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ANTHROPOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF PLAY IN DANCE PERFORMANCE *DECADANCE* OF THE CROATIAN NATIONAL THEATRE IN ZAGREB

The paper examines elements, types, and characteristics of play in dance performance *Decadance*, premiered on 11 November 2021 at the Croatian National Theatre in Zagreb, choreographed by Ohad Naharin. The first part of the paper presents a theoretical consideration of play as one of the basic existential phenomena, the formal features of play, possible approaches to play, and dance as play. In the second part of the paper, the ways of embodying play in the conceptual structure of the performance are analysed, especially in its choreographic, dramaturgical, and performing segments. It is concluded that the dimensions of play in *Decadance* are multiple and layered. Based on gaga dance language, the choreographic structure embodies diversity, plasticity, and unrestrainedness of movement characteristic of play, and supported by diverse performative and expressive dancers' interactions (with each other and with the audience), it forms sections that are characterized by the usual formal features of play: freedom, temporal and spatial limitation, unpredictability of course and outcome, unproductiveness, subordination to its own rules, a kind of beauty, but also unreality, and tension in terms of testing physical abilities. Dance, vocal, and verbal performance sections are structured in such a way as to include some elements of all types of children's play: physical play, play of pretend, manipulation of sound and words, play with rules, and creative play. Hence, those sections contain almost all characteristics of children's play: magical features; strength; confirmation, reflection or enhancement of identity; imagination; research; frivolity.

Key words: play as an existential phenomenon, formal features of play, dance as play, types of children's play, characteristics of children's play

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1. ANTHROPOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF PLAY

1.1. Play as an Existential Phenomenon

According to Schiller (2006: 89), man only plays when he is in the fullest sense of the word a human being, and he is only fully a human being when he plays. Play is the fifth basic element of human existence—after death, work, ruling, and love—but although it is listed as the last, it is not because it is the least important; on the contrary, play is primordial like other mentioned phenomena (Fink 1984: 292). Play permeates the entire human life and significantly determines its way of being, as well as the way of human understanding of being. It also permeates other basic phenomena of human existence, with which it is inseparably intertwined and connected. It does not have goals it needs to serve; it has its own goals and meaning in itself, and its pleasure lies not only *at* play, but also *in* play, that is, in a strange mixture of reality and unreality. Furthermore, play is characterized by rules; play sets obstacles and limitations for itself, i.e., it is subject to the rules it sets itself. Rules can be removed, or new ones can be made, but as long as play and playing are understood meaningfully, one remains bound by them (ibid. 296–298). In play, man “transcends” himself, goes beyond the limitations he surrounded himself with and “realized himself” in, leaves himself and every fixed situation and dives into the life’s foundation of primordial possibilities; in play, one can always start anew and discard the burden of the history of one’s life (Fink 2000: 263).

Play is most frequently defined as a voluntary action or activity that takes place within temporal and spatial limits, according to voluntarily but unconditionally accepted rules, that has goals in itself, and that is accompanied by feelings of tension and joy, as well as the awareness that it is “something else” than “ordinary life” (Klarin 2002: 14). Although play is commonly considered purpose-less or purpose-free activity, Fink (1979: 15) disagrees; he considers play a comprehensive and purposively determined activity, which in individual steps of the course always has particular purposes that are linked together. But the immanent purpose of play is not, as with purposes in the rest of human activities, projected out toward the highest ultimate purpose; play has only internal purposes. Play is regularly characterized by the aspect of portrayal, by its sense-imbued aspect and constant transformability, which manage to “alleviate life”. Play carries us away from a factual state of affairs, from the confinement in a pressing and oppressing situation, affording us happiness of fantasy in the flight of possibilities, which remain without the agony of actual choice (ibid. 15–23).

In play, the variety and plasticity of one’s own ability to move is discovered and elaborated, but Gehlen (2005: 189) believes that the true character of play should be sought in the realm of imagination and its relieved interests.

Imagination is the true core of play, but, looking deeper, this core is creation, self-indulgence in human “superficial” and relieved interests, which change quite arbitrarily. Adult play shows just that; namely, it rarely succeeds if it does not involve erotic, financial or competitive interests. The point, however, is that these interests may only be shown under the guise of, for example, fantastic and completely “impractical” interests; bouncing balls, the random distribution of multi-coloured cards, and the like, are actually fun or lively parts of play, and cause great interest in objectively quite insignificant cases. That ceremonial part, fantasy or chance mixed with rules, colourful and exciting things, and sometimes special clothes, deeply condition the charm of play, representing the relieved interests that are actually “play”. Ultimately, play is formed by the self-experience of the basic features of the man’s drive structure, which is abundant, plastic, open to the world, and communicative (ibid. 189–191).

