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## WRAP UP

### CREATIVE THINK TANK 2023

#### DANCE – TOOL OF EMPOWERMENT, STRATEGY AND MOTOR FOR COPING WITH CRISIS?

May 16, 2023

The Covid pandemic period confronted us with massive limitations, worries and above all with the vulnerability of our bodies. But it also made us (painfully) experience our dependence on social and global contexts. No sooner does this crisis seem to have been overcome than the war of aggression on Ukraine, trouble spots in the Global South and the effects of the climate and energy crisis now dominate our political and social discourses. Against this backdrop, we asked to what extent dance - as a physical practice, as an aesthetic experience as well as a social event of assembly - contributes to dealing with experiences of violence and re-imagining the present as well as strengthening communities and solidarity.

Based on short impulses from different artistic practices, international guests and participants discussed strategies, methods, aesthetics, goals and empowering potentials of dance for artists and audiences. The CREATIVE THINK TANK focused on exchange, was a reflection on questions about one's own work and served as knowledge transfer.

#### DANCE AND RESILIENCE

The one-day digital Creative Think Tank on May 16, 2023 based on the overarching theme **Dance - Tool of Empowerment, Strategy and Motor for Coping with Crisis?** started with the focus on **Dance and Resilience**, and thus with questions about the possibilities of dance for building resilience, but also resistance.

The morning was kicked off by four presentations. **Dr. Isabella Helmreich**, a psychologist from Germany, gave a lecture entitled 'Resilience - Buzzword or a universal answer? - On the concept of resilience and the question of human resilience'. Her Western understanding of the concept of resilience, which is developed in the interplay between the individual and their environment, was followed by a speech by **Serge Aimé Coulibaly**, a choreographer from Burkina Faso. He gave insights into his understanding of resilience and empowerment based on his experience with a community dance production dealing with effects of the threat of terrorist violence and political instability in Burkina Faso.

The Ukrainian choreographer and activist **Viktor Ruban** reported about his work with dance under war conditions and the development of tools from the practice of contemporary dance to help people with traumatic war experiences, while the French choreographer **Anne Nguyen** spoke about her understanding of resilience in the context of a work combining dance styles from various international urban street cultures.

The four lectures were followed by discussions in three **breakout rooms**.

In the first one – hosted by the German dramaturg and curator **Susanne Traub** – the special guests Serge Aimé Coulibaly, Polina Bulat, the producer of Cie Maciej Kuźmiński, among others, from Ukraine/Germany, and Tamara Maksymenko, a choreographer and dancer from Ukraine/Austria discussed questions such as the following with the participants: What are the potentials and possibilities of contemporary dance productions to support processes of resilience?

The second breakout room was hosted by **Simone Schulte-Aladag**, a culture manager and co-founder of the Festival THINK BIG! in Munich, Germany. A special guest was – besides Dr. Isabella Helmreich and Viktor Ruban – the Namibian choreographer and dancer Haymich Olivier. Together with the participants they discussed topics that developed from the following question: To what extent can contemporary dance tools and practices be used to develop restorative and resilience-building bodywork for people who have experienced war and violence?

In breakout room three, the leading question was: What role can platforms like festivals play in addressing socially or politically suffered violence?

**Simon Dove**, the executive director of CEC Arts Link in the USA, hosted the special guests Zora Snake, a choreographer and director of the Festival Modaperf in Cameroon, Yolanda Gutiérrez, a choreographer in Germany and Mexico, as well as the Ukrainian artist and curator Anton Ovchinnikov, along with other participants.

### **To summarize the discussions in the three breakout rooms:**

Different contexts require different concepts of resilience – that was one result of the discussions people had in two breakout rooms (Nr. 1 and 2). For Viktor Ruban, a choreographer and activist from Ukraine, and Serge Aimé Coulibaly, a choreographer from Burkina Faso/Belgium, the notion of 'resilience' is very much linked to 'resistance.' Resilience and resistance are inherently intertwined – especially in countries of war and crisis. The concept of psycho-emotional health, which includes body *and* mind, was brought up – in contrast to the concept of mental health, which focuses more on the cognitive aspect, but cannot support people in situations of physical danger, as Viktor Ruban pointed out.

