

COMPANY PROFILE

Naupaca Dance Factory
2004-2014



INTRODUCTION

Contemporary dance is made up of basic compositional structures that are combined with more complex and academic techniques. Contemporary dance choreographers explore ordinary movement in a sustained manner, and find within it material for dance. The traditional qualities of bodily movement are levelled out by an interest in a type of performance that is varied in direction and gesture. The subversion of the concept of 'performance' is carried out by choreographers and artists who are eager to rethink the parameters that define art. On the stage, boundaries are broken down in an anarchic manner, and the theatrical space becomes a visual field in which the textures of bodily movement are contrasted.



MISSION STATEMENT

Naupaca Dance Factory (c.2004) is a contemporary dance organisation made up of a group of individuals, coming from different artistic backgrounds, who strive to create and share ideas about bodily movement and artistic expression. Naupaca Dance Factory constantly seeks to explore dance as an interdisciplinary medium, and to present to audiences a sense of performance that is both limitless and visionary.

Seven productions were born out of this urge to question and reconsider local pre-established notions of artistic techniques and meanings. Through their work, Naupaca Dance Factory hopes to share with audiences its methods of fusing together and bringing to life, in a powerfully visual manner, its different concepts and ideas about the language of dance and performance art.





MILESTONES

2004

Choreographer Joeline Tabone founds the organisation as Director.

The first batch of dancers join in under the name *Jesus*.

Soloist Yosef Farrugia joins the company at age 15.

Nº1 *Wondergold* {Production}

2005

Nº2 *April 1912* {Production}

2008

Soloist Deborah Agius joins the company at age 22.

Nº3 *Uniting Diversity* {Production}

2009

Production Designer Luke Azzopardi joins the organisation.

2010

Soloist Denise Buttigieg joins the company at age 8.

Soloist Rachel Galea joins the company at age 15.

Deborah Agius becomes Production Manager & Financial Officer.

2011

Scriptwriter Maria Theuma Joins the organisation as a Concept Artist.

Nº4 *The Dream* {Production}

Soloist Marise Grech joins the company at age 13.

Composer Lukas Grech starts working for the company.

Nº5 *Alice's Adventures Under Ground* {Production}

2012

Visiting Dancer Stepan Pechar collaborates with the company.

Nº6 *The Death of Snow White* {Production}

2013

Nº7 *Immaculate* {Production}



NAUPACA
DANCE
FACTORY

DIVINA

CELEBRATING
T E N
Y E A R S

A CONTEMPORARY DANCE ADAPTATION OF DANTE ALIGHIERI'S LA DIVINA COMMEDIA

17 OCT

MEDITERRANEAN • CONFERENCE • CENTRE
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WWW.NAUPACADANCEFACTORY.COM

24 OCT

THE PROJECT

Naupaca Dance Factory (est. 2004) presents **DIVINA**, a contemporary dance production based on Dante Alighieri's 'La Divina Commedia'. Direction and choreography by Joeline Tabone. Production Management by Deborah Agius. Text by Maria Theuma. Production Design and Costumes by Luke Azzopardi. It is composed of three acts: Inferno, Purgatorio and Paradiso.

A story is never enough. Humanity, and the tremendousness of its history, is superior to it. Dante Alighieri, as a poet, was well aware of this. 'The Divine Comedy' is a vast poem, that delicately presents the entirety of a cosmos, and tests our beliefs in stories and in what they signify. The philosophical aspect of the poem is complex, as it explores and challenges steadfast truths and faiths. Yet, Dante, as a poet and a wanderer, remains intensely personal and passionate as he journeys from the depths of hell to the gloriousness of heaven. This is what we, as a contemporary dance company, find appealing. It is this sense of purity, this desire to explore the greatness of knowledge in a direct and unreserved manner. We believe that the genius of Dante lies in the way he tells stories, in the way he presents darkness and light in a straightforward manner, without obscurity. And we also believe that the role of dance itself is bound to this simplicity; this clear and immediate way of speaking of the human and the beyond.

OUR VISION

The theatrical production is composed of three acts, which explore the three realms of the poem; Hell, Purgatory and Heaven respectively. The narrative linearity of Dante's journey is broken down and body movement portrays a series of states of being. Dante's language will be rewritten in contemporary idiom, to be recited/sung by the title character, Divina.

The project encompasses four aspects - choreography, literature, music and design.

