



**NOMAD DANCE
ACADEMY
PUBLICATION**





WHY THIS BOOK?

● We are sitting in my new apartment; I've just moved in, so there is no furniture, only empty walls and some construction material. We are sitting in what will be my bedroom, on little brown prayer stools; we have our laptops in our laps. It's 7pm, every little sound we make echoes through empty rooms. We are drafting this introduction and finalising this publication on the Nomad Dance Academy.

↪ Almost six years after the first meeting and after the first three years of conducting intensive programmes on many different levels, we felt a need to summarise our work, to reflect and get some reflections from the environment in which we act. This book discusses what has been done and what else can be done – it can be understood as a point in time between the past and the future of the NDA.

↪ At the June 2010 annual meeting of the NDA team in Slovenia, we decided that June 2010 – June 2011 would be 'a year of resting'; we gave ourselves some time to reflect on our actions and rethink our position in the domains of the ideology and practice of contemporary dance. We wanted to act against acting mechanically, against producing for the sake of producing; also, we wanted to understand the effects of our actions and see how one might act on this complex mechanism. Making this book is a contribution to this year of reflection, reflection-in-progress rather than reflection after the fact.

↪ We approached people of different relations and levels of proximity to the NDA, with different degrees of involvement in the project, professionals in different fields of contemporary art theory and practice; we asked them to articulate their understandings of particular aspects of the project. We gave them only a few guidelines: to take a look at the project through a critical lens, without giving it a pat on the shoulder, to try to activate the minds of all of us by asking questions and finding problems. The diversity of the contributors' approaches represents the different approaches of work at the NDA.

↪ So, who is this publication for? Our colleague Biljana Tanurovska Kjulavkovski says it is for curious people, and I agree. It is for all the people who are involved with the NDA, regardless of their roles: the producers, the dancers, the local partners, the students, the audiences, the local and international funders, the decision makers, etc. Also, it is for all those in the region who are interested in the fields of dance and the performing arts, education, policy-making, curating, and networking. By doing this project we move across and blur the borders between what is understood as local, regional, and international, and we question the borders between practice and theory. By

by
**Dragana
 Alfirević
 & Gregor
 Kamnikar**

constantly shifting positions we understand what our reality is from one moment to the next. There are some people, opinions, and texts missing, because some of our contributors left themselves out for different reasons. Certain viewpoints are missing in order to arrive at a more complete picture – for example, the viewpoints of politicians and cultural policy makers. We think that this publication will be successful if it generates new questions, if besides offering information it triggers in its readers' imagination the idea of what the NDA is and what it could be. Because this is what the NDA is.



↓ Look around yourself: where are you at this moment? Are you reading this introduction in your bed just before going to sleep, in your office, or during your coffee break? Is your reading part of your work, education, free time, or is it a curious skimming through a material you know nothing about?





**THE
NOMAD DANCE
ACADEMY**

IS AN INDEPENDENT, OPEN, AND SUSTAINABLE PLATFORM FOR THE CONTEMPORARY PERFORMING ARTS WITH THE AIM TO INITIATE AND SUPPORT EDUCATION, RESEARCH, ARTISTIC PRODUCTION, AND TRANSFER OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE BALKAN REGION AND BEYOND.

The NOMAD Dance Academy is:

- ~ a platform for collaboration in contemporary dance
- ~ a self-refreshing organisational model
- ~ a tool for the promotion of contemporary dance
- ~ an intense programme for education and creativity

The Goals of the NDA are:

- ~ to contribute to the professionalisation of the field and to introduce the NDA model into other cultural fields;
- ~ to provide both young as well as experienced dancers and choreographers with more opportunities for education and research;
- ~ to rethink and improve conditions of production in the field of dance;
- ~ to promote dance as a socially relevant and inclusive art field and expand its audience.

The NOMAD Dance Academy initiative should open possibilities for further development of the existing art practices and potentials in contemporary dance, based on:

- ~ intense regional cooperation and exchange;
- ~ international networking and credibility of Balkan artists;
- ~ developing a common market, which should provide for the sustainability of new productions and improve the social status of contemporary dancers and choreographers;
- ~ an interdisciplinary approach to contemporary dance, which is a synergetic art form that relies on various art fields (the visual arts, new media, music, theatre, video, art theory...) and enriches them;
- ~ an investment in spawning a new generation of teachers in the region.

The NOMAD Dance Academy programme simultaneously operates on five interest areas, which focus on:

- (a) education,
- (b) research programmes,
- (c) productions and co-productions,
- (d) promotion, and
- (e) cultural policies



THE STRUCTURE OF THE NOMAD DANCE ACADEMY (2007–2010)

Conceiving and organising the NOMAD Dance Academy project, we have realised that we need a different model of organisation and communication, one that would be specifically tailored to our needs – a horizontal, de-centralised model, with specific decision making-processes and information flows. We are continuously dedicated to self-refreshing and reinventing the model we founded.

↪ The first year (2005) was a pilot year, during which we, as a group of individuals, were meeting and creating the project.



↓ During the first four years of its existence, the NOMAD Dance Academy has been organised in the following way: →



THE DECISION MAKING BODY (DMB) includes all the founders of the NOMAD project and a number of invited members. As of December 2010, these people are:

Dalija Aćin
 Dragana Alfirević
 Goran Bogdanovski
 Nina Božič
 Tamara Curić
 Marijana Cvetković Marković
 Dean Damjanovski
 Aleksandra Janeva Imfeld
 Gregor Kamnikar
 Stefania Kregel
 Kristina Kujundžić
 Maja Marjančić (2006/07)
 Hrvoje Matasović
 Bojana Mladenović
 Willy Prager
 Jasmina Prolić (2008/09)
 Nevena Redžić
 Martin Sonderkamp
 Stephan Shtereff
 Dejan Srhoj
 Iskra Šukarova
 Iva Sveshtarova
 Biljana Tanurovska Kjulavkovski
 Rok Vevar

↪ The DMB are 'the owners' of the NDA. They make all major decisions and insure that the project keep developing in a good direction.



THE ARTISTIC BOARD (AB) is a body within the NOMAD Dance Academy, which creates programmes, communicates with other bodies about all artistic and programme matters, and

selects participants of the Educational Programme. The AB consists of three members, who are selected with regards to their competences and interests. In the period 2007 – 2010 members of the AB were: Dalija Aćin, Goran Bogdanovski, Aleksandra Janeva Imfeld, and Willy Prager.



THE COORDINATION OFFICE (CO) comprises a team of people, whose duties include strategic planning, conceiving of certain segments of the project, administration, fundraising, and overall communication. The CO consists of three people, who are selected, like the members of the AB, based on their interests and competencies. In the period 2007 – 2010 CO members were: Dragana Alfirević, Marijana Cvetković Marković, and Biljana Tanurovska Kjulavkovski. Violeta Kachakova has contributed significantly to the coordination of the project, as part of the partner organisation from Macedonia.



LOCAL PARTNERS (LP) comprises the NDA members of each of the six participant countries. The purpose of all six LPs is to implement and run the project on the local level.

↳ LPs are partner-organisations to the NDA.



During 2007–2010 these organisations/people were:

- Brain Store Project – Sofia
- Fičo Balet – Ljubljana
- Lokomotiva – Skopje
- Station – Belgrade
- Tala Dance Center – Zagreb
- Tanzelarija – Sarajevo



As a strategic action, the NDA members have decided to establish new organisations that would take over the role of partners and organisers of the Nomad Dance Academy in the future.

↳ The newly established NDA organisations will aim to generate space for new individuals to participate in the development of NDA programmes. They will include individuals previously affiliated with our partner organisations, as well as new people who will have the opportunity to participate in the future development of NDA programmes.

↳ Organisations to be established are NDA Slovenia, NDA Macedonia, NDA Serbia, NDA Croatia, NDA Bulgaria and NDA Bosnia-Herzegovina.

RULES AND PRINCIPLES

The NDA is based on the following principles:

The Principle of Balance: the balance between regional and local levels, between different parts of the programme, between artistic and managerial aspects of the NDA, in financial matters, etc.

The Principle of Invitation: we have chosen to invite rather than select people, because we believe that inviting is much better suited to the formats of our work. Each member of the DMB may invite one new member every three years.

The Principle of Empty Space: every decision or segment of the project must leave some empty space, for new initiatives and ideas – an unknown territory for us to investigate.

The Rule of Three: a practical rule for solving practical issues: three members of the AB, three members of the CO, the main bodies in the structure, three main lines in the programme. Every position comes with a three-year term.



Guido Reimitz, the Moon of the Nomad Dance Academy, has a closeness to the programme that is defined by his distance from it. His support in the development of the project, to which he has brought a lot of knowledge and expertise, is crucial. Between 2007 and 2010, Guido did mediation and moderation and at crucial times helped us open the horizons of all the things the NDA could be(come). Thanks to him, we give more consideration to emotions and energies, we are constantly challenged to look beyond set limits, and we see different perspectives and possibilities for the work we are doing.





**PARTNERS OF
THE NOMAD DANCE
ACADEMY PROJECT
(2007 – 2010)**

BRAIN STORE PROJECT

The Bbrain Cstore Pproject, creative concepts' store, is a long-term project for interdisciplinary work, founded by a group of artists and theorists working in the field of contemporary arts.

↳ The Bbrain Cstore Pproject provides a platform for:

- ~ creating and producing its own artistic projects in the field of the visual and performing arts, fashion design, and their intermediate forms;
- ~ developing partnership networks with Bulgarian and international independent artists, practitioners and theorists, artistic groups, organisations, and institutions;
- ~ initiating and presenting our common as well as productions by others;
- ~ designing an alternative educational programme for artists and practitioners: workshops, lectures, research projects, etc.;
- ~ a creative exchange of ideas and points of view;
- ~ research in artistic processes and practices.

↳ The core of the Bbrain Cstore Pproject's plans and projected activities are artistic interventions, leaving behind the preordained halls of art and getting the 'everyday-audience' involved into an unostentatious, spontaneous cultural context.

With its politics of anti-elitism, openness, and sociability towards collaborations with contemporary artists, the Bbrain Cstore Pproject aims to build partnership networks of personalities, groups, and institutions.

↳ The programme for alternative education in the field of contemporary performing arts, which has already started, was designed to enlarge the knowledge of young artists.



↓ The Bbrain Cstore Pproject was founded in January of 2004 by performing artists Willy Prager, Mila Odajieva, Stefan A. Shtereff, and designer Neli Mitewa. In 2007, Stephan A. Shtereff left, and performing artist Iva Sveshtarova joined the team. Based on their common work and realisations of their own productions as well as co-productions with local and international artists, the initiators of the Bbrain Cstore Pproject decided to collaborate in the search for a contemporary interdisciplinary language.

www.brainstoreproject.com



FIČO BALET

FIČO BALET is an NGO. Through dance and theatre performances, festivals and workshops we are enabling people to experience art in a new way.

↳ Since 2000, we have collaborated with over 150 artists, held workshops, and performed throughout Europe and North America.

↳ We have received a number of Slovenian and international awards.

Our base is Ljubljana, and we are mainly supported by the Ministry of Culture of Slovenia and the City of Ljubljana.

↳ The Body is our media, Dance is our energy, we take our Space for a ride, you are our Story.

www.ficobalet.org

LOKOMOTIVA

Center for New Initiatives in Arts and Culture

The Lokomotiva – Centre for New Initiatives in Arts and Culture was founded in 2003. It is a small organisation, but a pro-active participant in the development of a democratic socio-cultural space. Lokomotiva is dedicated to the creation of an open, new, and dynamic civil environment in Macedonia, by opening the space for the development of new socio-cultural discourses and ideas, education, reflection, discussion, and creativity, whereby the citizens' needs and those of the actors on the scene would be articulated in new contemporary arts and cultural practices/activities/works. We believe that such practices could contribute to the development of new social values and might initiate socio-cultural developmental changes on the national, regional, and international levels.

↳ In its work so far, the Lokomotiva have realised different art programmes, public cultural activities, debates, lectures, presentations, video art and films, educational and developmental project researches. What connects all these programmes is the Lokomotiva's continuous re-reading and reflection on the context and production models, educational practices, institutional practices and social discourses, models of socialisation and partner collaborations that have been implemented in them.

www.lokomotiva.org.mk

STATION

Service for Contemporary Dance Belgrade

The STATION is a service for the contemporary dance community in Serbia, with the aim to make that community stronger, more structured, and recognised by Serbia's cultural-policy makers, state institutions, cultural operators, educational-policy makers, Balkan and European partners and funding bodies, as well as by the wider audience.

↳ The STATION strongly supports and encourages newcomers and as yet unrecognised companies and individuals. Its aim is to provide possibilities for development and learning; yet, its main goal is to stay focused on experimental and live art forms – a vital ingredient in every society.

↳ The STATION's priority in this early stage in its development is to be non-selective and focused on the community's needs rather than on producing individual artistic projects.

↳ One of the ultimate goals of the STATION is to provide reasonable and professional conditions of work to all active parties on Serbia's scene and to create the conditions and atmosphere for healthy competition. The quality of their work will determine individuals' and companies' growth, audience-reach, and producing capacities.

www.dancestation.org

THE TALA DANCE CENTRE

The TALA DANCE CENTRE is a non-profit artistic organisation founded on February 14th, 2000, by LARISA LIPOVAC and TAMARA CURIĆ, two artists who have been active on the contemporary dance scene for a number of years, as professional dancers and choreographers trained abroad.

The Dance Centre Programme aims to popularise contemporary dance with children, youths, and adults, by creating different dance programmes, such as: theatre performances, daily classes, programmes of education, the development of dance art, international collaboration, etc...

↳ We collaborate with foreign dancers, choreographers, cultural institutions, centres and organisations in Europe and beyond.

↳ We have initiated and organised the **Platform for Young Choreographers**, an event for:

- ~ presentations of domestic and foreign choreographers
- ~ the promotion of the contemporary dance scene in Croatia
- ~ providing assistance to young choreographers and dancers and thus enabling them to present their ideas and individual approaches to dance art

- ~ fostering collaboration with acknowledged international choreography centres and artists
- ~ local, regional, and international presentations and cultural collaborations of choreographers and dancers, through different projects.

Our goal is to establish a Dance/Education/Choreography centre in Croatia. Acknowledging the results, achievements, and contributions that our organisation has made to Croatian culture and the art of dance, the Zagreb City Hall has recognised our initiative and need for such a centre and agreed to finance our project.

↳ As art organisation, the Tala Dance Centre has been allowed to use the old cinema 'Kalnik', which we plan to adapt to our needs by the end of 2010.

www.tala.hr

TANZELARIJA

Tanzelarija is a non-profit cultural association registered in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with the aim to promote contemporary dance in its artistic, therapeutic, and educational aspects in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where this form of art and expression otherwise hardly exists.

↳ At Tanzelarija, we see dance as a tool available to all to discover, develop, and express themselves, to connect to themselves, to their environment and to others, to improve communication and co-operation, strengthen their self-confidence and creativity, and foster positive change and healing. Contemporary dance connects, heals and inspires.

↳ It is this approach to dance that we would like to promote, as opposed to dance seen as a series of movements ordained to be learnt and repeated, requiring a certain body shape or ability, resulting in competition or exclusively in performance.

Aims

- ~ the development of a contemporary dance scene in Bosnia and Herzegovina, ending Bosnia's cultural isolation in the field of dance, promoting cultural exchange with artists from different countries and establishing partnerships with other similar organisations in the Balkan region – the promotion of the healing and therapeutic potential of dance to benefit orphaned children and children with difficult family situations and other social groups in Bosnian society;
- ~ the promotion of the use of dance as an informal educational tool for self-discovery and self-development, for children as well as for adults.

www.tanzelarija.org

ON
CONSTRUCTING
THE NDA AND ON
POSITIONING
OURSELVES *



* This text is made of a compilation of private emails that a few members of the Nomad Dance Academy team wrote to each other, in order to clarify, or even further to confuse their mutual positions within the project, and the position of the project in the wider context. It was first published in the *TRH* (Walking Theory) magazine in 2008. The text was not proofread.



photo by Sunčan Stone

Subject: symposium
Inbox

dejan strhoj to n_d_a, quidoreim
show details 24 Sep 2007

hello everybody,

i was at bitef festival in belgrade last week and part of the festival was symposium on self education. (also dragana and dalija were there) in the public there were theoreticians and practitioners like jan ritsema, bojana cvejic, ana vujanovic, katerina zakravsky and others. i would like to share some remarks and observations they had after i presented nda.

they asked two things. first, why do we call it balkan educational program. 'balkan is construct, it is an age of post-identityt therefore idea of balkan can not not exist anymore, balkan evokes so many emotions...' then dr.suvakovic said 'you need to construct a new idea of balkan, not just mention it and let the observer without anything'

the other thing they asked was what do we mean by creating a unique dance scene. why unique, why a scene when we are all so different,...?

ritsema said: i don't have problems with balkan, just don't become elitistic, let anyone interested to know of what you are doing or be a part of it'



so, i found out that balkan is a good term to provoke, to play with, but we need to work on it. also utopian idea about balkan scene is great, but what is the model of a scene in society of individuals?

best, dejan

p.s this mail is send to nda group and guido

[tamara TALA](#) to [n_d_a](#)
show details 24 Sep 2007

hi,

this symposium sounds great!

I agree that balkan is good term-all reasons Dejan mentioned.

I see idea about BALCAN DANCE SCENE exactly about our differences working and exchanging together, that makes it "unique", cooperating and developing our region -that helps all of us to develop individually... regionally...

that is art all about, sharing
all....developing...experiencing...discovering...

kiss Tamara



[Bojana Mladenovic](#) to [n_d_a](#), [guidoreim](#)
show details 25 Sep 2007

hello dears,

a few thoughts on (pro)posed questions:

.. i tend to think that we are using the term balkan already in very loose way and i think our main utilization of it is strategic in my opinion.

loose way means that we (who established BDN) are defining which countries are balkan and which not. and we are making choices ad hoc- for this moment in time (regardless how many actual years it will last) and without claiming that this is only possible balkan. there are as many balkans as organizations and people that want to name it like that (well this is quite post-identity statement). anyway my point is that we are not claiming any universal truth- nor we are establishing something that has aim to impose itself as right, proper or only good (by stating this we are positioning us as peaceful entity that tends to operate in this world in good and collaborative manner with any other entity: country, region, group of artists, individual artist, project etc.)

second: strategic positioning has (hopefully) two impacts:

on happenings inside what we call balkan

on what (what we call) balkan can bring into larger picture (e.g. into construct called europe)

above mentioned impacts can be reached through "seducing" potential financial support from within our construct and from outside of it's "borders", basically because the aim is to create conditions for standing on equal grounds(with those that we don't consider balkans for this occasion) ..



what i find important in searching the answer to what do we mean by "unique", is our clear positioning ourselves as group of artists that are aware and able to constructively and critically (re) think our very position. by that i mean that we are aware that contemporary dance is (another construct) western product. that until now what was most often done in balkans is taking for granted and often non-critically implementing styles, forms, ideologies that had their natural birth (by) somewhere else.

what we are trying to do now is for the first time entering into the DIALOGUE with contemporary dance practices rather than as until now, being TOLD .

and as for becoming elite it is a good question do we/when is the moment to open it up to artists regardless belonging geo-politically to any proposed area, but elite is quite big word.

i think that in this moment NDA is an art-educational project but it is also in a way social (in sense of social system). in our pro(su)posed balkans the element of no structural support for development of contemporary dance is the fact that creates this area being more clearly distinguished from european (non balkan) area where it is structurally, institutionally, financially organized already in last few decades.

so this is the fight for providing people in this area with the (infra)structure that is necessary and that is responding to urgency for its existence.

this is our beginning position and first steps. i am looking fwd to a near future moment when the NDA program will be opened to just anyone. that moment is not yet now [here I talk about the beneficiaries- students of the program- the exchange on all other levels and openness is already happening].

kisses to all,

bojana

Von: guido

Datum: 26. September 2007

An: dejan srhoj

Betreff: Re: symposium

dear dean,

what does that mean:

don't become elitistic

and after representing NDA today in the danceweb meeting today, I just have the idea that you and I are presenting two total different stories about one hope on two places in the world an all our listeners are hearing even more individual stories. words are funny and there is space in-between our thoughts - always.

guido

p.s.: maybe I have to explain the need of uniqueness better. its not better or outstanding, it is meant in terms of "different", very simple like your left hand to your right one or one oak-tree and one birch tree. they are so different and beautiful if they are what they are and don't want to be something else.