1.2. Formal Features of Play and Possible Approaches to Play

Huizinga (1992: 15–17) and Caillois (1979: 34–38) list several important features of play:

- a) freedom—the main feature of play. Play is a voluntary activity, and as such is a source of joy and leisure; if participation in it became mandatory, it would soon cease to be play and become compulsion, i.e., an effort everyone would soon try to become free of. As a mandatory or even only recommended activity, it would lose one of its basic characteristics—that a player surrenders to it wholeheartedly and for his own pleasure.
- b) fictitiousness—play is accompanied by a specific awareness of a kind of secondary reality or of complete unreality in relation to life.
- c) unproductiveness—play does not create any goods, wealth, or any new elements, except for the transfer of ownership within the circle of players, and the outcome of the situation is identical to that at the beginning of play. Namely, the goals that play serves lie beyond the immediate material interest, i.e., the individual satisfaction of life’s needs.
- d) temporal and spatial limitation—play is “played” within certain time and space limits. In play, there is movement, rise and fall, change, certain order, merging, and discernment.
- e) organization and prescriptiveness—play brings certain temporary limited perfection into imperfect world and complicated life, i.e., it requires unconditional order; therefore, even the slightest deviation from order spoils it, takes away its significance and makes it worthless.
- f) tension and uncertainty—the course and outcome of play cannot be predicted because the player is given a certain degree of freedom due

to the need to invent. Tension tests player's abilities—both his spiritual powers and physical strength (endurance, ingenuity, boldness, persistence)—because the player, although he wants to win, must obey the prescribed limits.

- g) beauty—the aesthetic factor of play is perhaps identical to the urge to create an orderly form that play brings to life in all its shapes.
- h) repeatability—once played, play remains in the memory as a spiritual creation or spiritual treasure, it becomes a tradition and can be repeated at any time—it does not matter whether after a long pause or immediately after the end, as in the case of children's play, a game of chess or a match.

Schechner (2013: 93) lists seven possible approaches to play—which are interrelated—emphasizing that this number is not necessarily definitive:

1. Structure—what are the relationships between the events that constitute a play.
2. Process—how are play acts generated and what are their phases of development over time.
3. Experience—what are the feelings and moods of the players and spectators, how do they affect the play, and the like.
4. Function—what are the purposes of the play.
5. Evolutionary, species, and individual development of play—what is the relationship between human play and animal play, what are the differences between child play and adult play, etc.
6. Ideology—what political, social, and personal value the play presents, propagates, criticizes, or undermines.
7. Frame—how do players and spectators know when the play starts, unfolds, and ends.

1.3. Dance as Play

As a symbol of freedom from material limits (Chevalier, Gheerbrant 1994: 514), dance is, of course, (also) play because it frees the body from all social mimicry, from all gravity and conformity (Badiou 2009: 12). The art of dance arose from life itself; it is an activity of the entire human body, but an activity that is transposed into world, into a type of space-time that is no longer equal to that of everyday life (Valéry 2009: 7). As a person, man is his own means (Plessner 1994: 165). Self-immersion, as a personality trait, corresponds to exteriority in relation to physical form, which enables a man to make his body a means of expression (namely, due to the ability of grasping and manipulating, everything can become a means) (ibid. 166–167). A man noticed that he was stronger and more flexible, that his joints and muscles had more capabilities than were necessary to meet the needs of his existence, and he noticed that

some of these movements—by their frequency, sequence or amplitude—created pleasure in him, which goes as far as a kind of drunkenness, pleasure that is sometimes so intense that only the complete exhaustion of his forces, only a kind of ecstasy from exhaustion could end his delirium, or his loss of stimulated driving force (Valéry 2009: 7). A dancing body gives the impression that it ignores everything else, or that it knows nothing about what surrounds it. It seems that it is listening to itself, and that it does not see or hear anything but itself. In that world there is no goal outside of action, there are no things to reach for or push away (ibid. 9–10). Barba (2005: 10) therefore approaches the terms *actor* and *dancer* indiscriminately, considering that the tendency to understand the terms *theatre* and *dance* as different—characteristic of our culture—actually indicates a void without tradition which constantly risks turning the actor towards denial of the body and the dancer towards virtuosity. Trying, ultimately, to answer the question of what expresses the motif of dance as lightness, Badiou (2009: 13) believes that the assertion that it is the absence of weight will not take us far. Lightness should be understood as the capacity of a body to manifest itself as an unconstrained body, or as a body not constrained by itself, i.e., that it is disobedient in relation to its own impulses (ibid.).

