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**Gender segregation in performing arts**

**Artistic labor and gender identity: North Macedonia**

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## **Abstract**

This thesis examines the current working conditions for Macedonian performing art workers by analyzing the levels of institutionalized gender segregation in the theatre and music industry. The lack of research based on gender equity in the Macedonian performing arts shows that the ways in which gender identity is perceived remains unidentified, which contributes to the late discoveries of implicit gender bias amongst performing art workers, especially amongst women and LGBTIQ+ theatre workers. The research begins by conducting a comparative analysis between the ways in which the performing arts had been evolving throughout the past centuries in Western Europe on one hand, and the Western Balkans on the other hand. Later, it continues to investigate the working conditions before the turmoil of Yugoslavia, and after the Yugoslav wars, leading to the qualitative, semi-structured interviews, and the quantitative findings that explore how gender identity and gender partiality are seen amongst performing artists in North Macedonia. The findings show how artists, primarily women and LGBTIQ+ theatre workers perceive gender identity, as well as how they cope with gender bias and intersectional discrimination. In conclusion, this research proposes different ways to improve the current working conditions by diminishing the gendered segregation in the Macedonian performing arts industry.

**Keywords:** Gender identity, performing arts, theatre industry, gender bias, segregation

## Апстракт

Оваа теза ги истражува тековните услови за работа на македонските изведувачки уметнички работници преку анализа на нивоата на институционализирана родова сегрегација во театарот и музичката индустрија. Недостатокот на истражувања засновани на родовата еднаквост во македонските изведувачки уметности покажува дека начините на перцепција на родовиот идентитет остануваат неидентификувани, што придонесува за доцните откритија на имплицитна родова пристрасност меѓу изведувачките уметнички работници, особено меѓу жените и ЛГБТИ+ театарските работници. Истражувањето започнува со спроведување на компаративна анализа помеѓу начините на кои се развивале изведувачките уметности низ изминатите векови во Западна Европа од една страна, и Западен Балкан од друга страна. Подоцна, продолжува да ги истражува работните услови пред превирањата во Југославија и по југословенските војни, што потоа продолжува со квалитативни, полуструктурирани интервјуа и квантитативни наоди кои истражуваат како родовиот идентитет и родовата пристрасност се перципирани од страна на македонските изведувачи. Наодите покажуваат како уметниците, првенствено жените и ЛГБТИ+ театарските работници го перципираат родовиот идентитет, но и како се справуваат со родовата пристрасност и меѓусекторската дискриминација. Како заклучок, ова истражување предлага различни начини за подобрување на сегашните услови за работа преку намалување на родовата сегрегација во македонската индустрија за перформативните уметности.

**Клучни зборови:** Родов идентитет, перформативни уметности, театарска индустрија, родова пристрасност, сегрегација

## 1. Introduction

The prime idea that is progressing throughout this thesis seeks to address the socio-economic dynamics and subtleties that are directly or indirectly imposing diverse levels of gender segregation in several categories of performing arts, primarily focusing on the conditions in several cities throughout North Macedonia. The research reflects on certain works by theoreticians, creative practitioners and empirical studies whose primary focus is the inclusion of women in the world of performing arts, as well as on international policies that contribute to the protection of artistic labor in the spirit of equality, impartiality and equity. The extensive presence of unequal opportunities and treatment towards women in the labor market and the steady progression of unpaid labor in North Macedonia is incessantly affecting the levels of gendered segregation, determining the economic and social situation of women and other marginalized identities, such as transgender and non-binary individuals. In addition to the occurrences in the past decades, the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on the already existing critical stages of the limited development of the Western Balkans's artistic labor market has created novel key challenges for women and the establishment of inclusive access to equal economic opportunities. For example, although the percentage of women who are actively taking part in the Western Balkans' labor market remains high – approximately 40%, the number of women on the top management positions in companies still remains outrageously low – 14.2%.<sup>1</sup> In recent times, the fast surge of the global pandemic has had a significantly stronger impact on women's unemployment and wage loss in comparison with men, especially when one considers the increased levels of unpaid care work and household chores. Furthermore, improving the barriers that contribute to the unceasing presence of unpaid or underpaid labor will require detailed interferences that would reshape and invigorate the Macedonian labor market, the availability of social care, the societal and cultural norms and finally, the general approach towards the question of why women working in the field of culture are still facing the undesirable consequences of unpaid work.

The historical and contemporary depictions of women's artistic labor show that there are diverse approaches towards the objectification of the female body and women's theoretical work throughout the centuries. Additionally, the objective comparison between the evolvement of performing arts in North Macedonia, is showing that although there is progress achieved in

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<sup>1</sup> *The Covid-19 crisis in the Western Balkans* (OECD: 2020), 9.

terms of liberation of the body in the context of performativity, women's artistic labor is still perceived through an obsolete, patriarchal prism that dwells on the male gaze in its most archaic and rudimentary form. To comprehend the differences in women's artistic labor in different parts of Europe, this work contextualizes the social norms in terms of performing arts and artistic labor in Western Europe in contrast with those in the Western Balkans, or more specifically those in North Macedonia.<sup>2</sup> The quantitative data analysis and qualitative research interviews are mainly covering the past and current challenges regarding the way that gender identity is perceived and the treatment towards women who work in the fields of performing arts in North Macedonia. Due to the global pandemic and the traveling limitations throughout 2021, it was easier to focus on creating online surveys and interviews that solely focus on art practitioners from North Macedonia, i.e., artists who speak Macedonian. The findings from both the quantitative and qualitative data show that the general discourse in the Macedonian performing art fields is dissimilar to the common discourse in other Western and Northern European countries and their approach to gender equity, once again placing women in an unsteady and unsolicited demoted position. In the context of the qualitative findings of this thesis, which are collective or/and individual experiences of artists who are facing gender-based discrimination in their fields of work, I would point out Federici's explanation about the subordination of women's sexuality in the context of labor. As Federici explains, heterosexuality has been enforced on women as the only suitable conduct, and "In reality, every genuine communication has a sexual component, for our bodies and emotions are indivisible and we communicate at all levels all the time. But sexual contact with women is forbidden because, in bourgeois morality, anything that is unproductive is obscene, unnatural, perverted."<sup>3</sup>

The present-day development of the social and political questions concerning North Macedonia can also be reviewed in relation to the context in which the performing arts have been developing throughout the post-socialistic period. Furthermore, the occurrences in the political field, including the differences in languages and personal identities of the artists who reside in the Western Balkans, but also in the other Balkan ex-Yugoslav countries, determine the environment in which the overall performative field has been evolving.

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<sup>2</sup> Alexandra Balona, et. al, *An Untimely Book: Critical Practice (Made in Yugoslavia)* 3 (Lokomotiva, Skopje, 2018), 4.

<sup>3</sup> Silvia Federici, *Revolution at point zero: Housework, reproduction and feminist struggle* (PM Press, Oakland, 2012), 36.



The perceptible differences in the shaping of the cultural life in each ex-Yugoslav country are inevitable; they are simply the product of a decades-long unique transition for each territory with its economic power or its weakness and financial instability. The fluctuations on the political stage during the late 80's and early 90's have had a strong impact on the way women artists were included – or the complete opposite – they had left them aside, excluded from the high-end positions of power and from making formal decisions that would further shape the contemporary performing arts stage. The transformative period after 1991 had changed the entire role of the contemporary theatre practices, making it more difficult for the Western Balkans region to develop in the same way and with the same pace as some of the other regions throughout Europe: “The EU has come of age as a formidable integrationist actor; whose foreign policy of enlargement has proved strong enough a catalyst to engender genuine and institutionalized post-crisis transformation across the region.”<sup>4</sup>

## 1.1 Scope of the study

A ceaseless exploration of an already shaped hierarchical system that values a conventional approach in daily occurrences, in all domains of existing and coexisting, converging on performative arts with all of its intertwined subcategories, shows that a lot of discrepancies had been systematically sheltered throughout the years. The ongoing practice of gendered exclusion in performative arts has had a severe impact on cultural production in its entirety, continuously transforming the cultural environment, but only up to a point that has somehow never managed to reach the margin of exclusivity created by the concept of gender identity. Even in today's society, a vast number of social spheres are mainly occupied by hierarchical values, disregarding the principles of equality which are still not considered as an incentive. The primary goal of this research would be the exploration of gender segregation in performative arts – precisely focusing on several types of cultural production such as applied musicology, composition and applied theatre. The diverse aspects of the historical gender exclusion are analysed and dissected in distinctive categories of European cultural production, primarily focusing on Europe, the Western Balkans, particularly accentuating the current artistic labor circumstances for women who are living in North Macedonia. Reconstructing the idea that

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<sup>4</sup> Soeren Keil, Bernhard Stahl, *The Foreign Policies of Post-Yugoslav states: From Yugoslavia to Europe* (Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2014) 248.

women should not be perceived without implying that they are commonly the primary caretakers throughout their lives is profoundly entwined in the historical context of the society, in reciprocity with the influence by international artists, collectives, bodies and communities that tend to create joint consciousness or unconsciousness, depending which societal group is primarily struck by the exploitation narrative. The research questions that are the main focus of this thesis will aim to contextualize the current challenges and levels of exploitation of women artists, especially in some of the Western Balkan countries.

In what way can we define the relationship between performing arts and gender identity?

How much and how often does neoliberal globalization exploit women artists?

Can the Macedonian society recognize structural discrimination and gender segregation in performing arts?

How can we tackle structural discrimination in performing arts in North Macedonia?

In what way we could redefine artistic labor from a legal perspective, pointing out unpaid labor and the lack of gender inclusiveness in performing arts?

How does the historical origin of women in performing arts explain today's slow progress to equality and openness for all genders in different fields of performing arts?

What are the differences between Eastern and Western European approaches towards intersectionality and inclusion of women and other genders?

To what point is the precariat of implicit or explicit exclusion of women by - performers effecting today's cultural production?

In what ways can South East Europe improve its performing arts environment, leave its stereotypical views behind and make it more inclusive?

How can we, as individuals, have an impact on the constructive social transformation that will contribute to women's inclusiveness and representation in performing arts in The Balkans?

## 1.2 Method

The primary purpose of this thesis is to examine the historical genesis of the inclusion of women in the fields of performing arts, the social acceptance of their artistic labor and creative production in different spheres of performing arts. By observing their creative approach through the prism of gender identity and the context of their origins, the connection with their homelands and the implicitly established link with the countries in which they live and work. By detaching women from the principal idea of seeing them as natural caregivers, or as Tronto says - “Women and servants seem to be ‘naturals’ at caregiving because those are the roles they have been expected to play,”<sup>5</sup> we might start to see them thoroughly as equal stakeholders in the society, who are incessantly coping with circumstances that place their artistic labor at stake. Additionally, a quantitative and qualitative examination and research of the modifications and polarities of both Eastern and Western Europe and their different approach to cultural production is also something that needs to be tackled and included as a central matter. It is expected that the approach to cultural production can differ, considering the differences in the historical origins of performing arts and the gender disparity in the development of the cultural industries in both European regions. With the purpose of observing today’s social and cultural development of the performing arts in Europe, this thesis also consists of a transitory analysis of the past centuries and their continuous exclusion of women in theatre and music, i.e., composition and the musical canon. By focusing on the practice of women’s omission and self-censorship in the performing arts in the past centuries, it would be easier to recognize the ongoing practice of segregation that happens today; nevertheless, although its shape and form is immanently different than the one in the past, that does not mean that it is still not deeply dishevelled in the day-to-day gendered discourse between artists. If one takes location into consideration, too, the percentage of exclusion would deteriorate, depending on the level of social inclusion of women, which is also tightly connected to the legal perspectives of gender identity of the territory in question. By exploring the past, one can only learn about things known to humanity solely through the prism of men’s point of view and merely from women, considering the continuous prohibited spaces where women were not, and still are not fully allowed in. As Derek Scott explains, there is an ongoing “materialization of the nineteenth-

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<sup>5</sup> Joan Tronto, *Who cares? How to reshape a democratic politics* (Cornell University Press, 2015), 30.

century tendency to catalogue, taxonomize and hierarchize cultural production finds expression all over Europe and beyond, from the Ruhmeshalle in Munich to the Befreiungshalle in Kelheim, the Secession Building in Vienna, the Panthéon in Paris and the Panteón Nacional in Caracas, Venezuela, these great pantheons explicitly demonstrate that every nation collects its male heroes under the rubric of originality, creativity and virility”.<sup>6</sup> Scott points out these buildings as the representation of Guattari’s and Deleuze’s ‘territorialization’, enclosing and excluding women from any cultural practice, sheltering it solely for the purposes of men’s cultural development throughout the centuries of the rise, fall and transformation of the European cultural production.

Taking into consideration the different approaches to conducting and developing longer systematic research on the development of the performing arts, this study will be established by using different forms such as descriptiveness, historical genesis and an overall interdisciplinary approach - all intertwined into one another, led by a theoretical approach. The specific topics relevant to the subject that will be elaborated in this thesis will be quoted or paraphrased throughout the entire thesis, starting from the historical origins of the performing arts in Europe, followed by the development of the theatre field in North Macedonia, the quantitative and qualitative results from the conducted survey and interviews, the limitations and further expectations, and finally, the conclusions from both the theoretical research and the methodological approach.

Considering the research part, I used an analytical approach that helped in the assessment of the impact that gender segregation and exclusion of women in performing arts have on women artists who work in North Macedonia, but also had some experience in the rest of the Balkan countries. In addition, interviews with persons who work in the abovementioned spheres and an online questionnaire for specific groups of people relevant to this research was also included, complementary to the overall theoretical research, serving as up-to-date examples that can later help in the process of writing a final conclusion based on all of the relevant matters that have been analysed throughout the entire text.

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<sup>6</sup> Derek Scott, The Sexual Politics of Victorian Musical Aesthetics, *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 119, no. 1 (1994), 2.

## 2. Women's exclusion: Historical genesis

Performing arts have been the product of change and modification throughout centuries, considering that the Western history of theatre originates from ancient Greece and Rome. Taking into consideration the absolute presence of the patriarchal values in the European society throughout so many centuries, the theatre practitioners in ancient Greece that started to develop the first structures of the Greek theatre approximately in 532 BC, were reluctant to allow women to even appear on stage, depicting them as dangerous, so men did not allow public performances by women and thus decided to neutralize women's social appearance by giving men roles that were predominantly created for women. For example, the tragic heroine Antigone was always portrayed by male actors.<sup>7</sup> This ban against women in performing arts in ancient Greece did not allow women to partake on any stage. Centuries later, one distinguished historical happening that altered the continuous gender segregation in performing arts in Western Europe was the appearance of private theatricals in women convents that persisted throughout the middle ages. The historical findings show that these types of secluded theatre stages appeared mid-10<sup>th</sup> century. Hrosvitha<sup>8</sup>, also known as "The Nun of Gandersheim" is considered to be the first woman playwright and poet in Europe. Hrosvitha's works are in "either hexameters or elegiac verse; her plays, the so-called comedies, are in prose"<sup>9</sup>, and all of them are written in Latin. Hrosvitha's written works are based on rich dialogue, subtlety and genuine storytelling through which she meticulously contextualized the aspects of living as a woman, as an exclusion to the norm, as an outsider. Hrosvitha's work had a notable influence on the dramatic works written well along in the Christian era, as she combined elements and forms that were inspired by classical works, but were still easily differentiated. The Greek society might have initially banned women from performing arts, but later, this ban was also bolstered by the "Christian insistence on female chastity that remained in force until the 17th

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<sup>7</sup> "Women in theatre: A historical look" *NC Theatre*, March 18, 2015, available at <https://nctheatre.com/blog/women-theatre-historical-look>, accessed at 27 September 2021.

<sup>8</sup> "Hrosvitha", *Britannica*, available at <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Hrosvitha>, accessed at 27 September, 2021.

<sup>9</sup> Ed. John Clark, *The Ridpath Library of Universal Literature*, (New York: Globe Publishing Co., 1898), 128-9.

century when female singers began to appear in a new form of musical theatre called opera”.<sup>10</sup> As the outrage of women performers became stronger in reciprocity with the levels of restriction, the Catholic Church decided neither to approve nor sanction their behaviour; it started to employ male castrati for the soprano parts<sup>11</sup>. Predominantly on the Italian opera stage, the eunuch movement was inspired by the popularity of soprano voices, and although castrati<sup>12</sup> were prohibited since 1587, they still continued to perform as sopranos, considering that Saint Paul’s prohibition against women voices in the Catholic Church was still dominating. Pope Clement VIII started to admit castrati into the papal choir in 1599, justifying this action with the words of St. Paul: "Let women be silent in the churches."<sup>13</sup> The castrati in opera were prominent throughout the 17th century, “as the public reacted with “frenetic acclaim” to their voices”.<sup>14</sup>

## 2.1 Western Europe’s theatre: A retrospective

With the rise of Queen Elizabeth (1558-1603) and the beginning of the Elizabethan era<sup>15</sup>, a novel way of approaching the theatre stage started to emerge, creating obvious changes in the social structures of the British society. This whole period is predominantly associated with Shakespeare’s work, noting that his plays were and still are known for some of the most prominent women characters in the history of performing arts: “Rosalind, Cordelia, Lady Macbeth, and other Shakespearean icons were among the first female characters to be portrayed with the complexity and valour that were commonly conferred to male characters. Although his heroines were written in a remarkably complex manner, women performers were still prohibited from playing these roles.”<sup>16</sup> It is argued that given the social circumstances in the Elizabethan

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<sup>10</sup> Ken Gewertz, “When men were men and women, too”, *The Harvard Gazette*, July 17, 2003, available at <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2003/07/when-men-were-men-and-women-too/>, accessed at 27 September, 2021.

<sup>11</sup> Angus Heriot, *The Castrati in Opera* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1956), 31.

<sup>12</sup> The term “castrato” is synonymous with the terms “musico,” “eunuch,” “evirato,” “spagnoletti”.

<sup>13</sup> Samantha Ellis, “All mouth and no trousers”, *The Guardian*, August 5, 2002, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2002/aug/05/classicalmusicandopera.artsfeatures>, accessed at 27 September 2021.

<sup>14</sup> Sonja Breda, *The Paradox of the Castrato* Sonja (Portland State University, 2012).

<sup>15</sup> Liza Picard, “The social structure in Elizabethan England”, *British Library*, 15 March, 2016, available at <https://www.bl.uk/shakespeare/articles/the-social-structure-in-elizabethan-england>, accessed at 27 September 2021.

<sup>16</sup> Women’s Museum of California, “Get thee to a Stage! A Brief History of Women in the Theater”, *Women’s Museum of California*, September 6, 2017, available at <https://womensmuseum.wordpress.com/2017/09/06/get-thee-to-a-stage-a-brief-history-of-women-in-the-theater/>, accessed at 27 September 2021.

era, the prohibition on women performers might have been the reason why Shakespeare had a tendency to sometimes disguise his heroines into boys clothing and make them appear as boys:

“After all, he only pulls this trick five times in 38 plays, and, except in *Cymbeline*, each boy playing a woman disguised as a boy is paired with another boy playing a woman remaining a woman throughout the play *Loves Labor's Lost* aside, with its two major female roles and three midmajor women's parts, Shakespeare seems to have proportioned his roles for the ratio of men-to-boy actors in his company.”<sup>17</sup>

The Restoration period brought a notable change by modifying the stringent rules of the Catholic Church. Admission of women on the stage became a possibility, letting men and women's approach to impersonation become more profound and detailed. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, a novel practice of women playing men like Macheath in John Gay's “*The Beggar's Opera*.” started to become more prominent and obliquely contextualized the start of the feminist canon's development in the performing arts. Nevertheless, “based on the playbills and advertisements that have survived from this period, the male attire these women wore did little to conceal their feminine contours, which seems to have been the point.”<sup>18</sup>

In 1629, actresses first appeared on the theatre stage in Great Britain, as French actors upon the patronage of Queen Henrietta Maria, were performing at Blackfriars. Artistic labor and theatre practices were solely focusing on the men's body and men's ability to develop the character on stage, and the novel employment of women as actresses was seen as an innovation, which was primarily not accepted by the already indignant English public:

“The French actresses were “hissed, hooted, and pippin-pelted from the stage,” so that the writer “did not think they would soon be ready to try the same again.”<sup>19</sup> As a matter of fact, they reappeared a few weeks after at the Fortune and Red Bull theatres, but not successfully. They were not able to gather a large audience, neither to gain reputable admiration, and “in respect of their ill luck,” returned them a portion of the fees which they had to pay for their licence.<sup>20</sup> In 1632, the Caroline era stage play *The Court Beggar* written by Richard Brome, the character Lady Strangelove's line “the boy's a pretty actor, and his mother can play her part: women-

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<sup>17</sup> Eric Minton, “Shakespeare Understood Women Better Than Modern Men Do,” *Shakespeareance* (February 13, 2013), available at [http://www.shakespeareances.com/dialogues/commentary/Woman\\_Place-130128.html](http://www.shakespeareances.com/dialogues/commentary/Woman_Place-130128.html), accessed on 27 September 2021.

<sup>18</sup> Ken Gewertz, “When men were men and women, too”.

<sup>19</sup> W. Davenport Adams, *A Dictionary of the Drama* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1904), available at [https://www.theatredatabase.com/17th\\_century/george\\_chapman\\_001.html](https://www.theatredatabase.com/17th_century/george_chapman_001.html), accessed on 27 September 2021.

<sup>20</sup> W. Davenport Adams, *A Dictionary of the Drama*.

actors now grow in request<sup>21</sup> "shows a change of theatrical practice, but it still remains unidentified to which actresses this particular line refers. One year later, in 1633, William Prynne published *Histrio Mastix: The Players Scourge*<sup>22</sup>, also known as "Actors tragoedie", a play in which he defamed actresses as "monsters," and used derogatory adjectives to describe them, calling them "shameful" and "unwomanish". The presence of derogatory epithets for women were the result from their overall stand in the 17<sup>th</sup> century society in Western Europe – ostracised, deprived of success nor recognition, dependent on men's dominating manifestation, and shamed for simply being present in the world of performance arts.

