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THE RITE OF SPRING

(working title)

Intro

The reception history and current canonical status of the ballet *Rite of Spring (ROS)* present an entry point for renewed institutional critique of the ballet form from a feminist perspective. In the course of the research, I will transpose 'ROS' into the contemporary transformative space of rave culture, exposing the vectors of collective ritual and female suffering that the ballet has carried forward from the premodern era to our post-modern and cybernetically mediated cultural milieu.

The Rite of Spring was created in Paris in 1913 from the collaboration of three extraordinary Russian artists: composer Igor Stravinsky, prima ballerina and choreographer Vaslav Nijinsky, and painter and archaeologist Nicholas Roerich. This avant-garde modernist ballet, "subverted the codes of the ballet forever", as stated by Nicoletta Isar¹, provoking one of the biggest scandals in the history of performing arts. How has a ballet, so radical in its time, become so comfortably sedimented in the institutional canon? Today the postcapitalist institutional bastions of European culture invite renewed critique, and the ambiguous position of 'ROS' in the canon presents a unique point of entry.

I argue that beneath *ROS* and its controversies runs a transcultural current of archetypal violence – the sacrifice of women. This motif is both ancient and contemporary, continuing to tacitly underwrite social imaginaries. The immense recognition granted to *ROS* – the most frequently performed work of the 20th century – reinforces and uncritically perpetuates this motif, usually from within the most prestigious institutions of 'high culture'. The intention for this research is to see how the subversive nature of the original ballet can be reactivated in relation to new (postcapitalist) socio-political realities, cultural phenomena, and artistic means.

1/ *Feminist take* and dramaturgy

In her article "Sacrificial Cyborg and Communal Soul" (2003), researcher Hillegonda C. Rietveld explores the metaphor of the Cyborg as self-sacrifice through a fusion of subject and object, human and machine, in the experience of partying in the post-industrial age. In 1913, Stravinsky and Roerich's *ROS* linked dance and sacrifice by staging the dance to death of a young woman, designated by her community as the "Chosen One" and offered to the god of spring.

"I saw in my imagination the spectacle of a great pagan sacred rite: the old sages, seated in a circle, watching the dance to the death of a young girl, whom they sacrifice to make the god of spring propitious to them" - Igor Stravinsky²

¹ Nicoletta Isar, "Pathei mathos and skandalon in Rite of Spring", *Postmedieval: a journal of medieval cultural studies Special issue: Legacies of medieval dance*, bind 14, nr. 2-3

² Igor Stravinsky, *Chroniques de ma vie*, ed. Denoël, 2000

This vision is supposed to take place within an archaic Slavic society, but it is more the stuff of fantasy. Some researchers hypothesize that the theme of sacrifice comes from Scythian, Greek or Aztec myths. The Greek imaginary is replete with sacrifices of virgins playing the role of ritual scapegoats, bearing the collective guilt and killed for the benefit of society³. The violent dramaturgy of ROS, accompanied by dissonant music and the strange, frenetic movements of the dancers, thus create a work that is both a symbol of modernity and a summoner of this ancestral imaginary.

As re-enactors of the stage work, Millicent Hodson and Kenneth Archer insist on the notion of "ordeal": "We have learned from audiences around the world that they undergo an ordeal during the re-enacted ROS, which takes them from the obvious struggle of the dancers' multiple body rhythms in the 'Augures' to the spiritual marathon of extreme leaps and falls in the 'Sacrificial Dance'." This experience of "collective trauma" becomes the core of their work, and they see it as a link between audience, dancers and the sacred. They go so far as to assert that the self-annihilating dance of the chosen one, the climax of the ballet, is "what gives the work its full meaning" and that "we shouldn't take it as something primitive and brutal, that this woman dances to her death, but as an expression of faith, the idea that human activity can have an impact."

This alarming vision testifies to the extent to which the question of female sacrifice is treated as a motif, a cultural heritage unthought of in its political, sociological and ethical dimensions. What kind of society requires the killing of a young woman for the arrival of spring? The idea of an expiatory sacrifice organized by "old sages", whose victim must be a virgin, is part of a profoundly patriarchal imaginary in which violence against the feminine is sublimated and justified. In this case, the perversity goes so far as to present the chosen one as the agent of her own death, making her bear responsibility for it. This is indeed a "massacre" of spring, as the newspapers of the time called it. Not an aesthetic massacre, but the literal representation of murder, and more precisely of femicide. The numerous reworks performed since 1913 form an increasing sequence of variations that continue to amplify the aestheticization of violence. Very substantial (financial, scenic, human) means are used, as is specific to ballet as a genre. Death becomes a spectacle, the female body a resource to be appropriated, as the killing of the chosen one ensures the economic survival of the village). Rape culture is manifest: glorification of virginity (for example, the dancers are dressed in white in Béjart's work), feminine resignation (women do not fight their fate, and are portrayed as fearful and trembling), the aestheticism of kidnapping (brutal carries, clothes ripped off), male gaze and sexualization. One of the main research questions for the rewriting of the dramaturgy must therefore be: how can we transmute the notion of sacrifice to avoid such a heterosexist and violent logic?

