

IETM MAPPING

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# THE PERFORMING ARTS IN CROATIA

by Nataša Antulov



Željko Zorica Šiš, "12 chairs", 2013, photo: Tomislav Medak

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## The Performing Arts in Croatia

### *IETM Mapping*

by **Nataša Antulov**

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## FOREWORD BY IETM

This mapping provides an overview of the performing arts scene in Croatia: current characteristics, challenges and trends as well as a historical context of Croatian theatre.

The mapping was written in the upheaval of IETM Plenary Meeting in Rijeka, October 2019, where the theme Audience is put in focus. This meeting concludes a cycle of events held by IETM in the last years, where various aspects of “who is included and not” have been discussed and challenged. It is fitting that a whole meeting is dedicated to the audience, who they are and are not, what they desire or detest and what, if anything, gives us permission to analyse the longings, intentions, needs and will of “the audience”.

IETM has been fortunate to work with members and collaborators in Croatia on several occasions. Our first ever event in this country was a Plenary meeting in 1990, held in Zagreb and organised by IETM’s founding Croatian member Eurokaz. The next meeting was a small Satellite meeting in 1999 held in Zadar. In 2012, in collaboration with a consortium of arts organisations, IETM returned to Zagreb with a plenary meeting, addressing the theme “Art and Idea(l)s”. In 2018, together with Rijeka 2020, we organised our Campus, summer school for young professionals, in Fuzine, and now we are back in Croatia, again in cooperation with Rijeka 2020, hosting our Autumn Plenary, in the upheaval of Rijeka 2020 – European Capital of Culture.

We hope this mapping and this meeting will bring the attention of our members to Croatia and other ex-Yugoslavian countries as well as the attention of the Croatian performing arts community towards IETM and the great opportunities IETM membership and European and international collaboration can offer.

Ása Richardsdóttir, IETM Secretary General



Željko Zorica Šiš, “12 chairs”, 2013, photo: Tomislav Medak

## 01.

CROATIA- HISTORICAL  
CONTEXT

Being positioned on the border of the European Union, Croatia is among the countries that bear the burden of existing in the margins. Faced with economic debt, a neglected education system, EU immigration policies, demographic crisis, corruption and downfall of institutions, this country rushes in the arms of tourism and unclear cultural industry policies consumed only by the well-to-do citizens.

Croatia is a country that has been geopolitically formed by the convergence of different political, economic and ethnic elements. Some would say, it is a part of the Balkans, some usually define it as Central Europe, some – as the Mediterranean, and some – as Eastern Europe.

Throughout history, Croatia was mostly politically, culturally and economically influenced by the large players: the Ancient Greeks, the Romans, the Byzantines, the Franks, the Habsburg Monarchy, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Ottomans, and the Venetians). The direct consequence of belonging to different political centres was a long period during which the Croatian lands, today's historical regions, were not united. This diverse cultural influence often led to confusing and contradictory interpretations of identities in this country and its region. Of course, given the complexity, sooner or later nationalism will emerge insisting on the "true identity".

So, after several centuries of political relations with the Central European countries of Austria and Hungary, in 1918 Croatia merged into the Kingdom of Croats, Serbs and Slovenians, also known as the First Yugoslavia. During the Second World War, Croatia faced Axis invasion in April 1941 and most of the territory was under the Nazi state,

## CROATIA



CAPITAL: ZAGREB

CURRENCY: CROATIAN KUNA

POPULATION: 4.076 MILLION

OFFICIAL LANGUAGE: CROATIAN

SIZE:

LAND AREA 56,578 KM<sup>2</sup>,SEA AREA 31,067 KM<sup>2</sup>

ISLANDS 1,246

the Independent State of Croatia (NDH). During its existence, the NDH was governed as a one-party state by the fascist *ustaša* Ante Pavelić. NDH targeted Roma, Serbs and Jews, placing people in concentration camps within the territory controlled by the Independent State of Croatia. The largest camp was Jasenovac and in addition, there were two camps only for children.

At the same time, the National Liberation Movement (Narodnooslobodilački pokret-NOP) was the most effective anti-Nazi resistance movement led by the Yugoslav Revolutionary Communist Party. In relation to its population, Croatia had massive resistance movement and suffered the greatest casualties. The end of WWII resulted in creation of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Croatia became one of the six countries of the federation.

Although Josip Broz Tito and the Communist Party of Yugoslavia used oppression to control different aspects of society, Yugoslavia was often mistaken for Stalin's communist regime. In fact, one of the most important Yugoslav geopolitical gestures is embodied in the fact that Tito refused to turn Yugoslavia into a Russian satellite country (the famous Tito-Stalin split in 1948). Being between capitalism and communism, the East and the West, Yugoslavia created a unique political model that still intrigues many left-wing thinkers.

So, within the framework of Yugoslavia, Croatia continued to develop its own potential and, despite its non-democratic political arrangement, to express its own political goals. After Tito's death, political and economic crisis ensued in the 1980's and the constituent republics of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia split apart following the events of the '90s.

In 1990, the socialists lost power to ethnic separatist parties in the first multi-party elections across the country; except in Serbia and Montenegro, where Serbian nationalist radical Slobodan Milošević won. In Croatia, the communists lost to the conservative, nationalist HDZ (Croatian Democratic Union) led by Franjo Tuđman. In 1991, Slovenia and Croatia declared their independence and secession. Soon, the JNA (Yugoslav National Army) together with Slobodan Milošević started a war of destruction. This war is often described as Europe's deadliest conflict since WWII.

Croatia's sovereignty and western orientation was affirmed by its entry into the European Union in 2013 after a very long negotiation process, and, once again, the country (still not within Schengen) is in the position of being a border, which places it in a unique position of having to deal with immigration policies and guiding regional non-member countries into European union while dealing with the same problems of corruption, racism, fascism and demographic crisis caused by people leaving the country looking for better living conditions.

## 02.

FROM SOCIALIST MODERNIST  
HERITAGE TO LIBERALISM'S  
FAILED PROMISE

As may be expected, Croatian theatre history follows the turns and twists in its national history. Theatre in Croatia goes far back to 11th century when liturgical practices became important part of the culture. However, the 16th century, the period of Renaissance in Mediterranean Croatia (Dalmatia and Republic of Dubrovnik), marked a real theatrical birth through poets and playwrights that were under the influence of the Italian Renaissance. Artists such as Marin Držić who wrote comedies, pastorals and tragic pieces which are still performed on stages across Croatia and the region. But in fact, the period that determined the current Croatian theatre was when Croatia formed part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, especially at the end of 19th and the beginning of 20th century.

