dance pedagogue Nataša Tovirac from Slovenia should be mentioned), while the second—more rare—aims toward artistic performance work. In Slovenia, these works include Barbara Novaković Kolenc's performance *Rodin II. (2006)*, Branko Potočan's *Seeing Through Touch (Skozi oči dotika, 2010)*, which won a jury award at the PUF International Alternative Theatre Festival in Pula, and *She Had to Do It Alone – and I Am Going by Foot (Morala je sama – Jaz grem pa peš, 2015)*, and Liza Šimenc's *OTS (2024)*. Also, the 14th edition of Exodos Festival of Contemporary Performing Arts in 2008 paid special attention to disabled bodies. In Zagreb, we can mention Ksenija Zec's choreographies for Theatrical Company of the Blind and Visually Impaired "New Life" *Nos vamos a ver (Vidimo se, 2007)* and *I'm Glad to See You (Drago mi je što vas vidim, 2009)*. In Serbia, we can expose co-productions by the Group "Let's...": *The Curve for Gauss (Kriva za Gausa, 2008)*, choreographed by Boris Čakširan and Sanja Krsmanović Tasić, *Reset (2010)*, choreographed by Danica Arapović, and *Hegel and the Long List of Deceptions (Hegel i duga lista prevara, 2015)* by Marko Pejović, choreographed by Boris Čakširan, or Igor Koruga's dance piece *Exposé (2014)* about the position and life of people with Primary Immunodeficiency, a rare immunological disorder which is in many countries recognized as a form of disability, although an invisible one.

⁴ Dancer and choreographer Celeste Dandeker injured herself while executing an acrobatic element in the London Contemporary Dance Theatre's choreography *Stages* in Manchester in December 1973. At 22 years of age, the accident left her with quadriplegia. A long period of personal struggle led her to founding the Candoco Dance Company (with Adam Benjamin), the first professional inclusive dance company of disabled and non-disabled dancers in the UK.

List of Examples

Aleksandar Georgiev and Dragana Zarevska: Madness Runs in the Family
2013–2015 • North Macedonia

Ajda Tomazin: *A Flock of Experienced Birds*
2019 • Slovenia

Dalija Aćin Thelander and Siniša Ilić: *Exercise for Choreography of Attention “Point of No Return”*
2012 • Serbia

Federacija Collective: *Tkolektivnost*
2010–2013 • Slovenia

Veternica Collective
2013– • North Macedonia

Boris Čakširan with Group “Let’s...”: *Thanatos*
2011 • Serbia

Danica Arapović with Group “Let’s...”: *Reset*
2009 • Serbia

INCLUSION OF DISABLED BODIES IN
DANCE PRACTICES • Croatia

preOKRET – Inclusive Scene Festival 2016–

Dance Collective *Magija* 2006–

Divert – Inclusive Dance Collective 2012–

Per.Art
1999– • Serbia

Milana Broš/KASP: *Event 13*
1975 • Croatia

Neja Kos:
Phase 1977 • Slovenia
Down There the River Flows 1982 • Slovenia

Mateja Bučar
1957– • Slovenia

Jan Rozman:
Thinging 2018 • Slovenia
Things Thing 2021 • Slovenia

Vlado G. Repnik:
Luftballet 2010 • Slovenia
Luftballet 2.2 2014 • Slovenia

Irena Z. Tomazič
1979– • Slovenia



Veternica Collective, *A Tree in Time (Drvo niz vremeto)*, 2023.
Photographed by Jelena Belik. Courtesy of Veternica Collective.

Aleksandar Georgiev and Dragana Zarevska: Madness Runs in the Family

2013–2015 • North Macedonia

Madness Runs in the Family (*Ludiloto e del od semejstvoto*) was a collaborative platform initiated by Aleksandar Georgiev and Dragana Zarevska to reflect on the nature of their profession and explore the idea of extended choreography through the perspective of family collaboration. The project grew out of Georgiev's earlier work with his parents, which took place in 2013 and 2014. Georgiev and Zarevska challenged traditional notions of performance by engaging their family members who often do not fully understand the creative work of choreographers and performers, particularly those operating outside mainstream institutional frameworks, and who have no prior experience in dance or performance. Madness Runs in the Family opened up spaces for diverse identities and bodily presences, dismantling hierarchical distinctions between professional and non-professional performers. The intimate, intergenerational aspect of family collaboration blurred boundaries between personal and public, also with the performances in various spaces, including domestic settings like their homes, as a way to rethink the formal boundaries of performance setting. In doing so, Georgiev and Zarevska created an inclusive, open platform where collective processes could be experienced by people from different social groups, professions and environments, expanding the idea of what performance could be.



Aleksandar Georgiev and Dragana Zarevska, *Madness Runs in the Family* (*Ludiloto e del od semejstvoto*), 2013–2015. Courtesy of 2014 Lokomotiva – Centre for New Initiatives in Arts and Culture.

Ajda Tomazin: A Flock of Experienced Birds

2019 • Slovenia



Ajda Tomazin, *A Flock of Experienced Birds* (*Jata izkušeni ptic*), 2019. Photographed by Maša Pirc. Courtesy of Odprti predali Institute.

A Flock of Experienced Birds (*Jata izkušeni ptic*) is a social choreography, co-created by retired participants in yearlong workshops led by Ajda Tomazin and Rok Kravanja, with a desire to affirm the importance of the collective body and the power of community, addressed through the metaphor of a flock as a complex organism of relationality and interdependence. In the workshop sessions, the artist tested contemporary performance methodologies within the group, while selecting potential textual materials based on which the flock's narration was built. Tomazin replaces the stage with public spaces, interweaves narrated material with musical interludes and delivers it to the visitors in recorded form. The visitors, wearing headphones, are guided by the performers, walking in a group along a pre-defined path, where memories are stored; intimate experiences are intertwined with observations on urban and social changes, thus subtly speaking about the consequences of economic and political changes, even if they rarely coincide with the actual landscape through which the visitors are guided. Yet, everything that is said is inscribed associatively in specific places on the map, keeping the text alive, preserving everyday jibes, remarks, or even volleys of laughter. The social choreography emerges during the performance itself; in the social and political intersubjectivities through the practice of togetherness.



Ajda Tomazin, *A Flock of Experienced Birds* (*Jata izkušeni ptic*), 2019. Photographed by Maša Pirc. Courtesy of Odprti predali Institute.

Dalija Aćin Thelander and Siniša Ilić: Exercise for Choreography of Attention "Point of No Return"

2012 • Serbia

At the intersection of her work in contemporary dance and the realm of dance for babies and young children, Aćin Thelander initially focused her artistic oeuvre on choreographies of attention, which she continued to refine and apply in dance for the youngest audiences. Her work challenges and dismantles conventional restrictive and hierarchical structures in traditional performance practices. Viewing the audience as a heterogeneous group with diverse modes of perception and engagement, she moves beyond the traditional concept of 'attention' and the binary model of attention versus distraction prevalent in conventional theatrical settings. Aćin Thelander's practice emphasizes creating a high degree of commonality and conviviality between performers and audiences, fostering intersubjectivity, empathic responses, and playful engagement with relational aesthetics. Her performances aim to construct sensuous ecologies that celebrate individuality and create spaces of empowerment and shared vulnerability. During the work process on the project *Exercise for Choreography of Attention* (*Vežba iz koreografije pažnje "Tačka bez povratka"*), texts and drawings were compiled into an interactive book. The performance unfolds in two distinct spaces: the individual space between the viewer/performer and the book, and the collective performance space in the theatre hall. This performance combines individual and collective acts, utilizing choreography as a method to direct or attempt to direct attention through the performance text and drawings in the book. The duration of the choreography is not predetermined and varies based on each viewer/performer's engagement. The exercise can be adapted to various setups, including gallery spaces, theatre stages, auditorium spaces, site-specific locations, and libraries, with flexible configurations regarding audience size, positioning, instructions, and duration.



Dalija Aćin Thelander and Siniša Ilić, *Exercise for Choreography of Attention "Point of No Return"* (*Vežba iz koreografije pažnje "Tačka bez povratka"*), 2012. Courtesy of Station Service for Contemporary Dance.

Federacija Collective: Tkolektivnost

2010–2013 • Slovenia



Federacija Collective, Workshops with youth, 2013. Tkolektivnost project, 2010–2013. Photographed by Marcandrea. Courtesy of Federacija Institute.



Federacija Collective, Workshops with elderly, 2011. Tkolektivnost project, 2010–2013. Photographed by Marcandrea. Courtesy of Federacija Institute.

Participatory performances based on scores or experiential workshops, guided by choreographers to create an opportunity for embodied knowledge and the transmission of the value of dance for the society at large and its various groups, is an important endeavour in the field of dance. A strong example of such practices is Federacija Collective (Andreja Rauch Podrzavnik, Snežana Premuš, and Gregor Kamnikar), established in 2009 to create new/different formats of performance practices as well as to experiment with socially charged and innovative artistic projects. Their collective intention was realized in their continuous, serial four-year project *Tkolektivnost* (2010–2013), placed in open spaces and museums. Each year the group focused on one aspect (Relation in 2010, Transmission in 2011, Enthusiasm in 2012, and Implementation in 2013) through which they could guide their audience and test the potential of viewing, embodying, and understanding dance, while, through the accumulation of the experience, moving to the new cycle. The series of participatory ateliers,

in 2011, was created for a closed group of secondary school students and residents of the Retirement Home Fužine, while in 2012 the collective made a step further to involve the general public. For example, set in the public space, *Unauthorized* (*Neavtorizirano*, 2012) blurred the line between art and life, inviting passers-by to join, and challenged participants to shift their roles between observers and performers. The work was based on three levels: actions, interpretation, and the placement of objects in space, in which, through the experience, participants were expected to start layering their views, and open their imaginations to different ways of viewing and thinking about everyday situations as well as about art. In the dance installation *Permanent Exhibition of Nowness* (*Stalna zbirka zdajšnjosti*, 2012), which was set in the City Museum of Ljubljana, the audience was equipped with headphones, guided through some of the historical aspects of dance, and invited to practice recorded scores, while observing its execution by the collective as well as by other participants, again shifting roles from observers and listeners to performers. Besides the Tkolektivnost project, the collective's effort to extend dance work also manifests in the booklet designed by Darinka Novak (2010) as a form of dance work, providing another perspective on possible approaches toward the dance work.

Veternica Collective

2013- · North Macedonia

The Veternica Collective is an organization whose work is based on the principles of collective work and flexible leadership, and it is created with the common goal of encouraging the personal development of specific groups through group work and creative energy. Since 2013 Veternica has worked with children, youth and people with disabilities through various inclusive programmes in the field of culture and art, with a particular focus on experimenting with different theatre techniques, especially concentrating on the body and 'play'. In their work they include



Veternica Collective, *Divine Rhapsody* (*Božestvena rapsodija*), 2023. Photographed by Jelena Belikj. Courtesy of Veternica Collective.

non-verbal physical theatre and dance theatre, acting, dance, music, puppet and shadow theatre, creating a collage of games and exercises aimed at integrating the sensory, emotional, intellectual and social dimensions, in a protected environment and through a discreet and subtle form. Their work has addressed questions such as the decriminalization of Cannabis, patriarchal domination, children's critical mass, autism awareness, etc. In their ongoing collaboration with Trisomy 21 – Skopje (The Association of Citizens for Assistance and Support of People with Down Syndrome) since 2018, they established an inclusive ensemble that was primarily focused on performing Macedonian music. In 2022 the ensemble performed at Manifesta 14 in Pristina, in the frame of the performance work *Confutatis – What Are Heroes Made Of?* (*Confutatis – Od shto se napraveni heroite?*) by the Macedonian visual artist Velimir Zernovski, with a collective dance piece that explored the topics of mourning, loss, remembrance, masculinist ideals of heroization, normative corporeality and neurodiversity, forms of discrimination and exclusion.

Boris Čakširan with Group "Let's...": *Thanatos*

2011 · Serbia



Boris Čakširan with Group "Let's...", *Thanatos* (*Tanatos*), 2011. Photographed by Maja Ven. Courtesy of "Let's..."/Marko Pejović.

The Group "Let's..." (Grupa "Hajde da...") was established in the spring of 1999 by a collective of young experts in applied psychology. The organization's mission is to leverage professional expertise to empower individuals and groups, fostering the development of personal potential, relationships with others, and engagement with diverse communities. The programmes implemented by the organization span psychological support, personal development, empowerment, transferable skill development, artistic practice, and activism. These initiatives are primarily conducted through informal educational activities. The organization's work predominantly targets educators, primary school-aged children, youth, youth workers, local self-governments, and members of vulnerable groups, including the Roma, individuals with refugee experiences,

people with disabilities, those facing mental health challenges, the LGBTQ+ community, veterans of the 1991–1999 war, and young people from rural areas.

Thanatos (*Tanatos*), choreographed by Boris Čakširan, is part of the project *The Day After* initiated by the Group "Let's..." in Belgrade and the Centre for War Trauma in Novi Sad. This project aimed to bridge the gap between the past and the future by bringing together young artists and veterans of the wars that took place from 1991 to 1999. It created a unique space for dialogue, reflection, and healing through the medium of contemporary dance. The performance features a diverse cast, including seasoned war veterans who bring with them a wealth of experience and historical insight, and young dancers who represent a new generation looking forward with hope and optimism. This juxtaposition created a dynamic interplay of perspectives, enriching the narrative with layers of personal and collective memory. *Thanatos* delves into the concept of death—not just as an end but as a profound transformation. It explores the metaphorical death of societies, cultures, and human connections that occur when life-sustaining elements like compassion and empathy are stripped away. The performance opens with a stark and minimalist set, symbolizing the void left by war and the cessation of life's vital rhythms. It poignantly addresses the themes of death, decay, and rebirth, encouraging a reflective and transformative experience. The performance leaves the audience with a profound message: understanding and reconciling with the past is essential for building a future where the heart of society can beat with empathy, strength, and renewed vitality.

Danica Arapović with Group "Let's...": *Reset*

2009 · Serbia

The performance *Reset*, choreographed by Danica Arapović, was a part of the *Body Frame* project initiated by Group "Let's..." and aimed to foster collaboration between contemporary dance artists and people with disabilities. Inspired by the concept of resetting in modern technology—restoring a system to its initial state—it explored parallels between electronic systems and human experiences. In the world of technology, 'reset' means correcting errors and restoring functionality. Electronic systems, like humans, have a life cycle—they are born, operate, and eventually cease functioning. They face challenges such as viruses and information overload, requiring rest to regain energy and functionality. The performance depicted this cycle metaphorically, portraying human

struggles and vulnerabilities akin to those of electronic systems. *Reset* represented these moments as opportunities for reflection, healing, and renewal—an awakening from a state of stagnation or dysfunction, toward social inclusivity. Overall, *Reset* was a poignant narrative of human resilience and the capacity for growth, illustrating that, like electronic systems, humans can overcome challenges, restore balance, and emerge stronger from setbacks.



Danica Arapović with Group "Let's...", *Reset*, 2009. Photographed by Aleksandar Milosavljević. Courtesy of "Let's..."/Marko Pejović.

INCLUSION OF DISABLED
DANCE PRACTICES · Croatia

preOKRET – Inclusive Scene Festival 2016-

Dance Collective Magija 2006-

Divert – Inclusive Dance Collective 2012-



Tamara Bračun, *A Blink of Silence* (*Treptaj tišine*), 2022. Photographed by Nina Đurđević. Courtesy of 2023 Antisezona.

Dance Collective Magija, founded in 2008 by artistic directors Gordana Svetopetrić and Sanja Josipović, emerged from workshops organized by the Association of People with Cerebral Palsy and Child Paralysis in Rijeka. In Croatia, it is a pioneering collective, whose members are dancers with different kind of physical disabilities, collaborating artistically with professional contemporary dancers and choreographers, also organizing the Inclusive scene festival pre-OKRET (2016–), which focuses on including people with disabilities in the world of contemporary dance and performance art. The festival encourages collaboration, presents performances, organizes workshops, and enables space for choreographic experimentation, research, education, and innovation in dance.

Divert Collective, founded in 2012 within the administrative frame of the Croatian Institute for Movement and Dance (HIPD) as Inclusive Movement Research Collective (IMRC), operating independently and with a new name since 2019 in Zagreb, is a key partner in these efforts and has a similar mission. Divert explores the intersection of diverse physical and intellectual capabilities through workshops and dance productions. The collective provides a creative space for dancers with and without disabilities to collaborate, emphasizing the diversity of physical expression.

Magija and Divert co-produced *A Blink of Silence* (*Treptaj tišine*, 2022), a performance by dance artist Tamara Bračun, marking the first full-length work created and performed by a wheelchair dancer in Croatia. This duet, performed with Marina Bura or Anita Rumac, also on wheelchairs, delves into the emotional and social states that arise when deprived of the essential sense of touch, shedding light on such deprivation's profound psychophysical impact.

Per.Art

1999- · Serbia

The Novi Sad-based Per.Art is an artistic organization that has been dedicated to performing arts and cultural inclusion since 1999, and officially as an NGO since 2005, brought to life by people with and without disabilities. First initiated and run by Saša Asentić, in collaboration with other dance artists



Natalija Vladislavljević with Olivera Kovačević Crnjanski, Saša Asentić, and Alexandre Achour, *Dance in the 21st Century (Ples u 21. veku)*, 2021. Photographed by Marija Erdelji. Courtesy of Per.Art.

(Olivera Kovačević Crnjanski, Frosina Dimovska, Nataša Murge Savić, Tatjana Tucić, Dragana B. Stevanović, Branislav Savić, Dragana Galović, Biljana Radeka, Luka Kulić, Hana Markvard, and Dunja Crnjanski), the organization gathers persons with various disabilities, their parents and family members, professional artists from the fields of dance, theatre, and visual arts, dermatologists, other professionals, as well as volunteers. The main working principle of the organization is not a process where non-disabled artists 'train' their colleagues with disabilities, but is instead a continuous exchange creating new opportunities to learn more about ways to improve and enhance social relationships, gradually changing the immediate environment and, hopefully, society. Today, their partners include institutions of national importance such as the Gallery of Matica Srpska, Serbian National Theatre in Novi Sad, museums, and educational institutions like the Academy of Arts in Novi Sad, the Isidor Bajić Music School, and the Novi Sad Ballet School. Certain productions were inspired by the writings of colleague Natalija Vladislavljević, a person with Down syndrome, whose works focused on imaginary worlds and the feelings of the performers, who were initially discovering for themselves what art is and how they could express themselves through it. In contrast to these early works, an interesting shift occurred with the play *Empty Voice (Prazan glas, 2013)* in which artists with disabilities play themselves and talk about their lives. In 2017, they produced a major international co-production, *Dis_Sylphide (2018)*, in collaboration with Kampnagel Hamburg, a renowned cultural institution from Germany, and the theatre company Meine Damen und Herren. With this now iconic play, they toured many European stages and were invited to the most significant festivals in Europe. In the performance *Dance in the 21st Century (Ples u 21. veku, 2021)*, based on Vladislavljević's ideas and her choreographic and musical scores, dancers from the Pokretnica also participated. This collaboration was a unique and encouraging example of mutual support that exists on the local, very small but specific, contemporary performing arts scene, as a special example of inclusive artistic practice in general.

Milana Broš/KASP: Event 13

1975 · Croatia

Milana Broš's Chamber Ensemble of Free Dance (KASP) was known for offering a radical response to traditional forms with improvisation, challenging established dance positions and norms through direct, unstructured movement exploration, while extending practices to non-professional dancers and presenting them in non-theatrical spaces. The performance *Event 13 (Dogadaj 13)*, which debuted at the disco-club of the Student Centre in Zagreb in 1975 and was later presented in other unconventional, underground spaces, is marked by all of the above-mentioned specifics. Starting from the challenging dynamics of club environments, where



Milana Broš/KASP, *Event 13 (Dogadaj 13)*, 1975. Photographed by Velizar Vezović. Courtesy of Maja Đurinović.

loud music often creates a sense of isolation and aimlessness, hindering interaction among people, the performance begins as the audience enters the space, where the performers engage in a near-ritualistic act of passing a ball to one another. This utilization of props like balls creates a rhythmic organization among the performers, fostering group cohesion that "overwhelmingly associates to popular collective exercise routines of youth on Sokol's events from the early 20th century, or post-war intentions, embodied in sport mass activities" (Fučkan 2021). The performers then form two opposing lines, reinforcing the linear movement of the rolling balls and creating a dynamic of horizontal communication and contrasting directions. One performer disrupts the group of aligned bodies, knocking them down as they slowly rise again. "The myth of persistence is merging collectivism, the unconscious automatism to maintain balance, and the destructive impulses that ultimately lead to their fall" (Fučkan 2021). The performance concludes with a free dance, inviting the audience to participate, which they would usually do.

Neja Kos:

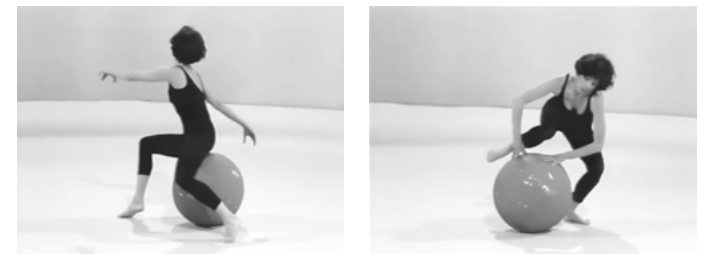
Phase 1977 · Slovenia

Down There the

River Flows 1982 · Slovenia

Dancer and choreographer Neja Kos (1943–) coming from the Slovene expressionist dance paradigm, decided to use objects and elements of a set in her work to generate new kinetic and choreographic possibilities in the late 1970s and early 1980s. In *Phase (Faza)* she introduced a ball as a 'dance partner,' while in *Down There the River Flows (Tam doli teče reka)* she organized choreography around a white bench. Although Kos states her decision simply originates in Wigman's pedagogical exercises, due to the changed context of experimentations in dance and arts, the use of objects on stage echoes differently in the period of the late 1970s. In *Phase*, the specificities of

the body trained in the expressionist dance parameters confronts the object partially as a separate entity and partially she handles it as a physical extension. Similar to *Down There the River Flows*, anatomical body parameters in relation to the object determine specific kinetics. Although the use of objects in those cases may not have been conceptualized in the same elaborate way as in the experiments of other contemporary dance contexts of the period, it definitely transgressed the use of the object (ball) from the early modernist dance practices that had later entered the Olympic discipline of rhythmic gymnastics. It opened the potentialities of kinetics and suggested the practices of dance research.



Neja Kos, *Phase (Faza)*, 1977. Still from the recorded performance. Courtesy of Studio for Free Dance.

Mateja Bučar

1957- · Slovenia

The choreographic oeuvre of Mateja Bučar has brought the relation between different materialities and bodies on the level of research, connected with the questions when and how materials can be observed or seen transformed into subjects, bodies in the process turned into materials, and how the process of perception could be objectified. Bučar observes these processes in "consideration of the extra-semiotic aspects of dance, read through a phenomenological understanding of kinaesthesia" (Bučar 2015, 8), as she is interested in "how our understanding of movement and choreography is rooted in basic aspects of our perceptive capabilities" (ibid., 11). Bučar's choreographic proposals aim to situate the spectator into a position in which it would



Mateja Bučar, *Dependance*, 1997. Photographed by Vadim Fishkin.

be possible to “re-experience the process of perceiving itself anew” (ibid., 99). Her choreographic work is thus committed to building the temporal instruments of perception, combining the set and object constructions with movement scores, exposing physical differences next to contrasting materialities, or installing short choreographies into the kinetic inertia of the urban landscape. Inspired by Adorno’s notion of the negative aesthetics, her work is committed to breaking into our mechanisms of perception with kinetic and material anomalies, contrasts or gradualities, by which our everyday perceptive limits become visible.

Jan Rozman:

Thinging 2018 · Slovenia

Things Thing 2021 · Slovenia

Dancer and choreographer Jan Rozman’s interest in performative research on materiality started during his study at the Solo/Dance/Authorship master study programme at the Inter-University Centre for Dance Berlin. His studious choreographic efforts are inspired by philosophers of speculative realism and the concepts of object-oriented ontology, developed by Graham Harman “that rejects the privileging of human existence over the existence of nonhuman objects” (Graham 2002, 2). Two of his performances are important to be mentioned in that regard: *Thinging* (*Predmetenje*) and *Things Thing* (*Reči*



Jan Rozman, *Thinging* (*Predmetenje*), 2018.
Photographed by Nada Žgank.
Courtesy of Emanat Institute.

reči), later created in co-authorship with Julia Keren Turbahn as a version suitable for children (6+). Both performances extensively incorporated objecthood into the choreographic works as a material *corps de ballet*, aligned them on equal terms with the live dancers, and let their textures, haptic qualities, and forms inform the somatic systems of the dancing bodies. Not only are the performances very much logical and an extended continuation of the choreographic constructivism of the 1960s, their playful and exploratory landscape has become a praxis, equally accessible to younger audiences as well as to the grown-ups. Although working with objects is not an entirely new approach in the Slovene contemporary dance landscape, it has never before been so precisely conceptualized and thought through.

Vlado G. Repnik:

Luftballet 2010 · Slovenia

Luftballet 2.2 2014 · Slovenia

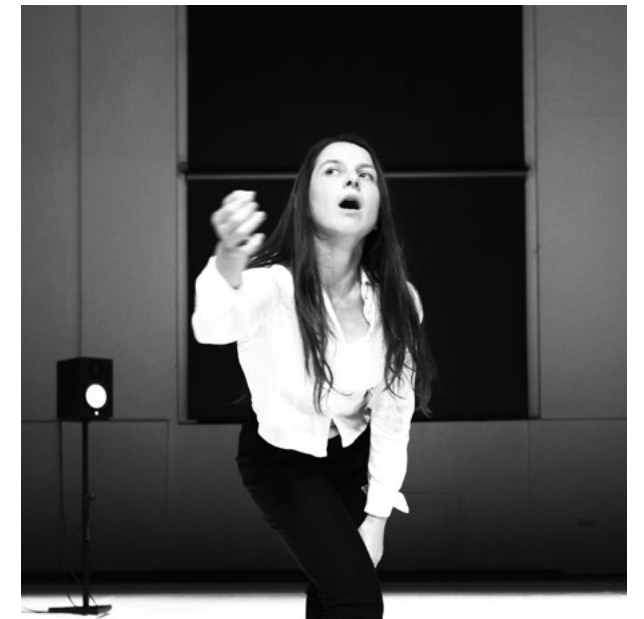
The work of Vlado G. Repnik, visual artist and theatre director, is at the intersection of performing, new media, and visual arts. His *Luftballet* directly unfolds the conceptual frame of this ‘automatic performance’ with 57 lighting bodies appearing as its main protagonists, gently dancing in the air throughout the performance in various formations, such as solos, duets, or group dance sequences. In such a way, Repnik brings the light technique into the centre and moves it from its minor role to the state of subjects—without a desire to narrate a story, yet delivering a specific gesture. The framework is readable indirectly through a wide scope of possible references that the audience have to bring to it themselves, primarily the ideals of the historic avant-garde (futurists and constructivists) that are widely present in Repnik’s oeuvre, appearing as his signature style, in their praising of (new) technologies and speculative desires to create and maintain the ‘autonomous life’ of the machine. While in the first performance Repnik still plays with the counterpoint between humans, animals, plants, and machines, his second version of *Luftballet* is cleaned out of the life matter, furthering the hopeful constructivist desires to instil life into ‘dead matter’ and to humanize apparatuses. Still, Repnik’s playful strategy doesn’t move toward a speculative future, instead he simply uses the well-equipped and technologically advanced light park of Kino Šiška Centre for Urban Culture to play with.

Jan Rozman, *Thinging* (*Predmetenje*), 2018.
Photographed by Nada Žgank.
Courtesy of Emanat Institute.

Irena Z. Tomažin

1979- · Slovenia

Choreographer and dancer Irena Z. Tomažin developed her dance practice in combination with voice, in the physical realm that had not been extensively explored in dance before and has developed, with some rare modern dance references (Valeska Gert), only in recent decades. In dialogue with Gert, this practice got signified with the term choreovocalistics and configured its historical referential field in the *Maska* issue *Voice of Dance* (Vear 2019, 80–84). It is important to emphasize that the struggle for the perception of dance in the material realm of its existence should not only include tangible or haptic matter in connection with physicality but also the sonic and vocal aspects of the dancing body (being sub-sonic or choreovocal). The choreovocalist oeuvre of Irena Z. Tomažin from the early 2000s developed through various artistic strategies: from defamiliarizing the body with the use of voice in her early works, including *Caprice* (*Kaprica*, 2005) or *Caprice (Re)lapse* (*(S)pozaba kaprice*, 2006), to playing with the feminine aspect of ethnic songs as in *The Taste of Silence Always Resonates* (*Okus tišine vedno odmeva*, 2012), up to making dance compositions from different vocal, physical, and material sources, as in *Pattern of a Spilled Voice*, *Traces of Caramel Footprints* (*Vzorec razlitega glasu, odtis karamelnih stopinj*, 2023) and collaborating with another choreovocalist, Jule Flierl, in *U.F.O.: Hommage to Katalin Ladik* (*U.F.O.: Poklon Katalini Ladik*, 2021). One of the important aspects of her work is the ability to perceive the body and the movement in its synesthetic qualities: the body with its accompanying inherent sound. The other is the existential and political aspect of having a voice and the fact that voice destabilizes the perception of subjectivities, once it appears in its acousmatic material mode.



Irena Z. Tomažin, *Moved by Voice* (*Mes(t)o glasu*), 2017.
Photographed by Nada Žgank. Courtesy of Emanat Institute.



Vlado G. Repnik, *Luftballet*, 2010.
Photographed by Nada Žgank.
Courtesy of GVR babaLAN.

Dance and Feminism

Contemporary dance and feminism were formed somehow parallelly. Even though there was no direct and strong link between the two, such a link manifested indirectly and, above all, through women's actions. The simple fact that the art of dance was primarily a women-centric field speaks in favour of such a thesis. Moreover, it was the only artistic discipline in which women were recognized as artists in their own right. Therefore, contemporary dance can be observed in the light of emancipatory practices and observed primarily from such a perspective, regardless of their involvement in other feminist struggles. Women collaborated extensively and maintained relations across and beyond their national states, fighting together against repression and sharing their knowledge and experiences.

In this respect, the territory of the former Yugoslavia is no exception. Women's and feminist associations were present already at the end of the 19th century in the territory of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire, during the formation and existence of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (1918, Kingdom of Yugoslavia from 1929), its subsequent dissolution, and the formation of the federation of Yugoslavia as well as later, after the break up of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), until these days. Their voice and position changed in diverse sociopolitical atmospheres, also differentiating between various micro-localities of the Western Balkan region. For example, at the beginning of the 20th century, the more radical feminist fractions could be found in the Hungarian part of the region (especially in Serbia), and a modest approach could be found in the northern part. Nevertheless, their voice united to some extent through various alliances during the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, but it was never uniform.¹ Women's organizations

in that realm "were carried out with the assumption that the problem of social inequalities must be addressed" (Grubački and Selišnik 2023, 244), despite the conservative authoritarian orientation that merged liberal, radical right, and proto-fascist elements into a cohesive political landscape, personified by King Alexander I Karađorđević. In such a state of affairs, feminism had two sides and two ways of operating, which can be traced through modes of alignment with dance practices.

It is necessary to pay attention to the theory and practice of the critical left in Yugoslav interwar culture to recognize the role of women's and feminist organizations within the leftist Cultural-Artistic Front (formed between 1928 and 1932, particularly in literature, and indirectly in visual art, less frequently in dance practices). These left-leaning women's groups operated in a climate of aggressive anti-communist policies, leading many to partly function illegally while/and disguising their activities within legal frameworks. Organizations like the Society for Women's Enlightenment and Protection of Their Rights (Društvo za prosvjećivanje žene i zaštitu njezinih prava, 1919) mobilized women toward revolutionary movements. By the mid-1930s, the women's movement regained strength, as the dictatorship weakened and political parties re-emerged. Together with the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, many women's organizations promoted anti-fascist efforts and the people's front, which is visible also in a wide range of women's magazines that were published at that time.² On the other hand, we can observe conservative feminist fractions and decisions to align with the political elite, as inscribed in the story of Maga Magazinović for example.

Regardless of the different personal backgrounds, political orientations, and aesthetic paradigms of dance pioneers in the Western Balkan region, among which many founded their own dance schools, it can be argued that these women were all emancipated and had passed on, along with dance knowledge, such positions to their students (see chapter 2 about dance schools). They also paid attention to their public visibility through staged performances and so asserted their public voice.

Feminism and Dance During and After WWII

The key differences come to the fore just before or during WWII. For example, due to her Jewish origin, Katja Delak (Slovenia) fled to America, some other female dance artists joined the resistance movement (Meta Vidmar, Živa Kraigher, and Marta Paulin-Brina from Slovenia, Georges Skyrgin from Serbia, and Mira Sanjina from Croatia/Serbia³),⁴ others entered into an 'alliance' with the occupier (Maga Magazinović from Serbia) or maintained a 'neutral' role (Smiljana Mandukić), etc. Their actions, in turn, led to their diverse post-war social positions and ambiguous attitudes toward their work in socialist Yugoslavia. For example, Sanjina performed at the second session of the

1 During the formation of the Kingdom of SCS (1919) more than 50 representatives of women's organizations attended the first women's congress in Belgrade, in the newly created country, and founded the National Women's Alliance (NWA, Narodni ženski savez) with the aim of the 'unification of all Yugoslav women.' "NWA would unite about two hundred women's associations in the early 1920s, and about four hundred in the late 1930s." (Grubački, Selišnik 2023, 242) In most cases these organizations aligned with the Communist Party and, therefore, existed within alternative spaces and networks for political engagement and managed to initiate and distribute a variety of agencies (movements, magazines, works, etc.) in the fight against women's repression.

2 At least a few magazines should be mentioned: *Woman Today* (*Žena danas*, 1936–1981, Serbia), *Women's World* (*Ženski svet*, 1923–1941, Trieste and, later, Ljubljana), *Woman and the World* (*Žena i svet*, 1925–1942, Belgrade), *Women's Movement* (*Ženski pokret*, 1920–1938, Belgrade/Sarajevo, Ljubljana/Zagreb), *Gazette of the Yugoslav Women's Union* (*Glasnik Jugoslovenskog Ženskog Saveza*, 1935–1940), among many others, became platforms for addressing issues related to patriarchy, capitalism, and their critique from feminist and Marxist-materialist perspectives. These magazines nourished the intersectional connection among female workers, artists, intellectuals, students, teachers, nurses, lawyers, art historians, writers, etc., through wide range of topics, including pedagogy, fashion, and the arts that addressed and attracted a wide scope of readers. In some of these magazines contemporary dance criticism appears, written with extensive knowledge, competences, and a different critical sensibility and perspective in comparison with mainstream media (among the writers were Maša Slavec and Minka Govekar from Slovenia). Furthermore, the magazines, like *Woman Today*, were connected with the anti-fascist revolutionary movement and presented one of the most important ways of mobilizing women to form the Women's Antifascist Front (Antifašistička fronta žena – AFŽ, 1942–1953).

3 Sanjina (who was of Jewish descent) was born in Zagreb and danced in the Croatian National Theatre ensemble. During WWII she fled to Split and later Ljubljana and, after the war, she lived in Belgrade, where she danced in the Serbian National Theatre.

4 Meta Vidmar was sent to a concentration camp, Živa Kraigher was actively involved in the resistance movement of the Liberation Front in Ljubljana, Marta Paulin-Brina, Georges Skyrgin, and Mira Sanjina were all members of the Theatre of the People's Liberation (Kazalište narodnog oslobođenja, KNO) in their local environments.

Anti-Fascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia (AVNOJ) in 1943, further linking modern dance to the communist ideals of the resistance.

In Serbia, after the war, Sanjina and Skyrjin became principles of the Ballet Department at the National Theatre in Belgrade, hiring many dancers without a job. On the other hand, Maga Magazinović's artistic influence and social status were not one-sided. Some of her students distanced themselves from their teacher, while others continued her legacy. Smiljana Mandukić further fused feminism and nationalism through exposing the female body's ideal. Her work with Cultural-Artistic Association (KUD) Abrašević (since 1955) and later with the Belgrade Contemporary Ballet of Smiljana Mandukić (1964) influenced generations of dancers and made a strong impact on women's emancipation as she encouraged them to gain independence from their traditional domestic roles.⁵ Slovenian dancers and choreographers continued their work independently (Meta Vidmar), in non-formal and formal education, in which dance was part of the curricula (Marta Paulin-Brina, Živa Kraigher).

In general terms, the development of contemporary dance in Yugoslavia was significantly shaped by the political, social, and cultural dynamics of the time. Women's roles, both in society and on stage, as well as the intersection of dance, feminism, and gendered labour, were crucial in shaping the regional contemporary dance landscape. This period saw a gradual transformation from traditional and classical dance forms to more experimental and expressive styles that aligned with modernist and avant-garde movements, laying the ground for the exploration of feminist ideas, but mainly in an indirect way. Female dance figures also did not declare themselves as feminists, especially those that were members of the Communist Party as they were perceived to be equal already, which does not mean they did not identify as feminists. That's why many aspects of feminism have to be read through the works that female artists developed. Moreover, their approach to dance—evident in their social and political engagement, the collectivization and formation of dance ensembles, informal groups, and collaborative projects—allows us to recognize their contributions as feminist today.

There are concrete reasons for the long absence of straight-forward feminist positions in Yugoslavia. Officially, socialist ideology promoted gender equality, and women were encouraged to participate in the workforce, education, and public life. Yet traditional gender roles and patriarchal attitudes persisted, creating a gap between policy and reality. Direct articulation of feminist ideas—with a few exceptions—became publicly present only in the late 1960s and more visible in the 1970s, first through theory, which was soon joined by more experimental and body based artistic practices, such as performance and body art, but not yet in dance. However, female dancers and choreographers began to challenge phallogocentric norms by exploring themes related to the female experience, such as identity, autonomy, and the body. More straight-forward feminist positions in dance could be found occasionally in the 1980s and more often since the 1990s, after the dissolution of Yugoslavia.

Feminism in Post-Yugoslavia

As mentioned, the relationship with feminism began to shift, especially in Serbia, Slovenia, and Croatia, in the mid-1990s, and intensified at the beginning of the 2000s as women's studies and networks, along with women's and feminist collectives, started to develop and expand into the realm of activism. In North Macedonia,

⁵ Such work was further transmitted through the work of her students—Dubravka Maletić, Katarina Stojkov Slijepčević, Vera Obradović, Sanja Krsmanović Tasić, and Nela Antonović—who were not identified as feminists but did emphasize the importance of female independence through work and through art practice as well.

the first feminist perspectives incorporated in dance practice became visible, although very rare, in the late 2000s. However, those practices were more focused on expressing women's perspectives and positions, rather than questioning and critically reflecting on them through contemporary dance movement repertoires.

During the 1990s and 2000s, feminist movements in Serbia faced significant challenges due to the political and social upheavals of the time, especially the war and the economic crises. Despite these difficulties, several key feminist groups and initiatives emerged that had contributed to the ongoing struggle for gender equality and women's rights in Serbia's wider society, adapting to the changing political and social landscape of the region. Also, some collaborations between feminist movements and theatres or dance troupes occurred, addressing social issues, challenging gender norms, and raising awareness about women's rights through performing arts. Institutionally-wise, the prominent Belgrade theatre Atelje 212 occasionally included feminist themes in its productions, while Bitef Belgrade International Theatre Festival has a history of presenting innovative and socially engaged performances with feminist themes and issues related to gender equality. In the 1990s, independent theatre and dance productions were linked to the anti-war and anti-regime citizen demonstrations through a variety of street and site-specific performances. Perhaps the most recognized ones were Dah Theatre (in collaboration with Women in Black), Theatre Mimart, and Ister Theatre. Dah Theatre is known for its exploration of gender issues, including feminist topics, addressing them through innovative and provocative theatre forms. Individually, dancer and choreographer Sonja Vukićević stood out with her first dance production *Macbeth/IT (Magbet/ONO)* (1996), focusing on the female perspective and criticism of the urge for domination and power, performed also during the citizen anti-regime protests in front of a police cordon in 1997. Jelena Šantić, a dancer and choreographer, fought against nationalism and genocidal projects in the 1990s with her group Group 481. In the 2000s, the Autonomous Women's Centre collaborated with various theatre groups to raise awareness about issues such as domestic violence and sexual harassment.

Today, feminist art initiatives in Serbia are actively promoting dialogue and social change through creative expression, including dance, collectively aiming to challenge traditional frameworks and promote gender equality in Serbian society. One notable project was the BeFem Festival of Feminist Culture and Action (2009–2020) in Belgrade, showcasing feminist literature, poetry, and performances, and other ongoing activities of feminist cultural centre BeFem (educational programmes, Bring the Noize acknowledgement for women's and feminist achievements). Another key player is Reconstruction Women's Fund (2004–), which supports grassroots feminist art projects across Serbia. Also, the Kondenz Festival of Contemporary Dance and Performance (2008–) in Belgrade has become an important platform which features works by (women) artists that explore themes related to gender, body politics, and feminist theory. These performances address issues such as women's autonomy, reproductive rights, and challenging patriarchal structures. Additionally, the Museum of Contemporary Art Vojvodina highlights feminist contributions through exhibitions featuring artists like Katalin Ladik and Milica Tomić who explore gender identity, performativity, and societal norms. From the 2010s, certain independent dance productions started to orient themselves toward feminist topics (single motherhood, freedom of female voice, the female body, feminist dramaturgy, etc.) such as, for example, Dalija Aćin Thelander's *Who Would Want a Mum Like Mine (Ko bi hteo mamu kao moju)* (2010), Sanja Krsmanović Tasić's *DADA – An Essay in Movement (Esej u pokretu – O Sa(v)esti*, 2014) about the mystifying death of a journalist who reported on war and politics in the beginning of 1990s in Serbia, *Still to Come: A Feminist Pornscape* (2017) by

Rahel Barra, Ida Daniel, Ana Dubljević, Frida Laux, and Zrinka Užbinec, and *Ballerinas* (*Balerine*, 2014) by Minja Bogavac and Forum for New Dance in Novi Sad, etc.

In Slovenia, the International Festival of Contemporary Arts – City of Women (Mesto žensk) was (and is) particularly valuable for the spread of feminism. It was first organized in 1995, in Ljubljana, as an initiative of the Governmental Women’s Policy Office (later renamed to Equal Opportunities Office) with an aim to draw attention to the relative lack of participation and presentation of women in the arts. Since 1996, it has been organized as an annual festival by the Association for the Promotion of Women in Culture – City of Women. The NGO and its festival are of central importance for the rise of feminist issues and, since its establishment, they have produced or co-produced a number of performing arts works, establishing a strong blueprint for women’s awareness of feminism. Another feminist platform, since 2000, is the International Feminist and Queer Festival Red Dawns (Rdeče zore) situated in the Autonomous Cultural Centre Metelkova mesto (AKC Metelkova) in Ljubljana. According to their historical overview, presented on their web page: “A small group of women – members of associations KUD Mreža, ŠKUC-LL, Monokel and the no longer existing Women’s Centre and Kasandra – questioned the position of women in the tangled mesh of art, culture, politics, activism and everyday life. In Metelkova mesto, like elsewhere, the larger part of creative and organizational yet invisible work was done by women. Women were keeping Metelkova mesto alive and lively. We decided to organize a women festival on March 8th, the International Women’s Day, to celebrate our lives and redefine public space in order to make it accessible for creativity and socializing of women on our own terms: in a non-hierarchical, non-exploitative, and anti-capitalistic manner.” After the 2000s, there are numerous dance artists of different generations that identify as feminists, occasionally raising feminist issues in their work more or less directly.

In 1999, the Research Centre for Gender Studies (RCGS) was established within the Euro-Balkan Institute on the initiative of the Women’s Programme of the Open Society Institute Foundation – North Macedonia, with a mission to disseminate academic and scientific knowledge in the field of gender studies and link theory—i.e., knowledge—with activism. In 2001, the RCGS started publishing the international *Identities: Journal for Politics, Gender and Culture*. It is important to note that, at the initiative of the RCGS, the South-East European Gender and Women’s Studies Network was established in 2004 with headquarters in Skopje (RCGS Euro-Balkans) and in Belgrade (Center for Women’s Studies at the Faculty of Political Science). However, despite the proliferation and production of knowledge in the field of gender studies, exchange and translation between this practice and the field of dance in North Macedonia has been lacking. Efforts to introduce the perspective of women, their social position, social stereotypes, male-female relations, and female experiences in dance practice, as well as efforts to deconstruct or open the vertical ballet female body, have been visible in the practice of contemporary dancers such as Iskra Shukarova in the work *Indigo Quartet* (*Indigo kvartet*, 2008) or *Ouch Couch* (2005), and Ivana Kocevaska in the performance *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown* (*Zeni na rabotot na nerven slom*, 2015) and *Women with Mustaches. Men without Beard* (*Zeni so mustaki, mazi bez brada*, 2013). In her practice, Viktorija Ilioska has taken a more explicit feminist stance, especially in terms of queering, received and fossilized bodily gendered movements, critically re-investigating identity categories (*Figure it Out!*, 2018) and interweaving feminist with eco and wider political positions (*I Need a New Body*, 2022). One should mention the importance and significant role alternative and independent festival productions have played in the context of promotion of (queer) feminist dance and performance practice, especially the

Festival of Feminist Culture and Action Firstborn Girl (Prvo pa žensko, 2013–) and Skopje Pride Weekend – Festival for Queer Arts, Culture, and Theory (2013–).

In Croatia, the Centre for Women’s Studies, founded in 1995 in Zagreb as the first non-institutional educational centre, aimed to address issues of gender, peace, and social justice in the post-war environment. In 1996, it introduced the course Dance as a Women’s Language, led by Iva Nerina Sibila, who was also part of the first generation of students. In 1998, the collective Linkt!, formed by Iva Nerina Sibila, Katja Šimunić, and Ljiljana Zagorac, emerged as a platform for collaborative choreography, emphasizing shared authorship and collective decision-making. The group explored dance in non-theatrical spaces like public areas and airports, as well as multimedia projects and installations, aiming to break free from traditional institutional frameworks. That same year, Zagorac highlighted the struggle for both physical and metaphorical space for dance in her solo work *Narrowed Space* (*Suženi prostor*, 1999). Meanwhile, Irma Omerzo, in *Space for Dance* (*Prostor za ples*, 1999) and *Some Strange Kind* (*Neka čudna vrsta*, 2003), addressed the precarious position of dancers. In the last two decades, the Croatian dance scene’s struggle expanded to issues such as the (non)institutionalization of dance, working conditions, motherhood and work, and the precarious nature of working within the field of dance. Platforms like TALA Dance Center (2000–) and Experimental Free Scene (Eksperimentalna slobodna scena – EkS-scena, 2001–2006), both women-led organizations, emerged and, alongside promoting experimental approaches, exchange of knowledge, and interdisciplinary collaboration, operated based on principles of care and solidarity, employing a horizontal decision-making model. This model emphasizes equal participation and shared decision-making among all members of the organization and highlights the importance of mutual support, empathy, and collaboration within the community. It’s more open to unconventional methods and challenges traditional practices of working. Since then, feminist topics and positions became more and more important.

Overall, the dance scene has long been predominantly female, and the feminization of this field, similar to other areas involving care and social reproduction such as healthcare, education, childcare, elder care, domestic work, and community services, has led to unstable and precarious working conditions. Many dancers face financial insecurity, limited institutional support, and restricted access to stable employment opportunities. This mirrors broader societal patterns where women, particularly in the arts, are disproportionately engaged in freelance or part-time roles, often lacking sufficient benefits, job security, or protections. In their research and publication, *How Do Female Artists Live?* (2018), selma banich and Nina Gojić explore the livelihoods of female artists in Rijeka and its surroundings, and examine whether and how these artists can sustain themselves through their work. The publication presents an analysis of the current state of women’s work in culture, drawing from research that spans nearly all aspects of the respondents’ public and private lives. Their research shows that for 55% of respondents, the monthly income from cultural or pedagogical work is below the Croatian average, while 34.8% earn less than the Croatian minimum wage. For 80% of respondents, their living space is often or always also their workspace and over 68% of respondents are mothers and believe that the income from their artistic or pedagogical work does not adequately support their children, or mostly does not provide sufficient child support. The intersection of gendered expectations and unstable labour conditions intensifies the difficulties women encounter in this field. It’s no surprise, then, that work in all its forms—production and reproduction work, artistic labour, work on the body (physical training), household work, unpaid work, the labour of love work, emotional labour, and all kinds of visible and invisible work—holds significant importance within the dance community.

List of Examples

Maga Magazinović

1882-1968 • Serbia

Smiljana Mandukić

1908-1992 • Serbia

Katja Delak

1914-1991 • Slovenia

Marta Paulin-Brina

1911-2002 • Slovenia

Belgrade Contemporary Ballet of Smiljana Mandukić:
The Skull Tower

1973 • Serbia

Marjana Krajač

1974- • Croatia

selma banich

1979- • Croatia

Experimental Free Scene

EkS-scena • 2001-2006 • Croatia

Maja Delak, *Expensive Darlings (Drage drage)*, 2007.
Photographed by Tone Stojko. Courtesy of Emanat Institute.

Maja Delak:
Expensive Darlings

2007 • Slovenia

Iskra Shukarova:
Indigo Quartet

2008 • North Macedonia

Teja Reba:
Made with Love

2015 • Slovenia

Rahel Barra, Ida Daniel, Ana Dubljević, Frida Laux, Zrinka Užbinec: *Still to Come: A Feminist Pornscape*

2017 • Serbia

Viktorija Ilioska: *Figure It Out!*

2018 • North Macedonia

Viktorija Ilioska:
I Need a New Body

2022 • North Macedonia



Maga Magazinović

1882–1968 • Serbia

In regard to the available historic and archiving resources, we can attribute the most significant feminist engagement within the field of dance practices in Serbia to the work of Maga Magazinović—a modern dance choreographer, educator, and performer. Magazinović is a key figure in Serbian sociocultural history, using dance and physical culture to amplify women's voices and challenge patriarchal norms. In an era when women were confined to domestic roles, her avant-garde approach to Balkan modern dance rejected traditional ballet, promoting new expressions of femininity and reshaping spectatorship. She broke gender barriers in dance, contesting male-dominated choreography, and contributed to feminist discourse through journalism and translation. By blending European modern dance with Serbian folk traditions, Magazinović created a platform for the female body to express complex narratives and reshape modern artistic practices.

Yet, Magazinović also believed that proper education was crucial for building a unified modern state with a strong national identity. Her nationalist sentiments emerged during her involvement with the Yugoslav student movement *Pobratimstvo* and her close connections with Bulgarian Bernstein socialists, who promoted nationalist policies aligned with fascist ideologies. Balancing feminist and nationalist views, Magazinović's focus on education made her a respected figure in the conservative circles of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia before WWII. She gained notable recognition, including teaching rhythmic and dance lessons to the king's children at the Old Belgrade Palace in 1934–1935. By the late 1930s, as the Kingdom of Yugoslavia's leadership aligned more closely with fascist regimes in Germany and Italy, Magazinović's work fit well within this political shift. Her focus on collective national identity and traditional dance made her a key figure in a Yugoslav-German cultural exchange. In 1938–1939 she led her Student Folklore Group to Germany to perform Yugoslav folk dances at events organized by the National Socialist Party. In articles for *Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia: Education Herald (Prosvetni glasnik)* from 1942, she praised the German educational system, criticized non-Serbian teachers, and endorsed Hitler's rejection of 'perverted art' influenced by 'Jewish taste.' During the Nazi occupation of Belgrade, her group performed regularly at Kolarac National University from 1942 to 1943, which some historians view as evidence of collaboration with the Nazis, citing her nationalist, antisemitic, and fascist sympathies.

