



GERMAN DANCE AWARD 2024

SASHA WALTZ · EXPLORE DANCE · DIETER HEITKAMP

ORGANIZER

Dachverband Tanz Deutschland e. V.

HONORARY PATRON

Prof. Dr. Norbert Lammert, Chairman of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation and former President of the German Bundestag

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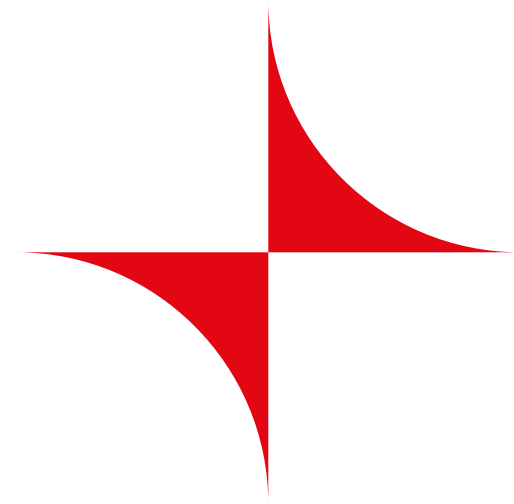
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GERMAN
DANCE AWARD 2024

SASHA WALTZ

HONOUR FOR OUTSTANDING DEVELOPMENT IN DANCE

EXPLORE DANCE –
NETZWERK TANZ FÜR
JUNGES PUBLIKUM

HONOUR FOR LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT

DIETER HEITKAMP

Award ceremony on Saturday, 12 October 2024
Aalto-Theater Essen

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The German Dance Award is the most prestigious honour for dance in Germany. Ulrich Roehm and the German Professional Association for Dance Education (DBfT) first initiated the award and it has been presented annually since 1983. The national umbrella organization Dachverband Tanz Deutschland has taken up the reins since 2018. The German Dance Award recognizes distinguished dance personalities in Germany. The focus is on the artistic work of the choreographers and dancers; however, personalities from other areas of dance or future-oriented initiatives can also be nominated.

The honorary patron is Prof. Dr. Norbert Lammert, Chairman of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation and former President of the German Bundestag.

This year, the German Dance Award will be presented to Sasha Waltz for her international appeal, her commitment to the independent dance scene structures and, above all, for her artistically unique and discipline-breaking body of work. Dieter Heitkamp receives the award for his lifelong achievements as a dancer, choreographer and promoter of contact improvisation in Germany, as a dance teacher and much more.

Explore dance - Network Dance for Young Audiences is being commended for its outstanding developments in dance, having succeeded for six years in bringing artistic dance to a young audience and is committed to close the gap in this area.

This commemorative publication is published for the festive event at PACT Zollverein in Essen one day before the German Dance Award ceremony on October 12, 2024 at the Aalto-Theater in Essen. The laudatory speech for the award winner will be given by theatre manager Nele Hertling, the laudatory speech for Dieter Heitkamp will be given by theatre scholar Prof. Dr. Gerald Siegmund. Member of the Bundestag Helge Lindh will speak in honour of explore dance.

HONORARY PATRON

For many years, Prof. Dr. Lammert has supported the award and its former sponsor, the Förderverein Tanzkunst Deutschland (German Dance Art Association) with great enthusiasm and moral support. The Norbert Lammert Foundation has repeatedly supported the ZUKUNFT dance award with an endowment.

He was a member of the German Federal Parliament from 1980 to 2017, and President of the German Federal Parliament from October 18, 2005 to October 24, 2017.

It is a great honour to have Prof. Dr. Lammert, a highly esteemed individual in politics and society as honorary patron of the German Dance Award.

PROGRAM



PROGRAM CULTURAL SALON

On October 11, the evening before the German Dance Award 2024 ceremony, the Dachverband Tanz Deutschland invites you to a cultural salon at PACT Zollverein in Essen at 7 pm. The evening will provide the opportunity to get to know this year's award winners, their art and their work and have a conversation with them. It will be moderated by Michael Freundt.

The evening will be complemented by the performance of the very first dance piece commissioned by explore dance: *MOVE MORE MORPH IT!* by Anna Konjetzky, Munich.

In addition, the laudatory speeches for the two honourees will be held. The laudatory speech for Dieter Heitkamp will be given by dance and theatre scholar Gerald Siegmund, the laudatory speech for explore dance will be presented by German Federal Parliament member Helge Lindh.

The following evening as part of the gala – the dramaturg and theatre director Nele Hertling will speak in honour of Sasha Waltz.

Laudators

GERALD SIEGMUND

Dr. Gerald Siegmund is Professor of Applied Theatre Studies at the Justus Liebig University Gießen. He studied theatre studies, English and Romance Philology at the Johann Wolfgang Goethe University in Frankfurt am Main. After his post-doctorate qualification in 2005, he was appointed assistant professor at the Institute for Theatre Studies in Bern, Switzerland. From 2009 to 2011, he was head of the Master's program in Choreography and Performance (CuP) at the University of Gießen. His main areas of specialization are contemporary theatre and contemporary dance, aesthetics, theatre theories, performance, intermediality and the diverse crossover areas between theatre and the other arts.

He has written numerous essays and texts on renowned choreographers, including William Forsythe, Meg Stuart, Jérôme Bel, Xavier Le Roy and Raimund Hoghe. The most recent publications are *Choreographie als Kulturtechnik*, in collaboration with Sabine Huschka, and *Theater- und Tanzperformance zur Einführung*.

HELGE LINDH

Graduated with a Master of Arts in Modern German Philology, German Linguistics and Modern and Contemporary History including Regional History. Helge Lindh gained professional experience as a research assistant in the NRW state parliament for the SPD parliamentary group. He has been a member of the SPD since 1999 and has held various positions, including deputy chairman of the Jusos Wuppertal and representative for political education on the board of the SPD Wuppertal.

In addition, he was chairman of the Project Group Migration and later of the AG (working group) Migration und Vielfalt Wuppertal, as well as chairman of the Integration Council and a member of various committees on refugee and immigration policy.

Since 2017, he has represented his constituency of Wuppertal as a directly elected member of the German Federal Parliament. In the Parliament, he holds the office of cultural and media policy spokesman. He heads the AG Democracy and is a full member of the Interior Committee.

NELE HERTLING

Nele Hertling, born in Berlin in 1934. Studied philosophy, German and theatre studies at Humboldt University in Berlin. Freelance work for broadcasters and publishers. From 1963 to 1988, she worked as a research assistant at the Akademie der Künste West (Academy of Arts) for the music and performing arts departments. In 1970, she founded the annual *Festival Pantomime Musik, Tanz, Theater* (PMTT) there together with Dirk Scheper. In 1986, she was appointed director of Werkstatt Berlin for the overall program of Berlin - European City of Culture 1988. This was followed in 1989 by the founding and management (until 2002) of the Hebbel Theater Berlin as an international production and theatre venue. This is also where the still successful Tanz im August festival originated. From 2003 to 2006, she took over the management of the DAAD Artists-in-Berlin Program.

She has been a member since 1998, Vice President from 2006 to 2015 and Director of the Performing Arts Department of the Akademie der Künste since 2016. She continues to be active in Berlin and international initiatives. Among her numerous awards include the German Dance Award 2018 and the Foundation Preußische Seehandlung's Theatre Award Berlin 2024.

MOVE MORE MORPH IT!

CHOREOGRAPHY, CONCEPT Anna Konjetzky
COMPOSITION, LIVE MUSIC Sergej Maingardt
DANCE PERFORMANCE Sahra Huby
MENTORING Moos van den Broek

World premiere: October 7, 2018, KÖSK Munich. For audiences aged 8 and over.

Who, how and what can I be? A body turns itself into music and provides the soundtrack for a journey through different identities, self-projections and imaginary characters. Big effects and subtle sounds trick the perception and arouse curiosity about a creative approach to characteristics.

With *MOVE MORE MORPH IT!*, Anna Konjetzky has once again created a work for young audiences, this time for the network explore dance. The dance performance in pop-up format can be performed at various locations: in schools, galleries, theatres and public spaces. In this way, it brings dance directly to the target audience, regardless of their social background or previous theatre experience, and encourages cultural participation. "We appeal to



PHOTO: FRANZ KIMMEL



PHOTO: FRANZ KIMMEL

children, young people and adults alike and have received wonderful feedback. Since the premiere, we have been able to tour with around 60 performances throughout Germany and internationally – from Johannesburg to Laos, from Mexico City to Reutlingen and Copenhagen," says Anna Konjetzky.

The Munich-based choreographer and artist Anna Konjetzky has been creating internationally touring dance pieces and dance installations since 2005. Her choreographic approach is a practice of reflection and transformation that is always embedded in a socio-political context and has a queer-feminist perspective. Anna Konjetzky has received numerous grants and awards; her dance installation *Abdrücke* (Impressions), in which Sahra Huby also danced, was invited to Tanzplattform Deutschland.

Huby's artistic path is not exclusively, but continuously closely linked to Anna Konjetzky, who has created many dance pieces with her, including further solos, *chipping* and *über die wut* (about rage), for which Huby received a FAUST Prize nomination in 2022..

PROGRAM DANCE GALA

Moderator: Siham El-Maimouni

Editor and presenter at Westdeutscher Rundfunk

GERMAN SIGN LANGUAGE: Elisabeth Brichta and Esther Schuler

AUDIO DESCRIPTION: Felix Koch and Jutta Polić

INTERPRETERS ENGLISH: Nadine Hegmanns and Andrea Wilming

VIDEO PORTRAITS: Siegersbusch Film

DANCE PERFORMANCE	Carmen (Danse Bohème) Choreography Johan Inger Music Georges Bizet, Rodion Schtschedrin, Álvaro Domínguez Vázquez Dancers Compagnie of the Aalto Ballett Essen
GREETINGS	Thomas Kufen Lord Mayor of the City of Essen
VIDEOMESSAGE	Ina Brandes Minister for Culture and Science of the State of NRW Claudia Roth Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media
DANCE PERFORMANCE	Chotto Desh (Excerpt) Choreography Akram Khan Direction & Adaptation Sue Buckmaster Music Jocelyn Pook Dancers Jasper Narvaez, Nicolas Ricchini
FILM PORTRAIT	explore dance – Netzwerk Tanz für junges Publikum
AWARD CEREMONY	Honour for Outstanding Development in Dance Presentation of the award
DANCE PERFORMANCE	Radical Cheerleading (Excerpt) Choreography Zufit Simon Sound Fredrik Olofsson Dancers Erika Leo, Sophie Prins, Sunayana Shetty, Cary Shiu, Zufit Simon

FILM PORTRAIT	Dieter Heitkamp
AWARD CEREMONY	Honour for Lifetime Achievement Presentation of the award
DANCE PERFORMANCE	In the Middle, Somewhat Elevated (Excerpt) Choreography William Forsythe Music Thom Willems and Leslie Stuck Dancers Polina Semionova und Martin ten Kortenaar, Staatsballett Berlin
	PAUSE
AWARD CEREMONY	German Dance Award 2024 Laudatory speech by Nele Hertling Presentation of the award and words of thanks Sasha Waltz
DANCE PERFORMANCE	In C Choreografie Sasha Waltz Music Terry Riley, performed live by Musikfabrik Landesensemble NRW Dancers Sasha Waltz & Guests

Presenter Siham El-Maimouni from Duisburg studied political and administrative science and sociology alongside her journalistic work. After her traineeship at Antenne Düsseldorf and freelance work for newspapers and radio stations, she worked for several editorial departments at WDR in 2010. Her work has received several awards, including the 2015 German Radio Award for Best Presenter. She has presented the culture magazine *Westart* on WDR television since 2016, the regional political WDR magazine *Westpol* since 2020 and the ARD culture magazine *ttt - titel thesen temperamente* since 2021. In 2020, she hosted the German Dance Award gala for the first time.

Carmen - a ballet

in two acts (Danse Bohème)

CHOREOGRAPHY	Johan Inger
MUSIC	Georges Bizet, Rodion Shchedrin, arranged by Álvaro Domínguez Vázquez, CD-recording
STAGE DESIGN	Curt Allen Wilmer, Leticia Gañán Calvo
COSTUME DESIGN	David Delfín
LIGHTING DESIGN	Tom Visser
DRAMATURGY	Gregor Acuña-Pohl, Laura Bruckner
STAGE DIRECTION	Toby Mallit, Javier Rodríguez
DANCE PERFORMANCE	Aalto Ballett Essen Company

World premiere: on April 9, 2015 with the Compañía Nacional de Danza at the Teatro de la Zarzuela in Madrid. This adaption for Essen premieres on October 13, 2024 and is supported by Sparkasse Essen with additional funds from the Essen PS Lottery Save-and-Win, Friends of the Theatre and Philharmonie Essen Association and a private donation from Sunhild and Christian Sutter.

Carmen is idolized and desired from all sides; the soldier Don José falls for her seductive skills. But his love constricts her, and so she gives herself over to the next adventure, while José's jealousy grows. The story of Carmen, the title heroine of Georges Bizet's opera of the same name, which premiered in 1875, raises many questions; and the love triangle continues to inspire artists of all genres to this day.

Following Ben Van Cauwenbergh's neoclassical ballet interpretation from 2011, Aalto Ballett Essen Company is now devoting itself to the myth of the so-called "femme fatale" in Johan Inger's choreography using modern ballet techniques. Inger takes a new perspective on the story. It is the view of a child who involuntarily witnesses the deadly events. A psychogram of the characters, whose unconscious drives become visible in shadowy figures, with Don José, who is lovesick and obsessed for the self-determined Carmen, at the center.