Am 27.09.2007

schrieb dejan srhoj:

dear guido,

when ritsema said program should not become elitistic, i said that we are not able to move 100 people around



the region, and he said something like 'of course not, just make sure that what you do also others can approach or get to know.' that's it. i think all of us engaged in nda want it to be an open project, but of course we still need to clarify open in what way, how to structure this 'openness' within the project and so on.

remark to personal stories on the project: yes, maybe we presented the project in different ways or maybe the listeners were very different. do you think that a project needs one and the same story?

best
dejan

From: dejan srhoj
To: bojana
Sent: Monday, October 1, 2007
Subject: balkan

ciao bojana,

znaci, sa jedne strane mi konstruiramo ideju balkana zbog strateske pozicije. a sa druge strane mi stvarno stvaramo balkansku scenu, kao nesto razlicito od zapadne scene. i tek scena moze da postane partner u dialogu sa zapadom.

ali i dalje se pitam sta stvara scenu? ako to nije

ista estetika, niti ista filozofska, teoretska pitanja na koja odgovaramo, onda su to slicni uslovi rada, slicni politicka i kulturna realnost i istorija i zajednicki projekat konstruiranja nove realnosti.

sta mislis?

pozdrav
dejan

Re: balkan...
Bojana Mladenovic
Monday, October 1, 2007
To:dejan srhoj

dragi dejane,

da probam ovaiko (btw,uzimaj uvek moje reci kao glasno razmisljanje i uvek zamisli znake pitanja umesto tacaka na mojim recenicama):

pa i ta scena je konstrukt koji mi pravimo. ona u svojoj hererogenosti moze samo da raste i da se razvija. ja bih licno bilo protiv ikakve homogenizacije, izjednacavanja, upeglavanja. takodje ne bih nam dala za pravo da unapred odredimo ideolosku poziciju kao kriterijum za pripadanje/nepripadanje sceni.

ono sto mislim da je vazno jeste upravo ta trka sa zapadom koja nas je do sada (iz kulturoloških, ideoloskih, infrastrukturnih, etc. razloga) ostavljala par koraka iza njih, da sada ta trka postane paralelna uz cak povremeno trcanje po istoj liniji a povremeno jedni pored drugih. tako da "ispred" i "iza" postaju irelevantni. da se uvek nudi nesto kao pitanje/problem i kao nesto sto otvara prostor za "drugog" da udje u dijalog (te da iz dijaloga i jedan i drugi izadju promenjeni, novi).

ali ne neminovno da smo razliciti, kao i ne neminovno da smo isti- jer vec jesmo i jedno i drugo te nema potrebe to potencirati.



mislim da je jos jedna ključna rec: potrebno (necessary). mi treba da radimo ono sto je necessary in this world in this time. samo tako ce se "granice" polako brisati i "mi" (ma ko god mi bili- ja ili ti licno, ili slovenska scena, ili jedna hrvatska kompanija, ili ova nasa mala druzba (sa ne malim ambicijama doduse), ili amerika ili...) postajemo relevantan, neophodan "igrac" sa svim ostalima "mi". samim tim mi i mi pocinjemo da cinimo "nas" nema vise "njih".

uh sad se upeljajh vise nego sto je neophodno. ali u svakom slucaju: sto otvorenije, sto raznovrsnije, sto razlicitije (na 'sceni') uz pronalazenje modela komunikacije i nikada odbacivanja ili zatvaranja. sve sto se ponudi kao problem, treba tretirati kao poziv na pronalazenje ne neminovno resenja vec postavljnja novog pitanja (nazovimo ga novim problemom)- tako se cini mi se raste i ne upada u letargiju i zatvoreni krug "identiteta" kao jednog jedinog i moguceg. flux, motion, growth, support, dialogue. no judgementalism and closed ideological circles.

ps. nisam sigurna da bih se slozila da tek "scena" moze da udje u dijalog sa "zapadom". to bi znacilo da scena treba da se formira (sa jasnim identitetom) pa tek onda... ali ko je taj ko ce da kaze ok, sada smo formirani, sada mozemo u dijalog? takodje, upravo je to problem (pozitivan) sto scena nije homogena te nema. Jedan glas.

mislim da "scena" jeste problematizan termin. ali mozemo da ga se drzimo za sada kao termina koji nas pozicionira spram zapada (nasi "slicni uslovi rada, slicni politicka i kulturna realnost i istorija i zajednicki projekat konstruiranja nove realnosti") ali i kao termin koji otvara platformu za nase medjusobno, u okviru 'scene', promisljanje potreba, pozicija, neophodnosti i sl...

ajd pa pisi dalje!

ljub

b

Dear dejan,

Let me try like this (btw, always take my words as thinking aloud and always imagine question marks instead of points in my sentences)

Well, that scene as well is a construct which is created by us. In its heterogeneity it can develop and grow. Personally, I am against any kind of homogenization, equalization, and also I would not like that we determine ideological position in advance, as a criterion for belonging/not belonging to the scene. What I find important is exactly this competition with the West, which left us always few steps behind, for different reasons (culturalogical, ideological, infrastructural etc). now this line can become parallel, with even running on the same line sometimes, and sometimes even one next to the other, so that "ahead" and "behind" become irrelevant. To always offer something that would be a question/problem, and always leave the space for the "other", to enter a dialogue and that each one can come out of the dialogue new, changed.

But not necessarily that we are different, and not necessarily that we are the same, because we are both so there is no point in stressing it.

I think that another key word is necessary. We have to do what is necessary in this world at this time. This is the only way to erase the borders, and "we" (whoever this "we" may be, me or you, or whole Slovenian scene or one Croatian company, or this little company of ours with ambitions that are not so small, or America or whomever...) become relevant, necessary player with all other "we's" by doing that we start building "us" and there is no more "them".

Uhh now I entangled myself more than its necessary, but anyway: as more open, as more diverse, with as much difference (on the scene), with trying to find models of communication and never closing or rejecting. Everything that is offered as a problem should be understood as a call for finding of not only solution but of posing a new question (lets call it new problem) – this is how we can grow and not fall into apathy, and into a closed circle of only one possible identity. Flux, motion, growth, support, dialogue. No judgmentalism and closed ideological circles.

Ps. I am not sure that I would agree that only "a scene" can enter into a dialogue with "west". This would mean that scene should be formed (with clear identity) and only then... but who is the one who will say, ok, now we are formed, now we can go into a dialogue? Also, this is exactly the problem (positive problem) that the scene is not homogenous so it does not have One voice.

I think scene is a problematic term, but we can stick to it for now as a term that positions us in



relation to the west (similar working conditions, similar political and cultural reality, common history, and common project of construction of the new reality) but also as a term that opens platform for our mutual (from within the scene) thinking of the needs, positions, necessities, etc...
Ok, lets write further!
kiss

dragana alfirevic
show details

to Bojana, dejan, tamara, quidoreim
10 Oct 2007

dears

we got this invitation to write a text about the nda for tkh (walking theory) special issue on self-education.
as dejan presented nda at the symposium, and we received some feed back, about 'balkan' to which then you reacted, i thought it would be interesting to publish your emails in tkh, after a short presentation of nda.
i think that this kind of personal reflection can say more than some possible presentation only, and it is also important aspect of nda...

let me know (soon) what you think.

yours
dragana



photo by Nenad Milošević

26 ~ 27

**THE NOMAD
DANCE ACADEMY:
AN ANALYSIS OF
AN INDEPENDENT*
INITIATIVE
IN THE (POST)
TRANSITIONAL
TURBO-CAPITALIST
SOCIETIES
OF THE BALKANS**



This text and the drawings coexist and form a rhizomatic material, which articulates our textual and visual modes of thought and reflection

This text is a recent reflection on the Nomad Dance Academy, done by some of its actors over the last five years, who have directly and indirectly contributed to its development since 2005 **

* Here we use 'independent' in the following meanings: 1) an initiative that is established bottom-up, or not established by the state or other external organisations, but by itself; 2) an initiative that independently decides on its organisational structures, bodies, decision-making processes and management; 3) an initiative that depends neither on the state nor on any other entities for its programme contents or finances. For more on independent culture, see Emina Višnjić and Sanjin Dragojević (eds.), *A Bottom Up Approach to Cultural Policy Making*, 10.

** The NOMAD DANCE ACADEMY was initiated during a Balkan Express meeting on the margins of the IETM conference in Belgrade, in March of 2005, when the Balkan Dance Network was established. It became a flexible and informal network of friends and collaborators through which contacts and information were provided to its members. For the members of the Balkan Dance Network, it was crucial to establish regional partnership through a number of different small-scale activities, so that informal connections could be formalised and deepened.

photo by Nenad Milošević



Text by
Biljana Tanurovska
Kjulavkovski and
Marijana Cvetković
Marković
Drawings by
Dragana Zarevska

● Those five years of our personal and professional investment in what appeared to be, at that time, a new professional network in the Balkans¹ resulted in an internationally renowned project and a unique platform with a potential to spawn some significant models for cultural cooperation, bottom-up action, self-organisation, etc. But to be able to define and further spread this potential in the form of methods and recommendations, the Nomad Dance Academy's main actors need to take a series of self-reflective actions on the processes upon which the Nomad Dance Academy was developed.

↳ As we participated, from the very beginning, in the group of contemporary dance artists and managers who started the idea of a regional platform for education, research, production, and promotion of contemporary dance in the Balkans, we will try to elaborate on the Nomad Dance Academy's actions and effects, both diachronically and synchronically.

↳ Starting from its first conceptual framework, set in 2006, the Nomad Dance Academy has grown into a platform and a collaborative, or tactical, network; moreover, it is now a self-organised system and format, which has affected different areas of collaboration, exchange, mutual support, capacity building, and cultural policy.

↳ The post-2000 Balkans cultural context, in which the Nomad Dance Academy appeared, may be described as post-transitional and 'nation-building'-oriented, which has resurrected old mechanisms of governance in culture, supporting and emphasising the traditional values that are supposed to help the new nation states shape their national(istic) identities.²

↳ Such officially proclaimed goals oriented most of the Balkan states' national cultural policies towards investing into the past, i.e., into the heritage of the majority population, in order to find or

¹ In the Nomad Dance Academy, we have decided to work with the terms 'Balkans' and 'balkanisation' and through our work reconstruct their meanings, instead of subliming ourselves to the vocabulary of daily politics and using ever-changing terms such as 'South East Europe', 'Western Balkans', etc. The word 'Balkans' contains more than its geopolitical meanings and what is most interesting for us are the Balkan people's common historical and cultural backgrounds, which strongly affect the work in contemporary cultural practices. When we write 'the Balkan region', we mean the countries included in the Nomad Dance Academy (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Serbia, Croatia, and Slovenia).

² For more on this, see the following: Milena Dragičević Šešić and Corina Suteu, 'Challenges of Cultural Cooperation in Southeast Europe: The Internationalization of Cultural Policies and Practices' and Milena Dragičević Šešić and Sanjin Dragojević, 'Imagined or Real Divisions, Cultural Policies and Their Boundaries', in *Transcultural Europe*, eds. U. Meinhof and A. Triandafyllidou.

reinvent their national roots. In this context, live and contemporary culture found itself in a void – as an excess without any support from the system that could secure its existence and further development.

↪ Acting in such a cultural context, we found ourselves falling into the cracks of a post-transitional system that had already adopted all the main neoliberal capitalist concepts whereby culture and art are seen primarily as commodities and not as a time-space 'sensorium', in which socio-cultural capital is produced with new values.

↪ Acting within a system that would not recognise us as a part of it infused us with a feeling of not-belonging, which led us to create a 'new system' within the system, a different format that would enable the re-production of the notions of culture and its values. Or, to be more precise, we tried to modify the rules of the 'infinite' game³ and create a space where no national cultural policy or national agenda could direct or limit the production of new values. On the other side, we were also aware of the new international (that is, the EU's and international donors') agendas for the Balkans and their insistence on, and support for, regional cooperation.

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↓

THE NOMAD DANCE ACADEMY AS A REGIONAL INTERLOCUTOR AND A SELF-ORGANISED COLLABORATIVE PLATFORM AND TACTICAL NETWORK

What makes the Nomad Dance Academy specific are the collaboration protocols as well as its organisational framework, based on the particular working principles generated and produced by its actors. These *working principles*, upon which actions are formed and communication is based, are *principles of balance* (between countries, genders, etc.), *invitation* (to other people to keep joining the network – in order to prevent it from degenerating into a closed circle), and *empty space/open space* (which deals with potentiality: in all of our actions and programmes we try to assure that there is something always that is undefined, uncertain, that there is a space to discover, that there are the indeterminate and the new). New work protocols are formed under these principles, in order to establish a sustainable format of communication and joint action in the region.⁴

³ This is in relation to play as a category of thought. We mean 'game' here as an infinite game (cultures are infinite games), an open-ended play that sustains existence. The division of 'finite' and 'infinite' games. James P. Carse, quoted in Richard Schechner, *Performance Studies*, 87–88.

⁴ As defined above (Bulgaria and the countries of the former Yugoslavia).

The Nomad Dance Academy as a platform. The purpose of introducing the concept of the platform is to show that creating a platform is always situated in a web of meanings and knowledge (we may call it a discursive web) where creation is brought about and motivated by specific private or public interests. [...] a platform is not a methodological basis in the strictly scientific sense. It is a loose body of knowledge, convictions and feelings, matrices of identification, obsessions and fascinations – including everything that we do not accept in a straightforward epistemological way.⁵

↪ By establishing such a platform we try to re-create an atmosphere or a discourse, to employ certain approaches and sets of actions (self-critical, critical, self-reflective and problem-oriented).

↪ In the Nomad Dance Academy's case these actions or approaches are launched, metaphorically speaking, from a *trampoline*⁶ – a platform for starting actions that derive from the bottom. These concrete actions are meant to influence the context and to be(come) new instruments of cultural policy, or regulations of protocols, in which certain procedures will be performed and will foster better conditions for the development of contemporary art/dance. These sets of actions are developed in relation to the identified problems, or to the naming of problems, by detecting voids or gaps in the system, such as the *education, research, production, recognition, and visibility* of contemporary dance.

↓

The Nomad Dance Academy as a tactical network. Cultural networks in Europe were established in the 1980s with the aim of creating a model of communication and a position from which professionals from one field could advocate for their needs. Those networks, based on the logic of membership, went through a number of changes, crises, and transformations; meanwhile, other networks were established as tactical⁷ or intensive collaborative networks, which performed different tactics, concrete procedural sequences, actions, and approaches to solving actual problems. They introduced methods or sets of actions or approaches in Derridian terms, whereby they transformed procedures and protocols of work.⁸ Recreating the format of a network is a potential plan that implies a certain procedure in the realisation of an action in which the network

⁵ For more on this, see <http://www.antijargon.tkh-generator.net/2010/06/09/suvakovicen/>.

⁶ *Ibid.* Šuvaković uses this metaphor to explain the meaning of 'platform'.

⁷ Sanjin Dragojević, 'Collaborative Platforms / Tactical Networks', in *A Bottom Up Approach to Cultural Policy Making*, 17.

⁸ <http://www.antijargon.tkh-generator.net/2010/06/09/suvakovicen/>.

operated. New formats enabled the newly established networks to function reflectively, critically, and proactively.

↳ This type of transformation or re-formatting enabled the Nomad Dance Academy to perform a certain strategy (a plan of action with the goal to develop a system in which contemporary dance could act/exist) and to develop new tactics that actualised problem solving.

↳ Another distinctive feature of the Nomad Dance Academy is its representative logic of identity, which it shares with 'membership networks':⁹ a completely new self-organised and non-hierarchical logic has been introduced in such tactical networks.

↳ Another logic, the one that Dragojević calls *operational networks*¹⁰ is the logic of the new form of organisation. This logic and its immanent processes have enabled the definition and systematisation of knowledge or a discursive web, not of knowledge as a possession, but as a precondition for action. In other words, the new Nomad Dance Academy organisational and discursive logic with an emphasis on diversified knowledge, experiences, and aesthetics has created the preconditions for creativity and capitalisation beyond aesthetic, political, and social boundaries.

↳ Dragojević describes these processes as a relevant and transferrable European cultural practice;¹¹ we would also add that they are integrative into a wider context – the context of contemporary arts and culture. As such, processes are not subject to borders, national or EU; their sphere of engagement and production is the entire field of European contemporary culture. They represent the larger discursive web of socio-cultural endeavour.

↳ Positioning the Nomad Dance Academy as a collaborative network and/or tactical network that is based on the principles of the non-hierarchical and self-organisational format enables problem-solving and intervention.

⁹ Dragojević, 'Collaborative Platforms / Tactical Networks', 17.

¹⁰ S. Dragojević, 'On Networks, Platforms, and Participatory Cultural Policies', in *A Bottom Up Approach to Cultural Policy Making*, 37. He emphasises that the activities of these networks are based on the format of intensive collaborative platform. The form of the platform is not determined in advance but it mainly depends on 1) expertise related to its special field of activity; 2) clearly stated interests of the players involved; 3) coordinated methods and activities. This combination of forms and methods of activity substantially enhances the process of defining and systematising the knowledge and the knowhow.

¹¹ *Ibid.* (A relevant European cultural practice consists of 1) clearly defining a basic concept and then implementing methods related to it; 2) the capacity to transfer this codified knowledge not only to a narrow expert audience, but to a wider, possibly general audience; 3) the capacity to engage in a process and long-term activities; 4) the capacities and the openness to redefine all basic premises and methods of activities.)



DIY Nomad Dance Survival Kit

USER MANUAL



Cut these tools out, and use them in need



Breadcrumbs

for navigation and marking the road



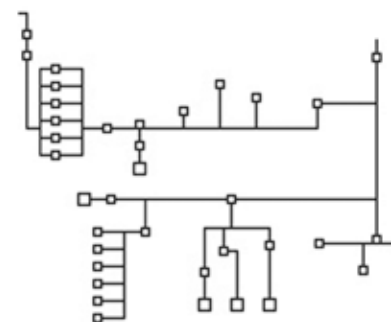
Scissors

for cutting-out cut-out tools

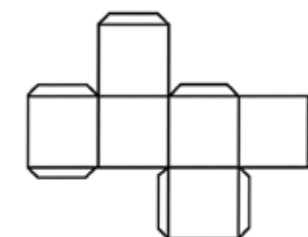


Trampoline

platform for organisations and individuals



DIY rhizome



DIY context

NOMAD INTERVENTIONS – A SET OF ACTIONS

The Nomad Dance Academy initiators' main concern was the problems that all Balkan countries faced after 2000: the lack of education, research, and production programmes, the lack of support, and the low visibility of contemporary dance in national cultural contexts.

1. At that time, in the region of the Balkans there was no institutional¹² or systematic education, and almost no other professional development opportunities for dance artists (dancers, choreographers). The Nomad Dance Academy established an educational programme for young artists that enabled them to develop their ideas, to create, to learn about the production processes of contemporary dance, and the production modes of the performing arts, to discuss, to reflect on art through theory, to read art in its socio-political contexts. The education programme is a four-month extensive course of lectures, workshops, residencies, discussions, and travel around the Balkans – Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Serbia, Croatia, and Slovenia. This framework aims at creating and producing knowledge about international collaboration, the international system of the performing arts, because many of the participants are aware of their local opportunities and systems, but not of those of other Balkan states or Europe. By 2010, the programme had had three generations of participants.

2. Research programmes or residencies are almost non-existent in the Balkans. There are only occasional and one-off programmes and projects. In collaboration with various European institutions, the Nomad Dance Academy has introduced its research programme in order to enable Balkan dance artists to do research. Research programmes are dedicated to artistic as well as cultural-policy research.

3. In most of the Balkan states except Slovenia and arguably Croatia, conditions of production were very low: there was no regular funding for contemporary dance artists and companies, venues were very few or none at all, there were no regular programmes of creativity in contemporary dance for the general public (festivals, new works, co-productions, etc.). Through the Jardin d'Europe, the Nomad Dance Academy has supported the productions of emerging artists and has also produced the performances of the participants/students of its Education Programme. So far, the Programme has produced around 40 performances (*Short Cuts*).

4. Promotion opportunities were on a very low level, too. Most artists had no opportunities to present their works in the regional context. Therefore we have established festivals that communicate to each other and present new works by regional artists. These festivals are the Kondenz in Belgrade, LocoMotion in Skopje, and the Antistatic in Sofia.

↓

↓ More recently, the founders of the Nomad Dance Academy have decided to introduce a set of activities that support reflection: meetings, discussions, workshops, and research sessions to reflect, analyse, and discuss the Nomad Dance Academy's results and achievements, as well as the current state of the contemporary performing arts, how to develop discursive webs, how to produce knowledge and share it in public discourse. We consider this new space in the project a relevant practice for the current state of cultural discourse, because it deliberately diverts from the standard neo-liberal working protocols – it promotes critique, self-critique, non-scheduled ways of collective work (group dynamics that doesn't apply strict timeframes, etc.).

↪ The performing arts field is currently under a strong pressure from the neoliberal market. Ana Vujanović has identified three main areas of this pressure: the *System of festivals*, the *Residency programmes*, and the *Commodification of the work process* (presentations, workshops, works in process, works in progress, lectures/knowledge production, education, etc.).

↪ Vujanović and others have suggested that those three lines of pressure encourage more flexibility and mobility among artists, which also makes them weaker in dealing with local cultural policies (we are always guests: we come, we do something, and then we leave).

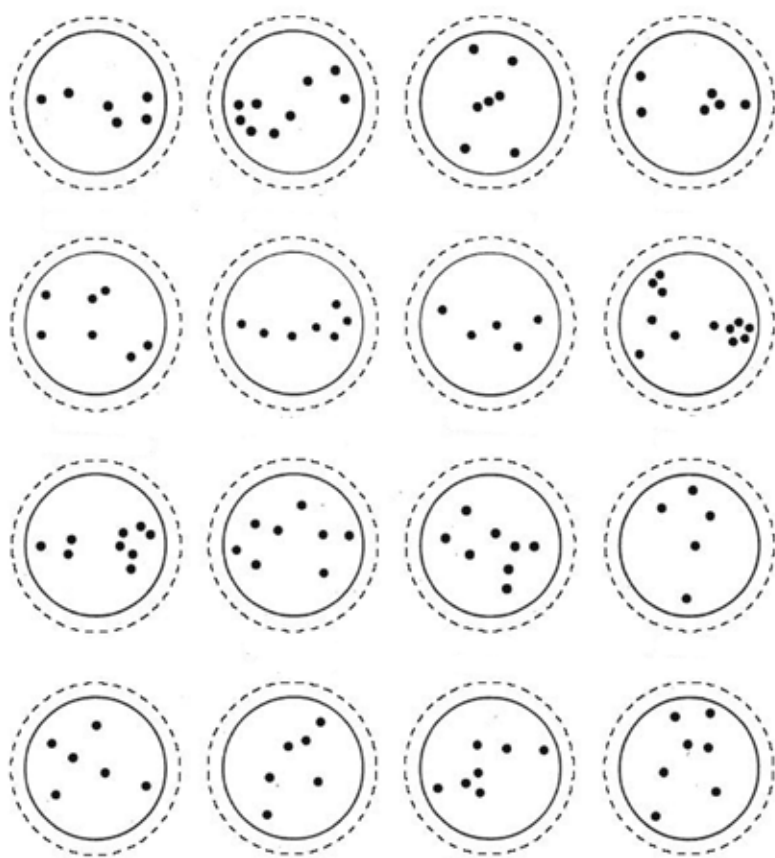
↪ Therefore we must think and intervene in these processes by creating spaces for reflection and problem-solving in order to deal with the cultural policies that affect the performing arts field.

