

# Charleroi danse - soutien à la création 2024

## THE BURIAL OF THE SARDINE

This application seeks to partner with Charleroi Danse for support of a new experimental choreographic and musical as well as visual work, *The Burial of the Sardine*, choreographed and designed by artist Nana Biluš Abaffy. The work is produced and supported by Needcompany, and further supported by project partners Garage29, workspacebrussels and Antisezona/Zagreb Museum of Contemporary Art.

*The Burial of the Sardine* will be performed by Nana Biluš Abaffy alongside percussionist Aya Suzuki and cellists Simon Lenski and Ainhoa Leguy. Music composition and sound design will be developed by composer Peter Poston. Dramaturgy is by artists Jan Lauwers, Grace Ellen Barkey, and Maarten Seghers.

The project has already had two weeks of initial development in Brussels at Needcompany, as well as two weeks at Les Briggittines, in November – December 2023.

The project will be further developed over a period of eight weeks through residencies at Needcompany, Garage29, and workspacebrussels from July 2024 – January 2025, during which time three public showings will be organised.

The first iteration of work will be presented at the Zagreb Museum of Contemporary Art, as part of the Antisezona 25 Dance program (2025 dates to be confirmed).

We are seeking further support for the project from Charleroi Danse through either a residency, a research grant or a co-production partnership. (Nana Biluš Abaffy is a part of the Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles).

## ARTISTIC RATIONALE

### UNDERPLOT

*The Burial of the Sardine* is an experimental choreographic and musical as well as visual work about love. It will carefully weave together an underplot so precise but so confusing that it calls on us to rethink completely the entire separation of the head from the tail, as well as of the forest from the tree.

But the topic is serious – love – and up or down, left or right, whichever way we run or crawl, towards or away from it, it hovers there, in the light, in the shadows, both in the centre and around the corner, love enchanted, forever.

How do we move through this weird force, and how do we articulate this underplot underlanguage that dances so restlessly on the tip of the tongue? Rupturing and creating networks through musico-choreographic calls and responses, *The Burial of the Sardine* follows four performers as they attempt to trace the outlines of this most peculiar age old mystery.

## **IDEAS**

The work is inspired by the architecture of dreams, cycles of sleep, Kafka's dream writings, vulnerability and the strange strength of it, hypnotic undercurrents setting things up in preparation for something that erupts, and faithfulness to an underlying strange sensuality guiding and always present in the aesthetic/religiously ecstatic pursuit of (outsider) imaginaries (which we try to make real).

I want my body to be informed by the body of the playing musician, the body that is formed out of necessity, as an unconscious consequence of trying to achieve something else. This search for movement that is simply a necessary consequence, the material reality of trying to achieve another kind of untouchable magic. I want to set up a semi-solid platform which can hold and protect this unsolid unprotected unconscious underreality.

My collaborators and I are in constant dialogue with one another about how to best realise these ideas and ambitions both musically and physically. Through movement based research that is deeply informed by and in conversation with the musical experimentation, we will work on developing a unique and complex hybrid choreographic and musical language.

## **STRUCTURE**

The structure of the work is inspired by what is known as 'sleep architecture'. As I went through the experience of insomnia, I started reading a lot about how sleep actually functions and how it is structured, and I realised that this is almost exactly how I think about constructing a piece.

Sleep architecture refers to the repeated cycles that we go through 5-6 times each night. It starts off as progressively deeper stages of non-rapid-eye-movement slow wave deep sleep, when everything in the brain becomes synchronised and goes up and down together in a slow wave - you don't dream yet you just relax and the body repairs itself. This is all in preparation for the final stage of sleep - which ends in rapid eye movement which is when vivid dreaming happens and when most muscles in the body become completely paralysed - except for eye muscles which dart around looking at dreams. This is when new memories are consolidated with old memories and you integrate it all through the dream.

Looking back and thinking structurally about my past works, I feel like that's very similar to what I've been trying to do through intuition. Having now studied sleep architecture and understanding it more clearly, I feel more equipped to formally begin experimenting with this science of dreams within *The Burial of the Sardine*.

