The Experience Theater
choreographed by Pina Bausch

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ABSTRACT – The Experience Theater choreographed by Pina Bausch – A theater where the spectator is involved in all senses, offering welcoming conditions. In the work of Pina Bausch, everyday body behavior is not just a matter of style; her dance develops content with a proper writing, inviting the spectator to experience a poetic reality. For this purpose, the article initially presents a historical line of Tanztheater, its attributes and interrelationships, closing with the specific characteristics of four works of the choreographer, created in the period comprising the initial two decades (1974-1989) of her fruitful production, and which were watched live by the author of the text.

Keywords: Tanztheater. Pina Bausch. Experience Theater. Choreographies.


RESUMO – O Teatro da Experiência coreografado por Pina Bausch – Um teatro no qual o espectador é envolvido em todos os seus sentidos, oferecendo condições de acolhimento. Na obra de Pina Bausch, o comportamento do corpo cotidiano não será apenas uma questão de estilo; sua dança desenvolve conteúdo, com grafia própria e convida o espectador a experimentar uma realidade poética. Para isso, o artigo apresenta inicialmente uma linha histórica do Tanztheater, seus atributos e inter-relações, até chegar às características específicas de quatro obras da coreógrafa, criadas no período que abrange as duas primeiras décadas (1974-1989) de sua frutífera produção, e que foram assistidas ao vivo pela autora do texto.

Introducing

Performing arts and the notion of representation are historically associated with magical, religious and primitive rituals. Based on interdisciplinary principles, the theater will use both the word and other non-verbal signs. Essentially, it deals with codes established from the gesture and voice, responsible not only for the performance of the show, but also for the language and expressiveness. The use of gestures and voices have made theater a text of culture that reports to other codes, with the use of space, time and movements.

Because Germany does not have a big tradition with the classical ballet and because it was the scene of several previous movements which reflected the relation of man with nature, this could be a reason for the country to have had the opening for being Tanztheater’s birthplace. Or, as some historians consider, the choreographers of Tanztheater would be the heirs of Ausdruckstanz – Expressionist dance.

The journalist Jochen Schmidt (1992) suggests tracing the following line:

Pina Bausch (1945-2009) may be considered the direct heiress of her teacher Kurt Jooss (1901-1979). Susanne Linke (1944) is considered the successor of Mary Wigman (1886-1973) and Dore Hoyer (1911-196). Gehard Bohner (1936-1992), the follower of Oskar Schlemmer (1888-1943) and the Bauhaus movement. And that Johann Kresnik’s ‘Choreographic Theater’ (1939) has points in common with the social criticisms made by Valeska Gert (1892-1978) in her work (Schmidt, 1992, p. 10, author’s translation).

This historic line with the names of protagonist artists, suggested by Schmidt, does not guarantee any direct connection between the two forms of expression, Ausdruckstanz and Tanztheater, but it can be realized that some traces were left there. In the pedagogical considerations, which are found from the teaching practiced by Mary Wigman and Kurt Jooss, it can be realized that these masters did not want to teach an already existing style or aesthetics. Instead, they intended each student to find in themselves tools to be reconciled with the techniques that would be absorbed throughout their studies.
Kurt Jooss, especially, believed in the possibility of the fusion of classical ballet with the capacity to express all the dramatic forms, originating in the theater. Jooss strove to create a new dance that possessed a text, merging the development of his methodological thinking between creation and pedagogy of dance teaching.

**Tanztheater and some Interrelationships**

*Tanztheater* aesthetics, as it can be seen today, descend from the interrelations between the protagonists of the German Expressionist dance, from Kurt Jooss’s activity in *Folkwang Hochschule* in Essen, Germany, as well as the influence of modern American dance. This fact can be proven as the most significant choreographers of the first *Tanztheater* generation studied in New York, as it is the case of Pina Bausch, who worked for a number of years in different American companies.

It can be said that *Tanztheater* has several faces, and that the personality of each creator, their stories and personal experiences will characterize and print the lightness and weight of their respective works. It will be found in *Tanztheater* works gestures associated with everyday gestures of people who inhabit different cities of the world. Certain productions are quite economical, as you can see only the performer, his body, a soundtrack, lighting and a simple costume. Choreographers like Pina Bausch, Reinhild Hoffmann or Susanne Linke have created works that require great productions with impressive scene effects. Among them are objects that occupy the whole stage or a scenery with actual elements of nature, such as water, earth, sand, cotton, flowers and others. The examples can continue with film projections, live music and many other subsidies. There are also elements that can be considered as elements of ordinary use, as if they were rules that *Tanztheater* choreographers follow, such as the disuse of elements of the classical ballet in its original form. Even if there is a character that comes dancing with pointe shoes, this would be in a different context than the one we are used to in classical ballet.

Undoubtedly, there is quite a vast area of intersection between classical ballet and *Tanztheater*; in this intersection, it can be found some of the phenomena that inspired the different modalities of dances seen in the contemporaneity.
Schmidt writes that:

*Tanztheater* has to do with the spiritual posture of each choreographer. With its relation to certain conventions and aesthetic, that during the development of the facts told by them, cause them to sprout freely as a new movie or a new novel (Schmidt, 1992, p. 25, author’s translation).

The scenic structures found in *Tanztheater* plays can be solos, scenic collages, or sequences danced in group. The solos are used to present the interpreter or to show a specificity of its movement. The scenic collages can happen in distinct parts of the stage, they talk about the same theme, or different themes. In such collages, sometimes the scenes overlap. The sequences that are danced in group have the strength of the collective, but the performers keep their own individuality.

The sung or spoken word does not necessarily belong to *Tanztheater* but begins to be tried already in the mid-1970s, as if to increase the possibilities of expression. However, it is only in the 1980s that the word reaches another dimension, when choreographers descending from the *Folkwang* lineage began to use, in some of their works, texts as a dance partner.

