

The paper offers two perspectives for analysing this specific cultural collaboration based on statistical analyses of the data collected during the bilateral research project between Macedonia and Slovenia in the field of the theatre. On the one hand, the authors analyse the presence of the Slovenian theatre productions at the various theatre festivals in Macedonia, and, on the other, the presence of the Macedonian theatre production and theatre artists at different theatre festivals in Slovenia. In the conclusion, they present the combined results of the bilateral research, emphasising the most frequent exchange habits found in the Macedonian and Slovenian theatre festivals during the last 25 years. The total sum reveals a discrepancy in the bilateral collaboration: 69 Slovenian productions participated in the Macedonian theatre festivals; 33 Macedonian productions in the Slovenian theatre festivals and 13 Macedonian productions in various theatres in Slovenia. The international festivals Ex Ponto (Slovenia) and MOT (Macedonia) played a crucial role in this relation.

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**Keywords:** theatre, festival, collaboration, production, Macedonia, Slovenia

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# The Theatre Bridge between Macedonia and Slovenia: Theatre Festivals

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## Introduction: A post-Yugoslav theatre bridge

Being part of the former Yugoslav federation for a long period of time, Macedonia and Slovenia have built a strong cultural collaboration, both bilaterally and with the other federal republics. Since 1991, the year when both countries became independent states, bilateral collaboration between Macedonia and Slovenia in the field of performing arts has continued with relatively high intensity through the exchange of theatre performances, work on co-productions, festival participations as well as the exchange of individual artists (actors, directors, costume and stage designers, composers, choreographers, etc.).<sup>1</sup> In this article we focus on the theatrical crossroads that are most crowded and accessible to Macedonian and Slovenian spectators, that is, theatre festivals, which also offer a social context. As Willmar Sauter puts it in his text about festivals as theatrical events: “A theatrical event is not only the encounter between a performance and its audience in a given place at a certain time, but includes also the complexities of the society in which it takes place. A theatrical event does not happen in a vacuum, but is closely related to such factors as aesthetics, the economy, education, attitudes, status, traditions, etc.” (“Festivals” 18–19). He goes on to “extend these aspects of the theatrical event to the scale of an entire festival”.

According to statistical data collected within the bilateral research project *Macedonian-Slovenian Theatre Relations (from 1990 until the Present)*, in the period 1990–2015 there were 46 Macedonian productions in Slovenia and 69 Slovenian performances in Macedonia. The article is thus structured in two parts. In the first part, we present all the different festivals and theatres that invited Macedonian theatre to Slovenia, that is, 33 productions at festivals and 13 guest performances at selected Slovenian cultural institutions. In the second part, we concentrate on Slovenian events in Macedonia, which were all organised within festivals. Again, we name all the festivals and list the theatres that toured to Macedonia since the independence of both states. In the conclusion, we expose the strongest connections between both states: the festivals *Ex Ponto* and *MOT*. In this article, the data has been arranged into tables to offer insight into the relational forms of the bilateral collaborations; especially to see the proportion

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<sup>1</sup> For more on Macedonian-Slovenian theatre relations since 1913, see Stojanoska (“Makedonsko-slovenske gledališke povezave”).

between festivals and other guest performances in Slovenian theatres. The data referring to the Slovenian side of theatre production and festivals was collected from the *Slovenian Theatre Annual* published by the Slovenian Theatre Institute (SLOGI) which offers the best overview of the Macedonian and Slovenian collaborations. The data from Macedonia is based on an early version of the Macedonian theatre database maintained by Faculty of Dramatic Art, Skopje, archives and documentations of theatres, reliable internet sources, etc.

## First Driveway: From Macedonia to Slovenia

The Macedonian theatre was presented to the Slovenian audience mostly within various international festivals. There were also a few “independent”, one-off guest performances at Slovenian national and other theatres such as: Slovenian National Theatre Drama Ljubljana (SNG Drama Ljubljana), the Drama of the Slovene National Theatre Maribor (Drama SNG Maribor), Slovene National Theatre Nova Gorica (SNG Nova Gorica), Mladinsko Theatre (Slovensko mladinsko gledališče), Celje People’s Theatre (Slovensko ljudsko gledališče Celje), Prešeren Theatre Kranj (Prešernovo gledališče Kranj), Cankarjev dom Cultural and Congress Centre (Cankarjev dom), most of the time based on a kind of bilateral “agreement”. As we will see, the most important role in collaborating with Macedonian theatre productions was played by the International Festival Ex Ponto (based in Ljubljana), followed by the Primorska Summer Festival (Slovenski primorski poletni festival), then Ljubljana International Festival of Pantomime (Ljubljanski mednarodni festival pantomime) and then a few guest performances at Maribor Theatre Festival (Festival Borštnikovo srečanje), Festival Exodos and the Week of Slovenian Drama (Teden slovenske drame). In the observed period, Slovenian festivals and individual theatres hosted 46 guest performances (including co-productions) from Macedonia.

