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DEFYING BORDERS IN THE LEVANT. CONTEMPORARY DANCE AND THE INTERNET

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Summary: Countries in the Levant have a common culture that values dance, with evidence of dance teaching as old as 1780 BC. Dances, particularly Dabkeh, performed as part of social events to date. Dance in the Levant moved from being participatory in nature to performance dances, particularly after the rise in need to conserve fading heritage due to political events storming the region and causing socio-cultural shifts. These events caused the space between populations of the region to increase, separating the countries more and more, adding hurdles to communication and mobility in the region, particularly between Palestine and both Lebanon and Syria.

The shift in dance towards performance art allowed for more creativity and introduction of modern dance in a dance movement that shared roots and expanded with exposure to international dance movements and with online exposure to Contemporary Dance. Dance troupes in the region started experimenting with new forms of dance, what developed quickly to organized efforts and productions renowned worldwide, with the main driver being four leading cultural centres and groups.

These centres and groups joined forces under Masahat Network for Contemporary Dance to overcome challenges they faced, financial and societal, utilizing the Internet as the main media for communication and coordination to develop dancing in the region through stronger relationships between individual artists, dance associations, and companies.

Resumen: Los países del Levante tienen una cultura común que valora la danza, con evidencia de la enseñanza de la danza, tan antigua como 1780 AC. Las danzas, especialmente el Dabkeh, se realizaron como parte de eventos sociales hasta la fecha. La danza en el Levante pasó de ser participativa en la naturaleza a bailes de performance, particularmente después del aumento en la necesidad de conservar el deterioro de la herencia debido a los eventos políticos que asaltaron la región y causaron cambios socioculturales. Estos eventos provocaron el aumento del espacio entre las poblaciones de la región, separando a los países cada vez más, lo que añadió obstáculos a la comunicación y la movilidad en la región, particularmente entre Palestina y el Líbano y Siria. El cambio en la danza hacia el arte escénico permitió una mayor creatividad y la introducción de la danza moderna en un movimiento de baile que compartió raíces y se expandió con la exposición a movimientos internacionales de danza y con exposición en línea a la Danza Contemporánea. Los grupos de danza en la región comenzaron a experimentar con nuevas formas de baile, lo que se desarrolló rápidamente para organizar esfuerzos y producciones de renombre mundial, siendo el principal impulsor cuatro centros y grupos culturales líderes. Estos centros y grupos unieron fuerzas bajo la Red Masahat para la Danza Contemporánea con el fin de superar los desafíos a los que se enfrentaban, financieros y sociales; utilizando Internet como el principal medio de comunicación y coordinación para desarrollar el baile en la región a través de relaciones más fuertes entre artistas individuales, asociaciones de danza y compañías. Internet y la tecnología permitieron la exposición a

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Internet and technology allowed exposure to potential and established dancers alike to learn and share their creation online, opening the door for a new wave of self-taught artists, who, some argue, enjoy larger freedom in their creations and movement.

Keywords: Contemporary Dance, Internet, Communication, Middle East, Levant

bailarines potenciales y consolidados por igual para aprender y compartir su creación en línea, abriendo la puerta a una nueva ola de artistas autodidactas, quienes, según algunos, disfrutaban de una mayor libertad en sus creaciones y movimiento.

Palabras claves: Danza contemporánea, Internet, comunicación, Medio Oriente, Levante

INTRODUCTION

The Internet provided unprecedented opportunities for communication and artistic creation, surpassing every other medium of communication in terms of expansion rate and possibilities. It became effortless and affordable to communicate with people from all over the world, access artistic creation, material and ideas, as well as exposing and sharing ones artistic creation and ideas.

With the new possibilities, the Internet affected every aspect of our lives, from watching live events, getting information, learning, finding recipes to exposure to art and artistic creation. O'Connor (1997: 5) described how the Internet affected people's relation to culture by saying that until the advent of the Internet "most people tended to enjoy culture created by others [...] rather than creating it themselves [...] However, Internet is now dramatically shifting this ratio in favour of more 'expressed' culture".

