

**tanzfabrik berlin**  
**RECOLLECTIONS: 1977-87**

In 1976 Christine Vilardo, a dancer from Philadelphia, arrived in West Berlin. She and Reinhardt Krätzig joined up with other sport students to dance and improvise in a small art studio on the Kulmerstrasse, in Berlin Schoeneberg. Among others was Dieter Heitkamp. The following year the group moved into the Möckernstr 68 in Berlin Kreuzberg and opened the 'tanzfabrik berlin'. I joined early in 1977 and was part of the collective as it formed, reformed, and grew in the first ten years.

Background: *Motion Berlin, Group Motion Philadelphia, Zero Moving Company Philadelphia ...*

Both Christine Vilardo and I studied with and performed with Wigman dancers who had moved to Philadelphia in the early 1970s, dancers who had established a dance improvisation company, Motion Berlin, in Berlin (West) after leaving the Wigman school. *Motion Berlin* members included Brigitta Herrmann, Helmut Fricke-Gotschield, Katarina Inga Sehnert, and later, Manfred Fischbeck. (Herrmann and Sehnert had completed the Wigman school in Berlin, Fricke-Gotschield was a summer student, Fischbeck was primarily a musician at the time.), and they performed with live music at the Schaubühne on Halleschen Ufer, Lacking financial support in Berlin, several of them took up an offer to teach in Philadelphia in the mid-1960s. Once in Philadelphia, they called themselves Group Motion. Helmut, who taught at Temple University, eventually split and formed his own Zero Moving Company. Brigitte and Manfred kept the studio on South Street and retained the name Group Motion. They did not remain friendly after the split.

Christine Vilardo was a student of Helmut's, and a dancer in Zero Moving. I have no idea what brought her to Berlin, but I think she had met Reinhardt somewhere ... I was invited to join Group Motion the year after completing my degree in Dance Education at George Washington University (where I studied extensively with Prof Maida Withers, a Wigman student).

In 1975, Group Motion was invited to the PMTT festival in the Akademie der Künste, to perform a new work with live musicians and a full-stage inflatable sculpture. I took part in the performance and workshops at Kottbussor Damm, in the former Ballhaus, which was a windowless ruin. In 1978, I left Group Motion to return to Berlin (only able to afford a one-way

ticket!) to teach workshops with Tonio Guerra (Group Motion, Philadelphia) and Ric Schachtebec (set designer, Berlin HdK). We called ourselves Tanztheater Trypticon, and were particularly successful with performances at the new Café Einstein at Nollendorf Platz. Tanztheater Trypticon didn't survive the winter. (Note: Before joining Group Motion, I studied with Maida Withers, an American 'graduate' of the Wigman school, who taught at George Washington University.)

By 1978, Tonio and I were both teaching at the newly founded tanzfabrik, along with Christine and Reinhardt. Classes were on Tuesday and Thursday evenings.

### TF and the AdK

That year Christine and I made our first visit to Dirk Scherper at the AdK, offering the TF studios for workshops by dance artists who were presenting at PMTT. We felt that the guests who were being presented should have a place where they could impact Berliners, and offered our studio for workshops. The relationship between the AdK and TF became a sound and long-term one, resulting not only in a strong liaison between NY choreographers and Berlin, but also manifested in the AdK's strong support for the TF by providing expanded performance venues (Studio and Ausstellungshalle) for our choreographies over the next decade.

In 1980 we received a prize from the AdK, DM10.000,--, in recognition of our work.

The workshops and even friendships between PMTT guests and tanzfabrik members bore such fruit that it's possible to say that the US influence on German dance, in particular the somatic work that dominates much of dance in Germany today, is rooted in this time and sprung from this relationship. (Currently, Angela Guerriero, for example, is organizing "German contemporary dance and the Judson dance theater movement" project, as part of the live-legacy project in Germany.