The progression of scenes, the oscillations between slow vs fast, calm vs intense, quiet vs loud, tension vs release, and the overall skeleton and arc of the piece will be informed by choreographic, visual and audio experiments specifically around sleep architecture.

## **TITLE**

*The Burial of the Sardine* takes its title from a painting by Goya. It refers to an old religious tradition where an entire village gathers in a wild carnival procession, carrying a ceremonial sardine which is then symbolically buried. The absurd funeral of the fish symbolises the burial of the past in order to allow for collective rebirth and transformation. This intense juxtaposition of the comic and the tragic, the ominous and the hopeful, as well as the concept of a collective rebirth will be used as a source of inspiration for our project.

## **SOURCES OF INSPIRATION**

A major source of artistic inspiration for this project is the work of Meredith Monk, and in particular her experimental choreographic and musical performance work 'Quarry' (1976). Her choreography is intricately entwined with a complex and embodied musical score, and she is a pioneer in this field from whom I have much to learn.

Another source of inspiration is the absurdist and humorous work of Ivo Dimchev, and in particular his work 'Operville' (2015), in which he works with classical opera singers to create an experimental choreographic and operatic work that subverts conventions of the performance of both dance and music.

A recent source of inspiration has also been 'Holding Present' (2023), a choreographic and musical work by choreographer Ula Sickle made in collaboration with Ictus ensemble. In this piece a relatively simple but potent choreographic score, as well as elements of the experimental musical scores, are performed by both dancers and musicians, who organically melt in and out of their dual roles. The intensity of the piece is accentuated by the continuity of an underlying amplified musical landscape that mixes and manipulates the live sounds of the performers with pre-recorded elements.

For visual inspiration, I will be exploring the work of artists including Laure Provost, whose work with masks and unexpected visual configurations are particularly stimulating for my practice and for what I wish to develop within this project.

## **CREATIVE TEAM**

### **NANA BILUŠ ABAFFY (CHOREOGRAPHY/DESIGN)**

Please see separately attached CV / bio.

### **SIMON LENSKI (PERFORMER)**

Simon Lenski is a cello player from Antwerp. He is a cofounder of Die Anarchistische Abendunterhaltung (DAAU). They have now brought out six albums and have toured the world, performing as the supporting act for Björk, Tortoise, Sixteen Horsepower and others. In addition, Simon Lenski has collaborated with andcompany&Co, EISBÄR, Wunderbaum, Meg Stuart/Damaged Goods and Wim Vandekeybus, and is much in demand as a guest musician. He has composed music for several theatre plays and three feature films, including Pieter Van Hees' 'Waste Land' (2014). Since 2017 Simon Lenski is a member of the Needcompany ensemble. 2018-19 he toured Europe with Selah

Sue as member of an acoustic trio formation. In 2019 he created, in collaboration with George van Dam a dance performance based on the Goldberg Variations in which George van Dam played the entire Variations and Simon Lenski danced to them. The piece premiered at the 2019 December Dance festival in Bruges.

#### **AYA SUZUKI (PERFORMER)**

Aya Suzuki is a Japanese percussionist currently based in Brussels. She plays with many renowned Belgian ensembles including Ictus ensemble, Spectra ensemble, and Quixtet. She holds a Master of Percussion from the Royal Conservatory of Ghent, where she graduated at the top from the classical music department in 2017. Prior to that she studied at the Toho-Gakuen School of Music in Tokyo, where she was taught by world-renowned marimba player Keiko Abe. She has also played solo concerts for many festivals including at Muziekcentrum De Bijloke, Musica Impulscentrum voor Muziek, deSingel (with ChampdAction), STUK, QO-2, Festival Vlaanderen, BEAT IT! festival in Concertgebouw Brugge, HANDELSBEURS, and some more in Netherlands.

