

**Cultural policy reforms of the independent  
contemporary dance and contemporary theatre scene  
(Report on the situation, conclusions and recommendations)**

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## INTRODUCTION

This report is an attempt to intervene in the cultural policy of the Republic of Macedonia in the parts that refer to the contemporary performing arts scene - contemporary dance and contemporary theater. Namely, the report is a reflection on how the cultural policy can be regulated differently or according to the needs of the abovementioned parts. Furthermore, it contains views, findings, conclusions and recommendations on specific topics concerning the artists working in the field of contemporary dance and theater, originating from the presentations and discussions of the participants at the conference titled *How to Do Things with Circumstances?* held on June 16<sup>th</sup>, 2012 at the *Youth Cultural Center* in Skopje. The conference *How to Do Things with Circumstances?* is part of a larger project that deals with analyzing the problems and conditions of the independent performing arts scene in the two former Yugoslav countries (Serbia and Macedonia) within which two consecutive events were organized - a symposium in Novi Sad (Serbia) organized by *Per-art* and a conference in Skopje (Macedonia).

The conference in Skopje was conceptualized by Biljana Tanurovska - Kjulavkovski and Iskra Shukarova from Lokomotiva - Centre for New Initiatives in Arts and Culture, Skopje. The conference was organized by Lokomotiva in cooperation with Ksenija Chochkova, alumna of the Robert Bosch Foundation. The conference was financially supported by the Goethe Institute and Robert Bosch Foundation (Serbia) and the association Society for Macedonian-German friendship and cooperation, Skopje (Macedonia), and it was realized with the friendly support of the Goethe Institute, Liaison Office in Skopje.

PhDs in theatre studies, philosophy and cultural science, MAs in management in culture and cultural policy, choreographers, dancers, programers of contemporary dance educational programs, theatre producers and directors from Macedonia, Serbia and Germany took part in this conference. Conference panelists were: **Senka Anastasova** - PhD in Philosophy, Assistant professor of Introduction in Cultural Studies at the Institute for Social Sciences and Humanities in Skopje; **Ivanka Apostolova** - PhD, employed as Head of Department for Cultural Studies (MA studies) at the Euro-Balkan Institute - Skopje; **Ruse Arsov** - producer, co-founder of the Center for Drama Arts *T-House*, works in the public institution *Youth Cultural Centre*; **Marija Zafirova** - theatre producer who lives in Skopje, a founder of the independent theatre – *TEATRA*; **Sonja Zdravkova – Dzeparoska** - PhD in theatre studies, Assistant professor of the academic programs for ballet pedagogy and contemporary dance at the Faculty of Music Arts at the University *Ss. Cyril and Methodius*, Skopje; **Dragana Zarevska** - visual and performance artist, MA at the Institute for Sociological, Political and Juridical Research at the University *Ss. Cyril and Methodius*, Skopje; **Hannah Marquardt**, cultural manager of the Robert Bosch Foundations' program; **Gisela Müller** - responsible for the artistic and educational program of the *Tanzfabrik* Berlin school and director of Dance Intensive program; **Sofia Ristevska** - graduated theatre director and MA in stage design, working independently in Bitola and she is part of the independent theatre scene; **Marijana Savovska** - dancer, choreographer, lives and works in Germany; **Biljana Tanurovska - Kjulavkovski** - MA in cultural policy and management, co-founder, manager program-coordinator of Lokomotiva - Centre for New Initiatives in Arts and Culture; **Marijana Cvetkovic - Markovic** - MA in cultural policy and management, manager

of *Stanica* - Service for Contemporary Dance in Belgrade; **Iskra Shukarova** - choreographer and assistant professor of academic programs for ballet pedagogy and contemporary dance at the Faculty of Music Arts at the University *Ss. Cyril and Methodius*, Skopje.

In the discussions at the conference about thirty actors from the field took part. Notes were taken by **Milka Ivanovska**, BA in Political Science and a collaborator of Lokomotiva in several contemporary dance projects.

At the beginning, the report refers to the development and status of the independent contemporary dance and theater scene, it advocates participation of all the actors from the field in the creation of cultural policies; it proposes new institutional models vs. outdated institutional solutions; talks about mobility and brain drain; it proposes instruments to support the research in the field, and how to stimulate the development of theory; it considers systematic solutions that would follow after the obtainable education, primarily referring to the type of job offered and the working conditions.

**The aim of the conference** was to analyze the socio-political situation, the conditions and needs in the field of contemporary performing arts in Macedonia and to reassess the cultural policy that is currently oriented to ad hoc solutions (for example, the recent decision of the Minister for Culture to support the private center *Interart* with a three-year grant without comprehensive analysis of the necessary priorities of the scene. This is an ad hoc solution for introducing a long-term grant only for one subject from the scene), conservative and conventional interpretation, formulation and building of the performing arts - the contemporary dance and theater. The problem, mainly, was located in the current cultural policy that supports the mainstream (commercial and institutional scene) as a leading aesthetics and production process, and does not recognize the modern expression in a relevant way, or is insufficiently informed about the needs and potentials of this art form.

**The discussion mainly focused on** cultural policies for performing arts and the effects of these policies, the mechanisms and instruments for support and development (financial, institutional, program, etc.), the educational opportunities, working conditions and terms, the existing possibilities for development, mobility status and brain drain in the performing arts in Macedonia. This event joined together the contemporary dance and contemporary theater scenes in independent sector in order to open a discussion about the similarities and differences of their positions in the cultural system and cultural politics of Republic of Macedonia.

