

Gibanica 2015: A Joint Critical Diary  
by Heike Bröckerhoff and Marialena Marouda

This is what we proposed to Mojca Zupančič, producer of the seventh edition of Gibanica (MOVING CAKE) – Biennial of Slovenian Contemporary Dance Art [when we invited ourselves to the festival as critics](#):

We would like to accompany the festival by writing a festival diary including

- mainly impressions from as many performances as possible, using different formats such as simple solo evaluations, dialogues/discussions, opposing two different statements, writing a text together, etc. This can vary and will be influenced by what the performances themselves suggest. (Texts will neither be neutral observations nor journalists' critique style.)
- (critical) reflections on the Slovenian contemporary dance scene, or what will be presented as the Slovenian contemporary dance scene in the framework of Gibanica.
- notes on encounters we have during the festival and/or interviews that we conduct.
- (critical) reflection on our own position as "critics" coming from elsewhere and unfamiliar with the scene.

With this diary we want to practice a rather fast, continuous, subjective, and also less elaborated, a weak ([a fragile kind of](#)) writing. It is written from the position of a stranger to the context, or as we are called here: international guests. Both of us are based in Germany and engaged in performance making, dramaturgy, and theoretical writing on the performing arts. I am currently working as a performance artist and choreographer. In the spring semester of this year I will start my PhD Thesis at the Institute of Applied Theater Studies at the University of Giessen. I also did my MA in the same institute in Giessen. Before this I studied Philosophy and Visual Arts in New York.

I am mostly working as a dramaturge in the field of choreography and performance. I studied Media and Cultural Studies in Düsseldorf, Germany, and Philosophy in Nantes, France. In 2013, I graduated from the MA program Performance Studies in Hamburg. Since a couple of years now I am a member of the performance collective Stomach Company from Nantes. I am writing for [– PLATEAU](#) - a discursive platform for the performing arts scene in Hamburg.

The idea to attend Gibanica came from our participation in the program Critical Practice (Made in Yugoslavia). Our group is composed of young authors who are engaged in and write about the performing arts. Our focus is on the scenes of the Post-Yugoslav space, i.e., the Balkans. Critical Practice has so far been an opportunity for us to get to know the scenes of Serbia and Macedonia. Our colleague Jasmina Založnik from Slovenia suggested that we also come to Gibanica to get a sense of the Slovene scene as well.

With her help we composed a long list of people to meet, places to go and things to see...

**So here we go.**

We should probably first clarify our role in the frame of the festival. How would you describe it? We give discursive support, we spread the word about these performances.

Spread the word to whom?

The international scene?

In what way do you think that we have access to it? We are mainly publishing the texts on our [blog](#).

Well, we're making our own international circle. Within Critical Practice (Made in Yugoslavia), no? We could also spread the word to our local scenes . . . ?

Yes. But I would say that mainly we want to be engaged in the festival by means of writing about it. Our writing-thinking during the festival is what makes us present and supportive, I think.

This would mean that we want to engage in the Slovenian scene . . . ?

. . .

Let's move on.

I agree.

How do we write about performances?

I would like the writing to be a description of how I encountered the different works. I want to write about how the pieces moved me, in a way, as precisely as possible.

I think our brief impressions/reviews should add something to each performance and not reduce them to a single interpretation. To recall Jeroen Peeters, "An artwork cannot be translated into words without excess," and append to it: "An artwork cannot be translated into words without excess [or misunderstanding]."

Wednesday, February 18

We arrived today. Marialena came from Frankfurt. Me, I came from Hamburg. It's Gibanica's seventh edition and our first time in Ljubljana. We know nothing about the scene. Except a few insights from Jasmina. She is supposed to be here, Milka Ivanovska from Skopje as well. But they somehow didn't manage: Jasmina recently moved to Aberdeen for her PhD and a trip from there would be too expensive. Milka started working in an NGO on the development of civil society in Skopje, and her time outside the office is very limited.

Marialena and myself, happy Western-based workers, got support from the Goethe Institute and Hamburg's Ministry of Culture. Thanks.

Just realizing that our program will be dense. We have tickets for everything. To get an overview of a selection of twelve works from a total of forty-eight applications. It's supposed to be those which "respect the classic exchange between the stage and audience; a decision informed by the limited time frame of the festival itself and our main intention of promoting Slovenian art within an international context. As a result, the most radical formats were unfortunately left out." (Selector's rationale). Would like to know more, what these "radical formats" were. It's a platform, this work should sell, no? Maybe the radical formats are less sellable? But anyhow, what are radical positions in contemporary dance in Ljubljana in the year 2015? We are collecting questions and will try to find answers during the festival.