The use of music in *Tanztheater* does not obey any rules. The options are very wide and individual, covering jazz music, including ethnic music, contemporary music, and silence. Many of these choreographers work with a musical collage, others work with specially composed music for their plays, and others work with already existing complete musical works. The performers dance in some parts their personal stories, but these appear on the scene as collective references and sometimes can relate, in some way, to the life stories of people who are also in the audience.

Just like in Brecht’s work, *Tanztheater*, especially Pina Bausch’s, takes everything from the gesture, gesture that is focused on the field of bodily actions and it will speak for itself.

When asked in an interview (2000) by Lothar Schmidt-Mühlisch whether she was aware that the impact that she had produced with her work revolutionized *Tanztheater*, Bausch, replied:

Naturally, I know the effects that my work produced. But that never bothered me, because I never work starting from an external reason, or theoretical. It worked, and it has always worked because I’m always asking
myself: How can I express what I feel? (Schimidt-Mühlisch apud in Koldenhoff; Pina Bausch Foundation. 2016. p. 238)

**Traces on the choreographer**

I did not think much about it. Possibly this happened by itself. In fact, I’ve always been quite afraid to do something, but I loved to dance. And more or less at the end of school when we can, or we have to choose what we will be, because we know the school will end - then it was already clear to me: I would study dance (Bausch apud Schmidt, 1998, p. 28, author’s translation).

Pina Bausch extended the existing concept of *Tanztheater*, revolutionized it and redefined dance in its entirety. Likewise, Bausch’s *Tanztheater* takes us closer to a Theatre of Experience, in which the spectator is involved in senses and has influenced the arts, particularly opera, theater and cinema.

The young Philippine Bausch, born in Solingen in North Rhine Westphalia, Germany, said in several interviews that in her childhood she used to hide under the tables in her parents’ restaurant of, observing the visitors and listening to their stories.

What I do: I look. Maybe this is it. I have always only observed people. I have always only seen human relationships, or tried to see them, to talk about them. This is what I’m interested in. I also know nothing that might be more important than this (Bausch apud Hoghe, 1986, p. 8, author’s translation).

At the age of 15, Pina Bausch decided to continue her dance studies at the *Folkwang Schule* in the nearby city of Essen, where she studied dance and dance pedagogy, and from there she performed in various parts of the world. Everything happened step by step, but always accompanied by some success.

At the *Folkwang Schule* she lived with the legacy of the teaching of masters such as Laban and Leeder, who looked for expressivity in the dance.

Pina Bausch’s first mentor in *Folkwang Schule* was Kurt Jooss, with whom she says that she learned sincerity, and how to offer tools to stock the qualities, already existing, in the bodies of her future interpreters-collaborators, coming from all over the world, and protagonists in Bausch’s
47 plays and 1 film, along her fertile and creative career. Later, she brought to her creations traces of the realism with which Jooss addressed social issues in his plays.

Bausch’s dance studies continued in New York between 1959 and 1962, thanks to a scholarship received through DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service). Initially Bausch was considered a special student at the renowned Juilliard School, where she studied with Antony Tudor, Donya Feuer, José Limon, Paul Sanasardo, among others. Next, she was hired as a dancer in American companies of modern dance. Certainly, this whole confrontation with the modern American dance, which Bausch had the opportunity to experience with her own body, directly influenced the characteristics of the dance that she would compose and perform in the following years, when she went back to Germany.

Pina Bausch returned to the Folkwang Schule in 1962 at Jooss’ request, to teach in the school and to perform as a soloist in the Folkwang-Ballett. As the company did not have, at that time, many presentations, Bausch began exercising choreography to occupy her free time. With the retirement of Kurt Jooss in 1969, Pina Bausch, at the age of 29, added to the activities that she had been developing in Essen the position of director of Folkwang-Ballett. Its name was changed to Folkwang Tanzstudio, name kept to the present time.

The methodology in the now world-famous Folkwang Universität der Künste, in the Department of Dance, was and is even today quite influenced by Jooss’ thought. His methodology is less based on learning a technique, although different dance techniques are offered in the school curriculum; the engine of teaching is the idea that students should find their way to relate and develop within the dance. It is perhaps a kind of creative authorship. And, with the success of the talented Pina Bausch and her Tanztheater Wuppertal always in international tours, the school has become a large study center that hosted students from different countries around the world.

But let’s go back to the chronology of the course that is being presented here.

Along the 1970s, Pina Bausch accepted invitations to teach in workshops in different cities, continued teaching in Folkwang, including...
classes for children, returned to New York to dance, and developed some choreographies that entered the repertoire of *Folkwang Tanzstudio*. After a few contracts to perform different choreographies at the Wuppertal Opera House in 1973, at the age of 33, Pina Bausch was appointed by Arno Wüstenhöfer (1920-2003), general director of the Opera House, as choreographer-resident, a position that she held with great success until her death in June 2009.

I thought it would not be possible at all to do something within the system. I thought about the routine and the determinations and everything that exists. I thought that in the Theater everything should be done as the board was already used to, I had great fear (Bausch apud Schmidt, 1998, p. 42, author’s translation).

All the existing rules within the Theater’s system acquired great flexibility to integrate the innovative creativity of Pina Bausch and her talented *Ensemble*. For 36 years since joining the Wuppertal Opera, it can be said that she was the only personality in the German stage scene who was able to transform all her theatrical visions into reality. However, her early works were not very well accepted by the public attending the Wuppertal Opera, used to classical ballets and operettas on the scene in a traditional way. They reacted aggressively by leaving before the show ended, saying rude words and knocking at the doors of the theater.

I believe that with the support given by the *Goethe-Institute* to *Tanztheater Wuppertal* in the early 1980s, leading the *Ensemble* to South America, Israel, Australia, USA and to several European countries, and with the positive critics received abroad, the public of the quiet town of Wuppertal began slowly to relate to that gender of theatrical conception.

