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## INTERNATIONAL PROJECTS OF UKRAINIAN CONTEMPORARY DANCE GROUPS 2010-2017

**Oleksandr Manshylin,**

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6025-9626>

Lecturer,

Kyiv National University of Culture and Arts,

Kyiv, Ukraine,

[manshylin@gmail.com](mailto:manshylin@gmail.com)

**The purpose of the research** is to trace on the material of several successful examples how the processes of unilateral influence of contemporary Western dance on Ukrainian are gradually transformed into bilateral cooperation. **Methodology:** historical-chronological method, comparative analysis, critical analysis. **Scientific novelty:** the art history research on tracing the participation/initiation of Ukrainian dancers in international projects is carrying out for the first time. **Conclusions.** The period of borrowing as an inevitable stage of the process in relations Western/Ukrainian contemporary dance ended. The transition from this stage to the next consisted in a great work on the study of movement and dance techniques, composition methods and other methodological aspects of choreography developed during the history of contemporary dance. To date, the unconscious borrowing can only indicate the creative inconsistency of one or another choreographer. By the current moment, the leaders of the Ukrainian contemporary dance, among which are Larisa Venediktova, Ruslan Baranov, Olga Kebas, Danil Bielkin, Anton Ovchinnikov, Krystyna Shyshkariova and others have gained sufficient prestige on the international art market. During the observed period, not only the relations with dance communities of Russia and Belarus were prolonged, but the new strong relations with dancers from Poland, Lithuania, Germany, Spain, Estonia, Norway, France, Great Britain, and the USA were established. It should be noted that partnerships with Western dance evolved in conditions of unequal financial participation in joint projects. In the absence of investments from Ukrainian side, Ukrainian dancers have acquired the skills to attract foreign investments to the works implemented both in Ukraine and abroad. As a result, with the first positive changes in the area of cultural policy (as shown by the first experience of the Ukrainian Cultural Foundation in 2018), the community of Ukrainian contemporary dance proved to be prepared for the implementation of high-level projects within a very modest funding.

**Key words:** *choreography; contemporary dance in Ukraine; international project; dance festival.*

**МІЖНАРОДНІ ПРОЕКТИ  
ЗА УЧАСТЮ ПРЕДСТАВНИКІВ  
СУЧАСНОГО ТАНЦЮ УКРАЇНИ  
2010-2017 РОКІВ**

**Маншилін Олександр Олександрович,**  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6025-9626>  
викладач,  
Київський національний університет  
культури і мистецтв,  
Київ, Україна,  
[manshylin@gmail.com](mailto:manshylin@gmail.com)

**Мета дослідження.** Прослідкувати на матеріалі кількох успішних прикладів, яким чином процеси одностороннього впливу сучасного західного танцю на український поступово трансформуються на двостороннє співробітництво. **Методологія.** Історико-хронологічний метод, метод порівняльного аналізу, метод критичного аналізу. **Наукова новизна.** Вперше систематизовано широке коло явищ, пов'язаних з міжнародною діяльністю української спільноти сучасного танцю. **Висновки.** Період запозичень як неминучий етап процесу у відносинах західний/український сучасний танець, завершився. Перехід від цього етапу до наступного полягав у величезній роботі з вивчення технік руху і танцю, методів композиції та інших методологічних аспектів хореографії, розроблених протягом історії сучасного танцю. Сьогодні неусвідомлені запозичення можуть свідчити лише про творчу неспроможність того чи іншого постановника. На поточний момент лідери спільноти українського сучасного танцю, серед яких Лариса Венедиктова, Руслан Баранов, Ольга Кебас, Данило Белкін, Антон Овчинников, Кристина Шишкарєва та інші набули достатнього авторитету на міжнародному арт-ринку. У досліджуваній період було не тільки пролонговано зв'язки з танцювальними спільнотами Росії та Білорусі, було встановлено нові міцні відносини з танцівниками Польщі, Литви, Німеччини, Іспанії, Естонії, Норвегії, Франції, Великобританії, Сполучених Штатів Америки. Важливо відмітити, що партнерські стосунки із західним танцем склалися в умовах нерівноцінної фінансової участі у спільних проектах. За відсутності інвестицій з українського боку, українські танцівники набули навичок залучення інозем-

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2010-2017 ГОДОВ**

**Маншилин Александр Александрович,**  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6025-9626>  
преподаватель,  
Киевский национальный университет  
культуры и искусств,  
Киев, Украина,  
[manshylin@gmail.com](mailto:manshylin@gmail.com)