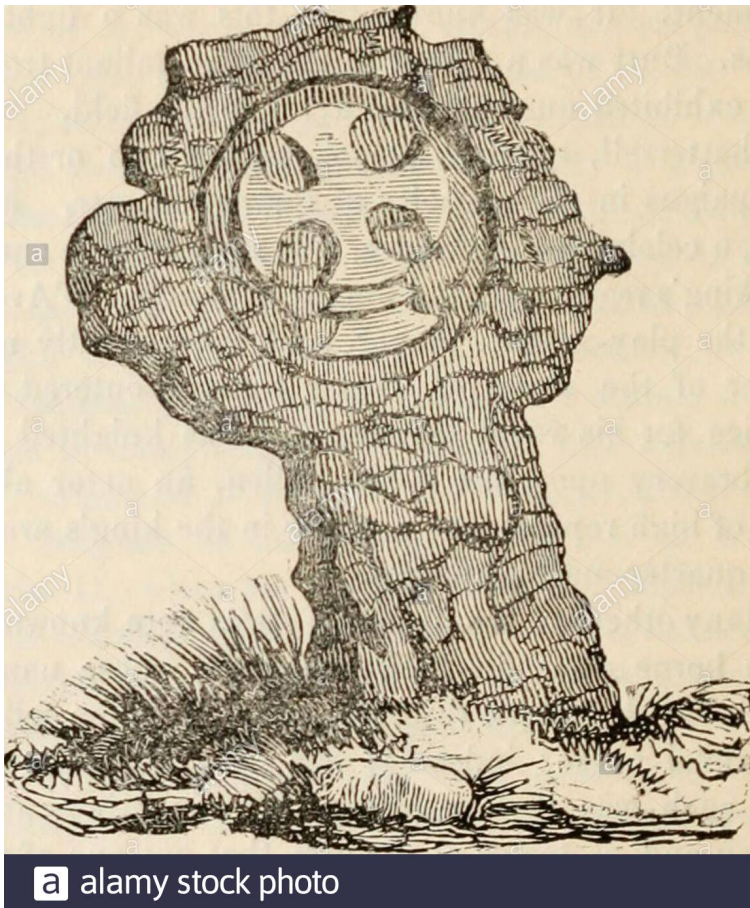


Illustration in William Prynne's *Histriomatri* (1632), that represents women as "unwomanish", "graceless", "impudent" and "shameful".<sup>23</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Dutton Cook, *A book of the play*, (Sampson Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington, London, 1876).

<sup>22</sup> "William Prynne, English pamphleteer", *Britannica*, available at <https://www.britannica.com/biography/William-Prynne#ref33815>, accessed on 27 September 2021.

<sup>23</sup> This image is in the public domain, which means that the copyright has expired or the copyright holder has waived their rights. The fees charged by Alamy cover access to the high-resolution copy of the image.



## 2.2 Aphra Behn

*“All women together ought to let flowers fall on the tomb of Aphra Behn... For it was she who earned them the right to speak their minds.”*<sup>24</sup>

Virginia Woolf<sup>25</sup>

Amid the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the women who were living in Great Britain started to form movements against the entrenched patriarchal societal values that were all-pervading; these values were the prime reason why women were pushed aside, either on the margins of performing arts, or completely excluded.<sup>26</sup> Alongside the emergence of these movements, women were slowly become more present in the performing arts, too. The canonical figure of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Aphra Behn (1640-1689) was the first British woman who developed a fruitful career as a playwright and is known until this day for her ongoing efforts to provide roles for women on stage and consequently, let them be acknowledged for their theatrical abilities. Behn had a significant impact on the perception of women in performing arts, and by focusing on the woman's body, gender identity and expressing honest sexuality that addressed the female orgasm, impotence, bisexuality and the indefiniteness of gender, she constructed her playwriting in correlation with politics, power and sexuality, often referencing on the divisive political movements in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Behn's work should not be solely perceived as a provocation served to the audience; it also had prolific impact on the observers by being sufficiently confrontational and associative. The Restoration period, during which Behn lived, is the first period in Western Europe when women actively and openly started to participate in the theatre field, amid late 1600's. As Hughes puts it, Behn's status as the first woman dramatist has been prone to a strong impact of the male gaze and

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<sup>24</sup> Janet Todd, *Aphra Behn: A secret life* (Fentum Press, 2017).

<sup>25</sup> Virginia Woolf. *A room of one's own*. (Feedbooks, 1929). 180.

<sup>26</sup> Victoria Martinez, “The Surprising 17th Century Origins of Radical Feminism”, *A bit of history*, January 8, 2018, available at <https://abitofhistoryblog.com/2018/01/08/the-surprising-17th-century-origins-of-radical-feminism/>, accessed on 27 September 2021.

profound vulnerability, “lost in the crowd of men”<sup>27</sup>; however, in-between the obscene responses of the men-ruled environment, Behn remained admired by male dramatists that were active in the theatre field during the Restoration period. By reconstructing gender in the novel Restoration period comedies, Behn’s works changed the social perception of the woman figure in theatre; on one hand – their appearance on stage, and on the other, their appearance as dramatists and cultural workers behind the scenes. However, Hughes argues that despite the fact that masculinity was dominant and ever-present, the Restoration period was also a transitional period known for a slight progression in dramaturgy and screenwriting. This is the era of the emergence of the “protofeminist” drama by men- dramatists (Durfey, Otway, Payne, Shadwell and Ravenscroft):

“Strikingly, they can be ingenuously utopian about women’s prospects, in contrast to Behn’s resentful realism. If we are assessing Behn’s place in the spectrum of Restoration drama, we must take the trouble to see all its colours.”<sup>28</sup>

In terms of contemporary ideas of gender, race and ethnicity, one of Behn’s most groundbreaking works is *Oroonoko*, a prose fiction piece that employs a first-person narrative from a woman’s perspective, provoking unambiguous informative detachments through the prism of African and American slavery.<sup>29</sup> By absorbing Behn’s work on stage, spectators started to think more critically and disparagingly about the distribution of power and the intertwined connections between the female body, women’s financial and political status, in parallel with forced marriage that was a prominent practice in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. However, “while Behn helped to liberate feminine sexuality, both on and off the stage, as well as offer a place for women within the world of playwriting, her political beliefs prohibit her from claiming the title “feminist”. ”<sup>30</sup> Although Behn was unambiguously conservative with Royalist sympathies and therefore her social status and political inclinations were not in parallel with the women’s liberation movement, she was still “the first English woman to earn her living solely by her pen”<sup>31</sup>, and that implicitly gives her work the status of being archetypal. Regrettably, this sort

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<sup>27</sup> Derek Hughes, *The Theatre of Aphra Behn*, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2001) 6.

<sup>28</sup> Derek Hughes, *The Theatre of Aphra Behn*, 2.

<sup>29</sup> Janet Todd, “The First English Woman to Make a Living as a Writer Was Also a Spy”, *Lithub*, August 7, 2017, available at <https://lithub.com/the-first-english-woman-to-make-a-living-as-a-writer-was-also-a-spy/>, accessed on 27 September, 2021.

<sup>30</sup> Rachel Elizabeth Campbell, “Aphra Behn, a feminist enigma”, *Museum of English Catholic women writers*, available at <https://bit.ly/3tnzm7D>, accessed on 27 September 2021.

<sup>31</sup> Janet Todd, “The First English Woman to Make a Living as a Writer Was Also a Spy”.

of ravishing freedom to produce intellectually in the different fields of performing arts was not available to most women even centuries ahead – “during the two more respectable or prudish centuries that followed her death in 1689, women were afraid of her toxic image and mostly unwilling to emulate her sexual frankness.”<sup>32</sup>

Hughes accentuates the fact that there is lack of available knowledge about the everyday theatre repertoire during the Restoration period and after, which makes it hard to come up with a conclusion on the frequency of Behn’s plays being performed in UK theatres.<sup>33</sup> So far, the findings show that there are two recorded revivals of the plays *The Rover* and *Abdelazer*. Behn’s play *The Rover* was regularly revived on stage, providing inspiration for the next generation of women dramatists, especially those who started to produce their works around the 1700’s.

## 2.3 Victorian era

Although the Victorian era was more gender inclusive and women were now regularly employed throughout European theatre stages, even the most prominent actresses were undoubtedly captivated in the masculine structure of the theatre’s expansion. Women performers were more often than not represented as “inhuman monstrosities” and sometimes were perceived as something different than women, and in reciprocity, the executive, administrative roles that held the theatre intact were always sufficiently defined for men’s personalities and behaviours. The dominating power structures continuously excluded women from the roles that contained certain levels of power, thus leading to a deficit in women playwrights throughout the Victorian era. Although the setup of the entire performing arts field was indisputably hard to transform and develop to become more accessible to women, women’s role as moving forces in a very male-controlled society still managed to leave a pioneering impact on the novel performing arts movements. As Powell states in *Women and Victorian Theatre* – “a life in the theatre offered women a voice - the ability to speak compellingly while

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<sup>32</sup> Janet Todd, “The First English Woman to Make a Living as a Writer Was Also a Spy”.

<sup>33</sup> Derek Hughes, *The Theatre of Aphra Behn*, 194.

others, including men, sat in enforced silence, waiting in suspense for the next word.”<sup>34</sup> Although their stage allure seemed almost intoxicating to both men and women, men in the Victorian era were prone to becoming defensive and to a certain level, felt jeopardised by the actresses’ domination on stage; this was unfathomably in correlation with the deeply rooted patriarchal values that consistently trapped Victorians in a very limited, close-minded social obscurity. The protruding theatrical discourse that was dominating in the 18<sup>th</sup> century shows certain testimonies of women who worked in theatre – they simply felt as they were “freed and empowered” whilst performing on stage. Just before the end of the Victorian era, Mary Elizabeth Braddon’s portrayal of a heroine who wants to achieve independence and rejects the safe life of becoming a governess is in the play *A Lost Eden*<sup>35</sup> shows a different perspective than most of the heroines in earlier novels in the Victorian era. Here, we are witnessing a long-awaited societal and cultural shift. Unlike two centuries ago, women were present on the theatre stage in continuity, and their creative performative work was far from becoming forgotten or left to rot in social obscurity.

“The actress Angela Clifton expresses a similar idea in Francis Gribble's novel *Sunlight and Limelight* (1898): "It's only on the stage, you know, that we poor girls are allowed to have careers.”<sup>36</sup>

The playwriting methods that emerged in the Victorian era can undeniably be defined as masculine art that kept on providing actresses with specific roles that seemed to openly impose the gender structures and conceptions that dominated during the Victorian era, or as Powell emphasizes – roles like the passive and pure heroine of Wills's *Olivia*, made famous by Ellen Terry, who at the Lyceum "drops down, face in hand sobbing" when she discovers her marriage to Squire Thornhill was a sham, then says dutifully to her father "I would sooner die in a ditch than disgrace you with my presence."

This pretence of dramatic production utterly created by closely following the prevalent established rules of masculine art was not something that women were oblivious to; as the discrepancy between the roles created by men for women and the dramatic production created specifically by women grew bigger, works written by women playwrights started to appear and be taken into account.<sup>37</sup> Undeniably, the socio-economic fluctuations towards the end point of

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<sup>34</sup> Kerry Powell, *Women and Victorian Theatre* (Cambridge University Press, 2007) 3.

<sup>35</sup> Mary Elizabeth Braddon is the author of the play “*A Lost Eden*”, published in 1904 by Hutchinson & Co., London.

<sup>36</sup> Kerry Powell, *Women and Victorian Theatre* (Cambridge University Press, 2007) 3.

<sup>37</sup> „Madge Kendal recollects that of the "hundreds of plays" submitted each year to her and her husband by hopeful playwrights, many were written with talent by ambitious young women.”<sup>6</sup> 3 In fiction about the theatre

the Victorian era also had a certain effect on the writings of men, too.<sup>38</sup> Nonetheless, the Victorian society was not fully at ease with women taking accountability for written theatrical works, and as Anna Maria Hall states in her novel published in 1857 “A Woman’s Story” in which the heroine is a young woman playwright - “the power to quicken the impossibility of women playwrights the beatings of every heart within [the] arena — to draw tears from every eye - to nerve each hand for applause, to rouse each voice, as the voice of one, in a long shout of approbation.”<sup>39</sup>

## 2.4 20<sup>th</sup> century: Redistribution of power

As early as the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the presence of women's uprising over the injustices they faced was increasing, and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century highlighted many new approaches in the cultural fields in Europe. In 1910, after German Socialist and feminist Louise Zietz, backed by Clara Zetkin, proposed the marking of an internationally recognized Women's Day, one hundred women from seventeen countries cast their ballots during the first international conference on Women, organized by the Socialist International in Copenhagen, Denmark. Thus, because of the struggle of heroines before our time, the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century not only alludes to the struggle for equal rights, but can also serve as a reminder of the many political, economic and cultural issues that women around the world face on a daily basis. In parallel with the expansion of the trade union movement, the roots of women’s dissent in the fields of performing arts were now unquestionably changing, as the educational opportunities for women were significantly improved by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Although marriage, domestic servitude and financial dependence on men were still a social

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the woman playwright is a familiar figure; and if in fact the works of most women playwrights came to nothing, gathering dust on the shelves and worktables of theatre managers, in novels their luck was considerably better.” Kerry Powell, *Women and Victorian Theatre*, 90.

<sup>38</sup>“Few if any women benefitted from these windfalls, because none of the Victorian women who wrote plays in the last three decades of the century experienced the long runs that brought large sums to some of their male colleagues-Dion Boucicault, R. C. Carton, Sydney Grundy, Henry Arthur Jones, Arthur Wing Pinero, Oscar Wilde, and others. By the end of the Victorian period Walter Besant's vision of a woman's theatre was only a nightmare, not a reality, thanks in some measure to the efficiency with which women were denied meaningful access to the profession of playwriting.” Kerry Powell, *Women and Victorian Theatre*, 73.

<sup>39</sup> Anna Maria Hall, *A Woman's Story* (3 vols., London: Hurst & Blackett, 1857) ,101.

norm in Europe, they were now perceived as obstacles that could be overcome by women in early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The evolution of theatre and acting in the early 1900's started to focus on topics in which the individuality of the woman was more present; sporadically, the depiction of women in a traditional setting started to lose its old denotation as the principal social and cultural norm. As women's political involvement started to increase throughout Europe, those who were involved in the performing arts started to obtain new daily roles as artists, playwrights or actresses, producing a speculative premise which started portraying women from a different angle. Women's artistic labor was not merely a forgotten discourse of the past, nor were their prior anguish as cultural workers. With the start of The Artists Suffrage League in 1907, feminist literary and dramatic work was becoming more present and socially accepted. The 20<sup>th</sup> century can also be connected to the collective practices and collective uniformity of the artistic labor, accentuating the collective conceptions over the individual performances. The arrival of the New Drama movement<sup>40</sup> was against the political milieu of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but it was strong enough to provide a platform for the flourishing of progressive ideas, especially in Great Britain, where the notable partnership between Harley Granville Barker and J.E. Vedrenne encouraged the creation of playwriting based on the leading cultural issues. Mid and late 20<sup>th</sup> century is immediately connected to the second and third wave of collective creation on stage. The 1950's are largely related to the main social and theoretical forces of the time, "...utopic, communitarian ethos, antiauthoritarianism, and Marxist inflected politics of the generation of '68 in non-communist states (e.g., France, America, Canada, and England)."<sup>41</sup> This period is known for the arrival of innovative aesthetic potentials and the development of avant-garde dance and modern composition through participatory stage performing and "leaderless" ensemble. The feminist movement of the 20<sup>th</sup> century brought a wave of theatre collectives formed by women only:

"This exodus has been well documented; see, for example, Victoria Lewis's article, "From Mao to the Feeling Circle: The Limits and Endurance of Collective Creation," in *A History of Collection* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013). We might think here of Lilith a Woman's Company, At the Foot of the Mountain, Théâtre Experimental des Femmes, Nightwood Theatre, Women's Theatre Group, and Monstrous Regiment, to name a few of the most visible. But this was also

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<sup>40</sup> Karen Bilotti et al., "Twentieth century British drama", *British Literature Wiki*, available at <https://sites.udel.edu/britlitwiki/drama-in-the-twentieth-century/>, accessed on 27 September, 2021.

<sup>41</sup> Quote by Tolokonnikova, "Closing Courtroom Statement," in *Pussy Riot!*, 91. In Kathryn Mederos Syssoyeva and Scott Proudfit, *Women, Collective Creation, and Devised Performance* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016) 15-16.

a period in which less widely celebrated women theatre artists were carving out significant creative space in companies dominated by the names of their male leadership: here we might think in particular of the women of Grotowski's Laboratory Theatre, discussed in Virginie Magnat's Chapter 14, "Women, Transmission, and Creative Agency in the Grotowski Diaspora," and the women of the Odin Teatret, discussed in Adam Ledger's Chapter 15, "The Women of Odin Teatret: Creativity, Challenge, Legacy"—as well as the actress-creators of the Gardzienice Center for Theatre Practices, among them Mariana Sadowska, Dorota Porowska, Elżbieta Rojek, and Joanna Holcgreber—who would co-create, transform, and transmit, globally, a vital legacy of "third theatre" collective performance practice and pedagogy."<sup>42</sup>

The third wave began in the beginning of the 80's and it continues to present day, dominated by an ethical imperative focused on the generative creativity of the performer on stage. This period is also closely connected with the resurgence of feminist protests conceptualized as performances: "...Guerrilla Girls of the 1980s in the United States, to the global FEMEN movement (launched in Ukraine in 2008) and Pussy Riot in Russia (founded in 2011), the subject of Chapter 20, Julia Listengarten's, "Pussy Riot and Performance as Social Practice: Collectivity, Collaboration, and Communal Bond."<sup>43</sup>

### **3. Women in music: Western Europe's anthology**

By focusing on the European practice of women's exclusion and self-censorship in music in the past centuries, it is easier to recognize the enduring practice of segregation that happens today.<sup>44</sup> The shape and form might seem immanently different than those in the past; however, the root of the issue can still be found in the hetero-patriarchal societal structures widespread globally, imposing social norms that generate gender segregation in the day-to-day discourse between musicians. If one takes location into consideration, too, the level of gender-based exclusion in music and its subcategories would deteriorate, depending on the level of social inclusion of all genders in general, which is also closely connected to the legal perspectives of gender identity of the territory in question. Until recent times, women have had severely limited

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<sup>42</sup> Kathryn Mederos Syssoyeva and Scott Proudfit, *Women, Collective Creation, and Devised Performance* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016) 16.

<sup>43</sup> Mederos Syssoyeva and Proudfit, *Women, Collective Creation, and Devised Performance*, 17.

<sup>44</sup> Rosie Pentreath, "81 percent of women say it's harder for female artists in music, with sexual harassment a key challenge", *Classic FM*, 26 March, 2021, available at <https://www.classicfm.com/discover-music/women-in-music/81-percent-say-more-difficult-female-artists-sexual-harassment/>, accessed on 27 September, 2021.

opportunities to freely compose, sing, create or play music, most often encouraged to see music as their pastime, not as their profession. The general number of theoretical references based on the development of music (with an emphasis on musicology and composition) that are publicly obtainable today, shows the bitter side of musical disciplines. Although professed as a noble and complex profession throughout the centuries, just as the other categories of performing arts, the historical origins of composition and musicology show that these disciplines have been presumably perceived as masculine virtues, and the general patriarchal discourse throughout Europe kept on reconstructing a shielded artistic sphere in which women were prohibited from participating for centuries: “If the whole enterprise of musical activity is always already fraught with gender-related anxieties, then feminist critique provides a most fruitful way of approaching some of the anomalies that characterize musical institutions.”<sup>45</sup> Kassia,<sup>46</sup> born around 805, is also known as “the first female composer of the Occident”<sup>47</sup>, or the first one for which documented works are available today. Distinguished for her Byzantine folklore composition works, in modern times, about 50 of her hymns and hundreds non-liturgical verses are publicly acknowledged. As Goodall states in *The Story of Music*, Kassia is recognized for “...mixing the parallel organum style with the drone style...gracefully refutes the assumption that the development of early music is exclusively the handiwork of men”. In a sea full of anonymous medieval composers, one known woman composer born in the 11<sup>th</sup> century is Hildegard of Bingen, a German Benedictine abbess, saint, composer and poet whose pieces and writings have just been recently rediscovered, as for more than 40 years, Hildegard was shut away in an ambiguous crest monastery of Disibodenberg in the Rhineland: “This remarkable woman had left behind a treasure-trove of illuminated manuscripts, scholarly writings and songs written for her nuns to sing at their devotions.”<sup>48</sup> Before Hildegard’s rediscovery by Philip Pickett and New London Consort in 1979, there were no mentions of Hildegard’s influence on composition and poetry in literary works. After redistributing the compilation album “A feather on the breath of God”<sup>49</sup> in 1983, Hildegard’s music and creative vision gained global recognition. Most of the impediments that women were facing when they tried to contribute in professional musical production for many centuries have clearly been institutional. They were not allowed to have

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<sup>45</sup> Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings* (University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 17.

<sup>46</sup> Lizzie Davis, “Listen to the music of the first female composer: Kassia a 9th-century Byzantine abbess”, *Classic FM*, 8 March, 2018, available at <https://www.classicfm.com/discover-music/periods-genres/early-music/first-female-composer/>, accessed on 27 September, 2021.

<sup>47</sup> The countries of the West, especially Europe and America.

<sup>48</sup> Owen Hopkin, “Hildegard of Bingen: life and music of the great female composer”, *Classic FM*, available at <https://www.classicfm.com/composers/bingen/guides/discovering-great-composers-hildegard-von-bingen/>, accessed on 27 September, 2021.

<sup>49</sup> Christopher Page, “A feather on the breath of God”, *Hyperion Records*, 1982, [https://www.hyperion-records.co.uk/dc.asp?dc=D\\_CDA66039](https://www.hyperion-records.co.uk/dc.asp?dc=D_CDA66039)



professional training, academic education, nor concept opportunity as they were simply defined as “incapable of sustained creative activity”<sup>50</sup> and their work was perceived as inconsequential and not as intricate as the works of their male peers.

