

C.V. / BIO

Nana Biluš Abaffy is an artist with a background in philosophy and a foreground in experimental performance and choreography. Nana takes a maximalist approach to artistic endeavour and works through dance, text, play, moving image and social intervention. She is interested in the pursuit of knowledge through embodiment and wants to know what her body is looking for. Nana believes that there is irreducible variation in the human experience and works towards establishing a space for that difference in search of landscapes where alterities can be envisioned.

Nana is a Zagreb born, Melbourne/Brussels based alien. She has been presenting fiercely independent work since 2013.

EDUCATION

Nana completed a Master of Fine Arts at the Académie Royale des Beaux-Arts de Bruxelles – Institut Supérieur des Arts et Chorégraphies in 2021. She has been working as a lecturer at the Académie since, teaching a semester-long masters seminar on contemporary art. Prior to that, she obtained a First Class Honours degree in Philosophy, and has been awarded a Postgraduate Scholarship in Creative Writing. She received an Australian Postgraduate Award for her thesis dealing with the Aeschylean tragic cycle and satyr play in connection to artists Kazimir Malevich, Marcel Duchamp, VALIE EXPORT and Martha Graham. Nana is a published researcher and has been invited to present her work on ancient tragedy at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama and at Oxford University.

INTERNATIONAL WORK

In certain strange international communities, Nana's work has attained something of a cult following, with video documentation of her full works having been viewed over 2.5 million times on youtube, where her channel has over 20 thousand subscribers. In the physical world, her work has been enthusiastically received and reviewed.

In 2023, Nana was commissioned to present *A Bestiary of Unimaginable Animals* as part of the inaugural FRAME Biennial of Dance, created for Melbourne's iconic Temperance Hall. The work has recently been nominated for the 'Breaking Ground Award' in Dance by Australia's Performing Arts Industry Green Room Awards.

In 2022, Nana presented the choreographic work *Victory Over the Moon* at Chunky Move as part of the Next Move+ commission, co-presented by Next Wave Festival; and she was an artist in residence at Lucy Guerin Inc dance company; and at Brunswick Mechanics Institute.

In 2020 [cancelled] Nana was due to present new video/live performance work with collaborator artist Parvin Saljoughi for the 2020 Tehran Contemporary Sculpture Biennial; and was commissioned to present a new choreographic/expanding cinema work as part of the 2020 Next Wave Festival in Melbourne [cancelled]; she also undertook the Chunky Move Solitude online residency; and contributed to ArtStations Foundation Poland online works.

In 2019, Nana presented choreographic work that was selected as part of the Live Works Performance Award at the 2019 Drodeseera Festival; she presented a live performance/video work curated by Flash Art Magazine, as part of the exhibition 'Rooze Mabada', at gallery Giardino Segreto Palazzo Durini in Milan; she was commissioned to present *POST REALITY VISION [private parts one to three]* at the biannual Dance Massive Festival / Dancehouse Melbourne; she was an Arts House CultureLAB artist in residence; and was an artist in residence at Centrale Fies Art Work Space in Italy; and at workspacebrussels where she showed work at the Kaaistudios.

In 2018, Nana was a finalist in the Keir Choreographic Award, commissioned by the Keir Foundation, Carriageworks Sydney, and Dancehouse Melbourne, for her work *POST REALITY VISION [part zero]*; she presented the experimental choreographic work *INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR THE CREATIVELY MALADJUSTED episode 104* as part of the biannual Melbourne Festival of Live Art, supported by Phillip Adams BalletLab; she presented *ISFTCM episode 105* at Santarcangelo Festival in Italy, and undertook an artist residency there; she was invited to undertake the res+ref artist residency as part of Kunstenfestivaldesarts in Brussels; and was commissioned by Runway Experimental Art Magazine to make a video based art work for their dance edition.