#### **AÏNHOA LEGUY (PERFORMER)**

Aïnhua Leguy is a cello player based in Brussels. She graduated with honours from the Conservatoire de Toulouse in 2020, where she specialised in cello, choral singing, and piano. Currently she is continuing her studies specialising in cello at the Koninklijk Conservatorium Brussel. She is active with several French and Belgian ensembles, orchestras and choirs, and enjoys experimenting with performance and dance. Aïnhua has also studied classical ballet since the age of 5, having graduated from the Conservatoire de Gap in 2018.

#### **PETER POSTON (COMPOSITION/SOUND DESIGN)**

Peter Poston is a composer and musician working in contemporary classical composition, and has been collaborating with experimental choreographer Nana Biluš Abaffy for a number of years. He studied composition at Houston University Conservatory of Music and at Ecole Normale de Musique de Paris. Peter's most recent collaborations with Nana include *News from Pontus* (presented at EXPLO, 2023), *A Bestiary of Unimaginable Animals* (commissioned for the FRAME Biennial of Dance, 2023) and *Victory over the Moon* (co-commissioned by Next Wave Festival and Chunky Move NextMove+, 2022).

#### **JAN LAUWERS / GRACE ELLEN BARKEY / MAARTEN SEGHERS (DRAMATURGY)**

The three core artists of Needcompany have together been making some of the most remarkable contemporary performance work to have come out of Belgium, for which they have received numerous awards, including a Golden Lion for lifetime achievement awarded to Jan Lauwers at the 2015 Venice Biennale. Their visually striking works most often combine performance, dance and music in artistically innovative and highly original productions that have toured to the most prominent venues and festivals around the world.

# PROJECT PARTNERS

## NEEDCOMPANY

Needcompany is an artists' company established in Brussels in 1986. Their creations are shown at the most prominent venues at home and abroad. Since the very beginning, Needcompany has presented itself as an international, multilingual, innovative and multidisciplinary company. It revolves around the individual artist. Everything is founded on the artistic project, on authenticity, necessity and meaning. The medium itself is continually questioned, and there is constant examination of the quality of the content to be conveyed in relation to the form it takes. Needcompany believes in quality, cooperation and innovation. Needcompany is a leading voice in the social debate on the urgency and beauty of art at both a domestic and an international level.

Needcompany is contributing to the project through:

- in-kind business and financial management, including subsidy administration and employment,
- in-kind artistic support and project dramaturgy by artistic directors Jan Lauwers, Grace Ellen Barkey, and Maarten Seghers,
- in-kind use of atelier and production support from production manager Rune Floryn,
- a financial contribution of €1000,
- an in-kind contribution of 2 weeks residency space,
- in-kind technical and logistical support,
- planning and co-ordination of a public progress showing, as well as future presentation and touring,
- professional guidance and support from company manager Pieter D'Hooghe.

## GARAGE29

Garage29 is a Brussels based structurally subsidised organisation that works with independent dance artists, assisting them with residency space, financial and development support, mentorship, dramaturgy and professional guidance.

Garage29 is contributing to the project through:

- a financial contribution of €2500,
- an in-kind contribution of 3 weeks residency space,
- in-kind technical and logistical support,
- planning and co-ordination of a public progress showing, as part of the 'Lundynamite' programme organised in collaboration with Les Halles de Schaerbeek and Théâtre de la Vie,
- professional exposure to their network of partners, including: Les Brigittines, workspacebrussels, La Balsamine, Le 140, Les Halles de Schaerbeek, and Théâtre de la Vie,
- professional guidance and support from artistic director Sabina Scarlat, and producer Anaëlle Guillermont-Canale.

## WORKSPACEBRUSSELS

Workspacebrussels supports performing artists in developing a sustainable artistic practice. It is an open and nomadic structure that flourishes thanks to numerous collaborations in the city.

Workspacebrussels acts as an indispensable link in the artistic ecosystem of research, production and presentation. Workspacebrussels profiles itself as a stable home base where artistic talent can develop to the full and where artistic quality goes hand in hand with administrative commitment and fair practice. This artistic 'home' is built on openness and trust: openness to what is new, unconventional or still unknown, and trust based on dialogue, engagement and transparency.