### 3.1 The musical canon

The notion of the canon in music literature serves as a “basic tool in defining the scope of the discipline”<sup>51</sup>; hence, the musical works that are professed as musical canons are profoundly valued, and often become the most substantial and relevant source that sets the exclusionary standards for the complexity and precision of musical works – their thematic content is the ration which later shows if a composition meets certain disciplinary standards. As Citron explains, the canon is a broadly accepted loosely codified organism, with a certain degree of flexibility.<sup>52</sup> The composers whose work is perceived as a musical cannon are reciprocally those who are directly professed as they are commendable of concert repetition, music scholarships, and a certain position in academia. However, more often than not, even if one simply glances at the above stated musical activities that are allegedly the exclusive musical canon, one can immediately notice the absence of women. So, the musical canon and the most glorified composing methods are simply the product of a society constructed solely with the help of the method of exclusion and dominance of power, just as it was shown in the rest of the performing arts disciplines. Although completely arbitrary and unwarranted, women responded to this gendered criterion; their exclusion brought up the “counter canon”, as the feminist literary critic Lillian Robinson puts it. The counter canon is an alternative repertoire that included only compositions created by women.<sup>53</sup> However, as Citron points out, the goal is not to create further separation and limit women’s inclusion in music, but to integrate their works in Western musical history.<sup>54</sup> Additionally, in order to succeed in creating a more equitable environment

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<sup>50</sup> Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings*, 18.

<sup>51</sup> Marcia J. Citron, “Gender, Professionalism and the Musical Canon” *The Journal of Musicology*, 8, No. 1. (1990):102.

<sup>52</sup> Marcia J. Citron, “Gender, Professionalism and the Musical Canon”, 102.

<sup>53</sup> “This is epitomized most directly in the recent Historical Anthology of Music by Women, edited by James Briscoe.” Marcia J. Citron, “Gender, Professionalism and the Musical Canon”, 102.

<sup>54</sup> Marcia J. Citron, “Gender, Professionalism and the Musical Canon”, 102.

that would include women authors, one must analyse and understand the absence of women's work and their continuous exclusion from the musical canon.

Citron argues that of the most crucial factors that can contribute to further expansion of the already segregated field of musicology is the deploying of interdisciplinary theoretical approaches and reconceptualising scholarly methodology. By analysing other disciplines that have been deconstructing women's exclusion from music, such as philosophy, anthropology and ethnomusicology, one can start to develop critical thinking and learn more about women's exclusion not solely through written works in the field of musicology, but in other related fields whose roots are in the arts and humanities.<sup>55</sup> The field of musicology is distinctively associated with various cultural methods that are interpreted differently in the context of the country that one is analysing. These cultural methods are critically important, especially the historical archived music data which helps to understand the complexities of the forgotten women in music of the past. Although now a larger portion of recordings are available, we are still only in the beginning phases of discovering the music written by women throughout the centuries of their oppression and exclusion from the musical canon.

### **3.2 1800's: Transformation and industrialization**

Before the 19<sup>th</sup> century, musical activities were organized around ecclesiastical units, supported by the predominant political movement that directly contributed to the employment of men composers. The fragmentary institutional exclusion of women kept them away from the direct path to employment and official status as composers. The situation started to change and develop to some level after 1800, when musical works started to move into the public domain that later had effect on the repeat performance of compositions. The repeating of certain repertoire of young musicians was a new way to help them emerge as artists on the international stage; however, women were still not fully comprised and their music was often disregarded:

“An important component in procuring performances was regular access to the musical establishment, that heterogeneous corps of professionals consisting of other composers, and of performers, conductors, impresarios, and board members of major performing organizations.

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<sup>55</sup> Marcia J. Citron, “Gender, Professionalism and the Musical Canon”, 115.

Women, in general, experienced enormous difficulty in forging those necessary contacts, largely through gender-specific conditions.”<sup>56</sup>

The exclusion of women was not limited solely to stage performances and music in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, considering that women were unceasingly discouraged from getting an academic degree in any discipline – let it be visual arts, science or humanities. Their identity was always intertwined with their sexuality throughout European history, as women’s involvement in music was rarely financially encouraged, since their work was never valued as the musical canon; therefore, it seems as it was expected from them to let their works become publicly available without the expectation of any remuneration:

“Women on the stage are viewed as sexual commodities regardless of their appearance or seriousness. Brahms pleaded with the aging Clara Schumann (provocatively dressed, to be sure, in widow's weeds) to leave off her immodest composition and concertizing.”<sup>57</sup>

Towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, composition in smaller forms was believed to be particularly less important and exclusive, identifying this type of composing with women, and often using the term “salon music”<sup>58</sup>, which then became recognized as music written by women, indicating amateurism, less creativity, less talent, less prodigious qualities.

“The idea that 'difficult thoughts' were man's sphere received support from nineteenth-century psychiatrists. Around mid-century, explanations were being sought for the large number of women among the institutionalized insane. These efforts led to what Elaine Showalter has called the 'feminization of insanity'. Building upon a biological explanation that women's brains functioned differently from men's because they were 'intimately connected with the uterine system'," Henry Maudsley argued, in 'Sex in Mind and in Education' (1874), that intellectual training in adolescence could damage both a woman's brain and her reproductive system... This is reminiscent of Schopenhauer's idea concerning the difficulty he supposed people to have in walking and talking at the same time, 'for as soon as their brain has to link a few ideas together,

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<sup>56</sup> Marcia J. Citron, “Gender, Professionalism and the Musical Canon”, 104.

<sup>57</sup> Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings*, 151.

See the excerpts from Clara's diary entries and her correspondences with Robert Schumann and Brahms in Carol Neuls-Bates, ed., *Women in Music: An Anthology of Source Readings from the Middle Ages to the Present* (New York: Harper & Row, 1982), 92-108; and Nancy B. Reich, *Clara Schumann: The Artist and the Woman* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985). *Women in Music* contains many other documents revealing how women have been discouraged from participating in music and how certain of them persisted to become productive composers nonetheless.

<sup>58</sup> Marcia J. Citron, “Gender, Professionalism and the Musical Canon”, 110.

it no longer has as much force left over as is required to keep the legs in motion through the motor nerves'.”<sup>59</sup>

The industrialization wave that started in the late 1800's started to reshape the labor in general, as women became subsidiary beneficiaries without basic legal rights and therefore, legal safety. Near the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the European woman composer was still a member of upper middle class or upper class, Caucasian and educated, typically at the burgeoning music conservatories.<sup>60</sup> In 1839, the first organisation of women in music in Western Europe known as the Royal Society of Female Musicians was founded, including musicians such as Lucy Anderson, Ann Mounsey and Charlotte Dolby. The aim of this organization was to give guidance to women musicians who were unceasingly excluded from musical occurrences and career opportunities, but most importantly, as a response to the Royal Society of Musicians which was founded in 1739, but would still refuse to admit women as official members.<sup>61</sup>

### 3.3. 20<sup>th</sup> century: Turning point

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the number of women in music started to grow, and by that, there was an expansion of mutual collaboration, collective performances and more frequent inclusion of women in music professionally, especially in Western Europe, or more specifically, Great Britain. Still, the traditional approach in classical music was predominant; women were now admitted to academia and were more encouraged to obtain academic degrees in music, but they were still excluded from playing or composing for professional symphony orchestras. Throughout the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, women musicians started to gain more recognition in Great Britain, some of them being Priaulx Rainier, Grace Williams, Elizabeth Maconchy and Imogen Holst<sup>62</sup>. Their work was directly affected by the English Musical Renaissance<sup>63</sup>, but was still more open to the original musical methods and styles that were

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<sup>59</sup> Derek Scott, “The Sexual Politics of Victorian Musical Aesthetics,” 34.

<sup>60</sup> “Although women were still a rarity in theory or composition class, a few of them, such as Ethel Smyth and Lili Boulanger, took advantage of these opportunities. Women composers were active in various musical cultures. One of the most interesting was fin-de-siècle France, with its mixture of the new and the old: the resurgence of a specifically French style fanned by nationalism after the Franco-Prussian War (1871), an interest in instrumental music, and the continuation of academic values as promulgated by the Paris Conservatoire.” Karin Anna Pendle, *Women and music, a history: Second edition* (Indiana University Press, 1991), 176.

<sup>61</sup> Sophie Fuller, “The Society of Women Musicians”, *British Library*, available at <https://www.bl.uk/20th-century-music/articles/the-society-of-women-musicians#>, accessed on 27 September 2021.

<sup>62</sup> “Women Composers by Time Period”, *Oxford Music Online*, available at <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/page/women-composers-by-time-period>, accessed on 27 September 2021.

<sup>63</sup> “Women Composers by Time Period, *Oxford Music Online*.

ever-changing. In 1911, the organization Society of Women Musicians<sup>64</sup> was founded, specifically focusing on the issues caused by the years of invisibility among women in music. Considering the enlargement of opportunities in this century in comparison to the previously inflexible, patriarchal cultural society in Europe that blatantly positioned women on the margins, women not only started to gain more visibility and opportunities to perform, study or create music, they were also able to receive honours and awards, perform and conduct on stage, write operas and symphonies and take part in numerous subdisciplines. Still, this century was also not spared from political mayhem, wars, frequent and inevitable migration and economic instability. When we are discussing the rise of women musicians in Europe, it is hard not to notice the discrepancies between the Eastern and Western part of Europe regarding the path towards more equality in artistic labor and career opportunities, as well as the actions they sometimes were forced to undertake:

“Many women in music chose self-imposed exile as the only response that would allow them to continue to practice their art. Germaine Tailleferre, Betsy Jolas, and Nadia Boulanger are examples of the many artists who sought safety in the United States rather than accept the wartime disruptions of the 1940s.”<sup>65</sup>

The lack of representation of women in theoretical literature is still present to a certain level, considering that most of the published works in the late 20th century which are focused on subdivisions of music such as orchestra, musicology, ethnomusicology and analytical methods are mostly excluding women. As Prevost and Francis point out, the first time that theoretical publications start to be more susceptible to contain the works and the vital aspects of the artistic labor of women musicians is merely at the beginning of the 21st century:

“Those books that extend as far as the post-tonal era often reference Ruth Crawford Seeger’s music, especially her String Quartet (1931), but otherwise, few women are discussed. As with textbooks on tonal music, it is the recent publications that discuss music by women composers. In his second edition (2000) of *Introduction to Post-Tonal Theory*, Joseph N. Straus provides two works by Ruth Crawford Seeger, while his third edition (2005) now includes the same works by Crawford Seeger, in addition to works by Sofia Gubaidulina, Thea Musgrave, and Ellen Taffe Zwilich.”<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Sophie Fuller, “The Society of Women Musicians”.

<sup>65</sup> Karin Pendle, *Women and Music, A history, Second edition* (Indiana University Press, 1991), 253.

<sup>66</sup> Roxane Prevost and Kimberly Francis “Teaching Silence in the Twenty-First Century: Where are the Missing Women Composers?” *The Oxford Handbook of Music Censorship*, November 2017, available at

#### 4. The Balkans: On musical history

Even though the progress of the Western Balkans' compositional style is a substantial cultural heritage to the European continent, important parts of its historical origin are still unknown, and the already collected historical literary works are not as available as those based on Western Europe's music origins, mostly due to the Ottoman rule which had brought many socio-political, economic and cultural outlays throughout more than five centuries. As Samson points out in "Music in The Balkans", the unyielding manifestation of chauvinism in the Balkan region, specifically the Western Balkans, which derives from the entire region and not just from one particular place, but also from Western Europe, had a significant role in the lack of historical presence of the musical canon development in the Western Balkans. From the perspective of ethno-organological studies based on the development of the Balkan music, there are similarities in the structure and the ways of using specific instruments just as in the western parts of Europe; an unswerving result from migrations of herdsmen, craftsmen and peripatetic trading of the merchant class. Still, some notable differences between the origins of the instruments used in the Balkans can easily be noticed when the legacy from the Ottoman empire is taken into account, especially when one analyses epic songs accompanied with string instruments and laments sung by women.<sup>67</sup>

Just as in the other artistic fields, the limitations in the Western Balkans are undeniably perceptible in the fields of performing arts. Throughout the years, the partitions of different cultural contexts accompanied by the long periods of transition after the Yugoslavian era, numerous ruptures and earnest detachment between neighbouring territories have stood across the path towards the brand-new performing arts scene. These limitations were construed because of different reasons, but most of them are intertwined by two significant elements that had a negative societal impact the Western Balkans - lack of financial power and shortage of educational support. The ongoing divisions throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century had directly reflected upon the intricate structures of the Western Balkans' societies and disrupted the expected progress that "might have happened". Although cruel and unjustified, their impact should not be seen as utterly negative for the reason that they subtly shaped the performing arts scene in its entire complexity, letting women performers dwell upon the inflicting bias throughout

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<https://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199733163.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199733163-e-26>, accessed on 27 September 2021.

<sup>67</sup> Jim Samson, *Music in the Balkans* (Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden, Netherlands, 2013), 141.

history and represent or redistribute parts of it in their works of art. Due to the differences between the historical development in Western Europe, within the traditional communities and the rural areas across the Western Balkans, women were somehow perpetually trapped in an unwanted and unwarranted subordinate social role that transitioned from the general day-to-day discourse to the lack of progressive thought in the performing arts' fields. The stereotypical approach towards women's role through the prism of patriarchal values was somehow always stuck as an ongoing narrative. Even today, in most societies, not just the ones struggling with the principles of democracy, as Tronto states, "gender still predicts who does most of the professional care work in society, and race and socioeconomic background still predict who is most likely to get stuck doing the dirty work of care."<sup>68</sup> The many ways that women were underrepresented in public performances in the Western Balkans region, with an emphasis on the central parts of Serbia (Shumadija), North Macedonia and Montenegro as they were excluded from performing without being specifically invited by their male peers, by some means managed to shape the peculiar development of performing arts in their entirety. This perpetuating presence of gender segregation started to change with the reconstruction of the entire territory into socialism, as late as the end of World War II.

Even when we consider the musical history of the Balkan countries, as Buchanan points out – "the Balkans are Europe's periphery – in it, but not really of it. They are Europe's dark shadow, its inherent *Other*, and possibly, its very own internal Orient (cf. Razsa and Lindstrom 2004:633)."<sup>69</sup> Buchanan speaks about the term *balkanism*<sup>70</sup>, constructed by Maria Todorova, a Bulgarian historian. This term's dwells on the polarization of two different worlds, bringing conflict within itself; it presents the oddness of the musical history of the Balkans, consisting of orientalism and a stereotypical view from the position of the superior, or as Buchanan puts it, placing the Western countries as the "positional superiority".<sup>71</sup>

## 5. Creative labor and institutionalization

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<sup>68</sup> Joan Tronto, *Who cares? How to reshape a democratic politics* (Cornell University Press, 2015), 19.

<sup>69</sup> Donna A. Buchanan, *Balkan popular culture and the Ottoman Ecumene* (The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2007), 18.

<sup>70</sup> Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (Oxford University Press, 2009), 8.

<sup>71</sup> Donna A. Buchanan, *Balkan popular culture and the Ottoman Ecumene*, 18.

The method of defining and measuring the creative labor of the artist is a challenging task, as the timeframe of creative production is hardly sustainable. Consequently, labor cannot be entirely measured as whole.<sup>72</sup> As Hardt and Negri explain, the qualitative significance of various forms of production can be divided in two distinctive categories – goods produced from the earth and goods or intellectual property that can be defined as social production. Both categories tend to reorganize the global economy of the capitalistic era and redistribute or manufacture goods that generally require a lot of communing, communal assistance and collective consciousness. The increased power of the diverse forms of labor can easily be recognized by the general enlargement and cumulative self-sufficiency collective production which is directly connected either to physical presence of the collaborators or co-workers, or to the expansion of the digitalization of labor, especially during 2020, since the start of the global pandemic caused by COVID-19:

“In the contemporary phase of general intellect, knowledge has a multitudinous form in the productive process, even though, according to the boss, it can be isolated, as was artisanal knowledge in manufacture. From the perspective of capital, the figure of self-organizing labor, which is increasingly the basis of production, remains an enigma.”<sup>73</sup>

In general, just as institutionalization has an impact on all social spheres, it also effects the process of art production, especially in times of a health crisis that effects individuals on a global level. For Biljana Tanurovska, situations that have a colossal effect on humanity directly limit the potentials to create and produce art.<sup>74</sup> A state of emergency undoubtedly creates a conflict between the fictive and the real world which then contributes to the creation of an unwanted state in which artists are only dwelling upon the tiny possibilities that they can get.

“In such terms you think beyond the fictional possibilities, in the direction of trying to develop tactics beyond survival tactics. Otherwise you would just survive. If you are a victim, if you are living under scrutiny or in a situation that is not good, then the first effect on your body is that you struggle against something which is endangering your being, your body becomes a body

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<sup>72</sup> Frederick Harry Pitts, “Measuring and managing creative labor : Value struggles and billable hours in the creative industries”, *Sage Journals*, 17 December 2007, available at <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1350508420968187>, accessed on 27 September 2021.

<sup>73</sup> Frederick Harry Pitts, “Measuring and managing creative labor: Value struggles and billable hours in the creative industries”.

<sup>74</sup> Biljana Tanurovska Kjulavkovski, “There is no primary voice speaking, there is no one who is smarter”, in Alexandra Balona et al. *An Untimely Book: Critical Practice (Made in Yugoslavia) 3* (Lokomotiva, Skopje, 2018), 28. Available at <https://lokomotiva.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/critical-practice-web.pdf>, accessed on 27 September 2021.



of survival. In that sense you imply some strategies of survival, not military but poetic tactics, mainly because you deal with arts and culture.”<sup>75</sup>

For Bojana Kunst, the institutionalization of art is entrenched in the continuous practise of putting artists in a defencelessness state, distinguishing vulnerability as the “main social capital today”.<sup>76</sup> Kunst emphasizes that the current organization of art institutions creates very unstable conditions for artists, making them prone to becoming vulnerable and not giving them enough protection measures. The art institutions today, as a whole, are closely related to the “poetics of invention”<sup>77</sup>, as Kunst puts it, but still, these institutions are also not prone to susceptibility; they have to sustain their own progressiveness and develop themselves experimentally – “...we are living in the time, when with the one swing coming from the populist and nationalistic cultural “reformations“ on the march throughout Europe, such institutions could be erased; and there are currently many places in Europe where this is going on.”<sup>78</sup> Additionally, Letunic speaks about the negligence of the infrastructures that should be reorganized, since acknowledging diversity is simply impossible, when there is such an “unsuitable quantitative criteria for evaluation of the arts”.

Letunic accentuates the fact that the commodification of the contemporary art practices reduces the cultural value to an economic value, solely focusing on the market survival, without leaving any space for restructuring the performing arts.<sup>79</sup> This particularly stands out in terms of gendered segregation in cultural production, too, since without acknowledging the importance of gender-inclusion, solely because of economic necessity, i.e. because it is the easier solution, we are not speaking about democratic values anymore, nor about solidarity and inclusion.

The institutionalization of creative labor in Europe can also be analysed by reviewing several substantial factors, such as the total distribution of educational provision, financial resources, policies and institutional factors, as well as cultural and social norms that are in relation to

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<sup>75</sup>Biljana Tanurovska Kjulavkovski, “There is no primary voice speaking, there is no one who is smarter”, in Alexandra Balona et al. *An Untimely Book: Critical Practice (Made in Yugoslavia)* 3, 28.

<sup>76</sup>Bojana Kunst, “The Institutionalisation, Precarity and the Rhythm of Work”, *Kunsten*, May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2020, available at <https://www.kunsten.be/en/now-in-the-arts/the-institutionalisation-precarity-and-the-rhythm-of-work/>, accessed on 27 September 2021.

<sup>77</sup>Bojana Kunst, “The Institutionalisation, Precarity and the Rhythm of Work”.

<sup>78</sup>Bojana Kunst, “The Institutionalisation, Precarity and the Rhythm of Work”.

<sup>79</sup> Ana Letunic, “On dance as a circumstance”, in Alexandra Balona et al., *An Untimely Book: Critical Practice (Made in Yugoslavia)* 3 (Lokomotiva, Skopje, 2018), 15. <https://lokomotiva.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/critical-practice-web.pdf>

gender identity.<sup>80</sup> Discrimination based on gender identity impacts both formal and informal education, starting from childhood years. In addition to the quality of education, the socio-economic structures of the country in question are also a significant factor that contributes to the further shaping of the individual. In order to overcome gender-based discrimination in education and improve the well-being of women, EU's legal framework such as the Convention of the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)<sup>81</sup> is mainly focusing on this particular issue.

### **5.1. Women's roles in the Macedonian theatre: the wife, the mother or the mistress?**

With regard to the development of the Macedonian theatre, Luzina points out the fact that there is absence of a thorough, serious, scientifically argued insight into the famous totality of the Macedonian dramaturgy, hence the bibliography of dramatic texts in the Macedonian theatre, a bibliography that would systematically cover all one hundred and fifty critical years of diachrony.<sup>82</sup> Putting aside the unsuccessful attempts to create a suitable bibliography of dramatic texts, it is inevitable to face the fact that one cannot even start to become aware of the correct amount of women who helped in the process of shaping the Macedonian theatre. How many women were included, and how many were excluded, or put aside, far from becoming the leading individuals in the process of creating? That is a question that remains uncertain. By compiling such a bibliography, one will necessarily have to selectively approach the establishment of a system with specified texts in which they will essentially be differentiated according to the time and place of occurrence, as well as according to the linguistic idioms through which they are articulated, according to the place and time of their publication, as well as their first and later performances, rather than just according to their authorship. Furthermore, one needs to make a distinction between the different aspects of the artistic labor of women in the Macedonian theatre, since the inclusion of women actresses had started to happen much earlier than the continuous inclusion of women as directors, or dramatists. Luzina points out that there is a lack of serious history of the Macedonian theatre, such that its own methodology

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<sup>80</sup> European Parliament, Directorate-General for Internal Policies, *Empowering women and girls through education* (European Union, Brussels, 2015) 14, available at [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/510022/IPOL\\_STU\(2015\)510022\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/510022/IPOL_STU(2015)510022_EN.pdf), accessed on 27 September 2021.