Act 1 of the ballet is dedicated to the Adoration of the Earth. At what point does the ritual for the renewal of life degenerate into a "scene of total violence"? What is the point of no return in the scenario, from which it would be necessary to start again in order to give it another twist? What other ending is possible?

How can we construct new scenarios and narratives in which women can appear as subjects and their bodies cease to be used as resources for the economic prosperity of the *polis* (i.e. the men in power)?

How can we propose new narratives, new fictions and mythologies pointing towards Feminist *Futures*, the advent of a cyborg subjectivity dismantling the logics of binarity and patriarchal oppression?

How can we make room for first-person expression and narratives ?

"Nothing about us without us" - following this principle of inclusion of the people who are directly concerned by an issue in the way we talk about this issue, the aim is to create (speak, dance,

³ including Euripides' *Iphigénie à Aulis* and the *pharmakis* women chosen as scapegoats for the ancient Greek festival *Thargelia*

imagine) new narratives that evacuate all forms of violence (total violence, sacrifice, invisible and systemic violence). The project involves writing new scenarios and possible narratives that can serve as the basis for a feminist dramaturgy. The writing is envisaged in a polyphonic way, syncretizing multiple experiences to bring out new emancipatory collective imaginaries, to the point of encoding a new cyborg "woman" subject in the sense that Haraway gives it.

From a methodological point of view, the dramaturgy will be constructed on the basis of collective experimentation and the deployment of imaginary worlds based on case studies, with the support of feminist theoretical writings and using techniques specific to the shamanic approach and psychodrama.

I propose to introduce anastrophe as a dramaturgical mechanism: using this figure of speech, which consists in reversing the order of words, as a method for imagining, based on the reversal of the scenario, a new narrative with emancipatory potential, a reversal of the initial dramaturgical order. The writing will be based on women's talking circles and collective systemic/shamanic constellations. I see these formats as individual and collective emancipatory mechanisms, of joyful and productive resilience.

The aim will be to collect a multitude of narratives - scenarios for escaping violence - and to transcribe and reduce them to around 24 narrative plots (short, simple, open-ended). They will form variations on the anastrophe of patriarchal violence, which could follow one another and/or co-exist polyphonically within a single *mise-en-scène* unfolding over the duration of a rave party.

2/ Ballet - ritual - rave

The project involves deconstructing categories and hybridizing the forms of ballet, rave and ritual, where ballet is approached from the angle of institutional critique, ritual from the shamanic angle, and rave from the point of view of participatory art⁴.

In an acclaimed analysis of Stravinsky's work, dance specialist Gabriele Brandstetter has argued that the mythical 1913 scandal surrounding the *Rite of Spring* should be understood as a public rejection of the "theatrical pact"⁵. It marks a definitive break with the traditional conception of classical ballet music and choreographic vocabulary. Thus, ROS embodied a subversive approach, not only in its aesthetic proposals, but also in ballet as a genre, with its meta-dramaturgical and situational elements.

My performance practice engages various power dynamics through the creation of subversive situations aimed at deconstructing structures of authority. My work examines the complex relationship between society, the economy and the body, through the production of protocols that are at once the ritual power of gesture and the reappropriation of tools of power. I see my practice as a process of critical work that aims to reconsider, as Claire Bishop puts it, "how art is produced, consumed and debated".

How can ballet be redefined and approached from the angle of institutional critique? What artistic forms can ballet take if it is critically debated, also from the point of view of the off-stage power dynamics, economics and politics of social relations from which it emerges and that it generates?

While retaining what defines a ballet, how can certain parameters be inverted to introduce disruptive mechanisms into modes of production, distribution and consumption as anti-capitalist critique?

⁴ Notably "directed reality", a sub-category of participatory art as defined by Claire Bishop: Claire Bishop, *Artificial hells: participatory art and the politics of spectatorship*, Verso, 2012;

⁵ Brandstetter, Gabriele. 1998. "Ritual as Scene and Discourse: Art and Science Around 1900 as Exemplified by "Rite of Spring" *The World of Music* 40 (1): 37-59;

How, while remaining connected to the institutions of high culture, do we get rid of tacit power relations and normative, hierarchical social organization?