In 2017, Nana was commissioned by the biannual Underbelly Arts Festival to present *ISFTCM episode 103*; and was commissioned by Lucy Guerin Inc to present *RIP Meatdog...Meatdog Lives!* as part of P4SS. In 2016, Nana was supported by the dance boards of the Australia Council for the Arts and the Ian Potter Cultural Trust to train with choreographers Ivo Dimchev, Trajal Harrell, Mårten Spångberg, playwright Mark Ravenhill, and video artist Tacita Dean. In 2015, Nana was selected to participate in a director's masterclass with Romeo Castellucci at the 2015 Venice Biennale of Theatre (which is where she was first introduced to the work of Needcompany).

WORK IN BELGIUM

In 2023, Nana was awarded the year-long 'Reality/Beauty' artistic fellowship with Needcompany; as well as a 'Beurs proven talent' from the Flanders government; she was further supported by artistic residencies with workspacebrussels, Les Brigittines, and Garage29 Incubator; and she presented work as part of the EXPLO festival. In 2022, Nana presented work at BELvue Museum as part of Museum Night Fever. In 2021, Nana was an artist in residence at Beursschouwburg; and showed work at De Markten; and at Espace Vanderborght gallery. In 2019, Nana undertook an artistic residency with workspacebrussels and showed work at Kaaistudios. In 2018, Nana was a finalist in the Keir Choreographic Award (Australia), judged by an international panel including choreographer Meg Stuart, and former Kunstenfestivaldesarts artistic director Christophe Slagmuylder. Nana was subsequently invited by Christophe Slagmuylder to undertake the intensive res+ref artist residency as part of the 2018 Kunstenfestivaldesarts; and she was invited by Meg Stuart to her 2019 triennial Tanzkongress in Dresden. Nana has been mentored by Meg Stuart ever since.

REVIEWS OF PAST WORKS

/// “Abaffy’s works often look like choreographed chaos... with the obvious undercurrent of animalistic energy, her style impresses. The movement is at once subtle and wild; impotent and alluring. Motifs of flapping wings and guttural groans situate us deep within an imaginary zoo, where the fleshy bodies both embody and beckon bestial spirits.” [*DANCE AUSTRALIA 2023*] ///

/// “Abaffy and her collaborators - Milo Love and Geoffrey Watson - have created a world with all the cold, white-on-white mystery of a painting by de Chirico. And the choreography, with its meditative tone and elusive symbolism, suggests a kinship with those metaphysical investigations that can be found in modernist art of the last century. Even the title recalls the futurists who promised to murder the moonlight in their quest to overturn traditional ideas of beauty. And one can sense here, amid the ironies and ambiguities, a serious desire to elevate human sensibility. Abaffy has a talent for the composition of theatrical enigmas that fascinate rather than repel. Her method of juxtaposing images creates semantic gaps that open onto the unexpected. Things become other than what are. They become what they could be or should be.” [*THE AGE 2022*] ///

/// “Like sleepwalking into a post-reality realm. Plaster casts of the three dancers' bodies, draped in white silk, line the stage. It's reminiscent of the human remains in the fallen town of Pompeii. This is a powerful introduction to Victory Over the Moon.... Abaffy's paradoxical fragility and strength especially stand out in this performance. The final scene, in which Love and Abaffy wave white flags of surrender over their heads, is mesmerising, and the repetition here is used to good effect. Dressed in blue velvet, the silk flailing above their heads, they are at once emblematic of Lady Victory and Mary, the mother of Jesus. After almost 50 minutes of circuitous heavy dance moves, this moment is vast, meditative and all-encompassing.” [*THE SATURDAY PAPER 2022*] ///

/// “Nana Biluš Abaffy’s anarchic Post Reality Vision... presented complex visions of how the inherently organisational practice of choreography might produce revelatory states of chaos.” [*UN MAGAZINE 2019*] ///

/// “A VISION FROM BEYOND CHAOS - Nana Biluš Abaffy stands out among peers for making movement-based pieces that draw chiefly from experimental theatre.” [*THE AGE 2019*] ///

/// “What we see here is a kind of staged counter-insurgency. Post Reality Vision proposes an assault against the palaces of representation and a disruption of the mediated gaze. The corporeal is asserted in all its awkwardness... it’s a comic but nonetheless sincere attempt by the performers to reclaim autonomy over their own objectification... there are moments of comic delicacy, too. Biluš Abaffy is so light on her feet. And her gestures have a kind of exaggerated expressivity. An ironic intensity.” [*WITNESS PERFORMANCE 2019*] ///