<sup>81</sup> United Nations, *Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women* (United Nations General Assembly, 1979), available at <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/>, accessed on 27 September 2021.

<sup>82</sup> Jelena Luzina, *History of the Macedonian Drama* (Kultura, Skopje, 1995), 6-7.

would not be based only on arbitrariness, improvisations and fragmentation, but a complete insight into its scientific subject.<sup>83</sup> Throughout the years of the development of the Macedonian theatre, up until the postmodern era, all of the already collected archived dramatic works are by men. Their works had managed to create a strong and continuous development of the Macedonian dramaturgy, as the theatre had been considered – and still is – “the sole medium for mass (cultural) communication.”<sup>84</sup> However, the collective memory that shaped the progression of the Macedonian dramaturgy is shaped solely on the basis of the writings of men; up until the postmodern era with the emergence of women whose written work started to be played on stage.<sup>85</sup>

When analysing the Macedonian bit drama, as well as the literary and theatrical history, the traces of the autochthonous folklore are predominating, and the folklore did not do any justice to the position of women in the unsettled past of North Macedonia. It is these traces that are analytically detached from the individual dramatic examples, serving as reflections of certain ritual or ordinary ceremonies, as echoes or quotations from traditional folk songs based on mourning, sad love story, patriotism, etc. Ana Stojanoska speaks about the way that one reads a dramatic text, which undoubtedly leads to a precise separation of the signs, symbols, ideas, motives – all of these elements build up the process of creating a dramatic text. Therefore, the place of conflict in the dramatic text is spontaneously created. Stojanoska speaks about the signs’ strong presence in the Macedonian bit drama, which is every so often inevitably stronger than the written text, emphasizing the paradigmatic dramas, where the semantics display the traditionalism in the Macedonian drama: “Signs, symbols, the semantic coordinates that are recognized in the Macedonian dramatic bit tradition, refer to their abundance, their multitude that is a result of the exceptional magic of the folk, folklore, or I would say, authorial memory.”<sup>86</sup>

A depiction of the favorable insertion of the magical elements and the Macedonian folklore is the play that premiered in the distant 1900 - Macedonian Bloody Wedding, by Vojdan Chernodrinski. This play had dominated the Macedonian theatre throughout the years, and had strongly influenced the future dramaturgy, not solely until the emergence of the modern theatre, but even after that, during the transitional years that led to the era of postmodernism. The most

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<sup>83</sup> Jelena Luzina, *History of the Macedonian Drama*, 101.

<sup>84</sup> Jelena Luzina. *Ten modern Macedonian plays*. (Matica makedonska, Skopje, 2000). 21

<sup>85</sup> One of the most prominent women dramatists in the postmodern era of the Macedonian theatre is Zanina Mircevska, the author of the dramatic text “A place I’ve never been to” (1996).

<sup>86</sup> Ana Stojanoska. *Theatre: A challenge. Studies and essays*. (Ss. Cyril and Methodius University, Skopje, 2018). 13.

striking replica in the play, and one of the most-known replicas in the Macedonian theatre belongs to the lead female character, Cveta: “I died, but I did not become a Turk”. Stojanovska accentuates the importance of this particular quote, as it “becomes some kind of a formula, a magical incantation, which positions the female role, or more precisely the woman in the Macedonian society until the emergence of the modern, and then the postmodern era in the Macedonian theatre”.<sup>87</sup>

Luzina also points out that the reflection of the rural, ambient spatial features actually participates to the articulation and shaping of the specific stage genre, i.e. the Macedonian theatre.<sup>88</sup> In her assessment where she mentions the traditional segments in contemporary dramaturgy, she fails to mention that the core of these traditional representations of the outdated society are based on patriarchal views on life and its struggles, in which the role of women is firmly associated with the home and its representation of safety; sheltered from the world outside, but also often not separating the woman’s character from her sexuality. As Laura Mulvey implicates, women remain detached with a breach that divides them from imperative matters that concern them as individuals, in context of their gender, matters “which are scarcely relevant to phallogocentric theory: the sexing of the female infant and her relationship to the symbolic, the sexually mature woman as non-mother, maternity outside the signification of the phallus, the vagina. But, at this point, psychoanalytic theory as it now stands can at least advance our understanding of the status quo, of the patriarchal order in which we are caught.”<sup>89</sup>

Mulvey’s insinuation about women’s representation as prescient infants is also applicable in the context of the Macedonian theatre; as women characters are more than often put in positions in which they are being degraded, discriminated, condemned, immoral, or repressed. In spite of everything, one of the common stereotypes about women in Macedonian dramatic texts is the immoral woman, the one who is unfaithful to her husband, the one who bears children but fails to succeed in her role as a devoted mothers. Kapushevskaja-Drakulevska speaks about the most striking in this sense is the character of Milka in *Eleshnik*, a 1997 play by Jugoslav Petrovski, in which Milka becomes *Juda Ohridska*.

Imagological studies show that the unfaithful woman questions the role that society has assigned to her – “being a wife, mother, or a daughter - exposes her own identity to shame, and

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<sup>87</sup> Ana Stojanoska. *Theatre: A challenge. Studies and essays*, 100.

<sup>88</sup> Jelena Luzina, *History of the Macedonian Drama*, 102.

<sup>89</sup> Laura Mulvey, *Visual and other pleasures*, (Palgrave, 1989), 31.

violates the agreement”.<sup>90</sup> By emphasizing these characteristics of the Macedonian woman, not just in the Macedonian bit drama, but also in the modern and postmodern theatre, as she is perceived from the standpoint of the screenwriter or director, we are only facing a one-dimensional character, one that leaves the crowd detached from her wholeness; her labor, pain, her struggles or brawls. All of it is contextualized in her sexuality, her behavior with men, or in her fertility, or fruitfulness – the connection with her children.

These characteristics depict the real-life Macedonian woman, still entrapped in an imposed societal role. In the context of the imposition of these characteristics of women in today’s society, Federici speaks about “reproductive work”, housework or domestic labor – all of them outweighing women’s intellectual labor.<sup>91</sup> The societal role of the woman is intertwined with the context of the region, as well as the reduction to the woman’s body to a reproductive innocence, connecting it exclusively with the bodily innocence. This is not only an outdated discourse; it is still present in today’s Macedonian society, driven by these traditional values that I speak of throughout the text. Jakimovska implicates that the depiction of women exclusively as caretakers, mothers or housewives, directly complicates the current conditions, implicating that this is an already given, natural role of the Macedonian women, regardless of the completely different life circumstances today.<sup>92</sup> The right-wing politics and the parties’ oppressive campaigns that were present in the public discourse in the last decade in North Macedonia only contributed to aggravate these outworn values, portraying them as standard norm. Retrospectively, the common politics managed to create public divisions, but still managed to normalize the unpaid labor of women and their caretaker role as their predominant characteristic.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Lidija Kapushevska Drakulevska; “The aspect of Otherness in the Macedonian drama”, *Contra Cultural Entities*, available at <http://www.mirage.com.mk/index.php/mk/component/content/article?id=252:2013-04-23-11-51-25>, accessed on 27 September 2021.

<sup>91</sup> Silvia Federici, *Revolution at point zero: Housework, reproduction and feminist struggle* (PM Press, Oakland, 2012), 91.

<sup>92</sup> Ilina Jakimovska, “The crying eaves: How one gender stereotype can be used for its destruction from the inside”, in Iskra Geshoska et al. (eds.) *Museum of Women’s Stories* (Skopje:Lokomotiva), 2016, 78, available at <https://lokomotiva.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/THE-PUBLICATION.pdf>, accessed on 27 September 2021.

<sup>93</sup> “In this regard, Jelena Cvetanovska’s doctoral dissertation is of great importance, dedicated to sin and punishment in the folk culture, as well as her film “Women’s Stories”, which includes autobiographical reflections of several adult women on their status in the countryside and their relationship with their husband, which confirm the previously stated views, not about a black and white story, but about the more nuanced situation with man-woman, but also woman-woman and man-man relations in our culture.” Ilina Jakimovska, “The crying eaves: How one gender stereotype can be used for its destruction from the inside”, in Iskra Geshoska et al. (eds.) *Museum of Women’s Stories*, 80-81.

## 6. European cultural spaces

Due to turbulent politics and different socio-economic structures that had a direct impact on the fundamentals of the modern European social production, cultural participation in Europe had to be remodelled and some of its relegated domains were mostly redefined with the help of international legal framework which later created opportunities for further collaboration and collective participation between artists from EU and non-EU countries, with an emphasis on Southeast Europe. For Claske Vos, this method should facilitate the creation of a “shared European cultural space that can ‘thicken’ EU citizens’ rather weak European identity and increase the EU’s visibility in the world”.<sup>94</sup> The cultural differences between countries are sometimes implicitly rearranging the contexts of artistic labor, but somehow, with the ongoing implementation and harmonization of European charters and conventions in EU and non-EU countries, the differences are also coordinated in one common way of shaping the contemporary cultural production. Theoretically, this approach opens up many possibilities for artists, but in practice, the cultural policies that are continuously implemented by the EU are occasionally not fully applied in a practical way. As Vos says – “Some have called this the neo-liberalization of the EU cultural policy: the social and economic potential of culture has been increasingly used to legitimize culture on a European level (i.e. Littoz-Monnet 2012; McGuigan 2004).”<sup>95</sup> This opens up the discussion of other forms of identification that have a significant role in cultural production as a whole. These characteristic identities are not solely focusing on the general distinction between territories as EU and non-EU countries, but they are also exposing an extensive discussion about the hegemonic aspects that shape the artists’ background and their artistic labor. Their identity can be contextualized on various levels that should be systematically observed - their homeland, nationality, ethnicity and gender identity.

For Vos, there is a certain level of resistance of the interference of the European Union in the cultural production on European soil, asserting that habitually, the main concern of administrative bodies and other contributors is the process of fulfilling the criteria to get the

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<sup>94</sup> Claske Vos, “Building European Cultural Spaces: Discussing the Impact of European Cultural Policy in Southeast Europe” in Biljana Tanurovska Kjulavkovski et al. (eds.) *Modelling public space(s) in culture* (Lokomotiva, Skopje, 2018) 34. Available at <https://lokomotiva.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/PUBLICATION2018Digital.pdf>, accessed on 27 September 2021.

<sup>95</sup> Claske Vos, “Building European Cultural Spaces: Discussing the Impact of European Cultural Policy in Southeast Europe” in Biljana Tanurovska Kjulavkovski et al. (eds.) *Modelling public space(s) in culture* (Lokomotiva, Skopje, 2018) 34.

requested financial support. This is perhaps the most important aspect that resembles these different approaches towards today's cultural production which is created by practitioners and theoreticians who live in the Western Balkans in comparison with those who live in EU countries. Consequently, there is a greater probability that applicants or non-EU collaborators would be more focused on obeying the standards and conditions requested by the funding bodies than on the actual artistic contribution which ideally would become an authentic part of the European cultural production. Consequently, this lets us believe that the established criteria does not make any profound changes in the already conventional social structures and does not effectively diminish gendered segregation in the creative processes. It does not tackle discrimination from within, but rather lets it get away unrecognized.

In relation to grasping the different methods of creating cultural spaces for artists, the current political fluctuations are also entwined in the process of creation of these methods. For Peter Lilja, the last few decades have successfully managed to decline the importance of nation-states, and as expected, there were consequences. One of them was the continuous increase of neo-globalization in correlation with the individual's economic interdependence that also created a lot of space for nationalist tendencies to become more present throughout Europe.<sup>96</sup> The cultural policies introduced by the EU have a tendency to let each country interpret and implement projects in their public space on a regional or national level. For Joan Tronto, adjusting political institutions to support different cultures and thus share caring responsibilities with individuals whose art is created in an inherently different environment from the one considered as the superior one is something far from reality.<sup>97</sup> Tronto speaks about the fact that throughout history, care is mostly associated with lowly people – “Those who provide non-nurturant, “dirty work” care are the least well-regarded in society”.<sup>98</sup> These words emphasize the one-dimensional side of the Macedonian society, in which the so-called “dirty work”, or “simple tasks”, are somehow always bestowed on women.

Additionally, the current European policies are showing that there is a possibility to actually alter the ongoing politics of care created in a capitalistic, profit-oriented society. For example, by financing some countries that need financial resources in order make a positive impact on an already precarious cultural system, these policies can alter the overall cultural production in

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<sup>96</sup> Peter Lilja, “Defending a Common World: Hannah Arendt on the State, the Nation and Political Education”, *Stud Philos Educ* 37, 2018, 537–552, available at <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11217-018-9618-3>, accessed on 27 September 2021.

<sup>97</sup> Joan Tronto, *Who cares? How to reshape a democratic politics* (Cornell University Press, 2015), 12.

<sup>98</sup> Joan Tronto, *Who cares? How to reshape a democratic politics*, 12.

the next few decades. In addition, there are applicable frameworks which are being provided to each candidate, but there is no guarantee that they will be fully implemented, as they are fully co-dependent on the context of each country in which the creative project is being developed. Vos gives an example that helps us comprehend the logical input behind Southeast Europe's way of creating EU funded artistic projects – they are generally supported solely from the EU, without any financial support from the national governments, simply to avoid several key-factors that contribute to the general slow movement of the Western Balkans cultural stages:

“These governments struggle with a lack of resources, apply more traditionalist approaches to culture, and are generally not very open to EU funded cultural projects, or only when it fits their interests. As most EU funded projects are dependent on co-funding from national governments, many of the projects of these pioneers cannot be developed and those projects that are co-funded are often not sustainable because co-funding is not guaranteed.”<sup>99</sup>

### **6.1 The Yugoslav performance art period and ex-Yugoslav countries today: Margins besides standards**

The Yugoslav cultural production remains recognized in both international and Balkan circles; however, the role of the theatrical development after the 70's is still yet to be analyzed, specifically in the fields of curatorial practices in both visual and performing arts. The lack of data of the historical genesis and cultural discourse of the Yugoslav's performing arts stages reciprocally leaves us without any inside knowledge on the gendered segregation in the Yugoslav period. Vujanovic analyzes the performing arts development in Belgrade during the Cold War Period, as it had been the central city where most of the novel cultural development in Yugoslavia occurred. Vujanovic explains that the Yugoslav performance art „is a rather asymmetrical namesake to its Western European and American counterparts“, preoccupied with the urge to resist both moderate modernism and socialist realism. Although the general perception of the Yugoslav society had not always been immediately connected with the

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<sup>99</sup>Claske Vos, “Building European Cultural Spaces: Discussing the Impact of European Cultural Policy in Southeast Europe” in Biljana Tanurovska Kjulavkovski et al. (eds.) *Modelling public space(s) in culture* (Lokomotiva, Skopje, 2018) 37.



principles of democracy and liberalization, its art showed an appeal for a democratization of society. Vujanovic singles out three main functions of performance art during the Yugoslav period: „artists’ need for direct action (*praxis*) in public, venturing out of one’s main art discipline (painting, theatre, poetry), and experimenting new forms of artistic expression for rebellious youth subcultures.“<sup>100</sup> The appearance of novel forms of experimental performing arts had mostly been noted in only three ex-Yugoslav countries – Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia, in different fields of creation but mostly focusing on the individuality of the body by creating multimedia performances, following the digitalization development.<sup>101</sup> In terms of the Bitef festival and the Yugoslav performance art development during the 70’s, Russian critic Nataliya Vagapova concludes that - “its task was to illustrate to the world the openness of the cultural policies, the tolerance of the Titoist leadership and its break with the theory and practice of socialist realism in art and in fact, while the festival, as well as Yugoslav culture as a whole, persisted amidst an essentially primitive and brutal political censorship, which was shrewdly kept hidden from public view.”<sup>102</sup>

The Yugoslav impact on today’s development of performing arts might remain visible, however, the political fluctuations following the transitional period had left a grave impact on the development of the Balkans performing art stage.

Vos, there are different key-factors that influence the process of creating a transnational public space in which different cultural practices from various countries throughout Europe can be shared autonomously. In order to create a safe space for artists that want to contribute to the

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<sup>100</sup> Ana Vujanovic, *Curating Performance in Belgrade during the Cold War: Bitef’s Fine Arts Programme*, Academia Edu, 2, available at [https://www.academia.edu/47455562/Curating\\_Performance\\_in\\_Belgrade\\_during\\_the\\_Cold\\_War\\_Bitefs\\_Fine\\_Arts\\_Programme](https://www.academia.edu/47455562/Curating_Performance_in_Belgrade_during_the_Cold_War_Bitefs_Fine_Arts_Programme), accessed on 27 September 2021.

<sup>101</sup> “In this context one might observe different neo-avant-garde performance practices, such as the multimedia performances of Vladan Radosavljević as early as the mid-1950s, Leonid Šejka’s para-rituals, Olja Ivanjicki’s happenings in painting as well as actions involving body painting with Šejka, Vujica Rešin Tucić’s poetry performances, the happenings of the Slovenian OHO group at Bitef, Katalin Ladik’s poetry-acting performances, etc. In the 1970s, the most active protagonists included the groups KôD and (□), Vladimir Kopiel, the Bosch+Bosch group, Tomislav Gotovac, Radomir Damnjan, the team ekipa A3: Akcija Anonimna Atrakcija [A3: Anonymous Attraction Action], the group of artists associated with the Student Cultural Centre in Belgrade: Marina Abramović, Gergely Urkom, Zoran Popović, Raša Todosijević, Neša Paripović, and Era Milivojević, Group 143, Opus 4, and others. Performance scenes developed in particular in Novi Sad and Belgrade, where Tribina mladih [Youth Forum] and the SKC respectively emerged as the main hubs of activity. In Belgrade, Bitef’s Fine Arts Programme with its experimental and activist performance arts curation preceded it.” Ana Vujanovic, *Curating Performance in Belgrade during the Cold War: Bitef’s Fine Arts Programme*.

<sup>102</sup> Natalija Vagapova, *Bitef: pozorište, festival, život* [Bitef: The Theatre, Festival, Life] (Belgrade: Službeni glasnik, 2010), 248.

cultural production in their homelands, simplifying the process by using policy models that are hard to be implemented in countries such as those in Southeast Europe is unnecessary. As Vos states, creating a “certain desirable ‘European product’ is not something that can be imposed by the limitations that EU’s policy models create. The real necessity lies ahead of that – in the process of providing a safe space for the co-existing of different cultures and different artistic approaches.

In addition, another key-factor is the process of letting go of the national narratives which are sometimes present due to the national government’s involvement in the cultural production stage. An analysis and comparison between two worlds existing on the same continent is justly needed, considering the ongoing impartial improvement in definite social spheres in Eastern European countries, primarily focusing on The Balkans. The current condition in the Balkans in view of cultural production, especially in contemporary performing arts, should not be professed nor confused for a complete societal development, bearing in mind the enduring ubiquity of labor and its continuous occurrence in Southeast Europe, or more specifically the countries in the western parts of the Balkans. The aspect of the traditional hierarchical arrangement and the ongoing unequal representation of women in cultural production or more precisely in performative arts, in retrospect, is continuously causing a vast amount of “untouchable” space, based on structural discrimination on ethnical level and on the gender identity of those in question. To understand the institutionalization of power, as well as the growing levels of precarity in the performing arts, one must turn to dissimilar theoretical aspects. One aspect would be that of Deleuze and Guattari, and another Laruelle’s – both similar in the context of rejection of the post-structuralist understanding of music, but also describing pure multiplicity where all immanent transformations are fully included.

“Laruelle speaks of a philosophical ‘ventriloquism’ of the Real. Yet his own seemingly quasi-mimetic approach to philosophy can equally be seen as a ventriloquist’s act that re-voices philosophical material (in an immanent mode) (Laruelle 2013b, 217; see also Brassier 2007, 134). We could thereby see non-philosophy’s performative posture as one that ‘plays the dummy’ so that it can re-enact the speech of philosophy. This is also another way of understanding what Laruelle means when he says that non-philosophy ‘clones’ philosophy. These clones “are not doubles or exact reproductions of philosophy”, yet they are remakes of a sort—mutants (Laruelle 2014, 52). Perhaps a more suitable analogue for this cloning comes in an alternative to the philosophical ‘game of positions’: the non-philosophical game of charades. Charades is a ‘parlour game’ whereby players attempt to guess correctly a proposed film, book,

or play, conveyed through mime alone. There are four basic approaches to playing charades that can be compared with philosophy and non-philosophy.”<sup>103</sup>

## 6.2 Intersectionality and inclusion

As Pascal Gielen explains, the high degree of individualization of the cultural production is in close relation to the contemporary social discourse.<sup>104</sup> For Gielen, the guise of individual independence makes the work of art more prone to sensitive reactions to the neoliberal management, as the performative works’ autonomous component is an understandable requirement. In spite of that, the enlargement of the creative capitalism is not a unified constituent, but rather a fluctuating process that can be contextualized in diverse ways, especially when one is able to see the clear modifications of cultural production in different parts of Europe. The Western Balkan countries are still facing struggles with monetary stability, sustainability and financial independence, even in today’s post-transitional society. This struggle has severely damaged the cultural production’s growth, creating innumerable difficulties that artists stumble upon while they are supposed to focus only on the levels of individuality and independence in their original works. Bearing in mind that the transitional period from socialism to democracy is knotted with the conversion of the post-socialistic countries’ economic liberation, these two cannot be demarcated as separate elements. Consequently, post-socialistic countries had to go through effective transitions in terms of democratic approaches and socio-economic reforms, since the political support and social development is profoundly associated to a successful economic shift. The transitional period in post-Yugoslav countries started around 1989 and was severely damaged by the shaky grounds on which the new wave of the Western Balkans’ politics was supposed to be shaped. Unlike the rest of the post-Yugoslav countries, North Macedonia passed the political transition without

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<sup>103</sup> John Ó Maoilearca, Laruelle, Immanence, and performance: What does non-philosophy do? *Performance Philosophy Journal* 5, no. 2 (2017), Available at <https://www.performancephilosophy.org/journal/article/view/143/252>, accessed on 27 September 2021.

