Festival Re-connections from the New Normality: The Baltica-Web Forum 2021

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Abstract

In Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, the Singing Revolution (1987-1991) marked a turning point in the restoration of national independence. This movement of non-violent resistance successfully engaged civil society in mass performative events and connected the three Baltic countries as a geopolitical unit, as embodied by the Baltic Way (1989). The Singing Revolution provided a new form of social capital, birthing a network of purveyors of folklore and cultural activists. Folk festivals became loudspeakers of the Singing Revolution, identifying the Baltic people as singing nations (Muktupāvela and Laķe 2020) through events such as the Song and Dance Celebration (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania), Tallinn Old Town Days (Estonia), Skamba Skamba Kankliai (Lithuania) and, this article's object of study, the International Folklore Festival Baltica (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania).

Inaugurated in 1987, the International Folklore Festival Baltica was born under the flagships of authenticity, kinship and Baltic unity. This festival was an initiative of international delegates attending the XVI World Congress of the International Council of Organisations of Folklore Festivals and Folk Arts (CIOFF), held in the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic in 1985 (Ojalo and Ojalo 2016). The festival became the "cornerstone" of national liberation (Muktupāvels 2011:89). The Baltica festival community then integrated members of the Baltic folklore movement – an informal cultural movement composed of folklorists, ethnomusicologists and music enthusiasts, who engaged in the experimental re-invention of Baltic instruments and traditions throughout the 1970s and '80s (Muktupāvels 2011). Although the activity of the Baltic folklore movement received various labels, this contribution will refer to the phenomenon as "Baltic neo-folklore" (Klotiņš 2002).

While the beginnings of the International Folklore Festival Baltica phenomenon have been widely researched by former members of the Baltic folklore movement (Boiko 2001; Kapper 2016; Klotiņš 2002; Kuutma 1998; Muktupāvels 2011; Rüütel 2004) and Baltic studies scholars (Šmidchens 2014), there is no holistic picture of the narrative, temporal and spatial transformations undergone by the Baltica festival. From a broader perspective, festival scholarship has tended to overlook these two dimensions, especially temporality (Getz 2010; Frost 2016). This paper addresses the unusual and unexpected metamorphosis of the Baltica festival during the second phase of the coronavirus pandemic. Under the name of new normality, this phase unfolded in the spring of 2021, gradually re-opening social and cultural life through social distancing and covid-safe measures, which led to the development of "new conventions,

rituals, images and narratives" (Corpuz 2021:e344). Within this context, the Baltica festival organisation designed the Baltica-Web Forum 2021 – an intimate online project of Baltic neo-folklore broadcast on YouTube from three different cultural centres, conducted exclusively in Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian. This contribution analyses the re-invention of the festival following interpretive ethnographic methods, grounded in participant observation and archival research on the festival's official programmes. This is in addition to 33 digitised newspaper articles covering the Baltica phenomenon (available at the Periodika repository of the National Library of Latvia), paying special attention to newspapers' qualitative interviews that were conducted with the festival community actors. This paper explores the impact of migrating the festival online, by comparing former festival narratives presented in official festival programmes and media, with visual participant observation on the Baltica-Web Forum 2021. This contribution argues that digital space created a new form of social capital that paradoxically connected the online festival to its beginnings, suggesting that the International Folklore Festival Baltica operates as a multinarrative space that can be revisited and instrumentalised in the present, as encapsulated by Umberto Eco's well-known concept of "cultural encyclopaedia" (1984). Ultimately, the aim of this paper is to enhance the understanding of the ways in which connections and re-connections of a festival community can be analysed, especially through the analysis of temporality, using ethnography as the main methodology.