The participants in the conference requested participation in policy-making and decision-making processes in order to secure transparency in creating of the cultural policy that will represent the needs of all actors, as opposed to non-transparent imposition and regulation of the needs of individuals.

The recognized problems and needs of the independent contemporary dance and theater scene outlined in this report are presented to the Ministry of Culture in a form of **conclusions and recommendations** towards appropriate regulation of the cultural policy in the field of contemporary performing arts.

## **INDEPENDENT CONTEMPORARY PERFORMING ARTS SCENE IN MACEDONIA: DEVELOPMENT, FORMULATIONS, VIEWS, EFFORTS**

When creating cultural policies for contemporary dance and contemporary theater, it is important to understand the meaning of these terms today, when they are conditioned by the new terminologies, verbalization and quick transitions of the meaning that is determined by the contexts in which they create. In regard to contemporary performing arts scenes in the Balkans, it was presented Milena Bogavac's point of view, a playwright from Serbia, published in *Raster*, an annual journal of contemporary performing arts, in the edition *Teorija koja hoda (Walking Theory)*, which defines/explains the contemporary (alternative) theater through a portrayal of traditional (mainstream) theater institutions. She says that these institutions are characterized by being closed for contemporary tendencies, currents and theories, captured on its stage, outdated and ungainly production apparatus, an army of actors in theater houses, surly and ill-humored technicians, huge financial funds, dazzling scenery, lavishing costumes and iron repertory system allowing for certain productions to run for several decades. Contemporary theater and contemporary dance is the opposite of all this. Although everything stated above aims to distinguish what represents an alternative, independent and performing art, it is done with respect to the needs of the mainstream for such approach.

Or as expressed by Biljana Tanurovska - Kjulavkovski: *"Contemporary dance is not connected with dance technique or special aesthetics but it is a philosophy of movement and choreography of the context and the body, expression of personal and original, and it is not a technique skill, or learning the conventions of beautiful, acceptable or aesthetic but introducing of new aesthetics and breaking and experimenting with the old one."* Such opinions about what is contemporary dance and contemporary theater today, should be the starting points from which the cultural policies of this field would be created because that is the only way to really meet the needs of those who create this art.

Regarding the institutional structure of contemporary dance in Macedonia, today, within the cultural policy, contemporary dance includes jazz ballet, modern, neoclassical, upgraded, etc.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A statement issued by the Ministry of Culture regarding support of the independent scene, says, "[...] *The Ministry of Culture made extensive analysis of the degree to which the contemporary dance is present in the independent cultural scene. Professionally, contemporary dance is the primary activity of the cultural center Interart and Lokomotiva - Centre for New Initiatives in Arts and Culture, whereas the amateur and semi-professional group includes the following subjects: Rebis, Break a Leg, Tutu, Mak Models, Bulforg Ballet.*" *Expressing their commitment to improve all segments of art, the Ministry of Culture, regularly, in the programs of national interest supports the subjects whose primary activity is contemporary dance, emphasized Kancheska-Milevska.*"

This statement listed *Rebis, Break a Leg, Tutu, Mak Models and Bulforg Ballet* as amateur and semi-professional contemporary dance organizations, although these subjects do not practice contemporary dance, but offer programs for jazz ballet, modern ballet, neoclassical, classical ballet for children, etc., but not contemporary dance. For them there should be a separate treatment and a different approach – on what the participants at the conference agree upon. But this raises the question of the relevance of this in-depth analysis of the Ministry of Culture of the degree of presence of contemporary dance in Macedonia taking into account the inaccuracies made in the most basic division and mapping of the subjects from this field. The abovementioned extract is taken from the article titled "Support the Independent Dance Scene" at:

<http://www.kultura.gov.mk/index.php/odnosi-so-javnost/soopstenija/544-poddrska-na-nezavisnata-tancova-scena>  
на 17.07.2012

The beginning of the development of contemporary dance in Macedonia is associated with the democratization phase of the program policies (1990-2012...) of the Macedonian Opera and Ballet (at that time Macedonian National Theatre). This initial democratization of the repertory occurred primarily when the employees of this institution enrolled in the west-European and east-European educational centers. However, the institutional dance scene in Macedonia embodied by the Macedonian Opera and Ballet continues to operate in closed frames, oriented largely toward its own choreographic personnel, standardized creative process focused on the final product, representative logic, regional cooperation with professionals from institutions of former Yugoslavia and predominantly classical ballet repertory, which is a legitimate institutional policy, but not a stimulating policy for developing a new dance language.

Due to this institutional policy and also the need to introduce novelties, in the early 2000s pioneering steps were taken in formation of the independent contemporary dance scene. Organizations such as Risima Risimkin's *Interart* (1996) and *MTC* (2002) and Lokomotiva - Centre for New Initiatives in Arts and Culture (2002) were established.<sup>2</sup> Risima Risimkin's *Interart* or *MTC* established a dance production of the choreographer who manages this center, an international dance fest with diverse performances and tendencies following the preferences of the audience and organized several regional conferences (2004-2005 and 2007- ). Whereas NGO Lokomotiva - Centre for New Initiatives in Arts and Culture from Skopje started and continuously is organizing workshops related to education in the field of contemporary dance and other forms of education, (co) produce more works by Macedonian authors and established the international festival of contemporary dance and performance *Locomotion*. This festival exhibited clearly profiling content and managed to grow its own audience. "*Lokomotiva is the only one on the contemporary dance scene in Macedonia that managed to initiate a new type of regional and international cooperation in the field of contemporary dance (different from the conventional model of representative collaboration that is mostly practiced), and it accomplished that through various international projects, from which we can distinguish the regional dance platform Nomad Dance Academy (of which is co-founder) and the European project Jardin d'Europe.*", concluded Marijana Cvetkovic - Markovic.

