

When Is Poland's Sasha Waltz Going to Appear?

**Joanna Leśniewska, Ramona Nagabczyńska,  
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**Marta Keil:** Let's outline the area within which we're moving. The Institute of Music and Dance [IMiT], a national institution established largely as a result of efforts and pressure from the dance community in Poland, has existed for seven years. There are public arts institutions involved with dance theatre, such as the Polish Dance Theatre, the Bytom Dance and Movement Theatre ROZBARK, the Dance Theatre in Kielce and the Lublin Dance Theatre, functioning within the Centre for Culture in Lublin. The field of so-called new dance and contemporary choreography are dominated by private initiatives and organizations, such as the programme *Stary Browar Nowy Taniec* [Old Brewery New Dance], implemented for thirteen years by the Art Stations Foundation in Poznań, and the Center in Motion in Warsaw, an independent private initiative of young choreographers, and the Burdag Foundation, which is a non-governmental organization. There are programmes and projects supporting the development of contemporary choreography: 'Zamówienia choreograficzne' ['Choreographic Commissions'] is implemented by the Institute of Music and Dance, while residence programmes and projects are developed within various institutions and festivals including *Komuna// Warszawa*, *Maat* and the Theatre Confrontations Festival in Lublin, *Nowy Theatre* in Warsaw.

But these initiatives are dispersed and ephemeral. How is it possible that in Poland, so proud of its public financing for the arts, there are so few public institutions statutorily supporting the development of contemporary choreography? Why is choreography still scattered among various organizations and private initiatives, and remaining invisible to the large part of society?

**Joanna Leńnierowska:** I'm fascinated by the silence that's followed your question. I'm surprised, because as a matter of fact we've been asking ourselves this question over and over again for the past twenty years... And after all these years of searching for an answer, it seems that we're still helplessly trying to rationalize this apparently unsolvable problem, though generations of dance artists have been struggling with it and by now the political context in the ministry of culture has changed many times. And still nothing.

In my opinion, the reasons behind the lack of a strong national institution implementing a long-term strategy for the development of dance and choreography – though this may be a task for two institutions – are much deeper than it would seem. Possibly, they are also much simpler...

The situation is the following, I believe. Dance has never been treated seriously in Poland. After all, venues are built for things which are considered important, which should be protected and exist in comfortable conditions... However, in Poland dance has never been officially recognized as an important art form. Many reasons are historical. The years of Communism stalled the development of dance and choreography, and there was no chance of creating its accompanying discourse. In some sense, the iron curtain blocked an entire area of thinking, which was de facto the foundation for everything that happened in the arts of post-war Europe. Besides, I'm under the impression that in Poland there is a tradition of recognizing as important only those arts which along with creating artistic qualities are also perceived in the context of their other objectives, for instance social or political. This is a persistent Romantic tradition of understanding art as an instrument of national struggle and perceiving artists as messiahs, saviours, wise men, advocates, judges of right and wrong, often also as instructor-educators of society...

The idea of dance as political art was born in the West only in the 1960s, which is exactly the time when we had no access to these ideas. Now we've come full circle.

**Ramona Nagabczyńska:** It seems to me that this situation also results from the way of thinking in which dance is a sub-field of theatre or music, rather than an art form in its own right.

**JL:** Exactly! And the process of contemporary dance becoming an autonomous form didn't happen all at once. Until the 1960s, nobody treated such proposals seriously. The style and language of dance changed, but not the form of its presentation: it was still a form of ballet, if slightly modernized. The real revolution happened in the 1960s with the counter-avant-garde and post-modern movements. That was when choreography in its current meaning was born.

These movements, however, bypassed Poland on a wide curve. They were, nevertheless, more or less consciously absorbed by alternative theatres and so called theatres of movement, whose political – and therefore significant and important for society! – nature is undeniable, an element of their identity, in fact their *raison d'être*, as was best demonstrated with the fall of Communism and the sudden breakdown of alternative theatre. In the meantime, the line of thought accompanying the development of dance in Poland, the country which in the inter-war period was one of the most important and the most dynamically developing centres of expressionist dance in Europe, was severed.

