



LION TALES

ANTHOLOGY
TO COMMEMORATE
THE 15TH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE MLADI LEVI FESTIVAL

Edited by
bunker

15 LION TALES

ANTHOLOGY
TO COMMEMORATE
THE 15TH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE MLADILEVI FESTIVAL

CIP - Kataložni zapis o publikaciji
Narodna in univerzitetna knjižnica, Ljubljana

792.079(497.4Ljubljana)"1998/2012"

LION tales : anthology to commemorate the 15th anniversary of the Mladi levi festival /
[editors Alma R. Selimović, Irena Štaudohar]. - Ljubljana : Bunker, 2012

ISBN 978-961-93350-1-7
1. Selimović, Alma
262983424



Ljubljana, August 2012

TABLE OF CONTENTS

REFLECTIONS AND MEMORIES

- 7 -- Nevenka Koprivšek: **MLADI LEVI – OUR FIRST FIFTEEN YEARS**
17 -- Mojca Jug: **THE FESTIVAL WITH A FACE**
21 -- Irena Štaudohar: **JUST IN TIME**
26 -- Res Bosshart: **YOUNG DOGS, OLD NAGS, AND THE NEW**
30 -- Pascal Brunet: **EUROPE – FORMULATING DEMOCRACY BEYOND IGNORANCE**
34 -- Rok Vevar: **WHAT IS THE ALTERNATIVE ACTUALLY? THOUGHTS ON COMMEMORATING THE 15TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE MLADI LEVI FESTIVAL**
44 -- Blaž Lukanc: **MLADI LEVI OR HOW TO REMEMBER?**
50 -- Zala Dobovšek: **YOUNG, VIGOROUS AND COURAGEOUS**
54 -- Tomaž Toporišič: **COMRADES, DO YOU STILL REMEMBER? OR FESTIVAL MEMORIES OF THE PIONEERS**

ARTISTS AND PERFORMANCES

- 61 -- Nevenka Koprivšek: **ARTISTS AT MLADI LEVI – THE INTERNATIONALISATION OF THE SLOVENIAN SPACE**
66 -- 15 FESTIVALS
1998 → 1999 → 2000 → 2001 → 2002 → 2003 → 2004 → 2005 →
2006 → 2007 → 2008 → 2009 → 2010 → 2011 → 2012
96 -- Alma R. Selimović: **THE FILIGREE WORK OF OBTAINING FUNDING**

IN MEMORY

- 101 -- Tomàs Aragay: **I CAN STILL SEE IMAGES FROM THE PICNIC BEFORE MY EYES**
102 -- Stefan Kaegi: **DEAR YOUNG LION**
103 -- Sebastijan Horvat: **THANKS FOR THE ILLUSION**
104 -- Magdalena Lupi Alvir: **A GOOD HORIZONTAL LINE AND A GOOD VERTICAL LINE**
105 -- Bo Madvig: **THE CRYSTAL GLASS BOUGHT IN LJUBLJANA SOUNDED BETTER**
106 -- Miguel Pereira: **I WANT TO BE A YOUNG LION FOREVER**
107 -- Matjaž Pograjc: **DEAR LION CUB!**
108 -- Mateja Rebolj: **A FESTIVAL IN TOP SHAPE**
109 -- Katarina Stegnar: **FIFTEEN FESTIVAL YEARS IS MORE THAN JUST A BUNCH OF PERFORMANCES**

DISCOVERING NEW SPACES

- 111 -- Tanja Lesničar - Pučko: **A FESTIVAL THROUGH SPACE**
116 -- Blaž Peršin: **THE SEARCH FOR NEW SPACES AND THEIR NEW FUTURE**

ACTIVATING PUBLIC SPACES AND AUDIENCE

- 121 -- Alma R. Selimović: **DEAR LADIES AND GENTLEMEN. SOME THOUGHTS ON THE AUDIENCE OF THE MLADI LEVI FESTIVAL**
130 -- Maja Hawlina: **OPENINGS**
133 -- SOME GROUNDBREAKING PRODUCTIONS OF THE MLADI LEVI FESTIVAL
134 -- *Lovepangs – Pain Transformer*
135 -- Ira Cecić: **LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT**
136 -- Alma R. Selimović: **TOMAŽ ŠTRUCL – ARCHITECT OF THE LOVEPANGS CITY**
138 -- *Cargo Sofia – Ljubljana*
138 -- Tamara Bračič Vidmar: **WITH VENTO AND SLAVČO ACROSS EUROPE THROUGH LJUBLJANA**
142 -- *Dominoes*
144 -- *My Street, Garden by the Way and Spaces of Play*
144 -- Katarina Slukan: **LEAVING RESIDENTS SOMETHING TO DWELL ON**

WE

- 148 -- The Team
152 -- Tanja Radež: **THE LION AND DETONATION**
156 -- Alma R. Selimović: **A FAMILY FESTIVAL, EVEN IF THE FAMILY IS DYSFUNCTIONAL. THE TECHNICAL CREW OF THE MLADI LEVI FESTIVAL**
162 -- Festival Newspaper Arena
162 -- Ana Perne: **IN ARENA**
163 -- Samo Gosarič: **TO MERGE THE WISH TO WRITE SERIOUSLY WITH THE FREEDOM OF BEING A VOLUNTEER**
164 -- Andreja Kopač: **TO LEARN TO WRITE, EXPERIENCE IS THE ONLY OPTION**

BOOK OF MEMORIES

- 167 -- Amelia Kraigher: **THE BEAUTIFUL FACES OF MLADI LEVI**
169 -- Mojca Dimec: **THE FESTIVAL BADGE**
170 -- Andrej Godec: **VISUAL AND EMOTIONAL OVERDOSE**
170 -- Natalija Pihler: **DEAR MLADI LEVI**
171 -- Bojana Leskovar: **A KING**
172 -- Ana Perne: **MLADI LEVI IN TOWN**
173 -- Jedrt Jež Furlan: **DEAR LIONESSES, DEAR LIONS**
175 -- Alenka Arko: **FESTIVAL MLADI LEVI HAS BROUGHT ME BACK TO THEATRE**
176 -- Barbra Drnač: **THE MADNESS CALLED COURAGE**
177 -- Maja Megla: **TRAFIC**

REFLECTIONS AND MEMORIES



NEVENKA KOPRIVŠEK,
Director of Bunker, founder of the Mladi levi festival

Photo Tina Smrekar



MLADI LEVI - OUR FIRST FIFTEEN YEARS

YOU NEVER FORGET
YOUR FIRST AND RIMSKA 2

I've always been a little suspicious about people who never doubted themselves. Perhaps this is so because I myself would normally, when still in the whirlwind of joy and enthusiasm over a new project, already be picturing the worst possible scenarios of how everything could go wrong. This state of uncertainty would then normally last only until I would find something close to a sufficient answer to each of my doubts and at this point the idea would start seeming somewhat realisable. However, I sure wasn't counting on the large number of doubters I met before the beginning of the first festival. "Another festival?" I was told, "But why? Don't we already have enough of them? Who needs festivals and who actually attends them? After two or three years they all vanish into thin air anyway..." Not very encouraging. "There is too much of everything already... and in the middle of the summer? You're nuts! Nobody's there then, the theatres are all closed..." "Well, that's exactly why," I answered, "because the theatres are all closed, wouldn't that be the best opportunity? The venues are available and we can maybe borrow equipment; people get back from holidays in that time and want to have somewhere to go, they want to spend some quality time socialising... Our festival will be different, open and not hermetic at all." They just doubtfully shook their heads. It was

a lucky coincidence that I met Irena Štaudohar at that time. She had just left her editor's job at Maska magazine, just like I had left the Glej Theatre. We were both disappointed by the cynicism of the scene and the politics, but at the same time full of desires and ideas about what the theatre, what a festival could be like – a space without any hard feelings, where people meet, share, learn, get to know other cultures, other landscapes, other visions, where there is room for debate, experiment and development. An open space, where making mistakes is a legitimate possibility. After all, it's nothing but errors paving the way to changing ourselves and the world, right? Are we able of doing that today, when we're not capable of tackling the challenges of the crisis? Admitting to ourselves that we gambled and lost a great many things as a society? Finding new ways? Without Irena, I would probably give up. We filled each other with enthusiasm, inspiration, got angry a lot, saved the theatre and the world every day, had fun and laughed a lot – all the things we still successfully do today, and if necessary, in one single breath. She was the one persuading me: "Nena, you, and only you are capable of changing things around here!!!" I was shaken by that every time. I thought she might be seeing something that I was not, but eventually I started believing in what she saw in me. I know how pathetic this sounds, but it really was quite like that. And then we sat down in a cold little office at Rimska Street 2, like in some Socialist Realist film (the one and only storage heater we had broke down, but the rent was more than friendly), puffing in our cold hands, dreaming, and selecting the programme. Winter went and spring came, Irena got a job as a journalist, the organisation started. I came into the office earlier and earlier and went home later and later, and it became clear to me that I could not do it by myself. Bojana Kunst recommended a student, and as it turned out a friend of that student, Mojca Jug, came by instead and said: "I've never done anything like this, but I'm very interested." "Let's try," I responded, "maybe we'll get along". Well, we've been getting along well for almost 15 years now. Soon after Mojca, Ira Cecić came, whom I accidentally (literally) ran into in the underground passage at Rimska Street and quickly invited upstairs. Until this very day I still don't know how only the three of us managed to organise the whole first edition of the festival. I guess it was a mix of things: we were passionately devoted, the Mladinsko Theatre helped with the facilities and equipment a lot, as did the Dance Theatre Ljubljana and the Glej Theatre. We put up a completely new stage at the Ljubljana Castle, opening the festival with the legend of experimental theatre, Ellen Stewart, and mayor Vika Potočnik. For something that didn't exist yet, it was a major accomplishment. The head technician was Dušan Kohek, and Tomaž Štruc the technical co-ordinator, with whom we used to travel around the world together a lot (Tomaž as lighting designer, and I as touring manager of Betontanc). We pulled out our *top ten* list of touring experiences that really made an impression on us. Of course we took into account the quality of the programme and technical conditions, but it soon crystallised in our minds that precisely the guest performances where we could stay for more than one day, where we were able to get to know local life, artists and audiences, nature and people, had really left a lasting impression on us. So, we would do it differently! Let's create opportunities, where we can invite artists to stay with us for as long as possible, even if that in practical terms means modest accommodations in student dorms. Some sort of *festival in residence*. Once in a while Blaž Peršin, the President of the Bunker Board at the time, would

pop in. Usually when we were in the middle of a crisis and he would reassure us: "Girls, don't worry, everything can be sorted out." I still don't know how he came up with that, but in the end, we really did sort everything out. Somewhat irrationally we came up with the idea of holding a picnic in the countryside, at Ulovka, which turned into a kind of internal, but obligatory, trademark, the highlight of the festival, where we would take artists, volunteers, but also critics and festival guests. And then there was the obligatory late night meeting point in the bar Druga pomoč. It was exactly at these meeting points that a great many friendships and new co-operations came into being, in a relaxed and hospitable atmosphere, very personal and very collective at once, which is so characteristic of the Mladi levi festival. Sure, we could discuss this further and more deeply, but I will stop at this moment just to illustrate it, or encourage all those people who hesitate facing new challenges.

**Showing how important it is to analyse what cultural space is missing
and to make a story out of it, to find the right people for it and to turn the impossible
into the possible, the possible into the realisable and the realisable into the pleasant.**

There is no space? Let's find it, let's occupy it!
No international summer program? Let's create it! No idea how to do it? We'll learn!
There's no real cultural policy? Let's face cultural policy as it is!
People don't co-operate? Let's create conditions for co-operation, let's set an example!
In all these years, the Mladi levi festival has been an arena and
an opportunity to do all these things.

Articulating change

Everything has its beginnings and endings, or more beginnings and more endings. In the first few years, the Mladi levi festival was indeed closely related to the international network Junge Hunde (founded in 1995), in which I participated at the time when I was the artistic director of the Glej Theatre. This network focused on developing conditions for young upcoming artists to be presented and to grow across Europe. The 90s, the post-war, post-independence years, were permeated with the desire for change and the faith in everything being possible. The good and the bad. The cultural space decreased with the disintegration of Yugoslavia, and artists were stifled in their local environments, but the young generation was obstinate – diverse in their poetics, but strong: Matjaž Pograjc, Iztok Kovač, Marko Peljhan, Emil Hrvatin, Tomaž Štruc ... Dragan Živadinov certainly opened the way for them in an international context already in the 80s, while the Mladinsko Theatre did so as well. But above all, this generation wanted to work differently, independent of the given practices of repertoire theatres. There was a sparkling hope in the air for better times, a spirit of curiosity, discovery, travel and everything new. Contemporary dance was flourishing, the theatre too, and new names emerged: Matjaž Farič, Branko Potočan, Maja Delak, Mala Kline, Ivan Peternelj, Sanja Nešković Peršin, Barbara Novakovič, Goran Bogdanovski, Valentina Čabro, Diego de Brea... The Junge Hunde network allowed a lot of young Slovenian artists to enter the international arena,

with guest performances and new connections. Both generations (the one from the 80s and the new one) were constantly proving that the Slovenian contemporary performing arts were transgressing local boundaries, and that they could no longer possibly be ignored at home because of their international recognition. The international scene was interested in us. They were surprised that so much was going on in such a small space. Foreign ministers found out about us through other, well-informed foreign ministers, and started to wonder, what it was that made us so recognisable abroad. In the Glej Theatre it seemed that my desires to breakthrough were beyond reach and that this space was impossible to internationalise to the point where it would be possible to host foreign artists and create spaces, where in all directions the impossible would collide. That's why my departure was logical. I started anew, from nothing, on my own. In 1997, I founded the association Bunker and alongside the new festival, the Slovenian version of Junge Hunde, the Mladi levi festival, with the intention of opening up the space, internationalising it, and enabling the conditions for the confrontation and exchange of ideas, for new forms of production and co-operation, learning and experimenting. Since the very beginning it was about paving the ways towards new spaces, mentally and physically, and about occupying new territories, developing better working conditions, about "professionalisation," trans-nationality, about transgressing prejudice and repositioning the contemporary arts from the periphery to the centre of attention.

Context: occupying a concrete and political space

For a better understanding of the context in which the Mladi levi festival was born, it's necessary to outline two other processes. Simultaneous with the beginnings of the Mladi levi festival, but also with the development of other festivals and new non-governmental organisations, two important processes took place, which are closely intertwined. The first one has to do with the acute lack of venues, which could offer a platform for new contemporary arts, apart from two small venues, the Glej Theatre and the Dance Theatre Ljubljana and occasionally the Culture and Congress Centre Cankarjev Dom. Together with Bratko Bibič I had just completed a study about the need for venues in the independent sector and the possible transformation of industrial and other buildings in Ljubljana into performing and production venues for contemporary art, like theatre, dance, visual arts, and music. This survey was later used as an expert ground for a number of successful stories: Stara mestna elektrarna – now a theatre, Kino Šiška – now a centre for urban culture, especially music, Kinodvor – now an art-house cinema, and the Rog Factory, which is in the process of transforming into a space for visual arts. A second story evolved in the field of cultural policy. As a relevant critical mass, the independent scene became more and more important and articulated. Individual *ad hoc*, sometimes passive, sometimes even fierce actions started to merge more and more into a systematic and connecting form of revolt against the existing elite and authorities. This was about occupying concrete and political space. The origins of Asociacija (the Association of Arts and Culture NGOs and Freelancers) go back to the early 90s (Metelkova – Autonomous Cultural Centre,

Prostori drugačnosti – Spaces of Difference), which only in 2009 reached professionalisation and by that became a legitimate partner in decision-making and creating better working conditions for non-governmental organisations and freelance artists in the field of contemporary arts. Thus, in all this time, at least two fundamental changes have occurred: the acquisition of new venues and programme funding of the non-governmental sector. So, at least in these two segments the conditions have progressively improved in two decades. In comparison with the situation of developed Western countries, of course, very modestly, much too slowly, still very fragile, but in comparison with other Eastern countries or with the Balkans, almost enviably. Depending on the perspective. But without understanding the circumstances, without these two processes, which also mutually influenced each other through the Mladi levi festival, local and international networking, and establishing a dialogue with more or less dialogue-inclined politics (but frankly, never really brave), and the exceptional engagement of individuals, artists and producers, including some officials, the Mladi levi festival could not have developed into what it is today. Without pretentious modesty it can be argued that the festival became referential for artists and curators at home and abroad, as far as the program and the consistent raising of awareness and changing of the social, public, cultural and political is concerned. The processes are far from completed, sometimes it feels like going a step or two forward, and then back three again, and a little further once again, but now even stomping in the same spot seems questionable. The transition promised a lot, but little has changed. The reforms of the public sector never occurred, the prosperity of the 90s was muffled, the authorities always tolerated us, sometimes even encouraged us, but were unfortunately unable or unwilling to support the daring wave of the flourishing young generation from the end of the 90s by enabling stable and systematic working conditions for all these *young lions* and the development of their potential. The international market often just spat out many of them, always craving young new blood.

Program, networking, the Balkans, Europe and the world

In culture, and especially in theatre, it is impossible to work on your own. The mere production and making of performances and how they are brought to the audience – and last but not least – enjoying them, is a collective experience. For festivals, this comes to the fore even more particularly, since an atmosphere emerges and in some special way everyone becomes involved in it: as if the mere air would sprinkle neurones of empathy. Somehow we crawl under each others' skin and are ready to accept, push the boundaries of the ordinary, look from another perspective, and share more than we usually do. This is most evident at the Mladi levi festival, since we make everything together and in a very personal way. Every festival edition is a reflection of ideas and projects that are shared at the Bunker kitchen table (since always we've been cooking for each other and sharing our thoughts with artists and guests, while holding a cooking spoon in one hand), and while travelling, at festivals, where besides Mojca and Irena practically all other Bunker creative staff are invited more and more. Each is also a leader of their own project: Tamara Bračič Vidmar (she joined the team as the youngest and is

still holding strong with us; she is the most charming, interested in everything, best executive producer ever, who is the only one with the nerve to debate and negotiate, when we all give up, now the Head of Public Relations at Bunker and Co-ordinator of the Balkan Express network); Alma R. Selimović (the smartest, most competent, and with the biggest heart among us, it is hardest to step into her shoes, when we are reorganising functions, and she is most fun to discuss cultural policy and ice-cream with simultaneously, now being the Development Manager at Bunker); Katarina Slukan (we are very close because she is a gypsy like me, a nomad at heart, but much more sensitive and deep, the Head of Education Projects); Maja Vižin (the most reliable person with the most subtle sense of humour when you least expect it, a plaster over the wound, now the Head of Ecology Projects and Betontanc producer); and Samo Selimović (the only guy who really survives in this female nest, our intellectual and anarchist, the only really political person of the pack, being also the best cook, the leader of our most complex project Sostenuto). Sometimes Liljana Briški also has to hit the road (out best administrator to date who has the patience to endure everything we expose her to, justified or unjustified), and, of course, Tanja Radež, our sparkling fairy, who never runs out of ideas, our artist and designer. And my closest and oldest colleagues, Mojca Jug and Igor Remeta, who have been at Bunker since the very beginning. Mojca has developed from being a secretary to being the artistic director of Stara mestna elektrarna. She is uncompromising in her righteousness, the best story-teller, swimming in international waters like a fish in the sea, having an invaluable, always fresh perspective and nose for people, performances and concerts. I had already been working with Igor at the Glej Theatre. He developed from a stagehand into one of the most sought after and inventive technical directors. He always has a solution for everything up his sleeve, even when something looks completely impossible, which is a challenge he actually quite enjoys. And there are our guys who can make a stage, a scene, a theatre out of everything: Andrej Petrovčič, Duško Pušica and Tomaž Žnidarčič. If I have learned anything over all these years, is that it's necessary to let go of responsibility as soon as possible, to trust and delegate work to younger colleagues, so each can grasp and execute a project as quickly as possible, considering content and organisation, as well as being in control of the budget. Then the young colleagues can delegate work to new colleagues, and this is exactly what our new strength, the joyful and dynamic Janja Buzečan is doing right now. Eventually all of them, working as if in some kind of cobweb, delegate work to others, to the volunteers. This way we always not only know what we're doing, we are also spared all the things we don't need to know, and can remain calm knowing that everything will be done. That's how we can jump into the working processes of each other when necessary, inspire, support, sometimes console each other, and help each other out with refreshing new ideas. At any moment, a project can become a lot bigger than ourselves, fulfilling the heart of each of us, overcoming our egos, regardless of our position on the hierarchical ladder, but rather regarding ideas and satisfaction, when we make something work together. The Mladi levi festival has been bigger than us for a long time now. This is especially true for where the sublime and artistic is concerned, and in the way it enriches the Slovenian space. But there's also this heart-felt relationship between the team members and between artists, which is catchy; and the audience, the volunteers, and even the journalists get infected with it. We all somehow become more open, attentive and sympathetic. The programming itself evolves like that, of course, but in the end Mojca, Irena and I have the final word.

However, the selection of performances, following certain artists, and discovering new trends is a consequence of lasting co-operation and networking in the domestic and international field. Thematic limits are never set in advance and positioned above artistic visions, we are like butterfly catchers -- always alert and spreading our sensibility in all directions in order to catch that which is relevant and up-to-date, that which would resonate with our audiences and spaces. Bunker forms part of different networks all over the world and the more the Bunker team attends seminars, festivals, network meetings, the bigger its social network becomes. First there was the mother network IETM, our window to the world, connecting more than 500 producers, directors, festivals, theatres and institutes mostly from Europe, but in the last years also from Africa, Canada and Asia, which are all engaged in intense transnational co-operation. Membership and meetings in this network represent an immense source of information, areas of exchange, support, engagement and common effort for quite some time now. The meetings of this network have turned out to be most popular work destinations with the Bunker team. Inside this very network some other, more focused, but for the development of the Mladi levi festival particularly important smaller consortia were born. For instance, the network Junge Hunde (for developing young artists), and later on the D.B.M. (Danse Bassin Méditerranée), which for a long time encouraged the development of dance in the Mediterranean area, where things often develop more slowly than in the wealthier North. The network Balkan Express is also very important to us; it has been rather informal for years, but Bunker has been strongly involved in it from the very beginning. It serves as a platform for new connections and solidarity inside and with the Balkan area. The Mladi levi festival focuses a lot of attention on artists from the Balkan area, and for many of them the festival has become a stepping stone. And then there is the Network 2020 – Thin Ice, which is now called Imagine 2020 – Arts and Climate Change, which promotes artists in their engaged relation to climate change. These networks and networking itself as a mode of operation is extremely important, both for the programme itself, as well as for common efforts, and after all it was through these networks that the Mladi levi festival received funding from the European Commission, mostly from the Culture program, over these past years.

State of affairs

If the 90s were full of energy, full of expectations, good spirits and hope for better times in creating a common space, the general atmosphere in Europe and in Slovenia today is much more stuffy. We wanted more rights and freedom, but we got markets and competition. Despair is in the air, giving in to destiny and fear. Censorship and self-censorship are increasingly occurring at every step, not only in art but also in other social spheres. It is all rooted in our fear to acknowledge that we have failed, that greed and disdain have prevailed over compassion and empathy. Right now, when we need all the knowledge we have, as well as creativity and courage in order to face the multiplying consequences of the crisis, which is not only financial, social and environmental, and for which there seems to be no end in sight, we are faced with growing financial budget cuts in culture, science, education and social justice, enclosing in national contexts, growing inequality between the handful of those who have everything

and those who have less and less (or nothing at all). The gap widens between consumption and resource availability, and even more so with the insufficient world order offering answers too weak in the face of all these new challenges. Is it still possible to talk about art and culture being that last field of freedom, where change is possible? Can we do it by ourselves? I doubt it.

How to proceed?

From personal experience, and perhaps because of my growing interest in the Feldenkrais Method, which promotes lifelong learning, and talks about raising awareness through movement, the articulation of change is possible in my opinion. New mental, emotional and perceptual patterns can be achieved through breaking and re-integration of habitual patterns, through new ways of moving and sensing. I think we are able to re-articulate ways of our social behaviour. If our brain is always exposed to the same patterns, it can only react in the same way. The more we expose it to new circumstances and challenges through learning, the more neural connections it is capable of. The more space is given to developing a dynamic imagination, the more new ideas and connections are possible to make. Like I did fifteen years ago, I'm facing new crossroads, new risks again. How to articulate what this common space is missing and what our new stories are? If I believe in personal change, the unused potential in each and every one of us, I can also believe that as a society we still have enormous potential for development, learning and discovering how to live together.

In the early years, Bunker was mostly associated with similar festivals and organisations, but it has become increasingly clear to us that culture and art can no longer exist only in their self-sufficient bubble and function as they have been functioning so far. Many new forms of co-operation, ideas and debates searching for common answers will be needed. Through the international project Sostenuto, which explored the extent to which culture can be a strong factor for economic and social change, and in which at Bunker we investigated the possibility of the revitalisation of our immediate surroundings, the Tabor neighbourhood with its centre in Stara mestna elektrarna, we have already begun looking for common local answers to global questions. We established the Cultural Quarter Tabor and, together with the group prostoRož, helped to revitalise the Park Tabor (as a dynamic space for encounters and exchanges), and together with the Cultural Association Obrat helped to change the abandoned construction site at Resljeva Street into a community garden called *Beyond Construction Site*. We learned a lot and changed our working methods. Networking and searching for new alliances has become important not only at the international but also at the local, immediate level. Now more than ever the Mladi levi festival has become a meeting point and a place for contemplating different new ideas, the meeting point for artists from across the world, the expert public and local audiences, whereas through new initiatives and micro-politics we resist global phenomena.

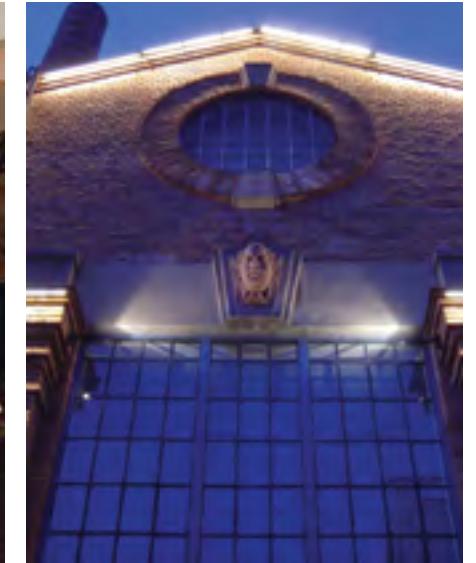
Despite the sad predictions that the crisis has only just begun, we do not intend to give in to defeatism and apathy. The Bunker team is ready, with tentacles spread through various branches of art, culture and

also education, urban planning, social welfare and ecology. We are ready for new challenges, issuing new debates and creating new tools for transformation. The Mladi levi festival will remain the peak and crown of Bunker's activities and will continue to set the space for much-needed changes in the shared responsibility of creating a world in which quality of life and solidarity have purpose and meaning.

Photo Dejan Habicht



Photo Urška Boljkovac



Vika Potočnik, Nevenka Koprivšek and Ellen Stewart; opening of the first Mladi levi festival at the Ljubljana Castle

About memory...

I always love to remember things, sometimes because I love to relive them, sometimes because they are my support, when I face the "now and tomorrow." A lot of misunderstandings exist about memory though, one of them being that we are aware of our experiences from the past, that our brain is capable of reflecting experience and facts which are safely stored in cupboards, from where they can be integrally retrieved when needed. The structure of memory is more complex and sensitive, emotive. It is affected by internal and external factors, subjective and objective, which bend and fold with the past, the present and are at the same time a kind of anticipation of the future. And with performing arts being one of the most ephemeral forms of art, every attempt to historicise memories is elusive, intertwined with imagination, immediate present experience, fears and longing. Nevertheless, each festival, each performance, each talk and every (even the shortest) encounter always has the opportunity to live longer in each and every one of us. All these flexible and constantly changing memories, some photographs and even less films, is all that remains after the festival. So, let us try to capture them as we see them now.

MOJCA JUG,
co-programmer of the Mladi levi festival,
programmer of Stara mestna elektrarna



Photo Urška Boljkovac

An audience waiting for dominoes. The opening of the 14th Mladi levi festival
in the amphitheatre at the platform by the Slovene Ethnographic Museum

THE FESTIVAL WITH A FACE

I started working for Bunker in 1998, several months before the first Mladi levi festival took place – without any organisational experience or knowledge of contemporary performing arts, but with a lot of curiosity. For the first few weeks I sorted piles of paper in the office, browsed through files, got to know Ira, and drank huge amounts of *caffè latte* in the bar next door. In August the Mladi levi festival began, and everything happened at a tremendous velocity. Artists, performances, audiences and locations kept changing, and my head was spinning from everything new, beautiful, and interesting, but also because of exhaustion. The first festival was organised by Nevenka, Ira and myself. Three people, one computer connected to the Internet, an instruction sheet on the wall on how to attach documents to emails, and the most important element in the office: a telephone with a fax machine. I remember dancing through the nights and dozing off during a few performances, when it was necessary to accumulate energy for our “smart-ass” debates over beer, which lasted until the next morning, as well as the stress of delayed flights or lost luggage.

We started with a mini office team of three and eleven other co-workers. Every year we acquired new strength (office-wise and technically). These were always very young people, usually without any experience, but with a lot of heart and enthusiasm for this kind of work. Many of these “summer” colleagues came and went at the old office in Rimska Street. Some danced with us for one summer, and many are still whirling away: Tamara Bračič (not yet Vidmar at the time), Klemen Trček, Maja Mujdrica (not yet Kim at that time), Marija Režek (not yet Kambič at that time), Davorina Čebular, Alma (without the “R.” back then) Selimović, Katarina Slukan, Samo Selimović, Brina Pungerčič (not yet Perko at that time), Bor Pungerčič, Maja Vižin, Liljana Briški, Suzana Kajba, Janja Buzečan. Given the complexity of the programme, the technical team has expanded as well. Mladi levi has always been the kind of festival where



Nevenka Koprišek and Mojca Jug, opening speech, Mladi levi 2011

not only artists, but also the new staff and the technical teams, producers and organisers all gain experience. I find it so amusing that you could start at Bunker as a cleaner, only to be leading your own projects as an independent producer five years later.

Nevenka has always had a nose for potential in people, and throughout the years she has managed to build an exceptional team. It is precisely this team spirit that distinguishes us from other festivals; we are known for the energy which circulates among the organisational team and artists, and which we all transfer to the audience. During the festival's first runs, artists stayed with us for the whole duration – it is important to us that visiting artists not only present their work, but are also able to see the other performances. Mladi levi is the festival with a face. The artist knows who the people are in the background, the technicians, the producers and the director. And we cannot forget the legendary picnic we organise during the festival. Together with the artists, the entire festival team, and our friends, we spend an entire day at Ulovka. Here, while playing football, lying in the grass and enjoying gourmet delights, people get to know each other, memories are shared, and future plans are made. The Mladi levi festival is also unique for its continual exploration of new spaces which are not theatrical in nature, and changing them into places for theatre, dance and art.

In the first few years the festival focused on young artists who were just at the beginning of their artistic careers. For many, an appearance at Mladi levi represented their first performance abroad and was at the same time a kind of a stepping stone. Slowly, the festival grew, and young artists were placed side by side with bigger and more established names.

The first and main guide for preparing the festival programme was always the quality of the artwork, which means that the festival did not change much as far as genre was concerned. The performances are not chosen for their genre, but for their message, relevance, innovation, communication, and boldness. Indeed, the festival's content has changed and responded to global and local developments. Recently we have also turned towards our micro-environment; towards our neighbourhood. We are doing much to associate with our neighbours and local residents in the hope that they would recognise the festival as something of their own, and not as some kind meteor that falls from the sky once a year. In accordance with global trends, it is increasingly becoming a production festival, where some of the works get to premiere, or to prepare for their local debut, and does not subscribe to only bringing "finished" works to the stage.

In fourteen years, many performances have taken place at the festival and it is indeed difficult to remember all that I have seen, heard and experienced. But, there are a few which have made a particularly strong impression on my memory, either because of the performance itself, or because of the organisational problems it caused. My favourite performances, the most beautiful ones which I can recall particularly well, were: *Eclats Sol Air* (CIE A. Brown, B. Krief & CIE Aude Arago Gilles Baron), where I first realised that a circus can exist without tigers jumping through a ring of fire; *Still distinguished* (La Ribot), where nudity on the stage is justified, *Museum of Broken Relationships* (Olinka Vištica, Dražen Grubišić) and *Lovepangs*, where pain acquires value. I think I could go on and on, because each performance left

some kind of an impression on me. And I mustn't forget the concerts, my favourite part of the festival: The Beet Fleet, Zoster, La Campagnie des Musiques à Ouïr, or Kombinat.

Since I am not a critic, but have nevertheless seen a large number of performances, I can only speak about my personal opinion and experiences in theatre and dance from the past fifteen years. When I started working at Bunker, the Slovenian independent scene was full of dance performances and performance art, while independent theatre was somehow lagging behind. In the past few years this has been changing; independent theatre has been getting stronger and better, and the new theatre and performance groups which have appeared are setting new standards and guidelines for production and presentation. Currently, the problem is hyper-production, where everything is bereaved of set designs, costume designs, and original music scores because of minimal funding. What we are seeing consists of mostly solo acts or duets. How unfortunate!

However, I do not believe that unlimited funding would necessarily change the essence of the festival. Even if there were a never-ending supply of money, the festival would still last ten days! There would be an improvement mainly in production conditions and artist fees, and perhaps we would be able to realise our dreams by inviting some really big names in theatre, dance or music, but, despite infinite funding, some things would remain the same: our positive energy, our fortitude, and our love of the festival.

It is difficult to summarise all of my impressions – in fourteen years a great number of anecdotes and stories have accumulated! One of my favourites is the one about the so called “Russian bed”, or “Where is the bed?” In 2003 Mladi levi hosted a group from Moscow, which brought along a military bunk bed as their prop. They had a great time in Ljubljana and relaxed to the point that they all forgot about the prop. Then, I remember the phone call at five in the morning with the question: “Where is the bed?” They were already at the airport when they had realised that they were missing their prop. The team flew back to Moscow, while the bed stayed in Ljubljana. Returning this bed turned out to be extremely complicated and expensive and I offered the team financial compensation for it, but they insisted that this was out of the question, since the bed was unique and impossible to rebuild. So, it took us the next six months to arrange all the papers and send the bed back, only to find out that nobody was there to pick it up at the airport in Moscow. However, the festival is not only made up of such anecdotes; it is the stuff dreams are made of, dreams which we dream up every August, right before we wake up to the reality of the season in September, the autumn, and the new cycle, all until the next Mladi levi festival.

Medical assistance has been necessary **four times** at the festival.

22 cleaners have worked at the festival over the years.

The 15 Mladi levi editions have hosted **17** concerts, during which **255** songs have been performed.

Altogether **1,680** pieces of strudel were eaten at the famous festival picnics.

IRENA ŠTAUDOHAR,

co-programmer of the Mladi levi festival,
journalist and dramaturge,
President of the Bunker Board (2001–2006)



JUST IN TIME

I may be a big romantic, but I'm not nostalgic – that's basically a good frame of mind to be in for the fifteenth anniversary of the Mladi levi festival. It's impossible to write with nostalgia about a festival that's still moving forward with such exceptional momentum, full of new ideas, still so contemporary and still so vital. While it may seem that we live in a country that is increasingly small and closed in upon itself, this festival is the main instigator for important international networks and collaboration with numerous partners from abroad. The festival still fills halls to capacity, just as it did fifteen years ago, with both new and loyal audiences. This is a festival which, with its programme, roundtables, and other activities, critically and actively responds to the world around it. A festival that visiting artists remember forever. Its atmosphere has always been special. And the same goes for the parties. Because its team is something else entirely – going above and beyond. This is a festival with heart, soul, passion, and intelligence. The same could be said for but a small number of organisations, and almost no corporations. Well, I said I'm a romantic. However, without any memories this wouldn't quite work either.

On memories

My absolute first memories concerning Mladi levi revolve around long conversations with Nevenka on whether or not Ljubljana needed a new festival. Even though we had both worked for a time in the so-called independent scene, we didn't know each other very well. She had just finished with Glej Theatre, where she was the artistic director, and I had just left editorial work at Maska. These were heated and wild conversations, and I clearly remember our first meeting at the restaurant Špajza and talking until they closed – and then continuing our conversation outside the establishment (a habit we still practice to this day). We were both of the opinion that there was so much explosive potential in contemporary Slovenian theatre; that there was a truly large and curious audience out there, and that things in the cultural and political sphere really weren't going anywhere. Independent performing art groups did not have a place

to perform, and there wasn't even a trace of some kind of contemporary theatrical institution that didn't already have an in-house ensemble, or that had newer production conditions, which might have led to an internationally based artistic programme such as Hebbel in Berlin, or Kaaitheater in Brussels.

(Many times I have thought that it was precisely due to the fact that directors of the 90s didn't have their own stage that they included some kind of imaginary new space into their visual narrative: Peljhan – residential stations, Živadinov – outer space, Pograjc – an intermediary space between the sky and the earth, Štruc – an MTV screen... These images later became a closely-knit part of their theatrical poetics.)

Prior to Maska magazine, contemporary dance and theatre performances had no theoretical and very little critical support. There were less and less international guest appearances, and the Exodus festival, which had begun with such force, had lost its momentum. Nevenka, who at the time was the most internationally recognised producer in Slovenia (and still is), has recently become a member of the international Junge Hunde network, whose concept was a festival that supports young artists still at the beginning of their careers. The larger festivals of the world have become an industry; a market for big stars. Young acts without an important producer behind them have a hard time getting their foot in the door. The producers of large venues and the directors of large festivals have been the ones determining the criteria for what's modern, what the trends are, and what's exotic (for example, contemporary Slovenian theatre is considered to be in this latter category).

But Mladi levi would be different. We would present only the most exhilarating; a review of the best and the most unique productions in the world. There would be a great atmosphere, and socialising would be its trademark; artists wouldn't have to leave the city immediately after the performance – they'd be able to stay. There would be a lot of things going on at the end of August, when people began returning from their vacations... At the time, Ljubljana really did need a good new festival.

Then I remember, very clearly and realistically, like something out of Émile Zola, the cold office on Rim-ska Street, one computer, and the fact that we didn't even have a printer. Soon the office began to fill up. Ira. Mojca. Štruc. And later Kohek. And then the first festival was before us. Already at the time I had learned something very important, something exceptional, from Nevenka and the entire team, which to this day remains a constant at Mladi levi – nothing, absolutely nothing, is impossible. We don't have a theatre? We'll build one. The performance is too big? We'll move the walls. We don't have any spotlights? We'll borrow them. Where will such a large number of artists sleep? We'll find something. And everything came together. At Bunker, even to this day, dreams of any kind are welcome. Because this is a place where the idea with the greatest chance of becoming a reality is the truly unbelievable one.

