



ŻFINMALTA
NATIONAL DANCE COMPANY

21 DANCES FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

9, 10, 11 OCTOBER 2020

21 DANCES FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

'21 Dances for the 21st Century' is the second full-length performance choreographed by ŻfinMalta's Artistic Director, Paolo Mangiola, in a collaboration with visual artist Kane Cali.

Borrowing its structure from the highly acclaimed book *21 Lessons for the 21st Century*, by Yuval Noah Harari, '21 Dances for the 21st Century' offers reflections, and possible solutions, on pressing issues in our global contemporary culture and the digital age, such as machine learning, AI, and the extinction crisis. As this multi-layered dance piece unfolds, chapter by chapter, it traces the spirit of what it means to live now, and the challenges we face.

PAOLO MANGIOLA

/ Artistic Director

“After reading *21 Lessons for the 21st Century* I was inspired to further interrogate the questions posed by the author, through my own practice as a choreographer. The idea was to create a work which is ‘episodic’, like watching a series, or browsing the internet. I also wanted the pace of the work to reflect the structure and rhythm of the book. I love the way Yuval Noah Harari gets us to think about the big topics – climate change, AI, immigration – and I wanted to challenge myself, the dancers, and our collaborators, to ‘translate’ these questions into dance, ultimately creating a parallel platform for thinking that the book provides.”

Paolo Mangiola

/ Production Team

Choreography: Paolo Mangiola,
in collaboration with the dancers

Visual Artist & Set Design: Kane Cali

Original Score: Veronique Vella

Costumes: Luke Azzopardi

Light Design: Moritz Zavan Stoeckle

/ Dancers

Pearl Calleja, Mathieu Chabaneix-Amor,
Tara Dalli, Félix Deepen, Ibai Jimenez
Gorostizu-Orkaiztegi, Andrea Martín Albert,
Keith Micallef, Nicola Micallef, Simon Riccardi-Zani,
Amber van Veen

/ Company

Agency Administrator: Rachel Vella

Producer: Nicole Bearman

Education & Outreach Artist: Martina Zammit

Artistic Coordinator: Anna Nowak

Creative Learning & Archive Officer:

Emma Louise Walker

Secretary: Sylvia Attard

Marketing & PR: NoceMuskata

Photography: Ritty Tacsum

Design: Anthony Galea

THE ARTISTS

KANE CALI

/ Visual Artist & Set Design

Automation Temple

Influenced by Harari's words, I set out to create a structure born of data. '21 Dances for the 21st Century' centres itself around the anthropocene, an age of great change, with challenges that address the need for deeper reflection through profound thought. It is a time that will be defined not only by its technological break throughs, but also by its philosophical imperative.

The direction of this work first took form in the word 'temple'. A data-driven temple dedicated to Homo Deus. A whitewashed structure, an artefact, a relic for the future; a point of convergence, a shift in power. This is not a temple built with sweat and tears, but rather by algorithms and automation. This monolith is a witness to our times, where monumental decisions have global repercussions and we are faced with the question: do we want our way of life to survive, or are we becoming accustomed to the patterns of our own demise?

Without a fixed state or position, the structure needed to convey monumentality both on a conceptual level and in scale. Its overwhelming presence might form a tipping point, from which civilisation either thrives or falls to ruin.

VERONIQUE VELLA

/ Composer

Artistic Director Paolo Mangiola's first request was for a score containing both acoustic and electronic elements. The mood was to be dark and dystopian, for the most part, which also seemed a fitting atmosphere to capture during a pandemic. Following the choice of acoustic instruments – the clarinet, viola and cello – musicians Godfrey Mifsud, Nadia Debono and Akos Kertesz were invited to collaborate in a recording session with Dr. Rene Mamo.

During early discussions with Paolo the word 'madrigal' emerged, which led my research towards a particular type of vocal composition popular during the Renaissance. A beautiful piece by Thomas Morley, 'Miraculous Love's Wounding', was arranged for viola and cello. The madrigal idea led to 'We are Us' – an a cappella piece for the dancers, inspired by Aristophanes's imaginative account of The Origin of Love.

The electronic tracks contain layers of various synthesisers, opting for warm, retro, analog sounds, which in turn influence the fabric of the entire work. Recurring musical motifs give shape and coherence, and allude to the theme of cycles, a clear example being similarities in the opening and final tracks. Overall, the music contains influences from minimalism, psychedelic, and neo-classical music, as well as folk elements.

The resulting score invites audiences to reflect upon the pertinent themes in the choreography, in particular the paradox of transient human experience and the irreversible human impact on the environment.