Between 2016 and 2019, as these issues of institutional critique began to emerge in my artistic practice, I was living in Paris. I pushed open a secret door leading to a hidden yet massive social space: that of secret raves and underground parties, taking place day and night in isolated or derelict spaces, public or private, third places sometimes bringing together up to a thousand people, such as catacombs, sheds, occupied buildings, abandoned factories and so on. I discovered the unexpected scale of the phenomenon, a vast parallel alternative network and a host of actors and collectives. I co-organized events with them; we experienced police raids, seizure of equipment, police custody, tear gas etc.-all kinds of instruments of repression criminalizing the "free party" movement. As a response, the rave movement devised its own camouflage and infiltration strategies, developed extremely elaborate, highly collaborative material and human logistics, and formulated its claims. This form of 'applied anthropology', through lived experience, led me to meet emblematic places and collectives. I discovered a major and highly influential socio-cultural phenomenon, of which there are hardly any traces left, either visual or musical, or in the form of narratives.

How do you "tell the story" of the rave from the point of view of those who attend it?

How can we share this experience with audiences who have not been introduced to the movement, or those who see it as a "sinister cult"⁶ ? How do we amplify what rave has to teach us, its emancipatory potential, its cultural importance that some emerging critics are emphasizing?

At once commonplace and unthought-of in its political dimension, rave is not simply a techno party, it is the antithesis of the club. With its origins in the legacy of Summer of Love and the Detroit techno avant-garde, this socio-cultural phenomenon is strongly linked to the history of black and queer oppression and resistance, to the disruption of gender roles and traditional sexualities, and to forms of dissidence and civil disobedience. As a *temporary autonomous zone*⁷, rave has historically defined itself in opposition to systemic state oppression, cultural exorcism, commercial purification and compulsory individualism. A collective, ecstatic form of resistance, a safe haven for marginal lifestyles and minority cultures.

"The ecstatic festivals of rave revived the use of time and land that the bourgeoisie had forbidden and sought to bury. Yet for all the reminders of these older rhythms, rave was clearly not an archaic revival. It was a spectre of post-capitalism rather than pre-capitalism".⁸

ROS is a *mise-en-scène* of pre-modern rituals, popular collective practices designed to glorify the earth while taking a violent sacrificial turn. In 34 minutes, a collective rite of passage unfolds, a dark crossing of the night from sunset to dawn. The ecstatic experience of the ritual takes the form of a final dance, that of the "young woman", who seems to want to escape from the circle that surrounds her, through repeated leaps and chaotic movements. For Millicent Hodson and Kenneth Archer, the reconstructors of ROS (1987), it is the spectacle of this torture that binds the audience and the dancers together. However, the ritual that is passively witnessed and the violence that is symbolically inflicted during the performance of ROS do not amount to a lived ritual and a true experience of togetherness.

What form can ballet take as a lived ritual that abolishes the hierarchical relationship between spectator and stage?

⁶ Simon Reynolds in *Generation Ecstasy. Into the world of techno and rave culture*, 1991: "Rave is more than music plus drugs; it's a matrix of lifestyle, ritualized behavior and beliefs. To the participant it feels like a religion; from the standpoint of the mainstream observer, it looks more like a sinister cult. I think again of this declaration "we must make joy a crime against the state";

⁷ concept introduced by the anarchist-immediatist poet and researcher Hakim Bey in his book *TAZ, Zone Autonome Temporaire*, Éditions de l'Éclat, Paris, 1997;

⁸ Mark Fisher, "Baroque Sunbursts", in Nav Haq (ed.), *Rave: Rave and its Influences on Art and Culture*, MHKA & Black Dog Publishing, 2016, p. 45.

In other words, and drawing on the anthropology of ritual, how can we find a meta-dramaturgical framework for ROS in the perspective of creating a *spontaneous communitas* in the sense defined by Victor Turner⁹ ?

How can the perspective on ballet as lived ritual relate to participatory art forms, particularly with reference to Claire Bishop's framing of "participation as project" that rehumanizes society ?¹⁰

How can we introduce a shamanic approach into the form of ballet, with a view to overturning its structure and value system, and thus transcend the predominance of the aesthetic to arrive at the production of a "constructed situation"¹¹ as Guy Debord understands it, where the participation of all is highly political?