The Swede Inger began choreographing as a dancer at the renowned Nederlands Dans Theatre in 1996. His works are in demand worldwide and are danced by many companies. This version of *Carmen* is his first full-length ballet which in 2016, received the prestigious Prix Benois de la Danse. The *Carmen Suite*, to which the composer Rodion Shchedrin adapted Bizet's melodies in 1967, is also complemented by new compositions from the Spaniard Marc Álvarez.



PHOTO: AALTO BALLETT

Chotto Desh (excerpt)

CHOREOGRAPHY	Akram Khan
DIRECTION AND ADAPTATION	Sue Buckmaster
TEXT	Karthika Nair, Sue Buckmaster, Akram Khan
COMPOSITION	Jocelyn Pook
LIGHT DESIGN	Guy Hoare
VISUALS AND ANIMATION	Tim Yip, YeastCulture
DANCE PERFORMANCE	Jasper Narvaez, Nicolas Ricchini

World premiere on October 23, 2015 at DanceEast, Ipswich, Great Britain

A child tries to find its place in the world. Akram Khan's 2011 solo *Desh* was a huge success worldwide. In 2015, the choreographer created a version for children aged 7 and over and their families in collaboration with theatre director Sue Buckmaster. *Chotto Desh*, which translates as "Little Homeland", is the danced story of an adult who dives back into early memories. Into the experiences of a child growing up in two completely different societies: both Bangladeshi and British cultures. It is a coming-of-age story



PHOTO: CAMILLA GREENWELL



PHOTO: CAMILLA GREENWELL

and an enchanting performance that mixes Kathak and contemporary dance, speaking, drama, specially composed music and dream-like video animations. *Chotto Desh* celebrates the strength of the human spirit in a modern world.

The British-Bengali dancer and choreographer Akram Khan is a practitioner of the centuries-old Kathak from the northern part of India. He describes his choreography as "contemporary Kathak", enriching this strictly rule-bound dance with Western techniques – and vice versa. His company, founded in London in 2000, tours worldwide with his productions: solos, duets, which are the result of encounters between artists, as well as his ensemble pieces. Repertory includes *Outwitting the Devil*, *XENOS*, *Until the Lions*, *Kaash*, *ITMOi (in the mind of igor)*, *Gnosis*, *zero degrees* and *Vertical Road*, a work commissioned by the Ruhrtriennale 2010.



PHOTO: DIETER HARTWIG



PHOTO: DIETER HARTWIG

Radical Cheerleading (excerpt)

CHOREOGRAPHY	Zufit Simon
CO-CREATION, PERFORMANCE	Erika Leo, Sophie Prins, Sunayana Shetty, Cary Shiu, Zufit Simon
SOUND	Fredrik Olofsson
LIGHTING DESIGN	JOM
COSTUME	Mirella Oestreicher
OUTSIDE EYE	Clarissa Rêgo, Moritz Gagern
PRODUCTION MANAGEMENT	Dietrich Oberländer

World premiere: November 18, 2022, LOT-Theater, Braunschweig

This sporty, thought-provoking choreography fits in with troubled times by focusing on shaking people up. And first and foremost, literally, with bodies, with movement. The words become shouts with heavy breathing and muscles. With this piece, Zufit Simon defamiliarizes sporty and cheerful cheerleading, as feminist and queer movements in the USA have already done with

“radical cheerleading”, which was invented in 1996. As the choreographer says, the reason for the piece was her concern about political roll-backs, especially when it came to women’s rights. How could she protest, as a woman, as a mother of two sons? “My body is my tool”, and her art.

The production, which was nominated for the FAUST Prize 2023 and won the Lower Saxony Foundation’s Best OFF Festival of Independent Theatre 2024 award, has since performed one guest engagement after another.

The performer and choreographer Zufit Simon was born in Israel, where she graduated from high school with a dance qualification. She then studied contemporary dance at the University of Music and Performing Arts in Frankfurt am Main (HfMDK). She lives in Berlin and is connected, “in a triangle” as she says, with Munich and Braunschweig, where she also rehearses, performs, has producers and receives funding. She also worked at Theaterhaus Jena for five years. Her work has been shown at national and international festivals; her choreographic concert *I LIKE TO MOVE IT* was selected for the Tanzplattform Deutschland in Hamburg in 2014.

Melanie Suchy

In the Middle, Somewhat Elevated (Pas de deux)

CHOREOGRAPHY	William Forsythe
MUSIC	Thom Willems in collaboration with Leslie Stuck
STAGE, COSTUMES	William Forsythe
LIGHTING DESIGN	William Forsythe
DANCE PERFORMANCE	Polina Semionova und Marten ten Kortenaar, Staatsballett Berlin
TECHNICAL REALIZATION	Tanja Rühl
STAGE & LIGHT	Tanja Rühl
REHEARSAL	Kathryn Bennetts

World premiere on May 30, 1987 with Sylvie Guillem and Laurent Hilaire, Ballet de l'Opéra de Paris, Palais Garnier

"*In the Middle, Somewhat Elevated* is a theme with variations in the strictest sense. It uses the academic virtuosity of classical ballet and expands and accelerates its traditional forms. By shifting the positions and emphasizing the transitions, the movements take on an unexpected power and dynamism that makes them dissimilar to their original forms," writes William Forsythe about his piece commissioned by Rudolf Nureyev for the Paris Opera Ballet in 1987. The American created one of the pioneering choreographies of the 20th century.

His aim was to find new combinations within the classical movement material and thus turn academic dance into a form of lively communication. The multidimensional alignment of the dancer's body in space, the balance/off-balance, seemingly random and yet rivaling encounters between the dancers, athletic rigor and limbs stretched outwards to the extreme serve this very purpose. The final pas de deux is one of the highlights of the choreography. Forsythe stretches the boundaries of classical ballet and the possibilities of dance – as well as the audience's visual experience.

William Forsythe was awarded the German Dance Award in 2004; he will receive the Kyoto Prize in 2024. Born in 1949 in Long Island, New York, he has been active as a choreographer for over 50 years. He directed the Ballett Frankfurt from 1984 and the Forsythe Company from 2005 to 2015. In 1999, he received an honorary professorship at the Frankfurt University of Music and Performing Arts, whose dance department Dieter Heitkamp has directed since 2001; since then, a lively and very fruitful working relationship with his company has developed there. Over 40 "Forsythe dancers" were and are active there, including as professors.



PHOTOS: ADMILL KUYLER

In C

CONCEPT, CHOREOGRAPHY	Sasha Waltz
MUSIC	Terry Riley: <i>In C</i>
MUSICIANS	Musikfabrik Landesensemble NRW e. V.
COSTUME	Jasmin Lepore
LIGHTING	Olaf Danilsen
CONCEPT, DRAMATURGY	Jochen Sandig
PERFORMANCE, CHOREOGRAPHY	Sebastian Abarbanell, Alessandra Defazio, Rosa Dicuonzo, Davide Di Pretoro, Agnieszka Jachym, Margaux Marielle-Tréhouart, Dominique McDougal, Sean Nederlof, Zaratiana Randrianantenaina, Wibke Storkan, Stylianos Tsatsos, Sasha Waltz & Guests

Premiered on March 6, 2021 in a livestream from the Radialsystem in Berlin. A production by Sasha Waltz & Guests. Made in Radialsystem.

In C von Terry Riley © Associated Music Publishers Inc./Edition Wilhelm Hansen. With permission of Bosworth Music GmbH/Wise Music Group



PHOTO: JO GLINKA



PHOTO: YANINA ISLA

“It’s about making decisions alone and together, networking, listening, supporting each other, growing together, giving each other space, sensing what is needed, what you can do on stage for the good of the whole community and leaving no one behind. Many of these ideas form the basis of democracy and are what is needed in our ever-changing societies at this moment,” writes Sasha Waltz. The company calls its artistic work “a permanent search for empathy and humanity. It opposes all forms of discrimination, violence and ideology and stands up for the democratic values of an open and diverse society. This is what the project *In C* stands for in particular, not just a political piece, but actually a democratic process in dance and music.”

In 2021, the dance company Sasha Waltz & Guests began a new artistic process from which various new projects and formats are constantly emerging. The musical basis is Terry Riley’s *In C* (1964), an open composition that was revolutionary in its time and is generally regarded as the first work of minimal music. Based on this milestone in music history, Sasha Waltz and her dancers developed choreographic material that follows a similarly variable structure and is deliberately not conceived as a finished stage piece.



GERMAN
DANCE AWARD
2024

SASHA WALTZ



PHOTO: HERLINDE KOELBL

SASHA WALTZ

JURY STATEMENT

The jury awards the German Dance Award 2024 to Sasha Waltz for her international appeal, her commitment to the independent dance scene structures and, above all, for her artistically unique and disciplinary-bursting oeuvre.

As a dancer, choreographer and director whose life and work is centered in Berlin, she has been a key figure in the development of contemporary dance since the early 1990s. To this day, she has continued to develop her distinctive choreographic signature and aesthetic vision. Sasha Waltz is undisputedly one of Germany's most renowned dance artists, both nationally and internationally.

Sasha Waltz's extensive oeuvre encompasses various creative periods: the early intimate, narrative-humorous pieces that she developed at the Sophiensæle in the 1990s, as well as the large, imposing dance productions at the Schaubühne Berlin in the early 2000s that focused entirely on the relationship between body and space. This was followed by her exploration of the art of opera, which led to a new genre, the 'choreographic opera'. Her intensive research into new relationships between visual art and dance as well as contemporary music and dance runs through her entire oeuvre, not only in her spatial explorations as part of the *Dialogue* projects, but also in her exchanges with artists from various disciplines. In recent experiments, she has created pieces that can be danced by both professional and non-professional dancers. With all these different approaches, she has both enriched contemporary dance and significantly influenced the development of other artistic genres.

In close collaboration with her life and work partner Jochen Sandig, she has repeatedly opened up new spaces for dance and attracted new audiences for dance both nationally and internationally. With 'Sasha Waltz & Guests', a company structure has been created that enables the artist to collaborate on large international projects as well as experiment with new forms and in which the company's dancers are also empowered to be creative.

Biography

Sasha Waltz was born in Karlsruhe, Germany in 1963. When she was five years old, she received her first dance lessons from a former Wigman student Waltraut Kornhas. As a teenager, she became interested in contact improvisation. From 1983 to 1987, she studied dance and choreography at the School for New Dance Development in Amsterdam and then went to New York for two years, where she danced in the companies of Pooh Kaye, Yoshiko Chuma & School Of Hard Knocks and Lisa Kraus & Dancers.

She came to Berlin in 1992 with a scholarship from Künstlerhaus Bethanien. Together with Jochen Sandig, she founded Sasha Waltz & Guests in 1993. She is a co-founder of Sophiensæle (1996) and Radialsystem (2006) in Berlin. From 1999 to 2004 she was a member of the artistic direction team at Schaubühne am Lehniner Platz, where she created pieces such as *Körper, S* and *noBody* as well as the choreographic installation *insideout*. The development of innovative, interdisciplinary forms of performance and choreography is a focus of her artistic work.

Her interdisciplinary *Dialogue* projects have been performed at the Jewish Museum Berlin (1999), the Neues Museum Berlin (2009) and the MAXXI in Rome (2009). In 2005, she created her first choreographic opera *Dido & Aeneas* to music by Henry Purcell, which premiered at the



PHOTO: SASHA WALTZ IN »TRAVELOGUE I - TWENTY TO EIGHT« ©DIRK BLEICKER



PHOTO: SASHA WALTZ / PROBE „KREATUR“ 2017 ©UTE ZSCHARNIT

Grand Théâtre de Luxembourg. *Medea* to music by Pascal Dusapin and text by Heiner Müller was also staged there in 2007. In October 2007, she choreographed *Roméo et Juliette* to the dramatic symphony by Hector Berlioz for the Opéra National de Paris. The project *Jagden und Formen (version 2008)* set to the music by Wolfgang Rihm was premiered in Frankfurt am Main in spring 2008 in collaboration with the Ensemble Modern. In 2010, her choreographic opera *Passion* by Pascal Dusapin premiered at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in Paris; in 2011, *Matsukaze* to a composition by Toshio Hosokawa premiered at La Monnaie opera house in Brussels. *Sacre* to music by Igor Stravinsky celebrated its premiere at the newly opened Mariinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg in 2013.

From August 2019, Sasha Waltz and Johannes Öhman led the Staatsballett Berlin as dual directors. They ended their joint directorship after just five months.

In 2021, Waltz developed the work *In C*, based on Terry Riley's composition of the same name. Her current works include *SYM-PHONIE MMXX*, commissioned by Georg Friedrich Haas (2022), *Beethoven 7* (2023) and *Johannes-Passion* (2024).

Sasha Waltz has received numerous awards, including the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany (2010). On February 29, 2024, she was appointed Commandeur de l'ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the French Ministry of Culture.



PHOTO: SASHA WALTZ / PROBE „JOHANNES-PASSION“ 2024 ©SEBASTIAN BOLESCH

Greeting

JOE CHIALO, BERLIN SENATOR FOR CULTURE AND SOCIAL COHESION

I am fascinated by numerous aspects of Sasha Waltz's work: on the one hand, I am impressed by the immense complexity of her repertoire developed over thirty years – from the abstract exploration of everyday objects in *Twenty to eight* to milestones of contemporary German dance theatre created with productions such as *Körper*, to the multitude of successful opera productions such as *Dido and Aeneas*, to the return to elements of minimal art in the production *In C*.