(<http://www.tanzfonds.de/de/projekte/angela-guerreiro>) )

### The space

In winter of 1977 Reinhardt Krätzig had found an abandoned factory building in the courtyard of the Möckernstr 68, and located the owners. A 'guarantee /backing was signed by the alternative apotheke on the Grossbeerenstr that enabled signature of the lease, and the collective improvisation team to move in. The large room (180 sm), with no pillars –

formerly a shoe factory – was for dancing. In the other side of the tract, ca, 160 sm, with walls and sanitary facilities, was for the WG.

Classes were running, and performances were held, but there was no business structure. Early classes included: Contact Improvisation, Dance with Breath, Modern Dance. (See JC papers at the AdK archives.)

By 1980, it was clear that we needed a second studio, and the WG was moved to the third tract on the same floor, across the hall. The old WG became office, changing spaces – and Studio 2.

Class schedules and rehearsal needs grew quickly, and the WG was turned into Studio 3 and more offices in 1985 (?).

### The Collective

In 1980 Christine Vilardo left Berlin for personal reasons, Krätzig returned to university full time for a degree in psychology, Fred Holland moved to Paris. With the first ‘builders’ gone, and thus a natural hierarchy evaporated, a true collective was established. The first collective members from that point on were Heitkamp, Carley, Norbert Mauk, Antja Kennedy (a student at JFK high school in Berlin), Sygun Schenck (Folkwang-Hochschule Essen & Lola-Rogge Schule Hamburg), Sabine Lemke, Roger Pahl (an Australian with a modern dance degree, choreographer but not teacher). Reinhardt remained active for a time.

Sygun convinced the collective to accept Heidrun Vielhauer (Folkwang). With her, group remained constant for the first 5-7 years. At some point, about 6-7 years into it, Roger returned to Australia and Claudia Feest (a TF student and supporter) got involved and eventually became a collective member.

Early TF students who were not in the collective but important to our company and survival included: Riki von Falken, Frank Deutschmann, Ingo Reulecke, Helge Musial. Early instructors other than the collective included: Leonore Ickstadt, Tonio Guerra, Elsa Rollston

1985 Vielhauer joined forces with the actress Rotraut DeNeve, and left Tanzfabrik to establish a tanztheater group in Bremer Stadttheater. Schenck and Lemke went with her, although Lemke later returned to Berlin and TF as a teacher.

The ‘collective’ as a model was based on sharing rehearsal space, teaching for the regular class schedule and summer workshops, taking part in weekly (Friday) ‘Verein’ meetings that dealt with everything from rentals to workshop teachers, guest artists, decisions about expansion, dividing up

rehearsal space and Senate money. These meetings usually lasted 3 hours but often went longer.

The collective also watched specified rehearsals of all choreographies in progress to give feedback. These rehearsals were called ‘showings’, and were dreaded. It was a form of self-policing, artistically. Perhaps it worked.

The Collective was democracy in action, in an artistic venue, which functioned well as long as we were all starving. It was a unique model, and one that the senate was wary of financing because we had no designated leader. Meetings with cultural ministers and television interviews were done as a group. During a Friday meeting, no single person was able cut any conversation short to expedite decision-making, and at least in the beginning, the lack of hierarchy was also reflected in the agenda points—no item was more important than another. This led to chaos--things like getting keys to a renter became as important as determining dates for showings and premieres. We met in the small room that is now the main office for the school.

It was very stressful, all-consuming. We were not only teaching in the TF but in various Volkshochschule to make a living. But in particular the style differences between Vielhauer/Schenck’s German-based ‘Tanz Theater’ vs the US influenced works/style of Heitkamp/Carley demanded tolerance and, as the group began doing more touring and performing, much negotiation. In the class schedule and workshops, the US influences (Contact improv, Jazz, as well as US modern dance styles) dominated.

Forced to rent out the performance space and weekend workshops to strangers for financial reasons, TF often housed workshops and shows that were sub-optimal (at best) and at times off-putting for our audiences and students during the first ten years. This was another source of conflict.