**Table 1.** Slovenian festivals hosting Macedonian performances (1990–2015)

Slovenian festivals hosting Macedonian performances	Number of performances
Ex Ponto Festival	17
International Mime Festival in Ljubljana	3
Primorska Summer Festival	3
Kluže Festival	2
Week of Slovenian Drama	2
Maribor Theatre Festival	1

Slovenian festivals hosting Macedonian performances	Number of performances
European Month of Culture	1
Exodos International Festival	1
Festival Ljubljana	1
Mej(ni)fest – NETA Festival	1
International Philosophical Symposium Miklavž Ocepek	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>

**Table 2.** Slovenian theatres hosting Macedonian performances (1990–2015)

Slovenian theatres hosting Macedonian performances	Number of performances
Prešeren Theatre Kranj	3
Mladinsko Theatre	2
Slovene National Theatre Nova Gorica	2
Celje People's Theatre	2
Slovenian National Theatre Drama Ljubljana	1
Drama of the Slovene National Theatre Maribor	1
Cankarjev dom Cultural and Congress Centre	1
Koper Theatre (Gledališče Koper)	1
<b>Total:</b>	<b>13</b>

### **Ex Ponto (1993–2016)**

The Ex Ponto International Festival was one of the most important theatre organisations which highly valued inter-cultural contacts between the countries of the former Yugoslavia. Ex Ponto was launched in 1993 (before other important international festivals in Slovenia such as Exodos (1995), City of Women (1995) and Young Lions (Mladi levi) (1998)) by the B-51 Cultural Society, whose work has been rooted from the outset in a solid humanistic, political and social foundation. At the beginning, Ex Ponto was a festival with minimal financial support but a huge amount of enthusiasm and strong belief. Focusing on maintaining connections with other parts of the former Yugoslavia and South-Eastern Europe, the annual Ex Ponto festival presented national and international contemporary theatre and performing arts works. Ex Ponto was also a member of the New European Theatre Action (NETA) and since November 2007 served as the seat of the NETA

Secretariat. "During its over 16 years of activity, Eš Ponto has succeeded to achieve its initial goal to stimulate communication and international cooperation and exchange between the Balkans and other East European countries, as well as with Western Europe, through presenting contemporary theatre and performing and visual arts productions to Slovene and international audiences" ("Depot: Eš Ponto", online).

According to Ana Perne, the festival's name already announces its aim – to build a bridge between former republics of Yugoslavia. She points out the tendency of Eš Ponto to be a highly multimedia festival, at least during the first decade. Eš Ponto had two main programme components: first, to retain connections not only *with* but also *between* the republics of former Yugoslavia (which have been burdened with nationalism, ethnic conflicts and economic difficulties) and second, "to acquaint the Slovenian audience with their performing trends and wider social situation" ("Družbenokritični angažma" 195). The painful context of war gave Eš Ponto the impulse to give these kinds of political (and yet intimate) themes a place and time to be seen, articulated, interpreted. Especially at the very beginning, the festival always included all nations from former Yugoslavia, later, it also invited artists from other countries (Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, etc.). In the second part of her article, however, Perne becomes more critical, saying that the programme of Eš Ponto was focused on new approaches in performing art – yet every year it became more and more disperse, sometimes giving the impression that its programme was made almost by chance. According to Perne, by trying to attract a wider audience, Eš Ponto put a greater emphasis on quantity instead on quality (199).

The New European Theatre Action (NETA) was established in Nova Gorica, Slovenia, in 2005, with an aim to promote cultural co-operation between European countries (including Macedonia) by exchanging performances, artists and engage in publishing projects. NETA became a big and crucial part of the Eš Ponto programme and art politics. According to the portal *Culture.si*, "NETA seeks to remove the obstacles which stand in the way of creating a 'no-visa/no-border cultural space' for theatre and to enhance general cultural co-operation."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The same portal describes NETA as follows: "In 2014 the NETA network comprises 69 theatres and festivals from 20 European countries. [...] The idea of setting up a professional European theatre network was first raised in November 2004 at the inaugural meeting of representatives of theatres and festivals from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Montenegro, Croatia, Macedonia, Russia, Slovenia, Serbia, and Turkey, which was held in Bitola, Macedonia. Striving to overcome local, regional, and national interests in a sense of developing synergies on a European level, NETA members engage in international co-productions and exchange of performances, thus contributing to cultural diversity and intercultural exchange" ("New European Theatre Action").