The middle class and the aristocracy of Croatia were to a large extent bilingual and had preference for music, theatre and fine arts over literature that came from Austria and Germany. Austrian travelling theatre ensembles were very much present in northern Croatian towns and Austrian/German theatre thus largely influenced the development of the Croatian one, while Split and other Adriatic towns were mostly under Italian influence.

By the end of the 18th century, there was no Croatian theatre and it was mainly German actors playing German texts, there simply were no Croatian actors. In 1840, there were at least four announcements advertising for actors, but in the end, no-one came forward. Instead, they invited a theatre company, the so-called "Flying Dilettante Theatre" ("Leteće diletantsko pozorište") from Novi Sad (Serbia) to Zagreb to play in the native language since Serbian and Croatian languages are almost the same. This company became

the first professional ensemble resident in the theatre. At the end of the 19th century, Viennese architects Helmer and Fellner started building national theatres across Croatia, first in Rijeka, then in Varaždin and Zagreb, which over time became a home for drama, opera, and ballet. Even today, the basis of the Croatian theatre system is modelled on the German theatre with a theatre house with a permanent company. Being aware of this specific circumstances, Branko Gavella, director, theorist and one of the most interesting theatre thinkers in Croatian history, said: "Our actors have become civil servants before they knew what it was meant to be an actor". For this reason, theatre in Croatia has always depended on the institutional legitimation and has not yet developed its full potential in non-institutionalised artwork production even though the art itself was often very exceptional.

The turning point for Croatian theatre came with the figure of Stjepan Miletić in late 19th century who had a big role in shaping Croatian theatre while Branko Gavella was dedicated to the founding of the acting school. He held the position of director of Drama at the Croatian National Theatre in Zagreb where he directed his best performances. In 1950, he reorganised the Zagreb National Academy of Acting into the Academy of Theatre Arts (today ADU), and in 1953 he founded the Zagreb Drama Theatre (today Gavella City Drama Theatre). He directed plays by Miroslav Krleža, a dramatist of great intellectual legacy who, in his early plays, anticipated modernist ideas. Other important names of the 1920s and 1930s, like Josip Kosor, Josip Kulundžić and Kalman Mesarić, also joined the modernist movement and were the first Croatian dramatist who were

also theoreticians analysing stage directing as theatrical inter-discipline developing a method that can be applied in the teaching process. Like all other theatre modernists, they were re-examining the relation between play (text) and the theatrical procedures that were connected to the actor's personality, context, and process.

After Gavella's death, Croatian theatre was mostly under the influence of directors like Božidar Violić, Kosta Spaić, Dino Radojević and Georgij Paro who belonged to the so-called "cartel of directors". Although they were considered to be Gavella's followers in the directing methods it seems that, apart from few early performances by Georgij Paro, not many would agree that they evolved his ideas further. However, as they were principal decision makers in the theatre establishment at the time and did not care to open up possibilities for work to young generations, Croatian institutional theatre came to standstill for decades.

Meanwhile, thanks to the openness of Yugoslavia which enabled a flow of information and ideas on an international level, modernism in visual arts was flourishing in the 1950s and 1960s. Exat 51, Gorgona Group, and later on, *Group of Six Artists* as well as *New Tendencies manifestation* (1961-1973, early performances by Tom Gotovac) showed that Croatian conceptual art and performance art, geometric abstraction, kinetic art, first computer graphics were relevant and in time with avant-garde movements in the Western world. The Music Biennale, founded in 1961, was a meeting point of important representatives of new music.

The first experimental theatre groups and festivals were forming in Zagreb already in the 1960s. Their platform was *IFSK – International Festival of Student Theatre* which, together with similar festivals in Wrocław, Erlangen and Parma, formed a network of avant-garde theatre groups at the time. Zagreb hosted early works of now acclaimed mainstream directors like Klaus Peymann, Andrei Serban, Ellen Stewart, etc. In the 1970s, progressive theatre ideas continued with Young People's Theatre Days in Zagreb and in the early 1980s, in Dubrovnik. This festival was organised by the theatre group *Coccolemo* which together with groups like *Kugla glumište*, *Lero*, *Pozdravi*, *Osamljena srca*, formed a nucleus of non-institutional theatre movement of the 1970s.

Among them, *Coccolemo* and *Kugla glumište* significantly influenced the alternative scene of former Yugoslavia and, during their over ten years of activity, they gained almost cult status. *Coccolemo* began as a high school adventure for Branko Brezovec who directed Brecht's didactic *Lehrstücke* with his classmates. Their first large project "A Day in the Life of Ignac Golob" employing three-meter high puppets relied on the Brechtian method and the aesthetics of Robert Wilson, only few years after his first shows in Europe. Another of their early performances, "Ormitha Macarounada", was one of the fine examples of new dramaturgy which put together different, non-joinable texts in a complex structure playing with a multiplication of meaning.

On the other hand, *Kugla glumište* focused on open-air performances which played with elements of popular culture and camp aesthetics. Although there were conflicting aesthetics and artistic competencies, both groups collaborated not only in the organisation of *Young People's Theatre Days*, but also in joint projects like "Summer Afternoon or what Happened to Vlasta Hršak", one of the highlights of the alternative theatre of the 1970s. The piece was a site-specific performance commissioned by Young People's Theatre Days of Dubrovnik which was a kind of a "festival-in-the-festival", a platform for avant-garde theatre within the official mainstream Dubrovnik Summer Festival.



*Coccolemo*: "A Day in the Life of Ignac Golob", 1977

The project was joined by the Dubrovnik-based group *Lero*, the Dutch group *Dog Troep* and the Italian magician *Bustric*. At the end, *Dunja Koprolčec*, a member of *Kugla glumište*, received the prestigious *Orlando Award*, which was seen as a provocation, although the award was voted on by all respected critics themselves.

Some years later, in 1987, a member of *Coccolemo*, *Gordana Vnuk*, started *Eurokaz festival*. *Eurokaz* was one of the first festivals in Europe to create a platform for the new generation of artists who by then were radically changing the European theatre landscape, by unleashing the theatre from the ideology of logocentric systems towards self-referentiality, opening it to new

media, high technology and science, visual arts, movement and dance, all of which will become the dominant aesthetics of the coming decades. Companies like *Soc. Raffaello Sanzio*, *Rosas*, *La Fura dels Baus*, *Needcompany*, *Ilotopie*, *Royal de luxe*, *Jan Fabre*, *G. B. Corsetti*, *Station House Opera* and many others performed at the first festival editions with their early works. *Gordana Vnuk* and her collaborator *Branko Brezovec* are also among the founding members of *IETM* and they participated at the now legendary meetings in Polverigi in 1980 and 1981 where they, as the only representatives of the so called Eastern Europe, created together with their Western colleagues, the very idea and the mission of *IETM*.

