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### Pina Bausch

As trainee dancers it's important for us to have a wide knowledge of choreographers and their unique styles so that we can develop as dancers and have the experience and knowledge necessary for entering the professional dance world.

Philippine 'pina' Bausch had a considerable influence on modern dance during the 1970s and onwards. Born in Solingen, Germany 1940 her desire to perform was practically from birth.

Performing for the guests of her parents hotel she learnt to observe people and "the fundamental things which drive them (Norbert Servos)." With guests of the hotel noticing her constant and natural urge to dance; it was not long until people started to recommend that she should attend a child's ballet class. This was the path that was then taken by Bauche- starting attendance at Solingen's children's ballet at the age of 5, where her natural talent and flexibility were soon discovered by her teacher.

Being born in a time of war, in a city that received vast destruction Bausch did not forget these times but instead grew to use these tragic memories as an inspiration for some of her work; reflecting panic, fear and danger.

At the age of 14 Bausch started studying dance at the Folkwang School in Essen under the teaching of Kurt Jooss. Modern German dance had become more expressive and free than classical ballet, Jooss combined these techniques by embracing the freedom of modern dance with the essential rules of ballet. Bausch was also trained in other art forms such as: “opera, music, drama, sculpture, painting, photography and design (Norbert Servos).” These other art forms influenced Bausch’s work as she had a great interest in combining them within her choreographies. In 1958 Bausch was awarded the Folkwang Leistungspreis with which she received a grant to spend a year at the Juilliard School of Music in New York. Falling in love with the cultural ways of New York she stayed for another year, financing her stay by obtaining a job at the Metropolitan Opera with Anthony Tudor.

Once Bausch returned to Essen she danced with the ballet company Folkwang Tanzstudio, formally Folkwang Ballet, which was now directed by Kurt Jooss. As well as dancing in the company Bausch also assisted with choreography, creating independent pieces such as *Fragment or Im Wind der Zeit* which resulted in her receiving first prize at the International Choreographic Workshop in 1969 at Cologne. Some of her other first choreographic pieces include *Aktionen für Tänzer* 1971 and *Tannhäuser Bacchanal* 1972.

In 1973 Bausch became the head of the Wuppertal Ballet, which was renamed Tanztheater Wuppertal. The term Tanztheater translates as dance theatre and describes a combination of dance and other art forms such as acting, singing and speaking which creates a unique dance style. Bausch highly contributed to Tanztheater creating such genres as dance operas and creating pieces to popular songs as well as old German folk music.

Bausch's choreography for *Le Sacre du printemps* became a changing point for her career "the emotional force and unmediated physicality of the piece became trademarks of her work (Norbert Servos)." Bausch's pieces had a high intensity energy that hadn't been seen before. Her performances had a very wide variety, with some dances being extremely intense to watch reflecting themes such as grief and despair making the audience feel slightly uncomfortable and tense. As well as the other extremity of humorous dances such as *Fürchtet Euch nicht* which involved both men and women dressed in women's clothing, Bausch was challenging stereotypical gender roles but in a light-hearted way.

In 1978 Bausch was asked to create a version of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, the disappointing result of this performance would later lead to Bausch finding her unique style of dance. The previous performers she worked with no longer wished to be a part of her work due to there being a lack of conventional dancing within her pieces. She therefore found herself with only five actors, four dancers and a singer. Consequently she could not use her usual choreographic techniques so took another root, she asked the performers questions about their personal thoughts around the

themes of the play. The piece, *Er nimmt sie an der Hand und führt sie in das Schloss, die andern folgen*, received poor reactions from the audience however Bausch had found the choreographic style that would result in her world renowned fame.

Bausch's new style involved using emotions that are universal to all humans as a starting point, whether that be their fears, worries, hopes or dreams. As everyone can understand these emotions it meant that Tanztheater Wuppertal became understandable for everyone, as well as this it started an international choreographic change. Their pieces revolved around looking at reality, reflecting the audience members everyday experiences but also giving them the chance to consider their dreams and hopes. It also concentrated on making everyone feel responsible for their own lives as well as creating a sense of community, with everyone sharing similar experiences it made them feel closer with one another. The ultimate aim is to leave the audience feeling as though no matter what happens in their life, they will survive.

Another big part of Bausch's choreographic technique revolved around set and costume. Often with the stage being transformed into a 'natural' environment, mimicking different seasons and weathers, such as rain or fallen leaves. One of Bausch's most famous pieces was *The Rite of Spring* which was performed with the stage being covered in soil. Another of her pieces revolved around props was Café Müller which involved the performers stumbling into tables and chairs. The sets and staging was made to affect the dancers movements for example the rain made their

bodies visible through their clothing and the leaves would effect where they stepped. The same concept was reflected onto the costumes the performers would wear, from such extremities as full evening dresses to simple slip dresses. Just like the content of the performances, the costumes and set were designed to reflect everyday life but with a imaginative twist, often creating a sense of dream-like appearance. Pina Bausch herself described Tanztheater as “a space where we can encounter each other, (Norbert Servos).”

Tanztheater was no longer just local to Bausch but had now become a worldwide known style, this resulted in many pieces being created with international companies from countries such as Los Angeles, Brazil, Hong Kong and India. Bausch's style of Tanztheater was once almost protested off the stage, yet now was well renowned, with companies from every corner of the world seemingly wanting to co-produce productions with them. The success of Tanztheater could be due to the emotions and themes being recognisable no matter the language or culture of the spectator, making it a universally diverse production form, which consequently creates a feeling of community for everyone in the world that has access to the performances. Each person no matter their social norms or culture is treated with equal respect, the performances do not aim to criticise anyone's beliefs or thoughts but instead convey a relaxing, almost magical perception of life. It encourages the audience members to realise their true strength and potential and to live their lives with a different view- a more positive and peaceful one. The emphasis is on the basics of life so that no matter who is watching they can relate without feeling as though they are receiving any prejudice, the aim is to just acknowledge life in itself and humanism. Therefore,

trying to achieve a sense of community around the world and helping those who may have different experiences to find their similarities and to create more respect for others, as at the end of the day everyone is just as human as each other. With so much hate in the world Tanztheater strips everyone's life to the basics hoping to empower everyone and to cause more peace and love for each other.

Pina Bausch died of cancer in 2009 in Wuppertal, Germany age 68. She continued to perform throughout her 60s and influenced dance as we know it today until her death, it is safe to say that her techniques and ideas will be studied and celebrated for many years to come. Bausch will continue being an inspiration for new dancers even after death, with her unique themes and staging and positive messages for spectators her career will inspire the next generation of choreographers.

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