This effect can also be noted in art created offline in the wake of ideas developed online, as Guthrie Lonergan calls it "Internet-aware art" (Beard, 2008), a concept that was also tackled by Marisa Olson with their similar concept of "PostInternet" (Olson, 2011: 59-63). They used these terms to describe the contemporary offline manifestation of material and ideas seen online, that is the mode of artistic creation after being online.

That distinction between conventional art, and PostInternet or Internet-aware art was possible when we had to seek online access, make special effort to find a machine with connection to the Internet and time for that access. However, nowadays, with the dominance of connected smartphones and devices, the Internet is with us and around us throughout our days, to the point where we had to seek special effort to get offline few hours a day, making almost any new artistic creation an Internet-aware art, or PostInternet creations.

Contemporary Dance, as any other form of artistic creation, was affected by the Internet and technology, providing established artists means to share their creations and connect with other artists. The availability of Contemporary Dance material online opened the door for new dancers and choreographers to learn about dance and movement by themselves, becoming self-taught dancers and choreographers.

Farah Saleh, dancer, choreographer, and winner of 2014 Young Artist of the Year Award (YAYA), argued in an interview for this book that self-taught dancers and choreographers are more interesting and creative. They have more space

for experimenting and creating original art, compared to attendants of dance academies, who usually end up having similar movement, and strive to create dances that match the taste of their instructors, rather than having to discover their own movement and express it freely.

This new generation of dancers possess exposure to different schools of thought online, and a plethora of resources and material, allowing them to create their own artistic identity, open to a world of possibilities, without being confined to strict roles of dance taught in dance academies and formal studios. This freedom allowed dancers to introduce new moves and concepts derived from their cultures and personal experiences, in a dialogue with their past as Yvonne Hardt puts it (2012: 217-231), leaving behind the incessant strive to create new movements.

The Internet also gave contemporary choreographers and dancers access to a world of other creators they can connect to and work with. Encouraging peer review of work, engaging in online communities of practice, and paving the way to co-productions crossing political and geographical borders. A process that could have been possible before the advent of the Internet, but required significant additional time and resources, and usually involved attending festivals and conferences, making it hard for newcomers to join, as Abdallah Damra Vertex, co-founder of Stereo48, noted for this book.

Abdallah and his friends from Nablus, a conservative city in Palestine, got into dancing after learning how to dance from videos they found on YouTube. Later on, they started to post their work online, and communicate with other performers over the Internet, getting necessary critique to enhance their performance and effectively becoming part of online networks of performers. This allowed them to gain exposure, and helped them to get in touch with, and host, renowned artists who they collaborated with to organize workshops to learn and teach hip-hop and Contemporary Dance. They have also gone into co-productions with artists they met online. At one instance, when a show they were working on included a group of dancers from Gaza that were not allowed to leave Gaza to join the performance, the group pre-taped Gaza performance, transferred it over the Internet and projected it on the stage as an integrated part of the show.

This is an example on how technology and the Internet found their way into performances, becoming part of productions, with choreographers exploring

the areas and boundaries of interactive art and networked performance. And allowed utilization of technical concepts like projection mapping where light and video projection re-creates scenery to provide immersive experiences, augmenting the performance with interactive objects that react to performers' movement, allowing the performers to not only control their movement and body, but also to interact with and control virtual objects projected on the stage.

While networked performances employ the possibility to connect multiple locations in live streams to produce performances taking place in multiple locations simultaneously and connected via the Internet, either through audio, video, or even 3D objects and holograms. These forms of computer-assisted performances point to a new understanding of environments of relations (Birringer, 2004: 88-111), allowing manipulation of performance space, by creating and breaking walls and borders, and creating new relations with real and virtual objects spread of geography and time.