To date there's no particular name or description for a perspective connecting that inter-war period development of dance in Poland and what happens here today. Perhaps the activities of artists creating alternative theatre and censorship – which fosters the tendency to turn from words and communicate through body or image – became in some sense a substitute for revolution in choreography, which hadn't had the chance to happen in Poland officially, at the levels both of infrastructure and of artistic quality. One thing's certain: the disastrous situation of contemporary dance in Poland is a much more complicated problem than ill will on the part of some official.

**Mateusz Szymanówka [MSz]:** These same reasons are, of course,

behind the fact that the debate on new models of collaboration in performing arts and on bringing closer theory and practice, which in the last two decades of the twentieth century redefined the way of thinking about the shape and role of Western institutions such as interdisciplinary art centres, for example.

**JL:** What happened in Western culture in the 1960s and 1970s is also strongly connected to the development of feminist thought. In Poland, however, there's a serious problem at a much earlier stage: we've never even appropriated then worked in the arts the thought and language of Freud. So the neglect of thinking and creating the discourse reaches back much further than the 1960s.

We should remember that in the 1960s, choreographers we now regard as authoritative worked in a completely unrecognized niche, mentioned in one weekly newspaper [the *Village Voice*] by their colleagues. In fact, we learnt these phenomena mostly because of the 1990s, thanks to several texts left by the post-modern creators and to the book by Sally Banes [*Terpsichore in Sneakers: Post-Modern Dance*, Wesleyan University Press, Middletown 2011] written over twenty years after the actual revolution and translated into Polish only three years ago.... And thanks most of all to those artists-choreographers from the 1990s who decided to revive the activities of Judson Church and discover their own heritage, while conferring cult status on those post-modern creators in their lifetimes! This contributed at least indirectly to their returns to dance. Especially Yvonne Rainer and her great return, encouraged on one hand by [Mikhail] Baryshnikov's *Pastforward* project and on the other by the fact that Xavier Le Roy began to reconstruct her works – for example, *Continous Project Altered Daily*. And the 'resurrection' of Steve Paxton as choreographer – earlier he'd been functioning mainly as a guru in contact-improv circles.

I believe we can't move forward without doing our missing dance-history homework, both our own and European and in general, from the entire post-war Western philosophy, social thought and art theory. As you can see, these homework assignments have piled up, and we can't let ourselves avoid them.

**MSz:** That's why in Poland we still have to discuss whether something is dance or not, though it would seem that discussion would be a thing of the past already.

**MK:** The same goes for the recurring question 'Is there any choreography here at all?'

**JL:** And 'What is dance?'. Many of us find it pointless having such discussion today; we feel it's not getting us anywhere. It turns out, however, that this can't be achieved using short cuts.

**Maria Stokłosa [MS]:** It crossed my mind that a feminist perspective could be very helpful here. There are books in Poland by Agnieszka Graff [*Świat bez kobiet*, Magma] and Magdalena Środa [*Kobiety i władza*] which systematize thought related to women's participation in public life, showing the invisibility of women in politics after 1989. They outline a wide perspective of relations between women, power and the

church in Poland, and demonstrate how their language was appropriated, for example in the abortion debate.

I think introducing such perspectives into dance could explain a great deal. I'd be interested in the analysis of the position of dance in relation to theatre, as well as reflections on whether the former was marginalized by the absence of words and narratives used for telling stories about phenomena deemed important – or perhaps by the body itself, which is politically and morally uncertain, and traditionally associated with emotions and 'female' sensitivity. Is dance the woman of Polish culture? In the context of patriarchy in theatre and in our country, such a perspective could explain a lot.

**RN:** I'd disagree with that, because much has changed in terms of the presence and visibility of women in theatre. I think by now this motif has been worked through in theatre.