**Table 3:** Macedonian theatre productions (excluding co-productions) at the Festival Ex Ponto (1990–2015)

THEATRE	PERFORMANCE	YEAR
National Theatre Kumanovo	V. Plavevski: <i>Break up</i>	2003
Turkish Drama Theatre Skopje	W. Shakespeare: <i>The Tempest</i>	2005
National Theatre Vojdan Chernodrinski, Prilep	B. Brecht: <i>Drums in the Night</i>	2008
Skopje City Theatre	S. Beckett: <i>Krapp's Last Tape</i> (performed at Festival Kluže)*	2009
Sofija Ristevska	V. Andovski: <i>Border</i>	2009
Sofija Ristevska	<i>Dirty Stories</i>	2009
Small Drama Theatre, Bitola	D. Dukovski: <i>Other Side</i> (performed at Festival Mej(ni)fest – Neta Festival)	2009
National Theatre Vojdan Chernodrinski, Prilep	B. Brecht: <i>The Caucasian Chalk Circle</i>	2011
Small Drama Theatre, Bitola	F. G. Lorca: <i>The House of Bernarda Alba</i>	2012
The Theater of an Actor, Skopje; Intercult, Stockholm	Plato: <i>The Apology by Socrates</i>	2012
Small Drama Theatre, Bitola; Drama-Puppet Theater Vratza, Bulgaria	E. Ionesco: <i>The Chairs</i>	2013
National Theatre Vojdan Chernodrinski, Prilep	B. Brecht: <i>Schweik in the Second World War</i>	2014

\* The Kluže Festival was produced by the B-51 Cultural Society, which also founded the Ex Ponto International Festival.

In Table 3, we see that during almost two decades of its existence, Ex Ponto presented not only many different genres, artists, themes and formats of Macedonian theatre but also its ideological and artistic shapes to the Slovenian audience, although the guest performances were mostly from national institutions (National Theater Kumanovo, Skopje City Theater, National Theater Vojdan Chernodrinski, Prilep, etc.) and based on some classical, well-known playwrights (Plato, Shakespeare, Lorca, Brecht, Beckett, Ionesco, among others).

### International Mime Festival in Ljubljana (2003–2006)

The short-lived International Mime Festival in Ljubljana also played an important role in hosting Macedonian performance artists in Slovenia. The first edition of the festival happened in 2003, its aim was to establish pantomime as equivalent to other performing art practices and genres as well as to make a step in the wider popularisation of

pantomime as such. The festival collaborated with two Macedonian pantomime artists between the years 2004 and 2006. Vojo Cvetanovski (1981), who performed twice at the festival, graduated in 2003 from the National Academy of Theatre and Film Arts “Krstov Sarafov” in Sofia. Trajče Gjorgiev (1967), who performed at the festival in 2006, graduated from the Faculty of Drama Arts in Skopje and since 1997 has been working in the Macedonian National Theatre (MNT). Working with deaf people for seven years in the field of mime, he has produced seven performances with this community.

**Table 4.** Macedonian theatre productions at the International Mime Festival in Ljubljana (1990–2015)

PANTOMIME ARTIST	PERFORMANCE	YEAR
Vojo Cvetanovski	<i>Imagination</i>	2004
Vojo Cvetanovski	<i>Love tales/stories</i>	2005
Trajče Gjorgiev	<i>Human</i>	2006

## Maribor Theatre Festival

In the period 1990–2015, the Maribor Theatre Festival first hosted a Macedonian guest performance in Slovenia in its accompanying programme in 1993, the performance by Akademski teatarski laboratorij, Skopje, which staged Žanina Mirčevska’s play *Dream* (Son). Since then, the Maribor Theatre Festival, the oldest and the most prominent theatre festival in Slovenia, has never hosted any performance from Macedonia – despite the fact that its focus has become strongly international in the last decade.

## The Week of Slovenian Drama (1971–)

The Week of Slovenian Drama is the central festival for performances of Slovenian plays, organised annually by the Prešeren Theatre Kranj with the support of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Slovenia and the Municipality of Kranj. It encourages the staging of performances of national drama as well as its production, promotion and presentation abroad. To achieve that, the festival cooperates with Slovenian and international theatres and theatre institutes.<sup>3</sup> The Week of Slovenian Drama also presents Slovenian playwrights’ works staged abroad.

<sup>3</sup> Important contributions to the encouragement of creating Slovenian drama are annual playwriting workshops, mentored by renowned Slovenian and foreign playwrights, reading performances and presentations of the nominated plays and cooperation with the Academy of Theatre, Radio, Film and Television and the Faculty of Arts, both of the University of Ljubljana. The festival started in 1971.