Our questions are mainly about the structural organization of the scene. What are the struggles and problems in the scene? What is the position and relevance of the festival within the Slovenian contemporary dance scene? What is the curatorial position of Gibanica? How does this mirror the criteria for the selection of pieces? How was the selection procedure structured and organized?

Today the festival was opened with a panel on Ksenija Hribar, choreographer, dancer, teacher, and dance activist who influenced the Slovenian contemporary dance scene significantly from the 1970s on. We only went to the evening event in the Slovenian Cinematheque to see the two short films *Slovo* by Karpo Godina and *Xenia on Tour* by Filip Robar Dorin and a screening of

Hribar's performance *Sentimental Reminiscences* from 1998. At the entrance of the cinematheque, we meet Ksenija's cousin: Angelika Hribar who speaks German fluently and immediately takes pleasure in telling us family stories.

From the introductions, I only retained a couple of words, among them "*D'un espace autre*," a text by Foucault on his concept of heterotopia. It's a pity that all the panels on her are in Slovenian. They keep it a local thing.

The atmosphere is warm. From the few and brief talks we have with two actors from the scene, I hear a bit of skepticism towards the independent scene and its potential or condition at the moment. What exactly does "independent scene" mean in Ljubljana? And where does this skepticism come from? Is it resignation after long fights over cultural politics in the city? Modesty? Or simply realist evaluation?

I remember Jasmina's comment a week ago: the festival doesn't have enough money to really invite and bring people to Ljubljana – do we need a dance platform in "twenty-first century style"? Should we nomadize festivals?

I have the "good" map. It's the map we were given by the lady at the information counter of the airport, but on it we marked the hotel, all the venues of Gibanica as well as Jasmina's restaurant, café, and bar recommendations. I carry it around with me always, and from the frequent use it has already worn out after the first day.

We are amazed by how beautiful the city is and find our way through the streets easily.

Thursday, February 19

10 am

In the morning we go for a coffee in Le petit cafe, parallely working on a text on the German contemporary dance and performance scene. The sun and the atmosphere of the place is wonderful, this city seems quite friendly.

12 pm Meeting with Nina Meško, Rok Vevar, and Andreja Kopač

Café at Nebotičnik

At noon we meet Rok Vevar, critic and moderator of the panel on Ksenija Hribar, who currently builds up and runs The Slovenian Temporary Dance Archive; Nina Meško, one of the Gibanica jury members and a former dancer; and Andreja Kopač, dramaturge and writer of the program texts for this year's edition.

Rok suggests to go to the Nebotičnik, the highest skyscraper in the centre (aka Ljubljana's Empire State Building).

On our way there, Rok talks about how in the 1980s and 1990s all the most relevant dance and choreography works of central and western Europe were presented in Ljubljana, mostly at the Cankarjev dom. He now feels that there is a greater introversion in the Slovene scene and that rarely any foreign work is shown anymore.

"What is the history of Gibanica?", we ask our hosts. Gibanica adopts the format of a Dance Platform. There is a question whether this format is still relevant today, Rok points out. However,

its political function is what is most interesting for him, that is, to show to the politicians that the scene exists and that it is working – a lot.

Gibanica has a dual function:

A) To present “the best” Slovene works of the previous two years to an audience of international curators. However, this is not so much the case, there are not so many foreign guests. The scene is much more isolated than it used to be and than it would like to be, Rok remarks.

B) To help the Slovene scene become more aware of itself and of its history. The documentation of the works that are produced in Slovenia as well as a greater systematization in the archiving of these works are extremely important for the scene’s self-understanding and self-awareness, Rok argues. It’s not only about producing your own work but also about the awareness of being part of something bigger, a history.

This is also the function of the program framing the festival, the presentation of the works of Ksenija Hribar, and the workshop on choreographic practices with Bojana Kunst and Paola Caspão; in other words, to create a bigger awareness of the beginnings of contemporary dance in Slovenia. “Is this a need to invent a history in order to make sense of the present?” I silently ask myself.

Jasmina would say: I’m not sure if this is an invention. It’s “real” . . . without a reference and context, how can you position yourself . . . ?

Yes, but when does the need for historicization arise? And why? Is it a political urge? And can works be instrumentalized in order to fit into a certain history?

These are questions that might be much more urgent for our contexts, no? Because in Germany there is much funding offered for archiving, historical research, etc., as you can see with Tanzfonds Erbe and other programs. So here I would rather ask: What does it mean for a scene to have no idea of any kind of history at all?

