

# CHOREOGRAPHIC JOURNAL

*seeing / vidjeti*



**CHOREOGRAPHIC JOURNAL**  
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Marjana Krajač & Zee Hartmann

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# Editor's Introduction

WRITTEN BY: Zee Hartmann

When dancemakers sit down to write, we expect the words to work for us the way our dancers do. The blank page is the empty dance studio before rehearsal starts, and each following sentence is expected to perform with the same acute attention to metre, style and emotional resonance as a dancer's approach to the new choreographic phrases. We sense the limits of what we can achieve in the studio, or on the page, without letting it dictate the shape of our work. In fact, our limitations push us to creative solutions that might include traversing genre through a deviation in technique or structure, culminating in something altogether unexpected, even to our own sensibilities.

You might find all of that here, in this collection of writings on the choreographic process, predominately written by Marjana Krajač.

Marjana, an innovative Croatian choreographer with a sombre, minimalist aesthetic, has a dedicated writing practice that she approaches with an analytical and emotional intensity also evident in her choreographic curriculum vitae. Writing in both English and her native Croatian tongue, she draws inspiration from everything around her, whether it be dense philosophical texts or architectural environments. With this collection we have attempted to trace these inspirational impulses, not necessarily chronologically, but through an intellectual progression of ideas around the nature of choreography, as both a theoretical and physical practice.

This collection aims to be the first in a series of publications chronicling Marjana's ongoing research, thoughts, and process-notes in the field of dance, and draws from a relatively recent history of publishing the notebooks of contemporary dancemakers. As each choreographer writes distinctly in their own creative capacity (Simone Forti, for example, included multiple hand-written pages and hasty line-drawings in *Handbook in Motion*, one of the first of these types of publications that saw a limited print-run in 1974), the writing we have collected here revels in its liminality: not quite a collection of academic essays, not quite personal narrative, not quite casual choreographic notes, though it touches on all of these styles. We have also included some reflections by dancers and critics involved with the specific works discussed. True to her choreographic approach, Marjana wanted to include these reflections to underline the importance of dialogue between the various collaborators, each with their own perspective and approach to her work. Besides this diffusion of the artist's voice as the penultimate authority on the work, another important tenet of this

collection is refocusing attention on the dancemaking process, and away - at least momentarily - from the performative product. *Choreographic Journal: seeing / vidjeti* thus makes explicit Marjana's personal working process, and by doing so, contributes to the vast and ever-evolving archive of choreographic writings.

The first essay, *Ontology of Movement in Space*, serves as a definitive introduction to Marjana's perception of the substance of choreography. The next four essays are meditations, both by Marjana and one of her dancers, about her *Fantasia Choreographique Series*. In *Independent Elements of Form* and *To the Inside*, we find the critical eye turned towards the work of renowned choreographers Hans van Manen and Jiří Kylián, in two reviews of classic repertory performed a year apart. The prelude to the four-part, in-depth analysis of her 2016 ballet, *Dark Landscapes* (which includes a review by Croatian dance critic, Katja Šimunić), is a swirling, poetic journey through a rehearsal for *Tiento* (2016) in *What Is This Pas De Deux About*. The last two pieces in this collection anchor the rest by returning to more tangible places. In *Camera Left Alone in a Dance Studio*, the immanency of the empty dance space is contemplated, while *Winter Season* circles back to the legacies of George Balanchine and the effervescence of New York City which is, in fact, where the two of us first crossed paths.

Marjana might have sensed something then that I only came to realize a little later: that my work as an editor aligns closely with my work as a dramaturg. As dramaturgy keeps finding new footholds in dance, new working processes are in constant development between dramaturgs and dancemakers, and this project has been no exception. Often, and inadvertently, I seem to conflate dramaturgy with phenomenology, and to my surprise, Marjana is in the habit of doing this too. If we were to define dramaturgy by way of Katherine Profeta, author of *Dramaturgy in Motion* (2015), as “a quality of motion, which oscillates, claiming an indeterminate zone between theory and practice, inside and outside, word and movement, question and answer”<sup>\*</sup> and phenomenology, by way of Sara Ahmed, as a mode that quite simply “asks us to be aware of the ‘what’ that is ‘around’”<sup>\*\*</sup> then both Marjana and my instincts about how to approach the difficult ephemera of dance, center around an idea of how to be in, and with, the work. I therefore, simply, attempted to hold space for these pieces by offering a soft guidance towards each essay's own burgeoning potential. This, after all, is the relationship between a dramaturg and a dancemaker/an editor and a

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\* Profeta, Katherine. *Dramaturgy in Motion: At Work on Dance and Movement Performance*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2015.

\*\* Ahmed, Sara. “Orientations: Towards a Queer Phenomenology.” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 4th ser., 2 (2006): 543-74. doi:10.1215/9780822388074.

writer: to build connections between disparate ideas, synthesize contrasting experiences on a molecular level, and then somehow, working from the inside-out, materialise impulse into a surface-level sensation, beyond the negative space surrounding the body, and into the viscera of others.

In the essays that follow, you'll be swept up in a verbose virtuosity that builds such intense momentum that meaning is superseded by the exuberant experience of reading each successive word. Or you'll find yourself breathing deeply through the silences between the pages, or at a certain comma, or during a particularly contemplative reflection. Perhaps you will struggle through a metaphor or allusion, only to find it making perfect sense a couple of sentences later, just as sometimes, as an audience member, parts of dances that are befuddling at first can suddenly become the work's most evocative motif.



# Ontology of Movement in Space

WRITTEN BY: Marjana Krajač  
TRANSLATED BY: Ivana Ostojčić

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*Within the kinesphere the body can move in different ways: the body can use the whole, or just some of its kinaesthetic parts, while sustaining and building the harmony of its own space. In order to truly experience movement, I now bestow it with the qualities of a living architecture. Comprehending movement does not only imply a conscious change of the position of the body and its parts in space, but also the change of its entire condition. Self-awareness, self-sensitivity, knowing oneself and the awareness of the movement are shaping the body and giving it a socially, aesthetically and ideologically differentiated place in contemporary culture.*

*Dijana Jelčić-Starčević, kinetic therapist and poet \**

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One of the most complex choreographic tasks is reformulating movement from the sphere of a moving body's social understanding to the sphere of the body's expanded perception of action in space and time. Since the moving body, in this context, usually adopts a performative layer, this action includes a reconstruction of the essential notion of performance in a narrative between a spectator and a performer.

Choreography, originating from two ancient Greek words, 'choreia' (χορεία), meaning dance performed by a chorus in Greek dramas, and 'graphos' (γραφή), meaning to write, provides us with interesting guidelines. In some interpretations the original purpose of choreography was to register movements performed by a chorus, but later the term became customary for a general arrangement of movement. Registering dance in a circle could be understood as a modernist idea that primarily deals with the issue of archiving and reconstituting movement. Via the etymology of the term 'choreography', clear perceptions about the nature of the stage and its architecture can be extrapolated.

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\* Jelčić-Starčević, Dijana. *4-D samomobilizacija; umijeće pokreta*, Blogspot accessed July 18, 2018

A choreographic action is much closer to an architectural action in the sense of the shape of space through ideas of volume and its repercussions. This action delves like a monolith into the implication of performativity, and today, decades after post-modernism, it can be equally alienating, cryptic and complex. On the other hand, social comprehension of the body in choreography creates an illusion of emotional and dramatic availability, opening up a space of expectation to melodrama and narrative / expression and physicality that sharpen this platform of idiosyncrasy. What a body does when it is antisocial, when it is capable of filling the volume of space with the rhythmic experience of time, is the fundamental cornerstone of choreography and its practice.

In the space of choreography, a body can relinquish the para-narrative of objects of differing volumes; space as material or temporal; time as present or absence; thought as objective, subjective, spatial or a-historic; emotion as voluminous and dynamics as trace, by approaching a non-hierarchical view regardless of whether they are animate and inanimate. Organisation of movement into choreography can be external, internal, or both. What does this mean exactly and how can it be depicted? In order for any movement to be executed, the internal organisation of a corporeal pattern must be manifested on the external surface of the body as a required starting point. This initial movement, the *primum mobile*, is the basis of all types of motion. The subsequent primordial impulse connects to a network of different spatial-temporal formulas from which it subsequently draws its counterparts to an internal response in the form of a gestural reaction or wave. The gestural wave, on the way to its external response, connects to other structural patterns. The moment the movement acquires its external appearance it is already poised with possibility. Therefore, what we see as a given is in fact already drenched in micro-histories and micro-significances. Such cognised movement enters the field of its own dramaturgy, its own act of signification.

Subsequently, movement is created in a series of spatial-physical-temporal platforms which then regulate, organise and register structured motion into what we call choreography. External choreography, according to the same principles, takes over visual manifestations of movement and structures them into larger compounds. The compounds arrange themselves by negotiating between the visible and what-is-yet-to-come, in an instantaneous dynamic. The simultaneity of the birth and the navigation of the structure creates the choreography, which substitutes interpretability with a dynamic phenomenology.

In the final instance, bodily movement is part of a larger, incessant motion of objects, elements, appearances, partially perceived patterns and fragmented rhythms. The dense material of reality, composed of an



infinite series of information-sequences manifested in different volumes of matter, can be understood only as a permanent, dynamic meta-object. Depending on the point of view, some aspects might appear more accentuated and curated than others. The pledge of a choreographic act lies in this re-evaluation of dominant hierarchies, as the matrix is subjected to existing hierarchies of what is currently socially pertinent. This determines the meaning and relevance of things, as well as our directionality. The medium of dance disposes with its sensitivity to constitute another type of discourse on the possible nature of reality, allowing for an experience of an utterly new world.

It is this message without the burden of intention where dance as a medium articulates itself. This long-term action is focused on comprehending the historicity of dance and the endeavour of understanding how individual aesthetic categories entered dance, and what form they exist in today.

*Choreographic Fantasy no. 1*, first performed at the Art Pavilion in Zagreb in November 2013, began with a need to unload this burden of referentiality, which is easily integrated into dance precisely because it is susceptible to multiple interpretations. The question of communicability of dance, or more directly, the question of its socialisation and its need to articulate itself validly, has been emphatically asked and emphatically answered in the creation of this work. This piece actualised and resolved this question in a manner that understood in advance that a body's universalism is not in its non-verbalism, but rather in its alienation. What we share supra-culturally is not what we understand, but instead what is beyond the scope of comprehensibility. Here we identified ourselves without limits, without mediators, and without the banality of interpretation.

In his *The Poetics of Space*, Bachelard says that on the outside of a being, in the field where a being wishes to manifest and conceal itself, the opening and closing movements are so many, so often reversed, so burdened by hesitation that we might conclude with this formula: a man is a half-open, unclosed being\*.

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\* Bachelard, Gaston. *The Poetics of Space*. NY, NY: Penguin Books, 2014.



# Vježbe koreografskog predskazanja i romantika mašine

NAPISALA: Marjana Krajač

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*What is real is the continual change of form: form is only a  
snapshot view of a transition.*

*Henri Bergson \**

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Proces koji se odvijao tijekom nastanka ovog rada mogla bih u određenim uvjetima nazvati *vježbom predskazanja* ili *vježbom sensoriranja* za ono što će u nekom trenutku postati izvedba. Predskazanjem bi se ovdje moglo nazvati to nešto što protok zbivanja razumijeva kao svojevrsnu gusto sabitu arhivu, neki tip zalihe vjerojatnosti koja onda ostvaruje ovaj ili onaj prizor. Mogli bismo reći da se predskazanje odnosi na nešto čemu se još niti ne nazire horizont, neki tip tehnološkog *dalekog mjeseca* koji će tek u nekim potpuno drukčijim uvjetima nego što su sadašnji moći postati čitljiv ili vidljiv.

Ako poslušamo Rancièrea koji govori o *političkom kao paradoksalnom obliku djelovanja*\*\* onda bismo ovdje mogli nazrijeti i politiku estetike koja u dvostrukom naporu da, s jedne strane realizira odmak iz društvenog, a s druge strane da se na isto kritički osvrne ili barem demonstrira svoju reflektiranost, kreira tkivo unutar samog napora prizora.

Utoliko je proces, kao dio formata koji zovemo nastankom djela, intenzivni proces objektivacije medija plesa, na način da pokret svojom formom postaje ključna jedinica sadržaja. Često se o pokretu govori kao jeziku ili specifičnom jeziku: kao da je ljudsko biće u trenutku ne-govorenja prisiljeno pritisak komunikacije prebaciti negdje drugdje, kao da je komunikacija ta koja naseljava prostor samorazumljivosti. Umjesto toga, bitno je pojmiti da je sâma forma, oblik, otisak forme ona jedinica sadržaja koja u specifičnim uvjetima može strukturirati uvid ili spoznaju. Tim dvostrukim upregućem; aktiviranjem jedinice forme i njenim (slobodnim)

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\* Bergson, Henri. *The Cinematographical Mechanism of Thought and the Mechanistic Illusion-A Glance at the History of Systems-Real Becoming and False Evolutionism. Creative Evolution*, preveo Arthur Mitchell, 272-370. New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company, 1911.

\*\* Rancièrè, Jacques, i Steven Corcoran. *Dissensus on Politics and Aesthetics*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015.

strukturiranjem u polje spoznaje, otvara se puno šire polje od pukog aranžiranja ili zaumljavanja ili utilitariziranja onoga što plesno nosi kao zalag.

Tek puko bavljenje plesom neće aktivirati taj zalag; bilo koji pokret u bilo kojim uvjetima može tek pocrtati moguću arbitrarnost ili samorazumljivost bilo kojeg pojavnog sklopa. Uopćavanje formata plesnog, čija terminologija i čitanje već unaprijed označavaju određeni sklop, može tek doprinijeti daljnjem sužavanju relevancijskog polja. Možemo reći da je na snazi jedan ključan mehanizam - arbitrarizacija polja vodi njegovom sužavanju, a ne njegovoj imanentnoj slobodi. Tome nasuprot, dugim putem senzoricizacije polja, u svojevrsnoj *disciplini discipline*, dolazimo do njegovog proširenja; gdje ono grabi prema horizontu koji se još niti ne nazire ali ga je moguće predskazujuće obuhvatiti - u smislu jedne materijalne skice.

Takva živa skica - vibracija - sabita kutija sadržaja jest predstava. Predstava, prikazivanje, predodžba, prikazati, predočiti, pred-očiti, dati na uvid, pokazati.

Seriya koreografskih fantazija, koju na nekim mjestima želim nazvati i *Urgentnim fantazijama*, dihotomiju između procesa i predstave ne uzima kao puki ekonomsko-društveni mehanizam, čime želim reći da predstava nije konzumentski priremljen potpourri nekog obimnijeg procesa koji se mora *nasjeći na šnite* da bi ga se moglo lakše prožvakati. Naprotiv, ova seriya uzima proces kao priremu za događaj predstave koju se razumije kao zajedničko naslućivanje jednog budućeg važnog ali istodobno dalekog horizonta. U tom sklopu, *Koreografska fantazija br. 2* ulazi jediničnim sadržajem sabite forme. Ako je *Fantazija br. 1* označila katalog različitih silnica, *Fantazija br. 2* ponire sloj dublje, u potrazi za preciznijim procesnim narativima koji svi skupno uigravaju u izvedbeno predskazanje.

U određenom smislu tako, seriya iznosi na vidjelo mehanizme koji prethode općim mjestima društvenog uređenja i ona ta mjesta poima kao posljedicu, a ne kao uzrok. *Koreografska fantazija br. 2* medij plesa vidi kao podsjetnik na arhaično-proročanske izvore ljudskog okupljanja, možemo reći i *polisa*, u kojima je pojedinačni čovjek mogao objasniti svoju pojavu samo povratno putem simbolizacije vlastitog životnog narativa. Ona *pre-obuhvaća* samorazumljivost trenutne podjele društvenih radnih procesa označujući ono još neuhvatljivo kao i ono pra-arhaično. Napinjući takav širok luk, u sabitoj tenziji izvedbenog događaja ona može realizirati svoj politički zalag tehnološkog predskazanja putem daha forme, udisaja i izdisaja oblika.

