



## THINKING AND RETHINKING BALLET

In 2021 The Slovenian Ballet Artists' Association and Cultural Institute Stage / The Slovenian Centre ITI under the support of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Slovenia launched a web page section and talks streamed on Youtube with esteemed ballet personalities from around the World.

Talk Host: TATJANA AŽMAN  
Introduction: NATAŠA BERCE

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*So far, our international guests from dance, dance education, choreography, criticism, artistic directors field, and new approaches were: **ROBERT DEKKERS (USA), GEORGETTE GEBARA (LEBANON), MIHAELA DEVALD ROKSADIĆ (CROATIA), CHASE JOHNSEY (SPAIN), ALASTAIR MACAULAY (UK), JAŠ OTRIN (GERMANY/SLOVENIA), JENNIFER HOMMANS (USA), SZILARD MACHER (HUNGARY), MÁRIO RADAČOVSKÝ (SLOVAKIA), GABRIELLE HASLINGER (AUSTRIA) and HELLEN PICKETT (USA).***

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*This exceptional cooperation between two organizations fosters the dialogue between art and society with diversity and international reach.*

**THINKING AND RETHINKING BALLET**  
*is the only platform in collaboration with the ITI,  
which offers the contemporary insite of this content about people and  
the most important aspects of the ballet art.*

We encourage you to follow our talks and share with your dance community in your country as well as with the dance artists connected to the ITI.

We are kindly inviting you to listen to our latest editions from 2023 with **JENNIFER HOMMANS, SZILÁRD MACHER, MÁRIO RADAČOVSKÝ, GABRIELLE HASLINGER** and the opening talk of 2024 with **HELLEN PICKETT**.

**Cultural Institute Stage / The Slovenian Centre ITI and  
the Slovenian Ballet Artists' Association  
wish you a succesful and ispiring 2024!**

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**Jennifer A. Homans** (born 1960) is an American historian, author, and dance critic. Her book *Apollo's Angels: A History of Ballet* was a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award in 2010. Homans was raised in Chicago, Illinois, where she trained as a ballerina from the age of eight. By the time she was a teenager, Homans had enrolled in dance classes at the University of Chicago and eventually left the state for more serious training at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts and School of American Ballet. After dancing professionally with the Pacific Northwest Ballet, Homans decided to enroll in Columbia University at the age of 26. After earning her Bachelor of Arts degree in French literature, she enrolled in New York University (NYU) for her PhD in Modern European History. Following her PhD, Homans accepted a position as a Distinguished Scholar in Residence at NYU, where she wrote her first book, *Apollo's Angels: A History of Ballet*. *Apollo's Angels* traced back the origins of ballet from the Renaissance to modern times. The book was described by *The New York Times* as "the only truly definitive history of ballet". It was a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award and was named as one of the "10 Best Books of 2010" by the *New York Times*. Homans' claim that ballet is a dying art form generated controverts Art critic Claudia La Rocco rebuffed Homans' claims and critiqued the book for its alleged lack of attention to post-George Balanchine developments in ballet, including William Forsythe. From 2012 to 2013, Homans was granted a Guggenheim Fellowship as she began writing her second book, a history of George Balanchine. The following year, she established the Center for Ballet and the Arts at NYU with funding from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to help "establish ballet as a serious subject of academic inquiry. In its inaugural cohort, the institute accepted seven fellows; John Carrafa, Gregory Mosher, J. David Velleman, Heather Watts, Frederick Wiseman, Christopher d'Amboise, and John Michael Schert. In 2016, Homans was selected as a Fellow of the New York Public Library's Dorothy and Lewis B. Cullman Center for Scholars and Writers. In 2019, Homans' Center for Ballet and the Arts received a three-year \$2 million grant. She was also named *The New Yorker's* dance critic, replacing Joan Acocella. She was named a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2021.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k-fAInK0trI>