Other historians focus on Magazinović's feminist and socialist contributions while dismissing her controversial ties to nationalism, fascism, and Nazism as either untrue or coerced. However, her deep connections to nationalism complicate her legacy. Scholars argue that to fully understand her work, one must acknowledge the contradictions, similar to other European modern dance figures like

Isadora Duncan, Mary Wigman, and Rudolf Laban, who also navigated complex political landscapes. The challenge is recognizing how feminism and nationalism intertwined in artistic practices, as many cultural figures were entangled with oppressive state politics during fascism, Nazism, and autocracy.

Smiljana Mandukić

1908–1992 • Serbia



Smiljana Mandukić, *Spaces (Prostori)*, 1977. Courtesy of Nela Antonović.

Right-wing ideologies in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia significantly influenced ballet and dance education, emphasizing discriminatory measures in body aesthetics, and gender roles. These ideologies promoted specific physical traits and health standards aligned with Aryan ideals, impacting the treatment of the female body and reinforcing traditional roles. Fusing feminism and nationalism through the ideal of the female body, can be traced also in the work of Smiljana Mandukić, a mid-20th-century Yugoslav choreographer, crucial in developing modern dance in post-WWII Yugoslavia. Similarly to Magazinović, she fused Yugoslav folk traditions with lyrical expressions of modern dance, exploring themes of human suffering. Gaining early recognition, she organized numerous performances in Belgrade through annual concerts at theatre Atelje 212. Her work in the cultural-artistic association *Abrašević* (since 1955), and later in the Belgrade Contemporary Ballet of Smiljana Mandukić (since 1964), influenced generations of dancers, especially women, encouraging their independence from traditional domestic roles. Her professional career began in the early 1930s in Belgrade, after leaving the Belgrade National Theatre. She studied at the Vienna Academy and opened her own School for Rhythmics and Plastic Dances in Belgrade, gaining popularity with morning gymnastics broadcasts on Radio Belgrade starting in 1939. From 1942 to 1943, she also performed with her group at Kolarac National University, focusing more on modern abstract dance, unlike the folkloric style of Magazinović's group. At the same time, Mandukić taught rhythmic dances at the state Music Academy and Secondary Music School, promoting dance as a means of healthy living and body liberation.

Katja Delak

1914–1991 • Slovenia

Katja Delak (Katya Delakova, nee Pollack) was active in Ljubljana between 1932 and 1938, where she had a dance school in the Dukič's block apartments. Delak was the only pre-WWII dancer/choreographer about whom the Slovene critics could not find a consensus and would have very different opinions about whether her works were valuable or not. In her 1932 dance *India (Indija)*, she would represent "subjugated, chained Ghandi's India" which made critic Emil Adamič recognize "that also the art of dance can have a political accent" (Adamič 1932, 3). In her first evening of dances in November 1932, the titles of the dances suggest some feminist topics: *Witch (Čarovnica)*, *A Doll (Lutka)*, *Fire (Ogenj)*, etc. Her dance travelogue *The Road (Cesta)*, 1934, which she presented in the Slovene National Theatre Opera and Ballet Ljubljana, is a selection of dances in which the social characters of different social classes were presented (peddler, chatterbox, mother, boy from the suburb, the drunk, tramp), along with a choreographic manifestation of the mechanic work. Critic Ludvik Mrzel has characterized her dances as the dances of new objectivity (*nova stvarnost*, *Neue Sachlichkeit*) in opposition to the expressionist dance paradigm (Mrzel 1934, 4) that dominated the modern dance landscape at the time. The critic, actress, and writer Maša Slavec, who had been declared a feminist before WWII and wrote for the feminist magazine *Women's World (Ženski svet)*, would be her persistent supporter. In 1938, when Delak presented her last evening of dances in Ljubljana, the dance critic and composer Marijan Lipovšek noticed that her dances imply the belief that "a man himself does not mean a lot individually or as part of his closed circles, only a community of humans can be important for the ultimate, high goal to get closer to the Light" and question "why human beings have to be exposed to suffering and dying" (Lipovšek 1938, 7). "Delak does not make dance interpretations [does not show] from the abstract notions, the human affects and what is the deepest for the humans are for her the matters, materials for dances" (Slavec 1933, 12–15). The dance art of Katja Delak was the first in Slovenia to be recognized as socially and politically engaged.

Marta Paulin-Brina

1911–2002 • Slovenia

In the *Madman (Norec)*, a short dance included in Paulin's first evening of dances in December 1940 that the dancer/choreographer presented in the Slovene National Theatre Opera and Ballet Ljubljana, an image of a deranged man was created on the basis of Mussolini's fascist regime. Paulin's artistic approach is one of the first transformations of political reality into the choreographic medium in Slovenia and an early example of realistic (although coded) approaches in dance.



Katja Delak, 1938. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of Iconotheque SLOGI – the Theatre Museum.

In the spring of 1943, Paulin joined the Partisan army forces and became a member of the cultural group of the XIV Division of the Yugoslav Partisan army. As a dancer, she performed at many meetings, especially in 1943, before her legs got frozen during the winter of early 1944. Of all the meetings, only three photos, by photographer Jože Petek, were preserved. Two of them were taken on the 23rd of September 1943 at Mašun (Southern Slovenia on the border with Croatia) where Paulin danced in front of the newly recruited fighters of the Rab Brigade, formed of the liberated prisoners of the fascist concentration camp on the Croatian island Rab, immediately after the capitulation of fascist Italy. In her memoirs, Paulin writes about the particularity of her dancing task which, in exceptional historical circumstances, demanded a different physicality, a different consciousness, and different dance rhetorics from the ones she knew from her dancing before WWII. Her effort to transform



Marta Paulin-Brina at Mašun in front of the Partisan Rab Brigade, 1943. Photographed by Jože Petek. Courtesy of the National Museum of Contemporary History of Slovenia.

political reality into artistic form, her consideration of dance as an expression of the human struggle in the troubling historical circumstances, and her recognition of the human responsibility towards history—as a history of the class struggle—is something that makes Paulin's work feminist.

Belgrade Contemporary Ballet of Smiljana Mandukić: *The Skull Tower*

1973 · Serbia

Smiljana Mandukić, a prominent modern dance choreographer active from the 1930s in Belgrade, advocated for women's rights, their independence and freedom of thought, as well as work beyond traditional roles in the kitchen, household, and childbearing, primarily through her pedagogical work in her Belgrade Contemporary Ballet troupe, founded in 1964. Some prominent Serbian dance artists emerged from that studio: Dubravka Maletić, Katarina Stojkov Slijepčević, Nela Antonović, Sanja Krsmanović Tasić, Vera Obradović, etc. One of her many choreographies *The Skull Tower* (*Čele kula*) was created at the 175th anniversary of the First Serbian Uprising against the Ottoman Empire. The Skull Tower is a monument from the First Serbian Uprising built by Turkish authorities in Serbia at the time, using the skulls of Serbian warriors who died in the Battle of Čegar. Classified as a monument of exceptional cultural significance for the Republic of Serbia, it remains a museum object today. Thematizing this historical event in her work, Mandukić focused on a female role behind the uprising, which was a rare occurrence during socialist (and patriarchal) Yugoslavia. Whether through solos, duets, or group dance female acts, through this work Mandukić was developing the modern dance language of expression—from vulnerability to combativeness—in opposition to a male ensemble defined by militancy and masculinity. Such choice and direction completely followed Mandukić's advocating for strong female independence within a patriarchal society, even though she never declared herself as a feminist. The dance piece was adapted and filmed inside the Skull Tower monument in 1979 and publicly televised



on the national TV of Serbia and Yugoslavia. The selected photo is a screenshot from the televised version displaying the duet between prominent Serbian dance artists Nela Antonović and Dubravka Maletić.

Marjana Krajač

1974 · Croatia



Marjana Krajač, *Variations on Sensitive* (*Varijacije o osjetnom*), 2014. Photographed by Damir Žižić. Courtesy of Marjana Krajač.

Marjana Krajač's choreographic practice explores the intersection of material, structural, and temporal elements within the space of dance, creating work that is conceptually layered. As both a choreographer and dance researcher, she focuses on the interaction between symptoms, consequences, and temporalities of form, space, and architecture. The performance *Short Fantasy about Reclaiming the Ownership over My Own Body* (*Kratka fantazija o ponovnom uspostavljanju vlasništva nad tijelom*, 2011), begins in darkness, as the dancer (Krajač) slowly moves into a deteriorating pose before transitioning into a relaxed dance, set against a photograph from a protest in Zagreb's Varšavska Street from the year before. As an activist, Krajač places herself physically in front of a police cordon, highlighting the tension between neoliberalism and public space lost to private capital. The scene intensifies with the sounds of protests, leaving the audience to confront feelings of frustration and social injustice. Returning to the stage after a moment of absence, Krajač delivers a critique of a broken social and economic system, embodying rebellion and the aesthetics of freedom through her engaged art.

Her work frequently involves collaborations with contemporary music composers, experimenting with sound, and the use of the camera to deepen the exploration of movement and space, like in the three-hour *Variations on Sensitive* (*Varijacije o osjetnom*, 2014), where Krajač explores dance ontology, examining its essence and deconstructed

Nela Antonović dancing in front of the video *Skull Tower* (*Čele kula*) by Smiljana Mandukić, in the performance *Desire to Make a Solid History Will End Up in Failure* (*Želja da se napravi čvrsta istorija završice se neuspjehom*), 2023, choreographed by Igor Koruga. Photographed by Luka Knežević-Strika. Courtesy of Station Service for contemporary dance.



Marjana Krajač, *Short Fantasy about Reclaiming the Ownership over My Own Body* (*Kratka fantazija o ponovnom uspostavljanju vlasništva nad tijelom*), 2011. Photographed by Iva Korenčić. Courtesy of Marjana Krajač.

history. Dance, as its own nature, must pass through itself to articulate meaning, with anything external remaining a mere projection. In collaboration with five dancers, she addresses the metaphysical significance of the body in movement, incorporating music, space, and gesture into the fabric of the dance's ephemeral layers. Her choreographic position extends to her discursive work, exploring the emancipatory potentials of dance and choreography to uncover new possibilities for dance, unbound by traditional frameworks and allowing deeper, yet more abstract exploration of movement itself.

selma banich

1979 · Croatia

selma banich is an artist whose practice spans dance, choreography, public actions, toward advocacy. Her work is grounded in research-based and activist approaches influenced by anarchism and feminism. She initiated the open platform Experimental Free Scene (EkS-scena, 2001–2006), based on horizontal decision-making, co-authored the initiative OOUR (meaning Basic Organization of Associated Labour, or Osnovna organizacija udruženog rada in the original, 2005–2010) that already with its name outlines the idea of socialist self-management, and the women's performing art collective Institute for Disaster and



selma banich, *Hrvatska narodna predaja*, 2010. Photographed by Adam Semijalac. Courtesy of selma banich.

Chaos (Institut za katastrofu i kaos, 2011–2014). Trained as a choreographer and performer, she started using her choreographic tools for direct political action, addressing women and social issues and advocating for collective empowerment within public spaces. In front of the entrance to the City of Zagreb Office for Education, Culture, and Sports, she performed *Hrvatska narodna predaja* (2010), a piece with layered meaning, as the title refers to Croatian folklore and to the notion of surrender indistinguishably. In the performance, she held her hands in the air for hours, with occasional support from passersby and colleagues who came to assist her. With such an act, she addressed relationality and dependence, as two important characteristics of contemporary dance. Four years later, in front of that same Office, together with dance artists Mila Čuljak and Pravdan Devlahović, she performed *Scrubbing* (*Ribanje*, 2014), which involved a deep cleaning of both the front doors of the building and the surrounding space. Repetitions of their actions were the core of their moving bodies, a reprise of the housewife's everyday choreography. Both actions referred to inadequacies of cultural policies, systemic inequalities, and the power dynamics at play in public life through feminist observations and critique. selma's approach to choreography extends beyond aesthetics, using dance and choreography as a form of social practice. She bridges her artistic work with activism, using choreographic tools to address critical issues.

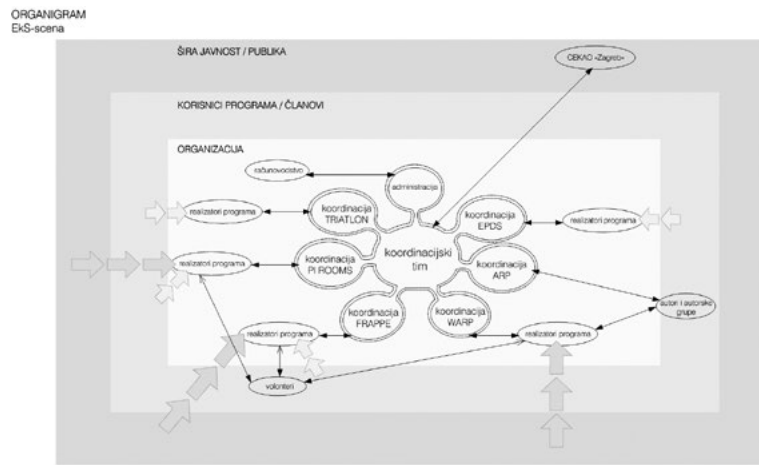
Experimental Free Scene

EkS-scena · 2001–2006 · Croatia

Experimental Free Scene (Eksperimentalna slobodna scena) or EkS-scena was a self-organized initiative with an open organizational model that involved horizontal decision-making and sharing responsibility. It was founded to promote and affirm contemporary dance and other performing arts forms and developed projects focused on dance education and building connections between the Croatian dance community and the European scene. This initiative emerged as a response to the lack of structured education and spaces (centres, theatres) for performing arts and dance at that time, addressing a critical gap in the field. The coordination team consisted of selma banich, Sandra Banić, Silvia Marchig, Maja Marijančić, Željka Sančanin, Zrinka Užbinec, and Petra Zanki bringing feminist perspectives of care and solidarity into the centre of their work. The initiative had numerous programmes: Epds programme (dance training and workshops), Frappe Programme (lectures, projections, and discussions), Collegii Saltati (theory lectures, projections, and discussions), Arp Programme (Artists-in-Residence), Warp Programme (authorial works and performances) and Triathlon (a collaborative project between Croatia, France, and Germany in the field of contemporary dance and movement theatre), Sofa jammings (improvisation and dancing in public and non-theatre spaces), In situ (dance and video media), π rooms

(a multimedia project with lectures, projections, and improvisations).

EkS-scena is known for supporting a broad range of contemporary dance work through its presentation formats regardless of aesthetics. Additionally, it has fostered an ongoing dialogue within the dance community, helping to identify and address its needs and promote dance activism. In 2006, the last year before a transformation in its working methods and organizational structure, EkS-scena included six programme coordinators, 13 art organizations/independent artists and 17 pedagogues.



LEGENDA:
 — poluzavrnjenost / fleksibilnost strukturiranja koordinacije
 —> dvostranski učinski/posredniški interakcija
 —> dvostranski učinski/realizacijski interakcija
 —> mogućnost udruživanja i ulaganja sa tjelom organizacije

Experimental Free Scene (EkS-scena, 2001–2006). Documentation of strategic planning, 2005. Courtesy of Experimental Free Scene.

Maja Delak: *Expensive Darlings*

2007 • Slovenia

The first production of the Emanat Institute for Development and Affirmation of Dance and Contemporary Art was created by its founder, choreographer, and dancer Maja Delak, and premiered at the City of Women festival in 2007. The performance is focused on “the position of women in the cultural, social and political context in contemporary dance in Slovenia [...] and problematizes the inaugural point of contemporary dance history in our space: contemporary dance was constituted by women already before the universal right to vote had been introduced in this geopolitical territory, and is as such principally a practice of emancipated women’s creativity” (Vevar 2007,14). In contrast, the scenography of the performance—the rather tight venue at Dance Theatre Ljubljana is surrounded by surveying cameras—emphasizes the impossible state of affairs for contemporary dance and especially women artists in the country in which “the system [...] does not support [...] but only controls” (Delak 2008, 16). Furthermore, the system’s shortcomings are directly addressed by the performer’s articulation of the ideal circumstances for dancers, to which others respond with bold laughter.

In *Expensive Darlings* (*Drage drage*), Maja Delak effectively confronts phallogentrism and its simplified dualistic system through which women always appear only as the first difference and less than men. The performers transgress from universality/neutrality (black and white costumes) into specific individualized, yet marginalized (female) characters that are based on Tatjana Greif’s taxonomy presented in her text “Queer Performative Art” (Vampirella, femme fatale, drag king, the bride, Barbarella, toreador, etc.). To oppose the dualistic system, the choreographer composes seven solos (co-created and performed by Maja Delak, Katja Kosi, Barbara Krajnc, Jelena Rusjan, Vlasta Veselko, Urška Vohar, and Nataša Živković) and juxtaposes them, but ensures their sufficient interconnection through which the heterogeneity of relationships (such as

dependence, support, admiration, exploitation, etc.) open up, unfolding a complex map of (social) reasons for their existence. By doing so, Delak leans on Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s concept ‘beside’ as a proposition where “several elements may lie alongside. [...] Beside comprises a wide range of desiring, identifying, representing, repelling, paralleling, differentiating, rivalling, leaning, twisting, mimicking, withdrawing, attracting, warping, and other relations” (Kosofsky Sedgwick 2003, 8). Such a position is crucial for situating the consequences of phallogentrism in the cultural, social, and political system on women, which is also fundamentally articulated in contemporary dance history.

Iskra Shukarova: *Indigo Quartet*

2008 • North Macedonia

In *Indigo Quartet* (*Indigo Kwartet*), Iskra Shukarova, accompanied by four ballet dancers, interprets the search for personal identity through individual and group interactions within a constructed movement system. The choreography is described by ballet critic Gjurjica Jovanovska (Vreme, 16.02.2008) as grotesque and layered with contemporary stylistic textures, creating a visual and performative contrast. Shukarova’s exploration goes beyond the described and the aesthetic contestations of ballet movement and exploration of modern and contemporary dance vocabulary on ballet-trained dancers’ bodies. The choreographic work delves into the complexities of women’s identity by using the female body as both subject and symbol and engages them in somatic research that interrogates how perceptions are carried within the body and how they manifest physically. With this work she explores femininity and how the female body absorbs, expresses, and is shaped by the gazes, or the environment—be it social, cultural, or institutional. In that regard,



Iskra Shukarova, *Indigo Quartet* (*Indigo Kwartet*), 2008. Courtesy of Iskra Shukarova.

Indigo Quartet might be perceived also as a reflection on the position of women, both on stage and in broader social contexts. It challenges the traditional, vertical, often passive, representation of women, offering a more nuanced, self-determined portrayal of feminine identity and bodily presence.

Teja Reba: *Made with Love*

2015 • Slovenia

Dancer, choreographer, curator, and activist Teja Reba started to create her hybrid performative choreographies during a period of financial crisis in the Republic of Slovenia. In contrast with the previous generations of choreographers who would mostly engage with (modern) dance composition or experimental approaches to dance in the relatively stable or developing circumstances, Reba’s generation confronted unstable working conditions in the eroding cultural



Teja Reba, *Made with Love* (*Delo iz ljubezni*), 2015. Photographed by JAŠA. Courtesy of Teja Reba.

system. The dance labour turned into a problematic ideological matter and a committed topic to work with. Her uninhibited and energized engagement with problems of gender trainings connected to the different social constraints, female stereotypes and myths, ideological abuse and penetrations into private life from the perspective of labour are elaborated in the work *Made with Love* (*Delo iz ljubezni*) in which she brings onto the stage different performative means and strategies along with her own family. In *Made with Love* Reba, on the basis of a precise score, arranges the gradual deterioration of composed orders and symbolic structures and set scenes into the ‘performative destabilization’ and ‘affective power.’ Reba’s work has developed as a

daring attempt to challenge social roles and ideological mechanisms controlling the visible and invisible female labour with the currency of love and passion and had no inhibitions in declaring it as feminist.

Rahel Barra, Ida Daniel, Ana Dubljević, Frida Laux, Zrinka Užbinec: *Still to Come: A Feminist Pornscape*

2017 • Serbia

Ana Dubljević, belonging to a generation of Serbian dance artists in the 2000s who emphasized collaborative authorship, focuses on artistic collaboration and non-hierarchical creation processes. The dance performance *Still to Come* reflects this approach, exploring feminist themes through a collective, non-hierarchical creative structure. Feminist pornscape, as a choreographic practice developed in collaborative work that Ana Dubljević further theoretically articulated, embodies a micropolitical approach rooted in feminist dramaturgical thinking. It embraces multiplicity, challenging traditional narratives and structures within dance. Embodying these reformulations, the performance *Still to Come* strategically subverts and disrupts traditional directional gaze and focus, through the integration of movement, text, and objects, organized within a non-frontal audience arrangement that foregrounds the importance of minor gestures and subtleties. By prioritizing the care of minor gestures and embracing a non-traditional spatial configuration,



Rahel Barra, Ida Daniel, Ana Dubljević, Frida Laux, and Zrinka Užbinec, *Still to Come: A Feminist Pornscape*, 2017. Photographed by Marija Piroshki. Courtesy of Station Service for Contemporary Dance.

the piece fosters an environment conducive to inflection and indulgence. The audience experiences a structure that is tender and safe, yet also direct and daring. This approach allows for a diverse range of expressions—vulnerability, curiosity, humour—while maintaining an open, encompassing gaze that deconstructs and re-signifies established body-world relations. The dramaturgy employed, referred to as “Tantra”—which Dubljević specifically elaborates in her book *The Feminist Pornscapes. On Feminist Dramaturgical Thinking in Dance and Performance Practice*—cultivates a complex, multilayered choreography of attention. ‘Feminist pornscapes’ create a space where differences coexist, desire is reimagined, and care and critique of dominant narratives are essential. These performances invite the audience to engage freely rather than imposing demands. They explore themes like female pleasure, queerness, altered consciousness, and human-nonhuman dynamics, without relying on direct feminist agitprop. This choreographic approach redefines performance boundaries and reclaims the potential for transformation and liberation within both the pornographic and choreographic realms.

Viktorija Ilioska: *Figure It Out!*

2018 • North Macedonia

Figure it Out! is a performance choreographed and performed by Viktorija Ilioska, created through conversations with Nastya Dzyuban, Ivana Ivković, Filomena Krause, and Elena Risteska. The work emerges from personal identity conflicts and reflects the context of Ilioska’s life (socio-political, economic, and working conditions in the field of culture, the position of women in society, and in art, etc.), unfolding as a series of hundred self-interview questions posed by the

choreographer to herself. These questions not only generate the soundscape but also shape the narrative through which she explores the construction of female identity and the body as an object of societal projections and gendered expectations.

With the body as the central medium of expression, focusing on its transformation, she opens the stage, wearing red tights that cover her entire body, creating a sense of constraint and concealment. The costume is her second skin, keeping the body unrevealed until she discards it and repositions herself—starting to take the form of the new (constructed) identity. Through undressing, both literal and metaphorical, Ilioska ‘humanizes’ her body. With a hundred ironic and sometimes absurd questions like, “Viktorija, what would East and West mean if you were a dog?”, “Viktorija, what will happen in the future?”, or “Viktorija, how long do you brush your teeth?”, she composes a self-interrogation ritual through which she blurs the lines between interviewer and interviewee, performer and audience. Her tone, tinged with cynicism, evokes both humour and discomfort, creating a layered critique of societal norms, identity, and how the body negotiates its space within those frameworks. By navigating through these questions, *Figure it Out!* not only delves into the personal and collective tensions of identity and gender but also turns its inquiries toward the audience. Through the feminist lens, the performance interrogates how society constructs, controls, and projects onto female bodies, questioning the limitations imposed on autonomy and expression.

Viktorija Ilioska: *I Need a New Body*

2022 • North Macedonia

Viktorija Ilioska’s performance *I Need a New Body* was conceived in collaboration with Nastya Dzyuban and Laura Stellacci and premiered in the Youth Cultural Centre (MKC), Skopje. It instigates the themes of pumping, sucking, extraction, and exhaustion—both of the human body and natural resources. As dance critic Rok Vevar reflected in the discursive programme *Dialogue that is missing*, the piece provides “a corpus of interpretative possibilities and questions”¹ about space, gender, binaries, nature, and more, without offering definitive answers.

The performance begins with two performers with trained bodies entering the stage, inviting the audience to breathe and connect with their own bodies. From there, the performers embark on a

¹ *Dialogue that is missing* (2022) was a discursive session with Viktorija Ilioska, organized by Lokomotiva in partnership with Firstborn Girl, Festival of Feminist Culture and Action, as part of the PSR Pumping Lab/Life Long Burning project. <https://tiiiitinc.com/mk/nastani/prikaz/194/the-missing-dialogue-artist-talk-with-viktoria-iliaska> (accessed September 24, 2024).



Viktorija Ilioska, *Figure It Out!*, 2018. Photographed by Sasho Alushevski. Courtesy of Lokomotiva – Centre for New Initiatives in Arts and Culture.

slow and deliberate movement across the stage, incorporating elements of nature to embody how processes of consumption, driven by capitalist forces, lead to depletion. Whether through draining the earth’s resources or pushing human bodies beyond their limits, these practices are linked in their pursuit of unsustainable growth. At a key moment, the performers put on costumes while inflating them with air, initiating a dialogue about what is considered ‘different’ or ‘other.’ They explore alternative processes of nurturing and renewal, contrasting them with the overexploitation inherent in current systems. This juxtaposition draws attention to how humanity indulges in the illusion of endless resources while draining the planet’s reserves—and how we must reconcile these actions. The performance moves between the body as a resource and as an object, examining the intersection of these roles. *I Need a New Body* challenges the audience to consider how the body can be both a site of exhaustion and empowerment, pushing us to reflect on how we might balance destruction and renewal in a world of finite resources. As Vevar notes, the performance isn’t about what the body is or desires, but what the body does—and how it manages to objectify that doing.



Viktorija Ilioska, *I Need a New Body*, 2022. Photographed by Sonja Stavrova. Courtesy of Lokomotiva – Centre for New Initiatives in Arts and Culture.

Queer Choreography

The entanglements between dance, choreography, and queerness have received insufficient attention in both queer theory and sexuality studies, and in (critical) dance studies. If dance is approached as an embodied social practice that sets kinaesthetic, moving, and affective corporeality at the centre of its interest, which is always embedded in specific spatio-temporal conjunctions and social contexts, within which—through its performative force—it enacts, materializes, and articulates meanings, relationships, and worlds, then dance and choreography can even represent a privileged arena for interrogating, problematizing, rearticulating, and experimenting with the coercive, repetitive, and normative yet undecidable and open materializations of bodily boundaries and surfaces that identity, gender, and sexuality are.

The necessity of bringing dance, choreography, and queerness into joint research is further made more urgent if we take into consideration that dance is a corporeal practice that, by its reflexivity, either reproduces or ruptures the habituated bodily forms of being and understanding the world and opens lines of flight for different becomings and transformations of movement, gesture, affect, perception, sensation, awareness, and embodied knowledge. Also, one cannot fail to recognize some of the major imperatives of and historical heritage left by queer embodied practices, theory, and politics, which establish a critical relation with the gendered and sexual embodiment of subjectivity. Queer practices and theory subject normative embodiment of gender to restless deconstruction and subversion, demystify it as a regulatory norm and a disciplinary apparatus of normalization, ironize it as a contingent and socially constructed fiction of the heteronormative choreography of society, and mobilize the body towards never fully anticipated horizons of the proliferation of multiple and unstable gender and sexual positioning, which is to say,

bodily morphologies and materializations. Queer gestures, movements, readings,¹ everyday social performatives, choreographies, and dances are thus ‘counter-fetishes’ that reflexively mobilize the body and its histories. This intertwining of queerness, choreography, performance, and dance can be read through different post-Yugoslav choreographic practices and works, such as the work of Feminalz from Slovenia, Aleksandar Georgiev from North Macedonia (also Sofia, Tenerife, and Stockholm), Marko Milić, Igor Koruga, Miloš Janjić, and Aleksander Zain from Serbia, and Sonja Pregrad and Matija Ferlin from Croatia.

Queer dance practices and choreographies also bring under scrutiny and contestation the deeply ingrained heteronormative and masculinist focal points and morphologies that have structured the major traditions of theatre dance, embodied through the phallic body, while eschewing alternative and marginalized sexualities. Veiled as alleged universality and pure interest in human movement, emotions, and sensuality, the practice of modern dance, as Susan Leigh Foster has argued, has its own closet (Foster 2001). This closet has ‘protected’ dancers and choreographers from the projection of sexual fantasies onto their bodies, and thus, allegedly purged the historical imaginary of the degraded, devalued, and stigmatized effeminacy attached to theatricality, performance, and staged appearances. Works that are part of this archive mobilize the multiple intensities, potentials, materialities, meanings, and sensations of the body as performative strategies for testing the limits and capaciousness of the normative (dance) body. As such they materialize non-normative or queer morphologies by expanding the habituated and sterilized affectability of gendered/normative bodies. They also bring them forward as liveable and desirable bodies, deemed as abject in the heteropatriarchal regimes of power and dance institutions and practices—both traditional and classical, and modern and contemporary—as can be seen in the work of Aleksandar Georgiev, whose work tackles the choreographing of the anal body (as a morphology and political position that shatters phallocratic imaginaries), Ana Dubljević’s (Serbia) focus on feminist pornscapes as choreographic practice, best exemplified in her collaborative work with Rahel Barra, Ida Daniel, Frida Laux, and Zrinka Užbinec, Marko Milić’s work of choreographing sexual desire, Alex Zain’s work on transgender and queer identity, Nataša Živković’s (Slovenia) exploration of the third gender (*virđžina* also *tobelija*) in the Western Balkans, and Matija Ferlin’s queer hermeneutics (Rafolt 2023) and self-objectification, etc. In addition, it is necessary to mention the existence of the proto-queer contemporary and postmodern reversals, appropriations, and the counter-hegemonic body in the works of artists of previous generations like Boris Čakširan’s and Kosta Bunuševac’s works in 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s in Serbia, Minka Veselić’s (Slovenia) dance performance dedicated to Ljuba Prenner in the 1990s, or the work of Iskra Shukarova (North Macedonia) in the 2000s.

In the socialist Yugoslavia, the official cultural policies promoted a narrative of collectivism, often sidelining individualistic and non-normative expressions of identity, including those related to gender and sexuality. Despite this, Yugoslavia was more open than many other socialist states, allowing for some degree of artistic experimentation and innovation. Although explicit queer movements were not prominent or publicly acknowledged in Yugoslav art, there were artists and performers who implicitly challenged heteronormativity and traditional gender roles. These proto-queer expressions can be seen in the work of certain avant-garde artists and choreographers who explored themes of drag, androgyny, non-binary identities, and alternative sexualities through their performances—most notably in Serbia,

¹ “Reading involves the trading of insults between two or more marginal subjects in ways that create comedic value by identifying and parodying representational norms. It reveals a radical politics of inclusion that rejects the idea of distinction that underpins subject formation (...). Usually, the practice of reading occurs within the queer ‘safe’ space of drag culture” (Woods 2022).

like Kosta Bunuševac's performances during the 1977–1985 period in public spaces like the Belgrade Student Cultural Centre (SKC), the Belgrade Youth Centre (Dom omladine Beograda), and on national TV, or Milan Delčić Delča's *Transsex hard-core one man show* at the BITEF Theatre in 1992, or Boris Čakširan's (only) solo dance performed at Palić Lake in 1995. These works emphasized drag practice involving a critique or subversion of either socialist realism or firm nationalist, patriarchal definitions of individuality and masculinity, exploring more abstract, fragmented, inner, and subjective forms of expression, which allowed for more fluid and ambiguous representations of gender and identity. Despite these proto-queer elements and orientations, neither of the mentioned artists ever declared themselves as queer or as queer-artist. Yet, such proto-queer, contemporary, and postmodern movements in Yugoslav dance and art represent a rich field of resistance, appropriation, and subversion. Through the body as a site of counter-hegemonic expression, these artistic practices challenged normative gender roles and contributed to a more complex, layered understanding of identity in both the socialist and post-socialist periods. The ongoing exploration of these themes by contemporary artists and choreographers continues to shape the cultural memory and identity of the former Yugoslav region. While some choreographic practices directly worked with these topics (Igor Koruga, *Unstable Comrades*, 2024), others continue to explore it through drag-art in combination with performance and dance, like the works of the Ephemeral Confessions collective.

The intertwining of choreography, dance, and queerness comes further into view if one considers sexuality not only in terms of object choice and intimate sexual practices, but rather in terms of affects/emotions, hence movement, orientation, direction, exploration, spatiality, embodied behaviour, relationality, and exposure towards other bodies and the world. The childhood, and the lives in general, of many queer people is marked by the shaming interpellation occasioned by one's queer kinaesthesia and embodied behaviour, that is, the failure to fully embody the masculine bodily codes, for example, by queer effeminate boys. But these failures, this stumbling in performing the language of bodily gestures, while being simultaneously the source of queer shame and interiorized identity absorption, can also become the material for defiant and recalcitrant rearticulation through a performative turning inside-out of the interiorized shaming interpellation of the policing other. That is to say, through the open futurity of the performative itself, through the instability of the citational and iterative practice of embodied performance, these failures can be transformed into a defiant, dramatized extroversion enacted into a performance/event. These kinaesthetic failures can become the source of a queer art of failure, transfigured into a dance as a display of one's body publicly, a mobilizer of pleasure in looking at queer bodies. Thus, publicly staging and enacting queer desires and identifications, whether on the dance floor or the theatre stage, can also become elicitations of desire—the desirability of queer bodies, pleasures, sensualities, affects, movements, and worlds. Starting with the first gay parties in K4 in Ljubljana in 1984 (made possible and preceded by the unruly punk choreographies, body aesthetics, and performativity in the basement of the student dormitory in Ljubljana and the Disco FV), followed by different, clandestine or more open queer clubs, bars, and spaces, during the 1990s in Ljubljana, Belgrade, and Zagreb, and up till the proliferation of drag shows, parties, and collectives in ex-Yugoslav capitals in the past decade, social dance has become the source for rehearsing queer choreographies, enacting queer disorientation as a sign of and a source for collectively sustaining and inventing alternative projects of freedom, as a choreographed manner of being-in-the-world and being-with-other-bodies that refuses to straighten up, to line up, to habituate, and reproduce.

As a utopian longing for the then and there, social dance bears the marks of the utopian force ingrained in performativity, expressing a desire for a different future of belonging and becoming with others.

Many queer choreographies and dance performances have been produced by and presented at festivals that have served as platforms for the presentation, promotion, and staging of minoritarian, feminist, and queer performances and art practices, thus representing vistas for the production and enactment of alternative worldviews, affects, structures of feeling, and socialities. These include the very first gay and lesbian manifestation in Slovenia, organized in 1984 as the Magnus Manifestation/Festival for Homosexuality and Culture, an event that turned into the present-day Festival of Ljubljana Gay and Lesbian Film, but also: FRIK Festival (2009–2014), Firstborn Girl festival (Prvo pa žensko) and Skopje Pride Weekend – Festival for Queer Art, Culture and Theory from 2013 onward (from North Macedonia); City of Women (Mesto žensk, 1995–), Red Dawns (Rdeče zore, 2000–), Syndicate of Outlandish Entities (Sindiklat odklonskih entitet, 2018) that was transformed, in 2021, into Small Arts Platform (Platforma malih umetnosti), and partially Ljubljana Pride Festival, 2001– (from Slovenia); Queer Zagreb (2003–, from Croatia); and Belgrade Pride (2001–) and Kondenz Festival of Contemporary Dance and Performance, 2008– (from Serbia). All of these festivals bear witness to countless performances, exhibitions, parties, social events, and gatherings, intimate friendships, hugs, and collective laughs that we approach as world-building performances. The performances presented at these festivals transport the public to other possible worlds that break heteronormative hegemonies as much as they transform audiences and their affective dispositions and bodily habitus, while pointing towards a future already present in the bits and pieces of the performances taking place on the stage. Even more so, these festivals had/have the 'utopian performative' (Dolan 2001) force to bring forward and bring into existence different temporalities, spaces, and social forms, making them affectively sensed. They present vantage points for encounters, friendships, exchanges of ideas and pleasure, relaxation, questioning, and the materialization of non-hegemonic and minoritarian infrastructures that not only make life bearable but also something to be wanted and desired, a world where one's body can feel cushioned.

The queer choreography we are talking about can be found and composed both on the stage and the street, in the quotidian, the everyday, and the theatre, in the high art dance world and the clubbing scene and disco podiums, in galleries and cabarets, the dark atmosphere of the proscenium and the dark rooms in gay bars, the independent cultural spaces and the trashiest drag bars, from simple walking to 'taking a stroll,' to the most highly conventionalized balletic and dance forms. Studying and doing queer choreographies in the post-Yugoslav context can thus take a turn towards dance histories, in order to critically read the phallic hypermasculinity, homophobia, and heteronormativity as the 'dark background' that defines dance histories and the canon of dance, disclose the gay closet of modern dance as the constitutive outside of our inherited dance vocabularies and aesthetic ideologies, offer a reparative reading of dance histories and practices by revealing the symptoms and possibilities lurking from the cracks of normative bodies as queer possibilities, or even set our focus on dance spectatorship, and queer spectatorship and reception, in particular.

List of Examples

Kosta Bunuševac, Oliver Mandić, Stanko Crnobrnja: *Belgrade at Night*

1981 • Serbia

Minka Veselič: *They Called Me Puby*

1992 • Slovenia

Boris Čakširan: *Solo at Palić Lake*

1995 • Serbia

Iskra Shukarova: *The Red Swan*

2008 • North Macedonia

Igor Grubić: *East Side Story*

2008 • Croatia

Feminalz: *Image Snatchers*

2013- • Slovenia

Ephemeral Confessions Collective

2015- • Serbia

Viktorija Ilioska, Tanja Ribarska, and Kliment Poposki: *The Cause of Disease*

2015 • North Macedonia

Marko Milić: *CAVE* 2016 / *DILF* 2022 • Serbia

Nataša Živković: *Sonny*

2018 • Slovenia

STEAM ROOM: *dragON*

2018–2023 • North Macedonia

Aleksandar Georgiev and Darío Barreto Damas: *Moonlight*

2019 • North Macedonia

Sonja Pregrad: *How Many Cubic Centimetres Can My Body Take Up*

2020 • Croatia

Aleksandar Georgiev: *The Power of S*

2021 • North Macedonia

Marko Gutić Mižimakov: *Dragon Hunt*

2024 • Croatia

Kosta Bunuševac, Oliver Mandić, Stanko Crnobrnja: *Belgrade at Night*

1981 • Serbia

A multimedia artist and performer, Kosta Bunuševac gained notable media attention in the 1980s through his participation in the art programme *Fridays at 10 PM* (*Petkom u 22*). He was the author, set designer, and designer of the groundbreaking camp TV show *Belgrade at Night* (*Beograd noću*, directed by Stanko Crnobrnja, 1980), which featured the androgynous Yugoslav soul pioneer Oliver Mandić as the first man to appear dressed in women's clothing on Yugoslav national TV. Bunuševac also created *Performance of Street and Extraterrestrial Splendor* (*Beogradska prevara uličnog i nadzemaljskog sjaja*), where the rock band Disciplina Kičme performed live on stage, merging rock 'n' roll and theatre. This performance marked a key moment for a generation of artists, including Bunuševac, Vlaja Jovanović, Radovan Hiršl, Nebojša Pajkić, and Ljubomir Šimunić, who grew up in the turbulent 1960s and matured amidst a clash of old and new cultural forces. This era was characterized by the undefined elite's echoes and the rise of pop culture, encompassing pop and rock music, comics, pulp novels, and B movies, inspired by movements like pop art. This group existed alongside the emergence of New/Conceptual (performance) art in the 1970s at the Student Cultural Centre (SKC) in Belgrade. The venue not only showcased the works of Jovanović, Bunuševac, and Šimunić but also facilitated the breakthrough of the entire Belgrade 'new wave' and beyond. Unlike previous generations, who focused on universal themes or existential questions, they celebrated popular culture and led lives filled with entertainment. This new perception of art as a product of industrial relations, echoing Warhol's belief that "everyone is always creative," was evident in Pajkić's production and editorial work at SKC. In Bunuševac's case, his work increasingly embraced a camp aesthetic in his painting, happenings, and theatre, positioning him as a pioneer of drag and queer art in socialist Yugoslavia. Although he did not identify as queer, the queer influences were prominent in his work, as evidenced by the first public display of a half-nude transgender person on a large rooftop billboard at the Belgrade Youth Centre (Dom omladine Beograda) to promote his upcoming theatre performance in 1986. This event was even covered by national TV that evening.



Minka Veselič, *They Called Me Puby* (*Klicali so me Puby*), 1992. Photographed by Božidar Dolenc at Dance Days Festival 1993. Courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art and Museum of Contemporary Art Metelkova (MG+MSUM).

Minka Veselič: *They Called Me Puby*

1992 • Slovenia

Based on the life of Ljuba Prenner (1906–1977), a Slovene lawyer and writer active in the interwar period who was assigned female at birth but identified as male from a young age and began to transition to a male appearance as a teenager, Veselič's choreography *They Called Me Puby* (*Klicali so me Puby*) from 1992 is one of the earliest attempts at gender fluidity in Slovene contemporary dance. Traces of Prenner's biography initiate choreographic and kinetic situations in which binary gender markers are exposed to fluidity, ambivalence, or transition. In the first part, the fluidity is exposed through double exposition; while the first dancer presents a normative female, the second one is dubious in her appearance and dance. The choreography plays with uncertain subjectification through overlappings, duplications, constant merging and dividing. The choreographer dramatizes group scenes as psychological exteriorizations of inner perspectives and imprints of deteriorating social patterns and uses different props (cases and boxes) to elaborate on the emotional states or human relations in the transitioning phases. Veselič's piece was conceived in the period when physical theatre was expanding on European stages and embraces the expressive, theatrical, and kinetic possibilities of the new dance paradigm to explore an uncommon topic for the time in the Republic of Slovenia. *They Called Me Puby* was also the first evening performance by Dance Theatre ALDEA (Snežana Premuš, Vesna Kukič, Anuša Sliško, Vesna Ristič, Sanja Slajmer, Vesna Žegarac, Tadej Brdnik, and artistic leader Minka

Veselič), a part of Dance Centre Maribor from 1991 to 1994 (transformed in 1994 into Plesna izba Maribor to formalise its status and gain independence), functioning under the umbrella of the Association of Cultural Organizations Maribor and Slovenj Gradec.

However, this is not the only dance performance dedicated to Prenner. In *Metamorphoses 3: Retorika* (*Metamorfoze 3°: Retorika*, 2015), Bara Kolenc along with Atej Tutta examines the mechanisms of political, judicial, and media rhetoric through the construction of the icon Dr Ljuba Prenner referencing the real-life story of the highly moral and politically controversial Prenner, a transsexual attorney in post-war Yugoslavia.

Boris Čakširan: Solo at Palić Lake

1995 • Serbia



Boris Čakširan, *Solo at Palić Lake*, 1995. Still from the recorded performance. Courtesy of Boris Čakširan.

Belonging to the generation of artists emerging in 1980s Yugoslavia, Boris Čakširan's opus and work in the local dance scene—as a choreographer for stage and film, a costume designer, a performer, an international pedagogue, and an art director of ERGstatus Dance Theatre—spans over 40 years. As a choreographer, he created more than 30 choreographies in Serbia and abroad. He has represented Serbia at the biggest events in the world, regarding the inclusion of people with disabilities in dance, the art of healing, working with young people with trauma, and war veterans (Duke University, USA in 1996, the Kennedy Center,

Washington DC in 2012). He is one of the founders of the International Inclusive Arts Network (IIAN). Yet Čakširan created and performed solo only once in his entire career, which took place at the Palić Lake in 1995 within an art camp for young people experiencing war trauma. The solo consisted of Čakširan dancing in the middle of a big stage, dressed in an enormous white dress, and with a long braid attached to his natural (short) hair. For Čakširan this performance was related to shaman practices exploring the inner parts of the soul, searching for hidden aspects or places. Čakširan merged this practice with a modern dance into a sort of ritual, aimed at participants of the art camp to understand how to use the body and dance as mediums for the expression of their inner feelings, thoughts, values, beliefs, etc. As with Bunuševac, Čakširan also never identified himself as a queer artist.

Iskra Shukarova: *The Red Swan*

2008 • North Macedonia

Choreographer Shukarova dedicated *The Red Swan* (*Crveniot Lebed*) to Ekrem Husein, a ballet dancer, one of the crucial figures in the national Opera and ballet in North Macedonia with a pronounced individuality and ritual devotion to dance, who danced for 50 years. In *The Red Swan* he makes a dance confession depicting three characters: a female (cabaret dancer), a male (samurai), and the creature (the dying swan, traditionally danced by female dancers). In the final scene, Husein is driving his own bicycle on the stage, offering an introduction of himself as an off-stage personality, thus blurring the boundaries between stage and reality, a role and real-life personality, performance and identity. Going through diverse identity positions, Shukarova and Husein gently refract the gaze with movements and images that



Iskra Shukarova, *The Red Swan* (*Crveniot Lebed*), 2008. Courtesy of Iskra Shukarova.

dysregulate the ballet vertical body, and step away from the position that is expected in the canonised role that Husein as a (male) artist had in a national ballet institution. Incorporating, in a postmodernist vein, dance movements alien to the ballet repertoire, such as clubbing, cabaret, everyday movement, non-normative gendered movement, while the iconic male ballet dancer performs a grieving female character entranced in love, they make the ballet institution and its hierarchy crumble. Setting Husein's ageing body on the stage, Shukarova undermines the ballet body norms that demand a perfect, youthful, upright, and geometrically precise body. The very presence of the choreographer herself on stage, visible, sitting and giving live instructions to Husein, discloses the power hierarchies and institutional/social apparatus that stage the allegedly ethereal bodies of ballet dancers on stage, while simultaneously demonstrate the difficulty of performing and memorising movement vocabulary by an ageing ballet body. This performance can be defined as proto-queer, since it dysregulates the norms (on stage as well as in private life), re-figures the ballet dancer's body and queers it into a body of a person whose privacy is affected through movements and images on the stage.

Igor Grubić: *East Side Story*

2008 • Croatia

East Side Story is a two-channel video installation by multimedia artist Igor Grubić with choreography by Irma Omerzo addressing contemporary social issues like violence and intolerance towards the otherness of the LGBTQ+ community. The work juxtaposes two videos. The first presents archival documentary footage from violent incidents during Gay Pride events in Belgrade (2001) and Zagreb (2002) where participants faced verbal and physical abuse and organized neo-Nazi attacks, while the second is a choreographed re-enactment of this live action by a group of dancers in Zagreb. In the second,



Igor Grubić, *East Side Story*, 2 channel film, 14min, 2006–2008. Installation view, TATE Modern London, 2021. Courtesy of Igor Grubić.

four dancers are mimicking movements such as beating, shouting, chasing and postures of guarding and hiding. They perform both victims of violence and bullies. These re-enactments take place in the same locations as the original violence—Zagreb's main square and park Zrinjevac—transforming these spaces into both historical records and performance stages. The contrast between real and choreographed violence emphasizes the emotional and social impact of aggression in public spaces.

Feminalz: *Image Snatchers*

2013 • Slovenia



Feminalz, *Image Snatchers* (*Tatovi podob*), 2013–. Photographed by Nada Žgank, 2014. Courtesy of Emanat Institute.

Feminalz, a collective of 'transgender entities,' established in 2013 by Emanat Institute, is a unique endeavour in the Slovenian landscape as their techno-burlesque performance *Image Snatchers* (*Tatovi podob*) has, with its more than decade-long existence, probably the longest life span in the sector, attracting a wide-ranging audience. Feminalz are pushing the boundaries of normative social roles and forms such as femininity, masculinity, family dynamics, machismo, etc., to oppose principles of political correctness and maintain the terrain of sharp social critique in the form of contemporary burlesque and cabaret. Their performances are based on humour and irony and their members represent a range of inventive fictional transgender characters, playfully exposing them in short acts and even more in their singular performances from the *Image Snatchers Present* (*Tatovi podob predstavljajo*) series.

The performances of *Image Snatchers* are not fixed, and neither are the Feminalz members. In addition, individuals and the group continuously create new performative acts, bringing in different perspectives through the combinations of acts and their binding texts to keep the performance in flux. Furthermore, the fluctuation of its members

does not weaken the collective or the performances, but on the contrary brings in surprising new elements, which is the result of occasional new blood and the crews' reaction toward sociopolitical actualities, or their reflection on more intimate, yet structural topics of gender and sexualities, always spiced up with iconic pop songs.

Ephemeral Confessions Collective

2015– • Serbia

The post-cabaret collective Ephemeral Confessions (Efemerne konfesije) made its debut in 2015 at the Belgrade feminist festival BeFem. The collective members are: Markiza de Sada (Vladimir Bjeličić), Dekadencija (Andrej Ostroški), Johanna Helmut Kohl (Zoja Borovčanin), Darlin Brando (Ksenija Latinović), Fritz Klein (Marija Balubdžić), Zed Zeldić Zed (Zoe Gudović), and MC illillillillill (Ilija Milošević). Over the years, they expanded with permanent members and collaborated with local artistic and queer scenes. Their full ensemble gained wider recognition through the play *Songs of Decadence, Splendor, and Alcohol* (*Songovi o dekadenciji, krizi očinstva i alkoholu*, 2017). In 2019, they produced *Ephemeral Confessions in Space – Songs of Decadence, Spiritual Crisis, and Nitrogen* (*Efemerne konfesije u svemiru – songovi o dekadenciji, krizi spiritualnosti i azotu*) and a radio drama *Ephemeral Audio-Piñatas* (*Efemerne audio pinjate u tri čina*), broadcasted on Radio Belgrade. The sound experiment *Ephemeral Aria No. 1* (*Efemerne ariozna No.1*) was presented in 2021, followed by the release of a music video *I'm Your Daddy* (*Otac sam ti ja*) in 2022.

Ephemeral Confessions approaches the concept of a collective and drag conditionally, treating drag as a dynamic practice rather than a static form. This method, characterized by a collage-citation technique, blends drag with unique performative

practices, transforming and refunctionalizing it in a novel form resonant with political contexts and the personal experiences of its members. The collective, active in various art and culture fields, explores drag as a performative act, suggesting that all gender performance is essentially drag, thus questioning the naturalness of gender roles. They engage in humour and language as tools for poetic transformation and satirical critique, processing the absurdities of everyday life. Their work is not explicitly tied to LGBTQ+ discourse or activism, despite performing in such contexts. Instead, they focus on personal and collective experiences, emphasizing humour and storytelling.

Viktorija Ilioska, Tanja Ribarska, and Kliment Poposki: *The Cause of Disease*

2015 • North Macedonia



Viktorija Ilioska, Tanja Ribarska, and Kliment Poposki, *The Cause of Disease* (*Pricina za bolesta*), 2015. Courtesy of Lokomotiva – Centre for New Initiatives in Arts and Culture.

The Cause of Disease (*Pricina za bolesta*) draws upon the artists' personal biographies and reflections on the society they live in, focusing on themes of the forbidden, as well as the concepts of borders and freedom. The performance explores issues such as freedom of speech, the declaration of sexual orientation, and other personal rights implicitly restricted in a traditional, conservative society, one further corrupted by the ruling political parties.

