



# ReTHINKING DANCE

ZonaD mobile platform & E-Motional

A NOTEBOOK OF UNEDITED THINKING

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[www.e-motional.eu](http://www.e-motional.eu) / [zonadstudio.wordpress.com](http://zonadstudio.wordpress.com)

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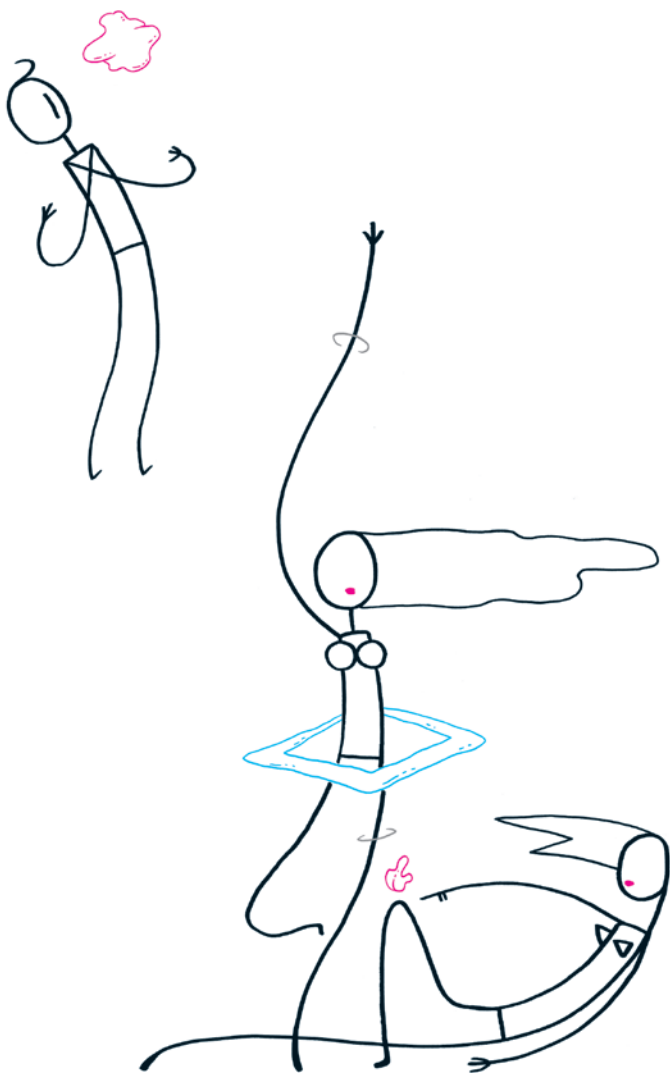
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# Intro



Did we wander an untraceable journey?

Is anything here just a word game?

Why and for whom?

What was left behind?

Why join the navy if we can be pirates?

What is risk vs. what is idealistic in what we do?

Hey, is it anybody out there?

Do we really need to do something together?

What is future?

Why don't you stop?

Anyway, do you still like to dance?

Is there a way out?

Can it be 3 in 1 -political, hyper-conceptualistic and identity-centered?

Then, what is that we should really think about?

Where and when is the work?

What can happen?

I went to run in the park and when starting, I was shocked to discover I was wearing my sneakers instead of my running shoes. You don't understand, this never happened to me, but it did now!

I was feeling something wrong in my body, so I went and eco-graphed myself. Apparently the thing was in my head, same as the sneakers in my feet.

How can you take the Zen of this space with you?

The new catharsis is when the **THING** just happens and it feels like there is no-time.

## Terms of reference

- \* E-Motional is an artist and manager-driven initiative, dedicated to exchange, research and artistic collaboration, co-production, touring, and audience development at European level started in 2011 and developed through 2015 by Gabriela Tudor Foundation in Bucharest in collaboration with partners from Latvia, Ireland, Cyprus, UK, Turkey, Portugal, Luxembourg and Romania, with the support of the Culture programme of the European Union. For the second phase, E-Motional: rethinking dance, the guiding idea of the programme was re-thinking of artistic practices and formats and finding the right language in development of new artistic contents in the field of contemporary dance. Over 400 professionals from 20 countries participated in the various project activities along the 4 years of E-Motional.
  
- \* ZonaD is an independent lab and platform created by Cosmin Manolescu and Ștefania Ferchedău, dedicated to contemporary dance and arts, with a continuous programming focusing on artistic research and professional development of Romanian artists. ZonaD encourages collaborative practices as well as individual research, while at the same time mediating and facilitating the meeting between artists and audience. Although its physical space was closed at the end of 2014, ZonaD continues its programme as a mobile platform which temporarily occupies other sister spaces, through partnerships with different organisations and institutions.

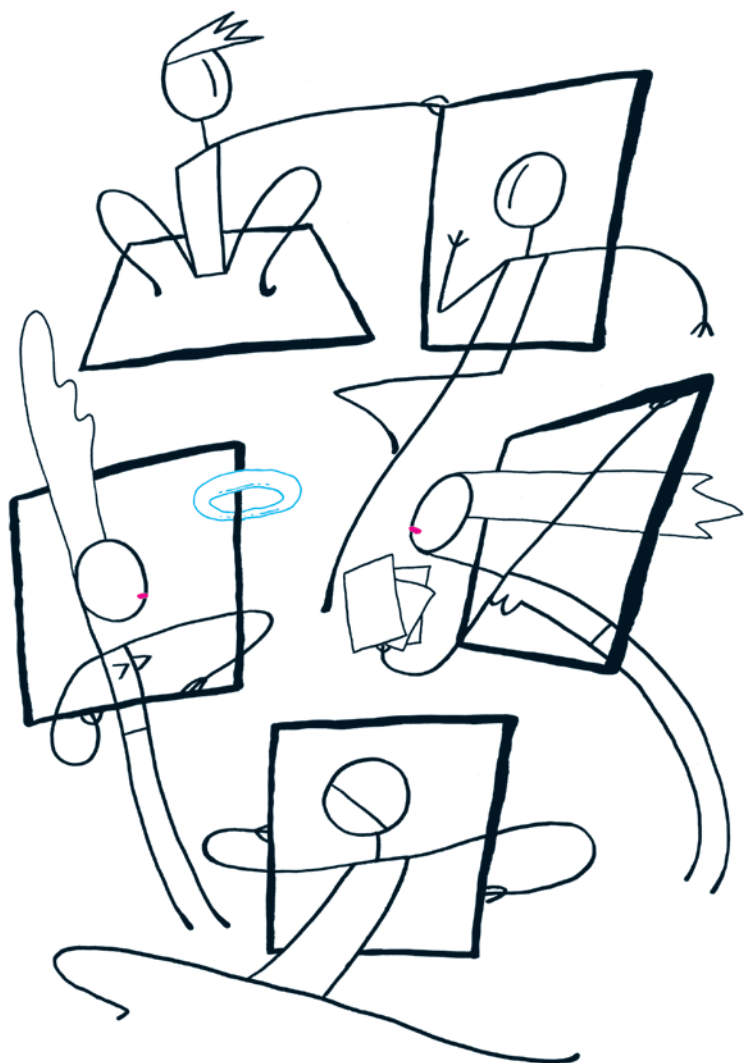


- \* The Reflection Platform was one of the strands of E-Motional: rethinking dance, designed as a format of research, brainstorming and encounter residencies between 3 partner countries -Romania, Latvia and Portugal. Two residencies took place in Porto (June 2014), and Bucharest (October 2014), the last one in connection with the E-Motional festival. The Reflection Platform brought together a mixed group of dance professionals -artists, managers/ producers, curators and dance critics, 4 or 5 participants from each country, also involved in a variety of events presented in the festival. The platform included daily encounters and discussions between participants, visits of art spaces, meetings with local artists, public lectures and performance attendance. Participants: RO -Cosmin Manolescu (choreographer), Vava Ștefănescu (choreographer), Jean-Lorin Sterian (artist & curator), Oana Stoica (theatre and dance critic), Ștefania Ferchedău (producer); PT -Rogério Nuno Costa (performance artist), Joana von Mayer Trindade (choreographer), Joclécio Azevedo (choreographer & curator), Alberto Magno (artist/ festival director); LV -Olga Žitluhina (choreographer & festival director), Inta Balode (dance critic), Maija Pavlova (manager), Elīna Lutce (choreographer).

# So, why join the navy if we can be pirates?

ROGÉRIO NUNO COSTA

[Porto, December 2014]



That is the title of the first text I read when introducing myself to the reflection platform's participants in June 2014, in Porto (Portugal). Since I suffer from a clinical pathology called Ontological Geekiness, I'm taking a decision now, as I write, as I "speak" to you, as I address to a group of potential readers that I don't know who they are (and this is actually a novelty concerning this E-Motional project!) — if I want to make a point and summarize an experience, then I'll have to stick to that very first moment when I had to teach a group of foreigners how to pronounce my name correctly: Roo.. djair... jooh! That is to say: I have this strange feeling that everything that I can possibly write at this point, pushing really hard towards a sort of synthesis of what has happened to this project through the lenses of my eyes, my mind, my skin, my ears, my taste buds, my fingertips, the memory of my emotions, etc., is already hidden inside that first cell.

I hope I'm not risking the underestimation of the process as a whole, but I feel like I really have to emphasize this "knowing me, knowing you" DNA, that is the core of the reflection platform, and kept on producing meaning throughout all its phases. I might even state that the information housed inside that DNA is the ultimate raison d'être of this project; and by stating this, I'm not being cynical. I do actually believe that creating a so-called "reflection platform" for a group of European artists, critics and producers to get to know each other and "that's-all-folks!" is a very interesting starting and ending point for something fundamental do be built collectively! I'm not really sure if this is/ was a common ground (I lacked it A lot in Porto and Bucharest...), but this assumption of mine, produced "on purpose" for this writing, appears to me as a very structural backbone of what this experience was for me, and probably for everybody else who joined it.

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So... I knew a group of people; that group of people knew me. What was left behind? How did that happen? What were their aims and goals? What were their motivations? Did they cross the same road? Did they become one? Or did they wander an untraceable journey, full of mismatches and untouchable pathways? Did they really get to know each other? Or did they just memorize some faces and names in order to properly communicate in an over-controlled environment meant to be "productive" (one of the words I hate the most...)?

This is the moment to revise some of the documents (texts, photos, etc.) I produced during the two moments and organise them towards a dialogue with the aforementioned questions (most of them are actually "answers", but only for those who don't suffer from the Dualistic Syndrome...); that is: bringing some

evidence to this process of "getting to know each other" I've been obsessed with since I started writing this "non-text". First conclusion: the data collected is too little (quantitatively speaking...), not very representative, too less exhaustive, too much peripheral, and, to be very honest, not very interesting. And this is me being humble — this is absolutely not what was supposed to be expected from a self-titled "documentary, archival, taxonomic, hermeneutical freak"... Well, I'm not sorry. I was too occupied in the process of "knowing you", that I totally forgot about "the rest". Was there any "rest" actually? This is a genuine concern of mine; everybody is invited to react to it, truly! On the other hand, a more abstract question comes to mind right now (I remember having that same question popping up in my head many times during the platform): **WHAT FOR?** Again: I need help. I propose a "non-text" because I think it is somehow contradictory to the informality of our journey to create a "text". No need to develop this idea, I guess... That's why I feel like recycling the text I read in our first session in Porto and re-write it for the present being. That is: re-constructing it and letting it be "vandalized" by the conditions of an experience made by a group of extremely different people who, in my opinion, never "met". This is nor bad or good; this is a matter (a very special one, I think) with which we can keep on our "post-mortem reflection". Yet again, to do that job properly, we need to go back to the origins, whatever they are. This is me being honest with this assignment (it's better to be honest than to be "professional"). At the same time, this is me being dogmatic and ego-maniac, again; I don't believe in people who write as if they were not there, as if the "object" was more important than the "subject". It isn't. This is one of my most infatuated fights: I care less about what you say, and more about why you are saying it, why to me, and why you. So, yes, it's about me, me, me, but it's also about you, you, you! All the time. And going back to the origins also means going back to a very blurred and unclear place, filled with doubts and dizzy interrogations. To build a critical perspective around my thoughts, I feel the urge to say that uncertain origins lead almost without fail to uncertain endings. This is not necessarily bad, but it's exactly what best represents my position in relation with the platform, and also what I envision to its potential future. As a matter of fact, to re-construct that inaugural text, letting it be literally stabbed by new thoughts, ideas and facts, also means to re-construct my artistic identity, my creative persona, and, above all, to reflect upon the way I relate to the other artistic identities and creative personae that surround me in the projects/ communities I accept to be part of. From this moment on, everything that I'm gonna translate into words is meant to be interpreted freely, taking into account that 99% of my brain inhabits a parallel

dimension called Future, which means that 99 of the 100 items presented below have not happened yet.