The 1990s brought war, independence and a new production landscape to the region. Also, in the 1990s, the performance group *Montažstroj* became the face of contemporary independent scene in Croatia with their production “Everybody goes to disco, from Moscow to San Francisco” and music video “Croatia in Flame” that made them famous in the context of pop culture. Also, new alternative groups started to emerge from SKAZ, an amateur theatre festival organised in 1996 and 1997, which helped consolidate the alternative theatre scene.

There were groups like *Le Cheval* that was formed by one of today’s most provocative theatre directors, Oliver Frlić, and Theatre des Femmes that joined together dramaturge Jelena Kovačić and director Anica Tomić who are today recognised as authors that address socially engaged topics. Schmrz teatar with director Mario Kovač left an important footprint in the history of amateur theatre of the 1990s as well.

Meanwhile, the emergence of the author duo Nataša Rajković and Bobo Jelčić was starting to get attention both from professionals and the audience. It began with “Observations” in Varaždin and continued with “Slowing down” in Theatre &TD that revealed something significantly different from other current theatre productions in Croatia. With “Uncertain Story” (1999), it was obvious that Jelčić and Rajković were bringing something new into the game.



Kugla glumište, “White room”, photo: Goran Pavelić Pipo, 1979

In 2000, a newly founded collective *BADco* (Beizimeno autorsko društvo) presented a performance, “Man-Chair”, that was based on a performance piece by Damir Bartol Indoš. From that point, BADco grew into a strong collective dedicated to processes, research, develop tools both for theory and practice, gaining international recognition and leaving significant heritage to generations that follow.

The 2000s marked a considerable comeback for Branko Brezovec who, after having directed abroad, mainly in Macedonia, staged spectacular shows performed by the ZeKaeM ensemble of actors: “Grand Master of all Villains” written by Miroslav Krleža and “Kamov, Necrography/ Moulin Rouge” written by Slobodan Šnajder that was both a political and an esthetical provocation.

If we can see BADco. as an offspring of conceptual art of the 1970s and 1980s that fights its battles in Godardian sense, politically, through formal procedures, then we can label Oliver Frlić as a member of the so-called *directors theatre* (like Ljubiša Ristić, Branko Brezovec). Coming from the alternative art scene of the 1990s and as a Bosnian refugee with strong and intimate response to political narratives that were building up in the cultural and political framework of Croatia, Frlić made an important imprint in public understanding of political theatre and the modes of representation that dealt with taboos. His works are sometimes painful, sometimes censored or even ignored.

Frlić became a brand of political bravery and exploited his own symbolic figure making us learn that not only does revolution eat its children but the children can eat their own revolution as well.

An interesting phase in his public agency was when he became a director of Croatian National Theatre Ivana pl. Zajca in Rijeka, Croatia.



BADco, Correcting Rhythm, photo: Marko Ercegović, 2017

By trying to redefine the idea of perception of what National theatre is and whom it belongs to, Frljić made several symbolic gestures that really made the conservatives angry. On the other hand, he stayed there for only one year after which the theatre became less politically engaged and shifted towards more commercial projects like musicals, children and youth theatre, drama repertoire and inclusive practices like The Fifth Ensemble, an ensemble which gathers differently abled performing artist.

As a title of BADco.'s performance says, "Institutions need to be constructed", yet to be found out is how they are to be construct, not just how deconstruct but how to deal with the actual market and not only with symbols. The question of construction of the new institution hit hard after the recession in 2008. The global economic crisis that spread from the USA to other countries of developed capitalism posed huge social costs that resulted in austerity measures imposed, among others, on the cultural sector. While the large, state-funded, institutions manage to stay stable even though their funding was cut, the independent scene felt drastic cuts that permanently changed the way performance artists deal with their work.



Oliver Frljić: Bakhe, photo: Dražen Sokčević, 2016

This is a situation in which performers like Selma Banich and Siniša Labrović made some of their most important works by trying to figure out what are the new bonds that make the (artistic) community come together. With people losing their jobs, their homes, and their trust in the community they live in, this work made a significant impact on how we construct new forms of collaboration.

In the period of 2017- 2018, reflecting on the context of Rijeka 2020 European Capital of Culture, Selma Banich and the dramaturge Nina Gojić, in a production of Prostor Plus, made a project called "How do female artists live?", an extensive analysis of the state of women's work in the cultural field based on a reliable study that covered almost all segments of public and private life of the respondents. This study showed just how complex the position of the female artist was but also empowered them to fight for their artistic positions.



Selma Banich: How do female artist live? 2019, photo: Renato Buić, 2018

One of the most imaginative authors in Croatia of the 2000s has been Matija Ferlin, a choreographer, dancer, and director who plays with non-verbal procedures in theatre and performances like "Sad Sam Lucky" and "The most together we've ever been" brought fresh aesthetics to Croatian dance scene.

An author that is also worth mentioning is Saša Božić, a dramaturge and a director known for a piece he did with Serbian artist Dalija Aćin Handle with great care. This piece was rewarded with the *Jardin d' Europe*, at *Impulstanz festival* while his latest work, trilogy *On Entertainment* raised interesting questions regarding relations between act of performing and the one of entertaining. Together with visual artist Zdravka Ivandžija Kirgin, he founded the *De facto* theatre organisation.

Božić frequently collaborates with choreographer Petra Hrašćanec who is, among other things, a founder (together with Sanja Petrovski) of a very successful contemporary dance festival *Monoplay* in Zadar. One of Božić's and Hrašćanec's most noticeable works was a piece "Love will tear us apart".

Most of the productions are made in the capital city of Zagreb as Zagreb has over 20 theatres, including Croatian National Theatre (CNT). There are four more National theatres: Split, Rijeka, Osijek and Varaždin. National and city theatres have permanently employed ensembles and staff, have their own venue for rehearsals and performances, fixed budgets for employee salaries, and programme funding due to public funding by the Ministry of Culture, Cities and Counties. Additional funding is obtained from other budgetary and non-budgetary sources. However, this has led to a certain stagnation in the organisation and production innovation because the production model in Croatian public theatres has not changed much over the decades. Meanwhile, the production method on the so-called independent scene (arts organisations and associations) is largely aligned with contemporary European

production trends, which is the result of intensive additional education of producers in this scene and their need to survive in a competitive environment with limited financial resources.



Matija Ferlin: Staging a Play: *Tartuffe*, photo: Jelena Janković, 2018

## 03.

CROSSPATHS OF  
KNOWLEDGE

As noted in the previous chapter, the economic crisis and austerity measures affected art research and production to a great extent. Of course, with the rationalisation of finances came the important question: what does society need? Which really means: where do we invest our money? Along the way came the dilemma “why do we need humanities in a STEM world?” The educational market opted for more “practical majors” which are believed to better equip students for the job market. So, many believe that students who choose humanities should either engage in cultural industries and make themselves useful/ profitable or treat their work as a hobby. Croatia is no exception in this.