Workspacebrussels is contributing to the project through:

- an in-kind contribution of 2 weeks residency space,
- professional guidance and support from artistic director Elke De Coker, and producer Riet Meeus,
- planning and co-ordination of a public progress showing
- professional exposure to their extensive network of partners across Brussels and Flanders.

### **ZAGREB MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART / ANTISEZONA**

The Zagreb Museum of Contemporary Art (Muzej Suvremene Umjetnosti - MSU) is a living place of creation, display, interpretation, and preservation of contemporary art in all its forms. Its goal is to encourage and uphold the understanding of contemporary art through professional, innovative, and educative usage of exhibitions and collections. As a multi-program institution it mediates heritage and the contemporary scene, reaching from visual to performing and film art, thus making it an active and critical part of our community. The MSU is the central and largest contemporary art museum in Croatia. / ANTISEZONA is a project which brings an all-year-round program of presentation and contextualization of contemporary dance and related performative practices to the Museum of Contemporary Art in Zagreb. Introducing local audiences to national and international contemporary dance and performance artists, ANTISEZONA is recognized by the public as a new epicentre of performing arts in Zagreb.

*The Burial of the Sardine* is due to be presented at the Zagreb Museum of Contemporary Art in 2025, as part of their Antisezona 25 Dance program, curated by Antisezona artistic directors Sonja Pregrad and Iva Nerina Sibila. They offer us a presentation fee (~2000€); rehearsal space in lead up to presentation; technical and logistical support; accommodation support.

## **WHY THESE COLLABORATIONS**

The project is supported by a strong artistic core team, as well as by confirmed commitment from project partners Needcompany, Garage29 and workspacebrussels.

The artistic and professional input and guidance from my collaborators will make a substantial contribution to the quality and reputation of this project. Their extensive experience and active involvement across the national art scene will help our project connect with a wide network.

Aside from being highly skilled professional musicians, the three **performers** that I've chosen to work with on this project each also have their own particular approach to the body and to movement in performance, which makes each of them capable of contributing to the unique movement vocabulary

of the work. Ainhoa Leguy is a trained dancer coming from classical ballet; Simon Lenski's past collaborations with choreographers including Meg Stuart led him to create his own experimental dance piece which premiered at the December Dance festival; and Aya Suzuki's characterisation of herself as a musician who works with the body was especially highlighted in her STUK solo performance of *Nine Bells*, in which the rhythmic sound of her movement and footsteps is as central as the bells she is percussing. The embodied approach to sound and to the performance of music, as well as the specific quality of their movement, make Ainhoa, Simon and Aya particularly valuable collaborators who I'm excited to work with again for this project.

For the composition and sound design of the work, I have chosen to work with **composer** Peter Poston, a long term collaborator with whom I've worked on various projects over the years, including my three most recent works. While sound design and composition have always played an incredibly important role in my work, in this new project the music and sound elements take on a much more central role, accentuated by the presence of live instrumentalists. Motivated by the success of our previous collaborations, where careful and sensitive attention was paid to all facets of sound within the performance (e.g. the amplification of footsteps and breath, the patterns and rhythm of call and response between performers, pre-recorded composition layered into live sound, use of multi-channel audio placed around the performance space), and the strong artistic alignment I feel towards the kind of work Peter independently composes, make him an ideal collaborator for this project.

The collaboration with **Needcompany** has been incredibly stimulating for my artistic practice. Last year, I was grateful to be awarded their 'Beauty/Reality' artistic fellowship, through which they generously supported my practice with a stipend, mentorship, and residency space throughout 2023. The freedom to experiment here gave birth to the idea for this current project, *The Burial of the Sardine*. The encouragement and interest expressed towards my practice by artistic directors Jan Lauwers, Grace Ellen Barkey, and Maarten Seghers have given me the courage to pursue my artistic intuitions with conviction in this work. Their taking on the role of dramaturgs for the project will contribute greatly to the quality and standing of the work, as well as to my development as an artist. In addition, the guidance from company manager Pieter D'Hooghe has been extremely useful in helping me navigate my professional career within Belgium.