LUKE AZZOPARDI

/ Costumes

Aside from its literary point of departure which, when the dust settles, will inevitably emerge as a canonical work in post-human theory, I feel that '21 Dances for the 21st Century' speaks of the ways in which the past and the perceived future can be revisited and assembled to create bold, new narratives; stories that offer insight into where we came from, and where we should be going. Moreover, it is a project which speaks in a beautiful, enigmatic language, with the intention of dismantling preconceived notions of chronology and truth.

While the rigid, cocoon-like envelopes surrounding the dancers are designed to act as exoskeletons, of sorts, the entire process of costume design was one of capturing and reimagining data through a layered approach – captured imagery, microscopic stills and x-rays were all translated, transformed and relayed to the point where they became 'pure data'. Data which borrows from the past to make a statement about art and movement in the present.

21 DANCES FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

PART 1

CHAPTER 1 – RUINS

Ruins, representative of past civilisations, rituals, and the unknown. These ruins lay the foundation for re/building a new space, for dance.

CHAPTER 2 – STORIES

The ability to create stories is an innate and unique human activity. Dance creates a space where stories are shared and intertwined, to become part of a collective.

CHAPTER 3 – AUTOMATION

Merging AI with natural intelligence. An exploration of the limits and the possibilities of movement and the human body.

CHAPTER 4 – CARVING

From automation to the manual and man-made. An expression of the solidity of the material and the force of the action of carving.

Reference: *Allegory of the Planets* and *Continents*, 1752, Giovanni Battista Tiepolo. Collection of The Met, New York.

CHAPTER 5 – BLENDING

A duet, a male and a female, and the big idea of Globalisation in all of its complexity – across cultures, gender, conflict, economies.

CHAPTERS 6/7 – THE SPREAD

6: Civilisations coalesce and the skull is assembled, facing south towards the audience. The Anthropocene takes form; everything is measured through human eyes.

7: An idealised matriarchal place, where female presence is dominant and intrinsically linked to unity, lightness, protection, and beauty.

PART 2

CHAPTER 8 – THE WIND FARM

An introduction to extinction. Through frenetic and repetitive movement, an idea of renewable energy is what remains in a bare, almost dystopian landscape.

CHAPTER 9 – THE COMPASS

Orientation, coordinates, time and space. The coordinates here are set to the Himalayas, a place akin to spirituality and finding our place in the world.

CHAPTER 10 – THE SHIFT

In line with the new coordinates, the orientation, and therefore the gaze of the skull, shifts to the East.

CHAPTER 11 – THE LEVER AND THE PLANT

Moving towards secularism, the acceptance of biotechnology and an expression of how humans can co-exist with science and technology. Once this is understood we no longer need idols.

CHAPTER 12 – HUMILITY

The skull is dismantled, collectively, signaling a departure from measuring the world through a long-accepted human set of rules, to awareness of being part of something bigger.

PART 3

CHAPTER 13 – THE FALL

A shedding, a clearing; emancipation from antiquated belief systems and rules and stepping forward into the present.

CHAPTER 14 – UNTITLED

A baroque score, the juxtaposition of a duet and a solo, fast and slow. Audience members can choose their focus.

CHAPTER 15 – THE WAVE

It's a revolution. This wave of change brings individualism and personal rhythm, a wave of 'collective solos'. The new coordinates are of the Solar System.

CHAPTERS 16/17/18

– THE MADRIGAL (IN THREE CHAPTERS)

Singing and vibration, through the words of 'The Origins of Love', by Aristophanes. A pure manifestation of love. Here there are no gods or external references.

CHAPTER 19 – A SOLO

CHAPTER 20 – LOST ITEMS

Extinct items are left in the space: extinct poems, extinct dances, extinct places. Through the ephemeral nature of dance, ideas are expressed and discarded at once.

CHAPTER 21 – THE COCOON

The origin. A symbol of encapsulation, and rebirth, where each of us can reach our potential.

Duration: 70 mins | **Age:** 5+



/ THANKS

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Valletta Campus Theatre,
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Intercontinental Hotel Malta

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Valeria and Jordi Goetstouwers

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Your support for ŻfinMalta National Dance Company will contribute directly to the future of world-class dance in Malta and support programmes that develop new Maltese dance works, cultivate emerging artists and inspire audiences.

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FULL SEASON PROGRAMME

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L-Università ta' Malta
School of Performing Arts



NEXT PERFORMANCE

**26 / 27 / 28 / 29
NOVEMBER 2020**

ZFINMADE

7 CHOREOGRAPHERS

6 DANCERS

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