In the following, the anthropological aspects of play are questioned—especially through the analysis of its elements, types, and characteristics—in the choreographic, dramaturgical, and performing segments of the dance performance *Decadance* of the Croatian National Theatre in Zagreb.

2. PLAY IN *DECADANCE*

2.1. Gaga as the Language of Play

Dance performance *Decadance* was first performed in 2000 in Tel Aviv, and it premiered in Zagreb on 11 November 2021 at the Croatian National Theatre. The choreography is by Ohad Naharin, the costume design by Rakefet Levy (transmission: Mia Rejc Prajninger), and the lighting design by Avi Yona Bueno (Bambi). As musical selections, the following are included: *Issa Nore* (Maxim Waratt), *Train* (Goldfrapp), *Pictures* (Ohad Fishof and Maxim Waratt), *Stones Start Spinning* (David Darling), *Verlaine: Part I. Un Midi Moins Dix* (John Zorn), *Al Ghariba* (Al Majad), *Guem* (Riacho), *Hava Nagila* (Dick Dale and The Del-Tones), *Illusion of Beauty* (Maxim Waratt), *Echad Mi Yodea* (The Tractor's Revenge), *Favourite Final Geisha Show* (Chari Chari), *Flutter* (Kid 606), *Ambient Trust* (AGF), *Private Birds* (AGF), *Na Tum Jano Na Hum* (Lucky Ali & Ramya), *Meeol* (Seefeel), *Do* (Chronomad), and *You're Welcome* (The Beach Boys). At the premiere, Women were played by Saya Ikegami, Nika Kristina Crnić, Natalia Kosovac, Helena Troha, Mutsumi Matsuhisa, Lada Rora, Rieka Suzuki, Atina

Tanović, Iva Vitić Gameiro, and Valentina Štrok, and Men by Taiguara Goulart, Mario Diligente, Bart Engelen, Drew Jackson, Tomislav Petranović, Bálint Rauscher, Takuya Sumitomo, Yuho Yoshioka, and Vid Vugrinec.

The essence of the conceptual approach to *Decadance* is the thematization of dance as a symbol of freedom from material limits, dance as play, and dance as pleasure. Namely, the choreography is based on gaga—a specific dance language whose developer is Ohad Naharin and which is characterized by the above-mentioned features. The first letter of the gaga alphabet is the so-called floating, which does not ignore the existence of material limits, i.e., gravity. However, instead of the body surrendering to gravity and adhering to the weight, it uses gravity as a source of energy and even for lifting limbs (Katan-Schmid 2018, according to *Wikipedia*). Naharin explains it as feeling the weight of body parts, but whose form is not shaped by gravity. In addition, floating aims to enable constant awareness and activity in which dancers are never completely free, even when doing nothing, remaining “available” for movement. Also, although gaga often involves more demanding activities, such as running, the emphasis is always on pleasure so that the muscle-burning effort could be considered healthy (*ibid.*).

However, the gaga philosophy has, first of all, essential similarities with play, and children’s play at that. According to Stevanović (2003: 126), playing with body—through movement, motion, and dance—is the authentic expression of children; children communicate with the real world around them, as well as with an imaginary world they carry inside them, through spinning, gesturing, jumping, throwing, and catching objects. Unlike most dance practices, everyone can participate in the gaga—just like in play—because the universality of human experience transcends aesthetic, political, and cultural specificities (Quinlan 2016: 23). Along these lines, gaga classes are held in mirrorless rooms, which is considered a key component of the work, given that the lack of reflective surfaces allows dancers to be present in the moment, without self-judgment about how their movements look; instead, the emphasis is on the feeling and experience of movement. The choice of music is also very flexible, ranging from ambient music to techno rhythms. Silence is often used as a soundscape, which is occasionally interrupted by instructions on the use of voice or embodied rhythms, such as tapping on the body or stomping with feet. The dress code is also very relaxed, as is the overall atmosphere. Gaga allows enjoyment in the grotesque and the strange; beauty is not uniquely defined nor is it directly linked to any specific aesthetic theory. Dancers are encouraged to get in touch with their own humour, sensuality, pleasure, passion, anger, and the like. Educators tend to have an encouraging and positive approach, which creates a pleasant feeling of freedom for students to explore their own improvisations as a stimulus for movement. Sometimes educators literally instruct students to “get weird”. Gaga is generally based on suggestions rather than strict instructions, so it is easy for students to