The project consists in imagining ROS as a "constructed situation", where the audience, traditionally conceived as spectators or observers, becomes participants. My intention is to imagine a multiplicity of devices that will allow a hybridization between ritual, ballet and rave, where the three forms contaminate and intermingle in their vocabulary, their spaces and their performativity. This experimentation will be possible by bringing together actors involved in the third-place and rave movement and actors of the institutions of high culture, while questioning the political and economic aspects of its own means of production, dissemination and consumption. In so doing, the project is concerned with writing meta-dramaturgical forms for ROS and its possible participatory future, more precisely *directed reality*¹² within a conceptual framework of institutional critique. The aim is to observe the existing realities of rave, ballet and ritual through the eyes of those who produce them and those who participate in them.

3/ Music: between orchestra and machines

In his documentary *Keeping Score: Igor Stravinsky, The Rite of Spring*¹³, Michael Tilson Thomas demonstrates the sonic modalities Stravinsky uses to incorporate Russian and Lithuanian folk motifs and songs¹⁴ into the score of so-called "art music", with a sophisticated symphony orchestra. He subverts the traditional approach of the modern orchestra by placing melodies in an unusual register for a given instrument, pushing instruments to the extremes of their tessituras, even diverting their usual use. These processes create unexpected sonorities, sometimes unrecognizable, freer, more intense, more improvised. He uses polytonal chords (harmonically distant chords), polyrhythms (changes in rhythmic signature within the same score), and ostinatos - repetitive rhythms¹⁵ reminiscent of techno music pulsations and patterns. "*The Rite of Spring* is an extraordinarily fierce thing. If you like, it is wild music with all the modern comforts" - Claude Debussy commented, describing this hybrid form. Harsh, vital rhythmic elements have their origins in folk tradition, while at the same time ROS established itself as an emblem of modernist rupture. It is one of the most widely performed works of the 20th century, and although it has been the subject of numerous choreographic remakes¹⁶, the musical score has remained unaltered, even canonical. Unlike many

⁹ According to Turner, *communitas* is an intense sense of common belonging that enables the whole community to share a common experience, usually through a rite of passage, bringing a sense of solidarity, unity and equality. He distinguishes "spontaneous or existential" *communitas* from "normative *communitas*" and "ideological *communitas*".

¹⁰ Claire Bishop, *Artificial hells: participatory art and the politics of spectatorship*, Verso, 2012:

¹¹In the Situationist International, "situation construite" is defined as: "a moment in life, concretely and deliberately constructed by the collective organization of a unitary atmosphere and a set of events". What's at stake is art's overcoming of the "society of the spectacle" as criticized by Guy Debord.

¹² see above

¹³ [Keeping Score | Igor Stravinsky: The Rite of Spring \(FULL DOCUMENTARY AND CONCERT\)](#) by Michael Tilson Thomas, San Francisco Symphony, documentary, 2006;

¹⁴ from the region around the village of Ustilug in Central Russia, Stravinsky's childhood village, and a collection of folk songs in Stravinsky's possession;

¹⁵ Between 1907 and 1920 Stravinsky was deeply involved in research into repetitive sonorities and rhythms, already present in *Petrouchka* (1911).

¹⁶ returned to the repertoire in the '40s with a remake in Disney's *Fantasia*, followed by numerous choreographic reworks in the '50s, starting with Mary Wigman's in 1957 and Maurice Béjart's in 1959. In 1977, *Rite of Spring* was one of 27 pieces of music recorded on the Voyager Golden Record entitled The Sounds of Earth, the first phonograph sent by NASA beyond the solar system in search of extraterrestrial civilizations;

musical genres, from blues to electro, where reworks are at the heart of musical creation, ROS has not, to my knowledge, given rise to any musical reinterpretations, with the exception of a jazz version by the American trio The Bad Plus¹⁷, and an identical remake of Stravinsky's version with cuts, for Disney's *Fantasia*.

How does one approach a musical rework of Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* by extending and extrapolating his own subversive approach, which makes use of repetitive sonorities and modular rhythmic pulsations?

What are the possible reinventions of the musical expression of the original score by Stravinsky through sound synthesis and modulation, in the cyborg age¹⁸ ?

How can we bring a new political prism to the *Rite of Spring* and its 'aura'¹⁹ by moving from the orchestra to machines and devices that are by their very nature and origins fundamentally anti-capitalist, associated with minority struggles?

How can we reinterpret the ritual and initiatory character of the *Rite of Spring* using elements and textures of electronic music, particularly techno, including its participatory broadcast formats, especially in the context of a long-term rave?

The project focuses on exploring new compositional and improvisational forms for an electroacoustic, techno-based version of The *Rite of Spring*, extended to the duration of a rave.

It will take the form of a constellation of collaborative interactions between instrumental musicians (performers, musicologists, composers) and electroacoustic musicians (researchers, engineers and/or technicians, dj-composers). It consists of open processes of sound experimentation, co-writing and recording.