↪ Vujanović proposes that devising strategies of resistance to the neo-liberal market – problematising it, (perhaps) avoiding it, rejecting it, negotiating with it – can be an artwork's political orientation. She adds that 'the working conditions can be thematised and included in the subject or form of a performance. But also they can be present in other practices around art production (art pieces) – discussions, cultural policy initiatives, interviews, lectures, workshops. The important thing is that these interventions into the given working conditions shouldn't stay within a closed cycle of the members of an art collective, as their private thing, but should be made public/visible/present in public discourse. It is possible in various ways, as contemporary art world

¹² In 2010, a group of Macedonian members of the Nomad Dance Academy helped introduce the first university B.A. programme in ballet and contemporary dance in Macedonia.

CONSTELLATIONS

(cut-out maps for further nomading)



doesn't comprise only artworks. Knowledge production around and within art becomes increasingly important'.¹³

↳ We believe that the Nomad Dance Academy reflection space will increase knowledge production and stimulate us to think of new policy measures that will enable the performing arts to develop through bottom-up interventions.



THE NOMAD DANCE ACADEMY – INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

As we suggested above, the Nomad Dance Academy represents the independent sector and strives, with its bottom-up strategies of advocating and lobbying, for *the creation of contemporary dance policies in the countries of the Balkan region*: institutions, funds, awards, education, conditions of labour, international and regional collaboration, and so on.

↳ To achieve that goal, we employ different tactics; one of them is building international partnerships by means of international collaboration, or collaboration on the EU level. Building partnerships with organisations from around Europe (through the *Jardin d'Europe* project),¹⁴ enhances the visibility of the Balkan dance sector on the international scene, developing discursive webs and envoicing ideas within a larger context.

↳ As a bottom-up initiative focused on the genuine need of artists and cultural managers to create a common ground for free creativity, the Nomad Dance Academy has transcended the dominant public policies, which are geared towards recreating nationalist cultural identities. By its very nature, contemporary dance was a fertile soil for creating a common ground for free creativity, because it is a collective creative process, nestled around the Balkans in very small artistic communities, which, as such, need partners from other countries. But in its organic concepts, the Nomad Dance Academy has purposely used these circumstances to show that cooperation is the main factor of development in any sector (civil, public, private) and in any field of art and culture. In the restricted political, financial, and geopolitical conditions (restrictive visa regimes, new political divisions – accession and non-accession countries, etc.) – real exchange and cooperation have meant an investment for the future for all independent art and culture players in the Balkans. In

¹³ Ana Vujanović, 'Politicity of Contemporary Performing Arts – Aspects and (/that can be)Tactics: Subjects, Media, and Procedures of Work' (prepared for the eponymous workshop in Weld, Stockholm in 2009 and a segment of the workshop *Stratagames* by Bad.co, Steirischerherbst, Graz, 2009).

¹⁴ See www.jardindeurope.eu.

such a framework the Nomad Dance Academy has every reason to advocate for more public support for regional cooperation, despite the fact that Balkan national ministries of culture don't have regional cooperation among their priorities.¹⁵

↳ By contrast, Balkan governments typically advertise international collaboration as their top priority, but the reality is different. Seizing an opportunity to enhance its international collaboration through the *Jardin d'Europe* project, the Nomad Dance Academy has accepted a chance to enlarge its activities, to expand its collaboration as a factor of development in the larger EU context. So far, this has only been possible thanks to the *Swiss Cultural Programme*,¹⁶ which has recognised the importance of collaboration and the potential of the Nomad Dance Academy. On the other side, the national cultural agencies of the Balkan states have supported the activities of this large international collaboration framework with very small or insufficient funds.¹⁷

↳ We think that this is a consequence of the predominantly community-driven (as opposed to territory-driven) cultural policies of the Balkan states.¹⁸ It is a public policy, often deliberately, to deny the interests of the minority groups (especially ethnic minorities, but also of other cultural minorities). Naturally, this kind of approach focuses almost exclusively on the public cultural sector and the national cultural institutions that participate in 'the building of national identity' and the preservation of (ethnic) cultural heritage, such as national theatres, national libraries, national museums, etc. Consequently, such policies are concerned only with those arts and cultural activities that aim to preserve cultural heritage and uphold the traditional values, that speak the traditional artistic languages, and do not engage in experimentation and research of new arts and culture phenomena.

¹⁵ As stated by Dragičević Šešić and Suteu in 'Challenges of Cultural Cooperation in Southeast Europe', regional cultural cooperation was not a priority for any of the Balkan governments between 1989 and 2003, except for Bulgaria.

¹⁶ The Swiss Cultural Programme supported the Nomad Dance Academy between 2007 and 2010.

¹⁷ In many of the Balkan countries there are instruments (implicit policies) of supporting international collaboration. Some of them are financial measures – support for the projects that have secured the support of the EU Culture 2007–2013 programme. In 2010, Lokomotiva, representing the Nomad Dance Academy at the Jardin d'Europe (www.jardindeurope.eu), secured 2% of its budget. Given that the EU cultural programme requires 50% co-financing, we may conclude that this policy instrument (supporting EU-funded projects by 2%) does not support international collaboration.

¹⁸ Dragičević Šešić and Dragojević, 'Imagined or Real Divisions', 170.

↳ Slovenian cultural policy expert Vesna Čopič has challenged such policy-making with her claim that the key for a successful inner reconstruction of South-Eastern Europe is 'a strong state and a strong civil society' model. That means supporting the independent sector, or projects such as the Nomad Dance Academy, as a 'Space of Appearance', within which a form of political action takes place that is not just ephemeral and based in speech as action, but instead firmly rests on 'acting without a model' and on making 'its means as visible as possible'.¹⁹

↳ We agree with Rogoff's proposal that 'spaces of appearance' can be applied to spaces other than exhibitions.²⁰ We think that projects such as the Nomad Dance Academy form an arena for such enactments, whereby the possibility of other political spaces arises.

↳ Such political spaces are where potentiality lies; moreover, 'they do not bear the markings of traditional political spaces but rather galvanise the spaces of everyday life and temporarily transform them by throwing flitting mantles of power over them'.²¹ As part of the 'cultural field', these spaces transform and re-cognise values and suggest political or policy measures. In relation to what Nowotny suggests, we could also add that cultural policies can be (come) part of democratic policies.²² He suggests that 'the social productivity and the democratic potentials should be developed in what has historically been constituted as the "cultural field", instead of reducing democracy itself to a "cultural value" or a part of a "cultural heritage"'. Nowotny suggests that otherwise, we run the risk of remaining trapped in what Walter Benjamin qualified, in the 1930s, as *fetishism* inherent in the very concept of culture: 'as an epitome of artefacts which are regarded, if not independently from the production process in which they were created, yet still independently of that in which they last. We should be quite aware of the fact that Benjamin's observation possibly not only applies to pieces of art or historical collections, but also to whole societies as long as they

¹⁹ In 'WE: Collectivities, Mutualities, Participations' Irit Rogoff uses Hannah Arendt's 'space of appearance' to suggest the meaning of exhibition, and further on she states: 'If we can accept the space of the exhibition as the arena for such enactments, in which it is we the audience who produce the meanings through our "being" and our acknowledgement of mutualities and imbrications – then what we have is the possibility of another political space. Instead of an occasion for the translation of various sets of politics into the realm of aesthetics and language, instead of a series of exercises in moral navigations that take place in and through the art exhibition, we have the possibility of an actual political space tout court'.

²⁰ Rogoff explains that meaning is never produced in isolation or through isolating processes but rather through intricate webs of connectedness.

²¹ Rogoff.

²² <http://eipcp.net/policies/dpie/nowotny1/en>.

are conceived merely in terms of “culture”. And we probably wouldn’t want European societies to become this kind of artefact’.²³

↪ The process of becoming an artefact has started, since democracy has yet to recognise the other spaces in which new collaborative acts are performed. This is probably the reason why the Nomad Dance Academy hasn’t directly contributed to what has been understood as national cultural values but instead generates intercultural capital through its self-organised, non-hierarchical structure, in which ‘creativity is a continuity that engenders itself in the others’.²⁴

↓
 ↓ By using the inner processes of sharing knowledge (the discursive web) as an external tool for interventions in its proper cultural and political context, the Nomad Dance Academy has been trying to develop a strategy to create and preserve its own space of action. This space that shifts from private to public and back insists on this duality and thus keeps its autonomy, secured by its individualist political attitude, by mutualities (in Rogoff’s terms), through permanent self-reflection, and by its horizontal (non-hierarchical) organisation structure. Such a platform has the potential to become another political space, one where heterogeneity is possible and welcome, but also one where new modes of production, collaboration and criticality are found. In the (post)transitional turbo-capitalist societies of the Balkans such spaces are becoming fewer and less visible, which raises their value and importance.

■

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²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ James P. Carse, quoted in R. Schechner, *Performance Studies: An Introduction*, 88.

NETWORKING IS
A LOVE AFFAIR
[AN INTERVIEW
WITH NEVENKA
KOPRIVŠEK]

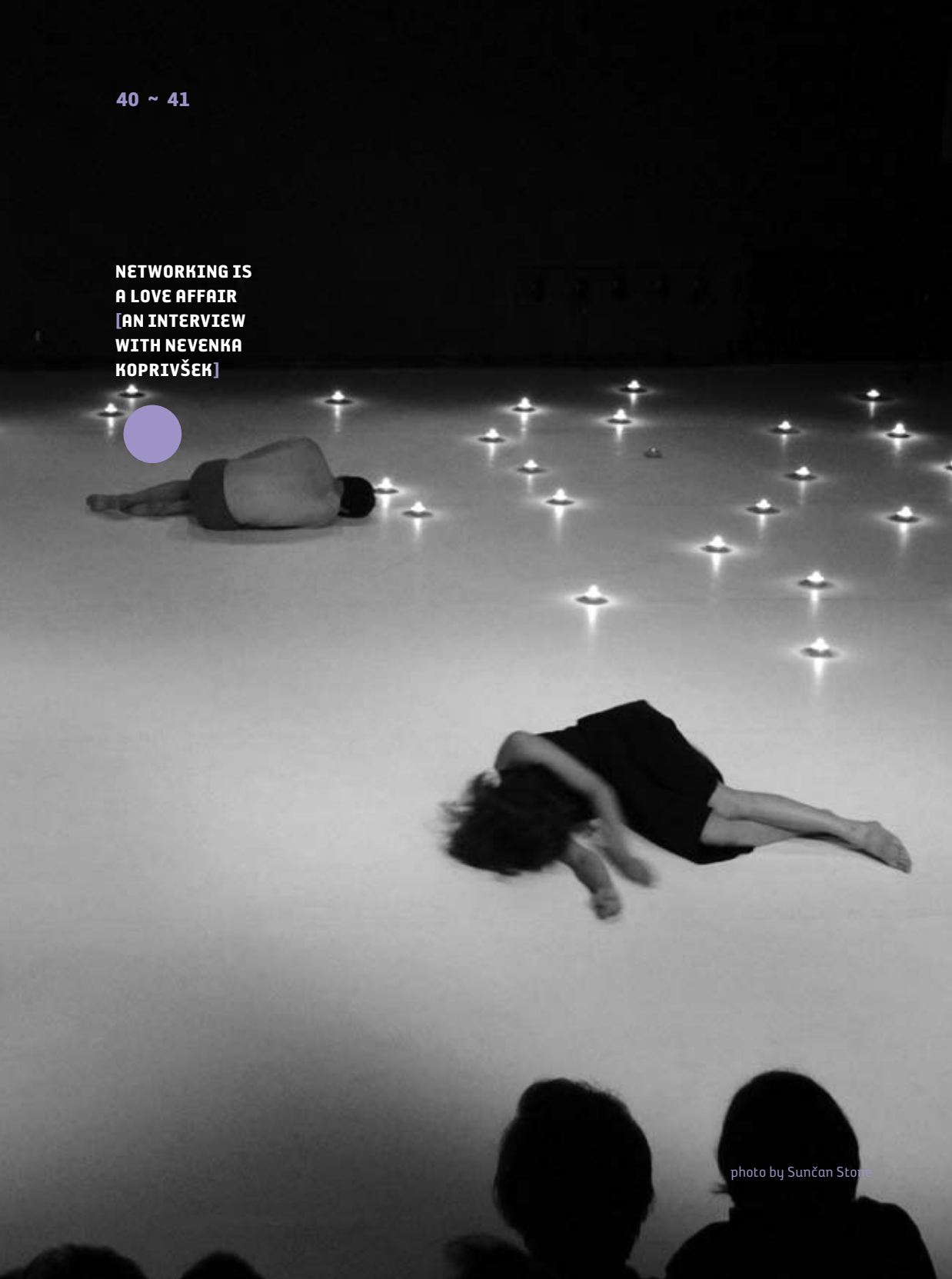


photo by Sunčan Stone



by
Gregor
Kamnikar

● **Gregor Kamnikar:**

The topic, with which I would like to begin the first part of this interview is Biljana Tanurovska's claim that over the first five years of its existence, the NDA has evolved from network to platform. Since you have lots of experience in networking, I want to ask you first: have you been able to detect different kinds of motivations for creating networks in the years you have been involved with networking (almost 30 years now)?; have those motivations changed over time and, if yes, how?



↓ **Nevenka Koprivšek:**

I don't think we can talk of artistic or cultural production without networks anymore, since Europe's cultural landscape has changed a lot over the last three decades, partly because of the development of networking. Especially in dance you can see how it's become totally international. The reality of the European dance scene is a good example of how hard it is to draw clear lines between consortia, networks, platforms, international companies, etc. And in fact, it doesn't really matter where those lines are. I think there is no definition of a network as such. Or, in other words: every individual network has its own definition. And so the motivations for creating a network may be very different.

↳ Why do people get together in networks?

↳ First, we are dealing with collective work in the performing arts. It is very hard to make your own performance in your own kitchen. I mean, you can. But there certainly comes a moment when you want to present it to an audience, and to say the least, this is when it becomes a collective experience. Also, the making of a performance is mainly a collective work. And collectivity already presumes networking, connecting, exchanging. This would be the first type of motivation, an artistic motivation, to create a network: to be able to create with people of different backgrounds, culture, and to present the work created collectively in front of an audience.

↳ Second, there is the kind of motivation with which I went into networking, and that is to get more information. I started connecting with other people because in Slovenia, as well as in the Balkans in general, I couldn't get the education I wanted. As a teenager in Slovenia, I wanted to be an actress, but failed the entrance exam at the academy in

Ljubljana, and so I looked around for more information about education and ended up at Jacques Lecoq's school. Studying there immediately put me in a fantastic network of people and gave me a source of information that continues to be useful even now! Even now I'm in touch with the people I worked with at the school. And as I see it, this kind of environment one can also find at the NDA educational programme. Later, when I became an art manager and artistic director at the Glej Theatre in Ljubljana, which was when Yugoslavia was falling apart, the cultural space shrank very much, so it was a purely physical need to branch out, to meet other people in the Balkan region and Europe as well. I joined the IETM and this was my first big window, platform, an opening to meet similar or different people. It offered a huge source of information, it was a place where you could exchange ideas, start up new projects. In fact, a lot of networks that I belong to now or that I co-initiated, started within the framework of the IETM, such as the Junge Hunde, which supported younger artists who wanted to improve their artistic or other kinds of careers in one way or another; or such as the Danse Basin Méditerranée, which emerged to answer the needs of different producers, art managers, festival directors etc., who said that in Europe artistic work usually circulates just one or two ways, meaning that dancers, actors, performers go to the northern part of Europe to get their education, to get the money to work, to go on residencies, whereas people from the North come to the South to get nourished, to get ideas, to get more emotional. There was some exchange going on between East and West Europe, but nothing inside the Mediterranean. That's why at that time this was a crucial regional collaboration network focused on the dance field, and similarly to the NDA, we discovered at the DBM that education and access to education was one of the region's crucial problems. To work well, people need to train, to get educated. And most of the quality schools are in the northern part of Europe. So this would be the second type of motivation for creating networks: to get more information, knowledge, and education.

↪ Another, third type of motivation is isolation. People can feel very much isolated, alone in their undertakings. Sometimes this happens because nothing similar to what they're doing exists in their environment. This is the case in many Mediterranean and Balkan countries. So it is a great source of comfort and release from the constant

struggle of having to justify your work and look for better working conditions, to join a network of likeminded people with similar experiences. When you see colleagues doing similar jobs and similarly struggling somewhere else, you immediately feel less alone. Yet another type of motivation could be to improve your current situation and conditions. For example, when I worked as a producer at Betontanc, it was very hard to obtain certain conditions of work, a good position on the local scene, but as soon as we started to tour abroad, our position on the local scene was improved and reinforced. It's a typical case in the Balkans.

↪ And last but not least, another kind of motivation would be to have better access to funding.

↪ For sure there are other kinds, too. From the kinds of motivations I did mention, we can already see that what all networks have in common is a lack. And what is lacking is education, information, funding, political structure and will, infrastructure, distribution, dissemination of artistic work, residencies, and education in cultural management. And there is a crucial moment in all this, which is obvious in all networks, especially the Balkan ones: a strong desire to get to know each other. Why? Let me give you an example. The NDA came out of the Balkan Express network that started for reasons similar to those of the DBM, but with a particular focus on the Balkans. As I mentioned before, as Yugoslavia fell apart, the local cultural scenes in the Balkans shrank and the mobility that was present in Yugoslavia was suddenly gone. At the same time, there was a huge nostalgia and also a new post-Balkan-war generation of people full of curiosity and not so biased by the past. There was something that we all had in common: a certain type of humour, a sense of life peculiar to us in the Balkans. We all share this strong desire to know each other. And it was all this that started the Balkan Express at the IETM meeting in Trieste organized by my colleagues and me.

↪ There was a special moment at the Belgrade meeting, I remember, when a critical mass of mostly dance people in the Balkan Express got big enough to become their own group, their own collective.

↪ Here I want to mention another godfather/godmother organization of the NDA: the Theorem.

After the Belgrade Balkan Express meeting, I went to a Riga meeting of the Theorem network, where I'd been a member for a short time. The Theorem were supporting collaboration between East and West Europe. It was mainly about strong producers from the West, the big ones who would support artists from the East. But soon, producers from the East grew strong enough to support artists in their own right, and so there was an overlapping of interests in the network. Now even though producers from the East had now become stronger, we were still not able to produce works big enough for the stages of these big festivals. So the network slowly fell apart. But before it did, the Theorem got some little funding and I managed to convince my colleagues there to use that funding to support the early stages of the NDA. I actually remember that we had about €6,000 for the first few meetings of the NDA, so people could get together, define their projects and start writing applications to get additional funding. At that time, for example, it was completely impossible to find money in Serbia to support travel to a meeting in Ljubljana. Also, Bunker was present at the first few meetings of the NDA, as a representative of the Balkan Express.

GK:

A detail: you said there was a critical mass of people at the Belgrade Balkan Express meeting for a new network to emerge. Did you realise that right there on the spot? How did this realisation come about?

↓

↓ NK:

When a critical mass of people interested in the same thing is big enough and they want, and not just want, but really need to collaborate, it's tangible. For sure, it has to be a big need, since networking is a terrible job. We all know that networking means extra time, no weekends, late nights, working for free. It is a human investment, which pays off only several years later. And at that time in Belgrade the desire and need were obvious, tangible, and easy to feel and see. So there was no problem recognising it. And it proved to be a really big need.

↪ Later on, when a substantial amount of money, that is, a kind of virtual power, enters the network, it may face an entirely new set of dangers.

GK:

The NDA got a substantial amount of money quite early on. As a freshman in the NDA, I can say that the NDA detected the dangers of money and power-play you mention and dealt with them quite well. I mean, it is still a functional and vibrant collective of people who want to continue to work together. At the DMB (decision-making body of the NDA) meeting in Slovenia this year, I remarked to Goran Bogdanovski after one session that I marvelled at how we came to a conclusion after such a passionate debate, which did not make reaching a conclusion seem likely. Goran responded that this session was a faint echo of the storms and thunders of passion at the NDA's early sessions. Then I wondered how I'd survive those meetings, because following this 'faint echo' I felt emotionally exhausted and did not want to see anyone from the group for some hours (laughs).

↓

↓ NK:

You need that, you need to feel that you are getting something more out of the whole adventure than just a project, a certain result. You need to go beyond that. Because of this passionate attitude, it is hard to keep up, to hold it all together. People's timings are different. That's why you need someone to lead the whole thing a little bit. I mean, we always say there is no hierarchy in the network, that we work on the horizontal level alone. But you also need someone to pull things together.

GK:

At least a core group of people who take care of where things are headed.

↓

↓ NK:

At least two or three people you can always contact and check what is going on with the network. There isn't much you can do alone. And you need some enthusiasts you can call and rely on from time to time, saying: hey, can you take care of this project for the time being and so on. These enthusiasts might be there with you for awhile and then maybe disappear entirely. It is interesting to see how this collective work is also individual in this way. And it is hard to get the right balance between the collective and the individual.

Maybe all we've been saying is a bit of a generalization of the topic; still, I believe it's a set of useful tools for analysing the state of the NDA.

↪ For me, the NDA is more of a consortium than a network. For example, the Balkan Express is a network, a frame with no concrete artistic projects. It is meant more to create conditions so that projects like the NDA may happen. And the Balkan Network was always proud of this child called the NDA. It is a rare concrete result of the Balkan Express network. It's one thing to talk, meet, and exchange ideas, and completely another to be together onstage and try things out, improvise, perform, educate. Those talks, meetings, exchanges then become real, tangible. And then all those activities – talking, meeting, exchanging, experimenting, performing, educating – get a meaning.

GK:

I like the idea of a lack as a source of the motivation to create networks and I'd like to ask you if those lacks change over time in the field of networking, and if yes, how they influence improvement in the field of art and culture?