(i) **Chorepgraphy**; Choreography portrays Dante's worldview by exploring parallels between late Medievals morals and a contemporary consciousness. The resulting body movement is primarily absurd. It centres around the concept of schadenfreude - the act of laughing at someone's else misfortunes - and renders the vision of hell, purgatory and heaven even more poignant.

(ii) **Divina**; Divina is a young woman, a poet-singer, who is constantly present on stage. She interacts with the characters and speaks in various voices.

(iii) **Music**; Hell is a composed of a series of soundscapes. Purgatory is a progression from soundscaping to slam poetry to pure musicality. Heaven is a combination and culmination of the previous musical styles.

(iv) **Production Design**; The design behind the proposed set deals with the original text's scientific themes, particularly those pertaining to the science of Dante's day: the spherical world presented in the poem and its various intra-levels. The stage is dynamic, a space of the improbable and the unexpected. Costumes are set to complement choreography and the dancers in movement. They are based on the application of late Medieval fashions, prints and silhouettes to contemporary dressmaking techniques. The text's explicit segregation between good and evil is reflected in visual opulence, motifs and rigid colour palettes.



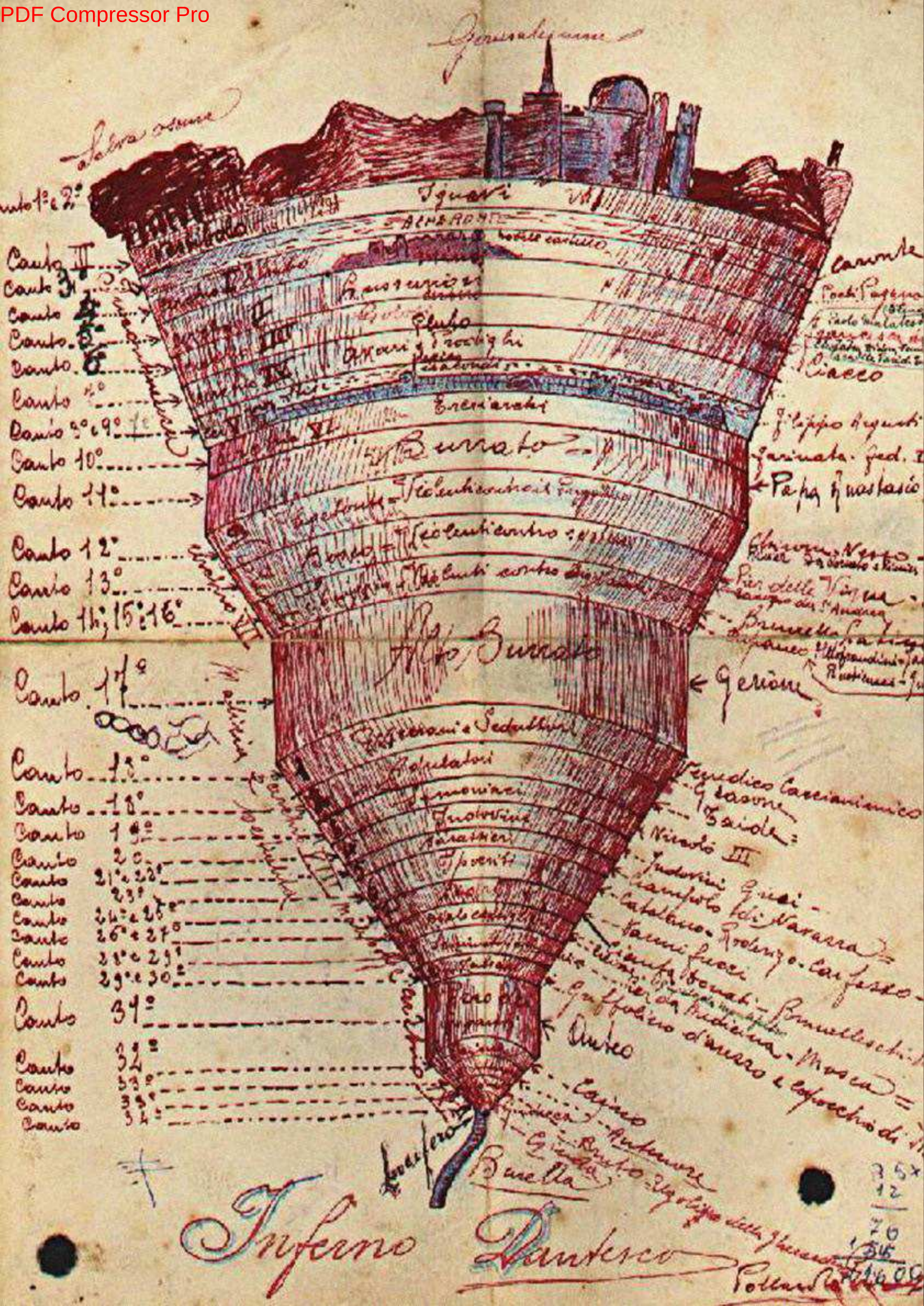


OUR VISION (cont.)

Project Location: The project, a contemporary dance theatrical production, is set to take place at the Mediterranean Conference Centre in Valletta on 17th October 2014 and at Aurora Opera House, Gozo, on 24th October 2014. Aurora Opera House and Mediterranean Conference Centre are venues whose architectural and spatial qualities are ideal for the staging of a contemporary dance adaptation of a classical text. They are also our preferred locations for the possibility of a live orchestra accompanying the dance during the performances.