I am also inspired by the consistency of her successful artistic career, which is the result of over thirty years of national and international ensemble work, combined with artistic innovations with her company Sasha Waltz & Guests.

Finally, I would like to mention Sasha Waltz's youth dance company in this commemorative publication and thank Sasha Waltz for her many years of commitment in the field of cultural education.

I sincerely congratulate Sasha Waltz on her long overdue award of the German Dance Award 2024. Her work is magnificent, vibrant and – made in Berlin.

Yours
Joe Chialo



PHOTO: SASHA WALTZ IN »TRAVELOGUE I - TWENTY TO EIGHT« ©DIRK BLEICKER

Freedom and Responsibility

TRIBUTE BY SANDRA LUZINA

INDEPENDENT DANCE AND THEATRE JOURNALIST, BERLIN

When Sasha Waltz & Guests celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2023, the ensemble was in high spirits. For Sasha Waltz, this was also an opportunity to look back – with mixed feelings. „Basically, we were in a state of emergency for 30 years,“ she said in the interview. „It wasn't as if everything fell into our laps. We worked very hard and persistently.“ At the time, she herself seemed a little surprised that she had persevered all those years. As stellar as her rise was, she had to go through difficult phases on her way to the top. She grew through the crises.

The beginnings were exciting, enchanting. When Sasha Waltz came to Berlin on a scholarship in 1993, she was considered an insider tip. For her first *Dialogue* (dialogues) project, she invited improvisational dancers and musicians to experiment with her. The shows were wild, crazy and very physical. They laid the foundation for the piece *Twenty to eight*, the prelude to the *Travelogue* trilogy. In this surreal and humorous flat-sharing drama, Waltz captured exactly the feeling of life in the early 1990s. It also showcased a completely new aesthetic. The 30-year-old became a highly regarded young star overnight.

She retained the interdisciplinary approach, the dialogically oriented work, which is still the powerhouse of her work today. Sasha Waltz's artistic track record is impressive. Her work comprises over 80 productions in which more than 300 „guests“ from the fields of architecture, visual arts, literature, fashion design, music and dance have participated. And Jochen Sandig: With him, Waltz always had a reliable partner at her side. The couple found post-reunification Berlin an ideal setting for their work. Together, they founded Sasha Waltz & Guests in 1993 and continued to conquer new spaces for dance in the city. „It has always been intertwined: creating art and structure, creating the spaces in which the art can take place,“ says Waltz.

When I look retrospectively at her work, I have such different spaces in mind: the public spaces that she developed and explored – for the sensational *Dialogue* projects in the Jewish Museum designed by Daniel Libeskind or in the Neues Museum Berlin designed by David Chipperfield. The stage spaces that she has helped to design and explore: Interiors or abstract spaces, sometimes with a tilted playing surface, sometimes with a lowering ceiling. The movement always unfolds from the relationship of the body to the specific surroundings. The space is therefore the starting point for the creations. Before the Hackesche Höfe became a tourist hotspot, Waltz

used an entire floor there as a rehearsal room. These real spaces influenced the stage design and color scheme of *Twenty to eight*.

Sasha Waltz and Jochen Sandig founded Sophiensæle as an independent venue in 1996. The opening production *Allee der Kosmonauten* immediately earned them an invitation to the Theatertreffen of the Berliner Festspiele. At the time, the choreographer had conducted interviews with residents of prefabricated housing projects. She captures the precariousness of the cramped living conditions in a wonderfully over-the-top piece. The dancers lounge on a shabby sofa and then constantly get in each other's way.

In 2000, Waltz and Sandig take the step into institution: joining Thomas Ostermeier and Jens Hillje as artistic directors of the Schaubühne. Waltz, an architecture enthusiast, sensed that the monumental stage space of the Mendelsohn Building called for a different aesthetic. Her abstract opening production *Körper* (Body, Bodies) strips away everything narrative: With a cool gaze, she explores the physical nature of human beings. In doing so, she succeeds in creating body images between hardness and vulnerability that have a long-lasting impact.

Sasha Waltz insisted on equal rights for theatre and dance; following disputes with Ostermeier, she left the Schaubühne after four years.



PHOTO: CHRISTIAN LARTILLOT

The company became independent again. The Schaubühne years were nevertheless a very important time for Sasha Waltz: Here she had the opportunity to choreograph for a large stage, to work with a permanent ensemble and to use the in-house production departments. Now the question arose again about which working structures could be established as an independent company and which could be afforded.

In 2006, Jochen Sandig and music manager Folkert Uhde founded Radialsystem V. Since then, Sasha Waltz & Guests have had their production space here. It is ideal for performances of medium-sized projects. However, Waltz has to look for other venues to present large productions. Not having a permanent venue where she can show her repertoire is one of her biggest drawbacks today.

Sasha Waltz ushered in a new phase with her interest in music theatre. In Purcell's *Dido & Aeneas* in 2005, she tried out the concept of „choreographic opera“ for the first time and created a new kind of fusion of dance, voice and music. „Working with outstanding orchestras, conductors and singers was very enriching for me and also allowed me to grow,“ she says. However, managing the very elaborate productions together with co-producers was always a great challenge. Sasha Waltz worked in a frenzy. At some point, the euphoria turned into total exhaustion.

Sasha Waltz has repeatedly tried out new things and pushed boundaries. She is a choreographer and theatre entrepreneur and has experienced the disadvantages and advantages of independent work. This has demanded a great deal of flexibility from her – but she has managed to adapt to the requirements of the moment. This is best demonstrated by her project *In C* to Minimal Music by Terry Riley, which she initiated in 2021 in the middle of the lockdown. Despite the contact restrictions at the time, the colourful performance breathes the spirit of freedom and openness.

Similar to Riley's musical figures, Waltz developed a system of 53 movement figures. The result is a variable structure: The dancers make their decisions in the moment. The playful ensemble piece illustrates the dynamic of freedom and responsibility. Waltz has also considered the social dimension: „As a collective, we are dependent on each other. How far does our freedom go? How far can we venture without endangering the group, the ensemble? It is an exciting process to live through and illuminate this.“

Since then, *In C* has been performed in many venues by different casts, by professionals and amateurs of different ages. Sasha Waltz speaks enthusiastically of her „community project“. Every performance is different. A democratic process is practiced in changing constellations – and at the same time the desire to dance is awakened. The dance community of *In C* continues to grow.

Perhaps this is a bit comforting: Sasha Waltz had to say goodbye to her dream of establishing a permanent ensemble of 20 dancers. However, she managed to keep her troupe together. Although she can only afford six permanent dancers, she draws on a pool of around 40 associated freelancers. New talents are constantly joining the familiar forces. It is impressive how Waltz, who often explores collective dynamics in her pieces, forms a close-knit community out of individuals each time. The fantastic dancers are the most important source of inspiration for her. And perhaps also the reason why she continues to create.

She continues to write a chapter in German dance history that began with *Twenty to eight*. She has now achieved mastery in her dialogue with music, as demonstrated by her latest productions *Beethoven 7* and *Johannespassion* (St. John Passion). During rehearsals for the latter in Salzburg, you could only marvel at the skill with which she conducted and arranged the 72 performers on the 50-metre-wide stage of the Felsenreitschule.

Freedom and responsibility – combining the two has always been her driving force. Her career has had its setbacks, but she has consistently followed her path. With her tremendous creative power, enthusiasm and commitment, Sasha Waltz is an exceptional artist.



PHOTO: ANDRÉ RIVAL

Greetings from Friends & Colleagues

YOREME WALTZ, DRAMATURG AND PRODUCER, KARLSRUHE

Dance floor

When we started working on *Twenty to eight*, Jochen arranged for us to have a rehearsal room in the Hackesche Höfe. Rehearsal rooms were, just like today expensive and hotly contested. In Berlin Mitte, however, there was an incredible amount of empty space. We had a whole floor to ourselves in the courtyards. Unbelievable. Previously there had been a sewing shop, everything was full of threads and incredibly black, I assume, it was oil from the sewing machines. Sasha, Takako Suzuki and I spent several days cleaning and setting up a studio. In the end, we were even able to set up Barbara Steppe's entire stage set there. What a luxury.

Sasha had borrowed the dance floor for rehearsals from all over the city. I had rented a van, „Robbe“ (“seal”), from Robben & Wientjes (a very popular van and car rental company) because I had a driver's license. So, the two of us drove through Berlin and collected the dance floor rolls from a cellar here, a storeroom there and an apartment somewhere else. I can't remember exactly from whom. At any rate from dance professionals who had helped to build up the dance scene in Berlin in the 80s. (Thanks again at this point!)

Our space in the Hackesche Höfe was in the first courtyard, roughly where the Chamäleon is today. I drove into the courtyard. Six dance floor rolls had to be carried up to the first floor. Although there was a lot of empty space, there was also a lot of cars driving in and out of the courtyards. It wasn't a pedestrian zone like it is today. When we wanted to drive out again from our dance floor haul with the van, we couldn't move forwards or backwards. I could drive, but I wasn't very good at reversing a big van and I especially wasn't very good at maneuvering between other cars. So, we just stood in the courtyard and laughed for minutes on end. Probably out of exhaustion, stress and feeling completely overwhelmed. But also, because there was simply a lot that was strange about this situation.

At some point, I think someone drove the van out for us.

When I recently borrowed a dance floor again, I had to think about it. Somehow it all starts with that. With the room and the dance floor. And with a lot of work that you usually do yourself.

Even a great career like Sasha's.

DIRK CIESLAK, VIERTE WELT, BERLIN

I remember my first encounter during the final rehearsals for *Allee der Kosmonauten*. Sasha was completely emotionally distraught, as she ran down Sophienstraße crying with rage and despair. Her unhappiness was caused by problems with the production photos. I could understand that much. From a distance, I would say today that the reason for the emotional outburst lay deeper. By renting the Sophiensæle, she and her partner Jochen Sandig were treading on very thin ice. Sasha obviously knew very well that only a successful *Allee der Kosmonauten* could secure the rent. It was a time when you could achieve a lot with a little daring. Without this success, the Sophiensæle would not have existed.

**HEIKE SCHUPPELIUS, PROFESSOR FOR STAGE DESIGN/SCENIC SPACE,
HFG OFFENBACH**

At the end of the 90s, after one of the *Dialoge* projects, Sasha and I got talking at the bar in the Sophiensæle. I liked her way of developing a performance piece from everyday observations in public and private spaces. I had dealt with similar questions in my architecture thesis at the Universität der Künste Berlin. I remember that table as an everyday object and pivotal moment.

In my work as a set designer for Sasha, the direct exchange of content begins long before rehearsals start: the joint research for which we use our collective knowledge, interests and aesthetic understanding to create a collection of material that remains in motion until the end. I really like this phase because there is still time and calmness before practical decisions have to be made and more and more people join the project. Sometimes these are short, intense moments. When I was living in Athens, we met during a guest performance on site. I had my students with me, Sasha was preparing for her guest performance. Nevertheless, we had a few hours in which a lot of creativity happened in preparation for the new piece *EXODOS*.

What characterizes her art? – After working at the Sophiensæle, I felt the change to the Schaubühne was a turning point. In spatial and aesthetic terms. From stories of everyday life, as in *Zweiland*, *Na Zemlje*, *Allee der Kosmonauten*, to *Körper* with an abstraction of things, that was unusual, irritating and exciting for me at the same time. To this day, what I really appreciate about Sasha's practice is that she doesn't rest on her laurels, but is always looking for and finding new challenges.

One memorable example from the years of collaboration was the filming of the Medea frieze in the Radialsystem. The dancers were completely

covered in clay from typical spa & wellness products. Although it no longer had much to do with wellness, everything had to be done very quickly, as the skin reacted with moisture and cold after a short time. Jumping between damp lumps of clay and calculating the video format in relation to the stage width of the State Opera, printing out stills on the second floor, clogged up showers on the third floor and the dramaturgical question in between, „were there flags in Greek mythology?“

With a love of experimentation – I wish Sasha Waltz continued energy and strength for innovative projects, but also for breaks, both short as well as long ones.

**MANFRED STOFFL, DIRECTOR OF THE THEATRE/DANCE DEPARTMENT OF THE
GOETHE-INSTITUT SINCE 2021**

„It's the final countdown“ – „You can hear it again now“, I said to Lars Eidinger at the time. We had come to the Sophiensæle from the „neighboring“ barracks at the Deutsches Theatre for the premiere of *Na Zemlje*, and the piece ended quite unexpectedly with the song by the Swedish pop band Europe. It was surprising that it worked after this piece, in which you could literally smell the earth and the meeting of two cultures, German and Russian, was so central. From today's perspective, it all evokes completely different images. Later, I was very surprised by *Kreatur*, especially the first third. The music, the dancers' movements, the costumes – the whole choreography. At the time, I thought to myself: Sasha can still reinvent herself after all these years.

She is certainly one of the artists who has traveled the most with the Goethe-Institut. Our internal planning tool goes back to 2008 and spits out over 100 collaborations with the keyword Sasha Waltz at the touch of a button. Of course, this includes classic guest performances in cities such as Tel Aviv, Santiago de Chile and Barcelona. But also tours through countries with several stops, such as India. Overall, *Körper* (Body/Bodies) is probably still Sasha Waltz's most toured work with the Goethe-Institut. But there have also been other formats such as residencies or workshops and talks. Recently, *In C* has enjoyed great popularity in the Goethe world with its diverse possibilities of being performed by local dancers from a wide variety of backgrounds.

