



BIENNALE

TANZAUSBILDUNG



AKT

MÜNCHEN 19.–25.2.2024

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IDEALS & ROLE MODELS

The **9th Biennale Tanzausbildung 2024 München** was an event organized by the Ballet Academy of the University of Music and Theatre Munich (HMTM), in collaboration with the Muffatwerk Munich. It was supported by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, the Department of Arts and Culture of the City of Munich, and the Bavarian State Ministry of Science and the Arts.

The Documentation about this nationwide event was prepared by Martina Reichelova and Maren Angele, B.A. students of the Theatre Studies Department at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, under the supervision of Anna Beke and David Russo, lecturers at the Ballet Academy of the University of Music and Theatre Munich and members of the curatorial team of the 9th Biennale Tanzausbildung 2024 München.

01

BEST PRACTICE
IN DANCE

INTRO DUCTION

This report was developed in the context of the **Biennale Tanzausbildung**, which took place in Munich from February 19th to February 25th, 2024. This year's ninth Biennale, themed Ideals and Role Models: Best Practice in Dance, brought together over 100 students and teachers from Munich, Germany, and various parts of the world. The event facilitated a vibrant exchange of ideas, collaborative work, and dance performances centered around this important theme.

The theme was chosen due to its relevance in contemporary discussions within the dance community. It prompted a variety of perspectives, particularly concerning the evolving dynamics and methodologies in the dance world. Observing the divergence in opinions on ideals and role models highlighted the influence of different backgrounds and experiences. Despite these differences, a consensus emerged regarding the shared vision for the future of dance.

A key focus of this Biennale was exploring the personal ideals and role models of participating students and teachers across different dance styles, including contemporary and ballet. Interviews conducted with these individuals aimed to uncover both the differences and commonalities in their inspirations and influences.

The concept of **ideals and role models in dance** was examined critically, questioning their definitions, the extent of their influence on dancers, and whether this influence is predominantly positive or negative. This comprehensive analysis forms the basis of the discussions and findings presented during the Biennale week.

This compilation of impressions and opinions from students and guests explores the varied perspectives on the role and impact of role models in dance, offering an analytical overview based on the experiences and insights shared during the Biennale week.

PARTICIPATING INSTITUTIONS

**Academy of Dance, Mannheim University of Music and Performing Arts
Ballet Academy, University of Music and Theatre Munich (HMTM)
Ballet School of Hamburg Ballett
BCDC Budapest College of Circus and Contemporary Dance
Cologne University of Music and Dance, Centre for Contemporary Dance
École des Sables Senegal
Folkwang University of the Arts Essen
Frankfurt University of Music and Performing Arts
Inter-University Centre for Dance Berlin (HZT)
National Ballet School of Canada
Palucca University of Dance Dresden
Royal Conservatory Dance The Hague
State Ballet and Acrobatics School Berlin
Taipei National University of the Arts Taiwan**

PERSONAL ROLE MODELS FROM THE DANCE WORLD

Role models play a significant role in **shaping individuals, inspiring them, and guiding their paths**. However, the influence of role models can sometimes lead to unrealistic self-assessment and the pursuit of unattainable standards. This can result in undue pressure, loss of individuality, and diminished diversity in artistic expression. While the impact of role models on their admirers is undeniable, the overall benefit of having such figures warrants careful examination.

At the **9th Biennale Tanzausbildung 2024 München**, we gathered insights on personal role models from students, teachers, dancers, and choreographers in Munich's local theaters. These discussions focused on the general perceptions of role models, strategies to mitigate their potential negative effects, and reflections on their influence.

Role models can vary widely; for some, they are the celebrated stars of the dance world, while others find inspiration in colleagues, teachers, and friends. For instance, Sonia Lautenbacher, a student at HfMDK Frankfurt, expressed, that every person she encounters, serves as an inspiration, as each individual offers something valuable to learn due to our inherent differences.

However, the admiration of role models can also have adverse consequences. Many young dancers, for example, tend to compare themselves to the 'perfect bodies' of renowned dancers, which can lead to eating disorders and mental health issues. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for fostering a healthy environment in the dance community.

„I mean, seeing dance in general on stage, like a performance, I always loved it, and I started dancing because my friends were dancing. They showed me some stuff, and I liked to dance. And then my parents put me to dance school. And somehow, I came to that school here in Munich, and there I continued dancing.“

Magdalena Knappe,
Student at the Ballet Academy, HMTM

STUDENTS

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„When I was young, I wasn't really watching videos, having pictures of people, of dancers and everything. So my mom was actually a bit worried, if I do that just for her. But then, I don't know, it is just in myself, I want to do the best, and I really like to move my body. But I don't really have like a ‚Oh I want to be like her‘. Just I want to be the best of what I can do.“

Lisa-Marie Deloye,

Student at the Ballet Academy, HMTM

„Yeah, but it changes with the years, I think. Because when I was a child, it was Roberto Bolle, you know, in Italy it is just him. But since you go from experience, I went out from Italy and I discovered the world. One of the things especially my role models are always ones that have my body type I think. But I also think, in our class, I don't know, role models, yes, but also what people can give to you. Because like Simon can think one thing and she can think another thing, and it's beautiful, like to get this information for you, because each person that comes through your life gives you something.“