- 001** E-motional should be about the annulment of every sterile interrogation concerning Art and the art's practice — "originality" being the most important (and irritating) of them all! Hence, the dialectical destruction of millennial binomials and other false issues: form vs. content, process vs. result, good vs. evil. I propose, instead, a romanticized tripartition of the "Real": utopian, yet concrete; insistently announced, never attainable... E-Motional should be a non-place-to-be.
- 002** Question for the grand prize: why is this called E-Motional?
- 003** "Knowing me" [remembering the 26th June 2014]: my work is an everlasting bande-annonce. It is about being eternally in-progress, so it doesn't matter where the process started and/ or when it's gonna end. That means this text, actually this list, is permanently under construction and is constantly being changed.
- 004** "Knowing you": the same.
- 005** "Creation" [remembering the 27th June 2014]: my work is about making lists. Furthermore, my work is about having ideas, and never care if they will ever be achievable. The process is already a result. The project is always better than its concretion. Because there is no film, only the making of (of that same film!).
- 006** "Criticism": my work is about adding accurate prefixes to the word "realism", endlessly: New-Realism, Proto-Realism, Sub-Realism, Hyper-Realism, Avant-Realism, Meta-Realism, Über-Realism, A-Realism, Alter-Realism, Infra-Realism, Inter-Realism, Intra-Realism, Re-re-re-Realism [aka Stutterer Realism].
- 007** "Forms and formats" [remembering the 28th June 2014]: my work is about documents, archives, categorizations, labels, taxonomies, plug-ins & plug-outs, inside-the-boxes & outside-the-boxes. My work is more ontological than anthological, which means it cares less about History, and more about his/story: the best story to be told is the one related to the project itself.
- 008** "Trans-nationality" [remembering the 29th June 2014]: the word says everything; it's somehow redundant to explain it.
- 009** "Walk and talk": my work is about meta-discursivity, the scientific method turning into an art's dogma — Molecular Art.
- 010** "Collaboration" [remembering the 30th June 2014]: my work is about being a fan, loving things, hating things, praising things, following/

un-following things, such as reality shows, German techno, rural terrorism, blank pages, IKEA ethics & aesthetics, Spanish delicatessens, Portuguese schlagerism, relish'ious dogmas, extreme makeovers, teen-emo-culture, Finlandized political science, happy hardcore, non-artistic artists, notebooks, trash-tastic philosophy, megallo-physics, progressive folklore, power ballads, Scandinavian weirdism, Oprah-look-a-likes & Big-Brother-wannabes, cook books & cook looks, blood-based food recipes, recycle bins, colored paper, mashup culture, science fiction, national anthems, emotional geography, informational architecture, quantum psychology, dinner parties, rave parties, birthday parties, Eurovision Song Contest parties, Jeux Sans Frontières parties, Eurotrash parties & political parties, i.e., the 1990s' Stuckism corrupted by 2000s' Idiotism™. If anybody reading this is interested in one or many of the above, don't hesitate to drop me a message; maybe this is the beginning of a wonderful love story: rogerio.nuno.costa@gmail.com.

- 011 "Creation process": my work is about the creation of one (or more) -isms for each new project. Idiotism™ is also known as Roger That!'ism [in Portuguese: rogerices]. My work is about considering Laziness™ the new Avant-Garde. And about elevating Art to the level of Gastronomy (the opposite has already been done).
- 012 "Conclusion" [remembering the 1st July 2014]: I broke up with my boyfriend. I like to blame E-Motional reflection platform for that. This was a warning! There's no future for us, me and you, because there is no Future™.
- 013 My work is about F for Faking and about F for Fooding. That is, my work is about telling the truth, even if by means of coercion. My work is about surveillance systems, invasion of privacy, Bentham-Orwellian philosophy, dictatorial curatorship, art manifestos, self-imposed obstructions, alter-egos and altercations. My work is about reaching art without using the means of art itself. My work is about social communication, social networks and social policies, but in a sociopathic kind of manner. My work is not poetic, it is journalistic. I follow the "Code of Ethics for Journalists" strictly and blindly. Because my work is about formulating the right questions: What? Who? When? Where? How? Why? Without expecting any answer whatsoever. So:
- 014 **WHAT?** Getting to know Olga, Inta, Elina, Maija, Alberto, Joana, Joclécio, Cosmin, Vava, Oana, Ștefania and Jean-Lorin.
- 015 **WHO?** Me.

- 016 WHEN? Tomorrow.
- 017 WHERE? In a smelly corner of Frankfurt's International Airport, on my way back to Porto and/ or on my way to Bucharest.
- 018 HOW? Wandering. Wandering always. One of my key-verbs/ actions.
- 019 WHY? [forbidden question when we're talking about the Future].
- 020 But I can actually come to your place, have a drink or too, cook some nice meal, and talk all night long without caring about who's asking who and who's answering what. This is my actual "specialization".
- 021 I won't say this again: WANDERING.
- 022 And here is the more-than-perfect opportunity to introduce the non-interview, or the phantom-interview, I engaged with Vava Ștefănescu around a grocery shopping and a dinner cooking session in Bucharest. But I feel like keeping the best part for the end. A quick snippet, though:
- 023 Vava: "What do you teach your Drama students?" Me: "Along with Hirschhorn, my work usually states: The best is not necessarily good. So far, all the 'best things' I've ever been in touch with are actually not 'good'."
- 024 Note to myself: my favourite artist, however, is Mark Dion, not because of the things he does, not even because of the things he says, but surely because of he's being an obsessive-compulsive hermeneutical freak.
- 025 Almost three months later, a special message to Vava Ștefănescu: my work is about being a nerdy child who never grows old. My work is obviously about procrastination.
- 026 Also: CHANGING.
- 027 A special message to Cosmin Manolescu: my work is about despising all the misleading confusions between Art and Tourism, but also Sports, Culture (and Cultural Heritage), Aesthetics, Design, Anthropology, Sociology, Museology, Art History, Art Criticism, Curatorship, Handicraft, Childcare, Spirituality, Religion, Therapy, Pedagogy, Engineering, Psychology, Drama, Economy, Gender Studies, Political Propaganda, Merchandising or Advertising. By despising the aforementioned, my work is usually confused with them.
- 028 Also: RE-SHAPING.
- 029 A special message to Joclécio Azevedo: my work is not "conceptual". My work is about conceptualization, that is, my work is conceptual. And undisciplined. And unformatted. And cynical. And altermodernist. And post-relational. My work is about the ethics of participation, that is, about the ethics of the observer. Along with the ghost of Marcel Duchamp, my work usually states: "The work of art is 100% made by the spectator".



- 030 That is: RE-CYCLING, always.
- 031 A special message to Jean-Lorin: my work is about finding points in a world's map where 3 or more countries meet.
- 032 By doing so, E-Motional reflection platform should be about RE-MAKING, RE-CREATING and RE-MIXING. That is: a non-place-to-be. What matters is yet to become.
- 033 A special message to Olga Žitluhina: my work is about despising all metaphors, especially the literary ones.
- 034 E-Motional should be A "real" encounter, not "about" a real encounter, or the possibilities surrounding real encounters.
- 035 That is, it's all about ethics, more than aesthetics — the contract we all had to sign before the beginning of the project is much more important than "the rest". Was there any "rest"?
- 036 A special message to Maija Pavlova: my work is about building prisons with no walls — universitas magistrorum et scholarium.
- 037 Also, my work is about the creation of titles that are trademarks. Titles™. In my work, the title usually says everything. In my work, the title is usually more important than the project itself. I have this strange feeling that E-Motional™ suffers from the exactly same disease, but it is trying to find a cure in homeopathy...
- 038 E-Motional should be about memory. Better said, about remembering. In other words, about the negation of itself, by a process that focuses only on the residue, rather than the object itself. I have this strange feeling that there is no object at all...
- 039 A special message to Inta Balode: my work was born in 1917. Better said, my work is about enunciation. Although, my work is an excuse for something that needs to be done, which has absolutely nothing to do with Art, or art, or whatever. It's a PRETEXT, that is, something that comes before the -text.
- 040 "Audience": hey, is anybody out there?
- 041 A special message to Joana von Mayer Trindade: my work is highly collaborative, but never in a pacific way. My work is about war. A war made from scratch. My work is about corruption, fear, arrogance and opportunism. My work is about everything that should not be done/ said. Nevertheless, my work is about being happy. But it is also about human encounters, little secrets, love letters, home cooking and unexpected daily-life events. My work is about the superiority of the ephemeral.

- 042 E-Motional = it is, hence it e-xists.
- 043 A special message to Oana Stoica: my work is about egocentrism, but sometimes also about egoperipheralism. In that sense, my work is 'auto', and 'bio' and 'graphical', but never 'autobiographical'. My work is truly about the universalization of the particular and the particularization of the universal. Back and forth. My work never accepts; still, my work never denies. It thanks. My work is about assuming Gratitude™ as a new avant-garde.
- 044 E-Motional reflection platform has no specificity, but it is highly specific, and Specification is one of its main subjects. Still, E-Motional reflection platform is not specialized, but it deals with Specialization, and the Epistemology of the Specialization:
- 045 These are the (specialized) subjects I propose should be featured/ discussed during a third moment/ project to be created under the scope of E-Motional reflection platform: Anti-Anti-Pop Culture, *Airs du Temps*, Autophagy, Viral Culture, Finlandization, Applied Interdisciplinarity, "Lo-Fi Sophy", 'Making Of' Aesthetics, 'Mash Up' Ethics, End of History, *Parcs Humains*, Non-Artistic Pedagogy, Petabyte Age, Non-Human Creativity, Post-Humanity, 21st Centuries, etc.
- 046 That is to say, E-Motional reflection platform is a word game. No doubt about that.
- 047 E-Motional reflection platform sings along with Frank Sinatra: "Use your mentality, wake up to reality!". This was a warning. For the Future, of course.
- 048 A special message to Elina Lutce: my work is portable. And shareable. And spreadable. My work is about finding sexiness in being an underdog. It's about cheesiness, and pretentiousness, and boredom. My art is about everything that doesn't look like Art. My art doesn't look like "art". Or "Art". Its major inspiration comes from Scooter's music, Girl Talk's mashups, Banksy's terrorism, Brazilian tecnobrega, Japanese synthesized pop stars, anti-fashion brigades, hipster lexicon, and the ultimate televised shameful attempts to be cool. My art beats more than 150 PM!
- 049 The best place to show your art to an audience is your house. It has always been like that; it's gonna always be like that.
- 050 Key word: ART EDUCATION.
- 051 How do choreographers work today? I really don't know; and, honestly, I'm not interested in getting to know...

- 052** Quoting Joclécio (by heart): "you create the audience by the way (and the time) you present your work".
- 053** Main goal: to assume "collaboration" as a way of mixing audiences and avoid turning our work into a cliché of itself.
- 054** I truly believe that our work should be the art povera of the future. It is always about our Name, and the infinite possibilities of someone like us "naming" Art after every move, every word, every gaze, every breath we take.
- 055** When travelling for the first time to Romania, and due to a painful amount of hours of waiting for the connecting flight in Frankfurt, I remember Abramović's obsession about the "waiting space", that non-place-to-be where and when EVERYTHING is possible. This could be my final statement, since it exists in my head in the form of a desire — E-Motional reflection platform should be a waiting space, a space-in-between (two places, two countries, two contradictory ideas...). Or else: E-Motional reflection platform should try really hard to find that waiting space, that space-in-between, that third reality that will solve the duality. E-Motional reflection platform should try really hard to build its reconciling third moment; otherwise, it will always be a disappointing and blunt "Americanized" story about the good vs. the evil.
- 056** Bucharest: the same words, but sharper, more pungent, sometimes harder to spell, and to swallow (even though the food was AWESOME!). Bucharest, the city of great contrasts, brought new challenges to this discussion. Instead of re-writing the last 55 assumptions again (which I felt like doing right now), I'd rather invite the reader to substitute:
- 057** WANDERING by FOCUSING.
- 058** CHANGING by GROWING.
- 059** RE-SHAPING by DISPOSING.
- 060** RE-CYCLING [re-making/ re-creating/ re-mixing] by STANDING STILL.
- 061** And waiting. Responsibly. Which leads me to:
- 062** "Limited Responsibility" [remembering the 5th October 2014]: Cosmin's piece is a paradox. And I have this belief that all art should be paradoxical. It's not about Cosmin or his friend. The piece is about itself, just like all "good" pieces should be, even if that means the total failure of a "good" idea.
- 063** EVERYTHING is autobiographical. Period.
- 064** Which leads me to Vava's piece. Yet again, is not "about" herself, nor "about" the girl performing in it. It is about the possibility of a piece about

Vava, or somebody else. It is again about an undeniable paradox, an unsurpassable contradiction. And of course, about failure (the greatest subject matter in art).

- 065** Which leads me to what happened during the discussion around Vava's and Cosmin's pieces — I just find a tremendous waste of time to discuss about the "aboutness" of things. I'm not interested in knowing what it is about, but about what it IS.
- 066** Which leads me to the idea that came afterwards: If I want to learn something about a theme, I buy a book about that theme. I don't go to performances to learn things...
- 067** Which leads me to the project I came up with when discussing with Maija and Joana while eating a superb meal at Caru cu Bere: a pop-up university, held in Riga (Latvia), designed to launch workshops, master classes, show cases, publications, parties, and performances about that eternal tension between Art and Didacticism.
- 068** Which leads me to the conference/ lecture/ performance I presented with Joclécio and Joana — the paradox of "looking back into the future" is the very same paradox that sustains E-Motional reflection platform ever since its right beginning until this moment when I'm writing this "reflection of the reflection". That is: the future of E-Motional has already been done. As a blind believer of Quantum Physics crazy postulates: the future of E-Motional is yet to be done.
- 069** Which leads me to "Off The Map" [remembering the 8th October 2014]: the future of Bucharest, a city trapped in two "sides" of the same story, is yet to be done. Bucharest, just like E-Motional, has to find its reconciling third element.
- 070** Which leads me to the "magic mystery domestic tour": when "ethics" and "aesthetics" keep on fighting after years and years of proven fact: both sides are right! There's no need to keep on fighting, when both sides are actually just one: "aesth(ethics)". Or else: there is no solution, simply because there is no problem (thank you, Duchamp).
- 071** Which leads me (again) to one of my cruelest dogmas, the one I introduced this very same list with (sometimes, it's nice to repeat things, so to memorize them better): the dialectical destruction of millennial binomials and other false issues — form vs. content, process vs. result, good vs. evil. I propose, instead, a romanticized tripartition of the "Real": utopian, yet concrete; insistently announced, never attainable... E-Motional should be a non-place-to-be.