On legends

The first festival at the Ljubljana Castle was inaugurated by Ellen Stewart, the late director of the legendary New York theatre La MaMa. I remember going to pick her up from the airport in Trieste. I thought

she was a wonderful woman, with bright red lipstick and white dreadlocks. She was feeling quite hot and requested that we open all the windows in the car. This created a virtual tornado inside the vehicle, something she liked very much. She spoke of her house in Italy, where she had several residences and received artists from all over the world. She was the most passionate when she spoke of food, about bread, and that she would most of all like to eat some really good fried liver. Later, I had an interview with her and she told me of her beginnings as a fashion designer and how, together with Yves Saint Laurent, they prepared some creations for the Queen of England's Ball; of how Polish dressmakers gave her the name La Mama in her fashion studio in the East Village, which was soon to become the theatre where great directors from Kantor to Grotowski would perform, as well as big names in acting, like De Niro and Pacino.

Mladi levi has made it possible for me to experience some very special things, to be able to get to know so many interesting people throughout the years within the context of the festival. Like La Mama. They were followed by many more; those in love with their artistic calling, enthusiasts, humanists, seducers, eccentrics, from all corners of the world...

The programming team watches at least **30** performances for every performance selected.

On the artists

In all these years we have reviewed thousands of performances on cassettes and compact discs, and we have seen just as many live. We have presented artists who were something special, masters of dance, plays, storytelling, acrobatics... virtuosi. Young artists have been joined by already-established stars, as excellent touring groups from abroad were becoming less frequent in Ljubljana. At Mladi levi, Ljubljana's public saw new genres, such as the contemporary circus, where zero gravity was achieved many times. They also discovered contemporary African dance, the most modern and minimalist thing I had ever seen as far as dance was concerned – a meeting of Zen and rhythm. Then there were trends in contemporary performing arts. Completely new and intangible forms of theatre.

After we decided on the last performance, we wrote the entire programme down on a piece of paper (a sort of ritual) and usually, right before our eyes on that very page, the festival would assemble itself into a story. The performances are connected by a mysterious underlying common thread, and this is no coincidence. The festival is a living organism. One year, in just such a way, there was an abundance of exceptional storytellers. Another time we discovered that all the acts we were hosting had no scenography; several years later there was practically no music. Then, once again, everyone on the stage was talking about how a performance came to be. Flash forward and everyone was flirting with the visual arts. A few years ago, a large portion of the performances spoke about family; about where it is we come from. This year, it is all about an exceptionally engaged and political theatre, undoubtedly a reflection on the current state of affairs we find ourselves in.

Roland Barthes once wrote Michelangelo Antonioni a wonderful letter in which he described three virtues which, in his opinion, defined an artist. They are: vigilance, wisdom, and fragility. When I remember the artists who we hosted, sometimes more than once, at Mladi levi, I think intensely about these qualities. This vigilance is of a loving kind. It is the vigilance of desire and a mental vigilance, wrote the French philosopher. Wisdom means that the artist does not confuse meaning and the truth. "How many crimes has man committed in the name of Truth? How many wars, how much repression, fear, genocide, all for the victory of one single meaning! The artist knows that the meaning of a thing is not its truth; this knowledge is good sense; one could say, a crazy form of prudence. And because of it, the artist stands out from the crowd, from the herd of fanatics, and the ruthless." The third characteristic is the most paradoxical – vulnerability, which is represented by the artist's sensitive view of the world; the fact that he sees things that others do not. Vulnerability is already written into the very essence of the artist's mission, as more and more people are becoming convinced that society can survive without art. "The artist's activities are suspect, because they disturb the comfort of established meanings, because they're both very precious and free of charge, and because society still doesn't know what to think of this luxury."

Barthes also feels it's important that an artist is Modern: "Many view Modern as a banner of war against the old world and its compromised values. However, for a good artist, Modern is not a static expression of cheap opposition; it is precisely the opposite. Modern is an active effort to follow the changes of Time. It is no longer on the level of big History, but rather is within that little History, whose standard of measurement is the existence of every one of us."

If I flip through the catalogues and look at the names of the artists and the titles of their performances, and I play them through the projector of my memory, I recognise the familiar time in which they were created, and when we watched them at the festival; it's micro and macro time. When everyone was thinking about modernism, artists at Mladi levi were already talking about their personal intimacy, which, in our time of technology and media, had already transformed into something completely different. When we thought the political theatre was dead forever, in the distance there appeared, loud as a revolution, several Italian theatre groups at the festival, all with critical reflections on the chaos in their country and on their president. When no one was telling stories anymore, the stages of Mladi levi filled with the best storytellers, practically novelists. When it seemed as if virtuosity did not matter, performers cut through the air with their texts and bodies. They reinvigorated life, and unfolded in an exceptional way. Because of these very relevant facts, Mladi levi is Modern. Contemporary. Just as Barthes says, it seeks to follow changes. It is just in time.

On the present

One of the main characteristics of theatre performances is that they are fleeting. After they are gone, all that remains are a few photographs, reviews, and memories. The theatre is one of the last forms of media in which the audience and the actor on the stage meet face to face. In the darkened hall they share the same time and space. The present moment. As they say: "The only reason for time is so that everything doesn't happen at once; the only reason for space is that everything doesn't just happen to you."

And this present moment, this incredible feeling is something that exists less and less in modern times, as various forces are trying to take it away from us. Not too long ago I spoke with the legendary screenwriter and playwright, and close colleague of Peter Brook, Jean-Claude Carrière, who said that our past is catching up to us at an ever increasing rate. For example, last year's fashion is already considered this year's retro. The future is becoming more and more uncertain and, because of all this, the feeling for and awareness of the present is simply being diminished. It's being stolen away from us.

But the theatre sometimes shows it to us. It releases the present to us through the body, like a mild electric shock. As people, we basically hold our lives in our hands with the help of time, and if that changes for a moment, something surprising always happens. The intensity of the festival programme has a lot to do with that, knocking down and challenging our everyday reality. During the ten or more August afternoons and evenings that I spend at Mladi levi, time is organised differently. The intensity of the performances, communication, thoughts about art, the world. There is a new coordinate system. The present is here under my feet and before my eyes. The day carries new dimensions. Just like when we are in love, as Barthes would say.

On friendship

I always associate Mladi levi with friendship. Towards people and art.

This is a special category that is hard to write about.

And not because I'm afraid to write something personal,

but rather because whatever I write would not be personal enough.

The office in Bunker, wherever it was, either on Rimska or on Slomškova Street, has always been and ever will be a haven of friendship. Time and space, which meet in the heart. For all eternity.

Photo Tina Smrekar



Nevenka Koprivšek and Irena Štaudohar, 15 years of working together

RES BOSSHART,

professor and Chair of the Department of Theatre and Opera

at the Zurich Art University (ZHdK), founding member of the Junge Hunde network

YOUNG DOGS, OLD NAGS, AND THE NEW

“About each culture it can be said that it is constructed hierarchically, such that everything has a value that is determined by its position in the cultural hierarchy of values.”

Twenty years ago, in his book *On the New: A Study of Cultural Economics*, philosopher, art critic and media theorist Boris Groys determined that the hierarchy of values manifests itself through a structured, cultural memory. In our culture and our times, this is clearly manifested in libraries, museums, theatres, and concert halls. Groys calls these institutions “archives”. They are the materialised form of the cultural memory of a society. This stretches from the local to the international.

The fundamental principle of any archive, and thereby of cultural memory, is that the New must be taken in, always, over and over. Thus, it is only within the context of the cultural hierarchy of values that it makes sense to speak about the New in art. The New is something different, but nevertheless of equal value to that which has already been taken into the archive. Imitations, forgeries and works of unoriginality are ignored by the archives as superfluous.

But if the New is taken into the archives, the question arises: where does it come from? Where is the innovation? Not in the archives, or else it wouldn’t have to be taken in.

Boris Groys goes on to name another area in addition to the structured, hierarchical area of the archives. He calls it the “profane space.” This area is extremely heterogeneous. Nothing is saved, and everything disappears with the passing of time.

It contains everything that is not encompassed by the archives, i.e. the irrelevant, the worthless, the inconspicuous, the uninteresting and the ephemeral. But also innovation. In this area, the potential for new cultural values can be found, because it is here that the Other exists.

However, in profane spaces nothing New is created, but rather only innovation: the Other.

I don’t intend to state that the roughly 20-year-old theories of Boris Groys prompted the founders of the international Junge Hunde network to launch a festival for artists, who were at the beginning of their artistic questioning of today’s society. But we realised at the time that there was no place, no structure, from which the New could emanate. Existing works were reproduced, and there were imitations which were promptly rejected by cultural memory as superfluous and tautological.

We were convinced that the “New” springs from an assertion and the social discourse it inspires. We wanted to transplant the outer process of the fine arts “ready made” from the 1950s (e.g. Marcel Duchamp’s *Fountain*) into the performing arts around the turn of the millennium. We wanted to see innovation as a pushing of the boundary that separates the culturally valorised art of the archive from the realm of the profane. We were convinced that the New exists in the transition from the profane into cultural memory. The New evolves from the evaluative, valorising comparison between the archive and the profane space – and gets lost the minute it is classified in one or the other.

We then established that there are no basic criteria that justify the different values between the Other and the New. A forgery of a masterpiece can be just as “beautiful” as the original – and still the copy remains garbage. The difference in value is based on an ideological fiction, which should be justifying the differences in the hierarchy of values. This fiction is strengthened in the public discourse, which is dominated by various fluctuations and market dominating forces.

The Junge Hunde network was committed to irritating these automated confirmations of the hierarchy of values in our cultural memory, to subverting them and, when possible, to breaking them apart. And I believe that we relatively quickly managed to at least irritate, here and there.

Considering my origins, I can judge the effects best in the German-speaking cultural sphere. In the beginning of the 90s the theatre landscape was in a state of numbness dominated by the heroes of generation ‘68. They ruled the public discourse. They were the border guards between the archive and the profane; between tradition, the New and the Other.

Thanks in part to the internationalisation of the Other, which is to say innovation, the Junge Hunde network was able to increase the pressure on the archives and to increasingly integrate the area of the profane space into the public discourse. As a result, cultural memory with the archival institutions penetrated deeper and deeper into the profane space and erased the border between them. The ideological fiction became a set phrase.

The Junge Hunde network provided an important impulse for developments across Europe. Our wish came true. The network no longer exists, but the Mladi levi festival shows its success 15 years later. Congratulations!

Junge Hunde artists

Photo Marcandrea Bragalini



Fjčo balet: 1:0, a breakthrough performance by Goran Bogdanovski. Mladi levi 2000

Photo Urška Boljkovac



Mala Kline: *Campo de' Fiori*.
Mladi levi 2004

Photo Urška Boljkovac



Domenico Giustino, Kajsa Sandström,
Gilles Fumba: *Rabbit Hole*. Mladi levi 2004

However, it would be a mistake to rest on one's laurels. Keep in mind that only 4% of artists aged from 25 to 30 who started working as choreographers, directors, authors, composers and conductors, are still active in their respective fields after 20 years. The rest are for longer or shorter periods of time sniffed, fed and tested but not convincingly and eagerly supported by the institutions, as a result of their ideological fictions. In every theatre (at least in the German-speaking area) today, young artists are taken up and exposed to the public discourse, but not supported, defended or pushed forward. The "Other" grows rampant in the profane primeval forest and as soon as one candidate falters – because a crosswind starts blowing in the archive – the institutions reach, disoriented, into the colourful profane, pluck another flower, turn on the LED lights, write a press release, and wait.

Why is our cultural memory – whose fundamental principle is, as previously mentioned by Groys, to again and again take up the New – satisfied with this fake art of engagement? Why don't we care about sustainability? About anchoring the New into the cultural tradition?

In my opinion, in the last few years, the New has been separated from any valorised aesthetic comparison in the public discourse, because the ideological fictions not only mutated into clichés, but also because the differentiation of values has become limited to the economic dimension of the free market. Thus, it's more inexpensive for cultural institutions to again and again, in rapid succession, declare profane innovations as new (albeit emptied), rather than to engage themselves in transferring the subjectively selected Other, via public discourse, as the New into our cultural memory.

In concrete terms this means: for the salary of an experienced director I can pay at least two young directors. I thereby get two productions, and am thus free to sell even more tickets at the same costs. Working with experienced directors involves binding relationships and social responsibilities. The young can be immediately replaced by other young artists.

And so it has come to pass that the demand of the cultural archive for Junge Hunde is significant, at least in the German-speaking area. And yet, the life-span of the Hunde gets shorter and shorter. Just 4% remain after 20 years.

After 15 years of Junge Hunde, I therefore wish to call for an international network of Alte Mähren (old nags), so that we can deal more closely with the innovative Other of the old stallions and mares, to resuscitate the public discourse, conflicting fictions, and to shape the structure of our cultural memory in the archives.

PASCAL BRUNET,
Director of Relais Culture Europe, in cooperation with
LAURENCE BARONE,
political analyst at Relais Culture Europe



Photo Urška Boljkovac

EUROPE - FORMULATING DEMOCRACY BEYOND IGNORANCE

I no longer remember the first time I came to the Mladi levi festival.

It was August, of course, but which year?

That's when I discovered a new Europe, the one that emerged after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

And also the one that emerged after the war in the Balkans.

So, just like every other well-meaning Western European at the time,

I attempted to grasp and understand the reasons behind these transformations.

I had learnt about the Balkans mostly from books, but in Ljubljana I found my way in,
choosing it out of many other options available to me at the time.

It was more friendly, that's for sure, but it was also just gaining its initial momentum.
But, I still wanted to understand! And sometimes that desire can blind you as well.

The festival atmosphere, the performances and the newly formed friendships were a real discovery for me. So, I decided to go on several journeys into Eastern Europe. I wiped the dust from my books about this region and started to meet people from it; people who are unusually connected to their history and lands, but also to their divisions, and their cultural individuality. At the time I had the impression that all of these processes still took place in a somewhat violent manner, without any words or real discussions. As if just the visibility of cultures was sufficient enough; either an obvious fact that they all still shared something in common, or the blatant reality of their rupture and tear.

And, among all these twists and turns there was something else that was particularly unusual for me: the absence of any discussion concerning the European project! To me this was the most significant thing of all. Everything else, the Balkans, the East, the wars... all of this was merely a summary of my own ignorance. But here, something else was at stake. As a somewhat naive Western European, I didn't quite understand the decision to follow in the ways of Europe, something which was simply accepted without any doubts or debate. Was it about becoming part of the European Union, or was it about joining Western Europe? Was it about taking part in a political and therefore also cultural project, or was it obtaining some part of Western prosperity?

It was rather incomprehensible to me that such crucial decisions on the fate of a country would be accepted without thoroughly examining the goals of the project they wanted to be a part of beforehand. And for this reason, out of all the artistic and social themes touched upon by the festival, I was most intrigued by the following one: the attempt to create the conditions for a debate on the common points of a given society within an artistic space. The European project is by all means part of this commonality. Even though it hasn't always been able to avoid the disappointments of Europe, the festival has, to a point, at least succeeded in bringing attention to certain social, political, artistic and cultural European oppositions.

During these times of crisis every new day confirms and further articulates the necessity of the European project; every new day speaks of the necessity to talk and negotiate with the citizens of Europe. This process of political construction can only be supported by an "open and documented" public discussion, which has been overlooked and poorly managed for far too long in Europe. The process in question must be supported by an awareness of our time, our development, and any initiatives currently in the works, but also on the responsibility of being able to understand them, put them in action, and even criticise them decisively if required.

Thus the cultural dimension of Europe's construction must be understood in accordance with the abovementioned categories. The Mladi levi festival thus became one of the all too rare European artistic events which attempts to enter into this discussion and define its goals. It only still has to strengthen its role as an area of European cultural space.

There were times when culture was not taken seriously on the European level, but this was years ago. Today quite the opposite is true. The political process is encompassing more and more, and the cultural agenda of the EU is increasingly being enforced. Funding is provided directly or indirectly, or in the context of other projects or policies, such as the cohesion policy. Numerous European cultural

players, such as Bunker and the Mladi levi festival, receive support and are entering into European networks (such as Balkan Express). There they are establishing cooperative projects and inventing new ways of functioning and understanding the world, which also affects that which we understand today within the concept of cultural and artistic endeavours. The topics of discussion take shape gradually, and concern either our developmental and social model, or the position of Europe in the world.

Apart from the amounts in funding, which are definitely not what they should be, we must also focus on these fundamental shifts, these new puzzles and efforts, recognise them on their own territory and draw them into the discussion. The challenge we face today, in this globalised and rapidly changing world, is to create a new approach to public art and cultural policy on the continent, one which will originate from our society and represent the foundation of what we want the 21st century to be like.

We must therefore ask ourselves:

- How can we establish a policy of European art and culture, which will be based on the principles of justice, and the rights of individuals and communities?
- How can artistic and cultural factors simultaneously bring together European solidarity and the responsibility for an exit strategy from the crisis, which must still be invented?
- How to propose new ways for a cultural economy between the not-enough regulated market and the economy, which is only limited to public interventions (especially when this support collides with the available means)?
- How can we formulate a political framework that would express the economic dimensions of the EU (together with globalised mutations), with social dimensions (fighting against social exclusion) and democratic ones (exploring the paths of social mutations)?

In the end, how can we define a cultural community policy that would not merely be an extension of national policies – which are themselves often in crisis – but would be a public policy of the “European common good”?

A realisation of the future EU action framework for 2014 has to be taken in this perspective. It cannot be replaced with the collapsing national cultural policies of numerous European states (either in terms of budget cuts or the right to freedom of expression). It will enable the construction of a responsible European space marked with solidarity. Thus, let us no longer confuse the project and the tools.

During these times of economic, social and political instability in Europe, a debate on the directions of the EU is necessary; one that would clearly demonstrate our responsibility. We don't have to continue with approximations or cliché repetitions. Even these debates also contribute to the emergence of some kind of political, social and cultural Europe, which will once again articulate art and culture in the light of what we understand as humanism, democracy and social justice.

Since the beginning, Mladi levi has been creating the conditions for such European discussions. Let us hope that it continues to do so for a long time, and that it will continue representing those Eastern gates I entered so many years ago.

The Mladi levi festival has hosted **26** round table discussions in **15** years.

Photos Dejan Habicht



A round table discussion at the second edition of Mladi levi: Spaces of independent performing arts in Ljubljana (Bojana Kunst, Blaž Peršin, Mojca Božič, Raymond Weber, Nevenka Koprivšek, Eda Čufer and Bratko Bibič)

WHAT IS THE ALTERNATIVE ACTUALLY?

Thoughts on commemorating the 15th anniversary of the Mladi levi festival

Since its first edition I have more or less regularly followed the Mladi levi festival. I perceive its foundation as a desire to provide opportunities for the recognition of younger artists and those who have not yet been able to integrate into international production networks. Its development in particular has been oriented towards: (1) the acquisition of infrastructure and guaranteed working conditions for Slovenian artists (the venue Stara mestna elektrarna), (2) the education of production and artistic staff, whom Bunker has been able to recruit from its continual co-operation with volunteers, (3) the perception of urban space as a cultural organism; for it to be decoded, an understanding and nurturing of minimal urban literacy is required (the Cultural Quarter Tabor), (4) the mobilisation of potential writers to reflect on performing arts (Arena), (5) the stable, attentive and continuous communication of the festival programme with the public and audience in order to ensure an acceptable audience attendance, (6) the re-programming of the festival into a mid-sized production with some established names and even stars from the field of the contemporary performing arts, and (7) last but not least, understanding the festival as a creative meeting point for artists (since the festival's first edition, all participating artists and artists groups have had the opportunity to stay in Ljubljana for the entire duration of the festival).

On one hand, the festival, which was founded in 1998 by Nevenka Koprišek and her colleagues from Bunker, is a success story among Slovenian non-governmental productions, since it is probably the only one of the festivals founded in the 90s without a major crisis and with a certain recognisable festival atmosphere. On the other, I find it rather hard to get rid of the bitter aftertaste when I think about the ambitions of the context it established, and what this context was in return able to obtain. In this

paper I would like to outline some contextual characteristics which sprouted from the founding of the Mladi levi festival, and state some theses about what went wrong in this story and how.

Festivals

Today it might seem that festivals in the field of contemporary performing arts have been held in Slovenia forever. However, the reality is quite different: festivals in Slovenia (in the field of contemporary performing arts, these have been produced and programmed primarily by Slovenian artists from the non-governmental sector) started in 1975 with the Ljubljana Dance Days, organised between 1975 and 1981 by the Slovenian dance historian, critic, teacher and editor of dance programmes at Ljubljana Radio and Television, Marija Vogelnik, together with her culture association Kinetikon. This was triggered by the production of contemporary dance, which suddenly expanded beyond educational contexts with the founding of the Studio for Contemporary Dance in 1973 and Dance Theatre Celje in 1975.

Looking at references affirmatively recognised by the contemporary performing arts as part of their own history, it is possible to realise that contemporary dance practices were categorised as amateur activities by the cultural and political system of that time, while experimental theatres (Pupilija Ferkeverk Theatre, the experimental Glej Theatre, Pekarna Theatre) with their liberal generation of young artists (born during and after WWII) in opposition to the first wave of these theatres (the Experimental Theatre, Ad Hoc Theatre, Oder 57 Theatre) perhaps for the first time actually succeeded in establishing a different aesthetic field, even though the temporary visits of directors and members of theatre ensembles in these venues represented a kind of parallel to their regular work in institutions, deviations from traditional artistic processes and encounters with different types of play-writing. In opposition to dance, the expert public never proclaimed experimental theatre as an amateur activity however, at the time this kind of production was obviously not as widespread as to request its own festival; the Belgrade festivals BITEF and BELEF, and other festivals in the former Yugoslavia, provided these artists with occasional contacts with international productions.

At this time Slovenia knew two major festival institutions, which sometimes included some forms of contemporary dance (modern dance, expressive dance, modern ballet) in their programmes or so-called experimental theatre. The first one was called the Ljubljana Summer Festival, first organised in 1953 by the Tourist Association of Ljubljana, which to this day remains a typical season festival (today known as Festival Ljubljana), a format used by city governments across Europe to offer their citizens and seasonal visitors a more or less quality programme, but in any case still a bullet-proof art programme. The first guest performances of European, and especially US American modern dance in Slovenia were linked to this festival (with the exception of the first guest performance of a foreign dance company after WWII in Slovenia: the Jose Limon Dance Company performed in the Ljubljana Opera House in the end of 1957 with choreography by Jose Limon and Doris Humphrey, who was the artistic director of the company at the time). These were entirely financially supported by the US government, with the executive production being

carried out by their secret services from the background in order to export American abstract art around the world by means of cultural colonialism. Therefore, in Slovenia it was possible to see: the Alvin Ailey Dance Company, the Paul Taylor Dance Company, the Alvin Nikolais Dance Company (Carolin Carlson and Murray Louis were also dancing in the company), the Glen Tetley Dance Company, and among the European companies: the Maurice Béjart and Ballet du XXe Siècle, the London Contemporary Dance Theatre and the Het Nationale Ballet – Amsterdam, led by Sonja Gaskell. After WWII this was how the international performing arts supply started to intervene with scarce domestic production.

The second festival institution was called the Week of Slovenian Theatres between 1966 and 1969, and was renamed the Maribor Theatre Festival (*Borštnikovo srečanje*) in 1970. This is the format of national theatre festivals, like those which sprout in different European states from different cultural and political systems and transformed in the 90s either into national theatre showcases or international festival programmes, or became a combination of both. (The Maribor Theatre Festival was probably one of the last to experience programme reform, with regard to this kind of theatre festival in Eastern Europe.) In the cultural and political systems of Eastern Europe these festivals had a predominantly reviewing (an overview of the national production) and trade unionist function (meetings of theatre trade unions). The Maribor Theatre Festival inserted experimental theatre productions into its programme after 1970, primarily because they were based on Slovenian plays, and this was also a chief argument to claim funding (especially from the Municipality of Ljubljana). Other productions were mainly left out of the programmes, and that caused individual frustrations among artists, but no bigger disputes. In 1979, when the Maribor Theatre Festival was accompanied by a festival called the Week of Slovenian Drama, which initially took place in the Folk Theatre Celje, the Slovenian play-writing production acquired its festival. In this way the conditions to consolidate play-writing canons were established (this was the fundamental reason for subsequent generational conflicts; at the heart of the problem was nothing else but the defence of the Aristotelian terms *mythos* and *ethos*; to a certain generation, theatre just was not conceivable without plots and characters).

This state of affairs was then satisfactory until the first half of the 80s, when, for various reasons, the effects of modern theatre widened from textual interpretations to a more radical director's text (if I may use the semiotic term). Influenced by the historical avant-garde, the theatre of that time became an engineering field for the de-composition and exhibition of theatricalised historical discourses (aesthetic, political and cultural). This is also when, because of the revolt against institutions, the hierarchical aesthetic relationship between high and low art was denounced for the first time, which suddenly resulted in a series of theatricalised "underground" collectives and their events (the theatricalisation of everyday life and identities). But this story has to be introduced in a different and broader context.

What still exists in the field of contemporary performing arts in Slovenia, includes – I dare say – somewhat outdated models of cultural production, which also includes the festivalisation of performing arts in the past two decades. This began to germinate in 1977 with several events, including a concert

by the band Pankrti, which took place on Tuesday, 18 October, 1977, in the Moste High School gym in Ljubljana, and is especially worthy of emphasis. The following Thursday the first album by the Sex Pistols was released in Great Britain, marking the outbreak of punk.

In the East, this coincided with a decline in the power of the Communist parties; in the West predominantly with the rise of right-wing parties and drastic liberalism in the economy (including the privatisation of state institutions). The end of the energy crisis gave momentum to a certain paradigm of pop culture, since the fall in oil prices after 1980 allowed for cheaper vinyl and plastic. LPs could suddenly be printed by minor independent record labels (ignoring the demands of commercial labels) with their own artistic and programme autonomy (these record labels later released albums by Laibach and Borghesia abroad). The doctrine of cultural politics followed the logic of privatisation in the West and suddenly pushed art into the market (the indirect and direct subsidisation of art stopped in the US and Great Britain). Two European countries which had rid themselves of Fascists in the 70s (Spain and Portugal) were on their way to the EU and European Structural Funds, and it was the beginning of Flemish national emancipation, which evolved rapidly in the 60s, and needed its own cultural distinction. All this generated the conditions for something different.

Even if in the US, particularly in Detroit and New York, punk emerged from the spirit of the dissident 60s, and mainly evolved as an emancipation of the urban aesthetics of popular culture, in Europe its seeds yielded different fruits. In Europe, punk provided younger generations (of the working class) with the widest range of creative potential, stimulated the articulation of their social and political positions, presented all possible forms of resistance against the "ideological state apparatus" and suddenly offered a variety of possible alternatives. The revolt against different state institutions also generated a series of rebellious strategies and tactics, among which precisely those that were the most artistically original were established in the socialist regimes of Eastern Europe, where artists boomeranged their governments with their own ideological operatives (Moscow Conceptualism, NSK, etc.).

In such a context, it became crystal clear that theatre and dance institutions, with their venues in exposed parts of urban city areas and their models of production, could not ensure the creative model craved by the spirit of the times. The theatre programmes and repertoires of national, city, regional and folk theatres, either by genre (ballet, opera, puppet) or target audience (youth, children), simply could not provide the new creative generations with any challenging prospects. Along with punk, post-punk, new wave, video art, fanzines and alternative design, photography and film, the alternative media, new lifestyles and social movements, and with the different theorising of contexts (political, cultural, social, artistic), the aesthetic patterns and artistic processes of the models of theatre institutions listed above seemed simply out of step with the times. Also, the field of performance art had to yield to so-called alternatives. These are only some reasons for the unleashing of creative potential which necessitated new production methods in the field of performing arts. The meagre funding of artistic production in the field of the performing arts required its mobility and networking as well (the

foundation of IETM in the beginning of the 80s was one of the first cases of its kind), and the newly established culture centres across Europe (Brussels, Lisbon, Barcelona etc.) required visibility and recognisability. The solution was to be found in festival networks and high production mobility.

Even though at this time the artistic and cultural creativity in Slovenia was extraordinarily eruptive, cultural policy needed another decade to react to the new situation. Ljubljana became a cultural trend setter for the entire Yugoslavian area, but its cultural production was financed by strapped youth and student budgets, or mainly by ticket sales (for music). It was supported by student and alternative organisations and their media, where an intellectual elite was being born, which quickly became aware of the new situation. The worn-out socialist infrastructure and the party toolkit of social control became the haven of this culture. The fight for venues began.

The share for culture in the Slovenia's state budget
was 2,11 % in 1998 and 2,05 % in 2011.

A groundbreaking moment for the Ljubljana scene was certainly the “party bunker”, which was what the Culture and Congress Centre Cankarjev Dom was called. It was built by the political echo chamber of the iron 70s, but in the 80s it became a shelter for the international programme in the field of performing arts. This is how productions from the new European cultural situation mentioned above, including the important Flemish story, found their way to Ljubljana for the first time. In exchange, the most important artists of Ljubljana were slowly being exported to the West. After the guest performance of Ristić’s theatre performance *Missa in A minor* in Nancy, France, the Mladinsko Theatre even received a letter from the famous French philosopher Michel Foucault just before his early death, where he opined that with their theatricalised picture of centralised power, NSK triggered a media scandal at the London LIFT festival in the second half of the 80s. Nobody expected that the Eastern European artistic attraction would change its artistic strategies depending on cultural context and it did not want to exhibit itself only as an “exotic object” of the East. Laibach and Borghesia signed contracts with foreign record labels, and the Ljubljana Lacanian school with Žižek was patiently waiting to be discovered by the West. Networking became a fact, but Slovenia was not ready to react to it in the form of festivals earlier than in the middle of the 90s.

For the break with the cultural paradigm, which in fact affected all of urban Europe, the festival event titled *What is the alternative?* was crucial in Slovenia (it was held on 4 and 5 November, 1983, and organised by the ŠKUC-Forum and Radio Študent in the Youth Centre Zgornja Šiška, supported by the Regional Committee of the Association of Slovenian Socialistic Youth). It might be that this was not only crucial because the artistic programme (music and video) suddenly could not survive without theory anymore (the symposium titled *The Role and Sphere of Difference in Materialistic Theory* represents a groundbreaking shift in the urge for theorising cultural life), but because this connection of

practice and theory (artistic and cultural) is of a certain special nature, and it eventually transformed Ljubljana from the provincial capital of Slovenia to a cultural metropolis. The various forms of creativity during this time placed Ljubljana on the cultural map of the world for the first time, and it was at its strongest. No Ljubljana city government has realised this since, even including state governments, where decisive posts are held by representatives who participated in the artistic and cultural upheavals of the 80s, and did not react any differently to the phenomenon described above.

Perhaps it is worth moving a few years back at this point. In order to be able to clearly see one of the crucial discrepancies between governments (and their cultural policies) and artistic production in the field of (contemporary) performing arts, one initiative is particularly suggestive, the initiative which was launched in September, 1978, by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Slovenia. Since the Communist Party was aware that it was gradually losing power by the end of the iron 70s, it sought clarity among specialists from the field of artistic dance (ballet and modern dance). Some critics, historians and artistic directors of the time were trying to outline the state of the domestic fields they were in. The Communist Party was not so much worried by the development of the individual fields (ballet and contemporary dance): the reports show that the Party officials had absolutely no clue about it. The problem they detected was the following: there were no members of the Party among dancers and choreographers from the canonised field of contemporary dance, nor were there any “good” self-managers. Their participation in Party structures was minimal. This is what they wanted to change. But, among the experts, some symptomatic problems occurred, which showed the divide between institutions and non-institutional activities: their reports displayed a kind of Cold War aesthetic, which is similar to today’s struggle between the left and the right. Moral values represented by their aesthetics and descriptions of production conditions suggested that we were dealing with two continents, between which there were no traffic connections whatsoever; nor was there any interest in meeting halfway. Well, while the governments ignored the primary interest in artistic fields, with which they sometimes establish some kind of dialogue, while still craving the potential instrumentalisation of these fields for their own interests, the divide between institutional production and the production of the non-governmental sector become irreconcilable. And in their essence, the arguments about these conditions remain similar to this day.

The festivals which were founded in Slovenia in the 90s, including the Mladi levi festival, are in my opinion a representation of one of the emancipatory manifestations of cultural activism from the 80s, which at a certain moment decided to initiate strategic points (appropriate media which managed to write about the production of contemporary art, individual educational initiatives, fluidity between local and foreign production, some artistic awards, national festival platforms, sector integration, venue infrastructure, initiatives to increase funding of the sector mentioned, suggestions for the institutionalisation of individual artistic fields, efforts to secure stable subsidising etc.), by means of which its social presence (belonging to some cultural space) would be granted representation (inclusion, which also has its legal or institutional foundations). But this has still not happened. Slovenian independence

and the new social and political situation promised inclusive policies for different segments of civil society, among others also for the incredibly lively cultural and artistic fields which formed in the 80s as predominantly intertwining, non-segmented, and common fields of artistic, cultural, social and political, medial and activist practices. However, like so many other political voices, this segment of society works as a democratic ornament, which has no other function but to conceal the fact that the social and political structure in Slovenia is in fact a soft dictatorship of two party fractions, two politicised churches, or two moral positions, and between them the traditional cultural struggle continues in cold terms, paralysing everybody.

Ministers of Culture throughout the years of the Mladi levi festival

- **Jožef Školč 1997–2000 • Rudi Šeligo 2000 • Andreja Rihter 2000–2004 •**
- **Vasko Simoniti 2004–2008 • Majda Širca Ravnikar 2008–2011 •**
- **Boštjan Žekš 2011–2012 • Žiga Turk 2012–... •**

During the period between 1991 and 2004, when most of the contemporary performing arts festivals were established, the festivals which are produced exclusively by the non-governmental sector had some deceptively happy moments indeed, when it was possible to believe that things were gradually improving. But these happy moments were in fact the sum of temporary solutions which: (1) prolonged the exploitation of more artist, creator and actor generations, (2) gradually pushed creativity towards obsessive, quantitative productivity, and (3) managed to produce either hysteria in the field mentioned (because of accumulated frustrations in view of the inefficient systematic solutions to cultural and political needs) or the lethargy and apathy of individual actors. It cannot be denied that things have improved since 1991, but things happened slowly, too slowly, and without a consistent guaranty that they would not drift back to their starting point. Today it seems that some groundbreaking concert in Moste High School or somewhere else could do its magic, and that it would be necessary to organise an event entitled *What is the alternative No. 2?* This is perhaps what the whole reasoning world has been asking itself, now more than ever. However, unlike the Ljubljana event of 1983, it seems that this question is not being raised out of necessity to name exciting existing phenomena, but out of global despair. One of the actors from the original event in 1983 is answering this question worldwide, so to speak. His name, of course, is Slavoj Žižek.

The festival picture of the past two decades can be divided into two segments. The first segment is particularly strategic, striving in different ways for the emancipation of individual creative and production areas in the field of contemporary performing arts. The second segment bridges genre gaps, and at the same time is a reaction to the deficiency and passivity of institutions in individual fields of creativity, pushing the regu-

lar type of production towards the festival type of production, since this is the only way sustainable funding can be guaranteed for the work of individual artistic fields; this being the case after 2000.

In the 90s, between 1991 and 1996, the Video-Dance Festival in its five editions bridged the gaps of knowledge about contemporary dance developments in the West and nourished the popular genre of filmed dance in the Slovenian cultural context. In 1993, the festival Ex Ponto demonstratively reacted to the closing of the common Yugoslavian cultural space in the field of performing arts, and to the exclusivity of the Slovenian cultural space for those artists who escaped to Ljubljana from the battlefields of the Yugoslavian wars. In 1995, two festivals were founded in Ljubljana. Festival Exodus emerged as a reformed version of the exhausted Dance Days, which were the continuation of the Ljubljana Dance Days since 1982, and predominantly took place at the venue Cankarjev Dom. It presented Slovenian dance productions (for instance, that of the Dance Theatre Ljubljana, the Studio of Free Dance, Kinetikon, etc.) in combination with individual foreign guest performances. The City of Women festival is important because it seeks a higher inclusion of female artists in the problematic male rule over international artistic and production structures. Between 1997 and 1999, the venue Cankarjev Dom hosted two festival programmes known under the common name of *Beauty of the Extreme*, which were probably the first response to the aesthetic paradigm shift in the field of contemporary performing arts (dance and performance art). The Mladi levi festival, which joins the already mentioned festivals in 1998, completes this picture with efforts to ensure conditions for young artists and creators to step into international production networks (it was founded as the Slovenian festival portion of the international network Junge Hunde). Among the festivals which emerged after 2000, including the Gibanica festival, the Slovenian Dance Platform fits this strategic festival picture. The latter emerged from the consolidation of the Slovenian dance scene (especially in Ljubljana) and set itself the goal of ensuring dance artists greater presence in the international area.

The problem of this segment of the Slovenian festival picture is that: (1) at individual festivals, a leadership crisis occurred too quickly, (2) considering the types of organisations (non-governmental institutions, associations) leadership changes did not occur, or occurred in the wrong way, (3) funding has not followed performance costs in the international performing arts markets, (4) festivals have not known how to step out of their constant beginnings, (5) they have had difficulty following shifts in the field of ever-changing aesthetics, (6) many festivals repeatedly lost the acquired trust of their audience. Finally, last but not least, all of this more than suited all the political options directing the Ministry of Culture, which, throughout all these years, has failed to remember what actually could have been its cultural policy. In contrast to the festivals mentioned, the Mladi levi festival has been able to ensure some kind of production, programme, and communication stability, and has become the leading festival among the projects mentioned in the field of performing arts in Slovenia. And, while festivals emerged in the region, with initial budgets comparable to mid-sized festivals across Europe, in Slovenia budgets have remained virtually the same as in the 90s.