Manuel Mircuda,

Student at the Ballet Academy, HMTM

„For me, I think it's a lot of people and I take the stuff that I find most impressive about them. Oh, I wish I could just jump as high as him or turn as him. I pick the things and I have a lot.“

Simon Boley,

Student at the Ballet Academy, HMTM

„I don't have one person that I feel like ‚oh my god, the turn like this, it's so beautiful and the other like oh, she's doing like Juliet amazing and she's beautiful‘ and it's like a combination from a lot of people.“

Sarah Pimentel Quintao,

Student at the Ballet Academy, HMTM

„I like to take the inspiring stuff and it's not just dancers, I think, for me also like choreographers also the thoughts that they have. Like they create the choreography it's amazing.“

Kateřina Novotná,

Student at the Ballet Academy, HMTM

„Ja, also auf jeden Fall die großen Stars. Also Friedemann Vogel aus Stuttgart und ja also schon einige.“

Kyle Lippoth,

Student at the Ballet Academy, HMTM

„I like many dancers, especially here in Bayerisches Staatsballett are amazing, so I count them as an ideal or role model but like in Ballett there is no person who is perfect, and if you just try to reach your goals to become better and better everyday, so you just get those inspiration from amazing dancers, but still your goal is to become better than yesterday.“

Alicia Baehr,

Student at the Ballet Academy, HMTM

Sonja Lautenbacher, student from the Frankfurt University of Music and Performing Arts claimed to have no role models what so ever. Her reason was, it did not make sense to her, she does not want to be like anyone else, but wants to find herself. She said, she was inspired by everyone new she meets, not only to one person. There are specific parts of different people she admires, her examples were strong presence, the courage of showing yourself, being clear of your own goal and going for it. The young dancer is inspired by her own friends and not by important and famous dancers she meets.

TEACHERS

„Im Tanz: Ich würde auch sagen, Raimund Hoghe ist jemand. Was auch damit zu tun hat, dass er auch Journalist war, und ich habe ja auch als Kritikerin eine Zeit lang gearbeitet, und diese Verbindung, wenn jemand schreibt oder mit Worten, [...] das ist was, was mich sehr beeindruckt hat [...]. Obwohl ich auch eine Ausbildung im Tanz gemacht habe, sah ich mich doch eher sozusagen schreibend im Café sitzen. Also das war so das Role Model, das ich hatte. Während Teenager-Zeiten war ich sehr, sehr daran interessiert, eine Ausbildung zu machen und auf die Bühne zu gehen, und da hatte ich so Leute wie Nurejew und Baryshnikov. [...] Aber da waren dann die anderen Role Models, schreibend im Café sitzen, doch stärker.“

Katja Schneider,

Professor at the Frankfurt University of Music and Performing Arts

„I think, the biggest role model to me is William Forsythe. I have a connection to him. I enjoyed the experience, how he worked with dancers. How he looks at certain things and sees the possibility of things. I think, he is a genius in what he has done over this time, that he was – well, he is still doing it. I think, that is enough. If you have to put one there, but there are many. But if I have to list one person, he is very significant to me.“

Craig Davidson,

Choreographer

„Das hatte ich als Tänzerin, da hatte ich Ideale und Vorbilder, und ich muss sagen, die erste war meine Lehrerin, Konstanze Vernon. Deswegen ist es so besonders und so schön hier zu sein, weil, ich fühle mich ihr sehr nah. Ja, und jetzt als Stellvertretende Direktorin der Ballettschule habe ich auch Vorbilder, weil, als ich die Stelle angefangen habe, hab ich Mavis Staines sehr verehrt. Und ich weiß, sie hat mir auch sehr viel geholfen, und ich habe immer gesagt, wenn ich groß bin, will ich wie Mavis sein. Und dann darf ich nicht vergessen, unseren Choreografen, unseren Direktoren, John Neumeier. Weil ich kenne ihn schon so viele Jahre, und er ist und bleibt mein ewiges Vorbild in vielen Aspekten: Wie man mit Menschen spricht, wie man mit Tänzern trainiert, wie man ihnen die Freiheit gibt, Sachen zu machen, wo man nicht denkt, dass man sie kann.“

Gigi Hyatt,

Deputy Director of the Ballet School of Hamburg Ballett

„Yes, I had a lot of dancers actually, colleagues of mine, so in the school, you know, we had this company in the school and they were working in the same place and these people for me were like my role models, I wanted to be like them. And I started very young, I started with three years old, so I think that was already my passion and I had no idea, but always the older, they were my role models.”