Medij plesa na jedan posebno iscrtan način ima mandat evoluirati svoju umjetnost dalje; on se kroz sebe bavi svime, onim obuhvatnije i cjelovitije postavljenim svime. On sa sobom i putem sebe nešto procesuiru prema svemu, a otpornost tog mandata upisana je u njemu inherentno, izvan modula tek pukog tematskog interesa. Ples na jednoj razini razumije da

je, slično noćnom nebu gdje vidimo svjetlost u vremenskom otklonu jer ona putuje iz daleke prethodnosti, ono što se realno pojavljuje za nas i oko nas samo materija na jednom oblikovnom proputovanju, prerušena u sadašnjost.

*Koreografska fantazija br. 2* posegnula je za upitom o formi onda dvojako; kao susret samog medija plesa sa sobom samim i kao susret tenzije sadašnjosti u predskazanju još neoblikovanog tehnološkog horizonta. Napon različitih materijalnosti izvedbe; mekših i tvrdih tekstura, plastičnih materijala, neonske svjetlosti, metalnih i betonskih ploha, upregnuće različitih oblika i dubina samog prostora, umjetna atmosferilija i artifičijelni ukrasi, u nekom obliku implozije umjetne prirode razmišljaju zajedno o nekim drugim hijerarhijama transfera emotivne zalihe.

Glazbeni komad pod nazivom *Electronics* (Zeitkratzer & Carsten Nicolai) koji zvukovno prati rad u tom je smislu zaokružuje tu koreografsku misao; u recenzijama opisan kao *lebdeće zajedništvo oscilatora i sinusoidnih generatora, koji postavlja pitanje o postojanju romantike mašine ili čak elektronske idile\** pružio je onu posljednju kariku osjetilnom lancu rada.

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\* Zeitkratzer [electronics] Carsten Nicolai. Zeitkratzer. Pristup 24. srpnja, 2018. [http://www.zeitkratzer.de/zkr0004\\_nicolai.html](http://www.zeitkratzer.de/zkr0004_nicolai.html). (prevedeno s njemačkog jezika).

# Exercises in Choreographic Prophecy and the Romanticism of the Machine

WRITTEN BY: Marjana Krajač  
TRANSLATED BY: Ivana Ostojčić

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*What is real is the continual change of form:  
form is only a snapshot view of a transition.*

*Henri Bergson \**

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A series of choreographic fantasies, which I sometimes want to call *Urgent Fantasies*, does not take the dichotomy between the process and the performance as a mere socio-economic mechanism. By that I mean to say that the performance is not a consumer-oriented potpourri of a more comprehensive process cut into slices to be chewed more easily. On the contrary, this series places the process as anticipating the event of the performance. In that respect, *Choreographic Fantasy no. 2* appeared as a densely formed unit of content. If *Fantasy no. 1* denoted a catalogue of different forces, *Fantasy no. 2* revealed a deeper layer in search of more precise narratives that collectively populated the performance prophecy.

In a certain sense, this series exposed mechanisms that preceded commonplace social order and posited these mechanisms as a consequence, and not a cause. *Choreographic Fantasy no. 2* perceived the dance medium as a reminder of the archaic-prophetic sources of human gatherings, a polis, one might say, in which an individual could explain themselves only in reverse - through a symbol of their own experiential narrative. This autobiography pre-comprehended the current division of social working relations by weaving together both the as-yet-unattainable and the pre-archaic. Spanning such a broad arch in the dense tension present in a performative event, a political pledge of a technological prophecy could be achieved through the inhalation and exhalation of shape - through the spirit of form.

At a certain point the process that took place during the making of this piece became an exercise in sensing what the performance will become, or

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\* Bergson, Henri. *The Cinematographical Mechanism of Thought and the Mechanistic Illusion-A Glance at the History of Systems-Real Becoming and False Evolutionism*. In *Creative Evolution*, translated by Arthur Mitchell, 272-370. New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company, 1911.

more accurately, an exercise in prophecy. The prophecy could be considered a densely compact archive in how we understood the flow of events, a sort of storage of probability which subsequently actualised one scene or another. We might even say that the prophecy referred to something that did not have a horizon yet, that it was a sort of technological, distant moon that became legible or visible only in conditions completely different from its immediate context.

*Choreographic Fantasy no. 2* delved into the issue of the duality of form as an encounter of the medium of dance, and of the tension between the prophecy of a present moment through an unshaped technological horizon. The charge of different materialities of performance (texture, plastic materials, neon light, metal and concrete surfaces, the harnessing of different forms and depths of space, artificial atmospherics and décor) organized the hierarchy of the transference of probable emotional storage.

The sound score, titled *Electronics*, by Zeitkratzer & Carsten Nicolai, accompanied the piece and completes the choreographic thought. It was described in reviews of the work as *a floating community of oscillators and sign generators, raising the question about the existence of a romance of the machine or even electronic idyll\**, and was the last link in the sensory chain of *Choreographic Fantasy no. 2*.

If I listen to Rancière talking about the political as a paradoxical form of action\*\*, I might also discern here that certain politics of aesthetics, in a double effort, achieve a distance from the social sphere, but also critically review (or demonstrate) referentiality. With this in mind, the process, as a part of the format we call a work-in-progress, intensely objectified the key unit of performative content, namely the dance medium.

Movement is often thought of as a language, as though a human being, in the moment of silence, is forced to transfer the pressure of communication elsewhere. It is as though communication is the only tool that can populate the space of self-explanation. Instead, it is necessary to comprehend that the movement itself (the shape, the imprint) is the unit of content which can structure knowledge in specific conditions. The activation of the unit of movement and its (free) organisation in the cognitive field opens up a much broader expanse than mere thought arrangements, mental processes, or utilisation of what dance carries as a promise.

A mere pursuit of dance will not actualise this promise. Any movement in any condition can underline the possibility of arbitrariness or

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\* Zeitkratzer [electronics] Carsten Nicolai. Zeitkratzer. Accessed July 24, 2018. [http://www.zeitkratzer.de/zkr0004\\_nicolai.html](http://www.zeitkratzer.de/zkr0004_nicolai.html). (translated from German).

\*\* Rancière, Jacques, and Steven Corcoran. *Dissensus on Politics and Aesthetics*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015.

self-explanation. Generalisation of the dance idiom can only contribute to further narrowing of the field of relevance. One might say that a key mechanism is force - the arbitrarisation of the field leads to its narrowing rather than to its immanent freedom. Yet when we make the field more sensory we arrive to its expansion, where it progresses to an undiscernible horizon. In this sense it is a prophecy, a material sketch. This living sketch, this vibration of a compact box of contents - is the performance. And the performance is staged, assumed, displayed, exposed.

The dance medium, in a particularly delineated manner, has the mandate to further evolve its art. It pursues everything, comprehends everything and completes everything. With itself and by way of itself it processes something holistically. The resilience of this mandate is inherently inscribed beyond the module of mere thematic interest. On one level, dance understands that what realistically appears for-and-around-us is matter on a formative journey, like a nocturnal sky ablaze with temporally deflected light arriving from a faraway past, disguised as the present.











# Tensity of Unresolved Questions

WRITTEN BY: Marjana Krajač

Late April 2018: We were closing the rehearsal week for a new work from the *Fantaisie Chorégraphique* Series with an outdoor session held by a young architect named Nemanja Čađo, in preparation for a project that is taking place in the Fall of 2018, at the Norwegian Theatre Academy at Østfold University in Fredrikstad. The location of the outdoor rehearsal was the architectural environment of The Cube Building in Zagreb, finished in 1968 by iconic architect Ivan Vitić. In contrast to its outer minimalism, the inside of the building is filled with art interventions by relevant artists of that time, the most impressive contributions from sculptor Raul Goldoni and painter Edo Murtić. As an example of architectonic modernism of the '60s, the building broaches topics relating to its inner historic space through a sensorium of perceptions at the meeting point of the body and the surface, either materially or metaphorically. We spent a good part of Thursday moving through, and exploring, previously developed rehearsal materials.

On Friday we were sitting in-between dance sessions, wrapping up the week and commenting on some of the procedures that we were using in the choreographic process, when we encountered that immensely interesting moment between *direction and exploration*, or *clarity and blurriness*. What is that navigated contingency that drives a choreographic process when the process is truly processual? How does it function when it aims to explore, search and hold a space for the indistinct areas that are yet to be sensed fully?

By taking our rehearsal material outside of the studio we were able to explore a gripping nature of surfaces, volumes and textures that constructed the space and informed the possibility of movement. But other sensory phenomena were suddenly intensely present too: temperature, wind, sunlight, fragrance, traffic sounds and passers-by gazing upon the dance that danced itself. Now, as we returned to the known atmospheric proposition of a dance studio, there was a feeling (somebody said) as if we arrived back from a journey. Structures that we encountered on the *outside* expanded the notion of what is still possible and available *inside* the dance,



and brought new sensation to the familiar territory of the dance studio situation.

Contingency of choreography, its possibility to contain all available experiences and expanding itself more or less into endlessness, bring in an awareness of the full scope of the containment that is dance. A dance, then, resides primarily within the vastness of the unknown within the literature of the known. That unknown holds clarity, a defined scope, and the potential to depart from the known into the infinite possibilities of this navigated contingency.

By committedly suspending arrival, by allowing a delay in certainty, a dance is able to travel through the experience of the self, revealing more layers of depth and tension. This state of unknown (questions still unanswered/surfaces contained yet still in expansion) is what allows for choreographic immersion. The immersive texture is not just for the maker, but also, perhaps even more, for the viewer, as they will collide with and digest other kinds of performative experiences. By being *inside* of the unknown, immersion conjoins all sides simultaneously in ever-stretching possibility: the dancer and the danced, the viewer and the viewed, a tensity of the questions posed.



















# seeing things as they are

WRITTEN BY: Marjana Krajač

Late May 2018: Two intense months are coming to an end as the new work in the *Fantaisie Chorégraphique Series, Choreographic Fantasy no. 3* premiered at the Zagreb Dance Center. It has been a truly engaging process in collaboration with five deeply committed dancers, namely Filipa Bavčević, Marin Lemić, Silvia Marchig, Sara Piljek and Nastasja Štefanić. Created under the working title *Open Processes*, this piece subscribed itself to dance-as-a-process, re-establishing some of the tenets of historical modernism, in particular the idea of “the work and the theory of the work at once”\*. Performed in a dance studio to *Sonatas and Interludes for Prepared Piano* by John Cage, the choreography confronted inner and outer architecture. While still fresh from the process, I have gathered some thoughts.

A week before the premiere, as we were discussing final details about how to perform this work, the idea of *seeing things sharply, exactly as they are*, came to mind. We talked about the meaning and potential iterations of this statement, and we concluded it with a manifesto of sorts:

Being exposed and close, visible and tender, clear and deliberate and simultaneously granting all these things to the recipient, to the viewer. Dancing in a space of amplified sharpness ensured that some void spots may arise: blurry fields being palpable as they enter - holding them softly until the next clear impulse appears - a clear line that will open a new moment. While bodies are voluminous and archaic, vibrating all kinds of emotional clusters as they proceed through time, and continuously reflecting each other through meaning, impression and narration, *seeing things as they are* navigates through and alongside the triptych of this meaning/ impression/narration, carrying itself and others, as well as embedding others into itself: viewing and being viewed, observing and being observed, interpreting and being interpreted. And then again, clearness will arise, opening things as they are, however they are, where welcoming them means meeting them with unshattered eyes: meticulous and barefaced.

One of the most prominent directions of the whole *Fantaisie Chorégraphique* series is that the choreography seeks to sustain itself out of its own inherent navigation and urgency, and then integrates music as

a responsive and transformative parameter. So to enter into the dialogue with *Sonatas and Interludes for Prepared Piano* was to approach it as an encounter in operation, an encounter in work, taking what the music is proposing at the core of the mutual discovery within the working itself. In that manner, to dance meant then also to listen in a specific way: listening to the choreography reloading itself as well as maneuvering through and beyond the music, incorporating yet releasing its patterns and reconstructions, opening the space of density and voidness, structure and form. In *The Prepared Piano of John Cage: A New Level of Hearing the Sonatas and Interludes*, Inara de Barros Ferreira writes:

“With ‘Sonatas and Interludes’ Cage reaches the apex of his prepared piano pieces. The outline of the preparations is enormous, and the preparation will reach nearly the entire range of the instrument. ‘The Table of Preparations for Sonatas and Interludes’ is highly complex; the process to prepare the piano takes approximately three hours. In these tables, Cage shows the tones that the interpreter should prepare, the material that should be used, the strings that the material should be placed on in addition to the distance that the pianist should put the object. As the reader can see, after the Material is inserted the first time, Cage once again repeats the material, the distance etc. This is because Cage desires the same note to be prepared two or three times in the same string but with a different distance and occasionally with a different material. The sound produced when there are two or more objects in the same string is entirely different than when there is just a single object in the string. In this piece he uses the most common objects to prepare a piano which are a bolt and screw, along with other materials like nut, plastic, rubber and eraser. In the table of preparation, one can see that he requires a total of twenty-five varied bolts. He did not write about the size of the bolts, although he noted about different types of bolts, such as: bolt (just bolt), small bolt, medium bolt, furniture bolt, long bolt. It is impressive to discover the difference of sounds between the same object but with different sizes, as I observed that a heavier object produces a strong, short rattle. In general, the sound of the bolt in the string produces little alteration in the sound of the pitches, but it does generate a percussive character. An important difference from the sound of the screws is that the sound of the bolt produces high harmonics.” \*

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\* Ferreira, Inara. *The Prepared Piano of John Cage: A New Level of Hearing the Sonatas and Interludes*. Master’s thesis, *The Prepared Piano of John Cage: A New Level of Hearing the Sonatas and Interludes*, Inara De Barros, 2010.



From a choreographic viewpoint the complexity in preparation required for the deliverance of *Sonatas and Interludes* is perfectly understandable, as the experimentation with this material required a precise framework upon which diverse physical outputs could challenge themselves. What is here important to notice is that the inherent configuration of the sound-objects was content enough (in that extended sense). Meaning, in its original function, it was simultaneously partially inscribed in the trace of the phenomenon produced by the collision of two elements, because the configuration of the sound-objects on the scale of weight, shape, material, density, volume or size delivered a different perception of sound to the viewer. So the whole system of thinking was primarily about the interplay of inner and outer configurations of the objects in relation to the surrounding tonal phenomena, influenced by their placement, use or context. Choreographically, we could then expand this even further, approaching seemingly non-objectual phenomena (such as touch, orientation, sense or sentience) as the final manifestation. As autonomous clusters of configurations collided with other parameters, the choreography delivered an extraordinary line of another kind of outcome.

*Arabesque, inner voidness, dense corner or breath, strong temperature, penché or inner emptying, sudden light, another body encounter pressed themselves against and into other momentarily-present elements, listening and translating - creating the fabric of the dance.*

In the sense of the choreographic process or procedure, choreographic objects, choreographic elements and sensorium transpositions were built over time through a mutual understanding of the relevance and phenomenology of these elements. The dance itself fortified the definition of these elements by establishing an analytical urgency or logic.