*"Lokomotiva through its program that includes new young Macedonian authors demonstrated qualities of openness and flexibility towards new tendencies in contemporary art, integration and genuine cooperation with regional and international centers, exchange and fluctuation of cultural products, staff mobility, research and experimental approaches to production of works, linking theory with practice, encouraging hybrid genres and syncretism (theater of movement, physical theater, dance theater, etc.)."*, concluded Sonja Zdravkovska - Dzeperoska.

However, despite the creation of a certain critical mass of people who since early 2000s worked on creating conditions for development and promotion of

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<sup>2</sup> This is taken from the presentation on the subject of *Modern Macedonian Dance Scene* by Sonja Zdravkova - Dzeperoska, PhD in theatre studies, Assistant professor of the academic programs for ballet pedagogy and contemporary dance at the Faculty of Music Arts at the University *Ss. Cyril and Methodius*, Skopje. For more information see the notes of the conference

contemporary dance as a recognizable and independent art, it seems that no serious impact was made for the development and establishment of an independent scene of contemporary dance in Macedonia. There was a void and a lack of initiative by the young generations of dancers, choreographers and cultural workers to develop independent contemporary dance scene due to the apathy that stems from the lack of conditions and unsystematic and ad hoc policies of the Ministry Culture in this field. The young generations are aware that the numerous, decades-long efforts by their older colleagues to change the conditions in the field in which they work did not bring positive outcome, and so they decided to pursue their careers outside the country where working conditions are on a significant level. Sonja Zdravkovska - Dzeperoska concludes that: *"In absence of any official definite strategy for the development of contemporary dance in Macedonia, its profiling today is between these two topoi of continuity of the institutional layer and the penetration of innovations that mainly arise from the non-institutional sphere."*

As for the independent theater scene, it experiences growth in recent years with the appearance of series of independent theater groups that actively contribute to decentralization and mobility of the cultural products within the country. After years of vacuum, this growth follows the initiatives for development of independent theater in the 90's (associated with the names of Darko Mitrevski and Aleksandar Popovski) and the opening of *Mala Stanica* as an independent center. In 2009, there was an initiative for establishing an independent theater called *Kaj navigatorot Cvetko* (by three prominent directors - Slobodan Unkovski, Ivan Popovski and Aleksandar Popovski) which with its infrastructure would have supported the new and young authors, but, unfortunately, there is no prospect that this project will be realized. Today in Macedonia there is a clear interest for the independent performances, and that was most evidently demonstrated by last year's inclusion of independent theater productions in the leading international theater festival in the country - *Open Youth Theatre* (2011)<sup>3</sup>. But, despite the intensive growth of the scene for contemporary theater, it seems that the lack of financial and infrastructural conditions seriously threaten its viability.

It is necessary to have clear cultural policies in the field of contemporary performing arts in order to encourage the development and sustainability of these scenes, preventing the brain drain from these fields, establishing state-sponsored programs to stimulate mobility, research, production projects, international cooperation, residential and educational programs.

## **1. ADVOCATING FOR A MODEL OF CREATING A CULTURAL POLICY – PARTICIPATION OF THE ACTORS FROM THE INDEPENDENT PERFORMING ARTS SCENE IN THE CREATING OF CULTURAL POLICIES**

The Ministry of Culture according to the constitutional and legal framework of Republic of Macedonia and Macedonia's strategic goals in the field of culture is identified as a major actor with which all other actors from the cultural scene should cooperate in the development of cultural contents and policies. Hence, the Ministry of

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<sup>3</sup> Open Youth Theater program 2011: <http://mot.com.mk/>

Culture and the independent scene should establish a two-way (mutual) relation of cooperation for balanced and planned development and creation of cultural policies in this field.

This report and this conference are part of a wider commitment for equal participation of the independent cultural scene in the creation of cultural policies in Macedonia. Although according to the Law on Culture (Article 9, Paragraph 4)<sup>4</sup>, the independent cultural scene is one of the actors involved in preparing the national strategy for culture, so far there has no visible effort by the state for political affirmation of the independent cultural scene as a partner in creating cultural policies in general, or for the field of performing arts.

The conference adopted a general conclusion that the decision-making process in the Ministry of Culture is highly centralized and that the non-institutional sector has been significantly marginalized in the creation of the cultural policies. The Ministry of Culture considers those organizations that are private and profitable, organizations representing amateur, not professional activities, ones that support an individual against a community, etc. as independent cultural scene and treats them on the same level as part of the cultural policy. So, not only that it identifies and interprets incorrectly the role of the independent scene, but it makes improper decisions about its development that are not in favor of the scene.

Therefore, we believe that it is necessary to introduce new democratic models of participation in the creation of cultural policies in practice, including all the actors of the independent performing arts scene, if we want to properly, consciously and strategically meet the needs of the independent scene (in this case the contemporary performing scene). The independent performing arts scene in Macedonia is small but includes experienced actors who have a commitment to influence the development of the conditions in which they work and which have not been changed since the independence of the Republic of Macedonia.