Connection as Social Capital: The International Folklore Festival Baltica

Festivals can be sites of identity-building, community bonding, and place-making. As multifaceted socio-cultural phenomena, the impact of festivals on communities is significant because of their transformative potential and capability to enact alternative lifeworlds. These functions can be encapsulated within the notion of social capital (Quinn and Wilks 2013), a concept coined by Bourdieu (1986) and re-interpreted by scholars such as Fukuyama, who defines it as "the existence of a certain set of informal values or norms shared among members of a group that permit cooperation among them" (1997:378). Since festivals are constituted and celebrated by many actors—namely curators, artists, spectators, and sponsors—they have become sites for weaving powerful networks. Nevertheless, owing to their unique nature and goals, international folk festivals have produced a distinct form of social capital. Their international label and the socio-cultural and political context from which they emerged render them prone to developing transnational solidarity networks. It can be argued that international folk festivals were a response to the social protests of the 1960s and the 1970s against capitalism, white supremacism, war, totalitarianism, and discrimination based on gender, sexuality, and ethnicity. These festivals then became the "cultural apparatus" of the so-called second wave of the folk revival in the United States and Europe, seeking to provide spiritual solace and promote community ties (Mitchell 2007:x). Their counter-hegemonic spirit—sustained by universal values, a sense of imagined kinship, and harmony bound in a political agenda—supported their main goal to give a voice to the social groups exploited by the *status quo*, or those existing at the margins. In doing

so, international folk festivals fostered an environment of socio-cultural exchange and interest in other regions' cultural and political agendas. Illustrative of this, the vision and mission of the International Folklore Festival Baltica aimed to counteract the *samodeyatel'nost'* or self-activity, a form of amateur Soviet folklore that aimed to reflect the proletariat's socio-cultural agency, gradually becoming semi-professionalised and staged (Rolf 2013). In the Baltic countries, the *samodeyatel'nost'* was implemented by Soviet authorities following a hybrid cultural formula, namely, combining Soviet folklore ways with local folklore forms (Rolf 2013).

In contrast, the Baltic neo-folklore fostered by the Baltica festival provided an alternative conceptual reality against the Soviet Union's cultural practices, achieved through neo-pagan folklore and values as a "whole way of life" (Williams 2011[1958]). This notion places culture as a conscious part of social life as in "a religion, a moral code, a system of law, a body of work in the arts" (Williams 2011[1958]:252). This holistic approach to culture also promotes a lifestyle and, to some extent, a commitment to specific ways of doing and thinking. In particular, the International Folklore Festival Baltica aimed to forge a transnational Baltic community built around the idea of creating a network of mutual help, while projecting to the West the idea of Baltic geopolitical unity, namely a common pursuit of freedom, legitimated by a similar past of territorial occupation and repression. The festival portrayed such a communion among Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania through cultural syncretism, a concept noted by Muktupāvels to be "eagerly accepted and circulated among folklorists in the 1980s" (2011:83). Syncretism was perceived as "the original coexistence and unity of text, music, movement, symbolic meaning, and functional context" (ibid). In the analysis of the festival programmes, the said cultural syncretism is revealed in the use of different cultural layers that echoed a pre-modern Baltic culture, instrumentalising the idea of Baltic ethnogenesis, cosmological rituals, a traditional rural community, and the concept of family from an abstract perspective. These categories became a form of self-definition for the Baltica festival community because they legitimised the Baltic regions' historical past and myths, while promoting the idea of a Baltic cultural identity. It can also be argued that projecting the idea of a pre-modern Baltic community enabled the construction of a distinctly Baltic rural and traditional society, connected to its past through rituals stemming from pagan beliefs. Upon a closer examination, it is possible to observe how the use of these narratives shifts according to the needs of the socio-political context.

For instance, in the narratives of the first festival editions of 1987, 1988 and 1989—which coincided with the dawn of the Singing Revolution—there is a clear desire to build national self-confidence, while highlighting the shared cultural practices among the Baltic republics. Also, the programme of the International Folklore Festival Baltica of 1988 framed Latvia as a modern nation, represented by the notion of the traditional family. Latvia was often viewed as a "child of sorrow" (Peters 1988:4) that has endured many hardships, but has maintained its ties to the motherland through folk songs thanks to "the intellectual power of the unbroken early generations in them, their unusually picturesque, poetic world outlook,

the pure ethics and aesthetics of the people, the philosophy verified in the course of centuries by the people" (ibid:6). In 1991, the discourse shifted to the idea of a united Baltic family in a crucial period when the Baltic regions were facing the threat of the Soviet Union's coup d'état after declaring national independence *de facto* between 1990 and 1991. In the former year, the Baltica festival was cancelled due to Soviet political pressure and an oil blockade (Šmidchens 2014). The Baltica 1991 festival programme claimed that the culture and history of hardships bonded the three republics, arguing that: "The Baltic nations confront military force and arms with persistence, strength of soul and feeling of solidarity, which are invigorated and deepened with the help of our songs and dances" (Rüütel 1991:5). These excerpts reveal the willingness to portray a connection between the Baltic regions as a cultural and political resource for building a new society, with a renewed conceptual and moral compass. Arguably, the possibility of enacting an anti-Soviet alternative reality by performing in the festival or joining the festival crowd became the mobilising force of the Baltica festival during the Singing Revolution – in other words, the values, emotions, and collective actions surrounding the Baltic neo-folklore and Baltica festival community constituted the festival's social capital.