LEVANT

Levant is the area to the east of Mediterranean, historically included Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and historical Palestine. The population in this area share a common culture developed over centuries. However, due to political events following the Sykes-Picot agreement of 1916, these countries were divided. Later events caused further separation, that resulted in barriers to communication and travel between these countries created, this is particularly notable between Palestine and both Lebanon and Syria, where travel has been arduous and very rare in the past half a century. The culture and heritage shared in this area values dancing, with evidence on dance and dance teaching in the region tracing to four millennia back. One evidence is found in a 3,800 years old letter, when King Zimri-Lim of Mari, an empire that stretched from Palestine to Persia, send to his wife Queen Shiptu, asking her to select the best looking and assign them to a dance teacher named *Warad-Ilishu to teach them the Subarean dances* (Rowe, 2008: 3-20).

Internet penetration in the region has been developing steadily in the past years, with Lebanon, Palestine, and Jordan going ahead of both Global and Arab World averages in the percentage of Internet users of the total population. Internet users in these countries doubled in numbers between 2009 and 2015, where, according to the World Bank (2016), Syria had only 30 Internet users for

every 100 inhabitants of the country, a humble number when compared to 74 in Lebanon, 57 in Palestine, and 53 in Jordan, this increase shows interest among population in what the Internet offers.

This development, however, was not matched with similar development in bandwidth, as the region is lacking behind both Global and Arab World averages of international Internet bandwidth per Internet user, with the data of 2015 sitting humbly at 27Kbit/s in Jordan and Lebanon, 14Kbit/s in Palestine, and a mere 3Kbit/s in Syria. To better understand where this sits globally, the worldwide average is over double the highest bandwidth in the region at 57Kbit/s, while Arab World average is 29Kbit/s (ESCWA, 2016).

Another important aspect to take into consideration when talking about the Internet in the Levant region is Internet freedom and openness, which have been an issue of high importance and debate in the recent years. Governments felt they are losing control over media, and people looking at the Internet as a gateway to freedom. In Syria, the Internet was heavily regulated, censored and monitored, but that didn't stop the Internet from being an important vehicle in organizing demonstrations as in March 2011 events, inspired by Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions, starting a series of events that were exploited by different parties towards the current war in Syria.

In the rest of the Levant, the Internet is considered partly free as ranked by Freedom House's Freedom on the Net 2016 report (FreedomHouse, 2016: 44), with obstacles to access, limits on content, and violation of user rights occurring often and increasing notably in recent years. Censorship and perception of surveillance did affect levels of self-censorship among Internet users in the region, but did not, for instance, translate into adoption of security tools as pointed out in the report Digital Privacy in Jordan: Perceptions and Implications among Human Rights Actors (7iber, 2015: 30). This attitude results in self-regulation of expression of self on the Internet, and possibly limiting artistic creation exposed online. In Palestine, Internet freedom is not only hindered by actions of the Palestinian Authority, which is in essence similar to other regimes in the region, but have an additional dimension of monitoring and surveillance, with *all* communication between Palestine and the world being forced to pass through Israel.

The mobility of Palestinians and communication with the outer world have always been an issue, people always looked for new forms of communication to

defy borders and connect with people outside Palestine. When Internet was introduced in the early 1990s, people resorted to it to communicate with long lost cousins in refugee camps outside of Palestine. Projects like Across Borders Program (ABP) stemmed from this need, launching in February 1999 at Birzeit University, to build “otherwise inexistent, Internet linkages between Palestinian refugees spread around the world” (CCE, 2014).

That same university, and in response to frequent road closures that barred students and staff from reaching their classrooms and office at the university between March 2001 and June 2004, particularly during the 2002 Israeli invasion of Ramallah (Operation Defensive Shields) (Hammami, 2004), introduced an online portal for students and staff to communicate and share content (Aouragh, 2012: 288). The portal, called *Ritaj* (Great Portal in Arabic), was the first platform of online education in Palestine, and shows another form of unique need and use for the Internet in Palestine.