Dr. Isabella Helmreich's understanding of resilience also encompasses a physical and cognitive dimension as well as a social and spiritual one. For her, resilience is an active dynamic process. Positive temperaments and emotions, optimism, self-esteem, cognitive flexibility, social support, spirituality and a sense of purpose in life are important productive resilience factors that can be trained. To avoid a neoliberal misuse of the term ("everything can be overcome or must be endured"), she pointed out that her concept talks about enabling resilient constellations and behaviors, not about how to make people resilient. Self-care, as she put it, is the foundation for a healthy and happy life.

From the perspective of dancers and choreographers, the body is an ideal tool for developing and practicing resilience and furthermore resistance – in different forms: i.e., literally by moving on and in this way creating change by overcoming tragic situations; by allowing crying as a form of relief; by means of somatic practices such as grounding, centering, working with the breath as productive methods for reducing cortisol and adrenalin production in stressful and dangerous situations. Viktor Ruban summarizes his observations: People under constant stress (like in situations of war and continuous danger) can recover faster when they learn different breathing techniques, work with vocal training, Laban technique, Bartenieff fundamentals, body-mind-centering, or other

somatic techniques from the field of dance. Another way to reduce stress symptoms is to stimulate creativity – what he and his colleagues do when they work with children (with simple art practices like drawing and singing). A lack of creativity is one of the many results of constant stress. But coming back to creativity – no matter which condition you are in – can turn the process around.

In all forms of advising and supporting people with techniques and practices, the fact of ‘lived experience’ plays a huge role. The writer Aurora Levins Morales was quoted: “We are led by those who most know these systems.” Viktor Ruban agreed: It is helpful when people who experienced war on their own, work with individuals and communities in similar situations.

Haimich Olivier, a choreographer and dancer from Namibia, emphasized the muscle memory of the body – as a resource everybody can use. During Covid times, he developed an individual practice for creating resilience with bodily resources: starting with resting, walking, observing the environment, bringing the mind in space – with the result of grounding himself. In the process of transferring this personal practice to dancers and other groups of people, he discovered – besides the pure pleasure in doing it – that many of them developed physical softness, groundedness, sharpness and – over the course of time – a stronger feeling of trust and connection. Creating a safe space for listening to the body and giving agency (back) to individuals and communities were mentioned as important for creating resilience. Equally important is to remain available and clear when working with people living in war, crisis or under insecure conditions.

In breakout room Nr. 3, the role of festivals relating to resistance and resilience was debated. Different key points were raised in the discussion:

In places where public gatherings are controlled or suppressed by authoritarian regimes, the very act of creating a festival is an act of defiance and/or resilience. Artists and communities gather for a shared experience – of celebration, reflection, and indeed resistance. Festivals need to curate the community encounters and their spaces – time to connect, share, reflect etc. – as much as the performance program. Because: A resilient community can lead to a resilient audience.

For inspirations, some **DOS, DON'TS, THOUGHTS AND QUESTIONS** for festival makers were gathered during the discussion:

**DOS:**

Have a look at community gatherings and celebrations around the world and in different cultural communities. Look at the elements that build connection, empathy, dialogue and resilient communities. Use those principles in imagining a festival.

Look where communities meet, gather and celebrate. How can a festival connect with those places and communities? Western theaters frame the event and how the community can engage in a very specific way and this can be alienating to many communities.

Ensure that curators work across generations and take cultural diversity into account. Because: A divided community is not resilient.

Involving local curation and local artists, and entering into a dialogue with local communities build community cohesion and the community’s ability to be resilient.

Elevating local artists – alongside a few ‘visiting’ artists – with equity and equal value is critical to building community cohesion and a sense of empowerment.

Sustainable practices are part of building good civic practice locally – so reflect on the ‘value’ of long flights and short stays.

## DON'TS:

Relying on parachuting in 'international' artists cannot build a community – and is not sustainable for the planet. Instead, it weakens the planet's resilience.