Project partner **Garage29** have previously supported my artistic practice through their 'Incubator' residency program in 2023, which included residency space as well as a financial contribution. The interest in the research and experimentation carried out as part of this residency led to the proposal by artistic director Sabina Scarlat to continue our collaboration by supporting the development of the new project proposed here. Garage29 have also been helpful in introducing my practice to their professional network of partners, which led to a recent meeting with Les Halles de Schaerbeek about a potential future presentation of *The Burial of the Sardine* there.

Project partner **workspacebrussels** have also previously supported my artistic practice through residencies at Les Brigittines in 2023, and at Kaaistudios in 2019. Ongoing conversations with artistic director Elke De Coker and producer Riet Meeus have been incredibly helpful in guiding my professional development within the Brussels and Belgian art networks. They are supporting me in reaching out to further potential partners and presenters for this project, and advising me on how to best manage and plan the future of the work.

Presenting venue **Zagreb Museum of Contemporary Art**, and presenting partner **Antisezona**, offer us an exciting opportunity to present *The Burial of the Sardine* in my birth city of Zagreb. The museum is a beautiful space that I am honoured to be presenting work in. Curators Sonja Pregrad and Iva Nerina Sibila have been helpful in planning the realisation of this and will assist my team and I with practical matters such as technical support, as well as finding accommodation.

## CONCRETE PLANNING

The project will be further developed over a period of eight weeks through residencies at **workspacebrussels**, **Garage29** and **Needcompany** from July 2024 – January 2025. During this time three public showings will be organised in collaboration with the three project partners. Of the eight weeks total development period, one week will be the preparatory period, and seven weeks will be the studio development period.

Throughout the seven weeks of studio development, the three dramaturgs, **Jan Lauwers**, **Grace Ellen Barkey**, and **Maarten Seghers**, will be present on a regular basis. It is planned that at least one of them will be present for at least one day in each of the first five weeks of studio development. The final two weeks of the development take place at the Needcompany space and during this time the dramaturgs will be present on a daily basis. Their artistic guidance and dramaturgical support during these regular moments of sharing will make an important contribution to the quality and reputation of the developing project, as well as to my development as an artist. I will be guided by their expertise and extensive experience in direction (Jan) in dance (Grace) and in music (Maarten). This collaboration with Needcompany is incredibly valuable to me as an artist, because it will help me not only to grow as an artist, but also to build my artistic career in the Belgian arts landscape.

Also present at strategic moments throughout the studio development period will be workspacebrussels artistic director **Elke De Coker** and producer **Riet Meeus**; Garage29 artistic director **Sabina Scarlat** and producer **Anaëlle Guillermont-Canale**; and Needcompany company manager **Pieter D'Hooghe**. Their presence will be particularly useful during the public progress showings, and the organisation and coordination of these important moments. They will support me in inviting programmers, curators and arts professionals, and assist me in establishing connections and relationships with their extensive artistic and professional networks throughout Brussels and Belgium.

## DEVELOPMENT STAGES

During the preparatory period week, **Nana Biluš Abaffy** (choreography / design / performance), and **Peter Poston** (composition / audio design) will begin by creating a detailed plan of the overall artistic objectives and specific choreographic and musical experimentations that will be used as a guide for the rest of the project development period. In line with this plan, they will collect, prepare and generate material which will serve as the source material for the studio development period.