In an interview with the Student Centre Zagreb, during their residency supported by the apap – advancing performing arts project, the artists critically addressed the polarization in North Macedonia—both in politics and societal values—where traditional and contemporary perspectives on living clash intensely. Reflecting on these dichotomies, they examined the concept of 'forbidden' surfaces in their lives and within the performing arts, particularly in times of economic crisis. In the performance, the artists included a critique of the lack of support for the conceptual or critical performing arts, that is socially relevant and politically aware. Through

diverse performative actions (talk, video material, and gestures) used in the performance, the artists were also referring to performance as a powerful tool for research, critical thinking, and civic engagement. In the above-mentioned interview, the artists emphasized that this performance was their way of confronting economic, symbolic and emotional barriers—spaces that have been ignored, excluded, or rendered invisible by society. Thus, as well as the performance itself we can also notice the presentation at the Zagreb residency as a performative action of advocacy, an intimate sharing of the working positions of performers in North Macedonia, an action of voicing the needs and boundaries or frames in which a performing artist can work, create and live.

Marko Milić: *CAVE* 2016 / *DILF* 2022 • Serbia

The 2016 dance performance *CAVE* (*Kejv*), renamed *DILF* in 2022, by Marko Milić is a notable example of his innovative approach to contemporary dance and performance art. Milić, a prominent figure in the ex-Yugoslav and broader European dance scene is known for his experimental and avant-garde works that often challenge conventional forms of storytelling and dance expression. *CAVE* specifically showcases Milić's interest in exploring the intersection of physical movement, space, and narrative while questioning whether sexual fantasy exists without trauma. It follows a series of works in which Milić explored how traumatic events shape our ability to perceive the world around us, also reflecting a deep engagement with the sociopolitical context and embodying the complexities and tensions of contemporary life, particularly in post-Yugoslav societies. The work was created in collaboration with Svetozar Adamović—the already retired principal ballet dancer of the National Theatre in Belgrade—performing at the centre of the stage, entirely displaying and exposing his naked body, shaped by two different physical practices: ballet and bodybuilding. In that sense, Adamović's body remains an interlocutor between these practices, which sexually-wise remain some of the most worshiped and desirable bodily practices in the queer world. Like many of Milić's works, this piece is designed to provoke thought and evoke a deep emotional response from the audience by blurring the lines between dance, theatre, and visual art. His performances are known for their minimalist staging, where every element on stage—from lighting to sound—interacts dynamically with the performers, creating an immersive and thought-provoking experience for the audience.



Marko Milić, *CAVE* (*Kejv*)/*DILF*, 2016. Still from the recorded performance. Courtesy of Marko Milić.

Nataša Živković: *Sonny*

2018 • Slovenia

Sonny (*Sine*) is a dance theatre performance that appears as anthropological research of *virđžina* also *tobelija* (from the Turkish *tövbe* for "vow") and *burnesha* (in Albania), while presenting it through a subversive performative form. *Virđžina* is a Western Balkan (mainly in remote parts of Macedonia, Kosovo, Central Serbia, Vojvodina, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina and the already mentioned Albania) historical phenomenon of institutionalized social gender change for women in families without a male presence in the household. *Virđžinas* took a vow of virginity and celibacy for life. They cut their hair, dress



Nataša Živković, *Sonny* (*Sine*), 2018. Photographed by Nada Žgank. Courtesy of City of Women.



Ephemeral Confessions Collective, *Ephemeral Confessions in Space – Songs of Decadence, Spiritual Crisis, and Nitrogen* (*Efemerne konfesije u svemiru – songovi o dekadenciji, krizi spiritualnosti i azotu*), 2019. Photographed by Vladimir Opsenica.

in men's clothes, take up a male version of their name, and take on the rights and obligations of a man in a patriarchal society—participating in male gatherings and may enlist for military service (Vince-Pallua 2014, 16) to ensure the survival of the clan. In that regard, *virđžina* could be defined as a 'drag' phenomenon. Nataša Živković, with her specific androgenous figure, takes written life stories in order to present them directly through impersonation. The artist moves from one to another *virđžina* story to represent their (mainly forgotten) voices. The setting mimics a fashion runway, through which the artist moves, gesticulates, dances, and speaks while underlining masculine features that instil uncanniness into the perception of the figure and reaches its peak at the moment when the artist calls 'their' 'sisters,' again represented through a gender shift. Transvestites (Daniel Petković, Loup Abramovici, Slobodan Malić) appear on the stage to serve *rakia* to the male representatives in the audience and wash their feet, and by doing so further escalate their discomfort. Through the performative act, in *Sonny* Živković succeeds in pinpointing the cracks of fixed gender, not only as an invented cultural phenomenon but also through the third gender, opening up its potential for further emancipation and acceptance of a wider gender fluidity, playing also a crucial, critical role within the City of Women festival that produced this performance.

STEAM ROOM: *dragON*

2018–2023 • North Macedonia

The choreographic trilogy *dragON*, co-authored by Aleksandar Georgiev, Zhana Pencheva, and Dario Barreto Damas, a.k.a. STEAM ROOM (North Macedonia, Bulgaria, Spain, Sweden), deals with the protest and celebration of the body on drag scenes, exploring their relation within dance and choreography. It is structured in three choreographic pieces that deal with dance, sound, and location, respectively: *dragON aka PONY* (2018), *dragON aka PHOENIX* (2021) and *dragON aka FOREVER* (2023). *dragON aka PONY* is a choreographic work that undertakes creating

a space of constant transition, unfolding intimacy and exposing a humble co-existence through dance references from the past and present arriving from Western and Eastern Europe. "Within a frame of contemporary Pop, the work revives geometrical choreography through the prism of classicism and the usage of folklore as a ritualistic form. That way *dragON aka PONY* offers a little bit of Isadora Duncan and a lot of MTV or VH1," as the dancers say in an announcement for the piece. The second part of the trilogy, *dragOn aka PHOENIX*, also deals with the protest and celebration of the body on the drag scene, exploring the correlation between the drag/camp/gay practice of reading and dance and choreography. Using a direct approach and the specifics of musical theatre as a form, the performance problematizes the potential absurdity in choreography and dance. While the first two parts of the trilogy are inspired by and work with two specific drag practices—ballroom and reading, respectively—in the third part of the choreographic trilogy, *DragOn aka FOREVER*, STEAM ROOM turned their attention to the drag practice of lip-syncing in relation to choreography and dance, while staging a celebratory party-like atmosphere and a catwalk of masterpieces, failures, virtuositities, and vulnerabilities. Georgiev and Baretto Damas's work has not been limited only to their dance projects. In the past couple of years, through a series of workshops, they have been working on 'drag choreographies' dedicated to the drag community in Skopje and everyone else interested.

Aleksandar Georgiev and Dario Barreto Damas: *Moonlight*

2019 • North Macedonia

Moonlight is a choreographic project that focuses on the body in rhythm, in static position, revealed and disrupted by interaction and other actions, or the body that affectively creates poetic structures and explores the relational multiplication of meanings as well as a choreographic construction of open and malleable reality. It travels through the senses that are structured through socially gendered games, stories, and songs which create a fixed identity. Georgiev and Barreto Damas perform naked on stage, presenting, through repetitive movements, physical and kinaesthetic material that cites childhood games, such as clapping and skipping, Disney choreographic elements and romanticized musical pieces, or heterosexually structured dance materials that colour childhood memories and dreams, such as a lovers' waltz. On the one hand, the queer social choreography in this work is enacted through an unruly playfulness that undermines the logic of winner and loser, competition and hierarchy. On the other hand, *Moonlight* is an archive that rediscovers and recognizes new meanings of those socially determined identities, through their unfolding and



STEAM ROOM, *dragON aka Phoenix*, 2021. Photographed by Sonja Stavrova. Courtesy of Coalition MARGINS Skopje.



Aleksandar Georgiev and Dario Barreto Damas, *Moonlight*, 2019. Photographed by Sasho Alushevski.

queering of the preconditioned, bodily archived normativity. Queerness in this work is choreographically articulated through the relational in-between playful exchange of the two bodies that embody an archive of different heteronormative movements and segments with no ambition for a concrete arrival or teleological accumulation and goal-directed movement, not even towards queerness as fixed semantics, corporeal register, or communal oeuvre. Instead, queerness becomes embodied and (social) choreographic practice drawing errant lines of poietic and constant shifting and moulding of existing structures and materials, precisely through the 'reciprocal motivation' of bodies in concerted action with no final product, thus reticulating sense as infinitum.



Sonja Pregrad, *How Many Cubic Centimetres Can My Body Take Up (Koliko kubnih centimetara smije zauzeti moje tijelo)*, 2020. Photographed by Nina Đurđević. Courtesy of 2020 Antisezona.

Sonja Pregrad: *How Many Cubic Centimetres Can My Body Take Up*

2020 • Croatia

Sonja Pregrad's practice revolves around the concept of 'objecthood'—around the body, dance, and performance, which represent an anchor for feminist, queer, and sensorial politics. Emancipating the figure of a dancer, Pregrad questions the subject-object chiasm of her performing body. From object to materiality, embodiment, touch, synaesthesia, sensuousness, and receptivity,

oscillating between submission and assertion, these elements function as vehicles for the performance *How Many Cubic Centimetres Can My Body Take Up (Koliko kubnih centimetara smije zauzeti moje tijelo)*, transforming the body into a medium that interacts with its surroundings—in a gesture of perhaps paradoxical challenge to the affirmed drag performance strategy of taking up space by the agency of over-performing. She constructs a sequence of opportunities to witness sensuous surfaces (as used in queer phenomenology)—being in touch with the materials such as lipstick, Lycra, another's skin, concrete floor, gendered gaze, language, light, etc. With this, the performance opens up a space to experience gender



Sonja Pregrad, *How Many Cubic Centimetres Can My Body Take Up (Koliko kubnih centimetara smije zauzeti moje tijelo)*, 2020. Photographed by Nina Đurđević. Courtesy of 2020 Antisezona.

embodiment. With shameless submission of the body to the gaze of others, she tactically/strategically reappropriates femininity and disintegrates prescribed meanings of gender categories. Through a double twist, the drag queen reclaims and redefines the act of performing female-to-female drag and the objecthood of femininity. By controlling how femininity is constructed, the performer destabilizes the spectator's perception, challenging traditional views of gender and femininity. Pregrad is further developing this method, extending drag to the realm of ecology. In other words, with her critical, fictive, and queering gesture, she is approaching plants as drag through the observation of senses and sensations, eroticism, etc.

Aleksandar Georgiev: *The Power of S*

2021 • North Macedonia

In a series of choreographic works developed by Aleksandar Georgiev, choreography tackles the problematics of 'anal politics' referring to the rejected parts of the body, while simultaneously proposing and performing a corporeal democracy. In *The Power of S*, Aleksandar Georgiev, together with Zhana Pencheva and Darío Barreto Damas, focuses on the disruption of the normative codes of representation of the 'anus' as a black hole space, as something hidden. Crawling on to the stage from behind a gold glittering curtain that was separating the stage from the white heterosexual terror of the bio-necropolitical civilization, three bodies—turned with their backs and gazing anuses towards the audience, renouncing their phallic posture and erective presence, down on their knees, at the bottom in horizontal parallel with the floor—threw the spectator into a state of anally-induced vertigo. Moving slowly, with no pronounced dramatics, touching each other, these three bodies were oscillating on the stage like non-human, acephalous monsters, or beheaded phalluses, with

their genitals almost invisible and unrecognizable, their sex devoured in the pulsations of the 'black hole,' and their head bowed down. Georgiev starts from the physical reference, but develops performance relations in dance, using the anus as a metaphor for a monster, a transformable creature that reveals parallel realities and experiences, placing it as the main protagonist of the body in performance. The dance displaces and deconstructs the meanings attached to the anus, proposing it as a moving and performing body that transforms the space and its meaning, especially the sedimented heteropatriarchal logic. It proposes another gaze on it, transforming the stage and the gaze of the viewer into a queer one, one that can offer another memory, meaning, and position of viewing and thinking about parts of the body that are forbidden, abject or hidden. The abject body part becomes a movable, transformable, intensive, and polymorphic muscle with unseen potentialities and powers, birthing in rhythmic contractions, closures and openings while seducing the audience from behind, and plugging the spectator into a sort of anal vertigo that decapitates the masculine head and the Phallocracy of the Western reasoning subject.



Aleksandar Georgiev, *The Power of S*, 2021. Photographed by Martin Atanasov. Courtesy of Aleksandar Georgiev.

Marko Gutić Mižimakov: *Dragon Hunt*

2024 • Croatia

In his artistic work, Mižimakov explores and combines animation, performance, and text, incorporating drag, machine learning, and objects. Inspired by Samuel R. Delany's novel *Stars in My Pocket Like Grains of Sand* from 1984, Mižimakov created *Dragon Hunt (Lov na zmajice)*, a film that blends dance, fantasy, and a queer perspective into a road narrative. In Delany's novel, characters hunt dragons with a cybernetic crossbow that links their sensory systems, allowing them to experience life as dragons. This ritual mirrors Delany's own experiences of gay cruising in pre-AIDS New York, where different beings sensorially encounter each other.



Marko Gutić Mižimakov, *Dragon Hunt (Lov na zmajice)*, 2024. Film Stills. Courtesy of Marko Gutić Mižimakov.

Machine learning algorithms, akin to Delany's themes, are central in Mižimakov's film, aiming to transport text into visuals, illustrating the fluidity of identity. The film features a trans-generational couple riding a motorcycle through an apocalyptic landscape animated by algorithmic interpretations of Delany's descriptions of planet Velm, in which the Dragon emerges from the fluctuating scenery. The cybernetic crossbow from Delany's story is replaced by a conch shell, which accompanied by a saxophone serves as a key instrument in the soundtrack. The conch's spiralling shape, activated by the hunter's breath, becomes the medium through which the Dragon's dance is translated. This transformation draws the characters, including the Old and Young Hunters, into a shared experience of becoming each other, the Dragon, and the landscape itself. Through these elements, the film encapsulates the essence of becoming and mutual transformation, central to Delany's novel and Gutić Mižimakov's interpretation. The entire film is made more choreographically than narratively, exploring the themes of movement and the transformation of the body within the landscape, as well as the landscape itself, all in relation to the original text which is used as a foundational template for the score.





Dejan Pajović with Theatre Signum, *The Picture of Dorian Gray (Slika Dorijana Greja)*, 1991. Courtesy of Anđelija Todorović.



Dušan Bročić, Ana Dubljević, Igor Koruga, Marko Milčić, Jovana Rakić Kiselčić, and Ljiljana Tasić, *Temporaries*, 2011–2013. Courtesy of Satian Service for Contemporary Dance.



Noltraining Lab, *Variations on Slowness: Time Out 3 (Variacije na počasnost: Time Out 3)*, 2016. Photographed by Urška Boljkovac. Courtesy of 2016 CoFestival.



Gathering of the Critical Practice (Made in Yugoslavia) Group in Struga, 2022. Photographed by Aleksandra Nestoroska. Courtesy of Lokomotiva – Centre for New Initiatives in Arts and Culture.



Collective performance of the hybrid format *Close Encounters of the Dance Kind (Bliski susreti plesne vrste)* at Antisezona 21. Photographed by Nina Đurđević. Courtesy of 2021 Antisezona.

CHAPTER 2

DANCE FORMATIONS



Katarina Stojkov Slijepčević, *Bells (Zvona)*, 1981 at Music Atelier. Courtesy of Katarina Stojkov Slijepčević.



Kino Kultura. Courtesy of Lokomotiva – Centre for New Initiatives in Arts and Culture.

Charlie Brittain, *Limbic*, 2019. Photographed by Borut Bučinel. Courtesy of 2019 Front@.



Mark Tompkins, *Song and Dance*, 2003. Photographed by Nada Žgank. Courtesy of 2005 Exodos.

From Dance Schools and Associations to NGOs and Institutions

In his cultural studies, Raymond Williams uses the term formations for the configurations of organizing and self-organizing communities in the arts and culture, which are productive in recognition of practical needs, responsive to the lacks in the existing regimes of cultural production, and more dynamic than the public institutions or established models of production in particular historical periods (bards, guilds, early forms of academies, exhibition practices, societies of professions, cultural or artistic movements, schools, independent communities, fractions, specialized groups, dissidents, rebels, brotherhoods, sisterhoods, national and para-national networks, etc.). Inspired by Williams, we will adapt the term to the dance context with an aim to introduce the diverse dance formations that have shaped the dance landscape in Yugoslavia and after. These include formal and informal institutions, organizations, schools, collectives, movements, networks, guilds, unions, and other entities that generate the systems in which dance is produced, cared for, and maintained.

(Private) Dance Schools Before and After WWII

Historically, dance in the region has been supported primarily through private schools. Before WWII, private initiatives such as the Maga Magazinović School for Rhythmic and Plastics (1910–1945) in Serbia, the Ana Maletić School of Artistic Physical Education (1932–1941) in Croatia, the School of Meta Vidmar (1929–1942, 1952–1956) and the School of Katja Delak (1930–1938), both in Slovenia, were pivotal. There are no available archives documenting schools before WWII in North Macedonia, however, Emilija Dzipunova, a ballerina and ballet critic, speaks about Vera Shekjerinova and Blagovesta Kavaeva from the Macedonian National Ballet, who, as children, attended the school of Sofia (Sonja) Cvjetičanin Miholić in Skopje. These schools were centred around dominant figures, who had often

received their education abroad (mainly in Western Europe, and particularly influenced by *Ausdruckstanz*). Typically, schools were organized hierarchically, reflecting the influence and control of their key individuals. They would encourage individual expression and aesthetically oppose the disciplinary approaches of ballet training, which was one reason they were more acceptable for the youth of the progressive bourgeois population and upper working-class. At annual public events, schools presented short dance works, choreographed by the students with the assistance of their mentors or created by the pedagogues themselves.

The post-WWII political landscape in Yugoslavia dramatically reshaped the cultural environment. Initially, strong ties with the Soviet Union influenced cultural policies and left a certain blueprint on dance, which led to the prominence of ballet, supported through institutionalization, alongside traditional dances. Traditional dances, in particular, were given a central role in the cultural system, receiving institutional support and registers cataloguing specific dances, tied to the diverse nations of the republics, were established. However, modernized forms of dance continued to exist but did not have the same visibility in comparison with traditional and ballet dance. Still, some of the contemporary dance programmes and schools were included in the programmes of socialist cultural and educational institutions. For example, Ana Maletić was licensed to operate her School of Artistic Dance (1945). Less than a year later, her school was nationalized and renamed into the Zagreb Dance Stage, until disbanded by the state in 1947. It took several years to open the Ana Maletić School of Contemporary Dance (1954–), which was licensed as a public school. In Slovenia, the School of Meta Vidmar re-opened in 1952 on the ground floor of her family house¹ as a formal and autonomous part of the Ballet High School of Ljubljana.² In 1951, Marta Paulin-Brina started to teach the course of rhythmic and movement education at the Secondary Preschool Education Gymnasium (founded in 1949). In the mid-1950s, Paulin and Marija Vogeltnik were among the founders of a contemporary and expressionist dance programme that appeared in the frame of an aesthetic education programme for children at the Pionirska Library. Dancer, choreographer, and pedagogue Živa Kraigher took the programme over in 1956. Her teaching successes led to the decision to include contemporary dance education at the Institute for Music and Ballet Education within the Department for Expressionist Dance established in 1963.³ In Serbia, Maga Magazinović's artistic influence and social status after WWII became extremely complex. Thus, in 1946, some of the dancers from her Student Folklore Group (1936) joined the cultural-artistic association (KUD) Abrašević, which had two artistic directors, Smiljana Mandukić and Dubravka Maletić, 247 registered members, 248 performances and concerts, and prepared 150 new choreographies in the period between 1945 and 1980. In 1964, the Belgrade Contemporary Ballet of Smiljana Mandukić was founded as a professional troupe that operated as a private initiative in a public institution (one of the cultural centres in Belgrade).

Slow steps toward further, systematized, contemporary dance education, along with the spread of dance classes and different dance education programmes for children and youth, could be found in most of the countries in the 1980s, while the institutionalization of contemporary dance education started to emerge

1 The Slovene Antifascist Front, which was part of the Yugoslav Partisan army, was founded on the 27th of April, 1941, in the legendary Vidmar Family House. These days the house is a residency of the ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany, a historic irony and a healing solution that reminds us of the absurdity of any warfare.

2 It has never been clear exactly when Vidmar's school came to close, but it was around the break between the 1960s and early 1970s.

3 With the change of the education system in 1983, the Institute for Music and Ballet Education (Zavod za glasbeno in baletno izobraževanje) was transformed to the Secondary School of Music and Ballet Ljubljana (Srednja glasbena in baletna šola Ljubljana). The Department for Expressionist Dance was renamed to the Department for Contemporary Dance in the school year of 1995/1996. As part of the school, the Higher Ballet School (Višja baletna šola) was established in 2007. The school was renamed again in 2009 to the Conservatory of Music and Ballet Ljubljana (Konservatorij za glasbo in balet Ljubljana).

only after the fall of Yugoslavia. Today, dance education is present in public and private sectors and exists in numerous informal, but also formal, educational programmes at high school and university levels. Nevertheless, dancers and choreographers prioritize dance universities from the West. One constant that remains is that, due to the need for financial stability, dancers and choreographers work as educators in both public and private sectors, frequently establishing their own dance classes, which tend to attract a dedicated group of followers.

Organizations and Infrastructure in the Reforming Political Landscape of Yugoslavia

The self-organization of people and communities for cultural purposes was initially connected with national emancipatory tendencies, with claiming rights for national languages and literature. In the monarchies between the world wars, the legislation on Societies and Associations was constantly changing with the tendency to control political gatherings and to keep revolutionary forces outside of the public eye, suppressed, non-operative, and illegal. Different Societies and Associations were organized around common cultural, artistic, business, scientific, etc., interests. Many of them represented guilds that included different non-professional cultural and artistic sections. One important characteristic of those Associations and Societies was an obsession with dance gatherings and parties, which were profitable and contributed to the local economies. At these dance gatherings, social class division was present (some of them would be strictly bourgeois congregations, while others represented working class and peasantry events).⁴

During WWII, cultural and artistic activities became a fundamental part of both the anti-fascist struggle of the Yugoslav Partisan army and the illegal congregations of activists outside of the military fronts throughout the territory of the former Yugoslav monarchy. Sections that were artistically and culturally busy in different Associations and Societies before WWII and were conscious of the necessity to act against fascism, transited into the Partisan movement and its civic support. With its artistic realizations in the Partisan movement, partisan art had been opening the space for the not-yet-existent.

The partisan cultural and artistic force would channel directly into the post-war period when the federal authorities tried to find possible forms of their further existence, connected with the mission to put forward/present the concept of the new working-class socialist arts and culture. The political control of Associations and Societies would continue, when socialist authorities had to permit the founding of such organizations. After the 1974 Yugoslav Constitution, the legislation of the Associations and Societies changed and abolished the demand for founding permission from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, which is the reason for the increased number of registered communities that paved the way for the civil society movements. Furthermore, the 1976 Law on Associated Labour equalized cultural institutions with economic organizations, and cultural administration was transferred to the republic and municipal levels, which opened the space for limited private initiatives to form private organizations known as labour communities. In the frame of dance and art forms related to choreography, the following organizations should be mentioned: the nomadic-pan-Yugoslav organization KPGT (formed in Zagreb in 1977 and later shifted its base to Belgrade), the group New Sensitivity (Nova osećajnost, 1979, Belgrade),

4 The article in the Slovenski narod daily writes: "Our age could be as well called the age of dance, in analogy with the stone, bronze and iron ages that we know from our history." [n.n.], "Doba plesa," Slovenski narod (1928), in *Dan, noč + človek = ritem: Antologija slovenske sodobnoplesne publicistike 1918–1960*, ed. Rok Vervar (Ljubljana: Maska, Nomad Dance Academy Slovenia, Javni sklad RS za kulturne dejavnosti, 2018), 195.

Koreodrama Theatre (1986, Ljubljana), and Dance Theatre Ljubljana (1985) that joined an existing PLC (Permanent Labour Community), Brut Film, in 1988.

Despite the legislation that simplified the procedures for establishing and operating artistic and cultural organizations, it is necessary to stress that the building of cultural infrastructure was one of the primary goals of the country after WWII. There was almost no town in the socialist Yugoslavia without its own cultural infrastructure, along with several specialized youth cultural infrastructures designed to provide a range of cultural activities and enable the youth to establish and improve their creative spirit.⁵ These centres were supposed to answer various needs: to act as local distributors of professional art, as local services for diverse (amateur) cultural and artistic groups, as providers of space, equipment, and human resources, and as producers. In addition, these centres were formed to provide proper socialization, in line with socialist values, norms, and social care, and to foster good mental health in the (younger) population, which is why they also had sufficient funding. Student integration in the self-management process (1966) gave student organizations and institutions additional independence. During the student movements (1968–1971), some of these organizations shifted organizational and curatorial working principles, supporting young artists to experiment and develop new artistic forms and creating a decentralized network that enabled the exchange of knowledge, collaboration, and dissemination of cultural and artistic works.

Thereby, throughout the 1970s and 1980s, numerous collectives, groups, and other initiatives that worked in these centres contributed to the reformation of the dance creation system: Chamber Ensemble of Free Dance (KASP, 1963), Studio Contemporary Dance Company (1962), Zagreb Dance Company (1971), Dance Week Festival (1984) in Croatia; in Ljubljana (Slovenia) Studio for Free Dance⁶ (1973), Summer Dance School (1981), Dance Days Festival (1982), Dance Theatre Ljubljana (1985), and Intakt (1988); the 1980s in Serbia witnessed the rise of new collective initiatives, many of which were shaped by the influence of Tanztheater, among the first were Theatre Mimart (1984) and Theatre Signum (1987). In North Macedonia, ballet was maintained as a dominant form. Despite the presence of several alternative groups with more progressive approaches to art, they did not make a significant impact on the dance scene and its further development.

Emergence of the NGOs in the 1990s and Today's Problems in the Non-Institutionalized Field

Following the fall of Yugoslavia in the 1990s, some already established formations ceased to exist, and some continued to exist or were transformed into national cultural houses and institutions or other legal bodies. In the whole region of the former Yugoslavia, the independent dance scenes started to develop within the civil sector as systems of associations of citizens, private organizations (institutes), and foundations—known as non-governmental organizations (NGOs). These NGOs began organizing diverse programmes, productions, festivals, and managing spaces used for performances, with occasional cooperation with public institutions. New ideas and initiatives emerged, deflecting from the previous frameworks and evolving into other forms of thinking and practicing dance. The combination of sociopolitical context, new production models, and inherited institutional infrastructure (being constantly restructured) opened up the gap for developing

5 Most of these institutions had general names, indicating their target group(s). Cultural houses were meant for the whole city community, houses of pioneers were dedicated to primary school pupils, youth cultural centres to a wider range of the youth population, student cultural centres were mainly run by students for the students.

6 The Studio for Free Dance (Studio za svobodni ples) was the first dance collective in Slovenia. It was founded by Živa Kraigher and her students.

hybrid models of institutions, among which KPGT stands out in particular. The hybrid nature of this (non)institution stems not only from the fact that it existed across the entire Yugoslav cultural space but also because it occasionally took on the structures of public institutions, as was the case with the National Theatre in Subotica and in Novi Sad. KPGT became a model of entrepreneurial appropriation of existing institutional capacities, representing a completely new model of hiatus between the non-institutional and institutional. However, this new model, in addition to entrepreneurship, also opened up new interdisciplinary possibilities.

Furthermore, the emergence of self-organizing collectives, organizations, networks, schools, and guilds played a significant role in the development of a constellation of hybrid institutions, with several (hybrid) models, including public-civil, public-civil-private, or private-civil partnerships, which also experimented with models of governing based on horizontal or self-managed principles. Examples include the venues of Dance Theatre Ljubljana (1985–), Old Power Station – Elektro Ljubljana (SMEEL, 2004–), and Španski Borci Culture Centre (2009–) in Slovenia, Pogon (2005–) and Zagreb Dance Scene at Trešnjevka People’s University (1971) in Croatia, Forum for New Dance (2002–2016) in Novi Sad, and Magacin Cultural Centre (2007–) in Belgrade, Serbia, and Socio-Cultural Space – Centre Jadro (2012–) and Kino Kultura (2015–2020) in North Macedonia, etc.

Institutional spaces nowadays, in most cases, do not answer to the specific needs of the professional dance and performing arts sphere. The connection between financial support systems and the difficulties that NGOs face is rooted in the imbalance between increasing needs and decreasing resources and in the instability and short-term orientation of the financial support systems for independent art. This leads to a fragmented, precarious environment, pushing the dance scene to advocate for stronger (institutional) support that could stabilize its ecosystem, maintained and nurtured by certain NGO initiatives in their joint actions, networks, and formations of platforms, which are filling the void in the institutional sphere. Also, the absence of dance institutions and a need for better working conditions for all dance practitioners pushed the dance communities across the Western Balkan region to organize guilds that would lead advocacy processes for more supportive institutional frameworks that nurture dance as a vital and dynamic cultural form. In Slovenia, the Contemporary Dance Association Slovenia (1994–) represents such a guild. It strives for professionally justified cooperation with competent Slovenian institutions in the process of adopting decisions regarding the contemporary dance field. Also, Asociacija—an umbrella association in the field of arts and culture in Slovenia, which started informally in 1992 and grew into a professionally coordinated organization—is providing advocacy and systemic support services to secure sustainable conditions for professional NGOs and others working in the independent cultural scene. The Association of Independent and Other Professional Dance Artists of Croatia—founded in 1996 and renamed as the Croatian Dancers Association (UPUH) in 2007—serves as a platform for the self-organization of the dance community to establish institutional foundations for artistic, cultural, and academic production. In Serbia, Station’s (2005–) efforts to become a representative body of the contemporary dance scene—based on the argument that contemporary dance and performance artists do not meet the ballet criteria represented by the Association of Ballet Artists (UBUS, 1962)—did not succeed. For this reason, some contemporary choreographers and dancers from the independent dance scene have also become members of the ballet guild. Also, the Association Independent Culture Scene of Serbia, of which Station was one of five co-founders, is fighting for artists’ rights, working conditions, and a new cultural policy for the independent scene. In North Macedonia, no guild represents the dance art community, however, there is Jadro – Association of the Independent Culture Scene that represents the NGO sector.

Despite the experiments, learning from collaborative efforts, and making hybrid institutions or spaces for joint actions on the independent scene, there is still no state-run contemporary dance institution in the region that would embrace new forms of thinking, creating, and presenting dance. The debate about institutionalization reflects a broader dilemma of the political, theoretical, and activist movements that critique global neoliberal capitalism and call for change. On the one side, institutionalization is viewed as a way to stabilize scattered political efforts and resist neoliberal erosion of the public sphere. On the other, it evokes nostalgia for past systems, such as socialist self-management and welfare states, which are seen as promoters of social equality and solidarity. Yet, there are trends in transforming public institutions toward private or market-oriented models, according to new public management, that appeared in the 1980s (Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski 2021, 19). Bojana Kunst (2020) argues that institutions have an inherent, irrational core rooted in imagination—a “dreamy and foggy” essence that enables and threatens the very institutions it creates. While institutions try to rationalize and control their structures over time, they attempt to erase this imaginative core by building stable frameworks, rules, and protocols. Caught in between these paradoxes, the question of institutionalization remains the focal point for different aspects of the artistic field of contemporary dance in the region (research, education, modes of production, artistic labour, distribution, documentation, and archiving, etc.), based on imagining the missing institutions, those that still do not exist. While neoliberal forces are impacting the institutionalization of dance, the dance sector in the region, with its force as part of the independent sector, advocates for rhizomatic structures that would be co-curated with the artists and cultural workers and would embrace and enhance diverse choreographic and dance practices. These imagined institutions would be convivial spaces that nurture the further development of artistic practices, facilitate communication with the public, and provide working conditions that support the artists’ necessities and creative processes.

List of Examples

Association of Cultural Organizations Slovenia

ACOS • 1945–1996
/ Public Fund for Cultural Activities
PFCA • 2000– • Slovenia

Ana Maletić School of Contemporary Dance

1954– • Croatia

Studio Contemporary Dance Company

1962– • Croatia

Zagreb Dance Scene at Trešnjevka People's University

1971 • Croatia

Katarina Stojkov Slijepčević

1945– • Serbia

Dance Theatre Ljubljana

1985– • Slovenia

Theatre Signum

1987–1993 • Serbia

EN-KNAP Group

EKG • 1993– • Slovenia

The Croatian Institute for Movement and Dance

HIPP • 1990– • Croatia

Croatian Dancers Association

UPUH • 1996–
Association of Professional Dance Artists “PULS”
UPPU “PULS” • 2001– • Croatia

Contemporary Dance Association Slovenia

CDAS • 1994– • Slovenia

Contemporary Dance Education Programme at the Secondary Preschool Education, Grammar School and Performing Arts Grammar School in Ljubljana

SVŠGUGL • 1999/2000– • Slovenia

Forum for New Dance

2002–2016 • Serbia

Lokomotiva

2003– • North Macedonia

Station

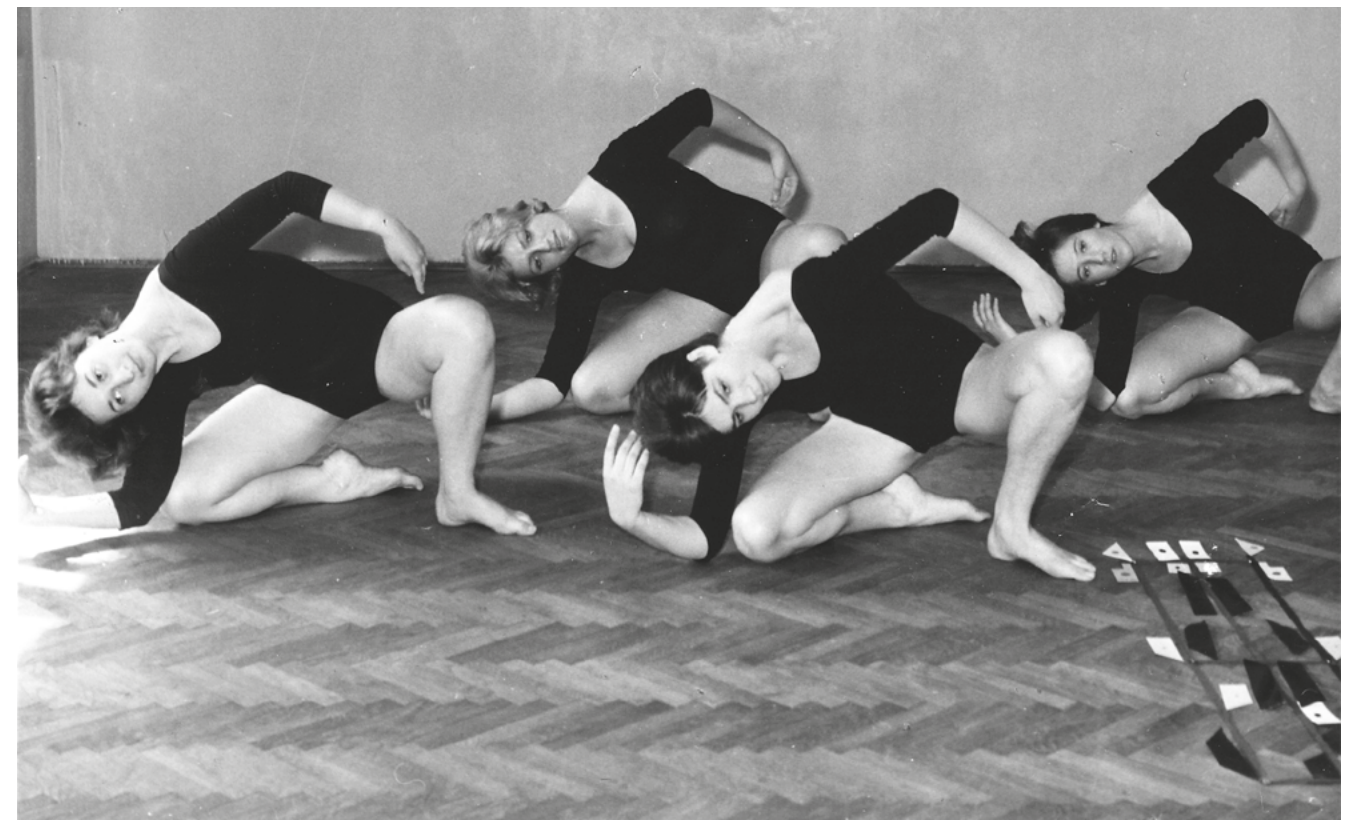
2005– • Serbia

Bitef Dance Company

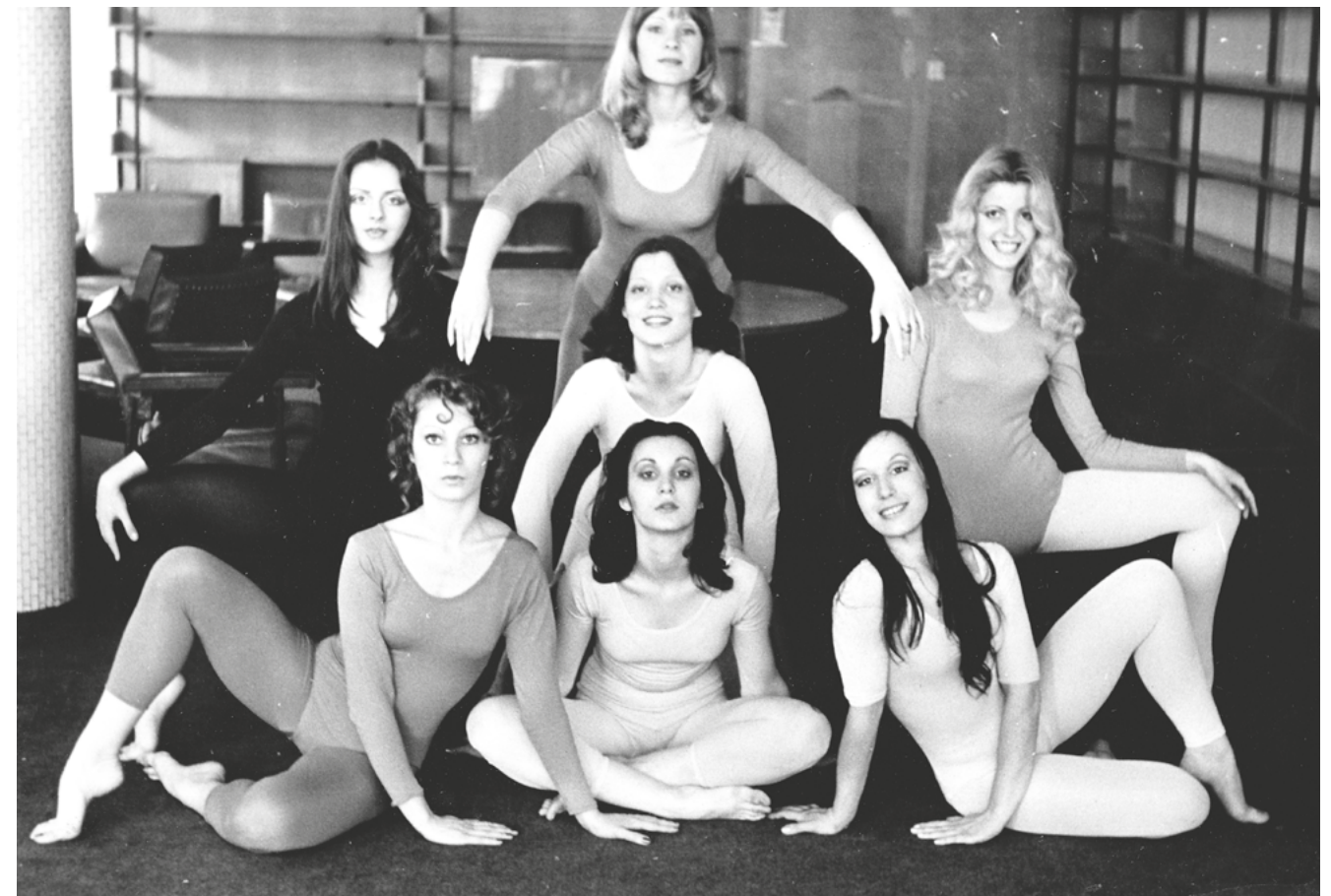
2009– • Serbia

Kino Kultura

2015–2020 • North Macedonia



School Ana Maletić, *Kinetogram*, 1960. Courtesy of Maja Đurinović.



Katarina Stojkov Slijepčević's troupe, 1970s. Courtesy of Katarina Stojkov Slijepčević.

Association of Cultural Organizations Slovenia

ACOS · 1945–1996

/ Public Fund for Cultural Activities

PFCA · 2000– · Slovenia

The Association of Cultural Organizations Slovenia – ACOS (Zveza kulturnih organizacij Slovenije – ZKOS) is an institution that emerged after WWII as the Union of Cultural and Educational Societies and is related to the role that culture, art, and education played in the anti-fascist struggle during WWII. After the war, these societies renewed the network of municipal cultural centres and continued to develop programmes similar to those during the war. The government of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia had planned the development of workers' socialist art from this union, but it was never properly conceptualized. At different periods in history, the institution took care of its cultural programmes, through which they cultivated possibilities for talented young people to choose artistic professions, with varying intensity. ACOS was crucial for the development of contemporary dance in Slovenia after Neja Kos was employed as an expert to curate contemporary dance education and artistic programmes. The latter included: different workshops and seminars for pedagogues and dancers during the seasons, a network of schools and pedagogues for young dancers throughout Slovenia, The Summer Dance School (from 1981 onward with some gaps in between), The Winter Dance School (from the 1990s onward), The Dance Days Festival, the International

Competition of Young Dance Creators OPUS 1, the Živa Festival, etc. ACOS functioned as an agency for dancers to get international scholarships, a mediator between domestic and international dance contexts in many different ways, and a publishing house. During the 1990s, despite its accomplishments, its central role started to wane and the professionalization of contemporary dance brought forward new methodologies, practices, and approaches to different elements of the system beyond what ACOS could have planned. Nevertheless, it is important to recognize ACOS' and Kos' important role and fundamental contribution to the conditions that made the development of contemporary dance in Slovenia possible.

With the law of 1996, ACOS was renamed to Fund of the Republic of Slovenia for Amateur Cultural Activities and in 2000 renamed to the Republic of Slovenia Public Fund for Cultural Activities – PFCA (Javni sklad Republike Slovenije za kulturne dejavnosti – JSKD). After the retirement of Neja Kos in 2005, the choreographer and dancer Nina Meško got employed and continued developing the field in the frame of PFCA.

Ana Maletić School of Contemporary Dance

1954– · Croatia

The Ana Maletić School of Contemporary Dance is a primary and secondary art school, founded in 1954, rooted in the European modern dance tradition. It is the oldest institution of its kind in the Republic of Croatia and the former Yugoslavia. Since its



Ana Maletić with Studio Contemporary Dance Company, *Connections (Veze)*, 1963. Courtesy of Maja Đurinović.

inception, the school has been dedicated to promoting contemporary educational dance based on the movement and dance principles of Rudolf Laban, and musical education through movement inspired by Émile Jaques-Dalcroze's method of rhythm. Ana Maletić integrated these systems, developing her unique method of dance rhythmic education, which continues to be practised to this day.

Before founding the Ana Maletić School of Contemporary Dance, Maletić opened her first private School of Artistic Physical Education in 1932, shortly after returning from Belgrade, where she had studied under Maga Magazinović. At that time, there were several schools for rhythmic gymnastics and body culture in Zagreb. Besides Maletić's School of Artistic Physical Education (1932–1941), the dancer and choreographer Nevenka Perko had a rhythmic school, and Mirjana Janeček, acknowledged as a pioneering contemporary dance artist, choreographer, and pedagogue, founded a state-approved school of artistic dance culture (1930–1946). All three offered diverse programmes that included "modern medical-gymnastics, the science of movement harmony, professional training for teachers, a dance studio, music improvisation, free rhythms, and gymnastics and dance for children" (Đurinović 2008, 20). During this time, Maletić established a studio and organized evening performances showcasing the choreographies they did in the school. After WWII, in 1945, Maletić was licensed by the state

to operate her (second) School of Artistic Dance, which was soon after nationalized and renamed into the Zagreb Dance Stage (Zagrebačka plesna pozornica), where she continued as its director and choreographer: "This was the first effort in our country to create an independent ballet ensemble outside the national theatre groups. The Zagreb Dance Stage was dedicated primarily to making the art of dance accessible to the general public" (Maletić in Đurinović, 1985, 47). However, Zagreb Dance Stage was disbanded by the state in the fall of 1947. After that Ana Maletić was teaching, collaborating with LADO, the National Folk Dance Ensemble of Croatia founded in 1949, and preparing for the opening of the new school, which opened in 1954 as the only licenced public dance school in Yugoslavia.

Studio Contemporary Dance Company

1962– · Croatia

In 1962, building upon and expanding the school's programme, Ana Maletić and her daughter Vera Maletić founded the Studio Contemporary Dance Company (Studio za suvremeni ples), the first contemporary dance ensemble in Croatia and the region. The following year, the Studio organized its first dance evening, featuring performances choreographed



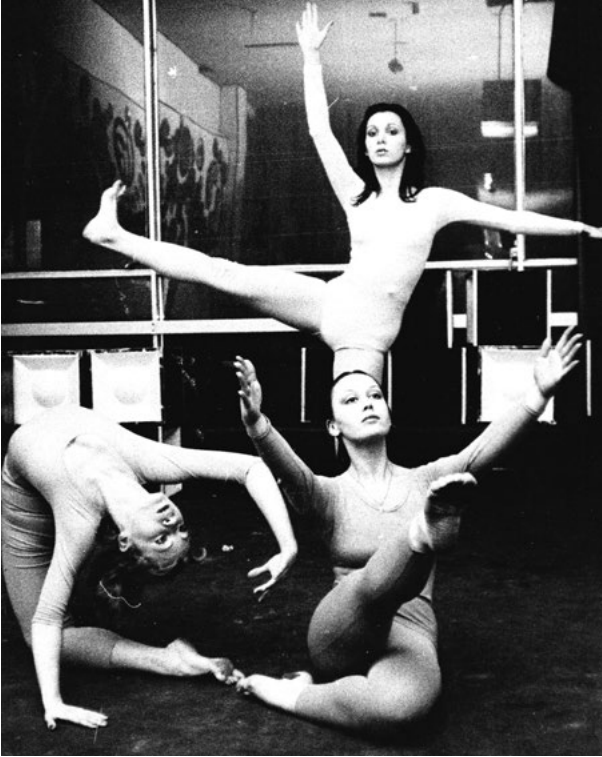
Ana Maletić with her students of the School of Contemporary Dance, 1960. Courtesy of Maja Đurinović.

by Vera and Ana Maletić. The artistic directors had different interests—Vera was increasingly focused on experimental approaches, contemporary Croatian music, and film, and later left the Studio to pursue an academic career in the field of dance, teaching at the Laban Centre for Movement and Dance in London and later continuing as a dance researcher at The Ohio State University. The Studio was then run by Ana for several years until 1968. Leadership changes within the Studio also brought stylistic shifts. Tihana Škrinjarić, artistic director from 1968 to 1979, introduced jazz dance from North America, which played a significant role in the local development of musicals at the Komedija Theatre, but also in rock operas, operettas, and drama plays. Studio collaborated with Croatian RTV, filming for TV shows like *Stage Lights (Svjetla pozornice)* through the 1970s, and worked with TV and theatre directors, including Anton Marti and Mario Fanelli. Over the years, Studio has produced and co-produced works in collaboration with numerous local and international choreographers exploring new expressions and approaches to dance.

Zagreb Dance Scene at Trešnjevka People's University

1971 • Croatia

In 1971, an early attempt to establish a dance institution took shape with the brief emergence of the Zagreb Dance Scene (Zagrebačka plesna scena) at the Trešnjevka People's University, today's Trešnjevka Cultural Centre (CeKaTe). The initiative came from the need for work and rehearsal space and was driven by Milana Broš, who united the prominent dance groups of the time. These included the Chamber Ensemble of Free Dance (KASP), the Studio Contemporary Dance Company led by Tihana Škrinjarić at the time, the Zagreb Dance Company (Zagrebački plesni ansambl) led by Lela Gluhak-Buneta, LADO, the National Folk Dance Ensemble of Croatia under the artistic leadership of Zvonimir Ljevaković, the Student Cultural and Artistic Association Ivan Goran Kovačić, and the School of Rhythmics and Dance led by Vlasta Kaurić. For a couple of years, these dance groups staged productions and premieres at Trešnjevka People's University as part of its broader programme. However, they lacked substantial infrastructural support, were responsible for selling their own tickets, shared the space with other users, and there was no real strategy to establish a dance centre. Eventually, the groups returned to their former theatre collaborations: KASP went back to the &TD Theatre, Studio Contemporary Dance Company to Komedija Theatre, and Zagreb Dance Company to Gavella Drama Theatre.



Katarina Stojkov Slijepčević's troupe, 1970s. Courtesy of Katarina Stojkov Slijepčević.

Katarina Stojkov Slijepčević

1945- • Serbia

As one of the stars from the Belgrade Contemporary Ballet troupe of Smiljana Mandukić, Katarina Stojkov Slijepčević is another prominent Yugoslav choreographer and dancer, whose expertise in modern dance (Martha Graham style) was noticed not only on film, stage, and TV in Yugoslavia/Serbia but also internationally. Stepping out from Mandukić's troupe in 1975, Stojkov Slijepčević initiated her first dance troupe—Experimental Ballet Troupe—gathering young dancers from a ballet high school and hiring them for various theatre, film, and TV projects. Besides numerous works and wide pedagogical and philological work (as an English translator), Stojkov Slijepčević's biggest contribution to the local dance scene was her initiatives to instigate dance troupes in each decade during the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, through which new generations of dance artists emerged. Her contribution is important as it marks the continuity of dance history outside institutions. Continuing to transfer the values of strong and independent females in (socialist) Yugoslav society, through modern dance expression, Stojkov Slijepčević took it a step further by occasionally introducing her dancers to a variety of approaches in performing arts from other notable artists: queer artist Lindsay Kemp (during the Bitef festival in 1979 and 1981) or theatre director Ljubiša Ristić, etc. In the 1990s Stojkov Slijepčević joined Ristić's theatre KPGT with her dance troupe for the purpose of KPGT productions. From this troupe stemmed today's most prominent choreographers and artists of the local and international scene of contemporary dance like Dalija Aćin Thelander, Bojana Mladenović, Isidora Stanišić, Dušan Murić, etc.

Dance Theatre Ljubljana

1985- • Slovenia

In the cultural and artistic restlessness of the 1980s and 1990s, Ksenija Hribar, together with her collaborators, decided to develop the cultural system of contemporary dance that she knew from her involvement in the establishment of British contemporary dance in the 1960s and throughout the 1970s in London, where she studied at the London Contemporary Dance School and danced in the London Contemporary Dance Theatre (produced and founded by Robin Howard's Dance Trust)

The founding team—Ksenija Hribar, Sinja Ožbolt, Breda Sivec, and Brane Završan—performed for the first time, along with Marko Mlačnik, in the *Adagio* (choreographed by Ksenija Hribar) as the Today for the Last Time (Danes zadnjikrat) collective at the Dance Days Festival at the Cultural and Congress Centre Cankarjev dom in December 1983, and Dance Theatre Ljubljana (Plesni teater Ljubljana – PTL) first performed under its name with the evening of dances *Baptism* at the world music festival *Druga godba* on 30th of May 1985 at the Križanke Summer Theatre Ljubljana. Yet, the significance of Dance Theatre Ljubljana in Slovenia is broader than a collective of artists. Dance Theatre Ljubljana was the incubator of artists as well as the system of production, advocacy, financing, education, postproduction, social security mechanisms, a dance guild as well as other elements of professionalism in the field of dance. Dance Theatre Ljubljana worked as the collective from 1985 to 1993, when it was restructured into a production house. In 1994, Živa Breclj, who took up the position of a producer, with her efforts of advocating managed to facilitate a venue on Prijateljeva 2 in the Prule district of Ljubljana where Dance Theatre Ljubljana still resides. In the first period after Slovenia became an independent republic, Dance Theatre Ljubljana played a significant role in facilitating contemporary dance and the basic conditions for work.