↓

↓ NK:

In all areas the lacks are still huge. And that is because of a huge lack of (good) cultural policy-making in the Balkans and Eastern Europe. We share a lack of education, infrastructure, funding... Maybe here and there a certain aspect of the situation in the arts is somewhat better. Let's look at Slovenia, for example. We lack a dance festival. But we have the Gibanica dance platform and a number of venues to present dance works. We have got the Ministry of Culture to treat contemporary dance as a priority at its department of the arts. There is a quality high-school contemporary dance programme that's already been going on for ten years as part of the state school curriculum. And there is a huge lack of rehearsal space. So we can say that things have improved in general. Around 1990, when I started as a freelance artist, it was impossible for me to survive. But now there are quite a few people who earn their living with freelance jobs. It is not an insignificant number of people. Of course there are new problems they have to face, but they do manage to earn their living doing what they like.

GK:

This reminds me of what my colleagues in Croatia, Serbia, Bulgaria tell me all the time: that working in Slovenia as an artist is really great – of course, in comparison to the situation of freelance artists in those countries. I understand that from their point of view it is a really good situation, but from the perspective of those of us who live here, the situation is far from ideal or optimal. As you said, though, there have been improvements, but the lacks are still so huge that they make the improvements seem negligible.

↓

↓ NK:

I often say that when we compare our situation to that of France or Belgium, of course we feel completely frustrated. We have many great dancers and choreographers who do interesting work, but we lack the facilities to do more profound work, i.e. to sustain a continuity good work. This is because we haven't developed good postproduction. But if we compare the situation in Slovenia to that of any other SEE country and a lot of Eastern European countries, our situation does seem idyllic. This means there is a huge imbalance in the region. And this is a great difficulty for us.

↪ The NDA has found a good formula to deal with this imbalance: small productions, education, mobility. I think the formula is excellent and unique. What is brilliant about it is that it reduces our dependency on schools such as P.A.R.T.S. or S.E.A.D. There is nothing wrong or bad about P.A.R.T.S. or S.E.A.D *per se*. But there is a lot of knowledge in the region, a lot of experience, and a different character of things. Also, people from this region can better detect the region's needs in the arts. On top of it, the Balkans has huge resources for inspiration, beautiful surroundings, far away from big cities. That's why I think the Balkans has a great potential in developing residency networks, since it does not have enough money to support production as much as the West does, but enough of it to build such residencies as described above.

GK:

You've addressed issues that I think the NDA is well-equipped to detect and deal with for the time being. One of the NDA's key concepts and principles is the idea of keeping that precarious balance on all levels of organisation and realisation. So the NDA also addresses the above-

mentioned imbalance between different parts of the region. In order to detect possible lacks in the functioning of the NDA that might endanger its existence, I suggest that we address the end of a network. All things that have a beginning must also come to an end. Have you ever witnessed the ending, conclusion, dissolution of a network? What were the causes? You've already mentioned the conclusion of the Theorem network and the reasons for it. What about other networks and their reasons?

↓

↓ NK:

The Theorem and Junge Hunde don't exist anymore, but we still get together at different occasions and in other projects. Some networks survive because there is obviously still a need that they address well, like the IETM, and others just die. I don't think it's necessarily a shame when a project, or a network, ends. Maybe the need that the network was meant to fulfil is still there, but the people running it can no longer provide answers for it. As for the Junge Hunde, which was a kind of network of friends and we still are very good friends, I still turn for advice or just to say hello to those guys. These people's conditions of work changed in such a way that we could no longer provide conditions for young artists to work on an equal footing anymore, which was the aim of the network in the first place. At the same time, other platforms have emerged for young artists that maybe provide them with better answers and so on. When the Junge Hunde started, young artists still didn't get a lot of opportunities to disseminate their works. Nowadays, they have more, even a plenty of opportunities. Today maybe it is more of a problem to disseminate the work of big companies or bigger productions. Here I would like to mention a kind of a middle generation, who are not young and hot anymore, who are not yet stars but are well into their prime and have no real platforms to meet on, exchange, disseminate their work. Nowadays it is a complex and big issue, I think. Somebody should address this problem seriously.

↪ Money can also spoil things big time. The DBM has yet to recover from this. Or, conversely, one reason why the Junge Hunde fell apart was that they did not get the European money.

↪ Problems related to hierarchies may also bring networks to an end.

↪ Again, the question is, as always: where is the point of equilibrium between flow

and organisation? Everybody has the need to feel included, important, participatory in a network. And some also need to make decisions, to pull things forward, some to do the work. So it has to be the right combination of people who have some spare time to dedicate to the functioning of the network.

↪ What I think is a problem with the NDA is that it comprises mostly artists. This can be a great advantage. But I think it is hard for artists to dedicate their energy to obtain the support for other artists. So, up to now the NDA has been a fantastic example of solidarity, but that level of solidarity is not easy to sustain. If the NDA consisted of producers only, we would be talking of a totally different picture. But since we know that in this region most producers are artists anyway, we get an even more complex picture. How does one find the motivation to do artistic work, to make co-productions, one or two per year? Or, to put it modestly, education is still our main goal and we will dedicate to it as much time every year as it takes and that's it.

↪ What I found to be a problem with the educational programme was the quality of the artistic work it produced. The first generation was very strong artistically, later generations not so much. But of course, this also depends on the type of people admitted into the programme and so on. And since the programme was successful, everyone became more demanding and started to expect more of such successes.

GK:

As far as I know, they were working on diversifying the group of people involved in the educational programme exactly because the first year was such a success. And when one's efforts are recognised, one is motivated to try more, but in different ways.

↓

↓ NK:

Yes, there were more people from non-dance fields involved. Maybe this also helped reduce the artistic quality or interest of the work. I think the programme's power was that it was so very dance-oriented in the first year. Why not? I agree that it is interesting, enriching, and fruitful to include in such a programme people whose backgrounds and interests are not necessarily in dance. I understood the programme to be an education in the basic performing skills in the field of dance. My advice to the

NDA educational programme would be to stress the development and education of dance performing and physical skills. Maybe it's gone too far in including people of other profiles, because now it faces the danger of becoming random. It's losing its profile that was so clear in the first year. But maybe I am wrong.

↳ To get back to the causes of networks coming to an end. Networks often fall apart because the active people in them get burnt out by the work they do. It is a pity that the government and other funding bodies cannot tell when a project is at its peak, to support it to develop even further. This is because non-institutional cultural management is far more advanced than the institutional. In general, cultural operators in non-institutional organizations are much more creative in finding strategies and tactics to realize their goals than the ones in institutions.

↳ In the NDA's case, as I mentioned before, the fact still is that it is mostly made of artists, who would prefer to dedicate all their energy to their artistic work, instead of running the NDA. And this is why the burning-out effect is so dangerous. Paradoxically, it is as though you invested your energy in creating a company, but then you lacked the venue/space to make it work. And if you spend your energy in creating a venue, you find yourself without a programme or company. And doing all this under insecure circumstances just adds to the stress and the burn-out effect. And I am not talking now about Slovenia or Croatia. I couldn't imagine doing such work in Sarajevo, for example. You need a lot of courage, support, and inner strength.

↳ And because of such cases it is also hard to quit the network, because in this case your network gives you hope. And when you move away from the roaring lion's point: me, me, me, I created this, I initiated that..., the question arises: what is the relation between this project and me. There is a moment when a well-established project starts to lead you and you are not leading the project anymore. And to let it lead you is a question of your ego.

↳ That is yet another important balance to take care of in networking: the egos. People should not feel victimized, they shouldn't feel as though they were sacrificing themselves for a common good whilst, on the other hand, feeling responsible to invest in the network. Here I would advice to delegate. Which again is not simple. There are always fresh people, people that would like to take over... If the original people were to withdraw

from the NDA, it would be interesting to enable the younger generation to take the lead and take the project further.

↳ Also, another way to get better financial support as well as fresh ideas is to connect to people outside of the Balkans. I think there are people out there who are interested in the idea of the NDA and its results and would be ready to collaborate and bring in new money as well. In general, it is good to open up, once you've established a good platform. And I think the NDA now is established well enough to be able to make projects with people outside of the Balkans. I think the NDA knows a lot of people, venues, situations, so it has a huge knowledge base on the Balkan region.

GK:

Let's do it. (Laughs.) Then again, there is the danger of becoming too big.

↓

↓ NK:

Bigger is not necessarily better, yes. Or, to put it better, it should be just big enough to be able to do its projects in less stressful conditions. The size also depends on the peoples' quickness. But being slow is not a Balkan thing. I've been in many networks where the Germans or the British were the slow ones and the Balkan people turned out to be the most efficient.

GK:

It is crucial to understand that the amount and effect of knowledge in the Balkans is measured by the standards and understanding of the West. Nothing wrong with the West here, but I would like to stress that one needs to listen openly to understand that there is another type of knowledge here and that its transmission patterns are not like those found in the West. And the West sometimes doesn't even value it as knowledge. The way it is done in the Balkans is not as appreciated as the Western approach is just because of historical prejudice.

↓

↓ NK:

Yes, I definitely think that the Balkans is a very interesting area in the fields of art and culture, it has a fantastic potential, a lot of interesting and reliable people, and it's just that the conditions are harder here. Also, we move more quickly than others do.

GK:

And with passion, you can hit the nail on the head or miss miserably.

↓

↓ NK:

And that brings me to something you mentioned before: that networking is about human energy. It is about humans getting together. Networks are not institutions. There is a human being behind every project. Hence this need to get together, to communicate, to do things together, especially in the performing arts. The network's human quality gives it time, length, and dimensions. In fact, this is the first and the last thing.

GK:

And keeping it.

↓

↓ NK:

Yes. Why the hell spend a sunny Sunday morning in a boring black box somewhere random with people you might not like to spend a Sunday morning with?

GK:

And without getting paid well for it.

↓

↓ NK:

You would be much better off with your beloved or sleeping in your bed, since you are tired from a whole week of managing your energy according to a hellish schedule. Networking requires a lot of energy and if you do not get along with the people you are working with in your network, it is definitely not worth it. You need to feel a certain level of sympathy for your co-workers. In a way, networking is a love affair.

■



photo by Urška Boljkovac

A COLLECTIVE TEXT
ON THE NOMAD
DANCE ACADEMY

photo by Urška Boljkovac

* This text is based on the process of collective writing and with its structure refers to the content model (NDA) that is the subject of this text.



by
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● For me, the NOMAD Dance Academy is above all a concept, which was developed as a model of collaboration; it can also be seen as a platform, or even an organisation or institution. We (about a dozen of us) created this model a few years ago, because we had to address the needs of the regional contemporary dance scene. Within the model we created, we developed new methodologies, procedures, and principles of work and collaboration. We built a system based on non-hierarchical structures; it is a self-organised generative system that we conceptualised as a new proposition for a more efficient functioning of the scene.

↳ I believe that what we have developed is a format of organisation that can work on newly developed principles rather than the ones we inherited from the past, or those that neoliberal global capitalism posits as successful. We have developed a project, an organism that questions authorship as well; the Nomad Dance Academy is a project based on collective authorship. What kind of effects have all these processes and practices had on us over the past three or four years?

↳ The Nomad Dance Academy is a self-innovative rhizomatic process that generates room for other initiatives and processes within itself. It is a networking tool, a process of education and creativity, an organisational model.

The Nomad Dance Academy is tailored to its participants' needs and to those stemming from their respective environments. It is both a process and a product. As a very rare instance of a bottom-up initiative that has survived the drying up of its original funding, this project is asking questions on authorship, ownership, close relations between the binaries of the personal and the group, the private and working, the artistic and the administrative, the public and the intimate, etc., observing them not as oppositions but as complementary forces.

↳ The project itself is also fighting the neo-liberal capitalist logic of growing entities that become larger and eat smaller ones. Instead, it works by creating possibilities and working for many rather than for One. What is also significant for the NDA is that it is from and for the people; its nature is closely related to those of the people who started it, and the development of the project has been conditioned by their own development and ability to learn and change.

↳ There are many lessons to be learned for all of us involved: on the necessity of having a process, on establishing stable foundations, on building long-term but flexible and adaptable visions, on achieving a balance among all the needs of the project. The project has generated its own set of rules and principles that can always be referred to and serve as an example in other situations. Can the NDA function as a model of cooperation in the business sector, as well? In educational institutions? In politics?

↪ As we close in on the idea of multiplicity, something happens to identity. Identity as such disintegrates and becomes a mere element of the system, thus losing its key role in that system, in fact losing its status as that which provides a measure to the system. Authorship is closely linked to identity. When we claim that we function as a multiplicity, we tend to avoid the fact that there is no identity anymore. We are in a funny/fake/abysmal state, in between the classical construction of identity (I, we, etc.) and identity becoming a mere element of a dynamic system. This is where the NDA stands. In order to function, it needs to be connected to systems that are based on name identity, interpolated with a tax number and other such population identifiers under the pretext of avoiding confusion in cases where two or more people might share the same name. Yet, the NDA promotes and actualises systems that are not based on name-identity. If the NDA communicated with established economics and politics in terms of non-name-identity, it would end after its first application.

↪ The NDA's in-between state regarding identity provides an opportunity to re-evaluate authorship with fresh and refreshing views. It soon becomes obvious that in this in-between state, authorship is no longer tightly connected to identity. It is more connected to creativity. A simple way to define authorship would be to liken it to re-contextualisation: you take something out of its context and put it into another one, either a pre-existing or a newly created one. As a French film-noir director once said: 'It is not important where you take it from, it is important where you place it'. In this way, we may observe the act much more than those who are performing it. It is the act that defines the one who performs it, not the other way around, which means that suddenly it is authorship that defines identity. We do not know who we are until we take action; we re-contextualise. And it is not the new context that defines us; it is the way we re-contextualise that defines us. This is where the NDA is headed. As it advances towards this goal, the structure, the system changes. If it didn't change, the NDA would be stuck at its current level and the abyss that is still a great source of ideas for the NDA would become a trap.

↪ As authorship comes from the activity of re-contextualising (re-territorialising), it no longer makes sense to talk of collective authorship. If the NDA still defined authorship in such a way, it would be reaffirming the classical constructions of the author and identity. Multiplicity equalises the status of the I, the we, the collective, with 'house', 'fact', 'love'... Paradoxically, multiplicity is one. And though we still recognize the I, the we, the house, and the collective in this multiplicity, none of them plays a special role in it. Other streams, which were covered by the I, the we, the collective, and

the house come forth... The NDA has yet to chart this great area. And that only makes the journey even better.

↪ The impact of experiencing multiplicity in life is much too strong for a clerk to be able to respond to it in an open-minded and curious way. The clerk is supported by the established system and this system does not like multiplicity messing with the clerk. So, the clerk needs to decide on his/her own, whether to let multiplicity into the system and becomes responsible to the system for letting multiplicity penetrate its structure (and thus, for example, put his/her position in the system into question) or simply transfer the responsibility for deciding about a project to the system, which does not want multiplicity anyway, and so deny support to that project in the name of the system.

↪ The 'Clerk' is a place-holder within the state apparatus. It is not a person but a way to codify the individual for the state apparatus to function. The codification diminishes the key elements of individuality. It takes a very creative (and intelligent) individual to be able to play and outrun codification. When one is aware of her/his creative force and intelligence, s/he usually stops working as a 'clerk'. People who persist as clerks lack the ability or will to play around with their oedipalisation (i.e., the castration of some of the key elements of their individuality). Because of this, it's likely that projects like the NDA will be barred from financial support, or quickly dismissed as a role-model for functioning.

↪ Entering (might there be a better verb: plunging into, surrendering to, realising?) multiplicities is always naive. Usually, one is neither locally nor totally aware what s/he's getting her/himself into. In order to do research, to produce, create, educate, etc. within multiplicity, one needs to let go of notions such as the subject/object, the I, the id, etc. and use certain tools that have already been clearly articulated and proven to work within multiplicity (see Deleuze, Guattari, Foucault, Delanda, McLuhan). As we mentioned above, the NDA has this amazingly dynamic and exquisite position (as of now) to be able to tap into all three realms: the old, the new, and the in-between. In this highly plasmatic ('plasma' comes from plasein – 'to come into shape') state of organisation, a lot can happen quickly and suddenly, just as it can also go bad as far as extinguishing the fire of the NDA furnace.

↪ Yes, where is the heart? Where is the furnace? In light of everything written above, I have this urge to ask: is this really the question? Taking the heart as an organ (in non-physical environments as well), I would say that we are talking about a body without organs; therefore, in a body without organs there is no such thing as the 'heart'. At the same time, one could say that the heart is

everywhere, in every micro-pore of the NDA. It is like a virus, like oxygen in the body, the body of each and everyone. This brings us to the idea of hologram dramaturgy, discrete creativity, and family art. But following it up would entail writing a completely different article. (If you have the energy to read Slovene, see some of the latest entries at u3p.ops.si.)

↳ Maybe we could go in another direction and ask: what is the common denominator in a highly plasmatic organisation such as the NDA?, instead of asking where the heart is. Is the common denominator contemporary dance, or that in-between state, is it a creation, or contemporary dance as creation, or...? Or is it its changeable position, a plasmatic one (as positive and negative) as strength? Is it also somewhere in its cohesive and heterogenic position, which re-produces mechanisms of communicating with the outside world? The outside world is what I'm here referring to as the 'clerk'. Yet, I don't see the clerk as a codified entity. I accept that every apparatus has a codified position of the 'clerk' in its system, but I believe that this position is not always the same, and that different elements of the apparatus also determine the role of the clerk. I believe that there are individual clerks who indeed can recognise creativity when they see it (those to whom we are referring in the context of the NDA) and I believe that they must be a link in that direction. I think that without un-codified roles within apparatuses, the NDA wouldn't exist as such. Unfortunately, clerks who are able to recognise and intervene are rare. As long as we can believe and keep finding these creative clerks within the apparatus, the NDA will have financial sustainability, and not only that. If, however, we see them as mere codified entities, then maybe we are headed towards creating an isolated and self-sufficient body that will re-produce itself without having links or channels through which other realities could interfere or speak.

↳ Another possible common denominator is our uncompromising urge to intervene in the areas of production, creativity, and education. Production, creativity, and education are the NDA's zones of interest, tools, and building materials. In its multidimensionality, the NDA does not go for eclectic interdisciplinary strategies *per se*. It believes in, and creates, possibilities for intra-disciplinarity and for methods that traverse the borders of different fields of operation. Being the painter, the frame, the painting, and the model all at once, the NDA acts as a tool of intervention right from the very place where it is being realised.

↳ I tend to see the NDA more as a situation than a structure. Therefore, the NDA's strength lies more in dynamic politics than in fixed policies. This is not to imply that the NDA does not have a structure, but that its persistence, sustainability, and strength tend to be in a state of constant 'becoming' (that is, that they always remain unfinished).

↳ The NDA has no central location or home; its moving nomadic structure is more of a temporary camp – a non-place of sorts. In non-places (that is, in liminal positions), identities do not take place, but, rather, differences that move on. By not having a real home, a set of singularities that's called the NDA repeatedly finds itself in the camp of *Das Unheimliche* (the Freudian uncanny – the strange and the horrifying that occurs at home).

↳ At the NDA, we have these intense meetings of the DMB (the Decision-Making Body), in which the Lacanian Real (the abyss) appears in the form of *das Unheimliche* almost every time, when some very basic questions about the NDA are being discussed. This is possible because the NDA does not operate as a structure, but from an (un)conscious temporary position of a situation (that tends to be articulated). Therefore, every NDA structure is always open to questioning, to change and improvement, instead of being a motionless regulative authority that seeks to strangle whatever cannot be inscribed within the realm of its identity politics I suppose that what enables it to be so open is its situational position, because from the viewpoint of a situation, its void may still happen. I see this void open up at almost every DMB meeting I attend; it gets terribly intense and traumatic. It's always some sort of an Event. One has to like it. A situation (according to Badiou) is a dynamics, a set of elements that belong, more than a set of included ones that form a structure.

↳ An NDA structure is more of an ironic game (with a constitution, set of rules, etc.), whereas an NDA situation is always a much more serious set of relations that happen and make us aware of the NDA's constant instability. I find that terribly, sometimes even horribly exciting.

↳ I suggest that we try to move on to discussing different aesthetics/politics/dynamics etc. of contemporary dance. It's the step that we are all afraid to take.



DANCERS IN
ALL DIRECTIONS*
ON SELF-EXHAUSTING
PRACTICES OF
CONTEMPORARY
DANCE FESTIVALS
IN THE BALKAN
REGION



photo by Nenad Milošević

* The title is half-borrowed. *Players in All Directions (Igrač u svim pravcima)* is the title of a book by Vujica Rešin Tucić.



by
Dragana
Alfirević

'...We are still an excess, a crack in the continuity of not having the space where contemporary dance is operating and where the audience can continually follow the transformations of dance...'

(Biljana Tanurovska Kjulavkovski, from the programme notes to the *LocoMotion* festival, Skopje)

- The practice of contemporary dance in the Balkan¹ region is (still) in its fragile, developmental phase, and requires immediate engagement and collaboration of all the structures involved. It is still being realised through the independent, NGO sector, and occasional collaborations with state institutions are rather incidents than a rule. After almost two decades of isolation and misinformation, actual procedures of production, collaboration, and promotion have to be reinvented, all involved need injections of knowledge, clarity, and readiness to make changes. Rearrangements in thinking in art and culture move unhurriedly, hand in hand with slow political changes, and are ever more dependent on them. All the developing scenes and their most active members share the same lacks and difficulties, with slight differences, moving slowly in vicious circles of detecting the needs, fostering the recognised potentials and, eventually, acknowledging the obstacles, and admitting defeat before they remember their own needs again.
- ↳ The Nomad Dance Academy attempts to be immediately interventional on many different levels: from the education of young authors and dancers and self-education, to continuous collaboration with decision makers, and communication with the audience. But most of all, the Nomad Dance Academy (NDA) is a developmental and self-refreshing model of collaboration of individuals and organisations. The project's greatest curiosity is its readiness to change the actual situation in the field, and in the long-term perspective its most significant achievements are the methods of organization and decision-making it has created. Resisting the need of the capitalist logic of cost-effects, the project has introduced new models of non-hierarchical, non-centralised organisation of structure and communication.
- ↳ One of the main interests of the NDA during 2006-07 was to create a series of promotional strategies, as the basis for understanding of dance. Out of these activities, five contemporary

¹ At the NDA, we have decided to work with the terms 'the Balkans' and 'balkanisation' and through our work reconstruct their meanings, instead of subliming ourselves to the vocabulary of daily politics and using ever-changing designations such as 'South-East Europe', 'the Western Balkans', etc. The Balkans contains more than its geopolitical meanings and what is most interesting for us are its people's common historical and cultural backgrounds, which strongly affect the work in contemporary cultural practices.

dance festivals have been initiated almost at the same time. Some of them are the first attempts to promote contemporary dance in their countries. These are: Antistatic (Sofia), Kondenz (Belgrade), Locomotion (Skopje), Pleskavica (Ljubljana), and Zvrk (Sarajevo).