- 072 And to be coherent, let's say it again, now louder, more convincingly, all at the same time, everybody's looking at each other's eyes, no fear of being pathetic or cheesy, this is how it goes: E-MOTIONAL SHOULD BE A NON-PLACE-TO-BE.
- 073 Which leads me, again, to the goal I established to myself in the introduction to this list: to go back to the origins of this process/ project (both words are synonyms), to get deeper and go further in its DNA, and try to find, there, the Synthesis™:
- 074 Porto #1 – Interesting and inspiring group session in the beach [for more info: [www.vouatuacasa.wordpress.com](http://www.vouatuacasa.wordpress.com)]
- 075 Bucharest #1 – Good “contextual” case studies for discussing: Modulab/ Garden of the Future, Museum of Contemporary Art, etc.
- 076 Bucharest #2 – Over-intensive program.
- 077 Bucharest #3 – Diverse and playful plan of activities.
- 078 Porto #2 – Lack of interesting and engaging contacts with the art community (the institutional and the independent...).
- 079 Porto #3 – Lack of focus and overview.
- 080 Bucharest #4 – Very good conditions for working: studio, equipment, etc.
- 081 Porto #4 – Bad conditions for working/ discussing: depressing building, uncomfortable table, no Internet connection...
- 082 Porto #5 – Unclear goals and methodologies.
- 083 Bucharest #5 – Lack of future perspectives/ possibilities of collaborations for the project (third moment?).
- 084 Porto #6 – Diversity of themes discussed concerning dance and dance/ performance practices.
- 085 Bucharest #6 – Too much attention on individual concerns; lack of “common ground”.
- 086 Porto #7 – Well-structured conclusion of the platform: summaries, schemes, list of questions/ assignments for the next phase.
- 087 Bucharest #7 – Re-thinking dance: I'm an observer, not a practitioner. But since observing dance (or writing about dance) is a “practice”, then I'm a dance practitioner, specialized in that very difficult dance move called “brain movement”.
- 088 And this leads me, again, to the non-interview, the phantom interview with Vava. This means we are at the moment of concluding this peripatetic list. This means we are on the verge of forgetting about everything and enjoy a meal together. This is the last day. This is the last night. All the things I remember sharing with Vava belong to the realm of the unknown,

the unshareable, the intangible. This may seem a bit of a contradictory standpoint, concerning all the postulates I thoroughly defended in this text. It is! I mentioned above Vava's question about my drama classes in the city of Guimarães (Portugal). I remember telling her about some clichés that I always use as quick answers. None of this really matters. It is always about what comes next. And next. And next. My conversations with Vava while shopping at the beautiful chaotic market in Bucharest and then cooking at her place, with her, for her friends, was the best experience for me to remember. And I can now use that certainty as the perfect example of what Reflection Platform should be/ have been — to give and be given in return. My pseudo-transcription of that pseudo-interview can only go like this:

- 089 Vava: FROM WITHIN.
- 090 Rogério: FAR BEYOND.
- 091 Vava: YOU SEE WHAT YOU GET.
- 092 Rogério: MYOPIA IS THE NEW UTOPIA.
- 093 Vava: WHY?
- 094 Rogério: POP CULTURE IS THE ONLY CULTURE [all the other "cultures" are just sub-departments of Pop].
- 095 Vava: FOOD...
- 096 Rogério: The only "metaphor" I can actually work with. It really gets people together, but it is also a very powerful sign/ representation of that "togetherness". We are what we eat; we reflect ourselves on the people we eat with; aesth(ethics), again and again and again...
- 097 Vava: SUBMISSIVE?
- 098 Rogério: PRO-ACTIVE [which is just the critical way of being submissive, that is, open to what comes].
- 099 Vava: LAZINESS IS THE NEW AVANT-GARDE?!
- 100 Rogério: The worst thing that may happen to this project is to turn into a Pavlov's dog (and Alberto has a lot to say about this, I guess...). So, a special message to Alberto Magno (and to all of us): why join the navy if we can be pirates?



# E-Motional guide to misguided sensibilities

JOCLÉCIO AZEVEDO

[November 2014]





After having a very good experience of following the E-Motional Festival and Reflection Platform in Bucharest in October 2014, the participants were supposed to produce some kind of written material. (...) I decided then to do an exercise, a poetic one. It is something that I normally do when I try to write about performance. This would be a way of reflecting integrating the writing as a material of the reflection.

I'm presenting, as a possible feedback, three different small texts, made in Q&A (Question and Answer) format. In the first one I mixed up my notes from the week we spent in Bucharest, it's a sort of self-interview. In the second one I asked some of the participants from the Reflection Platform to write down a question regarding the experiences we had together and on another piece of paper an answer, but to a different kind of question. I mixed up questions and answers having as a reference a game used by surrealists to find other ways of using words and revealing meanings. In the third one I made an "interview" with the written programme of the E-Motional Festival, taking random phrases from the different texts written by artists and programmers and giving them new possibilities of being combined.

Those are three poetic exercises; I'm not very worried with the sense they can produce. For me it was the way I found to think about the idea of subverting official or more conventional discursive practices and finding other perspectives to talk and reflect about the things we are interested in. I'm not sure that either this content or this form would be relevant for our work, but I believe that the process of producing those interviews was very important to me to make a point on the fact that discursive practices can be seen and understood in a kind of performative way. In other words we could say that discursive practices are also performative in a certain sense and they can produce alternative subjectivities. In other words I would say that reflection can be seen as an element of practice, it could be challenged, it could be transformed, it embodies the perception we have about relations with other performative practices, as the ones we have been having the opportunity to watch during this Reflection Platform. I think that those interviews then can be understood as some kind of sketch, of thinking process, as an incomplete way to access memory and meaning.

## #01 Random answers for random questions:

(MIXING UP MY PERSONAL NOTES FROM BUCHAREST AND MAKING A SELF-INTERVIEW)

- q What did you take with you from Bucharest?
- A The artistic program of E-Motional Festival has introduced us to experience a bit of the dynamics between artistic production, spaces and the audiences. Above all, I believe that the meetings with local artists and professionals were quite interesting. The short talks with Călin Dan at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Bucharest or with Ioana Calen at Modulab's Garden of the Future were quite resourceful in terms of content, for example. Each meeting we had contributed to the construction of a sort of artistic, human and inter-relational landscape.
- q How can you describe the city of Bucharest?
- A As a puzzle, I suppose. The architecture, the artistic environment, the shifts of scale... We can see some points in common with other cities, but in Bucharest it's really difficult to understand how each piece connects with the other pieces. It seems to be a very fragmented landscape.
- 25 | q How did you perceive the audiences from the different performances you could see in Bucharest?
- A It's interesting the way that each artist addresses an audience. Sometimes there is a sensation of audiences being a sort of collateral damage, not really important for what is happening on the stage. Sometimes there is too much attention, too much effort to engage or to please. Sometimes there are some assumptions on the way audiences should behave or the way they should understand the work. Sometimes it seems there is a certain tension and confusion about the understanding of what does it mean to engage the attention of an audience through the performance.
- q I don't understand. Can you be more specific?
- A It's just a general feeling. The idea of addressing an audience is something that I like to think about. I believe that the way we engage with an audience is a very important point in performative practices. It means understanding why do we decide to do something in front of someone. It creates a very strong relation that can produce different outcomes both for the artists and for the audiences.

- Q I'm not sure I'm following you. Can you be even more specific?
- A I think that I can't be more specific unless I would talk about each one of the performances I saw and this is not my goal. But what I can say now is that I was constantly thinking about rules. As artists we are constantly redefining rules, changing rules, creating new ones. Sometimes scores for performance are made of rules and instructions and so on. But I believe that audiences should be also encouraged to play with their rules too. I believe artistic work is something that allows us to find new permissions in life, to look to things from other angles, to create new visions, but also new behaviours.
- Q You mean to develop practices that could encourage freedom?
- A That is a too simplistic way to say it. It's not as simple as that. I think that the point is in understanding how do we deal with the idea of otherness. We are all different from each other. Sometimes we collide. Confrontation is very important. I think I'm talking about asking how we can activate the full potential of each work we do by having clear ways of addressing the audiences, accepting of course whatever the consequences of that are. Otherwise performance would become a way of reproducing existent mechanisms of power.
- Q When you say performance are you including also dance?
- A Yes, I'm talking about performance in the sense of something that is addressed to someone somehow somewhere and so on. Not just about performance as in performance art, which is a different thing. Yes, I think we can talk about dance as something that is performed, as an activity, as an art form with history and so on...
- Q What do you think about the idea of having a third moment to continue the Reflection Platform after Porto and Bucharest?
- A We always spoke about this possibility as a phantom, as something that no one was really sure about. I found quite interesting all the discussions produced around the theme. It's interesting because it was not stated as a goal, but as a maybe, a hypothetical scenario... So in this sense is quite funny because it became a subject to different kinds of speculation.

- q In your point of view what do you think it should be this moment?
- A I don't know. What I know is that it could be many different things, that it could have many different shapes. I think that after many talks about that, we should make a list of all the ideas that we had, even the more absurd. I like to think about unrealized projects, about even impossible projects. They are important because they talk about our desire to make things happen, independently of the fact of the things can happen or not. They are always full of potential.
- q Don't you think that this is a little absurd?
- A Well, at this moment I'm making an interview and talking to myself, this could be seen as something absurd also. We need some level of craziness if we want to achieve a less ordinary life. Of course I'm writing this and I know that perhaps I'll have an audience (readers) at some point that would read this. Absurd thinking for me is just the beginning.

## #02 Random answers for random questions:

### E-MOTIONAL Q&A MIX

(Mixing up aleatory questions and answers from the Reflection Platform participants and playing a surrealist game)

- q How to make the contemporary arts language become accessible for all spectators, even for the audience with low level of cultural education?
- A Audience should be always central to artist's work.
- q How can artists, dance writers and producers work together to better shape their future?
- A To meet the people, calm down and reopen themselves to new experiences.
- q Can a performer be on stage just as a performer?
- A The concept is not enough for the performance, it's very important how to perform, how to express yourself, how to attract audience. It's essential to make your concept understandable for the public.
- q Is there a way to look at others with the same eyes we look at ourselves?
- A I just can't focus when someone speaks more than 15 minutes.

- Q Who am I in a group?
- A Quite inspiring and fulfilling, though giving a sense of distance as well.
- Q What will happen next?
- A Professional work and attitude.

### #03 Random answers for random questions:

#### REVIEWING/REMIXING THE WRITTEN CONTENT OF THE FESTIVAL PROGRAMME

(Aleatory phrases taken from the written programme of the E-Motional Festival and mixed in different orders as a game; some answers were turned into new questions and vice-versa)

- Q How can we continue and expand a reflection endeavour in regards to contemporary artistic processes and contents?
- A We can experiment about roles we play and what we would like to be for real.
- Q What happens when you don't want to know what will happen?
- A I am interested in how the future is being built, and how it takes shape through the expression of the present, with its multiple challenges.
- Q What happens when you don't have any plan?
- A A change would be appreciated.
- Q Might our obsession for a structured life limit our experience?
- A The on-going of a performance can be decided much during its happening rather than in advance, during the preparation.
- Q Do I have to wonder about the dog in me?
- A It is a nonsense trying to name a reality – the subject knows that his/her existence is safe and "real" only when confirmed by the interaction with other subjects.
- Q Is it dance, theatre, music, film, performance art?
- A It is exploring what people see and sense simply by observing other people and their actions, their impressions and how they perceive and experience others.

- q Let us meet to try and understand the kind of meeting dance makers propose to their audience?
- A This will be a moment to reflect upon diverse personal perspectives of both making and discussing dance.
- q What kind of performative future can you create from such a momentary feeling?
- A At the beginning I felt some kind of danger, but then when I was taken inside I felt very safe.

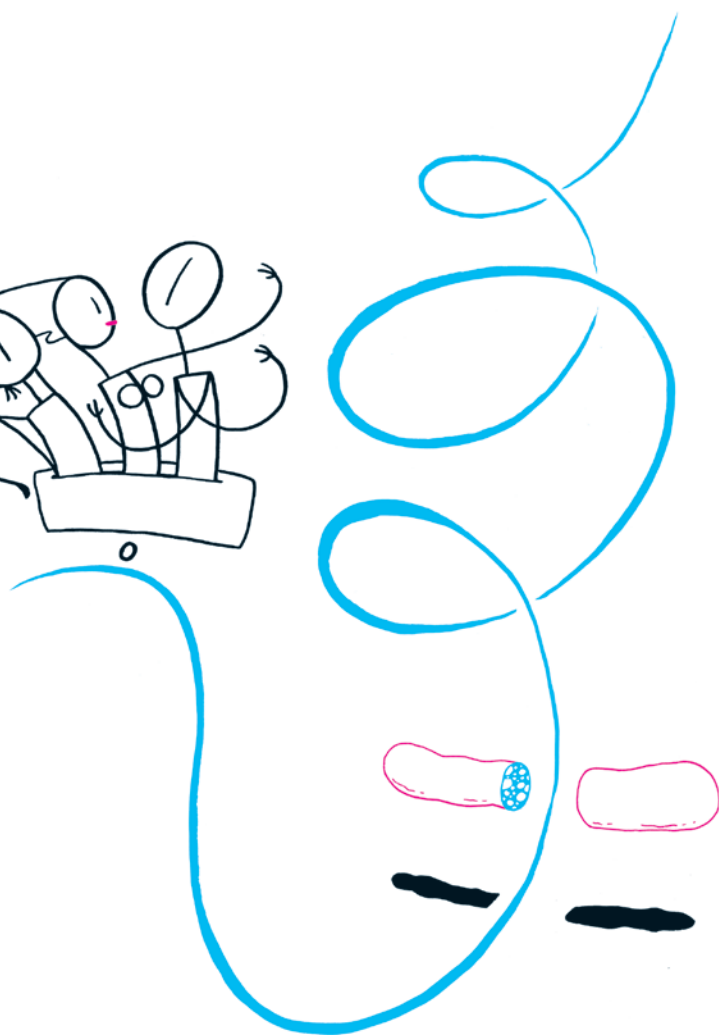
JOCLÉCIO AZEVEDO is a dance artist based in Porto.

