

## About the project

Dance "has become one of the most relevant critical-aesthetic practices in live art today" noted one of the most distinguished theorists of the field, André Lepecki (Lepecki, André (2016), *Singularities, Dance in the age of performance*, Abingdon: Routledge, p.7.). He continues: "dance in the age of performance, already expresses its singularity: to generate charged and vital problematic fields on which pressing and urgent political, corporeal, affective, and social problems are made visible and gather – not to find a solution, but to further the movement of problematization." (Ibid, p.8.) The proposed project, an international artistic and social collaboration (incorporating training and research) would like to explore this field further, and provide tools for artists and organisations to create socially relevant, high-quality artistic work.

In the project we want to develop skills in **micro** dramaturgy, i.e. the "weaving together" of the actual performance so that it is better readable and accessible by an audience. At the same, we want to research **macro** dramaturgy – how the artist relates to society and how the dramaturgical strategies and methodologies are transferable outside the domain of dance.

The main objective of the project is to develop **new skills** for choreographers in dance dramaturgy and to train a future generation of dance dramaturgs. An important added value will be exchange and collaboration between the participating artists and the curators and artistic directors of the participating dance organisations.

Dance dramaturgy, being a relatively young discipline and profession, lacks formal education in its practice.

At the same time, dramaturgical skills are increasingly required in contemporary artistic practice, as they contribute substantially to the quality of the choreographic work, and its **accessibility** and **readability** by an audience. By offering a programme to develop those skills, we want to strengthen the local dance communities involved, increase the quality of the work that is produced, and heighten the artists' potential for international exchange and collaborations. We aim to reach this objective by allowing a group of mid-career choreographers and people who want to train as dance dramaturgs to do a series of international workshops where they will collaborate with each other, as well as with local artists and communities and international specialists in the field.

As such, we want to:

- embed dramaturgy more strongly in the arts, and in dance in particular;
- create bridges between micro and macro dramaturgy;
- research dramaturgy as a crossover practice, articulating its transferable qualities, skills and values;
- raise awareness about the importance of dramaturgical practice for the development of dance;
- strengthen an international dance dramaturgy community.

The project's aim is to create sustainable, long-term connections between the art of choreography, dramaturgical reflection and society, which are three parts of one and the same interconnected triangle.

All the aims mentioned above will strengthen dramaturgy as a **sustainable career perspective**.

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## **Micro and macro dramaturgy**

*Of micro and macro dramaturgy* (1999), Marianne Van Kerkhoven defined micro dramaturgy as "the dramaturgy that situates itself around a concrete production"; while macro dramaturgy deals with "the social relevance and function of the theatre". (1) For Van Kerkhoven, the dramaturg always tries to build bridges between the micro and the macro dramaturgy, and as such supports the artists in their attempt "**to help us read the world and to decipher its complexities**".

"There are productions without a dramaturg, but there is no production without dramaturgy," noted Marianne van Kerkhoven.

The project wants to support mid-career, European choreographers to develop the tools to improve the micro dramaturgy of their own work by offering workshops and mentorship programmes in which choreographers and dramaturgs are brought together to develop their own dramaturgical practices and dialogues. As such, the project also wants to form the **future generation of dance dramaturgs**.

"More than ever, there is a need for critical re-inflection that the work of artists today indicates in its social and cultural context; more than ever, the world needs a refinement of standpoints, awareness of existing paradoxes and contradictions, a different view of reality. Artists can help us to read the world, to decipher its complexity. One of the means available to them is to use the dramaturgy in all different forms that it can take."

Besides improving the micro dramaturgy of individual works, we also want to raise the level of involvement between the artists, their work, the artistic organisations where these works are created and presented and society at large. The project wants to stimulate and realise creations that clearly reflect on today's macro dramaturgy.

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## **Artists to be involved**

Mid-career **choreographers** who already are engaged in a creative practice and who want to improve it through dramaturgical reflection and dialogue. Priority will be given to participants who are developing a new project, parallel to being involved in the project so that they will be able to apply and test the new skills immediately in their work.

**Dance dramaturgs** who want to further develop their tools and methodologies to accompany choreographers in their creative practice. The project will also be open to people who have already accumulated a certain

professional experience in the dance field or a related field and who are interested in becoming dance dramaturgs. The open call process will also allow people who have the ambition to become dance dramaturgs, but do not necessarily define themselves as such yet, to be found.

In the workshops they will expand their knowledge, experience and skills in dance dramaturgy. By doing so they will transform and improve their working methods, widen their theoretical and professional horizons, engage with local communities, learn from experts, try out new working methods/partnerships, explore new ideas in a safe environment, and potentially increase their employment and/or their opportunities for international exchange and collaborations.

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### **Content of workshops:**

Two parallel trajectories:

1. Tools and methodologies to improve micro dramaturgy: programme of lectures, workshops, masterclasses, peer-to-peer exchange and tasks, conceived by the scientific team in collaboration with a local partner.
2. Macro dramaturgical reflection on the identity and issues of a specific, local community, including: fieldwork, talks, research and one event organised with and for the local community.