More specifically, it will involve :

(1) to produce a hybrid form of a "transposition" of the original score or its fragments or their "re-orchestration" by machines mixed with the compositional logics and sound textures of techno music²⁰ ;

(2) to extend the musical canvas of the original score (approx. 34 min) to the length of a rave, using both "classical" and electronic music logics;

(3) to integrate a dimension of real-time creation ("live"), and empathetic improvisation as a practice situated within a participatory ballet;

(4) to create a notation system adapted to such a compositional form (unlike an instrumental music score), inspired by performance protocols designed for reactivation.

The project aims to transcribe the poetics, raw energy and rhythmic power of Stravinsky's score, its vitality and massive, spasmodic frenzy, through extended modes of representation and manipulation of sound and music. Rediscover the rhythmic pulses, soundscapes, passages of sensory overload, enormous explosions of communal energy, superimposed layers of sound in The *Rite of Spring*, as well as the modular character of its *ostinatos*, in the vocabulary of techno, i.e., that of symbols of resistance and post-industrial dystopias:

"The sounds all come out of fucking with machines. You use the sounds of capitalism to destroy the economy of taste. It's queer sonic materialism"²¹ .

¹⁷ [The Bad Plus - The Rite Of Spring](#) recording, 38 min, 2014;

¹⁸ in the sense given to the concept of cyborg by Donna Haraway, in Donna Haraway, *Manifeste Cyborg*, 1984

¹⁹ in reference to Benjamin's use of the term in Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, 1936

²⁰ *In contrast*, Wendy Carlos's emblematic *Switch on Bach* (1968) produces an "equivalence" of the instrumental score in synthetic/modulated sounds.

²¹ McKenzie Wark, *Raving*, 2023

"Sound machines make you feel more intensely, along a broader band of emotional spectra than ever before in the 20th Century. Sonically speaking, the posthuman era is not one of disembodiment, but the exact reverse"²².

4/ Choreography: infiltration strategies and being together

Richard Buckle, in his book *Nijinsky*, states that "not even Diaghilev and Stravinsky fully appreciated the power of Nijinsky's vision [...] nor recognized how far ahead of his time he was". Nearly 200 productions of *The Rite of Spring* have been choreographed since then, but it was Nijinsky's vision that shattered classical conventions, enabling the emergence of new modern artistic expressions, from Martha Graham to Bausch, from Michael Clark to Klaus Obermaier. Yet - and this also explains its mythical status - Nijinsky's version had to wait until 1987 before it was performed again, when choreographer Millicent Hodson recreated his choreography for the Joffrey Ballet.

As for Vaslav Nijinsky's original choreography, we have no recordings from 1913. Very little remains of the work itself: photographs of the dancers wearing their costumes taken at the Théâtre des Champs Élysées in 1913, drawings by Valentine Hugo, and the musical score annotated by Nijinsky's assistant Marie Rambert, found in 1984. These traces evoke the imagery of a pre-modern ritual.

In the documentary *Rite of Spring, Joffrey Ballet, Documentary and Performance*²³, produced to coincide with the first reconstruction of Nijinsky's 1987 ballet, Marie Rambert, who was also one of the dancers in the 1913 ballet, talks about the main instruction he gave the dancers: "be blunt! (and his obsession with "a sort of wooden quality for the dancers". Nijinsky turned away from the aesthetic of elevation to explore a dance towards the earth, anchored in the ground, rooted. The movements he invented²⁴ ran completely counter to the Romantic tradition from which he had emerged. Following Hanna Jarvinen, in a provocative article entitled "They Never Dance: The Choreography of *the Rite of Spring*, 1913, 100 Years from the Performance"²⁵, it could even be argued that ROS, with its heretical about-face towards "ugliness"²⁶, questions what is and what is not dance. Just as Stravinsky drew musical inspiration from non-scholarly musical traditions, Nijinsky's choreography borrows from Slavic folk dances to create a new movement vocabulary. In particular, the figure of the circle or *ronde*, which guides the entire spatial organization of his choreography, and the dancers' traditional costumes, created with the help of the anthropologist Roerich, are elements of "non-scholarly" culture that twist the classical aesthetic. Reworks of *The Rite of Spring* constitute a vast field of references²⁷. Their nature varies from monumental productions that retain the original number of dancers and orchestral music, to more experimental productions that modify the ballet's argument. A case in point is Yvonne Rainer's post-modernist piece (2007), a historical commentary on the original work and its scandal, in which dancers re-enact the invasion of the public space by the public. Xavier Leroy's almost burlesque version (2007), in which he stands alone on stage in a red polo shirt and jeans, mimicking an orchestra conductor; Castellucci's highly radical version (2014), in which he proposes a ballet of

²² Kodwo Eshun, *More Brilliant Than The Sun: Adventures In Sonic Fiction* Quartet Books, 1998

²³ *Rite of Spring: Joffrey Ballet. Documentary and Performance*, 1989

²⁴ gestures of "inward" feet, hooked hands, arms torn from the inside out, stomping in bent or arched postures, frenetic leaps, interlocking bodies dislocated by strange contortion techniques.