It is important to note that Pina Bausch, who has always been considered extremely talented, received in her two beginnings of career as dancer-teacher-choreographer and later as choreographer-director, an unconditional support and trust from her two mentors: respectively Kurt Jooss and Arno Wüstenhöfer. Jooss offered the necessary space and confidence for Bausch to grow up in the *Folkwang Hochschule*, and Wüstenhöfer offered her the freedom to develop her way of working. Furthermore, in certain moments of crisis, when members of the *Ensemble* wanted to step down from the company because they felt uncertain about the type of work they were doing or due to the reactions of the public, it
was Wüstenhöfer who talked to the dancers so that they would give one more chance to the choreographer and try a little more. I believe that art will always need visionary and instinctive people who support talented artists, protagonists who work with models that are ahead of their time, possibly being misunderstood because of that.

As it has been commented by Pina Bausch, over four decades of work as director and mentor of the *Ensemble Tanztheater Wuppertal* (1974-2009), created several plays which she called *Stück*. Next, two tables are presented concerning to two specific phases of the creator, so that the reader can have an overview of the whole repertoire that was created in this period. The tables also present the original title of the plays, their duration, the type of music used, Bausch creation partners, the number of dancers seen on stage, the location where the play was performed for the first time, and some other specific observation.

For the approach of this paper, it was chosen works created in the first two decades (1974-1989) and I have followed the chronology of creations for the research. It is highlighted, for every phase, the general aspects of the period and some emblematic aspects of the chosen creations. However, the intention will not be to exhaust all the information about each play, but rather to present some clues for the reader to approach the vast work of Pina Bausch.

**Traces about the Creations - Phase I (1974-1979)**

It’s not about art, or about mere ability. It’s about life and finding a language for life. And it’s about time and only about time and about what is not yet art, but perhaps could become art (Bausch apud Koldenhoff; Pina Bausch Foundation, 2016, p. 255, author’s translation).

In this phase, which I will call Phase I, the works of Pina Bausch produced between 1974 and 1979 are shown; it was quite a productive phase, as the choreographer created up to three works per season. At this phase, it is also observed that Bausch’s calligraphy received influences quite perceptible from the masters with whom she had worked until then, from the structures presented in the works, and these aspects were identified by us. In this first period of intense production, Bausch thought that it was important to keep the creations in the repertoire, thus any production could always be reperformed. It is also important to point out that the
*Ensemble* had only 25 members at the time and the dancers performed all the works.

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<th>Original title/Translation</th>
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<td>. Iphigenie auf Tauris</td>
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<td>. Zwei Krawatten</td>
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<td>. I’ll take you to the corner</td>
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<td>. Orpheus und Eurydice</td>
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<td>The Rite of Spring:</td>
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<td>. Come dance with me</td>
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<td>. Er nimmt sie an der Hand und führt sie in das Schloss, die andere folgen…</td>
<td>Rolf Borzik</td>
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<td>. He Takes Her by The Hand and Leads Her into The Castlel, The Others Follow …</td>
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Since her beginning in Wuppertal, Bausch created various plays with her young Ensemble, a characteristic that will unfold over her rich production.

In order to create her plays, Pina Bausch experienced with distinct musical genres as operetta, opera, and also used whole plays, such as Béla Bartók’s opera Bluebeard’s Castle, The Seven Deadly Sins by Brecht and Weill, Purcel’s popular songs, Shakespearean texts, until the collages songs, that will become a constant in her repertoire with the Tanztheater Wuppertal from the late 1970s on.

Norberto Servos, a researcher who followed Bausch’s work for four decades, suggests that:

The Tanztheater resembles much more to musical principles, where there is a thought with themes and counter theme (thesis and antithesis), variations and counterpoint to work. The beginning and the end do not mark the psychological development time interval of people. The dominant Principle is Dramaturgy and free motivation; however, the very carefully orchestrated choreography ties the process (Servos, 2012, p. 25-26, author’s translation).

Nowadays, dramaturgy of the body, dramaturgy of the body that dances is mentioned; dramaturgy is a term that dance has borrowed from the theater and gives us indications of something like writing a text, or a method to organize and do. In Pina Bausch’s Tanztheater it is always possible to perceive the body of the performer, and stories inside him will be the major theme of all her plays. Through the body, or the interpreters’ bodies, the stories will be told, and this network of stories woven into a large chunky choreographic patchwork quilt will give life to each one of Bausch’s play (Stücke).
Concerning to Phase I, the reflection and the comments included in this text will only be on *The Rite of Spring*, because it was the play that I watched the greatest number of times, danced by different casts, in different scenic spaces, including the orchestra playing live the music of Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971). And especially because it is the only play in the repertoire of Pina Bausch that I had the opportunity to experiment and learn some body sequences\(^{22}\).

Bausch’s creation *The Rite of Spring* (1975), with music by Igor Strawinsky (1882-1971), is a play with great technical difficulty and at the same time of great significance within the repertoire of *Wuppertal Tanztheater*. The play is performed in the expressive dance tradition and contains all the raw materials that Pina Bausch, throughout her forthcoming works, would have used.

*The Rite of Spring* marks at the same time the end and the turning point of an increment, which uses radically the means offered by the theater and that extends the traditional understanding of the dance. Subsequently to this play it can be said that a new meaning of choreography is found and from it follows the formation of the *Tanztheater* concept, that is associated with Wuppertal (Servos, 1996, p. 24, author’s translation).

At 35 years of age, Pina Bausch created *The Rite of Spring*, and she used to demonstrate every movement with her own body to the dancers of her *Ensemble*. Demonstrating can be understood here as transferring the movement from one body to another one, almost as a kind of *body-oral* history.

In order to be possible to perform the movements that compose the choreography of *The Rite of Spring*, it is necessary that the body of the interpreter has records of quite advanced techniques of classical ballet and modern dance. And learning must occur through repetitions, in search of movement quality precision along with the music.