Rita Barão Soares,

Choreographic assistant and rehearsal director at Ballett des Staatstheaters am Gärtnerplatz, teacher at the Ballet Academy, HMTM

Michael Freundt, managing director of the Dachverband Tanz Deutschland e.V. and a keynote speaker at symposium *Embodying New Ideals & Idealized Body Images* has different ideals at the same time in different dancing forms, because in his opinion, looking at only one dance form means to ignore that there is more. For him, it is very important, that we talk more about what dance means in a different cultural environment. Some of his personal role models are networkers, who brought different ideals together. People he mentioned were Ulrich Roehm, Walter Heun and Peter Appel – all open-minded professionals.

„Role models. As far as people go, yeah, I think I have a lot. I am inspired by my colleges for sure. A lot of them I see as role models. A lot of creators as well. Andonis Foniadakis, a greek choreographer I worked very closely with, is one of my role models for sure. Incredible work. And he will be making a piece for us this year at Gärtnerplatztheater.“

Alexander Hille,

Dancer at Ballett des Staatstheaters am Gärtnerplatz

„Ganz klar für mich, Ideale und Vorbilder sind der Grund, warum die meisten Menschen diesen Beruf überhaupt beginnen. Und in meinem Fall, und ich glaube, im meisten Fall der Menschen, ist das erste Ideal wahrscheinlich die erste Lehrerin oder der erste Lehrer, der einen sozusagen auf die Spur bringt. Für mich wird das immer bleiben, die Frau Hartlieb, die eine kleine Ballettschule in Salzburg hatte, und mir etwas mitgegeben hat, das mich auf meinem heutigen Berufsweg lange begleitete: „Bis hier, und weiter kann ich dir nichts geben, du musst woanders noch hingehen, um woanders noch zu studieren.“

Karl Alfred Schreiner,

Ballet director and choreographer at Ballett des Staatstheaters am Gärtnerplatz

„Ich hab' mich an denen entlanggearbeitet. Aber am Anfang war es eigentlich nicht ein Ideal für mich. Ich wollte nur tanzen. Ich komme aus einer künstlerischen Familie, Vater Maler, akademischer Maler, Großmutter Sängerin, Großvater Konzertmeister, also war es für mich etwas ganz Normales, ans Theater zu streben. Diesmal war es eben der Tanz, ja. Danach waren es schon Beispiele wie Rudolf Nurejew, Paolo Bortoluzzi, ein berühmter italienischer Tänzer, und auch die Kollegen, die ersten Solisten des Ensembles, in denen ich war, in Düsseldorf, oder hier in München Heinz Bosl. Es wechselte auch ständig. Du entdeckst immer wieder neue Personen, und dann passiert es, dass du mit ihnen tanzt. So wie Natalja Makarowa oder Marcia Haydée. Und dann wachst du mit ihnen, oder sie mit dir.“

Ivan Liška,

Artistic director of Bayerisches Junior Ballett München

NEGATIVE ASPECTS

While role models are prevalent in the dance world, there are also negative aspects to idolizing a particular individual. In our interviews, we explored the potential challenges associated with role models and ideals.

Participants were asked whether they recognized difficulties in having role models, particularly in terms of self-limitation by focusing excessively on specific attributes, such as physical ideals.

Furthermore, we examined strategies to **prevent the negative impacts of role models**, especially from the perspective of educators. The responses highlighted concerns about the pressure to conform to idealized standards and the risk of diminishing personal uniqueness and diversity in dance.

„We are all different. So this is for me always, and I have to say, also my school, they always allowed us to be different. So I have to say, I never had that confrontation somehow. And I see there is a lot of this negativity that I personally never felt. I feel on the other hand, and what I try is always that we are all different, so we all have to learn to use our bodies. That is our instrument. I can not look at you and try to be like you, because your body is yours, I have mine. So I have to achieve my maximum but in my body, with my qualities, with what is negative and what is positive about my body. To manage to use that and not try to look and compare to somebody else, because then we will never achieve.

So this is what I'm trying, that we find who they are. In the same movement we are all different, that we can achieve exactly the same – in a different way.“

Rita Barão Soares

„Dass man Vorbilder hat, dass es einschränkend ist? Nein, ich glaube, man verliert sich selber nicht, oder man sollte sich selber nicht verlieren in Vorbildern. Man kann von jedem lernen, man kann von vielem lernen, aber nein, das schränkt mich auf gar keinen Fall ein.“

Gigi Hyatt

„Ich glaube, dass gerade im Tanz, also wenn man jetzt an den Ausbildungskontext denkt, Role Models oft noch sehr stark im rein Physischen verortet sind. Und das halte ich auch für nicht besonders gesund. Also da jemandem nachzueifern oder einem idealen körperlichen Zustand nachzueifern, das kann wirklich verheerend³ Folgen haben: Essstörungen und so weiter oder Körperwahrnehmungsstörungen, dass man sich ganz anders wahrnimmt, als man eigentlich ist, was tatsächlich ist. Und ich glaube, es ist aber dann wichtig, wenn man sich Role Models außerhalb der eigenen Blase sucht. Also das war vielleicht für mich die Idee mit dem Sitzen im Café, weil das so in den 70er, 80er Jahren halt noch nicht so üblich war. Also man verband es dann mit Simone de Beauvoir oder Leuten, die sich emanzipatorisch ihren Weg erkämpft haben. Dass man sich irgendwie einen Weg erkämpft, dafür sind, glaube ich, Role Models ganz wichtig. Ich glaube, sie werden dann toxisch oder verheerend, wenn sie zur Perfektionierung des eigenen anregen, also wenn man nie drankommt, und es immer noch etwas gibt, was man nicht richtig machen kann. Aber wenn man Role Models nutzt, um zu sagen: es gibt ganz viele Möglichkeiten, und das ist eine davon, und das geht, versuch es mal, dann finde ich sie natürlich sehr positiv.“