During my time in Berlin, Sasha Waltz was one of the most important choreographers who left a great impression on me. I will never forget her various trilogies, of which I have probably seen the *Körper* trilogy the most. Pieces like *Körper* and *NoBody* always adapted to the location, to the mood of the moment, even to the political situation. They could always be interpreted differently and are timeless in this respect.

Above all, I would like to thank Sasha on behalf of the Goethe-Institut for the many unforgettable moments, also with productions such as *Tears break fast*, *Allee der Kosmonauten*, *Zweiland*, *InsideOut*, *Dido & Aeneas* and all the others that cannot be mentioned here. We look forward to many more moments with Sasha Waltz all over the world because one thing is far from certain: The final countdown! There's still a lot to come!

GÜNTER JESCHONNEK, DIRECTOR, AUTHOR, CULTURAL MANAGER, MANAGING DIRECTOR OF THE FONDS DARSTELLENDEN KÜNSTE UNTIL 2015 AND INITIATOR OF THE TABORI PRIZE

Ten years ago, on a sunny evening at the end of May, the company Sasha Waltz & Guests received the first-ever honorary George Tabori Prize from the Fonds Darstellende Künste in a packed house at the Berliner Festspiele. George Tabori, a pioneering artist between independent and established theatre par excellence, would have turned 100 years old on 24 May 2014. Reason enough to also honour the internationally acclaimed company at the fifth award ceremony for the professional independent theatre and dance scene.

In my memory, I can see Sasha Waltz's large ensemble on stage at the highly emotional gala with happy faces, white roses and the prize award Christian Peschke's sculpture *The Dancer* in their hands. Norbert Lammert, President of the Bundestag, opened the anniversary gala. Klaus-Dieter Lehmann, then President of the Goethe-Institut, praised the ensemble in his laudatory speech, which had traveled to all the continents, and we printed the personal tribute of the then Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier in the program magazine. It couldn't have been a more prominent tribute.

The lively party lasted until the early hours of the morning. There was wild dancing, eating, drinking and philosophizing. I had never seen Sasha Waltz so relaxed – without the pressure of her own premiere or the increasingly high expectations of the media and the dance world. At the gala, I remembered our first indirect encounter, when I found a cassette in my letterbox in 1992 with a wildly dancing Sasha Waltz, who was still unknown in Berlin.

The almost thirty-year-old with a bobbed head of hair looked like Valeska Gert or Gret Palucca to me. I recommended that our board of trustees support this young dancer and her small team, which happened several times from 1993 onwards. In this way, we contributed to her brilliant start with the founding of her international company in Berlin. It was therefore not surprising that I wanted an excerpt from the timeless, fast-paced choreography by Sasha Waltz *Travelogue I - Twenty to eight* from 1993, in which she herself danced for several years, to be performed at the 2014 gala.

Congratulations, dear Sasha Waltz!

RENATE GRAZIADEI, DANCER, CHOREOGRAPHER, DANCE PEDAGOGUE, BERLIN

My collaboration with Sasha Waltz began in April 2004 when I became the training director for her company. The dancers enjoyed my training and invited me to accompany the company to Avignon to continue the training during the two-week guest performance. Once there, Sasha surprised me by asking me to take over the rehearsal management for the piece *Impromptus*, which they were performing in Avignon. Until then, I had only directed my own work, so this invitation was a welcome challenge. Since then, I have accompanied the company, sometimes more intensively and sometimes more loosely, as training director, rehearsal director for productions or, for special projects, as a dancer. I can hardly believe that it has now been 20 years of loose, but always unifying collaboration.

Sasha trusts the people she works with 100 percent. The exchange was always very open, direct and friendly and allowed a lot of freedom. There were so many moments that I wouldn't want to miss. I am very grateful for her trust, the respectful way she treated me and the experiences I was able to have while working with her.

Sasha always has an open ear for the concerns of other artists. If she can, she tries to address these concerns or needs or offer support. I don't experience that very often in our environment and I wish we could see it more often in „normal“ life. Then there might be fewer conflicts. I really admire this side of her.

I congratulate Sasha wholeheartedly on the award.

**CHRISTIANE RIEDEL, MEMBER OF THE ZKM (CENTER FOR ART AND MEDIA KARLSRUHE)
BOARD, 2002-2020**

ALSO FOR PETER WEIBEL (1944-2023), BOARD MEMBER ZKM, 1999-2023

Sasha Waltz is being honoured with the German Dance Award for her contributions to contemporary dance and other artistic genres. It is also intended to honour her for fundamentally changing the concept of the museum.

Her exhibition *Sasha Waltz. Objects, Installations, Performances* at the ZKM / Center for Art and Media in Karlsruhe in 2013 showed her not only as a choreographer, but also as a visual artist. The ZKM as a location for new forms of artistic practice was the ideal place for Sasha Waltz's work to make tangible the „central, opposing movements in contemporary art, namely the performative shift, the approach of the arts of space to the performance formats of the time-based arts, as well as the so-called installative shift, an approach of the arts of time to the space-based arts“ – according to Peter Weibel in the foreword of the catalogue. Over the course of four months, Sasha Waltz created a kind of „focused journey“ (her words, in the catalogue), a new kind of infusion of exhibition and performance, with which she expanded the static museum space into a performative space for action.

This groundbreaking live exhibition is also the story of a long relationship. Sasha and I have been connected since childhood, ever since our unconventional dance lessons in Waltraud Kornhas' apartment in Karlsruhe. Peter Weibel and Sasha Waltz had a deep connection as artists. It was a rare constellation of people and ideas, time and place that made the unknown possible.

The idea was born one Saturday afternoon during a conversation with Sasha Waltz, Jochen Sandig and Yoreme Waltz in the ZKM director's kitchen, which was overflowing with books. Peter Weibel asked Sasha Waltz: „What have you always wanted?“ And Sasha replied immediately: „An exhibition of installations!“. It became much more than that. It became an event that revolutionized the institution of the museum and at the same time touched people deeply. That's why Peter Weibel repeatedly said: „This is the most human exhibition we've ever done.“.

NELE HERTLING, DANCE MANAGER, CURATOR, GERMAN DANCE AWARD 2018

I got to know Sasha Waltz in the early 1990s after she received a grant from Künstlerhaus Bethanien in Berlin as „Artist in Residence“. In many conversations, a lasting relationship and a warm friendship developed between us. Watching her choreographic works for the first time, *Travelogue* and *Allee der Kosmonauten*, I was fascinated by the freshness, the directness of her storytelling and the convincing movement sequences, which were highly professional in their originality. Together with her partner Jochen Sandig, the two were also concerned about the situation for independent dance in Berlin. They believed it was necessary to open up new spaces for dance, to reach a new audience. There was a lively exchange between us on all these issues. The opening of the Sophiensæle in 1996 was an important step for the presence of the independent scene. And for the performances of Sasha Waltz & Guests.

I will always have a vivid memory of *Körper* (Body/Bodies) premiere in 2000 for the opening of the Schaubühne Theatre – a distinctly individual signature with great skill and intense commitment of her dancers. The series *Dialoge* (dialogues), especially exploring public spaces and the personal connection to architecture, forms an important element in the diverse works of Sasha Waltz. I was impressed by how she succeeded in using improvisation and a desire to experiment to open up prestigious buildings to audiences, making them an active part of the exploration, such as in the Neues Museum Berlin in 2009 or in the Elbphilharmonie concert hall in Hamburg in 2017.

Sasha Waltz has also conquered opera houses, creating a kind of opera-dance-theatre where music, dance, and voice are equally interconnected. *Dido & Aeneas* by Henry Purcell, premiered in 2005 to great acclaim, and is unforgettable.

For Sasha Waltz, the art form of dance is also a medium of social and socio-political understanding. Therefore, she founded her own format, *Zuhören* (Listening), at the Radialsystem. Since 2016, it has offered a space for art and politics, for encounters, discussions and understanding. In addition to the significant international recognition of her choreographic works and the presence of her company with its outstanding dancers, she has made a decisive contribution to the importance of Berlin as a „city of dance“.

My sincere thanks for this.



Left and right from top to bottom: André Schallenberg, Yvonne von Duehren, Sven Till, Dr. Kerstin Evert, Jeanne Chapy, Giulia del Balzi, Franziska Ruoss, Johanna Simon, Nadin Hellmann

PHOTO: ANNA WYSZOMIERSKA

explore dance

JURY STATEMENT

The German Dance Award jury honours the work of the explore dance network in the category Outstanding Development in Dance. For less than 6 years, the explore dance network has been developing formats across federal states that focus on contemporary dance as an art and cultural practice on stage and in educational projects for young audiences. Its own mission is to „close the gap that still exists in the cultural offerings for children and young people in Germany”.

Until 2021, the network’s hubs included the three partners: fabrik moves in Potsdam, Fokus Tanz | Tanz und Schule e.V. in Munich and K3 Tanzplan Hamburg. In 2022, the network expanded to include HELLERAU - European Center for the Arts. Explore dance is funded by the federal government and participating federal states, an exemplary example of TANZPAKT Stadt-Land-Bund (dance pact city-state-federal).

Dance artists and educators well-known in Germany, such as Herman Heisig and Lea Martini, are mostly recognized by adult audiences. Over time, however, they have expanded their artistic approach to include dance pieces for audiences in other contexts such as kindergardens and schools.

With a diverse range of thematic offerings from friendship to physics, the network creates spaces at various locations for experiencing contemporary dance and the socially relevant issues it addresses. This not only takes place within the project partners’ associated programs. Every year, all world premieres of the respective season are presented together in one or more festivals.

With formats such as the Mobile Pop Up, explore dance goes beyond its main objectives to offer children and young people dance through performance, it also introduces them to modes of perception and takes them seriously as an audience.

Explore dance’s focus is not only on dance education through the support of teachers in local networks or through its own magazine, *Das Journal*. The touring system, which allows individual members to show their work throughout Germany, is also a special strength of the network. In this way, contemporary dance is actively reaching out to young audiences, as it is an audience that cannot travel to festivals, galas or well-known venues in the same way as working adults.

Networks are constellations without a centre. A network that wants to work across federal states needs strong hubs – and the stamina to cultivate and maintain them sustainably and consistently. This is exactly what explore dance achieves – multidirectionally, for six seasons, at several locations, with many creative bodies and minds – for a large audience of children and young people.

Biography

This is how it started: “We, Simone Schulte-Aladağ (Fokus Tanz), Sven Till (fabrik moves Potsdam) and Kerstin Evert (K3 | Tanzplan Hamburg), had already developed a strong interest in dance for young audiences through our successful dance education work: Teachers who were enthusiastic about our participatory projects encouraged us to also present professional dance pieces for children and young people. Because there were no structures for the production of dance pieces for young audiences in Hamburg, Munich or Potsdam, our only option was to found one ourselves.”

In 2017, the trio applied to the TANZPAKT (dance pact) city-state-federal funding program for a cooperative structure as a three-year pilot project. They were accepted. “Things got underway in spring 2018: Project teams were set up, structures for cross-state collaboration between three cities were developed and contacts with schools were established. An international advisory board selected experienced choreographers, who had not yet produced for young audiences, for the initial 18 planned joint dance productions.” The first festival took place in May 2019 and in autumn that same year, explore dance was awarded the German Theatre Prize DER FAUST by the Deutscher Bühnenverein (German Stage Association).

A second TANZPAKT funding phase from July 2022 secured the work for a further one and a half years. During this phase, HELLERAU - European Center for the Arts in Dresden, led by Carena Schlewitt, joined the network. In addition to continued funding from the participating cities and states, explore dance will now for the first time be funded by the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media for 2024, all according to the matching principle that had already proven its worth for Tanzplan Deutschland from 2005 to 2010.

In addition to stage productions, the focus is on easy-to-tour so-called pop-up productions that go where the children and young people already are, especially in rural areas, where there are fewer cultural offerings than in larger cities.

Six years on: 10 stage productions and 24 pop-up pieces with over 500 performances in Germany and abroad, 265 venues, 400 schools involved, 150 participating artists, 520 educational formats: Rehearsal visits, workshops and discussion formats on stages, in gymnasiums, schools, cultural centers and parks; plus festivals and expert symposiums.

Although this production and touring network for professional dance pieces for young audiences, which is the only one of its kind in Germany to date, appears to be well established, its future is sadly uncertain at the moment for lack of funding.

Melanie Suchy

Greetings

DR. CARSTEN BROSDA, SENATOR FOR CULTURE AND MEDIA OF THE FREE AND HANSEATIC CITY OF HAMBURG

In today's world, we are in a constant state of flux. Sociology tries to capture these processes in tangible images. The sociologist Erving Goffman, for example, understands constant social movement as a social fact that always relates to someone or something else and is fundamentally subject to a sequence of order. Accordingly, social interaction can be understood as a kind of choreography.

As an example, Goffman chooses pedestrian traffic: at first glance dangerously chaotic, at second glance highly functional and usually smooth. The metaphor also works for more complex movement sequences. If we replace road traffic with a ballet production or a hip-hop track, most of us will probably feel a bit awkward. One reason is that both arts are based on the rules of highly complex movement sequences. Another reason is that it is not just about learning a pas de bourrée or a kick ball change, but about the specific confrontation with the specific meaning of movement within the artistic context of the respective subculture.