<sup>104</sup> Pascal Gielen, “Imagining culture in a flat wet world”, in Biljana Tanurovska Kjulavkovski et al., (eds.), *Modelling public space(s) in culture* (Lokomotiva, Skopje, 2018), 16. Available at <https://lokomotiva.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/PUBLICATION2018Digital.pdf>, accessed on 27 September 2021.

any internal or mutual conflicts. In spite of that, the economic instability after the disintegration of Yugoslavia was present throughout all of the region, not leaving any of the post-Yugoslav countries without serious consequences that had later led to complications in the general societal progress, including the development of visual and performing arts. These matters are still persistent up to a point in most of the post-Yugoslav countries due to the long period of welfare state development after 1989, and accordingly, they often place the artistic individuality on the margins. There are numerous socio-economic issues that are somehow undermining these matters from becoming the focal point of discussion. Without the necessary skills in many fields and the ability to multitask, one might be left without key elements in their performance on stage – sound, lights, scenography, translations, costumes, instruments and other essentials for a successful performance are most often directly associated to the ability of the people involved in the creative process to successfully manage to simply make it happen (*snajdi se!*<sup>105</sup>). This state of emergence is usually created because of the complexity and longitude of the transformation process which is defining the Western Balkans through the prism of the western, industrialized world. Frequently, real life events show that the lack of financial stability leads to lack of funds for most of the essential parts of the creative production. On the other hand, the ongoing ‘infantilization’ of the post-Yugoslav countries should not be seen as a solution to such a complex issue, as it only makes the artist more prone to the utter feeling of never-belonging, never as profound as one needs to be. Hereafter, it unconsciously defines artists as individuals prone to self-victimization and subtly burdens them, keeping them trapped unaided and often detached from their creative labor. Buden uses the phrase ‘children of communism’ for the citizens of the post-Yugoslav countries, defining it as “the ‘figure of submission’ to the new form of ‘historical necessity’ that initiates and controls the process of the post-communist transition”.<sup>106</sup> The period of transition that the Western Balkan countries have gone through is often perceived as a long-awaited answer to a system in the ruins; these countries were and still are inhabited by citizens that are perpetually recognized as immature young children that cannot implement democracy without the help of others, i.e. the old European democracies. In this case, they are simply unable to function properly without the moral and financial aid from more ‘mature’ countries. As Buden states, “the repressive infantilization of the societies that have recently liberated themselves from communism is the key feature of the so-called post-

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<sup>105</sup> “Snajdi se” means “Deal with it” in Macedonian. This phrase is often used during creative processes on stage-theatre, opera, choir etc. The Serbian/Bosnian/Montenegrin/Croatian translation is similar – “Nađi se”.

<sup>106</sup> Boris Buden, *Children of postcommunism*, Radical Philosophy 159, no 1. (Jan/Feb 2010), available at <https://www.radicalphilosophy.com/article/children-of-postcommunism>, accessed on 27 September 2021.

communist condition”.<sup>107</sup> But, how to be able to regain the power to have free choice and an independent viewpoint which will flourish throughout the burden of their past if they are everlastingly described as juvenile? Buden speaks of ideology that concerns these “innocent children”, when the democratic and capitalistic reality becomes intertwined in its unrestricted, ideological reproducibility: “Even the most distant island can become for a time its cradle, no matter what the cost. Finally, infantile innocence has a constitutive effect for the whole horizon of individualistic (juridical) bourgeois ideology in the era of its globalization.”<sup>108</sup>

The unremitting suppression of the intellectual complexity and cultural heritage connected to the pre-transition period in the Western Balkans has managed to perplex the social structure and throughout the last three decades, it seems that it solely added more salt to the wound – leaving the Western Balkan’s artistic stage underdeveloped and downgraded in terms of gender equality, financial stability and solid grounds for its future fruition.

The aspect of Otherness, or the Other, i.e. the presence of women in the context of the performing arts on stage and off stage in North Macedonia, experiences its emanation through the counter-cultural entities, individual or collective, which deviate from the main social currents, and as such, all marginal social groups function. These are the second subjects in the series of established relations such as: rich-poor, enlightened (intelligent, cultured) - wild (stupid, simple), men-women, parents-children, etc.<sup>109</sup> Even at the core of the dramatic conflict in the indicated plays lies the difference, i.e. the alterity, as well as the desire to belittle, suppress and eliminate women from a position of power and overshadowing the male figure, regardless of the type of difference in question: social or status in the family, for age or gender inequality.<sup>110</sup> The depiction of the Macedonian woman on stage does not differ from the ways that she is perceived in real life. However, the antagonistic approach to the woman as a whole arises from the distorted standards in the judgment of identity in terms of material wealth and social status, and not in terms of true values and qualities. Hence the projection of a distorted image of both oneself and the Others, which implies conceit, self-esteem, and self-exaltation,

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<sup>107</sup> Boris Buden, *Children of postcommunism*.

<sup>108</sup> Boris Buden, *Children of postcommunism*.

<sup>109</sup> Lidija Kapushevska Drakulevska; “The aspect of Otherness in the Macedonian drama”, *Contra Cultural Entities*, available at <http://www.mirage.com.mk/index.php/mk/component/content/article?id=252:2013-04-23-11-51-25>, accessed on 27 September 2021.

<sup>110</sup> In Antica, the national (ethnic, religious) identity also plays a key role (analogous to the Macedonian bloody wedding of Vojdan Chernodrinski, for example), which is also enshrined in Iljoski's plays. In Begalka and Antica, otherness is problematized through the motive of forbidden love - love is a pivotal point from which other forms of differentiation arise. In the comedy Chorbadi Teodos, love and social antagonism exist in parallel, and even in the finale of the drama, these two currents will intertwine and resolve.

on the one hand, at the expense of belittling and underestimating the Other, i.e. the Macedonian woman.<sup>111</sup>

As Kapushevska-Drakulevska, explains, the integral corpus of the Macedonian drama script indicates that "the entire dramatic discourse is written as eminently masculine, which can be seen from the way his dramatic characters are built/developed".<sup>112</sup> Jelena Luzina rightly concludes. "In all literary genres, hence in drama, female characters will serve to personalize (illustrate?) Only those two traditional values of the patriarchal world: motherhood and honour."<sup>113</sup>

## 7. Legal perspectives: Women's labor

The connotation of masculinity with cultural production serves to the marginalization of women and keeps on pushing women aside from prestigious creative roles in most sectors of the artistic industry, therefore creating a whole new field where gendered segregation keeps on happening without any disturbances.<sup>114</sup> Baker and Hesmondhalgh argue that if the creativity of individuals can survive solely by being protected from the labor market, that same labor market must have certain boundaries. If the society can produce certain limitations, then it will reciprocally protect the autonomy of the aesthetic experience and the autonomy of the public knowledge:

"They can and should be untied from dubious gender politics. We need to examine *how* the commerce-creativity division of labor becomes attached to gendered divisions of labor, and recognize a much more varied set of modes of creativity, moving beyond dubious connections of creativity with infantilism and sexuality."<sup>115</sup>

When it comes to female labor force participation in the Western Balkans, the findings show that women who live in poorer countries are generally working either in the informal sector, i.e. grey economy, or family enterprises.<sup>116</sup> Additionally, although it seems as economic development means that all genders will be automatically included, the findings show that women are still pushed out of the labor market, and the only way to create improvement is

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<sup>111</sup> Lidija Kapushevska Drakulevska; "The aspect of Otherness in the Macedonian drama".

<sup>112</sup> Jelena Luzina, *Tetralika, Skopje-Melbourne* (Matica Makedonska, 2000), 309.

<sup>113</sup> Jelena Luzina, *Tetralika, Skopje-Melbourne*, 314.

<sup>114</sup> David Hesmondhalgh and Sarah Baker, *Sex, gender and work segregation in the cultural industries*, *Sociol Rev.* (May 2015), 23-36. Available at <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/1467-954X.12238>, accessed on 27 September 2021.

<sup>115</sup> David Hesmondhalgh and Sarah Baker, *Sex, gender and work segregation in the cultural industries*.

<sup>116</sup> Ruben Atoyan, Jesmin Rahman, *Western Balkans: Increasing Women's Role in the Economy*. (International Monetary Fund, 2017). 4.

through the availability of education.<sup>117</sup> Some of the factors that contribute to women's exclusion are the social barriers and stigmatization of women-workers.

Artistic labor in current times is tangled within the complexity of the historic context and the predominant politics, as well as the current state of development of each region in Europe. For Katarzyna Kosmala, creative work is a significant source of production nowadays, and the consumption of art is directed towards enjoyment, shock, desire or the imaginary.<sup>118</sup> All of these categories are altering the ways that the value of cultural production can be measured, showing that the engagement in critical practice is still alienated, implicitly suppressing gender identity as an important aspect, but still not fully developed and ready to achieve equality in terms of gender representation in some creative work environments. The complex historic background of the Western Balkans countries has a certain role in the ways that the creative production process and the artistic labor are legally protected. The weak joint perception of key elements such as unequal representation of different gender identities, pay gap and the presence of intersectional discrimination is still predominant when legislators are implementing international legal documents into their respective domestic legal framework. According to OECD's recent findings, female labor force participation in South East Europe is still significantly lower than male labor force participation, remaining at 46.3%.<sup>119</sup> Eurostat's research results from 2015 show that the cultural and creative industry which are also based on the artistic, individual and collective values and inventive approaches, accounted for approximately 3.7% of the employment in the EU, which contributes 4.2% to EU's GDP.

In terms of labor productivity, the development in the last three years (2018-2020) varied across the region, with the positive example of the labor market in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which showed continued increase in labor productivity. Regrettably, all other countries in the region reported either a slowdown or a continuous stagnation.<sup>120</sup> Although the findings show that since 2013, the overall activity rates in the Western Balkan countries increased, they still remained low in comparison to other parts in Western Europe, primarily because of the unequal representation of women in the labor market:

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<sup>117</sup> Ruben Atoyan, Jesmin Rahman, *Western Balkans: Increasing Women's Role in the Economy*, 4.

<sup>118</sup> Katarzyna Kosmala, *Women on Work, Women at Work: Visual Artists on Labor Exploitation*, British Journal of Management, Vol. 19, S85–S98 (2008).

<sup>119</sup> OECD, *The Impact of Legal Frameworks on Women's Economic Empowerment around the World: challenges and good practices*, (March 7<sup>th</sup>, 2018), 4. Available at <https://www.oecd.org/mena/competitiveness/2107-March-on-Gender-Legal-Framework-Highlights.pdf>, accessed on 27 September 2021.

<sup>120</sup> World Bank Group, *Western Balkans Labor Market Trends* (The Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies, 2020), 17. <https://wiiw.ac.at/western-balkans-labor-market-trends-2020-dlp-5300.pdf>



„With regard to gender, the labor force participation of women in the Western Balkans was among the lowest in Europe, whereas male activity rates (with the exceptions of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo) were comparable to those of the EU peer countries.“<sup>121</sup>

According to the World Bank report on Western Balkans labor market trends, the probability of obtaining a job automatically, i.e. through the selection process of the relevant national institution is around 50%. The findings show that women and younger individuals are at slightly greater risk of being selected through the automatic system, noting that the percentage varies depending on the type of labor force participation and the specific sectors where the applicants would work.<sup>122</sup>

In terms of the spectrum of cultural activities, they can be defined as profitable or non-profitable, but either way, they are always consisting significant elements that have an extensive profundity – self-expression and artistic identity. The cultural production, which can either be distributed and consumed as art or entertainment, has a high level of importance because it is always entwined within the social development in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The digitalization of the arts and consequently - artistic labor, have affected the ways that cultural production can be defined. By contributing to the modification of the previous definitions of cultural production, the digitalization also has a significantly high effect on the artist's ability to profit from their work. Recent findings show that gender inequality in the fields of cultural production still prevails: “Aspiring journalists, artists and writers, as 'outsiders', often accept unpaid work to gain a foothold in the cultural and creative sectors.”<sup>123</sup> OECD's report<sup>124</sup> shows that there are discontinuous employment patterns in the cultural sector in Europe, which later led to insufficient pensions or penalization of women artists throughout their maternity leaves. These irregularities have caused severe issues for self-employed artists, considering that the unequal treatment towards some groups of artists points to a serious gender bias. The gender bias is a constant that has a harmful effect throughout women's careers in the artistic fields. A study on cultural industries on a global level shows that on a global level, approximately 50% of the cultural employment is occupied by women. However, the number of women occupying high paid, managing positions in the field of executive production, directing, cinematography,

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<sup>121</sup> World Bank Group, *Western Balkans Labor Market Trends*, 20.

<sup>122</sup> World Bank Group, *Western Balkans Labor Market Trends*, 38.

<sup>123</sup> Magdalena Pasikowska-Schnass, *Employment in the cultural and creative sectors* (European Parliament, October 2019), 9, available at [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2019/642264/EPRS\\_BRI\(2019\)642264\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2019/642264/EPRS_BRI(2019)642264_EN.pdf), accessed on 27 September 2021.

<sup>124</sup> Magdalena Pasikowska-Schnass, *Employment in the cultural and creative sectors*, 10.



screenwriting etc. is approximately 17%. In addition, the study shows that the average amount of women directors on a global level is also low – around 30%. Gender equality and equity does not solely have economic benefits for women and other marginalized gender identities. The legal framework focused on gender policies and gender equality also help in the process of creating wide-ranging societies and encourage social synchronisation.<sup>125</sup>

By assessing what needs to be further implemented or altered in the legislation relevant to the cultural production, the Western Balkan countries can ensure the direct participation of women in the formal economy and financial matters of the countries in question. As it is noted in OECD's findings, each country creates the legal reforms by taking a different approach and pace, and both of them are correlated to the externalized intra-regional differences.<sup>126</sup> We can postulate the fact that each country has a diverse legal system that is gradually altered, meaning that the statutory laws of each country are dissimilar to one another, which is a feature that has an impact on the pace of implementation of the national laws and bylaws of the country:

“The fight for gender equality in South East Europe must be put into the context of the Soviet legacy. During the Soviet era, women were fairly well represented in all aspects of life. However, after 1989, political focus shifted to economic transition reforms, and the implementation of laws governing gender equality slipped down the priority list.”<sup>127</sup>

The post-Yugoslav period is characterized with improvements of the overall domestic legislation of each ex-Yugoslav country; however, it has to be noted that each country had undergone, and is still undergoing changes by taking a different approach to the implementation of gender equality laws. It is expected that the ex-Yugoslav countries, such as Slovenia and Croatia, will be associated with a faster and more effective implementation of the EU Acquis. Its harmonization with domestic laws which later leads to implementation of the EU Acquis is a reasonable condition that concerns each country that wants to enter the EU, considering that eliminating all inequalities based on gender and creating conditions for equal approach to the

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<sup>125</sup> OECD, *The Impact of Legal Frameworks on Women's Economic Empowerment around the World: challenges and good practices*, (March 7<sup>th</sup>, 2018), 10, available at <https://www.oecd.org/mena/competitiveness/2107-March-on-Gender-Legal-Framework-Highlights.pdf>, accessed on 27 September 2021.

<sup>126</sup> OECD, *The Impact of Legal Frameworks on Women's Economic Empowerment around the World: challenges and good practices*, 5.

<sup>127</sup> OECD, *The Impact of Legal Frameworks on Women's Economic Empowerment around the World: challenges and good practices*, 6.

labor market for all genders are considered as some of the most important principles of the EU, as included in The Amsterdam Treaty since 1997.<sup>128</sup>

## 7.1 Gendered artistic labor in the Western Balkans

Additionally, to comprehend today's micro politics of caring or uncaring and their implications on cultural production, as well as the careless exclusion of women, a thorough exploration of the principles of continuous exclusion of women is also needed, pointing out the differences in feminism, depending on the standards that each territory holds dear. Clearly, establishing new grounds where cohabitation and mutual collaboration amongst feminist practitioners is possible and a way to take thorough, transformative steps towards new ways of thinking. This can also be clearly seen as a pertinent change that is currently happening in more developed countries and is bound to happen in others, those obliged to be treated as territories of transition, still going through a tedious process of upsurge, rebuilding their societies on the grounds of former politics, noting that there is also an unfolding of realist materialism which can serve as a gate pass to the times when creating an international, intersectional feminist discourse would occur, even in countries where the process would be slower. Katerina Kolozova accentuates that the new forms of realist materialism might have significant political ramifications. These ramifications should be owned by feminists, i.e. feminist scholars, since they can produce new ways of developing a political language in the spirit of feminism, one that would be used internationally, and would not be connected solely to one territory:

“Such a new universalism must emerge at the economic and academic margins, move concentrically toward the centre seeking to provide the grounds for uncompromising comradeship worldwide. The universe it will establish is one in which power will be measured in materialist or realist terms and its chief categories will also be the most robust ones: economy and the power of the nation-state as the main means of women's subjugation. Identity, culture, sexuality and all other major “real abstractions” will be as relevant in such a worldview as any other issue that is plaguing women, but they will not be the norm that hierarchically structures all of our priorities.”<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> European Union, *Treaty of Amsterdam* (European Communities, 1997), available at [https://europa.eu/european-union/sites/default/files/docs/body/treaty\\_of\\_amsterdam\\_en.pdf](https://europa.eu/european-union/sites/default/files/docs/body/treaty_of_amsterdam_en.pdf), accessed on 27 September 2021.

<sup>129</sup> Katerina Kolozova, *New Realisms, Materialisms, (Post-)Philosophy and the Possibility for a Feminist Internationalism Continental thought and theory, A journal of intellectual freedom*, 1, no. 3 (2017): 675,

By making a distinctive connection through entwining all of the specificities of the position of women in performing arts and its theoretical discourse, one can try to comprehend the institutional authorities and their power over the entire artistic path of women today, depending on the particular location of working and living. Silvia Federici points out the international segment of the creation process of a structured domestic labor that is clearly and consciously shaped in a way that satisfies only patriarchal principles, frequently treating women's labor as second best for a profit-driven capitalist society that is thriving on gendered continuous maintenance and care. Silvia Federici speaks about the possibility to establish an international feminist movement, or a so-called "global sisterhood", which can only survive by campaigning against the structural adjustment, foreign debts that are left unpaid, intellectual property laws etc. With the help of these tools, Federici believes that they subsidize to the new worldwide detachment or dissection of labor and its organization, and as a result, contribute to the undermining of a larger portion of the world population:

"As "Third World" feminists have often stressed, the inequalities that exist among women at the international level also affect the politics of the feminist movement. Access to greater resources (travel, grants, publications, and rapid means of communications) allows European and North American feminists to impose their agendas on the occasion of global conferences, and play a hegemonic role in the definition of what feminism and feminist struggles must be like."<sup>130</sup>

The implementation of legal framework on gender equality and impartiality is one of the primary goals of the European Union since its founding in 1957. Later, with the ratification of the Treaty of Rome, the principle of equal pay for work of equal value has been introduced, aspiring to ensure equal working rights for all gender identities. In current times, the Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality of the EU (2016-2019) was also established to render gender equality and prioritize the matters that women and other marginalized gender identities are facing on a daily basis. The most rampant discriminatory behaviours are sometimes implicitly present in the day-to-day discourse in both EU and non-EU countries, some of them being the lack of institutional presence of women and other gender minorities, gender pay gap and gender-based discrimination in the working environment, gender-based violence and lastly, domestic violence. Just as the rest of the countries in Europe, the Western Balkan countries had

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available at <https://ir.canterbury.ac.nz/bitstream/handle/10092/13482/Kolozova-CTT-v1-3-2017.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>, accessed on 27 September 2021.

<sup>130</sup> Silvia Federici, *Revolution at point zero: Housework, reproduction and feminist struggle* (PM Press, Oakland, 2012), 74.

signed and ratified most of the relevant international legal framework whose primary goal is protection of women and their rights. One of them is The International Agreement on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights from 1966, which serves to ensure gender equality among both genders in terms of employment, fair wages, and equal pay for equal work, healthy working conditions, maternity leaves and equal opportunities. Another one is the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against women and the Optional Protocol (1979) that is an essential legally binding treaty that regulates the processes of achieving gender equality and elimination all forms of discrimination – in the political, public and private life of women. I am emphasizing these two international legal treaties since they exist longer than 50 years; however, the inequalities in the labor market are still prevalent in most countries in Europe, even today. The lack of implementation, transposition of international legal framework in accordance with domestic laws and bylaws is one of the reasons why creative labor is a disparate field for some of its participants.<sup>131</sup> According to CSF's Policy brief, gender stereotyping is one of the most frequent causes of discrimination.<sup>132</sup> Stereotypes connected to gender identities create a palette of limitations that have effect on all genders, but the negative impact that stereotypes have on women is excessively higher than the impact they have on men.<sup>133</sup> Additionally, gender stereotypes are more pronounced towards women from the LGBTI+ community, showing that the Western Balkan countries are not prone to the damaging obstructions caused by stereotyping – “Analyses have revealed gender-biased reporting where women are presented either as objects and sex-symbols or as devoted mothers/wives.”<sup>134</sup> In addition, education is another field that is damaged by the perpetuating patriarchal values in the Western Balkans, since the education curricula is not limiting gender-biased language and historical male figures are also predominant in educative materials.<sup>135</sup> This shows that gender-based discrimination is deeply rooted in all fields of society and is also present in the labor market which creates a visible labor gap and prolongs women and other marginalized gender identities' unequal societal status. Riinvest Institute's research shows that women's participation in the labor market is lower than 50% in the Western Balkans, and

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<sup>131</sup> Nicole Farnsworth, David JJ Ryan, Adelina Tërshani, Nerina Guri, *Gender based discrimination and labor in the Western Balkans*, (Swedish Development Cooperation, 2019) 4.

<sup>132</sup> Ana Marjanovic Rudan, CSF Policy Brief, No. 04 *Gender Issues in the Western Balkans* (Civil Society Forum of the Western Balkan Summit Series, April 2018) 4, available at [https://wb-csf.eu/docs/Gender\\_Issues.pdf.pdf](https://wb-csf.eu/docs/Gender_Issues.pdf.pdf), accessed on 27 September 2021.