## THOUGHTS AND QUESTIONS:

Whom is the festival ultimately for? The 'visiting artists' who perform and then leave, the local artists who can collaborate and be supported over time, or the local community? It is critical to think long-term, to build and strengthen the sector locally, nationally and then internationally. A festival can also be an umbrella for a wide range of practices in the field or a hub in a network of small independent artists. Both help build resilience in the sector.

A festival can play a key role in helping to empower, strengthen and support a local dance community – especially where traditional and/or classical dance is the accepted norm. Dance makers creating new works now that reflect our times and perspectives need to be supported, championed and listened to – to support and promote the resilience of the artists themselves but also the art form.

## EMPOWERMENT – STRATEGIES, METHODS, POSSIBILITIES

After a short lunch break, the afternoon session entitled **Empowerment - Strategies, Methods, Possibilities** started with three short presentations by **Ming Poon**, a choreographer from Singapore, who gave insight into his participatory performance 'The intervention of loneliness', the German choreographer **Be van Vark**, who introduced the participants to her current community dance project on the German/Polish-border, and the dance artist **Galit Liss** from Israel, who works with older women dancing on stage.

The discussions in the following breakout rooms were guided by questions like: Who empowers whom and through what? To what extent can dance generate solidarity and enable a collective, simultaneous experience of vulnerability and strength? Where does the search for an aesthetic language of form end, and where does a social practice begin?

For **Galit Liss**, empowerment lies in the personal, social and political representation of the older body – on stage and in society. In her artistic work with women between 60 and 87, she emphasizes aspects such as pain, self-imagination and shame. To consult and support the non-professional but very experienced female dancers, she tells them at the beginning of a common artistic process: "There should be no pain while dancing. If there is pain, you have to find another way of moving." With this advice, she gives agency and responsibility to the individual, which can be seen as an important aspect of self-empowerment and resilience building.

"There is no right or wrong," is another crucial belief of Galit Liss. She has experienced that older women come to the studio with many judgments about their own bodies. Her goal is to create a space where they can leave negative self-images and shame behind. With her work, Galit Liss not only questions age boundaries in dance, but also sheds light on the aesthetics of the older female body. She talks about how surprised older women are when they "meet their bodies," as she said – and describes her own discovery: "Since I work with older women, I feel I work with life."

Surprise is also a key element in the work of the choreographer **Ming Poon**, especially concerning the audience in his performance *The intervention of loneliness*. Ming Poon calls it "collaborative"

rather than “participatory” and puts the concept in a nutshell: “Spectators will get what they produce.” The performance starts with him standing on stage (or in public) holding the encouraging sign ‘DANCE WITH ME.’ Those who dare to do so, connect with him through body contact, touch, movement, music, and also language and spoken words. A physical, emotional and intellectual contact between audience and artist unfolds during the performance. Over the course of time, audience members dare to share their insecurities, which motivates others to do the same. The fear of being judged diminishes, Ming Poon observes. *The intervention of loneliness* gradually enables a collective experience in which personal vulnerability turns into individual and collective strength.

In the development of the performance, Ming Poon was guided by questions such as: How can we reclaim loneliness rather than letting it own us? How can we transform loneliness from a place of isolation and separation into a tool for collective action, solidarity and empowerment? He found his personal answer in a ‘counterintuitive’ reaction – challenging himself to go out and try to get in contact, rather than the usual response of withdrawing and keeping silent about emotions of loneliness and isolation.

The question “Did you ever dance with a stranger? Or would you?”, which opened the discussion, revealed major differences in terms of cultural norms and gender images. Is spontaneous dancing in the streets with unknown persons seen as normal? Is it something you cannot say ‘No’ to without being impolite? These questions get different answers in different cultural contexts. However, one commonly shared opinion in the discussion was: There’s no “neutral body” – neither in the studio, nor in public.

Ming Poon summarizes the four principles of the role of the audience in his work: 1. The audience is present. 2. The audience is intelligent. 3. Non-participation is also a form of participation – a contribution to the performance as well as a political act. 4. Change is a collective act.