These actions, and other creative survival strategies that used the Internet and other forms of communication to connect Palestinians with the outer world, is beautifully described in Miriyam Aouragh’s book *Palestine Online, Transnationalism, the Internet and construction of identity*. Where they argue that although Internet in Palestine is embedded in a colonial reality, it offered ‘virtual escapism’ for Palestinians, an opportunity, although partial and temporal, but nonetheless necessary, to “engage politically and provide urgently needed forms of entertainment” (Aouragh, 2012: 288).

DANCE AND THE LEVANT

Dabkeh, or Dabkah, performed across the Levant and parts of Iraq (Cohen, 2004: 4048), is the best-known dance in the Middle East and comprises an important component of Levantine culture. Dabkeh is a group dance where men and women line up and move with synchronized footsteps, following the leader at the head of the line, where usually he or she twirls a handkerchief in their hand, Figure 1 demonstrations traditional Dabkeh line circa 1880. Locals performed Dabkeh on several occasions, but usually associated it with weddings. The dance itself is more of a participatory dance than a presentational dance, with people participating at the occasion becoming part of the dance, rather than just being spectators.



Figure 1: Traditional Dabkeh Line from 1880, Credit: M. Leon Cahun, Public Domain

A ‘salvagism movement’ started to appear following turmoil hitting the region, resulting in displacement of large numbers of people, and massive socio-cultural shift. This included the Nakba, where 700,000 Palestinians were exiled from their homes in Palestine upon the establishment of Israel in 1948, and later the Naksa, with another 250,000 Palestinians were exiled following the expansion of Israel in 1967. Nicholas Rowe described this movement as a revival movement that tried to preserve and salvage cultural past (Rowe, 2009: 45-68), over time, and what appeared to be a result of salvagism, dances added presentational aspect to their existence, and developed Dabkeh into performance art common in the region.

This rise of this dance as an accepted performance art paved the way to modernize popular dance, and performances started to be evaluated based on their artistic value, rather than by how much they adhere to strict moves of folk, this resulted in the rise of modern versions of Dabkeh that were introduced as modern dance. This, however, did not replace Dabkeh shows, but rather forked a new form of dance that was viewed as pure art, rather than folklore. Dabkeh

is still performed in events as the main folklore dance of the region, resembling values of resistance and steadfastness.

El-Funoun Popular Dance Troupe led the move towards modern dance along with the Music and Dance Troupe of Sareyyet Ramallah (First Ramallah Group). Both tried to reflect changes in society and political events into their dances with movements deeply rooted in local heritage. This movement found support in the several festivals taking place in the region, in Palestine there was Ramallah Nights in the 1960s and Birzeit University's Dabkeh competitions and Birzeit Nights festival, Bethlehem University festival in the 1980s then Palestine International Festival from late 1990s. Lebanon had another rich scene of festivals, including the famous Baalbek festival since 1955, which dedicated its Lebanese Nights segments to local dances, including Dabkeh as well as modern dance.

These festivals and events were not isolated at their beginnings, but were rather connected. At one instance, the same person, Wadea Haddad Jarrar, oversaw folk dance at Baalbek Festival Lebanese Nights and Ramallah Nights Festival. In 1960s, King Hussein of Jordan commissioned Wadea to teach dance and Dabkeh performance to the newly established troupes in Ramallah, as part of support to Ramallah Nights festival. Wadea was herself a Palestinian who travelled from Palestine in 1947 to study physical education in England. Upon graduation in 1951, Wadea joined their family in Lebanon where they had to take refuge after the 1948 Nakba, Wadea worked for the American University of Beirut, and created folk dances for university festivals, they were instrumental in most notable shows in Lebanon at the time (Rowe, 2010: 256).

To understand this shift and the interaction between Levant countries in dance, we can look at the timeline and productions of one of the groups. Sareyyet Ramallah Dance Troupe was established as part of Sareyyet Ramallah AlOula (First Ramallah Group), a social, cultural, and scout club. The group began by performing under the name Sareyyet Ramallah Dabkeh Troupe at Ramallah Nights Festival between 1962 and 1966. Upon 1967 war of Israel expansion (Six-day War), they ceased working to be resurrected back in 1985, where it participated with a traditional Dabkeh performance at Bethlehem University festival.