No. 3 occupied these specific elements and objects:

*body through its own itself  
observing  
observing yourself  
observing others  
body close to logic of the space  
body understood through space  
walk and walking through: lines and diagonals  
a place where the body never was  
peripheral entrance to the central space  
consciousness that is staying with you all of the time  
energy that is staying with you all of the time  
intervals of the collective motion  
spiral object, spiral surface, spiral thoughts  
mutual spiral thoughts as a prelude to dance  
moments of non-activity  
collapse, collapse of the body along the surface*

*collapse, rearranging the body differently*  
*relations and relativities in space*  
*constellations and constellativities in space*  
*complexity as a consequence rather than a cause*  
*body's concentric circles: the body phenomenon by itself*  
*lines*  
*micro-levels in the 4th position*  
*passé*  
*passé spiral*  
*arabesque*  
*falling in to the penché grip of the front battement*  
*unusual small jumps motivated by multiple impulses*  
*activation of the body in the third space*  
*breathing and breathing space*  
*sedimentation*  
*performance as a process of sedimentation*  
*culmination of the form: the form/shape/form-vibration of the body*  
*technique applied as vibration of a form*  
*a multitude of shapes and forms: the sound of shapes and forms*  
*surplus that is feeding the process of going onward*  
*exercising concentration*  
*rewinding the body through other bodies*  
*relevé*  
*relevé with observation*  
*long lines in the body and through the body*  
*constant detoxification of form: all forms that are coming out of the body*  
*small-medium-large forms, segments, surfaces that the body is engaging*  
*negotiating the middle volume segment*  
*only large segments for a long length of time*  
*moving through space: conquering of the space*  
*falling in to the stillness of space*  
*falling in to the stillness of movement*  
*falling in to the stillness of impressions*  
*a shift toward the inner space: sentient*  
*sentience*  
*sensory experience*  
*to dance starting from the exterior of the form*  
*to dance starting from the inner state of the sensory body*  
*pushing of from the other, supporting oneself by the surface of the spatial volume*  
*incorporating the roughness of space*  
*sound stimuli around the body*  
*passé - battement*  
*arabesque - piqué*  
*piqué - penché*  
*elements and forms transposed and translated through space*  
*relations in the architecture of the concrete space*  
*micro-level and inner body architecture*  
*event of the body in form*  
*what organizes a gaze*  
*equal levels of form, tension, breath, face*  
*amorphous form, impulse from the inner body, a collapse of the material*  
*structural form, impulse from outer formal configuration, a confirmation of the*

*material*  
*long detoxification of all forms*  
*space as the phenomenon in the vertical*  
*walking as the phenomenon in the vertical*  
*standing as the phenomenon in the vertical*  
*breath as the phenomenon in the horizontal*  
*gaze as the phenomenon in the horizontal*  
*spaces in-between within the music*  
*constructions and variants of the dominant impulse*  
*material mannerism*  
*relations between fragments & fractals*  
*resolving, resolution, stillness*

Each of these elements and propositions inhabited both the rehearsal and the performance of the work. In a progressive visualization it would be more precise to understand them as singular large surfaces - almost like geological plates shifting across and over each other, moving along, transforming and incorporating matter and materials anew. That silent tectonic sequentially made bare the final territory of the work in an ever-unfolding sense as each day pointed to another overarching dynamic.

*seeing things as they are* meant knowing these elements acutely and allowing them to transform with-and-around a particular dance, revealing their inherent configurations to create ripples in collision. In optical closeness to this dance, that immediate-ness translated all other elements into mere parameters to be explored, *to be placed upon the string*. That *field of clarity* required a certain shift in observing but also in performing: in understanding oneself as the body of dance, a dancer, a catalyst, a phantasmagoric surface where a diversity of conjunctions are inherently taking place. Finally, *seeing things as they are* is consisted of *seeing*, of *things* and of *as they are*: comprehending that state as a permanent non-place.



# From the Inside to The Outside and Back: A Dancer's Reflection

WRITTEN BY: Nastasja Štefanić

This text aims to, in one way or the other, bring to the forefront of my mind thoughts and emotions that were circulating during the creation of a recent work, *Choreographic Fantasy no. 3*, choreographed by Marjana Krajač. I have learned a lot throughout that process, and now, after some time has passed, I strongly feel a diversity of transformations on both mental and physical planes. By translating that shared history into words, I hope to find a way to further ground my experience in order for it to become more visible in scope, through a process of inner purification. If I would have to choose one word to describe the whole period of creation from March until June 2018 it would be *process*. While I was writing and processing themes in my head, I was observing the consequences that arose in the midst of this post-process phase, and I started to feel lighter.

As the subtitle of this work was *Open Processes*, the term *process* was indeed one of the essential themes of this project. And as one of five dancers in this work, my body and I (if there ever is such a division - but let me go with it just for the moment) went through an intensive and challenging, but also an immensely interesting, playful and rich process.

One of the first principles that Marjana was insisting on was searching for a clear idea of form in whatever unfamiliar appearance that may come about, gradually finding our way towards more recognizable shapes, and lastly involving different historical ballet idioms. Through deconstruction, peripheral entrance into the movement and through searching and researching new variations of the familiar and unfamiliar, all forms started to open themselves up, offering me more as I went along and allowing me to discover their inner knowledge and meanings. This way of working suited me as a dancer and suited my character, and I found that it was an excellent way of developing and understanding the material. I am a committed infinite searcher of distinctness: I like to make things clear, to be precise, to understand the essence of things, giving me a solid basis for research in the search for new solutions. Within this work I grasped that simplicity and clarity are the basis for complexity and decomposition.

The most difficult thing for me within that set of tasks were the technical principles of the ballet form. Ballet technique is something that I am familiar with, but in my daily professional life as a contemporary dancer I do not use it very often. My body's posture, and how it is organized and built, is challenging in a narrow form and a lot of figures that we explored

and analysed required dedication and trust in the body itself. I thought that I would never be able to find lightness, pleasure and enjoyment without losing the precision and the clear idea of the form while executing it. In my mind that task was always connected with stiffness, pain and low breathing, and prior to this process I was unable to find a certain level of freedom in ballet. So I want to add this large breakthrough to my list of great things that I will take with me in consequence of this work with Marjana. Arabesque, grand battement, passé, fifth position, penché, piqué, relevé, grand plié, changement and many more are forms that are now my own. Since these are the elements that we have used as a base for building a complex dance vocabulary, Marjana went about them very analytically, taking enough time for the functional and aesthetic principles of each step while invigorating the vocabulary with a specific kind of choreographic discipline - which I have missed lately, I have to admit.

Day-to-day I was gradually sensing changes, not only in my body, but also in my comprehension. I quickly achieved a certain kind of stamina and strength, increasing my range of ability as well as my self-trust. I was encouraged to risk more, to play more and to worry less. The lightness that I was seeking prior to this work, and that I thought I would never reach, was now progressively and pragmatically incorporated into my physical practice as something familiar and close. This lightness and freedom were not only the result of disciplined work on specific technical elements but were also achieved using a very broad spectrum of specific choreographic methods and approaches.

Two principles: one coming from the outer idea of 'form' and the second from 'starting the movement from the inside', brought about my biggest discovery within the process. One of John Cage's quotes, particularly, left a trace in my mind: "...Giving up control so that sounds can be sounds" \*. To *let go* and just *to be* is already enough, but is also something that I wanted (and needed) to adopt during this process. Although I was familiar with some somatic practices, here something totally different happened: when we started to research our way through the form, I was unable to comprehend how to execute the technicalities of ballet with allowing movement to freely happen. At first they seemed like two contradictory elements and principles, but as I was gradually starting to slow down, to wait, to breathe and observe, to empty my mind and to give my body a chance to respond before the old preconceptions could kick in, things became clear. Moments in which I would succeed within that structure were the moments of the greatest progress and growth.

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\* Cage, John. *Silence: Lectures and Writings*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1973.

Another aspect to this somatic inner stimulation came about during sessions in which we worked with an idea of *sentience*, which can be understood as something that has no need for focus or description but that allows itself to be an unnamed impulse, as well as a platform of observation. Two approaches that came out of working with *sentience* were very interesting to me: sometimes the motivation for the movement was really coming from inside, from the inner state of the body, but very often the motivation came from an outside experience, from the different sounds around me, from listening to the space, the people, and the outer world. These external sounds activated movement, but then while moving I was noticing the internal state of my being and my body, observing again the inner impulses. A true self-reflection occurred, but without definition or reasoning or appellation.

Working with *sentience* and adjacent inner/outer approaches was for me the most liberating and playful part of the process. I found myself in places that I have never been before. In some moments it felt as though my body was not mine, or that I was observing someone else's movement. It seems to me that these kinds of moments, contextually, are truly significant in the career of a dancer. They encourage us to keep moving, to continue to explore and to search for new, fresh and unexpected situations, which can only be achieved when we *let go* and allow things to happen in that unnamed space.

The third significant theme that we were exploring during this process is *space architecture* and its stimuli. Every space has its own specific characteristics and legality. For me, space is an inexhaustible source of inspiration. Shapes, colours, materials, objects, composition, temperature, sounds, scents as well as the functionality, purpose and history of the specific location can serve as the motivators of movement. Exploring the architecture of a dance studio - where linear forms dominate and outstretched lines are emphasized - is necessary in the understanding of our bodies, and the understanding of the choreographic composition within that spatial organisation, as a whole. I would define that whole as an architecture within the architecture: an architecture of the bodies within the architecture of the space. I was often trying to imagine what kind of the geometric structure we were forming and re-forming. Insisting on an abstract form, playing with different variations of form-elements, and working towards a final affirmative exhaustion of these materials were necessary procedures that led to a gradual deconstruction and blurriness. That was the funniest part for me, because it was really coming from *inside*, from a committed sentience and from the decision to let things appear. The most challenging things for me were, again, to *let go* and to wait, to allow

the situation to reveal itself, to extend moments of quietude, to accept that sometimes *less is (really) more*, to listen to others that are moving with me and work in relation to everything that surrounds us, but also to take responsibility for myself, to be decisive, and finally that every movement and action are equally important.

In a continuation to this ever-evolving dance structure, dance-and-music, choreography-and-composition were all equal parts of the final performance even though the choreography was being built and developed autonomously from the music. In that sense John Cage's *Sonatas and Interludes for a Prepared Piano* was actually the sixth dancer. Since I am also a professional musician (I play the viola) I prefer to treat music as a separate entity that is not subordinate to anyone or anything. In this case, it means that the music is not subordinate to movement, but also not to other performative elements, as every one of them is utterly self-determined. Because of my background in music I often tend to experiment with rhythm and melody of the movement. Somehow, on a subconscious level, I deal with the musicality of my dance in-progress, even when the accent is not on the music. Every dance and every piece of music have their own rhythm, and even if I am trying not to dance *to* the music, but instead *with* the music, I notice that the impulse of my movement is equal to the pulse of the sound. The game continues when I try to break out of this impulse, as to play with this impulse/pulse/rhythm is a never-ending source of motivation for me.

John Cage's *Sonatas and Interludes* is a complex musical work that requires a certain type of treatment. Nevertheless, I had the need to refer to it as often as I referred to my dancing partner, and to approach it with the same awareness as I approached the other dancers, environments or even myself. So now there were the six of us (!) and the number of possibilities were endless: everyone had the chance to explore their unique moment, but always in a relation to, and consciously listening to, the whole. Performing the whole structure every day brought new differences on numerous levels, and that was the most precious thing of this clearly-structured, committedly-open and uncompromising ever-fluctuating choreography: it always felt like we were on a slippery and weaving land-mass, where we never knew if we would be able to traverse it successfully. The level of trust that arrived through this work from all sides was therefore enormous and profound.

I was amazed by how much I learned about myself after six consecutive performances of the premiere cycle of this challenging work. I realized so many precious facts about the deep inner-acceptance of the configurations of my body and mind, how they are different every day, how to work with



what I have in that certain moment in front of the audience and how to reconcile the idea that I am being watched with continuous exploration, research and curiosity without losing myself to exhibition. The most beautiful moments for me were the ones when I got totally lost in new situations and actions. They were moments of surprise and excitement, and they reminded me that I am alive, dancing a dance in one moment that only a second later will be gone.







# Autonomni elementi forme

O baletu *Adagio Hammerklavier* Hansa Van Manena, u izvedbi Bečkog državnog baleta u Bečkoj državnoj operi, 13. svibnja 2015.

NAPISALA: Marjana Krajač

Balet za tri plesačka para na klavirski *Adagio* iz Beethovenove *Hammerklaviersonate* op. 106, prvi put postavljen 1973. godine za Het Nationale Ballet u Amsterdamu, vrhunska je studija strukture narativnog baleta koja kroz arhetipsku formu pas de deux-a na izuzetno brižljiv način uprizoruje artikulaciju forme i značenja. Kroz pažljive, gotovo analitične dionice sekvence pokreta u ničim drugim naseljenoj plohi prostora, koreografija otvara pitanja o postanku forme istovremeno prolazeći kroz njenu dekonstrukciju.

Van Manen neslučajno uzima pritom verziju *Adagia* u pijanističkoj interpretaciji Christopa Eschenbacha, koji umjesto prosječnih 14 minuta trajanja ovog komada kreira interpretaciju u trajanju od pune 24 minute. Svojevrсна kontemplativna dubina Eschenbachove interpretacije kao da je potakla Van Manena na slični zahvat, tretirajući pritom glazbu i kao strukturu i kao autonomni element u prostoru izvedbe. Uprizorenje zaokružuje minimalistička scenografija Jena-Paul Vrooma koja također donosi vlastiti impuls autonomnog elementa i njegovog ritma.

U ovom svojevrsno asketsko-romantističkom postavu promatramo koreografski narativ koji povijest baletne forme tretira kao relevantnog sugovornika u sadašnjosti, koja putem artikulacije elemenata može punopravno sudjelovati u konstituciji moderne naprosto svojim, već upisanim, para-formalističkim korijenima. Ova ambiciozna koreografska teza otvara polje kritičnosti spram dodatnog naseljenja baletnog polja spektakularizacijom ili plakativnošću koje samo zagušuje potencijale forme koja sasvim suvereno konstruira svijest o svojoj vlastitoj gesti dekonstrukcije i modernizma.

Van Manen, koji će sebe često nazvati konstruktivistom, isto tako će reći sljedeće:

“Možemo se složiti da ples postoji u izoliranom prostoru vremena, on je *in actu*, kao pjesma koju se recitira; počinje i završava s proglasom, s dahom koji je oživljava.”

Čini se da je upravo u toj napetosti između apstrakcije i svojevrsne emotivnosti realnog trenutka Van Manenovo estetičko sidro. Iz te polazišne

točke on se vrlo zanimljivo može uputiti u tradicionalističku formu kao što je pas de deux, na način da koreografsko pletivo upogonjuje duet, a ne da duet služi kao strukturalna štaka ili neki tip psihološke relacijske ideje. Trostruki pas de deux ovog baleta naglašava dekonstrukciju i rekonstrukciju ove poznate forme, a koreografska mašta upravo u toj strukturi zadobiva puni kombinatorički zamah, no ostajući uvijek dozirana i odmjerena, na rubovima intrigantnog sentimenta koji nikada ne prekoračuje. Hans van Manen je nezaobilazno ime europske povijesti baleta, nizozemski velikan odlikovan nizom društveno relevantnih plaketa, no njegovi baleti ostaju čvrsto ukotvljeni u umjetničku odvažnost ne isklizavajući u prepoznatljive konvencije ili prejednost scenskim zavodljivostima.

Tri para; Olga Esina i Vladimir Shishov, Ketevan Papava i Roman Lazik te Nina Poláková i Eno Peci, vođeni rukom Mee Veneme (dugogodišnje Van Manenove plesačice i koreografske asistentice koja sada prenosi njegove balette) suvereno i svježije iznose ovaj materijal, kao da je nastao prije godinu dana, a ne daleke 1973.