Therefore, it is no surprise that it was the NGO sector, rather than the official educational institutions, that provided substantial resources for non-formal education in contemporary arts and contemporary theory. Its publications, magazines and texts dedicated to performing arts, along with the activities surrounding them were a large part of the non-formal education together with workshops and panels organised by different NGO's. One of them was *Frakcija*, a performing arts magazine that was established in 1996 by a group of dramaturgs, theatre theoreticians, critics and artists based in Zagreb. *Frakcija* provided theoretical and critical support for projects that were of marginal interest to the (not only Croatian) mainstream media, theatre criticism and official drama and theatre studies. This magazine became continuously present on the international and interdisciplinary crossroads of contemporary theatre and performance theory and artistic practice. Along with *Zarez*, that has ceased publication, and *Kazalište or Kretanja* that are still being published, *Frakcija* was a magazine that provided reflections on national and

international practices and engaged different authors (dramaturges, comparative literature students, directors and so on) in these activities. In addition to the magazines, there are also web portals such as [Teatar.hr](http://Teatar.hr), [Drame.hr](http://Drame.hr), [Plesnascena.hr](http://Plesnascena.hr) and [Theater.hr](http://Theater.hr).

Unfortunately, in the last ten years, there has been a drastic decrease in performing art publications in Croatia.

Unlike with other humanities, there is still considerable interest in dance and theatre study programmes. So now, even though there are more and more study programmes related to performing arts, the problem is context in which these young artists will work stays open. With new generations emerging from these art schools, this is the time to imagine new platforms or reassert the old ones.

- **ACADEMY OF DRAMATIC ARTS**

The *Academy of Dramatic Art* is located in Zagreb and has over 350 students and a teaching staff of around 100 employed and another 100 visiting lecturers. Up until the mid-20th century, its primary role was vocational training of theatre actors. Later, departments for film and television were added. In November 1950, the school was legally recognised as a higher educational institution, mainly through the efforts of Branko Gavella, Drago Ivanišević and Ranko Marinković prompting a rename to “academy”. In 1979, it officially became part of the University of Zagreb. Academy of dramatic arts provides education for all types of professions related to dance, theatre, radio, television and film production, including actors, dramaturges, directors, producers, dancers, cinematographers and editors.

- **THEATRE ARTS, ACADEMY OF ARTS AND CULTURE OSIJEK**

The *Academy of Arts and Culture* in Osijek is an art school affiliated in 2005 with the University of Osijek. Unlike other academies, this one specialises in puppetry arts. From 2019 Theatre Arts programme started MA programme in non-verbal theatre.

- **THEATRE ARTS, ARTS ACADEMY OF UNIVERSITY SPLIT**

Founded in 2005, the *Theatre Arts Department* (with the Acting study programme), is the youngest section of the Arts Academy in Split. It grew out of the need for young actors and actresses in the theatres along the Adriatic coast. Respecting the tradition of the Croatian practice in educating actors, the programme follows classical and contemporary pedagogical practices and places the choice of programme content in the context of belonging to the Mediterranean cultural milieu.

- **ACTING AND MEDIA, ACADEMY OF APPLIED ARTS RIJEKA**

“Acting and media” is an MA and BA interdisciplinary arts programme for research and development that is open to practitioners working in the field of performing arts. Creating a programme in the context of Croatian academic heritage that was mostly oriented towards acting as a theatrical performance, the aim is to broaden educational training for actors and expand their concept of theatre as a medium.

## 04.

## THE INDEPENDENT THEATRE

The first grassroots organisation established in early Croatian civil society was ARK, the Anti-War Campaign. ARK was established in Zagreb in 1991, the first year of the war, and connected a broad range of peace activists throughout Yugoslavia. Various groups – ethnic and sexual minorities, anti-war and human-rights activists, journalists and public intellectuals, artists and cultural workers and dissenters in general found themselves in opposition to the nationalist politics. Many of the groups active today in Croatia were involved in or inspired by the activities of ARK, like environmental justice advocate Zelena akcija (Green Action), the news outlet H-alter, feminist knowledge institution Centar za ženske studije, Amnesty International Croatia, Multimedia Institute, Attack!, the collective behind Medika, and Documenta: Centre of Peace Studies<sup>1</sup>.

The Open Society Foundation Croatia was founded in 1993 and it largely contributed the development of organisations like CDU – Centre for drama art, founded in 1996, that brought together theatre professionals who were committed to affirming and improving the drama and dance arts in Croatia. Art Workshop Lazareti from Dubrovnik was established in 1988 and was also supported through the Open Society Foundation in the '90s. Drugo more from Rijeka started their activities in 1999 and are today one of the strongest organisations in field of interdisciplinary art in the region.

The contemporary dance community initiated a working platform Experimental Free Scene in 2001. As a self-organised initiative in which several coordinators implemented projects related to dance education and connecting the Croatian dance scene with the region and Europe, it was conceived as a reaction to the striking absence of any systematisation of education in an art and dance performance.



Exhibition Frakcija 1996 – 2010, photo: Ivan Flipčević, 2010

In the 2000s, circumstances determined by the lack of funding, limited infrastructure and organisational instability led to amateurisation of the cultural and artistic production since most of the cultural workers needed to find a steady job with a steady income. At the same time, the disadvantages of institutions cannot be a reason to dismantle public institutions or to privatise the cultural system. This meant that the dynamics of non-institutional vs. institutional changed because of the possible scenario in which privatisation of public institutions could lead to disappearance of continues art production in general. This produced a model of civil partnership resulting in the founding of *POGON - Zagreb Centre for Independent Culture and Youth*. The institutional model here is based on the principles of sharing resources and improvement of conditions of production for the weakest participants in the cultural system. However, POGON addresses particular needs of Zagreb's independent cultural scene for production and presentation spaces. Similar model is being implemented at the Youth Centre Split, as well as at Molekula in Rijeka, or Rojč in Pula.

In the context of dance, it is important to emphasise a project *Croatian Dance Network*. This project demonstrated the fact that non-institutional dance production, due to the lack of structure that ensured performance beyond premiere performances and guest appearances at smaller specialised dance festivals, is difficult to reach for wide-ranging publications. The Croatian Dance Network wants to secure the location of dance performances on the large stages of theatres and festivals with the reciprocal enrichment of their repertoire with innovative content.



Reconstruction of the Jedinstvo building by architects Dinko Peračić and Miranda Veljačić

1 | Eckenhaussen, Sepp: *Scenes of Independence: Cultural Ruptures in Zagreb (1991-2019)*, *Deep Pockets, Institute of Network Cultures*, 2019

- **POGON**

The main function of Pogon is to provide the use of its facilities for cultural and youth programmes of the Zagreb based organisations free of charge. Any NGO, art association and informal group can use Pogon's resources for the implementation of programmes in the field of contemporary art and culture, as well as for various activities aimed at young people.

