

tanzfabrik berlin 1977-92

historical notes / jacalyn carley /

Here is, as best as I can recall with help from documents, an overview to the first ten-fifteen years of tanzfabrik, including a brief history leading up to its formation. It is rather rudimentary ...

- I. Intro
- II. Background of initial founders
- III. Collective leadership / WG
- IV. History of types of choreographies and productions from the first ten years, including touring and Senat funding
- V. TF and the AdK

I. INTRO

In 1976 Christine Vilardo, a dancer from Philadelphia, arrived in West Berlin. She, Reinhardt Krätzig and other sport students met to dance and improvise in a small art studio on the Kulmerstrasse, in Berlin Schöneberg. Dieter Heitkamp was among them. The following year they moved into the Möckernstr 68 in Berlin Kreuzberg and opened the 'tanzfabrik berlin'. I joined early in 1977. It was a completely raw space that Reinhardt found, and located the building owners (a lease was signed at that time). One studio was built and the remainder of the space was a WG.

When Christine left Berlin in 1981, a collective leadership was formed.

I was part of the collective 'tanzfabrik' as it formed, reformed, and grew in the first fifteen years. At this time it was defined primarily as a space for new dance art forms, classes for everyone, and eventually a space where new impulses in dance from the US (contact, BMC, Laban) would be embraced and used for artistic as well as pedagogic research. In the first 15 years TF grew to four studios, and the WG was disbanded, but the artistic collective leadership continued.

II BACKGROUND

A. Motion Berlin, Group Motion Philadelphia, Zero Moving Company – Both Christine Vilardo and I studied with and performed with Wigman dancers who had moved to Philadelphia in the early 1970s. These dancers had established a dance improvisation company, Motion Berlin, in Berlin (West) after leaving the Wigman school. They performed with live music at the Schaubühne on Halleschen Ufer, and 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.) Lacking financial support in Berlin, several members 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 a member of Group Motion.

In 1976, Group Motion was invited to the PMTT festival in the Akademie der Künste, to perform a major new work with live musicians and a full-stage inflatable sculpture. I took part in the performance and workshops that we gave at Kottbussor Damm, in the former BallHaus, which was still a windowless ruin. The following year 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.)

Workshops we offered at this time were hugely successful, with up to 350 participants in various sessions. Berlin had, outside of Tatjana Gsovsky's ballet school associated with the Deutsche Oper, no technique classes being offered. (The workshop format was quickly established, and has proved to be more successful in Berlin than the usual technique format for forwarding the art and dance information, to this day. One result being that workshop participants became the audience, the informed audience, that would come to support various productions)

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.

III. COLLECTIVE LIVING / GOVERNING

Reinhardt Krätzig located an abandoned factory building on the Möckernstr 68 in the late winter of 1977, 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, was for dancing. In the other side of the tract, ca, 160 sm, with walls and sanitary facilities, was for the WG. (This would eventually become offices, changing rooms, and Studio 2.) 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 dance (Louisa ? . They were not involved in the collective, and did not take part in decision making

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.)

Members:

From the beginning, the dance space was run, governed, as a collective. By 1981, 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, as best I can recall, were Heitkamp, Carley, Norbert Mauk (FU, Theater Wissenschaft), Antja Kennedy (a student at JFK high school in Berlin), Sygun Schenck (Lolla Rogge Schule, Hamburg), Sabine Lemke, Roger Pahl (an Australian with a modern dance degree, choreographer but not teacher). Reinhardt remained active for a time.

In 1980, 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. Somewhere in TF there must be a huge file of Minutes, as all decisions were written.

Early TF students included: Riki von Falken, Frank Deutschmann, Ingo Reulecke, Helge Musial. Early instructors other than the collective included: Leonore Ickstadt, Tonio Guerra, Elsa Rollston, Petra Kugel.

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.

Space:

By 1980, it was also 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. We received Lotto money to renovate sanitary facilities, put in sound proof windows, and sprung parkett floors about 1981. Studios 3 and 4 (downstairs) were added within the next 4 years.

Collective leadership:

This was primarily a group of dance artists, who needed to teach to support their art and the space itself.

Although the '68 generation' had long left the universities, the spirit was still alive and thriving in Kreuzberg. Many, many buildings were being occupied, Joseph Beuys was giving paint to occupiers and encouraging everyone to consider themselves artists. The protests on the streets of Berlin were such that at times teachers and students could not get to the Möckernstr for classes.

The collective practice was especially prevalent in WG's, most students at TF lived in one WG or another. Most WGs in Berlin at that time had a mandate/mission/directive, some were open sexual arrangements, others were highly active politically, etc etc. This sense of purpose and communality was typical for the times, an on-going manifestation of the '68 generation, ie., 'alternative' lifestyle was being defined and redefined.

Tanzfabrik fit into this perfectly.