Općenito bi se za Bečki državni balet moglo reći da se radi o izrazito ambicioznom, umješnom i otvorenom ansamblu koji je s mnogo dinamike i vitalnosti iznio ovaj rad.

# Independent Elements of Form

About Hans Van Manen's *Adagio Hammerklavier* performed  
by Wiener Staatsballet at the Wiener Staatsoper,  
May 13th, 2015

WRITTEN BY: Marjana Krajač  
TRANSLATED BY: Ivana Ostojčić

An outstanding study of narrative ballet's structure, *Adagio Hammerklavier*, three dance duets set to the piano *Adagio* from Beethoven's *Hammerklaviersonate op. 106*, premiered in 1973 by Het Nationale Ballet in Amsterdam. The ballet, with its focus on the archetype of the pas de deux, incorporated an articulation of form and meaning in a particularly meticulous way. Painstaking, almost analytical sequences of movement situated in an uninhabited, flat space raised questions about the origin of form through simultaneous deconstruction.

It is no coincidence that Van Manen preferred the piano version of *Adagio* performed by Christoph Eschenbach, who created an interpretation of this piece in 24 minutes (instead of the average 14-minute duration). A contemplative depth of Eschenbach's interpretation seemed to have inspired Van Manen to act similarly, as he approached the music both on a structural level and as an independent character in the performance space. The staging is completed by the minimalist set design of Jean-Paul Vroom, who also drew inspiration from the music's character and rhythm.

In this sort of ascetic-romantic staging we watched a choreographic narrative that treated the history of ballet as a relevant interlocutor, able to fully take part in constituting modernism through its preinscribed, paraformalist roots. This ambitious choreographic hypothesis pioneered a field of criticism against the ballet domain through an allegedly inevitable speculation or placation that only stifled the potential of the form. The form adeptly constructed awareness of its own deconstructed, modernist gesture.

Van Manen, who often refers to himself as a constructivist, admits the following:

“We could agree that dance exists in an isolated space of time, it is *in actu*, like a recited poem; it begins and ends with a proclamation, with an enlivening breath.”

It is through the tension between abstraction and momentary emotion that Van Manen's aesthetic anchor seemed to have plunged. This starting point gave him a chance to delve into the pas de deux, which set the

choreographic material in motion without using the duet as a structural support or a psychological idea. Considered and measured, bordering on an intriguing sentiment that never oversteps the line, the three pas de deux in this ballet highlight the deconstruction and reconstruction of this famous form, and it is in this structure that his choreographic imagination blooms. Van Manen is a staple of European ballet history, a Dutch master decorated with a series of socially relevant honours, whose ballets nevertheless remain artistically gritty without slipping into recognisable conventions.

The three duets, danced with mastery and contemporary freshness, were performed by Olga Esina and Vladimir Shishov, Ketevan Papava and Roman Lazik, and Nina Poláková and Eno Peci, led by Mea Venema (Van Manen's long-time dancer and choreographic assistant who is now in charge of his repertory).

The Vienna State Ballet, an extremely ambitious, skilful and open company, performed the work with abundant dynamics and vitality. The work felt as though it was created a year ago, and not in 1973.







# To the Inside

## About Jiří Kylián's *Click-Pause-Silence* performed by Staatsballett Berlin at Staatsoper im Schiller Theater in Berlin on January 4th, 2016

WRITTEN BY: Marjana Krajač

Between two choreographies of Nacho Duato, Staatsballett Berlin performed a marvelous Kylián quartet titled *Click-Pause-Silence*. The work originally premiered on November 11<sup>th</sup>, 2000 by Nederlands Dans Theater at the Lucent Danstheater in Den Haag. The score was a reconstructed composition of J.S. Bach's *Präludium No. 24 in b-moll* from *Das Wohltemperierte Klavier*. Kylián and his composer, Dirk Haubrich, deconstructed this musical piece collaboratively, separating it into fragments and then rebuilding it into a new piece.

In *Click-Pause-Silence*, Kylián's work, often combining form with gesture, reached intriguing asymmetries where movement was simultaneously dynamic and fluid in form and momentum. Different singular lifts and entangled points-of-contact deepened the proposition of this movement architecture. The commitment to the formal thoroughness of his movement constructed a particular emotional transfer, which read as nostalgia on the brink of a breakdown, or an inwardly exploding sadness. The work unraveled a compression of dense moments and contemplative structure necessary to render scattered intensities that held the pattern of time in place. Recapturing and reoccurring, convoluting and enveloping, this procedure enabled the interpretation of meaning of each singular presence, normally difficult to categorize and grasp on their own.

The idea of the choreography for this work was in many ways embedded in this structural musical gesture as autonomous fragments capable of perpetually reconnecting to create new and unexpected connections. The moderate, almost analytical tempo of the work enveloped several frames that allowed diverse scenographic decisions to logically come together in a thoroughly dynamic graduation. Each element of the work was therefore equally important in scale, the dynamism of the image dispersed into balanced signs that emerged gradually. Tempo, gesture and form, alienated from the distant screen, fragmented, looped and deconstructed. Thoughtfully shifting the viewer's gaze *onto* and *into* the different elements that develop in front of our eyes, Kylián succeeded in immersing us in contemplation about singular heroism (singular here meaning as structured around one's own position, articulated within itself, communicating an

inner form, unexchangeable). His meticulous and thorough choreography developed this singularity and opened it up to the unexpected spatial and interpersonal solutions.

The piece lasted no more than 20 minutes. Nevertheless, the emotional experience of time seemed much larger and deeper. A feeling of an in-endo of time split into many layers, allowing different elements of the piece to reveal themselves *to the outside* and *to the inside*. This *towards the inside* motion of the work, this development *from the outer to the inner*, found its conclusion in an intriguing moment when the white, downstage dance floor suddenly lifted, creating an interruption within the stability of the usual scenography, breaking the line, presenting a new voluminous space. “*The inside of the envelope is yet another outside, developed (or de-enveloped) otherwise, full of folds, turns, convolutions, and adhesions. Full of invaginations, small heaps, and conglomerations*” as Jean-Luc Nancy has said\*. Along those lines, *Click-Pause-Silence* possessed a multiplicity of inner and outer perspectives, some that we observed and others that we expected to propel our understanding of the dance as it continued to unfold after it has ended.

Performed by Ilenia Montagnoli, Olaf Kollmannsperger, Vladislav Marinov and Federico Spallitta, the material side of *Click-Pause-Silence* offered a challenging framework for calm and contained performativity. Solitary choreographic patterns, eremitic even in a duet or a trio, required a large portion of expressive moderation, as seen in the thoughtful, alert and vivid movement articulations. Montagnoli masterfully rose to the astringent environment, whereas Kollmannsperger, Marinov and Spallitta still needed more austere execution rooted in the steadiness of its formality.

Staatsballett Berlin rose to the occasion of the challenging contrapunct of Duato’s expressionistic position. Always rooting for more of a sophisticated neoformalism, I concluded the evening reminiscing with friends about the legacies of *Tanztheater* and its impact on the writing that can be found in today’s ballet landscape. There are certain flavors of this particular era that have permeated the taste of the whole industry. In this case, we were pondering the 2000s, which still feel emotionally too close to consider as archival, though rationally far enough to be able to more precisely formalize thoughts about this time.

The memory that remains is fractured. Talking about it afterwards will bring all kinds of new focuses: for some it was the bright elusiveness of Bach, for others it is the double-vision of the projected images. Still others, and this

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\* Nancy, Jean-Luc. “Inside Out.” The Philosophical Salon. April 06, 2016. Accessed July 18, 2018. <https://thephilosophicalsalon.com/inside-out/>.

was true for me, found significance in the voluminosity of elements. Gaze was allowed to slide, to connect the fragments in any possible order which, regardless, created the coherent whole.











# What Is This Pas De Deux About?

WRITTEN BY: Marjana Krajač

I am often asked the question of what something is about: What is this piece about? What is this work about? Since that question is always somewhat bulky and substantial, it seems to me that its answer is often strongly linked to the capacity of its reception. So let me try to explain what it is all about, taking one of my favourite formats, the pas de deux. The one I am referring to is titled *Tiento*, which I created in October 2016 for the program of the Open Day with the Ballet of Croatian National Theatre in Zagreb.

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*When experiencing the pas de deux in performance, I often come away with hoping that the audience was captivated by our 'conversation' as much as by the excitement of the physicality. It is so satisfying when the pas de deux goes well.*

Cynthia Harvey \*

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When dancers Asuka Maruo and Duilio Ingraffia arrive at the ballet studio of Croatian National Theatre in Zagreb, I am already there going through the music. It is our first rehearsal and my first suggestion is to structure space: it is going to be a narrow, long trail, deep in length and compressed on the sides. It is a simple image of a corridor, a passage, a tunnel, a bridge - approaching and departing, going backwards and forwards, transitioning. So we start with that idea as an anchor. Instead of setting up movements or steps I am asking them to try to just go through the dance, trusting that as they go along, bit by bit, breath by breath, the dance will reveal itself gradually. A few hesitations, some simple questions, and then we are good to go.

*Start with the stillness in you, I say, with breathing in and out, feeling the presence of the other. Give some moment to the music, I say, let the sound embrace you and then just let it proceed.* They both nod softly, thinking,

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\* Laws, Kenneth, and Cynthia Harvey. *Physics, Dance, and the Pas De Deux*. New York: Schirmer Books, 1994.

gathering focus. After a minute or so they are ready and standing: two figures in space, in silence, at the beginning. Music appears faintly from the background.

The first movement appears, maybe just a hand, a slight lean forward. There is an impulse that arises, an inner viscosity of the other giving the first suggestion; there is a form that emerges, a leg lift or balance shift, a body spiralling. A pause arrives, issuing some reaction, catapulting to the outside, and then both arms holding, encompassing, going in again, exploring tension. A body suddenly waves, but only slightly. Out of somewhere: arabesque - adjusting and organizing its arrival and departure, then grounded again. A need to open up to the surrounding space, some simple steps, someone turns and now there is an energy shift, a sudden activity from all-over, reacting in different directions, less controlled, yielding to the whirling-around, and here we are: breath calming for a second, then eyes and face, sensing the mutual idea. *Yes, yes, let's go for it.* One is falling, the other one assisting with structure, reacting to that upswing of the inner logic. It presses forward - so much space around us - bursting out in all directions. A thousand arms appear as a gaze appears, eyes searching far out, pulling the outside in, absorbing it all, and then the body reaches further again. Ideas are developing, following the impulse that was somehow already there, supporting that thought we had. But here is another one not quite defined yet (did we finish a previous thought?), letting the memory fall apart, surfing on traces, on margins. And then eyes again, grounding, mutual arrival. A very clear intention arrives, a familiar structure for a moment: soothing, rounding, assuring, just enough to feel the breath with confidence. The body re-aligns itself ready to open further, some more simple steps, maybe a palpable feeling of vulnerability, a bit shaky on the inside, fluctuating but not hindering. Then a grip comes, a body carries it forward with conviction in an assured dialog, a firm orientation, momentum that replicates itself forward, a myriad of forms and gestures, all now making appearance, making themselves visible, gripping the surfaces of the structure and then slowly again fading away, disappearing in itself, dissolving. A body empties out its traces, the body which is now gone until the next juncture where there is weight again, presence again, mood again, texture again, that vibrates another form briefly, and yet another, and the next one, horizon of forms, shapes, volumes, gaps and lines, all sustaining and enduring, confirming that we are here, together, present.

The music subsides, and with the first dance accomplished, Asuka and Duilio are laughing softly as they relax. We all smile and giggle a bit in that funny conspiracy of doers and makers, playing with elements, so easily and so not easily at the same time. I am articulating some wishes, some preferences that might sharpen out some moments, like hints of expressiveness

or narrative that I saw arriving here-and-there. So I am suggesting that they understand the work as a trace, as a shadow, and then to release it gently with the new movement that appears. Another thought is regarding a confidence in the moments of pause, a confidence in the breath, allowing that tranquillity to reload the dynamic of the dance by creating more spaciousness in time. My final thought is about the outer edge of any articulated movement: that the movement should reach its full potential before transitioning to the next inner idea.

Asuka and Duilio embark on the second round of this dance, and then third, and then the fourth and so on, accumulating the experience of creating the choreography afresh. In re-living it again and again, by confirming its contractions and releases and letting the outside gaze fall upon them freely, their explorations don't evoke comparison, just observation, almost like watching a delicate ripple in time. It is not about being impeccable or pressured, but about being transparent and lucid.

As the three of us see it, this dance could go on forever, appearing out of nowhere and perpetuating endlessly. It just so happens that here, on this particular day, there is a visible portion of this dance, at this particular corridor in space.





















# Structural Landscapes and the Transformative Dark

WRITTEN BY: Marjana Krajač

Late July 2017: It's been exactly a year since rehearsals started for *Dark Landscapes*, a ballet I created with, and for, Ballet of Croatian National Theatre in Zagreb. The first rehearsals started in July 2016 with a subsequent premiere on November 11th, 2016. A suspended one-year-after memory of the rehearsal process is now emerging, providing me with the momentum to portray some of its themes, endeavors and risks in this three-part essay. The marvelous dancers that embarked with me on this unique journey were: Asuka Maruo, Adam Harris, Cristiana Rotolo, Tomaž Golub, Iva Vitić Gameiro, Andrea Schifano, Lucija Radić, Takuya Sumitomo, Miruna Micu, Kornel Palinko, Natalia Horsnell, Guilherme Alves, Rieka Suzuki, Duilio Ingrassia, Valentina Štok and Ovidiu Muscalu.

## I.

### Music for Horizontal Contemplation

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*The near 40-minute length of 'Two5' is remarkable in its rigorous insistence on both the awareness by the performers of space as a "non-place" and the complexity of how the score is arranged to bring out the microtonalities of the trombone by virtue of its semitones - located six steps between."*

*Thom Jurek \**

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There are several different strings of choreographic structure present in *Dark Landscapes*. Let me start with the structure that is most closely connected with John Cage's composition for piano & tenor-trombone, *Two5*, from *Prelude for Meditation* (1993).

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\* Jurek, Thom. "John Cage: *Prelude for Meditation*-Hildegard KleeB | Songs, Reviews, Credits." AllMusic. Accessed July 18, 2018. <https://www.allmusic.com/album/john-cage-prelude-for-meditation-mw0000634550>.

In my choreographic processes I often develop a singular constitutive part of choreography to a different piece of music than what the dance is ultimately performed to. The final music, added only at the end of the process, serves to layer, to deepen and to connect all the sections of movement, building a certain *inner history* of the piece that enables dancers to expand their focus and to relate to the material with a renewed understanding.

John Cage's *Two5* was one of the scores for the development of a crucial part of choreography in *Dark Landscapes*, danced by the male ensemble. Choreographically, I simply started with the idea that there is a pas de deux possible within the masculine side of the movement scope. We started with minimalistic transitions through the space, structurally embarking through the spatial line into horizontal sculpture and movement pulses that connected a single duet to an accumulation of simultaneous duets. Developing this further, in smaller and larger groups, dancers expanded into different flows and rhythms, finding links between figures created along the way. Marking the space, and the figures within that space, created a rhythmic holding pattern - an asymmetrical relationship between *action* and *silence*. Images that appeared progressively through working with the material, and that started to form the spatial basis for a choreographic grid, were: *To carry and to be carried, to transport and be transported, to place and to be placed, to position and to be positioned, to observe and to be observed.*

The tasks set up by this choreographic grid were challenging in both its minimalist and maximalist approaches. Almost pedestrian, organic standings-in-silence were counterpointed by formal voluminous figures held in sculptural tension. Many subtle physical details determined the dancers' grounded focus while holding the total surface space in complete awareness, which included the dynamic of the second choreographic layer, happening simultaneously. This type of awareness required calm, present body-focus that was both silent and attentive, imaginative and selective, autonomous and open towards the collective subconscious. It took us some processing-time to gather all the strings of bodily understanding, and to grasp the total conceptual motif. Each dancer experienced their own visceral journey while shaping their movement, being *with it* and *in it*. This process differed immensely from an externally motivated structure based on choreographic or performative appearance. In other words, the dance *felt* different than it *looked*. And it *looked* only in a context of comparison to others, or to The Other (as in: a totality of otherness).