The observation that change can happen as a collective act was also emphasized by the choreographer **Be van Vark**, who spoke about her current community dance project “Das Fest,” which she realized in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern in northern Germany with more than 100 non-professional participants from different regions and villages. As one of the biggest challenges, she identified processes of segregation: segregation of German and Polish, young and old people, long-time residents and newcomers, the few rich and the many poor people. In this region, characterized by the isolation of different social groups, the mere fact that 100 people come together to realize a cultural activity is empowering, as Be van Vark put it.

In the discussion, the concept of resilience, which Dr. Isabella Helmreich, presented in her lecture, was linked to observations that Be van Vark had made during the month-long working process: participants developed a positive disposition and active coping skills, they began to express themselves and value their own doing or they began to revalue what they already knew.

With regard to the question of how existing hierarchies should be dealt with in community dance projects, the approach ‘less guiding and leading, more contribution’ was particularly well received. A strategy that is also relevant to the work of Ming Poon and Galit Liss.

In the group discussion, the role of empathy in the context of community dance was also addressed. In the work with certain groups, for example refugees, practicing empathy can be very dangerous, because problems and traumas could be manifested and even intensified. In order to generate productivity, it would instead be important to direct the focus of the joint artistic work to the present and the future.

A **basic summary** of all three discussions in the afternoon of the CREATIVE THINK TANK would be: The knowledge of being integrated into (temporary) communities through artistic dance projects is

experienced as extremely strengthening and encouraging, because it leads out of isolation. Prerequisites for these experiences are safe, inviting spaces and contexts with 'simple' rules created by choreographers with clarity and awareness.

As a **summary of the full day**, it remains to be said that more than 50 participants from different work contexts, countries and continents stayed together for the entire Creative Think Tank, discussing with each other, listening to each other. The day ended with a listening session in which the artist **Siegmar Zacharias** invited participants to listen together to her half-hour sound experiment. Listening with the whole body, experiencing one's own body as a collective resonance space for grief, joy and healing – these experiences were the focus here.

In the final round of exchange, the impressions of the day were summed up in a partly emotional way. It became clear once again how important the topics of 'resilience', 'resistance' and 'empowerment' are and how productively strategies and tools from dance and choreography can be used for this purpose.

## // SPECIAL GUESTS & HOSTS

### **GITTA BARTHEL**

is active in art, mediation and research practice, creates lecture performances and works as a lecturer for contemporary dance and choreography at universities and training centers. She was a research assistant at the Institute for Movement Science/Performance Studies, University of Hamburg, where she completed her doctorate in 2017 on the topic of mediation in dance art and cultural education.

[More information](#)

### **POLINA BULAT**

is an independent contemporary dance manager and promoter with a background in PR management, journalism and production.

She founded the Ukrainian website dedicated to ballet and dance, Balletristic.com, and produced the Balletristic Writing Course to develop the community of dance writers in Ukraine. Since March 2022, Polina has been aiding, promoting, and coordinating refugee dancers in Europe on a volunteer basis and in collaboration with other organizations and initiatives. She is currently based in Germany and working internationally as a dance artists' representative, project coordinator and producer.

She is the co-producer of the dance piece "Every Minute Motherland" from the MACIEJ KUŹMIŃSKI COMPANY as well as the producer and writer of the documentary "Fragments of Resilience."

[More Information](#)

### **SERGE AIMÉ COULIBALY**

born in Bobo-Dioulasso (Burkina Faso), he received his training at the FEEREN-Compagnie in Burkina Faso and at the Centre National Chorégraphique in Nantes. Since he founded Faso Danse Théâtre in 2002, his work has been shown in Europe and Africa and invited to various festivals. He works with various artists and regularly participates as a dancer and choreographer in international productions, among others, with Moïse Touré, the Marrukegu Company, Julie Dossavi, Alain Platel and Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui at the ballets C de la B. Because he needed a place for experimentation, reflection and his concept of artistic engagement, Coulibaly founded ANKATA in Bobo-Dioulasso, a laboratory for research and production in the performing arts. A meeting place in exchange between continents, disciplines and communities with the aim of inventing the future, it is open to all.