**Szilárd Macher**, ballet dancer, pedagogue, choreographer, Vice-Rector of HDU, studied at the Ballet School of Art in Győr between 1985 and 1991 and then at the Hungarian Dance Academy in Budapest until 1994. After graduation, he was offered a contract with

the Hungarian National Ballet, where he danced until 2020 when he was promoted to soloist. He danced The Prince (The Nutcracker), Rothbart, Pas de trois in Swan Lake, Peasant pas de deux in Giselle, Waclaw in Bakhchisarai Fountain, Karenin in Anna Karenina, Gremin in Onegin, Paris in Romeo and Juliet, Charles Hamilton and Mr. Kennedy in Gone with the Wind, Lord in The Tragedy of Man), Adam in Tricky Students, the Enchantress in Snow White, the Great Brahmin in La Bayadère, Four Hungarian Officials in Mayerling and the leading roles in ballets by George Balanchine (Serenade, Symphony in C, Moonlight), Jiří Kylian ( Six Dances), by Hans van Manen (Five Tangos, Concertante, Adagio Hammerklavier), Robert North (Death and the Maiden), Ninette de Valois (Chess), Kenneth MacMillan (Concerto), Gyula Harangoz (Poloveska Dances), Lilla Pártaya (Bolero, Othello, The Golden Brush), Imre Dózse (Adagietto) and András Lukács (The Connection). In 2002, he received the Junior Interlyra Award; in 2007, he was awarded the Gyula Harangozó Award by the Hungarian Ministry of Culture; and in 2017, he received the Golden Cross of Merit in Hungary. He toured with the Hungarian National Ballet in the USA, Mexico, China, Japan, Spain, the Netherlands, and Finland and was invited to international gala concerts in Russia, Austria, Italy, Great Britain, Finland, and Budapest in memory of Rudolf Nureyev. In 1998, he graduated in ballet pedagogy, in 2003, in dance theory and criticism at the Hungarian Dance Academy, and in 2007, he obtained a master's degree as a choreographer at the University of Theater and Film Arts (SZFE). In 1998, he became a ballet teacher at the Hungarian Dance University, and in 2018, he received the title of university professor. In 2010, he was appointed director of the Institute for the Education of Dance Artists, and since 2020, he has been vice-rector at the Hungarian Ballet University. His students have won numerous awards at international ballet competitions. They are also members of many ballet ensembles around the world (Dresden Semperopera Ballet, Royal Swedish Ballet, Tulsa Ballet, Hong Kong Ballet, Vienna State Ballet, Mainz Ballet, Croatian and Hungarian National Ballet Ensembles, Hofesh Shechter Ensemble, Frankfurt Dance Ensemble, Gothenburg Opera Ballet Ensemble and others). He was a visiting teacher in Amsterdam, Oslo, and Helsinki, Taiwan, and taught at various international dance summer seminars and festivals. He was also a ballet master of the Hungarian National Ballet, the Formosa Ballet (Taiwan), the Preljocaj Ballet, and the Nureyev International Ballet Competition. He was a member of the jury of Mia Čorak Slavenska IBC (Zagreb, 2016), 12th IBC – Sicily (2017), Anna Pavlova BC (Florence, 2018), and Pacific IBC (Tokyo, 2019). He works as a dance critic and theoretician at the Hungarian Dance Magazine.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-emdj5wXMOQ&t=3s>

After graduating from the Eva Jaczová Dance Conservatory in Bratislava, **Mário Radačovský** joined the Slovak National Theatre Ballet in 1989, becoming a soloist in a very short time. In 1992, he received an offer to dance in Jiří Kylián's Netherlands Dance Theatre in The Hague, but before joining he first had a half-year contract with The Ballet of the National Theatre Brno as a soloist. Working at the NDT, he met some of the most important choreographers of his time, including Jiří Kylián, Mats Ek, Nacho Duato, Ohad Naharin, William Forsythe, Édouard Lock and many others. In 1999 he accepted another foreign offer and became the first soloist of the Les Grands Ballets Canadiens in Montreal, then returning to the Slovak National Theatre Ballet in 2000 as a guest soloist and later its artistic director in 2006–2010. He founded the ensemble Ballet Bratislava, which he led until its dissolution (2011–2013). From the 2013 season, he has been the artistic director of The Ballet of the National Theatre Brno. In 2018, he finished a master's degree in choreography at the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague. He began