- **Eurokaz**

In 2013, *Eurokaz* had its last festival edition. After 27 years of engaging in festival activities, its founders decided to contribute to the de-festivalisation of the cultural space and reflect on the more direct influence on Croatian theatrical practice. Given that purpose, it has been reorganised into a producing house for performing arts open to international collaboration and promotion of the young generation of Croatian theatre directors.

- **THEATRE &TD**

The *Theatre &TD* is located in the Student Centre complex in Zagreb and, until recently, operated within the programme concept of Culture of Change under the direction of Nataša Rajković. Theatre &TD puts its focus on exploring different forms of the performing arts, exploring spatial possibilities and opening doors to young, non-established authors and students. Theatre & TD has become a multifunctional programme space open to theatre, concerts, festivals, exhibitions and various interdisciplinary events and experiments. Programme Culture of Change relied on the poetics of & TD from its earliest days in the 1960s, the poetics of the avant-garde, experimenting, pushing boundaries and the freedom of creativity. In 2018, Student Centre management removed our Nataša Rajković from her position, at the same time appointing the person who had no experience in managing cultural institutions or proposed

programme for the future of the SC Cultural Department. Even though this shift in management provoked negative reactions from many cultural workers in Croatia, Student Centre management stays firm in its decision.

- **DOM MLADIH SPLIT**

The space of the *Youth Centre*, owned by the City of Split and managed by the Multimedia Cultural Centre, is already used by a large number of associations and institutions. This type of open institution changes the existing professional practices towards new forms of work and enables the development of partnership and cooperation with civil society and establishes a dialogue between the public, civil and business sectors.

- **MEDITERRANEAN DANCE CENTRE**

The *Mediterranean Dance Centre* (MPC) is a place for conception and implementation of ideas, artistic projects and various educational programmes. It is based on the site of the former Svetvincenat Cultural Centre and is conceived as a type of partnership between the local government (the Municipality of Svetvincenat) providing the infrastructure and the non-profit social segment. Zagreb dance centre, as an arts organisation, provides the programming content. MPC uses education, presentation and creation as the basic terms through which it encompasses its activities.

- **DRUGO MORE**

Working since 1999 as a non-profit organisation in the field of culture, Drugo more identifies and explores topics of social relevance and general interest to the community. By working locally, regionally, internationally and interdisciplinary, the company connects an artistic programme with discourses in science and cultural theory, driven by the belief that art is an important cognitive tool.

- **ARL LAZARETI**

*Lazarette Platform* is a collaborative and advocacy platform in Dubrovnik. Several associations are currently located in Lazareti - Lazareti Art Workshop, the Association for Promoting Media Culture Luža, Desa Dubrovnik, Dance Studio Lazareti and Teatro Lero. The collaborative platform aims to influence dominant local policies (culture, public spaces, civil society), to empower organisations, to further structure the space in which they operate and to declare their objectives clearly, being the only social and cultural centre in Dubrovnik, created from the bottom up, by joining members to create together an open, accessible, active public space for living culture.

- **DOMINO**

*Domino* is a non-governmental, non-profit organisation based in Zagreb, Croatia, with the mission to question the traditional and to transform the oppressive norms in societies in transition to democracy through culture, media, public policies, education and collaboration with local and international organisations.

- **TEATAR EXIT**

*EXIT Theatre* is an independent theatre founded in 1994 aimed at promoting their cultural activities in Zagreb, Croatia and abroad. It is one of the most recognisable theatre venues in the country.

## 05.

## KEEP DANCE AUTONOMOUS

Before WWII, any form of dance other than ballet were not supported by state structures, so any initiatives for establishment of modern and contemporary dance were depending on the interest and capabilities dance practitioners brought from outside, school or just traveling.

By the end of the 1940s, Ana Maletić, a famous Croatian dance pedagogue, struggled to grow her private School of Dance Art into a national one. Finally, at the session of the City Council in 1954, the National Committee of the City of Zagreb decided to establish a School for Rhythm and Dance in Zagreb.

At the Second Biennale of Music in Zagreb (1963), dancer and choreographer Ann (later Anna) Halprin presented three performances with her dance group Dancer's Workshop. The play "The Five Legged Stool" astonished the audience and the critics so much that this performance is considered as having introduced postmodern dance to the Croatian dance context.

In the 1960s, professional dance ensembles finally came on the scene again. Ana Maletić and her daughter, Vera Maletić, set up the Contemporary Dance Studio as a kind of upgrade and addition of the institutional dance school curriculum, while Milana Broš, founder of the Chamber Free Dance Ensemble (KASP) is more inclined to experiment. A little later (1970), Lela Gluhak Buneta started the Zagreb Dance Ensemble (ZPA).

In 1982 Mirna Žagar, with the foundation of MAPAZ (Moving Academy for Performing Arts Zagreb), started the Dance Week Festival and opened up new perspectives for involvement of young artists in international projects and for education in prominent dance schools.



Fourhanded, Feral, photo: Marko Gutić Mižimakov, 2019

During the coming decades contemporary dance scene was marked by artist like Ivana Müller, Andrea Božić, Maša Kolar, Sandra Banić, Selma Banich, Mila Čuljak, Aleksandra Janeva, Irma Omerzo, Marija Ščekić, Nikolina Pristaš, Pravdan Devlahović and so on.

As previously mentioned many of these artists were engaged with the EKS scene, in the course of work that had urban guerrillas, disassembled into several spaces where they trained and operated, and within the timeframes, worked in a municipal cultural and artistic society of a non-existent dance center.

In 2007, Ana Maletić's School of Contemporary Dance was the only institution in the field of dance. It was founded in 1954 and based on the European tradition of modern dance. In 2013 dance education gained a university level with the launch of the Dance Department at the Academy of Dramatic Arts in Zagreb. Even though this kind of institutional legitimisation of dance was supposed to be a germ of the institutional and non-institutional development of the field, there is still low public support, lack of social security mechanisms, uncertain regulation of the status of freelance artists, all of these are only a part of the discouraging image of dance art that, despite all its problems, manages to keep its work socially and artistically relevant.

The Zagreb Dance Centre is the only venue in Croatia designed and meant exclusively for contemporary dance. Dance pieces are created and performed. It hosts many workshops and residencies by Croatian and foreign choreographers. In 2016 the Mayor of Zagreb made a questionable decision and allocated the premises to the Zagreb Youth Theatre. The annexation of Zagreb Dance Centre by the Zagreb Youth Theatre meant the loss of autonomy for contemporary dance. As a reaction to the Mayor's controversial decision, [the Croatian Dance Artists Association](#) recapitulated for the last ten years in dance through a research and publicity project called "Keep Dance Autonomous 007 – 017".