ignore pedagogical suggestions or not take them seriously, which is why they sometimes leave the class without having acquired new skills. The structure of classes varies depending on educators' concept, and the only obligation is to start with the research of the previously mentioned floating, which educators insist on in order not to allow gravity to define dancers' movement, where the emphasis is on the stillness of a moment, with very little movement, but high-level sensory awareness. The class often ends with a burst of energy, that is, students are asked to move as energetically as possible (ibid. 26–30). It is noticeable that Naharin's approach to dance corresponds in basic contours with that of Johann Kresnik (in Kolb 2011: 82, 84), who also does not insist on a specific form of movement or steps but on images, and who allows freedom and de-hierarchization within the ensemble, evident, among other things, in the dancers' ability to choose the type of training, respecting everyone's opinion, and the absence of age limits (the oldest dancer in his troupe was 67 years old).

The conceptual flexibility of a gaga class is also noticeable in the loose conceptual structure of *Decadance*. Namely, the performance consists of a set of several sub-units, which are not connected to each other either choreographically, dramaturgically or musically. Points are without clear links between dance, singing, and verbal parts, as well as without clear reasons for certain choreographic and dramaturgical choices (for example, laughing for no known reason or showing bare buttocks and lifting shirts to show side parts of the stomach). The choreographic segment is in general represented relatively poorly—taking into account that it is a dance performance—and without a pronounced aspiration to please the audience, to impress them or give them pleasure. The choreography is designed almost as a guided improvisation, with rare unison sections in the formational aspect (for example, the pyramidal, semicircular or rectilinear structure of the ensemble) or the performance aspect (for example, choreographically and vocally homogenous performance of the song *Echad Mi Yodea*). In the musical segment, however, the stylistically and rhythmically diverse selections do not point to a specific guideline, just like in the costume design. Dancers change their clothes several times—into shirts and pants, suits, and underwear—but without an obvious reason why.

2.2. Typology of Play in *Decadance*

The very opening of the performance aims to hint at its confrontation with conventional theatrical frameworks; it therefore does not have a formal beginning in the form of the raising of curtain, but begins with the arrival of the dancer Natalia Kosovac, who sits cross-legged in the dark for a few moments. Only then is the stage illuminated and other performers come, but before the performance begins, Tomislav Petranović comes on stage and—instead of the stage manager—asks through the loudspeaker the audience to turn off their

mobile phones. The ending of the performance is also not conventional; it is only referred to by the name of the last musical number *You're Welcome* and the choreography at the end of which the dancers leave the stage one by one, until finally it remains empty and darkened. The dancers are not, therefore, stopped in any movement, pose or formation until the curtain is lowered as an indicator of completion, as is generally the case.

What takes place in the meantime corresponds to a large extent to the more recent classification of children's play, presented in a similar way by several contemporary authors, and summarised by Klarin (2017: 17):

1. Physical play—consists of physical, exploratory, manipulative, and constructive games.
2. Play of pretend—consists of pretend games, dramatic games, role-playing, fantasy games, initial writing and arithmetic, and sociodrama games.
3. Language—refers to games that include sound and words, or spontaneous manipulation of sound and words in the form of rhythm and repetitive actions; this group of games also refers to humorous and entertaining stories.
4. Play with rules—here again language plays a significant role (for example, through agreement, negotiation, self-control).
5. Creative play—includes games in which children use their body and different materials to do something, express their feelings, ideas, and thoughts; they mostly enjoy dancing, drawing, modelling clay, and dough.

