



iDANS founder Aydin Silier (L) and artistic director Gurur Ertem pose for a photograph at the Bimeras Cultural Foundation office in Istanbul.

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Performing artists are often at a disadvantage in the art market economy and must inevitably struggle to find sufficient subsidies and sponsorships unless they find a way to commodify their work.

Unlike musicians, filmmakers or other visual artists, contemporary dancers in Turkey have great difficulties in making new productions, finding proper performance spaces and attracting the attention of the media -- not to mention the audience.

Yet, there are exciting developments in the field, such as the iDANS Istanbul International Contemporary Dance and Performance Festival, which will kick off its fifth installment on Sept. 30.

Organized by the Istanbul-based Bimeras Cultural Foundation, iDANS has quickly proven itself to be one of the best festivals in the field in Turkey, having hosted many significant dancers that Istanbulites could not have seen perform live on stage otherwise.

The festival offers a truly impressive program of contemporary works that will be staged in various venues across the city until it wraps up on Oct. 23.

"International dancers and institutions are really supportive of the festival due to its independent structure. Unlike the over-institutionalized initiatives in Western Europe, we have an experienced, self-taught team and because of this we might be even more appealing," says Aydin Silier, the head of the Bimeras Foundation.

This year's theme is "At Work," as set by the curatorial team, and in accordance with the theme, several performances, screenings, discussions and public space interventions on the festival program will delve into the question of whether contemporary dance should be considered "labor."

"In contemporary creative capitalism, we see a new type of worker who is similar to a dancer; s/he is supposed to be mentally mobile, agile, adaptable, flexible and playful. S/he should also continuously be engaged in the production, circulation and distribution of images and ideas," explains Gurur Ertem, the festival's artistic director. "How does contemporary art work? What works? What kind of a 'job' is art? Can we consider the new worker an artist and the artist a worker?" are among the questions the festival raises via the 22 events on the bill.

Critical Endeavor and Europe in Motion

iDANS is not just a festival featuring live contemporary dance performances, but also includes a significant element of education in it.

Silier explains that the importance of education for the festival has previously been highlighted through conferences held within the festival's framework, out of which they have published two books.

This year, though, they will be trying a new educational format with their Critical Endeavor workshop. First organized last year in the form of a joint event with the Prix Jardin d'Europe, participants in this international workshop on performing arts writing and journalism will focus on improving their ability to write about contemporary dance. The writings the group produces about iDANS 05 performances can be followed on the festival's blog, which can be reached via www.idans.org.

Another part of the festival's educational agenda will be Europe in Motion, a travelling international development program designed to educate new generations of choreographers under the coaching of renowned figures in the field, including Jonathan Burrows and Mustafa Kaplan. The project is supported by the EU and has several partners, including iDANS.

Bimeras is also planning to carry the festival overseas in the upcoming season under the title "iDANS." This upcoming edition, which will be held in Berlin, will delve into the generations of guest workers in Germany on the occasion of the 50th year of the guest worker pact between Turkey and Germany.

"The program is going to address changing notions of work, creativity, innovation and productivity; issues concerning work-related mobility and immigration, and the blurring of life and work through labor relations, which, in turn, introduce new forms of alienation and suffering on top of existing problems of integration and xenophobia," Ertem explains.

"We also want to question to what extent a stranger can be accommodated as a guest, and when and under what conditions hospitality turns into hostility," she says.

For more information, visit www.idans.info.

A glance at the iDANS 05 program

"Fase": Pioneering choreographer Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker had her unique stance on the world dance scene with her 1982 piece "Fase." This work is set on the American minimalist composer Steve Reich's composition consisting of four phases.

"Cheap Lecture and the Cow Piece": Jonathan Burrows and Matteo Fargion invite audiences to witness the unique way in which they rhyme and dance the story of their processes of creativity, creation and collaboration.

"I am not me, the horse is not mine": World-renowned animation artist William Kentridge portrays the story of the fragmentation of his artistic personality departing from the short story of Nikolai Gogol, "The Nose."

"Eskiyesi": Mustafa Kaplan and Filiz Sızanlı, close collaborators since 1997, revisit, reenact and reinterpret the history of their work.

"ÇOK": A meditation on a question ("How many bodies can a body embody?") narrated through personal reflections of dancers, choreographers and visual artists from Istanbul.

"Around the Table": Conceived and developed by French choreographer Loic Touze and pedagogue Anne Kerzerho and realized by a network of local artists, "Around the Table" provides a platform for dialogue and reciprocity in the exchange of knowledge about the body by bringing together people from different occupations.

"The Show Must Go On": A reinterpretation by an all-local stage crew of 2001's "The Show Must Go On" by Jerome Bel, one of the most important masters in contemporary choreography.