The school (evening classes and workshops for non-professionals) eventually became the ‘umbrella’ to which the company paid rent. The school took on responsibility for rentals, facility management, under Peter Bauer’s direction. While freeing up the ‘Collective’ to focus on production, this would ultimately place the school in a position above the creative members and make any decision to expand performing opportunities (i.e., less classes) nearly impossible.

Significant others:

-- 1984: André Thériault was hired as manager for the TF company, to organize tours. He spoke no German but was a fast learner.

-- 1984: Peter Beuer was hired to run the school.

- 1985: Anna Stein (AnnA) began doing TF graphics/posters, creating a definitive style.
- 1986 Gisella Göttman became office manager for the company. Her pragmatism was like glue for the collective.
- 'Beitrag' was a group of ca 10 students on work-scholarship. For a small 'beitrag', they could take all classes they wanted, and were expected to help with set-up and strike of performance (from risers, chairs, to sets), sell tickets, and clean up each weekend for performances. Once a year they could mount an evening of their own work that various collective members would mentor.

The first WG included Christine, Fred Holland (Philadelphia artist), Antja Kennedy, Estelle Eichenberger, and Dieter Hietkamp. Over time, the WG included members who were not dancers; some were musicians not necessarily interested in danced. They were not involved in the collective, and did not take part in decision-making. The existence of the WG, however, had potent character for defining us as 'alternative', and also became a source of conflict as it was often hard to respect the living space during intensive rehearsal phases.

The dominance of the US somatic work that we brought to Berlin, including Contact improvisation and Body-mind centering, impacted the entire German dance world. That influence might be the greatest legacy of the TF, considering the ubiquitous nature in German universities today.

Internally, it conflicted deeply with regular technique classes and striving for a higher technical level of dancer as we grew. As money grew tighter, as the Wall fell, this point of contention, along with more and more demands from collective members and long-term dancers to produce their own works grew.

As the somatic teachers and practitioners at TF found more and more common ground, there was a cult-like feel about it, an inability to harmonize with other dance styles evolved. Jazz and Modern Dance, Ballet and the like were barely tolerated, certainly considered irrelevant to the TF future. At the same time, Heitkamp was determined to do even larger productions, performed only several times at larger houses – thus eating up substantial amounts of the budget.

Mobbing was evident as of 1993.

After 15 years, long enough in real-world times, I quit.

The reality of less and less money, demands for more works (not fewer!) by the cultural powers that be, meant that Heitkamp was bound to leave as well. After his departure to the Uni in Frankfurt there were no significant choreographers able to reclaim or redefine the artistic dominance of the first fifteen years of TF.

Today it remains a critical and viable production and teaching space with great impact.

The book 'tanzfabrik', published for the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of TF, contains essays by Irene Sieben and Johannes Odenthal that capture the essence of the phenomena that we were. It is markedly slanted, however, and certainly odd in the selection and weighting of so-called TF critical works. One has to wonder why original and/or significant collective members were not interviewed...fear of reality? This Feest/Heitkamp version of the first ten years is just that.

In the meantime, there has been significant interest and activity in academic circles and publications to reconstruct the first ten years of TF.

## **tanzfabrik berlin**

### **PERFORMANCES: 1977-87**

In the public eye, the first ten years of TF were defined by the eclectic and collective nature of the tanzfabrik, as in solo duo evenings and improv evenings, and by genre-bending experimental evening length choreographies. Beyond Berlin, TF reputation was made as evening length works by Carley, Heitkamp, Vielhauer/Schenck toured. Moving into the AdK on Hanseatenweg in Berlin (West) for larger productions enabled us to attract audiences beyond the backyard studio/off-scene crowd inside Berlin.

It's possible to break down the types of Tanzfabrik performances into seven categories. The most important of the seven, "Evening length choreographies" is number 7. Whereas the lists in the first six categories are not complete, the list in '7' is complete and accurate.