However, an analysis of Latvian newspaper articles that covered the Baltica phenomenon through interviews with the festival community revealed a discrepancy between the festival programmes' narratives and the viewpoints of folklorists, ethnomusicologists, and music enthusiasts who participated in the informal Latvian folklore movement. This collective of folklore connoisseurs had different perspectives surrounding the essence of an international folk festival, and the elements that enabled its community's agents to connect. Folklore can lead to a collision between the interests of various sides of a festival movement and, usually, festival leaders contribute to these conflicts, not amateur movement members, who tend to avoid creating ideology and excessive policy (Dziadowiec 2016). In the case of the International Folklore Festival Baltica, the said cluster of folklore connoisseurs wondered if the festival would succeed in a format that included strict planning, large concerts and highly stylised folklore. According to a Latvian newspaper interview with poet and member of the Latvian folklore movement, Knuts Skujenieks, "There should be no spectators, no listeners, no performers. For such a large family, in honour of which guests have arrived, who are also happy and everything works together"[1]. In the same article, musicologist Arnolds Klotiņš claimed that "folklore is no longer perceived without a relevant social environment, psychological mood. It lives in a family, and neighbourhood. Therefore, it is completely unnatural to gather huge masses of people together in order to "present" folklore"[2]. Adding to this, Klotiņš stated that Baltic neo-folklore "is an art of situations where communication plays a huge role"[3]. Another significant insight can be found in the article by folklorist, musician and pedagogue Ilga Reizniece, published by the magazine *Liesma* (Flame): "the fact that almost all the guests invited to our festival were dance groups seems to ignore a truth known to everyone, because Latvians are still a singing nation"[4]. Their views on how Baltic neo-folklore should be interpreted and performed echo the idea of a

small festival's "imagined community" (Anderson 2006[1983]). From this perspective, it can be suggested that different opinions are held on the idea of social capital, as they envisaged the spirituality and cultural wisdom embedded in it as the driving force of the festival community.

Once the national independence of the Baltic republics was successfully restored, the Baltic states seemingly needed to position themselves as old European nations, with a strong intangible cultural heritage. This strong emphasis on rituals reverberated in the festival's performances throughout the period following the restoration of national independence. Drawing from personal observations during festival fieldwork in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia between the years 2017-2019, the festival editions were firmly focused on showcasing the national folklore of the host country, while also highlighting international guest ensembles. It can be argued that the festival's initial framing of social capital, namely Baltic unity, shifted to a cultural layer of indigenous folklore that added to the concept of national culture. This transformation could be explained by Dziadowiec's (2016) postulation that festivals tend to either begin forming a part of the system or break away from it, creating a new structure. At the national level, once the need to establish a sense of Baltic unity dissipated with the achievement of national independence, the Baltic republics gradually abandoned their collective agenda to attend to their own national matters. The Baltic unity marker, once considered "an extremely powerful one in the run-up to independence" (Mole 2012:157), was gradually ignored by national policymakers in parallel with the collective label of the Baltic states as singing nations (Muktupāvela and Laķe 2020). Within this context, the International Folklore Festival Baltica endured as a *rara avis*. Its celebration entailed a private annual meeting of the three Baltic festival organising associations, maintaining the idea of Baltic cultural cooperation.