PHOTO: EVA RADUNZEL

André Schallenberg, Ceren Oran, Uta Meyer, Gudrun Raber-Plaichinger, Anja Brixle, Simone Schulte-Aladağ, Annerose Schmidt, Dr. Ulrike Wörner von Faßmann, Lara Schubert, Angelika Endres

Dance is social interaction, social interaction is a dance. Explore dance offers a non-verbal language of interaction through contemporary dance. By focusing on children and young people, the network is not seeking to address the „audience of tomorrow“ in an abstract way, but to connect with them directly. The young audience is already there and takes part in the social choreography regardless of age – but so far only in a brief guest role. For this reason explore dance is making an important contribution to intergenerational dialog.

For six years, under the auspices of TANZPAKT Stadt-Land-Bund (Dance-Pact City-State-Federal) explore dance has made access to dance for children and young people into an art form in itself. The pieces developed as part of explore dance are shown in at least four locations – Hamburg, Potsdam, Munich and Dresden – and in this way develop a nationwide presence.

On top of this, pop-up formats open up even more public spaces. Children and young people are not just an audience at explore dance, they are involved in the production process and taken seriously as genuine protagonists. In this way, they experience what is involved in the creation of a dance project and get to know themselves as well as how to deal with each other in a new, untested constellation.

I would like to congratulate explore dance and those involved in the network on being honoured for outstanding development in dance with the German Dance Award 2024!!



PHOTO: JIN LEE IN „PRISMA“, CHOREOGRAPHY BY ROTEM WEISSMANN. © EVA RADÜNZEL

From wonder to participation

A TRIBUTE BY SABINE LEUCHT, DANCE AND THEATRE CRITIC, MUNICH

In the beginning was the wow effect. My first encounter with explore dance in fall 2018, at KÖSK in Munich: Sahra Huby sprints through a solo choreographed by Anna Konjetzky as if she had springs under her feet. In *MOVE MORE MORPH IT!* Huby's body encounters a table. A microphone is stuck underneath it, which transmits all sounds to the musician Sergej Maingardt for distorting, „morphed“ magnification: Writing movements scrape; and when the dancer stretches her vertebrae, it clicks loudly. The very first pop-up piece of the nationwide network has now been shown some 70 times, from Johannesburg to Mexico City, from Reutlingen to Copenhagen. It is a wonderful example of how contemporary dance can connect with the world in which children and young people live in order to create something completely different and unique. Simply wow!

Afterwards, a child asked the question: „Is it exhausting or fun?“. Huby's answer: „Both!“ The fact that one often goes hand in hand with the other is a beautiful, incidental lesson that can be drawn from many of the pieces that explore dance has created for young audiences so far.

Now in its sixth year, the collaboration between fabrik moves Potsdam, Fokus Tanz | Tanz und Schule e.V. Munich and K3 | Tanzplan Hamburg is attempting to reduce a gap in Germany's cultural offerings by enticing established contemporary choreographers to work for young people, in some cases for the first time. The fact that only the best is good enough for this target group was a self-evident claim from the very beginning. It was also clear that it was not enough to simply stage a performance here and there. Since 2022, HELLERAU – European Center for the Arts has been the fourth partner on board. The network intends to gradually expand.

André Schallenberg, Head of Program Dance and Theatre at the youngest network partner, is already making potential new members' mouths water: „Explore dance has raised the work with and for a young audience to a new level in terms of artistic quality, production and touring structures, and has permanently changed the visibility and self-image in the professional scene. Thus, making it ideal for HELLERAU to join the network.“

Simone Schulte-Aladağ, the artistic director of Fokus Tanz emphasizes the „very inspiring collaboration with colleagues“: „The exchange of experience and knowledge transfer is really great. We function like a small virtual ‚dance production house‘.“

Because its successes are undisputed, there is actually only one thing standing in the way of its expansion: money. The funding of explore dance

by TANZPAKT Stadt-Land-Bund is only secured until the end of 2024. The Pact and the Network it supports are prime examples of cooperative cultural funding: local authorities, federal states and the federal government each contribute a share. Everyone benefits because the productions created in Brandenburg or Hamburg are also shown in Bavaria and Saxony – and vice versa. It is a truly sustainable way of producing that reaches a significant number of children and also provides the performers with many performance opportunities.

Explore dance now has 34 pieces and more than 500 performances, showcasing the full diversity of contemporary dance. From Diego Tortelli's perceptual experiment *Shifting Perspectives*, which makes abstract dance available for unlimited combination with various soundtracks. From Antje Pfundtner's *für mich* (For Me), which uses a colourful potpourri of forms ranging from language games to burp dance to chew on real-life themes, to Dennis Deters and Lea Martini's *Eine Geschichte der Welt* (A Story of the World), in which three performers make molecules dance in the spotlight without words.

Whether they are fairytale-like or political, quirky or cool, if these productions have the „wow!“ factor they can only inspire children, parents and teachers to dance – and other artists to work for young people. Schulte-Aladağ says there were many more great concepts than what we could actually produce: „We interpret this to mean that the field of developing dance pieces for young audiences has become more visible and appealing thanks to explore dance.“ The peak of recognition so far – although there is certainly more to come! – was when Anna Till and Nora Otte were invited with their virtuosic and playful dance style crossover *Swan Lake in Sneakers* as the only youth piece at the Tanzplattform Deutschland 2024 in Freiburg im Breisgau.

However, explore dance is not limited to their productions. They are also fulfilling their responsibility to the target audience with some 520 workshops, teacher training courses and other educational formats to date. For Schulte-Aladağ, the special appeal lies in the mix of experiencing dance and meeting the artists. The mobile pop-up pieces, which have made up two-thirds of all productions since the pandemic, are predestined for this. They transform classrooms, sports halls and community halls into stages in the blink of an eye and reach almost all children and young people, regardless of their origin, education or neighborhood.

Uta Meyer (project manager explore dance, Hamburg) reports on the charm of the encounter: „With *1004 Zentimeter Mut* (1004 Centimeters of Courage) by Nora Elberfeld, we were in an elementary school on the outskirts of Hamburg. After the performance, we were packing up the stage set when there was a knock at the door and a child asked for autographs. A short

time later, all the children came back and the team had a signing session. Especially after the performances, there is a very intensive and appreciative exchange between the artists and the audience. This intimacy rarely occurs in theatre venues.“

The young audience members are already involved in the production process. Franziska Ruoss, artistic project coordinator in Dresden: „They contribute to the content and artistic realization and get to know the different phases of a dance production. The close exchange with the artists not only enables direct contact, but also enhances the receptiveness of contemporary dance pieces.“ And when the one or other „tips“ that the children have given the professionals is also included in the performance, there is great sense of pride.

Such experiences of self-advocacy are immensely important. We need to avoid losing the next generation to a lack of hope and perspectives, and to ideologues who bombard the vacuum with „cool“ pimped up propaganda via Tiktok and the like. On its fifth birthday, explore dance even received scientific confirmation that dancing for yourself, as well as seeing dance, makes you more creative, open and focused. No wonder that almost all teachers who cooperate with the network are repeat offenders and even want dance to be a permanent part of the curriculum. The dance community, too, can only be pleased if its audience of tomorrow is given a taste for carefully selected delicacies.

And yet reluctant funders are still not committed, despite the awards bestowed on explore dance so far: In 2019, explore dance received The FAUST Perspective Award, now the German Dance Award – honouring for outstanding development in dance; the German UNESCO Commission cites the network in its 2024 State Report as an innovative example of how Germany promotes cultural diversity. In addition to the reasons mentioned above, Kerstin Evert (Artistic Director K3, Hamburg) adds: „Dance as an art form is international and diverse, seeing dance productions enables us to perceive bodies in their diversity and to recognize that communication is not only about language. In a democratic society, it is of great importance to experience participation.“

You can only nod ‚yes!‘ again and again – and congratulations!

Greetings from Friends & Colleagues

ANNA KONJETZKY, CHOREOGRAPHER, MUNICH

Mine was the very first pop-up piece to premiere as part of explore dance, and I found and still find it a pretty successful format. We produced and worked in Munich and with Munich schools, but after the premiere in 2018 we were also able to show the piece in the two partner cities of Hamburg and Potsdam and experienced several very nice performances, especially in Potsdam.

In fact, *MOVE MORE MORPH IT!*, which targets almost all age groups from 6 years upwards, has given us many valuable insights. We have performed it in many school settings, but also at dance festivals and in many countries from Greece to South Africa and Mexico.

It was particularly nice to perform our piece there again and again with the help of Fokus Tanz | Tanz und Schule e.V. and to stay in touch with them about how the piece has grown and changed over the years. We are still showing *MOVE MORE MORPH IT!* and the 55th and 56th performances are scheduled for fall 2024.

We probably wouldn't have made the piece without explore dance and therefore wouldn't have had the many great performances and encounters and we wouldn't have implemented the participatory extension for the KORA program of DanseHallerne in Copenhagen. In addition, this project inspired me to explore a shorter, 'rougher' format without a large stage and lighting and to come up with many other thoughts and ideas.

In general, I felt a great deal of trust from explore dance in Munich (Fokus Tanz | Tanz und Schule e.V.) right from the start. While the network was still gathering initial experience with this pop-up format, we just went for it. However, we were able to benefit from Fokus Tanz's many years of expertise, so that we had a great exchange with different school groups during the rehearsal process.

FIONA FERGUSON, CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR, IMAGINATE, SCHOTTLAND

I met Simone from ThinkBig Festival and she kindly invited me to be part of the international advisory group. It's so long ago, I'm not actually sure how we first met, Simone usually comes to our festival, Edinburgh International Children's Festival, so we meet there regularly as well as at other festivals in Europe.

I think the organisations and people who are driving explore dance are very open and curious about dance for young audiences. I found these qualities came through in all communications and experiences I had with this project including the selection processes and the way they present and promote the final productions. Explore dance is a fantastic project that brings together organisations and individuals who are so passionate about dance for children and young people. They have really committed to producing new dance performances, they have commissioned so many full and pop up dance productions since they started. This is an incredible achievement, for the children who see the work, the artists who make the work and the wider international dance for young audiences network. They also explore different settings for the work including performances that happen in schools, in big and small venues, and in outdoor and public spaces.

ANTJE PFUNDTNER, DANCER, CHOREOGRAPHER, GERMAN DANCE AWARD HONOUREE 2020, PRODUCTION FÜR MICH AT EXPLORE DANCE, HAMBURG, 2018

What should change structurally in society or in theatre so that theatre becomes more accessible for young audiences – and develops into a place that says goodbye to its elitist identity and can be shared and enjoyed across generations? I am very interested in this question. I'm also interested in the artistic question of whether it makes a difference to my work if I know in advance of a production that children or young people will be our audience at the premiere. Is there any topic at all that we can NOT or should NOT share with children or young people, and what artistic and structural qualities are required accordingly?

Explore dance and the respective participating artists provide an important impetus and push for this line of thought: how to bring theatre to young audiences – and also how these young audiences come to the theatre and WHAT they are invited to see.

That's why I'm delighted that this network, with all those involved, is being honoured.

I and we (Antje Pfundtner in company) warmly congratulate dance for young audiences.

For we will never be as young again as we are during these performances for and with this important audience.

Congratulations!

MOOS VAN DEN BROEK, DANCE JOURNALIST, DANCE DRAMATURG AT EXPLORE DANCE, AMONG OTHERS

Around 2013/2014, I was leading an international network focused on the dance developments for young audiences called Fresh Tracks Europe based in a production venue called Het Lab Utrecht. Soon many young choreographers from Het Lab Utrecht were being invited to show their work internationally because these pieces opened up something new. This is the context that I was eventually asked by tanzhaus nrw in Düsseldorf to advise them and later on, several partners from explore dance. Unfortunately, the Het Lab Utrecht no longer exist due to funding cuts.

I do not have any specific method. Every encounter is very different because everyone works differently and some choreographers also have their own dramaturg. You have to get to know each other and actually, the time is short. Trust is the basis. I look at the material, we talk, a context is given, I respond. I am only there for a short period. Therefore, I learned not to be too much of an elephant, the process is delicate and vulnerable.

Dance for young audiences is very underestimated in the performing arts world. Well, as a matter of fact, dance in general. In German speaking countries, text-based theatre is very dominant. So, dance comes after all that, and dance for young audiences is somewhere at the end of the line. It is not fair because dance for young audiences is a very important. The fact that kids move less and less, the fact that kids are raised with images, the fact that there is a lot of knowledge in the body that we deny... Kids respond incredibly to dance and movement, so why do we always hang on to the story? Kids have no problem to read abstract movement. That is why this network is crucial for breaking down strong traditions and mindsets.

For me it is important to offer something worthwhile in a creative process. There have been very successful dialogues that continued after the specific process, as well as less fruitful encounters. I do not always know what the effect is or has been and that is fine, I am just a passenger with some expertise, who gives a fresh perspective as an outsider. You have to be modest and let the artist lead. What I really enjoy is when an artist discovers the pleasure of working for young audiences and this influences their work or approach to creating. And the audience can also bring something, it works both ways. We often forget that.

MONICA GILLETTE, DANCE DRAMATURG, TANZHAUS ZÜRICH

I am attracted to dance that both strives to reach new audience members while also advancing the development of the artform itself. explore dance does this beautifully and continuously.

My first awareness of explore dance came from listening to choreographers who created work within the network. What caught my attention was how they described the nourishing production support they received as well as how impactful the encounters with the young people were, especially in how those encounters exposed them to new ways of thinking about their artistic practice.

