

SCORES IX and IV created by Anna Pehrsson during COFESTIVAL 2021

In a normally grey November, I had the pleasure of travelling to Ljubljana to attend CO FESTIVAL, through the European network Life Long Burning. Despite the precariousness that the Pandemic still inflicts on all of us, and perhaps in particular the Performing Arts, I was met by a caring, warm, and highly professional curatorial team and a strong programming of national and international artists.

Indeed, November can be both colourful and eventful.

I was stunned and very inspired by the integrity, drive, and uncompromising will to inscribe contemporary dance as a valid art form in Slovenia, shared by the curatorial team and supported by a loyal audience. In fact, each performance in the festival was sold out.

Through my attendance at COFESTIVAL and its programming, I was again struck by Dance's capacity to create communities, to offer spaces of intimacy and touch upon the unspeakable. I was relieved to finally share moods, environments, and atmospheres as a body among other bodies within the frame of a theater space.

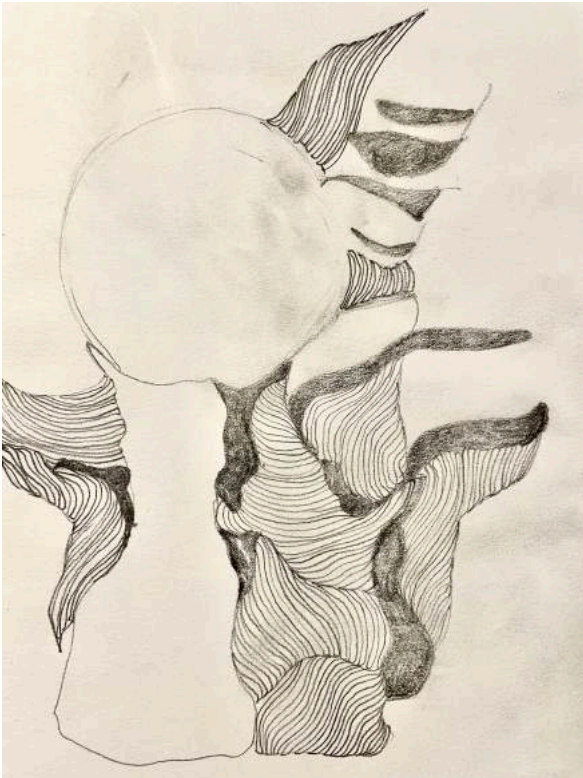
Indeed, especially during times like these, we must continue putting thoughts into action.

As the lights faded in Kino Šiška, ideas started dancing - what a body is and may be and who we are as humans - was yet reformulated and transformed. Isabelle Schad's Reflection proposed a reconfigured relationship between the human and its environment, by submitting the dancing bodies to a turning floor moving in the opposite direction, and continuously dismantling the conditions the bodies were subjected to. Christos Papadopoulos' Ion suggested an energetic poetic sphere where a transforming rhythm - a more than human - created an appearing and disappearing cluster of bodies or communities. Yassen Vasilev's Impossible Actions, set in an incredibly generous atmosphere, offered conditions for other ways to dance and structures for how to work as a collective, through five days of workshop, followed by its performance. Snježana Premuš opened up the theater to a space of study of bodies and language where each audience member could choose what to follow and lose oneself into its own research of what the performance was.

Indeed, COFESTIVAL danced me into the new. Into proposals for change.

As a part of the festival programming, NDA Slovenja hosted a conference on Movement Research with Slovenian dance artists working nationally and internationally, allowing for the idea of a conference itself to float between language and dancing, ending by all participants imagining dancing together. Here, I, the foreigner was invited to take my first hesitating steps in a group of strangers.

I was indeed dancing.



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During the last day, I visited the Slovenian Dance Archive, open to the public and initiated by Ron Vevar, who personally showed Yasen Vasilev and myself a rigorous collection of programmes, posters and videos.

During our lunch later, we spoke of the passion and commitment that makes things happen. I think I mentioned feeling strengthened as an artist by my visit.

Anna Pehrsson