²⁵ Jarvinen, Hanna. 2013. "They Never Dance:" The Choreography of *Rite of Spring*, 1913, 100 Years from the Performance.' *AVANT. The Journal of the Philosophical-Interdisciplinary Vanguard* 3: 69-08.

²⁶ also underlined by Millicent Hodson in the title of her book *Nijinsky's Crime Against Grace*, which codifies the radical nature of her creation (1996);

²⁷ Here's the list we've been able to compile: Léonide Massine (1920), Marie Wigman (1957, 2014), Maurice Béjart (1959), Kenneth Macmillan (1962), Paul Taylor (1963, 1980), John Neumeier (1972), Hans von Manen (1974), Pina Bausch (1975), , Martha Graham (1984), Mats Ek (1984, 2022), Jorge Lefebvre (1988), Min Tanaka (1990), Javier de Frutos (Consecration, 1991, *The Palace Does Not Forgive*, 1994, ROS, 2002, *Milagros*, 2003), Michael Clark, (Mmm, 1992), Marie Chouinard (1993), Angelin Preljocaj (2001), Régis Obadia (2003), Uwe Scholz (2003), Doug Varone (2003), Emanuel Gat (2004), Hedy Maalem (2004), Glen Tetley (2005), Klaus Obermaier (2006), Xavier Le Roy (ROS, 2007), Yvonne Rainer (*Rite of Spring Indexical*, 2007), Marguerite Donlon (2008), Ginette Laurin (2011), Jean-Claude Gallotta (2011), Izadora Weiss (2011), David Wampach (2011), Fejes Ádám (2012), Dominique Brun (ROS #197, 2012), Sasha Waltz (2013), Bill T. Jones (2013), Yuri Possokhov (2013), Romeo Castellucci (2014), Martin Harriague (2021), Dewey Dell (2023) etc.

dust, with no dancers but industrially-produced animal bone powder used as fertilizer; with David Wampach (2011), two hooded protagonists wander the stage evoking Stravinsky's score solely through breathing, the music is entirely evacuated; or Dewey Dell (2023), who stages the *Rite* as a continual struggle and metamorphosis of insects referring to the cycles of life and death, set to Stravinsky's original music.

Taking into account the wide variety of choreographic reworks of the *Sacre*, my focus is more specifically on those linked to ritual, rhythm and repetitiveness, elements that the piece shares with techno and rave music. Over the past ten years, the rave aesthetic has gained in popularity and has often inspired contemporary dance. A number of artists in Berlin and elsewhere have drawn inspiration from rave for their choreographies, staging its culture and codes (Gisèle Vienne, *Crowd*, 2017; (LA)HORDE, *Room With A View*, 2020; Mette Ingvarsten, *The Dancing Public*, 2021; Jęfta Van Dinter *In On Earth I'm Done: Mountains & Islands*, 2021-2022, etc.).

My artistic approach in general, and for this project in particular, is to explore participatory protocols, approached from the angle of lived experience, *off-stage*, situated. The aim here is to approach choreographic practice as a space for political experience through the body.

How can we use the dynamics of festive ritual, its principle of transgression, its values of care and safespace, its potential for ritual transition, to create an art form that enables a connection to self and community in resistance to the atomization of the postmodern individual?

How would ballet choreography manifest itself if its synopsis were conceived from a feminist point of view? How can we transform exclusion and sacrificial brutality through the experience of *togetherness*, and turn the night into a time of speculation where we invent our own danced narratives?

What choreographic forms might emerge by extrapolating Nijinsky's subversive approach to freeing the graceful classical body? Could the psycho-cultural terrain of the rave and its powerful soundscapes be the site of such a reversal?

How can dance be an act of liberation in the context of an event that avoids the rave's logic of scenic aestheticization? Can the party, a place of unproductive, gratuitous and pleasurable expenditure, assert itself as a means of anti-capitalist resistance, a means "of reappropriating ourselves, of choosing the way in which we spend our energy"²⁸ ?