*Two5* allowed a specific kind of opening for inner and outer choreography. In its durational approach it reminded me of *A Collection of Rocks*, a work that John Cage premiered in 1985 at Music Biennale in Zagreb. A spaciousness in sound (long pauses that are punctuated by instrumental interventions) embraces the imposing tonal shifts and creates a sense

of *dense liquidity*. It is fun to wonder whether the pauses are punctuating the score, or if the score is punctuating the silences. In that double-vision of presence and absence, the movement (in music and in dance) was a loop that suspended itself by annihilating itself - endlessly invigorated and perpetually dissolved. Like grasping at nothing, mere repetition became solid ground.

This solid ground became the inner grid of the work, a grid as indistinctly visible as a conceptual grid usually is: here and there in present continuum, crucial in its imperative of inner calmness. The dancers confessed to me that completion of this task was not palpable until the piece was performed in complete duration. The challenge was in maintaining a precise calmness while simultaneously sensing the timing of the work as a whole, as well as the waves of activity of the other choreographic parts. As the piece flowed, a potential for a sudden dynamic emerged. The grid dissolved, gradually becoming a part of the work. The work itself *grew around* the grid, offering new pathways toward theme, dynamic and tension within the shapes.

The lesson of withholding and punctuating in John Cage's score perfectly encouraged the contrasts that I aimed to explore in this work. In retrospect, the autonomous interior of this reflection is a contemplation in-and-of-itself, a rumination about relationships, time, flow and invisible details.

## II.

### Eikónic Memoire of Dance

Iconic, from Latin icon, from Ancient Greek εἰκών (eikón): a sense of a *visual representation (of an object or scene or person or abstraction) produced on a surface.*

The central mechanism of the floating structure of *Dark Landscapes* was the recognition that ballet is rooted in the eikónic apparatus. What this means is that there was a deep sense of form defined as a representative of *some thing*. Now, the most interesting thing, for me, was opening that interpretative space in order for this *thing* to be recognized and defined, though it could also be left unrecognizable, open, in a process of becoming. The potential of this interpretative and cognitive flexibility is that it emerged out of the contours of the eikón and was thus the strongest driving force of artistic interest for this kind of choreographic structuring. Again, it is not that the significance of the form is dissolving. On the contrary, the form affirmed its inherited substance, but the meaning of the form is perpetually transmutable. If the meaning of the form is transmutable and convertible, that means that the very plasticity of the eikón transfers to the plasticity of



time and the plasticity of relationship in space. The centrifugal perspective of the *singular-point-attention* in space disintegrates into a multitude of attention points that are navigated from within the fabric of the permanently floating structure.

This spurred several important questions:

Where was the point of reference in space? How was the flow of music embraced? What anchored the movements that were only just arriving?

Instead of exploding into expression, this structure imploded towards intense simultaneous attention. On many levels, movement that was arriving opened up a spatial structure as well as created the reference point in space, where other movements could then temporarily organize themselves. Next: arriving forms, dynamics and relationships created a new referential point in space which then provided a new wave of movement-ideas, impulses and resolutions. On yet another level, the *breath* of this structure as a whole shaped a correlated architecture comprised of form, form-ideas, dynamics, relations, strong and soft decisions, transformations, holdings and reachings, observations and offerings, resolutions and oppositions, assemblages and dissolvings, transversals and remodelings, all the while continuously listening and emotionally holding this inner space. Depending on the momentum, the music could contribute, punctuate or soften the diverse tensions and potentialities that culminated, creating a soft time-container, or a strong framework to be conquered.

This grounding of texture and inner logic of movement happened in many overlapping phases. First rehearsals started with one or two clear choreographic propositions materialized in medium-long dance sessions that allowed for uninterrupted flow of time. In experiencing the first grids of my floating structure, ideas exchanged and moments shared among the group gradually built a legacy of mutual responsiveness that eventually created a foundation for new explorations. Parallel to that, my choreographic manual of propositions was narrowing down from a very wide field of possible activations to a certain area that seemed to sparkle. In paying close attention to the kinaesthetic explorations in rehearsal, I was able to construct my own new insights linked to specific dancers in my frame of view. In this mutual dialog of observing and proposing, choreography was gradually being refined further, defining itself from this mutable and transformable process.

This process, *that leapt into the void* to encounter The Other (other bodies, other dynamics and forms), transformed clusters of some long-forgotten memory of dance and crystalized itself in an ever-present eikón of dance, introducing precision and articulation that carries strength of meaning. A myriad of connections were being constructed along the way: dynamic

that followed impact of form, form that followed openings in space, space that recreated itself from traces of the form-impact, music that anchored a machine of atmospheric traces, body that encompassed translations of sound and time, emotional impact that created urgency in rhythm and constructed and resolved connections between bodies that were navigating through the form - these elements all shaped an understanding of mutual choreographic desire.

Aspirations towards this kind of choreographic architecture is the zeal for extended avenues of choreographic focus. For another text that I wrote (*Camera Left Alone in a Dance Studio*, also included in this volume), an identical theme emerged. In 1912, Anton Giulio Bragaglia declared in his *Manifesto Fotodinamica Futurista*:

“The picture can be invaded and pervaded by the essence of the subject. It can be obsessed by the subject to the extent that it energetically invades and obsesses the audience with its own values.” \*

Thus, Bragaglia is here firmly occupied with phases of the *in-between* of appearance, or perhaps more-so, with the essence of moving-matter that reshapes itself as it progresses, or shifts, through *time-space*. Bragaglia articulates this as *the essence*, meaning, the core of the value, or the value itself. The *matter-in-progress* could be of stronger interest to us the moment at which presence is peaking (which is just a *peak event* of the ever-unfolding movement-in-progress). The final vision of what this choreographic structure is allocating is simultaneously *a compendium* of how to dance it, how to embody it, how to deepen it, how to grasp it cognitively and practically and how to *burn from within*. This vision then allows each dancer to go through the kaleidoscope of form and imagination in a sometimes-visible and other times invisible process.

The main grid of the work consisted of the procedures surrounding the floating choreographical structure, while other upcoming elements were subsequently integrated. It was as though the floaty-ness of the structure devoured the singular elements and still carved out each and everyone’s luminosity. Dancers that autonomously navigated saturation, tincture and intensity of the choreographic flow were in possession of the strong undertow of its vibrancy. There are moments in that *experience-from-within* that were solely theirs: intimate and exposed at the same time.

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\* Bragaglia, Aton Guglio. “Futurist Photodynamism.” *Modernism / Modernity*, 2nd ser., 15 (2008): 363-79.







### III.

#### Within the Transformation: An Interview.

There is so much spring grace in Belgrade that it opens your breathing and relaxes your walk. The Belgrade Dance Festival embraced us warmly, and on the 4th of April 2017, *Dark Landscapes* were performed at the Madlenianum Theatre. Staging this work is always electric. The choreographic material reshapes constantly, finding its momentum in singular accumulative decisions that gradually builds a texture throughout the work. The committed ensemble once more found their way in to the depths of this work, performing it with serenity and flow - some new moments appeared, and some dynamics in the music were rediscovered and interpreted anew. With that in mind, I talked with soloist Natalia Horsnell about the choreographic process.

**Natalia, you have been a dancer at Ballet of Croatian National Theatre in Zagreb since 2010, and promoted to a soloist position in 2013. How do you feel in the company at the moment?**

At the moment I feel good, very busy, but good. Right now we are getting ready for a new premiere of *The Glembays*, a ballet by choreographer Leo Mujić, as well as performing *Peter Pan*, last years' work by Giorgio Madia. We are also getting the ballet *Anna Karenina* ready to be performed on tour at the Alexandrinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg. I love being busy though, and when there is not a lot happening I find it harder than when it is *go go go*.

**During the rehearsals for *Dark Landscapes* I sensed your encompassing reflexivity and comprehension of the process. Is there something that was particularly interesting to you during our sessions?**

I found that the process of creating *Dark Landscapes* was as a whole very interesting. It was the first time that I played a part in making and creating a ballet like this. At first, I honestly found it very hard to really *let go* from a fixed ballet structure. It was challenging having to know what I am doing when I am doing it, on what count with what partner, and letting a more outside-of-the-box feeling take over when, at the same time, we have an overarching structure and creative base from which to grow and form our ideas on. When I think about where we all started, and about how the piece developed, it was quite amazing. The fact that the process and transformation happened not only to the piece but also to all of us as dancers - that was the most rewarding.

**There was a challenge for all of us to translate the organic ever-evolving process of the rehearsal sessions to the stage-setting. This moment for**

**me is always accompanied with some sort of flow-nostalgia and arrival into the materiality of the stage set. What are your thoughts about this?**

It is always an exciting thing to take whatever we have been working on onto the stage, as the stage is *where it all happens*. It can be scary at times, as the stage is completely open and you can suddenly see everything. The studio and its safety and sense of control is gone. In the case of this work, I found it astonishing how I actually felt more creative and more liberated once we were on stage. I cannot really pinpoint the exact reason as to why! Maybe the extra space, the intensified sound system or even seeing the seats in front of us indicated that in the near future people will be sitting there watching what we have been working so hard on. That is where I felt that the whole group grew and explored and changed, pushing the piece to a new level.

**Singular material of the choreography is floating within the whole structure. What do you feel changes the most from performance to performance?**

The one thing that changes the most is the overall energy of the group. There are so many different complex parts to the piece, so many outside factors that end up playing a huge part in how the choreography feels, and how we feel within the choreography, which ultimately influences what the audience gets from us during the piece. We all give or take energy from one another all the time. I remember days where we all had more energy, a bouncier energetic flow and objective perspectives. On other days, maybe when fleeting tiredness set in, it was transporting a different energy into the piece, which had a ripple effect within the group, in turn changing the performance.

**In every process there are some leftovers, traces, ghosts of some ideas... Is there an aspect of the work that you wished we could have continued to explore?**

That is hard to tell. I feel that we did explore things very deeply within ourselves. There is always room to do more, but I sense that every time we dance this ballet we are still exploring and creating and finding new and exciting things about the work and where it takes us.

**What is your most recent takeaway from this process and from the work in general?**

One of the things that stands out, among many, is the way I have learned that I should trust myself and be open to creating and exploring in ways that I normally wouldn't. There were times when I completely doubted everything, and when I could not find anything. Slowly, with the guidance and support of the whole group, I think we all found something very special.











# Studena romantična plesna gesta

O *Tamnim pejzažima* Marjane Krajač

Napisala: Katja Šimunić

U listopadu 2005. uznemirila me, očarala, duboko se utisnula podjednako u emocionalne i racionalne slojeve sjećanja izložba *Melankolija: genij i ludilo Zapada (Mélancolie: génie et folie en Occident)*\*. Postavljena u Grand Palaisu u Parizu prema kustoskoj zamisli Jeana Claira da se neortodoksnim kronološkim slijedom izlože djela koja tematiziraju melankoliju od antike do kraja dvadesetoga stoljeća, bila je to heteroklitna izložba koja je obuhvaćala tristotinjak izložaka u rasponu od znanstvenih objekata i kabineta čuda do slika poput onih Edvarda Muncha, Georgea Grosza, Giorgia de Chirica ili Edwarda Hoppera te skulptura Anselma Kiefera ili Rona Muecka, primjericice. Na naslovnici kataloga reproducirana je *tamna* slika Caspara Davida Friedricha *Redovnik na obali* (1808-1810). Desetak godina nakon izložbe čijim sam se tragovima (katalog, internetske potrage) nepredvidljivo, ali učestalo i pasionirano vraćala, a žureći jedne zagrebačke kasnojesenske večeri koja je, obilježena kalendarskim razdobljem u kojemu smo se zatekli, mogla posve prikladno prizivati i naslov Flaubertove pripovijetke *Studen*i, brzim pogledom u prolazu sam zahvatila plakat, i nešto poslije malo pozornije naslovnicu programske knjižice baletne večeri u Hrvatskome narodnom kazalištu u Zagrebu. Prva od dviju koreografija koje je te večeri trebalo pogledati, a koja nastaje kao susret eminentno klasičnobaletnoga ansambla i neosporno suvremenoplesne koreografkinje Marjane Krajač, nosila je naziv *Tamni pejzaži*\*\* . Dakle, tako naslovljena mogla bi ta koreografija biti i neki izgubljeni izložak u pokretu apostrofirane melankolične izložbe, pomislila sam.

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\* Izložba je bila postavljena u Galeries nationales du Grand Palais u Parizu od 13. listopada 2005. do 16. siječnja 2006. Opsežan katalog (*Mélancolie: génie et folie en Occident*, Gallimard, RMN, SMB, Paris, 2005, 504 str., ponovljeno izdanje 2014) uredio je autor izložbe Jean Clair koji je na pisanu refleksiju o melankolji i njezinim raznolikim likovnim preobrazbama pozvao na suradnju teoretičare i pisce poput Jeana Starobinskija, Marca Fumarolija, Yvesa Bonnefoya, Philippea Comara i druge.

\*\* Baletnu večer praizvedenu 11. studenoga 2016. u zagrebačkome Hrvatskom narodnom kazalištu činile su dvije koreografije: *Tamni pejzaži* Marjane Krajač i *Bolero* Maše Kolar. Autorski i izvedbeni tim *Tamnih pejzaža* činili su skladatelj Thomas Köner, scenograf i kostimograf Silvio Vujičić, dramaturški suradnik Andrej Mirčev i oblikovatelj svjetla Aleksandar Čavlek. Plesači/ce: Asuka Maruo, Adam Harris, Cristiana Rotolo, Tomaž Golub, Iva Vitić Gameiro, Andrea Schifano, Lucija Radić, Takuya Sumitomo, Miruna Micu, Kornel Palinko, Natalia Horsnell, Guilherme Gameiro Alves, Rieka Suzuki, Duilio Ingrassia, Valentina Štrok, Ovidiu Muscalu. Baletna majstorica: Suzana Bačić.

## Akromatski dispozitiv za distopijski balet

U gledalištu, u očekivanju početka *Tamnih pejzaža*, inicirani naslovom koji boji neodređene krajolike uznemirujućom emocijom, izranjaju iz sjećanja, poput nekih hladnih ili vjetrovitih slojeva, krajolici Caspara Davida Friedricha, njegova ulja na platnu poput *Lutalice iznad mora magle* (1817-18) ili *Zime / Ruševine opatije Eldena* (1808). No već sam početak koreografije Marjane Krajač razuvjerava doslovnu naslovnu mračnost pejzaža i uranja gledatelja u bijelu scenu i jarko, neobojeno, kazališno svijetlo. Ali i dalje izaziva u meni asocijaciju na romantične friedrichovske krajolike, ovoga puta na njegovo *bjeličasto* ulje na platnu *Ledeno more / Brodolom Nade* (1824) na kojemu se miješaju prirodni elementi, voda i stijene na velikoj hladnoći, i razvija narativ o *napadu* leda na jedrenjak. Slika veliča nadmoć prirodnih sila, zemlje, vode i zraka, nad svime što čovjek pokušava i uspijeva postići. Kao što je to, primjerice, izgradnja jedrenjaka s kojim se može oploviti svijet i otkrivati nove svjetove. Kompozicija je središnja, razbijena u šiljaste, prizmatične oblike, zemljanih i plavičastih nijansi boja neba i leda, naglašavajući odsutnost toplih elemenata poput flore i faune. Ljudska prisutnost nije vidljiva, ali je naslućujuća, možda ispod broda, možda ispod leda. Sveprisutno u toj slici, ali i u njezinu promatraču jest veličanstvenost i ljepota prirode. Veličanstvenost i tragičnost istodobno koja poziva na (straho) poštovanje prirode, a koja se tako uporno od davnine do danas izjalovljuje i o čemu u velikome vremenskom skoku od romantičnih slikara prema našoj ledenoj, brodolomnoj sadašnjosti svjedoče i fotografije Daniela Beltràa\*.