Stephan Brinkmann, a dancer who had the opportunity to perform in *The Rite of Spring* between 1993 and 2010, corroborates with our thinking in his paper:

The movement of *Sacre* is dramatically and musically motivated and based on a given concept. Yet, the relationship between emotion and movement is not to be thought of as one of cause and effect, but as one of reciprocity (Brinkmann, 2015, p. 160, author’s translation)\(^ {23}\).
The keywords that could be assigned to this play would be: ritual, group, battle between the sexes, tension, sacrifice/sacrificed, exhaustion. These words cannot be seen as crystallized throughout the play, but it can be seen their transformation in the movement performed by the Ensemble members, in a pulsing, sweeping music, that seems to rule all the actions seen on the scene.

When Jacques Malaterre, the director of the documentary _Les Printemps du Sacre_ (1993), asks Bausch what she means by her version of _Sacre_, she replies:

I cannot speak of the Rite of Spring. It’s too powerful. I don’t have the words.

My every phrase, my every intention is there in my movements.

I have only my dance (Bausch apud _Les Printemps du Sacre_, 1993).

Image 1 – The Rite of Spring – _Tanztheater Wuppertal_ cast.

Source: Photo from _Tanztheater Wuppertal - Pina Bausch_ collection.
Stephan Brinkmann also tells in his article (2015) that what moved the choreographer Pina Bausch at the beginning of the work was music. In 1997, 23 years after her debut in Wuppertal, Bausch was invited to stage her *The Rite of Spring* for the dancers of Paris Opera, and in the first conversation with the dancers she spoke about it:

The first thing I did was to tell them about what *Sacre* meant to me. The starting point is the music. There are so many feelings in it; it changes constantly. There is also a lot of fear in it. I thought, how would it be to dance knowing that you have to die? How would you feel, how would I feel? The Chosen One is special, but she dances knowing that the end is the death. The dancers listened carefully. They seemed very interested (Brinkmann apud Riding, 15 jun. 1997, author’s translation).

In the play (Image 1), the only scenic apparatus is the stage covered by a layer of earth, which refers to an archaic, ancestral place, without allowing to identify a defined period. The earth influences directly the movement of the dancers, hinders their actions, adheres to the women’s dresses in the unfolding of the play, to the naked torsos of the dancers, to the faces and to the hair, mixed by the sweat of the bodies of the interpreters.

In Pina Bausch’s *Tanztheater* nothing happens ‘as it were’, as if the dancers were interpreting their weariness. They are really with their feet buried in the earth, up to the height of the malleolus bone. The energy that is
required by the dancers in *The Rite of Spring* reaches the public directly, without any concealment (Servos, 1996, p. 25, author’s translation).

The dancers chosen to work in the rich repertoire of *Tanztheater Wuppertal* plays belong to a group of human beings who, through the direction of Pina Bausch, insist on showing the public how people really are, not how they should be. Bausch was able to develop with them a new type of theater, a theater that has different faces of the world. Probably much of this has to do with the provenance of its actors, who have diverse nationalities, coming from the five continents and bringing their experiences of varied cultures, temperaments, and mentalities, and yet keeping the peculiarity of their identities.

**Traces on the Creations - Phase II (1980-1989)**

In this phase, which I will call Phase II, are the works carried out between 1980 and 1989, when Pina Bausch reduced her new creations to one per year, with some exceptions, as it can be seen in Table 2. It was a decade of arrivals and departures in the personal life of Pina Bausch, who lost her life and work partner, Rolf Borzik (1945-1980). Borzik was the author of a part of the scenography and costumes of the first decade of *Wuppertal Tanztheater’s* existence. In addition, Borzik worked in *Café Müller* (1978), an emblematic and very significant play that is in the repertoire of *Tanztheater Wuppertal* to this day. In *Café Müller*, Borzik created the actions of the character he performs. He organizes, insistently, the chairs that are part of the scene, and tries to support the people that circulate through that café. This decade was also a decade of several innovations, when her son was born, and when the number of invitations for the *Ensemble* to participate at international festivals, around the world, increased significantly. In 1983 Pina Bausch played in Federico Fellini’s movie *E la Nave Vá*, as princess *Lherimia*. Along 1988 Bausch directed her own film with the members of the *Tanztheater Wuppertal* (*Die Klange der Kaiserin / The Complaint of an Empress*), which debuted in movie theaters in 1989.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original title</th>
<th>Translation</th>
<th>* Duration</th>
<th>**Music</th>
<th>Scenography</th>
<th>Premiere location</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of dancers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>. Bandoneon</td>
<td>South American Tangos</td>
<td>Grafl Edzard Habben Marion Cito (C)</td>
<td>Wuppertal</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>18</td>
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<td>. Walzer</td>
<td>Waltzes</td>
<td>Musical Collage</td>
<td>Ulrich Bergfelder Marion Cito (C)</td>
<td>Amsterdam In coproduction with Holland Festival</td>
<td>1982</td>
<td>23</td>
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<td>. Auf dem Gebirge hat man ein Geschrei gehört</td>
<td>On the mountain a cry was heard</td>
<td>Musical Collage</td>
<td>Peter Pabst Marion Cito (C)</td>
<td>Wuppertal</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>24</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>. Two Cigarettes in the Dark</td>
<td>Musical Collage</td>
<td>Peter Pabst Marion Cito (C)</td>
<td>Wuppertal</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>. Viktor</td>
<td>Musical Collage</td>
<td>Peter Pabst Marion Cito (C)</td>
<td>Wuppertal *In coproduction with Teatro Argentino and the city of Rome</td>
<td>1986</td>
<td>22</td>
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<tr>
<td>. Ahnen</td>
<td>Ancestors</td>
<td>Musical Collage</td>
<td>Peter Pabst Marion Cito (C)</td>
<td>Wuppertal</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>23</td>
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Film:  
.Die Klage der Kaiserin  
.*The Complaint of an Empress

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<th>Film: Palermo Palermo</th>
<th>Musical Collage</th>
<th>Marion Cito (C)</th>
<th>Wuppertal</th>
<th>1989</th>
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<th>Musical Collage</th>
<th>Peter Pabst</th>
<th>Marion Cito (C)</th>
<th>Wuppertal</th>
<th>1989</th>
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<tr>
<td>*In coproduction with Teatro Biondo Stabile, Palermo and Andres Neumann International</td>
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Table 2 – Catalog of Pina Bausch works for Tanztheater Wuppertal (1980-1989). Source: Author.