In 2022 explore dance invited me to moderate a series of discussions with international colleagues who also focus on dance for children and young people. The discussions became a personal professional highlight because it allowed me to witness how much innovation is happening in this part of the dance field – new forms of residencies where children are invited into the creation process, innovative approaches to bring dance into rural areas, pop-up performances in classrooms, vibrant touring networks, transformative dialogue with policy makers, progressive approaches to open calls and commissions, new mediation and performance formats as well as breaking down stereotypes and barriers that limit what young people have access to.

Perhaps most inspiring though is the dialog that explore dance generates between young people and dance artists. Each encounter they help support is telling a young person that their viewpoint, their ideas, their doubts, questions, emotions and opinions matter.

The opportunities explore dance provides encourages dancemakers to boldly consider children and young people in a dance field that for too long has marked that audience as too unsophisticated to count in a contemporary dance landscape.

Congratulations to everyone who has contributed to the success of explore dance and for the positive impact you have had on the dance field and young people throughout Germany!

ANNA TILL, DANCER, CHOREOGRAPHER, DRESDEN

Explore dance caught my eye before HELLERAU was a partner in the association. I found the idea of creating pieces specifically for young audiences from the independent scene very appealing and innovative. Eventually Dresden was invited to apply. I wrote a proposal with my long-year colleague, Nora Otte (director). Working with explore dance and the special criteria for a so-called pop-up piece gave me a feeling of freedom right from the start.

This reduction to very few resources and a very small team was formative for our artistic work – in a positive sense.

As we were new to working together with a young audience, the close contact with explore dance was extremely important and helpful. We always had the impression that our project was wanted and supported. And since it was the first round with explore dance for HELLERAU, we went down this unknown path together, so to speak, without either side sticking the label expert on their blouse.

In contrast to regular guest performances, there is a strong sense of solidarity between the production locations and venues in the explore dance network. As an artist, you can sense that everyone knows about each other and their respective projects, wants to promote them and take care of performances in schools or other venues in a very professional manner. You are not left alone at this point, which is essential, especially in the context of a pop-up piece (a different, unknown location every day, different framework conditions, little set-up and preparation time). The encounters with the children and young people are carefully and extensively prepared. Every one of our performances, including at partner locations outside of Dresden, has been accompanied by explore dance staff on site. Their knowledge of the target group is valuable and important.

For the entire *Swan Lake in Sneakers* team (Nora Otte, Anna Till, Konstanze Grotkopp, Johannes Till), the conversations with the children and young people after the performance were impactful and will remain in our memories. The small groups (40-70 people) make it easy to have a direct exchange; meeting „my audience“ directly after the performance is a tremendous gift. What did they perceive and how? What questions did they ask themselves? What irritated them, what did they find funny, what embarrassed them? Some groups of pupils were very excited and therefore restless during the show. The fact that I can show myself to them again afterwards as a „private person“ and talk to them, answering their courageous and open questions, is – alongside the performance – the second important act. And part of explore dance.

Without explore dance, Nora Otte and I would not have made *Swan Lake in Sneakers*. Explore dance opened up a whole new target group for me. After we performed for a mixed-age audience and sometimes even exclusively for adults (for example at the Tanzplattform Deutschland 2024), we realized that this also works in other settings. The most exciting performances for me are when young and older people are in the audience together – parents with their children – reacting at very different moments. The piece speaks on different levels and in this way to several age groups. This has strongly influenced my thinking about the audience (itself) and my way of working.

YOTAM PELED, DANCER AND CHOREOGRAPHER, BERLIN

explore dance has had a huge impact on my path as an artist. It was the first time that I made work whereby I felt completely safe and free to engage in my practice; to follow a more organic, a more humane way of creating, without the usual stress and constraints of a production. We felt incredibly welcomed at Fabrik Potsdam and in all the other venues we travelled to with the network. The work felt like a shared mission of solidarity and curiosity.

Meeting teenagers helped me understand where I create from, what inspires me, and how I would like to meet the artists I work with and the audience I meet. It has been a beautiful experience, which continues to echo and charge me with motivation.



PHOTO: JIN LEE IN „PRISMA“, CHOREOGRAPHY BY ROTEM WEISSMANN. © EVA RADUNZEL

Dieter Heitkamp

STATEMENT OF THE JURY

Dieter Heitkamp receives the award for his lifelong achievement

Dieter Heitkamp is a Gesamtkunstwerk. He moves powerfully in various roles of artistic creation: as a dancer, choreographer, teacher, director, mentor, visual artist and advocate for young dancers. For 45 years, he was responsible for the transformation and development of contemporary dance in Germany in a wonderfully energetic, incisive and dynamic spirit.

One of his achievements in dance history is to have introduced contact improvisation (CI) to the German dance scene. Dieter Heitkamp began learning CI in 1977 and two years later began teaching CI in Germany, while at the same time co-founding and co-directing the Tanzfabrik in Berlin. In the following 19 years between 1979 and 1998, his vital dynamism helped to spread CI and contemporary dance in the city of Berlin and on a national level. Choreographing, teaching, directing, making art, mentoring, changing politics, these were and are Dieter Heitkamp's activities.

His Frankfurt phase began in 1998: at the University of Music and Performing Arts, HfMDK, he initially worked as a guest professor and from 2001 as professor and head of the dance department. Dieter Heitkamp transformed the largely classical dance department, which was on the verge of closure, into a state-of-the-art contemporary dance program interweaving local resources and guests, making it a highly respected institution for contemporary dance education. In 2023, Dieter Heitkamp retired after 25 years at the HfMDK.

A driving force in dance in Germany, Dieter Heitkamp has initiated countless programs, formats and performances and is a tireless artist and educator who supports young dancers and encourages them to be flexible, creative and open to lifelong learning processes.



PHOTO: EVA RADÜNZEL

Biography

Dieter Heitkamp, born in 1957, studied sport and biology in Berlin, later art education. In 1977 he began his dance training in contact improvisation, improvisation and performance, several modern, contemporary techniques based on release and alignment, body mind centering and other body awareness methods.

As a founding member of Tanzfabrik Berlin e.V., he was a dancer, choreographer, teacher and organizer there from 1978 to 1998 and one of the artistic directors until 1995. He created 18 full-length pieces for Tanzfabrik, which toured throughout Germany, to 14 European countries and to Brazil, Hong Kong, Japan, Canada, Russia, the USA and Vietnam. He was also commissioned to create for example, for *Pizza Girl* (Ballett Frankfurt), for theatre productions at the Freie Volksbühne Berlin (Peter Palitzsch, Holger Schultze), for dance and documentary films and for television, as well as choreography and stage design for Hans Werner Henze's *Le Disperazioni del Signor Pulcinella* (Staatsballett Berlin).

In 2001, he was appointed Professor of Contemporary Dance at the Frankfurt University of Music and Performing Arts (HfMDK) and was Director of the Dance Department until 2023. He was a founding member of the Hessian Theatre Academy (HTA) and from 2006 to 2015 on the management team of Tanzlabor_21/Tanzbasis Frankfurt_Rhein_Main; in this context, the MA CoDE at the HfMDK and MA CuP at the Justus Liebig University Gießen were established. From 2007 to 2014, he was one of the representatives of the Ausbildungskonferenz Tanz (Dance Education Conference), and in 2012 Artistic Director of its 3rd Biennial Dance Education in Frankfurt am Main.

From 1998 to 2023, he developed over 70 choreographies and lecture performances with students, including interdisciplinary, site-specific large-scale projects with the Junge Deutsche Philharmonie, the International Ensemble Modern Academy, the hr Big Band and the Fauré Quartet. He has been a guest teacher at German dance academies and has given and continues to give courses throughout Europe as well as in China, Israel, Japan, Colombia, Russia and Vietnam.

His artistic work is characterized by experimentally-oriented concepts and movement research that investigate communication possibilities in/about/through dance in relation to the social environment. He combines theoretical aspects with physical practice, writing with choreography and creates image-sound spaces of possibility. The interdisciplinary choreographies, lecture performances and installations bring together movement and word, visuality and sound, the sensual and the cognitive in such a way that the performers and the viewing audience are constantly active on several physical and media levels.

Greetings

PROF. ELMAR FULDA, PRESIDENT OF THE HOCHSCHULE FÜR MUSIK UND DARSTELLENDEN KUNST FRANKFURT AM MAIN

“He is the reason why I studied in Frankfurt.”

It is impossible to express more clearly who Dieter Heitkamp was for the HfMDK (Frankfurt University of Music and Performing Arts) than this graduate. When he came to the university, dance education was about to be closed. Not with him. Dieter Heitkamp transforms the largely classical department into a state-of-the-art study program for contemporary dance, in which local players and international guests work together, and makes Frankfurt attractive for young people who want to discover and redefine dance together with him and his team.

Heitkamp acts. Don't complain – do it! Fast, efficient and successful. Computer broken? Order a taxi, put the computer in, go to the repair shop, the taxi waits outside the door while the repairs are being carried out, go back and carry on working. That is Dieter Heitkamp's attitude towards work. With a really big heart for people. A friendly, bright mind who rarely sleeps.

Golden shoes, pleated or checked designer trousers, shaggy hair that fits perfectly in every situation. Dieter Heitkamp creates aesthetic and communicative works of art! And is one himself.

Thank you, dear Dieter Heitkamp, for 25 years at the HfMDK Frankfurt!

Work is art is life is art

DIETER HEITKAMP IN CONVERSATION WITH MELANIE SUCHY

He lives in Frankfurt am Main, not far from the end of the Zeil and the Mousonturm. Between commerce and art. He belongs to the latter. So, does his three-room apartment, in which he has integrated objects from his many stage performances. I have known Dieter Heitkamp since I completed a Master's degree in Journalism at the HfMDK (University of Music and Performing Arts) in Frankfurt a.M. in 2003.

Reading your summarized bio, it is striking how much you have done.

This also remains true for other people in the arts to this day: performing, choreographing, teaching, organizing. And at the beginning you also have to distribute flyers and posters yourself. That's all part of it.

What were the toughest challenges you've ever tackled?

One was the university's mission statement process from 2012 to 2014, the largest grassroots democratic process I have ever taken part in: with all students, all teaching staff and the entire administration. Topic: "Who are we and where do we want to go?". Colleagues asked me to join the steering group. I also wanted to ensure transparency in the process. Because anyone who has a say in decisions must have insight into the information that flows. Ultimately, it was also an artistic process: I made huge boards that were carried through the foyer. I also improvised. The mission statement that emerged is good. After that, I took a break.

The other big undertaking was Tanzlabor_21, but it was a lot of fun. I was first on the board of trustees for Tanzplan Deutschland. Then I left to work with others on the application for Frankfurt, Tanzlabor_21, which was one of the most complex applications at the time. And we really implemented all the points, including the two Master's degree courses, which were made permanent after five years.

Have you ever failed at something?

I worked with Nancy Stark Smith for over ten years on the *Contact Improvisation Global Archive*, among other things, which was never realized. It was a great concept, but the applications for money were rejected. We only made *wrongcontact.zone* into a website.

I accompanied the *Contactencyclopedia*. An international team was working on a community-oriented wiki. Then there was no more money. What remained was the *Round Robin* project and the worldwide *ciglobalcalendar.net*.

You've studied several subjects.

I didn't complete any of my studies. Eight semesters of sport; I stopped biology after four semesters. Certain interests then flowed into other courses and my work, such as the biology of Body Mind Centering. Art has always been important. After graduating from high school, I wanted to study art education in Hamburg and was rejected for "lack of creativity". Then I went to New York and Philadelphia around 1980 and met people who saw themselves as artists without anyone certifying them as such. In retrospect, the rejection was a good push to go somewhere else. Back in Germany, I applied for art education at the Berlin University of the Arts and was accepted. I didn't finish, because at some point I was able to make a living from dancing.

Much of the inspiration for the independent theatre and dance scene in West Germany came from American artists

For the Tanzfabrik in Berlin, there were links to the 1960s in the USA with Christine Vilardo and Jacalyn Carley. The special thing about Tanzfabrik was also the collective idea and the fact that there were choreographers, sports students and theatre scholars there. It was a wild mixture of styles. Many new approaches were presented there. All of this also influenced my work at the university. That it wasn't about standardizing something.

Planning, initiating, doing, you were always at the forefront.

In the 90s, I organized the first dance video workshops in Germany; we did a huge dance video film project with Johannes Odenthal. Earlier than anyone else.

Also the political work. When the German Forum for Contemporary Dance was founded at the end of the 1980s, I was initially on the board. Or when I helped organize the Tanz im August festival with Claudia Feest, there were large series of workshops; that's where a lot of people got to know each other. And later at the TanzLabor_21 summer academies: opportunities to meet each other and develop new perspectives. I also worked on committees to get involved in funding and therefore make work(s) possible: at the Fonds Darstellende Künste (Performing Arts Fund),

at the Kunststiftung NRW (North Rhine-Westphalia Art Foundation), on the funding advisory board in Stuttgart.

I think I have a strength in channeling. I make connections with information from different areas. That is an interest. Networking also includes, on the initiative of Ingo Diehl, the founding of the Ausbildungskonferenz Tanz (AKT, Dance Education Conference), and then the Biennale Tanzausbildung (Dance Education Biennale). The 2012 edition here in Frankfurt was so well documented that the Biennale was subsequently included in the canon of national cultural competitions. Until then, there was no planning stability.

How do you convince people to change something?