**Цель исследования.** Проследить, каким образом процессы одностороннего влияния современного западного танца на украинский постепенно трансформируются в двустороннее сотрудничество. **Методология:** историко-хронологический метод, метод сравнительного анализа, метод критического анализа. **Научная новизна.** Впервые систематизирован широкий круг явлений, связанных с международной деятельностью сообщества современного танца Украины. **Выводы.** Период заимствований как неизбежный этап процесса в отношениях западный/украинский современный танец завершился. Переход от этого этапа к следующему состоял в огромной работе по изучению техник движения, методов композиции и других методологических аспектов хореографии, разработанных в ходе истории современного танца. На сегодняшний день неосознанные заимствования могут свидетельствовать только о творческой несостоятельности того или иного постановщика. К текущему моменту лидеры украинского современного танца, среди которых Лариса Венедиктова, Руслан Баранов, Ольга Кебас, Даниил Белкин, Антон Овчинников, Кристина Шишкарєва и другие приобрели достаточный авторитет на международном арт-рынке. В исследуемый период были не только пролонгированы связи с танцевальными сообществами России и Беларуси, но также установлены новые прочные отношения с танцовщиками из Польши, Литвы, Германии, Испании, Эстонии, Норвегии, Франции, Великобритании, США. Важно отметить, что партнёрские отношения с западным танцем складывались в условиях неравноценного финансового участия в проектах. При отсутствии инвестиций



них інвестицій у роботи, що реалізуються в Україні, так і за кордоном. В результаті, вже при перших позитивних змінах в галузі культурної політики (що засвідчив перший досвід роботи Українського культурного фонду 2018-го року) спільнота українського сучасного танцю виявилась підготовленою до реалізації проектів високого рівня складності та якості при доволі помірному фінансуванні.

***Ключові слова:** хореографія; сучасний танець в Україні; міжнародний проект; фестиваль танцю.*

с української сторони, українские танцовщики приобрели навыки привлечения иностранных инвестиций в работы, реализуемые как в Украине, так и за границей. В итоге, при первых же позитивных изменениях в сфере культурной политики (как это показал первый опыт работы Украинского культурного фонда в 2018-м году) сообщество украинского современного танца оказалось подготовленным к реализации проектов высокого уровня сложности и качества при весьма умеренном финансировании.

***Ключевые слова:** хореография; современный танец в Украине; международный проект; фестиваль танца.*

**Actuality of the research topic.** From today's perspective, the 20-years history of Ukrainian contemporary dance consists of a multitude of phenomena and events scattered in time and space, recorded only in the memory of their direct participants. This work is aimed at collecting and systematizing data on one of the most important aspects of the process – the participation of Ukrainian dancers in international projects. Leaving outside the research the numerous educational programs, we will focus here on the collaborations relating to the creation and demonstration of contemporary dance works.

**Analysis of recent research and publications.** This topic has not become yet the subject of art history study. One can serve a specific help from only individual journalistic materials related to a particular performance or festival. For example, dance projects related to Gogol Fest were covered by Dmitry Levitskiy (Левицький, 2017) and Oksana Mamchenkova (Мамченко, 2017). Events related to Zelyonka Fest activity have been described, for example, by Olena Zadorozhna (Задорожна) or Olga Herman (Герман, 2018). Some self-reflective materials of organizers of the processes of international cooperation have also been published, for example, an article by Elena Lobova and Anton Ovchinnikov in the magazine "Dance in Ukraine and the World" (Лобова, 2015).

**The purpose of the research** is to trace on the material of several successful examples how the processes of unilateral influence of contemporary Western dance on Ukrainian are gradually transformed into bilateral cooperation.

As in any other post-Soviet country (and, probably, to a large extent it concerns the countries of Eastern Europe), contemporary dance in Ukraine developed under the strong influence of Western dance. During the early years of this process, the learning and borrowing concerned not only the movement techniques, methods of composition and other methodological aspects of choreography, but in many ways just the individual pieces of European and American dancers.

So, for example, the well-known Ukrainian choreographer Radu Poklitaru, staged in 2002 for the ballet of the National Opera of Ukraine, performances "Pictures at an Exhibition" and "Rite of Spring" in a style that was clearly different from what was created in that theater earlier, some critics directly blamed in plagiarism from the famous European choreographers. Especially ardent balletomanes even compiled a video, in

which the fragments, staged by Poklitaru were compared with excerpts from the performances of Mats Ek and Jiri Kylian. Another part of the audience appreciated the fresh breath in these performances, even though inspired from the West (and how could it be otherwise, considering the long informational vacuum formed within the Soviet state) (Заболотная).

Example with Radu Poklitaru falls somewhat out of the topic of this article, since his activity field is modern ballet. But the mentioned trend concerned the Ukrainian contemporary dance no less. And, of course, a way to avoid unconscious borrowing was a conscious immersion into the techniques, composition methods, and other methodological aspects of choreography developed during the history of contemporary dance while the Soviet space was switched-off from this process.

