# Marina Abramović’s Balkan Erotic Epic premieres in Manchester with 70-strong cast



Marina Abramović, the revered performance artist, is set to unveil her most ambitious creation to date—*Balkan Erotic Epic*—during its world premiere in Manchester this autumn. Known for her capacity to push boundaries and challenge societal norms surrounding sexuality and nudity, Abramović aims to elevate this exploration by delving deep into ancient rituals that celebrate eroticism and spirituality.

This groundbreaking performance will showcase a staggering cast of 70 participants, including dancers, musicians, and singers, and is structured across 13 dynamic scenes. Each segment is designed to reflect and re-enact historical rituals surrounding fertility, sexuality, and community, challenging contemporary views of eroticism. Among the most striking scenes is “Scaring the Gods,” where women will mimic an age-old ritual aimed at invoking rain by exposing themselves to the heavens. This act, rooted in Balkan folklore, highlights a provocative intersection of the sacred and the profane, suggesting that eroticism is nature's vital force rather than a mere taboo.

Speaking about her vision for the performance, Abramović expressed her desire to connect audiences with her cultural heritage. She referred to the project as not just a personal endeavour, but as an opportunity to explore universal themes of mortality, pain, hope, and the human desire for connection. “This gives me a chance to go back to my Slavic roots and culture,” she stated, imploring the audience to confront the often-puritanical sensibilities surrounding nudity and sexuality in British culture.

The artist underscored her intent to reshape public perception, positing that in our contemporary society, erotic expression is frequently mislabelled as pornography. This perspective is not merely an artistic stance but a clarion call to acknowledge eroticism as a "vital spiritual and life force," essential to understanding human existence and experience.

Produced by Factory International and set in the expansive Aviva Studios, the venue promises to reflect the scale and ambition of Abramović’s vision. Artistic director John McGrath has hailed the performance as a landmark moment for audiences, who will be encouraged to "navigate the performance as they wish," allowing for spontaneous, immersive experiences that reflect the chaos and fervor of the rituals being depicted.

A notable aspect of *Balkan Erotic Epic* lies in its incorporation of not just visual spectacle, but also traditional cultural elements such as Balkan throat singing. By blending various art forms, Abramović aims to create a multifaceted exploration of her themes that resonates on various sensory levels. This amalgamation of performance art, dance, and music serves to illuminate the rich tapestry of Balkan traditions, which Abramović has sought to reclaim and reinterpret throughout her career.

Following its debut in Manchester, this provocative work will continue its journey to major international cities, including Barcelona, Berlin, New York, and Hong Kong, inviting a global audience to grapple with the themes of sexuality and ritual that are both deeply personal and culturally expansive.

Through this exploration, Abramović once again challenges not only her viewers’ comfort zones but also the broader dialogue surrounding sexuality, spirituality, and the enduring relevance of ancient practices in a modern context. As she noted in a recent interview, the reception of such bold content will be telling of contemporary societal attitudes, particularly in a climate that often grapples with its own contradictions regarding nudity and eroticism.

As audiences prepare for this unique experience in Manchester, it is evident that *Balkan Erotic Epic* seeks not just to challenge perceptions of art and performance but to open a much-needed discourse on the intimate and often controversial intersections of culture, sexuality, and humanity.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
2. Paragraphs 2, 5
3. Paragraphs 2, 5
4. Paragraphs 2, 6
5. Paragraphs 1, 2
6. Paragraphs 1, 5
7. Paragraph 4

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2025/may/22/manchester-to-host-world-premiere-of-marina-abramovics-balkan-erotic-epic> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://factoryinternational.org/whats-on/marina-abramovic/> - Factory International has announced the world premiere of Marina Abramović's 'Balkan Erotic Epic' at Aviva Studios in Manchester in Autumn 2025. The performance will explore eroticism, spirituality, and ritual, blending art forms such as performance, dance, and traditional Balkan throat singing to delve into the eroticism embedded in Balkan mythology. Abramović reflects on her Balkan roots and the spiritual rituals she experienced as a child, aiming to create a new understanding and context for the public today.
3. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/art/artists/marina-abramovic-interview-moco-museum-nudity/> - In an interview, Marina Abramović discusses her upcoming performance 'Balkan Erotic Epic' in Manchester, inspired by ancient Balkan rituals. She describes a ritual where women would run into fields, lift their skirts, and expose themselves to the heavens to stop rain and prevent floods. Abramović expresses her excitement about bringing this ritual to Manchester and anticipates the reaction of the English audience to such a bold performance.
4. <https://www.theartnewspaper.com/2024/09/02/marina-abramovic-rain-manchester-vagina> - Marina Abramović plans to stage her 'Balkan Erotic Epic' in Manchester, inspired by ancient rituals where women would expose themselves to the heavens to stop rain and prevent floods. She describes the idea of the power of a vagina stopping the rain as incredible and anticipates the reaction of the English audience to such a bold performance. The performance is set to take place in a large factory space in Manchester, possibly Aviva Studios.
5. <https://fadmagazine.com/2024/09/27/marina-abramovic-to-present-world-premier-at-aviva-studios/> - Factory International has announced the world premiere of Marina Abramović's 'Balkan Erotic Epic' as part of its 2025 season. The performance will explore eroticism, spirituality, and ritual, blending art forms such as performance, dance, and traditional Balkan throat singing to delve into the eroticism embedded in Balkan mythology. Abramović reflects on her Balkan roots and the spiritual rituals she experienced as a child, aiming to create a new understanding and context for the public today.
6. <https://culturalpolicyjournal.wordpress.com/past-issues/issue-no-6/balkan-epic/> - This article discusses Marina Abramović's incorporation of Balkan identity into her public profile and branding strategy. It highlights her performances that integrate Balkan themes, such as the Gala at the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) in Los Angeles and 'The Life and Death of Marina Abramović' at the Manchester International Festival. The piece examines how Abramović has utilized Balkan elements to enhance her artistic identity and appeal to the American art establishment.
7. <https://pirellihangarbicocca.org/en/exhibition/marina-abramovic-balkan-epic/> - Marina Abramović's 'Balkan Epic' exhibition at Pirelli HangarBicocca presented video installations and performances created between 1997 and 2005. The works included 'Balkan Baroque,' a documentation of her performance at the 1997 Venice Biennale, and 'The Hero,' a tribute to her father. The exhibition also featured 'Balkan Erotic Epic,' based on ancient Balkan traditions, exploring themes of body, sex, and death in popular culture.