Art Forms Addressed by the Project: The dance production is of a contemporary and artistically significant nature. It deals with a combination of textual (literature), visual (choreographic, costume design, set design) and musical (original musical score composition, interaction between dance and live orchestra) material, in order to present a danced retelling of La Divina Comedia. The artistic qualities of La Divina Comedia are pioneering; it aims to promote contemporary art and raise a collective awareness of contemporary cultural issues through bodily movement, classical literature and performance art. The audience present at the production will witness a performance produced and staged by artists who in their rendition and re-visiting of pre-established artistic principles contribute towards the setting up of new approaches to art. The production design, as well as the composed musical-narration complementing the staged movement, will resonate with current international art scene while re-presenting theatrical performances as artistic epitomes of the Maltese cultural scene. Our plan is to use this project as a link to European dance audience whilst promoting the islands' artistic value. As in the past, the aim is to achieve this through international networking as well as recruitment of foreign dancers in an effort to enhance inter-cultural relations.





OUR VISION (cont.)

Anticipated Outcomes: (i) A one and a half hour production of dance material of a contemporary nature, based on the original poem in Italian; (ii) A online digital publication of the script and a physical publication as a show programme; (iii) An exploration of production design as a means of strengthening concept and not as simple decoration; (iv) Costumes which will be on display as stand-alone artworks after the performance; (v) An art exhibition or installation by a respected local artist which is related to the theme of the project as an interpretation of Naupaca Dance Factory's adaption of Dante's work; (vi) Social interaction and discussions on the project through forums and blogs set up through the website.