**MS:** Yes, but that's still a new situation and has only lasted for the past ten years.

**MK:** How many female managing directors of theatres or of theatre institutions do we have now? I know that the number of production directors is increasing, but that's a recent situation, in our generation.

**RN:** It's true that there are few female managing directors, but the leading young directors are women.

**JL:** Who are allowed by men to work in those institutions.

**MK:** While listening to you, it crossed my mind that the situation of invisibility or lack of voice in the public debate that you describe concerns everything in Polish performing arts that doesn't belong to institutional repertory theatre. Note that the missed homework Joanna was talking about also concerns the so-called independent theatre: work models which differ from the repertory model and don't follow the Romantic myth of visionary artist leading his company, sometimes in an authoritarian way, as was the case with Jerzy Grotowski and Tadeusz Kantor, to name the most emblematic examples.

The dominant institutional model for performing arts in Poland is a repertory theatre, usually drama, usually managed by men – an institution with a clearly identified hierarchy and strictly defined structure. Independent, collective models attempting to introduce horizontal methods of work remain at the underfunded, precarious margins, rarely treated seriously.

**JL:** Yesterday, during the Polish Dance Platform [the 2017 showcase was organized in early April 2017 by IMiT in Bytom], Mira Todorova, a dance researcher and curator from Sofia, Bulgaria, asked me how it was possible that Polish dance, with the obvious shortage of infrastructure, managed in her opinion to maintain such high quality. We'd been discussing the financial and infrastructural base; she was very surprised to hear that in Poland artistic projects of major public institutions and non-governmental organizations are both financed by one programme. She asked how in these circumstances we even managed to develop.

I responded without hesitating that it's only because of our determination and the effort of the community: several generations of non-institutional artists who've invested their own resources and creative powers, who keep supporting this unprofitable dancing business. Ramona is right when she says that the lack of a suitable infrastructure and financing system is killing choreography. But again, this is only a consequence of a wider problem. The question I ask myself more and more often is whether we're also partially responsible for this situation.

For several decades, we've been unable to convince the decision-makers as well as the wider audience – we couldn't effectively communicate the significance of the art of choreography. We're unable to generate a social need to experience dance and choreography, thereby creating mechanisms of persuasion or pressure on politicians responsible for culture. Hence the problem with recognizing choreography as a significant form of art.

Let me repeat one more time: we have to abandon false hope for patronage from a state genuinely interested in the arts. Those institutions are created for phenomena regarded for some reason as useful. Useful for the authorities.

**MK:** Which is obvious from the history of arts institutions, given the example of the National Theatre, created to support and reinforce a particular way of understanding the nation.

**JL:** Worse still, dance projects I personally recognize as the most valuable – namely these which undertake critical work – aren't favourites of any political authority. Choreographic practice is often founded on the critical gaze, distrustful of any existing hierarchy: on exposing hypocrisy in political systems based on exclusion. Choreography promotes an open, horizontal way of thinking, creating and distributing alternatives to those founded on and established by tradition.

**RN:** This results partly from the fact that in Polish theatre, the Romantic myth remains prevalent of a genius artist who directs everyone's ways of thinking and acting.

**MS:** Yes, and this way of thinking's reflected in another recurring question: 'When's Poland's Sasha Waltz going to appear?'

**RN:** Even the Nowy Theatre in Warsaw is an example of this tendency. It was established because an outstanding director, Krzysztof Warlikowski, wanted to have a place for his team. I think that something like that is expected from dance: the appearance of great authorities, geniuses. But our work models are completely different.

**JL:** Note that Romantic models we keep referring to are profoundly male models. As if we've had it imprinted deeply in our mental DNA that only men have the abilities and the right to perform that function of 'artistic advocate for the people'.

**MS:** There's also the additional problem of the body, or rather of blocking the body in Catholic culture. The body is expected to function only in certain forms here, and everything related to the body is subject

to tightened control. Sex, and women's agency in their own sexuality, not only in terms of defining boundaries but also in the number of their male or female partners. Along with homosexuality, this is still a taboo in Poland. The sexual revolution has been conducted in a weird way here: to the point necessary to include women in the labour market but without allowing their agency, freedom or voice. Catholicism has always reinforced gender inequality and heteronormativity.