During the studio development period, present each day will be:

**Nana Biluš Abaffy** (choreography / design / performance) present on a full-time basis.

**Peter Poston** (composition / audio design) present on a full-time basis.

**Simon Lenski** (performance / cello) present on a part-time basis.

**Aïnhua Leguy** (performance / cello) present on a part-time basis.

**Aya Suzuki** (performance / percussion) present on a part-time basis.

Each studio development day will be divided into two parts, in the first of which everyone will be present, and in the second the choreographer and composer will be present. In this way time spent in the studio will be utilised more productively, and the different tasks that the project requires will be able to be dealt with in a more focused manner:

**-First part of the day:** Nana, Peter, Simon, Aïnhua, Aya will be present. We will work on developing the various elements of the project, including movement, music, sound, and performance, all of which we will continuously experiment with and refine along the way. We will conduct our investigations through musical, as well as movement based research, playing with accentuating and displacing coded musical gestures, and the dramatic but precise movements of a conductor, which will be explored both as a necessary form of communication between the musicians, and as a peculiar and strange language when explored in isolation. We will experiment with the physicality of the struggle and focus required to perform music, and we will play with developing and accentuating the materiality of the body of the performer, the body of the instrument, and the body of the music, such as the rubbing of sounds that the composition will explore.

**-Second part of the day:** Nana and Peter will be present. Together they will continue experimenting with new ideas, and building on and refining existing ideas. Nana will continue working on developing the choreography, the structure, and specific movement and performance sequences to test out. During this time, she will also work on developing the visual language and experiment with design elements. Peter will continue working on developing the compositional elements. He will experiment with the audio design, paying close attention to the evolving possibilities of the developing project. He will also be testing out various spatial and technical audio configurations, and accompanying Nana's choreographic experiments with live audio. Nana will conduct her investigations through movement based research, and through visual research which will inform and inspire the visual design and scenographic experimentation of the project. Peter will conduct his investigations through compositional research and experimentation, and through technical experimentation including the spatial configuration of multichannel audio sources, and the strategic use of microphones for amplifying the instruments, the breath, and footsteps.

## TIMELINE

**PREPARATORY PERIOD** (one week=5 days)

- 8-12 July 2024

**WORKSPACEBRUSSELS RESIDENCY** (two weeks=10 days)

- Two weeks in the fall (dates will be confirmed with workspacebrussels by June)

Progress showing #1 held at culmination of the residency.

#### **GARAGE29 RESIDENCY** (three weeks=15 days)

- 14-18 October 2024
- 26 November - 9 December 2024

Progress showing #2 held at culmination of the residency.

#### **NEEDCOMPANY RESIDENCY** (two weeks=10 days)

- 6-17 January 2025

Progress showing #3 held at culmination of the residency.

#### **ZAGREB MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART / ANTISEZONA**

- 2025 (dates tbc)

The first iteration of *The Burial of the Sardine* will be presented at the Zagreb Museum of Contemporary Art (Muzej Suvremene Umjetnosti), as part of the Antisezona 25 Dance program.

## **TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS**

The **scenographic** and visual elements of the work will be created in such a way that they are easy to transport as well as simple to assemble and disassemble in the performance space. The scenography will be made from printed material that will hang from the ceiling and be spread on the ground. This material is lightweight and easy to fold or roll up.

Much of the **audio** requirements, such as instrument microphones and small speakers, will be our own equipment, which is likewise simple to transport and assemble/disassemble. Standard large theatre speakers, if they are available, will also be used.

The **lighting** requirements for the work are at this stage flexible, and a standard lighting rig will suffice.

If standard white **tarkett** is available in the space, it would be appreciated, but is not necessary.

## **PROVISIONAL BUDGET**

### **INCOME**

1000€ - Needcompany (confirmed)

2500€ - Garage29 (confirmed)  
2000€ - Antisezona/Zagreb Museum of Contemporary Art  
1000€ - Private Donation (confirmed)  
29300€ - Has been sought from Arts Decree project subsidy (to be confirmed)  
**TOTAL: 35800€**

#### **EXPENDITURE**

25122€ - Artists' gross wages  
7728€ - Employer Social Security contributions  
1950€ - Production costs  
1000€ - Travel costs  
**TOTAL: 35800€**

#### **BUDGET REMARKS**

The budget was drawn up in collaboration with Needcompany and gives a realistic representation of the costs needed for a qualitative realization of the project. For a more detailed budget, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

