Rafaële Giovanola / CocoonDance

GERMAN DANCE AWARD 2027

Rafaële Giovanola ©Sabrina Weniger

Jury statement

Das The jury is delighted to award the German Dance Prize to Rafaële Giovanola in recognition of 25 years of exceptional artistic achievement and her pioneering contribution to contemporary dance.

In 2000, when Rafaële Giovanola and her partner Rainald Endraß were invited to the Avignon Off Festival, their company needed a name. At that time, she was creating a garden performance using cloth wrapped around the body, which reminded her of a cocoon. Thus, the CocoonDance Company was born. Since then, Rafaële Giovanola has pursued an uncompromising artistic path, insisting on

challenging pre-existing perceptions of the body, human presence, and relationships.

Her extraordinary stamina in observing and exploring a single topic is what makes her work unmistakable. Her relentless curiosity and ability to merge unfamiliar movement practices give rise to kaleidoscopic creatures: figures that exist between human and insect, plant and avatar, or machine—magical beings unlike any seen before. She is at home in the search for a body that does not yet exist.

In 2004/2005, the Ballsaal in Bonn became the home of CocoonDance. Since then, Rafaële Giovanola has created nearly 50 works within the framework of the Ballsaal and, since 2020, as Associate Artist at the Théâtre du Crochetan in the Swiss Alpine city of Monthey, her hometown. She has developed educational formats in both cities through junior companies, where anybody is welcome to join. This reflects her dedication to connecting dance with young people, giving them access to the art form, and making dance accessible to everyone. The same commitment also inspired the development of the MoveApp.

Like the name of her company, she has created her own cocoon within the dance world.

The jury celebrates Rafaële Giovanola not only for her outstanding body of work, but also for her enduring influence on contemporary dance. Her artistic legacy continues to inspire future generations and enrich the field with imagination, rigor, and originality.

Biography Rafaële Giovanola

Rafaële Giovanola is a Swiss choreographer and director, born in Baltimore (USA). After completing her classical dance training with Marika Besobrasova in Monte Carlo, she received her first engagement as a soloist in Turin. After one season, she was engaged by Egon Madsen at the Frankfurt Ballet, where she danced both classical repertoire and contemporary choreographies and, above all, encountered the choreographer William Forsythe. She remained under his direction for eight seasons and participated in numerous groundbreaking productions.

This was followed by engagements in Freiburg im Breisgau and subsequently in Bonn under the direction of Pavel Mikulástik, where she performed leading roles. Parallel to her career as a dancer, she founded the performative collective CocoonDance in 2000 together with dramaturg Rainald Endraß. Over the years, the company has developed an extensive network of partners in Germany and internationally and has been presenting dance performances at the Theater im Ballsaal Bonn since 2004. In addition to full-length productions, numerous educational projects are created there, including the award-winning Junior Company Bonn and the Junior Company in Monthey (CH).

From 2016 to 2018, Giovanola received a grant from Théâtre Pro for a three-year residency at the Théâtre du Crochetan, which further strengthened her ties to the city of Monthey. She has been working there as an associate artist since 2020. In 2021, CocoonDance launched the digital platform “MoveApp,” which connects

dance enthusiasts and, through user contributions, is creating a constantly growing glossary of contemporary dance.

To date, Rafaële Giovanola has created more than fifty productions that have toured five continents and been invited to major festivals, including Tanzplattform Deutschland in 2018 and 2020, STEPS 2022, Festival Antigel, CODA Oslo, TanzNRW, and other international platforms. She has received numerous awards, including the 2010 Promotion Prize of the Canton of Valais and the 2021 Culture Prize of the City of Monthey. For her production SPHYNX, which she developed for tanzmainz, she was awarded the German Theater Prize DER FAUST in 2022 in the category “Best Dance Production.” In 2024, she also received the D&D Award from the Italian magazine Danza&Danza as “Best Contemporary Artist.”

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