Katja Schneider

„Ich glaube, es ist gut, Ideale zu haben, aber es ist wichtig sich nicht an ihnen zu messen. Denn der Tanz ist halt wirklich sehr subjektiv, und es gibt verschiedene Meinungen, manche mögen das eine mehr, andere etwas anderes, deshalb ist es sehr schwer, wenn man sich selber mit jemandem vergleicht, was natürlich zwangsläufig öfter passiert. Aber ich glaube, es ist in Maßen gut zur Motivation.“

Kyle Lippoth

„If it's just one person and you try to do everything that person does, you can be inspired and take a lot from them, but you have to be you.“

Simon Boley

WORKSHOPS DAILY MADE

Workshops were a central part of the intensive week at the **9th Biennale Tanzausbildung 2024 München**. In total, six different **BA workshops** were offered **under the title *Daily Made***. The Creative Journey were led by renowned national and international choreographers, offering students a range of unique experiences. The workshops available included:

BA Workshop I: *The Freedom of the body* by Germaine Agony

BA Workshop II: *EVOLVE* by Craig Davidson

BA Workshop III: *CORPONOMY: corporeality + economics* by Eisa Jocson

BA Workshop IV: *Wildfire* by Dustin Klein

BA Workshop V: *suddenly the body, to space and back* by Simone

BA Workshop VI: *Trust and share* by Julie Shanahan

Additionally, MA students had the opportunity to participate in **MA Workshop: *The Meeting Point* by Ami Shulman**.

Over the course of three days, participants created their own short choreographies, which were performed on the final evening, the Showing, at Munich's renowned event location Muffathalle in front of all the other participants. The diversity of the workshops resulted in unique choreographies.

A common element across all workshops was the creation of a 'safe space' where students had the freedom to explore new movements and ideas. This environment fostered joy and curiosity, evident during both the workshops and the performances. The final performances were filled with excitement as students showcased their work, and there was a palpable sense of anticipation in the hall as they watched their peers perform in different dance styles.



Dancer in the M.A. workshop of
Ami Schulman (Performer,
Choreographer)
© Alica Baehr

Many dancers reaching for the
spotlight during *Improvisation
Session: Fresh Made Jam*
© Marie-Laure Briane

Six dancers hugging in the
workshop of Simone Sandroni
(Choreographer)
© Alica Baehr

The performances exhibited various dynamics, but the unifying theme was the collaborative effort that brought together mixed groups from dance students all around the world. The concluding performance from *Germaine Agony's* workshop culminated in a shared dance experience involving everyone in the hall, generating an incredible energy as dancers from diverse backgrounds united on stage

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The undeniable connection fostered through dance was a testament to its **power to bring people together.**



Dancers in motion during the *Improvisation Session: Fresh Made Jam*
© Marie-Laure Briane

Dancer Tadas Almandas in the M.A. workshop of
Ami Schulman (Performer, Choreographer)
© Alica Baehr

VALUES IN DANCING

The young dancers from the Biennale expressed a strong desire for changes or adjustments in the current dance world. Many existing values are seen as outdated and in need of modernization to align with contemporary standards. **Creating a healthy environment for young dancers**, both mentally and physically, is of paramount importance. The issue of eating disorders, frequently mentioned in conversations, highlights the necessity of protecting young dancers to ensure the dance world becomes a safe space where the love of dance is prioritized.

Opinions varied on the progress being made. Some believe significant strides are already underway, while others feel we are still at the very beginning, with much work remaining. Key terms such as diversity, body image, and positive change were frequently mentioned. Participants were asked for their perspectives on the current state of acceptance, diversity, and body images in the dance world.

„Ich glaube, wir sind auf dem Weg Fortschritte zu machen. Ich finde, es ist wichtig, dass jemand auf der Bühne steht, der einen berührt, der einem was sagen kann. Ein Tänzer ist ein Mensch, der sich bewegt. Und für mich ist das das Wichtigste. Nicht ein Tänzer, der die besten Pirouetten drehen kann oder die besten Füße hat. Das ist natürlich auch etwas, was man bewundern kann. Aber für mich ist das Wichtigste, dass ein Tänzer einem etwas sagen kann. Und dass man dadurch bereichert wird. Wir sind auf dem Weg.“

Gigi Hyatt

„Some things need to be updated, reevaluated, but not everything needs to be cancelled. You know, I think we need to broaden, keep broadening ourselves into the way forward. But we don't need to exclude anything going forward either.“