[More information](#)

### **SIMON DOVE**

is currently Executive Director of CEC ArtsLink and an independent curator and educator, co-curating Crossing the Line, the annual trans-disciplinary fall festival in New York City from 2008 to 2018. He was Professor of Practice and Director of the School of Dance at Arizona State University from 2007 to 2012 and

curator and Artistic Director of Springdance, the international festival of new developments in dance and performance in the Netherlands from 2000 to 2007. Prior to that he ran one of the first National Dance Agencies in the U.K., the Yorkshire Dance Centre in Leeds, was the founder and Artistic Director of Vivarta – the first contemporary South Asian performance festival in the U.K., contributed to national dance policy development with the Arts Council of Great Britain, and programmed an innovative arts center in London. Further he extensively mentors students and professional artists from many countries in developing their creative practices.

[More Information](#)

### **MONICA GILLETTE**

is a dance dramaturg, choreographer and facilitator. After dancing professionally, she now shapes innovative projects with dance as a pathway for social engagement and multigenerational cultural exchange. As a dramaturg, she has been accompanying several European funded projects – Migrant Bodies - Moving Borders (2017-2019), Empowering Dance (2018-2023), Dancing Museums - The Democracy of Beings (2020-2021) and Dance Well (2022-2025). In each of those projects, she co-authored and edited digital publications for dissemination of the knowledge, experience and skills developed in the projects.

[More information](#)

### **YOLANDA GUTIÉRREZ**

born in Mexico, is a Hamburg-based choreographer, video artist, curator and producer. Her projects have been shown at international festivals. She works with international artists\* from Europe, Asia, Latin America, the USA and Africa. Since 2017 she has regularly choreographed decolonizing audio-walks with dance interventions, performed under the titles URBAN BODIES PROJECT and DECOLONYICITES. In 2021 she founded her artistic platform SHAPE THE FUTURE. One focus of her work is on the question of what political role the body takes on in art, and how an artistic movement can become a political one.

[More information](#)

### **DR. ISABELLA HELMREICH**

is a licensed psychological psychotherapist (behavioral therapy) and an expert in health prevention, especially with regard to the development and implementation of interventions to promote resilience. Together with Dr. Donya Gilan, she heads the "Resilience and Society" department of the Leibniz Institute for Resilience Research in Mainz.

[More information](#)

### **GALIT LISS**

is an independent choreographer, artistic director and founder of the GILA PROJECT - an artistic space for mature women. She's a member of the Israeli Choreographers Association. In 2022 Galit received the prestigious Rosenblum Prize for the Performing Arts of the Tel Aviv-Yafo Municipality. As part of her artistic and social agenda, she creates with elderly women who are non-dancers. Her performances focus on the physiological aesthetics of the mature body in contemporary dance and have been performed at festivals in Israel and abroad. Galit Liss is the creator and artistic director of the school of "Gila workshops of movement and stage art for mature women." There she teaches the GILA practice - her unique methodology for working with the elderly body that she has been developing for the last 15 years.

[More information](#)

### **TAMARA MAKSYMENKO**

is a professional dancer, choreographer and a teacher of contact improvisation and contemporary dance. She has been teaching many workshops all over the world and is the founder of Motion Mode Dance Theatre (MMDT) and the creator of numerous dance projects. 28 years of dance experience (since the early age of 4). She received medical education in body therapy and sociology at Dnipropetrovsk National University and trained at the Physical Theatre in Intragna (Switzerland) with Thomas Mettler. Now Tamara is a member of the Ukrainian Contemporary Dance Platform Association and of the OFFTANZ Tirol Association (Austria). She is the founder of "Solo & CI Tirol Festival" and "West meets East."

[More Information](#)

## ELISABETH NEHRING

works as journalist, dance critic and cultural policy moderator. Since 2019, Dr Elisabeth Nehring has held the position of dance expert for Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. In 2018, she moderated and steered the Round Table Dance in Berlin, a participatory process with broad involvement of cultural policy, administration and dance experts to develop a concept for dance in Berlin. Since 1999 she has worked as a freelance journalist and critic for various radio stations (including Deutschlandfunk Kultur, WDR, etc.) as well as (supra)regional print and online media, reporting on important world premieres in Germany as well as international festivals and producing radio features on cultural and political topics. Elisabeth Nehring moderates public talks and is and has been a member of several juries.