**Re-Connection as Online Social Capital:
The Baltica-Web Forum 2021**

The unexpected outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic in March 2020 jeopardised the long-term stability of the Baltica festival with a climate of uncertainty and the halting of social and cultural life, for the first time in its history. The Covid-19 health crisis caused a significant change in

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paradigms regarding social behaviour and community making, deeply affecting festivals and significantly shifting the memories and emotions people ascribed to being in a festival crowd (Katczynski et al. 2022). As a result, there is a need to research the "emotional, spatial, and social impacts" of the pandemic on festivals (Katczynski et al. 2022:1). However, given the out-of-the-ordinary nature and magnitude of the event, there are no precise guidelines on how to embrace this kind of research properly. For example, how could the International Folklore Festival Baltica thrive in the gradual re-opening of social life under covid-safety rules after having experienced a year of significant social disconnection? Against all predictions, the Baltica festival organisation redefined the festival into the Baltica-Web Forum 2021. This online festival format was held on the 20th-22nd of September for the occasion of Equinox Day and Baltic Unity Day, dedicated to the exploration of "traditional cultural phenomena, the historical and the cultural interrelations of the three Baltic countries" (LNKC 2021). The festival programme of the Baltica-Web Forum 2021 was composed of two parts: one theoretical and one artistic, consisting of scholarly lectures, presentations, debates, workshops and concerts. Under the title "The ethnogenesis and evolution of Lithuanians, Latvians and Estonians (of the Balts and the Finno-Ugrians) – historical, cultural and linguistic interconnections and influences" (LNKC 2021), the festival's first day showcased scholarly lectures on diverse topics, such as archaeology, linguistics, mythology, handicrafts, ornamentation, ceremonial roles and old gastronomy (the latter category was explored via a live workshop, in which Baltic neo-folklore specialists provided cookery demonstrations for

traditional recipes). In the evening, a concert was broadcast with historical folk ensembles that participated in the early Baltica editions.

The second day explored "The singing, choreographic and instrumental ceremonial folklore and its early forms regarding the calendar and family celebrations" (LNKC 2021). On this day, the Baltica-Web Forum 2021 hosted scholarly presentations on singing traditions, Baltic instrumental music, choreographic and syncretic folklore and masquerade rituals, concluding with a lecture on Baltic wedding traditions. Then, the third and final day of the festival focused on the "Experiences of preserving folklore traditions in the Baltic States" (LNKC 2021), and was devoted to assessing the role and journey of the Baltica phenomenon, folklore methods, the revitalisation of tradition, and the development of new projects. It also discussed the experiences of portraying and promoting Baltic neo-folklore online, drawing from other cultural projects held during the pandemic. Lastly, the programme hosted a debate on archaic folklore forms. As closure events, the Baltica-Web broadcasted a synchronous performance of traditional dances titled *All "Baltica" Dance.* For the first time in the Baltica festival history, folk ensembles from the three Baltic republics were dancing at the same time in a boundless space yet united by a digital screen, with the folk dancers from each Baltic recording studio performing with the imagined co-presence of their neighbour republics. The second performance, *Ancestral Weaves*, showcased a different scale and rhythm, featuring an impressive sun design that was created with small candles which lit up as the performance progressed, resulting in the reveal of the sun imagery surrounded by a circular aura of candles. Set during the evening, the folk singers walked around the candles while dressed in Lithuanian folk costumes, while the dark and silent natural environment surrounding them was reinforced by their spiritual chants. Interestingly, this form of acapella singing is considered an authentic cultural trait shared by former Baltic tribes (Boiko 2000).

The next day, after the end of the festival, a live art installation named *Light for the Ancestors* was opened to the Lithuanian public at Bernardine Garden in Vilnius – the only live festival activity offered.

As planned for the live Baltica festival edition of 2020—which was eventually cancelled—the theme of the Baltica-Web Forum 2021 was 'ritual', which is defined by the official website as the means of being "right here and right now, yesterday and tomorrow, everywhere and always" (LNKC 2021). This definition is embodied by the chosen broadcasting platform of YouTube, which acts as a repository of visual culture that blends the past with the present, rendering it accessible to everyone at any time, through an online connection. Beyond this, YouTube fosters "media sovereignty", namely the "practices through which people exercise the right and develop the capacity to control their images and words, including how these circulate" (Ginsburg 2016:583). Applied to the context of a festival community, the online space becomes a flexible and non-institutional platform to portray the voices and visions of its members, although it also comes with a set of limitations, mainly that this digital divide and the metamorphosis of the

festival audience from spectators into digital users means that they are only able to provide feedback through YouTube's live chat or comments section.