With her innovative relationship with dance, Pina Bausch included in her creations dancers, actors, and musicians who interacted in the scenes. In that decade, it is possible to observe that her creations also start with thoughts, texts, repetitions of choreographic cells, in connection with fragments of personal life stories, and small testimonies, of her differentiated Ensemble.

As an example, Hoghe (1989) quotes a brief talk following a rehearsal with one of her dancers-coauthors:

I think it’s great that each play has something from you, a piece of your lives. I think other things are great too, but I think this is wonderful [...]. Each one must be able to be as he or she wants or has developed (Hoghe, 1986, p. 124, author’s translation).

This period inaugurates the use of the questions asked by Bausch to the interpreters during the productions. The interpreters could answer Bausch’s questions through words, movements or both. All the answers were recorded on video tapes, but the interpreters answered only the questions they wanted. Pina Bausch selected the answers-scenes that she thought were most interesting and reworked them individually. Also, she asked the dancer-author to pass to his/her classmates his/her answers, text or movement.

It is also important to emphasize that Pina Bausch through that it was incorrect to call this an improvisation, because in fact the dancers had time
to think and prepare their answers-scenes, and the choreographer, on the other hand, reviewed the material countless times.

Analyzing the scenes and situations that are presented in the plays created during this busy decade, it is possible to notice the presence of a choreographer who is an observer and interested in the social, cultural and geopolitical changes that were happening in the world. Through her sensitive observations and questions asked to the members of her Ensemble, it can be observed in certain scenes the emergence of answers when some actual facts were presented. And in the way they emerge in the scene, there will be a tension between reality and fiction, between the actual and the fictional, even if their boundaries are not clearly defined most of the time.

In the three plays of this period that will be highlighted next, I believe that some of these social, cultural and geopolitical changes came to light through Bausch guiding line. Each one of Bausch plays that were created in this period has some special aspects, but only Bandoneon (1980), Carnations (1982), and Palermo Palermo (1989) maybe should be highlighted.

**Bandoneon** – The play was named after an ordinary instrument in South America and that is quite important in the style of music known as tango. Instrumental tangos or sung tangos will be part of the soundtrack of the play from beginning to end, suggesting melancholy in some scenes, and a certain sensuality in others. The location where the play unfolds is a large hall, with tables, chairs, and on the walls, we see pictures with different figures. The men in the cast wear suits and ties, the women wear festive dresses, costumes that have become typical in Pina Bausch’s plays. The costumes were designed by Marion Cito (1938), the experienced former dancer of the company who for three decades has created the costumes for Wuppertal Tanztheater.
Bandoneon’s central theme is not dancing the tango, even though this musical genre crosses the entire play, giving the audience an opportunity, through the scenic images presented, to make free associations. One of the most emblematic scenes of the play is the moment when in pairs, a man and a woman enter through the proscenium. The man, quite slowly, puts his hand and forearm through the woman’s dress and slowly suspends it until she is mounted on his neck (Image 4). The couple will slowly continue walking on the space until the next pair enters and perform the first action. In the continuity of the scene, all couples enter and perform the first action described in the text. But it is only when the ninth and final couple enters and concludes its action that a strong musical accent takes place, giving a warning sign to the dancers who literally fall to the floor, and there they begin to dance a very marked and striking tango, in an unconventional way. In the various scenes of Bandoneon we see traces of a dance that seems to resist, and which tries to break down clichés of human and stylistic genre, which have been established in society for a long time.
Image 4 – Bandoneon – Cristiana Morganti and Andrey Berenzin. 
Source: Photo from Tanztheater Wuppertal - Pina Bausch collection.

Image 5 – Bandoneon folder. 
Source: Photo from Tanztheater Wuppertal - Pina Bausch Collection.
Carnations’ scenic impact happens when the audience enters the room where the show will take place and faces a field of life-size pink carnations scattered all over the stage. As usual in Pina Bausch’s plays, the fourth wall is open, bridging the actual and the theatrical without barriers. Among the emblematic scenes of the play is the solo created originally by the dancer Lutz Foster (Image 6) who, with his hands, in sign language, translates the song *The Man I Love*, from the American composers George and Ira Gershwin. What seems to be more analyzed throughout *Carnations* by the choreographer and the Ensemble, is why the ability to be happy is so difficult to acquire or preserve. Words like *love* and *being loved*, *companionship*, *pursuit of happiness*, or the sentence *love is strong as death* are said or suggested by the dancers in different scenes throughout the play.

Image 6 – Carnations – Lutz Foster. Source: Photo from Tanztheater Wuppertal - Pina Bausch collection.

It is possible to perceive in the guiding line of the play a certain provocative humor in relation to the traditional elements of classical ballet. Wearing a black dress, the soloist dancer Dominique Mercy repeatedly performs difficult combinations, full of acrobatics originated from classical ballet. Panting, between a combination and another, he asks the audience if they want to see more, and without actually expecting an answer, already starts a new acrobatic combination. Associating with the actual, it is possible, on one hand, to notice the criticism to a society that increasingly demands to the population specialization and high competitiveness. Specifically for the Ensemble, it is a way to counter some critics made at the
time regarding the results seen on the stage, which did not seem to require
great technical ability of the dancers. It is important to remember that the
year of the play’s debut was 1982, when the most popular dance in the
world still was classical ballet. In addition, the companies that were
considered *avant-garde* at that time were companies that ventured into
more contemporary themes\(^28\), yet most of the choreography was performed
with movements originating from classical ballet.

Throughout the play, in some scenes female and male dancers wear
dresses, while in others the traditional suit for men and evening dresses for
women (Image 7). In *Carnations*, it can be observed the combination, now
popular, in which the entire cast parades diagonally on the stage,
performing gestures that can be identified as the seasons of the year,
beginning with spring, followed by summer, autumn and lastly winter. The
whole scene is accompanied by a rhythmic traditional jazz music and good
contagious mood of the entire cast.