The aim is to produce a new choreographic form of *The Rite of Spring* as a participatory ballet, in the midst of a party where everyone is free to move around, happening in real time. My intention is to create spaces in which to experiment together with dancers who will become co-creators. A cumulative process of improvisation and co-writing sessions, as well as possible collaborations/dialogues with researchers in critical theory, choreographer(s) coach(s) and/or dramaturge(s).

The project is structured around the following axes/intentions:

(1) experiment with a choreographic vocabulary and poetics (movements, body shapes, textures) synthesizing the influences of music and "techno dance" and the legacy of Nijinsky's "weird quality" (anti)-aesthetic;

(2) articulate the relationship between totally free, even ecstatic movement as practiced in raves, and choreographic writing with its procedures for organizing movements (repetition, variation, accumulation, substitution, acceleration)²⁹ . To take up Nijinsky's recurring motif of the *ronde* as it applies to a crowd that forms a body, bearing in mind the political and feminist symbolism that M. Wittig gives to the form 0 in "*Les Guérillères*"³⁰ .

²⁸ "c'est reparty" column, interview with Florent Gaité

²⁹ movement organization procedures as formalized by Anne Teresa De Keersmaecker, in Anne Teresa De Keersmaecker, Bojana Cvejic, *A Choreographer's Score*, Mercatorfonds - Rosas, 2019;

³⁰ in Monique Wittig, *Les Guérillères*, University of Illinois Press, 2007, p.40;

(4) experiment with ways of interacting between infiltrated dancers and the public, with the intention of sharing joy: extend "danced" choreography (e.g. contamination strategies) to communication and empathetic presence, but also to the "choreography of care" (choreographing the framing of the party according to the notions of *care* and *safespace*, central to rave culture);

(5) research into improvisation and exhaustion in the face of hardship / within a *durational performance*; imagine syntax and variations in the intensity of movement energy, rhythmic pulsations and canvas sounds;

(6) creation of a singular form of notation, adapted to the research, capable of capturing patterns, proposals for social interaction, a predominance given to rhythm; for this I intend to draw inspiration from my research on performance protocols intended for reactivation and the research of Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker deployed in her book *A Choreographer's Score*³¹.

Project implementation

The project consists in creating an experimental and collaborative environment combining different formats and creative times. Bringing together diverse and sometimes distant practices, *Rite Of Spring* weaves a constellation, a transdisciplinary ecosystem. The various practices thus connected will also be addressed in relation to socio-political and theoretical issues, as dynamic and situated complexities.

Development phases :

Oct 2024 - April 2025: experiments in each stream/field (separately)

May 2025 - Oct 2025: back and forth between fields

Nov 2025 - March 2026: shape, notations, production of the various scores

Mar 2026 - Nov 2026: production

Dec 2026: first presentation

Project streams:

1 - dramaturgy from a feminist perspective ;

2 - music;

3 - choreography;

4 - research into ballet as a genre through the prism of institutional critique (rave, ritual).

How we work

My aim is to develop experimental formats with a horizontal, collective and open approach to writing, leaving room for improvisation and lived experience.

1/ women's talking circles and mixed groups, followed by collective constellation/ psychodrama sessions³². These sessions will serve as a starting point for the creation of a dramaturgy from a feminist perspective. These formats are open in terms of the number of participants, with constellations/psychodramas able to include up to fifty people.

2/ Field experiments - at raves, parties and electronic music festivals - for collective choreographic creation, with the dancers. This approach aims to develop the choreographic

³¹ Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker, Bojana Cvejic, *A Choreographer's Score*, Mercatorfonds - Rosas, 2019.

³² A method of investigating psychological processes using dramatization.

vocabulary within a crowd, in an ecstatic and participative situation, and explore the modalities of interaction with the audience.

3/ Experimentation with forms of musical writing that preserve improvisation, blending techniques from classical music, minimal music and electro. Starting with the conception of a global structure and patterns, the aim is to collectively produce an open score with an experimental notation system.

4/ Cross-fertilization within each field of the ballet between legitimate ("high") and illegitimate ("low") culture in a co-writing situation.