The Week of Slovenian Drama hosted the most recent Macedonian guest performance in Slovenia till now. It was *The Gorge* (Žrelo) by Žanina Mirčevska, a Macedonian playwright and dramaturg who has been based in Slovenia for more than two decades. Mirčevska's play, subtitled as "drama-grotesque," was staged by Drama Theater Skopje in 2014. In Slovenia, the play was nominated for the annual Slavko Grum Award for the best new Slovenian play and had its first production at SNT Drama Ljubljana in 2009.<sup>4</sup> It was described as "one of the most original Slovenian texts to appear in the past couple of years" and as "a humorous, original and bold comment on the globalised world" ("Žanina Mirčevska", online). In this play, we can find a certain subtext of the author's double identity position; she is an ethnic Macedonian, based in Slovenia who in this case describes some basic Slovenian national "archetypes" while the play is being staged in a Macedonian theatre in Skopje.

Only one other author appears in this context – Dušan Jovanović (also a theatre director and essayist), whose drama was staged at the National Theatre Kumanovo (1993) and was presented to Slovenian public in 1994. His *Antigone* (as part of his *Balkan Trilogy*) stands for one of the most important plays in the Slovenian history of drama because of its strong political and yet symbolical message and connotations. As the play is set in the middle of wartime, in the centre of a besieged town, the gesture of producing this performance in Macedonia and presenting it in Slovenia – during a period when the war in ex-Yugoslavia was at its most intense – was extremely important, both politically and artistically.

**Table 5.** Macedonian theatre productions at the Week of Slovenian Drama (1990–2015)

THEATRE	PERFORMANCE	YEAR
National Theatre Kumanovo	D. Jovanović: <i>Antigone</i>	1993
Drama Theatre Skopje	Ž. Mirčevska: <i>The Gorge</i>	2014

### Exodos (1995-)

In the next case, we see the rare occurrence of a dance performance from Macedonia to be hosted at a Slovenian festival. In 2011, Dance Studio Zodijak (Prilep) came to the Exodos Festival in Ljubljana with the performance *Bug's*, featuring the Macedonian artist Kire Miladinovski. In 1998, Miladinovski established Zodijak, a dance studio for research, production and education in contemporary dance. He received the Best Choreography Award at the state festival for modern dance Mak Dance, Kumanovo. In 2008, he

<sup>4</sup> For further data and analysis of Macedonian-Slovenian plays see article by Gašper Troha and Hristina Cvetanoska in this issue.



was a Nomad Dance Academy<sup>5</sup> student and the following year, he participated in the scholarship programme DanceWEB as part of Impulstanz in Vienna. *Bug's*, named after the famous Las Vegas Drag Queen bar, is a performance inspired by marginalised groups in the heterosexist societies, representing the imagery through which imagination, concentration and outward appearance develops.

The Exodos International Festival of Contemporary Performing Arts was established in 1995 and was always directed to give a mixture of practical, theoretical and educational aspects. As the main programme was always rounded out with other festival formats such as discussions, round tables, workshops or interventions into the public space, non-drama performing practices were consistently included (performances, lecture performances, contemporary dance, physical theatre, etc.). From 1999 till 2011, Exodos Institute organised the festival annually; the following editions have been biennial, following sudden financial cuts from Ministry of Culture (it lost about 2/3 of its previous budget), which threatened its existence. Anyway, it has made many connections and connected international projects and until now has presented more than 600 artists from all continents, including Macedonia.

### The Primorska Summer Festival (1993-)

In the years 1997–99 Macedonian theatre production frequently attended the Primorska Summer Festival, launched in 1993 as a co-production with the Koper Theatre. The main goal of the festival is to present performances in the specific natural ambient of the Slovenian coast and local city architecture. The summer period gives an opportunity to perform outdoors, in the wider public sphere, not only to get away from the black box format, but also and mostly to discover and redefine some interesting historical spots in different towns – infiltrating them with performances. We could say that a strong purpose of the festival is to re-create towns by spreading out different performative spaces.

**Table 6.** Macedonian theatre productions at the Primorska Summer Festival (1990–2015)

THEATRE	PERFORMANCE	YEAR
Youth Cultural Center Skopje MKC, Skopje	G. Stefanovski: <i>Bacchanalia</i>	1997
Youth Cultural Center Skopje MKC, Skopje; Eurokaz, Zagreb	<i>Caesar</i>	1998
National Theatre Bitola	Alexander Morfov: <i>Decameron, or Blood and Passion after Boccaccio</i>	1999

<sup>5</sup> See an interview with Dejan Srhoj in this issue. He is a freelance performer who works in the field of contemporary dance and is actively involved in developing programmes for the Nomad Dance Academy network which he co-founded.