### **Micro dramaturgical focus of each workshop:**

During the workshops, there will be a progression in the dramaturgical reflection on a new work from conceptualisation to implementation.

First workshop of each cycle:

What are the sources that inspire us and how do we research them? A training of our perception. How do we organise and improve the dramaturgical exchange and dialogue? Principles of intercultural collaboration. A training of our communication skills.

Second workshop of each cycle:

How do we develop open, non-linear methodologies to structure and organise our work? A training of our editing skills.

This part will be facilitated by three members of the scientific team for each workshop.

In each workshop, another experienced dramaturg is invited to give a guest lecture or masterclass.

In each workshop, local artists from other disciplines (music, visual arts, theatre, film, etc.) are invited to share their artistic practice and we will research how these can be creatively translated in an interdisciplinary translation process. For instance, how can the knowledge of film editing be

translated to dance editing or how can dialogical, visual arts practices inspire a dance practice.

The goal of this part of the workshop is to improve the dramaturgical skills of the participating artists and offer them concrete, practical tools and methodologies to apply these in their work.

### **The macro dramaturgical trajectory:**

This part of the workshops will examine how dramaturgical thinking and strategies can be applied beyond the field of dance. In each workshop, we will relate to one specific, local community and learn about its history and current issues.

Each of the European partners will translate and concretise this aspect of macro dramaturgy to a topic that is relevant for the local context

The macro dramaturgical trajectory during each workshop will follow a three-step development:

- First the participating artists will meet the community and learn about its history and current issues. This part of the programme will be co-curated and facilitated by the members of the scientific team, the local artistic directors and the local participants in the project. In this part, we will also involve people who work with the community, such as social workers, local charities or religious community leaders and invite specialists such as sociologists, cultural anthropologists, psychologists or historians who have particular knowledge or insights to offer.
- Secondly, the participants will practice dramaturgical reflection through further dialogue and exchange with each other and the community to develop strategies and artistic interventions which address some of these issues.
- Finally, these strategies and interventions will be shared with the community in a public event.

An important part of this macro dramaturgical research and reflection will be to find ways to avoid exploitation of the arts as a replacement for community work or for the communities to be just another source for a creative practice. How to develop an on going, meaningful relationship and long-term dialogue between the partner organisations and the communities that surround them? How can dramaturgy help us to better consider our (artistic) practices? How can dramaturgy be an instigator of positive changes in our society?

In each workshop, the following people will be involved and will dialogue with each other:

- 5 choreographers and 5 dramaturgs;
- 3 members of the scientific-team;
- 1 guest dramaturg;
- Local artists from various disciplines;

- Members of the local community, as well as guests who can offer particular insight into that community;
  - The artistic directors of all 6 partner organisations
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### Scientific-Team

In order to guarantee the quality of the content of the workshops and the tangible output, the partners decided to work with an independent, scientific team of established dramaturgs, who in dialogue with the artistic directors will further design, implement and accompany the project as facilitators.

The Belgian dramaturg, Dr. **Guy Cools**, will lead the team. Over the past ten years, he has developed a workshop model on dance dramaturgy and creative process for choreographers and their collaborators. He has already collaborated with Anghiari Dance Hub, DansBrabant, Dance House Lemosos and Tanec Praha. Dr. Cools will be joined by Maja Hriesik (SK), Anne-Marije Van Den Bersselaar (NL) and Katalin Trencsényi (HU/UK). The scientific team is chosen for their complementary skills in the field of dance dramaturgy. Like the partners, they also ensure geographic diversity.

**Dr Guy Cools** is a dance dramaturge. Recent positions include Associate Research Professor at the research institute Arts in Society of the Fontys School of Fine and Performing Arts in Tilburg, and Postdoctoral Researcher at Ghent University, where he completed a practice-based PhD on the relationship between dance and writing. He has worked as a dance critic, artistic programmer and policymaker for dance in Flanders. He now dedicates himself to production dramaturgy, contributing to work by choreographers all over Europe and Canada, such as Koen Augustijnen (BE), Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui (BE), Danièle Desnoyers (CA), Lia Haraki (CY), Christopher House (CA), Akram Khan (UK), Arno Schuitemaker (NL) and Stephanie Thiersch (DE). His most recent publications include *The Ethics of Art: ecological turns in the performing arts*, co-edited with Pascal Gielen (Valiz, 2014); *In-between Dance Cultures: on the migratory artistic identity of Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui and Akram Khan* (Valiz, 2015) and *Imaginative Bodies, dialogues in performance practices* (Valiz, 2016), a series of published, live interviews with major contemporary artists, which Cools curated from 2008 to 2013 for Sadler's Wells, London. With the Canadian choreographer, Lin Snelling, he developed an improvised performance practice called "Rewriting Distance" (see also: [www.rewritingdistance.com](http://www.rewritingdistance.com)) that focuses on the integration of movement, voice and writing.