Ksenija Hribar, *Konzert (Konzert)*, 1985. Photographed by Božidar Dolenc. Courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art and Museum of Contemporary Art Metelkova (MG+MSUM).

Theatre Signum

1987-1993 • Serbia

Theatre Signum was the first professional dance company in the late 1980s in Serbia. The group initially started through self-organized peer gatherings in the Student Cultural Centre (SKC) in Belgrade, pursuing a common artistic creativity in their own dances in opposition to their other constant professional engagements: in musical theatre and jazz dance (Terazije Theatre in Belgrade) as well as in various independent art projects across Yugoslavia, working with some of the most prominent artists of that time—Ljubiša Ristić, Nada Kokotović, Petar Slaj, Damir Zlatar Frey, Arsa Jovanović, Josipa Lisac, Lepa Brena, etc. The group consisted of eight dancers: Anđelija Todorović, Tatjana Pajović, Dejan Pajović, Tatjana Popović, Vesna Stanojević, Danica Arapović, Svetlana Marković, and Nenad Čolić. In 1987, they officially formed themselves as Theatre Signum. In 1989, when the Bitef Theatre was established in Belgrade, the director Arsa Jovanović invited the group to officially become the first professional dance troupe of this theatre.

Their stage productions combined languages of avant-garde theatre, physical theatre, and modern dance, centred around narratives from literary drama classics (*The Tibetan Book of the Dead (Tibetanska knjiga mrtvih, 1987)*, *The House of Bernarda Alba (Dom Bernarde Albe, 1990)*, *The Picture of Dorian Gray (Slika Dorijana Greja, 1991)*, *Macbeth Seeking Macbeth (Magbet traži Magbeta, 1992)*). Each of these dance works—oscillating between non-verbal theatre expressions, gesticulations, and situations and a strong technical dance vocabulary—was in the main programme of the Bitef festival. Their last production, *Hair (Kosa, 1993)*, performed with one hundred young people on stage in front of the four-thousand-seat auditorium at the Sava Center, included the format and language of community theatre work, gathering professional and non-professional dancers, actors, and youth to send a strong anti-war message within the historical circumstances of that time. Still, this production raised a controversy among the public (and a complete revolt from the Theatre Signum members) when such a politically engaged project turned out to be financed by the most notorious criminal during the Yugoslav wars—Željko Ražnatović “Arkan.” The six years of Theatre Signum's existence mirrored the turbulent sociopolitical changes of Yugoslavia, ranging from complete institutional, national, and international recognizability, fame, and glory (touring at the most prestigious international and global festivals, with constant TV appearances, best performance awards like the SIZ Award in 1991, etc.), to the complete fallout in 1993, followed by the breakup of socialist Yugoslavia and the increasingly corruptive regime of Slobodan Milošević.



Dejan Pajović with Theatre Signum, *The House of Bernarda Alba (Dom Bernarde Albe)*, 1990. Courtesy of Anđelija Todorović.

EN-KNAP Group

EKG • 1993- • Slovenia

The international dance collective EN-KNAP was founded by choreographer and dancer Iztok Kovač in 1993 in Leuven (Belgium) under the production-management house STUK, however, a year later, it instituted its domicile also in Slovenia (EN-KNAP Productions). Already with its debuted performance *Spread Your Wings (You Clumsy Elephant)*, *Razširi krila (slon nerodni)* in the original, from 1993, based on the music of John Zorn, along with Kovač's solo *How I Caught a Falcon (Kako sem ujel sokola)*, 1991, which received the London Dance and Performance Award for the best annual international performance in Great Britain by the London magazine *Time Out*, the choreographer gained recognition in Slovenia and Europe and was the first person from the field of contemporary dance to be awarded with the most important national Prešeren Foundation Award. The changing collective organized around Kovač's choreographic work toured extensively all over the world in the period of the growing interest in contemporary dance in the changing world of arts and culture after the fall of the Berlin Wall. His signature choreographic style combines contemporary dance composition with the procedures of an open work (improvisation), as well as virtuous dance kinetics with the industrial worker's physicalities and the communal playfulness of minors from his hometown Trbovlje. In addition, his film production, six dance and eight documentary films, made mostly

in collaboration with Sašo Podgoršek, are a unique tribute to Trbovlje and certainly left a mark.

With an urge to secure more stable conditions, Kovač formalised the group in 2007 under the name EN-KNAP Group (EKG) which became, and still is, the only permanent professional ensemble for

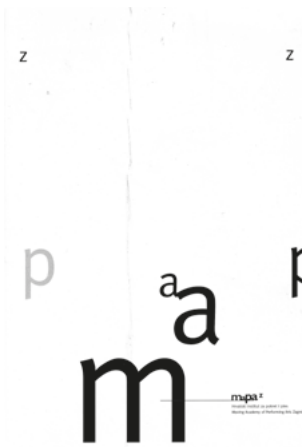


Iztok Kovač, *Spread Your Wings (You clumsy Elephant) (Razširi krila (slon nerodni))*, 1993. Photographed by G.B. Courtesy of EN-KNAP.

contemporary dance in Slovenia. It settled in 2009 in the venue Španski borci Culture Centre. The formalisation of the ensemble followed Kovač's vision of structuralization of a complex dance initiative. In that regard, EKG represents a transition from project to programme-based activities (and the associated new form of funding) and, in substance terms, a transition from project to repertoire programming. This enabled the group to gain time to study individual performances and manage its postproduction with ease while allowing it to organize its work over a longer period. Kovač selects dancers through international auditions, which accounts for their varied dance knowledge and cultural background. Transforming himself into the artistic director, he choreographs performances only occasionally and invites prominent domestic and international choreographers and theatre directors. In addition, Kovač has left some space for the dancers to create their work with or without the company.

The Croatian Institute for Movement and Dance

HIPP • 1990- • Croatia



Booklet of the Croatian Institute for Movement and Dance (HIPP), designed by Bruketa & Žinić OM, published around 1997 by HIPP. Courtesy of Maja Đurinović.

The Croatian Institute for Movement and Dance (Hrvatski institut za pokret i ples – HIPP) was founded by Mirna Žagar in 1990 as the first NGO in culture and has been dedicated to supporting independent contemporary dance in Croatia for over three decades now. As part of the Institute, numerous projects were developed to enhance the visibility and integration of Croatian artists on the international stage, including the Dance Week Festival (1984–) which they produce since early 1990s, or MAPA(Z) – Moving Academy for Performing Arts (Zagreb), initiated in 1992 by

Žagar in collaboration with the Dutch artist, mime pedagogue and producer Ide van Heiningen. Until 1999, MAPA(Z) was an education programme that brought together independent dance and theatre makers from across Europe. These seminars and workshops aimed to offer alternative models of professional training for artists working in the independent sector, focusing on dance and mime techniques, supporting mobility and collaboration. The programme also included sessions on cultural management, theatre technologies (such as interdisciplinary media, lighting, and video), and movement dramaturgy. Authors such as Ivana Muller, Andreja Božić, Jasna Vinovrški, Irma Omerzo, Žak Valenta, Edvin Liverić, and Marija Ščekić participated in MAPA(Z) activities as performers, researchers, and mentors.

Croatian Dancers Association

UPUH • 1996-

Association of Professional Dance Artists “PULS”

UPPU “PULS” • 2001- • Croatia

The first guild of its kind, the Association of Independent and Other Professional Dance Artists of Croatia, was founded in 1996 and changed its name to Croatian Dancers Association (Udruga plesnih umjetnika Hrvatske – UPUH) in 2007. It has around two hundred members from across Croatia and it serves as a platform for the self-organization of the dance community. It places a strong emphasis on union organizing and advocating for improved, fairer, and more productive working conditions for dance artists and cultural workers.

Another one, the Association of Professional Dance Artists “PULS” (Udruga profesionalnih plesnih umjetnika – UPPU “PULS”) founded by dancers and choreographers Ana-Maria Bogdanović and Katarina Đurđević, is a professional organization dedicated to supporting, advocating for the rights of, and promoting the recognition of professional dancers, pedagogues, and choreographers. Operating since 2001, “PULS” brings together professional dancers, choreographers, dance educators, and other experts in contemporary dance, with the goal of advancing and developing dance art in Croatia.

In 2022, both associations released the Professional Price List for Dance Artists, a document aimed at defining appropriate fees for choreographic, performance, and pedagogical work. Beyond establishing guidelines for fair compensation, it serves as a manual for understanding the labour and copyright rights of dance artists. Motivated by ongoing efforts to standardize work rights and compensation in contemporary dance in Croatia, this document addresses the current needs of the dance community. It also includes notes, recommendations, and instructions for drafting and signing copyright contracts, along with guidance on calculating fees. The document was preceded by earlier efforts within the NGO sector—the release of the professional price list for screenwriters, dramatists, and performance writers, created by the Croatian Screenwriters and Playwrights Guild, and the working document For Fairly Paid Work in Culture, published by the informal initiative For BREAD (Za KRUH).

Contemporary Dance Association Slovenia

CDAS • 1994- • Slovenia

The Contemporary Dance Association Slovenia – CDAS (Društvo za sodobni ples – DSPS) was founded on the 3rd of May 1994 in Ljubljana by a group of contemporary dance artists and cultural

workers: Iztok Kovač, Ksenija Hribar, Maja Delak, Suzana Koncut, and Eda Čufer. Between 1994 and 1999, its president was Ksenija Hribar (1938–1999). According to the available documentation, a professional association that would bring together artists and cultural workers in the field of contemporary dance had been contemplated at least since October 1985 when the idea was initiated by the circle of dancers and dance teachers around Neja Kos, who had been working at the then Association of Cultural Organizations Slovenia (ZKOS) as a contemporary dance expert since 1977. In the second half of 1985, the newly established Dance Theatre Ljubljana was in full creative swing, and its protagonist Ksenija Hribar was present at all initial meetings. However, it took another nine years for CDAS to be established by the Dance Theatre Ljubljana circle and its allies.

CDAS was one of the first professional associations established in the new state of Slovenia and was born of the need for the relatively invisible artistic practice to be provided with the conditions of social representation and systematic regulation. In the document CDAS General Guidelines, its members weigh up the state of affairs in the field, observing the following: (1) a deficit in the social representation of contemporary dance; (2) a lack of space (a lack of performance venues and particularly rehearsal space); (3) a lack of planning in the field of education and a need for a vertical structure in education; (4) a need for an international contemporary dance festival (familiarity with foreign production); (5) a qualitative deficit in the field of professional contemporary dance; (6) a need for a higher qualitative degree of critical, theoretical, and historical publications; and (7) a lack of documenting and archiving contemporary dance in Slovenia.

The CDAS 1994 programme included plans for the following: (1) a greater presence of contemporary dance in the media; (2) establishing a professional level that would regulate production and publication (theory and history) in the decision-making system (various professional bodies); (3) ensuring human resources in the field of theory and criticism; (4) historicizing Slovenian contemporary dance and its public accessibility; (5) establishing contemporary dance as an independent area with the Ministry of Culture; (6) analysing the work of major Slovenian choreographers; (7) resolving the legal status of dancers (a solution comparable to systems in other countries); (8) presenting educational programmes abroad, international networking; (9) a public cultural institution dedicated to contemporary dance; (10) involvement in decision-making on the allocation of funds at the Ministry of Culture in the field of contemporary dance; and (11) better knowledge regarding funds for financing this artistic practice.

After the death of Ksenija Hribar in 1999, CDAS lost its initial swing. In the first decade of the 2000s, the conditions for contemporary dance slightly improved with some systemic developments in the Republic of Slovenia, before they crashed because of various financial cuts in the period after 2008 and its

inability to follow the increasingly bigger dance scene. In 2009, CDAS became the producer of the Gibanica – Biennial of Slovenian Contemporary Dance Art and initiated the Contemporary Dance Network Slovenia, the dance touring plan throughout the state which ceased to function around 2013. It was not until 2023 that CDAS would be financially supported, for the first time, by the subsidies of the Republic of Slovenia.

Contemporary Dance Education Programme at the Secondary Preschool Education, Grammar School and Performing Arts Grammar School in Ljubljana

SVŠGUGL · 1999/2000- · Slovenia



Secondary Preschool Education, Grammar School and Performing Arts Grammar School Ljubljana (SVŠGUGL), *As the Ceiling Approaches the Floor (Ko se strop bliža tlu)*, 2023. Photographed by Anka Simončič. Courtesy of 2023 Živa Festival.

One of the biggest systemic achievements of an initial action plan of the Contemporary Dance Association Slovenia from 1994 was the realization and establishment of the high school programme for contemporary dance within the Slovene educational system, inaugurated with the school season 1999/2000 (Umetniška gimnazija – sodobni ples na Srednji vzgojiteljski šoli, gimnaziji in umetniški gimnaziji Ljubljana – SVŠGUGL). The choreographer, dancer, and pedagogue Maja Delak, who was actively involved in the preparation of the programme, defines the meaning of the educational programme as follows: “In 1994, the idea for a secondary school education programme was formed. The first initiative came from Vilma Rupnik and Neja Kos, President of the then Association of Cultural Organizations Slovenia, when discussing a reform of course curricula and programmes. The preparation of the proposal was assumed by the Contemporary Dance Association, the work itself being coordinated by me [Maja Delak] under the guidance of Ksenija Hribar. In 1997, the programme was approved. It was first offered a year

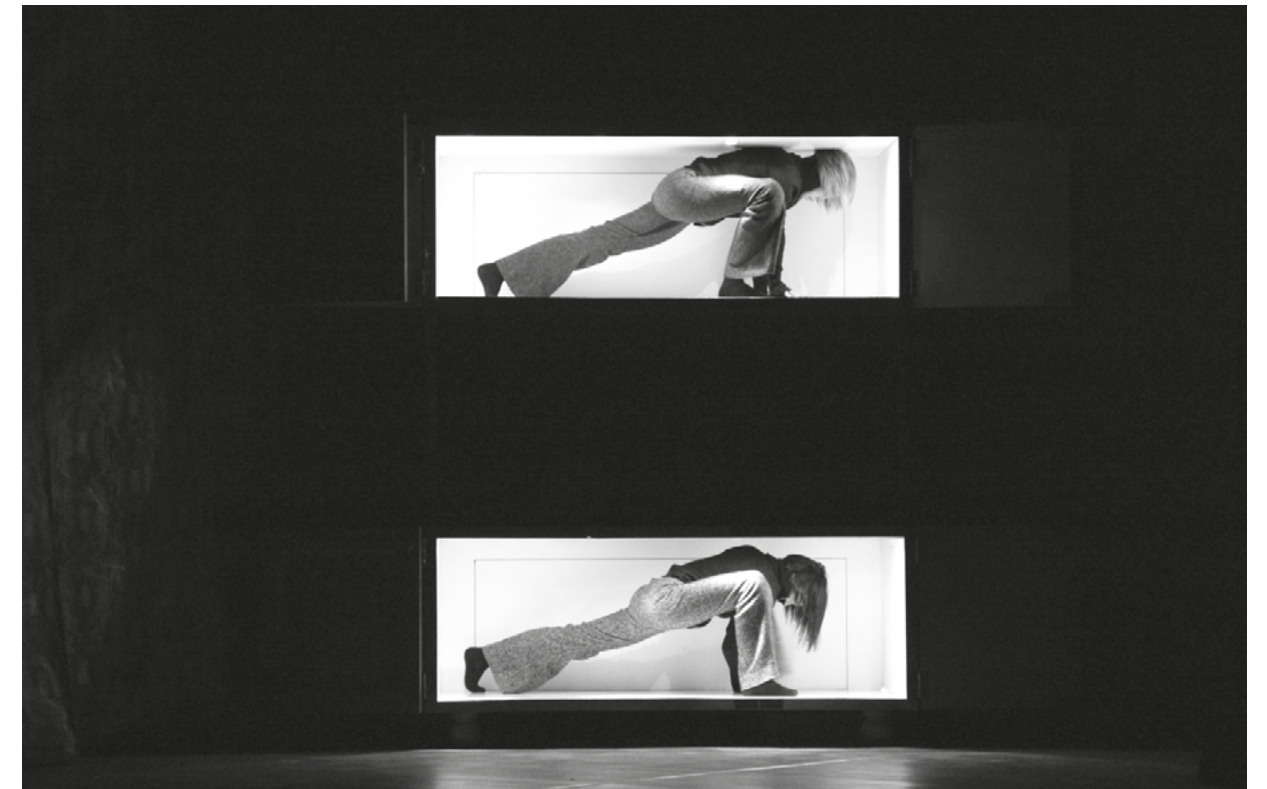
later than anticipated at the Secondary Preschool Education and Grammar School in Ljubljana twenty years ago. On 1 October 2018, the school changed its name to the Secondary Preschool Education, Grammar School and Arts School in Ljubljana. By acquiring a theatre or theatre and film programme, the school developed the artistic aspect and, in my opinion, the quality of the programme itself is at a high level. It is one of the rare institutions that has acquired new spaces for contemporary dance. By obtaining a baccalaureate after finishing the programme, the students have a wide variety of options for further study, as not everyone decides to pursue dance. A lot of former pupils are active in the field of dance: Ana Štefanec, Kaja Janjič, Barbara Kanc, Špela Medved, Aleš Čuček, Katja Legin, Evin Hadžialjevič, Ajda Tomazin, Nastja Bremec, Ana Romih, Jan Rozman, Nik Rajšek, Beno Novak, Veronika Valdes, Anamaria Klajnšček, Jerca Rožnik Novak and many others. The dance sphere works very well as a micro-organism, it is very diverse, which I think is important for an art school” (Delak 2019, 58–59).

Forum for New Dance

2002–2016 · Serbia

The Forum for New Dance (Forum za novi ples) functioned as an institutional entity within the Serbian National Theatre in Novi Sad (as part of the Ballet Department, which exists beside Drama and Opera) from 2002 to 2016, serving as a significant platform that bridged the aspirations of the independent dance scene and formal institutional frameworks. Established in 2002 by Andrew Peter Greenwood,

then director of ballet at the Serbian National Theatre, alongside Jasna Kovačić, Olivera Kovačević Crnjanski, Ivana Inđin, and Branko Popović, this initiative aimed to congregate dancers from the Serbian National Theatre around contemporary dance performances, which were incorporated into the theatre’s budget and repertoire. The project’s structure unfolded in multiple phases, initially emphasizing educational workshops that introduced a wide range of contemporary dance and theatre techniques. In addition, the Forum supported public presentations, video showcases, and performances by authors like Ivana Inđin, Branko Popović, Nandan Čirko, Dalija Aćin Thelander, Isidora Stanišić, Galina Borisova, and others, including collaborations with Saša Asentić, Dragana Bulut, Dragana Alfirević, Minja Bogavac, and Guy Weizman. This marked a pioneering effort to involve dancers from a national institution in contemporary dance practices and techniques, and the experimental work methods from the independent dance scene, thus expanding the traditional boundaries of their training and performance, fostering a space for innovation and experimentation, and contributing to the evolution of contemporary dance in the region. Operating within a conventional institutional and hierarchical framework while promoting a hybrid organizational structure, the dual nature allowed the Forum to function as a progressive force, a critical intervention in the cultural landscape, promoting a dialogic engagement with contemporary artistic practices. By providing a platform for both established and emerging choreographers and dancers, the Forum facilitated a dynamic exchange of ideas, enriching the cultural and artistic fabric of the Serbian National Theatre and the broader community.



Guy Weizman and Roni Haver with Forum for New Dance, *Language of Walls (Jezik zidova)*, 2005. Courtesy of Serbian National Theatre Archive.

Lokomotiva

2003- · North Macedonia



Curated programme by Biljana Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski and Violeta Kachakova, Art Spaces and Residencies Summit, 2020. Courtesy of Lokomotiva – Centre for New Initiatives in Arts and Culture.

Lokomotiva – Centre for New Initiatives in Arts and Culture was founded in 2003 in Skopje as a platform for education, reflection, production, curatorial endeavours, and research of contemporary arts and culture. It is continuously working on the development of the capacities and working conditions of artists and cultural workers, with a focus on contemporary performing arts, while understanding culture as an extended field co-related with society, and art as a post-disciplinary field that extends forms of expression, production, and dissemination. It has worked/is working on diverse international collaborations such as: Jardin d'Europe, Life Long Burning, ACT – Art, Climate, Transition, (Non) Aligned Movements: Strengthening contemporary dance in Western Balkans, Relmagine – green transition in the performing arts, International Summer School “Curating in Context,” which it co-leads, the discursive programme Critical Practice (Made in Yugoslavia), and Performance Platform Festival, among others.

As part of its working practice of sharing, Lokomotiva includes publishing in the field of contemporary theory and practice in culture and in the field of contemporary performing arts, thus, so far, it has published over 10 publications. Another practice of sharing is the programme Kultrening, offering free contemporary dance classes for the community. The organization is a co-founder of diverse initiatives, associations, and networks, including NDA, a regional network that actively works on the development of contemporary dance and performance in the region, JADRO – Association of the Independent Culture Scene in Macedonia, and Kino Kultura – Project Space for Contemporary Performing Arts and Culture. The organization is part of the European Dance Development Network (EDN) and the GPS/Global Practice Sharing Network.

Station

2005- · Serbia

Station Service for Contemporary Dance (Stanica Servis za savremeni ples, 2005–), an initiative founded in 2005 by more than fifty artists and cultural workers in contemporary dance and performing arts in Serbia, has consistently aimed to strengthen and structure this artistic community, enhance its visibility, and integrate it into cultural systems both locally and internationally. The organization's primary objectives include providing suitable professional working conditions for all active participants in the art scene in Serbia and the Balkan region. This is achieved through comprehensive programmes encompassing education, professional development, production, promotion, advocacy, and cultural policy. The broad scope of Stations's activities has facilitated the establishment of an extensive network of local and international partners, including Nomad Dance Academy, Life Long Burning, the Association Independent Cultural Scene of Serbia (Nezavisna kulturna scena Srbije), apap – advancing performing arts project, and numerous other individuals and organizations. Furthermore, it advocates for Balkan cultural cooperation, with its work through the NDA network, serving as a successful model of regional collaborative platforms. Station is committed to improving conditions for independent artists and cultural workers through activism, advocacy, and solidarity actions, while also collaborating with the academic community in cultural policy. The organization promotes contemporary dance from Serbia and the Balkans on the international stage through collaborative networks and international projects such as Jardin d'Europe, apap – advancing performing arts project, Identity Move!, Life Long Burning, Dance On, Pass On, Dream On, among others. The organization also emphasizes the production of new works, encouraging experimentation, transdisciplinary collaborations, and research.



The Neut Group, *Kolo*, 2022. Photographed by Luka Strika. Courtesy of Station Service for Contemporary Dance.

Bitef Dance Company

2009- · Serbia



Isidora Stanišić with Bitef Dance Company, *Revolutionary Room (Prostor za revoluciju)*, 2018. Photographed by Nenad Sugić. Courtesy of Bitef Dance Company.

Bitef Dance Company is a prominent contemporary dance company in Serbia, founded in 2009 as part of Bitef Theatre's mission to explore and promote contemporary dance. The establishment of the company marked a significant development in the contemporary dance scene in Serbia, providing a platform for innovative choreography and performance. The company is dedicated to exploring the boundaries of contemporary dance and often incorporates elements from other performing arts, including theatre, multimedia, and visual arts. This multidisciplinary approach is a hallmark of the company's work, although on the level of the style and the dance language itself, the company mainly nurtures a strong technical contemporary dance vocabulary. Bitef Dance Company frequently collaborates with international choreographers, dancers, and artists. These collaborations have been instrumental in elevating the company's profile and expanding its artistic repertoire. The company has gained recognition regionally, performing at various international festivals and venues. Their participation in these events has helped to increase the visibility of Serbian contemporary dance on the regional scene.

Kino Kultura

2015-2020 · North Macedonia

Kino Kultura – Project Space for Contemporary Performing Arts and Culture was developed, in a part of a privately-owned building, through a strategic alliance between two organizations: Theatre Navigator Cvetko and Lokomotiva – Centre for New Initiatives in Arts and Culture. The building, during SFRY, was known as Cinema Kultura (Kino Kultura) and became the property of the owners with the denationalization processes in the 1990s, in which the two organizations found the temporary infrastructure for the programmes of both organizations as well as supporting the work of the larger scene and making visible the

need for a new space for contemporary performing arts. They opened the space, which was reformed into a stage and programme with an emphasis on the performing arts as well as content developed by a larger community of citizens, reflecting recent and important questions in society. In the five years working as a space for contemporary performing arts and culture, Kino Kultura has become a positive example of a privately owned space, managed by private-civil (non-profit) cultural actors, with a public role manifested through its governing and programme.

The basic programme frame of Kino Kultura was composed of four programme lines: (1) programmes developed by the main partners, Theatre Navigator Cvetko and Lokomotiva, related to performing arts— theatre, dance and performance; (2) Open Space, a programme developed in collaboration with other organizations from the independent cultural scene and from the wider civil sector, individuals, and informal groups; and (3) Together, an animation and educational programme for the creative development of the larger community. The programme lines related to Theatre Navigator Cvetko and Lokomotiva were curated by the organizations' representatives, while Open Space and Together were open to proposals and not regulated by a selection process or defined by aesthetic criteria or curatorial concepts.

Aiming to test horizontal governing, as a base for further model development, the main partners developed the Advisory Body of Open Space. It was a temporary body composed of representatives from the independent culture and civil sectors, active in the field of culture, art, youth, and human and labour rights, with a mandate to develop a protocol for collaboration on the Open Space programme, which enabled the sharing of responsibilities about the space and programme implementation. Municipality support was received as a yearly project-based grant to Theatre Navigator Cvetko for the programme and space maintenance, which was insufficient and decreased each year. This was the reason that both partners had to fundraise additionally to enable the survival of the space. However, in 2021, during the COVID 19 pandemic crisis, the space stopped working due to a lack of financial stability and support.



Lobby of Kino Kultura. Courtesy of Lokomotiva – Centre for New Initiatives in Arts and Culture.

Self-Organization, Solidarity, and Care Re-examined

In the post-Yugoslav region, contemporary dance developments have been driven by formal and informal collaborative initiatives that experiment, propose, and develop alternative models for producing, disseminating, and organizing within the dance field. New working modes encompass different explorations of horizontality that include self-organization as a mode of production, but also creation, commonality, solidarity actions, and a convivial environment for collaboration. The attempt to map, locate, and determine the various ways in which collaborative efforts were initiated, sustained, and evolved from the 1990s or early 2000s to the present day necessarily evokes the complexities and paradoxes inherent in these questions. By simply listing the various spaces, networks, collectives, and platforms, a heterogeneous set of agents within the dance scene was encountered, with nuanced approaches to the issues of self-organization, solidarity, and care.

One of the concerns is that solidarity, if applied to the entire dance scene, often appears to be largely artificial and tied to financial considerations. For example, in Slovenia in 2003 and 2004, when the Ministry of Culture and the Municipality of Ljubljana established a several-year funding programme intending to provide basic stability to the NGO sector, the result was a significant increase in competition and class disparities between individuals and organizations who received funding and those who did not. Despite some collaborations between individuals or organizations, occasional projects, and guilds, such as Contemporary Dance Association Slovenia or Asociacija, Association of Arts and Culture NGOs and Freelancers, based on mutual interest, stronger and continuous affiliations between more numerous NGOs are rare. This situation highlights more complex social issues that condition all types of relationships and forms of production, including artistic ones that also include dance at least in some way. Being aware of the differences and complexities, this text outlines the principles behind various initiatives.

Self-organization stands out as the dominant organizational and artistic approach across various initiatives and, as a collaborative system, fosters the development of new skills and subverts the verticality in the creative and working processes with shifting professional roles, creating an environment of solidarity actions and care. One may say that such a system is not effective and productive as it is based on different temporalities. Many soft skills are needed that involve long-term negotiations, intentions, dedication, and persistence for transforming the processes, but also failures. Part of the contemporary dance field in the region, which has been strongly related to the ‘independent scene,’ incorporated such politics of work, both in production and artistic creation, exploring and incorporating diverse approaches based on care for the collective and working processes, where the redistribution of power and resources is a central concern.

Self-organization is also linked to a self-management concept, a term connected to the democratic industrial and political processes in the SFRY. Biljana Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski, in her book *Modelling Cultural and Art Institutions* (2021, 65–66), writes about self-management as an organizational and production model that was tied to workers and workers’ councils as a sovereign authority and was historically associated with a range of political ideas rooted in labour movements. Regardless of the fact that the principles of self-organization have been present for decades, they regained significance for the development of the independent scene, particularly in the countries of the former Eastern bloc where autonomous spaces were no longer state-created, highlighting a growing need for their independent production (Vilenica 2006, 101) and also as a way of self-articulation of the independent scene. In that regard, self-organization is not merely a production-management model but also a theoretical problem and an artistic-poetic position that reflects on work procedures and cultural policy issues (Vujanović 2006, 63).

Living in a system in which contemporary capitalism is extensively pressing toward art economies, sharpening and preconditioning all the soft spots, the dance scene insists on the creation of spaces, excesses, or environments of the ‘unknown’ where otherness can emerge and where the scene can jointly work through playful, caring, and self-organized engagements. Rooted in the legacy of the former Yugoslavia, self-organization as a model for organizing collaborative efforts has been transformed into new practices, evolving into a theoretical and artistic-poetic stance that informs contemporary approaches while creating potentially autonomous spaces for artistic work. It offers an organizational model in the art sphere, serving as a possible alternative to the capitalist structuring of art relations and production.

With the continuous lack of rehearsal and presentation spaces in Slovenia, advocacy processes and solidarity actions became of central importance, enabling conditions for the contemporary dance scene. In that regard, one of the most interesting is Kino Šiška, a former cinema that closed its doors in 2001 after the opening of the multiplex cinema Kolosej. Goran Bogdanovski and Dejan Srhoj, who left Ljubljana’s national ballet ensemble and founded the NGO Fičo Ballet in 2000, were promised a rehearsal studio from the municipality—a promise that was not kept. Bogdanovski found a vacant cinema, Kino Šiška, and negotiated its usage until the city “decided what to do with the building” (Bogdanovski 2022, 74). Even though they functioned without financial support, the Cultural and Congress Centre Cankarjev dom helped them to build a stage and borrow some basic equipment. Between 2002 and 2007, Kino Šiška became the central space for contemporary dancers and almost 80% of dance productions in Ljubljana were created there. The second example is the Old Power Station – Elektro Ljubljana (Stara mestna elektrarna – Elektro Ljubljana, SMEEL, 2004–). The Municipality of Ljubljana and The Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Slovenia have reached

an agreement with the company Elektro Ljubljana regarding the free rental of their non-used building, mainly as a rehearsal space for the performing arts, representing a civil-public partnership. The venue's management was passed to Bunker, an NGO established in 1997, which was chosen during a public tendering period of five years with a possibility of renewing the contract. The venue became of central importance for the entire performing arts scene but, with time—due to the growing needs of the scene—it has been acknowledged primarily as a presentational rather than a rehearsal space. Bunker managed to rent out another space from Elektro Ljubljana, Union Hall (Sindikalna dvorana – Elektro Ljubljana), as an additional rehearsal space, for a symbolic price from 2014 until its renovation in 2024.

Another private rehearsal space widely used by dance and contemporary circus artists is Studio Vitkar (2008–), established by choreographer Branko Potočan and his Vitkar Institute (1994–). After its demolition in 2023—as the land was bought and transformed into a residential complex—Potočan found an empty warehouse and managed to renovate it with help from the Ministry of Culture and their decretal funds. Since the beginning, Potočan offered the studio to the scene for a symbolic contribution, from which he pays the rent. A similar gesture was made by choreographer Mateja Bučar and her DUM Association (initiated with Vadim Fishkin in 1999), managing the DUM project space in the centre of Ljubljana. Founded in 2003 as the Gregor Podnar Gallery, for the first few years, DUM Association paid a relatively high rent to the Municipality of Ljubljana but, after several years of negotiation, they managed to reach an agreement for free rent, thus operating under similar conditions as other NGOs that operate in the properties that belong to the municipality. After Podnar moved his gallery to Vienna in 2014 and later to Berlin, DUM Association continued to operate as the DUM project space, committed to presenting, supporting, and reflecting on various fields of contemporary art, from performing arts, contemporary dance, and visual art practices, to art theory and critique. Especially in recent years, the space has become a sanctuary for the contemporary dance community. A solidary principle is pivotal also for Cirkulacija 2, a transdisciplinary art collective, functioning on a self-management basis and organized into the Association for interdisciplinary, independent art production and the circulation of contemporary art (2007–). The collective is socially engaged and was situated in the Autonomous Factory Rog¹ until they moved in 2014 to the larger premises of the former wholesale shop in the defunct Tobacco Factory complex (Tobačna), where they stayed until 2019, when the premises were sold and they were forced to move out. In 2020, they found a semi-temporal venue and production space in the Ajdovščina Underpass, where they are allowed to stay until the city cinema is built. Cirkulacija 2 is open to the community and have been occasionally used by contemporary dancers since early on. Another outstanding example of civic-private partnership is GT22 in Maribor, named after the address of the building on the Main Square 22 (Glavni trg 22). Situated in the centre of the city, the spaces, approximately one thousand square metres in size, owned by the Oset-Puppis family, were offered for use to the Foundation Sonda at the beginning of 2013. This NGO decided to share it with the local artistic community. They renovated the former warehouse factory and the former nightclub through voluntary work and conceptual inputs, with the support of the city, the state, and friends. For the first five years, they could use it for free, now organizations that settled there are paying non-commercial rent. The so-called interdisciplinary laboratory serves various cultural and artistic activities, including contemporary dance.

¹ The former bicycle factory Rog (that shut down in 1991) was squatted in 2006 as a critical response to the post-socialist transition process (privatization and de-industrialization) and the erosion of public and social spaces (individualization and atomization of society). Until its violent demolition in 2022, around 30 relatively self-sufficient and autonomous spaces operated, among which was also an improvised dance studio. More information at: <https://radar.squat.net/en/ljubljana/avtonomna-tovarne-rog> (accessed September 29, 2024).

In Croatia, the TALA Dance Center (2000–), a private venue and organization with the same name, has been dedicated to the development of contemporary dance, providing space for individuals and groups to rehearse and create new works. Its management team decided to open the doors to the artists during the day time, while later using it for commercial projects (various dance classes) from which they also cover the rent for the space. Pogon – Zagreb Centre for Independent Culture and Youth (2005–) presents a specific model of a civil-public institution that supports dance as well as other artistic practices and other self-organized initiatives. Another example is Experimental Free Scene (EkS-scena, 2001–2006), a self-organized initiative focused on dance education, practice-sharing, and connecting the Croatian dance community with the European scene, responding to the lack of structured education and performance spaces in the field.

In Belgrade, Station Service for Contemporary Dance was founded in 2005 by more than 50 artists and cultural workers in contemporary dance and performing arts in Serbia. From 2007, Station has been located in Magacin Cultural Centre, a former warehouse space that is formally administered by Belgrade Youth Centre, but, in reality, it has been self-organized and self-managed by different actors on the independent cultural scene and its legal status is still unresolved. This open space with horizontal and non-hierarchical organization has become an important germinator for different dance practices and smaller (dance) collectives that include street dance, hip-hop, breakdance, etc.

In North Macedonia, Kino Kultura – Project Space for Contemporary Performing Arts and Culture (2015–2020) was established in a part of a privately-owned building as a temporary infrastructure for Lokomotiva – Centre for New Initiatives in Arts and Culture and Theatre Navigator Cvetko. Through its programmes, Kino Kultura was the only space that supported the dance developments of the scene and was shared with performing arts communities as well as the larger civil society. Besides Kino Kultura, the Socio-Cultural Space – Centre Jadro in Skopje (2012–) is based on a civil-public model of governance and in its capacities offers space to self-organized dance initiatives. Other than these, there are many private studios around commercially organized dance programmes, which are not accessible as spaces for rehearsals and presentations.

Questions of self-organization and solidarity became dominant and articulated in projects such as Festival Pokretnica (2015–) in Novi Sad, Temporaries (2011–2013) and in theoretical-artistic research such as Examining Communitas (2011–2016) in Belgrade, Co-existing (2016) in Skopje, and Pleskavica festival (2011) in Ljubljana. They become essential in the model on which NDA is based, together with the NDA programme Nomad Dance Advocates from 2005 onward. We can also present some other projects to outline the possible forms of solidarity with and between the people active in the dance scene. In Slovenia, Temporary Creative Platform (Začasna ustvarjalna platforma, 2020) was initiated by Dragana Alfirevič, Rok Vevar, and Jasmina Založnik in response to the Covid-19 pandemic when, due to the restriction on gatherings, all artistic events were cancelled and artists—many of whom were self-employed and not eligible for the 'universal basic income' that the government offered—unexpectedly found themselves without their project incomes. Temporary Creative Platform invited 16 artists from various art disciplines to research one of three topics (public space/architecture and dance, intersectionality and dance, transfer of knowledge between generations) for which they were granted some money. Another example is Neodvisni.art (2019–), initiated by the Maska Institute and Via Negativa as a platform for reflection on the NGO scene working in the field of performing arts—a reaction to the lack of critical writing about NGO productions in the daily media—to which organizations would contribute some resources.

Temporality Catasters of Spaces (Katastri začasnosti prostorov, 2024), organized by Maska and NDA Slovenia in collaboration with Kino Šiška Centre for Urban Culture, was launched as a series of conversations to reflect on the modes of governmentality and agency that emerge within the formation of communities and the management of spaces, to consider the divides between private and public, governmental and non-governmental, institutional and non-institutional, and to map spatial dynamics. Its aim is also to bring forward new possible models for managing spaces, influencing the Municipality of Ljubljana and the Ministry of Culture to rethink and set more flexible and collaborative organizational models of their infrastructure in the future. The last selected example is the project 20 metres in length, 9 metres in width, and 4 metres in height (20 metrov v dolžino, 9 metrov v širino in 4 metre v višino, 2024) conceptualized by Sabrina Železnik and Teja Reba in the frame of Contemporary Dance Association Slovenia to outline the urgency for suitable infrastructure, rehearsal spaces, stable funding, and an institution for dance. The project's title is derived from the dimensions of a modular studio designed for contemporary dance that never reached the dance community. Its conceptual outline offered space for artistic presentations, first on the International Dance Day in Ljubljana and later in other Slovenian cities.

Besides spaces, different projects, and collaborations, the question of care has increasingly emerged as a central interest in contemporary dance performances. Through choreography, dancers were not only addressing care as a thematic element but embodying it in their processes, as introduced in performances such as *Exposé* (2014) and *Closeness of Touch (Blizina dodira, 2022)* by Igor Koruga or *Only Mine Alone (Samo moje, 2016)* by Igor Koruga and Ana Dubljević, focusing on rare diseases or depression as a public feeling. The shift becomes even more evident in works like *Still to Come: A Feminist Pornscape* (2017) by Rahel Barra, Ida Daniel, Ana Dubljević, Frida Laux, and Zrinka Užbinec, which explores care as an embodied (feminist) practice. Artists propose embodied care and practicing dramaturgy as care. Not only to care 'for' and care 'about,' but to care 'with.' From a feminist perspective, care challenges traditional power dynamics and hierarchies, offering alternative ways of relating, creating, and performing. In the context of dance performance *All Four One. Brundle. Chaos (Sve četiri za jedno. Na rubu dodira i kaosa, 2017)*, a work by Croatian choreographer and dancer Ana Kreitmeyer, created in collaboration with Martina Tomić, Ivana Pavlović, and Petra Chelfi, explores choreography as a shared space of encounter. Emerging after protests and activist efforts by the Croatian dance scene around irresponsible management of public resources, the performance highlights choreography as means of organizing (self) work, negotiation, and community, while also addressing fatigue, resistance, and resignation. In *Spores (Spore, 2016)*, the Croatian collective BAD.co's work explores the never-ending cycle of maintenance work. We maintain our bodies, homes, families, plants, friendships, relationships, cleanliness, clothing, infrastructure, organizations, spaces, and technology. This constant maintenance forms the invisible foundation that supports all other work and creativity, yet it frequently becomes an obstacle to uninterrupted productivity and artistic creation.

We have to admit that self-organization, solidarity, and care are terms that have come to be widely used in art-related activities and discussions in the last few years, and have become somewhat jargonized, trendy concepts without true implementation. The challenge lies in discerning the fine line where these concepts are co-opted by the capitalist logic of governance, even within the realm of artistic practice. We can find one of the most comprehensive and up-to-date critiques on the subject of care in Bojana Kunst's book *The Life of Art: Transversal Lines of Care (Življenje umetnosti: prečne črte skrbi, 2021)*. Offering a wide range of perspectives and considering the implications of care within artistic practices

and broader sociopolitical contexts, Kunst also addresses problems of precarity, artistic labour being undervalued and undercompensated, and the challenges artists face in maintaining sustainable practices in contexts where economic and social support structures are inadequate. She argues that while traditional institutions play a significant role in the art scene, non-institutional spaces such as artist-run initiatives and informal networks are crucial for fostering innovation, experimentation, and alternative forms of engagement with art. We might add that non-institutional spaces are also spaces for learning, exchange of knowledge and experience, interdependence, and solidarity. Cultural and art institutions often perpetuate colonial structures through mechanisms of representation, which can be understood as a tool for maintaining control and dominance, rather than cultivating authentic equality or intercultural understanding. Even when aiming for progressive change, these institutions may inadvertently reinforce hierarchies between cultures and peoples, thus sustaining the very systems they seek to dismantle. Within this framework, acts framed as care or improvement can become instruments of oppression, masking or justifying violence under the guise of benevolence. In *The Delusions of Care*, curator Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung writes about care practiced by institutions as a mere performative act, without a genuine interest in sustainable change. His critique also applies to the recent trend of thematizing the notion of care in the theoretical discourse of art and culture, where there is often a disconnect between the discourse itself and the practical ways in which it is implemented by academics, theoreticians, and the institutions with which they are affiliated (Vujanović et al. 2023).

We understand care as a fundamental aspect of how artists engage with their work and their communities, how artists care for their own creative processes, their collaborators, and the wider societal implications of their art. As seen in the organization of the independent dance scene within the post-Yugoslav context, care is manifested through work politics focused on creating and maintaining non-hierarchical systems which involve diverse organizations and initiatives across the region, developing support networks and sharing resources such as funds, spaces, and knowledge both locally and regionally. This approach draws on legacies intertwined with working principles that reflect a commitment to collective sustainability and support. In this way, dance in the ex-Yugoslav region has always persisted in exploring the working processes through solidarity, care, and self-organization. There are failures but also transformations in working environments and aesthetic shifts that reshape struggles into creation, reflection, and presentation of dance practices in the region, anchoring them in social issues that are intersectional and connected to the experiences of intersectional bodies.

List of Examples

TALA Dance Center

2000- · Croatia

Pogon

2005- · Croatia

Communal and Gathering Formats

Slovenia

Walking Theory (TkH): Deschooling Classroom

2009-2012 · Serbia

Dušan Bročić, Ana Dubljević, Igor Koruga, Marko Milić, Jovana Rakić Kiselčić, Ljiljana Tasić: Temporaries

2011-2013 · Serbia

Ana Vujanović and Saša Asentić: Examining Communitas

2011-2016 · Serbia

Practicable

2015- · Serbia

Kultrening

2016- · North Macedonia

FUTUR II

2018 · Croatia

Discursive Formations: *Maska, Frakcija, TkH*

Slovenia · Croatia · Serbia

Kretanja/Movements Dance Magazine

2002- · Croatia

Critical Practice (Made in Yugoslavia)

2013- · Serbia · North Macedonia

International Summer School “Curating in Context”

2019-2024 · North Macedonia

Co-existing

2016 · North Macedonia

ARCHIVES AND DATABASES:

Choreographers Directory Slovenia

Slovenia

Culture.si

Slovenia

(Non)Aligned Dance Archive

Slovenia · Serbia · Croatia · North Macedonia

BADco. Archives

2023- · Croatia

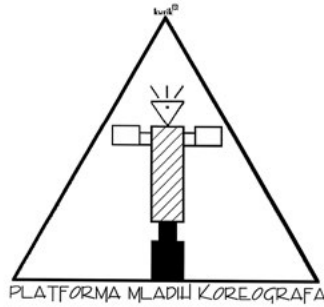
Jovana Rakić Kiselčić and Željka Jakovljević, *Flock (Jato)*, 2023.
Photographed by Aleksandra Marković.
Courtesy of 2023 Pokretnica festival.



TALA Dance Center

2000- · Croatia

TEATAR "EXIT"
14. svibnja 2000.
u 18:00 sati



Poster of the first Edition of Platform of Young Choreographers, 2000. Courtesy of TALA Dance Center.

The TALA Dance Center is a non-profit artistic organization founded in the early 2000s by dancers and choreographers Larisa Lipovac Navojec and Tamara Curić. Committed to the popularization of contemporary dance among children, young people, and adults, TALA is known for offering a variety of dance classes and workshops, as well as producing art projects and festivals.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, a lack of dedicated performance

spaces for long-term, systematic programming led dance organizations to adopt festival formats as a more viable option. Among the earliest initiatives was TALA's Platform of Young Choreographers (Platforma mladih koreografa, 2000), now known as Platforma HR (since 2010), which provided a context for presenting contemporary dance works in the absence of stable locations. Since its inception, the platform has played a vital role in supporting the growth of and strengthening the Croatian dance scene, offering emerging artists their first opportunities to showcase their work and education through workshops. Since 2021, Platforma HR has transformed into a year-round programme of artistic residencies, coproductions, and collaborations that provides the conditions for the creation, exploration, performing, contextualization, and promotion of artistic projects, with a focus on the exchange of artistic knowledge and experiences. TALA also produced and co-produced various projects such as the interactive dance magazine and project TASK (2011–2019), the platform for the development of contemporary dance for young audiences Kliker and the Kliker festival (2013–2019), and the Streetforma festival of street dance and experimental theatre (2015–2022), all of which have contributed to the diversification and accessibility of dance. For over two decades, TALA has advocated for better working conditions and has remained an important resource for the Zagreb dance scene, especially in addressing the community's ongoing challenges with limited spatial capacities. For example, during the initial years of the Dance Department at the Academy of Dramatic Art (ADU), classes were held at the TALA Dance Center due to the department's lack of sufficient space.

Pogon

2005- · Croatia

Pogon, one of the most prominent cultural and social centres in Zagreb today, dedicated to fostering independent culture, contemporary art, and youth activities, emerged as a direct outcome of the advocacy and activism of organizations dedicated to addressing the lack of infrastructure for independent cultural activities in the early 2000s. It was initiated by a coalition of NGOs that included two national networks: the Clubture Network, which focused on independent culture, and the Croatian Youth Network, which represented youth organizations. This coalition also included the local collaborative platform Zagreb – Cultural Capital of Europe 3000, and three independent cultural clubs: Močvara, Autonomous Cultural Center – Attack!, and The Multimedia Institute – club MaMa.

In early 2005, the coalition began a thorough advocacy campaign. This marked the first time that the needs of Zagreb's independent culture and youth were clearly defined, publicly debated, and formalised in a policy document that was endorsed by future political decision-makers. In tandem with public discussions, media campaigns, and protest actions, the coalition launched a series of events called Operation:City, each year addressing a key issue related to urban development. Through diverse artistic expressions, these events temporarily took over abandoned spaces and promoted the concept of a cultural centre. These joint efforts led to the establishment of Pogon – Zagreb Centre for Independent Culture and Youth, officially co-founded in 2008 by the City of Zagreb and the Operation: City organization. Together, they manage the centre, making it the first public institution in Croatia founded on the principle of a civil-public partnership. Today Pogon plays a significant role in the city's cultural landscape by providing a space for diverse artistic and social activities, including performances, exhibitions, workshops, and community projects. It is a space that facilitates the work and visibility of the dance community.



Programme of Platforma HR at Pogon – Zagreb Centre for Independent Culture and Youth, 2013. Photographed by Dinko Matijašević-Dinac. Courtesy of TALA Dance Center.

Communal and Gathering Formats

Slovenia



No!training Lab, Eating, Socializing, Reflecting, and Performing at CoFestival 2016. Photographed by Urška Boljkovac. Courtesy of 2016 CoFestival.

Besides project-based work or educational programmes, contemporary dance has been an incredible agent of communal forms and micro-societies that emerged out of the common work in dance. Throughout history, these kinds of communities had manifested in a variety of forms and emergencies, but their spontaneity makes their mappings very hard to evidence. Some of its forms are connected with body training, project and praxis developments, while others have only a function of gathering—of meeting through dance. The development of dance improvisation practices has catalysed in number of initiations. From this aspect it is necessary to mention an ongoing improvisation format that connects jazz and contemporary musicians with dancers, *Neforma (Non-Form)*, which is a series of performative improvisations organized by composer and musician Tomaž Grom and producer and curator Spela Trošt in the frame of Sploh Institute. From its initial edition in 2010, *Neforma*, which had its 109th edition in August 2024, has hosted an overwhelming number of domestic and international artists and managed to build a community of very loyal spectators.

Returning to the past, one of the most important generators of the Slovenian dance community

were Dance Theatre Ljubljana's morning classes (1984–2008), which exchanged international and domestic dance pedagogues and mixed professionals with those on the way to becoming ones. As (almost) everyone from the sector, including the emerging dancers, took part in the morning classes, they represented the dance scene's fundamental social cohesion. Its abolishment was a consequence of a fall in attendance, together with the absence of rehearsal directors to maintain the quality of the classes, as they had in the past, marking a paradigmatic change in the Slovene dance community which became stratified.

From the side of the professional dance community, the research-based and developmental formats of gatherings have been another generator of the professional dance community in Slovenia. The choreographer and dancer Nina Meško brought the practice of the lab and experimental work from her visits to New York in the 1990s and early 2000s. In collaboration with Dance Theatre Ljubljana, she initiated the Dance Lab, which would host the artists at the venue and organize their semi-finished work presentations.

A more recent example could be found in temporary collectives of dancers. One such example is the No!training Lab that was initiated by Katja Legin in Ljubljana (2013). After receiving sufficient funding, instead of spending it on her own work, she decided to invite a group of dancers and performers to work together in the studio and research 'variations on slowness.' The result of these continuous gatherings was a series of performances with the same title.

However, not only dance practice forms a community around itself. Similar examples can also be found in discursive formats. One of the important gathering places in that regard was Maska's Seminar of Contemporary Performing Arts (2006–) with its programmes that would seasonally host international guests and domestic lecturers. Already the few selected examples mentioned could serve as evidence that such initiatives have been an important endeavour in the development of the public sphere in contemporary dance.

Walking Theory (TkH): Deschooling Classroom

2009-2012 · Serbia

The project Deschooling Classroom (Raškolovano znanje)—with Ana Vujanović, Marta Popivoda, and Iskra Geshoska as co-authors and editors of the project—was initiated by the Walking Theory (TkH) platform in Belgrade in partnership with Kontrapunkt in Skopje, exploring and proposing alternatives to traditional hierarchical educational models in art and culture focused on the notions of individual authorship and expertise. Thus, this project promoted open, collective educational frameworks where self-organized communities enabled horizontal knowledge production, exchange, and distribution. The primary aim was to raise awareness of the potential for self-education

and foster the sharing of critical knowledge among practitioners in the arts and culture—especially within Balkan independent cultural scenes during the period of transition. Additionally, the project aimed to encourage collaboration among those interested in challenging the existing cultural system, critiquing the conceptual and infrastructural setup of cultural institutions, and establishing new support structures for independent cultural scenes. Deschooling Classroom drew inspiration from international trends in alternative education that emerged in the late 20th century, grounded in contemporary critical theory, with significant influences from Jacques Rancière's *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, Jean-Luc Nancy's theories on collaboration and belonging, and Ivan Illich's radical concepts in *Deschooling Society*. The project was organized into two cycles, with each 'generation' of participants going through a process of collective self-education. Each generation comprised three to four working groups focused on specific themes related to the project's overarching goals.