## ANNE NGUYEN

learned a number of martial arts and discovered the world of breakdance and battling. Since 2005, Anne Nguyen has dedicated herself to sublimating hip-hop dance and its rebellious culture and injecting it with a certain amount of mystery. She combines a raw, virtuoso gestural vocabulary with a geometrical, pure, deconstructed choreographic expression that exalts the power of abstraction. Parallel to her choreographic works, Anne Nguyen writes, directs and choreographies theatre-dance pieces where h-hop dance becomes the support for a wider reflection upon our society: , She draws from the observation of gestures, danced as well as ordinary, individual as well as collective, to turn hip-hop dance and popular cultures into a support for a reflection on tradition, on social markers, on diversity, on cultural appropriation and on mechanisms of cultural domination.

[More information](#)

## MING POON

is a Berlin-based choreographer who began his career as a professional dancer in 1993 and started to develop his choreographic practice in 2010. He creates choreographic interventions, where spectators are invited to exercise their agency to create change. His works are interactive and collaborative in design. They usually take the form of collaborative performances, public interventions and one-to-one encounters. He works with vulnerability, care, peripherality and failure as performance strategy. His practice is influenced by the Buddhist concept of interdependence and care, Judith Butler's resistance in vulnerability, Augusto Boal's theater of the oppressed and Nicolas Bourriaud's micro-utopias.

[More information](#)

## HAYMICH OLIVIER

is a Namibian dancer and choreographer. He graduated from the University of Cape Town with a Diploma in Dance Teaching and an Honors Degree in Choreography. Since then Haymich has prepared numerous choreographic works for the National Theatre of Namibia, Bank Windhoek Arts Festival and College of The Arts (Windhoek, Namibia). In 2010, along with fellow Namibian dancers, he started the First Rain Dance Theatre (FRDT), while fully operational FRDT did community outreach work by training young dancers and employing them on a freelance basis. He is currently employed as a dance lecturer at the College of the Arts in Windhoek, Namibia, where he teaches Contemporary Dance, Choreography and Dance Teaching Method. Haymich is interested in the body's response to trauma, in ways to develop movement dynamics that are not based on traditional technique training as well as in the movement language developed by older, more mature dancing bodies.

[More information](#)

## ANTON OVCHINNIKOV

works as choreographer, performer, composer, lecturer, and organizer of the annual international dance festival Zelyonka Space UP in Kyiv. Since 2008 he has been the artistic director of the Black O!Range dance production company. In 2015 he co-founded the All-Ukrainian Association "Contemporary Dance Platform." Since then he has been the president of the institution. The main objectives of the Association are to support young Ukrainian choreographers, integrate contemporary dance into the modern cultural life of Ukraine and establish the national center of contemporary dance. From 2016-2021 Anton Ovchinnikov presented a few solo performances and created five multidisciplinary projects. Since 2018 Anton Ovchinnikov has been a member of the expert panel of the Ukrainian Cultural Foundation. Since February 2022 the UA Contemporary Dance Platform has been managing two international projects supporting Ukrainian choreographers and their work during wartime.

[More information](#)

## VIKTOR RUBAN

is a performer, dancer, choreographer-researcher, educator and culture activist working on a project basis in



Ukraine and abroad based in Kyiv. Director general of Ruban Production ITP Ltd., program director and co-founder of "Impulse of Transformation" independent international dance platform, program and artistic director of the venue #KyivDanceResidency – platform for international studies in somatic, dance and performative practices, movement-based art and research. Initiator and ambassador of Ukrainian Emergency Performing Arts Fund initiative. Representative of Ukraine in the European Culture Parliament.

[More Information](#)

### **SIMONE SCHULTE-ALADAG**

has worked as a dramaturge and production manager for festivals, theater and film productions in Munich, New York and Vienna since 1994. In 2006 co-founded FOKUS TANZ, where she is largely responsible for artistic developments and project management. She is the co-curator of the international biennial festival THINK BIG! - Dance, Music Theatre and Performances for Young Audiences, which has been organized by FOKUS Tanz in cooperation with Schauburg since 2018. She is active in various advisory boards and on juries. In 2014, together with Tina Meß and Miria Wurm, she founded Tanzbüro München, which serves to network and advise independent dance professionals.

