

## Section.in.ua (Lviv, Ukraine)

(this review/interview was translated from the [original Ukrainian](#) using google Translate)

### Take the simple and show the interesting. Author of a performance about why people watch 50 days and what to do next



Dance performance "Shirts and shoes" / Jan Galas (First Theater)

On August 17, one of the few shows of the Ukrainian-American dance performance "Shirts and Shoes" took place in Lviv, which tells about what distinguishes and what makes people the same.

The performance is the result of the joint work of two choreographers: Peter Kyle from New York and Anton Ovchinnikov from Kyiv. For several months, the authors researched how people of different cultures perform everyday activities, skipped it through a series of reflections, discussions and transformations, and presented it to the audience in the form of a dance performance

In an interview with "Section", one of the choreographers of the play, Anton Ovchinnikov, told how the idea of creating this project was born, what is in it and what to expect next.



Anton Ovchinnikov - choreographer, performer and founder of the International Festival of Contemporary Dance Theater Zelyonka Fest

**Where did the idea for the performance come from and how did you work on it?**

The performance is the result of a study that lasted almost a year - from September 2017. Peter (Peter Kyle, choreographer who worked on the project - ed.) Has a solo performance called "One hundred days" - for 100 days he he went out to certain public spaces every day and watched people. Then he made a play that consisted of the daily movements of a hundred people. In form, it is quite simple: there is a text, for example, "The guy who plays football", "The girl who collects flowers", and he just portrays it. It all happens to music, according to a well-thought-out structure, has a composition.



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Peter told me about it, but I didn't understand what could be interesting here. Later, after he sent me a video of his observations, after many conversations, I realized that the process of recording movements, reflections, discussions is much more interesting than the final result on stage. This is solely my opinion. In addition, the action is inextricably linked to the collection and analysis of information. After all, without understanding the process, it is not very interesting to observe the movements of the speakers.

When Peter arrived in Ukraine, he saw things that are typical of us that are not typical of Americans (for example, a neatly folded student's hands at a desk and raising one as a sign that he wants to answer - ed.). So the idea was to do a study of the difference in the physical mentality of people. I was interested in it, but I said that in the end the viewer should be interested to look at it. The play must cling.

**How long have you been researching people and how has this been done in practice?**

We started filming people at the same time as Peter on August 24, 2017. And they did it for 50 days. I worked in Kyiv, Kropyvnytskyi and Kherson. He simply took the camera and tried to imperceptibly record the movements of certain passers-by on it.

**Were there no conflicts about this? In the end, you might have been noticed.**

There were many times that I noticed. In general, I always felt like a spy \* laughs \*. I had a small camera, like a GoPro, which I clung to my belt and tried to stand in different poses so as not to attract attention. It didn't always work. Then, when I was watching the video, I saw that I was noticed here, but the person didn't fully understand whether I was shooting it or not, so I tried to make sure or turned away.

### **Did you transform what you saw in the video into text and then into movements?**

Yes, we discussed a lot of every movement that was on the video. The participants of the play described it in words, then other participants turned these words into movements. The dance experience helped us to do this. This simplifies things, because we have a dictionary with which we can describe the tone, range of motion and more. But even the simplest movement can be described in two sentences, or in two pages. Someone described by color, someone by animals. It all depends on the perception of a particular person.

For example, before the performances, we had a workshop in Kyiv, where we invited people not related to the theater and did a little experiment. These people were divided into two groups: one was shown the video several times and asked to share what they saw in text format. And the participants of the second group had to reproduce the movements according to the description from the words.

This repeats the process of creating a play. In fact, when we read the descriptions, we confirmed for ourselves the idea that all people see the world differently and pay attention to different things.



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### **But still you left the textual component in the play. Why?**

The text we use at the beginning is intended to introduce the audience to the context only a little, to give an understanding that the play is based on the transformation of the text into a physical movement. The performance has no plot or story, it does not have an emotional perception of the world around it. And at first we thought it would be a single text.

But then, when we started to create the structure of the play, I suggested that in order to tell about some physical features of other people, you need to tell about your own. Otherwise, how can you understand that it's you and it's not?

We had a three-day process of researching each other when we didn't know who was researching us. Then everyone created a descriptive portrait of a colleague. And on the basis of this we built

the part of the play where each of the participants tells about himself by different means: who I am, how I see myself and how others see me.

**The text is heard from the stage in three languages: English, Ukrainian and Russian. Why these languages?**

They are communicated by the participants of the performance. We did not try to make the play representative and show that so many people speak Ukrainian and so many speak Russian. But, for example, in our team only one participant speaks Ukrainian. Others know Ukrainian, but communicate mostly in Russian.

In recent years, we have done quite a few performances where the text is used. And the question - what language should we speak on stage - constantly arises. There is an opinion that if we present Ukrainian theater in Ukraine, we are obliged to speak Ukrainian. But I always argue with this thesis. Now Ukraine is bilingual. And for me, modern theater is, to a greater extent, about what really is, about honesty. So why, if in my life I speak Russian, I have to do differently on stage?

**Regarding the musical component. There you can hear beatboxing and recordings of sounds from the streets. How did it combine into one musical accompaniment?**

All the music, suggestions on it were heard when the rehearsals began. The girls, the composers who were responsible for this part, watched what we were doing, offered their ideas, we - ours. So in the process of discussion, what the viewer hears was born. The whole group heard the final result three days before the premiere.

We wanted the sounds of cities to be woven into the music. We made some of such recordings in Ukraine, some Peter brought from New York.

As for beatboxing... We needed a clear rhythm at the beginning of the show. It turned out that the composer knows how to do it. That's how this particle came to be. This is a performative component - everything that can be done live now, we do here and now.

**How do people perceive your performance? What reviews?**

Reaction and feedback is a rather difficult topic. Usually 90% of the feedback we hear is positive. It's just that people who have a negative impression do not communicate with us. If someone doesn't like it, he goes out in the middle of the play or goes silently at the end. People seem to respect our efforts and therefore do not say what they think.

But the feedback is still different. Some things people don't understand as we would like. But the reason for this is that we did not have enough time to make them as we see them. There are only three weeks left for rehearsals due to the schedule of all participants. Therefore, we failed to fully focus the audience's attention on the right moments, sometimes their attention was distracted.

However, often people do not accept our work, because they consider the theater a purely entertaining element of life. And if there is no drive music, virtuoso jumps, which take your breath

away, they are dissatisfied. Some ask, "Why am I being shown this? Even I can do that. " And here I agree - of course they can! Because all the vocabulary, movements - this is what we saw on the street. It's about trying to pay attention to the physical part of your life that most people don't pay attention to. We still look at others sometimes, but we can say little about ourselves. Such a performance is an opportunity for us to put a mirror in front of people and say: "Try to look at yourself."

Some may end up asking, "Why do I need this? I didn't learn anything. " Probably so. But it is an opportunity to make your life more voluminous.

In fact, the performance is minimalist and it helps to better understand what we are doing, why we are standing in certain poses at a particular moment.

### **Will there be similar projects in the future?**

There are a lot of different things that suddenly become interesting to us and maybe we will continue, but in what form, in what composition, I do not know yet.

There is nothing concrete in the plans yet, but there are constant discussions. Recently, for example, it was said that you can take the theme of the play movements that a person makes only sitting on a chair. It can be made even more minimalist. But the play must be interesting for the viewer, otherwise he could just read the research, and not come and look at us. Therefore, we have an even greater challenge and interest - to take something easier and make it interesting.