**MSz:** This issue is well illustrated by the discussion unleashed in the press and on the Internet after the recent performance of Karol Tymiński's *This Is a Musical* during the Polish Dance Platform programme. This production, radically affirming queer desire, has revealed the fact that in Poland the only acceptable representations of sexuality are normative and the entire debate about morality in theatre is in fact shot through with homophobia and misogyny.

**RN:** But it seems to me that transgression was caused by the fact that a man [Tymiński] was present on stage. Presenting a half-naked woman's body isn't a transgression. So long as the woman isn't dancing, not presenting her body through dance in an intentionally erotic and aestheticized way, in which case presenting the body may turn out to be forbidden. The problem arises when a woman presents a different narrative of her body than the one written for the heterosexual male gaze.

**MS:** But isn't it true that a woman can't even offend that system? Whatever she does, she still remains so invisible she can't even reach the point of transgression. If a woman was on that stage, perhaps the performance wouldn't even be reviewed the next day, as happened with Tymiński's production. It's in some ways terrifying that we don't even have that degree of agency.

**MK:** Some time ago, Ramona posted a status note on Facebook in which she pointed out the invisibility of dance in the debate about arts institutions in Poland. There's no doubt today that choreography is one of the fascinating and rapidly developing arts. And the vast majority of Polish repertory theatres remain utterly impregnable to these phenomena.

I think this problem can't be solved by the increasingly common practice of engaging choreographers to design 'stage movement' for theatre productions. That situation's especially evident today as a result of government actions through which the repertory theatres most open to experiment are disappearing: Wrocław, Kalisz, Bydgoszcz. Ramona wrote:

It's awful, what happened at the Polski Theatre in Wrocław. What's going on at the Polski Theatre in Bydgoszcz and at the Bogusławski Theatre in Kalisz is also awful. It's awful that we've lost the places which produced and showed bold theatre. At the same time, there's something more that's equally awful. The fact that your colleagues, choreographers and dancers, have no institutions of their own. We have no place to create, produce or regularly perform (there's the Studio Dance Stage at Studio Theatre, which does a great job, but you can show a particular production only once there). We often produce performances for 5,000 złoty [about 1,200 euro], we invest our own financial

resources to produce them and after two evenings they're gone forever. [...] We may perform at a showcase next to [director] Michał Borczuch, but we're still expected to produce our performances for next to nothing. More and more often, gifted young choreographers collaborate with gifted young directors and that collaboration results in really great, fresh productions. We're noticed in theatre circles, but somehow this doesn't translate to our working conditions. [...] They say that the situation in theatre is so bad that it couldn't be worse. Well, it can be worse. It can be much worse. It can be like it is in dance.

Ramona, what prompted you to post this message?

**RN:** I work in theatre and often hear that the situation in theatre is the worst. And, of course, it's not good that institutions are being changed against the artists' will, but it struck me that in those discussions about institutions, dance is completely absent. The level of engagement among dance people in defending theatre is disproportionately higher than the engagement among theatre people in the struggle for creating acceptable working conditions for people associated with dance. I'm not holding this against them, they aren't directly concerned with dance issues. They have their own issues. However, I do believe that the fact that choreographers penetrate deep into theatre structures should result in mutual solidarity, and that engaging in the discussion about structural support for dance could become a first step in this direction.

**JL:** It crossed my mind that we've reached a stalemate here: everyone knows the situation of dance is bad, but no one has any interest in changing this situation. Too much risk is involved: if dance becomes too important, it can become a threat to other disciplines. Those young directors apparently realized what interesting ideas and solutions you're contributing, which from my point of view demonstrates which area of performing arts is currently most interesting.