Ana Vujanović, Marta Popivoda, and Iskra Geshoska, *Deschooling Classroom* (Raškolovano znanje), 2009-2012. Courtesy of Station Service for Contemporary Dance.

Dušan Bročić, Ana Dubljević, Igor Koruga, Marko Milić, Jovana Rakić Kiselčić, Ljiljana Tasić: Temporaries

2011-2013 · Serbia

Temporaries was an artistic project launched in 2011 by six contemporary dance and performance artists associated with Station in Belgrade. The project aimed to explore and challenge the concept of a 'local dance community' amid Serbia's unstable social and political climate, characterized by a conservative government, a lack of cultural policy, minimal funding, and inadequate spaces for artistic work. The artists sought to establish residencies and performance opportunities to ensure the continuity of their work, not by forming a collective but by collaborating individually. The project's outcome was a durational performance bearing the same name. The audience participated in a picnic with an artistic-cultural programme, divided into two non-communicating

groups. Each group was further split into smaller units on picnic blankets, adhering to the same rules as their larger group. One group played a charades-style game to guess terms related to social and artistic conditions (e.g., solidarity, precarity) performed by six artists. Successful guesses earned individual high-quality picnic items (e.g., champagne, chocolate cake), which could not be shared. The other group received shared goods and collectively decided how to connect the guessed terms with the performative materials. Materials and principles could be connected in various ways—depending on the group's decisions. This setup implicated the audience in shaping the event's dynamics, blurring the lines between representational and social aspects of performance. The event's direction varied, reflecting a dynamic interplay between aesthetic and social dimensions, creating an antagonistic playground where everything that appears, which is to be seen and heard on the (public) stage, becomes a potential agent of the social.

Ana Vujanović and Saša Asentić: Examining Communitas

2011-2016 · Serbia

Examining Communitas (*Communitas na ispitu*) was an art project that consisted of theoretical-artistic research and the performance *On Trial Together* (2012). The research explored various historical and contemporary forms of social, cultural, and artistic performances that 'spectacularized' the collective and mass body within the social systems that characterized the 20th century, as well as within the participants' own life experiences in Eastern socialism and Western neoliberal capitalism. Additionally, it examined contemporary dance as an artistic discipline that emancipates and brings visibility to the liberated individual body. The research behind this project continued with an analysis of each specific sociopolitical context in which the performance *On Trial Together* was to be presented, allowing for the performance to contextually resonate with the specific issues and dynamics of each location, to be thematically rich, ethically sound, and deeply engaging for its audiences. It contributed



Ana Vujanović and Saša Asentić, *On Trial Together* (*Communitas na ispitu*), 2012. Courtesy of Walking Theory (Teorija koja Hoda – TkH).

to the exploration of collective responsibility, justice, and the role of the individual within a group.

The performance *On Trial Together* itself was a hybrid public event that merged elements of a theatrical play, a choreographic score, a social game, and a happening. It was staged in a theatre venue, reaffirming the role of theatre in the symbolization of society. However, the stage was re-appropriated and transformed into a public space where citizens could discuss issues important to their society and speculate about its future through fictional constructions. The performance was based on principles of social live-action/role-playing games and simulations, inviting all audience members to participate. This concept encouraged the audience to create fictional situations from the initial plots. The performance concluded with an open forum for discussion about the participants' experiences and the stories created within the performance. These stories and the social choreography were temporary, changeable, and largely dependent on the participants. Thus, *On Trial Together* became a theatrical narrative that participants 'told themselves, about themselves,' and a choreographic spectacle created for no one's eyes. Each performance was a unique event (episode) that began with the situation created in the previous event in the chain, constructing an open series with unpredictable results. Overall, both the research and performance of this project transformed the project from a static artistic piece into a dynamic, responsive, and impactful exploration of collective societal issues.

Practicable

2015- · Serbia

The Platform for Contemporary Art and Culture, known as Practicable (*Praktikabl*), was established in 2015 at the initiative of artists active in the independent scene of Novi Sad. The platform's primary objective is to facilitate the development, affirmation, and promotion of contemporary art and culture, while also fostering interdisciplinary collaboration and networking among independent artists and cultural practitioners. Since its start, Practicable initiated the educational-research project *Pokretnica* in Novi Sad, led by Jelena Alempijević, Sara Tošić, and Frosina Dimovska, with the mentorship and support of Olivera Kovačević Crnjanski and Saša Asentić. The project employed models of self-organization and self-education to provide a conducive environment for work and collaboration among artists in contemporary dance and performing arts. In response to the paucity of spaces and programmes supporting independent artists and the development of emerging creators, a series of educational, research, and performance programmes were implemented. These initiatives addressed the needs of local dancers and performers while cultivating a broader public interest in contemporary dance. The activities included regular dance training, open workshops, discussions with students and professors



Jelena Alempijević, Frosina Dimovska, and participants dancing at *Pokretnica* festival, 2022. Photographed by Aleksandar Ramadanović. Courtesy of 2022 *Pokretnica* festival.

from the Contemporary Dance Department of the Ballet School in Novi Sad, workshops led by guest lecturers (Saša Asentić, Bojana Cvejić, Dragana Alfirević, Aleksandar Ašur), musical-dance meetings, and social dance events (*igranke*). The *Pokretnica* project was realized in collaboration with the Forum for New Dance of the Serbian National Theatre Ballet and the Museum of Contemporary Art Vojvodina. In 2017, the inaugural *Pokretnica* Contemporary Dance and Performance Festival was held, presenting the works of local artists in contemporary dance and fostering dialogue with other artists, the broader Novi Sad public, and new organizations and venues supporting the independent dance scene.

Kultrening

2016- · North Macedonia

Since 2016, in the framework of *Kultrening* programme, *Lokomotiva* has been continuously organizing contemporary dance classes for the community (both professionals and non-professionals). In collaboration with local and invited regional and international choreographers and dancers, *Lokomotiva* organized weekly classes at Kino Kultura from 2016 to 2020. After 2022, the *Kultrening* programme has been organized in the format of a



Poster of the *ULTIMATE* workshop (Queer Body Programme), based on photography by Dodo Dalik, designed by Jana Acevska, 2021. Courtesy of *Lokomotiva* – Centre for New Initiatives in Arts and Culture.



Poster of the *PUMPKINGS and HALLOQUEENS* Dreg Show (Queer Body Programme) designed by Julijana Mladenovska, 2023. Courtesy of *Lokomotiva* – Centre for New Initiatives in Arts and Culture.



Poster of the Boan Ruseski's workshop, based on photography by Zorica Zafirovska, 2022. Courtesy of *Lokomotiva* – Centre for New Initiatives in Arts and Culture.

series of dance and choreographic workshops, held at the Youth Cultural Centre and Socio-Cultural Space – Centre Jadro, free of charge. It is worth mentioning that among the various workshops, Aleksandar Georgiev and Darío Barreto Damas, Simona Spirovska and drag persona Linda Socialista initiated workshops related to drag performance/performing for the queer communities. Viktorija Ilioska, Sabrina Železnik, Kliment Poposki, Elena Risteska, and Aleksandar Georgiev, together with other team members of Lokomotiva, initiated the programme. They, as well as Teodora Ezovska, Tereza Lazarev, Hristina Angelovska, Boban Rusevski, Jovana Zajkova, Aleksandra Petrussevska, and other local and international choreographers, were/are sharing their choreographic practices with the larger local communities of professionals and non-professionals.

FUTUR II

2018 • Croatia

FUTUR II – Space for People and Dance was part of Platforma HR, held under the Ilica Project in Zagreb in 2018. This short-lived initiative took place in spaces along Ilica Street, which had once housed small workshops, factories, and public societies. By temporarily occupying one of these spaces to establish a long-term presence, the dance guilds Croatian Dancers Association (UPUH) and Association of Professional Dance Artists “PULS” (UPPU “PULS”) aimed to highlight the challenges that the community is facing in Zagreb and advocate for more responsible management of public and shared resources in the city.

The space became a welcoming hub for the dance community, residents, and the wider public—a place for creation, collaboration, and social interaction. Designed as an interactive, exhibition-style timeline, the space’s content and programming were co-created through a bottom-up archiving process, to which artists, audiences, and visitors contributed. They were invited to record significant events, memories, or artistic moments from the previous year and a half (2017/2018), or to imagine future



Croatian Dancers Association (UPUH) and Association of Professional Dance Artists “PULS” (UPPU “PULS”), Inside of the FUTUR II – Space for People and Dance, 2018. Photographed by Marina Paulenka. Courtesy of TALA Dance Center.

happenings. Participants, primarily dance artists, brought in elements from their own work—such as posters, photos, costumes, music, and notes—that gradually filled the exhibition. This grassroots approach to archiving allowed for a communal reflection on the past and future of the art form.

Discursive Formations: Maska, Frakcija, TkH

Slovenia • Croatia • Serbia



Cover of *Maska, Performing Arts Journal*, vol. 29, no. 1963–1964, designed by Mitja Miklavčič and Ajdin Bašić, 2014. Courtesy of Maska, Institute for Publishing, Production and Education.

In the 1990s, the new performing art practices generated the need for new discourses, theorizations, and genres of writing about them. The developments in the field of theory offered new possibilities for criticism, theory, and essayism as well as possible new discursive possibilities in the field. Three magazines and their circles started to collaborate extensively in the field of performing arts theory in the late 1990s and in the first

decade of the 2000s: *Maska, Performing Arts Journal* (established in 1920, published for one year and again regularly from 1985 onward), *Frakcija Performing Arts Journal* (1995–2015), and *TkH, Journal for Performing Arts Theory* (2001–2016) by theoretical-artistic platform Walking Theory (Teorija koja Hoda – TkH). The bilingual issues of the magazines became internationally well-established and supplied theoretical aspects not only for the cultural contexts of the former Yugoslav states but also internationally. Contemporary dance theory and history was one of their most vivid theoretical fields and one of the most important parts of their international contribution. In these journals practitioners and theorists worked together, assuring the vibrant link between practice and theory. These journals served as a platform for the formation of several very important theoreticians and scholars including Bojana Kunst, Bojana Cvejić, Ana Vujanović, Goran Sergej Pristaš, Aldo Milohnić, Janez Janša (Emil Hrvatini), among others.

Kretanja/Movements Dance Magazine

2002– • Croatia

In the early 2000s, when Željka Turčinović—a dancer, dramaturg, and choreographer—took over leadership of the International Theatre Institute, she initiated the formation of a dance committee, which led to the launch of the *Kretanja/Movements* Dance Magazine.

Kretanja/Movements is the only existing journal in Croatia exclusively dedicated to dance art.

Published twice a year, either as a single or double edition, the magazine serves as an informative resource covering various aspects of dance and physical theatre, supporting the development of dance criticism and theory in Croatia, systematically documenting Croatian dance production, and providing a reflective space for both audiences and practitioners to engage critically with dance performances and events. The journal strengthens the visibility of Croatian dance and theory with bilingual issues from 2015, while also bringing a broad spectrum of knowledge about dance and physical culture through engaging and modern design. The editorial team, which periodically changes over the years, consists of dancers, choreographers, dramaturgs, and theorists Maja Đurinović, Željka Turčinović, Katja Šimunić, Iva Nerina Sibila, Ivana Slunjski, Nina Gojić, Ana Fazekaš, and others.



Cover of the first edition of *Kretanja (Movements) Dance Magazine*, designed by Neven Kovačić, 2002. Courtesy of Maja Đurinović.

Critical Practice (Made in Yugoslavia)

2013– • Serbia • North Macedonia

The Critical Practice (Made in Yugoslavia) programme is designed to support emerging writers, critics, and researchers and to foster discursive reflections on contemporary performing arts, aiming to bring these conversations into the public sphere. While it primarily focuses on the ex-Yugoslav region, it is open to broader contexts. This regional focus stems from the lack of visible critical writing on contemporary performances and recent theoretical developments



Gathering of the Critical Practice (Made in Yugoslavia) Group in Struga, 2022. Photographed by Aleksandra Nestoroska. Courtesy of Lokomotiva – Centre for New Initiatives in Arts and Culture.

in performing arts from the area. The programme draws on existing platforms like Walking Theory (TkH, Belgrade), *Maska* (Ljubljana), *Frakcija* (Zagreb), and the NDA and combines critical theory, artistic practice, and cultural policy, considering their interconnected aspects of the performing arts scene.

Critical Practice (Made in Yugoslavia) is a long-term programme: the first edition ran from 2013 to 2018, and the second edition from 2021 to 2024. So far, there have been five cycles, each with its group of participants. Through seminars, workshops, and individual or collective work, participants engage in continuous dialogue. Within each cycle, approximately four gatherings are organized in different European cities, while the rest of the work is conducted from home or online. The programme encourages collaboration between participants and mentors (Ana Vujanović, Marijana Cvetković, and Biljana Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski), fostering a structure based on mutual respect. The final phase includes the publication of participants’ works. The NDA platform has produced all the cycles through the Station and Lokomotiva organizations, with the support of projects and networks such as Life Long Burning, NYU Tisch School of the Arts, apap – advancing performing arts project, and others.

International Summer School “Curating in Context”

2019–2024 • North Macedonia

The International Summer School programme started as a programme of the collaborative Curating in Context project (2019–2021), supported by Erasmus+ and co-organized between two NGOs (Tanzfabrik Berlin and Lokomotiva Skopje) and two higher education institutions (Stockholm University of the Arts and University of Zagreb – Academy of Dramatic Art). The project was developed to respond to the challenges of the growing influence of curatorial concepts and curating in the contemporary art field, beyond the sphere of visual arts, with a focus on performing arts. The project focused on creating knowledge and opportunities for students, practitioners, curators, scholars, and cultural workers to critically reflect and address different sociopolitical and economic contexts, and develop curatorial methods to rethink the practices of performing arts in relation to activism, social movements, and self-organization.

As a result of the Erasmus+ supported collaboration, the curriculum and plan for the International Summer School with the same title were developed, and four editions were organized until 2024. The first two editions of the International Summer School “Curating in Context” (2019, 2020) were organized remotely as part of the Erasmus+ collaboration, the third was organized in Struga, North Macedonia, as an integral part of the Freestanding Course of the Stockholm University of Arts, and the fourth was again organized in Struga by Lokomotiva.



Co-existing, 2017. Courtesy of Lokomotiva – Centre for New Initiatives in Arts and Culture.

Co-existing

2016 • North Macedonia

Co-existing was a programme in Skopje designed and coordinated by Aleksandar Georgiev, Viktorija Ilioska, and Elena Risteska in partnership with Lokomotiva and Kino Kultura—project space—to address the complexities and challenges of creating, curating, and distributing art in a rapidly shifting cultural and political landscape. The programme was structured around three key happenings: Co-Teaching, Fest Happening, and Closed Meetings, each offering unique spaces for reflection, experimentation, and discussion of production models in the performing arts. Co-existing also responded to broader societal issues, including the commodification of art, the erosion of the public sphere, and the effect of political and economic influences on art’s creation and distribution.

At its core, Co-existing explored the potential for collective action in the performing arts, emphasizing the importance of fostering environments where individuals can co-laborate, co-create, co-rehearse, and co-perform in a way that echoes the complexity and permeability of contemporary artistic practices. The programme with international and local artists seeks to create spaces that are not strictly defined but are flexible enough to accommodate the diverse needs and practices of the participants, pursuing more sustainable working conditions within and through the lens of contemporary performing arts.

ARCHIVES AND DATABASES:

Choreographers Directory Slovenia Slovenia Culture.si Slovenia (Non)Aligned Dance Archive

Slovenia • Serbia • Croatia • North Macedonia

Without a public institution,¹ an inventory of dance practices and artists in the field, and a history, even a partial one, the possibility of erasing the increasingly marginalized field of dance seems easy. In the absence of a dance institution to take care of the field, the historicization and archiving of contemporary dance has been left to the enthusiasm of individuals and NGOs. While it is possible to find individual archives, or parts of their archives, in some public institutions (the Archives of the Republic of Slovenia, the National Museum of Contemporary History, Theatre and Film Studies Centre at The Academy of Theatre, Radio, Film and Television, etc.) as well as in the Temporary Slovenian Dance Archive (2012), initiated by Rok Vevar that operates under

¹ After a decades-long struggle, the Centre of Contemporary Dance Arts (CSPU) was founded in the summer of 2011 as the first and only public institution dedicated to the field, but only a year later, before it could even come to life, it was abolished by the right-wing government. Slovenia is currently at a new turning point in the re-establishment of this public institution, but its structure and financial support are not yet clear.

the auspices of the NDA Slovenia and Museum of Modern Art and Museum of Contemporary Art Metelkova (MG+MSUM) as an ongoing installation, a more comprehensive overview of the practices, artists, journalism, and history of contemporary dance is not accessible to the public (except in some book editions). Concern for the field has therefore emerged from within, with some important digital archives and databases that map creators, organizations, spaces, and festival manifestations from the field of dance and beyond.

A more comprehensive inventory of the cultural sector in Slovenia is offered by culture.si, developed and edited by the team of the Ljudmila Art and Science Laboratory (2009–2020, 2024). Within the field of dance, it is worth highlighting the Choreographers Directory (Koreografski imenik), which “focuses on documenting choreographic practices and methods developed and applied by contemporary dance makers in and through their choreographic work,”² presenting artists’ bibliographies and a list of their performances, and includes the digital database, edited by former dancer and producer Sabina Potočki, which has been initiated and produced by Emanat and published in both Slovene and English languages (the English language pages are less detailed).

The third initiative is the (Non)Aligned Dance Archive by NDA Network (www.nada.nomaddanceacademy.si), a complex database dedicated to contemporary dance and wider performing arts from the former Yugoslavia. Based on Net Museum (MG+MSUM), it is designed in the local languages and in English to open up diverse and complex information and documentation on performances, protagonists, festivals, events, venues, and organizations from the sector and designed as work in progress. One of the main missions of the (Non)Aligned Dance Archive is to give the public direct access to different documents and sources of dance and performing arts works and happenings without historiographic mediators and intentions to privatize or control historicizations. It will become publicly available at the end of 2024.

BADco. Archives

2023- • Croatia

The first institutionalization of an independent archive in Croatia occurred in early 2023, when the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art in Rijeka (MMSU) permanently acquired the archive of Zagreb-based BADco., probably the most renowned and internationally best-established collective from the field of performing arts that was formed in our region in the post-Yugoslav period. The initiative to archive the extensive collection of objects, publications, documents, costumes, and other materials they had accumulated over

² Choreographers Directory, available at: <https://koreografski.info/en/about-directory/>.

the years in a museum originated a few years earlier, driven by the members of the group. The Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art in Rijeka, under the leadership of director Slaven Tolj at that time, responded positively to this idea, which was later implemented by the current director, Branka Benčić. The transfer of the archive to the museum was formalised as a permanent donation, now holding the status of a study collection. The archive is housed in three rooms on the second floor of the museum. The collection is divided into a storage area and a display section. One room showcases costumes, mostly created by BADco.’s close collaborator Silvio Vujičić, a fashion designer and visual artist. The second room holds scenography, props, documents, promotional materials, and publications related to the collective, such as *Maska*, *Frakcija*, and *TkH Journal*. The third room is a workspace equipped with a computer, providing access to digitized material on platforms like Flickr, Vimeo, and Memory of the World.



Costumes of BADco., Archive at the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art Rijeka, 2023. Courtesy of BADco.

On (Dance) Festivals

The festival (meaning, festivity, or celebration), in history, was formed as a specific format for socialization, that transcends cultures, histories, regimes and structures. The first recorded festival dates back to 534 BC, honouring the god Dionysus in Athens. Through time, festivals have been utilized in a variety of ways, for a variety of purposes, but its *raison d'être* has always been community, sometimes as celebrated on a popular level, at other times manipulated by “the wielders of power” (Seffrin 2006, 1). However, national and state festivals as artistic manifestations (for the elite or masses) were established only in the 20th century when they started to operate in a variety of manifestations. Therefore, it became impossible to arrange them in a functional universal classification. Festivals have been embraced by governments, both as a prestigious tool via the arts festival format of major cities, and on a grass-roots level via the community, due to its essential value “in terms of communicating and necessarily employing a polemical outlook on their own postulates, as well as context, time, space, genre, and the theoretical paradigms to which they refer” (Vaseva, Veljanovska, and Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski 2013, 356–357).

In our region, during the time of socialist Yugoslavia, festivals were established not (only) to attract international attention and “portray the country as a tolerant and friendly self-managed socialist society that never stifled, but, on the contrary, fostered a climate where one could re-examine and experiment with [almost] anything” (ibid., 359) but also to celebrate new art forms and forms of socialization. For these reasons, the festival map of Yugoslavia in the late 1960s was already complex and diverse. It consisted of a range of amateur, federal, and republic festivals with a competitive character (Sterijino Pozorje Festival, Novi Sad, 1956–; October Salon, Belgrade, 1969–, etc.); specialized international festivals of various kinds (Biennale of Graphic Arts Ljubljana, 1955–; Bitef, Belgrade International Theatre Festival, 1967–; Ballet Biennale in the frame of Ljubljana Festival, 1960–1989; Music Biennale Zagreb, 1961–, etc.); along with festivals whose programmes had a more popular

orientation that mostly took place during the summer period (Ljubljana, Bled, Dubrovnik, Split, Ohrid, etc.). After the fall of the Berlin Wall, as well as the fall of Yugoslavia, festivals became fulfilling platforms for the presentation and exchange of (international/Western) productions, fostering networking on the one hand and consumerism on the other. But they have also become a suitable ground for the presentation and support of bottom-up initiatives that mainly aimed toward a range of various objectives, including the production of knowledge, fostering dialogue and exchange between the public, building a community, etc. They were the spaces where diverse art and cultural discourses started being produced.

To look closer at a wide range of festivals nowadays in the same region, they appear in a diversity of forms and approaches, as a form that evokes tradition or disrupts it, being engaged with diverse temporalities: “In a way, [festivals] may serve as a corrective to the current sociocultural moment and, with their contents and formats, promote new directions” (ibid., 356). In that way festivals may question and shift cultural codes through the examination and exploration of mechanisms, protocols of work, and formats of production.

(Contemporary) Dance Productions at Festivals Around the Former Yugoslavia and Post-Yugoslav Space

Dance festivals, together with contemporary performing arts festivals, in the region—that are generally produced by the non-governmental sector nowadays—began emerging only in the 1970s, first in Slovenia and later in Croatia, while in other countries they started being established in the late 1990s and after 2000. In Slovenia, an early example is Ljubljana Dance Days (1976, 1977, 1979), established and organized by dance historian, critic, pedagogue, and editor of dance programmes at RTV Ljubljana (today RTV Slovenia) Marija Vogelnik and her Kinetikon Cultural Association. In Croatia, the Dance Week Festival was established in 1984 and is one of the longest-running contemporary dance festivals in Europe. The festival was founded by international dance producer Mirna Žagar and is produced by the Croatian Institute for Movement and Dance (HIPPI). During their management of the National Theatre in Subotica, theatre director Ljubiša Ristić and choreographer Nada Kokotović initiated The Emergency Exit Festival (1986–1991) and YU Fest (1988–1995) in Serbia, Theatre City (1987–) in Budva, Montenegro, and some others. In Serbia, Aeroplan bez motora festival (1994–1997) was initiated at Bitef Theatre. In Montenegro, the Festival of International Alternative Theatre (FIAT) has been happening in Podgorica since 1996.

Until then, various forms of contemporary dance (modern dance, expressive dance, modern ballet) were included mainly in seasonal festivals: Ljubljana Summer Festival (1953–), Split Summer Festival (1954–), Dubrovnik Summer Festival (1950–), Ohrid Summer Festival (1961–), etc.; annals of chamber opera and ballet in Osijek (1970–1983); bigger international performing arts festivals, for example, Bitef (Belgrade, 1967–), Young Open Theater (MOT, Skopje, 1976–), Eurokaz (Zagreb, 1987–2013); and also, mainly as a side programme, at some more advanced festivals dedicated to other disciplines, for example, the Music Biennale Zagreb (1961–), Festival of International Alternative Theatre (FIAT, since 1970, but under this name since 1996, Podgorica), or in the 1980s, at Druga Godba (1984–) in Ljubljana, Godo Fest (1984) in Magaza space in Belgrade and The Emergency Exit Festival in Subotica (1986–1991). Along with various ballet companies from Yugoslavia, European and American modern dance and ballet productions appeared on the stages around Yugoslavia (Limón Dance Company, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Paul Taylor Dance Company, Glen Tetley Dance Company, London

Contemporary Dance Theatre, etc.). In the case of international productions programming, festivals usually joined forces to manage a tour around Yugoslavia, mostly in Slovenia and Croatia, sometimes with Bitef in Serbia, but very rarely in North Macedonia as part of Young Open Theater (MOT).

After the fall of Yugoslavia, in the 1990s, contemporary art festivals, in which dance was an important endeavour, started to blossom in Slovenia: Video-Dance Festival (Ljubljana, 1991–1996), Ex Ponto (Ljubljana, 1993–2015), Sen žice/Performa (Maribor 1993–2019), Exodos (Ljubljana, 1995–2017), City of Women (Ljubljana, since 1995), The Beauty of Extremes (Ljubljana, 1997–1999), Break 21 (Ljubljana, 1997–2007), Mladi Levi (Ljubljana, since 1997). In other countries of the former Yugoslavia, the older progressive festivals remained but were confronted with restrictions in trying to maintain their programmes due to financial or war crises.

With a few exceptions, such as the Gibanica – Biennial of Slovenian Contemporary Dance Art (since 1997 in Ljubljana), contemporary dance festivals were mainly established after 2000 out of an urge to create platforms that would support and frame local dance productions and showcase them along with (some) regional and international ones. In Slovenia these are Ukrep – Festival of Dance Perspectives (Ljubljana, 2008–), NagiB Contemporary Dance Festival (Maribor, 2005–2013),¹ Front@ Contemporary Dance Festival (Murska Sobota, since 2006), Platform of Contemporary Dance (Maribor, 2007–), Spider Festival, a festival of radical bodies (Ljubljana, 2010–), CoFestival, the International Festival of Contemporary Dance (Ljubljana, 2012–) with its forerunners Short Cuts (2008–2009) and Pleskavica (2010–2011). In Croatia these are Platform of Young Choreographers (Zagreb, 2000–2010, Platforma HR since 2010), UrbanFestival (Zagreb, 2001–2015), Queer Zagreb (Zagreb, 2003–), Improspections (Zagreb, 2007–), Monoplay Contemporary Dance Festival (Zadar, 2009–), and Karlovac Dance Festival (Karlovac, 2011–). In North Macedonia, there is Dance Fest Skopje (2005–). And, in Serbia, there are the Festival of Choreographic Miniatures (Belgrade, 1997–), Body Shop festival (Belgrade, 2002–2007), one edition of the Festival of European Contemporary Choreography (Belgrade, 2004), Belgrade Dance Festival (Belgrade, 2004–), New.Dance Festival (Novi Sad, 2010–2013), Off Frame dedicated to inclusive dance and theatre practices (Belgrade, 2011–2020), Pokretnica Festival of Contemporary Dance and Performance (Novi Sad, 2017–), Festival Sola – International Festival of Solo Choreographies and Performance (Belgrade, 2021–). At this point in time, the NDA network established and fostered a few festivals in the region, including Short Cuts (2008–2009, later Pleskavica that settled as CoFestival in 2012, Ljubljana), ZVRK – Festival of Contemporary Dance Arts, Dance Theatre and Performances (Sarajevo, 2008, later as an Interdisciplinary Art Festival), Kondenz (Beograd, 2008–), and LocoMotion (Skopje, 2008–2015). Also, post 2010, there were other performing arts festivals established in North Macedonia that curate dance, such as Firstborn Girl (2013–) with the Rehearsing Feminist Futures Platform and Skopje Pride Weekend – Festival for Queer Arts, Culture and Theory (2013–).

During the 2000s, the Balkan Dance Platform was established as a space where new contemporary dance productions were presented through a selection process organized by the partners. Occasionally, the region hosted international networks' meetings that were related to performance programmes, intending to foster the links in the region. Some of them were International Network for Contemporary Performing Arts (IETM) meetings, the Balkan Express network

¹ Between 2004 and 2010 the festival was named NagiB, Experimental Movement festival. Between 2010 and 2013 it functioned as NagiB, Contemporary Dance Festival, introducing various modes of curation together with forms of presentation. Between 2013 and 2015 it shifted to a repertoire format, which could be defined as another try-out in the curation format and still as a specific type of Anti-festival before it moved toward other forms of production and presentation that does not fall under the name Anti-festival.

(dedicated to fostering collaboration in performing arts in the Balkan region) and Aerowaves network, or manifestations in a festival format dedicated (also) to politicized dance and choreography on special occasions or to place the discussion on the modernity of the performing arts in the broader context of the art history of the second half of the 20th century (East Dance Academy (EDA),² etc.).

Due to various reasons, including a lack of financial resources, political reasons implying implicit censorship of some festivals, and the self-exploitation and exhaustion of their creators, many of the festivals established soon after the fall of Yugoslavia did not survive until today, but as is visible from the list, there have been new initiatives that have tried to fill in the gaps, while answering to the needs of the contemporary dance communities in the region.

Anti-festivals

Manifestations that might not fit into the traditional 'classification' of festivals, and are deconstructing the idea of the traditional festival through rethinking the theme, format, and curatorial models, or models of presenting the art while taking care of the support systems, will be defined here as Anti-festival. Their format and formation are more or less dependent on the context out of which they emerge and could be read as a gesture, within their narrow time-space specificities, which is the reason for their often short-lived (mainly one) appearance. In some way, many of these Anti-festivals are/were initiated as a certain reaction to institutionalized codes, either reacting to the politics of programming, or the lack of space for presenting certain forms in their local contexts, disciplines, and genres, or to the misrepresentation of certain traditional programmes as contemporary, and to misleading social codes. But they also provided, and continue to provide, a podium on which different modes of working and collaborating can be tested. Some are reforming programmes, run throughout the year to subvert 'festivalisation' and support spaces for care, collaboration, and the production of art and discourse.

The proposal is to distinguish these festivals as particular, i.e., to place them as spaces of excess which are working on extending the meanings of what a festival in contemporary performing arts, particularly dance, can be nowadays. With such a gesture, they might restore the significance of the festival as an environment where the arts are celebrated not only through their representation (that becomes the only *raison d'être* of many festivals in the region) but also through collaboration and collaborative communication with the public, through joint work on their development as convivial spaces for reflection and art production, for the purpose of reshaping and rethinking the dance festivals models and ways of working in the region. Also, these festivals experiment with curatorial tactics, using approaches such as 'inviting the other' (as in Kondenz (Belgrade) and Locomotion (Skopje) in 2011), or with defestivalisation and refestivalisation, by working together on curatorial tactics (on Pleskavica in 2011 (Ljubljana), TASK from 2011 to 2019 (Zagreb), Antisezona from 2019 (Zagreb), and Performance Platform Festival established in 2024, in Skopje), or by being in a constant search for various possible models that would fit the particular needs of their environment (as in the case of NagiB between 2011 and 2015, Maribor).

² EDA was a part of the international project What to Affirm? What to Perform?, in which Maska collaborated with the Centre for Drama Art from Zagreb, the National Center for Dance from Bucharest, and the Tanzquartier from Vienna. East Dance Academy is co-financed by the Allianz Foundation and the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Slovenia, in cooperation with Cultural and Congress Centre Cankarjev dom, Aksioma – Institute for Contemporary Arts Ljubljana, and Zone, Ljubljana.

List of Examples

Ljubljana Dance Days

1976, 1977, 1979 • Slovenia

Dance Days Festival

1982–1993 • Slovenia

Dance Week Festival

1984– • Croatia

Eurokaz

1987–2013 • Croatia

Exodos

1995–2017 • Slovenia

Festival of Choreographic Miniatures

1997– • Serbia

Body Shop Festival

2002–2007 • Serbia

Dance Fest Skopje

2005– • North Macedonia

NagiB

2005– • Slovenia

Front@

2006– • Slovenia

Kondenz

2008– • Serbia

LocoMotion

2008–2015 • North Macedonia

Firstborn Girl Festival and Rehearsing Feminist Futures Platform

2021, 2023 • North Macedonia

Skopje Pride Weekend

2013– • North Macedonia

Pleskavica

2011 • Slovenia

The Collaborative Format of LocoMotion and Kondenz

2011 • North Macedonia • Serbia

TASK

2011–2019 • Croatia

Situations

2016 • North Macedonia

Antisezona

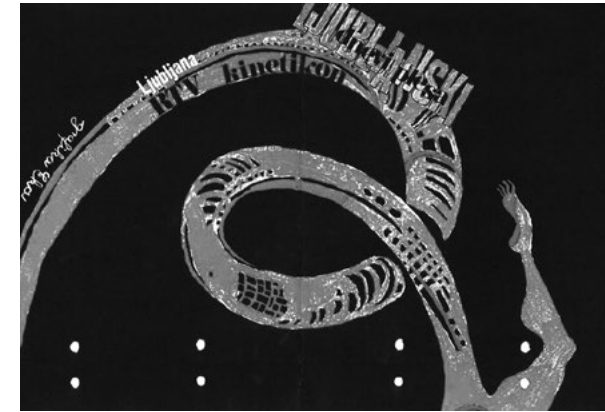
2019– • Croatia

Performance Platform Festival

2024 • North Macedonia

Ljubljana Dance Days

1976, 1977, 1979 • Slovenia



Visual Identity of Ljubljana Dance Days (Ljubljanski dnevi plesa) by Alenka Eka Vogelnik, 1976. Courtesy of Kinetikon Cultural Association.

The three editions of Ljubljana Dance Days (Ljubljanski dnevi plesa) represent the first contemporary dance festival in Yugoslavia, initiated by Kinetikon Cultural Association (KUD Kinetikon) and organized with the help of a public institution, namely Radio and Television Ljubljana (RTV Ljubljana, later RTV Slovenia) where dancer, dance critic, and historian Marija Vogelnik worked as an editor of the ballet programme at the Music Department of RTV Ljubljana. The programmes of the festival combined live presentations of different 'contemporary chamber dance and ballet groups' from Yugoslavia with an important remark that the term 'ballet' was, in Vogelnik's case, a strategic classification in order to convince the directors to produce the programme. Most of the live presentations in RTV's Studio A and in the Ljubljana City Theatre were contemporary dance groups, and the film programme accompanying the live presentations may have also included some ballet TV films. Some of the live programme was broadcasted either live or was recorded for TV, yet the economic crises that followed in the 1980s pushed TV to re-use most of the reels. After the 1979 edition of the Ljubljana Dance Days, the festival ceased to exist, as it was just an overwhelming production effort for Marija Vogelnik.

Dance Days Festival

1982–1993 • Slovenia

In December 1982 the first edition of the Dance Days Festival (Dnevi plesa), was organized in collaboration between the Association of Cultural Organizations Slovenia (ZKOS) and the Cultural and Congress Centre Cankarjev dom, which was partially opened and partially still under construction. The force behind it was the dancer, critic, and curator Neja Kos, working as an expert for contemporary dance at the Association of Cultural Organizations Slovenia. The Dance Days Festival would gather different non-professional and later also professional contemporary

dance groups to present their annual works at the end of every year. In the second half of the 1980s, the festival also started to programme some international acts that would come to Ljubljana and started to give awards for the best achievements in the field. The last edition of the festival happened in 1993. Documentation from 1994 shows that the director of Cankarjev dom, Mitja Rotovnik, started to negotiate with another group of curators the possibility of founding an international festival of contemporary performing arts with a bigger curatorial ambition and on a greater scale. The result of those negotiations came to light in May of 1995, when the Exodos Festival of Contemporary Performing Arts saw its first edition. The paradigmatic change between the Dance Days Festival and Exodos was a separation of professional and non-professional dance productions which had been a logical decision at the time. What was not possible to foresee at the time was the long-term change in cultural and economic policies and the erosion of the public for dance after the 2000s, which could have been partially avoided with the inclusion of non-professional productions in the accompanying programme.



Ksenija Hribar, *The Alpine Dreaming (Alpsko sanjarjenje)*, 1986. Presented at 1986 Dance Days Festival. Photographed by Božidar Dolenc. Courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art and Museum of Contemporary Art Metelkova (MG+MSUM).

Dance Week Festival

1984– • Croatia

The Dance Week Festival (Tjedan suvremenog plesa), founded by artistic producer and director Mirna Žagar with the idea to show regional production, is the first and oldest dance festival in Croatia. The first two editions of the festival in 1984 and 1985 included Croatian artists and offered workshops by choreographers Milana Broš, Vlasta Roglič, Tihana Škrinjarić, among others. By its third edition, the festival had already incorporated performances from the international scene from Slovenia, Austria, and Italy, and has continued to do so ever since. The festival has consistently taken place in Zagreb, with parts of the programme occasionally expanding to Rijeka and Split from the 2000s. In 40 years, the festival has shown more than a thousand performances of local and



Coverage of the Dance Week Festival in the daily newspaper *Večernji list*, 1985.

international artists, working on the popularization and decentralization of dance in Croatia. That was especially significant in the 1980s and 1990s when the festival introduced local and regional audiences to global trends of the time, expanded the boundaries of the performing arts, and gradually cultivated a more receptive audience open to diverse artistic expressions.

Eurokaz

1987–2013 · Croatia

The first edition of the Eurokaz festival was initiated by Gordana Vnuk in the frame of the FISU World University Games (formerly the Universiade), hosted in Zagreb in 1987. Eurokaz, The International Festival of New Theatre, became one of the most important festival manifestations in the last years of the Socialist Yugoslavia and in the first two decades of the newly founded state of the Republic of Croatia. With its highly ambitious regional and international programmes, it managed to attract artists and the public from the former Yugoslavia and wider international cultural landscapes. Eurokaz grew from the changed landscape of the contemporary performing arts in Europe that in the late 1970s and early 1980s broke



Visual Identity of Eurokaz programme by Studio Imitation of Life, 1989. Courtesy of Eurokaz.

from the models of national cultural systems and theatre houses and formed its different alternatives and networks based on circulation of productions which included the global cultural context. One of the first examples of this is International Network for Contemporary Performing Arts (IETM) that was established in 1981 as an informal gathering of performing arts professionals and in 1989 as a non-profit international organization. Eurokaz was an important endeavour at the beginning of IETM and became a strong critic of it in the 1990s when the festival tried to internationalize regional theatre directors that explored performing

arts strategies with innovation and diversity. Performances included in the festival programmes represented a lexicographic anthology of artists and performing arts at the time. Eurokaz was interested in presenting stage aesthetics detached from the

interpretative modernist drama theatre model and searched for those that continued the tendencies and sources of the historical avant-gardes (rather than neo-avant-gardes) with strong technological and kinetic aspects, use of sites and theatrical elements beyond drama. Exploring new theatre and choreographic phenomena beyond the European mainstream at the time, the festival also introduced theatre and dance from non-European cultures (Asia, Africa, and Latin America), body art, contemporary circus, etc. After 2006, Eurokaz started to produce and co-produce different projects and gradually transformed as an organization, with the last edition of the Eurokaz festival in 2013, the year when Croatia became part of the European Union, symbolically closing Eurokaz's mission of including the Croatia (and regional) theatre in the European cultural space, as outlined by its long-standing artistic director Gordana Vnuk.

Exodos

1995–2017 · Slovenia

Exodos Festival of Contemporary Performing Arts was initiated by Miran Šušteršič, lighting designer, producer, artistic director, and film editor, and Panoptikon Institute in collaboration with Cultural and Congress Centre Cankarjev dom in 1995. It was an attempt to bring big scale international productions of different genres (theatre, dance, circus, street theatre, puppet theatre, etc.) to the city of Ljubljana, as it was considered one of the new international performing arts centres and the festival was one of the first examples of a mutual production effort between a public cultural institution and an NGO. At the time, Exodos was able to exist as one of the biggest European festivals, since the foreign cultural centres of Western Europe considered the capital of the new state (Republic of Slovenia) a possible next stop on the international performing arts market and invested considerable amounts of money into the export of works. Under Šušteršič's leadership (1995–1999), together with a collective board of curators (Simon Kardum, Tomaž Toporišič, Koen Van Daele, Boris Pintar) and with the support of Mitja Rotovnik, the director of Cankarjev dom, it began as established and appeared unstoppable but soon eroded, because of some completely personal circumstances, and then never completely recovered to the initial level. Although the festival began as a project of the independent performing arts scene in collaboration with public institutions, for different reasons it did not manage to develop this relation. Nevertheless its high-quality profile has been bringing the most outstanding international contemporary artists to Ljubljana including the Flemish, French, Portuguese, British, Canadian, and American dance contexts (Ultima Vez, Maguy Marin, Vera Mantero, DV8 Physical Theatre, Holy Body Tattoo, etc.), some emerging names that would later establish themselves as the biggies (Wayne McGregor and the Random Dance company), some theatre novelties that, after Ljubljana, would tour extensively (the anthropological sensorial theatre of Enrique Vargas), and the most important domestic theatre and dance names. After 1999, the festival was produced by the Exodos Institute and Nataša Zavalovšek with the help of different domestic curators and the 2003 edition re-entered Cankarjev dom with extensive curatorial investment by Uršula Cetinski. After 2010, it was reconceptualized with the introduction of the international guest artist-curators (Jan Fabre, Tim Etchells, and Jan Goossens) and supplemented their curation with the geo-cultural contemporary dance programmes (2011: Balkans; 2013: Asia; 2015: Africa). Even though the festival never managed to overcome production instabilities, it managed to bring some of the most exciting and important international performing arts productions to Ljubljana before it lost its financial support and ended in 2017.



Eisa Jocsón, *Macho Dancer*, 2013. Photographed by Nada Žgank. Courtesy of 2013 Exodos.



Jan Fabre, *Prometheus – Landscape II*, 2011. Photographed by Nada Žgank. Courtesy of 2011 Exodos.

Festival of Choreographic Miniatures

1997- · Serbia

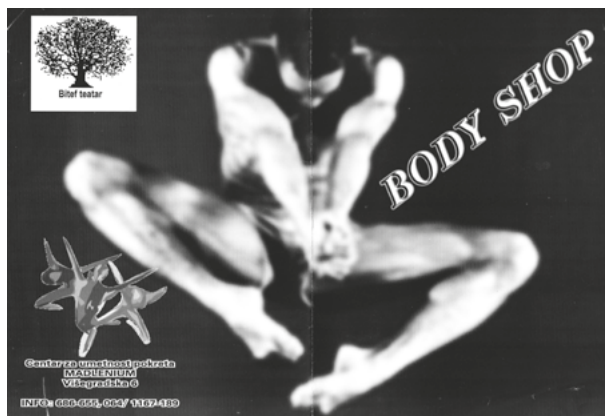
The Festival of Choreographic Miniatures (Festival koreografskih minijatura), held in Belgrade, was founded in 1997 as a seminal event dedicated to the presentation of innovative and experimental dance works and still continues to hold its annual edition each year. This festival is distinguished by its focus on short, dynamic choreographic pieces, typically ranging from five to ten minutes in duration. From its beginning, by emphasizing brevity and experimentation, the festival provided a platform for both emerging and established choreographers to explore new forms of expression within the constraints of a compact performance format. The festival's core objective was to promote and disseminate contemporary dance practices that diverged from traditional choreographic norms. Its format facilitated the exploration of diverse styles and concepts, encouraging choreographers to push the boundaries of conventional dance performance. This approach fostered a vibrant environment for creative experimentation, thereby contributing significantly to the evolution of contemporary dance in Serbia. The Festival of Choreographic Miniatures played a crucial role in advancing Serbia's dance scene at the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s by offering a venue for the presentation of original and innovative works. It attracted attention from local and international audiences, thus positioning itself as a notable cultural event in Belgrade. Through its focus on short-form choreography, the festival not only highlighted the potential for new artistic expressions but also provided a critical platform for dialogue and development within the dance community.



16th Festival of Choreographic Miniatures, 2013. Photographed by Lidija Antonović. Courtesy of Lidija Antonović.

Body Shop Festival

2002-2007 · Serbia



Poster for Body Shop festival, 2002. Courtesy of Svetlana Đurović.

In response to the restrictive political climate in Belgrade and Serbia during the 1990s, many artists turned to underground and alternative forms of expression, leading to the emergence of alternative art spaces, independent art groups, festivals, and underground music scenes. The lack of official support and the desire to resist the political situation fostered a vibrant subculture. Politically engaged art became prominent, with artists critiquing nationalism, war, censorship, and the political establishment. The era saw a rise in new media and performance art, including video art, installations, and provocative public engagements. Independent cultural spaces became key hubs for artistic expression. In this context, one of the initiatives in the local art scene was the Body Shop festival—a significant event in the dance and performance art scene in Belgrade during the 1990s. In a line of other dance and theatre festivals with similar aims (Emergency Exit in Subotica, ANET – Association of Independent Theatre, Asocijacija nezavisnih teatarâ in the original, etc.), it emerged as a response to the cultural and social conditions of the time, offering a platform for contemporary dance and experimental performance art, which were often marginalized in the mainstream cultural landscape. Body Shop focused on challenging traditional notions of dance and performance. It was a space for experimentation, where artists could explore new forms of movement, expression, and interaction. The festival often featured works that were interdisciplinary, incorporating elements of theatre, visual arts, and new media. Like many cultural initiatives of the 1990s in Belgrade, Body Shop was part of the independent and alternative art scene. It operated outside of state-sponsored cultural institutions and provided a critical counter-narrative to the official cultural policies of the time. Despite the international isolation of Serbia during the 1990s, Body Shop managed to maintain connections with the global contemporary dance community.

Dance Fest Skopje

2005- · North Macedonia

Dance Fest Skopje, established in 2005, emerged as a continuation of the artistic work of its director, Risima Risimkin, and her Interart Cultural Center, and focused on developing contemporary dance in North Macedonia. Since its inception, the festival has aimed to showcase innovative productions from national ballet companies and renowned dance ensembles across Europe and the world, while remaining committed to the broader cultural exchange and integration of the Macedonian contemporary dance scene into international projects. With a focus on tracking global trends, fostering dialogue with artists from diverse cultural contexts, and pushing the boundaries of the local dance scene beyond North Macedonia, the festival works to cultivate a young, engaged audience. Education and active public involvement have been central to its mission, shaping the festival as a key platform for the development of contemporary dance in the country. In 2024, Dance Fest Skopje celebrated its 20th anniversary. This milestone event was marked by a collaboration with the Macedonian Ballet, featuring a diverse programme that included performances from its repertoire, alongside works by emerging choreographers from the Skopje Dance Theater and Interart programmes. The festival also welcomed international performers, highlighting the wide range of artistic expressions that contemporary dance offers.



Nagib Incubator 2014, Photographed by Ramaida Osim. Courtesy of Nagib Association.

Nagib

2005- · Slovenia

Nagib Contemporary Dance Festival was initiated by former choreographer and dancer Vlasta Veselko in Maribor. Its first four editions were produced by NGO Pekarna Magdalenske mreže and, between 2009 and 2013, by Plesna izba Maribor, when Petra Hazabent, in her role as artistic director of the festival, formalised it into Nagib, Association for the Cultural Production and Affirmation of Artistic Processes. The first five festival editions focused on expanding contemporary dance and experimental movement, building up its profile and preparing the ground for sustainable funding. Later, its artistic leaders started experimenting with formats and forms, while the festival continuously reinvented itself, mainly as a reaction to the conditions in the local environment, the lack of financial and other forms of support for contemporary dancers (artists' needs, residencies, dramaturgy, possibility of postproductions, etc.).

In 2010, for example, the festival attempted to redefine its festival structure with a desire to establish more direct links with local artists through the laboratory format that supplemented the evening performances. The 2012 edition focused on the concept of parkour, a discipline that teaches us how to move creatively through our environment (city), and provided a residency for eight artists with daily visits to their studios where feedback sessions were held. The artistic team (Vlasta Veselko, Igor Dobričić, Petra Hazabent) emphasized the question of dance as a 'space of uninterrupted interaction between the artists and the audience.' Extending the focus toward other artistic disciplines (visual, intermedia, etc.) was another shift in the 2013 edition, while in 2014 and 2015, instead of a classical festival format that found a space within other recently founded festivals (Performa & Platforma, Prestopi/Crossings,

Drugajanje Festival), the festival introduced a season-long programme with a key purpose to improve conditions for postproduction while keeping the laboratory form as an opportunity and a support for the selected artists, accompanying it in the following three years with wide range of discursive formats (lectures, discussions and seminars, experimental radio production, etc.), slowly and certainly withdrawing from what could be defined as a festival.



Petja and Varja Golec Horvat, *Soror*, 2022. Photographed by Borut Bučinel. Courtesy of 2022 Front@.



Liquid Loft, *Stand-Alones (poliphony)*, 2019. Photographed by Borut Bučinel. Courtesy of 2022 Front@.

Front@

2006- · Slovenia

Front@ Contemporary Dance Festival was founded by choreographer Matjaž Farič in 2006. It functions under Flota, an NGO for organizing and producing cultural events, with a base in his hometown Murska Sobota (since 2001) that was joined by a Ljubljana branch in 2006. The festival takes place annually at the end of summer in Murska Sobota, a town of 13,000 inhabitants in Prekmurje, in the Slovenian North-Eastern region. Its strategic position, close to the crossings of three countries (Austria, Hungary, and Croatia) was recognized by Farič as a unique opportunity to build a strong network of partners across the borders with an aim to exchange production. This was also a reason for the establishment of the Beyond Front@ platform, in which partners gathered way beyond the above-mentioned countries and created grounds for sustainable relations and contemporary dance support. As such, Beyond Front@ has often been recognized by the European Commission, which enables certain stability and growth of the festival.

With its position, Front@ Festival contributes to the decentralization of contemporary dance in Slovenia, while directly addressing some crucial cultural-political endeavours, such as integration and accessibility. Throughout the years, Farič succeeded in attracting the local audience with dance and by doing so, proved it was possible to wipe out the prejudice of the elitist nature of contemporary dance. The festival presents domestic

and international dance performances, offering opportunities to young dance artists, through the selection process at the International Competition of Young Dance Creators OPUS1, to attend the festival and present their short choreographies there and also features workshops, lectures, artistic talks, dance interventions, and site-specific events.

Kondenz

2008- · Serbia

Initiated in 2008 in Belgrade as a small festival featuring solo and duet formats, Kondenz Festival of Contemporary Dance and Performance was designed as a platform to critically explore themes and approaches, and reveal the direct relationships between art and society, highlighting the intertwined processes that shape artistic work and its social context, unlike festivals that typically showcase only the desirable aspects of art or society. Besides showcasing experimental formats, methods, practices, and research in contemporary dance and choreography, Kondenz always had a special focus on the discursive aspects of dance—as it contextualizes various social interests and intentions that materialize through artistic works. The programme of workshops, discussions, lectures, and other forms of knowledge exchange serves to deepen the themes of artistic, cultural, and broader social activity, important for the work and life of the local dance scene in Serbia, thereby fostering collaborations and expanding audiences. Over its 17 editions, Kondenz has become an essential venue for learning, encounters, and experimentation for both artists and the audience, as well as for those who organize it. The festival's policy of offering all its programmes for free, from performances to workshops and printed publications, has also contributed to audience development. The audience finds its place not as consumers but as interlocutors and collaborators. Many local artists have passed through it, while the festival has also featured artists and other participants who were or are key figures in the European dance scene today. Although it remains minimally supported—since the Ministry of Culture's committees consistently allocate only minimal funds for festivals—it persists thanks to international networking and recognition of its significance at an international level.