According to the European Commission and the European experience, the performing arts are most vividly recognized and financially supported by the European Union for the incorporation of interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches and interpretations. The Ministry of Culture in its Strategic Plan for 2012 - 2014<sup>5</sup> defines a Subprogram for *"Creating and updating the cultural strategy and policy of the Republic of Macedonia in accordance with European practices and standards."* Thereupon, the recognition of the contemporary performing arts as an important entity within the cultural system of the Republic of Macedonia and the introduction of new standards of *'operating according requirements'* is in compliance with the European practices that the Ministry of Culture is committed to follow and incorporate.

The Ministry of Culture should support the development of the independent contemporary performing arts scene in Macedonia because the knowledge and capacities that it holds are public and developing good which is incorporated in the public cultural and educational institutions and serve in the building of its cadre and

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<sup>4</sup> Law on Culture, Unofficial consolidated text (Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia No 31/98, 49/03, 82/2005, 24/2007, 116/2010, 47/2011 и 51/2011):

[http://www.kultura.gov.mk/images/stories/dokumenti/Zakon\\_za\\_kulturata\\_Precisten\\_tekst.pdf](http://www.kultura.gov.mk/images/stories/dokumenti/Zakon_za_kulturata_Precisten_tekst.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Culture for 2012 – 2014 taken from [www.kultura.gov.mk](http://www.kultura.gov.mk) on July 15, 2012.



the performing arts scene, and, finally, through the programs it contributes to the development of the cultural needs in the country. What distinguishes the independent scene from the institutional scene and the economically more powerful creative industries is the capacity for critical artistic and cultural practices and introducing a new production process that proactively contributes to the development of the contents and the cultural policy. This productive position of the independent scene is due to the models on which it operates and the principle of deciding it supports, and that is the approach '*from the bottom – up*' or the participatory approach that provides balanced and planned development of the scene.

The past decisions of the Ministry of Culture in the field of performing arts are seen as unilateral and ad hoc, which is mainly due to the principle of decision making in the direction '*from the top – down*' and preferring the policy of personal contacts. There is an urgent need to overcome barriers for collaboration between different stakeholders from the independent scene on one side, and the Ministry of Culture, municipal administrations and national cultural institutions on the other side. It is necessary to provide mechanisms for open cooperation and communication between the Ministry of Culture - independent scene and the Ministry of Culture – subject.<sup>6</sup>

The tendency of the Ministry of Culture to transfer the culture and art from the domain of public responsibility to the market mechanism is not a valid solution in the case of contemporary performing arts because such market (i.e. demand/audience) has not been developed in the Republic of Macedonia yet. One of the conclusions is that the Ministry of Culture for years has been supporting commercial forms that flirt with the audience rather than influence the development of cultural needs, and it supports conventional models of international collaboration (representative models) that are considered as obsolete on European and international level. It is necessary to create a policy that would oppose the unilaterality and uniformity of what is produced or imported in order to create opportunities for a multitude of diversity in contemporary performing arts. According to Gisela Müller, responsible for the artistic and educational program of the Berlin School *Tanzfabrik* and director of Dance Intensive program, "*The main objective of cultural policies should be creating structures and environments in which artistic choices will be made freely.*"

#### Conclusions and recommendations:

- Advocating and demanding use of democratic models for creating cultural policy - participation of actors of the independent dance and theater scene in the creation of cultural policies, as opposed to non-transparent policy-making and introducing instruments in order to favor the needs of individuals
- Advocating and demanding a decision-making process on the principle '*from the bottom – up*'
- Knowledge and capacities of the independent scene are public and developing wealth which the state and the institutions can utilize in building cadres and the performing arts scene

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<sup>6</sup> For example, the incredible growth of the independent performing arts scene in Berlin is due to the long-time public dialogue and the recognition of the contemporary art as a priceless by the political elites.

- Removing the administrative obstacles for meetings, dialogue and cooperation (opening the Ministry of Culture for cooperation with different actors from the scene)
- Efforts to nurture diversity (immanent in art) against unilaterality and uniformity.

## **2. POST-INSTITUTIONAL PRACTICES vs. OUTDATED INSTITUTIONAL SOLUTIONS**

One of the crucial dilemmas in creating cultural policies for development of contemporary performing arts is whether old institutional models meet the needs of the scene or it is necessary to introduce new models, post-institutional solutions/practices. Furthermore, we should also consider the needs for flexibility, the orientation towards experimentation and research, the focus on working process and the unconventional ways of collaboration and production which are essential characteristics of contemporary performing arts.

The necessity of non-bureaucratic and flexible forms of organization for easier identification of the needs and the way of production require new models of institutions, rather than re-establishment of the already outdated institutional models. For example, the suggestion for opening a Dance Theatre and Dance Company in Macedonia, a modern type of institution characteristic for the development of dance companies for modern ballet in the 80's, cannot meet the needs of the contemporary dance scene which represents a variety of different author's approaches, syncretism and hybridity. Instead, it requires development of new institutions or institutions that will develop residential programs, programs for mobility of local and foreign professionals, performing arts research programs, production, programs for temporary employment of young professionals in order to transfer knowledge etc. The institution/institutions would satisfy the needs of a working space for all actors of the scene.

There are real differences between the production processes of the independent performing scene and the institutional scenes for dance and theater. The public institutional scene is large, monolithic and unresponsive to the demands of the contemporary performing arts for flexibility and openness. The indifference and apathy are problems arising from the nepotism which for years has been dragging out in the Macedonian cultural institutions, but, above all, it is the politicization of culture. Cultural institutions in Macedonia are still, in great number, led by party delegated people, and not by professionals. We need strategies and activities for institutional changes, such as education for new managerial practices of the management staff as oppose to have artists managing the institutions; transparent staff selection procedures; instruments for opening institutions to cooperate with the independent scene; and genuine international cooperation as oppose to representative cooperation.