On the other hand, I'm afraid theatre people don't genuinely care that you have your own voice as independent artists in the field, as that would reveal the superficiality of what traditional dramatic theatre has to offer today. Thus, the problem is that everybody agrees with you and they support you but at the same time are outraged by Ramona's post. The war is about where people have something to gain by winning or continuing it, not about where the problem is actually most severe. I'm afraid that to some extent this conflict is unresolvable.

**RN:** I'd say the problem is much deeper. I work in theatre and observe at close range the way the institutional hierarchy is constructed and how it operates. I wonder how it's possible that directors collaborate so closely with choreographers and dancers but won't stand up for them. Perhaps it's because hierarchies and roles determined in institutional theatre are so definite and so rarely questioned. This is clearly visible at the financial level, in frequent and large pay discrepancies between directors and actors.

**MK:** We should also remember that in institutional theatre, an actor is usually employed full-time while directors and other members of the production team work on a project basis.

**RN:** Those discrepancies remain very large. I wonder how everyone just accepts it then go out afterwards for a drink together. It seems to me the mechanism of looking the other way is very strong in theatres.

**JL:** Do you think the situation you describe is part of the struggle to maintain the status quo?

**RN:** Yes, I think it is.

**JL:** I think it's also an element in a mechanism resulting from decades of state support: a kind of learned helplessness. The welfare-state model of which we're so proud has consequences: we're terrified of a situation in which the state of affairs we're used to is disturbed and forces us to take on new activities and responsibilities.

**MK:** In my opinion, you've both tackled a fundamental problem. In my research on institutional criticism in theatre, I keep meeting resistance and reluctance in some parts of that so-called milieu. I keep hearing: what's the point of meddling, it'll only cause problems, it's so boring and self-referential, there really are more important issues. And I face accusations: how can you criticize institutions, how can you critically assess their modes of functioning now when arts institutions are imperiled? On one hand, of course, I believe public arts institutions must be defended – but on the other hand, I'm not convinced they should be defended at any cost and without critical assessment of their functioning.

Defending institutions doesn't consist of copying their methods. We're subjected to blackmail, which seems especially dangerous today, because in such a situation nothing's ever going to change. No matter how wisely we design the programme for an institution, we can't move forward if we don't take a critical look at relations and structures that govern that institution.

**RN:** I'm currently working with Vala [choreographer Tomasz Foltyn], who asked an important question: why do theatre people – and not only them – use public funds so readily, knowing the objectives of cultural policy in our country, then they're surprised that they don't have full creative freedom, that something's imposed on them. Independence of arts institutions is of great value, but in practice it turns out to be utopian.

**MK:** Well, yes, but this situation's actually a bit more complicated. Public funds belong to all of us; they come from taxes. Those aren't private resources belonging to a government. I don't see why we should give up public funds we're all entitled to. Giving up public funds and giving up public institutions would mean surrendering and turning over the field.

**RN:** Yes, I entirely agree with this. But dancers most often look for alternatives, create their own organizational models, because they don't have access to many institutions, while in theatre, there are few propositions for alternative structures. Perhaps this is a good time to think about a model for theatre that's different from repertory theatre. If work results from such organizations will interest a wider audience, perhaps

then they could both influence the shaping of public institutions and cultural policies. I believe the coexistence of independent organizations and public institutions and the opportunity to learn from each other is a healthy situation.

**MK:** One idea that appeared in your post came from Magda Szpecht, a theatre director you're currently working with, who suggested that theatres should open up to dance and employ choreographers and performers. I'm not sure, though, whether that's the best solution. Choreographers and dancers are already been working in theatres but usually collaborating with directors as part of a production team. Though great performances are often produced as a result, theatre benefits from this rather than dance. That situation doesn't increase the visibility of choreography, change the status of that field or increase its autonomy.

**RN:** It seems to me that it's some temporary solution, at least for this situation in which we lack instruments and places to produce our own performances. Theatres in Poland are heavily subsidized. That's exceptional even in comparison with Europe, so I don't see why we'd not take advantage of it.