Visual identity of Kondenz festival 2021 by Anna Ehrlemark, 2021. Courtesy of Station Service for Contemporary Dance.



Rebecca Chentinnell, Dragana Zarevska, Jasna Dimitrovska, and Darko Aleksovski, *Elegy for Ramno*, 2013. Courtesy of Lokomotiva – Centre for New Initiatives in Arts and Culture, 2013 LocoMotion Festival.

LocoMotion

2008-2015 · North Macedonia

LocoMotion, a pioneering festival for contemporary dance and performance in North Macedonia, was established in 2008 by Lokomotiva in collaboration with six regional organizations, including the founders of the Balkan Dance Network and NDA. This festival emerged from the urgent need to create new spaces for the production, presentation, and visibility of contemporary performing arts—a necessity due to the absence of such spaces at the time.

LocoMotion aimed to showcase the latest trends in contemporary performing arts from Europe, the region, and North Macedonia, while engaging in discursive practices to redefine the art form's position both within North Macedonia and across Europe. The festival sought to place North Macedonia on the global contemporary performing arts map and foster the development of local and regional arts scenes. By presenting latest and cutting-edge artistic practices and facilitating international collaborations, LocoMotion played a crucial role in expanding perceptions of contemporary dance and choreography as integral to European art and culture and significantly influenced the development of contemporary performing arts in North Macedonia.

The festival adopted an interdisciplinary approach, introducing new models of curating, programme development, and collaboration among cultural professionals. Each edition of LocoMotion featured a diverse range of activities, including workshops, debates, discussions, and performances that included contemporary dance and choreography, and also side programmes of music and visual arts. The festival was unique in its local context, offering a thematic focus for each edition, which was reflected in its curated programme. The festival curators were Biljana Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski and Iskra Shukarova who, together with Violeta Kachakova as programme manager, organized eight editions until the festival ceased to exist due to a lack of local and national support.

Firstborn Girl Festival 2013- and Rehearsing Feminist Futures Platform

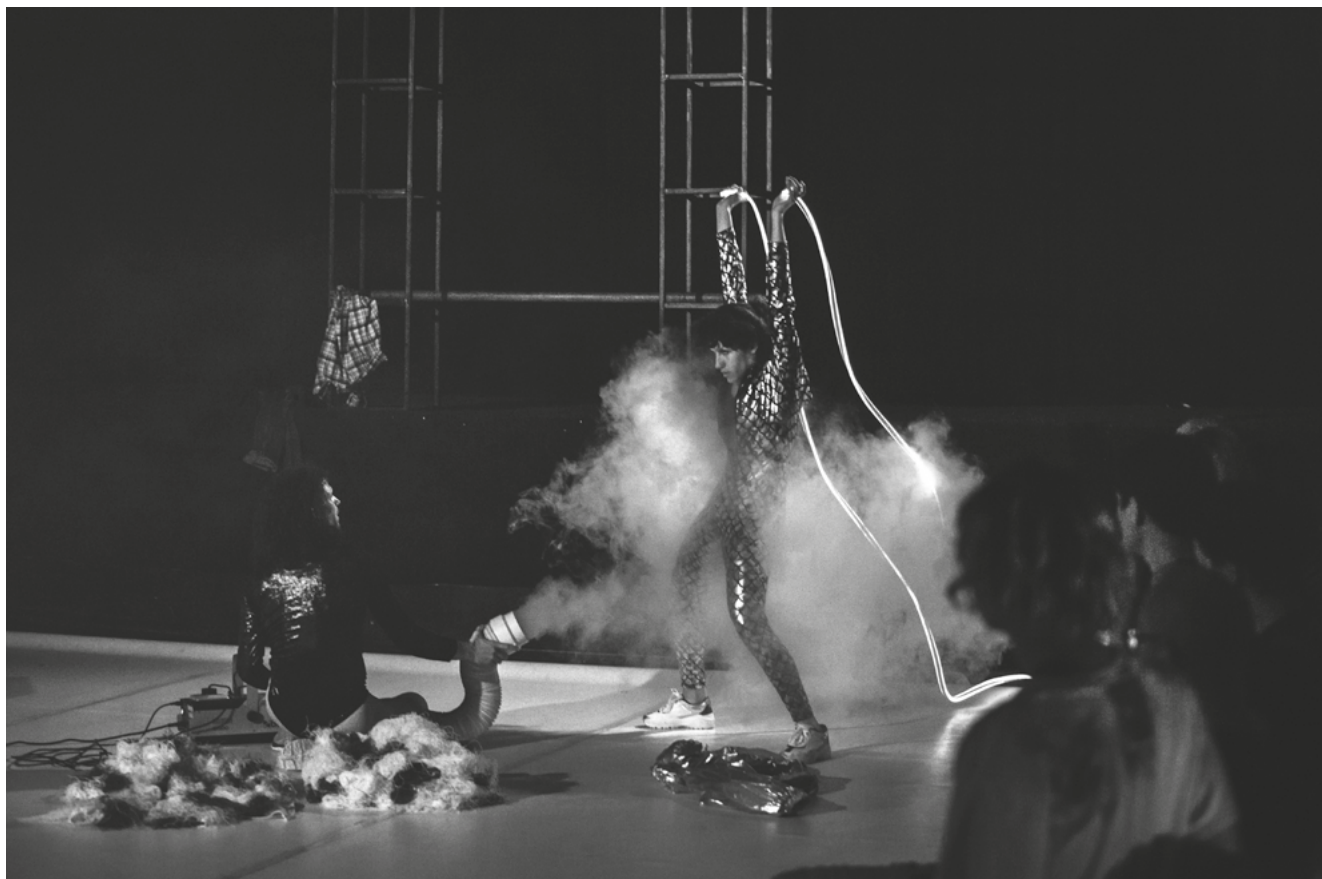
2021, 2023 · North Macedonia

Firstborn Girl (Prvo pa zhenko), the Festival of Feminist Culture and Action, has been organized by the Tiiiit.inc organization since 2013. The festival promotes diverse approaches to the reflection and representation of gender in art and critical practices by re-examining dominant narratives, challenging stereotypes, and maintaining a secure and inclusive platform on which the voices of different minorities and marginalized groups can become part of the mainstream. Firstborn Girl promotes feminism, contributes to the substantial recognition of women's intellectual and creative work, and supports the efforts of women's and LGBTQ+ rights. The interdisciplinary programme of the festival includes exhibitions, lectures, performances, dance, concerts, presentations, book promotions, DJ sets, and activities for children and youth along with workshops, which represent various reflections on feminism in theory and art.

As part of the festival's performance programme in 2021 and 2023, the Rehearsing Feminist Futures platform was held. The platform/programme was dedicated to supporting the production processes of independent authors in the performing arts scene. In response to the festival's social relevance, and building on ten years of continuous collaboration with local and international independent artists, cultural workers, and their initiatives, the Firstborn Girl festival transformed its performance programme into an artistic platform based on solidarity, co-learning, and cooperation. In 2021, it supported the production of one theatre and one dance performance, while in 2023, it produced a collective performance. By positioning the creative processes in the framework of feminist performance and theatre, the selected artists (based on open calls) were encouraged to find new approaches to staging the female experience by re-examining the constructed female identity, interpreting women's personal experiences as political, and advocating for social and political



Jovana Zajkova, *Jovano, Jovanke*, 2021. Courtesy of Tiiiit.inc.



Viktorija Ilioska, Max Smirzitz, and Patrick Faurot, *It could be Something Very Minimal*, 2019. Photographed by Sonja Stavrova. Courtesy of Coalition MARGINS Skopje, 2019 Skopje Pride Weekend.

change. They were further encouraged to rediscover classical women playwrights from a feminist position and to search for texts and performance projects dealing with gender as a historical construct under pressure—presenting women’s feelings and experiences without sentimentality but from a political position, as the basis for developing new approaches in their artistic practices.

Skopje Pride Weekend

2013– • North Macedonia

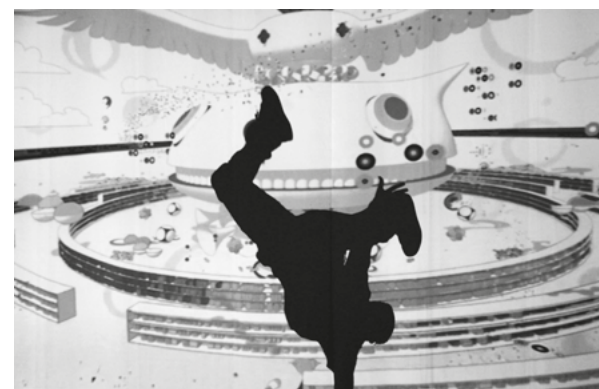
Skopje Pride Weekend is a festival for queer arts, culture, and theory, whose goal is creating space for the presentation and promotion of non-normative forms of world-making, that is to say relations, affects, identity positions, bodily styles, and sensibilities that have been marked—by the heteronormative, nationalistic, and neoliberal capitalist context—as queer, eccentric failures. Queerness, as the foundational premise of the festival, signifies a way of life, the art of the stylization of one’s own and collective life, and a political tool and attitude that resists the dominant models of power/knowledge that orchestrate and regulate some sexual and gender identities as ‘normal,’ while others as ‘queer.’ The queer political and cultural orientation critically investigates and problematizes human desires and aspirations to conformism and

normality, including the hegemonic assumptions and values about love, intimacy, kinship, embodiment, capitalist competitiveness and egoism, commodity fetishism, as well as the contemporary discursive performatives of the nation state. The programme of the Skopje Pride Weekend is focused on cultural and arts performing practices, as well as gender, sexuality, and queer theory’s knowledge production and critique. The performances and dance pieces presented at Skopje Pride Weekend festival aspire towards using the performative force to bring forward and bring into existence different temporalities, spaces, and social forms. The counterpublics brought into being through Skopje Pride Weekend and similar festivals in the region were simultaneously intimate infrastructures in the making, that slice open the division between the private and the public, and make possible alternative relationships, companionships, kinships, intimacies, friendships, or socialities in general.

Pleskavica

2011 • Slovenia

In 2010, the third edition of the Short Cuts festival, which presented the final works from participants in the regional NDA’s nomadic education programme, was supplemented with some international performances in the first Pleskavica festival. After ending



Improvised session by Pierre Yves Diacon at Pleskavica Festival, 2011. Photographed by Sunčan Stone. Courtesy of NDA Slovenia and Fičo Ballet.

the education programme and with growing awareness of hyperproduction and hyperfestivalisation, in 2011 the Pleskavica team—Goran Bogdanovski, Dragana Alfirević, Sandra Đorem, Gregor Kamnikar, Dejan Srhoj, Jasmina Založnik, and Rok Vevar—decided to detour from the widespread festival curation and rethink the notion of the festival, together with their colleagues. Therefore, instead of booking performances, the curatorial team decided to invite 36 artists from the Balkans and internationally, as well as some 21 local artists and other visitors. Under the title Defestivalisation – Refestivalisation, they clearly outlined their aim to rethink possible models and orientations of the festival, including a need for research and exchange. Guests curated a daily artistic and discursive programme with the visitors and presented its results in the evenings. By doing so “the principle of invitation in curatorial praxis appears to redistribute curatorial agency in a radical move to work with empty space and potentiality” (Baybutt, 2023, 101). The production of Pleskavica 2011 already included the NDA Slovenia, which was founded at the end of 2010. The following year, Pleskavica, with its partners Fičo Ballet and NDA Slovenia, joined with Ukrep – Festival of Dance Perspectives (Dance Theatre Ljubljana), and the European project Modul-dance with its partner Kino Šiška Centre for Urban Culture into a new initiative to act within the changing economic and cultural situation—CoFestival, the International Festival of Contemporary Dance (2012–).

The Collaborative Format of LocoMotion and Kondenz

2011 • North Macedonia • Serbia

To subvert the logic of neoliberal capitalism that turns festivals into venues for marketing artistic work—with little to offer in terms of their social, educational, and developmental value and without fostering exchange, intervention, or generation of knowledge—the festivals Kondenz and LocoMotion joined in 2011 to open up more space for communicating with the audience. They offered a programme that challenged the borders between authorities, space, the audience,

performers, programmers, territories, and festivals.

Both festivals featured pre-selected programmes consisting of several performances by authors active in the European context. In collaboration with Hybris Konstproduktion, they shared responsibilities for the curation and organization. Additionally, the curatorial programme was created to nurture the artistic communities and the public, as well as to develop discourses on what the performing arts could do and become. The programme was co-curated by a team of artists and curators (Dalija Aćin Thelander, Dragana Alfirević, Marijana Cvetković, Anders Jacobson, Iskra Shukarova, Johan Thelander, and Biljana Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski) who came together through a process of invitation. Each curator proposed an artist or cultural worker and invited them to participate and further co-curate the programme by selecting another artist or cultural worker. Each participant proposed an ‘activity’ to share their practice, which collectively shaped the programme. Additionally, the festival spaces were transformed into areas of ‘togetherness,’ where everyone spent time preparing and sharing breakfast and lunch with the audience, along with their practices. These spaces were designed for sharing, working, discussing, and not only presenting, all while fostering a sense of community.

TASK

2011–2019 • Croatia

Martina Granić, author of the concept, Sonja Pregrad, and the TALA Dance Center as producer, launched the interactive dance magazine and project TASK in 2011, which facilitated knowledge exchange between choreographers of different generations. The project’s methodology proposed that an established choreographer (author) publishes seven-step instructions for creating choreography through the TASK publication. Choreographers (reactors) are then invited to develop their own works based on these instructions. In addition to the more experienced choreographers, young choreographers and artists (break-a-leg reactors) also respond to the task, while receiving mentorship from previous



Documentation of Isabelle Schad’s work *Der Bau – Gruppe 12X60* for TASK 13, 2014. Photographed by Gerhard F. Ludwig. Courtesy of Martina Granić and TALA Dance Center.

participants. This approach highlighted the need to document and map choreographers' work in printed media in order to respond to the need for archiving and analysis of artistic processes. The final phase involved production, where artists (both reactors and break-a-leg reactors) presented their work, and afterwards a dialogue opened between participants and the audience. The resulting performances were showcased as part of Platforma HR. From 2011 to 2019, TALA Dance Center produced around 45 short choreographies and engaged 45 dancers and choreographers through the TASK project. Additionally, 20 authors contributed to the TASK publication.

Situations

2016 • North Macedonia

Situations was created as an innovative format by NDA members Gisela Müller, Dragana Alfrević, and Biljana Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski. This one-time programme was conceived to explore new ways of understanding dance and the role of choreography locally. The main objective was to think, discuss, and work on redefining what dance can be and how it can function as an inclusive, participatory, and community-driven practice.

Held at Kino Kultura (as part of the community development programme Together and Kultrening) from October 9th to 11th, 2016, it focused on exploring ways of 'being together' through dance, movement, imagination, and the sharing of memories, stories, and emotions. Participants of various backgrounds and experiences were invited to join the programme, which emphasized reflecting on the past, engaging with the present, and envisioning the future together, through the tools and ideas of contemporary dance and choreography. The Situations programme challenged the conventional dynamics of performance making, thinking, doing, presenting, and perceiving, aiming to create a space where dance is not just observed but actively participated in by people of all ages and backgrounds. The programme also aimed to underline that dance shouldn't become the privilege of some, but a space of togetherness. The programme encouraged participants to experience

the joy and pleasure of movement and choreography collectively, fostering an environment of collaboration and inclusivity. The format also aimed to contribute to local contexts by inviting artists to challenge and transform existing modes of operation, presentation, and communication in dance and performance.

Antisezona

2019- • Croatia



Collective performance of the hybrid format *Close Encounters of the Dance Kind (Bliski susreti plesne vrste)* at Antisezona, 2021. Photographed by Nina Đurđević. Courtesy of 2021 Antisezona.

Antisezona, a programme of contemporary dance performances, discussions and labs, was created in 2019 in Zagreb by five Croatian dance artists, Silvia Marchig, Sonja Pregrad, and Iva Nerina Sibila, its present curators and directors (besides museologist Tea Kantoci), as well as Ana Kreitmeyer and Zrinka Šimičić Mihanović. It arose as a place of mutual support and out of a need for a new contextual and production framework which was lacking at the time. The lack of support, inadequate infrastructure, and the inability to secure stable, continuous working conditions, along with exclusion from key decision-making processes, are among the many challenges dance artists are continuously confronted with. These difficulties were the trigger to seek new forms of association and self-organization.

It is structured as a year-round programme in the Museum of Contemporary Art in Zagreb, later extended to the TALA Dance Center. The programme takes place through five blocks a year, where reruns, premieres, local and international guest performances, and intermediate works accompanied by a participatory and discursive programme are shown. Antisezona functions without a formal manifesto, focusing instead on the idea of connection and exchange beyond typical stylistic or production boundaries. It exists as a sustainable ecosystem of self-organization, partnership, and care, affirming dance as a contextually sensitive, feminist, intermedial, inclusive, experimental, and open, yet collaboratively envisioned and realized artistic practice.

Performance Platform Festival

2024 • North Macedonia

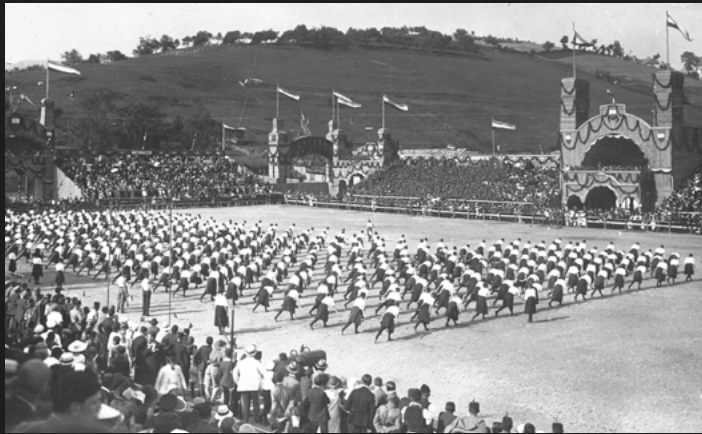
In the past years, Lokomotiva, in collaboration with local and regional partners, produced and presented numerous works by local and international artists as part of its programme. In 2024, they decided to reframe the programme into the Performance Platform Festival (PPF), a pioneering initiative, unfolding its programme through collaborations with festivals across the country and regionally throughout the year. The goal of PPF is to promote a feminist approach to curating, thus sharing the resources and developing convivial approaches to distributing programmes to diverse audiences. PPF reimagines the distribution of artworks beyond a one-dimensional approach by fostering multi-relational, ongoing partnerships and friendships. Acknowledging that the production of the new emerges from past efforts, PPF aspires to position itself not only as a connector within the Balkan region and locally but also as a temporary caretaker maintaining, enhancing, and developing the legacy of the performing arts. Dedicated to presenting international and local performances at the intersection of dance, theatre, and visual art, PPF focuses on research that delves into sociopolitical topics spanning micro and macro politics.



Gisela Müller, Dragana Alfrević, and Biljana Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski, *Situations*, 2016. Courtesy of Lokomotiva – Centre for New Initiatives in Arts and Culture.



Olga Dimitrijević and Maja Pelević, *World Without Women (Svet bez žena)*, 2022. Photographed by Jelena Belikj. Courtesy of 2023 Performance Platform Festival, Lokomotiva – Centre for New Initiatives in Arts and Culture and Tiiiit.inc.



Sokols women in the beginning of the 1920s from the Sokols photo collection donated by TVD Partizan Ljubljana – Narodni dom (1863–1983). Photographer unknown. Courtesy of the National Museum of Contemporary History of Slovenia.



Nada Kokotović, member of KASP rehearsing, late 1960s. Courtesy of Maja Đurinović.



Dah Theatre, *Presence of Absence (Odsustvo prisustva)*, 2013. Photographed by Una Škandro. Courtesy of Dah Theatre.



Vladimir Petak filming with KASP, *Shelter (Zaklon)* on the roof of the Zagreb Fair, 1967. Production by Fas. Courtesy of Maja Đurinović.



Dušan Jovanović with Pupilija Ferkeverk Theatre, *Pupilija, Papa Pupilo and the Pupilceks (Pupilija, papa Pupilo pa Pupilčki)*, 1969. Photographed by Tone Stojko. Courtesy of Iconotheque of SLOGI – the Theatre Museum.

CHAPTER 3

RESHAPING SPACES OF ART AND CULTURE



Vera Maletić, *Choreography for Camera and Dancers (Koreografija za kameru i plesače)*, 1968. Film Still. Courtesy of Maja Đurinović.



BADco., *The Labour of Panic (Rad panike)*, 2020. Photographed by Tanja Kanazir. Courtesy of BADco.



Filip Jovanovski, *The Story of the Flâneuse*, 2023. The City as a Stage II (Gradot kako scena) platform (2021–). Photographed by Natasha Geleva. Courtesy of 2023 Young Open Theater festival (MOT).

Transgressing Dance into Film and Video

The connection between dance and cinema can be found in etymology. The etymological meaning for basic cinematographic terms, including cinema or kineoscopes, is entangled with the old Greek words *kinema* and *kinesis* that define motion and movement. From that perspective, film is a medium of ‘movement-image’ as defined by Gilles Deleuze (Deleuze 1986). The French philosopher emphasizes that the mediality of film is essentially determined by movement as an image—the film is made out of a series of still images that are shown in quick succession. In that respect, cinema/film is not dealing with ontologically stated movement but always with an individual spectator’s impression of movement connected to the gaze. Furthermore, editing enables the creation of a movement that has never happened in front of a camera, exceeding the physicality of human movement.

Peter Sloterdijk argues that modernity, as a project, is based on a conception of kinetics where the world is controlled by humans who move it toward a future utopia. Kinetics became the core of the ethos of the new individual (Sloterdijk 2000). In that regard, the 20th century can be defined as a movement era. Lepecki writes: “As the kinetic project of modernity becomes modernity’s ontology (its inescapable reality, its foundational truth), so the project of Western dance becomes more and more aligned with the production and display of a body and a subjectivity fit to perform this unstoppable mobility” (Lepecki 2006, 3). Unsurprisingly, film has therefore expressed its interest in capturing various body movements, in various ways, which is also the reason for its appetite for dance throughout the 20th and 21st centuries.

Film and dance do not have a singular relation but many. On the one hand, film (and later video) became a medium for documentation and, more recently, also for presentation through numerous streaming platforms, while on the other, dance and film appear as interrelated subjects for exploration, whether in more

standardized and commercial ways or in more experimental and artistic ones. Our interest here is related to the latter, where again dance can be explored from various perspectives. First, the most common and immediate aspect to explore is the relationship between dance and film through specific genres where dance plays a core role. This form appears mainly under the names of screendance, videodance, cinedance, or dance film and (mainly) as an independent production, but it also implies more commercial genres such as musicals, along with a section of music videos. In the commercial genres, dance can appear as decoration due to its appealing characteristics, and as a tool of ideology, but it can also be a critical endeavour and a sharp commentator of (our) cultural, social, and political realm.

The second possible entrance into the exploratory relations between dance and film is coloured by a conceptual and curatorial point of view, where dance is observed through the extension of the moving body for the camera or through the camera, for example, in experimental films, mostly from the avant-garde movements of the 1920s and 1930s, or experimentation with the dancing camera since the 1940s onward, strongly marked by the work of Maya Deren. This perspective is quite present at contemporary curated videodance/screendance festivals.

A third direction, namely video technology, directly connects with the live acts/performances as its immanent part. The performer enacts with live-video and *vice versa* most directly. Here, specific ‘video tools’ for tracing and analysing dance should be mentioned, such as Whatever Dance Toolbox (2008–2011) created by the members of the Croatian performing arts collective BADco., in collaboration with German human-machine interface developer and artist Daniel Turing. Referring to the film industry, an interesting example comes again from BADco.: their performance *1 poor and one o (1 siromašan i jedna o*, 2008) begins with a reference to the first moving pictures in history—*Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory* (1895) by Louis Lumière—evoking the origins of cinema and the binary nature of digital communication as suggested by its title. Through a series of choreographed movements, dialogues, and visual projections, BADco. examines how technology affects human interactions, emotions, and societal structures. Another example of this integration of video and performance is Croatian choreographer Željka Sančanin’s 2003 work *Private in Vitro*. In this performance, Sančanin combines choreographic material with real-time video, creating a fluid interplay between movement and installation. The piece explores the intermediate space where the physical presence of a dancer in unconventional settings, such as galleries and shop windows, intersects with its virtual projection, further highlighting the evolving relationship between live performance and video technology.

However, there are also other possible categorizations relevant to the Western Balkan region, which we are addressing. Among the most useful and clear were the categories that were presented and first used at the dancescreen international dance film competition (organized by the IMZ International Music + Media Centre, Vienna, from 1988 onward, that takes place in cooperation with dance and dance film festivals as well as institutions in different cities), where relations between cinema and dance are divided into four categories: (1) stage/studio recordings; (2) restaging for the camera; (3) choreography for video/film; and (4) documentaries. The first category addresses works created by TV directors. In most cases, the original settings are used, the length of the performance is the same as the video, and the directors follow common theatre-staged laws. In the second category, the focus is still the dance performance, however, the directors in this case are trying to depict the body and spirit of the performance, rather than its linear development. The common feature is nonlinearity, while dance is captured in various locations.

The third category is the most authentic and common for videodance, since the choreography is created especially for film or video. Documentary, the last category, captures various segments of dance: the life and work of choreographers, their creative processes, or dance history (Van Daele 1999, 155–158).

The first and second categories were the most common in the region until the late 1990s, showcasing the importance of TV in that regard, which was later expanded to more experimental notions that were common for video art works appearing in the domain of visual art. From the late 1950s, national TV stations were established throughout the socialist Yugoslavia. The number of hours that had to be filled with programmes, besides the TV news, represented a huge challenge for the TV desks and editors, so theatre, ballet, and dance were appropriate solutions and ready-made for TV. From the 1960s up to 1991, artistic works from the performing and video art fields were regulars on the national TV stations, and recorded dance works are examples of exchanges between various national stations. An earlier instance of international collaboration happened in 1963 when Ana Maletić's *Connections* (*Veze*) was produced through a partnership between ORF and TV Zagreb, marking Yugoslavia's first co-production with the West. Subsequently, her TV choreographies *Magic* (*Magije*) and *Carnival* (*Karneval*), both in 1966, were recorded for Austrian TV. An experimental approach to dance film as a distinct and equal artistic medium was first undertaken by Vera Maletić. She began with screenwriting and choreographing for TV, where we can mention her work *Formation* (*Formacije*) in 1964 (in collaboration with Mladen Raukar for TV Zagreb, and with Hermann Lanske for ORF), and *Radiant* (*Radijant*, 1966), in collaboration with Vladimir Seljan. Her first work specifically designed for film, *Choreography for Camera and Dancers* (*Koreografija za kameru i plesače*), was shot in 1968 and is considered the first experimental dance film in SFRY (produced by Zagreb Film, in collaboration with Krešimir "Krešo" Golik). Another example of videodance experimentation is the work of Majna Sevnik Firšt, choreographer, dancer, and later director at TV Ljubljana (1961–1983), who—strongly influenced by Op Art—also introduced the term 'dance for the camera' in Slovenia while creating the first Slovenian experimental dance project for TV, entitled *Echoes* (*Odmevi*, 1969), which was important primarily from the viewpoint of fine art interventions in the TV media. Another important project, from this aspect, is her *Five Impressions* (*Pet impresij*, 1970). Sevnik Firšt also directed the first TV ballet on TV Ljubljana, *Sketches in Rhythm* (*Skice v ritmu*, 1967), with music written by Janez Gregorc, and is today most known for her realization of ballets for TV. She occasionally also worked for TV Zagreb.¹ The most artistic case from Serbia from the time was the dance work for screen *The Skull Tower* (*Čele kula*, 1979) by Smiljana Mandukić, which was created as a dance work and later adapted for the video. The practice continued in Serbia throughout the 1980s and 1990s, as in the case of Theatre Signum works, Theatre Mimart works, or some works by Dah Theatre.

The specific TV dance genre developed from the late 1960s onward and became recognizable, sometimes also awarded at TV festivals, for example, Lojzka Žerdin's *Woman in Black* (*Žena v črnem*, 1969). It is also worth mentioning that the first edition of Ljubljana Dance Days, curated by Marija Vogelc with her team in 1976, was hosted by Studio 1 of TV Ljubljana and was also partially broadcasted.

Another important aspect are the video art works that have developed out of an urge to transgress the medium of painting and are connected with the conceptual movement in art at the end of the 1960s and throughout the 1970s. In the 1980s, video art became a constitutive part of the alternative art and cultural scene, integrated into club and multimedia events and other manifestations.

¹ It is known that TV-dance works were in many cases presented on the National TVs throughout Yugoslavia, but there's been no catalogue or precise list of those screenings made yet.

At this time, it became a medium for those artists who treated Ljubljana's, Zagreb's, and Belgrade's alternative artistic community as artistic collectives and worked with it. Also in Skopje, in the 1980s, there was an expansion of video art production, related to Macedonian TV, and artists started exploring the possibilities of new media of the time. Artists from different disciplines, (pop)culture phenomena, and backgrounds collaborated with video makers. Besides its technological exploration, video art of the period in most cases can be considered a documentation medium. However, some exceptions include innovation in early animation works through the lens of choreography. Such an example is the video created by Goran Davide, *Too Much Tension* (*Previše tenzije*), by the Slovenian music group Borghesia that appears on their 1985 album *So Young* (*Tako mladi*). However, that was not the case for North Macedonia, Serbia, and Croatia.

In the 1980s, TV was an important producer of video art works and a regular presenter of programmes dedicated to this art medium, which was supposed to be followed by the first Slovenian alternative TV (ATV, 1985), but the TV station, unfortunately, turned in a different direction. However, except in Slovenia and Croatia, in other Western Balkan countries videodance, as a subgenre of video art, has not been developed. Dance was present and integrated as an appealing and dynamic element for commercial TV programmes and music during this period.

In 1991, the Video-Dance Festival was established by Miran Šušteršič in Ljubljana, and produced by Dance Theatre Ljubljana. All its five editions were curated by Šušteršič, Cis Bierincks, and Koen Van Daele—the first three were presented at the Cultural and Congress Centre Cankarjev dom and the last two editions at the Slovenian Cinematheque. In the first two editions, no local video artworks were presented since there weren't really any, but the festival inspired some video artists and film directors, which was echoed in the third edition of the festival, showcasing seven new local productions. This does not mean that dancers and choreographers did not work with video artists already before. However, in most cases, early examples of such collaboration could not be defined as videodance work(s) as dance appeared there more as an ornament.

Among the early Slovene videodance works we should mention video artists Ema Kugler, Jasna Hribernik, Marina Gržinić and Aina Šmid, and Jan Zakonjšek, as well as Neven Korda and Zemira Alajbegović Pečovnik. The first 'true' videodance/dance film is *Path* (*Pot*, 1993), created by Sašo Podgoršek and Miran Šušteršič in collaboration with Tanja Zgonc. Soon after, Podgoršek developed a strong collaboration with Iztok Kovač that led to a long list of successful dance films. Regardless of the decline in interest in videodance production, there are still a number of artists who occasionally reach for this form of work. From a historical point of view, it is important to mention Urška Žnidaršič who ended her studies in film direction in 1995 with the dance film *The Water Man* (*Povodni mož*), which was based on the choreography of Branko Potočan. The film *Express, Express* (*Ekspres, Ekspres*, 1997) by Igor Šterk is also an interesting example, in which choreographies replace dialogues between the protagonists. From the choreographic point of view, it is necessary to mention the film *Don't Think It Will Ever Pass* (*Ne misli, da bo kdaj mimo*, 2023) by the double bass player and composer Tomaž Grom. It is a unique, experimental, and enigmatic film; the viewer is drawn into it with his entire body, kinaesthetically following the motion of the camera, which never stops while folding everyday moments into poetry.

In the case of North Macedonia, the intersection of dance and video has been very rare, almost non-existent. Apart from a few appearances of dancers/choreographers in music videos (such as the videos of the band Leb I Sol, the music video Skopjanka of PMG collective, and some videos of the punk band Bernays Propaganda), the only videodance/short film that has had conceptual

incorporation of dance by a Macedonian choreographer/dancer is a short film in Serbian production *Ohrid Legend (Ohridska legenda)* from 2008. This 13-minute film, directed by Miloš Đukelić with choreography by Iskra Shukarova and two dancers (Dalija Aćin Thelander and Željko Grozdanović), is a contemporary adaptation of the ballet *Ohrid Legend* with the music of Stevan Hristić.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s Croatian choreographer and filmmaker Ljiljana Mikulčić (aka Liliana Resnick) started exploring the medium of film. She creates experimental films rooted in choreography, using movement as a core element to explore and express themes like violence, memories, the past, and emotions: *Ćej* (with Radovan Marijek, 1991), *Moments (Trenuci)*, 2007), and *Reopening the Past (Otvaranje prošlosti)*, 2010). With the democratization and accessibility of technology in the 2000s, numerous dance artists began exploring film language. Irma Omerzo's 2003 dance film *In Our City (U našem gradu)* features five scenes depicting dance situations in the urban context of Zagreb, each offering a commentary on society through choreographic and cinematic expression. Another example is *Sub Rosa* (2003), a short animated film co-created by Katja Šimunić and Nikola Šimunić, inspired by a dance performance choreographed by Katja Šimunić and set to a fragment of Dora Pejačević's *String Quartet in C-major, op. 58*. The film visualizes music through animated contemporary dance sequences. In Serbia in 2009, Station initiated FAST FORWARD, a programme that introduced the practice of video dance to the local dance scene. The programme was created in cooperation with dance artists from Sweden, North Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Albania. Ten video works were produced, including the first video dance by choreographer Dragana Bulut.

List of Examples

Dance on TV Zagreb

1960s and 1970s • Croatia

Vera Maletić: *Choreography for Camera and Dancers*

1968 • Croatia

Working for TV Belgrade

1970s–1990s • Serbia

Theatre Mimart

1984– • Serbia

The Hat Theatre

1993–2006 • Serbia

Vertigo Bird

1996 • Slovenia

Hana Vodeb

1981– • Slovenia

Dance on TV Zagreb

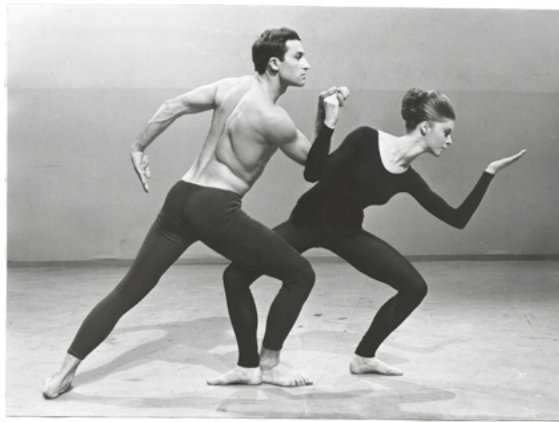
1960s and 1970s • Croatia

After TV was introduced, one of the key goals of TV programming and editorial policies was art promotion and popularisation in the SFRY. Therefore, TV programmes were also favourable toward all forms of dance. In 1962, Vladimir Seljan, editor of the Classical Music Department at national TV Zagreb (RTV Zagreb, 1956–), initiated a collaboration with Vera Maletić and Studio Contemporary Dance Company which led to the creation of the programme *Through the Prism of Movement* (*Kroz prizmu pokreta*, 1963). Although this programme was short-lived, it pioneered the genre of video choreography and marked the beginning of the cooperation between TV and dance ensembles (first with Studio Contemporary Dance Company, and later with Chamber Ensemble of Free Dance (KASP) and Zagreb Dance Company). The next collaboration between Seljan and Studio Contemporary Dance Company happened again a year later on a programme *Sound in Motion* (*Zvuk u pokretu*, 1964/65). Directed by Mladen Raukar, a pianist, music pedagogue, TV editor, and director, the programme blended music with dance, using dance as a visual representation of contemporary music. Raukar also directed *Connections* (*Veze*, 1963), a choreographic satire in five everyday scenes (casual, business, criminal, sentimental, and frivolous connections), one of Ana Maletić's first works for TV. This work was also co-produced with the Austrian broadcaster ORF and TV Zagreb, showcasing early cross-border partnerships in the realm of TV and dance. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, TV Zagreb maintained close collaboration with the dance scene working with figures such as Milana Broš, Vlasta Kaurić, Tihana Škrinjarić, and ballerina Maja Bezjak.

Vera Maletić: Choreography for Camera and Dancers

1968 • Croatia

Choreography for Camera and Dancers (*Koreografija za kameru i plesače*, 1968), Maletić's first work created for film, made in collaboration with film and TV director Krešimir "Krešo" Golik, is regarded as Croatian's first experimental dance film. The title pays tribute to experimental dance film pioneer Maya Deren and her short film *A Study in Choreography for Camera* (1945). Maletić's film's theme is inspired by Ivo Malec's composition *Miniatures for Lewis Carroll* (1964) and performed by the Studio Contemporary Dance Company members. The film opens with close-up shots of dancers in black leotards, set against a stark white background. The dancers appear to float, while the camera continuously explores their movements. The abstract close-ups gradually transition to wider shots, adding context while complicating the visual rhythm. The dynamic interplay arises from isolating specific body parts in motion, precisely framing and



Ana Maletić with Studio Contemporary Dance Company, *Formations* (*Formacije*), 1964–65. Cooperation between Austrian broadcaster ORF and TV Zagreb. Courtesy of Maja Đurinović.



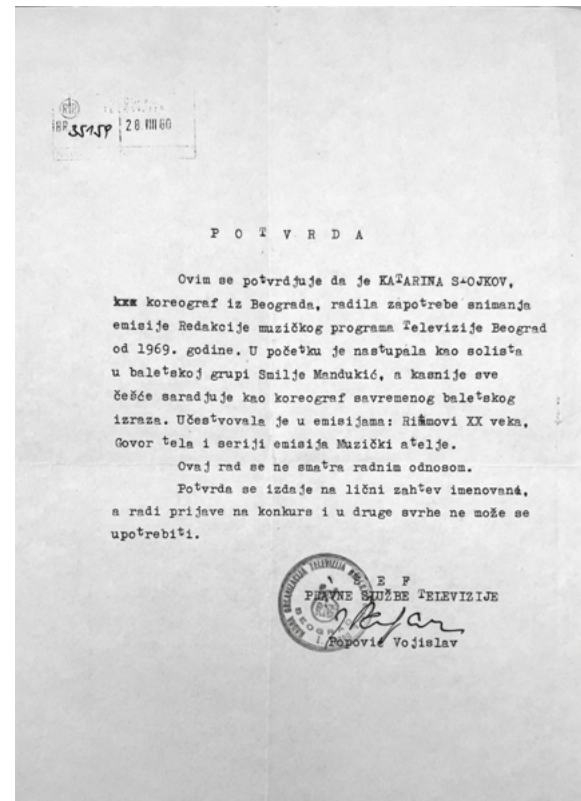
Vera Maletić, *Choreography for Camera and Dancers* (*Koreografija za kameru i plesače*), 1968. Courtesy of Maja Đurinović.

weaving them into a complex montage that gives meaning to the movements through careful editing. Since no moving camera was available in the film company Zagreb Film which produced the film, Maletić's dance was choreographed for a static camera, so the choreography is realized with the dancers' movements and framing, and editing made by Katja Majer. These were the early beginnings of the development of videodance. In addition, Maletić was one of the pioneers in teaching videodance in the USA, focusing on choreography in film and video at Ohio State University's Department of Dance (1977–2000).

Working for TV Belgrade

1970s–1990s • Serbia

The displayed document is a contract signed by choreographer Katarina Stojkov Slijepčević for her engagement on TV Belgrade in 1969. This is just one example of the numerous engagements of modern and early contemporary dance artists in Serbia during the 1970s and 1980s as professional independent artists or 'freelancers.' In addition to Stojkov Slijepčević, Dubravka Maletić, and Nela Antonović—contemporaries who, during their engagement at Smiljana Mandukić's Belgrade Contemporary Ballet troupe, worked in commercial programmes on Yugoslav TV and film—the next generation of dancers such as Anđelija Todorović, Jelena Jović, Danica Arapović, Tatjana Pajović, Nenad Čolić, Dejan Pajović, Sanja Krsmanović Tasić, among others, also showcased their choreographic and dance skills on national TV



Certificate for Katarina Stojkov Slijepčević proving that she was working at TV Belgrade since 1969, 1980. Courtesy of Katarina Stojkov Slijepčević.

during the 1980s and 1990s. Their work ranged from projects with alternative musicians, artists, and film directors (e.g., Josipa Lisac, Denis & Denis, Ekatarina Velika (EKV), Dušan Kojić / *Disciplina Kičme*, Vlada Divljan, Oliver Mandić, Slavko Crnobrnja, Goran Gajić, Božidar "Bota" Nikolić), to televised performances of works by dance troupes (e.g., Theatre Mimart, Theatre Signum, Dah Theatre), as well as commercial projects on national TV involving folk music artists (e.g., the *Folk Parade* programme with Lepa Brena, Nada Topčagić, Zorica Brunclik, Usnija Redžepova, Rade Marjanović, and others). Besides providing freelance work that allowed dancers to survive during times when there was no work within experimental theatre or dance, these engagements also serve as testimonies to the continuous existence of choreographic and dance work in the realm of modern and early contemporary dance in Serbia, both during the socialist Yugoslavia and subsequent turbulent sociopolitical changes. Additionally, they attest to the high visibility of these dance practices in the public space of post-Yugoslav society.

Theatre Mimart

1984 • Serbia

Founded in 1984, Theatre Mimart is among the first independent theatre troupes in Belgrade. Over the last 40 years, its founder and director Nela Antonović has explored new codes in dance through a trans-media approach in an open process together with collaborators. Positioning her artistic practice at the intersection of modern and contemporary dance, physical theatre, ritual theatre, mime, and multimedia (including video art, visual art, and sculpture), the troupe's body of work consistently navigates the boundaries between activist art, digital and multimedia performance, visual art, and dance. With a strong focus on social issues, their work engages with the defining forces of contemporary life—geopolitical, social, economic, technological, ecological, media, communication, and cultural phenomena. In an era of widespread visual and spectacle-driven societal and cultural life, Theatre Mimart has been discreetly searching for the meaning of contemporary art and the possibilities of performance as a means of communication and change. To date, the troupe has performed over 60 theatre productions, more than four hundred performances and street projects, and conducted over one hundred open workshops for young people, students, dancers, actors, citizens, emerging artists, as well as conducting integration workshops. The displayed photo represents a still from the very first production of this troupe, *Urbis Ludus*, presented in 1985 in the Student Cultural Centre (SKC) in Belgrade, in front of five hundred people. In search for the meaning of communication—especially in times which, in the words of Antonović, were marked by a sense of meaninglessness, an atmosphere burdened with the sense of everything being already seen, done, and exhausted—this particular performance

combined elements of modern dance (Antonović was a trained dancer in the Belgrade Contemporary Ballet of Smiljana Mandukić for 20 years), physical theatre, and multimedia performance. In later works and throughout the decades, the artistic work of Nela Antonović and Theatre Mimart continuously moved on the borders of activist art, digital and multimedia performance, visual art, ritual theatre, and dance.



Theatre Mimart, *Urbis Ludus*, 1985. Photographed by Nikola Grivcov. Courtesy of Theatre Mimart.



Leaflet announcing Hat Theatre's performance *Spring or a Nightmare in Serbia (Proleće ili noćna mora u Srbiji)*, 1999 at KUD France Prešern in Ljubljana, 18.12.1999. Designed by Ljudmila Stratimirović. Courtesy of Ljudmila Stratimirović.

The Hat Theatre

1993–2006 • Serbia

The Hat Theatre (Pozorište šešira) was a multimedia theatre troupe active from 1993 to 2006, founded by Ljudmila Stratimirović on the non-institutional art scene. The troupe was composed of female members (including Stratimirović, Zoja Borovčanin, Tatjana Prokić, and Zorana Ninčić) and male members (Nemanja Aćimović, Vladimir Đorđević, and Dejan Utvar), who were musicians in a band of the same name. After years of designing hats and creating hybrid fashion show formats combined with other forms of visual and stage expression—such as theatre, rock 'n' roll, video production, photography, comics, and, most prominently, physical movement—Stratimirović's work became characterized by inspiration, exploration, experimentation, innovation, and multimedia. The initial idea of the troupe was to create four performances or stories: winter, spring, summer, and autumn, and to compare them with the four stages of human life. Among the four performances, the most significant was the second one, titled *Spring or a Nightmare in Serbia (Proleće ili noćna mora u Srbiji)*, which was performed at Bitef Theatre twice a month during the NATO bombing of Serbia in 1999, serving as a beacon of light in Belgrade's artistic and cultural scene at the time. The fourth and final performance, *Autumn or How I Look (Jesen... ili kako izgledam?)*, 2006, focused on the position of women in Serbian society. The troupe also performed as part of an exhibition at the Ethnographic Museum in Belgrade, with a performance on the theme of the 'Glamočko Kolo' (a traditional deaf dance). The band's first solo concert, featuring original music composed for the troupe's performances, took place in 2006 at the Belgrade Youth Centre. Ljudmila Stratimirović continues to work actively as the director of the Cultural Centre Grad in Belgrade, supporting numerous artists from the independent art scene, while some troupe members remain active in other art spheres—Zoja Borovčanin and Vladimir Đorđević, for example, now perform as the famous rock band Lira Vega.



Sašo Podgoršek and Iztok Kovač, *Vertigo Bird (Vrtoglavi Ptič)*, 1996. Photographed by Žiga Koritnik. Courtesy of EN-KNAP.

Vertigo Bird

1996 • Slovenia

Vertigo Bird (Vrtoglavi ptič), directed by Sašo Podgoršek and choreographed by Iztok Kovač, stands as the finest example of Slovenian dance films from the 1980s and 1990s, when dance films were one of the most popular contemporary dance genres worldwide. Based on the choreographic works of Iztok Kovač and danced by his company EN-KNAP (later named EN-KNAP Group), *Vertigo Bird* is shot in the industrial ambience of the Slovene mining town of Trbovlje. The film relates the modernist idiom of dance to the industrial architecture and milieu in a constructivist manner that gave Kovač's dance work its full meaning, in its form and collectivism. The final scene with a dancer standing on the highest chimney in Europe, spreading his arms like a bird, was proclaimed the anthological film shot in Slovene cinema by the film critic Marcel Štefančič Jr. The dancer's body, surrounded by vast emptiness high above the ground and in contradiction with the solid construction achievement under his feet, represents one of the most memorable images of human vulnerability and modern progress.



Mala Kline, *VENERA: Between Captivity and Flight (VENERA: med ujetostjo in letenjem)*, 2022. Photographed by Urška Boljkovac. Courtesy of Mala Kline.

Hana Vodeb

1981– • Slovenia

Hana Vodeb, a versatile artist, has been present in the last decade in the field of dance as a filmmaker and editor who thinks, conceives, and conceptualizes videos for stage, installations, and dance films. With her aesthetic sense and feeling for dance, she has made a significant contribution to the contemporary dance scene, first as a documentarist and festivals' trailer creator (Mladi Levi Festival, Spider Festival, Gibanica – Biennial of Slovenian Contemporary Dance Art, Little Festival of Psychodrama in the Slovenian village Krušče) and more recently as an author of dance films, video as a scenic element in performances and dance installations, and creator of live video mappings that she creates in dialogue with choreographers (including Špela Vodeb, Katja Legin, Snježana Premuš, Milan Tomašik, etc.). Particularly noteworthy is her collaboration with dancer and choreographer Mala Kline. Kline based the performance *VENERA: Between Captivity and Flight (VENERA: med ujetostjo in letenjem)*, 2021 on Botticelli's painting *Birth of Venus*, depicting the moment of her emergence from the sea foam. Through the mapping, Vodeb captures the dancer's moving body in front of the screen and simultaneously integrates her frozen silhouettes into the video from which a multitude of forms and their variations emerge, creating a dialogue between bodies, those captured and the one present. The work could be interpreted as a visual poem in time, posing questions about corporeality, relationality, gaze, etc. Based on the performative materials, Vodeb also created a dance movie of the same name. In a dialogue with Kline, Vodeb also produced two video dance installations *Songlines V-XII* (2018), relating again to the choreographer's pieces with the same title, and a video that was an integral creative element in Kline's *MEMORIA* (2023).

Dance and the Body as Mediators of Change Within the Practice of Theatre

The modern history of Yugoslav theatre shows that in its most paradigmatic changes (introduction of new practices, procedures, changes of spatial or physical concepts, etc.) dance and choreography played a fundamental part in redefining the boundaries and possibilities of theatrical expression. Dance's influence extended far beyond mere performance; it was integral to how the body—whether individual or collective—was conceptualized, constructed, and engaged on stage. This impact can be observed in two primary ways: the direct application of dance techniques and the incorporation of dance-based procedures and methodologies into broader theatrical practices. Dance techniques, which emphasize movement, rhythm, and physicality, offered new ways to explore and express dramatic paradigms, as well as structures and construct narratives. The body's motion became a key element, shifting the focus from traditional dialogue-centric performances to a more holistic, embodied form of theatre. Dance methodologies introduced innovative approaches to the creative process in theatre, which often emphasized collaboration, improvisation, and the exploration of physical space, challenged conventional theatrical norms and encouraged more dynamic, fluid performances. Choreography and dance influenced not just the movement of actors but also the overall staging, pacing, and visual composition of theatrical productions. All new theatre tendencies, springing back from the times of historical avant-gardes, could be summed up into one task: what can the body reveal beyond its speech and how can the body produce meanings beyond its semiotic corpus?

Different theatre directors and groups collaborated with dancers and choreographers to resolve these tasks. They created a series of works that could roughly be chronologically systematized. Before WWII there were workers' theatres and choirs together with a few avant-garde groups (such as Ferdo Delak's *The New Stage*, originally *Novi oder*), while after the war innovations could be found either in various physical modalities in the stage performances of actors who were

informed by different innovative technical training and physical exercises both from dance and theatre, or in different choreographic approaches through which group scenes were composed.

Workers' choirs and Workers' theatres were cultural initiatives in Yugoslavia aiming to engage the working class in cultural activities that reinforced socialist values and collective identity. Established in the early 20th century during the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, these initiatives were amateur, composed mainly of workers from various industries and factories (non-professional actors, singers, directors, and stage crew members). For workers exhausted from long days of labour, choirs and theatres were more than just a form of entertainment; they served as a 'school of thought' where members learned to channel their rebellion (challenging working conditions, lack of resources) through creative expression. Therefore, theatre plays often addressed issues relevant to the working class, such as labour struggles, social justice or the construction of a socialist society. The most radical and outstanding in that regard was the already mentioned Slovenian theatre director Ferdo Delak, whose work expanded throughout Yugoslavia (including Croatia, Serbia and North Macedonia). Workers' choirs performed songs that celebrated labour, socialist values, and the achievements of the working class. Their repertoire often included folk songs, revolutionary songs, and compositions that reflected the aspirations and struggles of workers. Participation in choirs was widespread, performing at various state and public events, including celebrations of national holidays, political anniversaries, and other significant occasions. Both performance types were often staged in factories, public squares, and community centres, making culture a communal experience.