Looking back, I realized that many things simply take a hell of long time. What we were working on with the German Forum of Contemporary Dance in 1992 became Tanzplan Deutschland in 2004. Or at the university: It took years, from the first workshops on body awareness to morning training sessions, to symposia on *THE ARTIST'S BODY*. Constant dripping wears away the stone.

By the way, there was already a connection to Frankfurt in the early 1980s. At the first festivals at TAT for independent dance, *Bestanzaufnahme* (Inventory). In the production *Sternzeichen Homosexualität* (Zodiac Sign: Homosexuality) in the theatre, I presented *Zwei Herren und ein Saxophon* (Two Men and a Saxophone) with Helge Musial. Peter Hahn then invited me to curate two evenings of men's dance (the term 'curator' didn't exist yet), *mann tanzt* in Berlin (man dances) – what would now be called queer.

Why was it important to you to create pieces about men?

They were always pieces with people that I had a personal relationship with. The most personal was *Hallo, wie geht es dir* (Hello, how are you) with Bruno Stefanoni. He lived in Seattle, I in Berlin. We made a piece about that. We wrote letters to each other in performance. With Bob Rease *Project: 5 Men*, with Helge Musial *Buddy Bodies* and *Peter Pain*, with Kurt Koegel *Zerfall der Schwerkraft* (Decay of Gravity).

Enough of Berlin?

In 1994, Egbert Strolka asked me in Frankfurt if I wanted to come to the Hochschule (university). But my interest was in continuing education and improving job opportunities for choreographers. When he asked me about

the guest professorship in 1998, I had just taken a break. After 20 years in Berlin, I was at the point "Now what?" feeling like I was stuck in a box.

You were always on stage yourself in your pieces. Until the mid-90s?

Not anymore later. I had constant hip pain from my mid-thirties onwards and I could only dance with painkillers. That's why I did the piece *Peter Pain* back then.

Did you prefer being the dancer or the creator?

Both. I was at the Schiller Theater in 1981 when Peter Zadek and Jerome Savary made *Jeder stirbt für sich allein* (Everyone dies alone), with Otto Sander, Angelika Domröse, Bernhard Minetti. A star-studded cast. Over 60 performances. They had ten dancers for the revue scenes. I think that was my only successful audition after three years of training.

About my pieces: Many were co-directed. The most intense project was *Kompass durch den Sumpf* (Compass through the Swamp), where eight of us worked without a director; after three weeks we were throwing chairs one after the other. When we had a topic, we made a 90-minute piece in five weeks. Many working relationships developed from that.

What was with your hips?

I had dysplasia as a child, before it was tested and corrected. I did competitive gymnastics for ten years, then had no time to recover in the independent scene; you have to be constantly active. I waited a long time. Until the Forsythe dancer Noah Gelber enthusiastically talked about his hip operation. I made an art project out of the operations. It was great because it went well. No more pain!

I had previously changed my teaching style. More verbal and with questions. I stuck with that. Another push to engage with language came from my work at the university. Because at some point the first lecture is due. Until I was completely frustrated by these intellectual conferences. So I started with lecture performances. With dancers who add other levels to what I'm talking about, plus live music, live video and tasks for the audience. *Assistierte Schwebezustände* (Assisted floating States), *Hautsache Bewegung* (Movement is a Matter of Skin), *Schule der Sensibilität* (School of Sensitivity). *Laura lernt* (Laura is learning), straight after hip surgery, was performed as if in a tree nursery, at the beginning I do a stick dance à la Schlemmer/Bohner, but more like undergrowth; then the dancers cut the sticks down and plant seedlings on the stage.

Planting, growing, harvesting: what will finally exist in 20 years?

Maybe a Tanzhaus in Berlin. And one in Frankfurt or even more places for dance.

They will be founded by others.

I'm enjoying having time now. Researching a piece. Digitizing my videos. There's a lot of interest from archives, but not in the objects. But for me, it all belongs together: the texts, the videos and photos and the objects. They're all here.

Work is life?

Art. Living and working, that was also part of the collective idea at the beginning. Or that the guest choreographers from the dance department stayed here in the apartment – that I find it very difficult to separate – can or would like to..

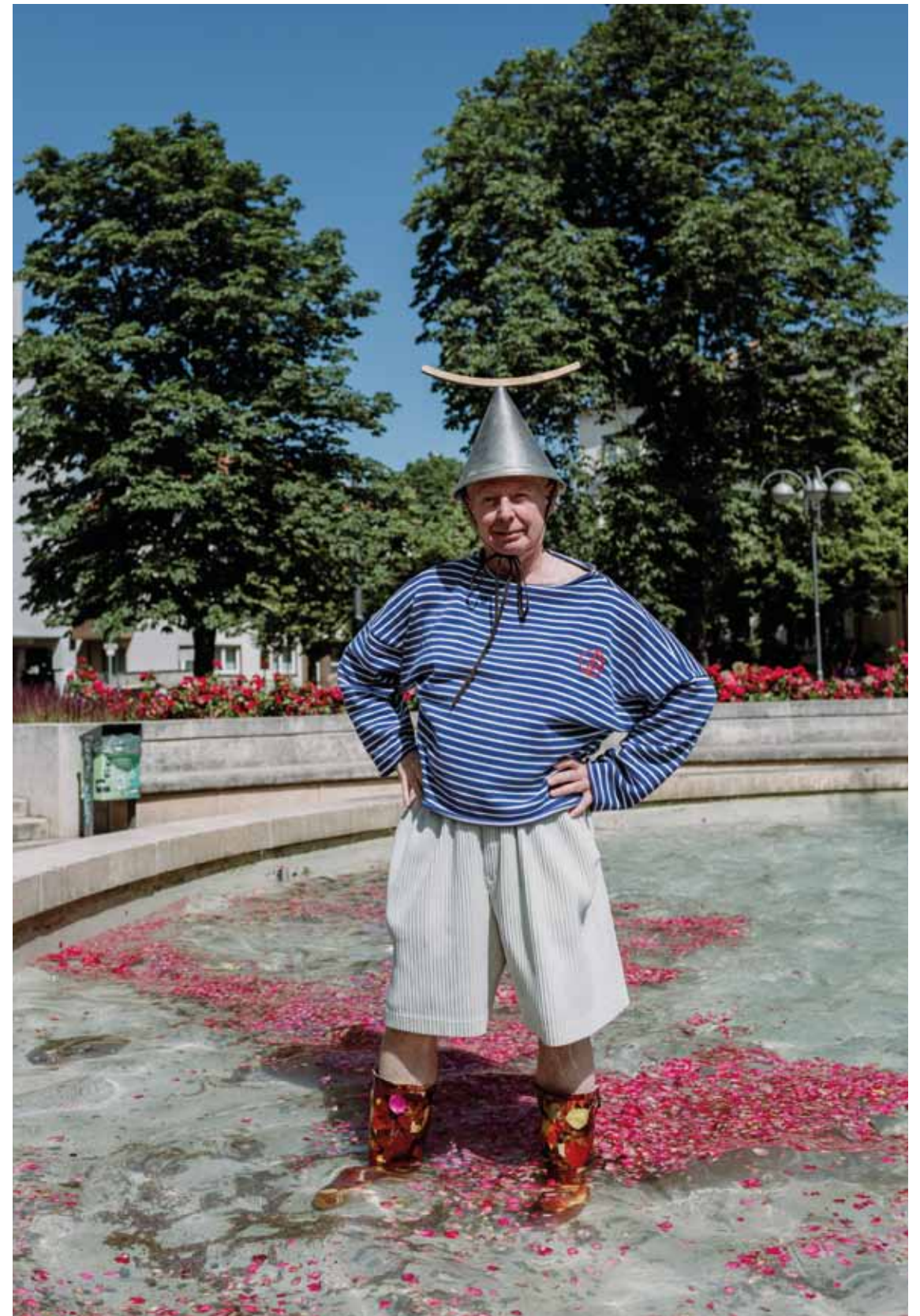


PHOTO: EVA RADÜNZEL

Greetings from Friends & Colleagues

ZUFIT SIMON, DANCER, CHOREOGRAPHER, DIRECTOR

Two months after I started studying at the HfMDK Frankfurt am Main (Frankfurt University of Music and Performing Arts) in 1998, Dieter Heitkamp came as a guest professor and later became director of the dance department. To be a student of Dieter Heitkamp is an absolute honour. He is no ordinary dance teacher, but a teacher of life. During my time as a student with him, he opened a big door to a new world for me.

He is a very special, generous and out-of-the-ordinary person. His creativity flows in all directions, his passion for teaching and passing on his knowledge, desire, joy and curiosity to experiment seem boundless and impressed me anew every day. Every lesson was different, never routine. After every lesson, I was motivated to explore further. I was carried away by his passion for art and movement. Dieter Heitkamp is an artist through and through, in his whole being, body, blood and bones.



PHOTO: EVA RADÜNZEL

He approaches everyone as equals. His door was always open to everyone. During my time in Frankfurt, I gained a wealth of experience through him. We experimented with light and darkness, flashlights, objects, fabrics, materials, bodies and skin. We visited exhibitions and dared to move between the exhibits (until we were kicked out). He motivated everyone to dare to try things out, to step out of our comfort zone, to believe in what we do, not to be afraid of what others think, to break taboos, to ask questions, to challenge the status quo. I have a lot to thank Dieter for as the artist I am today.

CLAUDIA FEEST, DANCER, CHOREOGRAPHER, TEACHER, THERAPIST, CO-FOUNDER AND LONG-STANDING ARTISTIC DIRECTOR OF TANZFABRIK BERLIN

Dancing is like flying and falling at the same time

Dieter Heitkamp is a pioneer of contemporary dance with all its possibilities to have an impact on society. With contact improvisation, he has further developed a teaching method that originated in the USA and established it in the German dance scene. In the early days of Tanzfabrik Berlin at the end of the 1970s, he used it to teach us how to achieve fascinating states of suspension without great physical effort: He taught us how to fall and how to balance while floating. He was also one of the first in Berlin and at the Theatre am Turm Frankfurt, TAT, to address the subject of male relationships and homosexuality on stage.

As a dancer and choreographer, he was and is whimsical, witty, quirky, very courageous in terms of content and concept, sometimes provocative, always full of humor. In our joint film *The Hanged Man in the Garden of Venus* (1988), he embodied the character of the court jester, and in later choreographies he showed himself to be related to artists such as Yves Klein, Egon Schiele and the literary figure Peter Pan.

Dieter approaches people with great curiosity and communicates in his own special way; he is spontaneous and creative in every moment. We have been good friends and colleagues since Tanzfabrik Berlin was founded. Dieter can't help but come into direct contact with people and things; this is probably why contact improvisation became his very own method early on, both when teaching and often as an impulse for his choreographic compositions.

Dieter is also very committed and reliable, both as a friend and as an artist. He has been culturally and politically committed to dance for many years, always an initiator, in contact with EVERYONE, always in search of new ideas. An explorer and inventor: people, things and events in this world attract him almost magnetically and vice versa. During the Tanzfabrik years, we were often on tour together, in Italy, Japan, Canada, Latvia and Russia. Being

on the road with Dieter means constantly exploring the environment with all his senses, and he can transform these “found experiences” into artistic ideas, objects and projects in a matter of seconds.

An eternal seeker who uncovers beauty in depth, Dieter perhaps became an artist because he finely and intuitively senses everything that happens around him, an innovator, a forward thinker, an avant-gardist in the best sense of the word. Ahead of his time. Playful and imaginative as a dance mediator: he has always practiced an idiosyncratic teaching style, formerly in the courses at the Tanzfabrik, then also at the Frankfurt Hochschule. His teaching is less instructive; rather, he invites you to go on an exploratory journey together and discover new dance movements for your own body. Inspiring.

**PROFESSOR AND DIRECTOR, MA CONTEMPORARY DANCE EDUCATION MA CODE, HFMDK
FRANKFURT A.M., PRESIDENT OF THE HESSIAN THEATRE ACADEMY HTA**

Before I met Dieter Heitkamp in 2005 in the first year of Tanzplan Deutschland, his reputation preceded him: In education at the Frankfurt University of Music and Performing Arts (HfMDK), there is a new era, renewal, someone who is familiar with current discourses. I can't remember when we met for the first time, the only thing that remains in my mind is my surprise as to why this hadn't happened earlier.

In keeping with his reputation and his irrepressible curiosity, it was hardly surprising that the first nationwide meeting of dance education in Germany, i.e. the initial spark for the founding of the Dance Education Conference (AKT), took place in Frankfurt am Main, like so many other such gatherings at the time. How often have we found ourselves thinking aloud at a flipchart over the years: in the founding phases of the AKT, the Bundesverband Tanz in Schulen (National Dance Association in Schools), in the years we spent together at the HfMDK (where I took up a professorship in 2012), and of course, when it came to structures, innovations or the first Bologna accreditation at the university - with the dance degree programs.

Dieter as a sparring partner, collaborator and accomplice. It was often a big party. Exciting years in which resources were made available in relation to dance and its education and there was something to move. He was a point of contact for many colleagues outside of the norms, often in the kitchen of his Frankfurt apartment. The artistic development of many generations of students can be traced back to his impulses.

His boundless and unconditional commitment, which is often expressed in meter-long Excel tables and often colorful data collections – affectionately named by those around him as “the wallpapers”: always with the aim of grasping complexity and diversity or somehow capturing them

in a document. A collection and documentation tool to process pieces, examination regulations, timetables or his own hip operations transformed into personal artistic events to process the overload.