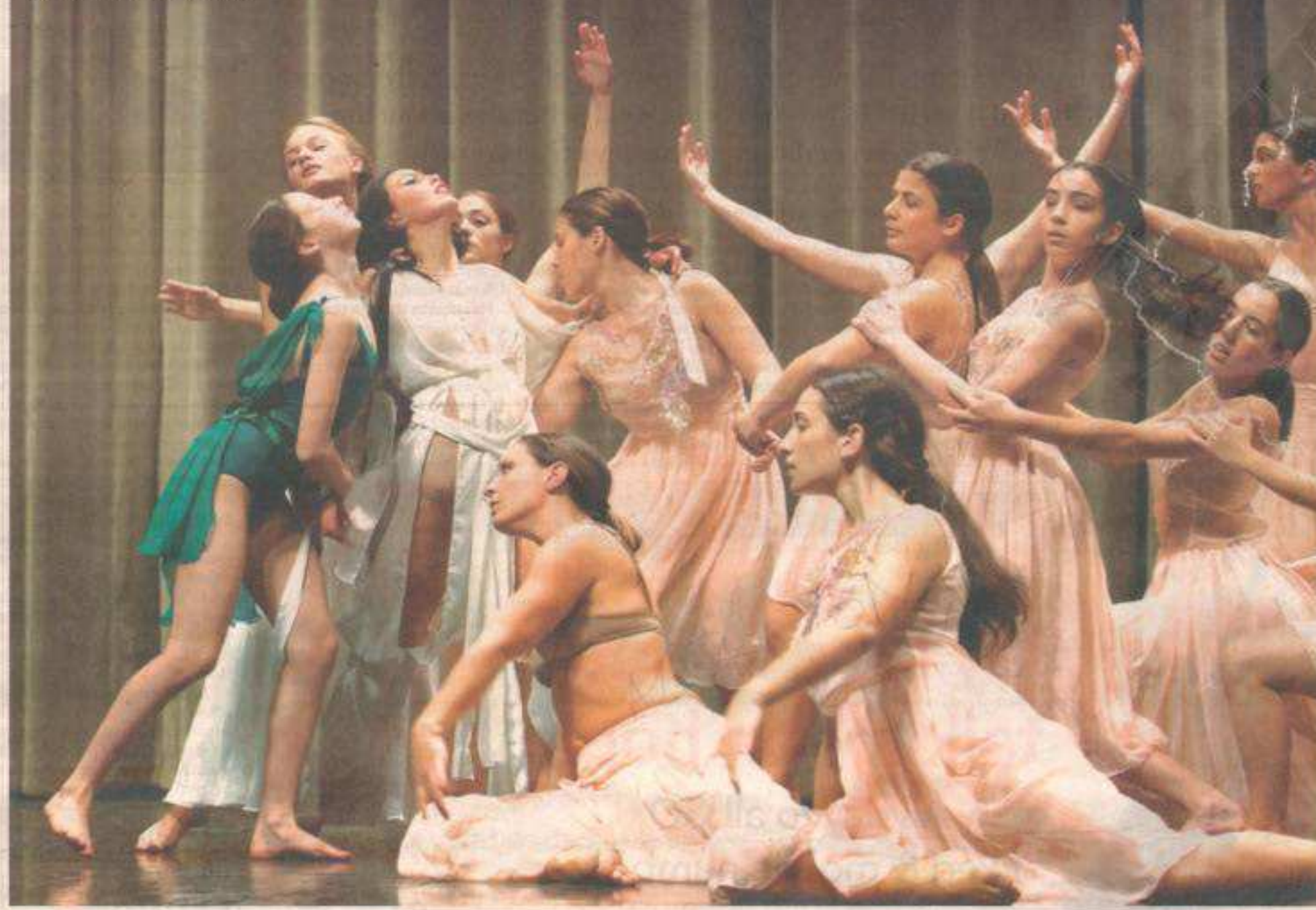
Broad Targets: (i) To promote the organisation as a contemporary art organisation; (ii) To promote dance, music composition, singing, set design, performace art, literature and costume making; (iii) To promote artistic professionalism in various other associated arts, such as videography, make-up artistry and production design; (iv) The recruitment of any male or female artists who want to join the organization for their artistic development; (v) To help develop the benchmark of how local contemporary artists can become full-time professionals.

Audience Category: Although the project will be open to all people and a general market, it is created and marketed to target very specific sectors; (i) Contemporary dance appreciators; (ii) General dance enthusiasts; (iii) Contemporary art appreciators; (iv) Literary circles; (v) Patrons of the Arts; (vi) Performance art enthusiasts; (vii) Gallery and theatre goers, critics, bloggers and forum-runners.



Dance

Naupaca dance troupe has reshaped a well-known fairy tale.
Photo: Darrin Zammit Lupi



The darker side of dance

Sumptuous costumes and avant-garde techniques characterise *The Death of Snow White: a Tragedy in Seven Days*. Peter Farrugia is seduced by the press preview.

Hot on the heels of last year's *Alice's Adventures Underground*, Gozitan dance troupe Naupaca are ready to launch another spectacular show entitled *The Death of Snow White: a Tragedy in Seven Days*.

Combining contemporary dance techniques with sumptuous costume design and a complex narrative, the group has taken a well-known fairy tale and reshaped it with particularly local flair.

Attending the show's press preview in the run-up to their first performance in Gozo on December 1, we were given a peek at several scenes from the dance and a closer look behind the scenes.

Speaking with scriptwriter Maria Theuma, it was readily evident that her work is intensely focused on the juxtaposition of sacred and secular themes to achieve a story of the body, caught in apparently conflicting states of transcendence and debasement. While the narrative seems to play fast and loose with its metaphorical register, it's a step in the right direction for national performance – it is bringing something new to

the scene, lifting the discussion considerably.