In terms of methodology, both practices had one thing in common: the involvement of modern dance choreographers in staging their public performances. These choreographers procedurally emphasized the expression of the individual and collective movement, rhythm, and physicality, connected to the collaborative nature and the collective spirit of socialism. Worker's theatre played a specific role. An outstanding example of this is the Ljubljana Workers' Theatre in the 1920s and 1930s under the artistic leadership of Ferdo Delak and Bratko Kreft. Delak's avant-garde project *The New Stage* (*Novi Oder*, 1925) stands out with its only issue of an eponymous magazine. In Serbia, Lujo Davidović dedicated his work to the avant-garde artistic means of communication, participated in the Scouts organizations, composed revolutionary songs, and spent most of his time with the recitative workers' choir *Abrašević* (1936) with about 80 members. The *Abrašević* choir nurtured a stage-dance musical expression of avant-garde theatre maintaining solidarity, sacrifice, courage, and the conviction to fight for a (more) just society. After the war, choreographer Dubravka Maletić continued working with the re-established Cultural-Artistic Association (KUD) *Abrašević*, creating choreographic works for grand state spectacles, and merging modern dance with traditional cultural expressions. In North Macedonia, many cultural associations had been established to support traditional dances and maintain the conventional 'body culture' through these activities. However, no modern dance section was part of these Cultural and Artistic Associations (KUDs), nor any other choreographed 'innovative' approaches in their performances.

Workers' theatres and choirs during the Kingdom of Yugoslavia could be described as cultural initiatives building art that was not something already known, but something yet to happen (socialist art). A transformative engagement of dance and choreography that was not (only) aesthetic is why it is so hard to grasp these practices today. Although with the potential that was supposed to become working-class art, paradoxically, all attempts ended up as bourgeois type of institutions during the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY).

In the mid-20th century, Yugoslav theatre and dance underwent a significant transformation, deeply influenced by the European avant-garde movements and homegrown experimentation. This era saw the emergence of groundbreaking practices that challenged traditional boundaries between theatre, dance, and physical performance. By prioritising movement, gesture, and bodily expression over conventional dialogue and narrative, artists and collectives across the region began redefining performance, laying the foundation for a unique fusion of drama and physicality that would start dominating the performing arts landscape in socialist Yugoslavia.

The tendencies of experimental theatre of the 1950s and 1960s in Slovenia (i.e. Experimental Theatre of Balbina Battelino Baranovič, Ad Hoc Theatre of Draga Ahačič) were such that the imperative for new physicality sprang from Artaud's writings. The second wave of experimental theatre (late 1960s and 1970s) found inspiration on various grounds. For example, Dušan Jovanović, who also directed the famous *Pupilija, Papa Pupilo and the Pupilceks* (1969) and many other outstanding works (also in Experimental Theatre Glej, today Glej Theatre), was inspired by the notion of play, understood in terms of Dutch historian Johan Huizinga, who wrote the first treatise of the concept of play in culture, entitled *Homo Ludens* (1938). Huizinga defined play as a voluntary activity experienced and accepted as something fictional that captivates us completely. As teatrologist Lado Kralj explains, his theses on play were fashionable throughout Europe in the 1960s, including Ljubljana and Belgrade (Kralj 2013, 400). Various stances of anthropological theatre addressing the spiritual realms were also popular then. To mention a few: Living Theatre-inspired forms (first three performances of Pekarna Theatre in the beginning of the 1970s from Slovenia) or through Grotowski-inspired forms of ritual theatre (Vlado Šav's *Vetrnica* (1973) from Slovenia, Miroslav Mandić from Serbia since the 1970s, Kaj Sveti Nikita Goltarot Theatre in the 1970s from North Macedonia), Brook and Meyerhold inspired forms (Branko Pleša from Serbia in the 1970s, and Dragan Živadinov from Slovenia in the 1980s) and Barba-inspired forms (Haris Pašović working in Serbia in the 1980s) (Založnik 2024, 140–143).

In Croatia different theatre collectives such as Theatre Lero (Dubrovnik, 1968), Coccolemocco (Zagreb, 1971–1986), Theatre Workshop Pozdravi (Zagreb, 1973–1982), Kugla glumište (Zagreb, 1975–1983), Theatre Daska (Sisak, 1976) developed in the vicinity of the active performance art scene and took on different normative constraints with interventions which in many cases brought theatre to public spaces and confronted the public on unexpected occasions (many times with radical humour). With all means available, including a daring approach to physicality, the theatre of those collectives would be considered, practised, and experienced as an agent for transforming life and challenging social, cultural, and artistic norms. An anti-academic and rebellious yet self-confident and daring stance of this movement is perhaps most precisely embodied in the work of Damir Bartol Indoš, containing daring, sometimes even brutal decisions and taking the body out of its comfort zone. It seems a paradigm that came to be fully appreciated by the contemporary dance and performing arts contexts only in the decades of the post-Yugoslav period.¹

In North Macedonia, alternative and experimental theatre in the 1970s had a slightly different direction and development and could be analysed through several initiatives: The Kaj Sveti Nikita Goltarot Theatre, The Roma Theatre Pralipe, and the Open Theatre University of the Aesthetic Laboratory at the Philological Faculty (Cyril and Methodius University of Skopje), where the Theatre Workshop and the festival

Young Open Theater (MOT) was established.² However, the Kaj Sveti Nikita Goltarot Theatre, founded at the beginning of the 1970s, was the first group to develop alternative concepts. Its founders were Vladimir Milchin, Slobodan Unkovski, and Martin Panchevski, all students at the Faculty of Dramatic Arts in Belgrade. They intended to break through the walls of institutional theatre and bring Macedonian theatre closer to contemporary art processes (Nikodinovski-Bish 2009, 42). Yet close to some other already mentioned examples, the group used the Grotowski technique and was organized as a theatre–school workshop that implied living and working together in the Monastery St. Nikita on the outskirts of the capital Skopje.

In the 1980s the retrograde theatre collectives of Dragan Živadinov (The Scipion Nasice Sisters Theatre, 1983–1987, the Cosmokinetic Theatre Red Pilot (Rdeči pilot), 1987–1990, Cosmokinetic Cabinet Noordung, 1990–1995–2045) are the most recognisable examples where physical practices under the classification of bio-kinetics (the Russian avant-gardes) were already informed by different kinetic hybrids of contemporary dance, with the following movement of the Third Generation of theatre directors in Slovenia, who collaborated with dancers and choreographers and staged some indisputable choreographic works. Inspired by Živadinov's retro-garde movement, they consciously chose not to engage in traditional dramatic theatre. Directors like Vlado Repnik, Igor Štromajer, Barbara Novaković, and Ema Kugler took a different approach, focusing on choreographic works, emphasizing movement and physical expression over narrative drama. Another merging between dance and theatre among still present collectives and ensembles formed in the late 1980s and 1990s, like Betontanc in Slovenia or Montažstroj in Croatia, which involved the creation of 'urban tribes' and anti-academic choreographic brutalism. They introduced urban themes like collective parties, sexuality, etc., such as in *Everybody Goes to Disco from Moscow to San Francisco* (1994) from Montažstroj and *Poets Without Pockets (Pesniki brez žepov, 1990)* from Betontanc, often initiating artistic practices based on ludus/public games/play which were brutal, risky, and dramatic, like retrospectively in the late 1960s, where play was to consolidate urban communities through irony, critique of socialism, consumerism, singing, and ritualistic choreographies. In Serbia, similar streams of physicality and alternative theatre were present in Theatre Mimart (1984), Dah Theatre (1992), Ister Theatre (1994), Omen Theatre (1995), etc.—although they were primarily actuators for and cultural forces of the political opposition to Milošević's political regime. Dah Theatre played a crucial role in challenging the culture of denial and impunity that surrounded Serbia towards the Yugoslav wars. Their work has been instrumental in keeping the memory of the victims alive and advocating for justice, despite the difficult political and social environment in which they operated.

Additionally, there were practices of physicality using imagination or surrealist narratives dealing with memories, evoking a sense of the past through movement. Understanding dance as a site for the encounter—Jozsef Nagy (Josef Nadj, a choreographer, dancer, visual artist and photographer)—flourishing in complete corporal freedom between reality and fantasy, tradition and modernity, exploring the essential: man's relationship with himself.

Still, there were theatre practices, experimenting with blurring the lines between dance and drama. Perhaps the most significant practice in that regard was the work of KPGT (an acronym formed from the words for theatre in the southern Slavic corpus: kazalište, pozorište, gledališče, teatar). "Originally, it was [...] an attempt for the Yugoslav theatre space to form itself as a unified cultural space. Its

¹ At the same time, dance had its own independent trajectory of development through the fusion of modern dance with jazz dance, gymnastics, folk dance, and *slets*, like in cases of practices in Serbia including the work of Smiljana Mandukić, Dubravka Maletić, Katarina Stojkov Slijepčević, Petar Slaj, etc.

² The first wave of alternative theatre in North Macedonia began at the end of the 1950s, when amateur theatre groups were established in different cities in the country. Specifically, more than 170 groups were registered (Nikodinovski-Bish 2009, 30). This also connects the beginning of alternative theatre with the opening of the 'small stage' of the Macedonian National Theatre.

author is Ljubiša Ristić with his close associates, of whom the ones who should probably be mentioned are Nada Kokotović, Dušan Jovanović, Rade Šerbedžija, Dragan Klaić, etc., who provided the KPGT, aesthetically speaking, with some sort of a plural field of parallel, as well as hybrid, stage practices” (Vear 2015, 16–17).

The innovative theatre forms initiated through KPGT in Serbia were mostly achieved through the work between a directorial-choreographic tandem Ljubiša Ristić and Nada Kokotović. Ristić defined the concept of this work as a ‘total theatre’—the emancipatory movement within the performing arts, where ‘actors dance, ballerinas speak.’ Yet, Kokotović defined choreodrama as a practice opposed to dance theatre, emphasizing that dramatic action is the basis of exploration, whether through dance, speech, or a combination of both. Choreodrama resulted from self-education and interaction with different theatrical and dance agencies and did not depend on one dance technique, but included ballet, modern dance and jazz ballet, martial arts, and everyday gestures. Although some dance historians today apply this term to choreographers from the first part of the 20th century (Maga Magazinović, Smiljana Mandukić), it was Kokotović who first used it for her choreographic contributions to KPGT productions and her solo work, as well as Sonja Vukićević who later also used the term. These practices of collaboration, relying on the concept of choreodrama, continued through other works of directors and choreographers. Gordana Dean Pop Hristova, who was part of KPGT, moved to Skopje and established the Rebis Ballet Studio, which became a symbol of modern dance. In Slovenia, Ksenija Hribar’s deep engagement with British contemporary dance gained from her time with the London Contemporary Dance Theatre (1967–1974), greatly influenced the theatrical work of Dušan Jovanović, Janez Pipan, and Vito Taufer. In North Macedonia, the concept of choreodrama was more of an exception, and one of the rare, if not the only examples of such work is Risima Rysimkin’s performance *Janis* (1990).

Speaking broadly, the collaboration between the theatre director and choreographer embodied a relationship between the dramatic and the dance elements, which, if understanding the continuity of these practices up to today, revealed essential distinctions between the institutional (dramatic) and independent (dance) scenes, or the ‘non-dramatic,’ ‘anti-dramatic,’ ‘post-dramatic,’ ‘dance-based,’ and broadly performative. The methods and knowledge that (contemporary dance) choreographers brought into this collaborations within the institutional theatre context are perceived as something new and different compared to educational drama arts institutions. The exchange of knowledge lead to change. The application of dance procedures and methodologies was part of this exchange: choreographers had a major, sometimes even crucial role of the rehearsals, developing various methods for preparing actors with different elements of (dramatic) interpretations through the body. This introduces the complex negotiation between, on the one hand, formalised, classified knowledge gained through education within the established frameworks of existing art schools/academies, and self-education and the more fluid flow of knowledge characteristic of the independent dance scene in the region of former Yugoslavia. Moreover, it requires questioning various inherited and newly formed positions in the labour market and different methodologies and conditions for the work’s production and presentation. However, why the institutional framework recognized the director as the sole author behind such collaborations remains questionable to this day, while at the same time it is undeniably accepted as routine, convention, and premise.

In such circumstances, the generation of contemporary dance artists which matured during the 1990s and 2000s slowly detached from the choreodrama concept within the collaborations between theatre directors and choreographers.³

The rich and dynamic interplay between theatre and dance in various forms in Yugoslavia, from the mid-20th century to the present, has fostered innovative approaches to performance, blending physicality, choreography, and drama. Through influential collaborations and experimentation, particularly with the concept of choreodrama, artists and collectives have pushed the boundaries of traditional forms, creating a unique legacy that continues to shape the region’s performing arts. This ongoing exchange between institutional and independent scenes has not only expanded the artistic vocabulary of Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav performing arts but also challenged conventional notions of authorship, creativity, and the role of the body in storytelling.

3 Such collaborations are presented in the following theatre-director and choreographer tandems: Tanja Mandić Rigonat with Anđelija Todorović; Kokan Mladenović with Anđelija Todorović, Bojana Mladenović, Isidora Stanišić, Andreja Kulešević; Tomaž Pandur, Nikita Milivojević, Aleksandar Popovski, Haris Pašović with Sonja Vukićević; Nebojša Bradić with Dalija Aćin Thelander, Isidora Stanišić, Vera Obradović; Anđelka Nikolić with Isidora Stanišić, Dušan Murić; Mateja Koležnik with Matija Ferlin; Jernej Lorenci with Gregor Luštek; Sebastijan Horvat with Ana Dubljević; Jovana Tomić with Bojana Robinson, Maja Kalafatić, Igor Koruga; Ksenija Zec, Petra Hrašćanec, Željka Sančanin with Saša Božić; Slobodan Unkovski, Vlado Cvetanovski, Aleksandar Popovski, Zoja Buzalkova, Srgjan Janikievic, Dejan Projkovski, Bojan Trifunovski, Dragana Stojcevska, Sibel Abdiu with Gordana Dean Pop Hristova, Risima Rysimkin, Iskra Shukarova, Olga Pango, Aleksandra Kochovska Nacheva; Filip Jovanovski with Viktorija Ilioska.

List of Examples

Chamber Ensemble of Free Dance

KASP • 1963-1987 • Croatia

Pupilija Ferkeverk Theatre: *Pupilija, Papa Pupilo and the Pupilceks*

1969 • Slovenia

Pekarna Theatre: *Pathwalker*

1972 • Slovenia

KPGT

1977- • Yugoslavia

Mladinsko Theatre

1955- • Slovenia

Koreodrama Theatre

1986- • Slovenia

Dah Theatre and Women in Black: Street Performances

1991- Serbia

Third Generation

1990s • Slovenia

Betontanc Collective

1990-2014 • Slovenia

Montažstroj

1989- • Croatia

TRAFIK: *The Walker*

1998 • Croatia

BADco. Collective

2000-2020 • Croatia



Chamber Anseble for Free Dance (KASP). Rehearsing, late 1960s. Courtesy of Maja Đurinović.

Chamber Ensemble of Free Dance

KASP • 1963–1987 • Croatia

In the context of modernist and neo-avant-garde movements across artistic disciplines—with EXAT 51 group (Experimental atelier, Eksperimentalni atelje originally, 1950–1956) and the New Tendencies movement (Nove tendencije, 1961–1973) that were part of the post-informer art movement—the establishment of the Music Biennale Zagreb (1961), which featured both new music and contemporary dance, as well as a shift from socialist realism to artistic plurality and abstraction, the Experimental Group for Free Dance (Eksperimentalna grupa slobodnog plesa) was founded in 1962 within the Pioneer Theatre (Pionirsko kazalište – PIK, today Zagreb Youth Theatre, originally Zagrebačko kazalište mladih – ZKM). In the summer of the same year, Milana Broš had the first official performance of her ensemble at the Ballet Biennale in Ljubljana, which was seen as an “experiment of freedom [...] and a pioneering step away from the conceptual frames of the predefined formalities of dance movement. Alongside, as a co-founder, there was a composer Bogdan Gagić (1931–2019) and a group of young dancers with whom she [Broš] started working in the Pioneer Theatre” (Fučkan, 2021). A year later, the Experimental Group for Free Dance separated from the Pioneer Theatre and the group continued independently as the Chamber Ensemble of Free Dance (Komorni ansambl slobodnog plesa – KASP).

The work of KASP aimed to strip dance techniques of classical ballet, folklore, and even modernist conventions, delving instead into the internal impulses of the body and a dance that relies on improvisation. KASPs’ approach was

marked by its interdisciplinary collaboration, blending dance with music and visual arts. They performed in non-theatrical spaces such as clubs, galleries, museums, etc. The ensemble worked closely with long-time collaborators like the above mentioned Gagić, composer Nikša Gligo, sound designer Branko Vodeničar, multimedia artist Ivan Ladislav Galeta, and visual artist Vladimir Gudac. The group’s members came from diverse backgrounds, including professional ballet and contemporary dance but there were also amateurs without any dance education. 25 years of KASP spanned over three generations of dancers like Nada Kokotović, Karla and Tuga Tarle, Maja Đurinović, Jasmina Zagrajski, Nada Dogan, and many others who had later become important figures of the performing art scene, either as choreographers, theatre directors, dance pedagogues, dance critics, or publicists. After KASP ceased to exist in 1987 in its original form, it transitioned into the Free Dance Workshop of the Student Cultural-Artistic Centre (Radionica slobodnog plesa Studentskog kulturno-umjetničkog centra – SKUC) that was led by Milana Broš and Gesta, a group initiated by former KASP members.

Pupilija Ferkeverk Theatre: *Pupilija, Papa Pupilo and the Pupilceks*

1969 • Slovenia

The legendary performance *Pupilija, Papa Pupilo and the Pupilceks* (*Pupilija, papa Pupilo pa Pupilčki*) from October 1969 is a collaboration between the theatre director and playwright Dušan Jovanović and a bunch of youngsters from the poet theatre group

441/442/443. Among the hybrid theatre performances from the second half of the 20th century, the Pupilija Ferkeverk piece corresponds the most with the postmodern dance tendencies and the theatre (neo)avant-gardes of the 1960s. The everyday movements and actions, the collection of found objects used in acts, the appropriations, the references from pop culture, the exposed bodies with nakedness, the found scores (games, a photo-novel, and the choral organization of the group), the unconventional use of music and texts, and the parody of conventional theatre and dance forms, etc., were just some of the elements of the linear structure of the scenes, which one imagines can be organized by chance in any order without losing its meaning (with the exception of the final scene in which a chicken was slaughtered in front of the public). Theatre means and elements are used in an egalitarian way, the bodies of performers enter the stage profaned, yet controlled and scored.

The premiere in the Knight’s Hall venue of the Križanke Summer Theatre was followed by a scandalous response from the local mainstream press due to the chicken slaughtering at the end of the performance that overshadowed the rest of it. However, the negative responses came mainly from the lack of teatrological concepts. On the day of the rerun, on the 4th of November 1969, the director of the venue, Danilo Bračić, banned all planned reruns and therefore, on the 6th of November, Pupilija Ferkeverk Theatre performed in the venue of the student campus of Ljubljana. Around 1,200 people attended. The same month the performance was presented in Maribor and shortly afterwards recorded for TV Ljubljana. In 1970, the performance toured Zagreb, Rijeka, and Belgrade. *Pupilija, Papa Pupilo and the Pupilceks* is one typical example of how a reformation of the theatre medium often ended up in forms that one can analyse as choreographies.

allowing for a shift in perception” (Založnik 2024, 163–164). In an interview for the TV Ljubljana, Lado Kralj stated that one of the fundamental intentions of their work is to re-sensitize the public. With the need to stage a play beyond the modern interpretational paradigm and to provide an experiential theatre situation emphasizing the use of non-verbal means of expression, *The Pathwalker* represents one of the first examples of ritual theatre in Slovenia that retrospectively functions as a choreo-vocalistic work and, with its emphasis on the physical aspects of the performance, shifts focus from the coded production of meaning to the non-representational, material aspects of performance in line with contemporary tendencies in choreography.



Lado Kralj with Pekarna Theatre, *Pathwalker (Potohodec)*, 1972. Photographed by Tone Stojko. Courtesy of Iconotheque of SLOGI – the Theatre Museum.

KPGT

1977– • Yugoslavia

A group of Yugoslav theatre artists—Nada Kokotović, a choreographer and director from Zagreb, Rade Šerbedžija, an actor from Zagreb, Dušan Jovanović, a playwright and director from Ljubljana, and Ljubiša Ristić, a director from Belgrade—founded KPGT (Kazalište, Pozorište, Gledalište, Teatar) in 1977, which has developed into a cultural and political movement with the aim of affirming and defending the unique Yugoslav cultural space through the joint work of theatre and other artists from all over Yugoslavia for Yugoslav audiences. In plays, the actors of KPGT spoke in all the languages spoken in Yugoslavia—Serbo-Croatian, Macedonian, Slovenian, Hungarian, Albanian, Roma, Italian, and others—and were perfectly understood by the audience in all cities of Yugoslavia, but also in Australia, both Americas, and in most European countries. During the rise of nationalist violence in Yugoslavia’s cultural, economic, and political spheres, KPGT theatre artists believed they had an answer to the looming disaster. However, the wars began, devastating the country and leaving KPGT artists trapped behind new borders. In the summer of 1995, Ljubiša Ristić and Danka Palian relocated the KPGT Theatre to the ruins of the abandoned Stara Šečerana in Čukarica, Belgrade, which

Pekarna Theatre: *Pathwalker*

1972 • Slovenia

The first premiere of the Pekarna Theatre, an offshoot and contemporary of the Experimental Theatre Glej (1970–) in Ljubljana, was Lado Kralj’s neo-avant-garde staging of Dane Zajc’s poetic drama *The Pathwalker (Potohodec)* with an encoded critique of the socialist system. Lado Kralj’s 1970/71 NYU studies with Schechner’s The Performance Group along with Grotowski’s marathon lectures, gave him insights into the processes of very different theatre making. Back in Ljubljana, Kralj decided on some radical approaches to stage work. The group led by Kralj decided to use the play as a score, substituting textual parts with physical actions, ecstatic gestures, and chanting. “Active participation [of the public] with immediate response to the action was expected or even encouraged, according to the belief that the kinaesthetic impulses would lead to an emotional resonance, while at the same time



Dušan Jovanović with Pupilija Ferkeverk Theatre, *Pupilija, Papa Pupilo and the Pupilceks* (*Pupilija, papa Pupilo pa Pupilčki*), 1969. Photographed by Tone Stojko. Courtesy of Iconotheque of SLOGI – the Theatre Museum.

later became a Cultural Institution of the city in 2021.

Production wise, Ristić's work in Serbia during 1980s and 1990s furiously sought to subordinate theatre institutions—such as the National Theatre-Népszínház in Subotica (1997–2000), Jadran Cinema (1985–1995), and the Serbian National Theatre in Novi Sad (1986–1991)—to his grandiose creative ambitions and to destabilize, shake up, and break them out of routine, along with all their resources, supported by the ruling political parties. He developed new models of technology and management, production, subleasing, use of alternative spaces, and enterprise efficiency, and introduced and developed the business of 'festivalisation of art'—a festival network (Godo Fest 1984, Shakespeare Fest 1986, Molière Fest 1987, Budva City Theatre and KotorArt festival 1987, YU Fest 1988–1995, Kiš Fest 1991) connecting thirty Yugoslav cities, generating a wave of co-productions, tours, and performances, as well as unprecedented mobility of cultural workers within the SFRY. This way, Ristić supported the privatization of public ownership (despite consistently invoking the ideology of the left and Yugoslavism) introducing the model of the artist-entrepreneur. While Ristić's 'guerrilla' practices were not directly applied in the independent dance scene, the impact of KPGT is still less visible in the poetic and stylistic development of contemporary dance artists who matured during 1990s, and more in initiating processes that today can be seen as transitional processes of privatization in the cultural field, with long-term consequences for the development of the independent cultural sector in Serbia after 2000.

Although historical accounts of contemporary dance have often referred to the role of KPGT as a 'non-linear phenomenon,' due to Ristić's controversial

political and production engagements, most contemporary dance artists emerging during this decade undoubtedly recognize KPGT as the most important starting point for both the development and institutionalization of contemporary dance in Serbia. In the late 1990s, the co-founder and director of KPGT, Ljubiša Ristić, gathered young dancers with various types of dance education: the graduates of the Belgrade Ballet High School (Isidora Stanišić, Dalija Aćin Thelander, Bojana Mladenović, Jovana Ćirica, Ana Ignjatović, Sanja Vinković, etc.) and non-institutionally trained dancers (Dušan Murić, Čarni Đerić). This group was led by choreographer Katarina Stojkov Slijepčević, whom Ristić invited to work on theatre and dance productions at KPGT, providing the new generation of dancers with professional opportunities they could not find elsewhere at the time. After several productions, Stojkov Slijepčević left KPGT, while the dance troupe continued to self-organize, maintaining daily training in contemporary and classical dance at KPGT, and bringing prominent choreographers. As an organizational infrastructure, KPGT enabled young contemporary dancers in Serbia to work collaboratively and equitably, self-educating and even venturing into independent creative work. These values and principles would later be key during the establishment of the independent dance scene in Belgrade in the early 2000s—either through individual initiatives like Ad Hoc Lom company (Mladenović, Stanišić, Murić, Đerić, and Vinković) or collectively, through emergence of Station Service for Contemporary Dance with more than 50 actors from independent dance scene.

In dance, the change within the aesthetic plan didn't happen in the frame/period of KPGT (dance authors were more influenced by international artists they met through various festivals and educational programmes); it happened mostly within theatre (with dance/choreography). Since KPGT was a symptom of the dissolution of fixed and pure ideological positions, the pure and fixed forms in the realm of theatre also began to dissolve, giving rise to new forms, more complicated and eclectic. The most significant forms introducing the possibility of transcending these boundaries belong to the collaboration of Ljubiša Ristić and Nada Kokotović through KPGT, since 1975. Their avant-garde performances integrated drama, choreography, and performance art, blending movement, dance, and visual spectacle with conventional dramatic elements. Kokotović's expertise in physical theatre and her choreographic methods enriched Ristić's productions by enhancing the actors' emotional and physical expression, adding depth to the narrative beyond the written text. This model of collaboration between theatre directors and choreographers reflects the complex relationship between dramatic and dance elements, highlighting key distinctions between institutional (dramatic) and independent (dance) scenes, which is mentioned in more detail in the introduction text of this chapter.

Mladinsko Theatre

1955 - Slovenia



Dušan Jovanović, *A Vegetable Night's Dream (Sen zelenjevanje noči)*, 1978. Photographed by Igor Antić. Courtesy of Mladinsko Theatre.

Between 1955 and the late 1970s, Mladinsko Theatre, literally Slovenian Youth Theatre (Slovensko mladinsko gledališče), had been a public theatre institution founded by the Municipality of Ljubljana in line with socialist theatres for children and teenagers. In the late 1970s, its new artistic director, Dušan Jovanović, transformed it into a daring theatre experiment, with pieces for youth that would attract audiences of all ages, and performances with a politically charged profile. As part of Ljubiša Ristić's federal theatre project called KPGT (initials constructed from the words for theatre in different South-Slavic languages of Yugoslavia), Mladinsko grew into the first international theatre brand from the late period of socialist Yugoslavia with an extensive international touring programme by the end of the 1980s. One of the key elements of Mladinsko's aesthetic reform was the introduction of choreography into theatre-making in the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s and 1990s, with some key figures. Ksenija Hribar's involvement in the developments of British contemporary dance (a member of London Contemporary Dance Theatre, 1967–1974), with her unprecedented insights into the wide aesthetic range of contemporary choreography and her personal interest in dance theatre very thoroughly impacted the work of Dušan Jovanović, initially in *A Vegetable Night's Dream (Sen zelenjavne noči)*, 1978) for which the choreographer was awarded the prize for choreography at the Maribor Theatre Festival (Borštnikovo srečanje). Continuing her work with Jovanović, her collaboration extended to performances by Janez Pipan and especially Vito Taufer for whom she conceived two feature-length choreographies, *I Am Not Myself I* and *II (Jaz nisem jaz)*, both from 1983) with a mixed cast from Mladinsko Theatre, Dance Theatre Ljubljana, and the collective SRP. Nada Kokotović's choreo-theatrical imagination

fundamentally restructured some works of Ljubiša Ristić in Mladinsko Theatre, among which the three-part structure of *Romeo + Juliet. Comments (Romeo + Julija. Komentarji)*, 1983) had a middle part staged as a sheer choreography with no speech. Marko Mlačnik, an actor in Mladinsko Theatre, engaged also with Dance Theatre Ljubljana, implemented a self-invented version of bio-kinetics into the changing theatre formations of Neue Slowenische Kunst and the Post-gravitation Art of Dragan Živadinov in three pieces staged for Mladinsko Theatre: *Drama Observatory Zenit* (1988) by Cosmokinetic Theatre Red Pilot (Rdeči pilot), 1:10.000.000 (1995), and 1:1 (1995) by Cosmokinetic Cabinet Noordung, all three directed by Dragan Živadinov. Mlačnik's immense choreographic innovation is present also in Taufer's *Silence Silence Silence* (1996), a poetic collage of dreamy theatrical imagery appearing in a womb of a silent creature. Another fruitful collaboration developed between director Tomaž Pandur and choreographer Maja Milenović Workman in the seminal and immensely successful *Scheherazade* (1989), an east-west opera, for which Milenović Workman developed a series of unearthly gestural compositions for different characters.

Koreodrama Theatre

1986 - Slovenia

Koreodrama Theatre was founded by choreographer and director Damir Zlatar Frey in Ljubljana in 1986 after the Dance Theatre Ljubljana team decided to separate artistically from him. With a reference to Laban, Frey developed Koreodrama artistically into a choreographed theatre, based on text or narrative movements. In collaborations and co-productions with different public institutions and, occasionally, their ensembles, along with a team of collaborators around him, Frey's stage pieces had an imprint of human vulnerability and madness, mirroring the confused time of the federal disintegration and political and existential instability better than most of the theatre and dance productions at the time. In the big and surprising set constructions,



Damir Zlatar Frey, *Beautiful Vida (Lepa Vida)*, 1995. Photographed by G. B.. Courtesy of Mladinsko Theatre.



actors and dancers would create expressive and physically spasmodic roles that would overcome the usual expectations of the public and make his theatre immensely popular. His introduction of queer aspects and travesty into theatre was one of the first examples of the kind in the post-Yugoslav cultural context. In 1999 Frey settled in Umag, Croatia, where he founded the International Festival of Chamber Theatre Golden Lion (Zlatni lav) but occasionally still worked in theatre institutions.

Dah Theatre and Women in Black: Street Performances

1991- · Serbia

Founded in Belgrade in 1991 by Dijana Milošević and Jadranka Anđelić, Dah Theatre – Centre for Research of Culture and Social Changes is an independent, experimental theatre company known for its socially and politically engaged performances, using theatre as a tool for activism and social change. Their work often incorporated themes of memory, trauma, and reconciliation, aiming to confront and provoke public discourse on the atrocities committed during the Yugoslav conflicts, to keep the memory of the victims alive in a society that was largely in denial or indifferent to the war crimes. Through collaborations with Women in Black (Žene u crnom)—a feminist and anti-war organization founded in Belgrade in 1991 and best known for its non-violent protests against war, nationalism, and militarism in the former Yugoslavia—these performances were often staged in public spaces and streets, to reach a broader audience and to challenge the public's conscience directly. This shift from conventional theatre spaces to public spaces introduced a new aesthetic that was more immediate and visceral. The performances often included symbolic and minimalist gestures, focusing on the body and its movement as a form of protest, which challenged traditional narrative structures in theatre and dance. Women in Black, with their silent vigils, black clothing, and performances, introduced a form of protest art that emphasized



Dah Theatre, *Presence of Absence (Odsustvo prisustva)*, 2013. Photographed by Una Škandro. Courtesy of Dah Theatre.



Luisa Morgantini, Women in Black's performance in Podgorica, 1999. Photographed by Vesna Pavlović. Courtesy of Women in Black.

stillness, presence, and the visual impact of the human body in space, creating powerful images that communicated their anti-war and anti-nationalist messages without the need for spoken words. The collaborative nature of Dah Theatre and Women in Black's work required a different approach to production, one that was more flexible and responsive to the unpredictable nature of public spaces. This meant developing new methods of rehearsing, planning, and executing performances that could adapt to the dynamics of protest environments. The lack of traditional theatre infrastructure in these performances necessitated innovation in staging, sound, and audience engagement, pushing the boundaries of what was considered possible in theatre production. One of Dah Theatre's most significant works in this context was *The Presence of Absence (Prisustvo odsustva, 2013)*. These performances were often met with hostility in Serbia, where nationalist sentiment and denial of war crimes were prevalent.

Third Generation

1990s · Slovenia

Considering the Slovenian history of the performing arts, one would hardly find anything close to an artistic movement in contemporary dance or theatre. One exception is the retro-garde movement Neue Slowenische Kunst and the following generation of theatre directors that made a practical and discursive change in the creation and production of theatre and introduced choreo-kinetic principles and approaches onto the stage in a fresh and daring way.

“In 1992, Eda Čufer, a theater theorist and dramaturge, now a well-known writer and historian of contemporary scenic arts, described a generation of theater directors (Matjaž Berger, Emil Hrvatin (now Janez Janša), Marko Košnik, Ema Kugler, Barbara Novaković Kolenc, Marko Peljhan, Vlado Repnik, Igor Štromajer) that came out of the changed artistic and cultural climate of the 1980s and was influenced by the permutations of the theatrical formation within the Neue Slowenische Kunst retro-garde

movement (the Sisters of Scipion Nasica Theater, 1983–1987, the Cosmokinetic Theater Rdeči pilot, 1987–1990, and the Cosmokinetic Cabinet Noordung, 19900–1995–2045) with the collective name the Third Generation [Tretja generacija]. Aiming to apprise the Slovenian public of a certain qualitative aesthetic difference in the history and development of the scenic arts, this journalistic term, surprisingly, stuck, without any subsequent clarifications in terms of cultural history, theater studies, or genealogy.

It can be speculatively understood as a differential descriptor used by Čufar to separate the then younger group of theater artists from those representatives of modernism (the second generation of directors) who had entered the Slovenian and Yugoslav theater arena with the aim to achieve artistic theatrical autonomy, especially *vis-à-vis* dramatic texts (plays) focused on Aristotelian mythos (plot) and ethos (character), and who had created a complex theatrical machine for confronting the literary public, instructed in the canonical examples of classical and modern dramatic chrono-topoi, with comprehensive theatrical interpretations of the world in their unpredictable, fresh, and bold repetitions (performances) by adding the otherwise lacking topical ‘nowness.’ While certain among the directors of that theatrical paradigm had distanced themselves from the bourgeois theater, where the public goes to see themselves reflected in the mirror of the stage, and had, in their experimental stages, radically interfered in the dramatic texts by promoting theatrical substitutes, the second generation's theater was nonetheless founded above all on the right to provide a lucid mirror interpretive moment to which all the elements of the dramatic system are subordinated.

In accordance with retro-utopian or contemporary artistic references and tendencies, the Third Generation subjected the public to a different theatrical machine, replacing the dramatic text with the directing text composed of a sequence of



Betontanc, *Poets Without Pockets (Pesniki brez žepov)*, 1990. Photographed by Božidar Dolenc. Courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art and Museum of Contemporary Art Metelkova (MG+MSUM).

visual and choreo-kinetic actions, inhabiting the space of the performance with historical references (predominantly to historical artistic – but also political – avant-gardes), morphological differences, and other forms of physicality, and directing the attention of the public to processes that, unlike the interpretation of art, did not aspire to bring the public together in ‘finding common meanings,’ (Kunst 2006, 50–51) but aimed to confront it with a plurality of (relational) views in an agonistic dispute.

The time in these works went from the current present moment of interpretive theater machines to analytical relations of physical and event presences and to referential networks of theater and other arts, expanding directing processes with curatorial principles of unpredictable time relations and parallels. In this theater, spectators were no longer competent interpreters, experts on metaphors that could act as critics in lieu of the general public, but curators of the view, narrators and editors of their own viewing process, readers of the medium and the act, expected to use their analytical competence to extend the performance beyond its ephemeral reception and establish that the theater is a liminal field between a performance and the process of reception, one that is prolonged into everyday reality. Which makes the view fundamentally uncertain and procedural” (Vear and Založnik 2021, 40–42).

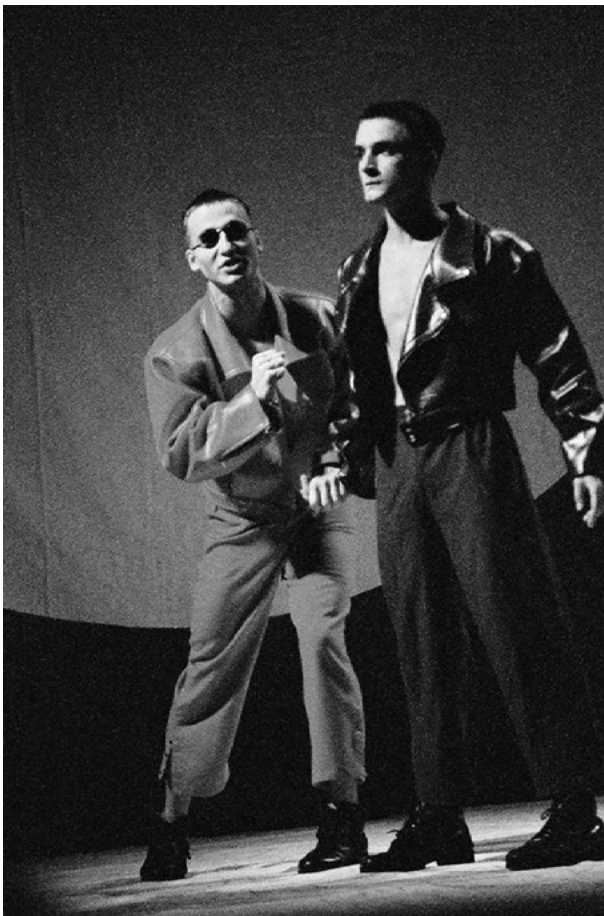
Betontanc Collective

1990–2014 · Slovenia

In the late 1980s and 1990s, physical theatre was a genre of contemporary choreography that a younger generation developed after the growing popularity of Pina Bausch's Tanztheater, which had opened up enormous artistic possibilities for hybrid stage forms. Brutalist and anti-academic forms of dance occupied

international stages in an outburst of creativity and different collectives started to emerge. In 1990, theatre director Matjaž Pograjc founded Betontanc and debuted with *Poets Without Pockets (Pesniki brez žepov)* in the basement of the Poljane Grammar School in Ljubljana in May of that year. The unexpected DIY approach to theatre and dance surprised the Slovene theatre landscape and turned into the latest Ljubljana stage hype. In the following years Betontanc would become the theatre and dance brand of the newly founded state of the Republic of Slovenia and experience

huge international success (*Every Word a Gold Coin's Worth* (*Za vsako besedo cekin*, 1992), *Wet Hanky Thieves* (*Tatovi mokrih robčkov*, 1993), *Know Your Enemy!* (1995), *On Three Sides of Heaven* (*Na treh straneh neba*, 1997), etc.) in the post-Cold War theatre explosion. Their international touring to different continents still hasn't been matched by any similar Slovene performing arts phenomenon. During the 1990s they would stage situations and stories of the contemporary urban tribes, communicating instinctively and engaging in risky games. Like most physical theatre collectives at the time, they embraced elements of competition, risk, and danger, which had been introduced into choreographic work in an unprecedented manner, different from the analytical formal procedures of the dance of the 1960s. The notions of human drives, instincts, competition, brutality, and danger mirrored societal change and the market logic in the production of human relations. The levels of their conceptualization are yet to be studied, historicized, and declared in the phenomenon of the high number of physical theatre collectives (for example, *Montažstroj* in Croatia) entering different stage programming throughout the world in the 1990s.



Montažstroj, *RAP OPERA 101*, 1991. Photographed by Karim Kurtović/Walter Sirotić. Courtesy of The Museum of Contemporary Art Zagreb.

Montažstroj

1989- · Croatia

Although theatre director Borut Šeparović's work later changed and transformed, in the first seven or eight years the art collective *Montažstroj*, resembling a techno-pop group name, produced a series of stage and video works with a strong taste of choreographic brutality, staging a muscular physicality that would have embodied the risk and danger of an untamed urban tribe. Developing works from the classical Greek tragedy corpus and referencing football and pop culture, the early works of *Montažstroj* were realized using different theatrical means and playfully combined the inventions of artistic alternatives and club culture with new media. It may be that the somewhat forgotten hype of metafiction and postmodernism in literature and the arts of the times gave licence to playful and liberated creativity which materialized in the works of *Montažstroj*. Coinciding with the unrest in Croatia and throughout the former Yugoslavia that led into the 1990s wars, their video *Croatia In Flames* (1991) caught international attention. In the next years, *Montažstroj*—similarly to the groups EN-KNAP and *Betontanc* from Slovenia—extensively toured the world with its stage works, gained international recognition and won a series of awards. After moving to Holland and later returning to Croatia, Borut Šeparović developed into one of the most interesting contemporary theatre directors in the region.



TRAFIK – Transitional-Fiction Theatre, *The Walker* (*Hodač*), 1998. Photographed by Dražen Šokčević. Courtesy of Magdalena Lupi Alvir.



BADco., *The Labour of Panic* (*Rad panike*), 2020. Photographed by Tanja Kanazir. Courtesy of BADco.

TRAFIK: *The Walker*

1998 · Croatia

TRAFIK – Transitional-Fiction Theatre (TRAFIK – Tranzicijsko-fikcijsko kazalište, 1998) is one of Croatia's pioneering independent professional theatre collectives from Rijeka. Emerging during a period of cultural and political transition in the country, TRAFIK has distinguished itself with an experimental approach to theatre, merging different forms including performance art, contemporary dance, physical theatre, mime, multimedia, and music. TRAFIK's first performance, *The Walker* (*Hodač*, 1998), marked a departure from traditional theatre by transforming a city underpass into a site-specific performance space. This unexpected encounter premiered in the Piramida tunnel in Rijeka (1998) and later in the Sopot Središće tunnel in Zagreb (1999). These unconventional locations turned the tunnels into atmospheric 'theatres,' where the spatial and environmental qualities—darkness, confinement, and raw, industrial elements—became integral to the narrative and mood of the performance. With the arrival of the performers (walkers), the space gradually took on new meanings shaped by mime-based improvisation. The performance drew inspiration from the works and life of Croatian proto-avant-garde writer Janko Polić Kamov, also from Rijeka, with the work's core revolving around Kamov's obsession with walking. As the performance unfolds, each passerby, along with the performers and audience, simultaneously gets the role of the walker, blurring the lines between observer and participant.

BADco. Collective

2000–2020 · Croatia

There were several aspects of the collective organization of BADco., a collaborative performance collective from Zagreb, that helped to differentiate them from the previous performing arts collectives in the region and also internationally. All of them seemed to be fundamentally connected with the systemic problems of labour organization and its material aspects. Although the collective worked primarily in the field of contemporary performing arts with a distinctive emphasis on dance and choreography, their work extended beyond aesthetic problems, moving into experimenting with the system of artistic work and its public time. The collective's work included systemic aspects of artistic creativity and production: dynamic self-organization of artistic labour with horizontal decision making, methodologically consequent invention and application of the studio regime, curatorial approaches to creation with an extended notion of time and media, production of the discourse that went hand in hand with their artistic creativity, procedural and constructivist approaches to the stage processes and works, as well as new approaches to the historicization of their work. Besides the demanding and complex stage oeuvre, BADco.'s work is interesting and paradigmatic because it recreates the cultural and artistic system on the micro-level and examines it. Therefore, it seems that such work would not have been possible in the previous decades of the late 20th century because of the available referential insights that it used and developed further.

Dance and the Body as Mediators of Change in Public Space

In the 20th century there are many examples in the realm of modern dance, the general culture of dance, and physical culture as well as popular cultures throughout the Yugoslav states, where the representations of the body or the sheer physical presence imply, contain, or mediate some future culturalizations and social or political engagements. Those examples are some early evidence of what followed. Certainly, the early solo works of female modern dancers between the 1920s and 1940s had, for the first time, choreographically staged or mediated issues we would nowadays consider social, political, or feminist (Katja Delak, Meta Vidmar, Marta Paulin-Brina, Mirjana Janeček, Ana Maletić, Maga Magazinović, Smiljana Mandukić, etc.), announcing the new considerations of the female body that would later be considered engaged, even though their political position was a different one. The workers' theatres throughout the Yugoslav monarchies of the 1920s and 1930s would, in some cases (for example, the stage works of the avant-garde director Ferdo Delak), compose the working class/workers in choreoformations that suggested that the working class could be a collectively organized political subject. In Serbia, workers' choirs were present. The most notable was the Abrašević choir in which modern dancers and the choreographer Lujo Davičo worked and choreographed the choir for their performances. After WWII there was an interesting conceptual change in the state-organized physical-cultural missions and visions that would drastically differ from pre-WWII concepts. The bourgeois approaches mainly focused on aestheticized or choreographed exercises before WWII (the Sokol movement) and would focus on providing basic hygiene conditions for the new socialist working class in the first decades after WWII. The socialist physical culture was connected with the urban planning of athletic fields and the architecture of social housing. As a result, dancing disappeared from the physical culture plans after WWII but triumphantly reappeared in the socialist

stadium spectacles celebrating the workers of the new socialist federal state from the late 1950s onward. In the first decades after WWII, the ballet institutions and the academic folklore companies were busy constructing ethno-dance bodies that were supposed to represent examples of future socialist art, an artistic regime that never succeeded in being fully conceptualized and realized outside of the established aesthetic realms of the pre-WWII bourgeois system. In the 1960s and 1970s, there are examples of solo works of German Expressionist Dance and various other modern dance schools that would engage in spontaneous, liberated, and improvised dancing that already carried the new sensibility connected with Western hippie movements as well as with new film, aleatoric music, and performing arts trends that tended to liberate the body from different constraints of the traditional social norms (Jasna Knez, Pupilija Ferkeverk Theatre, Pekarna Theatre, Atelje 212, KASP, etc.). With the Punk and the New Wave movements of the late 1970s and 1980s, the performing or dancing body suddenly expands beyond the staged works/acts. The new club and popular culture suddenly abolished the division between the auditorium and stage. The public, with its multiplying expressive, theatricalized, and screaming physical differences, began performing as intensively as the stage acts they were supporting in the auditoria. The Punk movement—with its aesthetic, cultural, and social followings and developments—liberated artistic, cultural, and activist creativity in the urban landscapes of the Western world as well as in the socialist Yugoslavia, following egalitarian DIY principles and values, including anarchistic beliefs. Punk, along with different alternative culture movements and their different bodies and physicalities, heavily influenced the performing arts in the 1980s. The individualism that arrived with Punk and New Wave could be understood as a form of rebelliousness against the Yugoslav socialist normativity of the previous decades without acknowledging the traps of neoliberal ideology. It was a breath of fresh air in the 1980s, but quickly conformed to the neoliberal ideology in the following decades. Nevertheless, with their expressive bodies, Punk and alternative movements liberated the social and political constraints of the earlier decades. They initiated dance and choreography into certain brutalist approaches, and enabled creativity by providing ways to engage and perform without any academic demands. It opened up artistic creativity in new ways and produced examples where dance and choreography entered different (new) media. In the late 1970s and mostly in the 1980s, the tactical embodiments that include new approaches to dance started to happen in different cultural and artistic fields as well as in a number of different media, beyond the expected traditional artistic or cultural disciplines and media, and their related artistic forms. From the 1990s onward, the 1980s attitudes continued in a different context, especially in Serbia due to the war, where artistic procedures were entangled with the protest movements and demonstrations, in which dance continued to be an important political endeavour.

The most exciting years were the late 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s due to the more viable cultural and artistic expression in the public sphere. In that regard, already in the mid-1970s, changes in progressive art influenced the audience's attitudes at public events. Artists from various domains used the stances of counterculture, such as anarchism, low art, and counter-institutionalization to create works that opposed the social and art system and often either mocked or humorously commented on it. Some initiatives even included music groups or mixed-media projects. They were integrated into new artistic currents or 'certain subcultures' that began forming at the time. Experimenting, intermedial approaches (according to Fluxus), and the revolt against the bourgeois society of socialist Yugoslavia make up the common conceptual base for the agency of artistic groups, which demanded hybridity of genres and collective work of different creative profiles, meaning their activity

was marked by interdisciplinarity. These undertakings included a diverse cast with different professional backgrounds, which makes their stage performances hard to define if they are observed purely from the perspective of genre. In addition, based on the widespread critique of the hermeticism and elitism of art, being closed off in specialized spaces and artistic venues which made their interventions invisible to the wider public, artists of the new generation started researching more inclusive contexts, outdoor spaces, and clubs, announcing the arrival of the 1980s with its plethora of such phenomena (Založnik 2024).

Mobilizing the existing and dominant words, images, scenes, and actions, as well as commonsense forms of participation in the commons, punks in the 1980s redistributed and twisted the affective lines of reproduction of the sensible and, through their screams, deemed as mere noise and animal rage beyond any intelligible meaning, simultaneously both attacked the regime of what is visible and sayable, and demanded and verified the equality of their ways of being, as the radical and unaccounted for difference. Punk, most prominently in Slovenia, brought forward, staged, and performed the heterology of the political in the period of increasing and deep crisis in Yugoslav socialism, while further dramatizing the crisis and bringing it to its limits. Building up new infrastructures, platforms, sensibilities, theories, magazines, fanzines, and aesthetics, etc., Punk introduced a world within the world, precisely through its political impropriety, that is to say, by meshing, reconfiguring, redistributing, and playing with and within the existing horizon of the sensible, on the one hand, and doing politics at its allegedly improper site, which is to say mass culture, culture, and the arts.

Considering the critical aesthetic-political strategies of punk bodies we can better understand Punk's relation to and metamorphosis into/with the wider alternative scene. Punk's core elements can be found in the new social movement's proclaimed characteristics (spontaneity, directness, no filtering of authentic interests, and no classic political representatives and mediators), a pluralism of ideas, autonomy (rejecting dependence on any sociopolitical organization), and a positive utopia. Punk introduced the possibility for sexual and gendered subversions and play, which serve as the base for feminist and queer struggles in the Slovenian context. The same punk aesthetics, in particular its embrace of amateurism and of anti-aesthetics' refusal of institutional canons, can be traced as a genealogical point and ingrained spirit within alternative and progressive art practices that were indifferent towards or criticized the modernist formalism in art. Punk's dissensual politics, style, and aesthetics, its eclecticism and 'cut-up technique of random juxtapositions,' can further help us understand some of the major techniques used in visual arts, video, music, photography, performance, and theatre productions of the alternative scene in the 1980s in Ljubljana. Put in a nutshell, we can trace the genealogy of many radically politicized postmodernist techniques in different media and cultural/art productions among the Ljubljana alternative scene precisely in the politico-aesthetic break introduced by Punk and its sensibility. Last but not least, Punk defined and spurred intense, critical, and contemporary theoretical engagements with the political reality, as much as it initiated theoretical discourses about itself.