According to its [official site](#), the project looks at "contemporary art of the past decade through the prism of history from below, from one side, and a comparative analysis of the situation and system conditions for working with other sites." The editorial and authoring team of the project consists of Selma Banich and Iva Nerina Sibila who wrote the introductory text and edited the timelines, Sandra Banic Naumovski, who provided the analysis of the subject in the dance community, and Ana Kreitmeyer as project coordinator. This project included workshops, plenums and different kind of events that were aiming to unite dance community.



Keep Dance Autonomous, photo: Dragan Matić, 2017

“Keep Dance Autonomous” builds on the research conducted by the Croatian Dance Artist Association in 2008, providing an in-depth insight into the dance scene, as well as by developing of an advocacy brochure which the dance community could refer to in the political struggle for better conditions for its art. The comparison of the results of these two projects testifies to the continuous and systematic neglect of contemporary dance in Croatia by the state and the key cultural institutions. The increase in the number of dance artists, arts organisations and dance programs over the last ten years has been accompanied by a stagnation of total public support for dance.

This are conditions in which dance artists are trying to find the way to keep presenting their work and maintain a critical distance towards their production context. In 2019 five renowned Croatian dance artists, Ana Kreitmeyer, Silvia Marchig, Sonja Pregrad, Iva Nerina Sibila, and Zrinka Šimičić Mihanović, in collaboration with the Museum of Contemporary Art in Zagreb, started the Antisezona 19 project. It is a new format of premiere and reprise performances, workshops, guest appearances, talks and accompanying programmes in which the

audience has the opportunity to meet artists in new and informal ways as a parainstitution that still stays independent and non-hierarchical.

Meanwhile, ZPC started a project *Koreospektar* that promotes young authors of the dance field. To name some: Nikolina Medak, Filipa Bavčević, Ida Jolić, Main Lemić, Šimun Stankov, Branimir Štivić, Eni Vesović, Ariana Prpić, Anna Javoran, Ema Kani, Una Štalcar-Furač, Ema Crnić, Marta Habulin, Eva Kocić.

Interdisciplinary artist such as Ivana Rončević and *Nina Kurtela* are gaining international attention for their work as they introduce a fresh approach in contemporary dance.

So, even though production conditions are not even close to the ones that are required by the existing contemporary dance scene it seems that we are now witnessing a new type of self-organisation that can maybe spill over to the rest of the performance art practices in Croatia. There will definitely be some rethinking of the previously used strategies and a new wave of dancers that have just finished their education in contemporary dance that will most probably renegotiate their future work conditions.

### **Dance companies, art organisations, dance festivals:**

- **BADCO.**

*BADco.* is a collaborative performance art collective based in Zagreb, Croatia. The artistic core are Ivana Ivković, Ana Kreitmeyer, Tomislav Medak, Goran Sergej Pristaš, Nikolina Pristaš and Zrinka Užbinec. As a combination of three choreographers/dancers, two dramaturges and one philosopher, plus the company’s production manager, since its beginning (2000), *BADco.* focuses on research of the protocols of performing, presenting and observing by structuring its projects around diverse formal and perceptual relations and contexts.

- **ČETVERORUKA**

*Četveroruka* is an artistic organisation aimed at opening new fields of theatrical communication. Established in 2013, by Marina Petković Liker and Sonja Pregrad, it focuses on the production of theatre and dance pieces, as well as on connecting the performative with theoretical examination of new theatre practices.

- **STUDIO ZA SUVREMENI PLES/ Studio for contemporary dance**  
Contemporary Dance Studio was founded in 1962 in Zagreb by artistic directors Ana and Vera Maletić. It was the first contemporary dance company in Croatia and the region. Over its more than fifty years of continuous activity on the Croatian and international scene, the Studio has produced a considerable number of dance projects and formed generations and generations of exceptional dance performers, teachers and choreographers. Studio has also won many prizes with some of the most prominent being awarded by the Croatian Actors' Association and the 2012 UPUH professional award making fifty years of its existence.
- **UMJETNIČKA ORGANIZACIJA 21:21/ Artistic organisation 21:21**  
After years of collaboration on numerous artistic projects, Petra Hraščanec and Ksenija Zec founded in 2012 the *Artistic Organisation 21:21*. The collaboration between these two artists is based on joint research and creation of performative technologies challenging the line between theatre, dance and performance.
- **ZAGREBAČKI PLESNI ANSAMBL / Zagreb Dance Company**  
A renowned contemporary dance company, *Zagreb Dance Company* was founded in 1970 by Lela Gluhak Buneta. Since then, Zagreb Dance Company has educated a number of dancers and dance experts now working both in Croatia and abroad.
- **KREATIVNI LABORATORIJ SUVREMENOG KAZALIŠTA/ Creative laboratory of contemporary theatre**  
*Creative Laboratory of Contemporary Theatre KRILA* is a new organisation initiated by theatre and performing artists Ivana Peranić and Jorge Correa Bethencourt in 2011 in Rijeka, Croatia. Their vision is to create an explorative environment, creative space and collaborative dynamics in the field of contemporary theatre in Rijeka and Croatia, as well as to develop the city and the region as a strong and vibrant centre of new tendencies in theatre and performing arts.
- **TRAFIK / Transition – fiction theatre**  
*Transition-fiction theatre* is one of the first independent theatre production houses in Croatia, created in 1998 in Rijeka by dancer and choreographer Žak Valenta. The human body is at the centre of their work, explored through various artistic forms: theatre, literature, music, art, film, interdisciplinary projects, etc. TRAFIK moves the boundaries between physical theatre, contemporary dance, mime, visual theatre, and site-specific pieces.
- **SODABERG**  
*Sodaberg Choreographic Laboratory* is a working, developmental and production platform for works in the field of contemporary dance, choreography and extended choreographic practices. The organisation's artistic director is the choreographer Marjana Krajač.
- **KABINET**  
Founded in 2008 in Rijeka by Ivana Kalc, an independent dance artist. Kabinet is active in the field of performing arts exploring the possibilities of interdisciplinary collaboration with the visual arts and new media. In addition to the author's artistic productions, the organisation is active in the field of education and the educational programme "The Cabinet of Contemporary Dance" introduces its participants to the techniques and methods of modern dance, and facilitate them in using their dance techniques and creating their own author's choreographic material.
- **MARMOT**  
*MARMOT, Small Author Workshop of Relationship Objective and Body*, is an art organisation founded in 2001 in Zagreb under the artistic direction of Irma Omerzo. MARMOT is engaged in the production of dance performances, films, artistic actions, as well as in dance research and educational dance programmes. MARMOT operates both on the Croatian and international dance scene, where it represents and promotes independent Croatian performing arts.
- **MULTIMEDIJALNA KOLIBA**  
*Multimedia hut* is an arts organisation which gathers artists from various fields such as contemporary dance and somatics, theatre, sound design and radiophony, visual arts, theatre, and literature – with the aim of creating common projects and inciting intermedia and interdisciplinary collaborations.