A year later, the troupe produced their first performance in a series of performances show were not pure folklore Dabkeh, *The Aasheq* (The Lover), followed by *Sowwar Falastiniya* (Palestinian Portraits) in 1989, and *Jbeineh* in 1992,

Onshoudat Al Riyyan (Chant of the Shepherds) in 1995, and later *AlBirjawwi* in 2000. Which marked a remarkable development in level of production (Sareyyet, 2016), Figure 2 shows a scene from the dance. As part of the shift, the troupe changed its name to become Sareyyet Ramallah Dance Troupe, comprising of both Dabkeh and Contemporary Dance groups. The exposure to new forms of dance provided Palestinians with new form of expression, expanding dance beyond aesthetics, as a dancer from Sareyyet stated in an interview with the Washington Post, “We are not just dancing pretty. What we do stems from the politics here” (Eglash, 2016).



Figure 2: Modern Dabkeh Dance from *AlBirjawwi* production. Credit: Sareyyet Ramallah Archive

At this point, the troupe, and after interactions with international choreographers and exposure to Contemporary Dance, many online, produced their first show that was inspired by Contemporary Dance style in 2005. The success of their production *Aal Hajez* (At the Checkpoint) inspired Sareyyet Ramallah to

look more into Contemporary Dance, and pushed towards founding of Ramallah Contemporary Dance Festival (RCDF) in 2006.

The troupe also went into co-productions with international dance companies, as they did with CityDance Ensemble from the United States. They co-produced a show titled +1/-1, employing the Internet as a media for communication and training, where trainers and dancers met and rehearsed online. This allowed them to overcome mobility restrictions, allowing Palestinian dancers exposure to world-class dance production. Figure 3 shows a Contemporary Dance performance with a scene inspired by Dabkeh dance.



[Figure 3: Contemporary Dance performance with a scene inspired by Dabkeh dance. Credit: Ghneim Zarour]

A similar wave of interest in Contemporary Dance has been developing over the years in other Levant countries, with a mature movement in Lebanon, crowned by the establishment of *Maqamat*, Lebanese Contemporary Dance Company. In 2002, the company launched Beirut International Platform of Dance (BIPOD) in 2004. Jordan, although slightly late to join the party, had its share of interest with the National Centre for Culture & Arts (NCCA) of King

Hussein Foundation started hosting the annual Amman Contemporary Dance Festival (ACDF) in 2009.

Syria, on the other hand, had a wonderful history of modern dance artistic creation. The oldest modern academic higher institution dedicated to art in the region, the Higher Institute of Dramatic Arts was established in Damascus in 1977. Syria had several modern dance theatres and groups, including *Enana* Dance Theatre, established in 1999, and *Tanween* Dance Theatre, established in 2009 as an artistic gathering and forum for professional artists who wish to experiment with dancing and developing the professional dance movement in Syria. Following this message, and from its first days of establishment, *Tanween* launched Damascus Contemporary Dance Platform (DCDP) as a contribution to Contemporary Dance scene in Syria, a scene that showed promise and hope, and reached its zenith right before 2011 revolts (Silverstein, 2015: 82).

The similarity in titles, aims, and goals of these Contemporary Dance festivals was not a pure coincidence, as they all were founded based on inspiration and experiences the creators shared as a virtual group of people interested in the subject in the region, in what later became *Masahat* Network for Contemporary Dance.

MASAHAT

Masahat Network for Contemporary Dance was established in late 2006. When Maqamat Dance Theatre, Lebanon, and First Ramallah Group (Sareyyet Ramallah Al-Oula), Palestine, decided to defy borders and mobility impediments between the two countries and collaborate on cultural activities to create a space for dialogue and communication through the artistic framework of contemporary theatre dance, this goal reflected directly in the network name, *Masahat*, Arabic for spaces.