I think, and here I would agree with Rok, that the independent scene in Germany also hardly has an idea of itself as a historical phenomenon. I think it is really important to be able to work with the awareness that you are not on your own, but actually part of a larger framework.

But these possibilities for grants, let’s say, motivate or allure people to deal with dance history. If there is no institution taking care of historicizing dance, as seems to be the case for Slovenia, it depends very much on initiatives by actors from the field. And – in Rok’s words – historical research, archiving, and sharing these documents, as for instance the panels on Hribar do, can help build the scene from the inside.

Nina speaks to us about the selection process of Gibanica and its complexities:

The goal was to pick the “strongest works,” but also to present a wide variety of aesthetic propositions. So, there is no theme framing the festival. There was consciously not one aesthetic or methodological position favored over others.

She speaks about the time pressure under which the selection process took place, which made heated discussions and arguing in favor or against certain works almost impossible. She would have wished for more time to exchange views among the jury members.

The difficulty that the different actors have solidarizing with each other makes the fragmentation of the scene hard to overcome, Nina and Andrea argue. State employees responsible for the independent performing arts are hardly speaking the same language with the actors of the scene, making it impossible to push for necessary and long overdue political decisions.

The question of the platform format comes back. Rok talks about how in the 1990s performance makers from Slovenia were given money to travel and present their work abroad. Even though

the political situation had already changed, it sold well, as a “war product.” What if money would again be spent in that way today? Well, they say, nowadays no one is interested in contemporary dance from Slovenia anymore. It’s neither “exotic” nor “contemporary” enough.

3 pm *Today is Tomorrow's Yesterday* by Bara Kolenc, Teja Reba, and Loup Abramovici  
Elektro Ljubljana

The first performance of the festival is a duet starting with two performers (Teja Reba and Loup Abramovici) entering the stage from two sides half naked and stimulated by a mating call. They encounter each other, come together in a light and tender atmosphere and... disappear again. Then they come back, this time dressed – the expulsion from Paradise. “This is the beginning of the original performance, but then my mother died,” she announces. He continues...

Together they move from intimate anecdotes to a list of “what is happening elsewhere at this moment” – which can be both horror scenarios and banalities – to “what would ideally be there” (in the performance and in the world).

“Silence is horrible,” she states. This must be the reason why the performance is full of sound, sometimes concrete materials such as bird calls or waves, sometimes more atmospheric and undefinable noise. That’s what is needed to fill the void. With a white rope and marine style, they construct metaphors and small scenes on what can be read as phases of their relationship: tug wars on distance and proximity, playing-drunk-at-home, vessel in storm, literally exchanging liquids, and half-violent, half-sensual mating rituals, a variété show. Shifting from human to animal behavior. In the end she dies, or is killed. The performers change from inside/private moments to communicative moments with the audience. With only a few props and precise modifications of the setting, the performers do not simply perform strongly, but construct the “scenes” of their relationships. Still, the work mostly remains on the level of the private. I would need more abstraction instead of representation-explanation in order to read the “night of the crisis” as a global one – as was promised in the program text. (Of course you should not pit a performance against its description.) As an audience member I am hardly affected by that crisis, it passes almost too lightly.

There is a welcome reception for the international guests in Hotel Park. We take a group picture, I wonder what we represent.

5.30 pm *Time Body Trio* by Andreja Rauch Podrzavnik  
Elektro Ljubljana

*Time Body Trio* is a colorful open format, an installation with dance, lights, piano, photo exhibition, workshop with kids, and guided tour for students.

Reality continuously invades this performance project.

“Tonight this space is a dressing room . . . .” Are they making images or sculptures? I feel it’s undecided.

The piece starts – and ends – with a monologue by the performer Katja Legin. She hands out a paper to the audience with the English translation of what she is about to say (in Slovenian). The (written) monologue works quite well in and of itself, I think, something like a list of clichés about the space of the theater: “I do believe that this situation can also be magical. Because, it’s true, when you are on stage, you can expand and grow wings. Here, I’m capable of things that I otherwise might not be.”

The matter-of-fact, disinterested way this monologue is carried out is what is interesting about it, and makes it appear as nothing special. When afterwards it turns out that it had indeed given away the structure of the whole piece, it appears somewhat a betrayal, this introduction.

7.15 pm *This is not a Hit* by Matej Kejžar (dance) with Marjan Stanić (drums)

Dance Theatre Ljubljana

The first part is a throwing of arms, hips, and legs . . . jumpy, wavy and in the dark, more and more light invades the space.

The second part is a course of rhythmic gymnastics that the sweating body moves through.