It would be the biggest surprise to me if Dieter wasn't still willing to push boundaries and throw himself wholeheartedly into dance and life. I can't imagine that, despite all his wisdom and gentleness, this potential doesn't burst through from time to time, making room for a moment of emotional ecstasy with a tear in the corner of his eye and thus shifting something in the perception of his surroundings. Thank you, Dieter!

NORBERT PAPE, DANCER AND CHOREOGRAPHER, BERLIN, FORMERLY FRANKFURT AM MAIN

For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come. (Hebr 13:14)

Did the priest see the young Dieter's potential when he chose this bible verse for his confirmation or was it a formative coincidence? Either way, something must have been touched and resonated in the boy coming of age. For in 2008, the verse became the title of one of his choreographies. Dieter is not of the kind to wait for heaven to come.

He taught us that institutions can be changed. More precisely, he taught us one can change institutions. He pro-actively contributed to the emergence of the institutional landscape that we experience today as an established international network of production centers for contemporary dance. I remember the inspiring stories of the birth of the Berlin Tanzfabrik out of the collective endeavor of a handful of rebellious artists and his insistence on the necessity of lobbying for the forms of dance that deviate from state theatre production. I had the chance to witness and learn from his participation in the conception, emergence and implementation of Tanzplan Deutschland. Upon being asked why he chose to enter the realm of dance education, he replied that at that point in his life, he felt that he could enact more change from within institutions. And indeed, also there, he relentlessly insisted on change, on collaboration, on interdisciplinarity, on flat hierarchies and on participation. He seized all opportunities presented to him while also supporting numerous others. I remember long brainstorming sessions with him and others, out of which the name „ID_Frankfurt“ emerged, which was then chosen for what has since become a lively and outstanding non-profit association of freelance artists*, theorists* and mediators in choreography and performance working in Frankfurt am Main and the surrounding area. Further, he taught us how institutions run through our bodies. His improvisation classes were deeply informed by queer and feminist body politics. Via skillfully curated sets of exercises and practices, he raised our awareness on how norms inscribe themselves in our habitual ways of moving, the way our

attention is solicited, our desires, our sense of shame, the way our interactions bear witness of subconscious power dynamic and greater social structures. We practiced setting limits, saying no in order to say yes to something else, to something more in line with our values, our interests, our selves. We listened to Laurie Anderson while exploring falling, or understanding ourselves as octopi, or following the point of contact along its path. We listened to every little movement. We used our feet as hands, moved from our mouths, then from our anuses, then switched between the two. Have you ever moved your tailbones from the inside? He would like to ask this question, seriously and also somewhat mischievously, inviting participants to give it a try at home. He did not mince his words.

20 years later, the world and our relationship to institutions has changed profoundly. In the face of the rise of liberal authoritarianism and relentless crisis, what remains of Dieter's emancipatory teachings? Positivity and actionism seem to make way for negativity and censorship. Laurie Anderson, for example, recently had to decide that a refusal of the Pina Bausch professorship was "the best way forward". She had been asked how she imagined working in an "undisturbed and concentrated" manner given her political opinions. The sexual liberation movement was challenged by #MeToo and currently needs to resist being instrumentalized for the pinkwashing of necropolitics. A postcard I remember seeing on Dieter's fridge comes to mind: „What urge will save us now that sex won't?“ The question from Jenny Holzer's *Survival Series* of the 80s hits differently today. For we have no continuing city, and thus also our struggles change. But beyond and possibly through these changes of discourse, strategies and tactics, I understand ever more deeply my indebtedness to Dieter for having encouraged us to fight indifference, to take a stance, to align our artistic practice with our values and for having been a role model in putting oneself out there "mit Haut und Haar".

HELGE MUSIAL, PROFESSOR OF DANCE, MOZARTEUM UNIVERSITY, SALZBURG

At the beginning of the 1980s, I was looking for a dance studio in Berlin, which hardly existed. Ballet was possible, that was largely it, had it not been for the newly founded Tanzfabrik. As I was making my way home from one of the dance classes there in the spring of 1982, someone called out from a third-floor window in the courtyard, asking if I would like to go for a coffee with him. It was Dieter Heitkamp.

It was thanks to him that I got to know contact improvisation. Like me, Dieter had a background in sports. But, what was and still is, particularly special for me is his work as a drawing and visual artist with a fascination



PHOTO: EVA RADUNZEL

for all kinds of objects that lent themselves to choreographic purposes. His sketchbooks for his works are wonderful pieces of art.

After the first improvisational performances on the premises of Möckernstraße 68, Dieter then suggested producing a duet with my saxophone. The instrument should not remain a static concert element, but the sound should move through the space along with the movement. Many years of collaboration followed.

Dieter's way of developing projects was new in the dance landscape of the early 1980s. Many of his works were created in co-authorship, but he also wanted ideas from performers in the works with him as lead choreographer. This made the pieces particularly multi-layered and created opportunities for the performers to express their personalities and life experiences. The often extremely spirited friction in the rehearsals was exhausting, but always explosive in terms of creativity. Example: In the 1985-piece *Sieg der Körperfreuden* (Triumph of Physical Pleasure) about sexuality and sport, all the performers were able to draw parallels to their own sporting past.

Dieter's artistic and cultural-political (activist) work is characterized by an irrepressible creative drive and combative courage. His ideas sometimes appear unconventional in their originality – and are convincing, sensible and purposeful on closer inspection. He deserves the honorary title of "dance visionary", as he has conceived and pioneered developments in dance that

at some point became the norm. Dieter addressed and paved the way for queerness in his work, as well as an original transdisciplinarity in dance. In his early pedagogical work, he had people from all age groups and backgrounds: a pioneer in today's popular approach to community dance.

Dieter was instrumental in creating an unmistakable colorfulness and originality in the early Tanzfabrik. He invented his own choreographic working methods and techniques. His work and aesthetics were always conceptually different. For me, every piece was a new experience, whether as a performer or as a spectator.

An anecdote from the early days of our almost 20 years of touring: In 1984, we performed *Buddy Bodies* at PS 122 in New York. The next morning, we wanted to take the night train to Montréal. Back then, we always transported our stage set ourselves, more or less in our carry-on luggage. In addition to my saxophone case and the travel bags with my personal belongings, there were: costumes and shoes for six different solos and duets, plus three large furniture packing mats as part of the stage set, a stone sculpture in the form of an old marble handrail from a demolished Berlin villa, spread over two padded wooden suitcases, total weight approx. 60 kg, and a 7 kg shot put ball. Also, a Bauhaus-Wassily-Chair, a gong, a metal pendulum; a strobe light, a slide projector, a 16mm film reel, and a broomstick. Most of the material was stored in a gray duffel bag, 1.20 metres wide and approx. 1.40 metres high.

We dragged all of this around the country for guest performances. So, when we stood on the platform with it, the train station manager wouldn't let us on. Too bulky, too much, no way. Then Dieter went into action. He argued emphatically and convincingly across the entire platform, 'we can take this all apart', and began to distribute the stage objects from the duffel bag across the platform. A grandiose performance that made the manager understand that Dieter was going to fight for us at the start our journey and that this was about something of the utmost importance. A conductor then helped us to fit everything in. The guest performance was saved.

I am truly happy about the invitation to have coffee with him in the spring of 1982. Our time together was one of the greatest gifts I have received in my life. It makes me feel joy and gratitude that the dance world has bestowed Dieter Heitkamp with the well-deserved honour of the German Dance Award for his work in 2024.

ULRICH ROEHM, DANCER, DANCE EDUCATOR, ORGANIZER, LONG-TIME FIRST CHAIRMAN OF THE GERMAN PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR DANCE EDUCATION (DBFT)

It was probably on one of my many trips to Berlin that I first saw Dieter Heitkamp with his choreography *Zwei Herren und ein Saxophon* (Two Men and a Saxophone). You have to imagine: Dance in the 1980s! A young dancer with a dancing musical instrument as a partner, Helge Musial, and a great dance-musical duet is created.

In the 1990s, the Fonds Darstellende Künste (DAKU) was still financed by the Federal Ministry of the Interior and was based in the capital Bonn. The president of the Union of German Stage Workers (GDBA) Hans Herdlein and I were on the fund's board and jury. In discussions with a ministry employee, we came up with the idea of a Fonds-DAKU gala in Bonn-Bad Godesberg for (supporting) politicians from the Bonn government scene to show them what they were supporting every year – and for the public, of course. So, I presented Heitkamp's *Zwei Herren und ein Saxophon* on the gala program, as well as Susanne Linke, whom I also supported through the fund whenever possible.

In 1985 I founded the Ballet Summer Bolzano, which I directed until 2006 (today Tanz Bozen / Bolzano Danza). In 1987 I invited the *Saxophone duet* to the Bolzano Festival; and in 1996, when the time was ripe for more dance styles for the South Tyrolean culture and dance scene, I invited Dieter Heitkamp (annually from then on) as a teacher for contact improvisation. From 2001, he also organized contact jam sessions there. Instead of teaching in the studio, he loved taking his students to the riverside and to get in touch and contact with nature – even when it was 42 degrees and there was no shade.

We remained in contact for many years after he went to the Hochschule in Frankfurt. Dieter Heitkamp, dancer, choreographer, organizer, educator, has truly contributed to dance in Germany! My heartfelt congratulations.

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The Board of Trustees supports the sponsor in the conception and long-term direction of the German Dance Award. It discusses and approves conceptual guidelines and appoints the jury on the basis of its own recommendations and those of the sponsor. The Board of Trustees also supports the sponsor in promoting the award in cultural policy and society.

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Dachverband Tanz Deutschland

The Dachverband Tanz Deutschland (German Dance Association – DTD, founded in 2004 as the Ständige Konferenz Tanz / Standing Dance Conference) has been working since 2006 as a nationwide platform for artistic dance in Germany. It was initiated out of the stakeholders' awareness that dance needs to speak with one voice in Germany's national political landscape. Today the DTD works as an umbrella for the outstanding associations and institutions for artistic dance in Germany. Its members span across a range of aesthetics, diverse production methods, and specific professional areas within the field in dance.

Dachverband Tanz Deutschland develops position papers and concepts for the advancement of dance in Germany, as well as launches campaigns and initiatives, implementing these in its own projects. Since 2016, it has been involved in the nationwide funding programs TANZPAKT Stadt-Land-Bund, Tanzland-Fonds for guest performance partnerships and creative transfer. Since 2018, DTD has been the organizer of the German Dance Award. Within the funding concept NEUSTART KULTUR, Dachverband Tanz Deutschland implemented the DIS-TANZEN, tanz:digital and DIS-TANZ-START programs.

In recent years, the association has achieved a great deal to enhance the perception of dance by the state and local authorities. Federal funding programs have been strengthened, re-initiated and carried out by Dachverband Tanz Deutschland. The networking of the dance scene via various discussion formats and projects has become more intensive; formats and platforms for information and regular professional exchange have been developed. The German Dance Award enables the DTD to communicate the diversity of dance and the qualities of this art form nationwide.

Projects of the Dachverband Tanz Deutschland are funded by the Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Kultur und Medien (Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media), the Kulturstiftung des Bundes (German Federal Cultural Foundation), the Kulturstiftung der Länder (Cultural Foundation of the Federal States), the Fonds Darstellende Künste (Fund for Performing Arts), other foundations, the city of Essen and the state of North Rhine-Westphalia.

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THANKS

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We would also like to thank our honorary patron Prof. Dr. Norbert Lammert and the Norbert Lammert Foundation. Additional thank you to Ms. Marianne Kaimer for her generous support and the sponsors Jeweler Brinckmann & Lange in Essen and Harlequin Floors.

We would like to thank the Board of Trustees of the German Dance Award and the the board of the Dachverband Tanz Deutschland, who provide us with expert and advisory support. Special thanks go to Ulrich Roehm, who as the founder of the German Dance Award, continues to be an attentive advisor. We would also like to thank Rainer Zoch, who for several years has supported us with his expertise in attracting sponsors. And we thank the jury under the chairmanship of Adriana Almeida Pees, who, out of a rigorous discussion about the many proposals submitted, selected this year's award winner and the honourees.

Many thanks to the artists and speakers who add splendour to the award ceremonies and make the German Dance Award a celebration of dance. Also Nina Hümpel, Tobias Ehinger and Marek Tůma, who design the gala program. Tobias Ehinger also contributes his expertise in the organizational management. Once again, we would like to thank for the diligent and professional cooperation with Theater und Philharmonie Essen GmbH and with PACT Zollverein.

We would also like to thank all those who made this program possible: the video team from Siegersbusch Film, the German Dance Film Institute Bremen and the technical teams. This year's supporting program includes the Dance Award Meeting Point in the Choir Forum with Dance Space Europe, an exchange format on the topic of touring in Europe. A big thank you to Johannes Bergmann and Friederike Geisler.

We would like to thank all those who support the German Dance Award as freelancers: editing, translation, proofreading, graphics, artist support, audio transcription, sign language interpreting and social media support.

Finally, our sincere thanks go to the team of the Dachverband Tanz Deutschland, which organizes this grand project with incredible enthusiasm and exceptional professionalism to make the German Dance Award project a reality: Valentina Boroni (production management), Kristina Skaro (production), Alexa Junge and Rosi Steinbrück (press and public relations), Susanne Schade (complimentary tickets), Franziska Rudert (artist support) as well as all the energetic assistants in Essen. Thank you very much!

Michael Freundt, Executive Director Dachverband Tanz Deutschland
Clara Dolinschek, Project Coordination German Dance Award



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SEE YOU IN 2026!

THE NEXT DANCE AWARD WILL BE
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