The last non-governmental decade issued the following festivals: the first edition of the Festival Naked Stage was launched (2002), reacting to growing interest in improvisational theatre forms in Slovenia. The development of contemporary dance outside Ljubljana led to the founding of festivals such as Na-gib in Maribor (2005), Fronta in Murska Sobota (2006), and Platforma in Maribor (2007). The need for new playwriting gave birth to the festival Preglej na glas! in 2006. Since a new generation of dance artists emerged and new forms of performance creation were needed, the Ukrep Festival of Dance Perspectives appeared in 2008, and from the educational productions of the regional Nomad Dance Academy, the Pleskavica festival emerged in 2010. The last two festival programmes mentioned formed the Cofestival festival in 2012, together with the Modul Dance programme. Parallel to this, various anniversary festival programmes emerged in the past few years (Maska 001, Šoking gala šov), as well as the occasional foreign network festival (the Balkan Dance Platform, Plesna Vesna/Spring Forward). This is how, due to production conditions, regular production gradually slid into the festival format.

Looking at my personal spectator biography, which has also been determined by writing reviews and articles for various Slovenian media at some points, I could argue that my perspective has been significantly marked, nurtured and sharpened by the festival productions of the 90s, and that I will never forget how groundbreaking and binding individual performances or festival editions of that time have been for me. I am certainly not alone in these feelings and beliefs. I think that the community producing festivals and assuring possibilities for the creation of contemporary performing arts in Slovenia should sit down at a common table in the near future and produce some kind of strategic, complementary plan, inspired by the contents, once titled *What is the alternative?* What we need is an assessment of the state of affairs and a vision for the future. After all, it is possible to realise that it is necessary, if nothing else, to be prepared at all times for the whims of one “Party Central Committee” or another. And, that now and then it is necessary to shed a little ray of optimism on our field of practice, which we need for inspiration and which is one of the reasons and conditions for our work. On this occasion, I wish the Mladi levi festival a great next-fifteen-year-plan. Good luck!

Photo Nada Žgank



Minister of Culture Vasko Simoniti
at the opening of Mladi levi 2006

Photo Urška Boljkovac



Vice-Mayor of Ljubljana Miloš Pavlica, Minister of Culture Andreja Rihter and Director of Elektro Ljubljana Vincenc Janša at the opening of Stara mestna elektrarna in August 2004

Photo Urška Boljkovac



Cultural offer in August 2003 in Ljubljana

BLAŽ LUKAN,

Assistant Professor of Dramaturgy at the Ljubljana Academy of Theatre,
Radio, Film and Television; publicist and dramaturge

MLADI LEVI OR HOW TO REMEMBER?

I've been going through my archives in vain; it's impossible to find any relevant texts about the Mladi levi festival. I guess that's the price I have to pay for trading in journalism for academia, but then again, the unfortunate situation also alludes to another change, one that has occurred in the nature of archives themselves: as they have become digitalised, instead of being recorded on paper, we are left with some paradoxical consequences. I used to save my newspaper articles, copies and even newspaper clippings with great care. Nowadays I tend to leave their destiny in the hands of a hard disk or USB drive, which basically means that they face a rather uncertain future, despite the technological superiority of the storing equipment. There's also the archive in our heads, but that's not very reliable either. There was a time when I was certain that the performances and events I wrote about would remain recorded in my memory, but in time I have come to realise that the opposite is true: accounts are deleted from my memory, because there is no longer any need to remember something once it's been written down.

Ok, maybe it's not quite that dramatic, but it's not that much of an exaggeration either. The written account you're reading now will probably become yet another doomed mission if I add one last fact to the above-mentioned impediments: my strong aversion to writing memories down.

(Although I do enjoy recalling memories in company, perhaps while having a drink or two, but not just the memories of past representations – those I enjoy the least. Remembering my student days, my military service, and my friends that have already passed away brings me great pleasure, probably as much pleasure as it gives boredom to those listening about something they weren't a part of.)

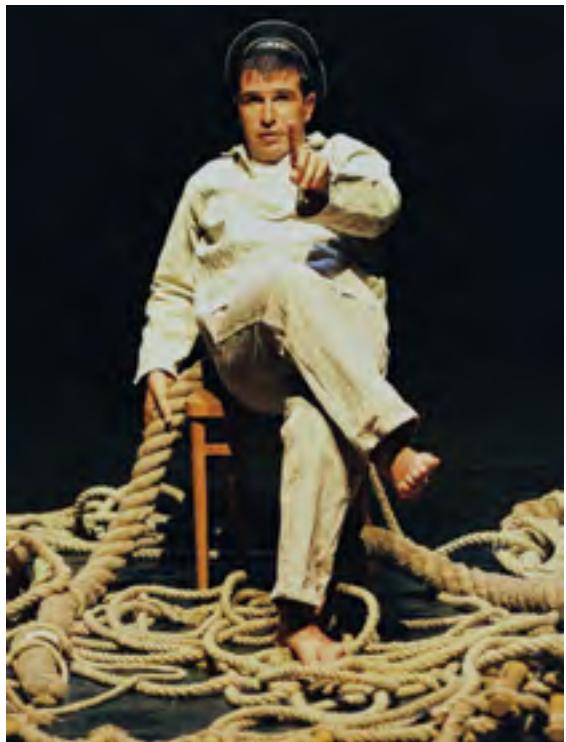
And for this reason I've decided to share some of the (still) living, perfectly personal, and more or less non-theoretical fragments, related to the fifteen years of the Mladi levi festival. This actually means that the subject in question isn't memories, but the living and breathing here and now. Therefore, when speaking in the past tense I'm actually referring to the present one (and in fact hoping for the future one).

To begin with, in the first year of the festival, I was most surprised to see the audience, which was refreshingly new and completely anonymous at the same time. In Ljubljana, all regular performance visitors from the non-institutional scene are mutually acquainted – and by this I mean that we actually know each other to the point of driving each other mad while simultaneously and desperately missing each other when someone is absent. And, from the middle of this group of people, a new and unfamiliar crowd emerged at the Mladi levi. It was a young crowd, but then again, I was also somewhat younger at that time...

Since the festival took place in the final days of August, just as the summer break was coming to an end, the crowd was particularly relaxed, sun-tanned and in just the right mood. It probably goes without saying that this last observation was particularly true for the younger female festival visitors (who are now, unfortunately, fifteen years older). I know that there's something terribly voyeuristic about that statement, but it nevertheless melts with the authentic pleasure that arose due to the newly emerging youthful audience of contemporary performing arts. A new context, new structures, new inclusion. Inclusion as a concept has been lying at the very heart of the festival ever since its beginnings, especially in terms of integration and participation in various social segments, processes and events. The idea was to shatter the cage of contemporary performing arts and to let the wild animal run loose. Stara mestna elektrarna as an innovative venue on one hand, and the active involvement of Bunker in its immediate environment on the other – particularly with regard to the degraded urban surfaces around Slomškova Street and the Tabor area – have helped transform this part of the city into a vital network with an innovative programme, which over and over again revolves around its focal point: (Bunker and) the Mladi levi festival. This has definitely become the most important space for events and the most visible social context of performing arts in the last decade.

And then, as mentioned above, there is the particular time of the festival: late August. Theoretically, this could be considered bad timing. The beginning of July would probably be considered the obvious choice, a time when the festival could be perceived as an extension of the season. A too-early start of a new season is something a rational programme director would definitely want to avoid. But then: complete disregard for logical strategies in terms of timing turned out to pay off more than anyone expected. The audience understandably cannot be as numerous as it would be during the dark and gloomy winter months, when no other world apart from the theatre seems to exist. But then again, why bother thinking about the ones who are missing? Let's talk instead about the ones who are around. Festival attendance has had its ups and downs during the years, but it has never experienced a drastic decline. I don't know if the organisers ever decided to do any research regarding the early festival visitors: have they remained a loyal festival audience, or has their progressive maturity perhaps propelled them to visit other, more "established" festivals and form part of the regular audience in – God forbid! – the drama theatre or even the opera? What's the repetition-restoration-ageing rate in the generational structural pattern of visitors? And, in any case, what does youth in the idiom "mladi levi/young lions" refer to? Is it all about age, or does it also speak about energy, instinctual explosiveness, and raw power? Given that youth is a rather relative term, one might subsequently ask what to expect from the so-called young performing arts, or from so-called young performances. This doesn't make that much sense. But nevertheless, new themes, new approaches and new effects can nevertheless be defined. Perhaps my memory has enough material stored to offer a taste: a body on the palm of a hand; speech coming from the body and not from the character, its fictitious duplication; interactive exchanges on the same idiomatic level, a statement can be understood without any noises and comments; auto-referencing always opens itself up to another gaze and hides no agendas behind its back; "remember that we come from the same world and that it is not entirely clear which side any of us is on"; a theatre performance is an object, a performance is a project; a theatre performance gratifies desire, a performance awakens desire; a performer and a spectator meet by pulling themselves away from the same website and returning back to it once the encounter is over – they return as themselves, but even more so.

The problem, however, is never to be found in a form, or in patterns, but in content. Even though it may not be evident from the start, it is always well thought through. Sometimes the title itself says it all, sometimes it is essential to read the description, and then sometimes a performance leaves its visitor completely clueless, for there was nothing youthful or "lion-like" to be found in it... Nevertheless, the programme selectors (namely Nevenka, Irena, Mojca...) should be complemented on bringing a relaxed and unpretentious spirit to the festival, accompanied with authentic love for theatre in the broadest sense of the word. And, it should be noted that the Mladi levi festival has stripped theatre of its fatalistic tendencies, redundant quests for meaning and majestic missions, only to transform it into the sheer joy of discovering, experiencing and encountering. The festival could thus be defined more as an event rather than an aesthetic, more as youth than art, and more as an encounter than a performance. Naturally, all performances cannot be reduced to one common denominator; a festival is, after all, a selected collection, where simultaneity in content somehow corresponds to temporal succession. Perhaps at one point in time the Mladi levi festival reflected the tendencies of the new (young) Europe, not the one pursuing its administrative-political agenda of integration (at any cost), and also not the one promoting its Euro-sceptical standpoint (at any cost), but one that has been for some time now emerging as the logical and "natural" conductor of inclinations, rising above and exceeding (immobile) productivity, institutionalisation, (new) forms of établissement and unionisation. These transcendental tendencies stretch beyond the arena of (performing) arts and enter a new social sphere, this time devoid of the 1960s utopian spirit (even though this decade is a source of inspiration) due to the acknowledgment of the common, unshakable,



Evgeny Grishkovets:
How I Ate a Dog.
Mladi levi 2000

belief in the Lord Gross-domestic-product Almighty. The new social sphere in question does, however, believe in consistent, persistent and latent revolt. The time of new social movements (Occupy, 15o) has not yet come, but the horizon of new social consciousness has already emerged; it sees things, but still doesn't know how to articulate or manifest them (in an effective manner), gazing upon edges and borders while still nevertheless holding onto the sublime. The performative within this social sphere becomes per-formative, just like the years of apprenticeship, often not for the generation of apprentices themselves, but for those who come next.

Who remains in my memory? To be fair, I really should have made more effort to remember names, but to be honest, my memory has always tended (and these days it does so even more) to cling to situations and atmospheres rather than faces and names, thus absorbing experiential impressions rather than stories. There were a lot of solo performances, but I don't see this in any way as a result of financial, economic, practical or logistical difficulties – a solo performance (either a play or a dance performance) enables a more intense contact, a dialogue of some sort, or perhaps even an eye-to-eye (I'm not a big fan of the expression "one on one") or a body-to-body encounter; a solo performance is my intimate dialogue (often without any words spoken) with the performer. Everything works in the favour of the solo performer: the relaxed atmosphere, the time of the season, the Stara mestna elektrarna venue, a glass-or two (or three) after the performance. A solo performance brings a performer close by; everything he or she does and is also becomes inhabited with intimate closeness: the face, breathing, the body, the sweat, the gaze, Eros. And you too draw near to the performer, even though they don't know you or notice you (as an individual audience member that is). It is here that a sort of conception happens, an initiation devoid of any routine or self-evidence, that participative contact that stands as the enabling condition of theatre in the first place: the contact between text and context, performance and commentary, a performer and a visitor. Contemporary performing arts draw their material from contexts; this fact especially applies to the art of the performance, which can never be stripped of its context, since the context is no less than its constitutive axis. Contemporary performing arts stand against the doctrine of division, delimitation and the new understanding of an event, which arises on the grounds of its absence: we must constantly project (ourselves) onto the non-existing background and set up screens to feature the projection of our primordial insufficiency... In this way, the Mladi levi festival stands as the producer of a beam of light, which, at an appropriate distance, leaves a material trace behind: that is all, and that is the most.

I would like to mention Evgeny Grishkovets, an amiable Russian whom I did a newspaper interview with. He's a former submariner, but otherwise an actor, playwright, storyteller and performer; I have met him frequently at various performances. He once presented theatre as a story, a remarkably intelligent, humorous, poetic and shocking story. The entire thing started with Grishkovets drawing a circle on the floor and addressing the audience with the following explanation: when I step into that circle, the performance will begin and this means that what you are watching now is still not the performance, since I am outside. A play on concepts, therefore, of outside-inside, going in and going out in order to introduce theatre as representation of the edge. Grishkovets thus began his narration titled *How I Ate a Dog* in a rather playful manner and then went on by making a translator – who was somewhat bewildered in the beginning – an integral part of the performance, which itself took place simultaneously

inside and outside the circle. It actually produced the edge, but only to extract from it “transitivity” as the motive for the narrative. Transitivity is normally a matter of agreement, but it has come to stand for more than that in the performance. In this circle (fictional, even though drawn by a piece of chalk on the floor), the performer actually comes to inhabit a difference: a tiny, meaningless and irrelevant deviation from the axis would transform a person from someone who merely is-in-being into someone who speaks about being, who enacts being. The line of the circle was turning presence into presentation and turning attendance into participation. The line may have been arbitrary, but it was nevertheless important, since it reflected not only being-in-existence, but also society as such. The line thus came to represent a fragile balance and a silent shift in attention from here to over there. Grishkovets is of course not the only one I remember (and, to be precise, he isn't just silently remembered, he also comes up as a subject in my lectures from time to time), but for the sake of convenience he shall serve here as the representative of the entire artistic crowd that passed the Mladi levi stage throughout the years.

Has the festival also managed to produce its own scenic-theoretical specifics, its own festival poetics or aesthetics? It's hard to say. It seems much easier to delineate the festival in a rather more descriptive manner: open, uncompromising, unorthodox, integrating, sociable, elementary, and physical. The festival performances, and I'm probably saying this for the third time already, have always somehow taken place on the same level with the audience, as if there was no border and especially no abyss in between. Despite different languages (or, better yet, different versions of the English language), the performances have managed to establish contact with the auditorium, to acclimatise to the latter or make the latter acclimated to them, to enter in a direct (verbal, but also tactile and olfactory) dialogue with it. If I were to say that the Mladi levi festival instigated the emergence of utterly new theatre codes, new material and new experiential domains in our environment, I would be exaggerating. However, the new and young festival names definitely introduced a lot of those things into the festival. There have been very few extremes throughout the years, which is not the result of a forced balance, but merely speaks in favour of a relaxed and yet not entirely arbitrary junction between various performative levels: from text proceeding to space and then moving ahead to the body and the spectator. The festival is embedded with the spirit of autonomy, as if a century or more had passed since the emergence of the performative turn, and there's also something self-explanatory in the air, accompanied with a breeze of lightness, which – rather than having a self-sufficient tone – comes across as entertaining and sociable. Ideology, however, is something the festival surpasses, as if the only ideology its visitors have in common is youth and its “roaring”. It's not about the desire to achieve external recognition, it's about finding an expression where the “coming out” acquires the shape of a surprising, but always definable and clearly heard voice: theatre as the arena of exiting and re-entering, this time with an experience resilient to erasure.

I haven't seen all of the performances in every festival, but I suppose that not a single festival has gone by without me seeing at least one of the performances. I've probably seen most of them when the festival was “stretched” over the entire year, which luckily did not work. I wasn't always the one to write a piece on what I'd seen at the festival; the workload at the newspaper *Delo* was distributed among me and my colleagues according to genre, individual affinities and, finally, availability. Throughout the years of the festival, different journalists have come up with different variations of the festival title (such as “roaring”, and

similar versions). At times, I felt like an integral part of Mladi levi and thus came to play a different kind of a role, whatever that may have been at the time. I'm not sure I have ever bought an entrance ticket; Tamara, Alma and Ira always took care of that, and I hope I made it up to them one way or another. I never attended the legendary festival picnic, something always “came up”, or perhaps I just had the feeling – at times without any reason to be quite honest – that I should nevertheless stay on the “other side”.

One becomes accustomed to certain things and they gradually become an integral part of life, even though it's not really clear why this is so (well, if I would have given it more thought, I'm sure I'd have come up with reasons, some of which have already been mentioned above), whereas there are other things which pass right through a person. I don't want to be melodramatic here (too late for that I suppose) by saying that the Mladi levi festival is one of life's integral parts. One thing is sure though: the ending of the summer would be different without it. Actually, now that I come to think about it, a fifteenth anniversary is reason enough to celebrate. To be quite honest, I'm not really sure that I want the festival to come of age. What if the Mladi levi festival stopped counting its editions from this moment on?

Photo Dejan Habicht



The ambient of the second Mladi levi festival in the Stara mestna elektrarna was designed by Matej Filipčič.

The event Mladi levi is on track to becoming a strong theatre festival and reason enough for us to organise our holidays and days off in such a manner that we don't miss it.

Blaž Lukan, Delo, 1998

But who would complain about the audience ... Judging from its unpretentious spirit and relaxed atmosphere (with regard to its term-plan, programme and organisation), Mladi levi at the moment seems to be the most vital Slovenian theatre festival; still devoted to its small format, but nonetheless important and expressive. Let us see content persist as its guiding principle also in the future, thus staying true to originality and the generational intransigence of selected performances, no matter how small they are. This way Mladi levi will remain young and a lion, and that's exactly how its audience will feel.

Blaž Lukan, Delo, 2006

YOUNG, VIGOROUS AND COURAGEOUS

One of the key characteristics of the Mladi levi festival is undoubtedly its timing; it is hard to overlook the importance of a collective interruption of the summer hiatus of enthusiastic theatre lovers – after a few weeks of abstinence on the home ground there appears a dense and diverse programme of performances on the horizon. Hurray! For many theatre-goers the season of theatre performances starts with Mladi levi. In the middle of summer, so to speak. The high temperatures that can last late into the evening are actually a trademark of the festival atmosphere. So much for the temporal and meteorological context.

Having only been present at the festival for the last six years, I cannot review the whole 15-year period and the advances in production from its beginnings up until now. I can only examine the last third of its existence under my amateur and critical magnifying glass. Without any doubt, the performances in the programme of the Mladi levi festival are a serious challenge for any young critic who enters the field of public self-reflection insecurely, albeit enthusiastically. As a rule, new aesthetics and ideological connotations, as well as the diversity of international affinities towards art, drive a young critic into looking for new ways of expression and less known conceptual procedures. You could think of it as a unique sort of summer school.

The other side is the format of the Mladi levi festival itself, as the organisers stick to their comprehension and understanding of the festival as an opportunity for intense socialising among artists, their personal and formal connections, interpersonal art observations, and a complex understanding of the festival concept. This idea is a real luxury, where creativity and art take the liberty to pause, exchange a deep look with the environment, re-establish contact with different views and take an opportunity to make a healthy comparison with other stage products. The festival is an escape from reality, extracted from time and space, and above all supports and offers young generations of artists the opportunity for personal growth and international promotion. For many years it has mixed "idols" with mere beginners, the former generously tolerating the latter's slips and lapses (which are an indispensable part of progress).

The intensity of the festival can be seen in its varied content. It looks like Mladi levi is far from trying to attract audiences with just the classical format of visiting performances. Instead, they try to incorporate themselves into the urban pulse, and (literally) occupy the streets and parks with all the pragmatism possible. In recent years, in addition to the main part of the stage production, we could see numerous parallel events, which, through their artistic touch, achieved wider and socially engaged goals. Recycling, exchanging goods, experimenting with natural resources, actively decorating public nooks, walking along the streets with bees and goats, the artistic use of parking places with useful installations and experimental exhibitions (and much more). They all evoked a collective sense of solidarity and the capability of comprehending the nation's capital from a different perspective. Revitalising the neighbourhood and encouraging residents not only to cooperate, but also to fully understand the festival and its role to promote and connect solidarity, culture and urbanism, is a significant production project in this era of individualism (not to mention the recession and currently unfavourable cultural climate).

The trump of the Mladi levi festival is definitely the openness of its programme, where art runs up against seemingly incompatible content, like environmental, ecological, or town planning issues, in a fruitful way. There is a double effect: through non-artistic forms, the festival attracts unusual attendees and vice versa. Regular visitors are given an opportunity to gain awareness of alarming contemporary problems. At the same time, the festival attracts a population that normally does not show any affection for modern art, but enters anyway for the sake of the intermediary transition the Mladi levi festival offers through some well-considered, non-aggressive, publicly open places. The increased interweaving of lay and professional, ecology and arts, politics and creativity, places Mladi levi in the field of well-considered, advanced and liberal festival formats that can easily cope with the trends of the modern world.

Exquisite selection

The Mladi levi festival offers young theatre enthusiasts who have just started exploring the new and unknown world of theatre aesthetics, but have not yet had the chance to escape abroad to widen their artistic horizons, admission into global performing trends, and often their first experience in events that break through the barriers of traditional scenes, move the theatre out into the world, support interaction, and move to those who pass the distinctive, purified aesthetics, performing skills and physical discipline. Rimini Protokoll, Jérôme Bel, Josef Nadj, Mathurin Bolze and Gob Squad are the key names that have easily found their way to my exquisite selection.

In 2006 Stefan Kaegi (Rimini Protokoll), an adherent of documentary theatre, put us into a simulated truck for the purposes of the project *Cargo Sofia – Ljubljana*. Together with professional truck drivers, he revealed the taboo sides of their profession, including trafficking and smuggling, as well as some scandalous activities at the stops. The next year Stefan Kaegi engaged generationally marginalised creators for the purpose of a performance called *Mnemopark*. Through miniature railway compositions and technological manipulations, they not only threw away their disadvantaged social position,

but also the embarrassment at revealing their personal memories. In 2010, Muezzins reconstructed their religious ceremonies in a performance called *Radio Muezzin*, conducted by the same director, where through the criticism of modern technological progress they directly pointed out the total destruction of intimacy in their praying ritual.

Photos Urška Boljkovac



Gob Squad: *Before Your Very Eyes*. Mladi levi 2011



Stefan Kaegi (Rimini Protokoll): *Mnemopark*. Mladi levi 2007

Playing with the boundaries between reality and theatre is the domain of the British-German group Gob Squad, regular performers at Mladi levi. Their project *Super Night Shot* (2008) was a time-considered, team-organised, and yet unpredictable invasion into the sphere of public life. The group explores with their camera the unpredictable city centre and with passers-by it creates at times eccentric, at other times polite, relationships and dialogues, and through simultaneous manipulations presents them to the audience in the theatre. The outside world, which is also our world, shows up like a bizarre mix of alienation, paranoia, madness and strangeness. Last year, the Gob Squad presented a very special reality show called *Before Your Very Eyes*, in which they “immorally” put children in front of a camera (and audience). Although simulated, but nevertheless real, the children were confronted with their own images and existence, and especially with their fleetingness.

I put dancers and choreographers (Jérôme Bel, Mathurin Bolze, Josef Nadj) among my favourites, which I probably did subconsciously, as they somehow represent a total counter-pole to the previously mentioned aesthetics. This once again confirms a recognisable attribute of the programme scheme of Mladi levi: it reaches into all the aesthetic, national and generational tendencies of performing practices. In the performance *Pichet Klunchun and Myself* (2006), Jérôme Bel, together with Thai dancer Pichet Klunchun, interwove theory and practice, as well as sensitive dramaturgical tension, and sharpened their intelligent debate performance about the basic contrast between Eastern and Western dance dynamics, understanding the body and its minimal/megalomaniacal expressiveness. One of the old acquaintances of the festival was also the dancer Mathurin Bolze, a “child” of the French school of contemporary circus, who astonished the audience at the opening performance of the eleventh edition of Mladi levi with his excellent acrobatic skills. The seeming ease and twisting of laws of gravity awoke fantastic and surreal effects in the project *Fenetres*. Last year’s appearance of Josef Nadj in the performance *Les Corbeaux* rounded up the festival in the manner of the unknown, animalistic, obscure, abstract, meditative and physically extremely precise atmosphere, which left behind a feeling of mysterious vagueness. This unique, open festival ending peered into the future at large, but also in anticipation of the next, fifteenth edition of Mladi levi. Dear festival: stay young, vigorous and courageous!

TOMAŽ TOPORIŠIČ,
dramaturge and publicist

COMRADES, DO YOU STILL REMEMBER? OR FESTIVAL MEMORIES OF THE PIONEERS

It was 1997, the pioneer-times of contemporary (performing) arts festivals, and the Exodus, Ex Ponto and City of Women festivals were two or three years old. The Mladi levi festival had just been conceived and was still unborn, and I had written an article about the festivals of stage arts in Slovenia for the now unfortunately long-gone literary magazine *Razgledi*. The article was published under the meaningful title *Bivouacking in a Musty Space*. If I am not mistaken, the author of the title was the editor Marko Crnkovič, who loved to title or re-title our texts, but I wasn't bothered by that at all. My original title was less straightforward, picturesque and bombastic, but in fact not far from the published one: *Philosophy and the Practice of Survival*. Both, unfortunately, remain up-to-date until this very day.

Let us swiftly compare the situation of contemporary stage arts festivals (as they were called at that time) fifteen years ago, when the Mladi levi festival was being established, and today, when they are entering into maturity. The basic line of my argumentation for the magazine *Razgledi* was as follows.

If we would seek the most obvious deficit area of conscience, tradition and experience inside the cultural programme offered by Ljubljana and Slovenia, we would first of all most definitely encounter the still taboo phenomenon of stage arts festivals. In its short history of statehood inside the first and second Yugoslavia, Slovenia noted an obvious discrepancy between the generally active, frequently excellent, and all but provincial theatre, dance, hybrid, and whatever description there might be for the lively artistic production on one hand, and the generally inactive, always recurrent and benumbed provincial festivals operating on the other. As if the (self)confidence regarding the importance of creative potential in the theatre sphere needed in the cultural space would fall short again and again. As if the concept of festivals could only be a matter of ghettoised Slovenian space and of the Slovenian theatre space. As if it would increasingly difficult for the cultural space to shut its eyes to the fact that the production, which takes place in a so-called unified cultural space, transgresses the national frames of its two million inhabitants, which become ten-fold, twenty-fold and so on, when applied to a critical mass of the potential clients of these vital arts.

The result of this Slovenian syndrome was certainly the fact that fifteen years ago, inside the stratification of the cultural sphere, Slovenia had only two festival constants. The first was the Maribor Theatre Festival (*Borštnikovo srečanje*), a national festival of Slovenian repertoire theatres which in its history did not nourish any international ambitions and is, because of that, still unknown outside Slovenia. The second was the Week of Slovenian Drama, with a shorter tradition, a non-international nature, and a relatively clear orientation. It also holds true that it is still enclosed in on itself, since it predominantly hosts repertoire theatre performances of plays written by Slovenian authors and the national playwright award "Gru-mova nagrada", a not-ambitious-enough prize for best play, which is limited to only two million people.

With the exception of the Alpe-Adria festival in Nova Gorica, which was the only successful attempt to internationalise the Slovenian festival space for a couple of years, the fifty-year history of Slovenia as part of the second Yugoslavia was marked by a distinctive lack of international theatre events, or at least stage art encounters. While cultural politicians, obsessed with provincial paranoia and the conservative community, were not actually able to stop the creation of the irregular and radical inside the field of stage arts, and were forced to admit that these creations corresponded with a broader European community, they have been able - by preserving the status quo and employing "politically suitable" cadres - to halt the initiatives of "radical and creative" individuals and small institutions, who have been trying to present the open spirit of creation in the form of festivals. This limited new theatrical creativity to productions and did not grant it suitable support for communication or, especially, a creative dialogue with partners. The striking example of this dichotomy between the creative power and pervasiveness on one hand, and the defence of the status quo (with its closed system and self-sufficiency) on the other, can be observed by comparing the last few seasons of the Slovenian National Theatre Maribor under artistic director Tomaž Pandur, and the parallel issues of the Maribor Theatre Festival, when two radically different concepts clashed in the same house.

Festivals, which were at least potentially a matter of larger nations (even if within Yugoslavia) existed elsewhere, for example: Sarajevo (Mess), Novi Sad (Pozorje, Malo Pozorje), Skopje (Mot), Belgrade (BITEF), Zagreb (Eurokaz), Split (Splitsko ljetno), Podgorica (FJAT), Graz (Steirischer Herbst), Vil-lach (Spectrum), later on in Cividale del Friuli (Mittelfest)...

The performances that appeared and were awarded at these festivals did not appear at the Maribor Theatre Festival, while important Slovenian contemporary artists and several critics were broadening their theatrical horizons at the festivals of the time. It seems as if the “less Central-European” places of ex-Yugoslavia were more cosmopolitan than the Slovenian cultural and authoritative boards granting festival concessions.

Slovenian independence, due to the claustrophobic feeling of reduced theatre space, the fact that the local space was finally faced by the reality that it had to provide for its own survival, and fact that the buffer zone of the former Yugoslavia with its cultural centres and ten times the Slovenian audience no longer existed, triggered two essential tendencies resulting in two antagonistic forces by the mid 90s. This was the contrast between prolonging self-sufficiency and ghettoisation in the newly and clearly marked territory of Slovenia, which could no longer be extended to the other “Southern-Slavic” territories. That is to say, this was the decision for “bivouacking in a musty space”; for motion inside an enclosed circle, with no desire to step out of the two-million national sphere of art for the people, and from the people. The decision to communicate and open outwards, also meant the opening of those outside to what is produced inside the Slovenian cultural space. Five years of independence, in comparison with the previous five decades, brought along a number of festival initiatives, which were for the most part not necessarily of an international nature. Yet, in spite of this, they all shared the desire and need for interregional and international communication, arising from the realisation that the fact of being enclosed in on one’s self does not ensure artistic and national identity, but rather creates a feeling of endangerment, self-destruction and a loss of those rare remains of self-sufficiency, instead of creative energy.

The first reaction of the status quo’s defenders, who are far from negligible in Slovenia due to its minor size, who often possess the levers of power and have a strong influence on public opinion, was an attempt to marginalise these new initiatives and, in extreme cases, to even incriminate their initiators. They have tried to minimise the newly established festivals as the concepts of an alternative, independent, local, social minority that is morally reproachable and Yugo-nostalgic, thereby summarising their non-national, non-communal orientation, over-specialisation, ignorance of the main-stream, and the like.

On one hand, today in 2012 nothing is as it used to be. On the other, the ghettoisation and marginalisation of the broad range of international festival initiatives, at the head of which has also and for some time primarily been the Mladi levi festival, along with the Exodus, Ex Ponto, City of Women

and Flota festivals, has remained – at least as far as the range of programme resources and available infrastructure is concerned. It is interesting that the criticism coming from the area of the long-privatised institutional or critical positions is trying to marginalise and ghettoise the non-governmental initiatives in the public with arguments such as privatism, narrow specialisation, non-popularity, no interest in drama theatre, and ignorance of the primary needs of the Slovenian population, since only the defenders of the status quo (from their privileged privatised positions), as some sort of “guardians of interpretation”, seem to know what (and how much of what) is needed. The newly established cultural privateers with their new, post-socialist jargon of righteousness naturally always strengthen these kind of reproaches with the infamous tag of the non-mastery of “cultural management.”

The Mladi levi festival, like all “new” stage arts festivals, despite its undisputed tradition, its faithful audiences and its position on the European festival map, is faced with the schizophrenic position of someone who is continuously being convinced by its self-declared charismatic mentors that it does not really exist, that it never actually existed, and that it would be best, if it did not exist in future. Therefore, with the phenomena of the establishment of stage arts festivals at the beginning of the new millennium, the Slovenian state and its civil society are facing specific problems regarding the

Photos Urška Boljkovac



Stara mestna elektrarna – Elektro Ljubljana

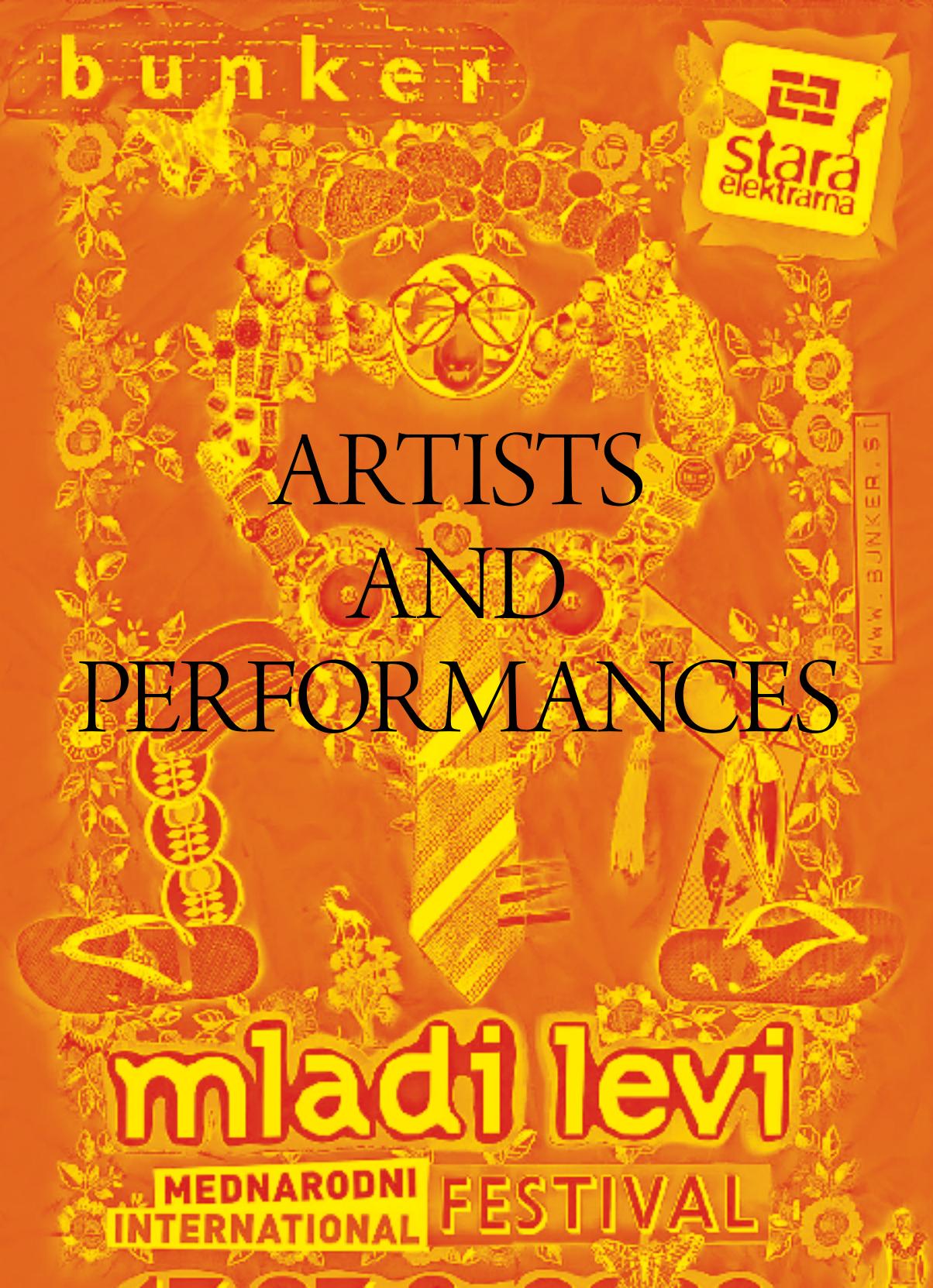
survival of non-provincial thoughts and actions. If they manage to overcome the delusions of this unpleasant segment of their history, if they soon become aware of the consequences of defending the status quo and the national and soul-caring elements in the manner of nineteenth century reading-club ideology, combined with the high-handed post-socialist attitude of constant endangerment, they will establish a creative field for an appropriate and equal dialogue between the creative and presentational segments of stage arts. The diverse conceptual field of art “production” will receive its equal partner in the diverse festival field of stage arts, which will no longer be a means to dictate the average, self-enclosed, self-sufficient and eternally endangered taste. If they do not succeed, due to their ignorance of the facts by betting on the abovementioned field as the only redemptive and irredeemable one, they will be sentenced to vegetation and claustrophobia.

At its fifteenth anniversary, the story of the Mladi levi festival, and its recognition as one of the central meeting places of artists and audiences of performing and contemporary art practices, is evidence of all of the dilemmas listed above. And, at the same time, it is evidence of the Badiouian ambivalence between ending the old and beginning the new. The festival picture certainly changed with the Mladi levi festival, at least with regard to where media presence, responsiveness, and the establishment and nourishment of the audience is concerned, one which is not only interested in artistic manifestations but which is also focused on dialogical reflections about art and culture as indispensable social practices. But, while marking the anniversary we cannot ignore the fact that the Mladi levi festival, with its sibling festivals, despite the satisfying fact that they have become an indispensable part of Slovenian daily cultural life, shares a major and presently growing concern: how to survive in an environment that is becoming more and more financially and politically hostile, and one which is not interested in culture as a point of identification, or as one of the fundamental pillars of civilisation. Together with the rest of the “non-institutional scene” the Mladi levi festival is in some way still (in terms of political jargon) in opposition to that. Therefore, even after fifteen highly successful years of existence, it unfortunately needs to play along with the opportunities offered by its oppositional status, make notable moves and enforce dialogue. If the next year or two do not yield tangible results in terms of continuous funding and the new institutionalisation of these non-governmental initiatives, as well as their equal participation in gaining budgetary resources, the philosophy and practice of the stage arts and their festival production will be sentenced to dealing with its own survival.

Photo Urška Boljkovac



The opening of the Mladi levi festival 2011. The platform by the Slovene Ethnographic Museum



NEVENKA KOPRIVŠEK,

Director of Bunker, founder of the Mladi levi festival

ARTISTS AT MLADI LEVI – THE INTERNATIONALISATION OF THE SLOVENIAN SPACE

At the Mladi levi festival it was always about young artists no matter their actual age. In the beginning, we were mainly presenting artists that weren't so renowned yet, but were on the other hand cutting edge and in search of the new. At the time it seemed as if a single festival was travelling around Europe with more or less the same acclaimed names. We were unshakably convinced that young artists had the right to an audience and space, which would allow them to sharpen their talents. Later on, more and more festivals emerged with the same concept, but Mladi levi remained a referential arena, a jumping board for as-yet-unknown names and a space for testing new genres.