[More Information](#)

### **ZORA SNAKE**

Zora Snake is a dancer, choreographer and performance artist, founder of the Zora Snake Company and the international festival Modaperf in Cameroon. He travels internationally, mixing artistic creation in public space, performance and political-poetic ritual, art and society. The development of civil society through performances in Cameroon's neighborhoods are particularly important to him. He has won numerous prizes and works with renowned artists such as Serge Aimé Coulibalys and Fabrice Murgia. He has been a guest at the Cité internationale des arts, the Palais de Tokyo and the Centre Beaubourg in Paris. His production Shadow Survivors premiered in Nancy in 2023.

[More information](#)

### **SUSANNE TRAUB**

works as a dramaturge, curator and author. She studied theater studies, philosophy and musicology in Munich from 1988 to 1993. She then worked as a freelance and employed dramaturge for various festivals, theater/dance productions and performance projects. From 2001 to 2008, she was a permanent dramaturge at schauspielFrankfurt. She has taught regularly at various colleges and universities (Munich, Bochum, Frankfurt, Leipzig, Arnhem, Salzburg, etc.) and curated, among others, the interdisciplinary event series Begehrte Körper (1999) and Moving Thoughts (2000) in Leipzig and the exhibition Open the Curtain (2003) on the interplay of art and dance at the Kunsthalle Kiel. From 2009 onwards, she worked as a freelance curator. Since 2012 she has been working as a consultant for dance, theater and music at the Goethe Institute.

[More information](#)

### **BE VAN VARK**

works as a choreographer and teacher. The range of her choreographic work is characterized by a passion for realizing participatory projects, on stage, in museums, for public spaces as well as in nature. In 2018 she was awarded the Cross of Merit on Ribbon for her work. In 1994 she founded the company van Vark (until 2002). Since 2002, she has been working with the concept she developed, "tanztheater-global," which brings together amateurs with professional performers. To date, numerous projects have been realized internationally within this framework. Since 2011, she has been chairperson of the association "Tänzer\* ohne Grenzen e.V." (Dancers without Borders). She is currently staging "Das Fest-Tanz auf dem Plateau" (The Festival-Dance on the Plateau) with people from 33 villages in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, Brandenburg and Poland.

[More information](#)

### **ANNA VOLKLAND**

studied dramaturgy in Leipzig and dance studies in Berlin, worked as a dramaturge for drama, dance and more open theatrical formats and has been writing about theatre and dance since 2010. From 2014 to 2020, she was a research assistant at the Berlin University of the Arts, where she began researching the history of institutional critique and attempts at democratization in the municipal theater of the FRG and GDR since the late 1960s. At the UdK, she and others initiated the biennial symposium "Performances of [Femininity] in the Performing Arts" (2016 - 2022 ff.) and taught, among other things, critical theater history, extended performance analysis and experimental artistic theory and practice. She is also active as a lecturer at other universities, since 2019 regularly at the HfS "Ernst Busch" Berlin.

[More information](#)

**SIEGMAR ZACHARIAS**

is a transdisciplinary artist, activist, researcher and death doula. She learns ancient plant medicine. She develops queer feminist collective practices of transformation as training for unknown futures in art, radical pedagogy and social justice. Siegmar collaborated with uncontrollable materials such as smoke, mucus as well as the human nervous system. She explores sound as a material force of vibration that connects people and more-than-human existence. During the pandemic, the series of online listening sessions WAVES - Listening Towards Social Bodies emerged as a collective mourning and enabling touch.

[More information](#)

## // TEAM CREATIVE THINK TANK

Concept and dramaturgy // Sabine Gehm, Sarah Israel  
Organization // Sarah Israel, Sabine Beyer  
Participant management // Anna Blahaut  
Technical moderation // Sophia Herzog  
Documentation // Elisabeth Nehring  
PR // Anja Michalke  
Technical support // stage & plan

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