And Larisa Venediktova, leader of group TanzLaboratorium group, who first started to present Ukrainian contemporary dance at European festivals, and Ruslan Baranov (Santah), leader of the Ukrainian contact improvisation movement, who gives intensives at the festivals across the continent in recent years, and Anton Ovchinnikov, artistic director of Zelyonka Fest (dance theaters festival), whose work made known the existence of Ukrainian contemporary dance all over the world, and Olga Kebas, whose performance “Personal Spring”, was created last year in collaboration of Ukrainian and Polish artists, and Danil Belkin, who participated with his solo “Leaning on” in a number of European festivals throughout the year, and all these dancers who worked in the spring of 2017 in Lublin with choreographer Jacek Luminsky in a framework of the “Przejścia” (“Transitions”) project... ..all of them learned, learn, and will learn from foreign teachers. But now this process has acquired a both-way orientation and has become a mutual exchange: of knowledge, experience, ideas, sensations, thoughts and impulses.

In this text we will trace the experience of international collaboration of only two dancers, as well as choreographers, as well as the founders and leaders of institutions.

Krystyna Shishkariova. In 2010 she opened “Totem Dance School” creating dance miniatures.

2011–2012 – in course of collaborative project with Ivan Belozertsev (Russia, St. Petersburg) “Tetra”, the first performance of the group, was created.

Constantly and continuously they organized and organizes educational projects (workshops, cycles, laboratories), some of which renders into scenic works.

So in the spring of 2013 the laboratory of Belarusian choreographer Olga Labovkina was held. The result of it was the performance “Tea Party” for eight dancers. In 2015, the two-week laboratory of O. Labovkina became the “Please Stay Your Seats” performance, shown in Kiev at the Gogol Fest international festival of contemporary art.

Becoming in 2014 the curator of Gogol Fest dance program, Krystyna Shishkariova received a new impetus and opportunities in terms of international projects with the participation of her school and dancers. As part of the 2015 festival, there were collaborations with the choreographer from Lithuania Biruta Benevecuchute and her “Dansema” children’s dance theater. The project involved 25 children, learning at the Totem school. At the same time, the dancers of company worked with Israeli choreographer Erez Zohar. Because of the break of contract by choreographer, the planned performance did not appear, but nevertheless Krystyna Shishkariova managed to gather the material not related to the direct work of Erez Zohar “The Cube” project. She found that it would be wrong not to give access to the stage of all the energy that the dancers had accumulated over a month and a half of rehearsals and work with the Gaga technique.



In 2016, Kristyna Shishkaryiova continued the work, supported by the Lithuanian embassy in Ukraine and organized the world premiere of performance “Ground Zero” by Marius Pinigis and Marius Paplauskas at the festival “Totem Dance Solo Fest”. Supported by the Spanish cultural attache, the Totem Dance Group has collaborated with choreographer Chevy Muradai. The premiere of performance “Between Us” was held as a part of Gogol Fest.

In 2017 Shishkaryiova’s company collaborated with Ballet Bejart Lausanne dancer Oscar Shakon. Four adult dancers and four children took part in the opera-ballet The Arc. Also Totem Dance Group became a member of a large American-Ukrainian work. Supported by the US Embassy and within the framework of Gogol Fest, Meredith Monk’s vocal-choreographic performance “A Celebration Service” was staged.

At this point, it should be recalled that until 2018, the state of Ukraine did not pursue any cultural policy, and therefore:

- first, most of the institutions were the heirs of the Soviet institutions and continued their traditions for 25 years;
- secondly, new phenomena (in dance field particularly), arising due to the energy of enthusiasm, having lost the impulse of this energy and not receiving any support from the outside, were doomed to vanishing. Personalities, referred to herein, are exceptions to the general rule, they make up the breed of most persistent.

Anton Ovchinnikov. In 2010, Anton Ovchinnikov was the artistic director of the Black O!Range dance theater (founded in 2008) and the school attached to it. Organizing the first Zelyonka Fest as a dance evening “for insiders”, he could not even imagine what ways this start-up would lead him in future. As early as next year, the festival has become an international and its guests were:

from Russia (St. Petersburg): Ivan Belozertsev with contemporary dance theater “Guild”) and the duet of Alexander Liubashin and Tatiana Tarabanova;

from Belarus: Olga Labovkina and “Karakuli” Dance Theater;

from Latvia: Dmitrijs Gaitjkevichs, a dancer from Olga Zitluhina Dance Company.

Lack of experience, high expectations and loyalty to his word made Anton to cover the festival budget deficit from his own pocket. The following year, Zelyonka Fest was held in the format of one evening, in which only Ukrainian dancers participated. However, this dance evening was recorded by the TV channel “Culture” and repeatedly broadcast on the air.

By the end of 2012, Anton Ovchinnikov took a decision to close the Black O!Range dance theater and school, and also paused the festival.