Throughout the years, we also wanted to introduce more acclaimed artists at the festival, especially those who couldn't be seen due to a general lack of international programmes in various institutions. It should be noted, however, that the international programmes in Slovenia take place exclusively through various festival forms and only rarely through individual visiting performances (such as occasionally in Cankarjev Dom for example), nor does it emerge as part of the regular repertoire in theatres or cultural centres. The proper conditions for internationalisation, i.e. equal entrance into the European space, co-productions and multifarious openness, don't yet exist in Slovenia. The few venues that would allow for internationalisation in this respect, namely Stara mestna elektrarna and Španski borci, don't have their own programme funds; thus we sometimes succeed in achieving internationalisation more by coincidence or via the extraordinary efforts of the teams. These conditions don't exist elsewhere, since non-governmental organisations are too malnourished, whereas public institutions are limited in organisation, like repertory families. The few exceptions worth mentioning are En Knap, Betontanc, Janez Janša (ex Emil Hrvatin), Tomaž Pandur, Via Negativa and the Mladinsko Theatre; the abovementioned occasionally manage to enter successful international co-productions, which can be seen more as bright exceptions rather than a regular way of functioning. The process of internationalisation

of the Slovenian space, which in some European countries has already been taking place since the 1980s, is far from finished. There is a general lack of proper conditions for it, and also a lack of sufficient possibilities for “artists in residence” programmes. The Slovenian audience comes into contact with foreign artists and trends almost exclusively through festivals.

I was never interested in categories like “the best” or “the most successful.” I will therefore not focus on “top” performances, nor on Mladi levi highlights, because every performance has contributed to the enrichment of this space in one way or another and because every performance has had its own devotees. The examples that I will state should thus predominantly be seen as descriptions of phenomena, as well as programme decisions. As previously mentioned, we’ve never concerned ourselves with preconceived thematic frameworks in programming. Generally we tried to avoid the “drama theatre,” not only because it can essentially be seen in every single theatre in both Slovenia and all of Eastern Europe, but also because – apart from certain bright exceptions (such as Alvis Hermanis, Dood Paard, Ivica Buljan or Dirk Opstaele) – its productions don’t really differ that much from one another. This statement has nothing to do with prejudice, either for or against dramatic texts, since all good stories are also eternal. Instead of striving for one more reinterpretation of dramatic texts in our programme selection, we’ve been on the lookout for those artists who have got their own stories to tell, who struggle with their own method of expression, who stand by their own views and are engaged in their statement. No wonder, therefore, that through the years we’ve introduced a great many solo performances. To mention just a few: Evgeny Grishkovets, Bo Madvig, Ursula Martinez, Ivo Dimchev, Camille Boitel, Ivana Müller, Zachary Oberzan and Jos Houben. I’ve always appreciated the solo format, since the virtuosity of the performer’s acting can be seen as if with a magnifying glass. It’s about complete devotion, concentration and invoking various states in relation with the audience. A real theatre treat! Solo performances of this kind are normally the result of years of work and exploration. Sometimes they merely break loose like the inner cry of an artist and thereby imprint themselves into the cerebral cortex forever.

Apart from excellent storytellers, we’ve also been mesmerised by the physical perfection of dancers and choreographers (Hiroaki Umeda, Pichet Klunchun, Josef Nadj) and captivated by performers in contemporary circus, a genre unknown as of yet (Eclat Sol Air, Mathurin Bolze, Camille Boitel, Jérôme Thomas ...). But it is precisely the performers in this artistic format that clearly show – once the initial astonishment of the first couple of minutes passes – that there may be much more behind a virtuosic execution. These artists are complex and highly original.

Most of all, we have always been captivated by a specific kind of humour, never the obvious kind, but perhaps best illustrated as the Theatre of the Absurd, sort of contemporary Becketts, Hašeks or Tatis. Perhaps it was always about capturing something vague and undefined, a bit crazy and even a bit lonely; perhaps it was about the spaces in between, distant and yet close. This may well be evident in our selection: Kamilla Wargo Brekling, Martine Pisani, Benjamin Verdonck, Philippe Quesne, Miguel Pereira, Station House Opera, Conservas, Josef Nadj – just to give some names. These performances captivate me again and again, since

they allow for a fair degree of distance to oneself while revealing how small or ridiculous our behaviour really is, calling attention to prejudice and at the same time leaving everything open and possible. But it’s only through the audience’s imagination that all this can finally gain an integral perspective and come to life.

We were always good at avoiding the traps of the hip fads of European trends in performing arts. For a while, it was “in” to perform everything in the dark or to stage a complete decomposition of performances, a sort of “non-acting, under-acting”, where the thesis “less is more” could perhaps translate best as “the less we understand, the better.” All of this is, of course, extremely important in study processes, and it is also part of the creative process, but it can also leave the audience wanting more.

Photo Urška Boljkovac



Baltazár theatre: *Think of me with pleasure*.
Mladi levi 2004

Photo Matjaž Wenzel



Sebastijan Horvat, Matjaž Latin, Aljoša Ternovšek,
Andreja Kopač: *Was ist Maribor?*. Mladi levi 2012

Despite extreme efforts in attracting new audiences, we have nevertheless managed to avoid the temptation to become “the biggest” festival and thus merely answer the needs of cultural tourism. By doing this, we would have lost contact with what we hold most dear, namely personal relationships, and dialogue with the artists and the audience. We decided to start introducing more participatory practices instead, and the projects such as *Lovepangs*, *Museum of Broken Relationships*, *Dominoes* or *Garden by the Way* have helped us intervene into public space in a more intensive manner by including the inhabitants or audiences not only in the projects’ results, but also in the creative processes.

Here and again we have been accused of aiming to please or trying to be likeable, but no one has ever criticised us for lacking courage or content. And these two qualities have been the most important for us all along. We have somehow felt akin to the performances, which give new hope or offer a critical perspective, either through activism (Simona Levi), distinct energy (African dance: Boyzie Cekwana, Opio Okach, Ariry Andriamoatsiresy), or their structured lucidity and intelligence, such as Jérôme Bel or La Ribot, for example. Also, we have always known how to appreciate a good collective performance, energy and skilful twists, very characteristic for Betontanc, Via Negativa, Dood Paard, General Eléctrica, Jonghollandia or Kornel Mundruczó. And, last but not least, let us

mention all the poetry, gracefulness and vulnerability emanating from the beauty, embodied by the Belaza sisters or the group De Utvalgte.

Slovenian artists have always had their proper place in the festival, perhaps somewhat more in the early festivals, when there was less space for the independent scene. But they nevertheless quite soon managed to find an international path for themselves through their networks and with the help of ours as well. Sometimes the previously seen performances have gained a new and different audience within the festival context.

And to wrap things up, let me perhaps introduce the performance that has moved me the most in all of the festival years. It's a Hungarian version of the play *Romeo and Juliet* by the Baltazár theatre. Five Romeos and five Juliets appeared in the performance, played by actors with Down Syndrome, who are generally not allowed to live and breathe love by society. Tears were pouring down my cheeks from the first minute on; the performance touched me somewhere deep inside with its innocent purity, with its faith in love and at the same time also with its impossibility. I was sniffling throughout the performance and for a long time after.

All of us – programmers, artistic directors and audiences – simply want to be touched by performances and reminded of something we might have already seen and forgotten exists, or perhaps we want the performances to open our eyes and make us see things that were merely a vague feeling in our bones before.

We're not interested in realism and even less in "just as it is in life," but I would nevertheless like to conclude with a genre, which will influence the history of theatre in my point of view. This genre knows how to surpass life itself and to disclose it from a different perspective by showing none other than ... life. I am referring to Stefan Kaegi and his documentary theatre. An example of documentary theatre is also this year's opening performance *Was ist Maribor?*, created by Sebastijan Horvat together with Aljoša Ternovšek, Matjaž Latin and Andreja Kopač. Both Kaegi and Horvat approach these performances with the thoroughness of investigative journalism. They make use of all possible theatrical and technical means to bring the phenomena of globalism to an individual level in a manner that concerns all of us. It doesn't really matter in the end whether the performance was about train collectors, muezzins, truck drivers or TAM Factory workers. We always learn both the global and the personal story and thus explore things we didn't know before, sometimes even the very city we live in.

When repeat performances of *Cargo Sofia – Ljubljana* were coming to an end, I used to go to the final destination and watch the visitors step out of the truck – and out of the performance – after their two-hour long journey across Ljubljana. They all seemed to have pink cheeks in a somewhat excited manner, like someone returning from the mountains or from a forest with just the right dose of oxygen. Dear artists, thank you for all the doses of oxygen you've given us over these first 15 festival years.

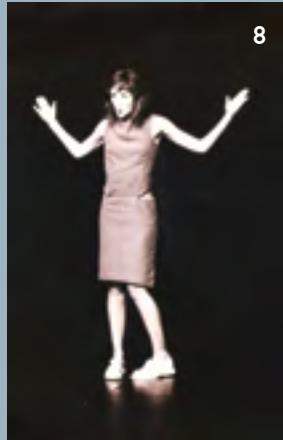
In 15 years we hosted **41** Slovenian performances,
and **206** performances all together.

COUNTRIES FROM WHICH ARTISTS CAME TO THE MLADI LEVI FESTIVAL

44

Belgium • Russia • France • Germany • Spain • Italy • Denmark •
Great Britain • the Netherlands • Croatia • Slovenia • Hungary •
Dominican Republic • Turkey • Kyrgyzstan • French Guiana •
the United States of America • Romania • Portugal • Algeria • Norway •
Serbia • Madagascar • Kenya • Austria • Poland • South Africa • Burundi •
Sweden • Bulgaria • Greece • Switzerland • Iran • Thailand • Latvia • Japan •
Tunisia, Kazakhstan • New Zealand • Bosnia and Herzegovina •
Finland • Slovakia • Macedonia • Egypt •

1998



Latrinité: AURI SACRA FAMES - 1

Sasha Pepelyaev's Kinetic Theatre: THE VIEW OF RUSSIAN GRAVE FROM GERMANY - 2

Les Zoms: LES POINTURES - 3

Showcase Beat le Mot: RADAR RADAR NICHTS IST EGAL - 4

Projecte Gallina: LOS CINCO DEDOS DE UNA MANO SORDA - 5

Rebecca Murgi: FOCUS ON L - 6

Bo Madvig: FLAT FISH NO. 8 - 7

Kamilla Wargo Brekling: MAXINE PA FARTEN 1 - 8

Jordi Cortés Molina: LUCKY - 9

Valentina Čabro: EXAH - 10

Sebastijan Horvat: ION - 11

Barbara Novakovič Kolenc: THE GIRL AND THE CONTRABASS - 12

Dertum: CONCERT - 13

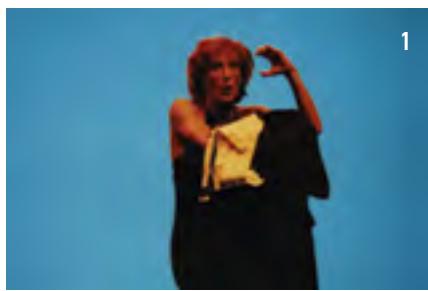
Tomaž Grom & Tao G. Vrhovec Sambolec: CONCERT

WHAT CAN WE SAY ABOUT THEATRE AND DANCE OF THE 90s round table - 14

Photos: Dejan Habicht



1999



General Elèctrica: NIGHT - 1
Bo Madvig & Peter Holmgård: VIGGO - 2

Zbang Dance Company: TÊTE - 3

Kamilla Wargo Brekling: ON THE ROAD WITH MAXINE 4 - 4

Samuel Louwyck: AFTER HOURS - 5

Sven Augustijnen: VIDEO

Kubilaï Khan Investigation: S.O.Y. - 6

Dood Paard: MEDEIA - 7

Ivan Peternelj: MEDIUM COELI - 8

Jordi Cortés Molina & Artur Villalba: MAT (Check-Mate) - 9

Maja Delak: GINA & MIOVANNI - 10

Trafik (Tranzicijsko fikcijsko kazaliste): HODAČ - 11

Štefbet Rifi: CONCERT - 12

SPACES OF INDEPENDENT PERFORMING ARTS IN LJUBLJANA round table - 13

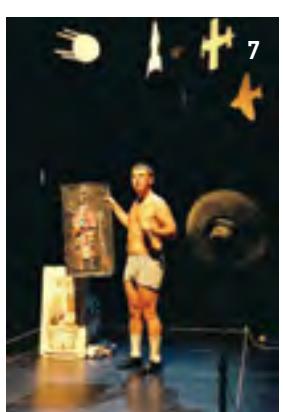
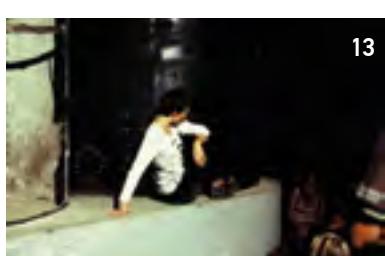
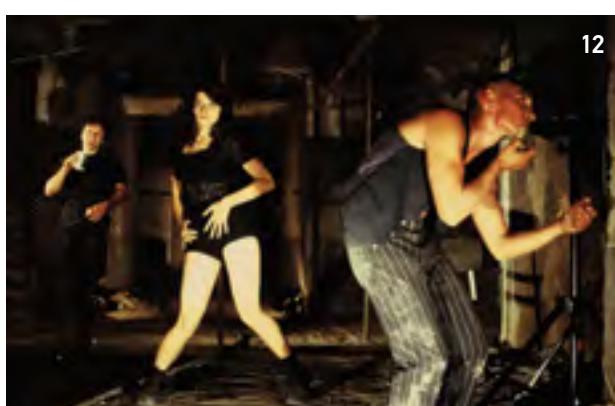
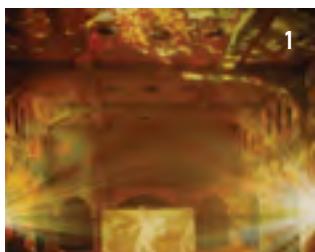
PRESENTATION OF EUROPEAN NETWORKS (IETM, D. B. M., JUNGE HUNDE)

AND POSSIBILITIES OF PARTICIPATION OF SLOVENIAN PRODUCERS

Photos: Dejan Habicht



2000



SPACE Besh o droM & Budapest FilMharmonix: CINETRIP PARTY - 1

Evgeny Grishkovets: HOW I ATE A DOG - 2

Conservas: FEMINA EX MACHINA - 3

Sasa Quelitz: O, WÜRFEL, 1 - 4

Seimi Nørregaard: GAME #3 - 5

Studio Players: FIVE SHORT PLAYS - 6

Evgeny Grishkovets: AT THE SAME TIME - 7

Natacha Kantor: LA GOURMANDISE

Sebastijan Horvat: SS/SHARPEN YOUR SENSES - 8

Goran Bogdanovski: 1:0 - 9

BAST: CONCERT

Compagnie Jérôme Thomas: IxBE - 10

Herbin "Tamango" van Cayseele - 11

Jordi Cortés Molina: LIFE OF A BUM work in progress - 12

Andreja Rauch, Petra Žist, Žiga Golob, John Sweeney: DUETS work in progress - 13

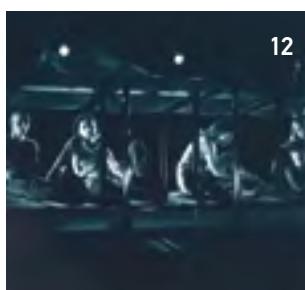
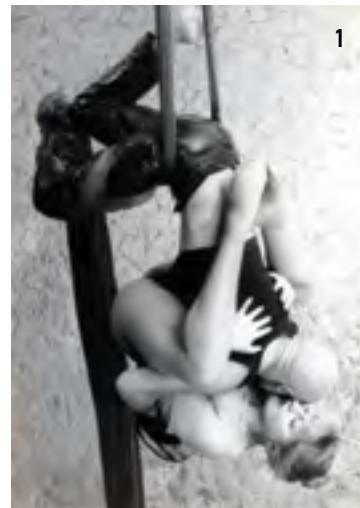
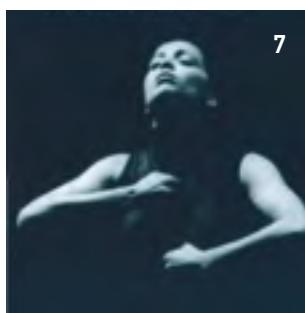
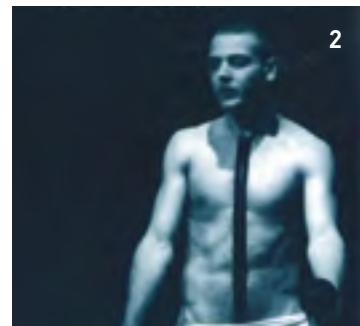
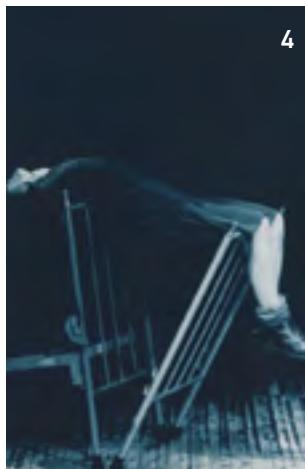
ARTISTS IN RESIDENCE round table

JOSEF NADJ workshop

HERBIN "TAMANGO" VAN CAYSEELE workshop

Photos: Marcandrea Bragolini and photos from the archives of the performances

2001



Cie Armance Brown, Bruno Krief & Cie Aude Arago, Gilles Baron: ECLATS SOL AIR - 1

Manuel Pelmus: OUTCOME - 2

La Ribot: STILL DISTINGUISHED - 3

G. Abramov Class of expressive body movement: THE BED - 4

Miguel Pereira: ANTONIO MIGUEL - 5

Evgeny Grishkovets: DREADNOUGHTS - 6

Company Nacera Belaza: LE SOMMEIL ROUGE - 7

Ellen Johannesen: PRAYING ROOM - 8

Almescabre: ICARO INVOLATO - 9

Kamilla Wargo Brekling: GRAZING LADIES - 10

Sanja Nešković Peršin: HOV HOV SUZANA - 11

Tomaž Štruc: MILLENEMY - 12

Rebecca Murgi: IO SONO SHAKE - 13

Laurence Levasseur, Compagnie Sweet Move: LE JOURNAL D'UN MANOEUVRE - 14

Ernesto Cortès Koen & Sven Augustijnen: SOLO - 15

Sven & Koen Augustijnen: ERNESTO documentary film

Trije puhalci: CONCERT

THE INVOLVEMENT OF SLOVENIAN ARTISTS IN INTERNATIONAL CO-PRODUCTIONS round table
RECOUNTS AND TALKS WITH ARTISTS round table

EVGENY GRISHKOVETS workshop

TOMÀS ARAGAY & SOFIA ASENCIO workshop

Photos from the archives of the performances

2002



Jérôme Bel: THE SHOW MUST GO ON - 1

Ursula Martinez: SHOW OFF - 2

Claire Croizé: BLOWING UP - 3

Dalija Aćin: PEEP SORROW - 4

Márta Ladjánszki & Réka Szabó: WHAT SORT OF TENDERNESS - 5

Antonio Tagliarini: FREEZY - 6

Betontanc: MAISON DES RENDEZ-VOUS - 7

Diego de Brea: DVOBOJ - 8

Silence: CONCERT - 9

Martine Pisani: SANS - 10

Tatiana Gordeeva: ICHBINBEIDIR - 11

Irma Omerzo: MI – NOUS - 12

The Arts High School in Ljubljana: VRT PREKRIŽANIH USOD - 13

Silvia Real & Sérgio Pelágio: CASIO TONE - 14

Miguel Pereira: 29. AUGUST - 15

Ten Theatre: LILICAN'S MUSEUM OF THEATRICAL IDEAS - 16

Fičo balet: FIČO BALET INVITES: SUMMER BREEZE impro night - 17

CONVERSATIONS WITH ARTISTS OR THE STATE OF THINGS round table

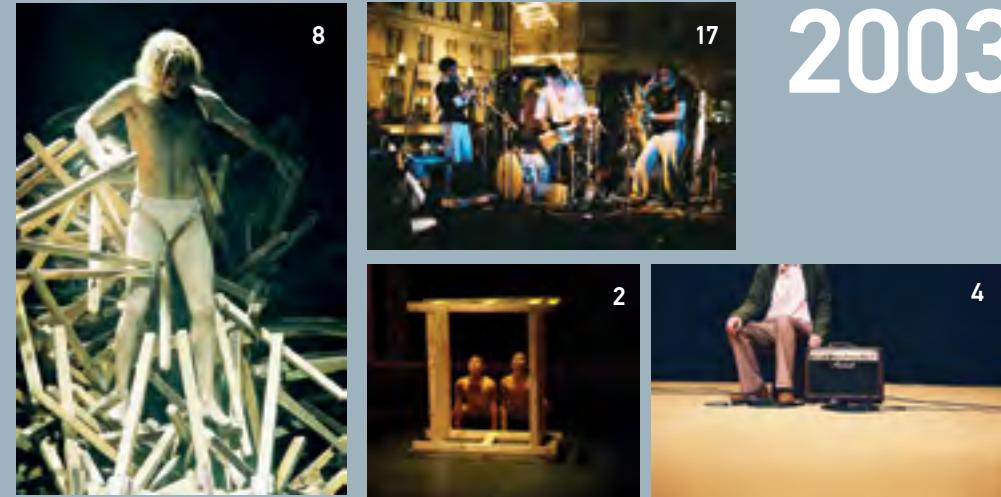
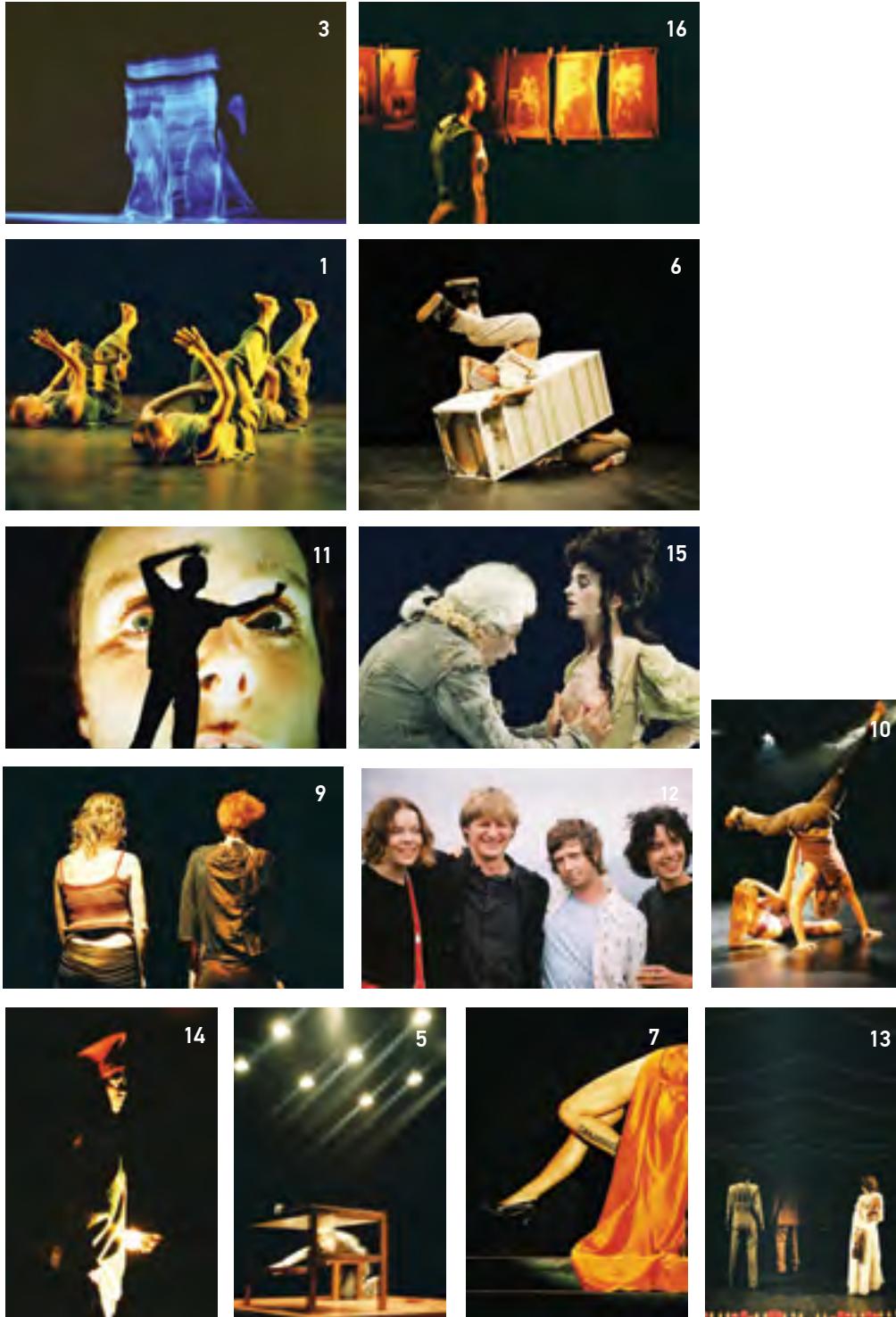
WENDY HOUSTOUN workshop

SIMON ANXOLABERHERE workshop

PASCAL MERAT workshop

Photos: Tina Smrekar

2003



Compagnie Rary: MPIRAHALAHY MIANALA - 1

Compagnie Rary: DIHY TSY AMIN'APONGA - 2

Compagnie Gàara: DILO - 3

Uninvited Guests: OFFLINE - 4

Oleg Soulimenko & Markus Schinwald: THE STAGE MATRIX - 5

Mustafa Kaplan: DOLAP - 6

Conservas: 7 DUST SHOW - 7

Camille Boitel: L'HOMME D'HUS - 8

Magdalena Reiter & Mateja Rebolj: FORMA INTERROGATIVA - 9

Gregor Luštek & Rosana Hribar: ANA IS THE NAME OF THE ROSE - 10

Dood Paard: 40.000 SUBLIME AND BEAUTIFUL THOUGHTS - 11

Display & Alexander Gerner & Fokuda: FIEL AMIGO – A FRIEND THAT CAN BE TRUSTED - 12

Compagnia Sud costa occidentale: CARNEZZERIA - 13

The Floating Outfit Project: THE (RE) DEFINITION OF... - 14

Ivica Buljan & Mini teater: SCHNEEWITTCHEN AFTER PARTY - 15

The Floating Outfit Project: JA, NEE - 16

La campagnie des musiques à ouïr: CONCERT - 17

Bush Hartshorn, Massimo Mancini: DANGER! LIVE NETWORK workshop

IZTOK KOVÁČ workshop

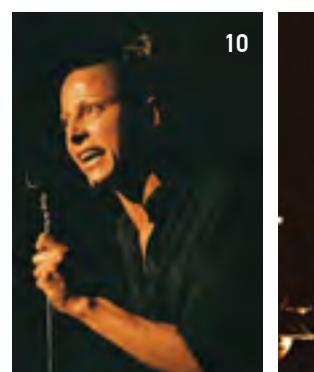
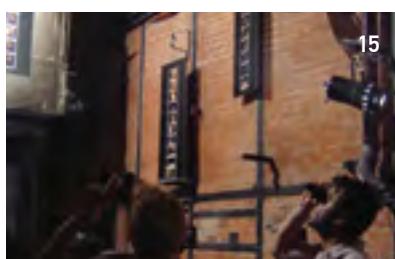
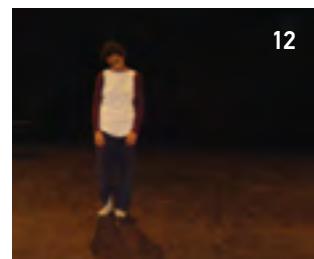
VOLODIA LESLUIN workshop

THE FUTURE OF JUNGE HUNDE NETWORK round table

A LECTURE ON THE STRUCTURAL FUNDS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

Photos: Urška Boljkovac

2004



IF WE DIDN'T EXIST, WE WOULD HAVE TO BE INVENTED a tribute to the scene at the opening of the
Stara mestna elektrarna - 1

Ivana Müller: HOW HEAVY ARE MY THOUGHTS? - 2

Henriette Pedersen: CLASSIC HEAVEN - 3

Jean-Baptiste André: INTERIEUR NUIT - 4

Tiago Guedes: MATERIAIS DIVERSOS - 5

Domenico Giustino, Kajsa Sandström & Gilles Fumba: RABBIT HOLE - 6

Mala Kline: CAMPO DE' FIORI - 7

The Beet Fleet: CONCERT - 8

Jonghollandia & Kopna Kopna: LOST CHORD RADIO - 9

Sebastijan Horvat & Nataša Matjašec: GET FAMOUS OR DIE TRYING/ELIZABETH 2 - 10

Laurent Pichaud: LANDE PART - 11

Nacera Belaza: LE FEU - 12

Baltazár Theatre: THINK OF ME WITH PLEASURE - 13

Maja Delak, Mauricio Ferlin & Mala Kline: RONDINELLA - 14

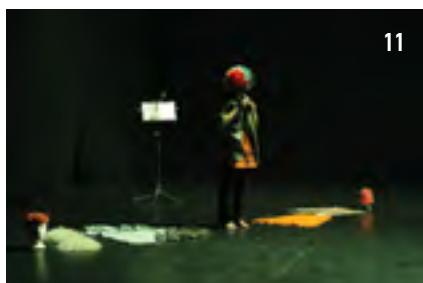
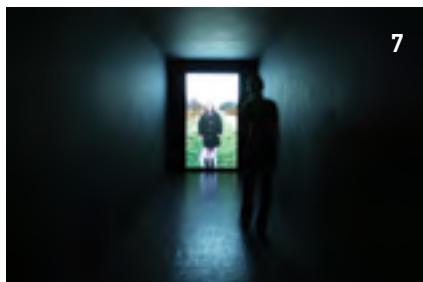
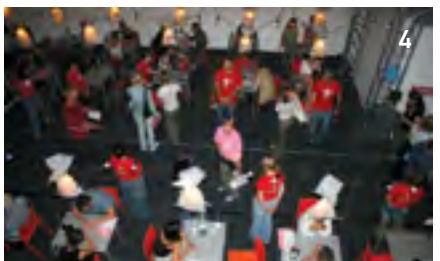
Urška Boljkovac: THE GAZE photo exhibition - 15

IT'S NICE TO TOUCH THE STONE round table

JOZEF HOUBEN workshop - 16

Photos: Urška Boljkovac

2005



JUNE

Vera Mantero, Vitor Rua & Nuno Rebelo: SO HAPPY TOGETHER - 1

Bojan Gorišek & Milko Lazar: GORIŠEK LAZAR 2 KLAVIRJA - 2

MUSIC AND THEATRE round table

BETWEEN ART AND ECONOMY cultural management workshop

AUGUST

Martin Bricelj: EVERLANDIA - 3

Carmen Brucic: LOVEPANGS - 4

Lone Twin: TO THE DOGS - 5

Ici-Même: A CONCERT OF CITY SOUNDS - 6

Rosemary Lee & Nic Sandiland: REMOTE DANCING - 7

Rosemary Lee & Nic Sandiland: STEREO DANCES - 8

AGORA a series of round tables - 9

NOVEMBER

Adela Peeva: WHOS SONG IS THIS?

Magdalena Reiter: SOLO - 10

Belmin Söylemez: MOUSTACHES

Boyzie Cekwana: CUT!! - 11

Apostolia Papadamaki: HERMAPHRODITE - 12

Eduard Gabia: MY PRESENCE PROVE OF TIME - 13

Mustafa Kaplan & Filiz Sizanli: SOLUM - 14

Renata Salecl: "BECOME YOURSELF – ONLY A BETTER ONE!" IDENTITY AS A MATTER
OF POST-MODERN CHOICE lecture - 15

WHO SETS THE CRITERIA, WHAT IS AUTHENTIC AND WHAT IS CONTEMPORARY talk with artists

PRACTICAL DRAMATURGY IN CONTEMPORARY SLOVENIAN PERFORMING ARTS round table - 16

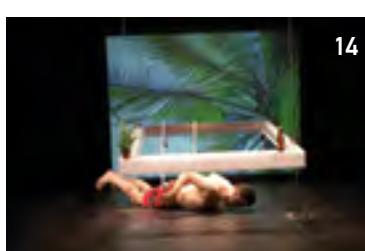
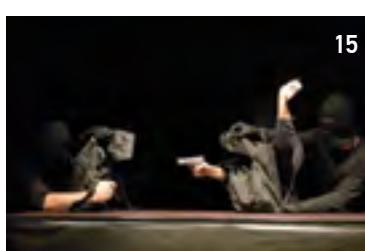
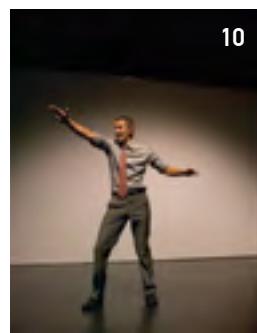
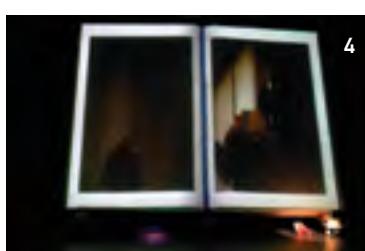
DESIRE DAVIDS workshop

LILO BAUR workshop

Photos: Urška Boljkovac, Žiga Koritnik and photos from the archives of the performances



2006



Station House Opera: ROADMETAL SWEETBREAD - 1

Olinka Vištica, Dražen Grubišić: MUSEUM OF BROKEN RELATIONSHIPS - 2

Amir Reza Kohestani: AMID THE CLOUDS - 3

Patrícia Portela: FLATLAND - 4

Stefan Kaegi (Rimini Protokoll): CARGO SOFIA – LJUBLJANA - 5

Xavier Bobes: HEAD IN THE CLOUDS - 6

Benjamin Verdonck: WEWILLLIVESTORM - 7

Jérôme Bel: PICHEK KLUNCHUN AND MYSELF - 8

Miguel Pereira: MIGUEL MEETS KARIMA - 9

Nataša Lušetić & Damir Klemenčić: EGOMANIA - 10

Ivo Dimchev: LILI HANDEL - 11

Mare Bulc: STUDY FOR THE LAST EGOISTIC PERFORMANCE - 12

Horkeškart: CONCERT - 13

Thaddeus Phillips, Tatiana Mallarino & Victor Mallarino: iEL CONQUISTADOR! - 14

Umka.lv: THE STORY OF DANIEL RAY - 15

Umka.lv & Betontanc: SHOW YOUR FACE! - 16

MEETING OF THE BALKAN EXPRESS NETWORK - 17

MIGRATIONS, MOBILITY, NOMADISM OF ARTISTS round table - 18

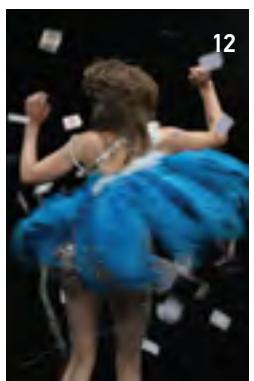
ANNE-MARIE BLINK workshop

UMKA.LV workshop

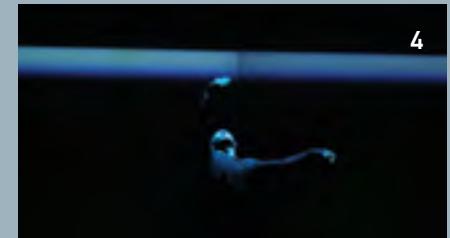
Photos: Nada Žgank



2007



6



Stefan Kaegi (Rimini Protokoll): MNEMOPARK. A MINI TRAIN WORLD. – 1

Stan's Cafe: OF ALL THE PEOPLE IN ALL THE WORLD (SLOVENIA AND ITS NEIGHBOURS) – 2

Etienne Charry: SIESSES MUSICALES – 3

Hiroaki Umeda: WHILE GOING TO A CONDITION and ACCUMULATED LAYOUT – 4

Emma Dante: IL FESTINO – 5

Barbara Novaković Kolenc: PROJEKT RODIN II – 6

Yasmine Hugonnet: LATITUDE DE POSE – 7

Radhouane El Meddeb: POUR EN FINIR AVEC MOI – 8

Mildreds: CONCERT – 9

Saša Asentić: MY PRIVATE BIOPOLITICS – 10

Art&Shock: BACK IN THE USSR – 11

Kate McIntosh: ALL NATURAL – 12

Matija Ferlin: SaD SaM – 13

Ronald Schimmelpfennig, Sebastijan Horvat: BEFORE/AFTER – 14

Martine Pisani: HORS SUJET OU LE BEL ICI – 15

De Utvalgte: JIMMY YOUNG – 16

Andrej Intihar: ANIMALS IN THEATRE – 17

10 YEARS OF THE MLADI LEVI FESTIVAL, THE PAST AND THE FUTURE round table – 18

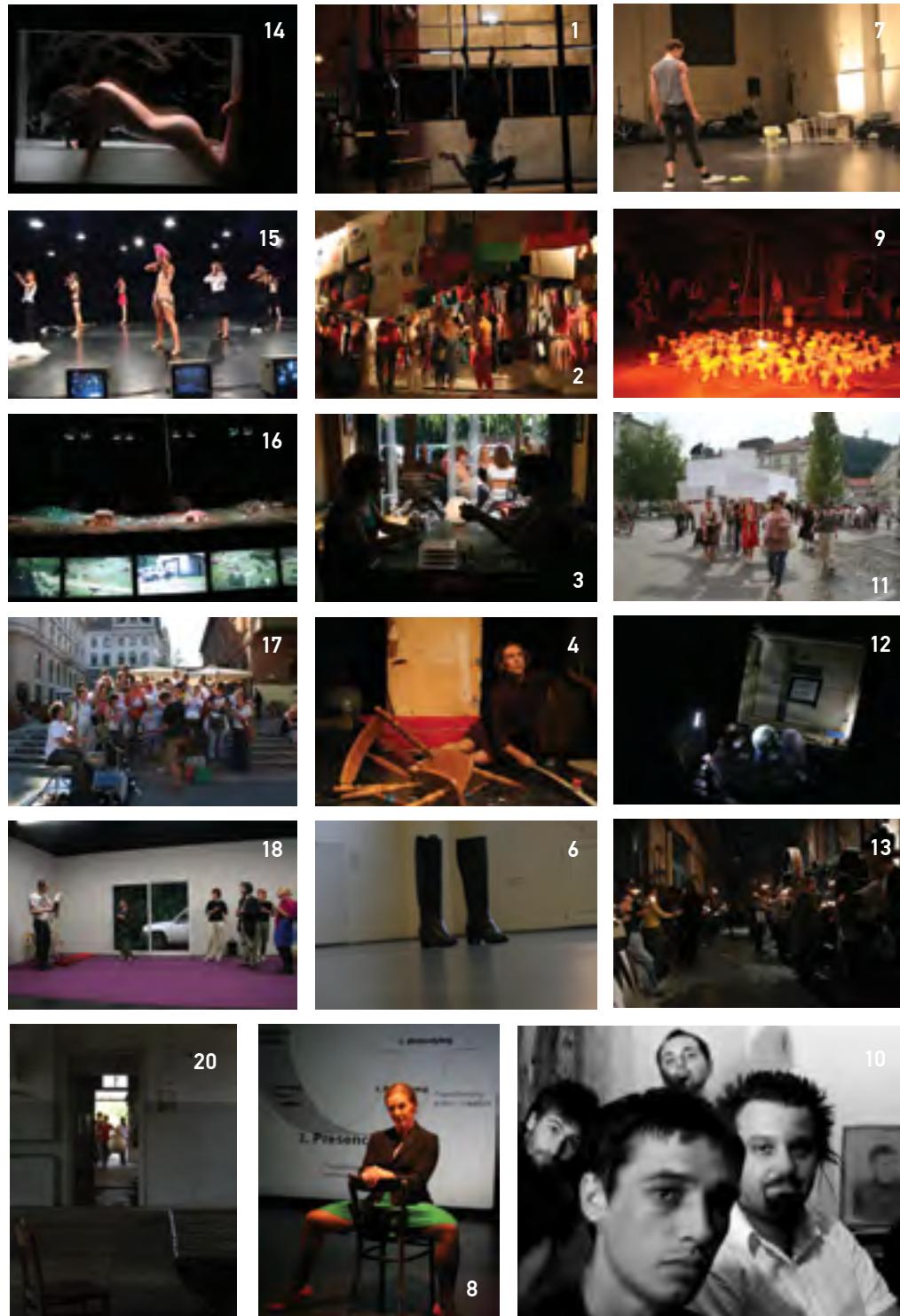
POLITICS AND PROGRAMMING workshop – 19

IN THE CIRCLE workshop

Photos: Urška Boljkovac



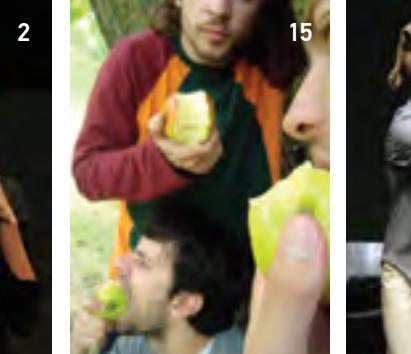
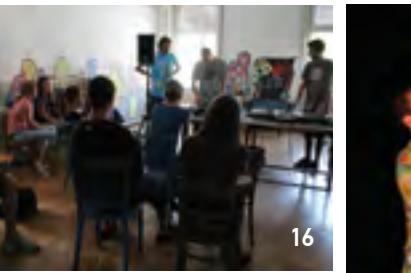
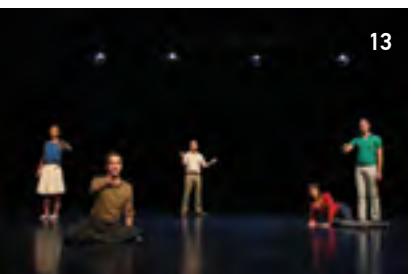
2008