Two of the three performances came from the Youth Cultural Center (Mladinski kulturni centar MKC), based in Skopje. Opened in 1972, in the recent years, MKC has become an alternative venue for numerous events: concerts, exhibitions, performances, festivals ... MKC offers a wide range of events for all age groups and interests, supporting the non-mainstream scene and especially the young artists from Macedonia.

## Guest performances in theatres

Although the vast majority of guest performances from Macedonia were presented at festivals, some of them were hosted by Slovenian theatres as well. Evidently, there was a huge lack of Macedonian presence in Slovenia during the period 1995–2002, when there was no guest performance at all. Most of the events involved national theatres from Macedonia which were hosted by various institutional theatres in Slovenia (Slovene National Theatre Nova Gorica, the Drama of the SNT Maribor, SNT Drama Ljubljana, Celje People's Theatre, Prešeren Theatre Kranj, etc.).

**Table 7.** Macedonian theatre productions at various Slovenian theatre institutions (1990–2015)

THEATRE	PERFORMANCE	HOSTING THEATRE	YEAR
Academia Stage Laboratory, Skopje	Ž. Mirčevska: <i>Dream</i>	SNT Drama Ljubljana	1993
Albanian Drama, Skopje	B. Brecht: <i>Baal</i>	Cankarjev dom Cultural and Congress Centre	1994
National Theatre Bitola	R. Krle: <i>Money Kills</i>	SNT Nova Gorica	2003
National Theatre Bitola	R. Krle: <i>Money Kills</i>	Mladinsko Theatre	2003
Macedonian National Theatre, Skopje	D. Dukovski: <i>Balkan Is not Dead</i>	Drama of the SNT Maribor	2003
Tanec, Skopje	Tanec	Prešeren Theatre Kranj	2003
Macedonian National Theatre, Skopje	H. Pinter: <i>The Caretaker</i>	Celje City Theatre	2004
National Theatre Bitola	A. P. Chekhov: <i>Three Sisters</i>	SNT Nova Gorica	2004
National Theatre, Kumanovo; Global Theatre, Ljubljana	S. Stanescu: <i>Balkan Blues</i>	Mladinsko Theatre	2004
National Theatre Shtip	T. Kosi: <i>Metamorphoses</i>	Celje City Theatre	2005
Tanec, Skopje	Tanec	Prešeren Theatre Kranj	2006

THEATRE	PERFORMANCE	HOSTING THEATRE	YEAR
Theatre 57, Skopje	I. Čulakovski: <i>Blood Wedding</i>	Prešeren Theatre Kranj	2006
Ljupčo Todorovski - Upa	N. Simon: <i>Anniversary</i>	Koper Theatre	2008

## Second driveway: from Slovenia to Macedonia

The theatre collaboration between Macedonia and Slovenia in terms of Slovenian theatre participation at the theatre festivals in Macedonia can be divided into three general segments:

1. Participation of the Mladinsko Theatre at the Youth Open Theatre (MOT);
2. Participation of different Slovenian theatres at Ohrid Summer Festival;
3. Participation of different Slovenian theatres at other festivals in Macedonia.

These three topics sketch the influence that the Slovenian theatre production has on the Macedonian theatre production, emphasising the influence of the new theatre methods presented by the Slovenian theatres at the Macedonian festivals. On the other hand, the participation of the various Slovenian theatres at the Macedonian festivals is the most important cultural cohesion accomplished by the two countries. Strong ties developed through the constant presence of Slovenian theatres at Macedonian festivals, especially the Mladinsko at MOT, can help us to shed light on the Mladinsko's influence on the way theatre is both produced and interpreted in Macedonia in the last two decades.

### Mladinsko Theatre and Youth Open Theatre (MOT)

The Mladinsko Theatre was established in 1955 as the first professional theatre for children and youth in Slovenia. The main switch of the theatre's profile happened around 1980 when the innovative performative procedures started to attract different age audiences which made the Mladinsko one of the leading stage laboratories in this part of Europe.<sup>6</sup> Having this laboratory profile as a trademark of the repertoire, the Mladinsko's stage productions have been determined as the most attractive in the region in the sense of the development of the experimental stage language. The directors who have marked the Mladinsko's profile as innovative as shown in the recent history of the theatre are all unique postdramatic directors with an authentic approach to building their own stage semantics; this trait has been one of the channels of influence of the Slovenian theatre

<sup>6</sup> More about the history of the Mladinsko Theatre in Toporišič et al.

production on the Macedonian one. The Mladinsko's performances shown at MOT have pointed to the importance of finding a new way of thinking about theatre's contemporary meaning, as shown in the article about the Mladinsko's influence on the Macedonian stage productions in this issue. A main characteristic that has been continuously displayed in the structure of the theatre performances is the importance of the actor's approach to the body as a linguistic instrument on the one hand, and the poly-semantics of the audio-visual design of the productions on the other. These stage laboratories have brought to audiences new and fresh focalisations of the theatre's components: the importance of the intellectual method (multilingual) in the director's approach to the chronotope on which the performance is based on (emphasising the case of Tomaž Pandur's presence at the different theatre festivals in Macedonia, beginning from MOT); the innovative approach to the body in all the linguistic possibilities and all the other reasons for the Mladinsko's self-definition of being "Not just a theatre".