Craig Davidson

„Also ich kann da jetzt nur für Frankfurt sprechen. Wir haben eine ziemlich große Diversität, die aufgenommen wird. Also gerade auch im Bachelor, das geht nicht nach Körperschema-Typus. Ganz viel reden, also wirklich auch Verschiedenes, also ich hab' die auch, bevor ich gefahren bin, mit Raimund Hoghe Videos versorgt. Also einfach eine Varianz von großer Diversität zeigen. Und viel läuft in Frankfurt über Workshops. Also es gibt den normalen Stoff, und die machen ihren Unterricht, aber wir haben eine Projektwoche, und in der Projektwoche kommen dann auch tatsächlich Lehrende, die etwas unterrichten, was man eigentlich normal im Curriculum nicht hat. Sei es jetzt afrikanischer Tanz oder irgendetwas, das damit auch andere Körperbilder bringt. Oder Tanzende, die gender-fluide sind und da auch nochmal einen anderen Umgang mit Körperlichkeit zeigen. Also ich denke, Erfahrungen machen ist da ganz wichtig und sich allem enthalten, was Aussehen kommentiert.“

Katja Schneider

During the feedback discussion about the Symposium and the overall Biennale, students emphasized certain overlooked topics that demanded greater attention.

The first issue was the **„perfect fit ballet body“**. The students feel immense pressure, not only from external resources but also from within, to have a *„perfect dance body“*, which may not exist, since every body is unique. However, this body image is contributing to the rise of eating disorders, highlighting the urgent need for therapy in dance academies.

There were also some complaints about the choice of words used by certain idols who spoke on the symposium panel regarding the *„ideal body“*. One of the statements criticized was the comprehension that you don't have good looks because you really want them, but rather because you work on your body and that is the result. The participants' dissatisfaction was supported by the fact that there are dancers who do not have the *„ideal body“* even though they are working on it and who then ask themselves what they are doing wrong. And that is something that needs to be avoided.

The participating students aim to **raise awareness to insecurities**, they want to convey the message that transforming one's body for the stage is impossible and, most importantly, that **perfection, in this sense, does not exist**.

Simone Sandroni mentioned something very interesting at the symposium on the topic of differences and artistic diversity with dancers with different backgrounds.

His inspiration, he says, comes from other dancers. However, he says the focus of his interest lies in the personality of the person, not the dancer. Furthermore, he considers technique is secondary in any artform.

Julie Shanahan shared her thoughts on her understanding of dance, praising the younger generation for **trying to change the system**. According to her, "*a lot that has to be done*". The goal would be everyone looking after each other because **dance is a community**. Shanahan claims everyone has something to contribute and it does not depend on your age. People should not underestimate the power of young muscles, hopes, dreams and love. There is so much beauty in freshness, she said.

Her words to the teachers were: **Do not just teach them the technique, teach them how the language is done.**

Her words to the young generation of dancers were: **Do not measure yourself all the time, express yourself in the form you can, at this point of your life, everything is possible!**

EDUCATION & REALITY

Gathering the values that teachers wish to impart to their students is crucial, considering their wealth of experience both in life and on their dance journey. Teachers serve not only as educators but also as ideals and role models for aspiring dancers.

What essential principles they aim to instill in their students for navigating the dance world and life more broadly?

„I would like them to see – or not even to see but just to take away the possibility of openness. That there is a safe space to try things and I am hoping to unlock or unleash certain things within their potential. Things that I have seen, people like for example William Forsythe do with dancers and how they create an open environment for them to try and to explore something new to feel.“

Craig Davidson

„I think, my biggest wish for them would be to find a connection in themselves to something that they love, because there is no right and there is no wrong. There is only what makes you wanna wake up the next day to do it, what you connect with something, what you relate to someone or something and this is the value of our lives. I don't think, that dance should be separated from who we are as a person, as a human being. Sometimes we do separate those things in the service of becoming an elite athlete or a virtuose. I think, virtuosity should be redefined as the depth/intecrasy of who we are. When you see someone on stage and you get to see a depth of them, they are completely unique. There is nothing comparable to another person.“

Ami Shulman,

Performer, choreographer, rehearsal director, teacher, certified Feldenkrais mentor and author

„I think, it is very important to respect each other, to respect our art and what we love. And never forget, that we do this because we love to do it. And never forget, that it should be fun. If it's not fun, then maybe we should start thinking about something else. At least for me. Because this is what should bring them on stage and people should appreciate what we do, so love also what we love to do.“

Rita Barão Soares

„I've noticed sometimes training ballet education that is about sort of being rigid to be correct and sometimes my work is too relax space in the mind and relax spaces in the body, so that other movement patterns can emerge, because I think, I don't know if its an ideal, I think my interest is that through their study, my students can have a long path ways of learning and I rather than close doors, I'm trying to open doors. So that's something that I try to instill in and all levels to the language I use, how I interact with students and for example musicians. In that way I know it is my duty to model respect in model of community. I could go much longer in other things with ballet technique and also sort of confronting canons in ballet and what should be celebrated and what should be left behind. That's also something that comes into the teaching but that still falls under the umbrella of sort of opening doors and also getting rid of baggage. Also the class can be a time to, in a safe environment, to examine I don't need this anymore and I can let it go. And to also trust your intuition.“