# Why and whom do we write for?

DANCE WRITERS INTA BALODE & OANA STOICA IN DIALOGUE (FRAGMENTS)

[Bucharest, October 2014]





When you are writing, how much do you think about your reader, do you have an imaginary reader in your mind? Is this linked to a certain type of publication?

I'm thinking about this, but in Romania the public for this kind of literary reviews of performances are only the people from the community of a certain art form. Many readers are actually performers, managers of theatres, and not the actual audience.

- I So aren't there any reviews in daily papers?
- o No, after the crisis, there are not. Reviews are published only in weekly magazines. We have four of them. There are two powerful in Bucharest – the magazine I am writing for (Old Dilemma) and another one with not such a good distribution.
- I When you are writing, do you feel like writing for a community of insiders?
- o We have a joke in Romania, but in fact it's pure reality – we are critics for the theatre press documentation, for festivals, when they go abroad. Is it the same in Latvia with the publications?
- I I would say that in general the media situation is better – the three biggest daily papers do write about something more experimental, small and different. Of course, texts are mostly about big opera and theatre productions, but from time to time, and less after crisis, they also ask critics to write something about contemporary dance. I sometimes write for one of them – these last years they asked me for two reviews per year about the only two ballet premières, but suddenly this summer they asked me again to write an overview of the Time to Dance contemporary dance festival. So it's not so bad. And the most influential daily paper has a cultural supplement on Fridays.
- o In Romania it was the same, but this ended after the crisis.
- I That newspaper doesn't really have a dance critic, the person writing about dance is a music critic, but she does write, and they write about other things as well. Olga Zitluhina's last performance was suddenly into

spotlight and there were several reviews about it. Sometimes it feels that there is even a bigger lack of writers than space in the media. In weekly magazines they write about different art events. We don't have a cultural weekly newspaper anymore; it got closed in 2010, so for now we only have the cultural supplements of the daily papers. There are also some websites. The music magazine treats dance very well and, since we have our own website [www.journal.dance.lv](http://www.journal.dance.lv), they give us four pages to fill in with dance articles. They trust me to decide what will be there. So I would speculate that in Latvia writing about dance somehow reaches out to a broader audience. I don't know who reads us, but the media coverage seems to be broader than it sounds to be here in Romania. Because not only specialized audience reads, I would give my guess that we are doing better. The theatre magazine publishes texts about dance as well. There is also a popular online platform, which deals with different issues – political, social, philosophical, and cultural. They also ask for articles about dance premières, and they include dance events in their suggestions for the week. It's actually really nice.

- o Can you live from your writing about dance?
- i No, no, no. I think there has never been any staff dance critic in any media, though there have been staff theatre critics. It's possible to get small fees for the texts here and there. We have a website for which we get some funding, so that in the best month maybe I am able to pay 100 Euro for running everything and around 20 Euro for each article written. In a very optimistic month I would get 160 Euro. And then I write for the music magazine every two months and they pay 100 Euro for four pages, this is good, but it's once in two months.
- o In Romania it's the same problem, you can't live from writing about culture. I think that writing about culture is more about visibility and a kind of power, I don't know...
- i In what sense?
- o I want to do it, but there is no financial motivation. This is the reason why Romanian critics are almost all females.

- i So how do you manage your budget? Do you have some permanent job?
- o Very difficult. I'm freelance, I wasn't always, but I've been for the last four years. I write, I work for some theatres and festivals from time to time. It's very difficult.
- i That's why I have this security guard job, so I can somehow manage financially. And I also like the idea that I'm working somewhere else, I have more freedom.
- o In Romania everybody is like that – literary secretary or working in broadcasting, etc. –, because nobody can live from writing about dance and theatre. But it's difficult because theatre directors think that we have huge fees, they don't understand.
- i In Latvia theatre critics who write more actively have positions in the universities. I don't believe people think that writing is well paid, but may be they would think that the reason for writing is power, as you mentioned. And, of course, even if artists often complain they still want criticism to be there. They hate negative reviews, but then they get positive ones as well and those are needed for press kits and visibility. It's always very interesting to see how marketing sections and producers work with writers, how it changes, whom and how they invite. We had a case when there was an interview on the national TV and it was quite long talk about one performance. And at the end the journalist asks the critic – should people go to the show or not? She said – no! It was such a scandal, the theatre called the TV station, how did you dare, and then they even didn't allowed the critic in the theatre for a couple of shows, and she is like the best known critic. It was for a short time, but it created a big noise. And then, on the other hand – do you want censorship; a person who says not to go to a show?
- o It's just an opinion, nothing more.
- i But it was so influential, like an explosion.
- o In Romania this kind of influence and power has practical and financial ethics because critics who have power are invited to become managers

of the festivals and theatres. We have a theatre festival in every theatre in Romania (laughs). It's important to have this power because then you can get a good contract.

- i And then maybe one day you can make a living by being a critic only.
- o I'm trying to clarify for myself why do we write then, if there is no money and if we have so many problems with the artists, and the public doesn't read what we write, so why are we still doing this? Not because I'm such a masochist...
- i We are idiots, we are strange people. I don't know. I don't know how it started for you, but for me it started like that. I have a theoretical degree, then I went to practical classes just for health reasons, then I felt how cool it is for my body, then I did some management to help dance artists because I thought they are doing the right thing and it is very new. But then I have always liked writing and somebody asked me may be you can start writing about dance and then I started... So for me there were two reasons, I think. One is that I always liked dance in all formats and I always liked writing and I did it in school and after and I was quite good at it. And another reason why I got to dance writing was because I felt very personal individual impact from contemporary dance on myself; it really changed me as a person – by making it, watching it, getting to know the people from the dance field, by feeling inside my body, feeling much better. Through that I was maybe also able to understand more what happens on the stage. So partially it was also a little bit of like giving credit back. When I say that I listen to myself and understand that, I have an idea that criticism is needed for the art form to develop. And also I want more people to have the same great experience I had by getting to know dance both from physical side and as a spectator's experience. And writing can be a bridge so that the audience may also come, and see and maybe try some class and they see again and they become happy both as an audience and as a human body. Something like that I think... For you, do you know why do you write?
- o I have a different background. I graduated law school, my parents were teachers – my father of history, my mother of Russian language – and they were very conservative. They didn't let me go to the theatre university.
- i So you wanted to become an actress at some point?

- o No, no, a critic. I wanted to be a critic from a very young age because I liked theatre very much. And I thought that it was a good condition because I felt that I don't have talent to become an actress or director.
- I Why would you think so?
- o Because I was acting when I was a teenager and it was not so bad but also not so good and I decided that the best condition would be the critic's position to see the performances and to be there. It was the best because I liked so much to watch performances. And I wanted to go to the theatre university and become a critic but they didn't let me and made me go to law school. After two years of law school I went to the theatre university and I realized how corrupted it was – they were choosing the students before the competition. They had 10 places for the students and they were selecting them beforehand.
- I Why is it so?
- o It was like a mafia, there are state funded positions, so I thought ok, I will finish my law school and after that I went to work in radio broadcasting because radio was my favorite part of media and then I started making a show about theatre.
- I So you started with the theatre show immediately?
- o Yes. Something started to happen on the independent scene and I liked it a lot so I was making more programmes about this than about the mainstream scene and this became like a brand – Oana from the National radio talking about the independent scene. And after I finished working there I joined a private radio – very intellectual and very powerful one as well. They had a lot of money from advertising and it was a very good radio station. In 2004 one of my friends collaborating with me on the national radio became chief of one of our weekly magazines and he invited me to have a column about theatre there. I said yes, because I was invited by an influential weekly magazine.
- I So you knew well and early what you wanted to do. And dance – did it pop up just as a part of the independent theatre scene you were following?

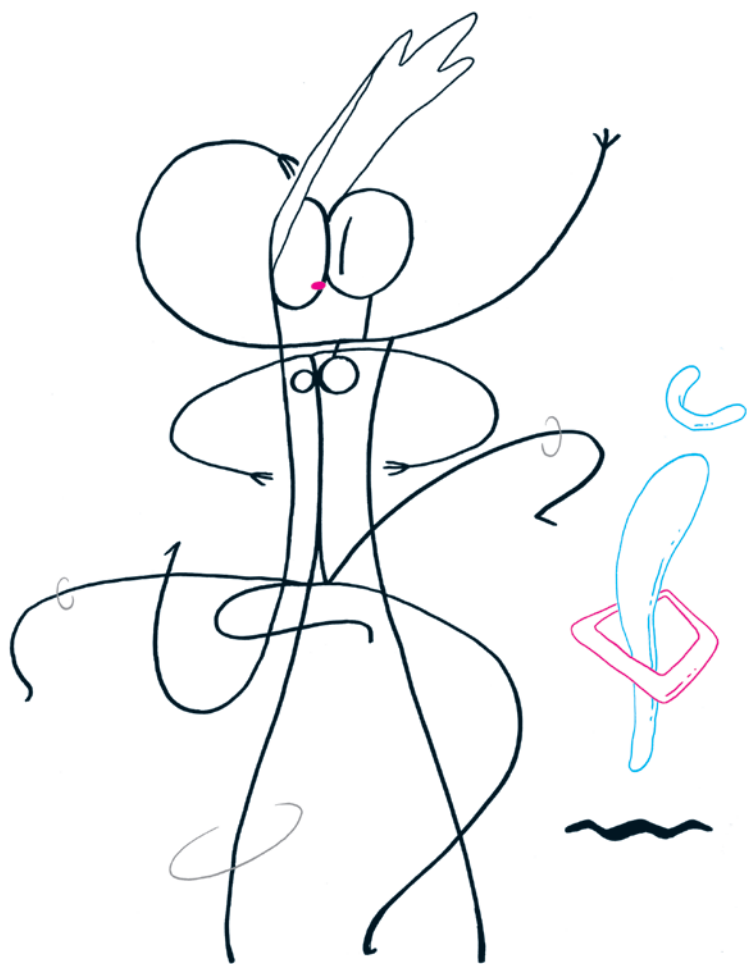
- o No, it was something different because the first director of the National Dance Centre, Mihai Mihalcea (Farid Fairuz – a man who has a fictional biography), was the one who invited me and others to come and write about contemporary dance. And he actually created the environment in media about contemporary dance.
  
- o Are you optimist about future of contemporary art in Latvia?
  
- i Yes, I think I'm quite optimistic because even if there are ups and downs I still think something important is happening. When somebody asks me something very general about art, I say that what I see as a main function of art is to touch your comfort zone and existing ideas and disturb you. As I see this as a main function, then what worries me is not that all the shows created should be amazing but if the independent scene continues its existence. And for that reason, the scene needs enough resources to somehow manage and not to transform into a too closed, self-sufficient or very offended community. It is important that new people keep joining and that audience finds it and understands that arts should be like this as well. (...)

# Latvian dance still likes to dance very much

INTA BALODE

[intro notes, Porto, June 2014]





## First 10 years

- > Beginning of 1990s – first symptoms (And us, via Danse)
- > **1996 – Olga Žituhina Dance Company**
- > 1999 – Modern (now-Contemporary) Dance Choreography programme at the Latvian Academy of Culture
- > 1999 – first funding for contemporary dance from the State Culture Capital Foundation
- > 2003 – first graduates from the Latvian Academy of Culture (LAC)
- > 2003 – the Association of Professional Contemporary Dance Choreographers of Latvia is founded
- > 2003 – Latvian New Theatre Institute – guest performances
- > **2004 – first full-evening contemporary dance performance**  
**“When owl's tail blossoms” – men included [video]**
- > **2004 – “Zl temp.dance” (Ilze Zīrina temporary dance) [video]**

## Last 7 years

- > **2007 – open project “Anatomy of Dance”** is founded – second generation of LAC
- > **2008 – regular dance performances at Ģertrūdes Street Theatre**
- > 2010 – contemporary dance performance at the Latvian National Ballet
- > 2011 – third generation of LAC
- > **2011 – first year when there are more than 10 productions**
- > 2012 – contemporary dance is included in the Annual Theatre Prize  
“Spēlmaņu nakts” – Olga Žituhina's “Ursus Maritimus”
- > 2013 – dedicated policies for the dance field at the Ministry of Culture – in process
- > 2014 VKKF – Latvian State Endowment for the Arts special programme.  
Riga European Culture Capital. ARA.  
[videos: Anatomy of Dance  
“Feet” (2007), Agnese Bordjukova, [http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=zL6ZiH3IIPM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=zL6ZiH3IIPM)  
“The Messenger” (2009), Sintija Siliņa  
“Aplam” at the Latvian National Ballet (2010), Olga Žituhina  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XGwUN7ETol8>]

## What happens now? [Survey needed]

- > Wind of change or wind of change again?
- > “Old” and “new” contemporary dance

- > Things getting serious and established?
- > Variety. One school and variety?
- > Are we for sale internationally?
- > What about “almost contemporary dance”?

### **The questions I asked**

1. How many dancers and choreographers have been active on the professional dance scene during the last 3 years?
2. Where do they come from?
3. What do they think?
4. What are they dancing about?
5. How are they dancing?
6. How is the performance built?