<sup>133</sup> Ana Marjanovic Rudan, CSF Policy Brief, No. 04 *Gender Issues in the Western Balkans* (Civil Society Forum of the Western Balkan Summit Series, April 2018) 8, available at [https://wb-csf.eu/docs/Gender\\_Issues.pdf.pdf](https://wb-csf.eu/docs/Gender_Issues.pdf.pdf), accessed on 27 September 2021.

<sup>134</sup> Ana Marjanovic Rudan, CSF Policy Brief, No. 04 *Gender Issues in the Western Balkans*, 9.

<sup>135</sup> Ana Marjanovic Rudan, CSF Policy Brief, No. 04 *Gender Issues in the Western Balkans*, 22.

according to the findings, the situation is currently the words in Kosovo – only 18% of women are actively present in the labor market.<sup>136</sup> Maternity leave sometimes is the sole reason for unlawful contract termination, which also adds to the discouragement of women to participate actively in the labor market. CSF's Policy brief also shows that women who are actively participating in the labor market are also facing different levels of discrimination – one of the most common types of discrimination occurs even before the employment status starts – during the interview process, when women are asked about their future family plans and marital status. Additionally, even the language used when advertising an open job position is identified as discouraging for women who would like to participate in the labor market, and the gender pay gap usually differs from one country to another.

## 8. Methodology

The enquiries that are driving this work are focusing on the contextualization of the day-to-day societal discourse and commonly accepted norms that are present in the lives of women who are working in the performing arts' sphere from the Western Balkans, with an emphasis on North Macedonia. This work consists of a mixed method approach to quantitative and qualitative data collection that can objectively show the present narratives that tend to have a direct impact on women's artistic labor in the Western Balkans in contrast with women who are working in the other parts of Europe. During the research period for relevant reference studies and analyses based on women's artistic labor in the Western Balkans, there weren't any available quantitative or qualitative researches that transparently show the discrepancies between different genders in the artistic fields. Therefore, the primary goal is to discern the commonly accepted attitudes towards women in theatre, dance and music production, as well as to present summarize and investigate quantitative analysis of people working in the performing arts fields in North Macedonia, including individuals from the minorities living in North Macedonia. However, considering that the survey was written in Macedonian language,

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<sup>136</sup> USAID, *Women in the workforce* (Riinvest Institute, Prishtina, 2017) 16, available at [https://www.riinvestinstitute.org/uploads/files/2017/November/10/Women\\_in\\_the\\_workforce1510308291.pdf](https://www.riinvestinstitute.org/uploads/files/2017/November/10/Women_in_the_workforce1510308291.pdf), accessed on 27 September 2021.

all of the answers were also written in Macedonian, which reciprocally only shows the results for people who speak the language, leaving out individuals from some of the minorities, i.e. individuals who speak in different languages. The first part of the methodology is based on quantitative research and analysis by conducting an online questionnaire in a period of 30 days. The number of people who participated in this questionnaire is 257, and all of the participants' remain anonymous. The second part of the methodology is based on semi-structured interviews<sup>137</sup> conducted in a period of 30 days with individuals from North Macedonia who work in different performing arts fields. This type of recollection of qualitative data aims to show the subjective side of the artists whose creative processes are closely related to North Macedonia. The mixed methodology that includes both quantitative and qualitative findings can sometimes lead to inconsistencies that need to be further analysed more thoroughly, because in many cases, both ways of engagement lead to diverse and varying results.<sup>138</sup>

## 8.1 Quantitative Research

The combination of both research methods intertwines different results that contribute to a final, more-detailed conclusion. When speaking of survey collection, one must take into account that it is only a presumable way to understand the bigger picture that contributes to a certain issue: “Survey questions are structured and designed to access generality and covariation.”<sup>139</sup>

The quantitative data collected for the purposes of this study was gathered by using the Google Forms online instrument which is fully anonymous and free to use. Considering the lack of available quantitative data based on gender segregation in performing arts in North Macedonia, this thesis aims to provide quantifiable data that can help in the further process of defining the current discourse among artists working professionally or have a freelance job in different fields of performing arts. The results show that the participants were working in the fields of theatre, applied theatre and performance, music and contemporary dance.

The insights that were gained throughout the four-week period were used to examine the perceptions of individuals from different age groups – 18 to 51+. The anonymous survey was delivered to all of the participants via social media, such as Facebook and Instagram, and all of

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<sup>137</sup> Hesse-Biber, *The Practice of Feminist In-Depth Interviewing. Feminist Research Practice* (Sage Publications, 2007), 115.

<sup>138</sup> Hesse-Biber, *The Practice of Feminist In-Depth Interviewing. Feminist Research Practice*, 281.

<sup>139</sup> Hesse-Biber, *The Practice of Feminist In-Depth Interviewing. Feminist Research Practice*, 281.

the responses were collected electronically by Google, within a four-week time span. Additionally, it is important to note that the results would have been varied if there was a different time frame used. For example, if the survey had been available for a longer period of time, it would have reached a larger crowd.

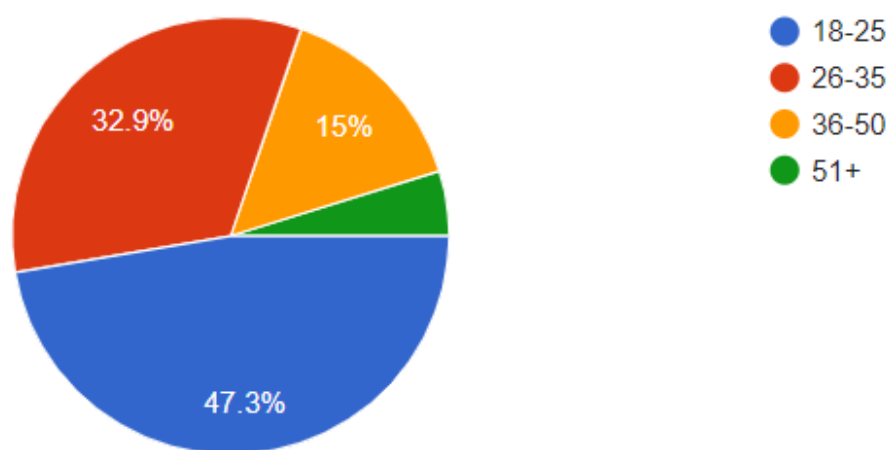
## **8.2 Quantitative Content Analysis**

The survey based on gender-based discrimination in performing arts in North Macedonia aims to distinguish the diverse attitudes and perceptions of performers working in the fields of theatre, dance and music. The anonymous examination consisted 23 questions with the possibility not to answer all of them. Of the total number of respondents, 47,3% of them are between 18 and 25 years old, 32,9% are between 26 and 35 years old, 15% are between 36 and 50 years old, 4,8% are older than 51 years old. As this survey was conducted online, some of the questions were multiple choice questions and some were answered by writing a paragraph, and thus, any further inferences in the written subsections were not possible. In this context, although the sample used for the purposes of this master's thesis is not representative, the obtained results should be taken only as indicative for conducting further rigorous research on the topic, and can be effectively used as a representative sample. For the quantitative data analysis, simple descriptive statistical methods were used, usually using cross-variables between two variables.

In addition to the above and given that the results should not be interpreted through the prism of causality, the results can help us analyse the opinions and answers given by women in contrast with the answers given by men and other gender identities. Only the relevant information from some of the most important questions from the survey are added in the

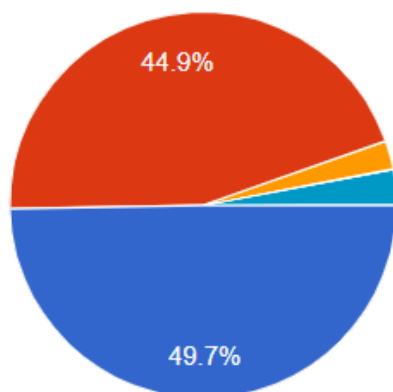
quantitative content analysis. Additionally, since 47,3% of respondents are between the ages of 18 to 25, the results provide an overview of the opinion of artists of the next generation that can help and contribute in the elimination of gender segregation in performing arts.

**Graph 1: Age of respondents**



**Graph 2: Gender identity of respondents**



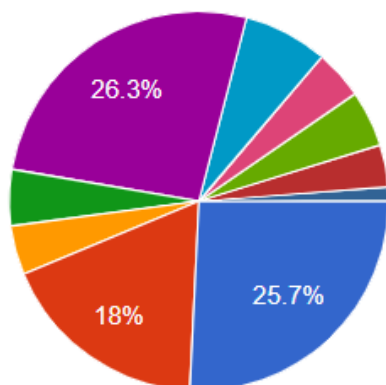


Women
Men
Non-binary
Other

In Graph 2 where the gender identity of the respondents is summarized, the prevalent percentage of respondents are women – 49.7%, closely followed by 44.9% men, followed by 3% declared as other gender identity and 2.4% non-binary individuals. Although the options transgender woman and transgender man were added, there were no responses to these options.

**Graph 3: Education**

High school/Gymnasium
Bachelor's degree
Master's degree

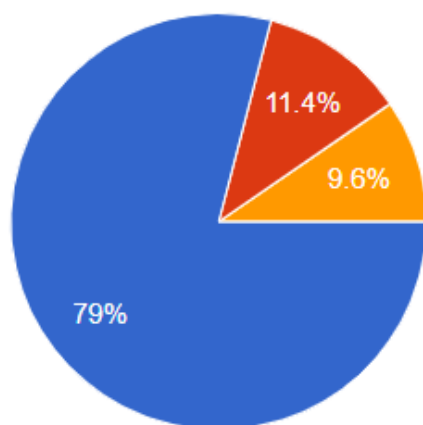


Doctoral studies
Pursuing Bachelor's degree
Pursuing Master's degree
Pursuing Doctoral studies
Other

The largest percentage of respondents had a bachelor's degree – 26,3%, followed by 25.7% of individuals that had a high school/gymnasium degree and 18% of individuals who are currently undergoing Bachelor's studies. 10.8% of the respondents had a master's degree, 4.8% were undergoing their doctoral studies, and 7.2% have a master's degree and 4.8% respondent by choosing the option "other".

**Graph 4: Did you complete your formal education in North Macedonia?**

Yes
No
I completed part of my formal education in North Macedonia and



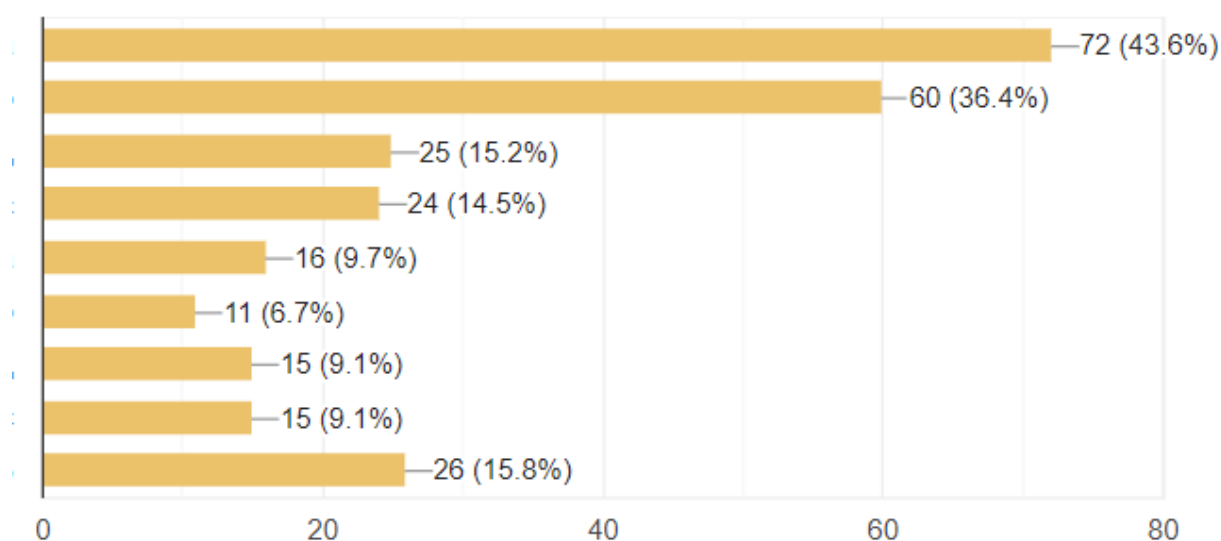
part of it in another  
country

**Graph 5: Other countries than North Macedonia in which the responders obtained their degree**

Graph 5 was optional and meant to be answered only by respondents who obtained their degree or they are currently undergoing studies in a country other than North Macedonia. Some of the eligible answers to this question are the following countries:

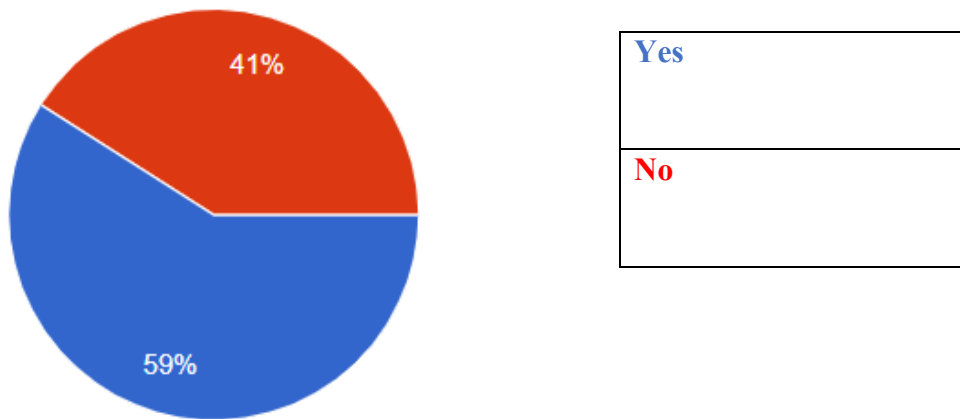
- Serbia
- Russia
- Romania
- Germany
- Slovenia
- Italy
- Bulgaria
- Croatia
- Great Britain
- USA

**Graph 6: Type of performing art in which the respondent is involved in**



Graph 6 shows which type/s of performing arts the respondents work with. Exactly 43.6% of the respondents are involved in the music field, followed by 36.4% working in the theatre field (dramatic arts, acting, directing, scenography and production), 15.2% are involved in dance (choreography and performance), 14.5% are working with performances (dance and theatre), 9.7% are working with music theory, 6.7% working in the field of dramatic/theatre theory, 9.1% working with dance theory, 9.1% working with performance theory and 15.8% chose the option “other”.

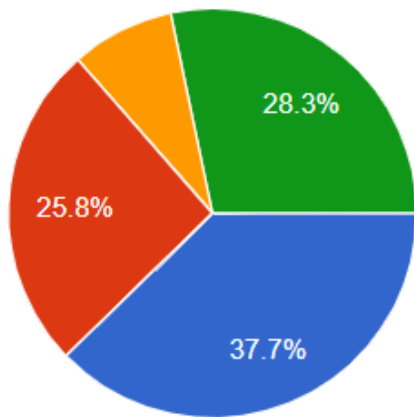
**Graph 7: Formal education in performing arts**



Graph 7 shows how many of the respondents have completed or are currently undergoing studies in some of the performing arts' fields. 59% of the respondents have or will have a formal degree in some of the performing arts' fields and 41% do not have a formal degree.

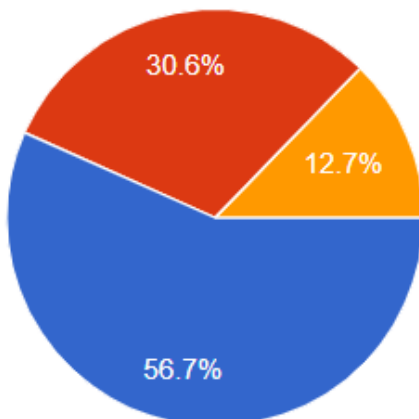
The next question was answered optionally, by writing a short paragraph about the ways that the respondents who do not have a degree in performing arts gained relevant knowledge and/or practical experience. Some of the answers show that the respondents gained knowledge through collaboration, research and non-formal education, collaboration with artists, amateur theatre groups, self-education, Internet, choir and folk dances, private lessons and trainings. In addition, 37.7% of the respondents are officially employed, followed by the high percentage of 28.3% that answered that they are not employed. 25.8% of the respondents are working with a work contract on a part-time basis or are engaged in projects and 8.2% of the respondents are working without a signed contract.

### Graph 8: Employment



Employed
Unemployed
Work contract on a part-time basis/engaged in projects
Engaged in work without a signed contract

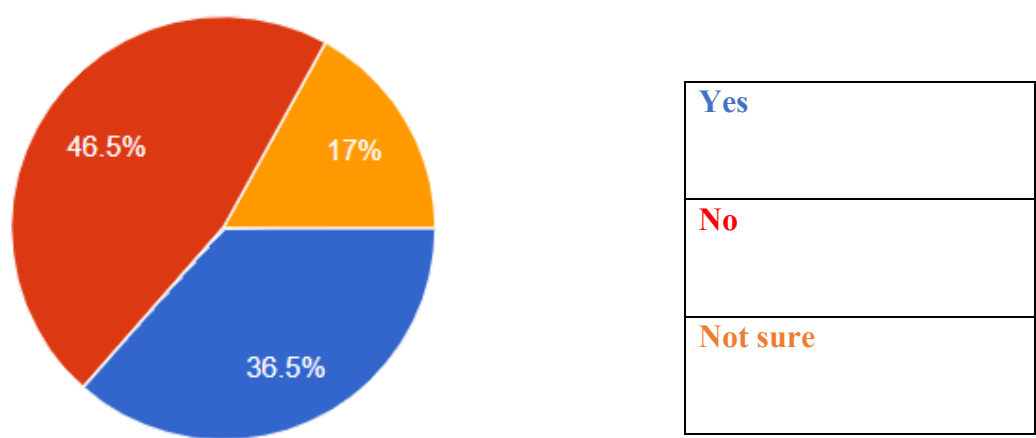
**Graph 9: Discrimination in the work field**



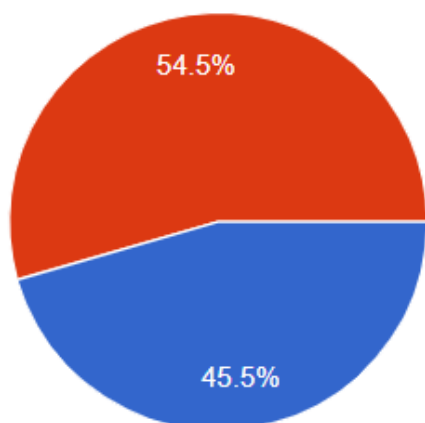
Yes
No
Not sure

According to the survey, 56.7% of the respondents felt discriminated in the work place, followed by 30.6% who did not feel discriminated and 12.7% who were uncertain whether they are/were discriminated. In addition, 46.5% of the respondents did not feel like they received an inappropriate question during job interviews, followed by 36.5% who felt like they were asked inappropriate questions and 17% who were unsure.

**Graph 10: Inappropriate questions during job interviews**



**Graph 11: Inappropriate comments about their work in the workplace**



Yes
No

54.5% of the respondents felt like they have never received any inappropriate comments about their work in the workplace opposite 45.5% of the respondents who felt otherwise. The next question was only for the respondents who answered that they had received inappropriate comments and was answered by writing a short paragraph. Out of the 52 answers that were received, 20 included colleagues, 15 included men, with an emphasis on men in a higher position in the hierarchy of theatres/directors/men in a position of power, 13 were or inadmissible or irrelevant to the analysis and 4 other relevant answers on this topic were the following:

“I could not say from whom such comments are most often addressed, because almost everyone feels called to express their own opinion, and most often when giving their opinion, it is not in the description of their job and it is diametrically opposed to what my actual job is at that given moment.”

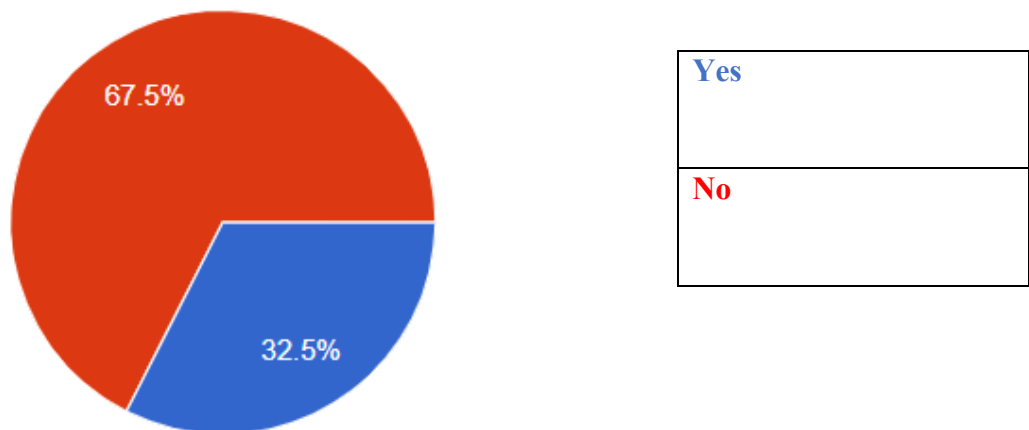
“From colleagues, derogatory comments, but only in Macedonia and from colleagues from the Balkans.”

“From ambitious parents associated with party membership belittling our work as art teachers.”

“Technicians, technicians, technicians! - especially in Macedonia.”