![Image 7 – Carnations – Tanztheater Wuppertal cast.](Image 7 – Carnations – Tanztheater Wuppertal cast.
Source: Photo from TanztheaterWuppertal - Pina Bausch collection.)
Unlike all the plays made by Pina Bausch for *Wuppertal Tanztheater*, with scenography by Peter Pabst until then, *Palermo Palermo* starts with the curtain closed (Image 11). The choreographer and set designer wanted the wall, which is the greatest element of this play, behind the curtain, so that the audience could not see it initially. Only after the curtain opening the audience saw the wall closing the entire proscenium. A few moments of wonder and the wall literally falls. After the collapse, the noise of many bricks, their remains, and a lot of dust on the floor, a new barren landscape appears, marked by the poverty of some portraits reminding to the south of Italy. In November of the same year the wall dividing Germany was demolished. Both Bausch and Pabst denied any relation between the unification of Germany and the play, because their idea of having a wall as set design had happened two weeks earlier than the historical episode.
Palermo Palermo is the result of a complex dramaturgical composition that tries to present some associations of experiences lived by the members of Tanztheater Wuppertal through the city that gives the title to the play. During the play, separate groups of women appear dancing to the sound of a very marked music. In other moments, only the men appear. This characteristic was also observed by the members of Tanztheater Wuppertal in the city, where the genres walked separately. The solos are danced by female and male dancers amidst the debris, full of dynamic, virtuosity and many symbols. Perhaps the play, until this period, is the one in which the performers most dance. Some critics said at the time that Pina Bausch makes use of the choreography in her plays, again. Among the themes addressed in the play, the eternal search for love and longing. One of the most emblematic facts observed by the cast in Sicily, and which can be seen in some scenes, is the lack of water in the region.
Image 10 – Palermo Palermo female cast Tanztheater Wuppertal.
Source: Photo from Tanztheater Wuppertal - Pina Bausch collection.

Image 11 – Palermo Palermo.
Source: Photo from Tanztheater Wuppertal - Pina Bausch collection.
The set designer Peter Pabst, Pina Bausch’s work partner for three decades, in a conversation with Wim Wenders (2010), on Palermo Palermo says:

I would no longer have the necessary courage to dream alone, to conceive and design something. Your fantasies must be allowed to run free. I enjoy that. Also, during this phase, I would often promise Pina anything and everything under the sun, without knowing if or how whatever I had promised would be even possible. Pina and I were almost identical in this regard. She always invented, in an uninhibited way, without knowing how everything should or would eventually fit together. Somehow, both of us always managed to position ourselves with our backs against the wall (Pabst; Wenders et al., 2010, p. 15-16, author’s translation).

Many searches that the choreographer had been doing along her last works in terms of scenic experiments are confirmed here in Palermo Palermo. However, concerning the long search for how to decipher the messages of the sensations experienced by the interpreters, Pina Bausch says with a smile, in an interview, that she still does not known how to decipher them. Perhaps the audience, enthralled with her creations began to find some of these answers and to enjoy the performances.

The questions do not stop, and the search does not end. There is something endless in it, and that’s the beauty of it (Bausch apud Koldenhoff; Pina Bausch Foundation, 2016, p. 259, author’s translation).

During the writing of this paper I had the opportunity to watch again some videos of Pina Bausch’s works and of her wonderful Ensemble, to read again authors who have their research anchored in Bausch’s work, such as Schmidt, Servos, Brinkmann, and also to be in contact with Bausch’s own thoughts, which can be found in the updated bibliography recently launched by the foundation that bears her name. What is identified is that, since her work is so vast and rich, it always will be found new ways that will make possible extend the current research.

In this paper, I chose to discuss only some aspects of the works The Rite of Spring (1974), Bandoneon (1980), Carnations (1982) and Palermo Palermo (1989), situated within the initial two chronological phases (1974-1989) of the author’s creations for Wuppertal Tanztheater. Furthermore, starting with the mid-1980s, Wuppertal Tanztheater, besides performing numerous shows of its extensive repertoire, started to receive many
invitations to international tours, seeming that the message contained in its works came closer to the sensorial of the public. The popularity of Tanztheater Wuppertal increased so much that more people became interested in the type of language presented by this Ensemble. Thus, countries such as Italy, Spain, EUA, China, Portugal, Hungary, France, Brazil, Turkey, India and Chile, supported by cultural institutions like local Goethe Instituts, theaters, festivals, universities, among others, invited Pina Bausch and her Ensemble to develop what is known today as artistic residence. It is from the experiences lived in the artistic residences that Bausch would create her new plays, inspired by the specific culture of each partner country in this adventure.

The plays of this period (1991-2009) highlight the varied poetic observations and contrasts identified by Pina Bausch and the Ensemble’s members on the cities that have hosted them. In none of the plays Pina Bausch intended to describe the city or the actual facts, and she presents the actors, who appear in their human wholeness, without any protection. They show their fears, their joys, their discoveries, from their experiences, and they seem not to be ashamed to be always and once again surprised.

Through the scenery of the plays, which were designed by Peter Pabst in these last two decades, it is possible to find certain realities in a great utopia. Especially in the sceneries that move in the scenic space, such as in the play Como el Musguito ... (2009) or complicate the actions of the dancers because it contains a mountain of flowers, in Fensterputzer (1997), or a mountain of stones, in Masurca Fogo (1998), or when the dancers must move on a floor covered with water, in Voolmund (2006), just to name a few.

The results of the studies of Bausch and the members of her Ensemble in the last two decades (1991-2009), made the set of scenes composing the works to gain more and more life and autonomy, through its content that spoke about the fragile, the strangeness, the longing, the inclusion of the other’s desires, and always about love.