One bilježe tamni snijeg, brzo otapanje leda, pucanje glečera kao posljedicu suvremene ljudske agresije (i) u prirodno okruženje. A s fotografija duboko sive i jarko tirkizne površine grenlandskoga snijega i leda posve prirodno možemo uklizati u scenski prostor *Tamnih pejzaža*.

Scenografska *slika* koreografije *Tamnih pejzaža* dominantno je bijela iako prošarana tamnim akcentima u kostimima plesačica i plesača i naglašena crnom masom koja se u jednom trenutku, potkraj predstave, spušta na pod scene. Ta crna *prijetnja* čini se poput topljenja crne guste mase, ali koja ipak nije u agregatnom stanju topljenja jer se potpuno jednaka, kompaktna, opet podiže s poda scene. Djeluje poput *teške* mrlje. Opasne, zloglasne, neizbježne. Podjednako materijalne, fizičke, i metaforičke, misaone.

Oscilirajući između scenografske i kostimografske *palette* građene na nijansama i gradiranjima različitih bjelina i crnila, uspostavlja se akromatski dispozitiv za koreografiju koja će se razotkriti kao balet na *špicu*. Naime, Marjana Krajač kreirala je suvremenoplesnu predstavu koja se može *čitati*

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\* Daniel Beltrà fotograf je koji se u svome umjetničkom radu posebice usredotočuje na ljudski utjecaj na okoliš. Više na: <https://danielbeltra.photoshelter.com>.



i kao mogući distopijski romantični balet. Autorica je kreirala koreografirajući, u proširenome smislu te riječi, plesove na vršcima prstiju za balerine i plesove na rubu klasičnobaletnoga vokabulara za plesače, združujući improvizaciju kao esencijalno suvremenoplesni postupak i akademska pravila apstraktnoga pokreta koja su pak, slijedimo li Johna Martina, u korišćenju baletne estetike. Oslanja se i na klasični partnerski odnos plesačice i plesača, ali i skulpturni obuhvat dvaju muških tijela u međusobnim prenošenjima s jednoga mjesta na drugo.

Istančana tehnika maksimalne jasnoće u izvedbi plesačica poput Asuke Maruo, Ive Vitić Gameiro, Cristiane Rotolo ili plesača poput Duilija Ingrassia, primjerice, donosi nedvojbenu čitljivost pokreta, neskrivenost dodira korporealiteta, zamišljenih pogleda, gesta ruku koje se pružaju u potrazi za nečim, nekim. Sve to stvara suptilnu narativnost poput one koju imaju melankolični šetači, zamišljeni tragači, siluete putnika u napetim izmaglicama pejzaža romantičnih slikara. Ili, još točnije, plesačice i plesači *Tamnih pejzaža* kao da svojim nepredvidivim prostornim putevima s jedne i gestikom klasičnobaletne provenijencije s druge strane uspostavljaju svojevrsnu romantičnu plesnu *grafiku* u pokretu.

Iznova promišljajući, tumačeći i osjećajući plesne silfide Lynn Garafola piše:

“Iako su romantičke grafike mogle imati različite teme, bile su prije svega povezane s balerinom. Ona je u njima stalno prisutna kao što je prisutna u pisanju tog razdoblja: ikona ženstvenosti, graciozna, izazovna, tajanstvena. Sa svojim produhovljenim pogledom i prozračnim suknjama, obitavala je svijet udaljen od doma i ognjišta: samotne doline, maglovite obale jezera, tajne proplanke i divlje vrištine koje su u baletu, baš kao i u prozi, poeziji i operi veličale romantičku ideju prirode, čak i onda kad su je označavale kao neko egzotično prebivalište na rubu europske civilizacije.” \*

Koreografija *Tamni pejzaži* na začudan način idealizira baletnu plesačicu. Ako su u posljednjim radovima Marjane Krajač (*Koreografska fantazija br. 1, Koreografska fantazija br. 2, Varijacije o osjetnom, Kaleidoskop im Nebel*) suvremenoplesne plesačice uvjerenost zastupale duncanovsku bosonogost, ovdje koreografkinja zadržava ili, bolje bi bilo reći, podupire, poštuje (mogli bismo insinuirati pa reći da možda čak i fetišizira?) baletne papučice na stopalima balerina. Ipak, ona se ne koristi špicama kao uobičajenom potporom stremljenju uvis ili kao sredstvom potenciranja virtuoznosti, nego kao produljenjem linije, izvanrednom klasičnom baletnom tehnikom modelirane noge, kao estetskom kategorijom, kao esencijalnim amblemom

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\* Lynn Garafola, „Silfida u novom svjetlu”, *Kretanja* 15/16, Hrvatski Centar ITI, 2011, 11-18, str. 12 (s engleskoga prevela: Andreja Jeličić). Taj tekst urednički je predgovor Lynn Garafole u knjizi *Promišljanje silfide (Rethinking the Sylph)*, Wesleyan University Press, 1997.

ženskoga leksika *danse d'école*. Koreografkinji iznimno drag, svakodnevni pješački pokret ovdje se s lakoćom pretvara u hod, *običan* hod na punome stopalu, ali stopalu stegnutom špicom. Tako da taj običan hod ipak postaje za nijansu odmaknutiji od stabilna svakodnevnog hoda, postaje za nijansu drukčiji i *čišći, idealniji*. Plesačice na špicama u *Tamnim pejzažima* ne teže postati zračnim vilama, nego se mekano *zabadaju* u os gravitacijske sile i *tamo* djeluju, odlučuju o sljedećem pokretu. Težnja nije let balerine, nego suvereno uskakanje u vertikalu koja postaje neiscrpnim potencijalom plesnih akcija. Marjana Krajač objektivizira svojim koreografskim postupkom klasičnu baletnu tehniku tako da ju postavlja u samo izvorište izvedbene misli. Plesačice i plesači suočeni su sa slobodnim poniranjem u neiscrpan arhiv kodificiranih koraka, okreta, skokova, podrški, poza... Improviziraju putanje, grafiku svojih plesnih gesta i trenutaka u kojemu bljesnu klasično-baletne figure u zadanu bijelom prostoru scene napućenu tamnim zvukom.

## Akustični prostor plesa

Unutar burne akromatske monotonije uspostavljene uzbuđljivom izvedbom nepredvidljivih dodira i dodirnutosti plesačica i plesača uspostavlja se akustični prostor. Odnosno plesni prostor. Njemačko-američki psiholog i fenomenolog Erwin Straus piše:

“U pejzažu prestajemo biti povijesna bića [...]. Nemamo sjećanje na pejzaž, nemamo ga ni na nas u pejzažu. Sanjamo usred dana otvorenih očiju. Lišeni smo objektivnoga svijeta, ali također i nas samih. [...] Kontrast koji sam pokušao objasniti suprotstavljajući geografiju pejzažu već sam opisao na jednom drugom mjestu (*Oblici prostora*), pišući o razlici između akustičnoga i optičkoga prostora, između prostora plesa i onoga svrhovitoga pokreta.” \*

Erwin Straus razliku između svijeta osjeta i svijeta percepcije oprimjeruje razlikom između pejzaža i geografije ili akustičnoga i optičkoga prostora. U optičkome prostoru djeluje se svrhovito unutar organiziranoga vremena koje se dijeli na ono prije i poslije, povijesnoga vremena, a u akustičnome prostoru postoji samo sadašnji trenutak, samo snažna prisutnost ovdje i sada, što je tako blisko biti plesne umjetnosti. Tako da Marjana Krajač *Tamnim pejzažima* ulazi duboko u akustični prostor, izvanredno građen i originalnom glazbom Thomasa Könera, ulazi duboko u plesni prostor, dakle u ples sam. U plesnim pejzažima Marjane Krajač lako možemo zamisliti one

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\* Erwin Straus, *Du sens des sens (Vom Sinn der Sinne. Ein Beitrag zur Grundlegung der Psychologie / O značenju osjetila. Prilog temeljima psihologije*, J. Springer, Berlin 1935), prijevod na francuski: J.-P. Legrand i G. Tines, Editions Jérôme Millon, Grenoble, 2000, str. 382-383. Ulomak s francuskoga prevela: Katja Šimunić.

koje sanjaju otvorenih očiju, lišene objektivnoga svijeta, dakle vile, silfide, idealizirane balerine ili jednostavno one koje su lišene svrhovitoga pokreta. U *Tamnim pejzažima* zatječemo plesačice i plesače koji djeluju, reagiraju improvizacijom na akademski kodeks apstraktnoga pokreta. Kreću se unutar precizno definirana leksika, idealnog leksika klasičnobaletne tehnike, ali zaraženi improvizacijom: njihovi pogledi, njihova stanja, izrazito su udaljena od klasičnobaletnog svrhovita pogleda u službi što virtuoznijeg izvođenja određene figure.

Neodlučnost plesačica i plesača. Tako fina, delikatna, jedva primjetna. Ili recimo preciznije: nije to realna neodlučnost, nego suočenje s mogućnošću izbora. Iz mnoštva pokreta klasičnobaletnoga repertoara, mnoštva *primjera* baletnoga pravopisa. A taj sakrosanktni baletni pravopis nije narušen u *Tamnim pejzažima*, samo je duboko utopljen u sjetni akustični prostor u kojemu gravitacijska sila postaje gotovo kao neočekivan dar - *prijateljskom*.

Pa ako je tjelesna dispozicija plesačica i plesača baletnoga ansambla zagrebačkoga hrvatskog kazališta dominantno označena otvorenošću pozicija nogu i konzekventno jednako takvom posturom tijela, usmjerenošću prema van (na taj tako klasičnobaletni *turn out*) njihova kreativna i izvedbena koncentracija u *Tamnim pejzažima* usmjerena je prema unutra (na taj tako suvremenoplesni *turn in*), na unutrašnje osjećanje prostor-vremena i koreografije. Erwin Straus glazbi pridaje gradbenu ulogu plesnoga prostora. Glazba omogućuje da se ples uspostavi, materijalizira, oprostori. A plesačice i plesači *Tamnih pejzaža* kao da kožom, najfinijim porama puti osjećaju suptilnu i fluidnu minimalističku elektroničku Könerovu glazbu. Kao da je ona tek prirodno produljenje njihove unutarnje glazbe: usklađena s njihovim kolanjem krvi, disanjem, drhtajima srca.

## Pretpokret improvizacije

Iako Marjana Krajač u svojim recentnim radovima ne priziva neko konkretno djelo koje bi pripadalo likovnim umjetnostima, ipak je u njezinoj koreografskoj zamisli latentno prisutna i ideja tijela koja proizlazi iz klasične umjetnosti. Ne može se reći da ona *slijedi* ideal antike, ideal grčkih skulptura koje su tako zanosno pribrano usredotočene na idealno tijelo bilo u pokretu bilo u mirovanju, na ono koje sublimira savršenu formu života. No ako su u dosadašnjim njezinim plesnim radovima tijela plesačica i plesača, izvođačica i izvođača, a to vrijedi i za one u kojima se sama koreografkinja također pojavljivala kao plesačica, namjerno bila izabirana *nesavršena* tijela suvremenoplesnih plesačica, naglašeno različita, sva u detaljima osobnih korporealiteta, neujednačenih vrsta i razina plesnotehničkih vještina, u *Tamnim pejzažima* koreografkinja je surađivala s plesačicama i plesačima ujednačeno visokih izvedbenih kvaliteta i pripadnih identičnom

klasičnobaletnom vokabularu. I možemo reći da se Marjana Krajač koristi tehnikom klasičnoga baleta kao svojevrsnim *ready-madeom*, ali *ready-madeom* dopunjenim konceptom plesne improvizacije. Plesačice i plesači slobodno odlučuju kada i kako će intervenirati u koreografsko odvijanje. Hoće li napraviti *grand jeté* ili arabesku ili... U kojem trenutku? Marjana Krajač ne distorzira klasičnobaletnu tehniku usmjeravajući ju prema oslobođenju pokreta, nego oslobađa odluke plesačica i plesača o izboru pokreta. I dobiva tako izvanredno diferenciranu osobnost njihovih pogleda, njihovih šaka, njihovih pretpokreta. Cijeli jedan skriveni koncept prisutan je u osjetu pretpokreta *Tamnih pejzaža*.

Pretpokret je ovdje drugo ime za koncept improvizacije kojim koreografkinja intervenira u tkivo klasičnobaletne tehnike, u tijela balerina i baletnih plesača. Složena, jasna i čitljiva struktura *Tamnih pejzaža* počiva na beskompromisnim pregovorima koreografkinje s plesačicama i plesačima da se ostvari *bivanje* u pretpokretu, tomu neiscrpnom polju mogućnosti oblika pokreta.

Potencijalnost pretpokreta očividna je u titranju moguće slobode pokreta, ona je pokret oslobođen nužne, konačne odluke, pokret koji pulsira u pretprostoru, predvremenu svojega odjelotvorenja. Dominantna karakteristika *Tamnih pejzaža* profinjena je koreografkinjina odluka da se strogu kodeksu apstraktnoga pokreta klasičnoga baleta, odnosno njegove tehnike, koja je, slijedimo li Andrea Levinsona, sama duša plesa, asocira koncept potencijalnosti, beskrajno polje pretpokreta kao prostora kreacije, drugim riječima suvremenoplesna improvizacija. Plesačica u *Tamnim pejzažima* odlučuje sama kada i kako izabranu *ready-made*, izabranu arabesku izvodi na sredini scene. Kao što u jednome trenutku to nadahnuto, odlučno i divno izvodi, *pleše*, Natalia Horsnell.

Plesni je pretpokret, slijedeći misao Vladimira Jankélévitcha o onome što imenuje „gotovo ničime” (*le presque-rien*), pokret koji još nije, ali već jest. I na tome radi koreografska misao Marjane Krajač. U *Tamnim pejzažima* plesačice i plesači kao da nemaju prošlosti, kao da nemaju ni budućnosti, kao da imaju samo pomalo distopijsku sadašnjost u kojoj se ostvaruju plesnom umjetnošću. Iz toga proizlazi njihova naslućena melankoličnost i evidentna ljepota, ta idealnost umjetničke plesne geste u koju je uloženo sve da bi bila tako ganutljivo jednostavna. Lijepa i ljudska. Poput hoda. Pada na pod. Poluokreta. Pogleda. Dodira drugoga plešućeg tijela.

Sama predstava *Tamnih pejzaža* za nas također postaje svojevrsnim *ready-madeom* koji traži asistenciju. Nastavak. U našem sjećanju, opservaciji, stvaranju teksta, poezije na tu temu, slike, naknadne fotografije. Najuzbudljiviji je dojam da su plesovi Marjane Krajač uvijek mogli biti i neki drugi plesovi nego oni koji su nastali, koje smo promatrali, opservirali,

analizirali. Njezini plesovi postavljaju nam zamke onoga što (još) nisu postali. Razmišljamo dakle i o tim mogućnostima. Improviziramo. Uzimamo ih kao predtekst i gradimo svoje imaginarne plesove gledajući njezine realizirane. Uzimamo ih kao pretpokret i promišljamo, možda, suvremene silfide dvadeset prvoga stoljeća. Izbjeglice iz ovoga krajnje utilitarnoga, liberalnom kapitalizmu podvrgnuta svijeta. Da. Suvremene silfide danas su na ovaj ili onaj način nužno - izbjeglice. A pejzaži su potamnjeni.