The 'collective spirit' was based on sharing rehearsal space, teaching for the regular class schedule and summer workshops, taking part in weekly (Friday) 'Collective' meetings that dealt with everything from rentals to workshop teachers, guest artists,

decisions about expansion, dividing up rehearsal space and Senat money. These meetings usually lasted 3 hours but often went longer.

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

The collective also encouraged students to create work and ensured that student work was presented at least once a year in a formal setting for a general public.

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 Senat was wary of financing to a greater extent because we had no designated leader. Meetings with cultural ministers and television interviews were done as a group. There was no one person who could 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.

There was no official 'Company'. When a collective member wanted to do a work, s/he would ask whomever seemed best suited. We attempted to use each other but were not bound to. Early on, students like Riki von Falken and Frank Deutschmann were asked to be in major productions, and in rare occasions their works were included in 'Bunte Abende', i.e., evenings wherein shorter works from all collective members were presented.

When new dancers were recruited, later by means of audition, it was made clear they could not expect to be in every production. This made it more or less impossible to form a solid company, and left individual choreographers to find ways to help their favored dancers earn money ... the pick-up company notion was practiced from the beginning and throughout this time.

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 kept us together.

-- '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.

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 'Tanztheater' vs the US influenced works /style of Heitkamp/Carley demanded and internal respect and 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.

IV TF PERFORMANCES: 1977-87

It's possible to categorize the types of performances into eight categories. The most important, evening length choreographies, I have put at the end in order to list them.

- 1) **Improv evenings** performed by the improvisation group, 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 (No doc)

- 2) **Mixed evenings** with short works by various choreographers, including
 - 'Tanzstücke' 'Solo Tänze' (Ickstadt, Vilardo) 1979-80 (no video)
 - Solo/Duo works by collective members
 - o In Dutzend Billiger (Band AdK: TF 032)
 - o Solo/Duo (Band AdK: TF 031(o) 'Tanzfabrik im Haus am Waldsee)
 - o Begegnungen 1 / 2 1980 (Band AdK: TF 0)

- 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). No tapes.

- 4) 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.
 - 'Benefizaufführung 12.6.82' (Band AdK: TF 033)

- 5) **Student evenings**, 'curated' by the collective.

- 6) Successful works that were **remounted** in the Akademie der Künste, Hanseatenweg.

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

- 8) **Evening length works** created the artistic footprint that the TF today still profits from. Collective members and guests danced for a choreographer/s. The list below is complete.

- <u>Geographies, Maps and Measures</u>	Vilardo, Holland	1979
- <u>Ch Ch Ch Changes</u>	Carley	1979
- <u>Masse</u>	Eichenberger/Holland	1980
- <u>Tanzzeit</u>	Carley	1980
- <u>Looping-Flugversuche</u>	Carley/Heitkamp	1981
- <u>Träume von einer schönen Haut</u>	Vielhauer	1981
- <u>Jandl Gedichte</u> *	Schurr/Carley	1981
- <u>Schwitters Ursonate</u> *	Carley	1982
- <u>Der Schöne Teilnahmslose</u>	Mauk	1983

- <u>Windeier</u>	Carley/Heitkamp	1983
- <u>...drin und gewinn</u>	Carley	1983
- <u>Mann Tanzt</u>	Heitkamp/Reese/uA	1983
- <u>Liebste Liebe</u>	Schenck	1984
- <u>Wunsch Konzert</u>	Vielhauer	1984
- <u>Sieg der Körperfeuden</u>	Heitkamp	1985
- <u>Anna Blume ist Rot **</u>	Carley	1985
- <u>Irmtraut Franke</u>	Lemke	1986
- <u>Facing Time</u>	Carley	1986
- <u>terra incognita</u>	Feest/Heitkamp	1987
- <u>whodidwhattowhom.. *</u>	Heitkamp	1987
- <u>Full House **</u>	Carley	1987

* denotes works that were not evening length but so significant in establishing TF that they stand alone..

** denotes works that were premiered in venues other than Studio 1.

In the public eye the first ten years of TF were defined by Carley, Heitkamp, Vielhauer/Schenck choreographies – and by the collective nature of the institution. Importing US influences, especially in the field of somatic work, was, however, gaining importance inside TF.

Touring until 1987

By 1981 we were touring extensively, (also in the function of representing the city of Berlin). Tours were throughout Europe, but included single tours to Canada, Japan, USA. Early works with significant touring history were:

Träume

Jandl/Schwitters

...drin und gewinn

Facing Time

Buddy Bodies (part of solo/duo program)

Whodidwhattowhom

TF project 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.

By 1986, our subvention was DM 4.800,--

1987 DM 150.000,--

1988, the total production budget was DM 509.375, -- (DM 455.375,-- came from the Berliner Senat.)

V: TF & AdK

That year Christine and I made our first visit to Dirk Scheper 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 the 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.