### **The sources I used while trying to answer**

- > What I already knew
- > What I found on our website [www.journal.dance.lv](http://www.journal.dance.lv)
- > What I figured out through the survey
- > What people told me
- > What I am guessing

### **Number of active dance people within the professional scene during the last 3 years: around 60**

- > ~ 36 choreographers (4 of them working only in theatres)
- > ~ 70 dancers (out of which 30 have been only dancing (20 don't have professional dance training (butoh, Ansis Rūtentāls Movement Theatre – 1978, Body & Soul))
- > ~ 5 have been only choreographing

### **Questions of the Survey**

1. Tell me about your dance/movement past.
2. Name the 3 most important teachers of dance (including youtube.com).
3. Number of works you have choreographed or danced during the last 3 years.
4. Do you consider yourself more like a choreographer or like a dancer?  
Are you better as choreographer or as dancer?
5. Where is the dance art heading to?

### Survey results – Activity

- > The questions were sent out to 43 people via e-mail and facebook.com.
- > The questions were sent out ONCE.
- > Brief reminders were made only to two people.
- > 18 people answered, that is 41,9%, which is good.

#### CONCLUSION:

People don't mind sharing their thoughts – tendency in the last couple of years (“Hours”, “Good Enough”).

### Survey results – Age to start dancing

- > 7 answers – age 3
- > 1 answer – age 4
- > 3 answers – age 6
- > 2 answers – age 7
- > 1 answer – age 9
- > 1 answer – age 10
- > 2 answers – age 11
- > 1 answer – age 14

#### CONCLUSION:

People in dance have a long dance past, men have a little shorter one. Latvian dance is still about dance.

### Contemporary dance for children

- > “Alice” (2002)
- > Classes
- > PoetryButterfly (2012) – Best Children's performance season 2011/2012,  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fDOR2ss-20w>

### Survey – Age to start contemporary dance

- > 6 answers – age 18
- > 6 answers – age 19
- > 1 answer – age 20
- > 1 answer – age 21
- > 1 answer – age 22
- > 1 answer – age 25
- > 1 answer – age 32
- > 1 answer – age 33

#### CONCLUSION:

Contemporary dance is for adults. Contemporary dance has school system – enroll after high school. The ones who started late didn't miss anything.

### **Survey – First dance genre studied**

- > 9 answers – folk dance
- > 4 answers – ballroom dancing
- > 2 answers – hip-hop
- > 1 answer – gymnastics
- > 1 answer – show dancing
- > 1 answer – Michael Jackson style solo dance

#### **CONCLUSION:**

Even when adults do contemporary dance, roots are not destroyed and this guarantees variety and communication with regular audiences.

### **Contemporary dance + Folk dance**

- > "Midsummer's Night", Andris Kačanovskis
- > "No zobena saule lec", TDA "Katvari", Agris Daniļēvičs

### **Survey – Important transitions / mixes among dance genres**

- > Ballet – hip-hop – contemporary dance
- > Folk dance – contemporary dance
- > Ballroom dancing – hip hop – contemporary dance – show dance – contemporary dance
- > Contemporary dance – contemporary jazz
- > Show dance – contemporary dance – show dance
- > Contemporary dance – movement in drama theatres
- > Hip-hop – contemporary dance – cabaret – body percussions
- > Movement theatre – contemporary dance – movement therapy

#### **CONCLUSION:**

Dance is one, but it has different faces, the combination among them creates unique signatures. There is a way out of contemporary dance.

### **Ballet – hip-hop – contemporary dance**

- > "Inside" (2010), Dmitrijs Gaitjukevics, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h37tbyQzKr4>  
Ballroom dancing – hip hop – contemporary dance – show dance – contemporary dance
- > "Sarah Kane" (2010), Kristīne Borodina

### **Contemporary dance – contemporary jazz dance**

- > “How are you?” and “Widows”, Līga Liberte,  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OyeEskzN5Vw>

### **Movement theatre – contemporary dance – movement therapy**

- > “Whoever” (2011), Ansis Rūtentāls Movement Theatre, Santa Grīnfelde  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=nVUobXH2nUI#](http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=nVUobXH2nUI#)

### **Show dance – contemporary dance – show dance**

- > “Lines of tango” (2011), Concept: Elīna Breice, Choreography: Liene Grava, Evita Birule, Dmitrijs Gaitjukičs, Elīna Breice, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nS9nnuRiMzl>

### **Survey – Dance teachers**

1. Teacher of the first or the first seriously taken genre
2. Contemporary dance teacher in real life – 15 votes **Olga Žitluhina**, 5 votes **Ilze Ziriņa**
3. Foreigners – 3 who have thought in Latvia in real life (Maria Munoz, Benno Voorham and Fiona Millward); virtual or met abroad teachers (very few) Pina Bausch, Maurice Bejart, Inaki Azpillaga.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

First you need to be infected with dance, any dance; then you need to be infected with contemporary dance and it works only in real contact; some idols exist.

### **Survey – average number of works per person (last 3 years, everybody decides on their own what is work)**

- > Choreographed – from 3 to 30 (this definitely includes amateur sphere), average around 10
- > Performed in – from 1 to 15, average 7–8
- > Little over 30 contemporary dance performances during the last 3 years

#### **CONCLUSION:**

Activity and demand for people trained in contemporary dance out of the direct field. Skilled in various contexts, bringing in their vision. Obstacle for international market?

### **Survey – Future of dance**

**More than 1 answer:**

- > **Part of the Latvian cultural landscape** – even if no direction was given, most answers were about Latvia; “dance is not an after job activity anymore”; “better understanding”, “more audience”, “more performances”
- > **Movement** – “movement goes on forever”; “dance is going forward”, “dance is moving towards all directions – good and bad”; “dance is moving and that’s good; “dance is always moving, nothing happens without movement”
- > **Variety** – “new styles, not one school anymore”; “infiltrates other dance forms”; “variety in thinking”

### Variety

- > “Quo vadis?” (2010), “Dirty Deal Teatro” – puppet/object/contemporary dance performance, director: Mārcis Lācis (1st time with director), choreographer: Dmitrijs Gaitjukevičs

### Survey – Future of dance

#### More than 1 answer:

- > **Dance at its golden age** – it becomes broader; multiperformances, movement, music, video etc.; “dance is so much and everywhere”; “dance is everywhere”, “in every kind of performance”; “everything can be dance”
- > **Easier to understand** – “teatralization of dance” (use of literature “On a hot roof”, “Bicycle”); “to make dance easier to understand”; “more adapted to regular audience members through help from directors and dramaturges”
- > **Need for positivism** – sunk into depressive notes, cacophony masked as search for the new routes
- > **“Atrophy of muscles”, “less movement”**

### Need for positivism

- > Experimental instrumental dance performance “Without Wires”, based on respect of the sound, love of movement and only sunny positive thinking. Concept: Valērijs Olehno, choreography, dance, live sound: Valērijs Olehno, Aldis Liepiņš, Antons Tkačenko.

### Dance is everywhere

- > **Theater performances** – Almost every performance has a choreographer, 9% contemporary dance choreographers, almost 20 names last season
- > **Music events** – choir concerts (2003 Sarmīte Mončaka diploma work with choir “Balsis”; “Kamēr...” Ilze Zīriņa; vak “Latvija” Olga Žitluhina Dance

Company); special projects ("My Rose" Sigulda); oratory (Arthur Honegger "Jeanne d'Arc au bucher")

## Survey – Future of dance

### 1 answer:

- > Socially and politically active
- > Lacks freshness, digesting the same information
- > Dance used in medicine
- > Small format
- > Interactivity
- > Merge with everyday
- > Wish for dynamics and surprise

### Socially and politically active

- > **Performance "Blew me!"** ("lepūt man!") in the frame of the "Marathon of thinking" during Homo Alibi 2010 dedicated to lecture-performance 'Is it hard to overqualify?' Choreographer Olga Žitluhina and journalist Dmitry Petrenko (now theatre director)
- > **"I am a dialogue"** – Anatomy of Dance, Elina Breice,  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=46\\_8qzFJoVc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=46_8qzFJoVc)

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### Some themes not mentioned. What are we dancing about?

- > Contemporary dance started to be taken more seriously with the entrance of men in the field 2003. **Men sell better.** 😊
- > Every couple of years men's performance  
2006 – "Take 735" by Olga Žitluhina Dance Company  
2008 – "4 Men in Boat" by dance theatre Boot and Boat, choreography: Rūta Nordmane  
2009 – "Mannersache" – show, ballet, folk, hip-hop – outside look, Concept, choreography: Branko Potocan, directed by: Branko Potocan, Andrejs Jarovojš, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D52-oWBTQBQ>

### How is the performance built?

#### Some ideas:

- > Full-evening means around 1h (exceptions "Dances of the lost", "Road movie")
- > Site specific and good use and awareness of space



- > Happy, intense and sentimental endings – care for audiences mood
- > Circle in composition
- > Mix of musical material
- > Tendency to be decent
- > ...

### Happy end

- > “Dix-Huit Pas” (based on novel by Patrick Süskind “Parfume”),  
Dmitrijs Gaitjukevičs

### LATEST NEWS

- > Nominated for the prize in 2014

#### LIVE RETHINKING!

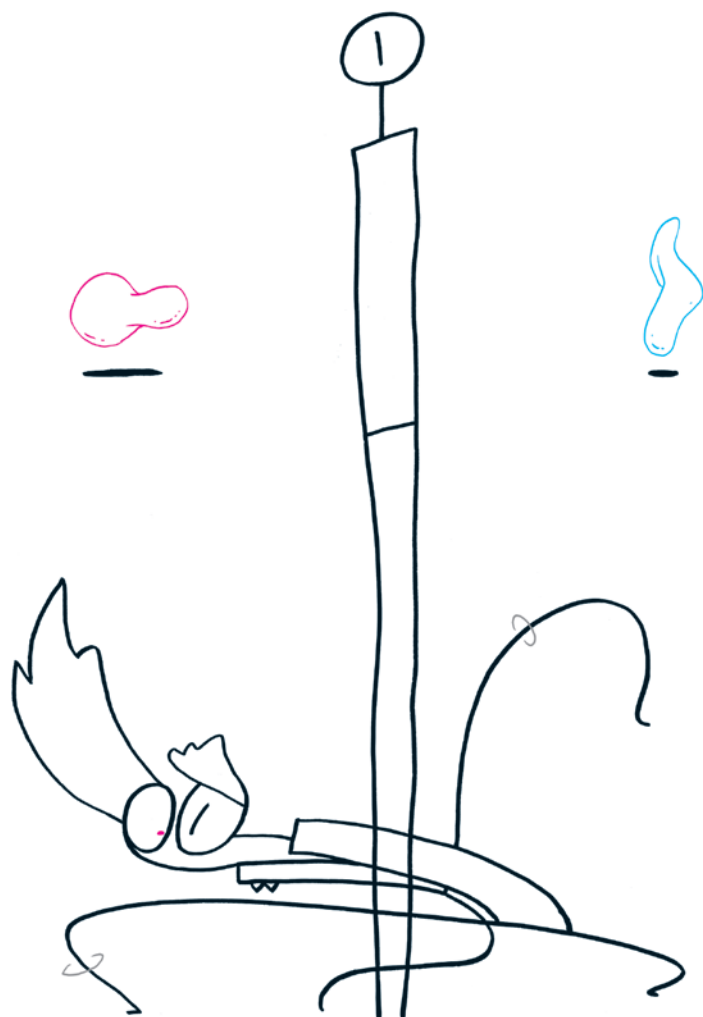
1. Huge festival, Olga, young composer superstar, break dancers, kokles...
2. A lecture/performance piece about Duncans
3. A duet about living long together
4. Tables, close, many dancers, Ibsen
5. Olga's solo of 14 choreographers

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# The Romanian contemporary dance scene in three words

OANA STOICA

[conference in Porto, June 2014]



The contemporary dance of the recent years in Romania can be summed up in three words.

The first one is **POLITICAL**.

Until a few years ago, not many people in Romania knew what exactly contemporary dance was. Some don't even know it today. The Ministers of Culture, for instance, the ones that are supposedly financing an institution called the National Dance Centre – about which, one of the ministry officials thought it presented folk dances – seem to always forget about its budget. This is because, for them, it is not very clear what exactly they are supposed to finance.

In addition to activating in a “doubtful” field, the Romanian dancers are also a bit “naughty”. This is another story. In Romania, people consider that contemporary dance artists – I will later explain how extensive the “contemporary dance” phrase is in Romania – are “naughty”. They investigate politics, religion, and social conventions. They lack obedience and don't “mind their own business (art)”. They are improper and instigating. For a long time (maybe even today), for the Romanian audience, the fact that they might be asked to do something was a stress. A few years ago, Eduard Gabia created a performance, “ειο”, during which the audience could choose between being a worker and not paying the entrance fee, or being a payer and only watching the show. His fellow artists that came to see the show chose work, whereas the general public opted for being the patron. This was an experiment that clearly showed a social split: there are the few who react to impulses – political, social, humanitarian, etc. – and get involved, and the many that prefer just to watch.

I started with politics because contemporary dance in Romania is almost entirely political. The political attitude was a necessity and still is.

After 1990, the Romanian dance had much to recover, both aesthetically and conceptually, and this was done through the exodus of choreographers that acquired artistic residencies abroad and created performances that were nowhere to be presented at home. In the early 1990s, in Romania there were no spaces or funding dedicated to contemporary dance. After several independent attempts of community organisation (the most notable ones being the Multi Art Dance Centre of Vava Ștefănescu and Project ๒๘๓ of Cosmin Manolescu), after a long and complicated struggle, inclusively in the press, as the press was

powerful in those times, any rebellion against the crypto-communist government instantly made the first page of newspapers, which put continuous pressure on authorities – the choreographers managed to establish the National Dance Centre (2004) – CNDB. The struggle continued even after the opening of CNDB, an institution that, although of a national rank and, as such, of maximum importance, was permanently underfinanced and threatened with dissolution. This situation was constantly “performed”, including at the moment when it was disposed of its premises (the building of the National Theatre, where the headquarters of CNDB were, entered renovation, and the Centre disappeared). Of course, the Ministry of Culture “forgot” to assign a new space to CNDB. This was four years ago. Today, CNDB has temporary premises, but this is another story and it has nothing to do with the Ministry of Culture.