The third part is two proposals for change: the musician beats the living daylights out of his drum set and misuses one of the parts as a flute. Later he changes place, sits and contemplates. The dancer combines more and more movements from the first and the second part to end up in a slower rhythm, calming down, moved by his sweat.

This is not about virtuosity in the classical sense but about stamina. Failing balance. It's a strong work with clear components and movement/sound material. What is striking is that a duet of drums and dance fortunately doesn't become a topic (which would distract from the physicality), and it's exactly this physical struggle to which both are exposed that keeps them together.

A friendship between a drummer and a dancer.

The lights go out, the dancer falls backwards, and the drummer begins to play. Deafening at first, leaving no opportunity for breathing or even for distinguishing rhythms. The room is lit by a single spot at first, on the right corner behind the audience. It is lighting not the performers, but a narrow line on the the floor, just in front of the audience, slowly rising. It seems as if the space is slowly flooding: the light is so slight, it appears like water. A frenetic dancing in the background "accompanies" the instrument in a sort of superficial but pleasurable way, like gogo dancers accompany the music in clubs.

After about half an hour of this, the atmosphere changes. The side lights go on and a much more intense and intimate relationship starts between the two performers, communicating with each other through their respective two instruments/machines, one through the drums and the other through the choreographed body.

I say machine(s) because the intimacy that is inscribed in the structure of the performance lives from a machinic repetition of movements and rhythms/sounds which are now – in juxtaposition with the darkness of before – attuned to one another, but which are nonetheless repeating in themselves, shifting in their mutual repetitions.

The principle of friendship for me falls apart (or does it?) towards the end of the piece, when the drums start disintegrating completely while the body still continues dancing, continuing despite the sweat and the exhaustion. Too figurative?

9 pm *The Hunting Season* by Milan Tomášik

Cankarjev dom, Linhart Hall

This performance is based on precisely performed dance technique, tempo, and humoristic scenes. Most of the virtuosic dance scenes performed by Jan Rozman, Alessandro Sollima, Tina Valentan, Špela Vodeb, and Aja Zupanec are commented in small, playful, mocking, foregrounded or backgrounded moments. It never becomes ironic, though. It becomes theatrical. All is performed with a serious and strong attitude in this paced accumulation of



movements, images, soli, and unisono. They fight with each other and kid around. Hunting is a subtle motive that from time to time pops up in the movement material. I rarely see work that has no questions for me but simply invites me to “enjoy”!

Regarding the first day of the festival and this first encounter with the scene in Slovenia, I am surprised at the multiplicity of aesthetic positions that were presented. Even though all the pieces are stage pieces with a (more or less) frontal orientation regarding the audience, they were very different in how they functioned as choreographies. I feel most “at home” with Matej Kejžar’s piece; I am somehow relieved to see it in this context.

What is also clear to me by now is that most works will be solos or duets, unlike the rather large company pieces mostly invited to the German Tanzplattform. I am relieved about this as well. Solo and duets mean that there is not much money.

Friday, February 20

There is something strange about voting after the show. I haven’t realized yet, but Marialena just pointed to that: audience members get a paper in order to give points to the performance. “After you have seen the performance, vote for the performance with grades from 1 to 5 (5 is best). Tear the number you think the performance deserves and put it to the basket at the exit.” There are no discussions or aftertalks, no “evaluations” of this kind – only numbers. Is there a prize given by the audience? What is the purpose of this inadequate way of evaluating a work of art? We’re neither in school, nor in a talent show. Maybe I shouldn’t be so strict with that.

1 pm

At this very moment, there is a performance going on elsewhere. It’s called *Pre-Première* and is the annual production of the Secondary Preschool Education & Gimnazija Ljubljana, a contemporary dance program. This year’s performance deals with the desire to dance. Unfortunately we’re missing it, we are writing and editing.

Working on the beautiful, sunny terrace of SEM (Slovene Ethnographic Museum) while drinking our coffee.

4 pm *For Juliano Mer-Khamis* by Jurij Konjar  
Center kulture Španski borci

The performance starts with Jurij Konjar dancing (improvising?) to jazz music. The stage is empty but for a small table on the left front corner, with vegetables, two water boilers, a small electric cooker, and a pot. Konjar’s nonchalant dancing, the jazz, and the cooking utensils create quite a “cozy” atmosphere: one senses that Konjar feels at home in his dancing body and that the rest of the space (including the audience) is an extension of his homeyness.

This fact, in and of itself, was a point of annoyance for me: I do not wish to be part of anybody else’s self-assertion.