Physical and creative play in *Decadance* is evident in the choreography itself, which does not only consist of dance elements, but also gymnastic ones—for example, *cartwheel*; then sports elements—for example, running; and elements that cannot be classified as performing at all—for example, posing. The choice of choreographic elements, combinations, and formations is generally more like improvisation or dance exercises chosen by the dancers than a consistent choreographic structure.

Play of pretend is evident in a shorter male-female duet, which choreographically differs from the rest of the performance, and which, through its different nuances, presents an almost idealized image of love relationship, consisting exclusively of love, joy, laughter, and lightness. In this way, play is presented, or confirmed, as an activity with primordial emotional and active orientation to the meaning of human activity, as Elkonin (1978: 283) points out, whereby the awareness of one's own limited place in the system of adult relations and the need to be an adult is observed.

In the performance, language is present in the vocal type of play, namely singing in an open circle, row or column, for which Mendeš, Marić and Goran (2020: 111) cite linear performance and movement in a row, i.e., a sequence,

as the main characteristic, whereby no one has been assigned the lead role. Dancers, standing in a semicircle with chairs in front of them as props, dressed in identical black suits and white shirts—which they gradually take off during the performance—sing and dance to the song *Echad Mi Yodea*. It is a traditional Israeli song, versions of which exist in Hebrew, Arabic, Yiddish, and other languages, and which is sung on Passover, and it enumerates common Jewish motifs and teachings, trying to convey traditional religious teachings to children in a fun and humorous way (*Wikipedia*). Considering that it is adapted to the youngest age group, in the structural, rhythmic and melodic aspect, the song in question has some elements of a nursery rhyme. The first verse reads: “Who knows one? I know one. One is our God, in heaven and on earth.” The second verse reads: “Who knows two? I know two. Two are the tablets of the covenant.” The third verse reads: “Who knows three? I know three. Three are the Fathers”. And so on, until number 13 (*ibid.*).

Regarding play with rules, Stevanović (2003: 122) points out that it mainly includes motor schemes of human behaviour (for example, games of balance, jumping, and skipping), then active schemes, general patterns of interaction and communication (for example, games of hide and seek), and general patterns of speech behaviour (for example, questions and dialogue games). There are three types of play with rules: those in which the rules are created during the play, those in which traditional rules are already present, and those that have newly formed rules in order to learn something (*ibid.*). In *Decadance*, two of its segments correspond to play with rules: the first is related to the interaction between dancers and the audience through questions, that is, the dialogue game, and the second to the interaction between dancers themselves through a combination of dance solos and monologues. However, play in both segments gives the impression that the rules are already known, even if only to dancers.

The introduction to the first such play is again performed by Petranović, who rather theatrically “forces” the audience to stand up, because if they do not stand up, the show will not be able to continue. After that, Petranović asks the audience a series of bizarre questions (giving “permission” to sit down only to those who know how to answer them), which most often have no purpose other than to make the audience laugh a little; however, dancers give the impression that they know the purpose of play. Therefore, the “permission” to sit down can be obtained by those who can show where the north is; those who came to the show by bicycle; those who have never been abroad; those who have great-grandchildren; those who do not like their work; those whose birthday is that day; etc. Only with the question about masturbation, Petranović does not wait for the audience to answer, but says: “And that is okay.”

The second segment of the performance also corresponds to play with rules, as well as ritual play. According to Garvey (1991: 111), rituals can be based on a wide variety of factors: movement, object of play, language, social