Founded in 1975, MOT is the leading Macedonian festival profiled as festival of experimental theatre forms and stage laboratories; logically, it becomes the spot where the Mladinsko feels at home.<sup>7</sup> In its history, MOT has been presenting the work of many important European stage directors, including ones from Slovenia: Tomaž Pandur, Diego de Brea, Tomi Janežič, Vito Taufer and others who have strongly influenced the Macedonian stage production over various periods. Having MOT as a display of the stage laboratories and a way on which the European stage production heads to, Slovenian stage directors have directly created part of the contemporary Macedonian theatre productions: de Brea at the National Theatre in Bitola and at the Turk Theatre in Skopje, Janežič at the Macedonian National Theatre, and Pandur at the Macedonian National Theatre, although his *King Lear* unfortunately never premièred due to his death.

Since 1983, with the first participation of the Mladinsko at MOT with *Class Enemy*, all further participations of the Mladinsko at MOT became one of the most expected events for the audience.

**Table 8:** The Mladinsko Theatre at MOT (1990–2015)

PERFORMANCE	YEAR (staged at MOT)
B.-M. Koltès: <i>Roberto Zucco</i>	1995
I. Buljan, Z. Klavdija: <i>Butterendfly</i>	1995
E. Filipčič: <i>The Puzzle Home</i>	1996
Ž. Mirčevska: <i>A Place I've Never Been</i>	1996
V. Taufer: <i>Silence Silence Silence</i>	1996

<sup>7</sup> More about the history of MOT in Nikodinovski Bish.

PERFORMANCE	YEAR (staged at MOT)
Strindberg: <i>Miss Julie</i>	1997
E. Hrvatin: <i>Male Fantasies</i>	1997
B.-M. Koltès: <i>In the Solitude of Cotton Fields</i>	1998
D. Zlatar Frey: <i>Tirza</i>	1998
<i>Who's Afraid of Tennessee Williams? (talk show)</i>	1999
V. Yerofeyev/M. Oblak: <i>Moskovsk</i>	1999
Shakespeare: <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>	2000
A. Jarry: <i>Ubu</i>	2002
P. Weiss: <i>Marat/Sade</i>	2003
A. Chekhov: <i>Three Sisters</i>	2004
P. Handke: <i>Kaspar</i>	2005
B. Strauss: <i>The One and the Other</i>	2006
T. Štivičić: <i>Fragile!</i>	2009
O. Frljić: <i>Damned Be the Traitor of His Homeland!</i>	2010
P. P. Pasolini: <i>Amado Mio</i>	2010
Dostoevsky: <i>Crime and Punishment</i>	2011
N. Alen: <i>Nijinsky's Last Dance</i>	2011
K. Mann: <i>Mephisto</i>	2012
Visconti, D'Amico, Medioli: <i>L'Innocente</i>	2013
A. E. Skubic: <i>Pavla Above the Precipice</i>	2014

The importance of the Mladinsko Theatre's presence at MOT is seen in the aesthetic innovation for which the Mladinsko is very well-known in Europe. In this way, the Mladinsko's impact on the Macedonian theatre production is reflected in the new directorial approaches and methods seen on the different Macedonian stages, as well as in the possibility for co-production between the Mladinsko Theatre and the Macedonian theatres. However, the first co-production happened only recently, the one between Theatre Dzinot (Veles) and the Mladinsko in 2016.<sup>8</sup> It premiered at the Impact Festival in Veles and in the same year participated in the Festival of Antique drama Stobi and MOT, but unfortunately it did not appear at any Slovenian festival or theatre.

Beside the participation of the Mladinsko in MOT, in the period 1990–2015 there are 15 other productions of Slovenian theatres that appeared at MOT:

<sup>8</sup> It was *Phaedra* by Sasho Dimoski, directed by Aleksandar Ivanovski, with Maruša Oblak from the Mladinsko Theatre in the leading role.