#### **1) Improvisation evenings**, such as:

- 'Vogel Klangobjekt'            Band AdK: TFVogel Klangobjekt Impro.- Ohne nr
- 'Benefiz'                        Band AdK: TF033 'Benefizaufführung 12.6.82'
- 'Hausbesitzer benefitz'        BandAdK: TF019 'Kont.te. hausbesitzer benefit, 1.März 81'
- 'Hallo wie geht es dir'        Heitkamp/Steffanoni 1981

#### **2) Short works by various choreographers**, i.e, mixed programs, such as:

- Solo/Duo programs with works only by collective members:
  - 'In Dutzend Billiger'            Band AdK: TF 032
  - 'Solo/Duo'                        Band AdK: TF 031(o) 'Tanzfabrik im Haus am Waldsee
  - 'Begegnungen 1 / 2 1980'        Band AdK: TF 0
- 'Tanzstücke' 'Solo Tänze' (Ickstadt, Vilardo) 1979-80
- Mixed programs with works by collective, students, others in Studio 1.

**3) Open-improv evenings** (called Blue Babies), in which *anyone* could sign up on that evening and perform an up to ten-minute work. (Original flyer exists in JC papers, AdK).

**4) Site-specific, TF areal.** Events in which various choreographers set works and events throughout the entire TF courtyard and spaces, in which the audience moved from one area to another. This took place many times.

- 'Benefizaufführung' 12.6.82 (Band AdK: TF 033)

**5) Re-mounts** of successful works in the Akademie der Künste, Hanseatenweg, to accommodate audience demand. Later, several works were created especially for this venue.

**6) Parodies** of our own works, done after the final show of a run. This was a strong tradition until about 1983.

**7) Evening length choreographies.** All works listed were premiered in the TF except where noted. This list is complete.

<u>Title</u>	<u>Choreographer</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Video</u>
- Geographies, Maps and Measures	Vilardo, Holland	1979	--
- Ch Ch Ch Changes	Carley	1979	MCB
- Masse	Eichenberger/Holland	1980	--
- Tanzzeit	Carley	1980	--
- Looping-Flugversuche	Carley/Heitkamp	1981	JC
- Träume von einer schönen Haut	Vielhauer	1981	AdK
- Jandl Gedichte *	Schurr/Carley	1981	AdK
- Schwitters Ursonate *	Carley	1982	AdK various
- Der Schöne Teilnahmslose	Mauk	1983	--
- Windeier	Carley/Heitkamp	1983	AdK
- ...drin und gewinn ...	Carley	1983	AdK
- Mann Tanzt	Heitkamp/Reese/uA	1983	AdK
- Liebste Liebe	Schenck	1984	AdK
- Wunsch Konzert	Vielhauer	1984	AdK
- Sieg der Körperfeuden	Heitkamp	1985	AdK
- Anna Blume ist Rot ***	Carley	1985	AdK
- Irmtraut Franke	Lemke	1986	?
- Facing Time	Carley	1986	AdK/MCB
- terra incognita	Feest/Heitkamp	1987	?
- whodidwhattowhom... * **	Heitkamp	1987	AdK
- Full House **	Carley	1987	AdK

\* denotes works that were not evening length but clearly significant in defining TF.

\*\* premiered in the AdK.

\*\*\* premiered in Hebbel.

### **TOURING thru 1987**

By 1981 we were touring extensively, (also in the function of representing the city of Berlin) throughout Europe, and also to Canada, Japan, USA. Works that toured extensively and/or significantly were, in chronological order:

Träume	Vielhauer
Jandl/Schwitters	Carley
...drin und gewinn	Carley
Facing Time	Carley
Buddy Bodies (part of solo/duo program)	Heitkamp/Musial
Whodidwhattowhom	Heitkamp



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**FÖRDERUNG 1977-87**

**Förderung from the Berliner Senat**

The first work that was produced by TF with senate funding was ‘...drin und gewinn’. Before that, we received substantial funding from the Dt Klassenlottery in 1981 to install sound proof windows, a sprung dance floor, and new toilets, showers and sinks in the dressing room.

After 1985, things happened quickly. The amounts below were grants from the Berlin Senate. Our entire budget was higher, of course.

1986	DM 4.800,--
1987	DM 150.000,--
1988	DM 455.375,--