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## Affinity: SB-ADaPT Fest Sprouts

SonneBlauma Danscz to Host a Mixed Bill at Center Stage

Friday, February 3, 2012  
by ELIZABETH SCHWYZER (CONTACT)

Last June, after months of planning and coordinating with dancers, choreographers, and artists around the world, Santa Barbara launched the first ever SB-ADaPT Fest: A Dance and Physical Theater Festival. Over the course of two weeks, venues around town hosted improvisational movement scores, site-specific installations, and experimental choreography. Artists from Turkey, Israel, and Slovenia rubbed shoulders with those from New York, Long Beach, and the Santa Ynez Valley. There were panel discussions, parties, and workshops. Parts of the festival toured to L.A. and N.Y.C. The organization at the heart of it all was SonneBlauma Danscz Theatre, led by husband-and-wife team Stephen and Misa Kelly.

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In the wake of last year's massive effort, the Kellys are taking stock and looking toward the future. Their hope is to continue the ADaPT Fest as a biannual tradition, which would put the next festival in the summer of 2013. To keep the momentum going, they're presenting a shared program next week that brings together many of the Southern California artists featured at last year's festival, as well as top Slovenian dancer Mojca Majcen, who wowed audiences in June with her solo performance, "Lady of the Camellias." The show is *Affinity: SB-Adapt Fest Sprouts*, and it takes place on Tuesday, February 7, at Center Stage Theater.



Nik Jarh  
Slovenian dancer Mojca Majcen

Last week, I caught up with Majcen and the Kellys over coffee at The French Press. Petite, pixie-like Majcen — pet name "Moki" — is a classically trained ballerina who left the hierarchical and artistically conservative Slovenian National Ballet to pursue new performance opportunities. After seeing Misa's choreography at last year's festival, she approached her and proposed a collaboration. For Mojca, working with Kelly represents a dramatic departure from her roots, and a satisfying challenge; Kelly's work tends to be surreal and psychologically driven, with passages of frenzied movement, speech, and wordless

utterances, non-sequitur soundscapes, and occasional nudity. Kelly, for her part, says she's honored to be working with such a disciplined artist, and a dancer who has been voted "best female performer" by the Slovenian public.

"This is the way art should be," Kelly enthused, "to have an incredible being come to you from another culture and to get to live together, eat together ..." "Get sick together, shit together!" Mojca chimed in. "We're sharing both the good and the bad parts," she explained conspiratorially before sharing her old-country cure for a head cold: warm Coca-Cola.

As part of next week's program, Mojca will perform "Moki's Wedding," a character-driven solo created by Kelly and inspired by Mojca's stories of her early life in Yugoslavia, before the country fractured in the early 1990s. I got a peek at the rehearsal process; it involves feathers, floor slapping, foreign languages, and some out-of-this-world extensions. As part of *Affinity*, Majcen will also dance in "Falling & Flying," a group work choreographed by Stephen Kelly and set to his original score.

Filling out the program are works by Santa Barbara-based companies Block & Block and Nebula Dance Lab, as well as three L.A.-based groups: Christine Suarez, Hart Pulse, and Rubans Rouge dance companies. What these groups have in common, according to the Kellys, is a willingness to take risks and create something new, which is what SonneBlauma has always been about.

Ultimately, reaching out to performing artists from around the world has encouraged the Kellys to push beyond perceived limits and to go for work that's edgy — even work that defies classification as "dance." To that end, this show marks their last as

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