↳ From the beginning our common aim as organisers of these festivals, was to promote contemporary dance and introduce it to the widest possible audiences, although over time we recognised the need to think about the possible positions and functions of a festival at this moment in history. Each of them has autonomous programming, there is no uniform line of aesthetic thought promoted by these festivals, and they develop in different directions according to the specificities of the local contexts and audiences.

↳ There is a question of if and in which way the independent initiatives, projects, and collaborations are able to change the system they are a part of. Maybe an even more interesting question is in which way should the independent initiatives change themselves together with changing the system, of which they are a part? And for how long will we keep the privilege of working on structural changes 'from the outside', waving the flag of changing the societies while staying immune to the changes ourselves?

↳ The rhetoric of the international and national funding bodies, and the models of collaboration deriving from this rhetoric, narrow the space for real investment and questioning, and need urgently to be rethought. Guided by the application vocabulary, we are heavily relying on the outdated and worn-out notions of 'mobility', 'visibility', 'sustainability', 'networking', 'exchange', as the framework for our actual activities. Without questioning these terms and their real meanings in the realities of the regional contexts, we lack the understanding of what the needs are and we fail to give systematic feedback to our own work.

↳ In the contemporary art scenes of the Balkans 'mobility' and 'exchange' are highly valued features of every project, promising that the process of learning or clash and emancipation will happen on both sides of the exchange. Practically, the exchange looks like this: the greater the number of international guests in an international event, the better chances the event will be well funded. An artist/theoretician/producer comes to a festival/conference/meeting, stays the minimum time necessary to execute the plan she came for (a one-sided performing or giving a lecture usually) and leaves exhausted, because apart from working very efficiently, (s)he tries also to meet the place and the people during her free time there. (S)he comes back home, tired, or travels consecutively to some other places and then returns home, even more tired. (S)he is unable to really have any influence in the context (s)he travelled to, as the limited time and often limited procedures

of the work do not allow that. At the same time (s)he did not really get to influence the visited place, and (s)he cannot have any significant influence on her own context, because (s)he is spending most of her time 'exchanging'. How then do we preserve the continuity when all the efforts and possible effects are fragmented into infinity? If we add to this the geopolitical foci of certain funders, the heterogeneity of possible interests can soon close us up in a dead-end without the possibility to ask ourselves about the real effect and the meaning of what we are doing.

↳ The Antistatic festival, since 2008 held in Sofia every April, presents a series of borderline projects and cutting-edge authors of the younger generation, with an obvious interest in multimedia and posing questions on the very aesthetics and politics of dance. According to its organisers, the 'Antistatic is a statement against inertia'. Deliberately remaining outside of mainstream culture and creating a specific niche for presenting 'radical' and genuinely new propositions, gives Antistatic a very specific place on Bulgaria's cultural map

↳ The common ambition of all the NDA-initiated festivals in their beginning was the inclusion of the wider audience, but also moving beyond the expectations of that wider audience, believing that an informed, involved, and critical audience is the [driving?] force of each scene together with its active members.

↳ Positioning the actual festivals onto the regional map of similar events is one of the most important questions. (How) do we identify our work with the similar existing events on this map? Do we follow the inherited logic of representation, and how do we understand the implications of this self-positioning? Do we accept the game that the size of our audience is a measure of our 'success' or are we more interested in creating a common space? What is our ambition, as organisers of the festivals, in relation to the audiences? Do we adopt the phrase 'audience development', neglecting the audience's heterogeneity? Do we really believe that the audience is not developed enough? What kind of collaborative/participatory spaces can we create for the audience?

↳ LocoMotion, a contemporary dance festival based in Skopje, organised by Lokomotiva, offers a selection of workshops, discussions, and performances. This year, the festival's subtitle is 'Space for a Dialogue', and even in the introductory text the selectors speak from the position of those who are posing the dangerous questions about the nature and the sense of their own work. They put themselves on the side of posing questions, which is a significant shift from the previous paradigm, where the festival is presented as the one who knows, and the audience as those who don't know and who should learn from the festival.

- ↳ Traditionally, both LocoMotion and Antistatic secure the place for regional and young local authors, giving them space to present their current works and meet with the audience.
- ↳ The festivals initiated through the NDA consciously engage in creating non-prestigious, no-star and anti-exclusivity frameworks, by insisting on critical positions of artists and works and, in this way, involving the audience, instead of offering a 'success package' to ourselves and to the audiences. This, in a sense radical, position, does not communicate with large numbers of audience, thus what we do can never become massively popular in the ways bigger institutional festivals are popular. But, we continue to follow their models (representational, parade of finished works, conceptual and organisational models, etc.) and without big audiences and sponsors are doomed to do it on a much smaller scale.
- ↳ The founder of one of the biggest festivals of contemporary dance in the world said: 'A festival is like an artwork, and it has to do with ego, with power, with the artistic identity of its selector, and it probably should have all the characteristics of a performance'. I want to challenge this thought by asking: what kind of festival? What kind of power? What kind of performance?
- ↳ Kondenz, a festival of contemporary dance based in Belgrade, hosts works which question the very nature of dance, stretching the possible boundaries of dance and its meanings that are never fixed, asking constantly: 'Could this be dance, too?'. Every year, the Kondenz is held at a different time and venue in Belgrade and its audience numbers about 300 people, mostly students and young cultural workers from Belgrade, and in some way we are 'preaching to the converted'. As I am writing this, we are preparing the third edition of the Kondenz festival. Each year its budget gets drastically smaller, while media and audience attention stay the same each year.
- ↳ The state share in the budgets of Kondenz and LocoMotion is approximately EUR 3.000 for each festival, with the tendency of getting even smaller every year. We have to rethink if this is the game we want to play, what our real contribution can be and how we can contextualise our work.
- ↳ After three years, we see our previous goals achieved; all our questions exhausted themselves as the political, social, and economical environments changed. What kind of contemporary dance festival can be(come) relevant at a time of terrorism and Youtube?²

² This text was inspired by discussions with my colleagues, Biljana Tanurovska and Dejan Srhoj, and by the texts on festivals from <http://www.antijargon.tkh-generator.net/>.

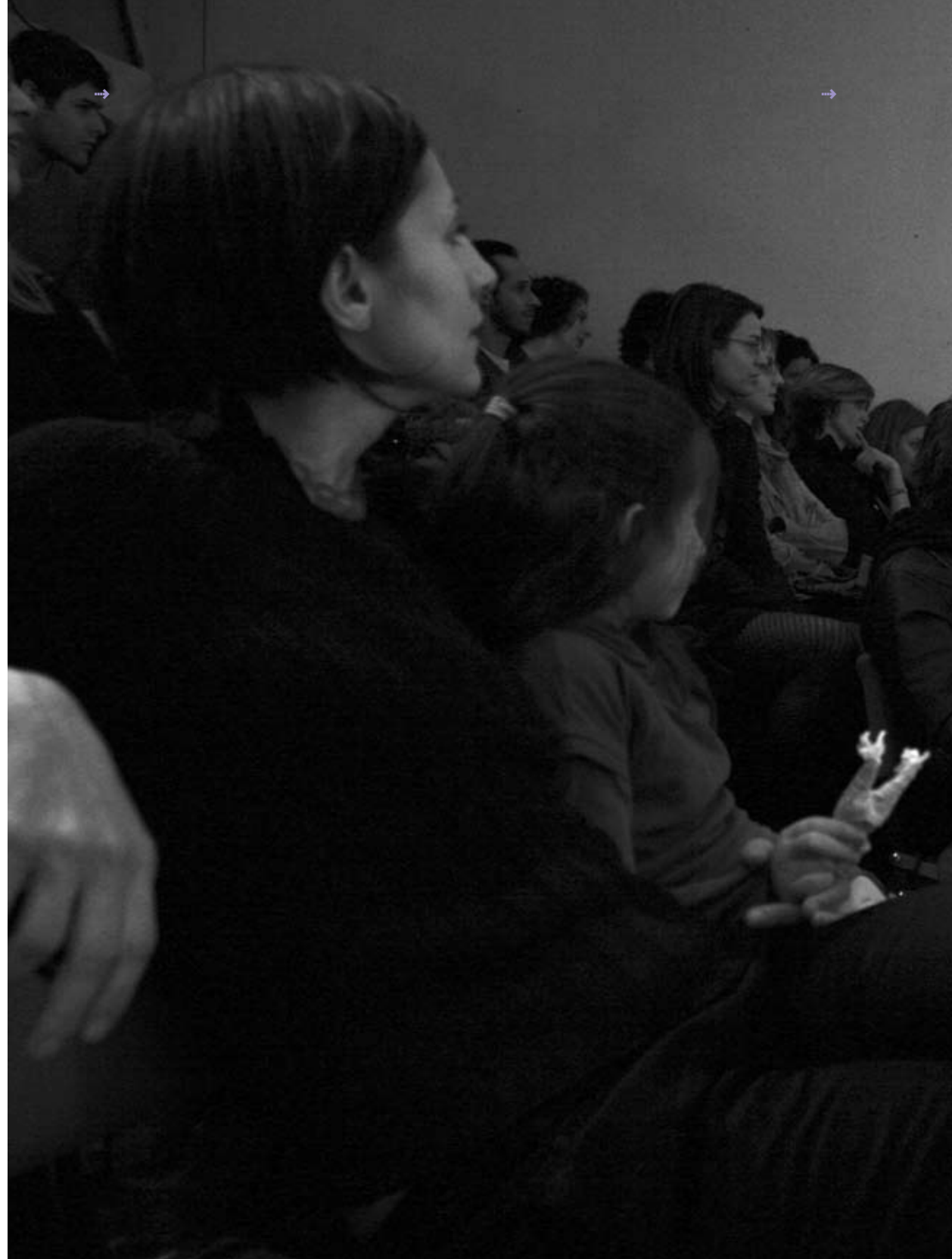




photo by Nenad Milošević



ANTISTATIC FESTIVAL [SOFIA]

● The Antistatic is Bulgaria's festival for contemporary dance and performance. It was initiated in 2008 by two and thereafter run by three independent organisations based in Sofia: The Red House Centre for Culture and Debate, the Ebrain Cstore Project, and the InformBureau. The festival was built as a 'statement' against inertia, as a manifest of the desire to express ourselves in radical motion. The festival strives to confront opinions and tastes with expectations and adjustments. The projects that are selected for the programme each year aim to extend the boundaries of audience receptivity and thus make them more flexible. The Antistatic is meant to enrich the cultural field by introducing into it marginal forms of performativity that the classical genres and practices accept only as peripheral. Therefore, the Antistatic supports experimenting, every unconventional form and courageous leap with the aim to further develop the audience, to build taste as well as to influence the local cultural environment. In 2008, the festival started with eight Bulgarian productions. The following year, the Antistatic was opened up to international artists and featured eleven performances, including 'Nomad', a special promotional programme for the participants of the Nomad Dance Academy (NDA) from previous years. In 2010 the festival showed ten performances; in collaboration with the NDA, as well as local and international artists, the festival initiated the 'Field of Potentiality', a platform for debuts of young Bulgarian artists.

www.antistaticfestival.org



**KONDENZ
FESTIVAL OF
CONTEMPORARY
DANCE
[BELGRADE]**

● The Station service for contemporary dance has a 'holistic' approach to the development of the contemporary dance scene. This means that we are trying to keep intervening on many different levels at once: in providing education for, and fostering the works of, young authors; in producing, co-producing, and engaging in international collaborations; and taking active part in the cultural policy field through direct dialogue, pressure, and interventions in creating new policy instruments to increase the recognition and visibility of contemporary dance in Serbia and in the Balkans.



The Kondenz Festival is a point of communication with the Belgrade audience and we are dedicated to presenting the works that we would like to see in our city.

↪ Since its founding, the Kondenz has been striving to place itself carefully on Serbia's cultural events map. We noticed that there was a big gap between international guest performances at the major festivals and Serbia's domestic production in the field of contemporary performing arts.

↪ Our curatorial logic is that smaller, experimental productions, critical towards their specific environments, or questioning certain aspects of performance making, should visit Serbia more often. Communicating with the audience is an important criterion, and we want to question the prevailing models of understanding the arts as a form of entertainment.

↪ The general conception of the Festival programme was based on presenting the diversity and different potentials of contemporary dance today, rather than choosing a certain style or technique. The selectors' goal was to introduce the Belgrade audience to a variety of performing styles, poetics, dance formats, as well as potentials in merging dance with the other arts (performance art, the visual arts, concert music, happenings...), and thus to provoke and challenge local artists to rethink their own frameworks.



In 2008, the format of the selected pieces was the solo, with focus on examining the nature of the solo itself. In 2009, we concentrated on dance and multimedia, and in 2010 we were concerned with the way different performances treat the audience.



GENERAL INFORMATION:

Kondenz 2010: The Bitef Theatre and the Cultural Center *Rex*, October 18th–20th, 2010

Kondenz 2009: KC Grad, October 9th–12th, 2009

Kondenz 2008: Center for Cultural Decontamination, March 8th–12th, 2008

Partners of the festival, 2008–2010: The Bitef Theatre, Cultural Center *Rex*, KC Grad, Center for Cultural Decontamination

The festival is supported by: Swiss Cultural Programme, Belgrade City Council for Culture, Serbia's Ministry of Culture, and the Jardin d'Europe programme (2007–2013).

Festival curators: Dragana Alfirević, Dalija Aćin, and Ana Vujanović.



THE FUTURE:

In the 2010–11 autumn/winter season we are rethinking our positions as curators and organisers of the Kondenz festival. We think that a more interventional and locally useful format should be provided, instead of the representational model we have followed so far. (See 'Dancers in All Directions' by Dragana Alfirevic, pp. 60)

www.dancestation.org/kondenz.



THE LOCOMOTION FESTIVAL [SKOPJE]

- The Locomotion was established under the auspices of the Nomad Dance Academy, with decentralised programming and decision-making. It was established as a programme meant to enable the development of an 'open space' for communicating with contemporary dance art.
- ↳ Our main idea and general programme conception is to spread information and foster reflection on the current practices and discourses in the field of contemporary dance, locally and worldwide. The festival's programme aims to present significant European contemporary dance performances, in order to demonstrate the versatility and ingenuity of contemporary dance as two crucial aspects of artistic creativity today. With this festival we want to stress the importance of independent, innovative authors and productions; we want to share with the public the diversity of contemporary dance, or, better yet, the current state of the development of the art of choreography today.
- ↳ This festival is an attempt to fill a void on our local scene, that is, to provide a space that will not be reserved for 'grand' productions but for presenting new, progressive, innovative forms and independent authors.



GENERAL INFORMATION

LocoMotion 2008: 26 October – 01 November, Macedonian National Theatre

LocoMotion 2009: 9 October – 7 November 2009, Macedonian National Theatre, Youth Cultural Centre

Locomotion 2010: 16 – 23 October 2010, Youth Cultural Centre



Festival programmers are Biljana Tanurovska Kjulavkovski and Iskra Šukarova



THE FUTURE

At the moment, three years after the founding of the festival, we – the programmers – are trying to be self-critical, to reflect, communicate, and search for answers about what to do next with this festival, why this festival, what distinguishes it from other festivals... We are rethinking our position and that of the festival within Macedonian, regional, and European cultural space. We are rethinking the format of the festival, the procedures through which artworks are realised, presented, and communicated.



photo by Sunčan Stone



**PLESkavica
DANCE FESTIVAL
[LJUBLJANA]**

● At its founding, the PLESkavica dance festival consisted of the final projects of the students at the Nomad Dance Academy. For the last three years, this platform has cherished a nomadic contemporary-dance programme of research, education, and production in Southeast Europe. The 2010 festival presented premières by a new generation of artists, under a joint title, Short Cuts. A refreshing addition to 2010 Short Cuts will be Blow Up, a special programme consisting of a selection of representative dance performances, created in the specific realities of various Balkan dance communities.

www.ficobalet.org/pleskavica



**THE ZVRK
FESTIVAL
[SARAJEVO]**

● In 2008, Tanzelarija started ZVRK, the first international festival of contemporary dance in Bosnia and Herzegovina. A path-breaking initiative, the Festival brought substantial attention to contemporary dance, at the time still a largely unknown art form on the local scene, which could rarely be seen in the theatres. The festival brought performances from eleven European countries, including Susanne Linke's 'Kaikou Yin'. In its second year, the festival founded its own organisation, likewise named ZVRK, as an outgrowth and expansion of its earlier activities on the promotion of contemporary dance. The new organisation was entrusted with running the festival in 2010. Since its founding, the festival has included performances, classes, dance film screenings, exhibitions, round tables, and intensive workshops with domestic and foreign choreographers, dancers, and visual artists. Since 2008, the Bosnian public's interest for contemporary dance has visibly increased, given that in 2009 attendance went up by 30%, and in 2010 by another 30%.

↳ In 2008 and 2009, Sanja Maier-Hasagić and Jasmina Prolić were festival selectors. The first ZVRK festival was held 17–22 September 2008 (following a pre-festival mini-programme on 12 September, organised in cooperation with the Italian Adriatico Mediterraneo festival) at the SARTR – Sarajevo War Theatre and the National Theatre. The second ZVRK was held 15–23 September 2009 at the SARTR and the Youth Theatre. Last year, ZVRK was held 20–23 September 2010, at the SARTR.





photo by Dženat Drebić



GO OUT AND DANCE

● Go Out and Dance is a promotional activity of all the partners involved in the NOMAD Dance Academy. Once a year, all of our partners organise simultaneous public events, which mark the International Dance Day, April 29th, and help to raise the visibility of contemporary dance in the region.

↳ Every April 29th, from 6pm to 8pm, the partners of the NDA organise events in the squares, streets, bridges, and other venues in Belgrade, Ljubljana, Sarajevo, Sofia, Skopje, and Zagreb. They also organise making short dance videos and photo projects, with the idea to promote contemporary dance in their local environments.



THE NOMAD
DANCE ACADEMY
EDUCATIONAL
PROGRAMME:
'SHIFTING
INWARDS,
SILENT
SPARKLES'

photo by Dženat Drekočić



by
Angela
Vadori

● Writing this text is a very interesting experience for me, since I know vaguely of the Nomad Dance Academy and its programme. My main information flow comes from its homepage, so this is a vision of the NDA's educational programme that is fuelled by assumption, imagination, and projection, a delirious articulation of what the idea triggers in my disquiet mind. I can envision something very unstructured, flexible, an education that happens by will and organisation of individuals. I hear a lot of talk lately about alternative forms of education, about self-education, horizontal pedagogical approaches, de-schooling classroom... It is a burning issue, a necessity to be discussed especially in arts education and without much research I have a feeling that in the field of dance much of this talk comes from the South-East of Europe.

↳ The NDA seems to have a great potential to reinvent dance education in a way that makes sense for the Balkan region and the steps leading there seem, from the outside, a learning process by a passionate group of people, with all the problems and strengths that such a learning process entails. While the 2008 edition still looked like a disconnected assemblage of workshops, classes, and teachers, the educational programme for 2010 shows more purpose and direction. Since 2011 is a year of reflection, of reconsideration of where the NDA stands and where it is going, I can only encourage whoever is responsible for the educational program to become clearer in their purposes and limitations. The temptation is probably huge just to give access to as much information as possible during the working period, for the students to absorb and digest in the subsequent time. I do not think that is always useful. It presupposes a certain view on education and on dance practice itself: the teacher as a source of information and therefore the information being tied to the teacher rather than the practice. If we turn this concept around and look at the practice as knowledge and therefore practising 'practice' as a source of knowledge, then the teacher's position shifts from being a necessary distributor of information to being a 'creator of self-educational spaces'. The 'explicative system' as Rancière calls it,¹ becomes superfluous or even damaging to creativity and independence. Especially in a context where continuous education is not easily available, one of the objectives of a nomadic education should probably be to educate young artists

¹ Jacques Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), p. 7: 'The revelation that came to Joseph Jacotot amounts to this: the logic of the explicative system has to be overturned. Explication is not necessary to remedy an incapacity to understand. On the contrary, that very incapacity provides the structuring fiction of the explicative conception of the world. It is the explicator who needs the incapable and not the other way around; it is he who constitutes the incapable as such'.

to become self-sufficient in both work and self-education, therefore the pedagogical approach would need to encompass learning and creative structures far more than the transmission of skills and craft. In short: sometimes less, with a focus on the essential, can be more.

↪ Self-education in itself is, in the social and cultural context we live in, a necessity as well as a form of resistance, I think that is undisputed. It is also an important tool in the creation of an artistic practice as well as a theoretical discourse that is useful in the context it happens in, meaning that education, artistic practice and theoretical discourse may need to differ greatly in different geographical, social-economical and cultural settings, creating an exciting diversity.

↪ There is much talk about horizontality and equality in education, concepts that have an immanence to art, especially to a critical, contemporary art, where the simplistic pedagogy of 'right' and 'wrong' should probably and hopefully cease to exist. The presupposition of equality in the status of artist, between the teacher and the student, without losing sight of the different status of experience and complexity allows establishing an educational practice that takes the form of a space, opened up to, for, and in part by the student. Or maybe just a space for a practice...