Partners, artistic team

- **dramaturgical research from a feminist perspective:** a shamanic approach to constellation with the "first concerned", led by Liliane van der Velde (TBC) founder of the Nature Conscience and Shamanism school NCC / dramaturgical approach by performative arts dramaturg and researcher Sébastien Hendrickx (TBC);

- **music:** female DJs such as Caterina Barbier (TBC), Rebecca Warrior (TBC), Miss Kittin (TBC) / instrumentalists and classical musicologists. To support this research, I would also like to invite specialists in electroacoustic research (e.g. Conservatoire de Mons, Royal Conservatoire The Hague, IRCAM);

- **choreography:** master students and alumni of ISAC -ArBA (TBC), Ingrid Berger Myhre (dancer, No/Be), politicized drag collective The Propaganda (TBC), pole-dancers Melanie Weill (philosopher, & pole-dancer), Olga Kodakova, Blue Phoenix Pole (TBC), as well as advisory sessions with critics Florian Gaité, Bojana Cvejic (TBC);

- **ballet as a genre through the prism of institutional critique:** actors of the rave movement and third places such as Arnaud Idelon, professor and founder of [Ancoats](#), Antoine Calvino, journalist and founder of the Microclimat collective/ performing arts institutions linked to the ballet tradition.

Visual references

Rave

as seen by Cha Gonzalez, a French photographer who offers a rare documentary work on parties, "those times when society's norms are transgressed [...] of connection with the other, intimacy and ecstasy".

Cha Gonzalez, series *Abandon*, BnF (Bibliothèque nationale de France) - Grande commande photojournalisme (public commission)









The *Rite of Spring*
(trade-ins, reconstruction and documents)



Maurice Béjart, *Rite of Spring*, Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie, Brussels, 1959



Yuri Possokhov's *The Rite of Spring*, San Francisco Ballet, 2013



Sasha Waltz, Rite of Spring, Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie, Brussels, 2013



Martha Graham Dance Company, "The Rite of Spring" with Terese Capucilli and George White, Jr. choreography by Martha Graham by Martha Swope, 1984, via the New York Public Library



Lydia Sokolova as the Chosen Virgin in "Rite of Spring" 1920, via The New York Public Library



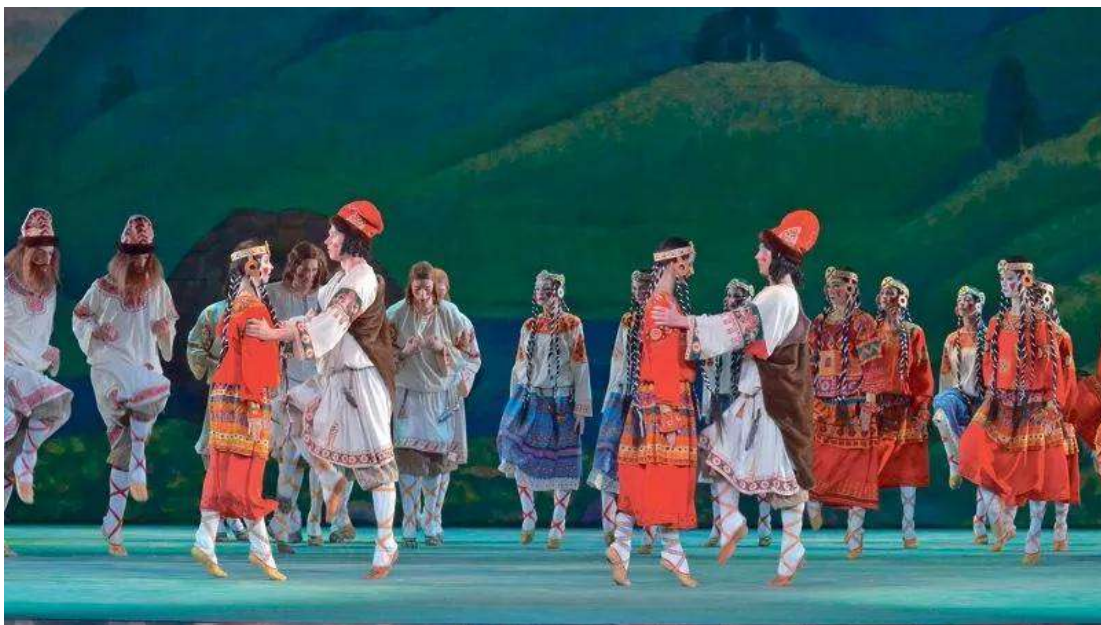
The dancers of *The Rite of Spring* (backstage image), presentation at the Théâtre des Champs Elysées, Paris, 1913, the original version by Stravinsky, Nijinsky and Roerich.



The Rite of Spring, the "restored" version by Millicent Hodson and Kenneth Archer, Joffrey Ballet, Chicago, US, 1987



Valentine Gross Hugo, on *The Rite of Spring* ("original" version, 1913), pastel on paper, published in *Montjoie! Magazine*, June 3, 1913



The Rite of Spring, the "restored" version by Millicent Hodson and Kenneth Archer, Joffrey Ballet, Chicago, US, 1987

Thank you!