We suggest a number of ways for institutional practices' reformation, for example, the opportunity to influence from inside with the approach '*from the bottom – up*' or to create parallel institutions to the existing ones that would work separately and without interference. A question is raised whether the institution can be changed

from inside because of the institutional critique, whether to form new post-institutions according to the needs, or there is no need for institutions for these arts and they can operate only as part of the civil society sector, i.e. as part of the independent scene. To answer all these questions, it requires an intensive discussion and concentrated study on this issue in the following period.

Conclusions and recommendations:

- A portrait of public cultural institutions: outdated managing model characterized by lack of openness, unresponsiveness, pyramidal hierarchy, inefficiency, nepotism, politics of personal contacts, insufficient flow of information and communication due to the voluminosity and non-adaptability of the managing model.
- A portrait of new post-institutional practices: openness, flexibility, focus on learning and research, responsiveness, flow of information and communication
- A need for discussion, thinking and debate about the development of new models of public cultural institutions of contemporary performing arts (dance and theater) and introducing new management practices.

### **3. BRAIN DRAIN AND MOBILITY IN THE FIELD OF CONTEMPORARY PERFORMING ARTS**

A significant number of young people educated in the field of performing arts studying in west-European centers after graduation are not returning in Macedonia. The reason for their leaving in the past was the lack of higher education programs as there are today, such as Department of ballet pedagogy at the Faculty of Music Arts, University *Ss. Cyril and Methodius* Skopje, Department of Contemporary Dance (*Skopje Dance Academy*) at the Faculty of Applied Music at the private University of Audiovisual Arts European Film Academy ESRA Paris - Skopje - New York and/or *Nomad Dance Academy* as a regional platform for contemporary dance that offers innovative educational programs. Before a higher education in this field was established, those who wanted to continue their education in the field of contemporary dance or work in the field, decided to leave and stay in the west-European centers. Today, the main reason for not coming back and not contributing to the local context is the lack of feedback and interest from local stakeholders in the field of dance to exploit the potential that these individuals have in terms of new knowledge, experiences and new designs of work and production. For example, the Macedonian Opera and Ballet collaborates with people from ex-Yugoslavian countries, whereas the local choreographers who studied abroad remain unrecognized and unexploited.

Today, the lack of education is overcome, but the question arises - what next? In Macedonia there is no support for the independent sector, there are no jobs in the public institutions and education, nor infrastructure and finance, i.e. no conditions for professional development in the field of contemporary dance.

The performers are forced to leave looking for open space for creation, communication and application of the acquired knowledge in the field of contemporary dance. According to the shared experience of performers from Macedonia who had a chance to work on different stages in Europe, the motivation for collaboration with individuals or groups from Europe, is mainly due to the availability of financial funds for these arts in the European countries, conditions for

professional development and the existence of openness and initiative for cooperation by the foreign performers.

In Republic of Macedonia despite the strategic goals to encourage mobility of professionals in European context, there is no formulated program or fund to support mobility in the performing arts. The national program is disappointingly formulated in terms of mobility support. A program for mobility should be treated separately, and not granted as part of the international program annually. Thus, instead of being stimulated, the international cooperation has been regressing, and so representation is supported instead of real collaborations.

In order to build and develop the home performing arts scene, there is a need to create a fund for mobility of artists from Macedonia and abroad:

- mobility of Macedonian performers abroad in order to present their work, as well as promotion, networking, exchange of experience and contacts;
- Macedonian performers working abroad to come to Macedonia for the purpose of knowledge transfer, networking, production and presentation of works;
- foreign performers and cultural workers to come to Macedonia with which they would contribute to the development of the local scene;
- support the presence of Macedonian cultural programers, curators, cultural workers at conferences, festivals, network meetings, etc. for international cooperation and promotion of Macedonian art.

In Macedonia it is necessary to establish programs that will financially support different types of mobility, such as residential programs for artists from Macedonia and abroad, education and research programs (laboratories, workshops, etc.).

Mobility of professionals and products (works) for intensive cooperation between the different scenes on European soil are additional advantage of the European Union. At the conference it was concluded that the mobility of professionals has created an opportunity for artists to live on a meta-level or to work in a meta-context, separated from the local contexts from which they originate. Such opportunities for mobility have enabled the emergence of nomadic subjects or decontextualized subjects gathering codes, knowledge and experiences from different scenes/contexts. According to Senka Anastasova, "*The nomadic subject is always lacking because it is losing a continuous insight into the developments on the scene followed by a hard process of renewal and actualization. The nomadic subject also has capacities, such as new qualified systems, designs and ways of functioning.*" The power (capacities and knowledge) of these performers - nomads should be actualized by creating channels for flow of communication between them and the scene/institutions. In Macedonia, this flow of communication is not enabled and these subjects remain unrecognized by the public cultural institutions and the Ministry of Culture. These professionals should be seen as an essential part of the whole, as a significant entity functioning within the extended scene<sup>7</sup>. They have the potential to reform the local context since they possess a distance that is required for critical reflection.

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<sup>7</sup> According to Marijana Cvetkovic - Markovic (MA in cultural management and cultural policy, manager of *Stanica* – Service for Contemporary Dance in Belgrade) the extended scene is a concept that contains all the artists that work on the local scene and those who went to work abroad.