**JL:** Maybe we should stop this self-propelled factory, maybe we should send the message that if you want good dance productions, you have to start treating us seriously. Because, unfortunately, I've the feeling that all these so-called temporary solutions quickly become permanent. In that case, we'll never get beyond dependence on another artistic circles, we'll never get past relations of gratitude with the theatre community, gratitude for allowing us to set foot in their palaces. We'll never get free of the image of a poor relative, stuck in the position of supplicant.

It seems to me that only radical actions aimed at autonomy make sense now, in full awareness of the price we'll pay for them. Let's look at the Institute of Music and Dance. IMiT was created with the promise that the solution of putting dance and music together would be temporary and that after three years the two institutes would become independent. Today, the prospect of becoming independent seems entirely impossible. Even though the minister for culture hadn't changed: the same minister who established IMiT and made those promises broke them in the next term. And that's that.

But blaming the minister is another sign of passivity, of putting yourself in the victim's position. So it seems we just have to grow up. We're a young art on the Polish landscape. But we turned eighteen long ago. We should abandon our naive belief that someone'll finally notice and appreciate us, and stop being offended by the reality of things being different from that. I believe we have the potential and that over the years we've worked out a set of instruments to change it!

**MSz:** On one hand, I agree with what Joanna said, but on the other, I'd like to be an optimist and believe we're now observing a process in dance of reaching some independence in the programmes of existing institutions, and most of all that we're attracting a new audience who've so far not been very interested in contemporary dance. Maybe we shouldn't give that up. Both theatre and the visual arts have turned their attention

to dance. Over the past two years, it's turned out that works by experimental choreographers, even presented multiple times, can fill the seats in a house, which has undoubtedly encouraged institutions to include dance and choreography in their programmes.

Of course, we still experience a huge gap between budgets for theatre and dance productions, but I think that artists have more and more arguments to gradually change this situation. To date, various places have been mainly interested in presenting dance funded by external grants, such as Scena dla tańca [IMiT's Stage for Dance programme]. Recently, however, some institutions have begun investing their own funds in producing and presenting dance pieces which may encourage other organizations to do the same. It's definitely not about choreographers invited by theatre companies to create performances with their actors, unless those artists are genuinely interested in such cooperation. Dance artists should have the opportunity to come to institutions with their own teams, as has happened with Nowy Theatre in Warsaw.

**MS:** Nowy Theatre is only one example of possible solutions, and an exceptional case. We hope this will last somehow, but we can't be sure.

**RN:** In the case of Nowy Theatre, it's important that dance is presented there as an autonomous art form, rather than an addition to theatre.

**MS:** But let's leave theatre companies for a moment and think about possible other options? In the case of the Center in Motion, I'm certain that'd be enough for us to function as a professional production house, and wouldn't necessarily have to be a new venue, because the produced performances could be shown on various existing stages on a partnership basis. At the moment, there's some regular financial support and two people employed full time, a producer and a tech-support specialist.

**JL:** I'd add one more important thing: we're talking about the Polish Dance Platform showcase, during which we discussed the need for establishing a national dance centre. I have to admit I'm against that initiative, because I think every step towards centralization is harmful. Creating a hierarchical structure in which all institutions depend on one main dance centre seems senseless and anachronistic.

History teaches us that a system of several dance centres stands the chance of functioning well – but only when they're established independently and then decide by free will to collaborate or not, respecting each other's autonomy including programme – that is, artistic – autonomy, once they have basic long-term support enabling them to plan their development and, therefore, the development of the autonomous art of choreography. But if just one place like this were to be established, especially in Warsaw, all the other regional organizations would have a huge survival problem.

**MS:** Therefore I'll fight much harder for institutionalizing the Center in Motion so that it can begin functioning as a stable institution, not an ephemeral or fictional entity, rather than for establishing a new institution at the national level, which would supposedly answer everyone's needs.