**Graph 12: Inappropriate comments about physical appearance in the workplace**



Graph 12 shows the percentage of respondents who felt like they received an inappropriate comment or comments about their physical appearance in the workplace. 67.5% responded that they have never received such comment and 32.5% responded that they have received some type of derogatory comment throughout their lives. In addition, the next question is answered by writing an optional short paragraph about the type of negative comments that the respondents received in the workplace. Out of 42 respondents who decided to answer, 20 answers were based on comments about not having a suitable physical shape/weight, and some of the most complex and worrying responses were the following:

“This has happened even during my studies and has been related to being overweight. It was in the direction that the suit makes me fat, the heels make me taller than my partner, that I have a beautiful face and if I lose weight, I will be more attractive and so on. Growing up I think I learned to ignore such comments, to the point of forgetting them. But objectively, everything has decreased, I no longer leave room for them to be said.”

“Imitating how I walk and gesturing and insulting a former director how I look.”

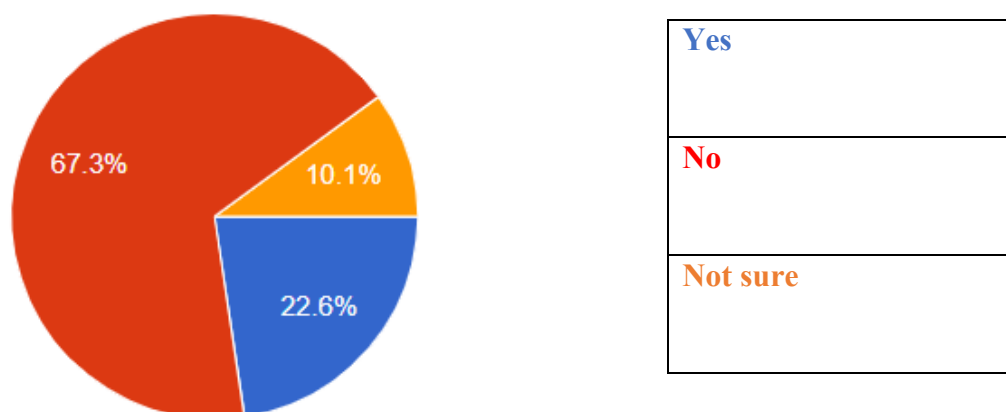
“That I have big breasts, in a situation before I go on stage to present a project.”

“Discrimination based on ethnicity.”

“At work I have not received inappropriate comments about my physical appearance because I work at university, but this is not the case for my profession in general, where it is normal for actresses to be put in awkward situations because of their physical appearance and to be objectified under the pretext that it is immanently for the acting profession.”

“Aggressive comments about my appearance from male colleagues.”

**Graph 13: Gender-based discrimination**



Graph 13 shows the answers to the question whether the respondents have ever faced gender-based discrimination in their work environment, project or freelance work. 67.3% of the

respondents answered that they have never faced gender-based discrimination, followed by 22.6% that answered “yes” and 10.1% that answered that they were uncertain.

In addition, it is not simple to make a clear differentiation between gender-based discrimination and discrimination based on ethnicity, socio-economic status, work position etc. The answers to the following question only for those survey participants who answered "yes" to the previous question was answered by writing an optional short paragraph in which they could explain how they were discriminated in the work environment based on their gender identity. Out of 20 responses, the most relevant responses for this analysis were submitted by women:

“These are subtle forms of discrimination, related to the fact that I am engaged in theatre directing and unfortunately, it is still often considered to be a “male” profession, so comments such as "what a sweet girl, and she is really strict, just as a real theatre director" or “well done, colleague, you worked like a man”.”

“When in our theatres a woman comes to a position to direct, choreograph, and talk about technique for example (especially technique (!)), I cannot imagine a situation where there was no discrimination. In terms of gender, the positions are truly old-fashioned. There is no progress in gender representation in certain professions. The technicians are always men and I would be very surprised if it occurred to me that we have a case where a woman works as a theatre technician.”

“I worked on a children's installation, as its author and choreographer, and at a certain stage of building the installation I expressed serious concern about the safety of the structure and the materials with which that structure is associated. In return, I was attacked, yelled at, and in the end, the man who was in charge of technical support still used the installation.”

“Lower salary than a colleague who was in the same position, but was a man.”

“My partner in the company, who is a man and with whom I have equally shared responsibilities, but most co-workers automatically talk to him when a contract needs to be signed or a decision made.”

“By being physically assaulted by a drunken colleague and when the time came to take appropriate action in the case, it was stated that I must have been the "culprit", because no other woman had ever had such a thing happen to her.”

“Most of the time, when the annual programs were made, no attention was paid to how many female roles there are in the texts, and also, there were only a few male roles in the plays for a

few seasons, and a few female roles in the plays, with women actresses not being able to express themselves.”

### 8.3 Qualitative Research: Interviews

In order to gain more detailed information of the contemporary circumstances in several performing arts’ fields in North Macedonia, I opted for a qualitative research through which the gendered segregation can be assessed individually, without generalizing the responses. This part of the research process focuses on the experience and of the interviewees and helps in the process of “selecting purposive or judgment samples.”<sup>140</sup> The qualitative part of the study is based on the relational connection between artists and their understanding of the different approach towards different gender identities in relation to the traditional values that are still prevailing in the dramatic arts community in North Macedonia. The number of participants in the qualitative studies can be separated in several categories, depending on the participants’ professions: 3 actors, 2 actors/sound producers, 2 film directors, 1 screenwriter/composer, 1 theatre composer and 1 film & TV producer. Given that there is limited movement because of the measures against the COVID-19 pandemic, some of the interviews were conducted online, some were conducted through the phone and two were conducted in person. The semi-structured interviews consisted of four, in-depth questions:

1. Have you noticed visible differences in the inclusion and the overall treatment of women and other marginalized gender identities versus men working in the theatre field in your work environment?
2. Can you point out the most noticeable differences in the attitude towards women working in the theatre field in North Macedonia, but also the theatre scene in the Balkans compared to other countries in Europe (Central, Western and Northern Europe)?
3. In your opinion, how could a higher level of inclusion of women working in dramatic arts’ fields be achieved, especially in North Macedonia?
4. Do you have knowledge about the dramatic arts’ educational materials used in North Macedonia and do you think that in order to provide equal access and opinions to the current development, there should be a greater educational representation of scientific

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<sup>140</sup> Hesse-Biber, *The Practice of Feminist In-Depth Interviewing. Feminist Research Practice*, 119.

papers dedicated to women's role in the dramatic arts, as well as relevant information on gender inequality on the theatre stage globally?

Considering the specificity of the topics that were discussed during these interviews, as well as the fact that I interviewed both men and women, I chose to conduct semi-structured interviews that focus on the subjective positionality of the interviewee, converging to promote social impartiality throughout the research process.<sup>141</sup> The limitations and challenges of the qualitative part of the study included low external validity with ability to generalize the results, considering that all of the participants were representatives of a very similar background - all of them have a bachelor's degree in the field of performing arts and five interviewees have a master's degree in dramatic arts or composition.

The age of the interviewees varies from 24 to 50; however, the approximate age is 30. Additionally, the outcomes from the interviews show that all of the participants share comparable opinions and sentiments about the persistent segregation and partial exclusion of women from the dramatic arts' fields in North Macedonia. Therefore, the conclusions are closely associated with an interactive bias that can be considered as a limitation to the qualitative part of the study. Five of the participants were men and five were women. One of the participants' nationalities is Turkish, and the rest of the participants declare themselves as Macedonians. Moreover, the outcome of the research would differ if the participants had a more diverse ethnic background or were also questioned more subjectively about their close encounters with gender bias and prejudice in the theatre field. Additionally, only one participant does not live in North Macedonia (the theatre composer Nikola Kodjabashia resides in London, United Kingdom), but in addition to this, it is significant to emphasize that all of the participants have had prior working experience in different countries throughout Europe.

Although the questions were sent to three more individuals from different ethnic backgrounds, they did not want to publicly participate in the research. Consequently, the questions give away a limited scope of the artists' experience and remain impartial up to a point in terms of complexity or longitude, as to make the participants feel more comfortable to state their opinions while being interviewed, considering that gender segregation in performing arts is still not commonly discussed in North Macedonia. These findings, as well as the informal discussions before the interviews overtly disclosed that some of the potential participants were not ready to discuss these topics, as they felt like their opinion could not contribute to the

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<sup>141</sup> Hesse-Biber, *The Practice of Feminist In-Depth Interviewing. Feminist Research Practice*, 116.

purpose of the research – three of the potential participants that felt unprepared to answer any questions related to gender identity and gender segregation in performing arts are musicians. This leads to a partial conclusion that the topic of discussion is still considered as somewhat novel and some artists feel like they lack knowledge in order to discuss the matter any further.

One of the participants in the qualitative part of the study, Ana Jakimska, apart from having experience in the dramatic arts, is a qualified film director whose work also focuses on gender identities in different historical contexts. Jakimska talked about gender inclusion in the film industry in North Macedonia, emphasizing the importance of the historical context of the American film industry that influenced performing arts on a global level.

“I think when we discuss the issue of inclusion in film today, we should first briefly look into the history of cinema. Let’s take the American film industry as an example, including Hollywood, as the most influential voice in the field. Of all films in the history of American cinema, 95 percent have been directed by (mostly white) men. As a result, naturally, men have shaped the cinematic language, both narratively and visually. Also, they have put men in the center of the stories as protagonists, and their gaze has been perpetually enforced as “the norm”. Turning to look closer to home, in Europe today hardly 1 in 5 films is directed by a woman and only 16% of the funding goes to films directed by women, according to a 2018 UNESCO report.<sup>142</sup> Having this in mind, I don’t think that the problem of inclusion in film is left to personal interpretation, it is an undeniable fact. It is something that we have inherited and that has been normalized for so long, that we need to actively be conscious about its existence in order to break the cycle.”

Although Jakimska’s work is mostly based in North Macedonia, she points out that the ways women are being treated in the fields of performing arts does not have many differences in terms of different territories across Europe.

“Traditionally, roles for women behind the camera have been gendered, with women mainly working as costume designers, stylists, and makeup artists, whereas men have been entrusted with the more technical jobs, as well as leading crew positions (producers, directors, directors of photography, art directors). It’s a curious situation, really, since according to a 2016 study by the European Women’s Audio-visual Network, roughly the same percentage of men and women graduate from film school each year. Do funding bodies view female-led projects as

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<sup>142</sup> UNESCO, *Promise of gender equality* (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2020), available at <https://en.unesco.org/news/unescos-report-gender-equality-2018-2019>, accessed on 27 September 2021.

more high-risk? Are the decision-makers mostly men who are not sensitized to stories told by women? Do women sacrifice their filmmaking careers in order to raise families? These are all open questions we need to have in mind when thinking about the film industry today and its future if we don't want to keep repeating the same mistakes."

Jakimska's opinion on how to increase the level of inclusion of women working in various dramatic arts is based on placing women in deciding positions within the cultural institutions and funding bodies. Additionally, she believes that reforms in the educational system and representation of women in the curriculum in ways which are dignified and inspiring for the coming of age across all genders could be an effective long-term solution.

In terms of educational materials used in North Macedonia and providing equal access and opinions to the current development, Jakimska points out that most of her professors, as well as the books that the students at the Faculty of Dramatic Arts in Skopje read and were included in the mandatory curricula were written by men, almost all of the films that they saw during their studies were directed by men and the industry guest speakers that were invited to class were mostly men. She points out that this structure might not be intentionally built in a way to shield out any female presence - and she adds, that is actually the biggest issue. Jakimska states that with the proven influence that cinematography has on the mainstream sentiment, instead of being part of the problem, cinematography can become an imperative part of the solution.

"Our educational system has taught us to link professionalism to men up to the point where it has become so mainstream that even we, as women, are quick to do this more often than not. To start changing this, we need reforms starting at the elementary level, with the Language and Literature class, where the first models of the world are drafted out."

Anastasia Boshkovska, who is currently undergoing film and theatre production studies at the Faculty of Dramatic Arts in Skopje, was a participant in the qualitative part of the study. In her opinion, a significantly visible gender gap exists, as it generally exists in every part of our society:

"Gender-based discrimination usually happens when you apply for projects or when you work on projects that are in the development phase, and in these types of situations, I think women are more degraded than men. There are so many women who work in the theatre field and are seen as objects by their male colleagues."

According to Boshkovska, there are various noticeable differences in the attitude towards women working in the field of theatre in North Macedonia, especially in comparison with other

parts of Europe. Boshkovska emphasizes that the state does not encourage any gender equality measures in the theatres, adding that the situation in the rest of the Balkan countries is similar. According to her, there are some positive changes happening recently, especially when it comes to awareness about discrimination, but it is still not as present as it needs to be. Boshkovska believes that there is a possibility to create more advantages for women by including them more in theatrical activities, by implementing a method that will encourage the creation of grants and special programs intended only for minorities, and feminist schools that would encourage women to enter the theatre and create as much as possible. Additionally, Boshkovska points out the importance of creating a larger amount of academic materials specifically for the dramatic arts in North Macedonia:

“I definitely think that the more research is done on this topic and the more such scientific papers are officially published and integrated into the educational process, the more awareness will be raised about it. That way, the new generations will grow up to become more accepting of one another and will alert the problems that women are facing in the theatre, but also in our society.”

Two of the participants in the interviews, Vasko Kostovski and Hristijan Pop-Simonov, have a degree in acting from the Faculty of Dramatic Arts in Skopje. Moreover, apart from having experience as professional actors in several independent and national theatres in North Macedonia, both of them work with voice over, sound production and sound engineering. In addition, Gligor Kondovski is a professional violinist, composer and documentary director who has a degree in screenwriting from the Faculty of Dramatic Arts in Skopje.

According to Kostovski, there are visible differences in the overall treatment of women in the dramatic arts in North Macedonia compared with the past, but only in terms of inclusiveness. According to Pop-Simonov, the treatment towards marginalized gender identities differs from one process to another, but on average women – besides being in a diminutive percentage of inclusivity – also tend to be taken less like “leading role or decision-making material” and more often are given a supportive role, whether on-stage or in the production/creative process. In terms of the most noticeable differences in the attitude towards women working in the different fields of dramatic arts in North Macedonia, compared to the other Balkan theatre scenes, Kostovski states that although the problems of women’s exclusion are already more clearly discussed in the plays, but also outside the institutions, the difference is still seen in the direct relationship of women with directors, or with superiors, where there is still a sexual approach to women. Similar to his opinion, Pop-Simonov talks about the tendency for women to be asked



to perform in ways that emphasize the stereotypical patriarchal views regarding women, present in the culture that the theatre pieces are being prepared in, under the (unfortunately true) assumption that it is accepted and welcomed by the (local) audience - “this encompasses stage direction (for example, to be asked to act in a more provocative way), costume design (to be given costume sets that are more revealing), casting (giving advantage to the physical attributes instead of performing abilities) etc.”

For Kostovski, inclusiveness can be achieved through “strict regulation of nepotism and clear de-politicization and departmentalization of culture”, i.e., theatrical activity. For Pop-Simonov, a shift in awareness must start, facilitated by a broader discussion about the problems regarding the state of inclusion of women in dramatic arts fields, and action must be taken in terms of consciously implementing creative decisions. He adds that the root of the problem must be addressed before changes in the arts can be observed, which requires a radical restructuring in the societal view and treatment of women and their role in general. In terms of educational materials and a greater representation of scientific papers dedicated to the female role in dramatic arts and gender quality, Pop-Simonov states that he believes that having access to any informative and educational material would be of great aid against gender inequality, as well as taking affirmative action regarding greater representation of scientific papers; creating and setting up dramatic texts that deal with the subjects at hand; and having more socially conscious casting and directing choices. Kostovski emphasizes the fact that education materials for the dramatic arts and even educational methods are largely outdated, and thus inclusiveness is low:

“That is why I think that there should be a greater representation of scientific papers that talk about the female role in the dramatic arts. As for the information on gender inequality, in my opinion, it would be better if it is submitted directly to the theater institutions.”

In addition to the the actors’ answers above, Kondovski’s answers and statements differ in the way that the questions and the entire conversation with him is primarily focused on the perception of gender identity amongst professional musicians in North Macedonia. The latest USC Annenberg Inclusion Initiative survey finds that only 18% of musicians on the global music scene are women, compared to 82% men.<sup>143</sup> Regarding visible differences in the inclusion and overall treatment of women composers in the work environment, Kondovski states that the differences are overdue, but he is glad that unlike from what he has heard in the

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<sup>143</sup>Stacy L. Smith, et al. *Inclusion in the Recording Studio?* USC Annenberg Inclusion Initiative (March, 2021) 12, available at <https://assets.uscannenberg.org/docs/aii-inclusion-recording-studio2021.pdf>, accessed on 27 September 2021.

past - that a woman should not be educated and that she should get married young – the opinions today differ and are truly starting to change. Kondovski adds that still, the percentage of domestic violence against women is barely changing and for the most common reasons, this also adds salt to the wound – by unequivocally holding women in an ungratifying position, placing them further from social, political, and consequently, artistic liberation. According to Kondovski, traditionalism and conservatism in relation to liberalism are not a black and white variant as we often see it in everyday life, especially in our country which still wakes up in certain cultural notions in practice, because they are inaccessible to the citizens:

“This society is still maturing and the love for certain professions, especially music professions, should not be tied to sex or gender and should not be only tied to liberalism, but to ethically free access to the profession and enabling women to live life as they wish, just as men do. Still, in smaller places, a woman cannot work to unleash her talent by herself, because in this country the small-minded societies still prevail, thus people aim to live a conventional life. ”

In terms of the the most noticeable differences in the approach towards women composers in other European countries in comparison to North Macedonia, Kondovski states the unbearable fact – the approach to engendered composition is simply not comparable. According to him, if we speak at the level of Yugoslavia, some relations with the cultural world were more acceptable to the Balkan countries, unlike Central or Western European countries: „In Macedonia, more and more women composers and musicians appeared in the 90s of the last century, and today, of course. In the Macedonian history after the war as generations of composers, there are no women, unlike according to the statistics in the UK, for example, where there are over a hundred famous women composers.”

In order to create free space and contribute to the inclusiveness of women composers in the Balkans, with an emphasis on North Macedonia, Kondovski states that we have to perceive our flaws in the musical academies in our countries, flaws in the quality of the academic approach and in terms of intellectual capacity of the staff. He adds that first, we need to have good academic music content for the students, and then start to discuss whether men and women are equally integrated. Kondovski states that in North Macedonia, we still do not have the appropriate criteria for what a classical performer should be like, a composer of different types of genres, not to mention the contemporary academic content that has remained an unknown territory for us:

„In classical music, we can still not see women playing certain instruments that are believed to be instruments just for men. There are still domestic influences that the Macedonian women

musicians should play the piano, violin, harp, but not the accordion, horn, trumpet, trombone, and thus, there is no open space for real artists to approach the institutions, so that they could also benefit from their presence and thus improve the academia that is lingering on, persistently waiting to become more serious and of better quality.”

The only participant in the qualitative study who resides in a different country than North Macedonia is Nikola Kodjabashia, a theatre composer and pianist who lives and works in London, United Kingdom. Kodjabashia operates at the intersection of contemporary orchestral and electronic music. During the interview, he pointed out that although he knows a solid number of women composers in Great Britain, Europe, America and probably proportionally mostly from Macedonia, the fact is that there is a larger number of male composers or musicians. Kodjabashia spoke about the gender dominance of men in his profession or in the creative industries. This ascendancy is both a reality and an anomaly:

“On the other hand, I would like to believe that in the creative industries, a positive selection based on talent, versatility and craft quality will prevail. But it is almost utopian. Division or any social supremacy based on dogma and prejudice is absurd. That selectivity is the opposite of creating a new, diverse quality work and society. For well-known social reasons, the phenomenon of compensatory selection occurs naturally. It is normal, good and renaissance for cultural discourse. Still, strategic wisdom is needed instead of a trendy healing of contexts of social inequality. It is about music and any attempt to regulate proportionality of any kind is also absurd in itself.”

When it comes to the inclusion of women composers in the United Kingdom, in contrast with North Macedonia, Kodjabashia’s impression is that in the United Kingdom, the essential problem is the obsession with two extremes, Class Belonging and Neo Liberal Trends – “Both are, in fact, behind the open and hidden sex, the racial division versus the privileges and the cosmetic approach to confronting our unwillingness to give up the comfort of consumerism.

In Macedonia, the basic problem is the pseudo-feudal collective consciousness and the attempts to seek quick technocratic solutions.”

Kodjabashia believes that in general, in both societies, progress on the issue of women's representation in the creative industries has lately been more ostensibly decent but far from sufficient or substantial. According to him, the rights and representation of women in music culture is patronizing as formal attention and withered carnation once a year – for Women’s day or similar holidays:

“Basically, all developed societies have decorative laws against all forms of inequality. We need to implement them, Implementation means to talk REGULARLY and EVERYWHERE about what is injustice, who inflicts it and why. In this context, justice is when everyone can create music but also everyone can choose what to listen to. The solution is education, more and more diverse education and creating a cult of education.”

Considering that Kodjabashia resides in the United Kingdom for a long time, he stated that his current knowledge of what type of academic educational material is used in North Macedonia is very limited. However, he believes that they should absolutely be enriched with as much information and knowledge about the creative or scientific achievements of women in the field of music.

The fifth and final male participant in the qualitative study is Darijan Pejovski, a professional TV and film director from Skopje. I chose to interview Pejovski specifically because of his acquaintance with the omnipresent issue of gender segregation in the Macedonian cultural production. One of Pejovski’s prior film work, *Three Days in September* (2015), is based on the position of women in the Macedonian society, the complexities that tag along women who choose to work as sex workers, as well as the offhand acceptance of gender-based violence. Additionally, the lead protagonists are women (Kamka Tocinovski and Irena Ristic).

During the interview, Pejovski accentuated the visible differences in the lack of inclusion of women in both dramatic fields – the Macedonian theatre and the Macedonian film production:

“When it comes to authors and the choice of themes and stories - yes, there is a visible and dramatic difference in the lack of inclusion. The work environment is still dominated by men, and the sectors are still completely "male" - camera, light, etc., and "female" - make-up, costume, partly scenography.