Currently, in Macedonia there is no strategy for connecting and including of those who left, so, these professionals are associated with the local scene through ad hoc collaborations. Only *Lokomotiva* from Skopje with some of its programs provides space for the professionals who had left Macedonia to work and to connect with the local context. In order to achieve strengthening and recognition of the contemporary dance scene, it is necessary to have state programs that will stimulate the systematic inclusion of the professionals who left Macedonia. These professionals can contribute to the development and recognition of the scene inside and outside the country because they are part of quality projects, important international organizations and structures in the field of contemporary dance. According to Gisela Müller, the development of the scene in Berlin occurred mainly because those artists and cultural workers who have acquired their education abroad returned to Berlin to transfer it to the home scene. Hence, the creation of cultural policies should take into account the experiences of the artists from the scene that stayed abroad for a longer or shorter period of time (to study or work).

It is necessary to establish programs for supporting the collaboration with these professionals and the existing institutions need to work on opening channels for improvement of the communication with them. It is also necessary to create a database for the extended scene (artists working in and outside of Macedonia) as well as a research on the invisible stage (artists with no formal education in this field working on the independent scene and largely contribute to the local and European context in the last 3-4 years) in order to fully map the contemporary Macedonian dance scene. Other ways to connect these professionals with the local context are festivals, conferences and workshops, residential and educational programs in which they would be included.

Conclusions and recommendations:

- Professional choreographers and dancers from Macedonia who work abroad are unexploited and unrecognized for the needs of the local scene
- Professionals who work outside Macedonia can transfer knowledge, capacities, new designs of work and functioning and give visibility to local performing arts scene in Macedonia and abroad
- A need for including professionals who work outside Macedonia in creating cultural policy for development of the scene
- A need for programs and instruments for connecting of the professionals who left Macedonia with the local contemporary dance scene

#### **4. RESEARCH PROGRAMS AND THEORY OF CONTEMPORARY PERFORMING ARTS**

Today we talk about the equal importance of both theory and practice of performing arts and their two-way relationship, or as Senka Anastasova, a cultural theoretician, would say: *“As there cannot be theory without art, so art without theory is quite impossible.”*

By comparative analysis of the scene in Serbia and Macedonia, it can be concluded that the independent scene in Macedonia lacks critical reflection and development of research and theory in performing arts. One of the main efforts of

NGO Lokomotiva - Centre for New Initiatives in Arts and Culture is combining of theory and practice. Hence, in organizing events, actions and practice, they always involve theoretical approach in order to get critical reflection on certain issues.

It is necessary to stimulate open discussion, critical reflection and writing about contemporary performing arts. A need to ‘expand the language’, which we use in order to increase understanding and critical-analytical reflection on contemporary performing arts, has been identified. For this purpose, the Ministry of Culture should support (subvene) translation and publishing of important theoretical books and magazines from the field of contemporary performing arts. It is necessary to support research programs for contemporary dance and contemporary theater and international cooperation in this field.

A need to support independent research centers in cultural studies and the performing arts is determined, as well as opening new opportunities for theoretical reflection in the domain. So far this hasn’t been done in this field, and key theoretical books and articles are available only in English, French, German, Serbian, Croatian, Slovenian, but not in Macedonian language.<sup>8</sup> Besides the need for timely recognition and responsiveness to important projects related to publishing and translation of professional literature, it is necessary to reform the administrative procedures for application of projects in order to achieve greater transparency of the selection criteria.

Furthermore, intersectoral collaboration between the Ministry of Culture and Ministry of Education is necessary so as to support and stimulate visiting of theoreticians from the field of performing arts at the Department of Ballet Pedagogy at the Faculty of Music Arts. These programs except for students would be available to the public/scene as well.

Conclusions and recommendations:

- Programs for support and development of research programs and theory of performing arts

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<sup>8</sup> As an example of uncooperativeness and unsupportiveness of a publishing activity in this context is the case with the publishing house *Centrifuga* from Skopje whereas the Ministry of Culture, for four years now, doesn’t want to subvene the translation and the publication of the chrestomathy “*Mapped Memories*” that represents a capital, extensive and serious collection of the most important texts from the field of theory of memory and interpretation. This book was published by one of the most prominent universities in the world - Fordham University Press, whereas the publishing house *Centrifuga* from Skopje with devoted correspondence got the copyrights for translating the authors of this book in Macedonian language. But, the Ministry of Culture totally rejected the support for this project, whilst the pre-agreement with the University is about to expiry. The Ministry of Culture should give financial support and become a partner in this project because it is unacceptable not to support worldwide publications and collaborations with world prestigious publishing houses. Another such case, which speaks about the trend of not acknowledging the value of the theoretical works of cultural studies, is the refusal to translate from Macedonian to English the theoretical book *Theory of the Popular* (2012) by Senka Anastasova, PhD. This project is rejected by the Ministry of Culture with no explanation, although a foreign publishing house is interested to appear as a publishing partner. These are only few examples that show the lack of interest for the need of professional books which are essential part for the development of contemporary arts.

- Subventions for translations, publishing of books and magazines from the field of contemporary performing arts
- Ministry of Culture to become an associate and partner in projects of independent centers working on theoretical researches.

## **5. DEVELOPMENT OF COMPETENT AUDIENCE AND CULTURAL NEEDS**

It is necessary for the political elites to identify the importance of the independent contemporary arts scene as an obligatory part of the cultural system of Republic of Macedonia. The development of a competent audience and cultural needs for performing arts (contemporary dance and theatre) is a systemic problem, and not only a concern of the actors of the scene. The tendency for commercialization of productions by following the preferences of the audience is the wrong approach in developing an audience because it encourages getting used to existing tastes and trends for superficial and trivial cultural demand. The audience should be built systematically and with institutional frameworks starting from family, school (educational system), the media and the government/state policies.