- Mathurin Bolze: FENETRES – 1**
Tanja Radež: RECYCLED T-SHIRTS – 2
Rotozaza: ETIQUETTE – 3
Camille Boitel: L'HOMME IMMÉDIAT – 4
1927: BETWEEN THE DEVIL AND THE DEEP BLUE SEA – 5
Miet Warlop: PROPOSITION 1: REANIMATION – 6
Marko Jastrevski: GARBAGE EPIC – 7
Nina Božič: ART VS. BUSINESS – 8
Rosa Casado, Mike Brookes: SOME THINGS HAPPEN ALL AT ONCE – 9
Zoster: CONCERT – 10
Vlado Repnik, Martina Ruhsam: BLANK_PROTEST
and Samo Gosarčič: DEMONSTRATIONS – 11
Tretaroka: BEATBOX/TRASH IS SOUND – 12
Gob Squad: SUPER NIGHT SHOT – 13
Plumes dans la tête: LA QUIESCENZA DEL SEME – 14
Maja Delak: EXPENSIVE DARLINGS – 15
Berlin: BONANZA – 16
Tellervo Kalleinen, Oliver Kochta-Kalleinen, KUD Obrat: COMPLAINTS CHOIR LJUBLJANA – 17
Philippe Quesne: L'EFFET DE SERGE – 18
Elena Fajt: HAIRBRIDS – 19
Mala Kline, Max Cuccaro: LOOKING FOR ANDY – WORKSHOP PRESENTATION – 20
Les SlovaKs: OPENING NIGHT – 21
ON THIN ICE – PRESENTATION OF 2020 NETWORK – THIN ICE: ARTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE – 22

Photos: Urška Boljkovac

2009



6



Superamas: EMPIRE (ART & POLITICS) - 1

Katarina Stegnar, Via Negativa: KUPEC Z ŽILICO - 2

MY STREET - 3

Kornél Mundruczó, Yvette Bíró: FRANKENSTEIN-PROJECT - 4

Grega Zorc, Via Negativa: DOBER POSEL - 5

Boris Kadin, Via Negativa: KAJ MI JE POVEDAL JOSEPH BEUYS, KO SEM MRTEV LEŽAL V NJEGOVEM NAROČJU - 6

Tatjana Tolstaja, Alvis Hermanis: SONJA - 7

Kombinat: CONCERT - 8

Faifai: MY NAME IS I LOVE YOU - 9

Heiner Müller, Ivica Buljan: MACBETH AFTER SHAKESPEARE - 10

Elia Rubin Mrak Blumberg: LORD, DON'T LET THE DEVIL STEAL THE BEAT! - 11

Aleksandar Georgiev THRESHOL (in process D) - 12

Ivana Müller: WHILE WE WERE HOLDING IT TOGETHER - 13

Maja Pelević, Matjaž Pograjc, Betontanc: MOŽDA SMO MI MIKI MAUS - 14

Ruta Nordmane: APPLE MAN - 15

Djing workshop - 16

FROM THE GALLERY OF MODERN ART TO THE METELKOVA. CONVERSATION

ON ESTABLISHING THE CULTURAL QUARTER TABOR workshop

DIFFERENT WAYS OF EXCHANGE AND COOPERATION "CURATING LOCAL" - 17

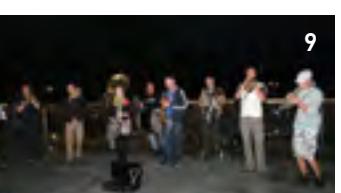
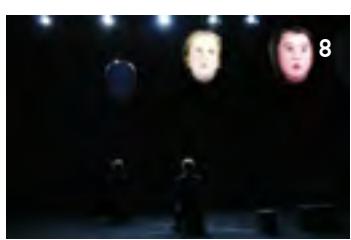
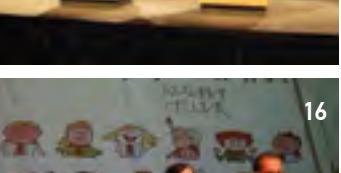
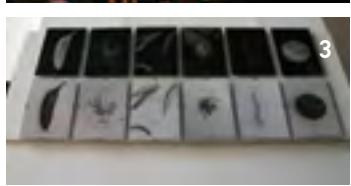
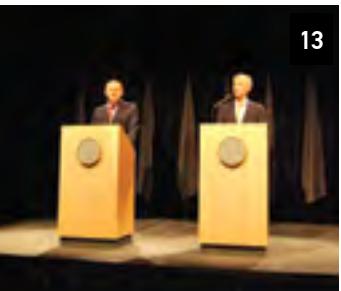
T-SHIRT PRINTING workshop - 18

Photos: Urška Bojkovac



17

2010



Stefan Kaegi (Rimini Protokoll): **RADIO MUEZZIN** - 1

Ackroyd & Harvey: **ON THE FIELD** - 2

Tanja Lažetić: **MIGRANTI** - 3

GARDEN BY THE WAY - 4

Zachary Oberzan: **YOUR BROTHER. REMEMBER?** - 5

Dirk Opstaele/Ensemble Loporello: **NUIT ARABE** - 6

Toshiki Okada/Chelfitsch: **HOT PEPPER, AIR CONDITIONER AND THE FAREWELL SPEECH** - 7

De Utvalgte: **SKUGGAR** - 8

Kar češ brass band: **CONCERT** - 9

Pichet Klunchun: **NIJINSKY SIAM** - 10

Primož Bezjak, Via Negativa: **INVALID** - 11

Jos Houben: **THE ART OF LAUGHTER** - 12

Rod Dickinson: **WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN, WHY AND HOW** - 13

Pichet Klunchun: **I AM A DEMON** - 14

Mathurin Bolze, Hedi Thabet: **ALI** - 15

Sanja Mitrović: **WILL YOU EVER BE HAPPY AGAIN?** - 16

Gregor Strniša, Iztok Lovrić: **BEATLEGEIST** - 17

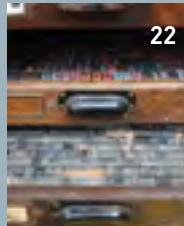
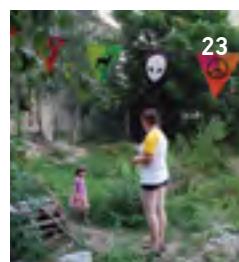
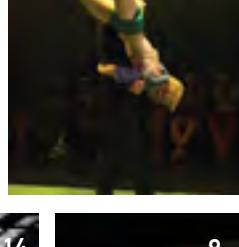
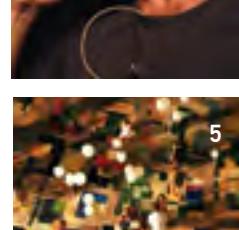
THE DICHOTOMY BETWEEN AESTHETICS AND FUNCTIONALITY IN THE URBAN SPACE round table - 18

THE ART OF ENGAGEMENT round table - 19

Photos: Urška Bojkovac and photos from the archives of the performances



2011



Station House Opera: DOMINOES - 1

Škart: STOROLL, SINGEROLL, PENJALEC - 2

SPACES OF PLAY - 3

contact Gonzo: THE LATE DRUMMER/STUDIES OF HAPPENINGS ON STAGE AND RHYTHM THAT DOESN'T MATCH BUT IN A WAY IT DOES - 4

prostoRož: MAP OF WISHES - 5

Motus: TOO LATE!_(ANTIGONE) CONTEST #2 - 6

Tanja Radež: GIRLS AND BOYS - 7

Ivana Müller: 60 MINUTES OF OPPORTUNISM - 8

Stacy Makishi: THE MAKING OF BULL: THE TRUE STORY - 9

Betontanc Ltd.: TAM DALEČ STRAN. UVOD V EGO-LOGIJO - 10

Nelisiwe Xaba: SAKHOZI SAYS "NON" TO THE VENUS - 11

Nelisiwe Xaba: PLASTICIZATION - 12

Rui Catalão: DENTRO DAS PALAVRAS - 13

Heine Røsdal Avdal, Christoph De Boeck, Yukiko Shinozaki/deepblue: YOU ARE HERE - 14

Teja Reba, Leja Jurišić: MED NAMA - 15

Dominique Roodthooft: SMATCH 2 - 16

ricci/forte: MACADAMIA NUT BRITTLE - 17

Dirk Opstaele: LYRICAL MINUTES IN THE CITY - 18

Gob Squad: BEFORE YOUR VERY EYES - 19

Dječaci: CONCERT - 20

Josef Nadj, Akosh S.: LES CORBEAUX - 21

TRICYCLE PRINTS STORIES FROM TABOR workshop - 22

HONEY WALK - 23

NEW APPROACHES TO AUDIENCE BUILDING round table - 24

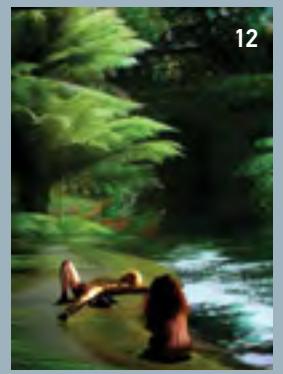
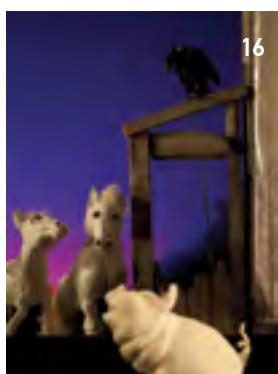
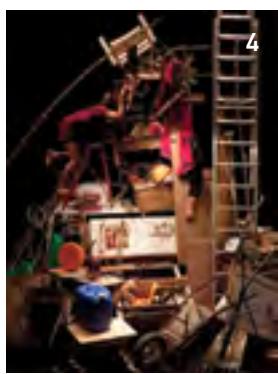
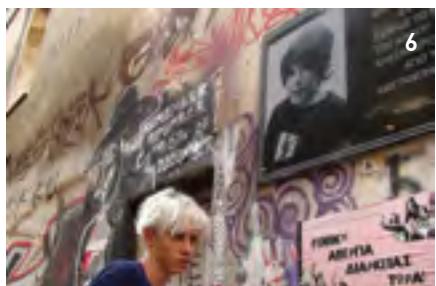
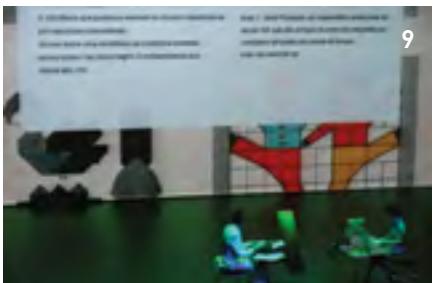
JANE'S WALK ON THE HUNT FOR PLAYGROUNDS - 25

Photos: Urška Boljkovac



24

2012



Aljoša Ternovšek, Sebastijan Horvat, Matjaž Latin, Andreja Kopač: WAS IST MARIBOR? - 1

Kyohei Sakaguchi: MOBILE HOUSE (PRACTICE FOR A REVOLUTION) - 2

Reverend Billy: WORKSHOP, SERMON AND PUBLIC INTERVENTION - 3

Camille Boitel: L'IMMÉDIAT - 4

Patrícia Portela, Christoph De Boeck: HORTUS - 5

Motus: ALEXIS. UNA TRAGEDIA GRECA - 6

ColectivA: X MM DIN Y KM - 7

Stefan Kaegi: LECTURE CIUDADES PARALELAS - 8

Patrícia Portela: THE PRIVATE COLLECTION OF ACÁCIO NOBRE - 9

Pionir 10: CONCERT - 10

Jolika Sudermann, Alma Söderberg: A TALK - 11

De Utvalgte: KUNSTEN Å BLI TAM - 12

Davis Freeman/Random Scream: EXPANDING ENERGY - 13

Societat Doctor Alonso/Tomàs Aragay: INTRODUCTION TO INTRODUCTION artist in residence - 14

Roger Bernat/FFF: PENDIENTE DE VOTO - 15

George Orwell, Andrej Rozman Roza: ŽIVELSKA FARMA - 16

HOW TO OUTSMART THE CRISIS mini conference

Photos from the archives of the performances

THE FILIGREE WORK OF OBTAINING FUNDING

Theatre is an expensive art. Not only is it dependent on a lot of manpower, but for a successful staging, an appropriate space is needed.

Despite the common belief that it's possible to perform anywhere, most performances need appropriate flooring, lighting, a sound system, stage design or in the past years, when stage designs (sometimes because of financial reasons) became scarce, technology turned into an important theatre means. For instance, video is almost always present in performances.

Obtaining funding for the Mladi levi festival has always been hard, since the festival never turned into a mainstream festival, in which case it could assure significant income with ticket sales. Additionally, despite improvements in national funding, it never turned out to be stable and sufficient enough to insure the festival with the funding needed for its realisation. Thus, every year the budget of the Mladi levi festival was like a delicate patchwork, sometimes with major patches and sometimes with tiny little patterns covering all of the festivals' needs. Despite the challenges, the basic principle remains the same, as money is only a means of helping to fulfil a program's visions and wishes.

Over the years, the total amounts for festival budgets are growing, but a closer look unfortunately reveals that when taking inflation into account, the progress is dreadfully slow and the improvement of the quality and size of the festival has more to do with the teams' experience and knowledge rather than to a growing budget. In comparison with similar festivals in the region, we accomplish the same or much more with a much smaller budget, while a comparison of budgets with bigger festivals in the West is pointless (for instance, the Avignon Festival has a budget sixty-times bigger than the Mladi levi festival).

Let us present the key areas of the financial success of the Mladi levi festival, by success we have in mind that we have managed to keep the festival on a high enough level without producing a loss and allowing it to hover around breaking even:

- Faithful regular funders and long-term partnerships. Some funders have been financing the festival for 15 years now. Besides the City of Ljubljana, the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Slovenia and the European Commission, also the French Institute Charles Nodier has been supporting the festival for 15 years.
- The successful acquisition of European funding. Kaleidoscope, Culture 2000 and Culture – the Mladi levi festival obtained support from all three programs, and for the last three-year-period the festival obtained support from the European Commission, which provided stability over these three years of national budget cuts.
- Improved stability of national and local funding, which provide a much needed funding base.
- An extensive network of partnerships provides the festival with non-financial means, which are of almost the same worth as financial ones. When accounting for the value of the festival, the investment of festival partners and immaterial means obtained are rarely sufficiently evaluated. This encompasses everything from collaborations with institutions, other non-governmental organisations, discounts, gifts and last but not least voluntary work invested in the festival. These contributions are invaluable and enrich the festival on various levels. Here Bunker has profited from widening its field of operations, since it is through the festival that all of the social capital of the organisation and the individuals in it are redeemed.
- International partnerships have also proven invaluable. They are reflected through international networks where Bunker was, or still is, a member: IETM, Junge Hunde, D. B. M., Theorem, Balkan Express, Sostenuto, Imagine 2020 – Arts and Climate Change, Network 2020: Thin Ice, In Situ, FIT/Global City – Local City, A Soul for Europe ... They are generating a pool of knowledge and experience that saves us from much seeking and research that has already been done by partners in the network. The networks have also provided an education platform in times when education in this field was not yet available in Slovenia. In Slovenia Bunker is a member of Asociacija (the Association of Arts and Culture NGOs and Freelancers), Mreža za prostor (Network for Space) and the Cultural Quarter Tabor.

• The continuity and education of the team organising the festival. Obtaining funding is not only a challenge, it requires knowledge and skill for which examples of good practice are scarce, and there are even less opportunities for quality education in this field. That is why constant education and learning-by-doing is crucial for the development of the team, which can not only select the program and carry it out but has also carried it out successfully over the years. Successful communication in the festival and successful programming do not occur in an office with closed doors. Successfully obtaining funding involves the whole team and is a common effort of co-operation for everyone involved in the festival.

• Dreaming and knowing your limits at the same time. The Mladi levi festival is proof of the impossible being possible and that it's not good to stop in the face of the first obstacle. Yet there is a difference between persistence and determination, and madness. Sometimes it's necessary to let go of something, saving something for the future and letting it mature for some time. The history of the Mladi levi festival has seen some cases where we tried everything possible, but it still didn't work. Yet it's better to put one project aside, than to bury the whole festival.

Obtaining funding for the festival as a whole is a long-term process, yet every single project, and every performance of the festival is a particular effort. We try to find possible funding connected with the country of the artists' origins. In this field, especially, the embassies of particular countries and also national cultural centres have proven generous over the years, for instance the British Council, Goethe Institute, Institute français (the central institute and their subsidiary in Ljubljana).

In the decade and a half we have had some exceptional examples of co-operation with private organisations which support the festival. For many years Revoz, Marand, and Europlakat have been sponsors of the Mladi levi festival. All of them are partners of the festival. Co-operation with them has been successful and we believe that the partnership with the festival has been of mutual benefit.

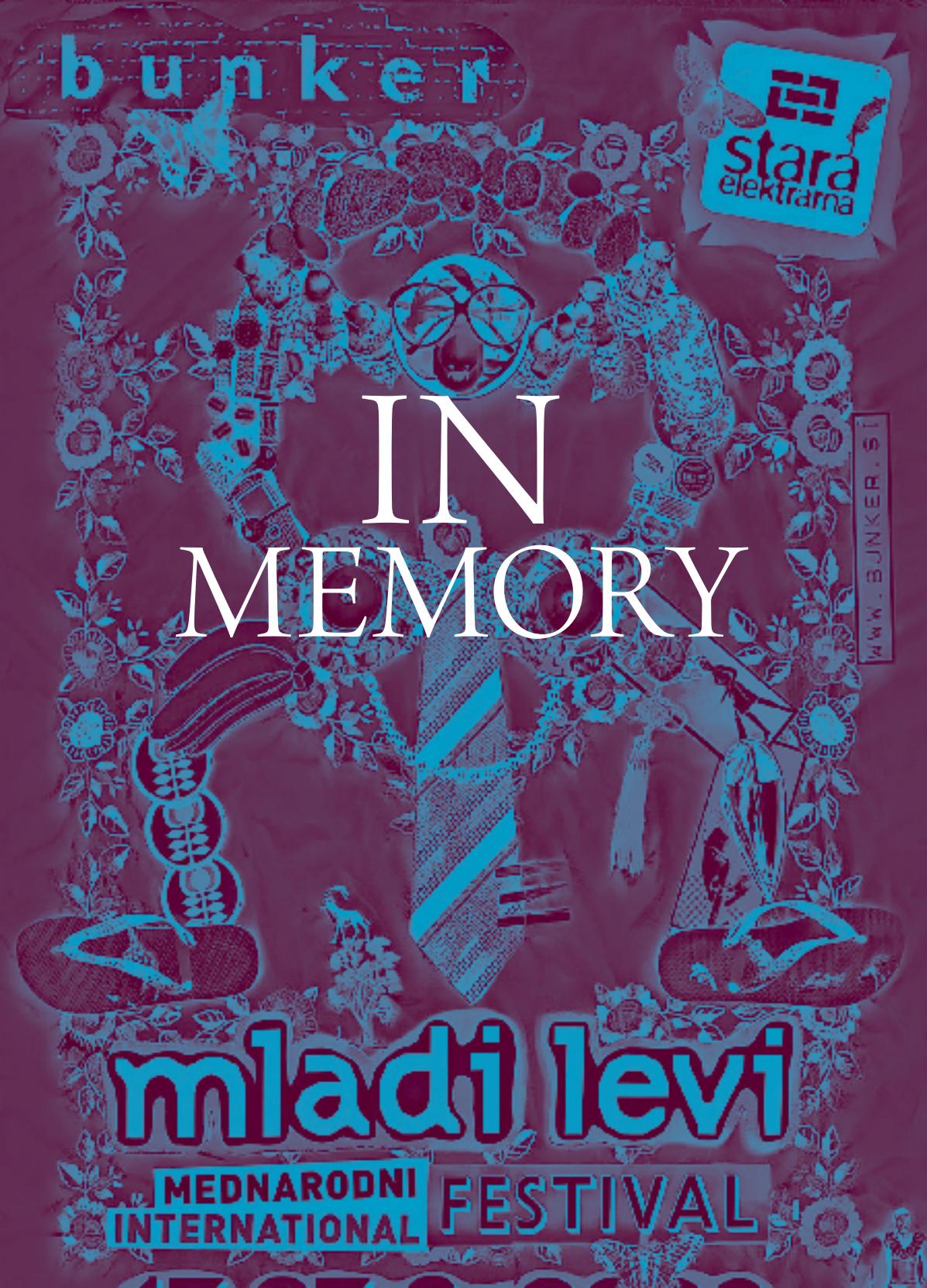
**All donors are important in this budget patchwork,
every stitch is important, every small patch, yet funders are especially
important because each year they make it possible for us to present
the public with – a festival!**

FINANCERS OF THE FESTIVAL IN 15 YEARS

Ministry of Culture/Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports, Ljubljana City Municipality, EU programme funds (Caleidoscope, Culture 2000, Culture), the Mayor's Office, Tourism Ljubljana, the Open Society Institute Slovenia, the French Institute Charles Nodier, ŠOU, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Spain, Victoria – the Cultural Ambassador of Flanders, the German Embassy, SCT, Delo, Panna, Marand, Hyundai avto trade, Institut français/AFAA/Culturesfrance, the British Council, the Danish Embassy, Adria Airways, Hortus, the Arts and Culture Network Program – Cultural Link, Generalitat de Catalunya, COPEC – Cultura de Catalunya, Teater Radet, the Hungarian Embassy, the Foundation Roberto Cimetta, Société Générale, the Student dormitory Ivan Cankar, Restaurant Arboretum, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Norway, Pro Helvetia, IPAE – Instituto Purtuges des artes do espectaculo, Revoz, White & Mackay, Restaurant Mediteraneo, Obad, KZ Laško, Peritus, Logina, Instituto Italiano di cultura, the Amateur Art and Performing Art Foundation – FPK, the Dutch Embassy, Kompas, Foto Maxi, Voljatel komunikacije, Megacop, Plasta, Pristop Kliping/Kliping, Loewe Avanta, Pivovarna Laško, VTI – Flemish Theatre Institut, Gradis Inženiring, Redoljub, Premiera, Restaurant Breskvar, Studio Christian, Gallery Gallus, Andrej Čeč, Restaurant Pri Škofu, Radio Študent, Mladina, Tam Tam, Hewlett-Packard, Metropolis, Leoss, Fun Food, Alten, Protechnik, Petit, Dar, Rustika, DRM, the European Cultural Foundation, Theorem, Institut Ramon Llull, the Arts and Culture Network Program – Open Society Institute Budapest, the Ministry of Culture of the Republic Croatia, the State Cultural Capital Foundation of Latvia, the Belgian Embassy, Fotokopirnica Zebra Plus, Viator Vektor, KZ Metlika, Ljubljanske mlekarne, Najdi.si, Radgonske gorice, the Swiss Embassy, Stadler, Peugeot Slovenija, Popar, Air France, Europlakat, UPC Telemach, Matkurja, the City of Lyon, AC Kondor, LTH Škofja Loka, Bureau Veritas, UMco, the European regional Development Fund, the EU-Japan fest-Japan committee, Japan Foundation, 200 ans provinces Illyriennes, Vigrad, LiveCliq, Jeruzalem Ormož VVS, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Slovenia, Parada plesa, Javno podjetje ljubljanska parkirišča in tržnice, Petre, Juice Box, Summit Motors, KPL, Radio Marš, Prosoft Consulting, SPL Ljubljana, Pekarna dobrot, Snaga, GEM, MediaBUS, Radio SI, Fini oglasi, Hotel Park, Ytong, Saison Foundation, Flemish Authorities, Vallonie – Bruxelles International, JSKD, Restaurant Park, Si.gledal, Fundacio Gulbenkian, the Arts Council Norway, the Norwegian Association for Performing Arts, the Spanish Embassy

PARTNERS OF THE FESTIVAL IN 15 YEARS

Mladinsko Theatre, Glej Theatre, Institute for Nature Conservation, Regional Unit Ljubljana, the Ljubljana Castle, Dance Theatre Ljubljana, Elektro Ljubljana, Gallery Equrna, Cankarjev Dom, Intakt, Druga pomoč, Organizacija d.o.o., ŠŽ Centralne delavnice d.d., the Railway Museum, the Association for Contemporary Dance, Masko, the Government Communication Office, Barsos-MC, Kmetija odprtih vrat Kuren, Slovenian Railways d.d., Vitkar, the Museum of Modern Art, MGLC, KUD Š.E.J.K., Gallery ŠKUC, the Sanje Festival, the Ljubljana City Gallery, the Slovenian Film Centre, the Oton Župančič Library, Kinodvor, CodeEP, En-Knap, Kapelica, the Ljubljana City Museum, the Rog Factory, Emanat, Litostroj e.i., Flota, Ptuj City Theatre, Kavarna Pločnik, the Slovene Ethnographic Museum, BTC d.d. Logistični center, Vitkar, Akustika Primožič, Svilanit, the Bookshop Behemot, L'Occitane, Terra Plana, Almira Sadar, Mladinska knjiga – Bookshop Konzorcij, Flat, 3muhe, Le Petit cafe, the Peace Institute, Cafetino, prostoRož, Pionirski dom, Prožvok, Smetumet, the Chess Association Železničar, the Union of Slovenian Organic Farmer Association, the Association for the Promotion of Music, Mini Theatre, the Univesity Botanic Gardens Ljubljana, Hostel Celica, Španski borci, Aksioma, the Puppet Theatre Ljubljana, Studio 12, the Museum of Contemporary Art Metelkova



I CAN STILL SEE IMAGES FROM THE PICNIC BEFORE MY EYES

We came to Ljubljana for the festival some years ago with our first long stage piece *Night*. Seen from today, from my eyes and after all these years of work, I see the show as a *melting pot* of many different things we were attempting at the time.

I came to Slovenia with three magnificent dancers: Laura Arís, Sofia Asencio and Natalie Labiano. Manu Martinez was the technician of the company. We performed at the Stara mestna elektrarna which was, I believe, being inaugurated that year. So everything around us before the presentation felt special.

For us it was one of the first times we showed our work outside of our country, so we were very excited and curious about people's reaction to it. As for the festival, I can remember that the new space also had people motivated and excited.

I also remember that the team and all the people who worked at the festival were very nice and warm, and I say this not to be polite but because I really sense that they were (and still are) people who care about what they do: who love the scene, try to make the best festival every year and know how to make artists feel happy during their stay in the city.

Well, we finally conducted our performance and we were very happy by the end of it. People liked it and there was a very fun and nice party in the hall of the space right after the presentation. I have a very nice memory of that party and the night of bars afterwards. I also remember a bar, not the name, not the location, but a bar that during that year's festival was the meeting point for everybody at night. Those were great nights, having fun, meeting people and other artists with whom we had been in touch and still are, and with whom we had been collaborating in projects for years afterwards, like Miguel Pereira and Antonio Tagliarini.



Finally, I have a great memory of the picnic day outside the city in the forest. A sunny, relaxing and beautiful day with everyone calmly eating together. We played a game of football. There were some artists, technicians and people from the festival team, and the images of that moment come easily to my mind.

I went to work in Ljubljana another two times but, as they say, nothing's like the first time. Thanks to all the people who made this wonderful experience possible for all of us.

Tomàs Aragay,

Spain, visited Mladi levi with a performance of his group, General Elèctrica, titled *Night* (1999), held a workshop at the festival in 2001 and stayed as artist in residence with work in progress *Introduction to Introduction* (2012)

Photo Stefan Kaegi



DEAR YOUNG LION,

So, you're turning 15 years old. Puberty. Up for your first real love affair?

We've been flirting every now and then: We ate Shopska salad under Bulgarian trucks, lay next to each other on Egyptian prayer carpets, and between some mini model trains you showed me how to access the Balkans through a Swiss door.

Looking back through my photo album, I found a picture that I cannot explain. Photo from the airport. It looks like you were always a place for dangerous shooting stars. I hope you don't mature too fast.

Please hang the photo next to the mirror where you pop your pimples and enjoy the party!

Stefan Kaegi,

Switzerland, Germany, member of the Rimini Protokoll collective, performed at Mladi levi with *Cargo Sofia – Ljubljana* (2006), *Mnemopark* (2007), *Radio Muezzin* (2010) and lecture *Ciudades Paralelas* (2012)

The absolute winner in the number of performances staged at the festival is Sebastijan Horvat: his works were shown at the festival **five times**. Runner-ups are Betontanc and Stefan Kaegi with **four** guest stays at the festival.

THANKS FOR THE ILLUSION

One of the greatest fears of a theatre artist is that one day he will finally grow old. The theatre, even before the emergence of our pop media culture, has always known how to instil terror in the artist – with the thought that his ideas and images will one day cease to be sexy, fresh, new, and young. That he might become like all those who he fought against and detested for years, and that in the end he would put on a superior and serious face while excreting a strikingly similar, if not even more impeccable, marble stone, much like the one he once loved to smash with such immature and profane vulgarity.

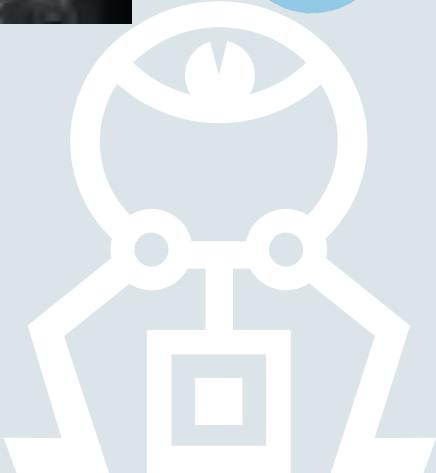
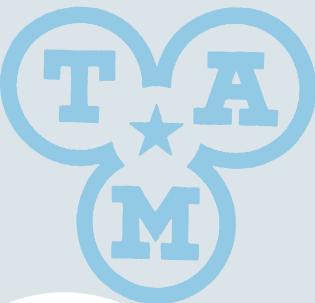
Thank you Mladi levi, for the illusion that this day has not yet come.

Sebastijan Horvat,

director, Mladi levi staged his performances *Ion* (1998), *SS/Sharpen Your Senses* (2000), *Get famous or die trying/Elizabeth 2* (2004), *Before/After* (2007), *Was ist Maribor?* (2012)



Photo from the archive of the performance



A GOOD HORIZONTAL LINE AND A GOOD VERTICAL LINE

Every city has its own pedestrians. When thinking about the pedestrians of Ljubljana, I remember: huge circles made of concrete in the passageway next to the Museum of Modern Art, through which the heads of people from the audience were popping out. They were sitting on empty wine boxes. I remember the train rushing above us and the railroad tracks that the *Hodač* performers used to run across to get to the other side and into another scene. On the other side, on the tracks, some other mysterious performance was taking place and the performers in it rushed like a train. Every one of them had to come to another station at an exactly determined time. I also remember the cyclists, who were passing by in astonishment, crossing the passageway and all of a sudden finding themselves in the middle of a performance. I remember the used black shoes of our poet of cursing, anarchy and resistance – Janko Polić Kamov – at the foot of the stairs; and legendary Ljubljana graffiti behind them. And then, for a reward: an excellent team and a party-picnic with barbecue, where the *Hodač* team remained lying on the grass in a real coastal style. I can still vividly remember dirty feet in a horizontal line and flip-flops belonging to one of the team members. “Who’s playing football?” someone asked. The answer was: “Ex-Yugoslavia against the rest of the world.” That sure was a good horizontal line – and an even better vertical one. And we were all there, right at the intersection of the two lines. There were beige T-shirts with the *Mladi levi* logo, which had the names of everyone performing at the festival written on the back, including *Trafik*. In the end, my husband wore one. And then, after 15 years, it fell apart. “Should we throw it away, it’s really shabby now?” my husband asked. But it seemed like such a waste to throw it away. “Oh, at least let’s have it as a rag to wipe the floor with.

Let’s keep the “levi” with us for a little while longer ... Roaaarr!

Magdalena Lupi Alvir,

Croatia, she and her group *Trafik* performed at *Mladi levi* with the performance *Hodač* (1999)

Photo Urška Boljkovac



THE CRYSTAL GLASS BOUGHT IN LJUBLJANA SOUNDED BETTER

Sleeping in the dormitories of a school that was closed for summer vacation. I took my mattress and slept on the balcony at the end of the corridor every night. Enjoying the warm summer nights. Enjoying the outdoors.

A picnic on a mountain. Everybody there. Hanging around on the green grass eating fantastic local foods. Laughing and having fun. Getting half drunk on the local plum brandy.

My mother performed with me one year. She was supposed to accompany me on a crystal glass for my solo. But, she forgot to bring it, so I had to buy a new one. It had a much better sound than the one at home! Or maybe the whole atmosphere of the festival helped pull out that crystal clear sound.

I shared a room with my mother, back at the school that had gone on summer vacation. I had to use ear plugs to escape my mother’s snoring. They were days of laughter, teasing and having fun. We went to the coast just to eat some fish.

Waiting for my tech time, at the new festival venue (Stara mestna elektrarna). We were last and everything was running late. Waiting and rehearsing with my mother in the parking lot at the back. The British girl before me wanted to change half her choreography while doing tech. In the end we had to ask her to leave. We had just 15 minutes before the audience came in. Slam, bam, we just had to make it work.

Bo Madvig,

Denmark, performed at *Mladi levi* with *Flat Fish No. 8* (1998) and *Viggo* (1999)



Photo Nada Žgank

I WANT TO BE A YOUNG LION FOREVER

From the very first time I went to Ljubljana to participate in the Mladi Levi festival (in 2001, I guess) I felt that I was at home.

As an artist, and as a person, I'm always concerned with the human aspect of the relationships that I create with the people I work with. The performers, the collaborators, producers and programmers are part of a chain that makes our creative efforts visible. It's very rare that with programmers, for example, we have the possibility to strengthen a real relationship or even develop a closer proximity – due maybe to a hierarchy/power relation that is established from the beginning.

With Nevenka and the entire team of Mladi Levi, I've always felt something different and special. Their generosity and support, how they let you feel comfortable, how they take risks in billing you as a "young artist" – "young" as a matter of spirit and not a matter of age – made me feel that I was in the right place to present my artwork.

I'm really grateful to the fantastic team, the city, the other artists, the food, the lovely picnics and for the enthusiastic audience that was receptive of discovering the new and the unexpected.

Mladi Levi was, and still is, in my heart as one of the places that gave me a warm reception and great memories. I really hope this goes on and on.

Miguel Pereira,

Portugal, performed at Mladi Levi with performances *Antonio Miguel* (2001), *29. August* (2002) and *Miguel meets Karima* (2006)

DEAR LION CUB!

What, you would like to tweet, facebook, and do some online socialising? No problem: your teeth have just barely come in, your fur is glistening and your whiskers are turned upwards. So, roar, bite, and live like Kozmus takes off with a hammer into the distance, fire some pellets in your enemy's backside with Debevec, go into battle for theatre honour and glory with Žolnir, and, like Špik and Čop, row your way to your hundred and fifteenth shore, for all time, for the holy and damned, a little amen and an even bigger *cuzamen*.

Here's wishing you many years more, and to all the eventual and potential little boy and girl cubs of your own.