**MK:** So we return to the need for minimal but stable financial support which would include many smaller institutions, instead of focusing on one organization centralizing the activities of other institutions.

**JL:** Yes, I'm convinced that it must be the long-term, systemic funding enabling such institutions as Center in Motion or new ones which I hope will emerge, and the strategic planning of long-term projects. There's also need for a network of international production centres which would include Polish artists, so genuinely professional choreographic dance can emerge.

**MK:** In the present moment, it seems difficult to undertake such a process of institutionalization. Yet at the same time, it seems especially favourable: note how many curators, producers and artists functioning at the international level talk about the need for common developments of new solutions which would enable collaboration between us. Methods for co-production or international cooperation, which we've known and have been employing so far, are shrinking rapidly. We need to develop new ones before we're surprised by the lack of any of those options we've known so far.

**MS:** Even more so, it's not at all a good moment to spin a megalomaniacal tale about great national dance institutions. We need an alternative, something entirely different from the nationalistic direction of thinking.

**JL:** Judging from previous experiences, do each of you see any real possibility of [choreographers] intentionally blasting the institution of theatre out from the inside by your regular presence, by creating original works of choreography, by questioning the functioning principles of that institution, its work methods and so forth?

**MK:** Do you mean applying choreography and the struggle for the visibility of this art form as an instrument of institutional critique? In my opinion, it's currently among the important instruments at the disposal of institutional critique.

**RN:** Yes, I think so too. I have the impression that in Magda Szpecht's *Ostatnie zwierzęta* [*Last Animals*], in which I'm involved at the moment, the presence of numerous people associated with dance influences the defining of work relations. I've the feeling that the struggle for our subjectivity, for the opportunity to speak up or express our objections to roles we've had imposed by the institution becomes very important. Let's see if it'll be possible to apply our assumptions in practice.

**MS:** I'm not sure if 'blasting out' is the appropriate term, but every artist or curator who enters an institution definitely also enters into a certain game with it, and it's a space for negotiation. It's worth mentioning that not only artists make these efforts but so do a new generation of curators, especially women curators, who simply know the specificity of work of choreographers and dancers so they become those artists' allies.

It seems to me that in Poland it's already been noticed that contemporary dance activities are based very strongly on cooperation, which is

why these activities don't have to be labelled by individual names. The language used in promoting divisions is gradually changing. Artists and curators are getting more efficient in negotiating pay. These changes are perhaps not spectacular but are nevertheless significant. At the same time, we should notice that in Poland the market hasn't been developed yet. Therefore there are no normative career trajectories as in Berlin and Amsterdam, for example, where you have to receive a small grant to present yourself at a festival for young choreographers then have to rely on a bigger grant for production in a local institution, then later for a much bigger grant to present something at the international level.

Here you don't to make have your proposal to curators through ten assistants, not yet. Our dream shouldn't be to gradually recreate in Poland the Western models focused on individual careers, but to reflect together on how to position our work and our cooperation within institutions, with institutions and outside institutions.

Abstract

**When Is Poland's Sasha Waltz Going to Appear?**

Joanna Leśnierowska, Ramona Nagabczyńska, Maria Stokłosa  
and Mateusz Szymanówka in Conversation with Marta Keil

How is it possible that in Poland, so proud of its public financing for the arts, there are so few public institutions statutorily supporting the development of contemporary choreography? Why is choreography still scattered among various organizations and private initiatives, and remains invisible for the large part of society? Together with Joanna Leśnierowska, dance curator and creator of the programme *Stary Browar Nowy Taniec* [Old Brewery New Dance], choreographers Ramona Nagabczyńska and Maria Stokłosa, and curator and dramatist Mateusz Szymanówka, we try to map the territory of institutional choreography in Poland and to answer the question about the changes necessary for contemporary choreography to gain the status of an autonomous and rightful field in the world of Polish arts. We also discuss the presence of choreographers in Polish theatre institutions and outline the relationships – perhaps surprising for some readers – between the status of contemporary choreography and the development of feminist thought in Poland.