Study for emergency Artist, Clément Layes, photo: Tomislav Sporiš

- **IMRC**

The *Integrated Collective for Movement Research* (IMRC) was founded in 2012 at the Zagreb Dance Centre. IMRC promotes the idea that dance and movement are not conditioned by a certain physical ability, but rather that physical expression, the experience of moving together in dance, as well as exploration of performative potentials of movement and dance, belong to everybody.

- **DIVERT**

DIVERT Dance Collective is a dance and educational project that brings together dancers with and without physical disabilities, in a joint exploration of dance and physical and intellectual NE-restraints. The project is unique in Croatia as, from the very beginning, it has operated at a high artistic and production level and an attained level of education. It was founded in 2012 in cooperation with the Zagreb Dance Centre, where they regularly held inclusive dance workshops. Divert's artistic director is a dancer and choreographer Iva Nerina Sibila in collaboration with dancer and danceability educator Helvecia Tomić.

- **MALO SUTRA/ LITTLE TOMORROW**

Little Tomorrow is an artistic organisation founded in 2017 by dancers and choreographers Bruno Isaković and Mia Zalukar who have been working in Croatia for many years.

- **ZADARSKI PLESNI ANSAMBL/Zadar Dance Ensemble**

Zadar Dance Ensemble, the oldest contemporary dance ensemble in Dalmatia, has since 1991 been active in the promotion and decentralisation of dance art. Today, the Zadar Dance Ensemble connects amateurs and professional dance artists, organises festivals and dance productions for children and adults, and organises educational programmes for dancers of all ages. Since 2009, they have been organising the Monoplay-festival of contemporary dance of solo form, the only such festival in Croatia, and the gathering of the Zadar dance scene called Evening of the Dance Miniature.

- **VRUM**

Artistic organisation VRUM was founded in 2007 by artists Sanja Frühwald and Mario Kovač. VRUM is structured as a collective whose primary interest is the field of contemporary dance; its performativity and theory, and is, at the same time, interested in contemporary theatre, visual art, music, photography and modern technology.

- **TALA DANCE CENTAR**

TALA is a non-profit arts organisation dedicated to popularising modern dance among children, young people, and adults. It has been operating since 2000. The founders are Larisa Navojec and Tamara Curić, dancers, choreographers and dance educators.

- **MAGIJA DANCE COLLECTIVE**

*Dance Collective Magija* is a dance group based in Rijeka led by Sanja Josipović and Gordana Svetiperić. Its dancers are members of the Association of people with cerebral and children palsy/ Rijeka. Since 2006 they have been focused on dance movement in the field of physical theatre and contemporary dance. Magija's work began with shorter dance productions and performances. In 2013, they started developing the inclusive dance scene in their region by collaborating with professional dancers and actors, dance students and other associations of disabled people. They are the founders and producers of Dance Festival Inclusive Scenes.

- **MASA DANCE COMPANY**

*Masa Dance Company* is an artistic organisation primarily active in production and education in the field of contemporary dance. Its founders Aleksandra Mišić and Ognjen Vučinić are well-known artists in dance and choreography.

- **OOUR**

OOUR was founded by Selma Banich and Sandra Banić Naumovski as a collaborative initiative of a group of authors involved in various artistic practices, who came together with the aim of researching the limits of their predispositions within the predefined concepts of performance.

- **KIK MELONE**

*Kik Melone* is a project founded in 2008 by the dance artist Silvia Marchig and the visual artist, illustrator and comic book author Igor Hofbauer. It functions as a collaborative performative group that works on the intersection of dance, theatre, performance, film and experimental music.



Esc Room, Natalija Manojlović & Ivana Đula, photo: Zagreb Dance Company

## 06.

PLAYWRITING,  
PERFORMANCE WRITING  
AND DRAMATURGY

The establishment of the Dramaturgy department (Academy of Dramatic Arts), offering both BA and MA programmes, can be perceived as a great shift in playwriting and dramaturgy. Playwrights like Ivo Brešan, Slobodan Šnajder, Milko Valent, Mate Matišić and Lada Kaštelan made a foundation for the future development of playwriting in Croatia while the MA study programme *Performance dramaturgy*, encouraged many young dramaturges in working in more broad spectre of performing arts, spreading their field of practice in interdisciplinary art while redefining relations and division of labour in production context. Many of them are very visible political activists that are very involved in their communities. One of the playwrights that mostly influenced the younger generation is Ivana Sajko, a writer, theatre director and performer, working in the overlapping fields of literature, performance art and music. She is one of the founders of BADco., the co-editor of the *Frakcija* magazine, four-time winner of the National playwriting award, decorated also with the French Chevalier Medal of Arts and Letters, honoured with the Ivan Goran Kovačić Prize for best debut novel *Rio Bar*, while her last book *Romance Novel* in German translation received Internationales Literaturpreis by Haus der Kulturen der Welt in 2018.

There are many authors that lean towards post-dramatic prose such as Sajko; Vedrana Klepica, Jasna Jasna Žmak, Goran Ferčec, and Dino Pešut and Espi Tomičić. The ones that are closer to the classical structure would be Tena Štivičić, Tomislav Zajec, Ivor Martinić, and Nina Mitrović, Ivan Vidić, Dubravko Mihanović. Just like Ivana Sajko, Tena Štivičić is an internationally acclaimed dramatist. Her play *3 Winters* premiered at National Theatre in London and won Štivičić the 2015 Susan Smith Blackburn Prize.

Many current Croatian dramaturges, including previously mentioned, are working interdisciplinary, to name some: Mila Pavićević, Nina Gojić, Nataša Antulov, Ivan Penović and so on.