Also, Pejovski accentuated the noticeable differences in the attitude towards women working in the field of theatre and film in North Macedonia, but also the theater scene in the Balkans compared to other countries in Europe. Pejovski said that in more developed cinematography, the gender balance in the film crew is taken into account, and he believes that is the biggest difference:

“In our country, traditionally, film work is considered as a variant of physical work, as film workers have the same role as handymen, and hence, it is dominated by men - as male dominate in the working roles such as bus drivers, taxi drivers, construction workers and the like. Nonetheless, in recent decades, the tools at work have changed, the culture and the way of

filming have transformed, and there is no reason why women should not be more involved. As for the authors - at the moment, there is practically no difference. For example, virtually every Kosovo director who has made a film has had success at major festivals. It is similar with the Macedonian film directors (i.e. Marija Apchevska, Tamara Kotevska, Dina Duma, Teona Strugar Mitevska).”

As stated by Pejovski, a higher level of inclusion of women in the film industry can be established through the education system, from the earliest age: “The sooner stereotypes about male and female professions are broken, the easier it will be for women to be more present in the typically men-dominated work positions.” Regarding the educational materials for the dramatic arts used in official educational institutions in North Macedonia, Pejovski accentuated that in the past, during his years at university, the educational materials were scarce, and any upgrades are welcome.

Three of the participants in the interviews who were women actresses – Angela Stojanovska, Ivana Pavlakovik and Emine Halil, spoke about their personal experience in the process of creating theatre plays and the inclusion of women in dramatic arts in North Macedonia. Stojanovska, who also works as a voice over actor, believes that beginning of the creative process is not the initial problem, but the treatment that follows – not just towards actresses, but towards women directors, too:

“Usually when it comes to women directors, the attitude of other people involved in the process (especially men) is arrogant. More specifically, everything that was said as an indication, suggestion, and direction by the director is taken with reservation. This is not the case when there is a man on the other side of the stage. In addition, women are always subject to comments regarding their appearance (clothes, body shape, makeup, etc.), which again is not the case with men involved in the process. And of course, let's not forget the continuous conversations such as "she gave this/did that" to give an actress a role in a play and or to hire her. I have never heard the opposite, and countless times I have found myself in a situation to "defend" colleagues from such conversations.”

Stojanovska accentuates the importance of inclusion of women in the context of higher education, especially in terms of inclusion in the academic fields – adding that if there is lack of representation of other genders, then we cannot talk about their inclusion in the theatre, too, for the simple reason that they would not be existing in the labor market.

“On the other hand, I do not remember that any institution has ever made an analysis regarding the future needs in terms of staff. In the sense that in the acting ensemble of the Macedonian National Theatre due to the retirement of three actresses, in the next 5 years, there will be a lack of adult women actresses on stage. I am not saying that this will resolve the situation in terms of inclusion, but it will certainly help. Some things can be solved simply, but there is rarely interest, of course to leave room for countless manipulations in employment.”

For Stojanovska, the educational materials used at the classes for the acting degree at the Faculty of dramatic arts are only a few old textbooks which were seldom used during her studies, stating that it all comes down to practical instructions implemented in some traditional programs and the different approach of each class mentor who uses different educational materials. Stojanovska adds that there is no relevant information about the theatre in general, let alone relevant materials about the contribution of women in dramatic arts. Pavlakovik, who is part of the Wonderland Theatre collective, speaks about her experience as an actress in North Macedonia, which is mostly with the alternative-independent scene and state theaters. Because of the fact that this scene is more open and certainly more susceptible to equal opportunities for both men and women, Pavlakovik could not point out major injustices against women or other marginalized gender identities. On the contrary, she emphasizes that she is especially delighted with the fact that gender equality is nurtured in independent theaters and that all of the contributors strive for everyone to feel equally important as their colleagues, regardless of whether they are an actor, director or a playwright – “Wonderland Theatre is a perfect example of one of my little utopias that I sincerely rejoice in and I deeply believe that it will survive and develop in our country. I see it as a spark of light that has no intention of fading.” Although the alternative scene is more open and diverse, Pavlakovik points out that there is still unequal treatment in terms of the traditional theatre setting. She spoke about the fact that both her and a colleague of hers were given a lower fee than the fee of their male colleague who had an identically "important" role as theirs:

“We later found out about this while talking to each other with colleagues, although the director told us that as freelancers all three would receive an equal amount. Of course, we did not receive an answer, although my colleague and I duly asked what the criteria were for such an outcome and we protested loudly.”

Pavlakovik spoke about the most noticeable differences towards women working in dramatic arts by reminiscing the unprecedented difficulties in choosing a text for their graduation play in which male and female roles would be equally or at least approximately represented, which

resulted with dissatisfaction with the division of roles and felt like a preparation for what awaited them on stage in the future. Regarding the percentage of female protagonists, she states that the number is significantly smaller, but that is also the situation globally, whether in theater or film. However, her many great collaborations in the theatre with women directors feel like an exceptional way to leave a significant message and an indelible mark in the Macedonian theatre, adding that the theatre should never be divided in terms of gender, since all genders are equally important and dependent on each other – on stage, as in life. She points out that it is important to improve the theatre management and give space to women directors who would directly contribute to the future development of the dramatic arts, point out Nela Vitoshevich's exceptional work so far in different cities across North Macedonia – Skopje, Prilep and Shtip.

In the interview with Emine Halil, an actress at the Turkish Theatre in Skopje, she points out that she has specifically seen different approaches towards women actresses in North Macedonia, pointing out that insults to women's physical appearance are quite common, especially about weight and fitting into the theatre costumes: „During rehearsals, people who work in the theater and are not actors are a loyal audience if a costume is to be taken off the stage and give assessments as if they were part of a prestigious jury. And the saddest part is that all of these things are often done to women by other women.”

Halil believes that if gossip connected to actors and actresses is reduced to a minimum and if the society stops perceiving women actresses as victims, which often curtails their freedom of creativity, then the theatre performances would reach a higher level. In addition, Halil states that in our country, we should start questioning the ways in which we can work without any prejudice. Regarding the educational materials that are used in academic circles in North Macedonia, new works and contemporary plays are important for the theatre field to grow in its entirety, pointing out that in new plays there are also statistically more women characters. Halil also points out that the people who work on the screenplay, whether it is the professor, director or actors, should be more interested in the context of the text than the gender of the characters, since gender is a fluctuating term in the theatre, where everything is possible.

## **9. Limitations & Further Research**

Although the task to define the singular basis of the numerous limitations that contribute to the underdevelopment of women's artistic labor in North Macedonia is not a simple one, the

qualitative research led me to recognize the prevalent display of gendered segregation in certain areas. As Federici accentuates the international dimension of the liberation movement of women which had led to more transparency in the findings based on women's labor,<sup>144</sup> the difficulties in overcoming the barriers that segregate one gender and push forward another still differ from country to country. If we consider the findings from the interviews from the qualitative research, the lack of availability of educational materials which further develop the critical thinking of the general population and contribute to the free flow of general academic knowledge might be the singular basis where the limitations start to become visible. To obtain a concrete analysis of the issues that women are facing during their transformative years as artists, one must turn to education and availability of relevant academic and non-academic educational materials, as well as archived materials (i.e., texts, theoretical works etc.) that focus on women in the performing arts field. Considering the findings from the qualitative analysis, the traditional aspects in the educational programs available to students who are later actively taking part in the artistic labor have a severe impact on the performing arts' development in the Macedonian society.

When we speak of education, the connection between the financial merits of the country cannot be ignored, since both are so deeply intertwined and depend on each other. The capitalist structure's basis is found in unpaid labor, which later contributes to the competitiveness of both national and international labor market. Racism, class-division and sexism are hidden behind this comparable nature of the capitalist labor market, and all of these characteristics contribute to the constant division and contest between workers. Federici implicates that if we manage to ignore this capitalist ideology, we might as well see racism and sexism as negative characteristics intertwined with capitalism, and consider them as "moral diseases" that only create false consciousness that we are taught about through our education. So, even when we discuss the merits of education, we cannot only discuss it unilaterally – even quality education sometimes tends to discuss these matters from a position of moral power.<sup>145</sup>

In this context, Federici speaks about the fact that feminists are not recognizing "that globalization has not only caused a global "feminization of poverty," but has led to the emergence of a new colonial order and created new divisions among women that feminists must oppose."<sup>146</sup> The tendency to disqualify the international financial and economic structures that

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<sup>144</sup> Silvia Federici, *Revolution at point zero: Housework, reproduction and feminist struggle* (PM Press, Oakland, 2012), 81.

<sup>145</sup> Silvia Federici, *Revolution at point zero: Housework, reproduction and feminist struggle*, 49

<sup>146</sup> Silvia Federici, *Revolution at point zero: Housework, reproduction and feminist struggle*, 82.



are one of the most upfront causes that continue the exploitation of women can lead to diminishing some aspects of women's labor .

By conducting further speculative research in the fields of the development of performing arts by following the principles of inclusion and transparency, the cultural production's evolution path can be completely altered and directed towards a progressive path that will lead to the presence of women's voices. The social structure's context can be reshaped only by hearing women's unique stories, which would later lead to a positive change in the educational and art institutions annual programs. As Gielen points out, the institutionalization of science and education in the Western world had managed to create boundaries between the political regimes and safeguarded the cultural production from power structures.<sup>147</sup> The national cultural heritage should be shaped, written, arranged and reformed through the gaze of all gender identities, rather than solely through the male gaze's omnipresence in the performing arts. This can only happen if the institutional power is distributed proportionally amongst all relevant stakeholders. Without creating any space for flexibility or improvement of the current cultural discourse, we remain in a precarious state in which the urgency of the discussion about gender identity is recognized as relevant only in closed circles, i.e. it remains a discussion between people who are already aware of the pressing issues. Consequently, to impose hierarchical or structural change in the cultural production, we need to de-institutionalize the Macedonian performing arts, simply because institutionalization of the arts does not let most artists, especially independent artists become involved in the reshaping of the cultural industries, nor it recognizes their artistic labor.

Gielen points out that one of the main causes of constant failure of institutional critique is the ambivalent approach and hesitant insolence of cultural workers towards the institutions with which they collaborate.<sup>148</sup> Their inflexibility is sustained in the artists' approach and vice versa, but I would argue that the core issue does not lie in the ambivalence of the artists, but rather in the continuous negligent state discourse that traps artists in an indecisive state that simply does not let them distribute their thoughts and share their opinions freely and without any fear of further prejudgment. The Macedonian social structure imposes its heavy weight on the shoulders of those who should be in the position of creating free space for artists to feel at liberty to develop their art in their chosen form. However, women and other marginalized

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<sup>147</sup> Pascal Gielen, "Imagining culture in a flat wet world", in Biljana Tanurovska Kjulavkovski et al., (eds.), *Modelling public space(s) in culture* (Lokomotiva, Skopje, 2018), 17.

<sup>148</sup> Pascal Gielen, "Imagining culture in a flat wet world", in Biljana Tanurovska Kjulavkovski et al., (eds.), *Modelling public space(s) in culture* (Lokomotiva, Skopje, 2018), 19.

gender identities, such as non-binary and transgender people, are unremittingly placed in a challenging position of constantly feeling vulnerable, invisible, or unheard. If the already underdeveloped social and financial conditions do not go through a constructive growth, we cannot really expect a sudden flourishing of the Macedonian cultural production, principally without even trying to create institutional boundaries, as well as bodily boundaries, and without even mentioning a centuries old dialogue about the problematical male-controlled behavior that women are facing in the performing arts, and every so often, even subliminally accept it as a systematic discursive norm.

Federici speaks about the society's need to "overcome the state of constant denial and irresponsibility, concerning the consequences of our actions, resulting from the destructive ways in which the social division of labor is organized in capitalism; short of that, the production of our life inevitably becomes a production of death for others".<sup>149</sup> Accordingly, the consequences from the prolonged anguish of women who are solely shaped in their "otherness", as well as the cultural neglect of their artistic labor shows the harsh reality of the Macedonian cultural production. Consequently, the continuous neglect or careless behavior does not leave any space for the evolvement of the Macedonian cultural production and its gendered segregation, while the institutions blindly choose to stay ambivalent when it comes to the discussion about power dynamics and inclusion of the excluded. In addition, today's capitalist society does not shut out the existence of unpaid labor, which is many times present at work, but also follows after working hours. I emphasize the fact that unpaid labor cannot be defined solely as housework – it is also present during working hours, i.e. hidden behind "multitasking" at work, or being your own producer, your own video and audio editor, or your own translator. On the contrary, capitalism invigorates labor that often stays unpaid and remains hidden from the public, and sometimes, it even stays unrecognized by those who are recreating it. By assessing this aspect of the capitalist market, we can also assess how women are often explicitly producing labor power that tends to stay unpaid, but they are somehow forced to silently recreate it, day after day, as it is expected of them to manage living with it. Federici speaks of this unpaid labor that drains women not only mentally or physically, but also emotionally and sexually: "The availability of a stable, well-disciplined labor force is an essential condition of production at every stage of capitalist development."<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> Silvia Federici, *Revolution at point zero: Housework, reproduction and feminist struggle*, 172.

<sup>150</sup> Silvia Federici, *Revolution at point zero: Housework, reproduction and feminist struggle*, 44.

## **Conclusion**

After conducting an analysis of the current development of the Macedonian contemporary performing arts stage, the quantitative and qualitative findings reveal that the behavior towards women and other marginalized gender identities is still shaped through the prism of traditionalism, oppression, and by burdening women with obsolete social roles. The Macedonian woman's role is not fully detached from the notions of care, and is still shaped through the perspective of an outdated system yet to be put aside. Tronto accentuates that "If we are able to think more about caring democratically, not only will our democracy become

more caring, but it will also become better at caring”.<sup>151</sup> Consequently, we should speak about the ways in which the cultural institutions can be reshaped and become more transparent when they internally discuss and react to the inclusion of women in managing roles, both on stage and off stage.

They should become aware of the urgency to fix all of the persistent issues that classify women as caretakers or multitaskers, as well as the pressuring obstacles that are created because of one’s gender identity, and then start to recognize the mutual interdependence between the artist and the institution. Vujanovic and Piazza accentuate that there is lack of open space for the missing voices of people in today’s democratic society, but what is missing is not only the voice of the colonized or the marginalized. The voice of citizens or the citizenry remains unheard, and this is the voice that should respond to the pressing social urgency by creating new initiatives that would contribute to the recreation of the institutions, but also to the deinstitutionalization of the cultural production.<sup>152</sup>

When the institutions start to reciprocally care for women workers and protect their artistic labor, we might begin to witness a turning point that would abandon the outdated patriarchal stigma and belief about women’s roles in our cultural industry. The description of the men’s power configurations in the Macedonian performing arts keep on resurfacing throughout the personal stories from the quantitative data and in the individual interviews. This shows that the individual struggle of women in the roles of performers, artists, theoreticians, is still not finalized, nor recognized by the cultural industries or national institutions that are supposed to create solutions that would diminish or eradicate the gendered social structures that keep on lessening the role of women in the artistic labor market.

Ritsema accentuates the ways in which the neoliberal Western societies instrumentalize the artists through persistent financing of the artistic sector in the last few decades. The expected consequence is visible today – there is a continuous increase of the number of artists,

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<sup>151</sup> Joan Tronto, *Who cares? How to reshape a democratic politics*, 35.

<sup>152</sup> “As a response to these conditions, in the aftermaths of the protests of the precarious and outraged in the 2010s, new social and civil initiatives which explore different democratic processes have emerged, such as the Solidarity movement in Greece or Municipal Confluences, like *Ahora Madrid*, *Barcelona en Comú* and *Cádiz Sí Se Puede* in Spain. They pave the way to reinvent ordinary people as political agents of their society, which is alternative to both neo-liberal proceduralism and the professionalisation of politics, from which ordinary people are excluded, and right-wing populism, where individuals become fused into an abstract category of people.” Ana Vujanovic, Livia Andrea Piazza “Introduction: People Are Missing...” in Ana Vujanovic, Livia Andrea Piazza (eds.) *A Live Gathering: Performance and politics in contemporary Europe*, (Dardedze Holografija: Riga, 2019), 13.

administrators, theoreticians, organizers and curators among the rest. When we speak of a profit-oriented society, we need to emphasize its limitations to the freedom of the artist:

“We think that we are free and liberated individuals, however, practically, we are not. What counts is the practice, what counts are the facts. And the factual situation is that we have no choice. We are forced to work—not in the old-fashioned brutal way; not physically, like slaves—and we have lost, or, more accurately, we have given away, our independence, by putting our resources on sale.”<sup>153</sup>

This instrumentalization of cultural workers happens because the Western societies want to capitalize from the cultural production. Nowadays, we easily define economy as profit-oriented, without thinking of the ways that the key-characteristics of the neoliberal economy have a negative impact on cultural workers and their artistic labor: “Before and after having served Capital as agents for gentrification in all big cities, artists serve and did serve Capital as agents and explorers for colonizing the rest of the world into economical and ideological globalization.”

To conclude, I analyzed the historical genesis of performing arts in Western Europe, focusing on the early works of women working in theatres in different periods throughout the Middle Ages, the Restoration period – focusing on Aphra Behn’s novel works as one of the first women dramatists, the Victorian era, the 20th century’s performing arts stages, and finally, the 21st century development of the contemporary performing art stages. On the other hand, I made a vague comparison with the slow evolvement of the Macedonian theatre, in terms of contextualizing and acknowledging the roles of women in the leading positions. Due to lack of archived data on early women – dramatists, theatre or film directors in North Macedonia, I conducted a brief analysis on the ways that women – dramatists and theoreticians depict some of the works created by several prominent men- dramatists whose plays shaped the Macedonian contemporary theatre stage. Additionally, the findings show that there is lack of available data based on the historical evolvement of the performing arts in North Macedonia. The Macedonian performing arts stage is yet to produce a thorough and genuine response to the outdated discourse that keeps the cultural production intact and detached from the rest of the European performing arts scenes and the pace with which they are developing. Durable change remains a necessity, but when we speak of change, we need to speak of one that will not only have a

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<sup>153</sup> Jan Ritsema, Property Revisited: Or, Let Us Help History Take Another Direction, *Identities: Journal for Politics, Gender and Culture*, Vol. 12, No. 1-2 (Winter 2015 - Summer 2016), 37, available at <https://identitiesjournal.edu.mk/index.php/IJPGC/article/view/304/215>, accessed on 27 September 2021.

short-term effect that can only contribute to the already thriving cultural production community, but one that will create a visible change and will impact cultural workers and impose the question of gender identity in the performing arts. Understanding this change as an urgent matter can help women, especially independent artists, outgrow the persistent urge to shelter their capacities in their own safe space.

This thesis argues that when we speak of performing arts in Europe, we need to assess the vital differences between the performing arts development in the Western and Northern European countries in comparison with the Western Balkans. When we speak of the Western Balkans, or more specifically North Macedonia as the primary country in the quantitative and qualitative analysis of this thesis, we need to clarify that the presence of these differences is still unavoidable, as we cannot simply ignore the post-transitional fluctuations that led to various disadvantages and financial cracks in the local cultural industry. These are some of the predominant factors that contribute to the gendered segregation in the cultural production; the slow development of the gender identity discourse is a direct result of these persistent instabilities. Vujanovic and Piazza speak about today's artistic perspectives in Europe – “marked with thirty years of protracted and troubled ‘democratisation and capitalisation’ of former socialist societies; the evolving of the European Union, characterized with the ‘proceduralism’ of formal democracy...”.<sup>154</sup> They emphasize that there isn't any space for institutional representation that later reflects on the lack of decision-making power amongst the citizens, accentuating that the democratic system in most Western European countries is bureaucratized and over-facilitated.

The characteristics of the present-day discourse amongst the European democratic institutions, such as their non-transparent approach and their choice not to accentuate the significance of the physical presence of those individuals who are supposed to discuss the cultural and artistic practices – “...in the current European – and even wider – context, characterized by both neoliberal capitalism and representative democracy, performance may not owe its political relevance to being ‘unmarked’, as Phelan claimed in the 1990s, but rather its political potential might lie in the gesture of marking.”<sup>155</sup> So, in what way will the actual issues that artists are facing will be discussed, when they are not even invited to participate in the discussion?

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<sup>154</sup> Ana Vujanovic, Livia Andrea Piazza “Introduction: People Are Missing...” in Ana Vujanovic, Livia Andrea Piazza (eds.) *A Live Gathering: Performance and politics in contemporary Europe*, (Dardedze Holografija: Riga, 2019), 12.

<sup>155</sup> Ana Vujanovic, Livia Andrea Piazza “Introduction: People Are Missing...” in Ana Vujanovic, Livia Andrea Piazza (eds.) *A Live Gathering: Performance and politics in contemporary Europe*, 14.

In the context of the quantitative and qualitative findings, I tried to demonstrate that the segregation that occurs based on sex and gender in the 21<sup>st</sup> century had been represented in different contexts throughout the centuries, beginning from the archetype of the male's presence in cultural production since the appearance of the performing arts. Although the historical genesis of the expansion of the European cultural production shows that the pace with which the segregation and mistreatment of women is different regarding the territory in question, I emphasized the importance of the economic development as one of the primary factors that contribute to the inclusion of different genders in performing arts. Therefore, the political fluctuations' strong influence on cultural production had a deep impact on the development of the independent cultural production as a response to the prolonged uncertainty of the social status of women who work in performing arts.

When women's authorship and individual success is noted as a valuable contribution to the cultural industries, the changes occur more rapidly and become more perceptible, even to outsiders that do not have particular knowledge of the context of the country in question. In the setting of the development of the Macedonian theatre, nurturing the independent theatrical work helps to shape the processes that continuously contribute to creating a more advanced, all-encompassing contemporary theatre in which women's work is included, and therefore, becomes more accessible to the public.

By gaining visibility and recognition, the gendered segregation reciprocally starts to diminish. However, this is solely possible with transparent institutional contribution which can only be achieved by de-politicization of the Macedonian institutions. The gendered segregation is intertwined in both the public and private spheres of cultural workers, and the fields of cultural production show only one aspect of the problem; consequently, gendered segregation needs to be tackled throughout all hierarchical ladders – starting from the institutions that withhold to use their power and keep on obstructing women's artistic labor.

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