Isaac Spencer,

Professor for ballet techniques at the BA dance department of the Frankfurt University of Music and Performing Arts



Olivier Vercoutère (Ballet Academy, HMTM; Bayerisches Junior Ballett München) with two dancers during the classical training
© Alica Baehr

Simone Sandroni (Choreographer) hugging with a dancer in his workshop
© Alica Baehr



„Oh, ich mochte denen viel geben, ich mochte Freude am Tanzen vermitteln, Spaß auf der Bühne zu sein, Interesse an Choreografie, Interesse an anderen Formen von Tanz. Sich selbst nicht zu einzugrenzen, so eng zu sehen, dass man nur so klassisch tanzen kann [...] Aber ich mochte ihnen einfach Selbstbewusstsein geben, also ich mochte Tänzer, die selbstbewusst sind, nicht zu sehr auf sich bezogen, kritisch, dass sie sich nicht zu sehr selber kaputt machen, sondern eine gesunde, eigene Einschätzung schaffen. Weil, es ist immer sehr, sehr schwierig, sich selber einzuschätzen. Und dass sie gestarkt in die Berufswelt gehen, dass sie alle Tools beherrschen: Wie benimmt man sich in einer Kompanie, wie respektiert man einander, die Arbeit einer Community? Weil, bei den Junioren sind 16 Tänzerinnen und Tänzer, die müssen zwei Jahre lang miteinander klarkommen. Wir sind von unterschiedlicher Herkunft, haben unterschiedliche Charaktere, aber die müssen lernen, ja, wir sind unterschiedlich, aber wir müssen das mit Kommunikation irgendwie lösen können, wenn Probleme auftauchen.“

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Olivier Vercoutère,

Professor for Classical Dance at the Ballet Academy, HMTM and rehearsal director/ballett master of Bayerisches

PROCESS IN DIVERSITY

Diversity is a critical and current issue in both society and dance. Classical Ballet, in particular, has historically upheld stringent standards for the ‚perfect body‘, often depicted as slender, white women with long legs in tutus and their muscular, white male partners. This narrow portrayal creates an exclusionary perception that ballet is only accessible to those who fit this specific mold. The pervasive issue of the ‚perfect body‘ in ballet is well-documented, often highlighted in media depictions where young dancers undergo extreme measures to conform to unrealistic standards.

In recent years, there has been some progress in addressing these standards, with efforts focused on **revising restrictions and promoting mental and physical health among dancers** in classical ballet. However, it’s crucial to note, that this shift does not diminish the demand for classical trained dancers in contemporary choreography; rather, it underscores a heightened awareness of broader health issues within the dance community.



The dancers Ellyne Knol (Royal Conservatoire Dance the Hague) and Wouter Smit (Royal Conservatoire Dance the Hague) during their performance *Crisantemi*
© Marie-Laure Briane



Inclusion is another pivotal aspect of the discussion. The presence of professional dancers with physical and/or mental disabilities on stage remains relatively rare, reflecting ongoing challenges in fostering inclusivity within the dance industry. Initiatives to support these dancers require time, understanding, and accommodations tailored to their specific needs.

Furthermore, **racial diversity is a critical component of the diversity discourse in dance**. For example, Osiel Gouneo's portrayal as the first 'black Romeo' at the Paris State Opera highlights the significance of representation on stage. The scarcity of ballet roles available to performers of color underscores persistent barriers that limit opportunities for diverse voices and talents in classical dance.

The complexities surrounding diversity in dance necessitate continued efforts and vigilance. While there has been progress, it is imperative not to become complacent. Initiatives must continue to challenge existing norms, promote inclusivity, and expand opportunities for dancers from all backgrounds and abilities.

The dancers from the Ballet Academy, University of Music and Theatre Munich during their performance *Mirror*
© Marie-Laure Briane

Dancer Kezia Jonah during her performance *Beloved « Qui ou Non »*
© Marie-Laure Briane



The dancers from the Hochschule für Musik und darstellende Kunst Frankfurt am Main during their performance *For long*
© Marie-Laure Briane

CLOSING REFLECTIONS

The intensive week brought together a rich tapestry of perspectives and aspirations, culminating in the **Sunday discussion**, that provided a nurturing space for meaningful exchanges. Here are key insights gathered from discussions on workshops, performances, the symposium, and overall event organization:

The workshops sparked tremendous enthusiasm among participants, fostering **new connections and friendships** as dancers from diverse backgrounds converged. Positive feedback was received for the hostel accommodation, which facilitated networking opportunities among attendees.

Feedback on the symposium was mixed. While some felt there was inadequate dialogue, particularly on critical topics like anxiety, eating disorders, and mental health in dance, there was a unanimous call to address body insecurities with sensitivity and promote representation, especially within the contemporary dance sphere.