For the festival of 2014 a qualitative leap in organizational work was made. The festival team was strengthened by a group of PR-specialists (not related to dance before) led by Elena Lobova. The organizers began working with foreign missions and looking for sponsors inside the country. And if at the level of sponsors success was not achieved, then the interaction with the Polish Institute, the Municipality of Gdansk, the Israeli Embassy and the British Council proved fruitful. In April, the festival program was attended by the Theater Dada von Bzdülów with performance “Invisible Duets” and the Candoco Dance Company with “Two for C”. Inna Aslamova (Belarus) and Danil Belkin (Ukraine) showed the duet “By Four Hands”. A performance created during the residence of the Israeli choreographer Eldad Ben Sasson was also shown. Jadwiga Majewska held the Kiev session of Mobile Academy of Dance Criticism.

In the same year summer, Anton Ovchinnikov and Elena Lobova go to the International Dance fair Tanzmesse in Düsseldorf. The participation of Zelyonka Fest in this major international event became possible grace to the invitation and assistance of

Audronis Imbrasas, the director of the Lithuanian Dance Information Center (Vilnius), who kindly singled out a part of his booth to the Ukrainian team.

Before the festival of 2015, the residence of Da Soul Chung, a South Korean dancer who worked at the Wuppertal Dance Theater, was held. Her work "Dusty Old Things" (for Ukrainian dancers), Lublin Dance Theater "Stories We Never Told" and the Lithuanian dancers performance "Contemporary?" formed the international program of the festival. Also Grzegorz Kondraciuk from the University of Marie Skłodowska Curie and Laurent Van Kote, international performing arts consultant for the French Ministry of Culture participated in Zelyonka.

Summing up the two years working, Elena Lobova said: "In order to develop such niche forms of art as contemporary dance, we need financial support of business or state. Zelyonka Fest 1.5 took place exclusively due to the enthusiasm of organizers and their friends, as well as thanks to the interest of the European colleagues to the Ukrainian contemporary dance. But these resources are not enough to reach a new level (Zelyonka Fest..., 2015).

Contrary to said, the next step was taken. In cooperation with Kyiv Molody Theater (which provided its space at a price lower than market), Zelyonka Fest showed the Ukrainian audience the performance of Külli Roosna & Kenneth Flak duet (Estonia-Norway) "The Wolf Project" (November 2015). And in March 2016, a tour of the Polish Dance Platform took place. The program of the following festival was so full of performances by European choreographers that we do not venture to give here again the list of proper nouns. We name only "There" performance by Jo Stromgren Kompani and "Nijinsky. The Rite of Dreams" of Sławomir Krawczyński, Anna Godowska and Tomasz Wygoda. The residency of this year was "Adur" performance by the Basque choreographer Jorge Allue, created with 13 Ukrainian dancers.

After summing up the financial results of the festival and covering the budget deficit, Anton Ovchinnikov decided again to lower the level of "internationality" of the event and by 2017 to focus on showing the works of Ukrainian choreographers.

Autumn 2017 Anton Ovchinnikov spent as a resident at the Contemporary Arts Center in New Orleans (USA) and returned from it with fresh ideas on work in 2018. This year was even more fruitful, but its description is the task of the next, separate study.

**Scientific novelty.** The art history research on tracing the participation/initiation of Ukrainian dancers in international projects is carrying out for the first time.

**Conclusions.** In accordance with the purpose, on the results of the research it is possible to formulate the following conclusions:

- The period of borrowing as an inevitable stage of the process in relations Western/Ukrainian contemporary dance ended. The transition from this stage to the next consisted in a great work on the study of movement and dance techniques, composition methods and other methodological aspects of choreography developed during the history of contemporary dance. To date, the unconscious borrowing can only indicate the creative inconsistency of one or another choreographer.

- By the current moment, the leaders of the Ukrainian contemporary dance, among which are Larisa Venediktova, Ruslan Baranov, Olga Kebas, Danil Bielkin, Anton Ovchinnikov, Kristyna Shishkariova and others have gained sufficient prestige on the international art market. During the observed period, not only the relations with dance communities of Russia and Belarus were prolonged, but the new strong relations with dancers from Poland, Lithuania, Germany, Spain, Estonia, Norway, France, Great Britain, and the USA were established.





– It should be noted that partnerships with Western dance evolved in conditions of unequal financial participation in coproduction. In the absence of investments from Ukrainian side, Ukrainian dancers have acquired the skills to attract foreign investments to the works implemented both in Ukraine and abroad.

– As a result, with the first positive changes in the area of cultural policy (as shown by the first experience of the Ukrainian Cultural Foundation in 2018), the community of Ukrainian contemporary dance proved to be prepared for the implementation of high-level projects within a very modest funding.

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