Your Betontanc

Matjaž Pograjc,

director and founder of the group Betontanc, which had visiting appearances at the Mladi Levi festival: *Maison des rendez-vous* (2002), *Show your face!* (2006) and *Možda smo mi Miki Maus* (2009)



Photo Tina Smrekar

A FESTIVAL IN TOP SHAPE

Normally we say that behind every successful man there stands a successful woman. In case of the Mladi levi festival there can be no doubt: here, women run the show! And not just that: these are the best women in town! The creative female team creates and keeps the festival in top shape. There are no ups and downs here, no audience crises, no lack of finances, no competition in the proverbial Slovenian sense of the word. We don't whine after the performances about how terrible everything was, but instead we rejoice and support the young artists. From its very start the atmosphere is fantastic and contagious. The performances and their creators reveal both known and unknown landscapes to the local artists and audience, as well as new stories and approaches, while the festival constantly discovers differences, spaces and a new, different kind of audience. I am delighted to see the festival spread through parallel projects run by Bunker; breathing new life into the street, weaving connections with local inhabitants during the festival time, and creating new, green surfaces.

I was a guest artist at the festival with the performance *Forma Interrogativa* in 2003. After that, Magda Reiter and I toured all over Europe. To this day I haven't forgotten the kind thanks and now legendary cult T-shirts that we received after the performance. I can only agree with the hero in the motion picture *Amarcord* and join him as he calls out to the lionesses -- *Io voglio una donna*, in art and all segments of cultural policy!

Mateja Reboli,

dancer and choreographer, a guest artist at the Mladi levi festival with the performance *Forma Interrogativa* (2003)



FIFTEEN FESTIVAL YEARS IS MORE THAN JUST A BUNCH OF PERFORMANCES

Reconstructing the year of my first visit to the Mladi levi festival requires quite some effort on my part. I must have been there in 1999 for the first time. Thirteen years ago, to be exact. And the performance by General Elèctrica must have been on at that time, even though I don't think I actually saw it; others must have just told me about it.

And if I try to remember the first time I performed at Mladi levi, the blind spot in my memory grows larger. It must have been five times altogether. Mostly with Betontanc and Via Negativa.

Finally, if I try to remember all of the performance groups or projects I have seen at the festival, only the most reputable will come to mind, such as Jérôme Bel, Station House Opera, Motus and Lovepangs. Terrifying. Unfair.

Now, if I put my Swiss cheese-like memory to the side, I no longer have to remember. I can just peacefully say that every year Mladi levi represents a slow slide into reality for me; a soft progression from holidays to work and, most importantly, a special privilege. It is an opportunity for me to gain insight into another theatre dimension, which goes on beyond our borders. It allows me to put my taste on trial (bad performances are even more suitable for this endeavour than good ones) and to be part of the scene, which lives and breathes with this theatre. Even if being part of the scene simply means having impassioned debates over beer, playing football in Kuren or – my favourite strategy for provocation – asking the technical team if they saw any of the performances from beginning to end, and if there was something they really liked (as of now, Ivo Dimchev is in the lead). Or even enjoying the insightful articles of the newspaper Arena.

Even though one might think that these fifteen festival years are nothing but a bunch of performances lying on the dance floor (on opening night), like high-heeled shoes no one can wear or even stand to look at anymore, I can assure you that time and time again I put on those blister-causing theatre heels on and don't take them off all night. And when the time for heels is over, I wait for the next year. To get blisters again.

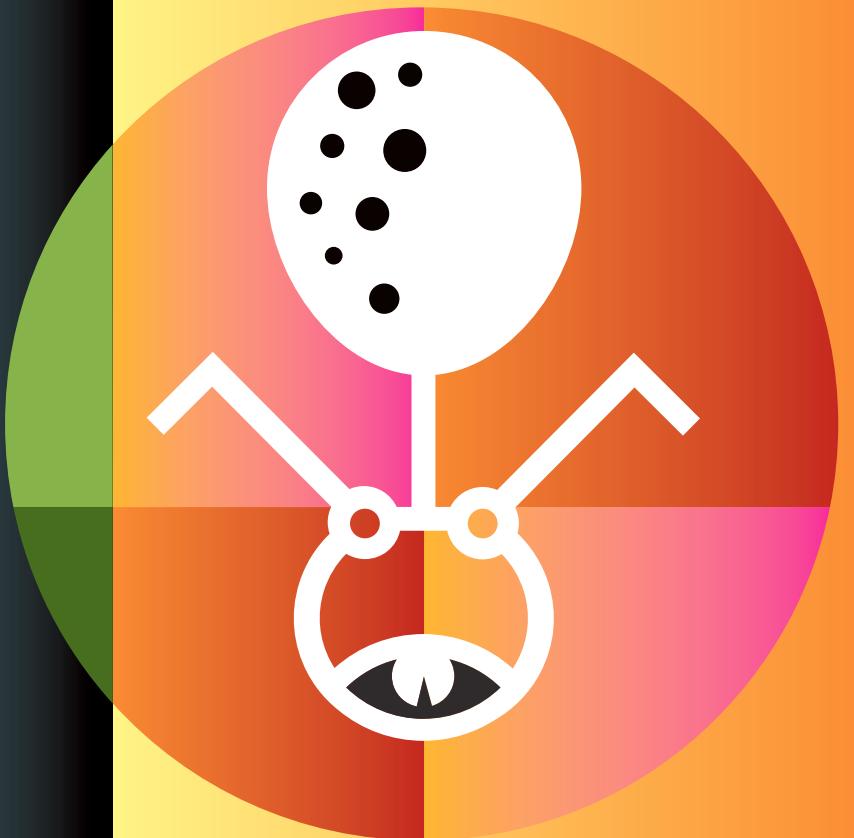
Katarina Stegnar,

actress, performer and author, performed at Mladi levi in the context of Betontanc and Via Negativa collectives and in a performance by Sebastijan Horvat



We have bought **74** pairs of shoes for the Mladi levi opening parties.

DISCOVERING NEW SPACES



TANJA LESNIČAR - PUČKO,
journalist

A FESTIVAL THROUGH SPACE

Planning a new festival is inseparably connected to space, both physical and cultural. Every festival exists in both of them. If its programme aims at unoccupied or cleared spaces without any art/events, presuming that the cultural space needs some at all, the festival should look for suitable places, unless it owns some.

The Mladi levi festival, founded by Bunker in 1998 in a rented office, without any performing premises of its own, has always taken this matter seriously, that is to say, conceptually: a performing place with a reflection on available infrastructure, "marked" by the usual range, as well as on finding new, "undiscovered" locations, like forgotten halls, museums, or abandoned areas. On one hand, it's a profiled programme, on the other, it's a survey on the needs for new infrastructure and the revival of existing ones. Right from the beginning, the issue of space raised the question of the audience, often bound to a certain location, as well as the need for creating a new place, the festival's own. And, lastly, it raised the issue of creating different means for organising and enabling artists to socialise, joined by volunteers and local residents, i.e. creating a new social environment. It was a reflection on how to create something bigger, which would exceed the intensive ten days of the festival, and would remain once the artists had left.

The opening of the first Mladi levi festival, at a time when non-governmental performing in Ljubljana was languishing and lacking in suitable performing premises, happened at the Ljubljana Castle, which at the time (like today) was searching for its own identity. The event attracted many people who were normally not fond of tourist locations. Most of the performances at the first festival happened at the Mladinsko Theatre and at Dance Theatre Ljubljana (which have, due to their nature, become the festival's permanent partners, as has Glej Theatre), which had similar programmes to some extent. The next year Bunker "discovered" Stara mestna elektrarna, in which the festival received its first domicile, and which,

after the historical monument's renovation, became its permanent location in 2004; Bunker was offered the opportunity to manage it. This fact carried many advantages: Stara mestna elektrarna has become firmly anchored in the consciousness of the audience, it was fixed on the cultural map of the city, which triggered the formation of a specific sociocultural circle. Nevertheless, it has not relinquished the use of other places, mostly open areas. For its second edition, the festival introduced a regular open air concert evening, first at Pločnik, which was still defining its image at the time, and later at different places, like Gornji Square, OF Square, Novi Square, and others.

Looking for complementary places reached a different dimension after anchoring at Stara mestna elektrarna. It became a search for spots that needed to be accentuated with some sort of stimulation, like acupuncture. A good example of this was the Rog Factory which, besides the undeniable poetry of the place, has always carried a clear political message to those who had the power to decide on the responsibility for the inexcusable dilapidation of a complex with so much incredible potential. And, not only to them, but also to the managers of existing places. Between 2001 and 2003, the Mladi levi festival discovered the venue of the Railway Museum, an exceptional place that nobody was really aware of, and which sank into a deep sleep again after this period.

This example illustrates perfectly well the need for two principles, which should be taken into consideration by every cultural policymaker: permanent infrastructure provides for the indispensable formation of a richly-varied cultural space, which requires incessant examination, whereas detecting new locations serves as a spotlight above the city at night, which suddenly highlights the places we have been passing by for years, without really noticing or seeing. Whether this discovery is permanent and the place reaches for the opportunity and continues with the activities that have awoken it or not, depends mostly on the enthusiasm of those who run it. "It can't be done" can no longer be an excuse. The experience of the Mladi levi festival has served as an example for later festivals.

This cultural mapping of the city, the so-called "territorialisation" of the festival, was additionally consolidated by street shows and performances, the number of which has been increasing. However, finding a location for them is sometimes done in collaboration with the performers themselves, even if they are foreigners. Judgements on the potential of public areas have thus acquired a very precious view from the outside – the city can be perceived through the eyes of a foreigner, which is always a good remedy for local blindness.

Opening the urban space reached a new dimension in 2004: Bunker decided to take over a wider stimulating role in the neighbourhood of Stara mestna elektrarna. The idea of a cultural quarter came true, and it joined all cultural factors of the area: in addition to the power station including also the entire area around Metelkova Street and the Slovene Ethnographic Museum, Kinodvor, Kinoteka, and later the Aksioma Project Space. The platform in front of the Slovene Ethnographic Museum has hosted several festival openings, which has had many advantages (the huge place is completely pro-



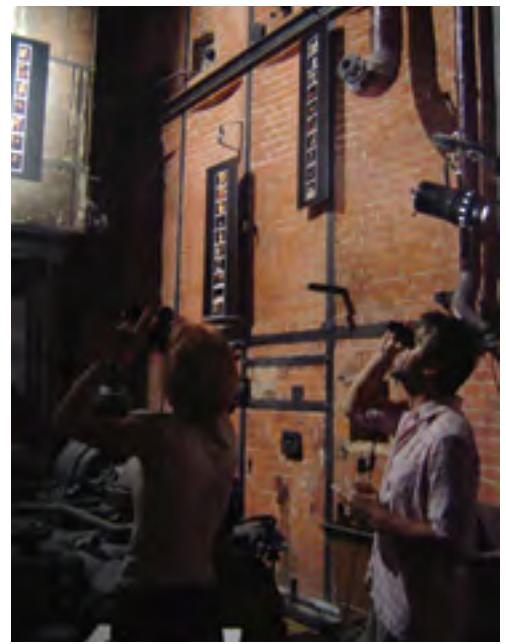
Museum Street of the Stara mestna elektrarna



Citylight and flags on Zoisova Street



Lyrical Minutes in the City. Mladi levi 2011, 2012

Exhibition *The Gaze* by Urška Boljkovac. Mladi levi 200410th anniversary of the festival in the Stara mestna elektrarna

The Rog Factory



The Railway Museum



The Glass Hall of the Slovene Railways

tected from traffic and noise) and some architectural disadvantages, which could be the reason for it only occasionally hosting events. The decision to move the opening of the festival into the open air has a political connotation, it is a step away from the exclusiveness of premières and openings for guests with invitations, and long speeches, during which most people yawn. It is a step towards the democratic availability of culture for all people and towards the original meaning of the word festival, which means festivity.

From the very beginning, the idea of a cultural quarter has had a clear social, civil-society component: to revive and renew Tabor Park, the location of the festival performance already in 2004, to include local people, to offer cooperation to all, from retired people in local homes for the elderly, children who yearn for playgrounds, and local residents who started getting to know each other at different workshops and flea markets, to those who got the opportunity to grow their own vegetables at a deserted construction site, and others. For this project, Bunker linked up with existing local societies, schools and individuals, as well as art groups like prostoRož, Dramska šola Barice Blenkuš, KUD Mreža, KUD Obrat ... and with public institutions such as Kinodvor, Kinoteka, Slovene Ethnographic Museum, Museum of Contemporary Art Metelkova ...

They often took the initiative and carried out their own ideas, as the whole activity exceeded the operative capacity of Bunker, which has always understood its own role as a stimulator, instead of just a performer. The project of incorporating culture into the local environment has already found a response in other quarters: Mini Theatre with partners revived Križevniška Street, which used to be very neglected and untidy, and similar projects are just being started in Kersnikova Street and in Šiška.

What can we learn from “space reading”, started by Bunker within the Mladi levi festival and continued with their managing of Stara mestna elektrarna? We can learn about extraordinary persistence in finding different solutions that would enable originating and presenting different forms of art, and offer them in a decent, artist and audience-friendly way. These solutions would give them an opportunity to organise meetings and find the best interaction between the artist and the spectator from the neighbourhood. Nobody should be excluded, for any reason whatsoever. The neighbourhood should discover its unaccomplished opportunities, hidden nooks and possibilities. The dominoes from last year, that ran across the Ljubljanica River, along the staircases and through the windows back to the street, all the way to the opening platform, like a fugitive, and yet a memorable current of pure energy, could set a good example for it.

BLAŽ PERŠIN,

Director of the Museum and Galleries of Ljubljana,

President of the Bunker Board (1998 – 2001)

THE SEARCH FOR NEW SPACES AND THEIR NEW FUTURE

How I hold dear that small apartment on French Revolution Square in my memory. Bunker, a safe haven for those who dare. An apartment, an office, a social space, where Nevenka and her young female forces (Ira, Mojca, Irena) started thinking about a new and different festival, which would have created an opportunity for new potential in the area of dance, theatre and performance. The opening into international space and the symptomatic desire to act differently served as the necessary drive and inspiration, bringing together a substantial number of people, who wanted to contribute to the development of home artistic production, comparable to the ones beyond our borders. The Mladi levi festival wasn't just one of the festivals covering that area. It was conceptualised as a festival of investigation and research, as a lab, establishing what cultural policy should be like, what the role of an artist is, and, naturally, how to make local audiences understand that the performing arts are a part of their own participation and engagement. As time went by, a credible haven for audience members emerged and it became clear for them that they could watch the festival performances in places beyond their wildest imaginations.

The end of the 1990s was a time of new emerging hopes for the artists in the arena of the performing arts. Problems were predominantly related to a lack of space, making artists constantly wonder about where, in which space exactly, to create and to present both their work and the work of other foreign artists with their visiting performances. There was, naturally, Cankarjev Dom and other institutions, where repertory theatres resided. But that wasn't good enough. Plus, it was a bit boring.

Apart from presenting new artistic creations, the primary framework of the festival was also about finding new spaces, deserted and desolate icons, waiting for a new plan for their new future and identity.

Stara mestna elektrarna. The Railway Museum, various alleys, forgotten squares and streets – they all acquired a new meaning and adopted a new concept on how to become useful for society. Certain

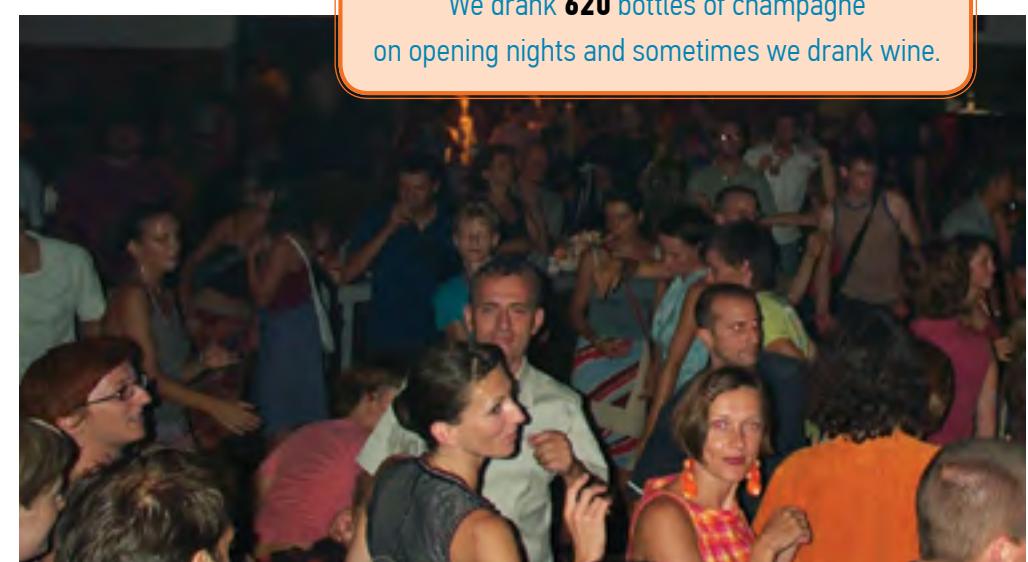
performances weren't even possible in the classic space of the theatre, it was only with their relation to a certain location that they acquired their *modus operandi*.

It goes without saying that times were different back then. No one expected any kind of fee for their conceptual work; it was all about the desire to create new opportunities, to help around and thus make something we all believed in happen. It all took place in a completely informal manner, during a chat, a coffee, or a glass of wine. Actually, Nevenka's team members consistently followed the principle that more heads know more. And even though the team was growing in number and boldness, the main festival idea remained the same – the festival never ends and its main task is to leave something behind after the curtain falls: a new and open space, a room for contemplation, a desire to show that things can also be done in a less than perfect situation.

Most certainly, the main "consequence" of the Mladi levi festival
was the birth of more space(s) for the performing arts,
which also meant that the "scene" finally acquired its identity,
that the genie was let out of the bottle
and that it would, at least I hope,
continue to run loose despite the current crisis.

The Mladi levi festival isn't just a festival, it's a way of life.

Photo Urška Boljkovac



Opening party of Mladi levi 2003

We drank 620 bottles of champagne
on opening nights and sometimes we drank wine.

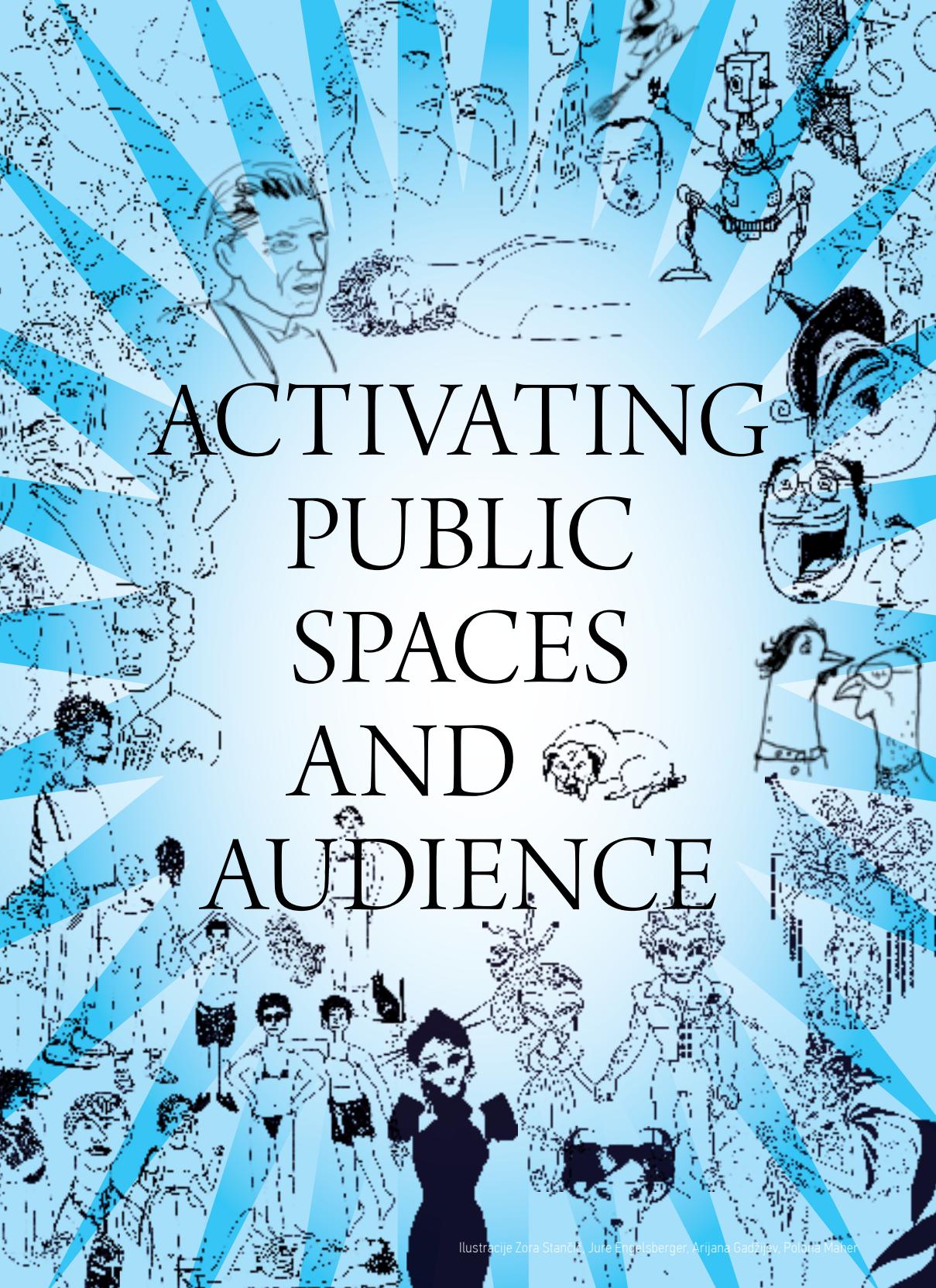
MLADI LEVI FESTIVAL VENUES

The Ljubljana Castle • Mladinsko Theatre • The Railway Museum • the Dance Theatre Ljubljana • the Stara mestna elektrarna (in 1999 for the first time) • Café Pločnik • the passageway at the Museum of Modern Art • Cankarjev Dom • the Minimal Bar • Druga pomoč • the Glej Theatre • the Museum of Modern Art • the square in front of the Museum of Modern Art • the ŠKUC Gallery • Kongresni Square • Jazzbina • Tivoli Park • Tabor Park • the City Art Museum of Ljubljana • Miklošič Park • the Ljubljana Train Station • City Museum Ljubljana • the Vžigalica Gallery • a truck • the Rog Factory • Dvorni Square • Argentinski Park • the ZOO • the square in front of the Slovene Ethnographic Museum • Kino Šiška • Le Petit café • Prešeren Square • Mestni Square • the glass hall of the Slovene Railways • OF Square • Slomškova Street • the Butcher's Bridge • the Mini Theatre • the Hostel Celica • Kinodvor • the city market • Breg • the Project Space Aksioma • the Ljubljana Puppet Theatre • the Petkovšek river bank • Museum of Contemporary Art Metelkova • the University Botanic Gardens Ljubljana

Photo Urška Boljkovac



prostoRož: My street. Mladi levi 2009



ACTIVATING PUBLIC SPACES AND AUDIENCE

Ilustracje Zora Stancic, Jure Engelsberger, Arijana Gadjiev, Polona Maher

ALMA R. SELIMOVIĆ,

Development Manager at Bunker



Photo Urška Boljkovac

DEAR LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

Some thoughts on the audience
of the Mladi levi festival

Right in the middle of the intersection between the work of artists and that of cultural producers, there is an audience for whom our work is meant for: the addressees of artists and our clients.

At least, that's how things were back in the day, but nowadays the audience has become one of the numerous stakeholders in the arena where experiences, insights and interests come together. The audience is constantly present in our thoughts, but more as a consequence instead of an end-goal, or in other words, as part of the entire summation and not just its final act.

Every organisation has its own internal culture, and so does Bunker, and the Mladi levi festival embodies the very moment that reflects our values, desires and also us, as people, behind it. The festival or, better yet, its attitude towards the audience, stands for a perspective that reflects an attitude towards the world and at the same time illustrates why we do what we do.

The festival has evolved, but so has the audience: not just in generational terms, but also in terms of demography!

The Mladi levi Republic

The more the current cultural policy grows utilitarian, the more we see the audience coming into focus. The growth in audience numbers is the most certain indicator of success, especially for funding bodies, but counting the pairs of eyes at a performance may nevertheless turn out to be a rather dubious endeavour, especially for performing arts such as the theatre. We have always been proud to see our festival events be so well visited, but instead of measuring our success by the number of tickets sold (or issued), we prefer to take the feedback of the audience as a point of reference; some performances have changed people's lives and some have started a new trend in Slovenia. The project *Lyrical Moments in the City* was prepared for the Mladi levi festival 2011; a great many visitors came to see it, but as it turned out, this was merely the beginning of a long and successful source of amusement: not a day goes by without at least 20 people watching the project video on Vimeo and by now, the number of views exceeds 100,000. *Lyrical Moments* has guest toured across Europe and is just about to celebrate its 30th performance in Ljubljana.

The essence of the festival is its programme; we therefore consider the list of artistic projects each year as our ID card. It shows who we are and combines with the somewhat softer festival tissue, connecting the entire thing into an integral whole and placing individual performances into context. People nowadays strive to gratify their desires and fulfil their expectations; Mladi levi, however, is not interested in fulfilling the expectations of an audience, but in surprising it: the festival reveals the horizon of new spaces, new forms of socialising and new forms of art while building relations amongst human beings. And despite the fact that every year the festival dates are widely known in advance, we nevertheless keep on falling into a ten-day universe, where – according to the original meaning of the word festival – the rules of everyday life are turned upside down and the gravitational forces push towards the left, which is also a word for lion in Slovenian.

The relationship between the festival and its audience can roughly be divided into four stages: the first one lasted from the beginning of the festival in 1998 to 2004, which is when the festival inaugurated the Stara mestna elektrarna and thus acquired its permanent venue; the second stage took place in the year 2005, when the festival consisted of three separate entities staging an international programme in the Stara mestna elektrarna, which was also the time of an emerging new period of participatory projects and volunteer involvement, triggered by the *Lovepangs* project; in the third stage, from 2006 to 2008, the festival returned to its standard 10-day August format in all its glory, while its programme was embedded with participatory and area-specific local projects with volunteers becoming an integral part of the executive team on one hand, and of the festival audience on the other. The last stage has lasted since 2009 and has been profoundly marked by a varied international programme accompanied by local practices; in this last stage Bunker has also seen its social capital – acquired through a range of projects, especially those devised at a local level in the Cultural Quarter Tabor – finally bear fruit. This last period of the festival's relationship with its audience could be primarily designated as a partnership in terms of a two-way communication, accompanied by acquiring new audiences which may not have been traditional theatre goers before.

Enthusiastic beginnings

Apart from Betontanc, Mladi levi has been the most central and largest project for Bunker from the beginning. The festival emerged in order to fill a certain void in the contemporary arts scene in Slovenia at the time: it aimed at bringing young and not-yet-renowned artists from across Europe on one hand and to introduce new genres of theatre and dance on the other, thus inhabiting the bold aesthetics of the European stages. When taking the cultural offer at the time into consideration, the Mladi levi festival stood as a response to the seasonal offer of institutional theatres and the occasional offers of Cankarjev Dom, the Exodus festival and certain other cultural players, while simultaneously also stepping away from the big European mainstream festivals, which tended to do programming in a "catalogue" manner. Thus, Mladi levi has set up a unique framework for the selected performances ever since its beginnings. This very context, which has transformed the festival into much more than just a bunch of performances and has given it a true authorial mark, has always been devised in a "visitor friendly" manner, which goes not only for the local audience, but also for the visiting artists, journalists, art critics and colleagues ... It's hard to say whether the organisational approach to the festival has been formed hand in hand with a consciously articulated desire to acquire more visitors; it is much more likely that this was the result of the spontaneous intertwining of the rich international experiences that Nevenka and Tomaž have had. They've both visited foreign festivals either as artists, guests or – in Nevenka's case – as the producer of Betontanc. Thus, when conceptually devising Mladi levi, they were able to put the entire range of useful experience they had acquired to good use in the form of ideas that they knew would leave a good festival experience. The approach to audience building was also partially formed out of plain necessity: Bunker didn't have its own venue, nor did it have a permanent audience that it could continuously address or count on when a new festival was being organised, which is why addressing new audiences acquired such a sincere form, marked with what could well be designated as a guerrilla approach. Finally, it is none other than people that mark things the most and this is how it has been since the first festival on: people have kept the same festival spirit alive until this very day and introduced colourful life into it with a mix of casualness, professionalism and – most importantly – the "nothing is impossible" mentality. Already in 1998, we could see the festival being embedded with the spirit that encouraged socialising after performances. It enabled artists to stay in Ljubljana throughout the festival and thus form connections with their colleagues as well as the audience. The now legendary picnic took place in the first festival year already, gathering visiting artists, the festival team, journalists, Bunker collaborators and artists from the performing arts scene with the most effective social glue – food and drinks. Instead of appearing like some sort of uptight reception, the festival opening has been a real festivity ever since its first year. The round-table discussions at Mladi levi have tried to at least shed light, if not resolve, the current neuralgic points of cultural production in Slovenia. All of this generosity has paid off instantly: the first festival had a good amount of visits and the audience expressed its generosity in many ways: not just by visiting the festival, but also by investing their time in spending the nights at the bar, Druga pomoč, participating in long debates and, especially, by making visiting artists and the festival feel accepted.

The context of the festival – marked by the efforts of its team to create a good atmosphere – has offered a safe haven for young artists, keeping overly harsh critical perspectives at bay, which has apparently created an almost euphoric atmosphere. Many have claimed that their performances came out brilliantly due to this euphoria and that they couldn't produce this brilliance ever again; the wings of the well-meaning gazes helped them create their best show ever.

Thus, love was born and it was mutual. The audience loved Mladi levi and the festival team loved its audience and devotedly took care of it. Sometimes, when we look at the archive photos, it becomes quickly evident to us that the festival was very much supported by our local “scene”, especially in the first couple of years: the laden stands brought together the entire scene – dancers, theatre goers, critics. The regular festival visitors and a wider circle of co-workers have not only become a loyal festival audience, but also festival ambassadors spreading over the word. The Mladi levi audience is known for small favours that have saved the entire festival: someone lent their car once, someone else suggested a picnic location or a concert venue, etc. This initial period came to a close in 2004, when the 7th festival edition inaugurated the Stara mestna elektrarna and on that occasion also paid homage to everyone on the scene for investing their efforts in setting up a new venue and also partly for supporting the festival with the opening event, titled *If we didn't exist, we would have to be invented*.

A love experiment

After the Stara mestna elektrarna became the festival's permanent venue, an opportunity arose to transform Mladi levi into an international season that would continuously bring international performances. Instead of having the festival in August, Mladi levi took place in three separate entities in June, August and November. The audience, however, responded almost with a grudge and most certainly not with a large number of visits. They missed the festival and the festival team came to realise that we'd underestimated the power of the festival spirit, of a dense programme, of a permanent festival period. When watching things from a certain distance, we came to the conclusion that the international scene is a big mouthful to swallow, and should thus be introduced and set up for years and years. The reality is quite clearly reflected in the current international offer in Ljubljana, still more or less based on festivals according to the trend of a general “festivalisation” of cultural offerings across all of Europe, which is having a hard time maintaining stability and is thus becoming more and more festival-focused.

However, due to the smaller range of the August programme that particular year, we were able to bring to life one of the biggest projects Bunker has ever produced: *Lovepangs – Pain Transformator*, which left permanent traces, especially in the way we cooperate with our audience and volunteers. The participatory nature of *Lovepangs* has widely opened the door to various groups of people and mixed our permanent audience with new groups, who were drawn in by the promise of cooperation and not just observation, and with everyone ready to give their time to the festival and help out. We started cooperating with various individuals and organisations in transforming the pain of love, and many of those collaborations have, over time, become permanent alliances.

In 15 years **266** volunteers have worked at the Mladi levi festival.
The number of audience in 14 years exceeds **110.000**.

Festival 2.0

After the year in parts, the Mladi levi 2006 returned in its original form, as an August festival. It was just like the return of an old love: familiar, homely, but even better than that! We stuck to our excellent tried-and-true recipes from the first years, merely spicing up the festival with new experiences and approaches: some of the artistic projects, which have somehow marked the new-old festival version with fresh approaches, included *Museum of Broken Relationships*, where people gave us objects from their romantic pasts, *Cargo Sofia – Ljubljana*, where Stefan Kaegi and his Slovenian team revealed the truck drivers' Ljubljana as never seen before, even though it's in front of us every day. Etienne Charry created a chillout place for a siesta in the Argentinski Park with his vintage transistors, and Stan's Cafe illustrated the generally quite abstract relations between nations and resources by using grains of rice. The Complaints Choir Ljubljana translated the whining of people into a complaint song, which we then sung across the streets of Ljubljana and we also protested against nothing in 2008.

We refreshed some of the approaches that we decided to preserve from the initial festival years. The festival T-shirts weren't given away anymore; instead Tanja Radež improved all of the T-shirts given to us by people, who in turn got their improved T-shirts back. We've also strengthened our presence in the city: the opening party moved to the outdoors and thus became more open to everyone, some city stores used festival paper bags to put products in, etc. And most importantly, the festival has also acquired its final form thanks to many volunteers.

The audience has accepted the hand we offered, sometimes even beyond our expectations. For us too, this has been a period of learning how to cooperate: many times we almost fell victim to one prejudice or another against our fellow Slovenians and time and time again we ended up being surprised. When preparing *Museum of Broken Relationships*, we were afraid that we'd bump into cautious unresponsiveness, namely that people would not be prepared to share some of their painful stories with us and with others, but – quite on the contrary – objects together with their intimate stories came thanks to the snowball effect. At first, our friends were the ones to gather the courage to participate, but soon people started bringing the most amazing stories, some of which were very intimate. Certain objects with stories still form a part of *Museum of Broken Relationships*, which now has its permanent headquarters in Zagreb. There were so many given-away t-shirts that we could have dressed up an entire army; Tanja Radež hardly managed to print them all. And every object thus given away, every piece of time thus bestowed, keeps this permanent friendship with the festival alive and well.



Tanja Radež: *Recycled T-shirts*. Mladi levi 2008

Local festival, global festival

We see the last three years of the festival (2009, 2010, 2011) as the period in which Mladi levi has been announcing the new directions that Bunker would like to follow in the future; in this period we have also come to see the fruits of our efforts, invested in many developmental and research projects (projects aimed at the regeneration of the Tabor area with cultural content, our endeavour to decrease social exclusion, cooperation in projects which bring art and ecology into one discourse, projects introducing contemporary art into primary and secondary schools, educational projects for artists and producers, and so on). The festival is thus no longer merely the biggest annual event, but is becoming – despite its clear preservation of aesthetic trends and its focus on performances – a synthesis of all Bunker's endeavours for a better quality of life. Mladi levi is also Bunker's most visible event, embracing our partners, co-workers and numerous new audiences, which we have cooperated with on other projects and are now becoming part of the festival.

This move in the festival direction also partly corresponds to its physical move to public surfaces, to the open air with various festival teams (*My Street*, *Garden by the Way*, *Spaces of Play*). This change is also reflected by a change in the structure of audiences and volunteers. The festival opening in 2011 was a true manifestation of the power that a permanent audience holds united; people were running behind a kilometre of falling dominoes and thus taking an active part in the festival's beginning, which more than 100 volunteers helped make happen.

When analysing the audience's behaviour during the last three festival years, we can detect a shift, which could in marketing terminology best be described as a shift from customers as targets to customers as followers. During these last couple of years, our audience no longer consists of people that we reach or address through a range of communication channels (posters, PR, printed and web advertising, websites, social networks...), but an extremely wide group of individuals, either connected to us

thanks to our previous collaborations or devotedly bound to our programme, which they regularly follow. We were glad to see that our initial audience, the one related to the scene in one way or another – has stayed with us through the years, whereas we're also starting to notice that we have managed to pull in a new generation every year and that the Mladi levi audience is, in fact, very intergenerational.

The structure of volunteers has changed in a rather similar manner. Our first volunteers were generally of the same age as the younger part of the team, the children of friends and co-workers. Already in the second festival year we started cooperating with the Faculty of Social Sciences, and especially with the Department of Cultural Studies, where we agreed that students could perform their obligatory internships by working at the festival. We continued working with students, but these days the festival volunteers come from various generational groups: ladies from the Day Care Centre for Activities of the Elderly that prepare food for the opening event, numerous groups that decide to take part in bigger events (like the members of the Meikyo kan Karate Club, the staff of the Slovene Ethnographic Museum, members of the Focus Association, elderly residents at the Retirement Home Center...) or individuals with all sorts of reasons for wanting to work at the festival; some get involved because they want to acquire work experience, others want to spend some quality social time during late August days, and then there are those who want to get to know the workings of artistic production "from within." Sometimes a person simply says that they just want a free ticket, and in these last couple of years those volunteers who come back say that they return because of previous, positive experiences.

The relationship that we gradually formed with volunteers is based on mutual respect, since we are very well aware of the fact that this relationship would melt away in the same instant that we started perceiving it as a one-way relationship. Volunteers are valuable co-workers, who don't merely invest their work into the festival, but also accompany it as its most devoted audience.

The bar Druga pomoč
is an evening haven for the thorough exchange of opinions after a performance.
It's also a space for democracy, where artists, technicians, producers,
and journalists drink together and make the festival come alive.

Photos Urška Boljkovac



Maja Delak: *Expensive Darlings*. Mladi levi 2008.
Mingling after the performance in Druga pomoč.



Museum Street before the opening of the exhibition *Boys and Girls*. Mladi levi 2011

Our relationship towards the audience

has always been communicated also with extremely reasonable ticket prices. This year (2012) we're introducing free tickets for the first time – also as a response to the times we live in – and will collect voluntary contributions instead.

Photos Urška Boljkovac



Railway Museum, opening of Mladi levi 2003

**Apart from work enthusiasm,
volunteers also manifest a genuine party spirit!**



Druga pomoč bar, a thank you party for volunteers, Mladi levi 2011

The festival picnics in Ulovka

provide the best material for Mladi levi anecdotes and legends. We've been washed by the rain and been sunburned; the bones from all the eaten pork legs would by now stretch into the sky. And if we put together the entire "strudel" that we have eaten over the years, we would have a pile of fruit the size of a truck. Friendships and professional collaborations have been formed and some even went down in history as festival winners at some of our famous football matches. The match artists vs. technicians is still waiting for its epilogue, whereas the festival team normally excels in lying under the trees and simultaneously solving problems over the phone.