### **The Performative Protest**

Several artists protested during one of the biggest classical music festivals in Europe, the George Enescu Festival in Bucharest, which has huge costs for the Romanian state budget. The event lasts for a whole month, during which renowned cult music artists, musicians, soloists, orchestras are guests of the festival. That the state is budgeting for culture would be no issue at all – this is what we all wish for, if only they wouldn't budget exclusively the megalomaniac forms of culture.

Contemporary artists fallen in the fight against glass case culture – <http://vimeo.com/20697919>

The reaction of a passer-by at the sight of the artists: “They probably have stomach aches.”

Another protest formula: Farid Fairuz – a performative fictional biography of choreographer Mihai Mihalcea – protests in a unique manner against consumerism and economical dictatorship, but also against the church, this special form of corporatism. Practically, Farid the Magnificent sanctifies the Afi Cotroceni mall (one of the largest in Bucharest).

AFIFARID – <http://vimeo.com/84219635>

When the National Dance Centre lost its headquarters, there were several forms of protest:

- the refusal to leave the building, “Occupy **СНДБ**”, associated to the worldwide movement occupy.
- a re-enactment of a statue that had recently been placed in front of the National Theatre for a cost of two million Euro– while the Centre’s annual budget was of a hundred thousand Euro and the public funder claimed that there was no money neither for budget increase, nor for the relocation of the institution, due to the economical crisis.
- a rally in front of the Ministry of Culture, during which the participants did a dance warm-up. The rally had the least success. The clerks locked themselves inside the ministry and called the police. Two overweight policemen arrived and looked puzzled since the rally was already over by the time they got there, taking as much time as officially allowed for a spontaneous protest (20 minutes).

## The second word – **HYPERCONCEPTUALISM**

After the fall of communism, the Romanian choreographers have rapidly assimilated the new aesthetics of contemporary dance, becoming very interested in hybrid, hyper-conceptualized and extreme formulas: non-dance, lecture, post-dance, performative installations, durational performances, performative bios or archives. For this reason, the phrase “contemporary dance” is an umbrella that holds multiple artistic expressions. Related to this, in Romania there are few dancers (a word which is rather associated with other forms of dance, like classical, modern, sports dance) and more choreographers and performers.

An artist group led by Manuel Pelmuş has created a performance series called “Romanian Dance History”. which reached its IXth volume, through which they attempted to position themselves in a critical way towards the past of Romanian contemporary dance. It seems that they reached the conclusion that this history is rather short, therefore the largest part of this approach is built upon the critique of the present. Historically, the authors related to the icon of Romanian contemporary dance, Stere Popescu, an avant-garde choreographer from the 1960s, author of the “The hammer without master” performance, on the music of Pierre Boulez, which generated a big scandal at its premiere in Paris in 1965, where it had split the public and the critics (some were enthusiastic, others basically demolished the show). At its return to Romania, the team of the National Opera in Bucharest was forbidden to tour abroad and Stere Popescu had his position as choreographer retracted. Stere Popescu never returned to

Romania, where his situation was rather delicate, not just because of the show, but also since his artistic endeavours were too abstract in an era of socialist realism, and because he was gay, something considered unacceptable and illegal during communism. He took his own life three years after that, while in London. Unfortunately, there are few testimonies or evidences of the performance "The hammer without master" and of Stere Popescu's work in general, therefore this show made the subject of an extensive research project by CNDB, called "What to affirm, what to perform?". Returning to the "Romanian Dance History", the reference made is rather to a legend, to a myth than to a real forerunner. Thus, the work of Stere Popescu is re-activated and interpreted through a mix of re-enactment and lecture.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AupKHQL-UgM>

It started from this, but the more recent episodes of the "Romanian Dance History" project questions the present, given that the past was quickly exhausted. The recent presentation of the IXth part in Prague, Czech Republic, has provoked the outrage of an audience member, who complained to the Romanian Cultural Institute, as the performance contained manele. Manele is a popular music trend in Romania, originating in Aromanian, Turkish and Greek music, but with an altered, simplified style – especially regarding the message it conveys, usually associated with Roma people, although this view is false. "Officially", manele are not part of the culture (the "official" culture is still profoundly conservative, only classical, purely aesthetical, non social art is recognized), but they speak greatly about the collective mentality of a certain population sector, for which they represent a genuine art form.

Talking about what it is that we assimilate to the expression "contemporary dance" in Romania: we put together about everything that moves around contemporary arts, even visual arts elements: performance, installations, public space interventions. Alexandra Pirici recently said that her public space interventions are not performances, but sculptures. They look like this:

Intervention at the People's House – <http://vimeo.com/32438119>

Alexandra Pirici and Manuel Pelmuş have collaborated for the Romanian project at the Venice Biennial last year (2013), entitled "An Immaterial Retrospective of the Venice Biennial". By using the bodies of 10 performers, Pirici and Pelmuş

have reconstructed over one hundred artworks that had been shown over the years at the International Venice Exhibition, including one from the 2013 edition. The project spoke about the memory of matter versus the memory of the body, it was a critique of monumentality, of the state that finances substance, rather than people. (There is a joke, I'm not sure if it's true, that said that the reason this artwork had won the national contest for the Biennial was its low costs: there was no need for an investment in materials, and people are cheap. Romania had one of the most reduced budgets at the Venice Biennial). "An Immaterial Retrospective of the Venice Biennial" is, in fact, a visual art piece.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RZHWnM5Fm5c>

The project was excellently reviewed by the critics and Pirici and Pelmuş were invited to conceive several other projects, including one at the Pompidou Centre in Paris, where they recreated a performative history of the museum. The work, titled "Just Pompidou it. A retrospective of the Centre Pompidou" was shown in Paris between February 19th and March 10th 2014.

I would like to briefly explain why everything is so hyper-conceptualised in Romania. There are several reasons for this. First, it is a form of contesting the past. In communism, there were two types of art: an artificial one, exclusively targeting aesthetics, and another one that "officially" expressed the immediate reality, called socialist realism. These were the only two accepted artistic directions. The exaggerated aesthetics is still present on stage today, especially in theatre, probably in classical ballet as well. But in contemporary dance, as in cinematography, minimalism, austerity and hyper-conceptualisation are a reaction to this type of art.

Another reason was the need for assimilation of the novelties on the international scene, which were seldom known, or, if they were, they couldn't be borrowed and developed under communism, there was no way contemporary language performances could be created. This encounter with contemporary aesthetics was so seductive, that Romanian choreographers not only have rapidly understood the performative languages, but they also developed and experimented them in their own style. They could no longer stop this process.

And, of course, there is the pragmatic reason: money. The shows were financially difficult to create. As I said, for a long time, in Romania, there were no



performance spaces, no rehearsal studios, no funding available for performance, therefore it was impossible to create massive performances, but rather solos and reduced-size works. Even today, the situation is not great, maybe just a little bit better than yesterday. This is taken care of by Vava Ștefănescu at CNDB, by Cosmin Manolescu at Gabriela Tudor Foundation, by Jean Lorin Sterian at Iorgheanu theatre, and a few others. But it is little and it is very difficult.

A performance created with low budget, a radical form of the cheap show, "Preview" displays a radical vision on the human body. Choreographer Manuel Pelmuș is practically annihilating it. The disappearance of the body from the stage determines the activation of different performance and reception elements. The audience enters the space while an empty chair sits on the stage. The lights shut off and, in complete darkness, Pelmuș, who has unknowingly taken his position on the chair, starts talking. The annulment is not just of the body, but also of the space, of the stage as performance space and of the performance itself, as action intended to be watched. What is dance, in this case? What exactly generates the dance, the movement itself or its relation to the audience? If you change the expression method (from visual to sound), does the result change? Does Pelmuș' dance exist subjectively, only in the imagination of the viewer or is it an objective reality, perceived with different methods, respectively hearing instead of sight and through the activation of imagination? In "Preview", the viewer becomes participant, since the performance relies essentially on his capacity to perceive it. It is a form of audience activation. (There is no video recording of this performance.)

One of the first Romanian contemporary dance performances with an impact was "Serial Paradise" by Cosmin Manolescu, together with Eduard Gabia and Mircea Ghinea (a performance also presented in Porto by Fabrica de Movimientos).

<http://vimeo.com/56701739>

When this performance was created, Romania was preparing to both adhere to the European Union and to join NATO. The war in Yugoslavia was taking place, which extensively affected us. Romania had become attractive to the USA, to NATO, since it was neighbouring Serbia. It was immediately integrated in NATO, which opened military bases here, to be used for the operations in Serbia. "Serial Paradise" expresses the public attitude facing this political game.

Also from the political area, in "The trilogy post-spectacle", Ion Dumitrescu and Florin Flueraş deconstruct the limitations of the discourse, first the public one, especially the one in the media (the episode "The authors wish that you attend their show"), which derails, become noise, lacking consistency and identity.

<http://vimeo.com/28455243>

The scenic discourse is then sprayed-on (the episode "Neo catharsis"), through the negation of functionality and conventional performance structure: the questioning of the contemporary performance that had become hyper-abstract.

The end of the show makes the political discourse derisory, through the third episode that announces the Presidency Candidate. "The Candidacy to the Presidency" has continued as series of performances, independently from the "Trilogy...", in various formats, adapted to the political reality of the moment, without becoming a performative "newspaper". The performance is touching on the political discourse in its essence ("the science" of speaking a lot without saying anything), haemorrhagic, illogical, lacking content.

<http://vimeo.com/28577713>

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Another performance, much less politically declared and rather social is the choreographic-sound installation "Quartet for a microphone". Vava Ștefănescu locks together three performers in a phone booth, forcing them to cohabitate in a claustrophobic space. It is an attempt to survive in a suffocating world that cancels intimate space. To relate to another means becoming their hostage.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=arUs7SQPi28>

Apart from the political realm, the concerns of Romanian dance are targeting, like everywhere else, the human body. In "What we have convened to be hazard", Ion Dumitrescu changes the function of the body, from instrument into the performer's show, into a material for the hypothetical performance of the viewer. It is another audience activation method. The viewers enter one by one in the room, where the performer is waiting for them naked, lying on a table, head covered. With a marker, the audience members can write anything they want on the performer's body. After that, they arrive in another room, where, on three video monitors, they can watch previous recordings of the performance,

as well as a live view of the one taking place. This is the final performance, the viewer-artist and the instrument-artist are performing together in front of the viewer that took back the viewer position and of the artist that became viewer – since Ion Dumitrescu “invites” other artists to perform, while he joins the audience.

The studies of the body are closely connected to the ones on identity. If I were to define in a single word the Romanian contemporary dance, I would say “identity”.

This is the third word about Romanian contemporary dance: **IDENTITY**.

Identity is a fluctuating concept in the contemporary world, with reference points that continually shift, especially in Eastern Europe, where people had to struggle with the recovering of their identity after its annihilation during communism. Since the fall of communism, we keep re-identifying ourselves. This flexibility of the identity brings it closer to the body, which is a shifting matter. Identity and body are symbiotic concepts. In performances, the identity targets several grounds – personal, artistic, social, national, ethnic, sexual ones.

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Vava Ștefănescu makes an identity transfer in “After all”: Carmen Coțofană performs her history, both professional and personal. An archive-body is allowing itself to be explored by an avatar-body, in a performance about body memory and the way in which the body is being “occupied”. Carmen Coțofană “occupies” Vava Ștefănescu – Occupy Vava – she insinuates in her world, she appropriates her objects, she remakes fragments of her performances, and their universes come together. Carmen’s life is becoming parasite in Vava’s creative world. What results from here is a hybrid body: Vava featuring Carmen.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uHukrkmpewk>

In “Piece with limited responsibility”, Cosmin Manolescu and Mihaela Dancs explore each other’s artistic universes, each of them trying to use key elements of the other – movements, choreographic phrases, objects – in order to create their own identity. One of the characteristics of the performance is that it refuses to have a model or a message. It is a “cheeky” form of autonomy: the independence from aesthetic dictatorship.

<http://vimeo.com/79280966>

One of the most spectacular identity questionings is that of Mihai Mihalcea, who has created a fictional performative biography. From time to time, Mihai Mihalcea becomes the Lebanese Farid Fairuz, a lucid, but hysterical and provocative fellow. The first "appearance" of Farid Fairuz was on e-mail (the virtual apocalypse). He sent an email to several cultural managers and journalists, in which he announced his intention of working as a performer in Romania. Some have replied. Soon after that, the press found out, through a press release, that Farid Fairuz himself was currently in a steamed conflict with the CNDB artistic director, back then – Mihai Mihalcea. The dispute – it had already become a performative act, Farid Fairuz having created a lot of debate around his request to budget a show that included five witches – was developing around the issue of public space. Farid had created a biography for himself, but not yet a face as well. His first materialisation was a vocal one, in an interview at Radio Guerrilla in which, "alongside" Mihalcea, he presented their conflict of opinions. Things got closer to "Preview" here; it was an audio performance that solicited the fantasy of the listeners, given the lack of the image of the Lebanese Farid. He appeared live in "Farewell (or About the subtle fall-outs of the limbic system)", "an extra sensorial fairy" in which he disenchant the Romanian culture with the help of witches (the fortune tellers, the enchantresses are part of the Romanian social reality, and their services are, discreetly, requested even by social-political, business or media elites.