Then Konjar starts to narrate. From this point on, the piece becomes the parallel narration of three stories:

- Konjar’s recollection of his travel experiences as an artist-activist and nomad. He particularly focuses on one recent traveling experience as a member of the Bread and Puppet Theater in Athens and outlines the project that they realized there. At the end of this narration he mentions the work and death of artist Juliano Mer-Khamis as a source of inspiration.

- Konjar's preparation of a soup, including a detailed listing of all ingredients and how to put them together (reminiscent of a cooking video). The soup is ready by the end of the performance, of course, and is served to the audience. It has sausage in it and is therefore, unfortunately, inaccessible to both Heike and myself. We're vegetarians.
- Konjar's verbalization of his dance and the decisions that he takes during his improvisation. He remembers having arrived at certain parts of the stage before, and decides to now take a different route, for example. This narration is a thinking-dancing out loud.

I understand this simultaneity of narratives as an attempt to bring together a dancer's (nomadic) routine, political ideology, and bodily practice. However, this is done quite superficially and inconsistently so that even though the soup keeps cooking, those three elements don't really come together conceptually. Rather, they all seem to exist as a self-assertion of Konjar's artistic practice, each merely pointing to his artistic comfort zone, thus turning the performance into a selfish and almost arrogant gesture.

**6 pm *The Taste of Silence Always Resonates* by Irena Tomažin  
Cankarjev dom, Dvorana Duše Počkaj**

In (very) stark contrast to the previous work, this piece is masterful in connecting/relating bodily movement to speech creation.

The piece is structured in "chapters" or songs, with the title of each chapter/song appearing each time projected on the back wall of the black box. Each chapter/song marks a specific handling of language and of voice, almost a particular exercise of improvisation on a specific word, phrase, or theme. Being unable to understand the words, since I don't speak Slovene, only having a photocopy of the translation, I feel I cannot fully grasp the complex coupling of intensity of meaning and formal investigation of the vocal apparatus.

The piece opens and closes with the masterful singing of Slovene folk songs. In between comes exhaustive experimentation with the voice as apparatus and as affect Tomažin manages to break down speech for the audience, and by extension, song in its elementary particles:

- breath
- sonorous body
- virtuosity
- specificity of sounds, characteristic of a particular language (necessary for communication) – this element is inaccessible to me.
- sensuality
- . . .

Tomažin is pulling (her) voice out of the void in one of the fragments; in another she is making her breath reflect the walls of the black box space. In their totality the different fragments produce a complex matrix of meaning, revealing the space of the black box, which we are all sharing as a room of intimacy and intensity, a room full of body and sound, a room of voice (reflections).

I find that the recurring theme of folk song, however, gives the piece a rather melancholic, "old fashioned" turn in comparison to the contemporary quality of the vocal experimentation that takes place in between, which I perceive as song as well. The beauty of "tradition" and the values it is associated with is always something that intrigues me and that I distrust simultaneously.



7.30 pm *Searchings Untitled* by Barbara Kanc

City Museum of Ljubljana, atrium

It's crowded in the museum. The audience is sitting on two sides of the "stage" (rows meet in a right angle) . . .

A "bear" in costume enters the space, switches on a TV & DVD player so we can watch a video together . . .

Music starts, coming from somewhere, an Indian instrument, a sitar maybe . . .

There are objects: a red Swiss ball, an orange jerry can, a chair, an axe, a cord, a gas lamp, . . . a young woman wearing a grey pullover, legs naked, enters from the back in slow motion, or as a moving still, and tries the impossible: to pick up and carry all the objects . . .

There is an electric fan gently moving a paper lantern . . .

The bear comes back with a snack, draws a line with black and yellow caution tape, lies down and watches her . . .

There is the noise of objects falling down the stairs. The collection of objects on stage collapses with a short delay . . .

She picks up the can and it looks as if she were pouring gas over the objects and burning them all . . .

Music becomes noise . . .

And everything that is happening in between . . .

*Searchings Untitled* is a sensitive and thoughtfully composed work. The three performers, April Veselko, Barbara Kanc, and Samo Kutin, are moving and acting in their own temporalities; they co-inhabit. It might be a child's game, a dream, an adventure – in any case, the work opens itself up for different associations, images, and a strong and very specific attention among the audience.

I somehow end up sitting on top of the whole thing, watching from the first floor of the atrium. There, I discover the musician sitting with his sitar (is it a sitar?), smiling gently, waiting for the performance to start. I feel very comfortable with the whole situation, not like an audience member but like a visitor, being allowed to discover and notice things in my own time. My attention is intensified, yet it is not guided from one event to the other, it can wander at will. This is quite a unique experience; I can't remember having it before in the framework of a performance.