**Table 9.** Slovenian theatres at MOT (1990–2015)

THEATRE	PERFORMANCE	YEAR
SNT Drama Ljubljana	D. Jovanović: <i>Antigone</i>	1993
Glej Theatre, Ljubljana	<i>Every Word a Gold Coin's Worth</i>	1995
Glej Theatre, Ljubljana	M. Kleč: <i>Xanax</i>	1996
Glej Theatre, Ljubljana	<i>Hamlets 'n' Roses</i>	1996
Glej Theatre, Ljubljana	Grapefruit: <i>Elvis de luxe</i>	1997
Cankarjev Dom, Ljubljana	<i>Melancholic Thoughts</i>	1998
Glej Theatre, Ljubljana	<i>Jesus F.</i>	1998
Mladinsko Theatre, MKC and Eurokaz Zagreb	Shakespeare, Brecht, Krum, Georgievski, Garvanlieva: <i>Caesar</i>	1998
Cultural Association B-51 (Ex Ponto), Ljubljana; Intercity Festival, Florence; Théâtre Saint Gervais, Genève	R. Garcia: <i>In a certain moment of life you should definitely stop the nonsense</i>	2007
Via Negativa	<i>Viva Verdi</i>	2008
EnKnapGroup	<i>In Between (Earth and Sky)</i>	2008/09
Glej Theatre, Ljubljana	D. Avdić: <i>Bridge over Blood</i>	2010
Maska, Ljubljana	<i>All Together Now!</i>	2014
Maska, Ljubljana	J. Rusjan: <i>Škrip Inc.</i>	2014
Prešeren Theatre Kranj, Ptuj City Theatre	<i>Dead Man Comes for his Sweetheart</i>	2016

To summarise the data, in the period 1990–2015, MOT hosted 40 Slovenian theatre productions which indeed is an important number of theatre performances structured in the methods of theatre laboratories and stage experiments. This makes MOT the most important platform for presentation of the Slovenian theatre production in Macedonia.

### Ohrid Summer Festival as host of Slovenian theatre productions

Ohrid Summer Festival, founded in 1961, is the most important Macedonian international festival.<sup>9</sup> Organised in two main programmes (drama and music), Ohrid Summer Festival has hosted renowned contemporary stage artists, composers and instrumentalists from all over the world. In the period 1990–2015 the festival hosted the following Slovenian productions:

<sup>9</sup> More about Ohrid Summer Festival at [www.ohridskoletu.com.mk](http://www.ohridskoletu.com.mk).

**Table 10.** Slovenian productions at Ohrid Summer Festival (1990–2015)

THEATRE	PERFORMANCE	YEAR
Academy of Theatre, Radio, Film and Television	Aeschylus: <i>Darius at the Tomb</i>	1993
Mladinsko Theatre	E. Filipčič: <i>Home Joys</i>	1996
SNT Nova Gorica	E. Ionesco: <i>The Bald Soprano</i>	1997
Mladinsko Theatre	Bernard Marie Koltès: <i>In the Solitude of Cotton Fields</i>	1998
SNT Nova Gorica	C. Goldoni: <i>Fishermen's Fights</i>	2003
SNT Drama Ljubljana	E. Ionesco: <i>Waiting for Godot</i>	
SNT Maribor (Ballet Ensemble)	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i> ballet	2006
Pandur Theaters, Ulyssis Theatre and Festival Mittelfest	L. Pandur: <i>Tesla Electric Company</i>	2007
SNT Drama Ljubljana	Molière: <i>Tartuffe</i>	2008
SNT Drama Ljubljana	E. Lubitch: <i>When I was Dead</i>	2013
SNT Drama Ljubljana	G. Stefanovski: <i>Figurae Veneris Historiae</i>	2015
SNT Drama Ljubljana	S. I. Witkiewicz: <i>The Crazy Locomotive</i>	2016

The twelve Slovenian productions that have participated in the official selections of the festival's editions prove that the collaboration between Macedonia and Slovenia has been very important for sustaining the international profile and meaning of this festival.

### Other participations of Slovenian theatre productions at Macedonian theatre festivals

In the period 1990–2015, several festivals hosted a total of seventeen Slovenian theatre productions. Four Slovenian performances, all of them from SNT Drama Ljubljana, were guests at the Spring Festival in Skopje:

**Table 11.** Slovenian Theatres at the Spring Festival (1990–2015)

THEATRE	PERFORMANCE	YEAR
SNT Drama Ljubljana	L. Tolstoy: <i>Ana Karenina</i>	2006
SNT Drama Ljubljana	V. Bartol, D. Jovanović: <i>Alamut</i>	2006
SNT Drama Ljubljana	Dostoyevsky: <i>The Brothers Karamazov</i>	2006
SNT Drama Ljubljana	Christopher Marlowe: <i>Edward II</i>	2006

In the same period, four Slovenian productions were part of the official selection of the Festival *Risto Shishkov* in Strumica. The festival, founded in 1992 as memorial festival to the great Macedonian actor Risto Shishkov and profiled in the chamber stage festival model, marks four Slovenian productions in the observed period:

**Table 12.** Slovenian theatre productions at the Festival Risto Shishkov (1990–2015)

THEATRE	PERFORMANCE	YEAR
Mini Teater Ljubljana	L. Jankovič: <i>Like me</i>	2008
Muzeum, Ljubljana	B. Novakovič: <i>Source Image</i>	2012
Mini Teater Ljubljana	E. Ionesco: <i>The Chairs</i>	2013
Slovenian Theatre Institute (SLOGI)	M. Knez: <i>Irena! No, I can't anymore!</i>	2016

The Impact Festival, founded in 2011 in Veles and designed as a stage laboratory platform for experimental theatre, presented in its very short history four theatre productions from Slovenia.