2004



2007



2011

Photos Urška Boljkovac

OPENINGS

Memory adores stories and reveals itself in images, and images of spaces often disclose more than time. It is the venue where the festival was held which has helped me to discover the year of my first visit to Mladi levi; it was 2002 and it took place at the old Railway Museum. Now the festival has made its home in Stara mestna elektrarna, but the nomadic and exploratory spirit, in terms of both the physical and mental spaces, has been written deeply into its DNA.

I don't think that the question of opening various spaces was consciously articulated in the conceptual agenda of Mladi levi, at least not in the first years. However, looking back at the previous festivals, one is bound to notice the immense sensitivity for a contemporary understanding of the roles and treatment of spaces, and their relation to the most current of issues.

How should we understand the present-day meaning and problem of the public space?

For a number of years moral sociologist Zygmunt Bauman has attempted to bring attention to the worrisome disappearance of the *agora*, an important "in-between"

space of coinciding public and personal dimensions, where the politics of life encounters real politics, and where personal problems can become public issues.

Thus, for Bauman, the priority of our time, and the subsequent priority of art, is to hang on to this dissipating public sphere and to once again populate the public space, which is steadily shrinking and being emptied.

The pathology of the public space leads to the pathology embedded in current politics: it is reflected not only in the withering and waning art of dialogue and compromise-making, but also in the absence of an engaged stance towards accepting personal and collective responsibility. Due to the abovementioned reasons, it is becoming increasingly difficult for the public space to bring forward or tackle important issues, visions of a good life and a just society, all of which have almost completely vanished from the entire political discourse.

There is another phenomenon, parallel to the shrinking of the public space, which must be addressed: the colonisation of everything and everyone by private capital. A productive encounter or dialogue between the private and the public is virtually no longer possible, since the public space is becoming increasingly dominated by private motives, consumerism and similar activities. In this kind of space

there can be no meeting of different cultures and people, and there are no more unexpected experiences. Everything is clean-cut, stylishly polished, and even every last detail of the set design has been thought through and perfectly refined – only to lead directly to the gates of consumerism.

Thus, today an increasingly large portion of the public sphere is crying out for emancipation and strength, and it is becoming more and more crucial to encourage the active social participation of people in all forms of life. Only the *agora* is that space where it is possible to practice the principles of personal responsibility, especially through public discussion and dialogue. This is especially true for the culture where we live and work, since it is formed through the perpetual emergence and displacement of continually new situations and patterns, and demands a great degree of vigilance and attention. Ethical action is possible only when it arises from compassion and the awareness of mutual interdependence. This is why it is absolutely crucial to address issues which foster sensitivity and widen the horizon of reflective thought, while also strengthening the possibility of free choice by virtue of considering new or already discarded explanations and by promoting a more complex understanding.

What role can art play in all of this? Its potential contribution to public dialogue manifests itself in at least four different ways, which can function separately, or in a complementary and intertwining manner: art can provide the spark for a conversation on individual issues by addressing and exploring their dimensions,

or various perspectives, and by asking unexpected questions;

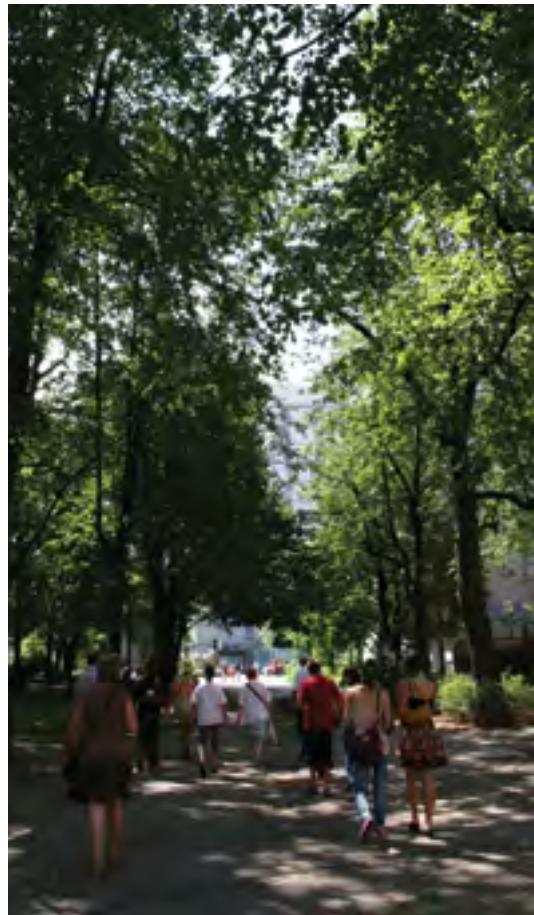
it can invite the most different of people to take part in its endeavours, even those who do not do so anywhere else, and can give a voice to those who may not be heard or are marginalised; it can become a concrete, physical, psychological and intellectual space for meetings, reflections and debate; and, of course, art in itself is a form of internal dialogue between the work of art and the spectator – it creates new meanings, entices difficult themes into the realm of the imagination, and sheds light on both individual viewpoints and the depths in a completely new manner.

It seems that during the last few years, the Mladi levi festival has been consciously building upon all of the four abovementioned forms. The festival was one of the first to employ diverse, often multidisciplinary approaches, experimental explorations and creative activities in order to address art-based thematic dialogues, which would – as artistic processes or presentations – offer a forum or a platform for public dialogue. In our space, the festival has thus become a kind of catalyst, constantly igniting new sparks of content. For example, we all still remember the fresh debates and invitations to active participation, networking, time banks, biodiversity and urban gardens. The Mladi levi festival and its audiences have either been uncovering the dimensions of civil, social and political issues in relation to individual issues, or they have been (re)considering the decisions that carry important consequences for the lives of individuals, the community, and society. Today, when we have almost completely lost our motivation, skills and tools to be a good person and political subject, dialogues of this sort have

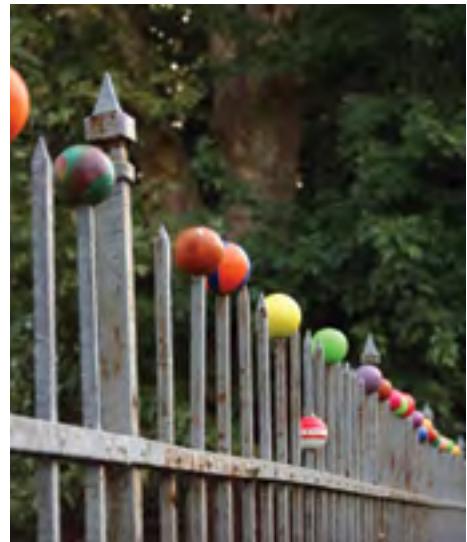
not only become absolutely crucial for the democratic functioning of the society, but they also introduce a variety of perspectives for complex or even controversial topics.

One could therefore assert that the Mladi levi festival has never quite been satisfied with whatever was already here. Its impeccable intuition for themes and phenomena that are still in emergence constantly lures us into discovering spaces with the capacity to change our mood, perspective and feelings, and to rearrange our thoughts. From forgotten plots of land, to trucks and playgrounds for adults, into merry gardens, residential streets, and onto dreamy rooftops. These spaces carry several meanings and fulfil various purposes; they force us to face difference, widen our horizons and, with surprises, they lead us to contemplation. But most importantly, these spaces are not just meeting points; they are also arenas of important conversation and exchanges. It is becoming increasingly evident that Mladi levi also sees its role, together with the artists, audiences, neighbours and coincidental passers-by, as giving birth to new communities, with more cohesion, solidarity and connections. Last but not least, in whatever Mladi levi does there is an immense drive to imagine fresh, innovative and better ways of living together.

Photos Urška Boljkovac



Discovering the city through Mladi levi walks.



SOME GROUNDBREAKING PRODUCTIONS OF THE MLADI LEVI FESTIVAL



LOVEPANGS – PAIN TRANSFORMATOR

Lovepangs was established in 1998 by Carmen Brucic and Janette Mueller. It was an artistic strategy, aimed at highlighting social, aesthetic, economic and scientific questions. The yearning for love, unrequited love, romantic pain, shyness, feebleness, hurt and sadness – these are feelings known to every person. In a world that merely appreciates strength and efficiency, these feelings are considered a disgrace, weakness and a loss of autonomy. The main theme and engine of the congress *Lovepangs – Pain Transformator* was the pain that emanates from love.

Within the Mladi levi framework, and as a production of Bunker, *Lovepangs* took place in August 2005 in the Stara mestna elektrarna, which became a city within a city; there the public flirted with the intimate, company with solitude, conversation with silence, friends with strangers. It's not shameful to be unhappily in love. It's not a sin to be sad or lonely. *Lovepangs* had a love jury, which performed an interview with every visitor to determine their level of love pain. It held conversations with 56 pain experts, which were there to converse with casual visitors. The experts were volunteers from various areas and gave advice with regard to the pains of love, while the *Lovepangs* congress was covered live on the congress radio station with the best love songs and conversations on the topic of love. Visitors could act in their favourite cinematic love scenes with the help of directors and costume designers, or they could choose their love literature in the biblio-bus. Musicians sang about love in concerts, love poetry was sold at an auction, visitors could make money (in a pain currency called *bolar*) with a lie detector and this money could then also be traded at the congress stock market. Yes, pain can also turn into capital. And visitors could withdraw the money they earned from the congress bank to spend it, perhaps on romantic verses.



IRA CECIĆ,

producer of *Lovepangs*,
producer of *Mladi levi*
from the beginning of the festival until 2005



LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT

When someone asks me how the whole thing started, I always remember the time when I was chit-chatting with Neverka over a cup of coffee and she invited me to work with her on the very first festival. What followed was another brief coffee and meeting Mojca. The year was 1998 and it was love at first sight between Mladi levi and me. I've always been known as a girl who falls in and out of love, but this particular love was here to stay – and so it was for eight years. The Mladi levi festival 2005 was the last year I participated as a team member; it was special not only because it was my "last", but also because the festival format was temporarily altered that year and divided into three separate festival entities that came to life throughout the year. I had the luck of winning the executive producer role for the festival highlights in August – I suppose my colleagues felt that it belonged to me at the time. Their decision probably also had something to do with the fact that the theme of love in the broadest possible meaning has – as one would expect from a hardcore female collective – become profoundly embedded in our long-lasting co-existence in Bunker. The interactive project of artist Carmen Brucic's *Lovepangs - Pain Transformator* inhabited a specific narrative format in order to speak about the yearning of love, about hurt and anger, about unrequited love, and about the romantic pain that arises from separation and loss... *Lovepangs* and its complex structure in content and form constituted a majestic production challenge for the entire team and also inflicted a pain or two itself in the process of preparation and realisation. It has led me, the "falling-in-love girl", through all emotive shades and emotional states that accompany separation and made the departure particularly difficult for me. It's not easy to say goodbye to a great love.

56 love experts participated in *Lovepangs*.

TOMAŽ ŠTRUCL

written by Alma R. Selimović



Photo Tina Smrekar

ARCHITECT OF *THE LOVEPANGS CITY*

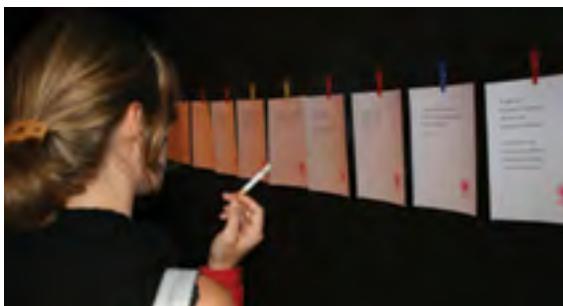
In Bunker, dreams have always been a part of everyday planning, and high-flying ideas have always stood as the essential cornerstones of the festival. Thus, it's always been a good thing to have someone on the team who's been able to build a bridge between ideas and reality, between conceptual planning on one hand and the moment when a hammer or linen should be used on the other. For the first eight years of the Mladi levi festival, that person was Tomaž Štrucl. An artist, a technician, and a Renaissance man, who inhabited the space between pop culture and theatre, between architecture and directing.

Tomaž has been a technical coordinator at the festival for eight years; he knew how to pull through the visiting productions no matter how difficult the conditions were; he was also a part of the core festival team that devised the entire festival at the time; from hospitality gestures to the search for appropriate locations. He was the engine of parties and its wide social networks, without which the festival would never have existed.

His last big project in the Mladi levi framework was *Lovepangs*, which has forever made us change the way we approach and execute festival productions. Tomaž saw *Lovepangs* before any of us did, and it was according to his own vision that a city emerged out of thin air in Stara mestna elektrarna: a new floor that wasn't there before, dimmed lights made of parchment paper for intimate conversations, a radio station under the ceiling, lie detectors, movie screens with set designs from the most famous Slovenian films... Tomaž Štrucl built up a new world and has thus also helped us build a new community: his phone was a database of both volunteers as well as love experts.

With this project about love he said goodbye to the festival as a technical coordinator and passed his mission on to the generation he has helped to raise in Glej Theatre, in the DIC Hostel and also in Mladi levi.

Lovepangs has taught Bunker how to work in a collective manner when implementing festival contents; the entire team and not just the programmers was involved in devising the love congress and this democratic approach has remained a constant ever since. The project has also been groundbreaking in terms of its participatory spirit, since it wasn't really a performance, but a joint project of everyone involved. It should also be considered groundbreaking because of the participation of volunteers: only after the *Lovepangs* experience have we started to gather volunteers and work with them. This project has clearly showed that people are willing to give their time, energy and knowledge for things that they believe in and which mean a great deal to them.



Photos Urška Boljkovac

CARGO SOFIA – LJUBLJANA

TAMARA BRAČIČ VIDMAR,

producer of *Cargo Sofia – Ljubljana*,
Head of Public Relations at Bunker

WITH VENTO AND SLAVČO ACROSS EUROPE THROUGH LJUBLJANA

Cargo Sofia – Ljubljana was the first performance by Swiss director Stefan Kaegi hosted by Mladi levi; he has since come to perform at the festival several times. We had already heard a lot about this performance while it was still in its preparatory phase. But then things developed further and when I saw the performance of *Cargo Sofia* in Switzerland, where it had its global premiere, I thought it would be perfect for Mladi levi!

Stefan Kaegi has an exceptional gift of pulling good stories out of the people he talks to. He often creates documentary theatre performances, which means that he works with amateurs, who then become narrators and actors through his performances. *Cargo Sofia – Ljubljana* was a performance that spoke about the lives of truck drivers. The main protagonists of the performance were the interesting and entertaining Bulgarian truck drivers Ventislav Borissov and Svetoslav Michev, who have driven thousands of kilometres, crossed numerous countries, and changed many passports – the latter would constantly run out of space due to the massive amount of stamps received at border crossings. They told us about the times before Bulgaria entered the European Union, i.e. the 80s and 90s of the former century. Back then they would smuggle Levi's jeans, loads of pornographic magazines and nylons from the West into the Eastern



countries, especially Germany, and handbags and shoes from Italy. From the East, however, they would always secretly smuggle cigarettes, while officially driving vegetables, tea, and other stuff.

The life of truck drivers is rather dangerous, as 350 of them are killed on roads every year, with about 20 fatalities on German highways alone. The truck drivers Ventislav and Svetoslav (Vento and Slavčo to their friends) told us that they feared it might get even more dangerous, since every year there are more vehicles on the streets. On the other hand, truck drivers live such dangerous lives simply because the companies they drive for rush them constantly into speeding things up. Since the deadlines for delivering goods with short expiry dates are too tight to reach if they drive by the rules, the drivers regularly exceed speed limits, drive 24 hours without stopping, violate regulations regarding obligatory rests and, naturally, get fined. The penalties are normally already calculated into the price of goods transported to be sold later on.

The Bulgarian drivers have shown us a different Ljubljana and a different Europe through their performance; the one containing highways and rest areas instead of cities. Truck drivers know Europe in its small and wide dimensions very well, but it seems that their maps are different to ours: there are no tourist attractions listed there, just very precise notes regarding good, inexpensive and safe rest spots and pleasant personnel. Let me just add as an example that when the performance *Cargo Sofia* got invited to a large Avignon festival and Stefan Kaegi told the news to the truck drivers, Vento happily exclaimed that this really was a spectacular thing, because the Avignon gas stations have showers!

Truck drivers are actually quite self-sufficient, apart from the need for fuel and toilettes. They've got a bed, a radio, a TV in their trucks and some of them even have a fax machine! It's cheaper apparently, if they accept their bosses communications via fax than over the phone. They carry their own food with them, because buying food at rest areas would be too expensive. Bulgarian truck drivers therefore buy food for their trip in their home country, Bulgaria, because that's the cheapest way. But since food must stay good for a long time, it most often happens that they end up eating canned goods. Sometimes their wives bake them cottage cheese *burek*, which can apparently last for a surprisingly long time – if they don't eat it too soon. They also drive a gas stove with them to cook a sausage or brew a cup of delicious Bulgarian coffee. The truck is basically a home to drivers, they take care of it and become attached to it, some even decorate it, but they all carry a huge music compilation with them wherever they go. Vento and Slavčo have an impressive collection of Bulgarian folk music, but Slavčo liked Serbian folk music above all else. Drivers from different countries meet at rest areas and sometimes prepare a meal together between their trucks, or share some coffee or home-made schnapps and talk about stuff. The long Sundays, when they have to wait until 10 p.m., pass faster that way.

For the performance *Cargo Sofia – Ljubljana*, the audience entered a large truck, which in its insides had 84 seats, whereas one side of the truck had been transformed into a large window. We drove around Ljubljana with the truck and listened to the stories told by the drivers. And thus the entire world became a stage.

As we were preparing for the Ljubljana reprise of the *Cargo Sofia* performance, planning the itinerary of the truck, we overlooked numerous interesting city spots that I hadn't even known about before.

Some of these were stunning – we were driving around the halls of the Litostroj Factory and passed the Vevče Paper Mill, the Količovo Karton Factory, the Ilan Pig Farm, and then timed our speed when driving 70 km/hour on the Ljubljana bypass to see how long it would take us if we were to head off to Domžale. Too long, as it turned out. We also experienced quite a few difficulties with regard to the largest allowed weight limit, since trucks heavier than 3.5 tons are not allowed to drive across the city, and our truck plus the audience on it was twice the weight allowed. Preparations for the performance took two months and then the truck drove across its designated itinerary for the first time.

Cargo Sofia – Ljubljana began in front of the Stara mestna elektrarna, where an old truck waited to take us through the tunnel under the Ljubljana Castle on Dolenjska Street. We stopped at the first gas station, filled up the tank, the drivers bought Coca Cola to go and we moved on. The next stop was a Viator Vektor truck wash, where they gave us a good wash. Our polished truck then drove a circle around the singer that sang a tender Bulgarian melody in the middle of a roundabout. She seemed like a mirage. We drove on to the Barje rest stop at the Ljubljana bypass, where the drivers found various other truck drivers cooking coffee, baking hot dogs for dinner or simply standing around. They asked them where they were from and how far away they were from their destinations. The drivers were often Bulgarians, Romanians and Macedonians; their destinations were still thousands of kilometres away. After that we headed off towards the container terminal in BTC, where we drove along numerous lines of completely loaded containers, wondering what's in them, and observing the construction crane unloading material from one of the trucks with immense ease. In the meantime, we listened to the terminal manager, who spoke to us while driving his professional means of transportation – a bike – about how the terminal functions. We also explored the logistics centre, where trucks stop, collect customs on goods and acquire receipts for paid customs. From there, we headed off to a shopping centre, where we came to realise that the singer wasn't merely a mirage, because she was standing there in the middle of the roundabout again and completely bewitched us. With the pathos of ethno music in our ears we returned to Stara mestna elektrarna, where we all had a glass of home-made Bulgarian schnapps, which is the only proper thing to do after a successful drive.

Four scheduled performances were immediately sold out at Mladi levi and so we decided to organise two more due to overwhelming demand. However, Slavčo and Vento rejected the idea in a somewhat celebrity manner – no additional performances had been stated in the contract and there was absolutely nothing we could offer them to tempt them into performing more than previously agreed. However, after long conversations and a box of smoked cigarettes, we managed to agree to one more show. And this one turned out to be the best of them all!

After the performances, I asked Slavčo and Vento whether they were happy with their way of life. They both agreed that not a thing in the world could make them change their profession. They do miss their families, they said, but the road means freedom and they like being alone. Driving time is a time for contemplation for them, since this way they can avoid the hustle and bustle of everyday life. In a truck, they are their own boss. Really, can it get any better than that?

After *Cargo Sofia - Ljubljana*, the documentary theatre of Stefan Kaegi has returned to Ljubljana in various forms; in 2006 we also learnt what the term local production really means, since Kaegi only brought an idea and an actor with him. We placed Ljubljana in the performance title – not as a decoration but as the main protagonist.



Photos Nada Žgank



Stefan Kaegi (Rimini Protokoll): *Cargo Sofia – Ljubljana*. Mladi levi 2006

DOMINOES

Mladi levi 2011 was opened by *Dominoes*, which mesmerised the city and set a new standard for opening events. The author of the grand installation is one of the most renowned English contemporary theatre groups, the Station House Opera; the installation *Dominoes* was devised by their artistic director Julian Maynard Smith.

The basic idea of the event was – like all good ideas – quite simple; a line of huge falling dominoes, which were really just big building bricks, falling across the city by the thousands. The project was initially devised for a district in London, and it connected the city or, better yet, the people in it. In Ljubljana, the dominoes predominantly fell through the Tabor area; they crossed streets and a bridge, stood in the park, disappeared into houses and then appeared again. They found their way into apartments and changed the laws of gravity... They brought people together, as many volunteers helped set them up. The last domino fell in front of hundreds of visitors at the festival opening on the platform by the Slovene Ethnographic Museum, whereas the entire process was accompanied by volunteers and a crowd of around a hundred people on bikes, wheelchairs, on foot and on scooters. We could cut right through the collective euphoria with a knife; the enthusiasm spread over the entire festival, not just opening night.

2,250 large bricks fell during
the performance *Dominoes*.

JULIAN MAYNARD SMITH, Artistic director of Station House Opera and author of the *Dominoes* project

>You're not going ask me what it all means, are you? Because I don't know. I don't know what it means. I think it means something different for everybody. The entire thing is fun and I wanted to bring this idea that I had to life, I wanted to see it in action and hoped that it would work. The dominoes resemble a couple-of-kilometres-long sculpture, which draws in almost the entire city.

I think it was a good idea that we started setting dominoes up on the other side of the river. We examined several itineraries for the track, but in the end we chose the one that offers various highly interesting possibilities along the way.

Immediately after the fall of the first domino, I simply sat down and had a beer.<

Dominoes was a groundbreaking opening event for Mladi levi, since the opening performance, as well as the outdoor party, was available to everyone and not just to a limited number of people in a theatre auditorium. On top of that, *Dominoes* connected several different groups in their voluntary work (the elderly, representatives of various organisations from the neighbourhood, students, neighbours...) thus forming a physical and mental community out of space and people.

For Bunker, *Dominoes* have come to represent the spirit of all the endeavours that were invested in the area's revitalisation, while simultaneously also marking Mladi levi as the central summer event of the Tabor area.



Station House Opera: *Dominoes*. Mladi levi 2011

Photos Urška Boljkovac

MY STREET, GARDEN BY THE WAY AND SPACES OF PLAY

KATARINA SLUKAN,

Head of Education at Bunker

LEAVING RESIDENTS SOMETHING TO DWELL ON

Although similar programme guidelines were already planned earlier, in 2009 with the Sostenuto project we also managed to acquire funding and a broader scope, which made the relatively systematic development of a participatory and highly socially engaged portion of the Mladi levi festival possible. Every year we created a content-based set of activities which had a physical impact, especially on the immediate surroundings of the Stara mestna elektrarna the Tabor area, and a temporal impact on the Mladi levi festival itself.

We were inspired by the opinions and wishes of temporary and permanent residents, younger and elderly passers-by, and all the others, who either constantly get their fill of cultural and other events in this place, or those who almost never find their way here. We identified some of the residents' key desires, or points of concern in the Tabor area: a general perception of the absence of green spaces, the lack of quality public spaces for socialising, and idleness – the feeling that nothing was going on. A part of the answer was the newly established Cultural Quarter Tabor, which was a relatively logical consequence of the concentration of cultural possibilities in the area. In the distance of just a few streets, institutions of national cultural significance (the Slovene Ethnographic Museum, the Museum of Contemporary Art Metelkova, the National Museum, the Art-house Cinema Kinodvor, the Slovenian Cinematheque) meet the hustling independent cultural practices and the alternative party



scene (Metelkova Mesto and Rog Factory). That gave birth to conceptual directions, which manifested themselves mainly in the form of a parallel programme to that of the Mladi levi festival, and to this day we are still inspired by them, even after having concluded with the *Sostenuto* project.

In the first year, 2009, we focused on the street nearest to us, Slomškova Street, and with the help of the prostoRož team we created a short illusion of urban vitality out of a street section that was for the most part completely numb. We managed to inspire individuals and associations from all kinds of areas to cooperate; from chess clubs to organic farmers. Parallel to this, the playful initiative known as *Street Market* also took place, exchanging knowledge, goods, time and human attention among individuals with the desire to revive the most fundamental human values; values which, despite the discourse on the economic and ecological crisis, or perhaps because of them, are still last on the list of general social concerns.

The next year we continued our work, inspired by the green layer of our neighbourhood, or perhaps by the lack of it. The result was a series of activities titled *Garden by the Way*, where we created miniature balcony gardens and garden beds for schools. We combed the neighbourhood with walks led by various "green" experts and started to build the community garden *Beyond Construction Site* together with the cultural association Obrat, which is (probably) at its peak right now, three years later. The programme section, which to a significant degree marked the Mladi levi festival programme of 2011, represents various projects under the common name *Spaces of Play*. Besides the kilometres of dominoes set up by the UK collective Station House Opera, and Škart's masterpieces of *Storoll*, *Penjalec*, and *Singeroll*, we were once again joined by the prostoRož team with their magical carpet *Map of Wishes*, while Tanja Radež contributed the childhood collection of *Girls and Boys*. Dani Modrej hosted the workshop *Fences through Playful Glances* and Maja Simoneti ran an urban walk titled *Jane's Walk* through the Tabor area from the 130 cm high perspective of a child.

This year, after the conclusion of the *Sostenuto* project, we remain with a large loyal group of volunteers who will implement most of the minor logistical issues. There is also a group of senior volunteers from the Ljubljana network of daily activity centres for the elderly who will take care of the hospitality for the opening banquet for the fourth year in a row, and which will be seasoned by the innovation of a visiting master chef. A major part of the festival's performances is marked by this kind participation.

From the very beginning, this kind of programme strategy has received highly polarised reactions. Even among the production team at Bunker opinions have been divided. Doubts were targeted primarily at the excessive deviation from theatre practices and at the question of the artistic value of such activities. We were probably indeed guided more by intuition than clearly set goals, and especially by the deep desire to really touch the wheels of collective consciousness; to turn them at least a little, very gently, and towards a better and more just tomorrow.

If we draw a line and add up the results, a densely interwoven network of diverse partnerships, which has already sprouted new ideas and given birth to new projects, unfolds in front of us. Although it would be hard to say that the number of visitors at Bunker events has increased, we have manage to leave both the local residents

and everyone else with something to dwell on, which is something we will build upon in the future. On one hand our aim is to increase the general level of cultural and creative literacy, on the other it is to revitalise the local community. We have tackled a number of themes, thereby emphasising those invisible, gentle values, which are always giving way to the rough, competitive relationships of the dominant economic regime.

Now, after three years of intensive work with the communities and socially engaged projects, I ask myself whether we might have been too impatient with our questions on the meaning, and even the artistic value, of this kind of programme direction? And, I can state with certainty that we will continue to create spaces where the local meets the global, the audience meets the art, and art meets society.

**There was always festival space along with the performances at Mladi levi,
but “the street”, “the garden” and “the playground” took a bigger share
in the programme and thus became inscribed in it as undertones
of the programme and at the same time also its integral part.
They have placed Mladi levi on the map of the town and formed even closer
ties between the local and the international.**

Photos Urška Boljkovac



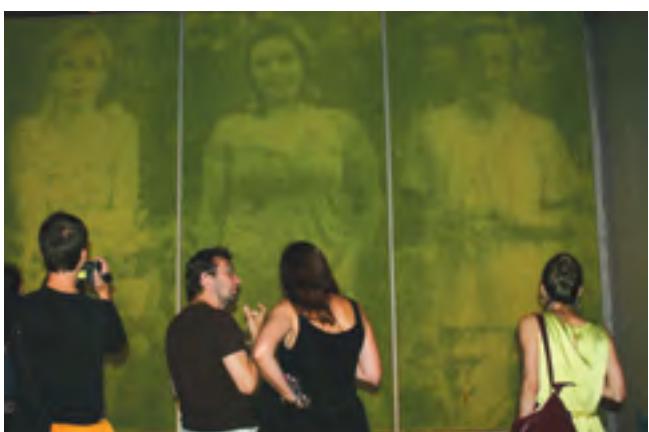
prostoRož: *My Street*. Mladi levi 2009



Beyond Construction Site. Mladi levi 2010



Wild Seed. Mladi levi 2010

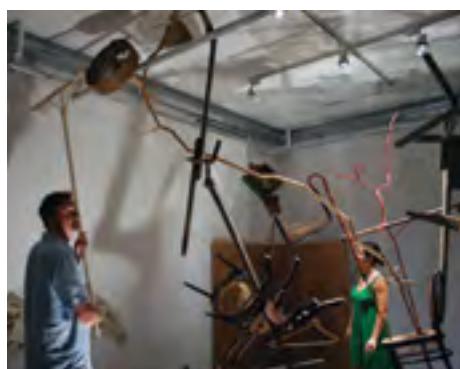


Ackroyd & Harvey: *On the Field*. Mladi levi 2010

Photos Urška Boljkovac



Škart: *Penjalec*. Mladi levi 2011



Jozef Houben, Emily Wilson, Alois Elmauer: *Holz*. Mladi levi 2011



prostoRož: *Map of Wishes*. Mladi levi 2011

Photo Mare Mutić



Tanja Radež: *Girls and Boys*. Mladi levi 2011



The Mladi levi 2011 festival team on *Penjalec* made by the Škart collective.

Grega Mogorčič, Suzana Kajba, Nevenka Koprivšek, Andrej Petrovčič, Janko Oven,
Igor Remeta, Liljana Briški, Alma R. Selimović, Mojca Jug, Janja Buzečan,
Samo Selimović, Duško Pušica and Tomaž Žnidarčič.

MLADI LEVI FESTIVAL TEAM MEMBERS THROUGH THE YEARS

Nevenka Koprivšek

Irena Štaudohar

Mojca Jug

Ira Cecić

Marija Režek Kambič

Tamara Bračič Vidmar

Klemen Trček

Alma R. Selimović

Branko Jordan

Maja Mujdrica Kim

Katarina Slukan

Bor Pungerčič

Maja Vižin

Brina Pungerčič Perko

Samo Selimović

Liljana Briški

Suzana Kajba

Marko Brumen

Janja Buzečan

The Mladi levi festival 2012 team
in the Stara mestna elektrarna.

Maja Vižin,

Mojca Jug,

Liljana Briški,

Janja Buzečan,

Samo Selimović,

Katarina Slukan,

Nevenka Koprivšek,

Tanja Radež,

Alma R. Selimović,

Tamara Bračič Vidmar,

Irena Štaudohar

Photo Urška Boljkovac





Photo Urška Boljkovac

THE LION AND DETONATION

The Mladi levi festival has an associative link with the seaside, with eyes set on distant horizons, and with freedom. It bears a special relationship with the sea that one yearns for, or misses; with the sea that imprints on the skin of our stage technicians and is brought to the courtyard of Stara mestna elektrarna by our guests in the hot late-summer evenings. When I explain to my Croatian friends why I return to Slovenia at this particular time, I find myself bringing up the Mladi levi festival. People normally think it's the festival of some leftist movement, even though I try to explain the broadly widespread metaphor of a the Young Lion as someone who struggles relentlessly for a better world, with whatever means are at their disposal. According to the famous idiom, one fights like a lion, for youthful sincerity and for the right to practice art, which allows one to give a precise account of the world we live in.

A Lion, one-eyed, two-legged and multiple in meaning, as the emblem of the Mladi levi festival was conceived fourteen years ago in the Tandar Studio on a pre-summer afternoon that is still so vividly clear in my memory. The logo was introduced to my future clients, who have through time turned into something far beyond that word, in the workspace on Rimska Street, boiling from the sizzling summer heat and preparations for the second Mladi levi festival. We were sitting on the floor in a rather doubtful manner, talking about who we were and what we'd like to become. I now know that contemplative processes are something one needs to live and breathe perpetually, since excessively planning strategies in motion, explaining the current state of the world too precisely and in a creative manner, never really works. When gazing upon the logo, the Bunker team seemed a bit scared on that sizzling hot afternoon. It was based on the image of an eye, a symbol of the careful observation of the world, which was meant to trigger an explosive stuffed with a creative charge.

Due to reasons completely unknown to my mind at the time, which I look upon today as a proximity in our value systems and a similar attitude towards the world, trust and friendship evolved between us and grew far beyond what designers call corporate visual identity. Mladi levi announces the forthcoming festival with its eye. It reminds visitors of what to expect in the late summer and delivers them a promise that it will again leave a distinct mark on their lives with its exquisite selection of artists. The

festival has, without moving more than just a couple of blocks up and down the area, encountered the world in an abundance of different forms. It's quite remarkable to think about all the answers that I took with me from the festival events, providing responses to questions I've never asked before, even though I should have. In the last couple of years of the economic crisis I have often found myself in a situation where someone tries to sell the ideas and worldviews that the Mladi levi festival and its creators have been sincerely practising for a decade and a half. I used to think that we'd somehow been forced to do so due to a lack of funds, money, or ideal conditions, but now I know that this way of functioning merely speaks of our similar understanding of everyday life, embedded with a socially responsible attitude in every single moment. And it is our immense faith in this worldview that pushes us to try and persuade others by making them see its beauty.

The visual festival image every year points us in the direction of where we'd like to go, what we'd like to learn, what are the things we don't understand and what it is that we wish for. When it became clear that this year's festival opening – one of the most important annual social events in Ljubljana – would stage a documentary performance entitled *Was ist Maribor?*, a naturalistic funeral ceremony for the Maribor Automobile and Motorcycle Factory (TAM) and to my mind a historic event after the year 2000 in Slovenia, a red star emerged in the detonation point of our lion. It jumped over directly from the famous TAM visual sign that every single Yugoslavian national knew how to draw once upon a time. I've been asking myself and others whether the time for the red star is already here or whether perhaps a more appropriate moment will appear in the future, without knowing that in no more than a month this very star would become an object of persecution and a victimised icon in the media, used strategically to divert attention away from the present and the future towards the past. Without knowing at the time that those of us able to admit and live with the fact that the world and history are multi-faced entities, use it as a signatory emblem.

In a similar, but perhaps somewhat more innocent manner, Mladi levi turned green in 2010. It brought attention to the tremendous importance of every blade of grass, every little bush, and every tree, and showed how air and vitamins keep us alive. Mladi levi joined the global movement struggling to raise awareness with regard to the fact that nourishment-giving greenery should not be taken for granted. We tried to send out a message that you can love the entire world if you start by showing some love to your own street. Mladi levi can turn into a balloon and take us to the sky, it can burst out of sheer joy and then take us back to Earth. Mladi levi has performed in a tuxedo with a bow tie, the visual signifier of male elegance; it has been a sailor with an anchor, and has stood for our devotion to home and love for the sea. Last year, in 2011, a part of its visual image consisted of little flags with iconic messages as metaphors for various convictions and modes of belonging. We have shown that we stand by our convictions to struggle and make the world a better place. Just as the Tibetan flags pray for us, our flags simultaneously announced that the world is diverse and colourful, not just unjust and cold. When conceiving new projects, we constantly ask ourselves how to convince ourselves and others that what we do is useful, that all people should be equal and that some of us live and breathe humanism, culture and art with devotion, which is completely and perfectly fine. As a designer I've encountered various messages in various expressive techniques, inhabiting my creative and mental world. The entire Bunker team consistently helps me water my ideas, which I then further articulate into broadly applicable events and emotions.



Posters from the 15 editions of the Mladi levi festival. The first was designed by Nika Zupanc, and all others by Tanja Radež.



A FAMILY FESTIVAL, EVEN IF THE FAMILY IS DYSFUNCTIONAL

The technical crew of the Mladi levi festival

Festivals around the world are famous for their programmes and atmosphere. However, artists fondly remember the ones where they had a good relationship with local technical crews and work went without a hitch. Festival programmes are very dense; however, what is a nicely concentrated programme for the audience, can be a hard task for the crew, who has to make it work like a well-oiled logistical machine. Things can change from an apocalyptic hall, or a blooming garden, to a classical theatre hall the next day with 150 lights and a load of scenery. Touring always means adjusting to new stages and different conditions, but local technical crews support the artists, so that the performance keeps its spirit and quality despite the different environment.

In the last few years, piles of cables, floodlights, projectors, scenery elements, costumes, a variety of different stages and demands that vary from impossible to whimsical/capricious, not to mention the touring technical and art teams at the Mladi levi festival, have been managed by a crew of four technicians, the home technicians of Stara mestna elektrarna.

In the first years of the festival, the tandem of Dušan Kohek and Tomaž Štruc brought together the technical crew of the festival. The end of August was a very intense time for them, a warm-up for the following season. Later, they passed over their place under the grid and behind the mixing console to a younger crew, which became the permanent crew of Stara mestna elektrarna. Igor Remeta, the technical director, has been working for the festival since the first year, whereas Andrej Petrovčič, Duško Pušica and Tomaž Žnidarčič joined him in the first five years. Every year they need quite a few helping hands, but the four of them keep all of the threads in their hands and never miss a single day of the festival.

Igor, Andrej, Duško and Tomaž do not romanticise the festival or the artists. Tomaž says “work is work” and all of them agree that they do not necessarily have the most pleasant recollections of the performances that impressed the audience most, but rather the teams they cooperated well with, the ones who did not complicate and who explained clearly what they needed. Sometimes working together brings new friends, but sometimes they just finish their work and leave. Their opinion of artists and performances is always valuable and proper, as they see them at their most vulnerable moments, when they are trying to adjust to local circumstances and solve the problems that have occurred. This is why Tomaž is most fond of the artists who do not bluff and say clearly what they want, and who are always ready to talk about their needs.