The extremely slow and precise movement of Barbara Kanc somehow creates a deceleration of the process of reception, thus allowing for a greater intensity of perception. I do not interpret in whole sentences, but in words, sounds, and colors. I think: TAKING - TIME - NECESSARY - . . . I notice and really appreciate the care and attention with which everything has been created, selected and placed in the space. A handmade paper lamp, a handmade bear's costume, the dancer's costume, the musician's instruments – there is hardly an element that seems accidental or conventional . . .

In this sense, the choice of space for the performance is really intriguing: we are not in a room, but in a hallway, a large open corridor, an in-between space. This gives the piece a very relevant and intelligently humorous sense of "in passing."

9 pm *The Second Freedom* by Leja Jurišić and Teja Reba  
Elektro Ljubljana

We're in the cathedral of freedom, and be aware that you will not feel prepared for what comes next . . . *The Second Freedom* stages emancipatory acts, passes through a selection of women's roles – from the most outdated ones to the more recent, but we might not have overcome some of them – and puts them into movement. Informed by his writings, the women try to seduce Mladen Dolar, here revered as the father of Slovenian philosophy . . . in a flattering style. The work is full of ideas on (sexual, or female) emancipation, philosophy, and psychoanalysis. With the help of dance, theatrical situations, body art, as well as a smart and extravagant stage design (by Petra Veber) Jurisic and Reba push the limits. It gets obscene, bloody, awkwardly playful, messy, and morbid. Piss off! Pump it up! The sharp and harsh commentaries hit the excessive amount of constraints with which we buy what we put down as our freedom. You can only relax when images of tropical islands are projected onto the stage, and the two performers are dancing in bikinis to some pleasing melody. But then you might realize that this is just another moment in which joy and disgust can be disturbingly and excessively close.

...

I am wondering about the presence of text in the pieces. All the dancers here are speaking. Not that I don't want them to. I am just surprised, as in Germany it seems to me that dancers have turned their backs on words again and moved elsewhere, to objects and choreography. Is this a question of paradigm?

I would not agree, I think, about the lack of speech in "German contemporary dance". Maybe because most of the artists I admire are speaking quite a lot (Antonia Baehr, Martin Nachbar, Deufert und Plischke, among others). I find in the case of the pieces we have seen so far, that speech works best when it has a—

—raison d'être?

Yes, which comes from within the piece itself and is not a mere addressing of the audience or an explanation of what's happening at the moment. The speaking in *Second Freedom* works really well in this sense, I think. It is a game with words and meanings..

Many texts are lists. Or is it only in the work of Teja Reba? Does Forced Entertainment have a strong influence here?

Do you mean that the text has a repetitive aspect to it? I would perceive this more as a game structure between the two performers than as a list. Like the funny game of addressing Mladen, supposedly sitting in the audience:

- Hey Mladen, do you . . .

- Ok Mladen, have you ever . . .

- Listen Mladen, what about . . .

Or what do you mean by list?

Look how you scripted the Mladen game. It's a list.

...

When did we start taking cabs all the time between the performances?

Foreign guests, jury members, and some others are now invited to take the cab that is waiting in front of the theater to bring you to the next venue . . . . Hurry up!

Oh my, such a stressful thing, I love walking between the venues as an excuse to see some more of Ljubljana. I only squeeze into the cabs reluctantly.

I understand. But cabs are also great.

. . . when provided by the festival. (Thanks.)

Saturday, January 21

11 am *Choreography Practices*, Discussion with Bojana Kunst and Paula Caspão

Cankarjev dom, Lili Novy Club

This discussion is supposed to be about the notation of choreographic practices. Kunst and Caspão therefore propose a game, but it will take us (the audience in Lili Novy Club) some time to learn the rules. Here is a summary: There are twenty-eight quotes from different sources, but mostly from contemporary philosophy. You start with a quote chosen by chance, you read it. (You try to speak about it.) Another participant reads out another quote and tries to relate it to yours or to what you've just said. It's about producing relations that haven't existed before, making you think differently, entering unknown terrain, a collective thinking process. You engage with references in order to dismiss them and move elsewhere. That's at least how I understand it. Inspired by the discussion, we will make a list of statements and questions for you. *In order not to break with your flow of thought(s), we've omitted any mention of the quotes' authors.* Enjoy playing!