conventions, and even play with rules can be performed in a ritualized manner. What defines ritual is not its content or the factor that structures it as such, but controlled repetition; it is generally rhythmic, and the behaviour of participants takes place in the predictable regularity of tempo. Some rituals may combine language and movement (ibid. 111, 119), as is the case with this performance. Namely, the dancers—standing in two opposite, straight lines, perpendicular to the rows of seats on the ground floor—come out of their lines one by one and perform a short solo, with which they present the full range of diversity and plasticity of their own ability to move through the maximum flexibility of spine and limbs. At the same time, they introduce themselves via loudspeaker with a separate biographical note, mostly irrelevant to the audience. Most of the notes, however, are characterized by children’s perspective, given that the content of most of the biographical information is related to parental figures and events or habits from childhood. For example, one female dancer told how at the age of four she shaved her left eyebrow with a razor because she thought the razor was a comb, and even today that eyebrow seems thinner than the other one. Another shared with the audience that no one calls her by her name, but by her numerous nicknames: Tana, Kike, Čobanac, Starica, Ljubica, and others. The third confided that, when she dies, she would like to be cremated, and her ashes distributed to her family and friends. The fourth said that she often loses things, but they often come back to her, and in this way she somehow returns to herself. The fifth shared that her parents would very much like her to get married, after which she shared her email address with the audience. One male dancer, on the other hand, shared the information with the audience that his father was an alcoholic, and he himself does not go on stage without drinking an alcoholic beverage. Another said that he expresses himself verbally rather poorly. The third said that as a child he had an accident in which he broke his leg, after which ballet was recommended as a form of rehabilitation, and that is why he became a ballet dancer. The fourth said that his parents were gymnasts. The fifth said that when he was little, his mother cut his nails and kept them in a box, and he continued this tradition as an adult, keeping them in a yellow box. Such verbalized dance interaction for the audience is mostly empty in terms of content and meaning, but it seems to leave a completely opposite impression on dancers, proving once again the thesis of Garvey (1991: 122) that ritual is first and foremost play because it has all descriptive characteristics of play settings. Like play, ritual is pleasurable; the purpose of a performance is in itself, and not in some task—for example, exchanging information or resolving misunderstandings; it is quite spontaneous and involves partners in equally precise performances; it is characterized by repetition and highly controlled rhythmic performance (ibid.). It is also worth noting that the concept of *Decadance*, in which singing, ritual, physicality that is occasionally taken to extremes, and occasional uncomfortable questions addressed to the audience

play a prominent role, corresponds with the specific aesthetics of *Living Theatre*, as presented by Rabkin (1984: 17–18). There are also certain points of contact with Peter Schumann's *Bread and Puppet Theater*, which resists social hierarchy and reaches into the past for artistic movements in dance, as well as for ritual theatre and masked performance (Hutton 2019).

In conclusion, all of the above confirms that *Decadance* contains almost all characteristics of children's play, as observed by Sutton-Smith (1997, according to Klarin 2017: 6–7):

1. Play as fate—play is one aspect of fate, it has the characteristics of magic, which is evident in *Decadance* primarily through choreographic elements of *gaga* that defy gravity.
2. Play as strength—means play as a representation of conflict, most often in the context of sports, which is represented in *Decadance* by inserting gymnastic elements into the choreographic structure.
3. Play as identity—play has the role of confirming, reflecting or enhancing identity, which is present in *Decadance* through the introduction of dancers to the audience with the presentation of biographical sketches over loudspeaker, during which they perform their solos, adapted to their own strongest performing sides.
4. Play as imagination—play is most often improvisation that leads to flexibility and creativity, which in *Decadance* manifests itself primarily in the choice of choreographic structure, which resembles more to flexibly directed improvisation than to choreographer's strictly set defaults.
5. Play as self-exploration—play is challenging, it is filled with risky activities, and it implies research; whether play is mental, physical or something else, it is a kind of "test". In *Decadance*, this is evident through the selection of complex dance elements with which the performers test their limits of flexibility, endurance, coordination, speed, and expressiveness—in accordance with the basic postulates of *gaga* (*Gaga*)—especially in solos and performance of the song *Echad Mi Yodea*.
6. Play as frivolity—indicates that play is free, optional, it is anti-work, foolish, and ironic, which is shown in *Decadance* in the sudden laughter of dancers for which the audience does not see a reason, then in the removal of underwear, for which there is also no dramaturgical basis, as well as for a kind of posing where the movement of hips or showing of stomach are emphasized as a contextually completely irrelevant parts of the body.

Conclusion

Anthropological aspects of play in dance performance *Decadance* are multiple and layered. The choreographic structure is based on gaga dance language, which is based on the one hand on defying gravity, and on the other hand on dancer's satisfaction (not technical sophistication, as with most other dance techniques); which on a symbolic level corresponds to the understanding of play as an activity in which a person "transcends" himself, and on a literal level to the purposefulness of play, which is based on the joy *at* play, but also the joy *in* play. This impression is reinforced by the choreographer's choice of performers' bodies as almost the only means of expression, whereby their approach to the ludic dimensions of stage events is a combination of adult approach and children's approach. The adult approach is evident more in the form than in the content; namely, it does not include erotic, financial or competitive interests in the presented play, but organization and thoughtfulness in terms of program, form, and performance.