In interviews, the choreographer says that she never saw her works as completed, and therefore she was always looking for improvements to make a scene increasingly true and coherent, or to increasingly improve every gesture made by members of Wuppertal Tanztheater.
At the end of this text, her words could offer an echo:

Individual experience is only a means to reveal what really ‘everyone has’, connecting the actors on stage with the audience. By exposing themselves to the experience of getting to the bottom of emotions, the dancers take the first step, and they invite the audience to follow them on their journeys in unknown territories. (Bausch apud Koldenhoff; Pina Bausch Foundation, 2016, p. 256, author’s translation)30.

Notes

1 Classical Ballet – An artistic dance that usually is performed in a theater by a group of dancers, in a scenery, with music; it represents a theme, a story or any scene.

2 Life reform movements - A comprehensive movement that sought a return to life-generating forces and the regeneration of man and society through the non-consumption of alcohol and meat, integrated by adults and students who, due to fatigue with problems that are characteristic of life in the big cities, sought to reestablish contact with nature. The movements also sought to recover the feelings of freedom, individuality, and discovery of one’s own body. All together, they were part of the so-called Körperkultur (Body Culture).

3 Tanztheater – The dance movement started in Germany in 1932, characterized by the transcendence of the technique of the classical ballet, and the use of drama from the theater. The movement was carried out by the choreographer and pedagogue Kurt Jooss (1901-1979). Some of his best-known followers are the choreographers Pina Bausch (1940 - 2009), Reinhild Hoffmann (1943) and Susanne Linke (1944). In her PhD dissertation Traces of Tanztheater in the Creative Process of ES-BOÇO - Institute of Arts – UNICAMP, 2007, the author Sayonara Pereira chooses to keep the use of the word Tanztheater without translation, believing that there is no need for a literal translation, as in the case of the expression Commedia Dell Arte. Later she defends that if there is translation, the one that would better define the use of the expression would be Theatrical Dance, believing that the expression approaches the two disciplines.

4 Ausdruckstanz [Expressionist Dance] emerged in Europe in the early 20th century. Germany became a country with sympathizers of this movement who entered history, represented by names such as Mary Wigman (1886-1973), Harald Kreutzberg (1902-1968), among others. Expressionism as a movement will deal with various artistic expressions, covering plastic arts, cinema, dance
(Ausdruckstanz), literature, music and theater. This artistic movement was concerned with expressing the conflicts of the human soul, and the instability of the current society.

5 Kurt Jooss (1901-1979) was a German dancer, choreographer, pedagogue considered the forerunner of Tanztheater. His vision for dance included classical ballet, visual arts and theater. He founded and directed several dance companies, including Folkwang Tanzstudio, which still exists in the Folkwang Hochschule in Essen, Germany (presently Folkwang University of the Arts, an internationally renowned school). He studied with the great master Rudolf von Laban (1879-1958) and was one of his most remarkable successors. He wrote his name in the history with the play The Green Table (1932), in which the hypocrisy of diplomats, warlords as well as the pain and the terrible aspects surrounding the wars can be seen on stage in a satirized way. The play is still staged today.

6 Susanne Linke (1944) is one of the pioneer creators within Tanztheater and, in contemporary times, is one of the living artists with greater importance within the so-called German Dance. She studied with Mary Wigman, Kurt Jooss e Pina Bausch. From the influences received, she has developed, along her trajectory, new forms of movement and her own way, in which her movements are full of control, containment and great precision. One of the greatest legacies that she will leave to the dance history are the solos choreographed and danced by her, including: Im Bade wannen / In the bathtub (1980) and Flut / Tide (1981). In addition, she restaged the cycle of solos of Dore Hoyer, Human Affections, for the first time in 1987. She currently directs the Susanne Linke Ensemble at the Trier Theater, Germany.

7 Mary Wigman (1886-1973) was a German dancer, choreographer and pedagogue. She is the major name associated with the pioneering of Expressionist dance. Her works, such as Hexentanz / The Witch Dance, remain emblematic until the present times.

8 Dore Hoyer (1911-1967) is considered one of the most important German solo dancers. She began her gymnastics studies in the childhood, and she has completed them at the Jaques-Dalcroze school in Hellerau, and then she studied dance at Pallucca Schule. She ensured a place in the history of German Dance through Expressionist dance. She performed in Argentina in the 1950s, where she introduced the German Dance through classes and performance. Her technique is extremely precise, and her production is huge, covering plays for groups and solos. Her legacy is recorded only through the cycle Human.
Affections (1962), which was recorded by the German television in the 1960s, but her dance influenced and continues to influence many artists from various parts of the world to this day.

9 Gehard Bohner (1936-1992) graduated in classical dance in the city of Karlsruhe and worked as a dancer in companies of different German theaters, such as: Mannheim, Frankfurt and Deutsche Oper in Berlin. From 1964 on, he began to develop his choreographic style, working with avant-garde musical compositions and winning prizes and consideration. In the 1970s, Bohner directed and choreographed for state companies; subsequently he worked on his version of Triadic Ballet by Oskar Schlemmers and developed solos with which he performed until the end of his career.

10 Oskar Schlemmer (1888-1943) was a German painter and sculptor and a professor of arts, appointed by Walter Gropius (1883-1969) to work at the Bauhaus School in Weimar, Germany. He developed an avant-garde career in art, but here it can be highlighted the conception of his Triadisches Ballett (Triadic Ballet). In this play, in which Schlemmer began to conceive the space movement, with the participation of the dancers Albert Burger and Elsa Hötzel, since 1912, he also created the costumes. The partial premiere of the work took place in 1916 and, in 1922, it was finalized and presented in Stuttgart. <https://youtu.be/mHQmnumnNgo>.

11 Bauhaus was one of the largest and most important expressions of what is called Modernism in design and architecture, being the first design school in the world. The school was founded by Walter Gropius in 1919. The initial intention was to make Bauhaus a school combining architecture, handicraft and an arts academy. This ended up being the basis for many internal and external conflicts that took place there. Initially, the school was located in Weimar, then moved to Dessau and, later, to Berlin. Presently, the Bauhaus - Universität Weimar is again located in the city of Weimar and maintains its leadership as one of the best universities in Germany, mainly teaching architecture, integrated with a teaching core linked to the arts and where design, media and music stand out, among others.