1. How to think of the archive not in an architectural way?
2. The body is not a box, it is always situated. There is always a collaboration.
3. Technique is not something objective; it is based on ideology.
4. The archive loves singularity (of the author). A work that is a multiplicity from the beginning is not easily staying.
5. How can we think of performance outside the realm of visibility?
6. We have arrived in the situation in which we do not know – at least not yet – how to move politically.
7. How can things circulate if not by means of becoming visible?
8. When we think about performance documentation, we think about capturing something that is lost. How can we think about performance as something that stays instead? How can we document something as a future, as something that comes...? How can you bring the memory of it into the future?
9. Practice is never connected to one voice. The body archive is very multimediated.

10. How to make things become “public” in different ways? How to make something public for longer?

11. We’re in a paradoxical situation of missing documentation and at the same time constantly producing documentation at a great velocity.

12. Take place and disappear immediately!

13. How to challenge history-making in the sense of producing evidence?

14. The amount of evidences that would be needed to collect in order to function as a proof is, by definition, indefinite.

15. It’s not that the past should not touch us, but we should also be able to touch the past.

16. A question should be asked about the relation between power and documentation.

17. An archive that consists of bones and flesh – hard and soft material.

19. How do I affirm not only through references that are already there.

20. Create your own dérives!

21. Society is more about process than achievement.

22. For whom do we document?

23. There has to be a dialogue with institutions.

24. We need different ways of sharing.

25. What is the sense to take part in the EU dance scene in the same way as Germany, Belgium, etc., do?

26. Sometimes we need some evidence. And queer evidences also means to appropriate.

27. To know what something is not, is not the same as to know what something is.

28. Choreographic Practice is already a translation.

4 pm *Betwixt* by Maja Kalafatić and Maria de Dueñas López  
Cankarjev dom, Duša Počkaj Hall

This duet, with music by Ivan Mijačević, is an exercise in bodily relationality. Unlike contact improvisation (the details of which I must confess I had to look up), which is movement exploration springing from a (single) point of bodily contact between two dancers and which has to be constantly maintained (gradually shifting, for example, from foot/hand to knee/elbow), in

*Betwixt*, the contact is presented as a pause in movement and the movement's final end. In this sense, every position of contact presents a still pose including two bodies. The piece is a constant negotiation between movement (alone) and stillness (together).

In terms of movement material, what is explored is a certain geometry of the body and the architecture of this geometry. Contact occurs at the point of intersection between positive and negative body/space.

As much as I appreciated what I found a subtle, formal investigation of (female) tenderness, I think that the exercise somehow remained on the level of movement research without really managing to address or include the audience in the process.

The music, recordings of what I assumed were occasional dialogues during the rehearsals or subtle piano-playing fragments, both sounding as if from far away, was a little too mystical for helping to bridge the gap between the audience and the performers.

### 5.30 pm *What if* by Maja Delak

Elektro Ljubljana

On a black stage with white parallel lines on the floor, reminiscent of the lanes of a running track in a stadium, Maja Delak is lingering. In a pose difficult to keep for long, like a swimmer just before jumping into a swimming pool (knees bent, hands stretched out and up) she tells us how happy she is to be able to perform for us tonight, since performing makes her life more intense and more meaningful. Then her body starts to shiver, her muscles slowly betraying her.

Microphones are scattered in this space and Delak speaks through them to the audience and to herself. She makes the situation of the dance performance oscillate between that of a formal interview setting with herself in the position of both interviewer and interviewee ("What are your three biggest dilemmas?"), a dialogue/monologue between herself and her body, and a "direct" addressing of the audience.

*What if* is a reflection on capitalist modes of production from the point of view of an aging dancer. The body is therefore – literally as well as figuratively, in dancing as well as in contemplation – the main focus of the piece. Delak addresses her body in a series of dualisms: (my) fertile/infertile body, productive/unproductive body, new/old body, young body, demanding body, stiff/flexible body, professional body. In this way, she manages to present the body as the site of conflict between two different times: the time of living and the time of producing. The body is not fetishized, however; rather it becomes somewhat awkward. Dance, when it appears in the solo, is usually presented with a certain irony, its function unsafe and uncertain, almost comical.

In Delak's strong proposition, what I missed was some subtlety and an economy of means in terms of how the piece was constructed dramaturgically as well as aesthetically.

Dramaturgically, the intention was stated over and over, creating redundancy rather than complexity. Aesthetically, I found elements like the many microphones, or the huge subtitles in English during the performance, somewhat too dominant for the actual use that was made of them. Since there was not much else in terms of stage design, this created the effect of the performance somehow lacking care (subtlety needs time), which I thought actually went against the piece's intended proposition.