The Baltica-Web Forum 2021 can be read as a repository of shared knowledge, festival experience and performance of the International Folklore Festival Baltica, and therefore the Baltica-Web format can be linked to the online social capital notion. This form of social capital can emerge from the space provided by social media, which allows for the development of new perspectives and generates emotion-based, mobilising resources that stem from solid interpersonal connections (Spottswood and Wohn 2020). The interpretation of the Baltica-Web Forum 2021 as a form of online social capital allows for a slight expansion in the horizons of the current understanding of this notion.

Unlike live Baltica, the Baltica-Web Forum 2021 took place simultaneously and synchronously from the three Baltic countries for the first time. Each country gathered the respective festival organisers, folklore and ethnomusicology scholars and Baltic neo-folklore cultural practitioners in a specific studio. This co-presence of festival actors is unique to the Baltica-Web Forum 2021, as festival organisers and scholars usually acquire a discrete and backstage role. If we interpret the Baltica-Web Forum 2021 as a re-enactment of the festival's beginnings through the concepts of the digital festival community and online space, a deeper understanding of collective emotion and affection emerges. For instance, the *Ancestral Weaves* art project materialised into a small-scale performance in a natural environment, engaging the online audience in an intimate festival atmosphere accompanied by polyphonic singing. Another example of an emotion-effective strategy is the reflexive approach to the festival's history, which—evidenced by the involvement of the festival organisers of the three countries during the Baltica-Web Forum 2021 debates—highlighted the commitment of the contemporary festival community towards the Baltica festival as a collective creative project of Baltic neo-folklore.

While the Lithuanian organisers emphasised the political milestones achieved by the Baltica festival during the last years of the Soviet Union, the Latvian Baltica organiser recognised that the festival had experienced a significant drop in its audience and popularity, however, she stressed the significance and relevance of the festival to contemporary folk performers. From this perspective, the digital festival provided a sense of network re-connection and an online social capital based on open and transparent communication between the Baltic festival community actors, arguably cementing new social foundations for continuing the commitment to celebrate the festival in the near future. These examples represent a willingness to stay connected to the past through the present: a way of being within the festival's cultural memory. Beyond this, the unique format of the online Baltica is also a reminder that festivals can be resilient in difficult times, because they are dynamic socio-cultural phenomena that are constantly present and evolving.

Connecting the Past and Present:
Umberto Eco's Cultural Encyclopaedia

The striking resemblance of the initial festival Baltica narratives and the Baltica-Web Forum 2021 can be interpreted as a redefinition of meaning at the International Folklore Festival Baltica in the online space through compelling familiar narratives. As mentioned in the abstract of this paper, during the Singing Revolution (1987-1991), there was a fundamental need to bring civil society together through mass gatherings, such as festivals, where they could experience collective euphoria. As presented above, the Baltic countries' post-Soviet era led to a focus on the idea of representing intangible cultural heritage and gradually abandoned the geopolitical dimension of the festival. However, along with the coronavirus pandemic came the emergence of a new need: the upkeep of ties among the actors participating in the Baltic neo-folklore scene. Social distancing and halted mobility were not obstacles to building a digital folklore project for the Baltic countries in a web forum format. Within this atypical format, the research and knowledge of folklorists and ethnomusicologists were equally, if not more, significant than folk performances. Nevertheless, the factor that rendered this online festival compelling from a research viewpoint, were the commonalities between the Baltica-Web Forum 2021 festival programme and the opinions shared by folklorists and ethnomusicologists of the Baltic folklore movement in newspaper articles published in the late 1980s.

Exploring this parallelism by uniting two highly dynamic periods of the International Folklore Festival Baltica, this paper has proposed implementing Umberto Eco's idea of "cultural encyclopaedia" (1984) to interpret the meaning-making processes surrounding the festival's narrative scheme. Eco's notion has been considered a fundamental contribution of the author to the field of semiotics (Lorusso 2015), and a connecting element between the theory of knowledge and the theory of interpretation (Violi 1998). This cultural encyclopaedia marked "the transition from the code conceived as a rule to establish signification and interpretation, to a system of possible inferences, where a certain degree of choice and interpretative freedom can be accommodated" (ibid:25). Since festivals and festival communities are constituted by meanings in constant dialogue and transformation, Eco's approach could be promising for enhancing understanding of the temporal and narrative dynamics of festivals.