12 Johann Kresnik (1939) is an Austrian dancer and choreographer who develops his career with great success in Germany. He directed several dance companies in state theaters in cities such as Bremen, Berlin, Bonn, among others. He names his works as Choreographic Theater and they have, in general, a political, subversive and provocative connotation. Kresnik’s favorite theme concerns
militarism, imperialism, Nazism, terrorism, wars, murders, suicides and madness. The audience never sits comfortably when watching his plays.

13 Valeska Gert (1892-1978), whose birth name is Gertrud Valesca Samosch, she can be considered one of the most ambitious German artists. Descending from a Jewish Berliner family, Gert was a dancer, theater actress and was immortalized as a film and cabaret actress. She can also be considered a pioneer as a performer, opening doors for the future punk movement. In the 1930s, due to the Nazi regime, Gert had to leave the official stages and then emigrated to London; she left to the United States, where she continued to perform. In 1947, she returns to Europe and, in 1949, to Berlin, where she continues acting in her own cabarets. During the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s she acts in films directed by Fellini, Fassbinder, Schlöndorff, among others.

14 *Folkwang Hochschule*, located in Germany, in the city of Essen, North Rhine-Westphalia, was founded in 1927 as a school where students specialized in music, theater and dance. Currently there are new courses such as design, and postgraduate courses. In 1968 the college (*Hochschule*) was raised to the category of university. Since 2010 it takes the name Folkwang University of the Arts (*Folkwang Universität der Künste*). The dance department was initially directed by Kurt Jooss. Some of its distinguished students are Pina Bausch, Susanne Linke and Reinhild Hoffmann. In addition, the International Dance Company *Folkwang Tanz Studio* (FTS), founded by Jooss, is hosted at the school to this day.

15 Reinhild Hoffmann (1943) is a German dancer and choreographer, as well as a Tanztheater’s member, who had Kurt Jooss and Jean Cébron (1927) as masters at the Folkwang Hochschule in Essen (1965-1970). Next, she danced with Johann Kresnik at the Bremen Theater. Afterwards, she directed the Folkwang Tanz Studio in Essen along with Susanne Linke; between 1975 and 1979 she directed the Bremen Tanztheater with Gerhard Bohner (1978-1986). Between 1986 and 1995, she had her own company based in the Bochum Theater, where she combined dance and spoken theater in her plays. She currently performs as a choreographer in operas.

16 Eugen Berthold Friedrich Brecht (1898-1956) was a German poet, playwright and director.

darum: Wie kann ich ausdrücken, was ich fühle? (Schmidt-Mühlisch, interview to the newspaper Die Welt, 05 May 2000, apud Koldenhoff; Pina Bausch Foundation, 2016, p. 238).

18 Rudolf von Laban (1879-1958) was an architect, pedagogue, dancer, choreographer, theatrologist, musicologist, being considered the greatest dance theorist of the 20th century. He studied and systematized the language of the movement in its various aspects: creation, notation, appreciation and education. He created the Labanotation, one of the major movement notation systems used nowadays.

19 Sigurd Leeder (1902-1981) was a plastic artist, scenographer, costume designer, dancer of Ballets Jooss and an important collaborator of Kurt Jooss. He created his own methodology with influences received from Laban and Jooss. In 1959, he created the Dance Department at the University of Chile, where he remained until 1964.

20 The Goethe Institut is a non-profit organization located in the city of Munich, Germany, and it has the mission of promoting the German language abroad and international cultural cooperation, thus offering a comprehensive view of the German culture. At the same time, the institute, which bears the name of the important German poet and philosopher Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, is in some way related to the local cultures as, over the years, these institutes have been created in various cities of the world. In addition to the Wuppertal Tanztheater, the Goethe Institut has funded various German dance companies on tours across different countries.

21 It is important to highlight that the author of the text watched, live, 40 of the 47 plays (including the two new versions of Kontakthof - 2000 and 2008) that Pina Bausch created for the Wuppertal Tanztheater, besides the film directed by Bausch. In this sense, she feels comfortable to speak based on her own impressions, memories and information found in the specialized bibliography.

22 In 1985, as a guest-student at the Folkwang Hochschule, the author of the text had the opportunity to take part in some rehearsals coordinated by Hans Pop, dancer and choreography assistant at the Wuppertal Tanztheater.

Original in English: I cannot speak of the Rite of Spring. It’s too powerful. I don’t have the words. My every phrase, my every intention is there in my movements. I have only my dance (Bausch apud Les Printemps du Sacre, 1993).


Rolf Solomon Bausch (1981) was Pina Bausch’s son with the Chilean poet Ronald Kay. He is a jurist and, since 2009, chairman of the board of trustees of the Pina Bausch Foundation.

The fourth wall is an imaginary wall separating the stage from the audience. The contemporary theater deliberately breaks the illusion of the scene, and often suggests a direct audience participation.

This note would have to be extensive, but as I am focused on Bausch’s works in Wuppertal Tanztheater, I suggest that the reader research sites such as: <https://www.bejart.ch>, <https://www.stagium.com.br>, <www.grupocorpo.com.br>, <https://www.ndt.nl>, among others, to prove our statement.

Original in German: Die Fragen hören nicht auf, und die suche hört nicht auf. Es liegt etwas endloses darin, und das ist das schöne daran (Koldenhoff; Pina Bausch Foundation, 2016, p. 259).

Original in German: Die individuelle Erfahrung, ist nu rein Medium, um aufzudecken, was tatsächlich ‘alle haben’, was die Akteure auf der Bühne mit den Zuschauern verbindet. Indem sie sich der Erfahrung aussetzen und den Gefühlen auf den Grund gehen, tun die Tänzer den ersten Schritt, und sie laden ihr Publikum ein, ihnen auf ihren Reisen in unbekanntes Gebiet zu folgen (Koldenhoff; Pina Bausch Foundation, 2016, p. 256).

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