**Dr Maja Hriešik** is a dramaturg, lecturer and researcher. She was born in Novi Sad, ex-Yugoslavia, and moved to Slovakia in the late 90s, where she completed MA studies in Aesthetics at the Philosophy Faculty and an MA in theatre directing and dramaturgy at the Academy of Performing Arts. For several years she worked as a freelance performance artist in the field of opera and theatre as well as a programmer for the largest international theatre festival in Slovakia, Divadelna Nitra. She was editor-in-chief of dance magazine *Salto* (2006-2011) and still regularly publishes texts on dance and hosts a programme on dance, public space and activism on Slovak public radio. For the Slovak Theatre Institute she curated international presentations of Slovak dance and workshop programmes for emerging performers.

Gradually she devoted herself more to production dramaturgy, collaborating with Slovak and Czech choreographers of different generations (Marta Poláková, Jaro Viňarský, Yuri Korec, Petra Tejnorová, Lukáš Bobalík, etc.). She completed her theoretical PhD studies devoted to corporeal strategies in contemporary dance and theatre, which led to the publication of a book of essays entitled *On Corporeal Dramaturgies in Contemporary Dance* (2013). She is a lecturer at the Dance Faculty in Bratislava (classes on dance dramaturgy, history and aesthetics of dance) and a founding member of PlaST – Platform for Contemporary Dance, whose aim is to advocate for better conditions and visibility of Slovak contemporary dance [www.plast.dance](http://www.plast.dance).

**Dr Katalin Trencsényi** is a dramaturg, researcher and theatre-maker. As a London-based freelance dramaturg, she has worked with the National Theatre, the Royal Court Theatre, Deafinitely Theatre, Corali Dance Company and Company of Angels, among others. As a theatre-maker, she has worked and taught internationally in Belgium (DANSPUNT – Out of the Toolbox Festival), Canada (Playwrights' Workshop Montréal), Poland (Festival of New Dramaturgies), Russia (Diaghilev Festival), and the US (LMDA dance dramaturgy workshop at Gibney Dance). Katalin is a co-founder of the Dramaturgs' Network (d'n) and from 2010 to 2012 served as its president. She is the author of *Dramaturgy in the Making: A User's Guide for Theatre Practitioners* (Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2015), the editor of *Bandoneon: Working with Pina Bausch* (Oberon Books, 2016), and co-editor with Bernadette Cochrane of *New Dramaturgy: International Perspectives on Theory and Practice* (Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2014). Since 2018, she has edited the dramaturgy section of the award-winning global theatre portal, [TheTheatreTimes.com](http://TheTheatreTimes.com). As a visiting lecturer, she has taught at the University of Kent, the Guildford School of Acting (University of Guildford), Kingston University, Falmouth University and the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama. Currently she is working as an associate lecturer at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art (RADA).

**Anne-Marije van den Bersselaar** is a dramaturg in dance and performance art. For the past 12 years she has worked with various international choreographers, including Mor Shani, Hilde Elbers, Kristel van Issum and Joost Vrouenraets. She graduated in 2012 with an MA in Theatre Studies at the University of Utrecht, with a thesis in academic dance curricula perceived as artistic constructs. Three years ago she founded the Concept Store for Artistic Strategies: A Design Agency for Creative Storytelling (2015) to engage dramaturgical processes in various creational contexts and domains. She has been teaching art theory, philosophy and research courses at Fontys Dance Academy for over seven years. In 2014, she took part in the international Erasmus+ Project "Inclusive Dance. The Transferable Skills of the Dance Artist" as a researcher and content developer of the platform [www.inclusivedance.eu](http://www.inclusivedance.eu) (2017). This project was in collaboration with the Royal Conservatoire Antwerp and Duncan Centre Conservatory in Prague. In addition, she co-designed the new cross-disciplinary FHK Masters programme Performing Public Space (PPS). In June 2018, she took up a position at the AKV|St. Joost Master Institute of Visual Cultures to

coordinate innovation and positioning of their current masters programmes in Animation, Graphic Design and Art & Media.

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### **Project partners**

**Tanec Praha** (CZ) will lead the project. They have almost 30 years of experience and are the leading contemporary dance organisation in the Czech Republic. They have already participated in several Creative Europe projects, such as *Trans Danse Europe*, *M4m*, *Be SpectACTive!* or *Dancing Museums* and have the artistic and managerial skills to lead the project.

**Dans Brabant** (NL), **Dansens Hus Stockholm** (SE), **Tanec Praha** (CZ) and **Anghiari Dance Hub**, the latter in partnership with **Marche Teatro** (IT), will each host and curate one of the workshops where specific aspects of dance dramaturgy will be explored by the participating artists. They each will send four participants (two choreographers and two dramaturgs) to participate in the project.

**Dance House Lemosos** (CY) has been an active partner in the conception of the project, but their contribution will be limited to sending four participants and organising the first meeting for the artistic and scientific team who are supervising and curating the project.