# Marina Abramović’s Balkan Erotic Epic redefines eroticism as spiritual ritual



Marina Abramović, a luminary in the art world, is set to unveil her latest project, **Balkan Erotic Epic**, in Manchester this autumn. This immersive performance piece promises to push the boundaries of contemporary art by exploring themes of eroticism, spirituality, and ritual in a manner that reclaims the cultural significance often associated with these elements. Drawing audiences into a vibrant tapestry of ancient practices, the production features a cast of 70 performers and will unfold over 13 provocative scenes.

At the heart of Abramović's work is a profound reflection on societal perceptions of eroticism. She asserts that modern culture often conflates any exploration of sexuality with pornography. Through her performance, she seeks to challenge this viewpoint, presenting eroticism as a vital force integral to human experience. “In our culture today, we label anything erotic as pornography,” she explained, emphasising the need for a broader understanding that sees erotic expression as a spiritual and life-affirming practice.

The venue for this ambitious production is Aviva Studios, where participants will navigate the performance space with a degree of agency, allowing for “pop-up encounters” that incorporate intimate dances and haunting songs. Abramović aims to immerse attendees not just in the visual spectacles of the show but in the cultural narratives of the Balkans, which span across regions including Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, and Slovenia. In these traditions, erotic rituals often serve as calls to nature or expressions of communal hope.

Past exhibitions have seen Abramović grapple with similar themes. Her earlier exploration of Balkan eroticism has been evident in various forms, from large-scale installations to video works. For instance, her exhibition at La Fábrica Galeria in 2007 delved into the role of eroticism in Balkan popular culture, supported by research into ancient manuscripts and medieval pagan rituals. These previous works paved the way for her latest venture, as she attempts to synthesize years of exploration into a single, cohesive performance.

Among the scenes to be performed is *Scaring the Gods*, in which women historically lifted their skirts to avert rain that threatened crops — a ritual grounded in a belief system that imbues the female form with the power to manipulate nature. Such scenes not only highlight the erotic but also invoke a deep sense of historical connection and cultural heritage. The artist notes that, “Through this project, I would like to show poetry, desperation, pain, hope, suffering and reflect our own mortality.”

Abramović's work has a tendency to provoke and challenge, especially given her recognition of Britain's sometimes puritanical view on nudity and sexuality. During her recent retrospective at the Royal Academy of Arts, she noted this curious cultural sensibility, relishing the opportunity to confront it head-on through her art. As artistic director John McGrath stated, bringing Abramović’s latest creation to Manchester represents an “unmissable opportunity” for audiences, heralding a new chapter in her illustrious career.

Following its Manchester premiere, **Balkan Erotic Epic** will tour to global cities such as Barcelona, Berlin, New York, and Hong Kong, signalling a growing international interest in re-engaging with the primal aspects of human experience that Abramović seeks to evoke. By grounding her exploration in the resonance of folklore and the erotic, she invites us all to consider how deeply entrenched cultural narratives shape our understanding of ourselves and the universe.

### Reference Map

1. Core focus on Marina Abramović's Balkan Erotic Epic.
2. Context regarding themes explored in the performance.
3. Insights into past exhibitions and research influence.
4. Details about the significance of specific performance scenes.
5. Mention of Abramović’s views on British cultural sensibilities.
6. Information on future tour plans for the production.

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 explores 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 ancient rituals that have influenced her work, aiming to create a new understanding and context for contemporary audiences.
3. <https://www.absolutearts.com/artsnews/2007/01/11/34316.html> - In January 2007, La Fábrica Galeria in Madrid hosted Marina Abramović's 'Balkan Erotic Epic,' featuring three large-format images and two videos that delve into the significance of eroticism in Balkan popular culture. The exhibition was part of Abramović's research into Balkan folklore and its use of eroticism, aiming to explore how humans attempt to connect with cosmic forces through eroticism. The works were based on ancient manuscripts and medieval pagan rituals from Slavic culture.
4. <https://pirellihangarbicocca.org/en/exhibition/marina-abramovic-balkan-epic/> - In 2006, Marina Abramović presented 'Balkan Epic' at Pirelli HangarBicocca in Milan. The exhibition included video installations and performances created between 1997 and 2005, focusing on the Balkan theme. Notable works included 'Balkan Baroque,' documenting a performance at the 1997 Venice Biennale, and 'The Hero,' a tribute to her father, a partisan during Tito's regime. The exhibition concluded with 'Balkan Erotic Epic,' addressing the relationship between body, sex, and death in Balkan popular culture.
5. <https://artmap.com/seankelly/exhibition/marina-abramovic-2005> - In December 2005, Sean Kelly Gallery in New York showcased Marina Abramović's 'Balkan Erotic Epic,' a major exhibition comprising several video projections. The works explored how sexuality and the human body were employed in Balkan pagan traditions and culture throughout history. Abramović researched Serbian folklore and discovered instances where eroticism was used to address everyday issues, such as rituals to stop rain that threatened crops. The exhibition aimed to examine Balkan folklore and culture, the power of sexuality, and tradition.
6. <https://nymag.com/nymetro/arts/art/15228/> - In an interview with New York Magazine, Marina Abramović discussed her work 'Balkan Erotic Epic,' which delves into ancient and pagan beliefs, folktales, and rites rooted in the mythologies of the Balkans. She highlighted a ritual where women would run into fields and lift their skirts to scare the gods and stop rain that threatened the harvest. Abramović emphasized the idea of the power of the vagina to stop the rain and the cultural significance of such rituals in the Balkans.
7. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/art/artists/marina-abramovic-interview-moco-museum-nudity/> - In an interview with The Telegraph, Marina Abramović discussed her upcoming performance 'Balkan Erotic Epic,' an extension of a 2005 work that explored centuries-old folkloric rituals. She described a ritual where women would run into fields, lift their skirts, and expose themselves to the heavens to stop rain that threatened the harvest. Abramović expressed her intention to perform this ritual in Manchester with 24 dancers, anticipating the cultural impact of such a performance in England.