The story began when Khalid Elayyan, from Sareyyet Ramallah, had the idea of introducing Contemporary Dance to Palestine through starting a Contemporary Dance festival. Khaled searched online and found that Omar Rajeh, from Maqamat Dance Theatre, founded Beirut International Platform of Dance in 2004 as an effort to establish a Contemporary Dance scene in Beirut, and to create a space for cultural exchange and interaction between Lebanon and the Arab and International Worlds.

Khaled sent an email to Omar sharing his intentions, Omar, in return, showed interest in cooperating and shared with Khalid details about dance companies and organizations that may be interested in such festivals in the region, as well as some of what they learned through the process of establishing a Contemporary Dance festival.

A year later, building on success of Beirut and Ramallah festivals, and news spreading online, two organizations that shared similar objectives joined them, Tanween Dance Theatre from Syria, and the National Centre for Culture and Performing Arts from Jordan, effectively creating a Levantine network for Contemporary Dance, both organizations started their own dance festivals in 2009.

Festivals continued annually, but waves of instability hitting the region affected Syrian cultural and artistic scene, causing it to lose means of support starting from mid-2011. Large group of Syrian artists fled the war, resulting in a halt to most artistic activities, and DCDDP was no exception. However, Amman, Beirut, and Ramallah continued to have their festivals, and this year they are celebrating the 9th edition of Amman Contemporary Dance Festival, the 12th edition of Ramallah Contemporary Dance festival, and the 13th edition of Beirut International Platform of Dance.

Along with the festivals, partners believed in the importance of discussing the art they are presenting with audience and experts alike, in order to establish Contemporary Dance as a part of the art scene in the region and link it to local societies, this was the motivation to hold discussion sessions involving audience. In Ramallah, organisers scheduled Q&A sessions after most of the shows, allowing audience to reflect on what they have just watched with the artists. The expert discussion was also valued, with conferences discussing dance and society organized as part of festivals' activities, making use of availability of international experts and artists participating at the festivals locally to share their thoughts and experiences.

This motivation was also reflected in workshops organized alongside festivals' main activities. Workshops offered by local and international dance experts catered for people interested in dancing as well as established dancers. Public interest in workshops encouraged Sareyyet Ramallah to establish their own dance school targeting children and youth, to teach Ballet, Dabkeh, and Contemporary Dance. As well as an annual dance summer school for estab-

lished dancers and practitioners, open to locals and internationals alike. The school, as its coordinator Farah Saleh states, relies entirely on the Internet and social media platforms to announce, find, and connect with participants.

The festivals and international exposures allowed co-production of shows. Sareyyet Ramallah for example, collaborated on a new show with international partners almost every year since launching its Contemporary Dance festival. Giving dancers the chance to obtain professional training, as what happened with Yazan Ewaidat, a dancer who began as part of Sareyyet Ramallah Dabkeh dance troupe, and later started their career as a professional contemporary dancer and choreographer after participating in multiple productions and workshops held by Sareyyet Ramallah. Yazan recalls how in most of the co-productions they were part of, they used Skype and online conferencing to connect with co-dancers and even rehearse together online. The success of this method inspired Yazan, who is currently residing in Belgium, to produce a show with a dancer living in Nablus, the discussions, choreography, and rehearsals are done exclusively over the Internet, and the two dancers will only meet in person two weeks prior to the show to do final rehearsals together.

Other artists, on the other hand, feel that non-virtual experiences affects them more. For instance, Amal Khatib stated for this book that the shows they attended in person touched them more deeply, and workshops attended in person contributed the most to their artistic development. Amal justifies that that dance is very emotional in sense for them, and is more effective when you can not only see, but also hear, smell, and be able to touch. However, they still find the Internet helpful in researching artists and dance companies, to stay up to date with their work, as well as communication and organisation.