The technicians almost never watch the performances. Once the performance has started they can enjoy their only peaceful moments, when things are no longer in their hands. Andrej says that very seldom flashes at rehearsals convince them to sit among the audience during the performance. A rare exception was Ivo Dimchev with the performance *Lili Handel*. A tense moment during the working process can also distract them from watching the show, because they believe the tension from before can influence their opinion of it and make them unfair/prejudiced.

Despite the realistic approach to the festival, which is really demanding and tiresome, both physically and psychically, they all agree that working for a festival is quite different from regular work at a theatre. It is more concentrated and is therefore harder and more demanding, but at the same time it is more interesting and they enjoy it more. Igor likes festivals because “every day brings new challenges and new people. We’re not rich in equipment and staff, so we’re even prouder of our achievements. So far everything has gone well, we have never cancelled a performance because of technical difficulties and everyone has been satisfied.” Andrej mentions that sometimes they’re confronted with prejudices that our country is in the “wild east” and the teams are a bit frightened at first, but when they start working they usually relax and at the end they are enthusiastic about the passion, enthusiasm and professionalism they may not have expected.

Although technical plans, demands (i.e. tech riders) and equipment are adjusted and prepared in advance, every new day still brings at least ten little momentary crises that arise from misunderstandings, language slips or simple human mistakes. Some of them have become legendary and technicians remember them as amusing moments, although they certainly didn’t feel like laughing then. Igor remembers a critical situation when the crew misunderstood the French technical rider and overlooked the fact that they needed a huge ice cube. They would have frozen it if they had realised that they needed it earlier, and not just before the show. After about fifty telephone calls, Andrej rushed to Brdo, where the protocol kitchen sold him a huge ice cube, meant for a large swan sculpture. In the yard of Stara mestna elektrarna they cut it with a spade, while the performance was already running. Duško remembers a conscientious cleaning lady who brought them some additional work when she swept away the “scenery” of the Station House Opera group, consisting of precisely

displayed shards, despite the notice "do not sweep". She couldn't help herself, she said; when she saw a mess she simply had to clean it up.

Igor's historical memory of the festival does not consist of faces or performances, but of solved problems: despite a three-week drought and a prohibition in hunting stores, they once managed to find earthworms for the show; they also managed to prepare the scenery for a show by the group Supera-mas, although they had to literally rebuild the entire construction because the original scenery was too high; the whole crew went shopping for aubergines all around Ljubljana for a show by Henriette Pedersen; they provided the Iranian group with warm water for pools on the stage in the show by Amir Reza Koohestani, although they had to heat it in the basement litre by litre ... A technical challenge of the project *Lovepangs* impressed itself on Tomaž's memory the most, as they had to build the whole city in Stara mestna elektrarna.

The tempo of the festival is deadly for the crew. The technicians can only sleep for four to five hours a night. Each of them climbs a ladder at least a hundred times during the festival, lifts tons of scenery elements and reflectors, hangs up at least a hundred lights ... The communication is often difficult, since it includes different languages and different interests. Each group of artists considers their performance or project the most important at the festival, so it is very hard to navigate among all their wishes and demands. The lack of language skills is compensated by technical slang expressions – *paar, PC, dimmer, multicore, marshal, monitor, chinch, and jack* – which are far more important than polite requests. Their heads and hands are full night and day. Duško says that the older they are, the more they feel their tiredness after the festival. However, with the years they have become a well-trained crew with a lot of experience and knowledge, so a lot of the work has become easier for them. The hardest days come at the end of the festival, when everyone is getting exhausted, the pace is intensifying, the enthusiasm is waning, and the refreshing state-of-mind after the holidays is fading away faster than a suntan.

Igor says it gets harder to solve technical problems and to keep a positive attitude of mind near the end of the festival. The less they speak, the more valuable their professional skills, so that the work goes on smoothly and undisturbed, although spirits are not as high as during the first few days. However, they all like working for the festival. For most of them this means the initiation and first learning hours of their profession. Andrej thinks that this is why the Mladi levi festival can be considered a family festival, even though the family is dysfunctional. All of them prefer working on the festival over regular work in a theatre during the whole year; what's more, they've paid the festival quite a few compliments: it's a pleasure to have such a big audience, the festival crew is good, the Mladi levi festival is a good start of the season, it brings you from the seaside back to the scene. A pleasant introduction to the annual event is Igor's birthday in the spirit of expecting the first group of artists. He can't say he'll be working for the festival in 15 years from now, but if not, he promises to come over for a beer, to pat all of us on the back and tell us how well we've been doing things.

Female performers at the festival usually find the technicians a true miracle in a world that seems to lack real men. These guys know how to change a bulb with one hand only, nail together a table, calm down an anxious stage manager, lift heavy boxes and not let any problem throw them off track. If something doesn't work, it's just another challenge for them. Apart from their strength and technical superiority, working in the theatre with artists and mainly female producers, gives them a certain sense of humour and softness, which one can feel in communication and cooperation with them. Technicians are really cool; no wonder the prettiest dancers and actresses usually fall in love with light-, tone- or scenery masters.



Photos Urška Boljkovac



When the last applause ceases to sound in the hall and when the festival activities turn into evening mingling and an exchange of experiences, the hardest part of the day begins for the technical crew – they have to take the scenery to pieces again and prepare the stage for the next day. They can't stop until the work is done.

MLADI LEVI TECHNICIANS THROUGH YEARS

Photo from the Bunker archive



Mladi Levi 2003 tech team in front of the Railway Museum

Every evening, new stages, new places, new illusions ... and then setting things up again later at night. From midnight till dawn, they create perfect order from the apparent chaos, where the lights, the sound and the picture work according to the movement of a finger; nights are meant to set the scenery, days are busy with rehearsals, and evenings are dedicated to performances.

Igor Remeta
Andrej Petrovčič
Duško Pušica
Tomaž Žnidarčič
Dušan Kohek
Tomaž Štrucl
Tine Bolha
Denis Tanković
Boris Prevec
Silvo Zupančič
Branko Garača
Mitja Strašek
Jasmin Sahinpašić
Davor Balent
Marjan Sajovic
Štefan Marčec

Valerij Jeraj
Matjaž Brišar
Emir Beširević
Jure Vlahovič
Franc Ažman
Dušan Kovačič
Grega Mohorčič
Janko Oven
Jernej Kenda
Robi Kokošin
Marko Brumen
Luka Curk
Leon Curk
Simon Bračič
Andrej Intihar
Jernej Volk



Photo Dejan Habicht

FESTIVAL NEWSPAPER ARENA

ANA PERNE,

Arena's first editor (2002–2004)

IN ARENA

Choosing a name is always a special project. And so was picking a name for the publication that was to report on an event like the Mladi levi festival. No wonder we ruminated over the name of the festival newspaper for quite some time. One that should include pithiness and some striking power and would fit the event – like Levi (a play on words in Slovenian, meaning both “lions” and “left”)? After a list of ideas, of which some were more funny than serious, Nevenka Koprivšek came up with an idea and the newspaper became (and remained) Arena.

It was 2002. During a Seminar on contemporary performing arts (organised for the first time by Maska) Bojana Kunst introduced the idea that a seminar paper should also be embodied in a newspaper, so that seminar authors could try their hand at writing about contemporary performing arts, reflecting on the basis of theoretical knowledge achieved. After considering the options of creating a festival newspaper, we decided to cooperate with the Mladi levi festival, and the preparations started with great enthusiasm. Together with Ana Gale, who gave Arena a special character with her design during the three years of my editorship (from 2002 to 2004), we created the form of the newspaper and set up the manner of carrying out each issue. At the beginning the crew was pretty small (only four regular writers and a handful of co-operators), but, as soon as the next year, interest rose to such an extent that we were able to confront more different records on one performance.

The possibility of publishing and co-creating a newspaper offered experience, which was especially valuable for those who were at the beginning of their professional career. The existence of the newspaper confirmed the need to reflect contemporary art practises, after the dialogue between the stage and the auditorium, the creators of the programme and the festival audience, and last but not least the

need to test and introduce different forms of writing about art. “Arena,” the dwelling place of Mladi levi, appeared as a place to express views, and is revived with every festival. During the years it has extended the circle of authors and tested many different forms of realisation, but still preserved the initial ideological guidelines. Let it develop further in this spirit ... So be it!

SAMO GOSARIČ,

writer (2006–2008), co-editor of Arena with Iztok Ilc (2007)

TO MERGE THE WISH TO WRITE SERIOUSLY WITH THE FREEDOM OF BEING A VOLUNTEER

My story with the newspaper Arena is just one in a long line of many from the young participants of Maska’s Seminar on contemporary performing arts, who wanted to acquire their first experiences in writing, reviewing and editing, together with the warm and fast tempo of the Mladi levi festival. I suppose I belong to the second generation, which took things over following the period of the first three newspaper years with editor Ana Perne, and the break after that. The beginnings reach back to 2002, when the first generation of seminar participants was looking for a suitable festival to conduct practical work. The second generation had a similar experience with the newspaper to the one previously described by Ana, the first newspaper editor: the quick pace of writing and night editing, calling authors at 4 am and convincing the designer to squeeze in those last three sentences, and then running to the photocopy shop for the freshly baked newspapers to be ready for the evening audience. I believe we’ve created what we wanted and what we needed – an autonomous space for exploring our writing and testing different genres; a space allowing us to creatively melt our desire for writing with the freedom of volunteering. And then we passed that space on to others.

Part of the Arena team
in 2010



ANDREJA KOPAČ,
writer (2006–2011), editor (2009)

TO LEARN TO WRITE, EXPERIENCE IS THE ONLY OPTION

The simple proverb “All beginnings are difficult” acquires its full expression only when we decide to actually do something. And so I chose: writing. The real question here, however, is how to go about this task after having obtained a degree from a faculty that presumably already taught me all about the art of writing (journalism). I felt even more naked and barefoot with regard to my writing skills after I finished my studies, which was quite a problem for me at the time. An interview – no stress. An article – what, where, where to, where from? What is it that I know anyway and how to employ the level of my (lack of) knowledge, to channel it into the art of writing, this most beautiful of individual endeavours? To learn in this domain, one has no other option but to gain experience. Which is exactly what *Arena* provided: it made experience possible, widened it, and made it solid. In a time of little tolerance for the written word, there are very few places that enable autodidactic learning. So, if the Mladi levi festival offered the desired information, then *Arena*, as the festival newspaper, provided mental reflection as something of tremendous importance for a young person. First of all, this was because it had a sharp thematic focus (i.e. every festival programme); secondly, because it brought together individuals interested in similar themes; thirdly, because it remained open for various formats in genre and content, which was ensured by a self-organised and alternating editorship. I’ve tested myself in both: first of all as a writer and later on also as an editor. I did make a couple of wrong turns every now and again, but it was *Arena* that allowed me to push my limits and gave me the reason to push others by encouraging them to be brave and to surpass the patterns of writing about art used by the mass media. *Arena* has thus always stood as a place of intertwinements, complications, sleepless nights and, most importantly, attempts that allowed for craziness, mistakes and sideways. My motto at the time was: no copy-editing – no censorship. I liked it back then, but it sounds a little too flimsy today – and this is exactly how things should be. We must strive to correct (our) mistakes.

Photo Urška Boljkovac



BOOK OF MEMORIES

Photo Dejan Habicht



THE BEAUTIFUL FACES OF MLADI LEVI

Mladi levi brought about a completely unexpected refreshment of the Slovenian festival map in the late summer of 1998. The first festival cut through me with such intensity that in every subsequent year I've waited for the festival just as one waits for a loved one. I still remember a promising night at the Ljubljana Castle. The Belgian group Latrinité was on with an incredibly contemporaneous and energetically charged interpretation of *The Gambler* by Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoyevsky. I also remember a French performance from the first festival with two staggering actors who had boxes placed over their heads; they seemed like a completely realistic Beckettian pair, though slightly resembling the Czech stop-motion cartoon *A je to!* Also unforgettable: the living sculptures of Danish dancer Bo Madvig, whose naked arms, back and legs were covered with countless freckles. During his forty-minute solo he calmly told us the story of how his grandmother rubbed these spots and tried to wash them off when he was a child.

In Mladi levi 2000, I was most captivated by the Russian Evgeny Grishkovets, with two monodrama performances in the best storytelling genre there is; *How I Ate a Dog* and *Simultaneously*. Much later, in 2004 (which is the Mladi levi year when the Croatian-Dutch choreographer and dancer Ivana Müller asked herself *How Heavy Are My Thoughts?* by weighing and measuring her brain) I talked about these performances with my colleague from Belgrade, who subsequently gave me a Serbian translation of three of the plays written by Grishkovets with a foreword written by Jovan Ćirilov. I still wonder why Evgeny's texts have never been staged in Slovenia.

During 1998 and 2003, I hosted all of these (and many other) artists in the studios of Radio Student on a regular basis. We would meet every day at 12:00 pm in front of Le Petit café, I would load them into my blue R4, which had served its time long ago, and take them to the radio station. Things started at 12:30 pm, live. These were mostly entertaining conversations in rather broken English about the performances we had seen the previous night. The Danish duo, consisting of director Kamille Wargo Brekling and performer Maxine Rogers was infinitely funny, not only on stage, but perhaps even more so on air. Their performances of *On the Road with Maxine no. 1* and *On the Road with Maxine no. 4*, which were hosted by the festival in 1998 and 1999, came across as an exceptional mixture of household humour and stand-up comedy. The Portuguese Miguel Pereira and the Italian Antonio Tagliarini told me about numerous creative limitations and subsequent frustrations, which (not only) artists encounter perpetually. They had recognised these limitations and frustrations as a propelling push and most useful inspirational material for their cabaret-coloured theatre biography. After his performance of *After Hours* in 1999, Samuel Louwyck from Belgium showed us several delirious effects of alcohol vapours and had his party going until the following afternoon. We brought him to the studio half-conscious, but he assured us throughout that he could do it. I asked him about his dance experiences in the group Les Ballets C. de la B. by renowned Belgian choreographer Alain Platel, since I could see some similarities in the radical spirit of Louwyck's performance and Platel's performances. I never got an answer, the interviewee simply fell asleep in the studio.

Evgeny was the only one that I never took with me to the radio station. He didn't speak English and I didn't speak Russian. I did nevertheless succeed, with the help of a translator, in recording a long interview for the magazine Maska during a four-day workshop for young dramatists, which took place during Mladi levi 2001. Back then he told me something I will remember for the rest of my life: "The human face is the most interesting thing I have ever seen. It is unrepeatable. I could stare infinitely into the numerous faces I encounter. My dramatics strives to be none other than observation of this type. Which is why I teach people at my seminars and workshops that we must develop our ability to observe faces in order to finally be able to see our own face in the mirror."

I often hear that the Mladi levi festival is important, because it managed to introduce theatre into new spaces in Ljubljana with nothing other than sheer energy: the Ljubljana Castle, Railway Museum, City Museum of Ljubljana, the former Rog Factory, Museum of Modern Art and, naturally, Stara mestna elektrarna. This wasn't as self-evident fifteen years ago as it is today. I merely nod to that and add: during the last fifteen years in these spaces, Mladi levi has hosted roughly eight hundred unusually beautiful faces.

Amelia Kraigher,
publicist and editor of the magazine Maska

THE FESTIVAL BADGE

I covered the first two festivals for a magazine, which means that I had the chance to see them through from beginning to end. I was there, involved in the happenings, present and mesmerised. It was during summer holidays, all was bathed in the melancholic August light, filled with youth, suntans, love and accompanied by the new and exciting festival concept with a wide-ranging freshness of performing arts. Something truly optimistic and beautiful. The collection and celebration of new artistic practices and the new space of Stara mestna elektrarna. The festival brought the new century right in front of the electric gates of the 20th century, thus offering the very first insight into what could be described or defined either with the term post-drama theatre or with the performative turn and the aesthetics of the performative. It wasn't about the representation of majestic works of art, instead it was all about events. And, naturally, it wasn't necessary for events to produce meaning or to make sense; they tended to appear rather than happen, they did their stuff rather than present their stuff. The Mladi levi festival is a big achievement, since it was the first to establish contact with international networks. It entered into partnerships with several European countries, it instigated the emergence of fresh connections, it inhabited the true European spirit and it enacted the search for the European identity. It even found that European identity for a brief moment and thus made her understood and embodied in theatre and dance. The first and the second festival editions were filled with enthusiasm over Bo Madvig, Jordi Cortes Molina and Kamilla Wargo Brekling. Following the solo success at the first festival year, all three of them were given the chance to return as strong authors. Bo and Jordi made their return in duets; Bo with his mother Eva Madvig, who accompanied him by playing on glasses, and Jordi with Artur Villalba. Only Kamilla continued her solo performance *On the road with Maxine* with actor Maxine Rogers.

Their images and their stories remain fresh and vivid even today, hidden perhaps somewhere in the brain where the aesthetic experience resides. Especially Maxine Rogers (under the director's guidance of Kamilla Wargo Brekling) remains captured in my memory. In her two 15-minute solos – little stand-up miniatures – Maxine succeeded, while turning the doorway light on, in presenting her own housing problem through omnipresence of word and gesture that were being slowly uncovered layer by layer. She revealed a female desire for her own home, which did come true next year – a house, a neatly arranged garden with daisies and daffodils and green, green grass and children – but then also went down in decay at the same time. On both occasions, Maxine used just the right amount of tension, non-theatricality, peace and personal omnipresence to round up her little narrative. I can still see her, the glowing and radiant narrator in red hot pants ... the festival badge as I called her back then.

Mojca Dimec,
mentor at the Arts High School in Ljubljana, Department of contemporary dance and theatre,
publicist and actress

*During the last days of August, we have found ourselves in the fiery claws
of the young festival lion, who has expressed a new joy of living.*

Mojca Dimec, Mladina, 1999

Photo Dejan Habicht



Photo Urška Boljkovac



VISUAL AND EMOTIONAL OVERDOSE

Every year in August one becomes somewhat hesitant to head off for vacation, as there are so many interesting things going on in the city. A hollow, but nevertheless increasingly louder roaring starts echoing from the distance sometime in the middle of the month. And then it comes: the Mladi levi festival.

This is the time of the season when I know a sparkling vibe will fill the air, striking us with a visual and emotive overdose from the world around us while we meet old friends and make new friendships. This is the time of the season when I also lend a hand to the Bunker bunch and contribute to the festival's beat, thus feeling like a young lion for a little while.

Four years ago, for example, we sang about what was bothering us. In 2005 we transformed the pain of others and even got a little pain in return. Last year, we dragged large dominoes across the city and then guarded them together with the Meikyokan karate club girls against any attempts at their premature fall. And we can most certainly expect new adventures this year. I can hardly wait!

Andrej Godec,

lecturer at the Faculty of Chemistry and Chemical Technology

DEAR MLADI LEVI,

for 15 years now, August has been your month. I love visiting the festival, especially since becoming a neighbour of Bunker six years ago. Right there, in Bunker, things get deliciously "baked, cooked and fried", only to be served in Stara mestna elektrarna to all of us, waiting eagerly for the games to begin. The socially engaged performances on one hand and the accompanying events on the other, they all find their permanent place in memory; it is because Bunker functions as a sort of "social octopus", which draws you near and then uncompromisingly involves you in festival activities. One such exciting project was the Recycled t-shirts concept, which involved collecting of worn-out t-shirts, which were to be given brand new energy with a textile print by the designer Tanja Radež. I myself was not only wearing two of these t-shirts while running from one film screening to another at the 18th Sarajevo Film Festival, I even walked with them across the red carpet. You deserve it, dear Bunker, after all the hard work you've done!

Greetings from Sarajevo,

Natalija Pihler,

culture connoisseur, Bunker's neighbour

Photo Natalija Pihler



A KING

When the Mladi levi festival roared for the first time, it was clear that a lion king had been born. He was just a fluffy and stumbling little bundle as a young cub, receiving loving gazes and pats of approval on the shoulder from everyone around. But the young lion's roaring gradually grew louder and louder as he came of age, whereas our loving gazes – although a little bit more critical – remained equally loving the whole time.

We got through puberty without any serious problems. Today our lion king is a handsome young man, roaring in a masculine manner with a voice that echoes far away... Last year he jumped off our window, flew across the Ljubljanica River, over the entire Tabor area and finally landed in the platform next to Metelkova, announcing that he was once again in Ljubljana. And I said to myself: this time he's really here to stay!

Bojana Leskovar,

communications expert, the Ministry of economic development and technology

Photo Urška Boljkovac



MLADI LEVI IN TOWN

The news that the Mladi levi festival was in town spread quickly through Ljubljana at a time when the festival was still at its very beginning. That also included the student population, which I joined when visiting the first Mladi levi editions. The fact that one could feel the presence of the festival in town later proved to be one of the things that contributed to the identification of Mladi levi. The date of the festival in late August could not have been better chosen. It is also true that such an advantage is hard to keep through the years. Soon the presence of the festival in town was perceived in different forms. With its performances, the festival sometimes took its audience to newly discovered places, it later included the streets and discovered the quarter around Stara mestna elektrarna, which became the central performing area.

A decade and a half ago, Mladi levi brought a festival of dance and theatre to a city whose cultural image was much less diverse than it is today. The festival was recognisable for introducing young, not-yet renowned artists from abroad. Marked by the freshness of youth, by different and even daring approaches, the event represented a special attraction. Creators – many of them returned more than once – surprised in many ways; for instance, Laurent Pichaud, whose appearance substantially influenced the reception of his movements on the edge of the theatre in merging with the landscape of the Tivoli Park; or Ivana Müller, who during her first visit to the festival (*How Heavy Are My Thoughts?*, 2004) confirmed the gravitas, by which she is to be remembered, and at her next visit (*While We Were Holding It Together*, 2009) she introduced a performance, memorable for the power that leads the spectator into the process of presentation.

Over time, the Mladi levi festival has passed over different phases, it has started to present more established artists and extended the programme with other genres. Despite these changes I hope it sticks to the adjective that adorns its name.

Ana Perne,
dramaturge and publicist

The ten-day festival co-existence, which is to come to an end on this day, has proven that enthusiasm can overcome language barriers and potential cultural differences – although not by reducing these differences to a similar level, but through a productive construction, which values the contribution of every member. Interaction established on the basis of encounters in common space, has the potential of propelling the unexpected and the emotive into motion; it pauses at times, but only to find its former rhythm in a heartbeat.

Ana Perne, Arena, 2002



They're everywhere, they know everyone. They spread into city gardens, they connect street inhabitants. And normally they go to holidays in the wintertime. Perhaps they stay around, because they're a bit perplexed – like most others in the sector – about where the hell to go from here. To a referential institution? I doubt it. Only rarely is the non-governmental sector just a progressive and transitional marching towards institutions. Beyond borders sounds more likely. At home, the fortresses of institutions seem either unobtainable or uninteresting. It's also better for us if the lionesses stay at home. To open the door for the new season in a hearty and joyful manner.

Jedrt Jež Furlan, Dnevnikov Objektiv, 2012

DEAR LIONESSES, DEAR LIONS,

You have awoken my nostalgia and memory. This does seem to be happening more and more these days ... are we really that old?! One approach to recalling memories that I prefer is to be thankful for all the good, crazy and dynamic things that went on while keeping the Partisan nostalgia, or scourges of frontline soldiers, at bay. Simply having been present at the onset of a festival or two, having helped to make things happen, and having assisted at a couple of births as a festival midwife, makes me feel like a pioneer. While many claim that their events are famous for their excellent atmosphere, it should be noted that this really has been the most visible feature of the Mladi levi festival from the start, not as a branding move though, but as the plain and simple truth. Perhaps the time of mass-produced festivals has made us forget what they are essentially all about, namely celebration and socialising. Rushing off from one festival to another merely triggers oblivion, whereas the same cannot always be said for digestion. I have always appreciated the kindness that the Mladi levi festival has shown to artists, who would stay in Ljubljana throughout the festival period in the initial festival editions. Apart from the artists, this friendly spirit has also embraced the local inhabitants and thus the right atmosphere was created. We had the chance to repeatedly pull the artists' sleeves in the middle of Ljubljana and invite them to drink a coffee. Jordi Cortés Molina, live, just for me, wow! The fact that I was a journalist gave me an alibi to approach artists and not look like a fan. I had my tools and my weapons with me: a camera, and a microphone or a pen. And, as you can imagine, I made very good use of them. Everybody is nice to reporters. When European networks, subsidy payments and international cooperation were something more or less of a theoretical nature in Slovenia, we could hear about all those things from the festival guests. They sure did know their way around. And so we received our first lesson from them when they made us stop whining about the situation in our little country and convinced us to go claim our own piece of the European cake. We came to realise that even if we felt unable to start cooperating at home, and even if we were not that keen on cooperating in the first place – there's always someone willing in Europe. I came to learn about networks and their meaning at the Mladi levi festi-

val. The excitement over what I learnt has propelled me into pushing Pascal Merat in front of the camera every year during the early festival period and at one point I seriously started fearing that he would start avoiding meeting me the next time. The festival has preserved its youthful spirit, which is in large part due to its appealing performances; it has never made me angry and I am, to be honest, much more lenient on it than perhaps may be the case with... But then again, let us be kind. The performance creators may grow old (I mean, more mature) but not the performances. They will stay forever young. Dood Paard and their "non-acting" blew my mind away, just like the performance entitled *Sonja* did, regardless of the fact that the two performances were completely different in genre and otherwise. The feeling was more or less the same throughout the 15 years of vastly different artists. The festival has definitely made some good choices regarding the selection of artists and performances, which would have been quite hard to find at home. Offering a difference is an important and worthy endeavour, because it allows one to demonstrate how much one keeps track of what goes on in the domestic scene. Moreover, offering a difference also allows one to give a mute lesson to others, which would have sounded something like this if articulated: "Have you perhaps considered approaching a creative process from a different angle?!" Art abroad was to a large degree stripped of the rather gloomy weight of the conceptual, which at the time burdened the domestic scene. Everything always has to be so serious and intelligent here in Slovenia... The Mladi levi festival has clearly shown us that a different approach can also bring good or at least likeable results. The search for new spaces has been an invaluable component of the festival throughout the years. The invisible bulldozer of home walls has been on a mission; it hasn't done much digging, but we nevertheless got ourselves a radar for hidden spaces. So basically, thank you for making a couple of years in this short eternity somewhat more exciting for me. I have written this text in the sizzling fever of Dalmatia since, naturally, I had to go to vacation earlier not to miss the opening of the Mladi levi season. I would never be able to forgive myself otherwise.

Jedrt Jež Furlan,
journalist and publicist

The second festival of theatre and dance *Mladi levi*, which took place in the last week of August, opened Ljubljana on almost all sides of the European sky. Not just because of the number of visiting artists, who stayed in Ljubljana throughout the festival, but mostly because of the freshness that the not-yet seen dance and theatre poetics have brought to our space. On top of that, *Mladi levi* is a festival that leaves traces behind. Very solid traces.

Jedrt Jež, Razgledi, 1999

FESTIVAL MLADI LEVI HAS BROUGHT ME BACK TO THEATRE

I know, theatre is so... last year. Or, better yet, last century. Just like me, but then again, we all seem to be doing rather well for our age.

They say that the beginnings are always the best. When it comes to the opening night: I remember the sophisticated, classical performances and by this I mean that they had proper actors and dialogue. I liked the Spanish female group of performers General Elèctrica the most, since they once and for all destroyed my prejudice that women can't be REALLY funny.

For years I've been what one might call a classic theatre spectator, but then all of a sudden it seemed like this was starting to become – as I wrote in the first sentence – out of date for some reason. The Mladi levi festival has actually brought theatre back to me and vice versa. One thing I can be sure of is that the Bunker girls will travel the world for me every year and go through tons of material and performances in order to offer what is at the moment new and important in the world of theatre.

I particularly look forward to opening nights, asking myself what might happen this year? A little bit of circus, miniature trains, dancing, classic stuff? And then I make myself pretty – it is, after all, the theatre I'm going to – to sit on a haystack and watch dominoes fall across the city. Then the party starts. I've come to realise in the last couple of years that I don't see that many familiar faces anymore and I think that's really great. It means that new generations are visiting the festival and, moreover, that the festival has stretched across the entire street and the local quarter, and is on its way to taking over the entire city. This is why I'm already accustomed to the fact that friendly older ladies cook at the party. The Mladi levi festival has become part of their lives as well.

And then we dance until we're asked to leave; I feel as if I was in a song – this year's summer hit – played constantly on every radio and it goes like this: ...tonight we are young... and we rock!

Alenka Arko,
editor of the TV show Preverjeno

Photo Urška Boljkovac



THE MADNESS CALLED COURAGE

"This Nevenka woman must be a bit crazy. To organise a dance festival in the middle of August, when everyone's on vacation? To make a decision like that, you really have to be a bit cuckoo. Or maybe you just need guts." It was somewhere along these lines that I pondered the announcement that the Bunker team, led by Nevenka Koprivšek, would hold a dance festival entitled *Mladi levi* or *Junge Hunde*. The capital was to be consumed with dance euphoria right when its potential audience was tanning itself somewhere at the seaside. But, in reality, disbelieving individuals like myself have quickly come to realise that Nevenka knows what she's doing. The truth is not everyone is off; the dance scene is not at a complete standstill in the summer. The first festival already swept away any doubts either regarding the concept or worries about the audience not attending. In the beginning, the festival served as a springboard for certain artists to reach international stages, but nowadays we see these artists returning to the festival as big and acclaimed names of contemporary performing arts. The *Mladi levi* festival has been, is, and will be, a guarantee for a high level of emerging artists from various expressive genres. The festival has always been famous for a vibrantly pleasant atmosphere and for the not-yet-very-promising artists that weren't what one might call "a sure thing" at the time. Some of them turned out to become global attractions just a few months after their performance in Ljubljana. I personally liked the fact that the festival never shied away from flirting with popular dance genres, such as hip hop, step or circus acrobatics; it was also because of this that the festival grew its audience, which wasn't exactly a haven for regulars of the contemporary dance scene. A festival has always been a perfect chance to see a missed performance and also a space for discussions about various topics, articulated by the artists' dancing expressions. The festival newspaper also went down in history; thanks to the newspaper, everything will remain, even when memory becomes deceptive and the images in our heads fade away. Even though the financial reality of the festival was never particularly strewn with roses, Nevenka always knew how to find the necessary means to make her ideas happen. Ideas also came flying into that three-room apartment on Slomškova Street, transformed into a lovely office by the Bunker team. And if one was in the neighbourhood and hungry by any chance, one always had a place to go. The pots and pans on the stove always smelled of Nevenka's enticing delicacies. I know that she is not particularly crazy about anniversaries, she told me so herself at the fifth festival anniversary. I also know that she still sticks to her principle that life is too short to be taken seriously. Therefore, let us hear the *Mladi levi* festival roar for at least another fifteen years.

Barbra Drnač,
editor of the TV show and portal *Parada plesa*



Photo Urška Boljkovac



TRAFFIC

Streets are a rich inspiration for human madness. The French comedian Jacques Tati shot an excellent film named *Trafic* in 1971. Its footage is like a hidden camera recording the little secrets we hide behind our masks. When I wait in a car at a junction, I like to slide back into his film and observe the people next to me. Some of them pick their nose and eat their boogers, women correct their make-up, some verbally beat up one another in a fight, while others simply stare in silence, each through their own side of the window. But, it was the director Stefan Kaegi who took up the subject of roads in a most entertaining manner in his performance *Cargo Sofia – Ljubljana* at the *Mladi levi* festival in 2006. He transformed a truck into a theatre hall and covered one of the walls with glass, so that one could see the road through it, whereas passers-by and drivers could not see the audience inside. Kaegi took us across the streets of Ljubljana for an hour and a half and it was a trip that made us laugh to tears. The things people won't do! We saw a female's legs sticking out of a car window on the highway, her long-haired boyfriend driving and headbanging to the strains of heavy metal, slamming his head back and forth in ecstatic zeal, while the open window blew his hair everywhere. Or there were the drivers circling around the BTC roundabout in a state of shock because they could see the opera singer Maja Djordjević standing on the grass in the middle of the roundabout, singing arias on a microphone. Kaegi and Tati thus opened a new perspective on the road as a scene or stage, where little human dramas take place. Observe drivers as if you were watching a film or a theatre performance. I highly recommend it. You'll have fun.

Maja Megla,
journalist



Photo Nada Žgank

Mladi levi is a fresh and lucid festival of high quality, which enables insight into current European theatre trends, especially that of experimental, non-institutional and mostly physical theatre. But the festival brings much more than just interesting theatre programme, for it has also become a unique example of a different organisational practice implemented by an institution/festival on the one hand and of socially responsible action on the other. By drawing on new forms of cooperation, networking and coexistence, the festival points to new modes of existence, differing from the one that the alienated contemporary man has been treading upon thus far, whereas the environmental and ecological festival projects contribute in an active and engaged manner to a better quality of living in urban environments.

Maja Megla, 2010, Delo



Translators of texts are listed below.

English language editing: [Michael Manske](#), [Ajda Šoštarič](#)

Nevenka Koprivšek: **MLADI LEVI – OUR FIRST FIFTEEN YEARS** - Urška Brodar, Ajda Šoštarič

Mojca Jug: **THE FESTIVAL WITH A FACE** - Urška Brodar

Irena Štaudohar: **JUST IN TIME** - Tony Čater

Res Bosshart: **YOUNG DOGS, OLD NAGS, AND THE NEW** - Michael Manske

Pascal Brunet: **EUROPE – FORMULATING DEMOCRACY BEYOND IGNORANCE** - Ajda Šoštarič

Rok Vevar: **WHAT IS THE ALTERNATIVE ACTUALLY?** - Urška Brodar

Blaž Lukan: **MLADI LEVI OR HOW TO REMEMBER?** - Ajda Šoštarič

Zala Dobovšek: **YOUNG, VIGOROUS AND COURAGEOUS** - Laura Bračič

Tomaž Toporišič: **COMRADES, DO YOU STILL REMEMBER? OR FESTIVAL MEMORIES OF THE PIONEERS** - Urška Brodar

Nevenka Koprivšek: **ARTISTS AT MLADI LEVI – THE INTERNATIONALISATION OF THE SLOVENIAN SPACE** - Ajda Šoštarič

Alma R. Selimović: **THE FILIGREE WORK OF OBTAINING FUNDING** - Urška Brodar

Sebastijan Horvat: **THANKS FOR THE ILLUSION** - Ajda Šoštarič

Magdalena Lupi Alvir: **A GOOD HORIZONTAL LINE AND A GOOD VERTICAL LINE** - Ajda Šoštarič

Matjaž Pograjc: **DEAR LION CUB!** - Tony Čater

Mateja Rebolj: **A FESTIVAL IN TOP SHAPE** - Ajda Šoštarič

Katarina Stegnar: **FIFTEEN FESTIVAL YEARS IS MORE THAN JUST A BUNCH OF PERFORMANCES** - Ajda Šoštarič

Tanja Lesničar - Pučko: **A FESTIVAL THROUGH SPACE** - Laura Bračič

Blaž Peršin: **THE SEARCH FOR NEW SPACES AND THEIR NEW FUTURE** - Ajda Šoštarič

Alma R. Selimović: **DEAR LADIES AND GENTLEMEN. SOME THOUGHTS ON THE AUDIENCE OF THE MLADI LEVI FESTIVAL** - Ajda Šoštarič

Maja Hawlina: **OPENINGS** - Ajda Šoštarič

Ira Cecić: **LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT** - Ajda Šoštarič

Alma R. Selimović: **TOMAŽ ŠTRUCL – ARCHITECT OF THE LOVEPANGS CITY** - Ajda Šoštarič

Tamara Bračič Vidmar: **WITH VENTO AND SLAVČO ACROSS EUROPE THROUGH LJUBLJANA** - Ajda Šoštarič

DOMINOES - Ajda Šoštarič

Katarina Slukan: **LEAVING RESIDENTS SOMETHING TO DWELL ON** - Urška Brodar

Tanja Radež: **THE LION AND DETONATION** - Ajda Šoštarič

Alma R. Selimović: **A FAMILY FESTIVAL, EVEN IF THE FAMILY IS DYSFUNCTIONAL: THE TECHNICAL CREW OF THE MLADI LEVI FESTIVAL** - Laura Bračič

Ana Perne: **IN ARENA** - Laura Bračič

Samo Gosarič: **TO MERGE THE WISH TO WRITE SERIOUSLY WITH THE FREEDOM OF BEING A VOLUNTEER** - Ajda Šoštarič

Andreja Kopač: **TO LEARN TO WRITE, EXPERIENCE IS THE ONLY OPTION** - Ajda Šoštarič

Amelia Kraigher: **THE BEAUTIFUL FACES OF MLADI LEVI** - Ajda Šoštarič

Mojca Dimec: **THE FESTIVAL BADGE** - Ajda Šoštarič

Andrej Godec: **VISUAL AND EMOTIONAL OVERDOSE** - Ajda Šoštarič

Natalija Pihler: **DEAR MLADI LEVI** - Ajda Šoštarič

Bojana Leskovar: **A KING** - Ajda Šoštarič

Ana Perne: **MLADI LEVI IN TOWN** - Ajda Šoštarič

Jedrt Jež Furlan: **DEAR LIONESSES, DEAR LIONS** - Ajda Šoštarič

Alenka Arko: **FESTIVAL MLADI LEVI HAS BROUGHT ME BACK TO THEATRE** - Ajda Šoštarič

Barbra Drnač: **THE MADNESS CALLED COURAGE** - Ajda Šoštarič

Maja Megla: **TRAFIC** - Ajda Šoštarič

Editors: Alma R. Selimović, Irena Štaudohar

Designer: Tanja Radež

Editorial board: Nevenka Koprivšek, Irena Štaudohar, Alma R. Selimović,

Tamara Bračič Vidmar, Maja Vižin, Tanja Radež, Mojca Jug

Publisher: Bunker, Ljubljana

For the publisher: Nevenka Koprivšek, Director

Print: Tisk Žnidarič

Circulation: 200

Ljubljana, August 2012

Bunker, Ljubljana

Slomškova 11, 1000 Ljubljana

info@bunker.si

www.bunker.si



This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION,
SCIENCE, CULTURE AND SPORT

Mestna občina Ljubljana



This work is licensed under the Creative Commons License.

To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/2.5/si/>

You are free:

- to Share — to copy, distribute and transmit the work
- to Remix — to adapt the work under the following conditions:
 - Attribution — You must attribute the work in the manner specified by the author or licensor (but not in any way that suggests that they endorse you or your use of the work).
 - Noncommercial — You may not use this work for commercial purposes.
 - Share Alike — If you alter, transform, or build upon this work, you may distribute the resulting work only under the same or similar license to this one.