The Ministry of Culture should help in the development of the audience for contemporary dance and theater. In this respect it is crucial to cooperate with the Ministry of Education which has to dedicate itself in introducing contents from the field of contemporary performing arts in the curricula of primary and secondary schools and relevant faculties, as well as developing cultural needs and competencies for cultural expression in this field among young people. It should also develop programs for stimulating high-quality culture of leisure time as oppose to stimulating trivial and superficial culture that is currently dominant, more powerful and media supported.

### **Conclusions and recommendations:**

- Intersectoral collaboration of the Ministry of Culture and Ministry of Education which are the key actors in building a strategic approach for the development of cultural needs and competent audience for the performing arts - contemporary dance and contemporary theater. Development of programs with content(s) from the field of contemporary performing arts in primary and secondary schools, following the example of visual art and music art (examples from Austria for introducing dance and theater in order to develop creativity among children and youth).

## **6. THE SITUATION WITH EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN CONTEMPORARY DANCE AND THEATRE SCENE**

Given that each cultural policy is based on the educational policy, the situation with the education of professionals in the field of contemporary dance and theater is one of the key issues when considering the perspectives for development of the independent scene. In Macedonia there are: a state Faculty of Dramatic Arts with a long tradition (departments for playwrights, producers, actors, directors, etc.), newly

opened Department of Ballet Pedagogy with specializations in contemporary dance and classical ballet at the Faculty of Music Arts in Skopje at *Ss. Cyril and Methodius University* and the Department of Contemporary Dance (*Skopje Dance Academy*) at the Faculty of Applied Music at the private University of Audiovisual Arts European Film Academy ESRA Paris - Skopje - New York. It is important to emphasize that the Department of Ballet Pedagogy at the Faculty of Music Arts - Skopje at the state University *Ss. Cyril and Methodius* is the first official state dance academy established on the territory of the former Yugoslav republics which is an opportunity to attract interested students from the region. Regarding the contemporary dance, in the period when there were no higher education opportunities, many of the professionals employed in Macedonian Opera and Ballet enrolled in the east-European educational centers, and a smaller part in the west-European educational centers. Choreographers who were not employed in the Macedonian Opera and Ballet mainly attended the west-European academies and centers or international educational platforms (*Laban Centre, Rotterdam Dance Academy, Salzburg Experimental Academy of Dance 2004, Austria, Nomad Dance Academy, Dance web*) and after that, most of these professionals are not working in Macedonia today which disables the transfer of knowledge and input of the local scene.

Furthermore, with the existence of higher educational institutions/programs in the field of performing arts, especially important is the problem of connecting the professionals who are produced by these programs with corresponding jobs. What conditions should be developed so that these people can be employed after finishing their educational training? What are the work perspectives of a graduated dance teacher or a dancer in the Republic of Macedonia? These are issues that should be seriously considered when creating a cultural policy for development of the performing arts scene in Macedonia. It is necessary to have joined engagement of the educational institutions and the cultural system stakeholders in order to achieve coordination of curriculum with the employment opportunities.

From the experience of those professionals who are educated contemporary dancers and choreographers, the Macedonian Opera and Ballet as an institution that fosters classical ballet aesthetics, rarely and insufficiently has contemporary dance performances as part of its repertory. The performers who are educated in the field of contemporary dance have to return to the classical ballet repertory in order to ensure stable employment and living, or work independently which, on the other hand, is not supported in a relevant way by the system (most typical example of this is the case of Iskra Shukarova – a choreographer, teacher, dancer and currently a professor of Contemporary Dance at the Department of Ballet Pedagogy at the Faculty of Music Art in Skopje). One of the conclusions is that there are no conditions for performers to work independently and yet manage to support themselves if not employed in a national cultural institution. The independent scene is built as a space for supporting those performing arts professionals who don't have the ability to apply their knowledge in the existing national institutions in the field of dance. The Ministry of Culture should help in creating work conditions for the independent contemporary dance scene by, for example, establishment of special funds for contemporary dance as part of the performing arts funds, provide working spaces (studios), guaranteeing the status of independent performing artists and cultural workers in the field, etc.



Regarding the contemporary theater, the students from the Faculty of Dramatic Arts and ESRA as well as Macedonian students studying at universities in Sofia are the core of young people who after finishing school should be employed. Although the Macedonian National Theatre and the Drama Theater employed a number of actors in the past few years, this number is significantly smaller than the one generated by the academies as trained professionals.

As for the criteria for selection and employment in the Macedonian national theater institutions, collaborations initiated at informal ways are favored. According to the participants of the conference, these institutions demonstrate nepotism and unprofessionalism in the management and selection of employees and productions. Macedonian theaters are closed to collaborations and prefer the politics of personal contacts as a way to achieve cooperation and success on the Macedonian theater scene. In this scene, as well, the young people are forced to create their own independent theater groups as means of self-employment and ensuring employment and creative autonomy. These independent theaters are registered as ‘associations of citizens’ because they have no other legal option. The independent theatres in Macedonia should self-organize and unite for a common position and advocating activities in order to obtain certain basic rights, such as a separate budget, status, working spaces, etc.