To fully grasp the disruptive political practice of Punk's political subjectivation, and its sensible, that is to say corporeal and affective, dynamic of disidentification, one can contrast Punk's bodily performatives and affective de/re/investments and dispositions with the mass choreographies and spectacles in the socialist Yugoslavia, such as the Day of Youth celebrations. In contradistinction to the 'choreopolice' of mass choreographies, the punk subjectivation brought forward disruptive 'choreopolitics' (Lepecki, 2013). Breaking the perfect geometry of the youthful dancing bodies at the Day of Youth *slets*, and their perceptual and affective

orientation towards predetermined paths, punks exploded the bodies' sensibilities, experiential registers, expressive possibilities, and relational and affective dispositions, thus "reviscerating one's body intuition" (Berlant 2022, 108) and constructing new forms of being-in-common and communal life. Choreographed and staged in the damp basements of Disco FV, leaning on walls full of overlaid and torn posters, magazine pages, and graffiti art works, surrounded with raw and exposed fittings, pipes, and siphons, sensorially bombarded by a multiplicity of sonic and visual stimuli coming from the sound system, the band's playing, the multiple TV screens and the lights, punk bodies embodied heterotopias and created a different habitus. The images gathered in the Disco FV archive at the International Centre of Graphic Arts (MGLC) in Ljubljana offer an exciting and eroticized insight, at least partially, into the affective atmospheres of the punk choreographies at Disco FV. One can see relaxed bodies, with their non-formal countenance, leaning on each other, talking, drinking alcohol, smoking, or hugging. Sometimes they sit on the floor or lay on the wall benches, and on different occasions, they jump, leap, dance, and sing with ecstatic faces and feelings of joy. Order is turned upside down when these punk bodies perform the infamous moshing and thrashing, engendering weird, unpredictable, and self-exposed encounters and collisions between bodies. Unlike the disciplined and uniformed bodies of the *slets*, the photos in the archive show unruly bodies, as well as tired, exhausted, sweating bodies, either in wet t-shirts or half naked, in an open and energetic atmosphere, empowered by enthusiasm and the feeling of something new happening. Generationally, sexually, or gender-wise, one can also see the levelling of hierarchies, equal participation, and capaciousness in different movements. In an atmosphere like the Dadaist Cabaret Voltaire, the whole disco space is turned into a theatre or cabaret stage, with the DJs and club organizers, dressed in different outfits and dresses, signalling various thematic nights and possibilities for self-reinvention and imagination. The disco basements were thus not only transforming desires but also became an object of desire, pleasure, and the site of freedom (Dimitrov 2023, 141).

Similar to what was happening in Ljubljana at the end of the 1970s, throughout the 1980s it is important to mention clubs like Lapidarij, Zagreb Student Centre, and GSC Kulušić in Zagreb, Student Cultural Centre (SKC) in Belgrade, and partially Belgrade Youth Centre along with Akademija nightclub in Belgrade, where dance and various physicalities became closer to New Wave rock initiatives, performance art, visual art, feminism, queer performativity and so forth. For example, club nights by the Vaver Frustration Group (Veran Matić and Saša Opačić) on Wednesdays and Lost in Art on Fridays at Akademija nightclub are worth mentioning (Raus 1985, 10). The latter was hosted each time by another (distinguished) visitor/artist, who chose the music, performance and video works, slides, projections, dress code, and the protocol of the event. Both of these serial events placed performances and video works in clubbing events, intertwining progressive art strands with music and leisure in a similar way as those found in Disco FV. In the 1990s, dance artists in Serbia moved to the street to voice their disagreement with the political elite, establishing new communal spaces and making dance and choreography of vital importance for social cohesion.

The changes among the public could also be observed through rich photo documentation since the 1970s onward, where one can observe a drastic change in the audience's attitude. It is not surprising that this time coincides with the emergence of concert photography and photographers' increased interest in capturing corporal and affective modes. It would be worth comparing and analysing the rich oeuvres of photographers in the region who followed the alternative movements and clubbing culture to gain an insight into the general atmosphere of the time in the former Yugoslavia. Nevertheless, even

one example provides a short overview of some of the most notable changes.

Božidar Dolenc's photographic oeuvre between the second half of the 1970s and the 1990s is an optical trans-substantiation of the raw ecstasy of the new cultural appetites in Ljubljana, of the boundless need for new forms of sensuality and purpose, of social peculiarities and commonalities, of different physical expressions, and, last but not least, of identity politics, which all combined to transform Slovenia's capital into a relevant, heterogeneous, and exciting cultural space. It was a space that could at times be strict and profiled in terms of its worldview, but never exclusive. This was the Ljubljana that made it onto the global cultural map in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the city that became the stuff of fantasy for art lovers across the globe with its diverse artistic, theoretical, and cultural talents and creative productions. This was the Ljubljana the culturally well-informed of Berlin, London, Paris, and New York knew about. While not the only photographer of that place and time, Dolenc and his specific photographic-somatic apparatus gave it an image that may well cover the widest range of interests, including a vast scope of various cultural, artistic, and social practices, transforming them into photographic images reverberating with sounds and smells, with textures that seem to rub against our skin; Dolenc's images condense the kinetic time of the bodies and take a measure of their ecstasies. This metropolitan village of ours was not the fruit of the labour of the country's national cultural institutions; it was produced by the insatiably curious, compassionate, and creative people with imagination and knowledge, people who understood time could flow freely only when certainty gave up its exclusive need to occupy space (Vearar 2023, 81).

List of Examples

Sokols and Orels

Slovenia

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Sokols and Orels

Slovenia

Before the modernization and commercialization of sports throughout the 20th century, physical culture movements were an important part of social life in the second half of the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th century. The Sokols (Sokoli) were part of an international Pan-Slavic movement, and its orientation was a liberal one, while the Orels (Ori) were connected to the Slovene catholic circles, a progressive aspect of Catholicism on the Slovene ethnic territory (mostly on the Austro-Hungarian part of the Slovene land). They were suspicious of each other and there was no collaboration between them. Sokolism, which became the biggest mass movement in Slovenia at the turn of the 20th century, accompanied the struggle for national emancipation and, above all, the Slovenian national idea, making it also a strong agitation against the German position. In the first decades of the 20th century, the division between sports and dance was not very clear, so modern dance elements would enter or would be practiced in both movements. Many documents show how sports and dance were intertwined in those movements, how physicality became part of the modern project, and how practices that would later separate sports and dance were developed from a common ground. One term used for dance in those movements was rhythmic gymnastics which would become an Olympic discipline in the 1950s. Both movements had their own massive manifestations. In 1922 the South-Slavic Sokol societies gathered in Ljubljana. The poster preserved from this manifestation is a very interesting document of movement notation. The dancer, choreographer, and artistic director of the Slovenian National Ballet Pino Mlakar and his school colleague, poet and writer Edvard Kocbek, would be active in the Orels. Their writings are interesting documents of the beliefs and ideas about the body, modern dance, and the new catholic movements.



Sokols in the beginning of the 1920s from the Sokols photo collection donated by TVD Partizan Ljubljana – Narodni dom (1863–1983). Photographer unknown. Courtesy of the National Museum of Contemporary History of Slovenia.

Dubravka Maletić 1939– and KUD Abrašević: Dance at SFRY Public Ceremonies

Serbia



Private photograph of Dubravka Maletić in her apartment. Courtesy of Svetlana Đurović.

Dubravka Maletić is known for her innovative approaches and contributions to modern dance in the former Yugoslavia and Serbia. Her work explored themes of identity, history, and the intersection of traditional and modern forms of movement. In Yugoslavia, her work was closely related to KUD Abrašević, a well-known cultural-artistic association in Serbia with a long history: firstly, as a worker's choir from the period of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, advocating for worker's rights

through modern dance, and secondly, from the period of socialism when it blended traditional and other forms of dance, music, and cultural expression. Maletić's choreographic work through KUD Abrašević played a key role in socialist Yugoslavia's cultural landscape. Her work encompassed state events and syndicate-organized public performances, reflecting the values of socialism, unity, strength, and Yugoslav identity. Maletić's choreographies were featured in grand state spectacles like national holidays, memorial happenings, Communist Party gatherings, syndicate mass organizations,

emphasizing and reflecting collective movement and harmony—central themes in the socialist aesthetics and in the working class. She carefully crafted accessible yet impactful choreographies for these events, involving large groups and skilfully blending folk dance, representing 'people's culture,' with modern dance techniques and mass gymnastic displays, thus balancing traditional motifs with contemporary forms to align with the state's goals of promoting cultural heritage and progressiveness. In terms

of production, Maletić's work represented a shift towards more complex, large-scale performances that required sophisticated coordination of movement, music, and staging, from rehearsals to the execution of the events. Aligning her artistic practice with the state's goals, Maletić's work thus influenced how dance and choreography were perceived and institutionalized, elevating dance from a marginal art form to a central element of national celebrations and public life.

Day of Youth's *slets*

1957–1988 · SFRY

The Day of Youth (Dan mladosti), a celebration of Yugoslav leader Josip Broz Tito's birthday, was the central and largest event in the SFRY. Thousands of youths, military students, gymnasts, and workers were included in this 'operation' to display the ideology of socialist Yugoslavia. Through diverse formations of specific, selected bodies, the displays represented the imagined, utopic social order. The demagogic function of the celebrations is enacted by the mass choreographies on the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) Stadium, whereby thousands of bodies display, visualize, and inscribe the nation, the state symbols, Yugoslav history, the Communist Party, and the Leader (inscribing his signature with their bodies, his name, or other symbols associatively related to his name). The *slet*, as the mass choreography at the event was called, had a recognizable structure and dramaturgy that made it a coherent work, even though it was based on a compilation of various 'bodily' disciplines and genres. Physical culture was combined with sports and rhythmic gymnastics, folk dances, and simple choreographies for kids and



Day of Youth *slet*, 1987. Photographed by Tone Stojko. Courtesy of the National Museum of Contemporary History of Slovenia.

military representatives consisted of short choreographed pieces one after another, outlining the desired body tropes, which could be divided into six groups: the docile body of the pupil; the militarized masculine body serving the army, the state, the party, and the president; the body of a proletarian, the worker's body; the athletic body of a gymnast; the sexually differentiated body, the woman's body; and the nationally codified body (Dimitrov 2014, 57).

The last years of the Day of Youth celebrations reflect the emerging and unbridgeable gap between the dispersed effervescence throughout the social body and the desire to keep the organic intimacy of the multitude of bodies. The body images and the choreographies slowly display the mismatch of the symbolic organization of society, its persistent hold on the driving ideological imagery, and the moving, changing, and transformed bodies of the citizenry. The organic body politic started facing all-encompassing convulsions, diverging intensities, movements, desires, and orientations. It became harder to contain the ever more salient turbulences and dissensual orientations in society. After Tito's death, the Day of Youth celebrations continued to display the same ideological content, although in changed clothes. The entertaining component of the programme became more salient and all the popular music stars and songs from Yugoslavia started to appear at the Stadium. Despite efforts to adapt the same political imagery to the changing times and needs of the citizenry and the youth, the refusal, disinterestedness, exhaustion, and emptied formal gestures of the performing bodies become more visible. What started happening below the erected megalomaniac portrait of the deceased president are stumbling gestures, ideologically absent bodies, and disinterested subjects.

The last Yugoslav *slet*, which was choreographed by Damir Zlatar Frey, had an interesting mistake. The thin, slim, dance-athletic body of Sonja Vukićević performed the figure of an agonized, struggling, and torn individual, running, exhausted but relentless, across the pitch, 'fighting' the rainstorm hitting her ascetic body, emerging at the end on an elevated platform in the centre of the Stadium. The dramatic image of a singled-out female body, surrounded by an anonymous mass of people organized in concentric circles around the platform she stands on, reverses in an unprecedented way the affective atmosphere, the technologies, the bodily regimes, the iconography, and the erected phallic figure of the masculine leader that structured the biopolitical apparatus of the *slets* for three decades. Instead of presenting only organized dance formations, it contrasted them with a solo choreodrama performed by Sonja Vukićević, who was, according to Vujanović, "a symptomatic dance figure for the local paradigm shift from the collectivism characteristic of socialist countries (the SFRY), toward the individualism characteristic of capitalist countries (the new states, after the disintegration of the SFRY)" (Vujanović 2012).

Student Cultural Centre (SKC) in Belgrade

1971 - Serbia

The Student Cultural Centre (SKC) in Belgrade is a significant cultural institution that has played a central role in the city's artistic and cultural life since its establishment in 1971. The building that houses the SKC was built in 1895, originally known as the Officers' Club, but was handed over to the University

of Belgrade, specifically to the students, following the large student protests in 1968. Located in the heart of Belgrade, the SKC was designed as a space for students to engage in cultural and artistic activities, but it quickly became a hub for the broader artistic community, especially during the 1970s and 1980s. It served as a gathering place for artists, musicians, writers, and intellectuals, fostering a vibrant and experimental cultural scene. It was particularly influential in the development of various artistic movements, including new wave music, conceptual art, pop-art, performance art,



160 Programme Booklet for Theatre Signum's performance *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* (*Tibetanska knjiga mrtvih*) in Student Cultural Centre (SKC), 1987. Designed by Milan Bursać. Photography by Aleksandar Dolgij. Published by Srboštampa Belgrade. Courtesy of Anđelija Todorović.

avant-garde theatre, and experimental dance. Bands like Idoli, Ekatarina Velika (EKV), Električni Orgazam, and Disciplina Kičme were closely associated with the centre, often performing there and contributing to its reputation as a breeding ground for innovative music. The SKC hosted exhibitions, performances, and discussions that challenged traditional artistic norms, but also the values of the socialist Yugoslavia (through feminism, queer art, etc.). The SKC supported experimental theatre and dance performances, providing a platform for artists like Nela Antonović (Theatre Mimart), Theatre Signum, and others, to produce their first performances, and to merge with musicians, filmmakers, curators, and visual artists, blending elements of theatre, dance, and visual art, and pushing the boundaries of conventional performance and dance art.

Dance and Clubbing Culture in Skopje

1980s–2000s • North Macedonia

In 1980s Skopje, disco culture symbolized a social distinction for urban citizens with various nightclubs playing global pop and dance hits. The prominence of dancing and music cultures in the urban life of the 1980s was reflected in the presence of different disco hubs, nightclubs, such as Malibu, Estrada, Turist, Panorama, Gorila, or the disco in the Macedonian National Theatre that was opened in the late 1980s. Disco movements were characterized by dances in small groups, in pairs, or synchronized dancing in circles by groups of friends and connoisseurs on most occasions. Dance styles in discos were influenced by global trends, especially from the British and US pop scenes, as dancers emulated choreographies from music videos. The disco scene fostered socialization, flirtation and embodied a desire for Western lifestyles. By inserting their bodies into the choreographic and styling apparatus brought by MTV music videos, music and youth magazines, and Western fashion editorials, they were simultaneously reclaiming the space they'd been excluded from (in the geopolitics of the socialist-capitalist global clash), making it available through their body movements, on the one hand, and the other hand, transforming their bodies into a sign of their distinctness from the other dancers on the podium and the citizens on the streets of Skopje.

In the 1990s, the rise of alternative radio stations, especially Channel 103, led to the development of the underground and clubbing scene. Club parties embraced post-punk, post-rock, and electronic music, creating a space where youth could express alternative worldviews and further challenge social norms through bodily expression. The DJ became a central figure, and the dancing experience evolved, dissolving the group-focused disco dances into more individual, expressive movements. These embodied projects performed contested the bodily norms regulating social life and brought to light critical social



161 Drag queen Divon Jane, Skopje Pride Weekend, 2019. Photographed by Natasha Geleva. Courtesy of Coalition MARGINS Skopje.

voices that carried forth and supported different radical democratic projects in the years that followed.

From the 2000s onward, Skopje saw the emergence of a queer clubbing scene, with venues like Ljubov (Love) or Damar (Vein), the LGBTIQ socio-cultural space Komitet, or clubs like Dupka (Hole), Retox, Legend, Kapan An, Epicentar, Station 26' (Stanica 26), and others, providing safe spaces for queer individuals to challenge heteronormative norms through disidentificatory performances and drag shows. These queer spaces and performances have become crucial sites for expressing alternative identities, fostering a sense of belonging, and promoting feminist and queer perspectives.

The changing histories of social dance in the frames of clubbing cultures not only embodied transformations and resistances to normative political and performative regimes, but also nurtured the new generations of choreographers that have either incorporated the clubbing experiences and music as a conceptual part of their contemporary dance choreographies (as in the case of Iskra Shukarova, Aleksandar Georgiev, and Viktorija Ilioska) or have performed their work in the context of the club itself, as is the case with Ivana Kocevskaja in 2016 in the nightclub Epicentar.

JBTZ Affair and Dance Theatre Ljubljana

1988 • Slovenia

After 1985, when the federal political climate in the socialist Yugoslavia became overheated, the dancers and choreographers of Dance Theatre Ljubljana performed at a series of different events organized by the developing civil society in the Socialist Republic of Slovenia. One of them was a congregation on the 31st of May 1988, which was one of the first massive political gatherings in the Socialist Republic of Slovenia at the end of the Yugoslav Federation. On this day, *Mladina's* journalists Janez Janša and David Tasić, and a Slovene sergeant in the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA), Ivan Borštner, were

arrested in Ljubljana. The arrest of Franci Zavrl, from *Mladina's* editorial board, followed in the next few days. After being involved in writing and publishing articles critical of the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA), they were charged with betraying military secrets. The JBTZ trial (or the JBTZ affair, originally afera JBTZ), also known as the Ljubljana trial (ljublanski proces) or the Trial against the Four (proces proti četverici), was a political trial held in a military court, thus the government of Slovenia was not involved in the proceedings. The defendants were sentenced to between six months and four years of jail time. The trial sparked great uproar in Slovenia and was an important event for the organization and development of the liberal democratic opposition in the republic. The Committee for the Defence of Human Rights was founded on the same day of the arrest, which is generally considered as the beginning of the so-called Slovenian Spring.

On the 21st of June 1988, a congregation was organized for the support of the foursome on trial in the Congress Square in Ljubljana. Around 25,000 people appeared to show their support and different organizations linked to the developing civil society in Slovenia participated with their speeches or cultural programmes. Two dancers, from Dance Theatre Ljubljana, Sabina Potočki' and Brane Potočan, performed with a short choreography, dressed in the costumes of Brane Završan's



162 Dance Theatre Ljubljana performing at the protest against imprisonment of three *Mladina* journalist's and a sergeant in the Yugoslav People's Army, 1988. Photographed by Tone Stojko. Courtesy of the National Museum of Contemporary History of Slovenia.



1 In the following decades, Potočki distanced herself from her involvement in the congregation because of the manipulations of Janez Janša, who later became the president of the Slovenian Democratic Party and three-time premier of the Slovene government and had been trying to revise historic happenings.

choreography *Panoptikum*. The performance is one example of the close connection of the non-institutional performing arts and dance scene in the happenings that would bring the independence of the Republic of Slovenia or, more precisely, oppose the rise of nationalisms in the SFRY.

Sonja Vukićević: *Macbeth/IT*

1996 • Serbia

Sonja Vukićević, a prominent Serbian dancer and choreographer, performed an excerpt of a piece *Macbeth/IT* (*Magbet/ONO*) with actor Slobodan Beštić in Kolarčeva Street, Belgrade, during the street protests against Milošević's political regime in 1997. The performance, originally produced by and performed within the Center for Cultural Decontamination (CZKD) in 1996, occurred during a time of intense political turmoil in Serbia, while Belgrade was a hotbed of anti-regime protests and public demonstrations, with citizens expressing their dissatisfaction with the government's policies and the ongoing conflicts. Vukićević's and Beštić's performance was seen as a courageous act of resistance and solidarity, reflecting the broader struggle against the oppressive regime. It was a reinterpretation of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, exploring themes of power, ambition, and destruction. The performance had a major role in transforming public space into a site of artistic and political intervention, blurring



Sonja Vukićević and Slobodan Beštić, *Macbeth/IT* (*Magbet/ONO*), 1996. Photographed during the citizen protests in Kolarčeva street Belgrade in 1997 by Vesna Pavlović. Courtesy of Vesna Pavlović.

the boundaries between art and protest, using the physical presence of the performers to challenge the oppressive political climate (performing in front of the police cordon), and engaging the public in a new form of social and cultural discourse. Vukićević's work was known for its avant-garde and experimental nature, combining dance, theatre, and visual art to create a powerful, immersive experience. *Macbeth/IT* showcased the potential of dance and performing arts to provoke thought, inspire change, contribute to political activism, making it a significant moment in the cultural history of resistance in Serbia with a lasting impact on the Serbian cultural scene.

Tjelovanje

2017 • Croatia

Since the 2000s, the Croatian dance scene has witnessed several significant protests, actions, and interventions in public space, supported or organized by guilds. These efforts aimed to raise awareness about the precarious conditions faced by independent artists, emphasizing the lack of institutional support, unstable funding, limited opportunities, and inadequate social protection for dancers. Some activist efforts include *Tjelovanje* (2017), *Countdown – Bodies of the Independent Scene* (*Countdown – tijela nezavisne scene*, 2010), *Brochure* (*Brošura*), and *Congratulations* (*Čestitamo*), both in 2008.

One of their recent examples was *Tjelovanje*, a 24-hour protest of dance artists in front of the City Assembly of Zagreb on 2nd of May 2017. 'Tjelovanje'



Hurdle in front of the police at *Tjelovanje*, 2017. Courtesy of Keep Dance Autonomous/Autonomija plesu.

is a play on words combining 'tjelo' (body) and 'djelovanje' (action), emphasizing the embodiment of activism through the body itself. This initiative involves dance, improvisations, instant choreography, performative gestures and the use of the body as a site of protest while focusing on how artistic labour and physical presence can serve as a form of resistance. The community gathered around the Zagreb Dance Center Plenum (Zagrebački plesni centar – ZPC; ZPC Plenum), consisting of members from the dance community, members of the guild, and the broader art scene, advocated for an independent dance institution based on a civil-public partnership. This collective action aimed to address the lack of accountability and to push for reforms that would ensure greater transparency and more democratic governance within the institution of Zagreb Dance Center. ZPC Plenum asserted that ZPC is yet another example of public resources being misused to favour the politically connected, rather than serving public interest and equal opportunity. Also, this action aimed to express their disagreement with city authorities for handing the only public space in Croatia specifically designed for dance to the management of the Zagreb Youth Theatre (ZKM)—a move that was seen as undermining the autonomy of dance in Croatia and as a setback for the dance artists' long-standing efforts to establish an independent institution managed by the dance community.

Filip Jovanovski: *The City as a Stage*

2021 • North Macedonia

The City as a Stage (*Gradot kako scena*) is an interdisciplinary platform developed by Filip Jovanovski that focuses on the research, understanding, and creation of contemporary public spaces through an experimental, process-based, and collaborative approach. Functioning as a laboratory, The City as a Stage creates activities often culminating in performative events, exploring and working with various media, related with research to a certain site (a building, monument, or other public space

site), or fictive storytelling. This interdisciplinary platform encompasses architecture, theatre, dance, video, film, visual arts, and spatial installations, revealing the meaning and function of public spaces within neoliberal contexts and the specific context of Skopje, conditioning historical, socio-political, and economic transformations.

Exploration of the relationships between space/architecture, the city, communities and stories related to them, which construct and conjoin diverse social choreographies, are central to Jovanovski's work. Through research, he builds a historical or fictional narrative that ends as a performative action or spatial intervention (installation) in public space, created in collaboration with other artists (among them choreographer Viktorija Ilioska, musician Viktor Tanaskovski, poet and musician Iva Damjanovski, actor and stage director Besfort Idrizi, visual and research artists Anastasija Pandilovska). Following this, Jovanovski continues with research work, relating it to the next performative event/intervention, thus building performative actions as a 'whole' into a durational performance. For him, to refract the stories from the city into performative actions means to engage with the city as a resource, including local communities, while drawing from the traces of abandoned solidarity and rethinking how transnational solidarity could reshape the urban environment. He developed a method of 'reading buildings' in order to approach the city as a text, re-reading historical events, evoking tectonic shifts, and confronting official and unofficial histories. Lately, he created three 'city tours' organized as diverse architectural, site-specific, performative sites, and social ecosystems, always related to certain socio-political events.

With Viktorija Ilioska, who performed in a few performative actions of The City as a Stage platform, Jovanovski also collaborated on a performative essay *Dear Republic* (*Draga republika*, 2021), which focused on the modernist or brutalist building of the Central Post Office in Skopje. Ilioska contributed as a choreographer and co-author to this work, shaping the physical and performative aspects of the project.



Filip Jovanovski, *Dear Republic* (*Draga republika*), 2021. The City as a Stage II (*Gradot kako scena*) platform (2021–). Photographed by Dragica Nikolovska. Courtesy of Filip Jovanovski.

Researchers

Slavcho Dimitrov holds a PhD in Transdisciplinary Studies of Contemporary Arts and Media from FMK – SINGIDUNUM University. He has an MPhil in Transdisciplinary Gender Studies from Cambridge University, and another MA in Gender and Philosophy, from the Euro-Balkan Institute, Skopje. He works as a researcher in the fields of gender and cultural studies, queer theory, performance, and political philosophy. He is the founder and curator of Skopje Pride Weekend – Festival for Queer Arts, Culture, and Theory, and is a queer activist working with Coalition MARGINS Skopje.

Milica Ivić is an art theoretician and art practitioner from Belgrade, Serbia. She holds a PhD in Theory of Arts and Media from the University of Arts in Belgrade. She is an independent researcher working in the field of contemporary dance in Serbia, interested in questions of archiving and the institutionalization of contemporary dance, and also works as a dance dramaturg. She participates in numerous exhibitions, artist in residence programmes, and festivals as part of the AKC Matrijaršija/Novo Doba collective.

Tea Kantoci is a curator and researcher with MAs in Fashion Theory and Culture, Museology and Heritage Management, and Journalism from the University of Zagreb. She develops experimental curatorial practices from a performative, interdisciplinary, and feminist approach. She is part of the curatorial team for the Improspekcije festival and Antisezona, programme of contemporary dance at the Museum of Contemporary Art Zagreb, and collaborates with organizations on engaged heritage practices and grassroots archiving.

Igor Koruga is a choreographer and performer in contemporary dance. He holds an MA in Solo/Dance/Authorship from the Berlin University of the Arts, in anthropology from the University of Belgrade, and has finished DAS Third at the University of the Arts in Amsterdam. His work explores socio-political phenomena through choreography, integrating critical theory and digital media. Koruga collaborates with artists locally and internationally, teaches choreography, creates stage movement in theatre and film, and performs across Europe. He has received multiple national awards.

Biljana Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski is a cultural producer, researcher and curator at the intersection of dance, theatre and visual arts performance, art history, cultural policy, independent cultural scenes, feminist and environmental (curatorial) practices. She works as a freelancer and as a programme director of Lokomotiva, Skopje. Currently, she is a co-researcher for the (Non)Aligned Dance Archive; co-curator of the Performance Platform Festival in Skopje, curator of the international school “Curating in Context,” and co-mentor of the Critical Practice (Made in Yugoslavia) and Re-Imagine projects. She teaches and writes, is an art historian and holds a PhD from the Faculty of Drama Arts in Belgrade.

Rok Vevar is a dance historian, archivist, curator, publicist, and founder of The Temporary Slovene Dance Archive. He’s a cofounder and co-curator of CoFestival International Festival of Contemporary Dance, and a dance community activist and advocate in Ljubljana, Slovenia. He edited the book *Day, Night + Man = Rhythm: An Anthology of Contemporary Slovene Journalism 1918-1960* and wrote *Ksenija, Xenia: The London Dance Years of Ksenija Hribar 1960-1978*. In 2019, he received the Ksenija Hribar Award for dance theory/history and in 2020, the Vladimir Kralj Award for theatre criticism and studies.

Jasmina Založnik is a freelance dramaturge, dance publicist and producer. She is active locally and internationally as a writer, editor, dramaturge, curator, researcher, archivist, and art collaborator. She is a co-manager of the Nomad Dance Academy Slovenia, and a cofounder and co-curator of CoFestival International Festival of Contemporary Dance. She holds an MA in philosophy (Intercultural Studies – Comparative Study of Ideas and Cultures at the University of Nova Gorica) and a PhD in visual culture (University of Aberdeen, 2020). In 2015, she received the Ksenija Hribar Award for dance in the category of criticism/dramaturgy/theory and the Meta Vidmar Award in 2023.

List of Performances Discussed in the Book

The list of performances is organized in chronological order of their appearance in the book.

CHAPTER 1: PLURALITY OF BODIES AND THEIR VOICES

Madness Runs in the Family

(Ludiloto e del od semejstvoto), 2013–2015
Concept, Performance, Costume, and Sound: Aleksandar Georgiev, Dragana Zarevska
Production: Lokomotiva – Centre for New Initiatives in Arts and Culture

A Flock of Experienced Birds

(Jata izkušanih ptic), 2019
Concept, Choreography, and Direction: Ajda Tomazin
Performance: Nika Rožej, Vladka Matijevic, Jasna Vitez, Vera-Veronika Planinšek, Lidija Tolič, Polonca Tomazin, Zlata Marn
Co-direction and Mentorship: Rok Kravanja
Dramaturgy: Jasmina Založnik
Sound Design: Iztok Jug Drabik
Production: Odprti predali Institute
Co-production: Carnica Institute (The Layer House), Adult Education Centre Kranj, Prešeren Theatre Kranj

Exercise for Choreography of Attention “Point of No Return”

(Vežba iz koreografije pažnje “Tačka bez povratka”), 2012
Concept and Choreography: Dalija Aćin Thelander
Concept and Drawings Performed as a Choreographic Task: Siniša Ilić
Graphic Design and Layout Performed as a Choreographic Task: Katarina Popović
Production: Station Service for Contemporary Dance

Thanatos

(Tanatos), 2011
Choreography, Costume, and Lighting Design: Boris Čakširan
Performance: Jelena Stojiljković, Jovana Rakić Kiselčić, Ljudevit Kolar, Miodrag Tasić, Novica Kostić, Željko Vukelić
Dramaturgy: Marko Pejović
Music: Aleksandra Đokić
Set Design: Ivana Krnjić
Video Editing: Ana Čosović
Co-production: the Group “Let’s...,” Off Frame Festival, Belgrade
Partner: Centre for War Trauma, Novi Sad

Reset, 2009

Choreography: Danica Arapović
Performance: Ana Ignjatović-Zagorac, Danijel Todorović, Jelena Stojiljković, Jovana Rakić, Senad Sopnić, Stojan Simić
Dramaturgy: Marko Pejović
Music: Aleksandra Đokić
Costume, Lighting, and Set Design: Boris Čakširan
Dance Pedagogy: Ana Ignjatović-Zagorac
Co-production: the Group “Let’s...,” Cultural Institution “Vuk Karadžić”
Partners: Association of the Blind and Visually Impaired of Serbia “White Cane,” Sports and Recreation Association of Persons with Disabilities “Everything is Possible”

A Blink of Silence (*Treptaj tišine*), 2022

Concept and Choreography: Tamara Bračun
Co-creation and Performance: Marina Bura/Anita Rumac, Tamara Bračun
Co-production: Divert – Inclusive Dance Collective, Dance Collective Magija

Event 13 (*Događaj 13*), 1975

Artistic Direction: Milana Broš
Selection and Music Editing: Branko Vodeničar
Performance: Alida Buntič, Jagoda Cvrlje, Sanja Hršak, Beti Korač, Branko Magdić, Miladinka Rackov, Velizar Vesović
Production: Chamber Ensemble of Free Dance (KASP)

Phase (*Faza*), 1977

Choreography, Performance, and Set Design: Neja Kos
Production: Studio for Free Dance

Down There the River Flows

(*Tam doli teče reka*), 1982
Choreography: Neja Kos
Performance: Marko Mlačnik, Daliborka Podboj, Vilma Rupnik, Silva Ross, Tanja Zgonc, Majda Černič-Zivina
Music: Darijan Božič
Production: Studio for Free Dance

Thinging (*Predmetenje*), 2018

Concept and Performance: Jan Rozman
Dramaturgy: Julia Keren Turbahn
Lighting Design: Urška Vohar
Costume Design: Kiss the Future
Set Design Advisory: Dan Adlešič
Stage Assistance: Dan Pikalo
Production: Emanat Institute, Sabina Potočki
Co-production: Dance Theatre Ljubljana

Things Thing (*Reči reči*), 2021

Direction, Choreography, and Performance: Jan Rozman, Julia Keren Turbahn
Performance in German Sign Language: Jan Kress
Set Design: Dan Pikalo, Jan Rozman
Lighting Design: Annegret Schalke
Sound Design: Andres Bucci/Future Legend
Costume Design: Tanja Pađan/Kiss the Future
Outside Eye: Sanja Tropp Frühwald
Song Composition, Text, and Vocals: Alexander Patzelt; Translation and Vocal in Slovene: Manca Trampuš
Mentoring: Gabi Dan Droste, Benjamin Zajc
Production: Emanat Institute, Sabrina Železnik (Slovenia), Patricia Oldenhave, Alexander Schröder (Germany)
Co-production: Ljubljana Puppet Theatre, in collaboration with FELD Theater für junges Publikum

Luftballett, 2010

Concept and Direction: Vlado G. Repnik
Collaborating or Appearing in the Work: Soap&Skin, Igor Štromajer, Martina Ruhsam, David Cvelbar, Anja Plaschg, Lyano Cullen, Urša Ivanovič & Sky, John Cage, Jean-Luc Godard, Björk, Jernej Černologar, Valter Udovičić, Matjaž Čad, Robert Klančnik, Laurie Anderson, Stefan Doepner, Stuhl Orkester Trio + 57 ballet lighting bodies
Special Thanks: Bojana Kunst, Brane Zorman
Production: GVR babaLAN, Kino Šiška Centre for Urban Culture, KIBLA Maribor

Luftballett 2.2, 2014

Concept and Direction: Vlado R. Gotovan
Collaboration: Martina Ruhsam
Automatization: David Cvelbar
Intimate Mobile Communication: Igor Štromajer
Supervision: Simon Kardum
Production: GVR babaLAN, Kino Šiška Centre for Urban Culture

The Skull Tower (*Čele kula*), 1973/1979

Choreography: Smiljana Mandukić
Performance: Belgrade Contemporary Ballet of Smiljana Mandukić
Music: Dušan Radić
Production of the Performance: Belgrade Contemporary Ballet of Smiljana Mandukić, 1973
TV Adaptation, 1979:
TV Direction: Milica Dragić
Production: TV Belgrade

Short Fantasy About Reclaiming the Ownership over My Own Body

(*Kratka fantazija o ponovnom uspostavljanju vlasništva nad tijelom*), 2011
Concept, Choreography, and Performance: Marjana Krajač
Photography used in Set Design: Gordana Obradović-Dragišić
Collaboration: João Fiadeiro
Lighting Design: Duško Richtermoc
Production: Realized through the W-Est_Where project of the Croatian Institute for Movement and Dance (HIPPI), with support from the EU program for Culture, Dance Week Festival, Zagreb Dance Center, Viriato Viseu Portugal Theatre, RE.AL Lisabon, in collaboration with Sodaberg Choreographic Laboratory

Variations on Sensitive

(*Varijacije o osjetnom*), 2014
Concept and Choreography: Marjana Krajač
Performance: Lana Hosni, Irena Mikec, Katarina Rilović, Irena Tomašić, Mia Zalukar
Technical Direction: Duško Richtermoc
Sound Technician: Miroslav Piškulić
Production: Sodaberg Choreographic Laboratory

Expensive Darlings (*Drage drage*), 2007

Concept and Choreography: Maja Delak
Co-creation and Performance: Maja Delak, Katja Kosi, Barbara Krajnc, Jelena Rusjan, Vlasta Veselko, Urška Vohar, Nataša Živković
Dramaturgy: Katja Praznik
Set Design: Marko Peljhan
Music: Gipo Gurrado, Atilla Faravelli
Lighting Design: Urška Vohar
Costume Design: Nadja Bedjanič
Production: Emanat Institute, Sabina Potočki, Nina Janež
Co-production: City of Women, Ljubljana Dance Theatre

Indigo Quartet (*Indigo Kvartet*), 2008

Choreography: Iskra Shukarova
Performance: Iskra Shukarova, Zeynepa Dimkoska, Anita Chavoli, Cvetanka Stojanovska
Production: Macedonian Opera and Ballet

Made with Love (*Delo iz ljubezni*), 2015

Concept and Choreography: Teja Reba
Performance: Loup Abramovici, Teja Reba, Eduardo Raon, Bela Su Reba Abramovici, Ava Nuria Reba Abramovici
Dramaturgy: Suzana Koncut
Set, Lighting, and Costume Design, Video: Meta Grgurevič, Jaša
Sound Design and Music: Eduardo Raon
Technical Direction: Igor Remeta
Production: Maska Institute Ljubljana, Tina Dobnik

Still to Come: A Feminist Pornscape, 2017

Concept and Choreography: Rahel Barra, Ida Daniel, Ana Dubljevič, Frida Laux, Zrinka Užbinec
Performance: Rahel Barra, Ida Daniel, Ana Dubljevič, Zrinka Užbinec
Lighting and Set Design: Carina Premer
Costume Design: Silvio Vujičić
Production: Marijana Cvetković, Ana Dubljevič
A Cooperation between Künstlerhaus Mousonturm and MA Choreography and Performance Justus-Liebig-Universität Gießen, in the frame of Hessische Theaterakademie
Co-production: Station Service for Contemporary Dance

Figure It Out!, 2018

Concept, Choreography, and Performance: Viktorija Ilioska
The performance was made in conversation between Viktorija Ilioska, Nastya Dzyuban, Ivana Ivković, Filomena Krause, and Elena Risteska
Production: Viktorija Ilioska
Co-production: Lokomotiva – Centre for New Initiatives in Arts and Culture

I Need a New Body, 2022

Concept and Choreography: Viktorija Ilioska, in conversation with Nastya Dzyuban and Laura Stellacci
Performance: Viktorija Ilioska, Nastya Dzyuban
Voices: Amélie Haller, Maren Küpper
Sound Design: Laura Stellacci
Production: Lokomotiva – Center for New Initiative in Arts and Culture
Co-production: Nomad Dance Academy Slovenia, Viktorija Ilioska

TV Show Belgrade at Night

(*Beograd Noću*), 1981
Authors: Kosta Bunuševac, Oliver Mandić, Stanko Crnobrnja
Direction: Stanko Crnobrnja
Screenplay: Stanko Crnobrnja, Kosta Bunuševac
Collaboration on Screenplay: Oliver Mandić, Predrag Sindelić
Editing: Jovan Ristić
Performance: Oliver Mandić, Neca Falk, Srebrna krila, Kosta Bunuševac, Ivana Korolija, Dušica Ožegović, Zorica Šurbatović, Maja Milanko, Ballet Group of Petar Slaj (Maja Milošević, Snežana Mitrov, Borica Knežević, Suzana Radulović, Dragan Črnić, Lee van Chan), Youth Music Group Čupko
Set Design: Milica Ejodus
Set Design Assistance: Milan Obretković
Costume Design: Vasa Vitorović, Nada Perović, Kosta Bunuševac
Make-up: Olja Ivanović
Masks: Anđelka Jovanović
Choreography: Petar Slaj
Music Collaboration: Bojan Hreljac
Production: TV Belgrade, Nenad Romano
Organization: Zoran Milovanović

They Called Me Puby

(*Klicali so me Puby*), 1992
Choreography: Minka Veselič
Performance: Snježana Premuš, Vesna Kukič, Anuša Sliško, Vesna Ristič, Sanja Šlajmer, Vesna Žegarac, Tadej Brdnik, Minka Veselič
Set and Costume Design: Breda Varl
Lighting Design and Technical Direction: David Orešič
Production: Dance Theatre ALDEA within Dance Centre Maribor
Co-production: Association of Cultural Organizations Maribor and Slovenj Gradec, Slovene National Theatre Maribor

The Red Swan (*Crveniot Lebed*), 2008

Concept and Choreography: Iskra Shukarova
Performance: Ekrem Husein, Iskra Shukarova
Production: Macedonian Opera and Ballet

East Side Story, 2008

Concept and Direction: Igor Grubić
 Choreography: Irma Omerzo
 Camera: Jasenko Rasol
 Video Editing: Zoran Minić
 Performance: Pravdan Devlahović, Darko Japelj, Zrinka Šimičić, Zrinka Užbinec
 Production: Kreativni Sindikat

Image Snatchers (*Tatovi podob*), 2013–

Concept, Choreography and Performance: The Feminalz
 The Feminalz: Crucial Pink (2013–), Mad Jakale (2013–), Mathilde Buns (2013–2021), Tristan Bargeld (2013–), H.P.D. (hormonal perturbator in decay) (2013–), Cica-San (2013–2018), Rosa Dolor (2014–2020), Frau Strapatz (2014–2020), Rebellious Controversy (2014–), Poppy Hopps (2015), Dee Dee Void (2016–), Ariela (2016–), GlitterAid (2020–), Musée-Cunt (2020–), Belinda (2020–), Gospod Magdalena (2021–), Broj Ena (2024–)
 Guests from Mladinsko Theatre: RotoGambrinus, Mademoiselle Satisfaire, Vazelina
 Guests: Liberty Brokeheart, Aphra Tesla
 Operating System, Shiva the Goddess of Gandja, Maud Otis, Virgin Mary, Freddie Cankar, Mama Mila, Anja Bezlova, Duo Heišes Eis
 Costume Design: Urška Recer, Matic Hrovat, Tanja Pađan/Kiss the Future
 Make-up and Hair Design: Tina Prpar
 Selection of Music and Original Tracks: Luka Prinčič, The Feminalz
 Lighting Design: Janko Oven, Aljaž Zaletel, Urška Vohar, Dan Zrimšek
 Video: The Feminalz, Luka Prinčič
 Texts: Saša Rakef, Frau Strapatz, Ariela, Dee Dee Void, Gospod Magdalena
 Production: Emanat Institute, in collaboration with Gromka Club, Maska Institute Ljubljana, Kino Šiška Centre for Urban Culture, Mladinsko Theatre

The Cause of Disease

(*Pricina za bolesta*), 2015
 Concept, Choreography, Performance, Costume Design, and Sound: Tanja Ribarska, Viktorija Ilioska, Kliment Poposki
 Production: Lokomotiva – Center for New Initiative in Arts and Culture

CAVE (*Kejv*), 2016, renamed **DILF**, 2022

Concept and Choreography: Marko Milić
 Performance: Svetozar Adamović
 Consultation: Igor Koruga
 Text: Marko Milić, Milica Urić
 Production: Marko Milić, Svetozar Adamović

Sonny (*Sine*), 2018

Concept and Performance: Nataša Živković
 Performance: Daniel Petković, Loup Abramovici, Slobodan Malić
 Set Design: Lenka Đorojević
 Lighting Design and Technical Direction: Špela Škulj
 Consultation: Teja Reba
 Production: City of Women, Eva Prodan
 Co-production: Bunker – Old Power Station

dragON aka PONY, 2018

Concept, Choreography, and Performance: Aleksandar Georgiev, Zhana Pencheva, Darío Barreto Damas, aka STEAM ROOM
 Music: Tsvetan Momchilov
 Set and Costume Design: Ralitza Toneva
 Co-production: Garage Collective, Brain Store Project, Nomad Dance Academy Slovenia.

dragON aka PHOENIX, 2021

Concept, Choreography, and Performance: Aleksandar Georgiev, Zhana Pencheva, Darío Barreto Damas, aka STEAM ROOM
 Music: Tsvetan Momchilov
 Lyrics and Vocals: Dragana Zarevska
 Set and Costume Design: Mihaela Dobrev
 Production: STEAM ROOM, Garage Collective
 Co-production: Workshop Foundation

dragON aka FOREVER, 2023

Concept, Choreography, and Performance: Aleksandar Georgiev, Zhana Pencheva, Darío Barreto Damas, aka STEAM ROOM
 Music: epic and favourite songs, Tsvetan Momchilov
 Set and Costume Design: Mihaela Dobrev
 Lighting Design: Grace Morales
 Video: Nataliya Sidorenko
 Production: STEAM ROOM, Garage Collective
 Co-production: Köttinspektionen Dans, MDT Moderna Dansteatern

Moonlight, 2019

Choreography and Performance: Aleksandar Georgiev, Darío Barreto Damas
 Dramaturgy: Nina Gojić
 Sound Design: Emilian Gatsov – Elb
 Production: Garage Collective
 Co-production: Lokomotiva – Centre for New Initiatives in Arts and Culture

How Many Cubic Centimetres Can My Body Take Up

(*Koliko kubnih centimetara smije zauzeti moje tijelo*), 2020
 Choreography: Sonja Pregrad
 Performance: Petra Chelfi, Ivana Pavlović, Martina Tomić
 Consultation: Roxanne Flamingo
 Music: Ana Horvat, Nika Pečarina, Branimir Norac
 Video: Sonja Pregrad
 Production: Studio TRAS
 Co-production: The Hub (Čvorište)

The Power of S, 2021

Choreography: Aleksandar Georgiev
 Performance: Darío Barreto Damas, Zhana Pencheva, Aleksandar Georgiev
 Music: Tsvetan Momchilov
 Production: ICC (Imaginative Choreographic Center), Garage Collective

Dragon Hunt (*Lov na zmajice*), 2024

Direction, Editing, and Animation: Marko Gutić Mižimakov
 Cinematography: Lea Anić
 Sound Design: Ivana Jurković
 Music: Lana Hosni, Jasen Vodenica, Max Franklin
 Cast: DISCOllective, Nika Pečarina, Sonja Pregrad, Lana Hosni, Marko Gutić Mižimakov
 Additional Research: Max Brands
 Production: QueerANarchive, Tonči Kranjčević Batalić
 Co-production: Kino Klub Split

CHAPTER 2: DANCE FORMATIONS

Deschooling Classroom

(*Raškoloovano znanje*), 2009–2012
 Co-authors and Editors of the Project: Ana Vujanović, Marta Popivoda, Iskra Geshoska
 General Manager: Jelena Knezević
 Production: Walking Theory (TkH)
 Partner: Kontrapunkt, Skopje

Temporaries, 2011–2013

Concept, Choreography, and Performance: Ana Dubljević, Dušan Bročić, Igor Koruga, Jovana Rakić
 Kiselčić, Ljiljana Tasić, Marko Milić
 Dramaturgy: Ana Vujanović
 Production: Station Service for Contemporary Dance

On Trial Together

(*Communitas na ispitu*), 2012
 in the frame of the **Examining Communitas project**, 2011–2016
 Concept: Ana Vujanović, Saša Asentić
 Textual Proposal: Ana Vujanović
 Choreographic Proposal: Saša Asentić, in collaboration with Ana Vujanović, Olivera Kovačević-Crnjanski, Christine De Smedt
 Performance: audience and moderators
 Moderation: Ana Vujanović, Boris Radujko, Milena Bogavac, Saša Asentić, Tatjana Tucić, each time different, usually performed by persons from local contexts
 Set Design: Nataša Murge Savić, Siniša Ilić
 Collaboration and Consultation: Annie Dorsen, Bojana Cvejić, Isabell Lorey, Milka Đorđević, Xavier Le Roy
 Initial Production: Per.Art, Walking Theory (TkH), Nataša Murge Savić, Dragana Jovović
 Every new episode was produced by the host organization.
 Initial Co-production: Serbian National Theatre, Novi Sad

CHAPTER 3: RESHAPING SPACES OF ART AND CULTURE

Choreography for Camera and Dancers (*Koreografija za kameru i plesače*), 1968

Direction: Krešimir Golik
 Screenplay and Choreography: Vera Maletić
 Cinematography: Ivica Rajković
 Editing: Katja Majer
 Music: Ivo Malec
 Production: Zagreb Film

Urbis Ludus, 1985

Concept, Choreography, and Direction: Nela Antonović
 Synopsis: Ivana Petrović
 Performance: Dragana Senić, Vera Obradović, Sanja Krsmanović, Marija Kreča, Mihajlo Djurić, Ana Jojić, Zorana Peković, Zorana Petrović, Olivera Stanojević
 Music: Dejan Stefanović, Dušan Petrović
 Mime: Dragan Grbić
 Costume Design: Nada Gilić
 Production: Theatre Mimart, Student Cultural Centre (SKC), Donka Mihailović

Vertigo Bird (*Vrtoglavi ptič*), 1996

Direction: Saša Podgoršek
 Screenplay and Choreography: Iztok Kovač
 Cinematography: Sven Pepeonik
 Cast: Jordi Casanovas Sempere, Maja Delak, Claudia de Serpa Soares, Aleš Hadalin, Mala Kline, Iztok Kovač, Antoine Lubach, Kathleen Reynolds
 Editing: Tomo Zajc
 Costume Design: Isabelle Lhoas
 Sound Design: Hanna Preuss Slak
 Production: EN-KNAP Institute

Pupilija, Papa Pupilo and the

Pupilceks (*Pupilija, papa Pupilo pa Pupilčki*), 1969
 Direction: Dušan Jovanović
 Manuscript: Dušan Jovanović, Tomaž Kralj, in collaboration with Pupilceks
 Performance: Manca Čermelj, Meta Gorjup, Milan Jesih, Matjaž Kocbek, Žarko Kozina, Ilonka Kranjc, Goranka Kreačić, Barbara Levstik, Ferdo Miklavc, Junoš Miklavc, Dušan Rogelj, Ivo Svetina, Monika Žagar, Jožica Avbelj, Slobodan Valentinčič, Tomaž Kralj Primožič, M. Smolej, B. Oblak
 Music: Lado Jakša, Tomaž Zorko, Milenko Arnejšek Prle
 Production: Pupilija Ferkeverk Theatre

Pathwalker (*Potohodec*), 1972

Based on the Text: *Pathwalker* by Dane Zajc
 Direction: Lado Kralj
 Performance: Samo Gabrijelčič, Meta Gorjup, Zdenko Kodrič, Barbara Levstik, Barbara Jakopič Kraljevič, Janez Vrečko, Tomaž Pengov, Matjaž Hočevar
 Music: Tomaž Pengov
 Production: Pekarna Theatre

The Presence of Absence

(*Prisustvo odsustva*), 2013

Direction and Dramaturgy: Dijana Milošević

Performance: Sanja Krsmanović Tasić, Maja Vujović

Music: Jugoslav Hadžić

Violin and Violin Compositions: Nemanja Ajdačić

Recorded Voices: Sanja Krsmanović Tasić, Ivana

Milenović Popović, Nina Noren, Maja Vujović

Set Design: Neša Paripović

Costumes: DAH Theatre, Marija Marković

Lighting Design: Milomir Dimitrijević

Assistant Direction: Mladen Lukešević

Consultation: Klaudija Bernardi

Production: Dah Theatre

The Walker (*Hodač*), 1998

Concept and Choreography: Magdalena Lupi

Co-creation and Performance: Iva Nerina Gattin/Silvia

Marchig, Alex Đaković, Edvin Liverić, Žak B. Valenta

Visual Solution: Lara Badurina

Music: Ivan Šarar

Production: TRAFIK – Transitional-

Fiction Theatre, Boba Bundalo

Macbeth/IT (*Magbet/ONO*), 1996

Macbeth/IT (*Magbet/ONO*), Street performance, 1997

Based on the Text: *Macbeth* by William Shakespeare

Concept: Sonja Vukićević

Performance: Sonja Vukićević, Slobodan Beštić

Music: Zoran Erić

Production: Center for Cultural Decontamination

(CZKD)

The City as a Stage

(Gradot kako scena), 2021–

Concept and Direction: Filip Jovanovski

Curatorial Support: Ivana Vaseva

In collaboration with Kristina Lelovac, Boris Bakal,

Miodrag Kuč, Dejan Ivanovski, Viktorija Ilioska, Ilija

Tiricovski, Kristijan Karadzovski, Simona Dimkovska,

Jana Brsakoska, Ljubisha Arsić, etc.

Research: Miodrag Kuc, Filip Jovanovski, Jana

Brsakoska, Jubisha Arsi, Simona Dimkovska,

Kristijan Karajoski, Boris Bakal, Cultural ECHO,

City Scope, Luna Shalamon, Deniz Adarevi,

Denica Stojkowska, students of the Faculty of

Architecture in Skopje (Tamara Jerkov, Dimitar

Milev, Sandra Nikolovska, Bojana Isijanin, Stefan

Tankov), students of the Faculty of Drama in Skopje

(Aleksandar Jovanovski, Martina Danailovska,

Marija Taleska, Martina Petreska, Ivan Vrtev)

Music Intervention: Duo Alembik

Production: FRU/AKTO Contemporary Art Festival,

Boris Vasilevski, in collaboration with Aleksandar

Jovanovski, Denis Ajdarevic, Luna Shalamon,

Martina Petreska

Co-production: Center for Art and Urbanistics

(Berlin), The Shadow Casters (Bacači sjenki, Zagreb)

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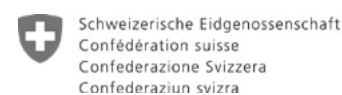
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