I keep using the word practice... probably the way I use it derives from Deborah Hay's definition of performance as practice. Or from Chryssa Parkinson's Self-Interview:²

↪ 'If you think of the material of performance as perception or as relationship (as Deborah would say), then some form of "doing it" to understand it makes sense.'

↪ At this point I need to apologise to all the people whose ideas and concepts I distort in an attempt to grasp and articulate something I barely understand myself. I believe there is something essential to the 'doing it to understand it' or to Milli Bitterli's 'making sense of it', or for that matter to the term 'performative practice' or 'performance practice' itself. The 'doing', the 'practice' starts transcending the artistic product, what is done is not as important as the intention behind it. The 'way it is done' or the 'why it is done' become the main focus of art practice and in consequence of an educational model.

↪ Somehow all this leads me back to Jerzy Grotowski's³ description of his educational approach: 'The education of an actor in our theatre is not a matter of teaching him something; we attempt to

eliminate his organism's resistance to this psychic process. The result is freedom from the time-lapse between inner impulse and outer reaction in such a way that the inner impulse is already an outer reaction'. In a very personal, practical, and irrational way, for me Grotowski and Hay speak about the same. About a will to perception that precedes an awareness, about a transparency and a state of mind that allows us to construct a practice which generates its own logic, rather than a practice that relies on apprehended craft, about intention as a creator of action. They make me think of the willingness to give oneself up to this necessity that art creates and more importantly to the love for it.

↪ So back to the space for the educational practice, or maybe just practice... A personal practice for me needs to encompass artistic process, personal development and self-education, which are three facets of one and the same concept, indivisible. As a friend put it: 'to be a better artist, sometimes you need to become a better person'. The teachers from whom I have profited the most have been those who have not only questioned me as an artist, but as a person, who have made me want to reinvent myself, become a better me. An impossible task to reach in a four-month program, but maybe a direction to look into, an idea to seed and maybe one that has been there since the beginning of the NDA, but that still needs practical articulation.

↪ What the NDA tries to open, namely an educative space of creation, is a very complex matter in which not only pedagogical, didactic, and artistic aspects play a role, but also human and social dynamics within the group of 'educators'. In this creative environment, what needs to be transmitted is not only skill, craft, in form of compositional or dramaturgical tools, but there needs to be space for that sparkle to be found, that differentiates art from everything else, that makes the mind fly and the heart beat faster, that excites us and that we as artists are in love with. A hard task. And one that requires not only a strong confrontation with one's art, but with oneself. Perhaps what can or should be sown in arts education in general is the will to self-reinvention, the ability to question and to follow one's disquietudes and the persistence to create one's own practice whilst constantly revising the status of necessity of our constructs. A shifting inwards in a time when pragmatism, politics, fashions, and a general dissolution are markers and symptoms of the contemporary artistic environment? Maybe the task of the teacher has become to help the student find the small details that matter amidst the chaos and overflow of impressions, to find the silent sparkles of art amidst the noise of contemporaneity and that which has duration and foundation amidst volatility and transitoriness. ■

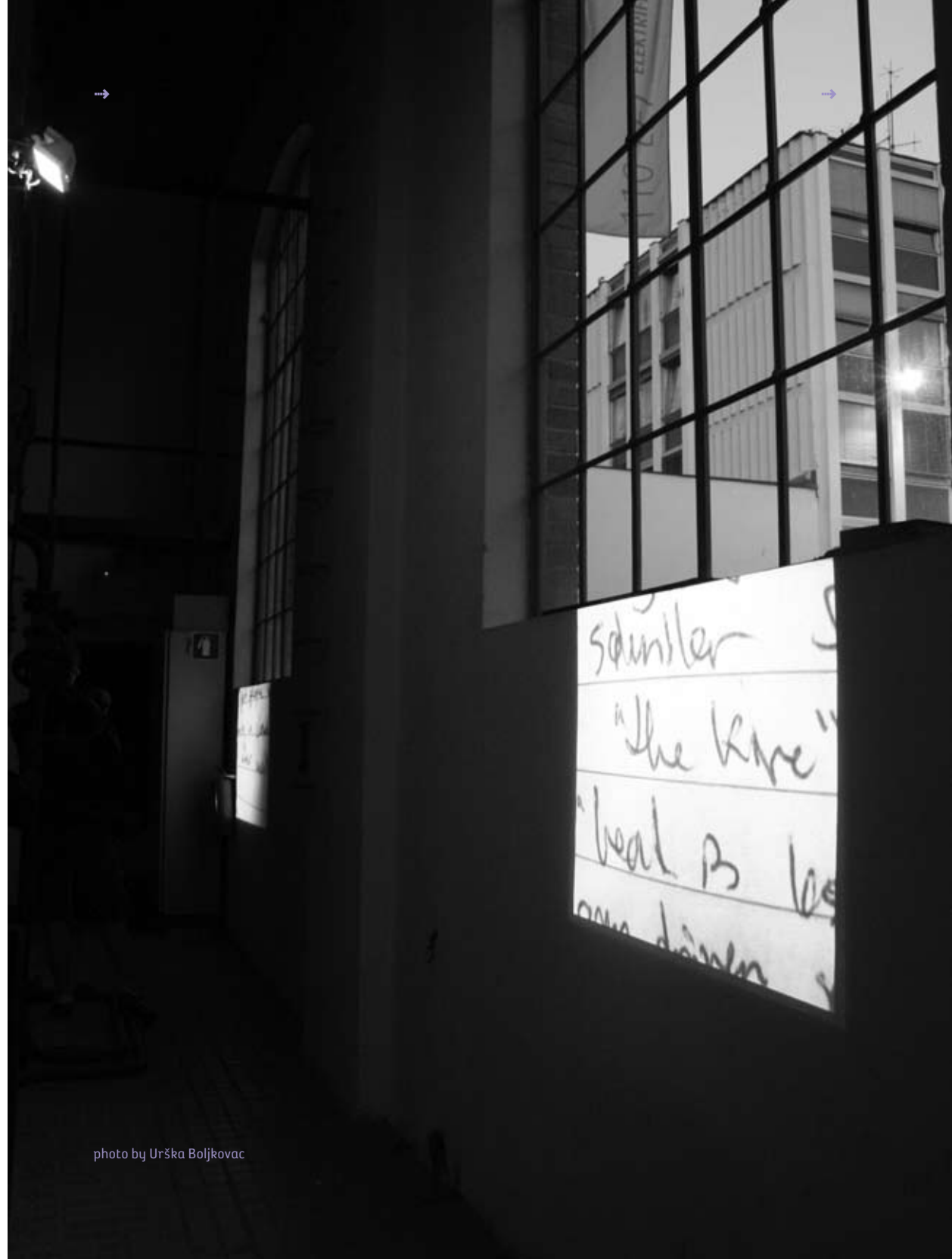
² Chryssa Parkinson in 'Everybody's Self-Interviews', eds. Mette Invarstsen and Alice Chauchat. <http://www.everybodystoolbox.net>

³ Jerzy Grotowski, 'Towards a Poor Theatre', in *Routledge Reader in Politics and Performance*, eds. Lizbeth Goodman and Jane de Gay (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), p. 7.



THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMME

- The NOMAD Educational Programme is dedicated to emerging artists in contemporary dance who, once they enrol, live, learn, work, and move together during a four-month period. They get an opportunity to travel through, and work in, the artistic environments of Skopje, Sofia, Belgrade, Zagreb, Sarajevo, and Ljubljana, creating networks for future artistic collaboration.
- ↳ The NOMAD Educational Programme is meant to improve and encourage exchange, education, and creativity in contemporary dance in the Balkans through a set of workshops, lectures, study visits and encounters with artists and theorists from each of the six participating countries and beyond.
- ↳ It is an opportunity to advance young dancers' and choreographers' artistic expression, to enhance their careers at an early stage, and to break ground for future international collaboration. The Programme provides daily professional classes, workshops, and lectures on contemporary dance practice and theory, the space for individual research, and contacts with local and international artists and institutions. The NOMAD awards twelve scholarships that cover tuition, travel expenses, and accommodation during the four-month period (March through June).
- ↳ Simultaneously with the educational line of the project (workshops, lectures, classes), the participants get an opportunity to go through the process of artistic creation and present their works at the end of it, as performances, installations, etc...
- ↳ The Programme offers ground for fruitful collaboration inside the group, as well as presents challenges through meetings with artists and different conditions of production. In two residencies each, the participants get a chance to develop their ideas, supervised by dramaturges, theorists and choreographers. Every June, Ljubljana hosts a festival, consisting of their productions, called Short Cuts.





**EDUCATION
2005-2007
(AN NDA PILOT
PROGRAMME)**

● Between May, 2005, and December, 2007, partners of the Nomad Dance Academy organised a process of an intensive exchange of educational programmes, workshops, study visits, which enhanced the mobility of students and teachers. The aim of this pilot stage was to make way for the future Educational Programme, to target and prepare future possible students of the Programme, as well as to build our internal organisational capacities and develop communicational and organisational tools for the future.

↪ Each partner was asked to save room for regional and international students, and in some cases to cover their travel and lodging costs; in this way we wanted to foster artistic and cultural exchange, which, at the time, was lacking in the region.

↪ This made us understand the needs of the local scenes and tuned us in with the potentials and lacks of various organisational structures, so we could have a trial of the NOMAD Educational Programme, which started in 2008.



Some of the workshops organised during this period were:

Belgrade

Martine Pisani, Ivo Dimchev, Matej Kejzar, Isabel Schad, Frans Poelstra, Fabrice Lambert, Charles Linehan, Iskra Šukarova, David Zambrano, Nikolina Pristaš, Gregor Lustek, Serge Ricci, Goran Bogdanovski, Ellen von Schullenbursch, Laura Moro, Martin Sonderkamp

Ljubljana

Andrew Harwood and Judith Keri: EMPTYING, LANDING, SOARING
Juliana Neves – Flying high

Sarajevo

Stephan A. Shtereff, Dragana Bulut, Dejan Srhoj, Goran Bogdanovski

Sofia

Dragana Alfirević, Selma Banich, Jurij Koniar, Matej Kejzar, Aleksandra Janeva, Iskra Šukarova, Eduard Gabia, Xavier le Roy



TERMINOLOGY

Body work: 1.5 hours of body work daily.

Workshop: a longer period of work in dance creativity / 1 - 7 days / 5hrs per day.

Lecture: 1.5 - 3 hrs on specific topics.

Residency: time for research, experiment, development of the Short Cuts, chill out

iShare: each participants has to lead at least one training or class or workshop of their choice for two to three hours.

Mentorship: points of communication in the artistic process of the Nomads, supported by the artistic mentors/dramaturges

Meeting Baltazar: meet the local 'star' or special person, and have a discussion or drink with him/her – 2-3hrs.

Short cuts: artistic projects/productions of a performance, installation, concert... 5 - 20 minutes, to be presented at the end of the programme.

Nomads: a group of travelling participants of the Educational Programme.



PARTICIPANTS' TASKS

~ To attend the Educational Programme with responsibility for her and her colleagues' processes.

~ To have created a 'Short Cut' project by the end of the programme;

~ To to have led at least one iShare by the end of the programme;

~ To engage in community-outreach work (optional);

~ To produce a report on the programme by August 15th, containing their artistic, personal thoughts, statements, ideas.



NOMAD
EDUCATION
PROGRAMME
2008

- **SKOPJE**
March 16th → ■
17th Welcome day Lokomotiva
& internal presentations
18th – 22nd [W] Galina Borissova
21st [L] Elena Jovanova
23rd □
24th – 28th [W] Selma Banich
25th [L] Suzana Milevska
29th [iS] + [L] Sonja Zdravkovska
30th □
31st ■ →
- **SOFIA**
March 31st → ■ & welcome by Brain
StoreProject
April 1st [L] Tzvetelina Iossifova
2nd – 4th [Bw] Teodora Popova
2nd – 5th [W] Venelin Shurelov
6th □
7th – 12th [W] Martin Sonderkamp
9th [L] Neli Miteva
13th Research & creation
towards the [Sc]
14th □
15th ■ →
- **BELGRADE**
April 15th → ■ & welcome by Station
16th [L] on Serbian contemporary
dance scene
17th – 19th Research & creation [Sc]
19th [L] Ana Vujanović
20th □
21st – 26nd [W]
27th □
28th April – 3rd May [W] Mala Kline
May 4th □
5th – 8th Research [Sc]
& visit to Kanjiža
9th ■ →
- **ZAGREB**
May 9th → ■
10th – 11th [iS]
10th [L] Borut Šeparović
11th [L] Maja Djurinović
12th – 17th [W] Nikolina & Sergej
Pristaš
18th □
19th – 24th [W] Isabelle Schad
22nd – 23rd [W] Borut Šeparović
- **PIRAN**
May 25th → ■ Welcome by Fičo Balet
26th – 30th [iS] & [M] Dalija Aćin
27th [L] Bojana Kunst
31st ■ → & welcome to Ljubljana
- **LJUBLJANA**
June 1st [L] Rok Vevar
2nd – 8th Body work Andreja Rauch
2nd – 8th [W] & [M] Igor Remeta,
Tomaž Štrucl, Emir Beširević,
Brane Zorman, Alma Selimović,
Igor Medjugorac, Miha Klinar
Creation towards presentations [Sc]
7th [Sc]
8th [Sc]
9th Academia feedbacks
10th ■ →

[L]	Lecture
[M]	Mentorship
[W]	Workshop
[iS]	iShare
[Sc]	Short cuts
[Bw]	Body work
→ ■	Arrival
■ →	Departure
□	Days off



NOMAD
EDUCATION
PROGRAMME
2009

- **SARAJEVO**
February 25th → ■
26th Welcome by NDA and Tanzelarija
26th [L] **Dubravka Zrnčić-Kulenović**
27th artistic presentation of students/
NDA presentation
28th [M] **Borut Šeparović**
Short cuts
March 1st [M] **Borut Šeparović**
[Sc]
2nd □
3rd – 13th [W] **Martin Sonderkamp**
14th □
15th ■ →
- **SKOPLJE**
March 15th → ■
16th Welcome by Lokomotiva
16th [L] **Sonja Zdravkova**
Džeparoska
17th – 18th [W] **Jasmina Prolić**
19th □
20th – 22nd [W] **Dean Damjanovski**
23rd – 28th [W] **Isabelle Schad**
29th □
30th [iS] **Elia Mrak**
31st ■ →
- **SOFIA**
April 1st Welcome by BrainStoreProject
2nd [L] **Ani Vasseva**
3rd – 8th [W] **Gregor Luštek**
9th – 10th □
11th – 15th [W] **Erol Alexander**
11th [L] **Boyan Manchev**
13th – 15th [W] **Ivica Buljan**
16th ■ →
- **BELGRADE**
April 23rd → ■
24th Welcome by Station
25th – 26th [L] **Ana Vujanović**
27th – 2nd May [W] **Howard Katz**
May 3rd □
4th – 6th [W] **Dorijan Kolundžija**
5th ■ →
- **KANJIZŪA**
May 5th → ■
6th – 8th [W] **Janez Janša**
8th – 15th [iS] [Sc]
16th ■ →
- **ZAGREB**
May 16th → ■
17th Welcome by Tala &
presentation of the local dance scene
18th [L] **Maja Djurinović**
20th – 21st [Bw] **Irma Omerzo**
19th – 20th [M] **Borut Šeparović**
22nd □
23rd – 28th [Bw] **Silvia Marchig**
23rd – 28th [W] **Marta Ladjanski**
29th – 30th □
31st – 2nd June [Bw] **Irma Omerzo**
31st – 2nd [M] **Borut Šeparović**
June 3rd ■ →
- **PTUJ**
June 3rd → ■ welcome by Fičo Balet
4th – 10th [iS] [Sc]
8th [L] **Bojana Kunst**
11th ■ →
- **LJUBLJANA**
June 11th → ■ & welcome by Fičo Balet
12th [L] **Rok Vevar**
13th □
14th [W] **Brane Zorman, Igor Remeta,**
Tomaž Štrucl, Emir Bećirević, Andrej
Intihar
15th [W] **Igor Medjugorac & Miha**
Klinar
15th [L] **Tamara Bračič**
16th – 19th Creation of [Sc]
20th – 21st Presentation of [Sc]
22nd Conference and picnic

[L]	Lecture
[M]	Mentorship
[W]	Workshop
[iS]	iShare
[Sc]	Short cuts
[Bw]	Body work
→ ■	Arrival
■ →	Departure
□	Days off



NOMAD
EDUCATION
PROGRAMME
2010

●
SKOPLJE

March 13th → ■
14th Welcome day Lokomotiva
15th artistic presentation of students / NDA presentation
16th [M] Rok Vevar [Sc]
17th - 22nd [Bw] Martin Sonderkamp
17th [L] Biljana Tanurovska
Kjulavkovski Production
20th [L] Sonja Zdravkova Džeparoska
Local dance scene
23rd □
24th - 29th [W] Dragana Alfirević &
Elena Jovanova Marčevska
Process as a product
30th □
31st ■ →

●
SOFIA

March 31st → ■ & welcome by
BrainStoreProject
April 1st - 3rd [W] Willy Prager, Iva
Sveshtarova, Stephan Shtereff
Collective artistic creation
4th □
5th - 7th [iS] presentations
5th [L] Boyan Manchev *Collective*
8th □
9th - 13th [Bw] Galina Borissova
12th [L] Ani Vasseva *Local dance scene*
14th □ & ■ →

●
BELGRADE

April 15th → ■ and welcome by Station
15th - 19th [Bw] & [W] Gregor Luštek
20th - 21st □
22nd - 28th [W] Dalija Aćin *Public
space creation*
22nd [L] Jelena Vesić *No More Reality*
*[Crowd and Performance:
demonstration, public space,
use of body]*
29th Go out and dance!
30th ■ →

●
KANJIŽA

May 6th → ■ to Kanjiža
7th - 13th [M] Dejan Srhoj,
Janez Janša
9th [L] Zoltan Bickei
About Jozef Nadj's art
14th ■ →

●
ZAGREB

May 14th → ■
15th Welcome by Tala
16th - 20th [Bw] & [W] Aleksandra
Janeva Imfeld
18th [L] Maja Djurinović
Local dance scene
21st □
22nd - 29th [iS] Nerina Sibila,
Jasenko Rasol, Marcell Mars *Other
media creation*
30th □
31st ■ →

●
PTUJ

June 1st - 8th [M] Rok Vevar
Work on [Sc]
3rd [L] *Local dance scene*
9th ■ →

●
LJUBLJANA

June 9th → ■
10th Welcome by Fičo Balet
11th [W] Jaka Šimenc, Tomaž Štucl,
Brane Zorman, Andrej Intihar
12th [L] Tamara Bračič
Local dance scene
12th [W] Igor Medjugorac,
Miha Klinar
13th - 17th [M] Rok Vevar, Goran
Boždanovski, Dejan Srhoj, Zoran
Grabarac, Tomaž Štrucl, Brane
Zorman, Andrej Intihar
18th - 20th [Sc] presentations
21st Picnic
22nd Academia feedback

[L]	Lecture
[M]	Mentorship
[W]	Workshop
[iS]	iShare
[Sc]	Short cuts
[Bw]	Body work
→ ■	Arrival
■ →	Departure
□	Days off

**NOMADS 2008**

Nina Božič
 Ivaylo Dimitrov
 Ana Dubljević
 Denitza Georgieva Georgieva
 Kire Gjorevski
 Jasmina Kazazić
 Rina Kotur
 Nina Jan
 Marko Jastrevski
 Lili Mihajlović
 Kire Miladinovski
 Elia Rubin Mrak Blumberg
 Elma Selman

**NOMADS 2009**

Katina Diskov
 Aleksandar Georgiev
 Marko Kalc
 Igor Koruga
 Céline Larrère
 Elia Rubin Mrak Blumberg
 Lejla Muhić
 Martina Nevistić
 Ruta Nordmane
 Zhana Pencheva
 Bor Pungercič
 Ana Schnabl
 Nikolina Todorova

**NOMADS 2010**

Krassimira Bakardjieva
 Pierre-Yves Diacon
 Viktorija Ilioska
 Jana Jevtović
 Maya Levy
 Esta Matković
 Kliment Poposki
 Jovana Rakić
 Eléonore Abigaïl Richard
 Martina Rukavina
 Inti Šraj
 Domen Šega
 Katelina Vladimirova Kancheva
 Florian Wessels





THE NOMADS' FEEDBACK ON THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMME

● 'Participating in the NDA programme has made me understand the importance of dramaturgy even more than I did before. Also, another lesson I got was how sensitive this area is. Throughout the NDA process, there was this tough love approach to the concepts & dramaturgy of the short cut, like the tough loving master who can break you free from your shell and enable you to go through the process with a greater awareness. Eventually this makes your work more inclusive, or, if it's exclusive, then it communicates why it is.

↳ Receiving tough love from an experienced artist with a greater vision than yours can go either of two ways:

1. You may get better results, even entirely new directions that might deepen the process and therefore also the product

and/or

2. You may experience a total shutdown.

↳ I want to reassert the sensitivity I mentioned earlier: when a stranger massacres your work, it hurts; however, when a fellow-artist does, it's incestuous.

↳ In order for you to accept others' feedback to your dramaturgy, you need to ask for it, and you need to ask someone you can connect to, or at least someone who is willing to enter your world. That someone must be willing to enter your world, to find the baby there (i.e. your potential) of your creation and not slaughter it with his/her sophisticated vocabulary and psychological dexterity (or at least not fall asleep during your presentation).

↳ It was here that I learned the power of "No".'

Kliment Poposki,
Nomad 2010.

● 'I think your programme is so amazing because you leave it open, you make it alive just like the body is alive, instead of trying to fix it, structure it and hierarchise it (as it's done in most dance education programmes, which is a catastrophe for a living art). It's really a Deleuzian programme (no, no, I don't mean to say the idea is French... although...), with its rhizomatic approach to learning, exchanging, networking. It's a really rare and precious thing, to give people an opportunity to create and educate themselves without trying to shape and make them fit into readymade boxes. The way you gave us tools to move, create, and think, the mind-opening with which you supported

each of us, both as individuals and group-members, enabled everybody to make their own choices in a very free way.'