/// “Nana Biluš Abaffy has work to do, and those in her immediate vicinity best beware. A puss in boots who will walk all over contemporary forms of representation, Abaffy’s boots are mad for walking... this wry performance is also an ironic commentary upon artistic stasis and, despite an apparent shambolic form, is nicely tuned and structured in a deceptively disciplined manner. Like Plato’s cave, this performance lingers in the mind as a statement about the potential for art to dispel tedium - in art’s struggle with death - and the barely concealed terror of being alive...” [*TONY RECK REVIEWS 2019*] ///

/// “Sometimes art can sweep you off your feet and take you somewhere magical, this performance is one such occasion... Post Reality Vision, created by Nana Biluš Abaffy, is a ludicrously fun affair, a manage-a-trois between three virile dancers, who slip effortlessly between the roles of protagonist, antagonist and art director.” [*MELBOURNE CRITIQUE 2019*] ///

/// “... very impressed by the intensity of Nana's talent. One of the most valuable events in the professional life of a curator is when you see the work that is so innovative that it is still in its pre-figurative state, not fitting into any of existing trends or formats. I believe that Nana is such a pre-trend setter, an early sign of an artistic approach that might become a trademark of the new generation of artists. It is characterized by intensity and fragility of performative presence; open and fluid format of the work that allows for indefinite number of variations; and refusal to produce formalized statements in favor of communicating through mechanisms of affect and empathy. The work draws on a wide range of influences, from philosophical texts to the post-internet wildness of imagery; and it feels like an embodiment of newness.” [*EVA NEKLYAEVA, SANTARCANGELO FESTIVAL 2018*] ///

/// “strong poetic badass work” [*MEG STUART, CHOREOGRAPHER 2018*] ///

/// “We need dance that initiates revolution not Orphic neophytes. We need dance that emerges from a clear practice of social and political engagement. What value is a momentary liberation of the senses? Why not work for a permanent liberation? ...The Secretive Dance Team creates site-specific live performances incorporating urban and natural landscapes and found interiors into expansive if enigmatic dance dramas full of strenuous and fantastical posturing and passages of anarchy. Miracle in Aisle 6 was the group’s third production, it was performed only once, and was not supported by any funding or presenting organisation. And it was free. We go to a place, not to an institution. Or, if the place is an institution, it is not that sort of institution... A waxing moon. Grey buildings. An audience that does not recognise itself. And then – a tableau no-one could anticipate. And then – movements, thoughts, feelings, actions... Chaos is a key ingredient in all Secretive Dance Team performances. Dancers sometimes appear carried away by the thrill of performing somewhere they shouldn’t be performing. There is much recklessness and occasional bursts of violence... It is good to be outside the supermarket. It is good to be outside the church... watching cosmic secrets unfold, outlined bodies radiating to the stars.” [*ASSEMBLING THE POLITICAL, DANCEHOUSE DIARY*] ///

/// “performed in an obscure zone neither public nor private... What is at stake for the secretive dancer, and for her audience, is never clear, and perhaps never can be clear... A genuine reconciliation of the two tribes, audience and performer... What to say, except that it is – against all probability – a beautiful, natural moment... A dream, past the wit of man to say what dream it was.” [*NEANDELLUS*] ///

/// “Ingmar Bergman has risen from the grave” [*CHRIS BOYD, PERFORMANCE CRITIC*] ///

/// “an elaborate performance poem for four voices, a surreal fantasy and an installation-immersion... It's this kind of detail, the extension of the theatrical experience, that makes Psychoknot Theatrics stand out as a serious company, a team capable of pushing boundaries and breaking new ground.” [*TIME OUT*] ///

/// “the obliterating cure of Psychoknot Theatrics... extremist anti-theatre... this is no doubt a company which puts itself on the absolute outer margin of theatrical playfulness.” [*DAILY REVIEW*] ///

/// “an excitingly devastating emotional journey.” [*HECKLER*] ///