to create as a choreographer in 2002 at the Les Grands Ballets Canadiens in Montreal. Radačovský's first work was the miniature *The Letter*, followed by *Inspiration* (2002) and *Train Station* (2004). After returning to the Slovak National Theatre, he introduced the ballets *Change* (2005), *Meeting the Swan I.* (2007), *Warhol* (2007), *68* (2008) and *Everest* (2009). In the Ballet Bratislava then for example *Monos* (2012), *Queen* (2013) or the musical *Mata Hari* (2013). But most of his choreographies were created outside of Slovakia: *Bolero* (2006) at the Jeune Ballet du Quebec in Canada, *Romeo and Juliet* (2011), *Black and White* (2012) and *Beethoven* (2015) at the Grand Rapids Ballet in the USA and *Compulsive* (2013) at the Diablo Ballet in San Francisco. He staged his choreography *Black and White* also at Royal New Zealand Ballet. He introduced other choreographies in theatres in the Czech Republic: *Fateful Loves* (2012), *Together* (2016), dance version of the famous musical *West Side Story* (2017) and *Romeo and Juliet* (2019) in the National Theatre Brno, the *Slavic Quartet* for the Prague Chamber Ballet (2014) and *Carmen* for the ballet of the J. K. Tyl Theatre in Pilsen (2016).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=day509Zl2Y0&t=3199s>

**Gabriele Haslinger** was 6 years old when she was accepted at the prestigious ballet school of the Vienna State Opera, 14 when she received her employment contract to the Vienna State Opera Ballet and 21 when Rudolf Nureyev (Soviet-born ballet dancer and choreographer, 1938 – 1993) specifically chose her of all ensemble members as his partner for a series of roles – at a time, when she had not even reached her soloist status yet. This was followed by dance partners like Sir Anthony Dowell CBE (retired British ballet dancer, former artistic director of the Royal Ballet), Kevin Haigen (American ballet dancer and educationalist) or Michael Birkmeyer (Austrian ballet dancer and choreographer) to name just a few. Gabriele was acclaimed for her virtuosity and elegance and for making the most technically demanding roles seem effortless and gracious. Little did she know that at the age of only 27, she would have to retire from her active stage career. Untimely endings, the proverbial 'closing doors', were not uncommon in the life of Gabriele Haslinger, be it in her professional life or in her personal endeavours. Whenever there would have come the moment to finally enjoy the fruits of her efforts, she was actually not given an awful lot of time to glory in her achievements. Two failed marriages and a premature ending of her stage career as a ballet dancer are the most painful life events Gabriele had to experience. And yet she is convinced: "Ultimately, adversity has allowed me to have a more colourful, more diverse life."

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=My-mLqkWLXM>

**Helen Pickett**, the California-born choreographer has created more than 30 ballets, most recently *Eventide* (Boston Ballet), *Games* (Ballet West), and *Camino Real* (Atlanta Ballet, where she is resident choreographer). She has been commissioned for future world premieres for the Pennsylvania Ballet, Scottish Ballet, and the London-based group, *Sisters Grimm*. Among other ensembles for which she has choreographed are Dance Theatre of Harlem, Washington Ballet, and Aspen Santa Fe Ballet; and important international companies in Vienna, Dresden, and Antwerp. For eleven years Pickett performed with the celebrated European dance company, William Forsythe's Ballet Frankfurt, and acted with New York's world-renowned theater company The Wooster Group. She collaborated with installation video artists and filmmakers including Eve Sussman, Toni Dove, and Laurie Simmons. She founded and created *Choreographic Essentials*, an intensive for college-age choreographers, and *Step into Courage*, a

motivational creative workshop. Pickett won the Best Choreographer and Best Dance Production awards in Atlanta (2014 and 2015). She received a Fellowship Initiative Grant from the New York Choreographic Institute, a choreographic residency from Jacob's Pillow, a Jerome Robbins Foundation New Essential Works Grant, an honorary doctorate from the University of North Carolina School of the Arts, and earned an M.F.A. in Dance from Hollins University.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hGmSjNh\\_aGs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hGmSjNh_aGs)