<http://vimeo.com/59127375>

Farid Fairuz appears again in the performance "Realia (Bucharest – Beirut)" presenting a mix of self-biography of Mihalcea and of the fictional one from Fairuz. This is, in fact, the autobiographic performance of a body with two identities. "Realia" makes a tour of the real and fictional past, in order to fix itself back into a present in which the same biographical halving is taking place. At the end, the identity capturing finally happens, and Mihai Mihalcea proclaims: "I am Farid Fairuz". From that moment on, Mihai Mihalcea is but a name in an identity document. Farid Fairuz is doing what he pleases in his body. He talks a lot and says many uncomfortable things that upset the ministry of culture, things that, in fact, bother several ministries of culture.

<http://vimeo.com/74841203>

Daily life as support, subject and space for art is one of the defining characteristics of contemporary performance. For example, sickness as daily event becomes subject for an artistic investigation. As a way of celebrating her healing, Mădălina Dan, diagnosed with Hodgkin's disease, performs an eight-hour choreographic marathon entitled "Hematopoiesis" (the term defines the process of creation, multiplication and socialising of cells in the bone marrow). It is not a festive performance, but an interrogative one, which celebrates the body's regeneration process but also analyses its limits.

The body is history, memory, and archive. This is the theme of yet another type of durational performance, created as a result of an artistic residency in the frame of E-Motional. "(anti) aging" is an archive in progress which, for 30 years to come (2011-2041), gathers together, like a diary, the lives of the two performers, Mădălina Dan and Mihaela Dancs. The memory archives itself on the body and is also recorded with a video camera. In the first part of the show, the two choreographers do a short remembering of recent past. The recording of the performance will keep safe not only these evidences, but also the way in which Mădălina and Mihaela are interrogatively rebuilding their professional and personal history.

<http://vimeo.com/35697046>

One of the most important body functions is that of instrument for gender identity affirmation. The subject has long been popular on the performance scene, giving the need to relax an intolerant collective perception. Even as it is no longer criminalised, homosexuality is still difficult to accept on mass level. One of the strongest gender identity discourses (relating to the least discusses lesbianism) is "Parallel", produced by GroundFloor Group Cluj (directed by Ferenc Sinkó and Leta Popescu, performed by Lucia Mărneanu and Kata Bodoki-Halmen).

<http://vimeo.com/82675289>

Besides the difficulties in being accepted as gay, the girls also have to confront misogynies (if male homosexuality is tolerated by society as an ignorable abnormality, the female one is almost never recognised). Two identities are being built in two spaces separated by a wall. The identity construction develops in three episodes, through the creation of two queer characters. As a performance,

"Parallel" is a hybrid form of dance, movement, gymnastics, acting, live music, theatre, etc.

The most recent gender identity performance is "Institute of Change". The show created by Paul Dunca questions the relevance of gender identity in contemporary society. In what way does the sexual identity change produce an essential personality mutation? What is feminine or masculine defining?

Dance and critique

How should critique get closer to contemporary dance?

- I think that in Romania it is essential that critics make dance accessible to a general audience that does not have the necessary tools to understand contemporary art. The Romanian education system is still making use of aged techniques. There is a lack of any contemporary art reference in schools (Romanian literature is studied up to the works from the 1970s) and the education system favours information reproduction, rather than the development of free and critical thinking. Therefore, the audience needs to be educated. This has been happening in the last few years thanks to critics and choreographers that are running contemporary dance workshops for all ages, but it is a process that takes time.
- Critique plays the role of memory, especially in the situation of sudden disappearance of performances. There are, of course, video recordings, but their decrypting and contextualisation are absolutely necessary. Speaking of contextualisation, I believe that the best critique is curating, a situation in which several already seen works can be placed together, in a certain context, in order to create a new work. Thus, the critics have their own part of creation.

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As a summary: Romanian dance is **political, hyper-conceptualized** and concerned with **identity**.

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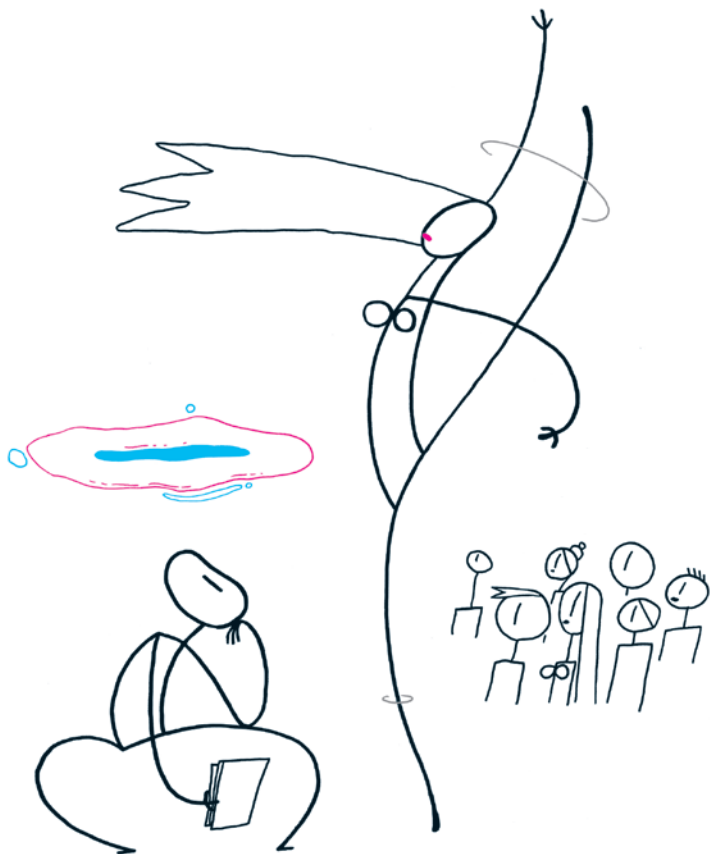
# Hey, is it anybody out there?

COSMIN MANOLESCU

AUDIENCE MEMBERS

ANA TECAR





# I. Questions and answers for tomorrow

COSMIN MANOLESCU

[Bucharest, November 2014]

q Is there an audience for dance artists?

A Yes, usually the audience is there and I'd like to think that every person counts individually as an audience. I don't like to think about the audience as a mass of people. Every person from the audience is different and reacts and deals with the performance in a different way. And right now, I'm not interested anymore in numbers (I mean to have a full house, all seats occupied), but rather to have an audience that is open and ready to engage with my work. I'd also like to think that a lower number of people in the audience may lead to a more intimate situation which serves to generate a more powerful performance.

q Should an artist think about the audience?

A Yes, definitely, it should be the most important thing. Audience should be at the core of the creation process. Even more, I think people should be invited to join the artistic process and then give feedback after the show.

q What you would like to bring to the audience?

A A real experience, something that might change people's life.

q What are the ethics of the observer/audience?

A It is based on a sort of 'contract' you've signed with the audience.

q How do you engage with the audience?

A In a very direct way, by including audience members at the chore of my artistic process. Lately I use to interact more and more with the people and create a direct dialogue with the audience.

q What comes out from the experience of knowing the audience?

A A lot of information, I suppose, and sometimes some feelings too. You get to better understand what and why you are doing, what works and what doesn't work in relation to the audience. Sometimes it brings ideas on how to move next.

- q How can you trigger the audience to come to see your performance?
- A I would say that it is more important to find ways to bring new people to see your work. The people whom you enter in the dialogue may become followers and will maybe come to see a second show. For me the most important question is how to bring a new audience.
- q How do you bring the audience to pay the ticket?
- A I realized that now it becomes more and more difficult to bring the audience to value the performance by paying a ticket. On one hand because if you received public funding in Romania, then you are obliged to present your creation almost for free (you can't sell tickets); secondly because the tickets to a show in Romania tend to become more expensive lately. I stopped being interested in selling tickets some years ago, and for a while now, for the ZonaD space, we have used a donation-based system. It's safe and easy, and these donations can be then invested in keeping the space going.
- q Does the public exist before the creation?
- A The public is always there and ready to see your work. I have a love & hate relationship with the audience. I like to know them better so I sometimes give a workshop in relation with a new performance. I also like to invite them to watch my rehearsals from a very early stage of the work. I love to interact and create space for a dialogue with the audience.
- q How do we see dance?
- A I'd like to believe that I try to see dance in a very open way. For instance, each time I go to see a new performance it's like for the first time. But I often get disappointed when the artists/ performers are very self-oriented, don't really care about the viewer and don't give me anything in terms of content and emotions.
- q Which are the leftovers of a performance/ project?
- A The marks on the skin, the working notebook, things you may receive from your spectators, the dialogue you have online with the people after the show. The memories of the encounter.

Q Do we really need to applaud for a performance?

A We don't need to applaud after a performance. In fact, in my opinion, when we applaud we tend to give away and reject the experience we just went through, instead of keeping it inside us. After we applaud we can easily go for a drink and forget the performative experience quite rapidly. When there is no applause, the performance and its questions/ emotions stay longer with us. Because of this, in most of my latest work I try not to offer to the audience the possibility to applaud. And I like that very much.

COSMIN MANOLESCU is choreographer, performer and curator, artistic director of the E-Motional programme and of Gabriela Tudor Foundation in Bucharest. [cosminmanolescu.wordpress.com](http://cosminmanolescu.wordpress.com)

## II. What does the audience think about contemporary dance?

THOUGHTS FROM THE PUBLIC OF THE [FRAGILE]\* PERFORMANCE

[November 2014 – June 2015]

Contemporary dance is an experience that can – might change people's lives.

Contemporary dance is very much about freedom.

Contemporary dance is contemporary life, with questions that are contemporary.

I am not sure what contemporary dance is. But I don't want to limit what it may be. I want to make it limitless.

It's like travelling in and out of my body, capturing messages from all over the place.

I believe contemporary dance is freedom of movement.

| 6

A situation that makes me feel more comfortable with my body and your body.

Dance is freedom and freedom is a state of mind for me, I can feel free when I travel, read, see a good dance performance or a good movie. Also, I cannot distinguish the feeling of freedom from the one of happiness, power or love...

Something I don't know.

I present contemporary dance because it can change the perception of the body. I like contemporary dance because of the freedom that it radiates, the emotions, un-control, or interactions.

I like the feeling of freedom and the people who are making contemporary dance.

I like the energy and the feelings but dance stereotypes are absolutely boring me.

I like the touch of dance.

A very recent and magic process (not exactly a "moment", though) is me finding (or remembering?) that life is again magic.

I am not to judge, but I feel it's missing more and more the inside dance and is more into show and into putting extremes in front of the public.

I don't like contemporary dance when the choreographer is too technical and when he is trying to create some copies of himself.

Contemporary dance is either soft or daring. And sometimes fragile.

I remember you asking me before why I dance, why is dance so important. Why contemporary dance? Contemporary – because I don't like history that doesn't touch me anymore. I don't get why baroque churches are worthier to be preserved than a concert hall built in soviet times where I was attending my very first concert. So I am always for contemporary, that is what is touching me, does not have the history of people that I have never ever met. When it comes to dance – it is because dance is movement and I think people are made to move and communicate via movement and I find that contemporary dance is the most fluent movement in our society/ culture. I like that contemporary dance has variety and is supposed to be alive. I like living things best.

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The time when I started to get familiar with contemporary dance was sort of a daring time – to change the rudiments of everyday life and start something new and unfamiliar. I started practically but the feeling of freedom and something deep was so strong, that there was this desire to explore and reveal the reasons of dance and movements' connections to the brain and to the unconsciousness. Something so abstract and literally untranslatable, that can touch people's minds and hearts so deeply and personally. And writing or any kind of other way of reflecting on dance is just a way to think about it and pass it over to other people.

In contemporary dance you never know what will happen.

\* [Fragile] is a piece by Cosmin Manolescu in the frame of the E-Motional programme, created and performed together with Giselda Ranieri (IT) and Tanja Andreeva. [www.e-motional.eu](http://www.e-motional.eu)

### III. memories/questions/traces of a (post)emotional body

ANA TECAR

[July 2015]

when you dance, you have or you exist? do you think dance is nakedness – death is static – why do we ask questions – who is the craziest one here – do you think I believe you are crazy ? – yes!

do you think you are more seductive if you make this movement – dance is movement or sound – do you think this dance can help us?

why don't you stop?

why don't you stop?

can you be with others and feel nothing at all?

is there any part of the body which can generate something new? how can you hide from the routine of everyday kisses, from the boredom of touch?

i am celebrating you and not your assumed projection. des-isolation. disillusionment. when i am not met with the same energy, i lose my interest – she said. treatment.

humanity of being too human. beauty in destruction. putting yourself in danger makes your mechanical functioning stop.

can you? both listen and communicate. we function as comfort to each other. you do need more than zero empathy in order to be a good therapist. between obsessions and compulsions there is only the ID card identity. Every body it is a healthy body.

visit older messages – i will question my past for a trivial performance. how easy is it to delete somebody from your mind? metal scratch on a brick.

it's great, ana! make noise when nick cave starts, no, you don't necessarily need to be interactive but. noise is not different from self-esteem. boredom and

laziness. can you find something behind? the sleepiness of self-satisfaction, the beauty without contractions. unconditional right to see equals unconditional right, as well, not to be seen – freedom. unconditional transparency. the superficial façade that i'm practicing every day. excessive accumulation of frustration equals the capacity of giving more?

the validation of the existence through hyper-availability and transparency – i'm accessible. i'm naked. i'm valuable. exhibitionism or the necessity to appear as a naked body?

resolution! a day of complete honesty. failed! neither confess, nor deny. impossibility of a brutal truth. but. brutality might be more seductive than the imperative of the truth. you will better be silent.

no resolutions that i will accomplish on my own.

energetic vampirism or abnegation? devouring the other one without him feeling it. power abuse, intimacy abuse. one can be the agent of another one's suffering and not be aware of it. what do you do when the other one's body is completely surrendering to you? being able to manipulate the feelings of the other – are we really capable of empathy or it is about satisfying our personal appetites? acceptance or excitement at the intimate stories of the other? kissing the feet – to what extent was this gesture made for the sake of the exercise and to what extent for a genuine need of making it?

what are the limits of the body under pleasure? exfoliating with an audience – is this performance art? art must abramovic be beautiful. marina became a punctuation-exclamation mark.

we are (pre)/ (super) or (in)human. you kiss a foot as if it belonged to you. is this generosity?

sublimate your anxieties into creativity. glory to all the sane people. you can get mad just by looking into the other's eyes. the thoughts from behind thoughts can be seen.

exorcism of fantasies. should you judge someone caught in a free-flow task of questioning himself? he is not a man who plays another...

which is the most bizarre gesture you would make in the front of somebody? the transformation from healthy to infected body. Artaud. we dance with the cows on a poisoned field. if we mooed, could we accomplish the task closer to butoh – what is butoh – all about what is this task all about. violent annoyance of one's own body.



documentary. the dancer is created by the space, rejecting the visualized comprehension of the body – violence is just inside-butoh have to stay unconventional. we are just playing a little innocent nudity. tanz ridicule.but. when you look at a stone just look to that stone and nothing else.

sexual ambiguity. oh no, no, we don't dance for the sake of the joints erosion. bodies under mixture disappear behind the image of the group. alchemy, try to also see the others – it's not only about your story – why do you choose to talk only about you? why do you express only the most accessible features of the other? hard times require furious dancing – there is no grotesque and no ridicule. imaginative sexuality, the body withdrew in the head. being attentive only to what's surrounds you without a ludic spirit, but i love to laugh – suppose that i am serious, will this make the ritual more exquisite? the weakness presented as an act of courage – find a place where silence is not condemned and it is not an absence – you have never seen a blade there is just your imagination about it. self-abandonment might be selfish. might be a demonstration. provoking voyeurism. we are trying to build a more acceptable model. we are back to task number one – how do you get out of template?

| 7

it's only silence here and when it's silence you enjoy the silence.  
dance as if you were to dance for the last time.