**Table 13.** Slovenian productions at the Impact Festival (1990–2015)

THEATRE	PERFORMANCE	YEAR
Mladinsko Theatre	M. Oblak: <i>Diva, Saint, Mother, Bitch</i>	2011
Glej Theatre	N. La Bute: <i>Reasons to be Happy</i>	2011
Mladinsko Theatre	M. Tompkins: <i>Wind of Foolery</i>	2014
Mladinsko Theatre	U. Kaurin, V. Weis: <i>Hero 1.0</i>	2014

The Monodrama Festival in Bitola, founded in 2001 and determined in its title, hosted one Slovenian production in 2013: ŠKUC Theatre's *The Case of Inge M.* by Heiner Müller. In addition, two dance festivals (LocoMotion and Tanc Fest) hosted four Slovenian dance productions.<sup>10</sup>

## Marking the theatre bridge: a general picture

In the period 1990–2015, 69 stage productions were part of the official selections in various theatre festivals in Macedonia, most of them at MOT. The fact that Mladinsko's productions, labelled as forms of experimental theatre and stage laboratories are most frequent participants at theatre festivals in Macedonia speaks about the impact

<sup>10</sup> For a more detailed elaboration see article by Sonja Zdravkova Djeparoska and Aldo Milohnić in this issue.



they have on the Macedonian theatre productions, especially those oriented towards experimenting with direction and acting, as well as audio-visual stage design.

## Conclusion: Defining the festival theatre bridge

To summarise the facts of the research, the theatre bridge between Macedonia and Slovenia and vice versa, in the frame of bilateral festival participation, we see that 69 Slovenian productions have participated in the Macedonian theatre festivals, and 33 Macedonian productions have been part of the selection of the Slovenian theatre festivals (plus 13 as individual guest performances staged at various Slovenian theatres). These numbers show that the Slovenian presence at the Macedonian theatre festivals is quite stronger than the Macedonian one at the Slovenian festivals. This disproportion opens the question of lack of proportion in the bilateral cooperation, which guides us to finding different models of equalisation and invigoration of the Macedonian presence at the Slovenian theatre festivals. On the other hand, the strong connection between the Mladinsko and MOT points to an important theatre bridge which has made a serious impact on the Macedonian authors/productions through the history of the collaboration. Through the importance of the laboratory approach to the stage production, the Macedonian theatre has gained several strong partners, authors/directors that have shaped the contemporary Macedonian theatre production, especially through placing the postdramatic techniques on different Macedonian theatre stages. Emphasising the method of *textual reduction* (Lehmann 78) in the case of de Brea, as well as the so-called *perfume distillation method* (Lukić) in the case of Pandur, the appearances of these directors at the various theatre festivals has influenced new paths for exploring the contemporary theatre possibilities and stage innovations in the wide approach to the theatre. The participation of the Slovenian theatre productions in the Macedonian theatre festivals marks an important bridge through which the Macedonian theatre production develops into more open, experimental performances that can be marked as postdramatic.

The Ex Ponto Festival played a key role in presenting Macedonian theatre to the Slovenian audience; 17 Macedonian theatre performances were part of its programme. This number is half of all Macedonian performances hosted at Slovenian theatre festivals. The international festival Ex Ponto was one of the most important theatre organisations which highly valued inter-cultural contacts between the countries of the former Yugoslavia. Without this festival, the Slovenian audience would have been strongly deprived of seeing former and contemporary tendencies in Macedonian performing arts. On the other hand, it remains an open question if the Macedonian performances shown at Ex Ponto were really representative ones; as the festival's policy in general did not always emerge from the intent to show the "best of".

Sadly, the selection of festival performances depended mostly on the financial (dis)ability and sometimes also on “friendly” (reciprocated) agreements. As elaborated in the first part of this article, Macedonian performances were presented only sporadically at other Slovenian theatre festivals, so we can hardly say that Slovenian theatre was influenced by Macedonian theatre as strongly as we can notice in the case of the impact of Slovenian theatre on the trends in Macedonian theatre in the last 25 years.

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