The realization of these plans mostly corresponds to the understanding of play from children's perspective, so the ludic segments of the performance combine the elements of all kinds of children's play. Physical and creative play is evident in the choreography itself, which, in addition to dance elements, also includes gymnastic, sports, and static elements. Play of pretend is present in a shorter male-female, idealized love duet. Play in which language is the dominant means of expression is represented in the vocal-dance performance of the song *Echad Mi Yodea*, which is intended for children age due to both content and form. Play with rules corresponds to two segments of *Decadance*: the first is related to the interaction between dancers and the audience, where the role of the audience is to answer a series of bizarre questions, and the second to the interaction among dancers themselves, who according to a precisely determined order perform their solos dominated by emphasized diversity and plasticity of movement, while at the same time they introduce themselves through loudspeaker with biographical notes of very narrow and specific informativeness.

The above-mentioned types of play in the performance have most of the formal features of play as an activity: they leave the impression of free choices (to the point that they are meaningfully almost hermetic for the external circle of recipients); they are temporally and spatially determined; they have an unpredictable course and outcome; they are unproductive; they are framed by their own rules; in terms of content, design, and goal they are quite far from reality; in some places the symmetrical configurations of dancers correspond to the classic definition of beauty; and they are tense, that is, uncertain when it comes to testing their physical abilities. However, most characteristics of children's play are also present in the ludic sections of the performance. Play as

a separate aspect of fate, which also has magical characteristics, can be seen in the choreographic elements that defy gravity; play as strength is evident in the demanding dance elements and some gymnastic elements; play as an activity of confirming, reflecting or enhancing identity is presented through dance and verbal presentation of dancers to the audience; play as imagination, which inevitably involves improvisation, is manifested in the choreographic structure that resembles more to slightly directed improvisation than to strictly given structure; play as research and a kind of “test” is evident in the segments in which dancers test their limits of flexibility, endurance, speed, and expressiveness; play as a frivolous activity is presented in sudden and reasonless laughter of dancers and in unclear reasons for exposing the buttocks and stomach.

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**ANTROPOLOŠKI ASPEKTI IGRE U PLESNOJ PREDSTAVI *DEKADENS (DECADANCE)*
HRVATSKOG NARODNOG KAZALIŠTA U ZAGREBU**

S u m m a r y

U radu se istražuju elementi, vrste i obeležja igre u plesnoj predstavi *Dekadens (Decadance)* koja je, prema koreografiji Ohada Naharina, premijerno izvedena 11. novembra 2021. u Hrvatskom narodnom kazalištu u Zagrebu. Došli smo do zaključka da su dimenzije igre u toj predstavi zastupljene višestruko i slojevito. Koreografska struktura bazirana je na plesnom jeziku gaga, čije suštinske postavke – testiranje plesачkih limita savitljivosti, izdržljivosti, koordinacije i brzine – korespondiraju s fizičkim aspektima igre. Potpomognute izvođačko-ekspresivnim raznovrsnim plesnim interakcijama (međusobno i sa publikom), plesne, vokalne i verbalne deonice predstave odlikuju uobičajena formalna obeležja igre: sloboda, vremenska i prostorna ograničenost, nepredvidljivost toka i ishoda, neproduktivnost, podređenost vlastitim pravilima, svojevrсна lepota, ali i irealnost, te napetost na planu iskušavanja telesnih sposobnosti.

Ludičke dimenzije scenskih zbivanja, uopšteno rečeno, kombinacija su odraslog i dečjeg pristupa igri. Odrastao pristup ponajviše je vidljiv iz forme, odnosno iz organizacije i promišljenosti na programskom, strukturalnom i izvođačkom planu. Realizacija tih planova uglavnom, pak, odgovara poimanju igre iz dečje perspektive, objedinjujući elemente svih vrsta dečjih igara: fizičkih igara, igara pretvaranja, manipulaciju zvukom i rečima, igara s pravilima i kreativnih igara. Na tragu toga, spomenute deonice sadrže i gotovo sve karakteristike dečje igre: magijske specifičnosti; snagu; potvrđivanje, odražavanje ili unapređivanje identiteta; imaginaciju; istraživanje; neozbiljnost.

Ključne reči: igra kao egzistencijalni fenomen, formalna obeležja igre, ples kao igra, vrste dečje igre, obeležja dečje igre