The performances stood out as a highlight, described as **impressive, enchanting, and meticulously organized**. The inclusion of a stage enhanced the theatrical experience, adding a special dimension to each performance. Equally significant were the workshop presentations, which showcased classmates exploring new dance forms, fostering a spirit of exploration and solidarity. The decision to keep workshop performances closed to the public was praised for creating a safe environment conducive to artistic expression.



A woman at the symposium holding a speech
© Marie-Laure Briane

Simone Sandroni, Jan Broeckx (Ballet Academy, HMTM), Anna Beke (Ballet Academy, HMTM), Friedemann Vogel (The Stuttgart Ballet), Anne do Paço (Vienna State Ballet), Nina Hümpel (tanznetz.de) with Lucia Lacarra (freelance dancer) and Alexei Ratmansky (New York City Ballet) on Zoom at the Panel Discussion II: *Transitions and Constants. Artistic Ideals Yesterday. Today. Tomorrow.* (ltr)
© Marie-Laure Briane

Overall, the week brimmed with enthusiasm, with many expressing a desire for a longer Biennale — an aspiration met with playful fatigue from the curatorial team. The event left a lasting impression, reinforcing the community's **deep-seated passion for dance and a collective commitment to enhancing future editions with deeper engagement and broader participation.**



Feedback-session for the presentations of the different schools —
Flower-shower
© Alica Baehr

INDIVIDUAL HIGHLIGHTS

To gain personal insights from the students about their experiences at the **9th Biennale Tanzausbildung 2024 München**, we asked them about their highlights of the week. This allowed us to reflect on their favourite moments together and capture those memorable experiences.

Additionally, this provided a valuable opportunity for future organizers of the Biennale, to understand, what resonated well with participants, enabling them to build on the event's successful aspects. Our focus was on the participants themselves – what they enjoyed, what they learned and how they felt throughout the week. Ultimately, it was about celebrating their experiences and the impact of the Biennale on their journey in dance.

„For me it is I think the workshop. Just also to choreograph together with the choreographer and the other dancers, to get to know them. We all dance different, some never really danced ballet, so they have a completely different style and that is nice to put together and dance. And still we are moving almost the same.“

Magdalena Knappe

„I think for me, we had a class with Isaac Spencer, it's classical for contemporary dancers and I really enjoyed this and really I felt, like I danced and I moved. So that's my highlight“

Lisa-Marie Deloye

"Yes, I would say the highlight was a dance practice that we led with other MA students, with the direction of Ami Shulman. She was a rehearsal-director in Göteborg and we created a very nice warm-up for the symposium.“

Tadas Almandas,

Student at dance department of the Frankfurt University of Music and Performing Arts

„Oh yeah, I think this has been like a super great week. First with the performances at the beginning, was really nice both, to watch the others and to perform myself. And it was nice that the week continued with the workshops and classes. It was very nice and very fun.”

Theodor Bimer,
Student at NBS in Toronto

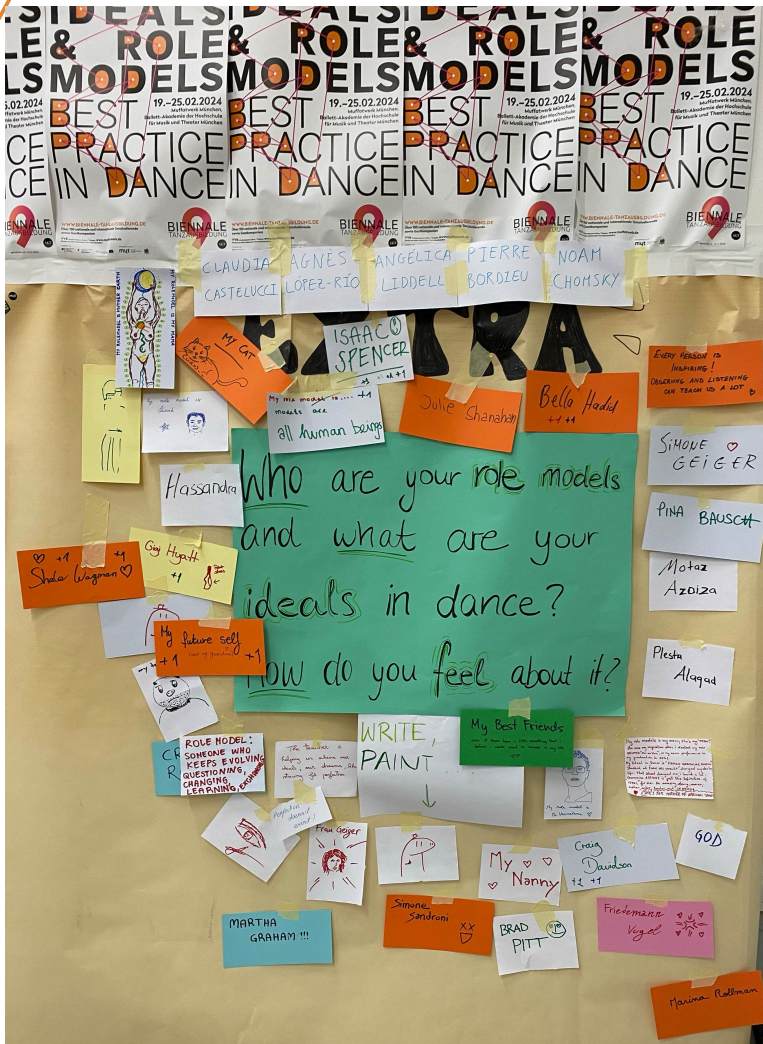
During the feedback session on Sunday, the participants were asked to share their thoughts on **what they enjoyed about the Biennale in general and to suggest improvements for future events**. Here are some key points that emerged:

- 1. Networking and Interactions:**
Many participants highlighted the opportunity to dance with and get to know different people as a major highlight. This aspect was cherished for fostering connections and building relationships.
- 2. Public vs. Workshop Performances:**
There was unanimous appreciation for the arrangement where performances by different schools were open to the public, while workshop performances remained closed. This setup created a safe space for workshop participants, allowing them to perform without excessive pressure, given the short preparation time of three days.
- 3. Workshops:**
The workshops received widespread praise for providing room for creativity and self-expression. Participants valued the continuity of having the same choreographer for all three days, which allowed them to delve deeply into their progress and artistic development.
- 4. Optional Training Sessions:**
Before the workshops each day, dancers had the option to participate in training sessions covering various dance styles. This flexibility catered to individual preferences and readiness for the day ahead.

5. **Rest Day:** Some dancers expressed a desire for a scheduled rest day without dancing to give their bodies a break, highlighting the physical demands of the intensive week.
6. **Symposium Format:** Participants appreciated the structure of the symposium day, which began and ended with dance sessions. This format was described as refreshing and complemented the intellectual discussions with practical engagement in dance.
7. **Accommodation and Networking:** All visiting dancers were housed together in the same hostel, facilitating networking opportunities among participants. Local dancers from Munich noted this as a missed opportunity for them to connect more closely.
8. **Positive Atmosphere:** Overall, the atmosphere was described as positive and supportive. Participants felt encouraged and affirmed in their abilities, experiencing a sense of belonging and validation in pursuing their dance aspirations.

These insights not only celebrate the successes of the **9th Biennale Tanzausbildung 2024 München** but also provide constructive feedback to enhance future events, ensuring they continue to inspire and empower dancers from around the world.

CONCLUSION



Poster with personal role models from participants
© Maren Angele

In conclusion, the **9th Biennale Tanzausbildung 2024 München** proved to be a resounding success, marked by a week filled with new discoveries and transformative experiences. This innovative event brought together talented dancers from around the world, fostering a vibrant exchange of ideas and techniques.

Participants engaged with **diverse dance styles ranging from contemporary to classical ballet and experimental forms** like Gaga, exploring new methods and approaches. Each dancer showcased their talent and creativity across these varied styles, demonstrating the richness and dynamism of the dance world.

The event also served as a platform for discussing new strategies aimed at fostering a healthier and more supportive environment within the dance community. Topics such as diversity, acceptance, and the nurturing of individual personalities were at the forefront of these discussions, signaling a commitment to positive change and growth.

Throughout workshops, lectures, and performances, dancers not only displayed technical dexterity, but also revealed their emotional depth and expressiveness, captivating audiences with the profound impact and beauty of dance as a **form of expression**.

As we reflect on this memorable week, we hope this documentation serves as a reminder of the inspiring moments shared in Munich. It was a privilege to witness and contribute to this forward-looking event, offering glimpses into the promising future of dance.



Curatorial team of the 9th Biennale Tanzausbildung 2024 München: Jan Broeckx, Simone Geiger Liebreich, Isabelle Severs, Anna Beke, David Russo (Itr)
© privat

LINKS

TRAILER 9th BIENNALE TANZAUSBILDUNG 2024 MÜNCHEN

— the documentation of the 9th Biennale Tanzausbildung 2024 München is available [at the following link](#).

EMERGING DANCE ARTISTS (EDA)

During the Biennale week, Johannes Bergmann and Dany Beyer from the German Dance Association (Dachverband Tanz Deutschland) introduced the platform EMERGING DANCE ARTISTS. As an aspiring professional dancer, you face a variety of challenges: How can you maintain both your physical and mental health? How do you obtain insurance as a freelance dancer? The Emerging Dance Artists platform offers solutions to these and many other concerns.

Emerging Dance Artists is a knowledge platform created specifically for emerging dance artists in Germany, produced by the German Dance Association. The platform features over 20 webinars, each with focused chapters on critical subjects like health, career development, working conditions, and more. This new online platform, EMERGING DANCE ARTISTS (EDA), aims to support dance students and graduates in successfully beginning their professional dance careers in Germany. Developed as part of the DIS-TANZ-START funding program, EDA offers interdisciplinary webinars hosted by experts, along with additional resources on topics such as career development, working conditions, health, and essential qualifications. EDA is freely accessible and is designed to foster sustainable knowledge transfer and promote self-directed, digital learning.

<https://www.emergingdanceartists.de/home>

IMPRINT

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