The Youth Cultural Center (YCC) is a public institution under the local government of the City of Skopje. YCC continuously provides logistic and material support of the independent theater scene in Macedonia. Even though this institution in the last couple of years has offered a new model of cooperation with the independent theaters and productions (a partnership defined on the basis of profit sharing participation in the production and distribution of the performances), there are numerous obstacles that slow-down or completely interrupt the implementation of this model. As an example, there is the most recent decision of the Government of Republic of Macedonia, as an anti-crisis measure, to cut down the tickets for young people (the main target group of YCC), and by that reducing the tickets sale in half – which is the main source of funds necessary for production and distribution of the performances, thus making this model totally inoperative. It is necessary to recognize the role that this institution has in the development of the independent theater scene in order to create an appropriate model of its funding and support. This institution should be included in the program for infrastructural and technical subsidizing of theater institutions in Macedonia as a producer of the biggest international theater festival in the country, *Youth Open Theatre*, and the international amateur theater festival *Faces without Masks*. Even though it is not a theater, in accordance with the productions and the capacities for collaboration with the independent theater groups, it should be seen as a facilitator in the development of the independent theater scene in Macedonia.

The independent scene is the only one that provides sustainability of the performances, i.e. their subsequent showing, but no opportunities for the actors of this scene to be able to live of what they do. One of the conclusions of the conference is that the working cycle of the independent scene is not profitable despite the fact that there is a lot of work and investments involved. The question is till when the performer can work solely for the enthusiasm? It is wrong to get the impression that the artists of the independent scene work only for the nobleness and that they do not need money for living. What motivates the artist to create against the small financial

gains and poor working conditions is a very popular question. It is necessary to re-position these professionals in the cultural system and to find actual solutions for proper appreciation of the labor in this field. Opening of new work positions and ensuring their sustainability should be supported. The Ministry of Culture should adopt cultural policies whose effects will act motivating the creative force in the performing arts.

According to the experience of the cultural workers in the field of performing arts, there are problems with non-transparency of the selection procedures when selecting projects for funding as well as concentration of funds in national institutions. They've also recognized a danger of concentrating the majority of funding for performing arts in the Macedonian Opera and Ballet which mainly supports classical dance expression. Supporting this institution is of great importance, but the support of its programs does not meet the needs of the contemporary dance scene. Furthermore, signing a cooperation agreement between the Ministry of Culture and one center for contemporary dance (*Interart*) means supporting a unilateral approach in creating a contemporary dance, which is opposed to the function of the contemporary dance and strategic commitments to supporting cultural diversity in the art expression. The Macedonian Opera and Ballet cannot and should not meet the needs of the contemporary dance scene. The support of one private center cannot meet the needs too, and, to the contrary, can only create imbalance. A distribution of funds and a support of program that covers a multitude of actors are necessary.

Programs for continued financial support of performers who already work or are starting to work on the independent scene in Macedonia are necessary. It is recommended to introduce a transparent system for valorization of projects when awarding funds by the Ministry of Culture. It is also required a transparent system for evaluating the qualifications of the professionals as an assurance for equality when applying for a job and certain job positions.

Another particularly important issue is the production of good quality professionals trained for new initiatives, productions and work in the independent performing arts scene. The graduated students in theater or dance should have understanding and awareness of the system of cultural institutions and their position in the system oppose to independent scene and national cultural institutions as field of activity. It is necessary to create educational programs that will prepare the theater or dance students for the actual requirements of their profession. The independent scene for performing arts needs trained professionals for different modes of action and theorizing. The future development of the independent and institutional scene depends on the initiative of young performers and their production competences.

According to Marijana Cvetkovic - Markovic, there are two main reasons why education is important for the independent scene. Firstly, because of the importance to transfer the critical thinking of the cultural and artistic field in educational programs, and secondly, because the actors from the independent scene can work in the educational system as collaborators, teachers and lecturers. There is a need to transfer the experience of the independent scene and informal education to the formal education and academic environment so as to stimulate openness, diversity and flexibility in the approaches of creating of contemporary performing arts. Such intervention in the system is needed so that young people can adopt new ways of

thinking about art and culture and new ways of acting, not only in their profession but in society as well.

Conclusions and recommendations:

- Transparent qualification framework for evaluation and selection of employees
- New pedagogical methods and educational programs in the performing arts -to prepare students for the labor market, for taking initiatives and possess production competence
- The graduated students in the field of performing arts must know the cultural system of the Republic of Macedonia, the major stakeholders in that system and cultural policies in the area in which they (will) act
- Overcoming the politics of personal contacts and greater transparency in the distribution of funds
- Introducing benefits for self-employment of professionals, e.g. despite support for the artists (which should be adjusted to the needs of these scenes), to introduce and support opening of jobs positions for managers within the independent cultural scene
- Introduction of financial mechanisms - to support multi-year projects as part of the national program for culture. These projects should have educational and developing character.

## **CONCLUSION**

We believe that with this report we managed to clarify and emphasize the importance of these arts (contemporary dance and theater) and the need for a different treatment within the cultural policies, i.e. a separate one, and not just as a part of the mainstream ballet or the theater scene, but, exclusive and proper treatment, appreciating and caring for those who create and develop these segments.

The findings which are part of the report are only the beginning of a series of thematic discussions that we want to develop, and the proposals and conclusions of this conference will be elaborated further. We think that it is of great importance that the abovementioned thematic sessions are planned, developed and implemented in partnership with the Ministry of Culture.

Furthermore, we propose formation of a group of representatives from the independent scene and the Ministry of Culture to work on drafting a plan and strategies for development of the field of independent contemporary arts - dance and theater.

We offer our resources, contacts and expertise as an investment in the further preparation of a document - a plan and a strategy for the development of the contemporary dance and theater scene in Macedonia.

Respectfully,

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