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# Glacial Romantic Dance Gesture

## On Marjana Krajač's *Dark Landscapes*

WRITTEN BY: Katja Šimunić

TRANSLATED BY: Ivana Ostojčić

In October 2005 I was disturbed, enchanted and deeply impressed, both on the emotional and the rational level of memory, by the exhibition *Melancholy: Genius and Madness in the West (Mélancolie: génie et folie en Occident)\**. Set up at the Grand Palais and curated by Jean Clair. The idea was to exhibit works focusing on melancholy from the ancient period to the late 20th century in an unorthodox chronological order; it was a heteroclitite exhibition encompassing around 300 exhibits, ranging from scientific objects and cabinets of curiosities, to paintings by Edvard Munch, George Grosz, Giorgio de Chirico and Edward Hopper, to sculptures by Anselm Kiefer and Ron Mueck, for example. The cover of the catalogue featured Caspar David Friedrich's dark painting *The Monk by the Sea* (1808-1810). Ten years after the exhibition to whose traces (catalogue, web searches) I kept coming back to unpredictably, but often and with passion, in a hurry one late autumn evening which could, characterized by the season, quite aptly be named after Flaubert's story *November*, my eye was caught by a poster and, a moment later, by the leaflet of the ballet night at the Croatian National Theatre in Zagreb. The first of the two choreographies scheduled for the evening, a synergy between the eminently classical ballet ensemble and the indisputably contemporary dance choreographer Marjana Krajač, bore the title *Dark Landscapes (Tamni pejzaži)\*\**. With this title, therefore, this choreography could easily be a lost exhibit in motion of the mentioned melancholic exhibition, I thought.

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\* The exhibition was set up at Galeries Nationales du Grand Palais in Paris, from 13 October 2005 to 16 January 2006. A comprehensive catalogue (*Mélancolie: génie et folie en Occident*, Gallimard, RMN, SMB, Paris, 2005, 504 pages, re-issued in 2014) was edited by the author of the exhibition Jean Clair, who invited theoreticians and writers like Jean Starobinski, Marc Fumaroli, Yves Bonnefoy, Philippe Comar and others to reflect on melancholy and its different visual transformations in written form.

\*\* The ballet evening that premiered on 11 November 2016 at the Croatian National Theatre in Zagreb, consisted of two choreographies: *Dark Landscapes* by choreographer Marjana Krajač and *Bolero* by choreographer Maša Kolar. Creative team of *Dark Landscapes* included composer Thomas Köner, set and costume designer Silvio Vujičić and dramaturgical advisor Andrej Mirčev. Light designer: Aleksandar Čavlek. Danced by: Asuka Maruo, Adam Harris, Cristiana Rotolo, Tomaž Golub, Iva Vitić Gameiro, Andrea Schifano, Lucija Radić, Takuya Sumitomo, Miruna Miciu, Kornel Palinko, Natalia Horsnell, Guilherme Alves, Rieka Suzuki, Duilio Ingrassia, Valentina Štrok and Ovidiu Muscalu. Ballet mistress: Suzana Bačić.

## Achromatic Disposition for A Dystopian Ballet

In the auditorium, awaiting *Dark Landscapes* to begin, sparked by the title that colours indistinct landscapes with a disturbing emotion, Caspar David Friedrich's landscapes, his oils on canvas like *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog* (1817-18) or *Winter / Ruin of Eldena Abbey* (1808) emerged from the memory like cold or wintry layers. However, the very beginning of Marjana Krajač's choreography disproves the expected darkness of landscapes and immerses the spectator into a white stage and glaring, uncoloured, theatrical light. But nevertheless, it evokes romantic Friedrichian landscapes in my mind, this time his whitish oil on canvas *The Sea of Ice / The Failed Hope* (1824), combining natural elements, water and rocks in great cold, unrolling a narrative of the attack of ice on a sail ship. The painting glorifies the dominance of natural forces, earth, water and air, above all of man's attempts and accomplishments. Such as, for instance, building a sail ship to circumnavigate the globe and discover new worlds. The composition is central, broken down into pointed, prismatic forms of earthen and bluish hues of sky and ice, accentuating the absence of warm elements like flora and fauna. Human presence is not visible, but it can be sensed, perhaps below the ship, perhaps below the ice. Omnipresent in this painting, as well as in its spectator, is the magnificence and beauty of nature. Both magnificence and tragedy, which call for respect I (and awe) before nature, so persistently failed since ancient times until this day, testified in a large span of time to our glacial, shipwrecked present since romantic painters also by the photographs of Daniel Beltrà\*. They portray dark snow, quick thaw, glaciers cracking as a consequence of contemporary human aggression in(to) natural environment. And from the photographs of deeply grey and bright turquoise surface of Greenland snow and ice one can glide quite naturally onto the stage of *Dark Landscapes*.

The scenic *image* of the choreography of *Dark Landscapes* is dominantly white, albeit interspersed with dark accents in the dancers' costumes and accentuated with a black mass which, at a certain moment, towards the end of the performance, lowers down to the floor of the stage. This black *threat* seems like a meltdown of a dense black mass, which is nevertheless not in the liquid state of matter because it rises again from the floor of stage equal and compact as it was. It seems like a heavy stain. Dangerous, ominous, inevitable. Equally material, physical and metaphorical, contemplative.

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\* Daniel Beltrà is a photographer whose artistic works particularly focuses on the human impact on the environment. See more at <https://danielbeltra.photoshelter.com>.



Oscillating between the set and costume design *palette* built on hues and gradations of different shades of white and black, an achromatic disposition is established for a choreography that will unfold as ballet *en pointe*. Marjana Krajač has created a contemporary dance work that could equally be *read* as a possible dystopian romantic ballet. By choreographing, in the expanded sense, the author created dances *en pointe* for ballerinas and dances on the verge of classical ballet vocabulary for male ballet dancers, conjoining improvisation as an essentially contemporary dance act and the academic rules of abstract movement which is, following the thought of John Martin, engrained in the roots of ballet aesthetic. It also leans on the classic partner relationship between the male and the female dancer, as well as on the sculptural grip of two male bodies being mutually transported from one place to the other.

The refined technique of maximum clarity in the performances of dancers like Asuka Maruo, Iva Vitić Gameiro, Cristiana Rotolo or Duilio Ingrassia, for example, adds to the indisputable legibility of movement, unhidden touches of corporeality, pensive gazes, hand gestures stretching out to something, to someone. All this creates a subtle narrative of melancholy flâneurs, meditative wanderers, silhouettes of passengers surrounded by tense haze in romantic paintings. Or, more accurately, the performers of *Dark Landscapes* seem to establish a sort of romantic dance graphics in motion with their unpredictable spatial trajectories on the one hand and their classical ballet gesture on the other. Rethinking, reinterpreting and re-sensing dance sylphs, Lynn Garafola writes:

“Although Romantic prints could be varied in subject matter, they belonged above all to the ballerina. She haunts them, as she haunts the writing of the era, an icon of femininity, graceful, teasing, mysterious. With her soulful gaze and airy skirts, she inhabited a world remote from home and hearth, the secluded valleys, misty lakesides, secret glades, and wild heaths that in ballet as in fiction, poetry, and opera extolled a Romantic idea of nature even as they coded her as an exotic dwelling on the periphery of European civilization.” \*

The choreography of *Dark Landscapes* artfully idealises a female ballet dancer. In Marjana Krajač's latest works (*Choreographic Fantasy no. 1*, *Choreographic Fantasy no. 2*, *Variations on Sensitive*, *Kaleidoskop im Nebel*) contemporary dancers advocated Duncanian barefootedness, however here the choreographer maintained, or better yet, embraced, respected (one could even say fetishized) pointe shoes on ballerinas' feet.

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\* Garafola, Lynn. *Rethinking the Sylph: New Perspectives on the Romantic Ballet*. Hanover: University Press of New England, 1997.

Nevertheless, she does not resort to pointe shoes as the usual support to upward striving or a means to accentuate virtuosity, but as an extension to the line, an outstanding classical ballet technique of a powerfully shaped leg, as an aesthetic category, as an essential emblem of the women's lexica of *danse d'école*. Everyday pedestrian movement, so dear to the choreographer, here easily turns into a walk, just an ordinary walk on the whole foot, albeit a foot sharply confined in a pointe shoe. This *ordinary* walk thus becomes a tad different than the steady everyday walk, a bit different and *clearer, more ideal*. Dancers in pointe shoes in *Dark Landscapes* do not aspire to become ethereal fairies, but rather softly *poke* into the gravity axis and act *there*, deciding on their next movement. They do not aspire to “fly like ballerinas”, but to steadfastly jump into a vertical which becomes an undying potential of dance actions. Marjana Krajač in her choreographic procedure objectivises the ballet technique and sets it at the very source of performative thought. The dancers are given a chance to freely delve into an infinite archive of codified steps, turns, jumps, supports, poses... They improvise trajectories, the graphism of their dance gestures and flashes of classical ballet figures in the set white space of a scene imbued with dark sound.

## Acoustic Space of Dance

Inside a turbulent achromatic monotony deriving from the exciting performance of unpredictable touching and being touched between the male and female dancers an acoustic space is established. German-American psychologist and phenomenologist Erwin Straus writes:

“In landscape we stop being historical beings [...]. We have no memory of landscape, nor does landscape have any memory of us. We dream in broad daylight with our eyes open. We are devoid of the objective world, but also of ourselves. [...] The contrast I tried to explain by juxtaposing geography and landscape I have already described elsewhere (*The Forms of Spatiality*), writing about the differences between acoustic and optical space, between the space of dance and the space of purposeful movement.” \*

Erwin Straus exemplifies the difference between the world of senses and the world of perception with the difference between landscape and geography or acoustic and optical space. Optical space houses purposeful actions within an organised timeframe, divided into before and after, a historical

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\* Straus, Erwin. *Du sens des sens Vom Sinn der Sinne: Ein Beitrag zur Grundlegung der Psychologie*. Grenoble, 2000, pp. 382-383.

time, whereas in acoustic space there is only now, only a strong presence here and now, which is so close to the essence of dance art. Therefore, Marjana Krajač in *Dark Landscapes* penetrates deep into acoustic space, remarkably built by Thomas Köner's original score, delving profoundly into the dance space, into dance per se. In Marjana Krajač's dance landscapes one can easily imagine those dreaming with their eyes open, devoid of the objective I world, fairies, sylphs, idealised ballerinas or simply those lacking in purposeful movement. In *Dark Landscapes* we find dancers who act and react with improvisation to the academic code of abstract movement. They move within a precisely defined vocabulary, the ideal vocabulary of the classical ballet technique, but infected with improvisation: their views, their states are extremely detached from the classical ballet purposeful view serving to perform a certain figure as virtuously as possible.

The dancers' indecision. So fine, delicate, barely noticeable. Or to be more precise: this is not realistic indecision, but rather facing the possibility of choice. Among the multitude of movements in the classical ballet repertory, a multitude of *examples* of ballet grammar. And *Dark Landscapes* do not undermine this sacrosanct ballet grammar, only deeply engrain it in the melancholy acoustic space where gravity becomes almost an unexpected gift - it becomes *friendly*. Therefore, if the physical disposition of the dancers in Croatian National Theatre's ballet company is dominantly characterised by the open feet position and consequentially equal body posture, outward-facing (this classical ballet turn out), their creative and performative concentration in *Dark Landscapes* is facing inwards (this contemporary dance turn in), focusing on the inward sense of space and time and choreography. Erwin Straus attributes music a constructive role in dance space. Music establishes, materialises, spatialises dance. And dancers in *Dark Landscapes* seem to feel Köner's subtle and fluid minimalist electronic music in their skin, in their finest pores. This music seems to be only a natural extension to their internal music: harmonised with their blood flow, breathing, heart palpitations.

## Improvisation Pre-Movement

Although Marjana Krajač in her recent works does not evoke a specific art work from the visual arts sphere, nevertheless her choreographic idea displays a latent presence of the idea of body stemming from classical art. She cannot be said to *follow* the ancient ideal, the ideal of Greek sculptures so fascinatedly and steadily focused on the ideal body, either in motion or still, on the body sublimating the perfect form of life. Her previous dance works featured the bodies of male and female performers, deliberately chosen to be the *imperfect* bodies of dancers, significantly different, all in

the details of personal corporealities, unaligned in terms of sorts and levels of dance techniques and skills. In *Dark Landscapes* the choreographer worked with ballerinas and ballet dancers of equally high-performance qualities, belonging to the identical classical ballet vocabulary. One could say Marjana Krajač resorts to the classical ballet technique as a sort of ready-made, but a ready-made supplemented with the dance improvisation concept. The dancers can decide freely when and how to intervene into the choreographic flow. Will they make this grand jeté or arabesque or... At what moment? Marjana Krajač does not distort the classical ballet technique pointing it to free movement, but rather liberates the dancers' decisions on the choice of movement. And thus gets an exceptionally differentiated personality of their gazes, their fists, their pre-movements. An entire covert concept is present in the sense of pre-movement in *Dark Landscapes*.

Pre-movement is here in fact another name for the concept of improvisation used by the choreographer to intervene in the tissue of the classical ballet technique, in the male and female ballet dancers' bodies. The complex, clear and legible structure of *Dark Landscapes* relies on the choreographer's uncompromising negotiations with the dancers to establish *coming into existence* in pre-movement, this infinite field of possibilities of movement.

The potential of pre-movement is evident in the flicker of the possible freedom of movement, it is movement liberated from the inevitable, a final decision, movement pulsating in pre-pace, in pre-time of its materialisation. The dominant trait of *Dark Landscapes* is the choreographer's refined decision to associate the strict code of classical ballet's abstract movement, i.e. its technique, which is, to Andre Levinson, the very soul of dance, with the concept of potentiality, the infinite field of pre-movement as a space of creation, in other words, a contemporary dance improvisation. A dancer in *Dark Landscapes* decided by herself when and how to perform the chosen ready-made, the chosen arabesque in the middle of the stage. As did Natalia Horsnell at a certain point, with inspiration, determination and brilliance.

Following the thought of Vladimir Jankélévitch and his "almost nothing" (*le presque-rien*), a dance pre-movement is a movement which is not yet but already is. And this is what Marjana Krajač's choreographic thought pursues. In *Dark Landscapes* the dancers seem to have no past, no future, only a somewhat dystopian present in which they become accomplished through dance art. This barely perceived presentiment of melancholia and evident beauty stems from it, this ideality of the artistic dance gesture in which *everything* was invested to make it so movingly simple. Beautiful

and human. Like walking. Falling on the floor. Semi-turn. Glance. Touch of another dancing body.

The very performance of *Dark Landscapes* to us also becomes a sort of ready-made that requires assistance. A continuation. In our memory and observation, in creating text or poetry to the subject, in engendering an image or a subsequent photograph. The most exciting impression is that Marjana Krajač's dances could have always been some other dances than the ones created, watched, observed, analysed. Her dance works set the traps of what they have not (yet) become. We consider these possibilities. We improvise. We take them as pre-movement and we imagine, perhaps, the contemporary sylphs of the 21st century. Refugees from this utterly utilitarian world subjected to liberal capitalism. Sure. Contemporary sylphs are today, in one way or another, necessarily - refugees. And the landscapes have grown darker.