## **DOCUMENTATION**

#### **VIDEO DOCUMENTATION OF *THE BURIAL OF THE SARDINE* (PROGRESS SHOWINGS)**

[November 2023 at Needcompany & December 2023 at Les Brigittines)

<https://www.xn--69q.world/the-burial-of-the-sardine.html>



#### **DOCUMENTATION OF RECENT WORKS**

 **WEBSITE:** <https://www.xn--69q.world/work>

## A BESTIARY OF UNIMAGINABLE ANIMALS

[March 2023, FRAME Biennial of Dance, Melbourne]

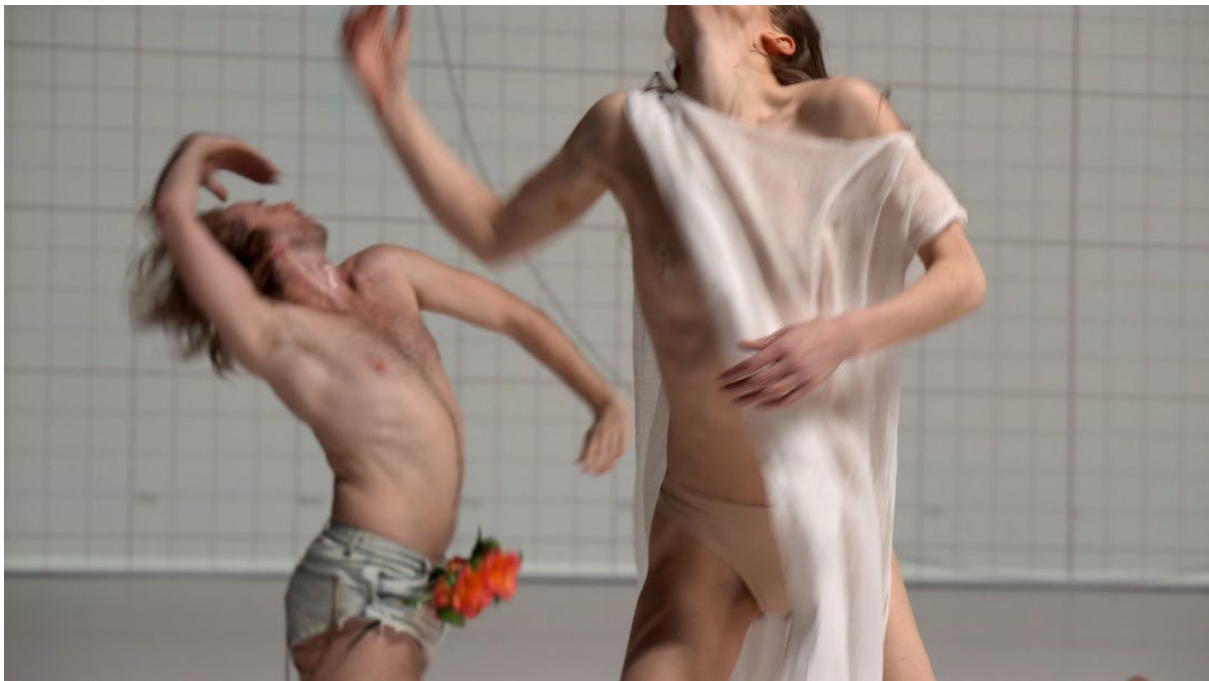
<https://www.xn--69q.world/bestiary>



## VICTORY OVER THE MOON [МИР]

[July 2022, Chunky Move/Next Wave, Melbourne]

<https://www.xn--69q.world/victory-over-the-moon>



**POST REALITY VISION [private parts one to three]**

[2019, Dance Massive Festival, Dancehouse Melbourne] <https://www.xn--69q.world/private-parts>



**105: INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR THE CREATIVELY MALADJUSTED**

[July 2018, Santarcangelo Festival, Italy] <https://www.xn--69q.world/105>