To better fulfil the goals of Masahat network, the partners have worked on establishing forums and networks of dancers and choreographers, Maqamat Dance Theatre established *Multaqa Leymoun* (Lemon/Orange Forum), a platform for exchange, meetings, and training for young dance artists, with the purpose of creating a pan-Arab Contemporary Dance collaborative network building over Masahat. Sareyyet Ramallah in their turn announced an online platform that would serve similar goals of *Multaqa Leymoun* but augment it with online tools, the platform, called *Lammeh* (Gathering), was announced during RCDF 2017, and aims at being an informational hub for and about dancers, choreographers, companies, festivals, and productions.

Masahat did not only give organizers a platform to share experiences and discuss activities but extended that to coordination of efforts, in an attempt to overcome financial and societal challenges. This was rendered in many aspects, including coordination of festivals timing, and inviting companies to tour the region and perform at more than one of the network festivals instead of coming specifically to each festival, minimizing the cost of transportation of these companies, and even sharing posters and design that can be used across these festivals and activities.

The Levant, although values Dabkeh dance as a cultural activity, still largely regard modern and Contemporary Dance foreign to the society and even frowned at among population that is more conservative, posing societal challenges on dancers and organisers. Campaigns and articles were written to warn from these activities, putting the blame for the decline of moral values in the society on dancers and organizers of festivals. Here, the online network of dancers and organisers played an important role through providing needed support and affirmation to stand against these claims, allowing organizers to reach people interested in art, effectively achieving their goal of creating a space for dialogue and communication through art, particularly Contemporary Dance.

CONCLUSION

Internet and technology allowed exposure to potential and established dancers alike to learn and share their creation online, opening the door for a new wave of self-taught artists, who, some argue, are more creative in their creations and movement. Internet and technology use extended from communication and coordination to becoming part of performance production, either through using Internet and technology as means of expression on stage, or the practice of rehearsing and choreographing performances online with remote participants.

This practice is becoming more common and even the method used most in the Levant, where the Internet contributed to the accelerated growth and success of Contemporary Dance through offering means necessary to overcome mobility restrictions. The Internet also paved the road for similar minds in the region to work together, and provided the environment essential for enabling the process of artistic creation and art dissemination, defying borders and mobility restrictions.

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Hanna Kreitem, Ph.D. Researcher at Northumbria University, UK, his belief in the importance of free and open Internet towards society development motivated him to work on Internet and digital rights for over 10 years. Hanna worked on several Internet infrastructure projects, such as the grassroots project of Palestine Internet eXchange point, and served in various Internet-related bodies, including Internet Society Palestine Chapter as member of board in 2015. Hanna was also a member of Arab Multistakeholder Advisory Group (AMAG) for Arab Internet Governance Forum (Arab IGF) 2014, where he assisted in organizing the third Arab IGF, held in Lebanon. Hanna's research now serves the same goal, with focus on Internet limitations and infrastructure projects, how it affects our communities, and the democratization potential of the future of Internet and media.

Hanna Kreitem, Doctora investigadora de la Northumbria University, Reino Unido, su creencia en la importancia de Internet libre y abierto para el desarrollo de la sociedad lo motivó a trabajar en Internet y en los derechos digitales durante más de diez años. Hanna trabajó en varios proyectos de infraestructura de Internet, como el grassroots project: Palestine Internet eXchange point. Asimismo, Hanna sirvió en varios órganos relacionados con Internet, incluido Internet Society Palestine Chapter como miembro de la junta directiva en 2015. También fue miembro del Arab Multistakeholder Advisory Group (AMAG) para el Arab Internet Governance Forum (Arab IGF) 2014, donde ayudó a organizar el tercer Arab IGF, celebrado en Líbano. La investigación de Hanna actualmene cumple la misma meta, con énfasis en las limitaciones de Internet y los proyectos de infraestructura, cómo afecta a nuestras comunidades y el potencial de democratización del futuro de Internet y los medios.