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Bonn – Hommage à Pina Bausch

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Pina Bausch und das Tanztheater [Pina Bausch and Dance Theatre]. 4 March – 24 July 2016, Bonn, Germany.

[events]

From the March 4 to the July 24, 2016, the German city of Bonn hosted a huge exposition entitled *Pina Bausch und das Tanztheater* in the Bundeskunsthalle. It was the very first exhibition devoted to her, and a tremendous one. Its main aim was to present the life and works of Pina Bausch (1940–2009). The exhibition came into existence due to the collaboration of the Pina Bausch Foundation (and its director Salomon Bausch) and the dance company, Tanztheater Wuppertal, whose current artistic director is Lutz Förster, one of the dancers in Bausch's former ensemble. The curators primarily aimed to create a so-called performative exposition, which enabled its visitors to experience an active meeting with Bausch's personality and works. The exhibition enabled its visitors to study a lot of biographical archives which included a number of pictures, photographs, programmes, posters, director's books and audio-visual material. One also had a chance to see numerous records of Pina Bausch's productions, produced by Tanztheater Wuppertal which are usually unavailable to the public. One could also take part in dancing workshops, lectures, and performances. There was also the possibility of meeting former members of Tanztheater Wuppertal from the Pina Bausch era (1963–2009). For the opening, all the important interviews and speeches by Bausch were published under

the title *O-Ton Pina Bausch Interviews und Reden*.

The curators primarily focused on the creative process and the genesis of Bausch's performances; as not only the result but mainly her staging approach meant such a contribution to postmodern theatre. An imitation of an old movie theatre Lichtburg was in the centre of the exhibition space. The real building is situated in Wuppertal's quarter Barmen, close to Wuppertal's Opera House, and Tanztheater Wuppertal uses it as a rehearsal space. It is a magic place without any distractions; it is a space intended for creative processes, in which all Bausch's productions since 1963 took place.

On a daily basis, the exhibition offered visitors a chance to meet one of the dancers. This dancer led a twenty minute dancing workshop every two hours and introduced its participants to popular simple dancing variations from Bausch's productions. Those variations are characterised by line walking, during which the dancers make smooth, individually linked gestures. Probably the most famous variety is that of *Nelkenreihe* (Nelken-row): a dancing variety taken from Bausch's performance *Nelken*, in which gestures are aimed to portray the four seasons. Even such banal gestures and movements are part of world-famous and awarded choreographies created by Bausch. Her geniality lies in this

seeming simplicity, which also forms the aesthetics of her tanztheater. Bausch believed that dance is not built upon pure technique or routine. She tried to find its language made of individual words, pictures, movements, and moods; a language that has the ability to mediate life and to describe it. It requires a long and complicated rehearsal process to achieve such a language to truly communicate to others. According to Bausch, neither art nor craft are important; the crucial thing is life and the search for its natural language.

The bibliography dedicated to Pina Bausch and her works is quite immense. This exposition, too, gives evidence that Germans perceive Bausch and Tanztheater Wuppertal as a part of their national cultural heritage – something that is greatly valued. The German dancer and choreographer Pina Bausch has indisputably been one of the most important theatrical personalities in the second half of the 20th century. Even though her name is not so popular and well known in the Czech lands, Bausch has had an impact on the postmodern Czech theatre; such an influence requires a detailed study to be done. There are several obvious reasons for such an ignorance of Bausch in Czechoslovakia: first, Pina Bausch worked in Western Germany (north Rhine-Westphalia). All the countries led by the Communist regime were mainly influenced by the aesthetics of socialistic realism (represented by Russian ballet) and thus, there was a little chance for Bausch and her works

to get known and also reflected here. Second, no publications on Pina Bausch have been written in the Czech language yet, which is a fact closely linked to the previous argument. In spite of any relevant Czech reflection of Pina Bausch, she is definitely worth studying and can still be very inspiring. This idea is supported by the fact that a number of her methods and techniques have been ‘rediscovered’ anew while they should be developed and cultivated instead, for example, her methods based on collaboration, namely on dialogues and improvisation of all the ensemble members. The production as such is then built upon this fundamental material.

Even though Pina Bausch was mainly a dancer and a choreographer and her means of expression was primarily dance and movement(s), her methods and approach to ensemble cooperation had an impact not only on contemporary dance and Tanztheater as known today (and represented e. g. by Sasha Waltz, Theresa van Keersmaeker, or Nederlands Dans Theater), but also on the ‘genre in progress’: performance, which is still much popular in Germany, France, Netherlands and in northern Europe. Bausch is important mainly due to her staging methods, which were seen as outrageous and scandalous when she started her career in a mainstream municipal theatre in Wuppertal. From today’s perspective, however, these methods stood at the beginning of a postmodern theatrical aesthetics and practice.