Céline Larrère,
Nomad 2009.

● 'NOMAD was an alternative approach to an alternative reality. From the workshops to the travelling, from the shortcuts to the daily challenges of eating and sleeping, from the lectures to the iShares, NOMAD tried to educate us in a holistic way and to give us the tools to succeed in the multi-disciplinary reality of the dance world today. The institutionalized dance education that I received in the United States for three years (part-time) prepared me less for the rigours and challenges of the global dance world than the three months I spent with NOMAD did.

↳...and in the contemporary dance world today, especially throughout Europe, the reality is that people migrate, travel continuously, collaborate across countries, and work under pressure – both with respect to time and money. People come together from different backgrounds, different artistic media, with different talents, to share ideas and work through the creative process to create a new piece or project. And that is exactly what NOMAD modelled so well. It was an academy and school that exposed us to the elements of the world outside, not isolated and distanced from experiential reality (like some dance schools are, especially in the USA), but it was purposely designed to immerse us students in dance, in life, in calm and in stress, in all aspects of living, and hopefully thriving, in the dance world.'

Elia Mrak Blumberg,
Nomad 2008 + Teddy Bear 2009.

● 'I got the experience of having to do constant, intensive work, which I didn't have before. It deepened my sense and understanding of dance – it is a general state of high work intensity, which I'd like to maintain in the future.'

Rina Kotur,
Nomad 2008

● Post-NOMAD: here are a few questions (which I know you are exactly dealing with these days...). How does NOMAD continue for the NOMADs? This is something that I feel is very important. If the essential principle and goal are to develop a network of people working in various fields and aspects of performance, how do we continue to build on it? And, maybe more importantly, how do we develop it in a way that is at once both organic and logical in light of its goals and purposes, but remains strong and grounded in its efforts? How do we continue to build working relationships between people who are scattered all over the world? What could be 'NOMAD 2' – the next level, in a way, for those who have passed through this experience in whatever role, so that this community may not just disperse and disappear, which I think would be a sad loss.

Jana Jevtović,
Nomad 2010.



THE NOMAD EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMME 2010 IN BOSNIA- HERZEGOVINA

● For our 2010 educational programme we decided to try out a model for Bosnia and Herzegovina different from the ones we used before. In order to foster development of the few – so far – young artists who want to research contemporary dance and the performing arts in Bosnia and Herzegovina, we decided to create a special programme for education and local organisational-capacity building.

↳ The concept of a local programme envisages five intense workshops, each lasting for five days; they are realised over a period of five months (or more, according to the needs of particular workshops/teachers) and would comprise no more than fifteen people. Our intention is to produce a group of dancers who will follow all five workshops and make a final presentation at the end of the programme. The following artists were selected to teach in the programme: Aleksandra Janeva Imfeld ('Contemporary dance technique'), Elia Rubin Mrak Blumberg and Aleksandar Georgiev (NOMAD alumni, 'Flying low, improvisation and composition'), Iva Sveshtarova ('Alert body, training for performers'), Bojana Mladenović ('Creation'), and Marijana Cvetković ('Project management workshop'). The teachers and themes of workshops were selected in such a way as to cover various themes from different aspects of contemporary dance (techniques, performing, production etc) in each workshop, in order to enable the participants to attend only a selection of workshops and not necessarily the whole five-month-long programme, which might be difficult for a number of reasons.

↳ The programme gathered dancers from different local dance organisations as well as individuals who generated a good group synergy and worked enthusiastically with their teachers. Several good initiatives and opportunities came out of this work – to organise a local network of dancers and organisations under the designation of 'MOB', as well as better connections with some local and international cultural institutions.



**'DANCE /
THEORIES
– RELOADED'**

'DANCE / THEORIES – Reloaded', issue #18 of the *TkH* magazine, is co-produced by *TkH / Walking Theory* and the Nomad Dance Academy, as part of the *Jardin d'Europe* project.

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The issue is being released in English.

Photo by Katarina Popović



● 'DANCE / THEORIES – Reloaded', issue #18 of the *TkH* magazine, was conceived by the TkH centre for theory and practice in the performing arts, Belgrade, and the Nomad Dance Academy (NDA), with the aim to 're-load' theoretical discourses on contemporary dance.

↳ Back in 2002, *TkH* #4 came out, which was entirely dedicated to dance. Although it went out of print a long time ago, it is still sought after by professional and general public alike.

↳ The members of the Nomad Dance Academy maintain that theoretical reflection is an important part of contemporary dance practice and that written theory is not readily available in the region; the students at the NOMAD Education Programme have taken a similar position, as well as all other professionals affiliated with the NDA.

↳ Therefore, the *TkH* and the NDA decided to produce another issue of the magazine that would be dedicated to contemporary dance; this is how the present remake of *TkH* 4 was created. But, it is a re-loaded and altered remake, dedicated to contemporary dance and the changes in its social and cultural environment over the last couple of years.

↳ In the 'Theoretical Reflections' section of the magazine, the editing team present re-makes or entirely new texts by the authors who contributed to issue #4 (Bojana Kunst, Goran Sergej Pristaš, Jill Sigman, and Miško Šuvaković), as well as contributions by other authors from the region (the former Yugoslavia) who have been active over the past few years or are emerging now (such as Bojana Bauer, Dragana Bulut, and Marko Kostanić, who are our youngest authors).

↳ 'Profiles of Regional Dance Scenes: Belgrade, Ljubljana, Skopje, Zagreb' is another addition to the old issue. In that section we tried to map out the dance scenes that have developed in the region since 2000, by presenting the works of the choreographers who have made a difference on those scenes: Dalija Aćin, Bojana Mladenović, Nina Meško, Iskra Šukarova, Nikolina Pristaš, and Željka Sančanin.

↳ In this issue, we gave writing space to a number of different authors, so they could articulate various critical and dissonant discourses of phenomena, notions, and problems relevant to contemporary dance and choreography: Bojana Bauer, Dragana Bulut, Bojana Cvejić, Andrew Hewitt, Ana Isaković, Ivana Ivković, Marko Kostanić, Bojana Kunst, André Lepecki, Goran Sergej Pristaš, Jill Sigman, Biljana Tanurovska Kjulavkovski, Miško Šuvaković, Rok Vevar, and Ana Vujanović.





JARDIN D'EUROPE

Partner Organisations

 Coordinator
 danceWEB / Austria

 Co-organizers
 4Culture / Romania
 Bimeras Culture Foundation / Turkey
 Centre Chorégraphique de Montpellier / France
 Cullberg Ballet / Sweden
 Lokomotiva / Macedonia
 Southbank Centre / United Kingdom
 Station / Serbia
 Ultima Vez / Belgium
 Workshop Foundation / Hungary

Associated Partners

Brain Store Project / Bulgaria
 Catidans / Turkey
 Culturgest / Portugal
 Fico Balet / Slovenia
 Flemish Theatre Institute (Vti) / Belgium
 Ireland Dance Festival / Ireland
 Laban Centre London / United Kingdom
 Tala Dance Center / Croatia
 Tanzelarnja / Bosnia-Herzegovina
 Trafó / Hungary
 Workspace Brussels / Belgium

Project dates

1st of July 2008 - 30th of June 2013

photo by Jardin d'Europe



● Jardin d'Europe is a European project dedicated to the establishment of a sustainable European infrastructure for the professionalisation of emerging dancers, choreographers, dance administrators, and dance writers. its main objective is to organise individual artistic projects capable of becoming a driving force in an emerging dance market throughout Europe.

↳ Jardin d'Europe is organised as a network of European dance institutions (dance training centres, dance companies, and festival organisers) with particular focus on central- and eastern-European countries (4Culture/RO, Bimeras Culture Foundation/TR, CCN Montpellier/FR, Cullberg Ballet/SE, danceWEB/AT, Lokomotiva/MK, Southbank Centre/UK, Station/RS, Ultima Vez/BE, Workshop Foundation/HU).

↳ This project, supported by the European culture programme (2007 – 2013), is a good opportunity to develop an altogether new comprehensive initiative with the objective to overcome the precarious status of contemporary dance in Europe and to build a reliable hub for contemporary dance and its relating art forms (visual arts, film, music, philosophy, theatre, fashion, architecture).

↳ The network activities of Jardin d'Europe are planned in a period of five years starting in July 2008. Each year, the results of the accompanying evaluation processes will be used to reframe the process according to the current necessities. Its well-elaborated elements are linked together to support the qualification and professionalisation of the emerging players of our art form on a European-wide scale.



THE ACTIVITIES



Prix Jardin d'Europe

The Prix Jardin d'Europe (EUR 10,000,-) is awarded annually to a dance production presented in the frame of the festivals who present emerging authors. Hence, every year, one of the partners organises a festival presenting 10 to 14 works of emerging choreographers selected both from the European dance market and from works co-produced by Jardin d'Europe. In 2008, this event took place in Vienna, in 2009 the prix was hosted in Brussels, and in Istanbul in 2010. In the following years the prix will be awarded in Bucharest (2011) and Vienna (2012).



Critical Endeavour

Ten European emerging dance journalists from all participating countries are invited to attend workshops in writing on contemporary dance. The contact between these young critics and national and regional media is encouraged, in order to professionalize the dance critique.



ttt (teaching the teachers)

ttt is an initiative that aims at giving an answer to a European dance scene in need of new teaching and training methods in the field of contemporary dance, taking into account new artistic fields involved in dance creativity nowadays, such as dramaturgy, lighting, transforming movement into film/image, and dance photography. Respective activities, e.g. workshops, each of them between seven and ten days long, take place twice a year at the relevant initiatives/venues of the participating co-organisers throughout Europe.



Nomad

Nomad is a poly-active network structure designed to establish a professional, socially relevant, and well-connected contemporary dance scene in the Balkan countries. Nomad benefits from knowledge transfer and capacity building and will be associated to the educational research and production activities developed by the Jardin d'Europe project.



SuSy (Support System)

This programme element is aimed at establishing a sustainable managerial infrastructure for the production, mediation, and reception of contemporary dance, with focus on the countries where the needs are very high. 'Emerging administrators' have a chance to enhance their competence in managing cultural projects on the European level whilst getting a professional training at the different partner organisations.



danceWEB Scholarships

This programme is the sequel to the danceWeB Scholarship programme, as it has become one of the most important and successful training experiences for emerging dance artists worldwide. 65 dance artists from all over Europe are selected each summer to participate in the activities of ImPulsTanz in Vienna, thus enjoying a five-week compendium of workshops, performances, and individual coaching/mentoring.

Wild Cards

The objective of Jardin d'Europe Wild Cards is to encourage trans-national circulation of artistic development in the field of choreographic research and further education throughout Europe. Jardin d'Europe Wild Cards offers residencies, choreographic research with an established company, as well as scholarships for further educational programmes to emerging choreographers and professional dancers. Each participating institution provides one to three Wild cards for their relevant programme while nominating artists out of their country for 'wild cards' in other programmes.



Action Research

For the full duration of Jardin d'Europe between 2008 and 2013, the process is accompanied by action research in the frame of a self-innovative structure. Its activities are documented and accompanied to ensure permanent innovation over those five years as well as to produce material and publications. The projects' results are available to the European dance community via online media and publications (film, print).



PRACTISING
THE BASICS *

photo by Nenad Milošević

* This article is part of Gregor Kamnikar's book on contemporary dance, forthcoming in 2011, which was commissioned by the Republic of Slovenia Public Fund for Cultural Activities (www.jskd.si).



by
Gregor
Kamnikar

● When we are done with the basics of acquiring new knowledge and understanding it, we like to move on and explore new territories, discovering a hitherto unknown land or some peculiar new detail about a known area. We seldom bother to review the basics on which our explorations rest. Well, here is an article that examines some of the basics of contemporary dance. Welcome to an adventure of understanding the basic terms of contemporary dance.

↳ Any kind of dance that includes a critical view of dance belongs in the domain of contemporary dance. This is one of the criteria that distinguish contemporary dance from other types of dancing: social, traditional, folk, sport, pop, urban, circus, ritual, etc.

↳ The other criterion that distinguishes contemporary dance from other types of dancing is the status of contemporary dance as an art form. In my mind, a dance work qualifies as artistic if its authors' motivation was to transmit a view, a thought, an experience, or an emotion that was acquired by a critical observation and experiencing of life.

↳ Since I've already mentioned the term 'critical'¹ a few times, let me unpack it a bit. I might label 'critical' any view that is shaped by my own opinions, conclusions, realisations, and not just perceptions. Another way to put it would be to say that I do not take things and events for granted. I doubt and question things and events for what they appear to be; in other words, I keep asking: 'Does the content of this thing or that event match its form?' and 'Do I need this content to match that form?'. This might seem simple enough, but as it turns out, it is much harder to do than it seems.

↳ 'Critical thinking' might also be defined as thinking with my own head. It poses the most difficult questions in the process of questioning things. How do I distinguish between those opinions, conclusions, realisations, and perceptions that I create, and the ones that I take from others, consciously and willingly or not? How can I be sure that what I set out to articulate by dancing is really me articulating it and not someone else doing it through me? How can I be certain that I am thinking with my own head and that my thoughts are not being dictated to me by others? Do I dare to think, feel, sense, and move according to my own intuitions and knowledge?

↳ These and similar questions are part and parcel of critical thinking. Thinking with my own head also necessarily includes scrutinising each word of that expression, 'thinking with my own head'. In

¹ A bit of etymology on the word 'critical': from French: *critique*; New Latin: *critica* ('critique'), prop. fem. of *criticus* ('critical'); see *critic*. But this Latin word comes from the Greek: *krinō*, primary meaning: 'to separate, put asunder, distinguish', all of this in order (secondary or tertiary meaning) 'to be able to judge something fairly'.

other words, any critical view includes self-criticism. We might turn that statement into a criterion of critical thinking. Whatever view includes self-criticism is a healthy critical view. The back and forth spawned by self-criticism may invigorate one's self-expression. It may also propel one deeper into the unknown areas of the matter one is exploring. Conversely, however, there is the danger that one might get bogged down in excessive self-criticism and thus waste most of his or her creative energy and force, leaving little for actual creativity.

↳ Having indulged in explaining critical thinking, let us now indulge in defining the 'artistic'. What might be the criteria of calling a dance work artistic? Actually, this question is part of an ongoing debate that I've been having with myself, with others, and with the dance works I create. If there is an answer at all, it is different every time. No two dance works may have the same answer, or even offer an answer at all. I suggest we begin answering this question by stating that 'a dance work is art whenever anyone proclaims it as such' (the artist or other artists, observers, passers-by, theorists, etc.). Let me rephrase that: deciding whether a work of dance qualifies as art is up to anyone and everyone. It is based on one's sense of art, of what is artistic and what is not.

↳ Do we all have a sense for art? I believe we all do, whether we deal with art or not. This sense in us may wake up at any moment in our lives. And when I try to describe it or connect it with some other matter, I end up reducing it to my description of it or connection to that other matter. That doesn't mean I'd better stop talking about it. I think it is crucial to acknowledge it and so to talk about it, knowing it may never be pinned down with words or connections to other notions, such as truth, poetry, sensuality, beauty, etc.

↳ Every individual's sense of art is unique to him or her, elusive, and ever-changing. It relates to beauty, truth, politics, but does not entirely depend on them. That is, unless you allow it to become thus dependent. Reading heaps of books on what does and what doesn't qualify as 'a proper' sense of art, on what does and what doesn't qualify as art, or on how to recognise art, may contaminate one's own sense of art and put him or her in a position of favouring acquired knowledge of art to his or her own sense. In the worst case, you may end up stifling your own sense of art by trusting too much in what others have to say on art. Then you become dependent on the consensus on what is art, you neglect your own sense of art and end up saying 'whatever' or 'I don't get it' when confronted by a work of dance.

↳ Publicity may contaminate one's sense of art as well. Publicity does not only promote a product, but also a certain way of using it, a context, an ideology. Usually it is an ideology that appears to

foster a wide range of options, but actually it leaves only one. All of this applies to contemporary dance as well. Publicising a performance as artistic does not ensure that it is indeed artistic. But since publicity can be suggestive, likeable, manipulative, it's not always easy to resist the need to comply with the publicised values and adopt them. And adopting them without reflection may contaminate one's sense of art. Again this is not to say that all widely publicised products should be banned. It is simply a call to acknowledge what is going on in publicity and then work with it appropriately.

↳ The other way to contaminate your sense of art has to do with social status. When I'm trying to get into a certain social group, it goes without saying that at least in the beginning I will adopt that group's view and sense of art. Again, acknowledging the danger of contaminating our sense of art by our social status may actually lead us to enrich both our own and the sense of art of the group we are so eager to join.

↳ So, taking care of your sense of art is crucial if you want to keep it genuine, as it were. Taking care of it depends on how certain influences can be turned from contaminating to enriching and relativising, or diversifying of one's sense of art. I can take care of my sense of art by paying regard to it whenever I'm deciding whether to call a particular dance work art or not. And I can further enrich my sense of art by learning about art, about artists and dance works. This mixture of sense and knowledge of artworks I call taste.

↳ I guess it is clear by now that we all have a personal taste for art, not only artists. If only artists had taste for art, we'd have to ask them where they got it from. Is there a gene that causes one to become an artist? Ha, ha. Like other people, artists, too, need to take care of their tastes, educate and cultivate them. Taste enables us to recognise, appreciate, and experience artworks.

↳ Taste is like talent. At first, talent is only a spark, which you need to take care of, to let it branch out, to develop, to breathe and grow from possibility to actuality – to realise itself in work.

↳ People differ as to how sensitive they are to art. But even those who are very sensitive in this sense are not necessarily artists themselves. It takes great care, cultivation, and education, coupled with this kind of sensitivity to support the creation of what I would call art. Likewise a person who lacks such sensitivity may, through cultivation, develop his or her sense of art and create wonderful results, a surplus.

↳ A peculiar thing about art and the taste for it is that it often happens that despite our different tastes we are all enraptured by the same part of a performance. Obviously there are moments in

the performance that move us, that take us by surprise. How come this sometimes happens for many of us at the same time, although we all have different tastes for art? We could say that there is something going on that transcends individual taste, or any taste for that matter. It is a kind of surplus in performance. Fascinated by such moments we rush to say that this or that performance is truly artistic.

↳ But again, what goes beyond taste, this surplus, should not be taken for a criterion of what qualifies as art and what doesn't. To use it as such a criterion would necessarily amount to reducing or at least to adjusting your taste to that criterion – that a work of dance is artistic only if it produces a surplus. If this were so, we could teach in schools how to detect such a surplus in every performance. Art would boil down to manufacturing surpluses. To a factory. Which also happens. And then taste would entirely fall under the Diktat of production. Which actually (unfortunately) is the case for most of us.

↳ So let me stay with what I suggested at the beginning of this discussion of taste, that what qualifies as art is decided by each and everyone on their own at a certain moment. My decisions are based on my taste for art.

↳ Following this whole discussion I may now conclude that, for example, hip-hop, rumba, disco dancing, social dances, traffic, and flocks of birds could all qualify as contemporary dancing provided that they embrace a critical view (especially of their own position, condition, and making) and that they be artistic. And it is important to add that making those types of dancing critical and artistic (i.e., making them qualify as contemporary dancing) should not make them lose their characteristics and prevent us from still recognising them as hip-hop, rumba, disco dancing, social dances, traffic, and flocks of birds.

↳ Here lies another feature of contemporary dance that distinguishes it from other types of dancing. Contemporary dance does not presume or prescribe a certain code of behaviour, type of music that every member of the contemporary dance community should listen to, a set of themes that contemporary dance should address, a dress code, etc. This is unlike hip-hop or other types of dancing.

↳ This is the reason why such 'customs' or 'identity triggers' are not at the forefront of contemporary dance. Along with that I could also add that contemporary dance is not required to entertain, please, be beautiful or be there for people to mingle to. At the forefront of contemporary dance is the articulating and expressing of critical views of opinions, thoughts, feelings, sensations,

experienced in an artistic way. Instead of prescribing anything, contemporary dance critically examines the very act of prescribing (where it comes from, why I need to dress like this and not like that, etc.). However, none of this is to say that contemporary dance cannot be funny, entertaining, pleasing, or beautiful. For example, self-criticism is often expressed through self-irony and humour. This can be both very funny and likeable.

↳ Like everywhere else, likeability can also be dangerous in dance. It is pretty easy to create a likeable performance (just follow the signs of the heavily promoted mainstream taste). But most artists are not driven by those elements (entertainment, pleasure, beauty, likeability, etc.). Every artist has a kind of relationship with his or her idea. Since s/he finds his or her idea so attractive, s/he examines it closely. This examination can then make the idea even more attractive and put the artist into a vortex of attraction and examination. It propels the artist to act and take measures. And for example, to articulate and express the idea through dancing. And whilst dancing, the artist further examines what movements express his or her idea better than others.

↳ This is also linked to taste, as I discuss it above. We could say that the artist/performer has to keep checking whether the dance s/he is performing works or doesn't work for what s/he wants to express. If it works, s/he examines it more, analyses it and based on the information thus gathered and his or her keen interest in the idea, develops and extends it. If it does not work, s/he abandons it and may analyse why it failed.

↳ Whilst creating, artists themselves seldom ponder on whether what they are doing is art or not. Most of the time they are busy with articulating and expressing whatever it is that they're saying. If that involves questioning whether what they are doing is art, then that gets scrutinised as well, along with other stuff.

↳ Deciding what does and what doesn't work is actually a practical application of the taste for art.

↳ So there we go. A short memo on the basics of contemporary dance. What I gather from all of the above is that dance art today is first and foremost a practice. A practice of what? Of different survival and living strategies. This practice leaves no stone unturned, even if it is really heavy, enormous or sacred. When it's a matter of creating strategies of living and survival, stones like 'dance', 'contemporary', 'art', and 'taste' cannot be just left there to sit in idleness.