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# Camera Left Alone in a Dance Studio

WRITTEN BY: Marjana Krajač

Late February 2018: Empty spaces, spaces that fill up with meaning by the protocols of choreographic and other types of dance work, architectures of inner and outer senses, logistics of inhabiting containers of space, presence and time - these ideas are regularly occupying my interest. This is an extract from a text I created for the Research Academy at the Zurich University of the Arts in July 2017. The original presentation included a collection of materials addressing questions of the moving image, phenomenology of the camera and the collaborative exploration of the documentary field throughout history. In this version I was contemplating the dance studio and its imaginations.

A dance studio is a specific space. In opposition to the atelier, which is usually filled with things and traces of things, a dance studio is purposefully empty. When working in a dance studio we are explicitly asked not to leave traces: to remove all things that are brought in and to leave the room as it was found. We are also asked to remove ourselves in order for the next person or group of people to enter the space. This rhythmic exchange of things and people, of the present and the absent, is the core nature of the logic of a dance studio. Pragmatically, the dance studio stands predominantly empty. Counting all the night hours and holidays, the emptiness of the dance studio almost supersedes its occasional state of being occupied. The studio has to contain this inherent empty state in order to host different activities uninterfered. The potential of these diverse activities (and this diversification can be a logistical, aesthetic or ideological), is strongly contained in its emptiness. Containing light, containing temperature - a dance studio space is circulating ghostly matters\*.

Avery Gordon wrestles with this same idea by exploring how absences in narrative, history and memory can only be reconstructed by examining the shape of the gaps they leave behind. She differentiates the ghost from haunting, defining haunting as “that which appears to not be there, a

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\* Gordon, Avery. *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011.

seething presence, acting on and often meddling with taken-for-granted realities, the ghost is just the sign, or empirical evidence if you like, that tells you that a haunting is taking place.” \*

At the same time, if we observe the artistic work taking place in a dance studio in a manner that is detached from the narrative of the content, we could distil its rhythms as a dialog of radical presence and absence as activity that is taking place, activity that is starting or activity that is finishing.

In 1912, Anton Giulio Bragaglia declared in his *Manifesto Fotodinamica Futurista*:

“The picture can be invaded and pervaded by the essence of the subject. It can be obsessed by the subject to the extent that it energetically invades and obsesses the audience with its own values. It will not exist as a passive object over which an unconcerned audience can take control for its own enjoyment. It will be an active thing that imposes its own extremely free essence on the audience, though this will not be graspable with the insipid facility common to all images that are too faithful to ordinary reality.” \*\*

Bragaglia states that there is an interest beyond what is disclosed to us, beyond what appears. He was more interested in matter progressing through time than the final outcome of that progression. This quality is the inherent value that invades the audience. It is a speculation on “the essence of the subject”. This phases in-between appearance, and the essence of the moving matter that reshapes itself as it progresses or shifts through the time-space. For Bragaglia that is the essence, meaning the core of the value or the value itself. Making this terminology somewhat flexible, we could conclude that the essence is also in that which is seemingly not present. Thus the degree of absence of matter-in-progress could be of stronger interest to us than the moment at which a presence is peaking (which is just a peak-event of the ever-folding movement in progress).

Often equipped with the wall-size mirror which reflects the picture of the studio back to its inhabitants, the dance studio can also be understood as a place of choreological *fata morgana*. An empty dance studio, though, is a strong mediator between experiences and occurrences, holding the place for containment and disappearance, articulating difference from the seduction of the narrative of its activity-content.

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\* Eflin, Jackson. *Incursion into Wendigo Territory. Historical Hauntings and Modern-Day Manifestations*, Volume 1. Ball State University Digital Literature Review, 2014

\*\* Bragaglia, Aton Guglio. “Futurist Photodynamism.” *Modernism / Modernity*, 2nd ser., 15 (2008): 363-79.

Let's imagine taking a video camera and leaving it in a dance studio. The camera films uninterruptedly: people arriving and leaving, dancing and talking, space that is filled with activity and stillness, day and night, week after week, month after month. In an endless flux of available hours, the camera would organize the ebb and flow as data, extracting and transforming the notion of the texture of time. On a bigger scale, within the dialectics of technical and subjective time, the camera itself then inhabits a potential for its own subjectivity. Beyond the notion of the timestamp that we use to orientate ourselves, the camera left alone to its own devices, so to speak, would sink into that time-dimension sans a fixed orientation point. It is this inner-perspective that is the core of subjective time.

So can we imagine leaving the camera running endlessly? Will the camera that keeps recording for hours, days, weeks, months and years, the *Eternal Camera*, forever electronically translate the everlasting containment of the dance space?

The camera left alone in the dance studio will record endlessly. Finally, its constitutive technology eroding, the camera itself dies.

## Notes

### **EMPTY DANCE STUDIO**

- *EMPTY ROOM / EMPTY SPACE*
- *SPACE OF NO TRACES*
- *SPACE OF REMOVED TRACES*
- *SPACE OF EMPTINESS IN BETWEEN ACTIVITY*
- *SPACE IF FILLED ONLY WHEN ACTIVITY IS TAKING PLACE*
- *THERE ARE SIGNIFICANT PERIODS OF EMPTINESS*
- *DANCE STUDIO IS PORTRAYED AS EMPTY*
- *EMPTY DANCE STUDIO IS A SPACE OF POTENTIALITY*
- *EMPTY DANCE STUDIO IS A SPACE OF "IN-BETWEEN" / A PHASE / A STATE OF MATTER*
- *SPACE IS USUALLY MIRRORING ITSELF*
- *SPACE IS CONTAINING LIGHT*
- *SPACE IS CONTAINING TEMPERATURE*

### **CAMERA LEFT ALONE IN AN EMPTY DANCE STUDIO**

- *CAMERA THAT IS FILMING A STATE OF MATTER*
- *CAMERA THAT IS FILMING ABSENCE*
- *CAMERA THAT IS FILMING POTENTIAL*
- *CAMERA THAT HOLDS PLACE BETWEEN ACTIVITIES*
- *CAMERA THAT IS DOCUMENTING THAT AN ACTIVITY IS TAKING PLACE, THAT AN ACTIVITY IS FINISHING, OR THAT AN ACTIVITY IS STARTING*
- *CAMERA THAT ORGANIZES A FOCUS OF EMPTINESS*
- *CAMERA THAT ORGANIZES A FOCUS OF CONTAINMENT*
- *CAMERA THAT REGISTERES DURATION*
- *ETERNAL CAMERA*
- *CAMERA THAT STOPS RECORDING WHEN IT TECHNICALLY DIES*





# Winter Season

WRITTEN BY: Marjana Krajač

Late January 2018: I have spent a good part of the month in New York City, upon the invitation of the Woman in Dance Leadership Conference that was hosted by New York University's Tisch School of the Arts, the Tisch Initiative for Creative Research, Tisch Department of Dance and Dancespace Project. The conference investigated, explored, and reflected on women's leadership by inviting renowned dance makers, artists, scholars and directors to contribute and share their views. It was deeply refreshing to talk and exchange ideas around this topic with colleagues from all generations. We were all tangibly grasping profound developments that are taking place at the moment in the field of dance leadership as they relate to women working within this field. Seeing many dear friends and peers in-and-around the city, I spent my last evening at the season-opening of New York City Ballet, with an all Balanchine program that somehow concluded a wide range of swirling thoughts and themes present throughout this dynamic month. Special thanks go to my dear friend, writer and photographer Robin Martin, with whom I shared one melancholic Sunday afternoon photographing and walking Brooklyn's Williamsburg.

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*"In [Appolo's] discipline and restraint, in its sustained oneness of tone and feeling, the score was a revelation. It seemed to tell me that I could dare not to use everything, that I, too, could eliminate." \**

*George Balanchine*

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One morning, when I was a young dancer during the end of the Nineties in Berlin, I entered a small antiquarian bookstore where I came across a book that has continued to resonate with me. It was *Winter Season*, written

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\* Wenzel, Ryan. "Modern Antiquity." The Brooklyn Rail. October 4, 2012. Accessed July 24, 2018. <https://brooklynrail.org/2012/10/dance/modern-antiquity>.

by Tony Bentley, a 22-year-old dancer who described her life inside of New York City Ballet between November 1980 and February 1981. Simply and directly, as though talking to a friend, she wrote about day-to-day activities, emotional reflections and relationships. And yet, her writing accurately portrayed the ebb and flow of intensity, hardship, fascination and struggle of being a dancer, as she navigated between disciplined and structured life. The desires of being young and still searching for a visceral texture of herself, was clear.

As I entered the David H. Koch Theatre on that Tuesday evening for the opening of the Winter Season of the New York City Ballet, I remembered Tony's diary and that vague but impacting sense of luminosity that she captured so precisely. There was a radiating promise of a fresh season, of known and unknown dances performed at impressive theatres in the evenings, or work-in-progress pieces performed during the days at local dance studios. It seemed in that moment that this opaque feeling of radiance of being *in-the* and *with-the* dance never leaves you, once you are able to get a hold of it.

How do I go forward with that evanescent notion of dance that is in continuous search of its own tangible mission? Seeing Balanchine's *Apollo* that evening, I was wondering if that seemingly simple choreographic structure could offer us a contemplation about the spaciousness of ballet. During the ballet, Apollo - the god who was one of the most important and complex of the Olympian deities, the god of music (and poetry, oracles, archery, plague, medicine, sun, light and knowledge) - is visited by three Muses: Terpsichore, Polyhymnia and Calliope. Four bodies in space metaphorically enter and exit at the precipices of classical Greek era in a choreographic play that is one of friendship, tenderness, intellectual friction, affirmative rivalry, comfort, understanding and strength. Narrative symbolism and the structural form of this work are both encompassed in enough visual and mental latitude that allow for many layers of understanding.

As Jean-Luc Nancy grippingly writes in *Corpus*:

“Bodies aren't some kind of fullness or filled space ... they are *open* space, implying, in some sense, a space more properly *spacious* than spatial, what could also be called a *place*. Bodies are places of existence, and nothing exists without a place, a *there*, a “here,” a “here is,” for a *this*. The body-place isn't full or empty, since it doesn't have an outside or an inside, any more than it has parts, a totality, functions, or finality. It's acephalgic and aphallic in every sense, as it were. ... In these and thousands of other ways, the body *makes room* for existence. More precisely, it makes room for the fact that the essence of existence is to be without any essence. That's why the *ontology of the body* is ontology

itself: being's in no way prior or subjacent to the phenomenon here. The body *is* the being of existence. ... *Bodies don't take place in discourse or in matter.* They don't inhabit "mind" or "body." They take place at the limit, *qua limit*: limit - external border, the fracture and intersection of anything foreign in a continuum of sense, a continuum of matter. An opening, discreteness." \*

Program notes for *Apollo* often mention Stravinsky's commission of this ballet as a minimalist, yet grand, piece of music that can be realized in an uncomplicated setting. "The absence of many-colored effects and of all superfluties produced a wonderful freshness," he later said\*\*. That moment of freshness, openness and bare space anchor the many rhythms of the dancers' psyches, in the same way that I perceive Tony Bentley's experience: a reflective, yet free, inner world that leans with and against the outer structures of a day, a city, an institution, architecture, time and life - coherently carrying vast contradictions yet still gently sensing each relevant moment by shaping it as it appears.

Bentley often mentions a recognizable dichotomy between *the stage* and *the real outside world*, occasionally intuiting that they both are one, or none/non-existent. In essence the structure of both is porous, held together by our collective interpretations and efforts. That's why we were sitting in that auditorium together, our minds holding that stage in place, perceiving shadows as our own and hearing sounds from afar that belong to other parts of us, that have been gathered here, so that we can hear them again.

Breath was shared here and there, eyes exploded quietly within, gestures showed what we were holding inside, and flow of time shifted and dissolved our burdens.

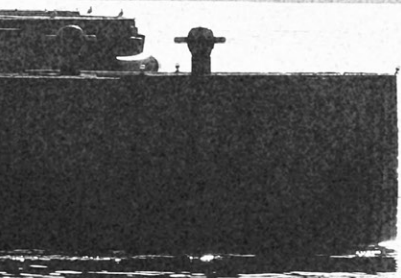
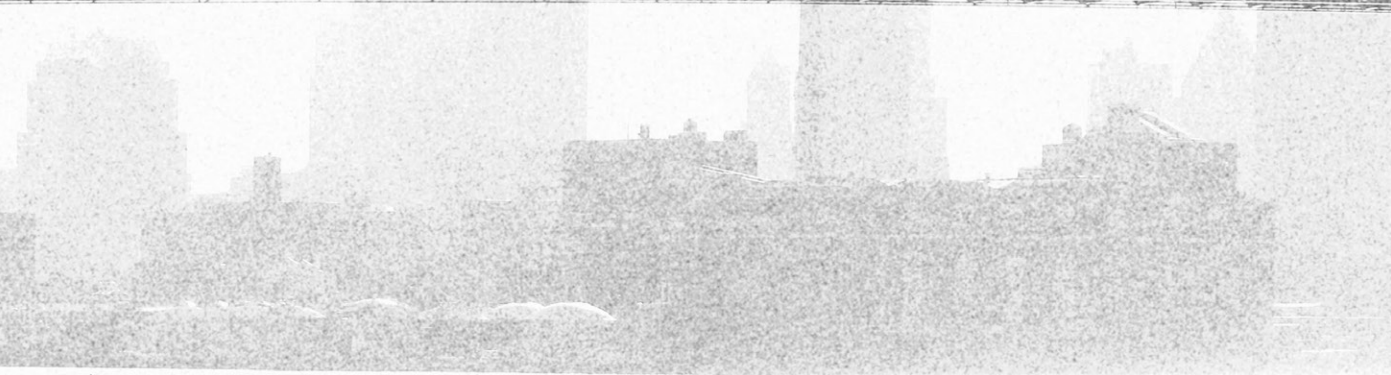
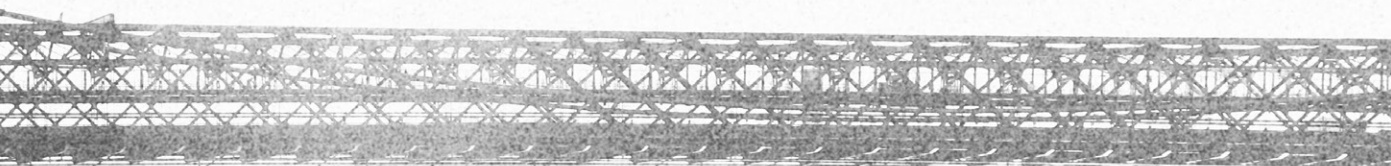
In this moment in time, at the beginning of 2018, while numerous complexities require our attention and articulation, the notion of holding a simple breath-space for each other is more relevant than ever. Like Polyhymnia, the muse of geometry and meditation, sometimes just being present and attentive, in whichever city we might find ourselves in, is already an inner affirmation that the capacity to approach everything with a fresh pair of eyes still exists.

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\* Nancy, Jean-Luc. *Corpus*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2008.

\*\* From the program notes.





# CHOREOGRAPHIC JOURNAL

*seeing / vidjeti*

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AUTHOR: Marjana Krajač

EDITOR: Zee Hartmann

CONTRIBUTORS: Katja Šimunić, Nastasja Štefanić, Marjana Krajač, Zee Hartmann

TRANSLATION: Ivana Ostojčić

PHOTOGRAPHERS: Tjaša Kalkan, Karla Jurić, Robin Martin

GRAPHIC DESIGN: Valentina Toth

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Umjetnička organizacija  
SODABERG KOREOGRAFSKI LABORATORIJ  
HR - 10000 Zagreb  
E-mail: [contact@sodaberg.hr](mailto:contact@sodaberg.hr)  
Web: <http://sodaberg.hr>





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