

# ROLF BORZIK und DAS TANZTHEATER



Report: Tanzrecherche NRW #29

Location: Wuppertal Archives of Pina Bausch

Research topic: Scenography - stage environments by Rolf Borzic and Pina Bausch

Artistic research by Ola Maciejewska

This artistic research project started with Pina Bausch's famous saying 'being moved by' that evolved in relation to Rolf Borzic's stage environments. The project was entitled "Scenography - stage environments by Rolf Borzic and Pina Bausch" to underline the dependency between the body and environment and more specifically the conditioning aspect of a set design in the creative writing of a performer.

#### The Covid condition

This artistic research started in October 2020, when France was preparing for the second wave of the pandemic. Due to regulations imposed by the government in the winter of 2020 travels were banned and working at home was favored by most of the employers, in France as well as in Germany. In consequence, we have agreed to adapt this project to the circumstances. Thus, most of the work was made at home, working remotely via the internet and telephonic exchanges with Ismael Dia the director of the Archive. The second part of the research was made in-stu (forest, street, and a studio) which consisted of somatic experiments that explored tools where dance plays with redefining its relationship to space and time. The decision to move the project outdoors was a consequence of circumstances, yet in the end, showing up being very coherent, as it allowed me to build a direct link with my choreographic research.

My choreographic research is informed by the biomorphic constructions for 'Serpentine Dances' (Loie Fuller: Research and Bombyx Mori) invented by Loie Fuller controversial and impossible to categorize, the icon of Art Nouveau, and queer mother of a Western dance tradition who merged dance with special effects to evoke the movement of natural phenomena by inventing constructions consisting of bamboo sticks, electricity and large amounts of textile. The role of materials, things, and other than human elements in the process of writing is made visible in this type of work, similarly to the original grammar designed by Rolf Borzic in relation to Pina Bausch's choreographies. It's not just mere things - a decoration, or a prop, that we find on stage in the work by Fuller or Borzic, but a precise assemblage forming an environment as opposed to a traditional set design. The set design is not based on the frame that closes the image, but on actions, things to do. By focusing on the action, a sense of reciprocity is being evoked, and the process of co-construction becomes visible. In the work of Tanztheater, it appears that the dancer accommodates, inhabits a particular place, but what's most striking is that these environments are not unified. There is no forced sense of unity, at times slightly displaced, de-contextualized, e.x, even when natural elements like branches of a tree appear on stage it is more pointing towards juxtaposition in relation to the open, raw theatre architecture and volume with which those branches are composed, merged with. The natural and the artificial are collided together to give an impression of a double expansion, a sense of space. Ignoring the limits of a place is also another way to play with the edges of space. The dancers go towards the edge of the stage to cross the invisible fourth wall to engage in one-to-one conversations with the spectator. They flirt with and at times offend those randomly picked strangers as if it was a scroll in the urban context. The casual, organic, and actual theatre architecture is overlapping. Creating an environment where small gestures are made in big places when space performs and it's when dance becomes an embodied spatial practice, a form of symbiosis between two seemingly opposed elements.

#### Practice outdoors

Having the opportunity to dive deeper into the creative universe of Tanztheater and the unique writing of Rolf Borzic in the period of intense lockdowns in France and abroad was at first very

frustrating, yet it unveiled an interesting dynamic in regards to the process of this creative research. The idea was that the project will mostly happen in the archives of the Pina Bausch Foundation, in the four walls of an institution. Due to the covid circumstances, this project had to be displaced, from Germany to France, to a forest, to the urban landscape, and a dance studio. It became more about applying the reflection onto the actual practice, on something to do, while I could not visit the archives physically. The absence of a direct link with the archival material provoked an interesting reaction in which I found myself constructing from bits and pieces my own story, a translation, that manifested itself in the practice. Some sort of positive compensation, an intense dialogue. From reading and observing photographic documentation, viewing recordings of the shows, and putting them in direct dialogue with my artistic research, I assigned myself to work outdoors, mostly in the forest, urban environments and at times dance studios to experiment with redefining some notions that dance likes to foster, the relation between the body to its environment... Several choreographic scores emerged out of this experiment. Working outdoors alters the idea of the body image. It is as if the physical body had no limit as if the body was extended. It expands in space and time as far as to all the other heartbeats living on Earth before humans even existed... That kind of fictional scenarios started to appear and shape the story of the body...

In conclusion...

I wish to thank Tanzrecherche NRW #29 and the Archives of Pina Bausch Foundation for supporting this artistic research on the spatial environments of Rolf Borzik that opened many questions, ideas, and links with my choreographic practice that works towards deepening environmental sensibility...