*What if* is a statement that says what it wants to say very directly and without room for (mis)interpretation.

7.30pm *Still* by Jurij Konjar  
Elektro Ljubljana

This dance piece by Jurij Konjar is situated within the larger frame of a two-year research in Modul Dance Network with different collaborators: Franck Beaubois, Catherine Jauniaux, Jaka Šimenc, and Martin Kilvady, who is performing with Konjar tonight. Based on a practice of improvisation, they dance for a certain time, then speak about that dancing for a certain time, dance again, and in the end are asked questions by the audience. Improvisation creates skillful and trained movement phrases that end up in stills. But this I only realize now when thinking about the title. They are constantly in movement, so the stills almost vanish. They have no life of their own, are just a hold before the next phrase, in-between; it's too easy to overlook them. The score for the improvisation-composition allows its performers to keep their own styles: opaque or transparent. *No need for having a common language when you listen to each other.* Something like that.

Still, I have the feeling that it's all about them, their relationship, and how they perform it to the audience. But in a way, the audience sitting on three sides on the stage are only their mirrors. The piece leaves only little space for reflection (e.g., on the still), as it is already full (of movement). Rather, it asks more for admiration. Contemporary dance becoming 3-D ballet.

9.15 pm *After this, therefore because of this* by Sebastijan Geč, Milan Loviška, and Otto Krause  
Cankarjev dom, Club CD

Kill the Fairy! We're in the fairy's world and fairy wants to play a game. In a way, she's holding an audition: whoever is out is in (her court and may sit a bit elevated.) The performance is based on the game musical chairs. But there is a bit more. The beginning is quite promising: fairy makes some people laugh, manages all technical problems on fairy's own. Together with the audience-motivators-dancers, they create a few suggestive moments using also lights, fog, and participatory items for the audience: glitter and pocket flashlights. Two performers are giving their best and try as hard as they can to get the audience off their chairs. This is an offense! Now the audience will play against them. Defend their position in theater – on their chairs. The game transforms into a sit-in. And, interestingly enough, becomes a situation. Who is going to change sides . . . ? Different strategies are applied to kick out the audience-motivators themselves, to speed up the procedure (there are approximately seventy people in the audience and the fairy suggests recruiting all of them). In the end, it gets messy. Then: face in the cake. Game Over!

Kill the Fairy indeed. I was surprised at how easily a “participatory” performance can turn into oppressive audience-coercion. An intended “wonderland” into a political hell. When people started shouting “Dance so that we can get out of here!” I quickly escaped toward the exit, scared.

Before the ceremony: a buffet. Here it's almost more ceremonial. We finally taste the Gibanica cake.

10.30 pm Official Prize Ceremony  
Cankarjev dom, Club CD



Award Ceremony for many things: the audience and the jury prize for the best piece at Gibanica as well as the Ksenija Hribar Awards for Lifetime Achievement, Choreography, Performance, Pedagogy, Dramaturgy/Theory/Criticism, Light Design, Sound Design, and Production: <http://www.sodobniples.si/novice/#37>

By the way . . . guess who got the award for best Critic/Theorist/Dramaturge in the field of contemporary dance? Exactly, Jasmina Založnik. Congrats!

. . . I can't help thinking that these award ceremonies have something old-fashioned, or melancholic about them, but I can't really explain why. Maybe because they admit the competitiveness inherent in the performing arts, while nowadays festivals are supposed to be enabling discourse instead.

I quite agree with this demand for the discursive (when it is sincere) and missed it during Gibanica. I was therefore not willing to participate in the audience voting process for the best performance, as I found having to give scores from 1 to 5 to each performance quite an arbitrary way of evaluating the works. Also, since the goal of the selectors was to show a wide range of propositions, aesthetically as well as methodologically, within the contemporary dance scene in Slovenia, I am wondering how this goes together with choosing one "very best" piece? Still, I was very happy with the jury's (and the audience's) decision and found the ceremony to be quite a joyous and positive event. It was actually a celebration of the fact that good work is being made in Slovenia, in many different areas. So in this sense, I totally go along with it.

In the end: Dancing.

...

I forgot something.

This was also in our first mail to Mojca:

"The festival diary is inspired by what Ana Vujanović did for Gibanica ten years ago."

We took it as a starting point for our joint festival documentation, doubling the gesture and the voices. We wanted to keep the spontaneity of the diary format while also attempting to fragment the single standpoint of the documentalist. We wrote a diary in complicity, sometimes agreeing, sometimes repeating, **sometimes repeating**; sometimes talking past, simultaneous to, or after each other. We hope you enjoyed reading it.

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