EVERY (NDA)
HISTORY IS
A CONSTRUCT *

photo by Urška Boljkovac

* At different times, and for different uses, we re-construct our history within the Nomad Dance Academy project, while presenting it to different audiences. By acknowledging the very fact that we manufacture our history, we deliberately engage in actively recreating and reinterpreting that history, rather than passively reproducing it.



by
Dragana
Alfirević

- Before 2005, many smaller collaborations and visits were organised around the Balkan region, artists and managers understood the need for extensive dialogue on the situation(s), and they felt the need to collaborate more intensively.
- ↳ The NOMAD DANCE ACADEMY was initiated during a Balkan Express meeting at the March, 2005, IETM conference in Belgrade. Ten members of what was to become the NDA team were present at the meeting, and one of the conclusions of the working group was that we should embark on an intensive regional collaboration in order to professionalise conditions of work in the domains of contemporary dance and the performing arts. The Balkan Dance Network was thus established. It is a flexible and informal network of friends and collaborators, which provides its members with contacts and information.
- ↳ For the members of the **Balkan Dance Network**, it was crucial to establish regional partnership through a number of different small-scale activities, so that informal connections could be formalised and deepened.
- ↳ The **2005–2007** period was very important for the development of regional cooperation, as well as for the establishment of new links among various individuals and organisations active in the fields of theory, practice, critique, and management of contemporary dance, in order to foster education, professionalisation, and promotion of contemporary dance.
- ↳ The **Nomad Dance Academy Pilot Project** was realised as a one-year set of activities, in order to enable a network of partners from the Balkan region to establish deeper connections, create possibilities of exchange, and prepare for the inception of the **Nomad Dance Academy** in its current form (2007–2010). Since then, we have simultaneously realised a number of different parallel programmes within the NDA project, planned as a long-term sustainable collaboration. In 2007 the Nomad Dance Academy became part of a larger network of partners and activities of the Jardin d'Europe project, and will remain within this network until 2013.
- ↳ Since 2005, we have collaborated with many local and international organisations and presented the network and its activities at numerous conferences and debates.





2005-2010: A POSSIBLE TIMELINE

- ...before 2005 – sporadic individual collaboration, partial initiatives and visits among the members of the future Nomad Dance Academy team
 - March 2005, Belgrade – IETM / Balkan Express meeting, first discussions of regional collaboration in contemporary dance, attended by a majority of the current NDA partners. It was this meeting that provided momentum for the creation of the NDA.
 - May 2005, Skopje – a small group gathered to discuss the topic of 'Contemporary dance in the Region – what is to be done?'
 - August 2005 Medana, Slovenia – the creation of the first draft of the NDA platform.
 - September 2005, Belgrade – the creation of the first draft of the Educational Programme.
 - January 2006 – August 2007 – workshops and individual residences organised in the Region.
 - December 2006, Belgrade – the 'Professionalization of Contemporary Dance in the Balkan Region' conference.
 - March–June 2008 – the First term of the NOMAD Educational Programme held.
 - June 2008 – Short Cuts #1 presented in Ljubljana.
 - 26th October – 1st November 2008 – the First Locomotion festival held in Skopje.
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- February – June 2009 – the Second term of the NOMAD Educational Programme held.
 - 1-5 April 2009 – the second Antistatic festival held in Sofia.
 - June 2009 – Short Cuts #2 presented in Ljubljana.
 - 9 October – 7 November 2009 – the second Locomotion festival held in Skopje.
 - 29 April 2009 – Go Out and Dance! #1 held in Belgrade, Ljubljana, Sarajevo, Skopje, Sofia, and Zagreb.
 - March–June 2010 – the Third term of the NOMAD Educational Programme held.
 - 8-12 April 2010 – the third Antistatic festival held in Sofia.
 - 29 April 2010 – Go Out and Dance #2 held in Belgrade, Ljubljana, Sarajevo, Skopje, Sofia, and Zagreb.
 - June 2010 – Short Cuts #3 presented in Ljubljana.
 - 16-23 October 2010 – the third Locomotion festival held in Skopje.
 - 24 October – 15 November – artistic residency in Montemor-o-Novo, Portugal.
 - 2-8 December 2010 – a study visit of the NDA team in Stockholm.
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DANCING FROM
SKETCHES,
ACROSS NEW
KNOWLEDGE, TO
CUTTING-EDGE
PRACTICES
WITH NOMAD
DANCE
ACADEMY



photo by Dženat Drekočić



by
Kristina
Kujundžić

- Contemporary dance can be dangerous. Why? Or: how can any kind of dance be dangerous?
- ↳ An art field, in which transversality (as defined by Deleuze and Foucault) is under constant examination, and in which the actors' individual actions keep deconstructing all the one-dimensional, limited concepts, and segmented contexts over and over again, is dangerous.
- ↳ What follows is my personal reading of the NOMAD Dance Academy's first dangerous five years.
- ↳ Right from the very start the NOMAD Dance Academy insisted on fostering inter-disciplinary communication and collaboration with various structures and fields, such as education, science, policy-making, as well as politics. However, it was never about rehashing the clichés and commonplaces of inter-disciplinarity – such as its well-publicised determination to keep crossing the borders between dance and the performing arts, dance and the visual arts, and so on.
- ↳ Fostering constructive dialogue and support for new types of collective work involving individuals and organisations from diverse fields was our top priority even in our earliest meetings. I was fortunate enough to attend one of those early meetings, held at the 2005 IETM / Balkan Express Satellite conference in Belgrade
- ↳ Prime minister Zoran Đinđić's time in office (2000–2003) saw a brief and encouraging period for the civil sector in Serbia. By 2005, however, that already seemed like a distant past, because around that time Serbia's civil sector was probably at its lowest point: the general level of societal development in Serbia, the legislative processes, and other relevant conditions were stifling further progress, functionality, and vitality of the cultural sector in general, and especially the activities of the non-institutional cultural agents.
- ↳ During the same period in Slovenia the tools of international cooperation were expanding and various comprehensive strategies and programmes were becoming available for cultural agents to enhance their international and regional relations.
- ↳ Cultural actors from the remaining Balkan countries – Croatia, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Romania, and Bosnia and Herzegovina – found themselves in between those two extremes. Most of those countries were closer to the Serbian side of the spectrum...
- ↳ Nevertheless, the reality they were facing did not discourage the participants of the Balkan Express Satellite meeting from focusing on their goal: a developing a collaborative platform tailor-made for the Balkan contemporary dance community.
- ↳ Due to political and other ongoing turbulences in the region, the international community was cautious and therefore assumed a standby position. The Satellite meeting was 'observed', but a recognition of its importance would come only much later.

↪ Refusing to accept this kind of situation, a group of contemporary dance operators from Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Slovenia, and Serbia took matters in their own hands and began discussion on creating a unique model for contemporary dance artists from across the region. Was it risky? Yes, it was. The expectations were high, both those of others and our own, the pressures from those 'with more experience', those who 'know better' and 'have already undergone the process' were also great, whereas there was only limited support.

↪ However, those people had all the vital elements for a successful process: a Vision, diversified Knowledge, Enthusiasm and Willingness to invest as much as necessary, and, last but not least, mutual Trust.

↪ With the exception of knowledge, none of those elements are crucial for cultural policy making and furthermore, according to theory none of them could really be used as an instrument, but I would say that exactly those elements were (and still are) the key points that distinguish the NOMAD Dance Academy from other such initiatives.

↪ In December of 2006, when the global (climate) changes were made manifest with an overwhelming fog in Belgrade, an international conference on the 'Professionalization of Contemporary Dance in the Balkans' was organised. The conference venue corresponded with the weather conditions as well as with the blurred contextual framework of non-institutional culture, which includes contemporary dance: the building, Magacin u Kraljevića Marka (MKM), was formerly a warehouse belonging to the Nolit publishing company, which the City Hall had allocated to the cultural scene following a rather long series of negotiations. The building had neither heating nor any furniture and its technical facilities were rather limited, but for the conference participants it looked like a dream come true, because for the first time it seemed as though the City Hall had recognised the importance of the non-institutional cultural scene and addressed its concerns with adequate policy instruments. The impression was wrong: it was not a well-prepared decision with political backing; in a way, the non-institutional cultural agents were used; the venue was placed under the jurisdiction of a public cultural institution and furthermore, that institution was put in charge of funding the work and programmes that were to go on at the venue.

↪ Nevertheless, the conference opened up communication and exchange between policy-makers and contemporary dance representatives. Also, the conference debates and reflections on the new tendencies in European contemporary dance gave the artistic community a chance to assess the challenges and achievements, as well as a better understanding of the processes that accompanied the twelve-month emergence and functioning of the NOMAD Dance Academy.

↪ The NOMAD Dance Academy was defined as a regional platform for contemporary dance, with the aim to intervene immediately on many different levels: from the education of young authors, choreographers and dancers through self-education, to a continuous collaboration with decision makers and communication with the audience. But most of all, the NOMAD Dance Academy was defined as a developmental and self-refreshing model based on individuals and organisations in close collaboration.

↪ Those definitions contained some key words and were clear enough so that international donors, sensitive to the needs of the Balkan artistic communities, could understand them. Their assessments still pointed to high levels of risk in investing into such a complex regional initiative, but it was equally alluring to be among the first to make the decision and support an obviously pioneering initiative.

↪ It seems as though Balkan national policies could be best described as rearguard policies, which was manifest in NOMAD's case, too, since the local authorities offered their support – which they portrayed as their awareness of the significance of contemporary dance – only after the initiative had gained the trust and support of the international donors. The local authorities' recognition was rather symbolic than profound, but it did signal to the actors on the scene that the social capital in their possession was a potent instrument in creating and influencing cultural policies. But it did not happen automatically.

↪ The decision to emphasise the strategy of education in regards to the strategy of presentation was probably the most exciting decision that the NOMAD group made in the first few years of its public activity. I believe that it was exactly this decision that positioned NOMAD within the field of transversality. This transversality is based on a structure that is not a classical network of like-minded people or a particular vision of an isolated (sub)group, but a substantial and fully thought-through initiative of the Balkan contemporary dance community.

↪ Any cultural network that is meant to answer challenges and contribute to newly formed public spaces that cut across the traditional domains of knowledge and practices and that critically addresses transnational and international collaboration, must start from new forms of education, mobility, and site-specific self-organised structures.

↪ With its Short Cuts programme for first-year students, the NOMAD Dance Academy has been reasserting its position that networks should no longer be solely about exchanging information and products/programmes, but also about new knowledge and cutting-edge practices.

- ↳ Policy and politics will follow that mode of repositioning networks and redefining their roles. Or will they? European policies have – the NOMAD's model has been recognised as part of the Jardin d'Europe programme.
- ↳ But when it comes to the lack of recognition on the national level, should one look for the reasons for it in the specificities of the region, or in NOMAD itself?
- ↳ The Balkan countries' national cultural policies focus primarily on improving their particular country's national image and increasing its influence. Therefore, not a single country in the region considers (regional) cooperation a clear priority, and thus adequate means for it have yet to be provided; with the exception of Slovenia and Croatia, the Balkan states do not even recognise their non-institutional cultural scenes as interlocutors in public policy making, which of course also includes cultural policies; since institutional reforms have yet to be carried out, there is presently no system that could enable a long-term commitment and systematic approach. In a situation like that, an interest in contemporary dance is of secondary importance.
- ↳ Even though NOMAD is not a metaphor for a network but a well-thought and constantly improved instrument, it is still in its adolescent stage. Following the network's legitimisation, its members will expect it to be:
 - ~ a sectorial association, which would be able to answer all of its members' needs regarding artistic development, research, collaboration, productions, and dissemination;
 - ~ a system that would protect, promote, and advocate for all of its stakeholders;
 - ~ a system of exchange and acquisition of attitudes and ideas, and also an opinion-maker;
 - ~ a database and information centre;
 - ~ and an umbrella organisation of a diversified set of individuals, organisations, and institutions.
- ↳ Also, there are some common problem areas that require creative solutions:
 - ~ instead of opening new areas of reflection, the diversification of activities and programming may only diffuse the attention and focus;
 - ~ without proper peer support, a network can make already heavy workloads even heavier and become tiresome rather than motivating and inspiring;
 - ~ barriers in communication can sometimes lead to misunderstandings or misinterpretations in practice and in thinking, which can in turn lead to a breakdown of trust.

- ↳ Even for NOMAD this is too much to deal with – at the moment. With its flexible structure and without fixed mechanisms of control, which are the most valuable qualities of NOMAD since they allow for experimenting, risk-taking, innovation, in one word – development, what has been achieved so far is fully worthy of respect.
- ↳ Furthermore, making an impact on social policy making is crucial for influencing the creation of public policies, which also includes cultural policies. NOMAD should admittedly try harder in this area. The seemingly low level of NOMAD's influence in the sphere of public policy may be attributed to a lack of mechanisms for making the results known to the wider public, as well as to the lack of developed mechanisms for evaluating the effects of the activities performed.
- ↳ NOMAD are currently developing a platform for collective knowledge. This knowledge, once shared, will give one a unique opportunity to access current thinking and see evolving practices, to observe alternative cultural contexts, which shed an entirely different light on the same problems, but also suggest unforeseen solutions.
- ↳ The NOMAD partnership enables more effective peer learning, acting as a critical link between centralised and decentralised cultural and educational practices, thus becoming a potential resource that could contribute to policy coherence horizontally and vertically. That is what has been happening lately in Macedonia, where an undergraduate major in contemporary dance is now being offered for the first time, and where the NOMAD community has been acting as a hub for making contacts, the knowhow, good practices, and much more.
- ↳ To establish operational instruments of recognition, the NOMAD Dance Academy needs to find a way to enter the public institutions and official education systems, which, despite rapid and deep political, economic, and everyday-life changes, have not undergone a significant structural transition yet. For the sake of further development, it is crucial for all sides to invest more in collaborative work, even if it be limited in time and space, in order to build up dialogue as a process and grow out of the outdated and inadequate principles inherited from a previous era.
- ↳ In a context where no clear institutional basis exists for participatory policy-making, continuity and consistency are what matters. The problems, requests, as well as the possible solutions I highlighted above should be kept on the political agenda even if they are seemingly ignored – that is probably the biggest challenge for any initiative, and thus for NOMAD as well. Whatever topic one picks, it should be neither overstated nor forgotten, but instead must have up-to-date social and political relevance.

↳ With all those levels of reflection and assessment built in, the NOMAD Dance Academy should be able to provide a continuum of ongoing action research as an integral part of teaching and learning, enabling the review of existing and current research. Given all the lessons learnt and advantages of transversality practised by NOMAD, it can certainly be used as a prototype for future initiatives in a variety of art fields.



photo by Nenad Milošević

INTERVIEW
WITH ANA
VUJANOVIĆ



photo by Nenad Milošević



by
Dejan Srhoj

● I met with Ana on a sunny Sunday morning, in the lobby of hotel Moskva in Belgrade. She was perfectly dressed, as usual, with a straight hair cut. There were a few people sitting around us, talking calmly. Soft jazz music and the smell of coffee.

Dejan Srhoj:

Ana, I know you as a dramaturge and theorist of the contemporary performing arts. Is that accurate?



↓ Ana Vujanović:

I would say it is, but it's not a complete description of my work. I define myself first of all as a practitioner, a cultural worker, because that old-fashioned term (taken from the socialist vocabulary) covers a wide range of dirty, material, as well as more sophisticated and spiritual activities in which I engage. I'm paraphrasing Benjamin here to emphasise that today we can hardly keep them separate. But I'm not proud of being a multi-tasking person who exploits herself endlessly; instead, I'd rather try to diagnose the state of affairs. As I'm a freelance author and actor and as my general concern is the contemporary independent cultural-artistic scene, I need – like so many of my colleagues – to work a lot to reach the point of dealing with dramaturgy and theory.

↪ To a certain extent, all that which is supposed to precede my main job becomes a value for itself, as it is not invested in my own professional career only but becomes a contribution to the scene and to the public space for/of contemporary art in general.

↪ Sometimes I wish I had more time to concentrate on my own work, but on the other hand I cannot comply with the neo-liberal machines of academia and creative industry, and stay in 'my own room'.

DS:

You told me you were very busy these days (end of December) – what are you doing?



↓ AV:

Here I might as well just elaborate on what I just said. I don't think you would like to know. It's an incredibly boring list of duties, mostly administrative ones, 26 of them in

the two weeks around January 1st, after I arrived from Spain and before I leave for Berlin.

↳ Besides, I have two creative engagements. In January, the TkH platform is going to resume the How to do things with theory project at Les laboratoires d'Aubervilliers in Paris, and Bojana Cvejić and I are working now on outlining our research on Performance and public, which we will put together next year, together with Marta Popivoda and a few external collaborators. The other thing is this conversation.

DS:

Many of my colleagues at the Nomad Dance Academy are not satisfied with being forced to multitask constantly. I would like to think of multitasking as a way to broaden the field of my artistic practice and to include organising and programming the Nomad Dance Academy in it. Would you agree that programming and organising the NDA educational programme is also an artwork?

↓

↓ AV:

I would say it is indeed possible today to regard all those activities as artworks, as they are recognised and legitimised as such by the Artworld – they are publically presented, they have become topics of theory and other art discourses, they could even be toured or sold. I'm referring here to all those artists' talks, exchanges, collaborations, networks, trainings in management, dramaturgical coachings, etc.

↳ But then, if it is so, we need to rethink the Artworld in economic and political categories. Because, although all of those activities do broaden our fields of work and provide us with the necessary skills for survival in the Artworld – hence from a confused and clumsy genius in 'his/her own room', an artist becomes an actor – we should never forget that the Artworld has in mind a precise calculation of their value. Here we need to recall the concept of post-industrial production with its categories of immaterial labour, cognitive capitalism, and post-Fordism, in order to understand why all those activities are accepted as artworks and thus commodities on the cultural market. They are cheap. They entail only a small investment in production and the product is still there. The Artworld is really smart and I'm afraid faster than we are. Over the last ten years, those

of us engaged in the performing arts have mostly celebrated precisely that which has made us more and more precarious in economic terms. Plus, as a consequence of their commodification, we are facing the de-politicisation of our potentially political activities. As far I as can remember, it was Deleuze who once said: what is commodified cannot harm anything.

↳ On the other hand, or to return to the beginning, I would say that only as actors we can act: we can fight for different modes of production, organisational models, and cultural policies, and we can discuss and negotiate the status of art in society. So I'm not in favour of a return to the romantic idea of the artist-genius, whose social position is a transcendental one. I just think we must think the possibilities that are given to us today more critically and self-critically, if we want to make them critical and political. Otherwise, all that we do is from a macro-social perspective only a 'cheap deal' that feeds the machine of capitalism.

DS:

Do you think the NDA has managed to offer as you say a 'different mode of production, a different organizational model'?

↓

↓ AV:

I'm not so familiar with the internal organisation and management of the NDA. What I would say from my position of an outsider is that the NDA functions as a project co-organised by a few independent organisations and funded by public money and a few international foundations. In these terms, its mode of production is neither new nor different; instead, it's rather typical, as it operates through categories of project-based management and fundraising system.

↳ On the other hand, it is probably true that an organisational model that you both create and subject yourself to is what I would identify as different and experimental, based on your own ideas of how to collaborate, how to distribute the roles among your team (in accordance or discordance with your educational backgrounds), and how to create an educational process. What distinguishes the NDA from other similar projects is also a kind of 'reverse nomadism', where those who travel, the nomads, are the

participants and not the lecturers – which would be more typical. I think this approach is especially valuable in the Balkan region, where people, particularly young actors on the scene, still don't travel abroad regularly, which is not the case on the international (European) scene, where this kind of 'nomadism' is already a must.

DS:

One of the reasons the idea of nomadism appeared was the wish to create a 'unique contemporary dance scene in the Balkans'. Can you relate to the idea of a Balkan contemporary dance scene? Can we speak of dance scenes in contemporary dance nowadays at all?

↓

↓ AV:

The notion or the concept of the Balkans has never really been close to me, as it is in my mind somehow directly linked to the old times of the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian Empires and has recently been revived by the international agencies... I prefer to use 'the former Yugoslavia', referring mostly to its socialist, post-Second World War legacy. I don't want to say that 'the former Yugoslavia' is a better term than 'the Balkans', or that I have stronger arguments... I think it's rather a political decision.

↪ Anyway, I do think that there is something today that we might call the contemporary dance scene in the Balkans, characterised by a research-based or conceptual approach to dance and choreography, small-scale productions, a certain sense of humour and cynicism, a distance from the so-called post-modernist dance, influences from the conceptual performance art scene of the '70s, etc.

↪ Maybe it is something that all of you, who have dealt with the notion of the Balkans through your various programmes and initiatives during the 2000s, have produced yourselves: a set of similarities of individual Balkan scenes that did not pre-exist as a common denominator of the Balkans and therefore could not have been used as a departing point.

↪ How about that – especially in relation to the term 'to create', which you used in your question?

DS:

At many different meetings of the NDA, we have debated on the Balkan dance scene and whether it might have a common ground in thought. We usually ended up talking about production opportunities, spaces, budgets, politicians, and players. We understood each other so very well. After those meetings we'd go eat and drink. Again we understood each other very well. After that we'd go see each other's shows. And then we wouldn't understand each other that well. We realised how different we were. So very different that it seemed we could never be called a scene. We kept on meeting each other, we became very critical of each other, we started collaborating with each other.

↪ I was surprised by your answer. I expected you would say that the scene does not exist, that there are just individuals without any connecting point. And then I see a list of common features. Wow! Yes. But no! I realise that any similarities among the individual local scenes are not pre-thought, that they are not deliberate decisions. We did not create them. They are simply born in between words, thoughts, movements.

↪ But yes, it takes endless meetings, initiatives, exchanges, discussions, and parties to make room for the in-between. Yes. Endless.

Shall we end there?

↓

↓ AV:

Hmm... I wouldn't say it is endless, but for sure it is a potential field of exploration or even invention. So yes, I would leave it at that.

Thank you for this conversation, Dejan.

DS:

Thank you, Ana.

■

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An article by American Blair Tindell mentions that professional dance companies, classical and contemporary, report that 67-95 percent of dancers have an injury each year.



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