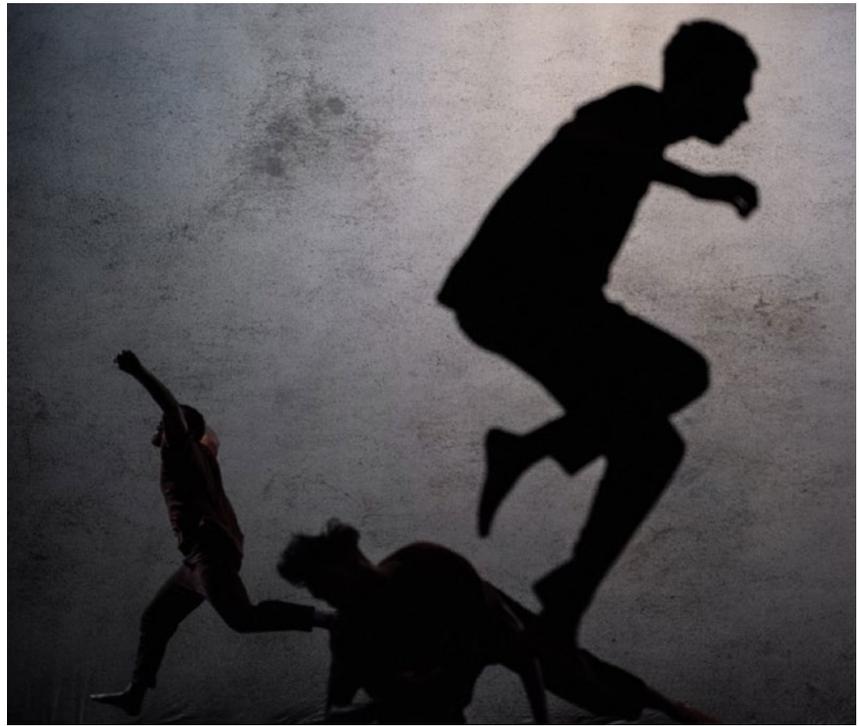


Ivana Sajko, photo: Davor Višnjić/PIXSELL

## 07.

FESTIVALS: NEED FOR  
INOVATIVE CURATING OR A  
NEEDELE IN A HAYSTACK

In trying to re-establish the independent scene of the 1970s and 1980s, local and national level policymakers dedicated most of the available resources for cultural production towards supporting various festivals. Such a policy became common in Zagreb after 2000. Even though this policy was of good intentions, to foster the development of non-institutional aesthetics and the formation of new audiences, the result was not quite as one expected<sup>2</sup>. The decision of public authorities to invest more in festivals than in the regular non-institutional production pushed the non-institutional practitioners to organising festivals as a way to acquire more funds for their work. Thus, the festivals turned into a substitute for the much needed change within the cultural system. While festivals like Eurokaz had a significant impact on theatre forms that emerged in the 1990s and 2000s, it is harder to determine the impact of the current ones, which does not necessarily mean that these festivals are not celebrating innovative practices.



NÄSS, photo: Dance & Non-verbal Theatre Festival San Vincenti via Facebook

- **DANCE AND NON- VERBAL THEATRE FESTIVAL SAN VICENTI**  
*Dance and Non- Verbal Theatre Festival San Vincenti* is a unique cultural event, founded in 2000 and organised by Zagreb Dance Company, which proved itself as the favourite gathering spot of dance experts and dance lovers. They follow the festival's international programme composed of contemporary dance productions, physical theatre, mime, circus performances, street art and educational seminars and workshop.
- **DANCE WEEK FESTIVAL**  
Dance week festival is Croatia's primary international festival of contemporary dance, movement theatre and mime. This annual festival, organised by the Institute for Movement and Dance, was founded in 1982 by its artistic producer Mirna Žagar. Its eclectic programming is a platform for encounters of diverse choreographic and artistic visions and for dialogue across the arts disciplines.
- **MONOPLAY**  
*Monoplay* is a dance festival in Croatia in the domain of contemporary dance and its expression within the contemporary theatre. It is the only festival specialised in showcasing solo performances. Since 2009, the festival has been held in Zadar at the end of each August.
- **GANZ NOVE PERFORACIJE /GANZ NEW PERFORATIONS**  
Festival of performing arts Ganz New Perforations was created by linking the Domino Perforation Festival with the Ganz New Festival that was part of the programme Culture of Change, abolished programme of Student centre Zagreb which operated until 2018. The organisers, Domino Artistic Director Zvonimir Dobrović and Ganz New Perforations Artistic Director Silvija Stipanov, assessed that decision was the best move in the increasingly difficult conditions for the realisation of the performing arts festival.

2 | Eckenhaussen, *Sepp: Scenes of Independence: Cultural Ruptures in Zagreb (1991-2019)*, *Deep Pockets, Institute of Network Cultures, 2019*

- **SOUNDED BODIES FESTIVAL**

*The Sounded Bodies Festival* is part of the Accessible to anyone art initiative. Festival tickets are not paid for at booking but, when leaving the show, each visitor decides on the price of the ticket, depending on his or her ability to support the work of art.

- **QUEER ZAGREB FESTIVAL**

*Queer Zagreb* organises each year, alongside the Zagreb Pride, the central LGBTIQ event of the year, the Queer Zagreb Festival. It is the largest queer festival in south-eastern Europe and brings together more than 400 performers from around the world. The festival includes theatrical, cinematic, concert and/or club production.

- **PERISKOP**

*Periscop* is a festival that brings together artists from Croatia and abroad. It is organised by Prostor Plus with the aim to decentralise dance and circus arts in Croatia and to enhance the artistic, performing and educational potential of contemporary dance, movement and new circus in Rijeka.

- **IMPROSPEKCIJE**

*Improspekcije* started in 2007 and is dedicated to development and affirmation of the improvisation scene in Croatia, as well as to organising international and interdisciplinary exchange in the field of improvised performance. The project was developed as a series of performances, workshops, research platforms, ongoing open conversations and it culminates in an annual festival format.



Next Big Thing, Kabinet, photo: Dance Week Festival

- **RIJEKA 2020 European Capital of Culture**

In 2020, during the Croatian EU Presidency, Rijeka, as the largest Croatian port, will become the centre of a significant and extensive culture and arts programme and the host city for the best and most interesting artists from the global, Croatian and European cultural scenes – as it is the European Capital of Culture for 2020.

Nestled between the Mediterranean, Central European and Eastern European influences, Rijeka has been part of as many as seven different countries over the past century of its history. As part of the European Capital of Culture project in 2020, Rijeka is building and opening new cultural buildings and facilities, which are co-financed by EU funds, and offering over 600 cultural, artistic and other events that involve more than 250 cultural institutions and organisations from Croatia and 40 other countries from Europe and the rest of the world <sup>3</sup>.

On 1 February, Rijeka opened ECOC 2020 with a piece from Damir Bartol Indoš and Tanja Vrvilo who were a part of opening ceremony *Opera Industriale*, composed by young composers Zoran Medved and Josip Maršić. In this way, Rijeka embraced Croatian avant-garde heritage while linking it to emerging artists.

### *What does the future bring to performing arts in Croatia?*

There is still a great deal of work that needs to be done in the educational system, such as taking performing arts subjects into primary schools and, in that way, creating an environment that will have a strong base for further investment and interest in this field. If an environment can be established that recognises the importance of different forms of performing arts then Croatia will have stronger platforms for artistic production, both institutional and noninstitutional.

<sup>3</sup> | [rijeka2020.eu](http://rijeka2020.eu)