Along with an original score composed by Lukas Grech, and the professional contribution of production manager Deborah Agius, it's the individual talents of dancers like Marise Grech, Stepan Pechar and Yana Dimech that have pushed this production into high gear. The dancers' costumes (designed by Luke Azopardi) were placed on special display after the preview.

In terms of quality construction and inventiveness, they launch the production into a league of its own – several hand-embroidered dresses (completed by Sarah Micallef) are especially noteworthy.

The choreography, by Joeline Tabone, echoes the narrative tension between the body as beautiful and complex, yet by turns grotesquely provocative. Her dancers are distanced from the balletic refinement of modern European academics, but the style is never vulgar or ungainly. This may presage a national movement towards avant-garde dance, away from the processed

recitals and rehearsed reinterpretations of mainland classics that Malta makes do with for most of the year.

Throughout the preview, we were shown an aggressive series of human tableaux peopled with living ciphers. Nightmarish and fantastical,

"The body is simultaneously elevated and debased as an art object"

the audience is called to project themselves on the neglected and abandoned bodies that demand attention. In the space of a few short segments, we were made to deal with a tremendous number of figures and sift through the details to discover real substance.

At certain moments (the entrance of the Seven Dwarves) the true nature of substance (as

volatile bodily material) revealed itself to profound effect.

The performance is definitely not devoted to commonly expressed ideals of beauty. Action and story revolve around a central theme of time, generated and dissipated within bodies that are apt to metamorphosise inside time, enfolded within time. This preoccupation with temporal uncertainty fills the production literature, an anxiety that time's closed structure will still flow through the movements of each performer.

This is the essence of Tabone's choreography, exhibiting a texture of time where many images pile onto each other and clash within Theuma's jumbled narrative patchwork (drawn from the Genesis creation myth, Grimm Brothers' story and contemporary materialist culture) to produce an image of the body that is not, and can never be, body itself. The body is simultaneously elevated and debased as an art object.

This might sound a little bleak, a solipsistic labyrinth without the benefit of Ariadne's thread, but there's a hopeful hint of some

deeper relationship – an awareness of the harmful aspects of the body's disenfranchisement – that is carefully opposed by the ceaseless swell of creative human images.

Watching the entire performance will answer plenty of questions (how does this conflict resolve itself? Is there more to the dramatic vision than beautiful facades?) and raise many more. Naupaca's vision does not obviously relate with modern criteria of beauty and identity, instead pushing the boundary of that conversation but never limiting itself to easy attraction.

However, once an audience member has made that journey across the divide and approached the dance world face to face, what kind of story will ultimately emerge? I can't wait to find out.

The Death of Snow White: a Tragedy in Seven Days will take place on December 1 at the Aurora Opera House, Victoria, and on December 7 and 9 at the Mediterranean Conference Centre, Valletta. Bookings can be made by calling 2124 6389 or 2559 5750.

SUPPORT

"New and exciting standards in contemporary dance in Malta."

"Beautiful and complex, yet by turns grotesquely provocative."

Pete Farrugia, *Sunday Times of Malta*, 2012

"Bound to trump Hollywood's take on Lewis Carroll's classic in innovation"

"[Naupaca Dance Factory] appear to match the progenitor of their source material in intellectual adventurousness"

Teodor Reljic, *MaltaToday*, 2011

"Suberbly synchronised and highly professional... Tough, realistic and with sequences that were very Dantesque"

Albert Storace, *Times of Malta*, 2012

"Redefined the local contemporary dance scene and revolutionised the island's artistic sector... quite cruelly raising the standards for the next generation of contemporary dance productions."

Fejn Se Mmur?, 2012

"A very good reason to be excited about their future output."

MaltaToday, 2012

"The darker side of dance; Sumptuous costumes and avant-garde dance techniques"

Sunday Times of Malta, 2012

PAST CORPORATE SPONSORSHIPS | スポンサー

2008 HSBC Malta.

2010 Boathouse Xlendi.

2011 Café Jubilee | JPortelli Projects.

2011 Ministry for Gozo | Ministry for Education & Employment.

2012 Coca-Cola Malta | Playmobil | McDonalds | Baron Homes | Arkadia.



PROSPECT

Through this project Naupaca Dance Factory seeks to target a broader audience. The successful completion of such a large scale project will conduct all efforts undertaken to reach a high level of professionalism.

Naupaca Dance Factory considers this a paramount step to achieve international recognition and more importantly to leave a legacy of artistic material to future generations of artists.



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