The cultural encyclopaedia can be defined as a colossal library in which books converse with one another, produce intertextual links, and exhibit potential meanings that can be used to generate new signs (Desogus 2012), but the ability to render the encyclopaedia's cultural material intelligible and meaningful relies on members of an interpretive community (Eco 1984). The readers of the cultural encyclopaedia act as interpreters, based on their previous knowledge of a given text or culture (Bianchi 2015), and in this process pick the most appropriate text, then disclose different and partial degrees of grasping the entire cultural encyclopaedia as a repertoire of potential interpretations (ibid). It is, however, important to note that the cultural encyclopaedia cannot be understood in its totality, and it is also

unrepresentable because it must accommodate divergent interpretations and contrasting divisions of the continuum (ibid).

When applied to a festival framework, the cultural encyclopaedia is shaped into a repository of festival narratives embodied by festival programmes or memorabilia, whose re-discovery holds the potential to re-enact past meanings, memories and emotions. In the case of the Baltica-Web Forum 2021, Eco's cultural encyclopaedia becomes a fruitful concept from which to understand the initial festival narratives and spirit, along with the notions of Baltic unity and Baltic cultural identity. The readers of the festival's cultural encyclopaedia were festival organisers, folklorists and ethnomusicologists, whose contributions allowed them to design a kaleidoscope of scholarly interpretations of Baltic neo-folklore. Following Eco's rationale, the Baltica-Web Forum 2021 actors interpreted the online Baltica format as a cultural text exclusively concerning the Baltic countries, guided by their previous knowledge and experiences with the Baltica festival. Since the cultural encyclopaedia cannot be known as a whole, the material generated in the Baltica-Web Forum 2021 could not have been foreseen in previous festival editions, as it was a response to the massively unusual context of the coronavirus pandemic. Hence, expanding the knowledge of a festival's history and differentiating between periods of high activity and stability might be helpful in better interpreting festivals in times of uncertainty.

Conclusions

This article explored the transformation undergone by the International Folklore Festival Baltica during the coronavirus pandemic's new normality phase, which crystallised into the online folklore project Baltica-Web Forum 2021. Despite the sample constraints of this study, the interpretive analysis illustrated that investigating festivals' temporality dimension is critical for providing a more holistic understanding of festivals. The ethnographic approach was valuable for interpreting their often hidden inner dynamics and the factors that successfully bond a festival community, as emotional ties and experience are deeply subjective. It showed that migrating to an online festival does not necessarily imply a total disconnection from the live festival's meaning and emotion – in fact, it provided an opportunity to analyse the festival from a different perspective, decoding broader patterns that might be dormant during periods of socio-cultural and political stability. Arguably, the online space as a boundless and open arena allowed for new forms of creativity that moved away from the institutional structures and artistic guidelines that are often imposed on festival communities. In addition, the Baltica-Web Forum 2021 is an example of the re-connection of a festival community's direction and values, paradoxically taking place in a period marked by social distancing and restricted mobility. This was achieved by conferring a prominent role to scholarly lectures by folklorists and ethnomusicologists who were not in the International Folklore Festival Baltica's spotlight, rethinking the idea of the festival community and network and moving beyond the international folk festivals' format that echoes the idea of a patchwork of indigenous cultures.

The first section of this paper explored the idea of connections as social capital, arguing that the festival's initial vision and mission were grounded on the idea of establishing a solid network that could be mobilised for national identity purposes. However, an analysis of newspaper articles revealed that some members of the informal Baltic folklore movement held a different understanding of the festival's social capital, which was more oriented towards an authentic spiritual connection among the festival community actors. The second section proposed an understanding of the online re-connection of not-so-visible members of the festival community with the Baltica festival project as a form of online social capital. Nevertheless, perhaps the most ambitious contribution of this article is the interpretation of a connection between the festival's origins and the covid-safe Baltica format through Umberto Eco's concept of "cultural encyclopaedia" (1984). This paper claimed that the International Folklore Festival Baltica could be interpreted as a multinarrative space that can be revisited and instrumentalised in the present when necessary. In so doing, the festival could be the catalyst in making the alienating, uncertain socio-political scenario of the pandemic into something more meaningful, building bridges with former festival community actors who shared a particular vision of the festival's narratives and criteria on the performances. This understanding brought to the surface the realisation that a festival community of a well-established celebration could re-connect in the online space, creating new meanings while preserving the festival's cultural memory in the most unexpected circumstances.

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