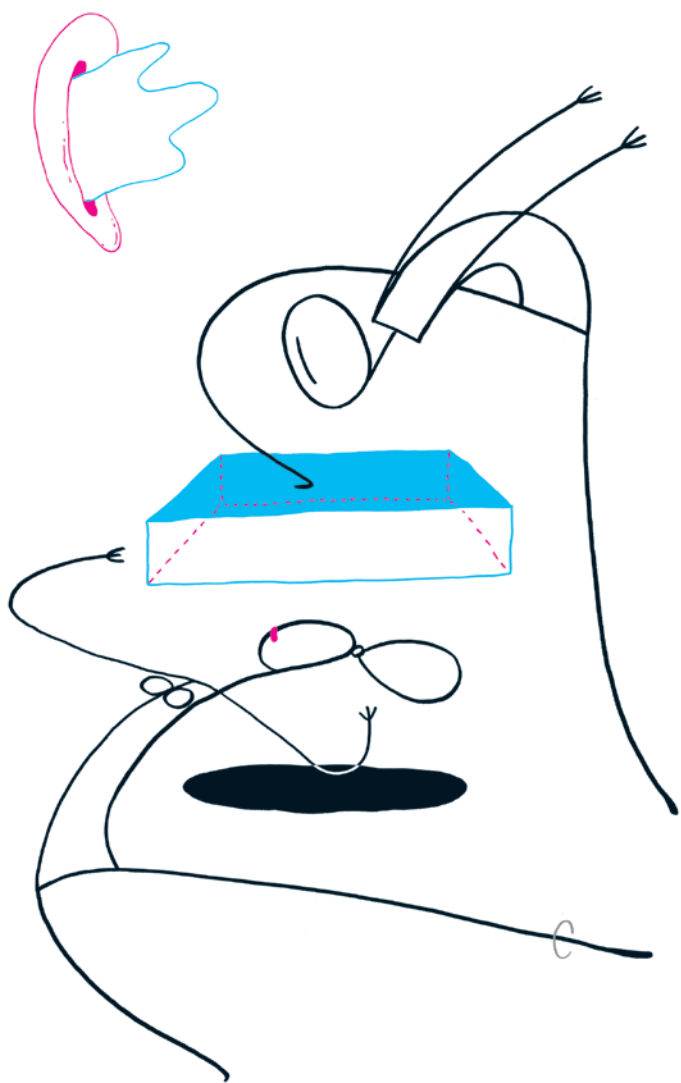
ANA TECAR is one of the participants to the Performative Identities workshop led by Cosmin Manolescu in the frame of ZonaD mobile platform and ICon Arts Academy in Cîsnădioara in July 2015.

# What next? The Institute of the Present

ȘTEFANIA FERCHEDĂU

ELENA VLĂDĂREANU

[Bucharest, July 2015]



The Institute of the Present is an emerging discursive platform for research and analysis of contemporary culture, aimed at generating a new encounter place based on free knowledge and co-ownership of existing resources. It came out for me as a new initiative towards the end of E-Motional, maybe as a result of my five years in this programme.

The Institute will function as online resource platform and potentially as physical space as well, gathering, developing, discussing archives from performative and visuals arts of the last 25 years in Romania, while also creating new contents on ongoing artistic phenomena.

The beta version of the Institute of the Present was developed in July as part of the ZonaD dancelab for interactive research/MAP – sharing of processes, as a real time documentation of participating artists' projects, undertaken in collaboration with writer and journalist Elena Vlădăreanu. Interviews, texts, visual and audio material were then open for anybody interested to follow us on the dedicated blog at [artsf.ro/institute-of-the-present](http://artsf.ro/institute-of-the-present). Next are some fragments from the July archive.

ȘTEFANIA FERCHEDĂU, professional identity currently in reshaping,  
[www.artsf.ro](http://www.artsf.ro).

# Gemma Riggs & Laura Murphy at Carol Factory

ELENA VLĂDĂREANU

Last Friday, on July 17, when I got to the Carol Factory together with the artists from ZonaD dancelab in the frame of E-Motional, I saw Gemma Riggs and Laura Murphy changing looks among them, which implied 'this is the place where we would like to work'. Gemma ([www.gemmariggs.co.uk](http://www.gemmariggs.co.uk)) is a visual artist, Laura ([www.lauramurphy.ie](http://www.lauramurphy.ie)) is a dancer and choreographer, and, since 2012, from the first edition of E-Motional, when they worked together in Riga, they continued to meet in different artistic projects. The Carol Factory project was launched in 2014 by Zeppelin and Eurodite and it aims at recuperating and reconvertng the industrial spaces from the site of the current Hesper factory, dating from 1887, in a space for cultural events and concerts. ([www.halelecarol.ro](http://www.halelecarol.ro)).

So we have a dead industrial space, beautiful walls, the proximity of present industrial spaces, where work is ongoing and limits are to be respected, light filtered by the trees and a hot day reaching 30°C, giant pipes and their sounds, several art installations created by artists and designers from Romania, Netherlands and Norway, a choreographer and a video artist. I was very curious and I was happy that Gemma and Laura accepted me to join them. After almost an hour and a half during which Laura danced with the giant yellow pipes and Gemma filmed her, we had a 10 minute talk.

q You started to work together three years ago, in Riga, as part of the first E-motional edition. How was your first experience together? You are coming from different disciplines: Gemma from visual arts, and Laura from dance.

GEMMA

I think it started with us seeing a row of chairs. Both of us had a very strong reaction, we seemed to be sparked by the same idea, and were manifesting it in a frame and in movement. We thought about how the body could move within this form and how that could be framed on camera. For me it continued throughout our collaboration, that response to these forms, to the combination of all possibilities of the body and its framing by the video camera.

LAURA

I think there are also parallel interests in relation to concepts. We began by talking quite a lot and when we see things in the city, like in Riga or here in Bucharest, were' drawn to quite similar things in relation to the lines of the architecture that might work with framing, and lines in the body and in the movement. At the moment we are both interested in the colors of the city, and in rhythms. These parallels are what we are interested in and trying to find them in our own disciplines and as well as together, in order to create a tight collaboration between the visual art and the movement.

q What do you like here, at the Carol Factory?

LAURA

I like the architecture of the spaces, such as the lines and the squares of all the windows and the circular shapes; I like the colors, the yellow is really strong and the reds; the wooden formations created by other artists (Laura is referring to the wooden installations created as part of the exhibition Design post-industry) – I quite like their textures, I also like the sounds that the factory is making, they are quite natural sounds; actually they are unnatural, but they are natural to this space – since they are being made by machines.

GEMMA

I suppose that, with a place like this, these shapes and forms have quite bizarre, strange scales; the issue is how the camera captures those scales, and how the body fits within these strange scales; it creates something quite abstract or it shifts your perception of it slightly, and of how the mechanical purpose relates to the humanity. There is always a sense of history, and of vastness – the space is big.

LAURA

I guess that, at the moment, there is this juxtaposition between us working here in quite a playful manner and the people who are working here on a daily basis. I think there's something in that that's quite real, quite like fiction and non-fiction in the same time almost.

q How do you get to a common point of inspiration for a place?

LAURA

We hadn't really had any problems with that so far, in the sense that we are both drawn to quite similar spaces. So I guess that's quite lucky and it's also

one of the reasons why we are still collaborating after so many years, that we're both drawn to the same idea of shape and scale and the body.

GEMMA

Talking, and walking, and making connections. So we're always like: oh, look at that, how does that relate to something we spoke about previously, do they relate actually? And I suppose that what we've been trying to do is to work through those, write them down, try to examine what they are after that initial response.

LAURA

And sometimes things work really well for the body, but maybe not so well on camera and then vice-versa. Some things make beautiful stills, but the movement potential within whatever frame is quite limited. So, it's also about finding those compromises and the best way to represent the image and the body: together or separately.

q Do you always have a good collaboration with each other?

Laura

I think sometimes it's the miscommunication, which we've talked about this week probably for the first time. It happens that we don't fully understand each other's words and vocabulary as we are not familiar with the other discipline, and we are really trying to clarify it. For example I know the dance vocabulary quite well and I'm trying to explain it. It happens with Gemma as well, with some words from visual arts I wouldn't understand, or we might have different meanings for the same thing. So I suppose that's what I would say about our miscommunication.

GEMMA

Yes. Generally the dialogue is pretty strong. And the only other thing might be the structure of the working process of dance and how we need to identify what we both need in order to work as individuals and then together. But with each project we've done we just worked through all these problems.

LAURA

Yes, and we've been trying to feed each other's individuality as well as the collaboration. And I think we're still in the early days, in the sense of how many projects we've done together.

q And now, for this project, you are in the middle of the research. Do you have a view of the final presentation?

LAURA

Gemma and I have a hundred thousand million ideas all the time, so we are constantly trying to refine and refine. So I would say that at the moment it's all very open.

GEMMA

We are here for a limited period of time, and time feels quite precious. It feels like a privilege to have access to Bucharest and its hidden spaces and limits, so we identified, I think, two ideas on which we will experiment with, two lines of enquiry. We're also interested in getting a taste of the different elements captured, so that we can reflect on them for the presentation, but also for when we go home.



# ZonaD dancelab presentations

ELENA VLĂDĂREANU

While I was watching the two final presentations of the ZonaD dancelab, on July 29, I kept in mind the “rethinking dance” motto of the E-motional project’s current edition.

Born in 2000 was the theme of the research and choreographic creation laboratory on which Arcadie Rusu and Elisabeta Mihai have worked. Elisabeta Mihai is only 12 years old, but already has 6 years’ worth of experience in contemporary dance, this being the third project where she works with Arcadie. While it is their third project together, it is the first one in which Elisabeta is alone on the stage, in a one-woman-show that talks about the vulnerability, but mostly about the force of an age where everything seems possible.

Elisabeta dances, but she also talks about herself, about the pleasures and difficulties of this age, using humor, sarcasm and shallowness, just as an adolescence beginning looks. “Yes, it is the first show in which I perform by myself. I felt... I don’t know... like my heart was beating out of my chest. I was worried I would fail. I feel better when others are on the stage with me. As with the other performances, I knew what I was supposed to do, but before I wasn’t so afraid, because I was together with others”, Elisabeta confessed.

I was curious if the personal elements used in this performance sequence (the piece is now 15 minutes long and is to be further developed) are representative for the 12 years old present generation. Here is what Elisabeta has to say: “The irony that I used in this text is visible in my colleagues too. They are spoiled kids and they only like this new music, and to be on the phone, to ‘talk’ about other colleagues or go to the mall.”

Much closer to what a rethinking of dance would mean was the installation that Gemma Riggs and Laura Murphy presented at the end of this dance lab. Their research tackled several directions, exploring the symmetries and colors of a city which, in fact, is not as grey as we perceive it to be.

One of the first directions in their research was on the relationship between the human body and an industrial space that, although decommissioned, is very

present and full of history: the Carol Factory space, within the active Hesper factory site. It was here that Laura danced among pipes and naked walls, while Gemma filmed and took photos; the result is a symmetric and bright montage of bodily and industrial details. It was the same play of colors and gestural automatisms that the two artists looked for in the movements of workers throughout the city, in parks and on the streets.

They also captured certain gestures and postures in the parks, which they later displaced in some private homes, asking from the participants to recreate them in a set timeframe, while Gemma was filming. The same participants (not professional dancers) had to give most accurate details about how to get to their favorite place in Bucharest. Out of four answers, only one was towards a favorite spot, since the others didn't find any places to love in the city. It was an extremely lively installation, an urban puzzle with sounds and images, sometimes rough, crude, a rethinking of dance in the intimacy of urban spaces.

ELENA VLĂDĂREANU is writer and cultural journalist. She currently collaborates with Cultural Romania Radion station.













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