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Library News

From the Dance Notation Bureau

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Birth, Love, Death: A Diary of Pina Bausch's *Wind von West* in Germany and America

John Giffin

Wuppertal, July 2009

It started at her funeral. The time and location were kept a secret to keep out the press and the curious. Over 100 former and current company members and coworkers gathered at the beautiful woodland gravesite on a hill high above the city. I had not been to Wuppertal for 30 years but it was important for me to personally say goodbye to her. As we individually threw white flowers on the casket, some shared a thought or a poem - one sang a Schubert lied. I did a movement tribute - the large lateral arms' circles from the chorus section of her work *Wind von West*. It was an act of giving back to Pina something meaningful that she had given to me so long ago. As fate would have it, I was able to give back to her much more as part of a team chosen to reconstruct two productions of the entire work in 2013.

To put this in historical perspective, *Wind von West* was the opening choreographic piece of Pina's very successful 1975 Stravinsky evening, titled *Fruhlingsopfer*. It was followed by a small cast work, *Zweite Fruhling* (which I also reconstructed but will not discuss here), and ended with her celebrated *Sacre*. Although not in the original cast, I, as a member of the Wuppertaler Tanztheater, danced all three of these works in numerous performances from 1976 to 1979. After this time, both *Wind von West* and *Zweite Fruhling* were replaced by *Café Mueller* in all subsequent performances, and the Stravinsky evening as such was lost.

New York City, October 2010

The year 2013 would mark the 40th anniversary of the Wuppertaler Tanztheater, and plans were developing that would eventually become *Pina40*, a yearlong celebration of the life and work of Pina Bausch. I and other former company members met with company director Dominique Mercy when he was supervising The Paris Opera production of Pina's *Iphigenie auf Tauris* at Lincoln Center. It had been decided that the celebration should involve the two educational institutions which were most important to Pina's artistic development - the Folkwangschule (now the Folkwang University of the Arts) in Essen, Germany where she studied with Kurt Jooss and later served as faculty member, and The Juilliard School of Music (now The Juilliard School) where she studied with Antony Tudor and Alfredo Corvino among others in 1960-61. As a major component of this celebration, the two missing works of the Stravinsky evening would be reconstructed and the evening would be performed in its original form not seen in almost 35 years. It would encompass two separate productions of *Wind von West* with a total of nine performances in Wuppertal and New York. The project would also include a sixteen student exchange in which eight Juilliard dancers would perform in some Folkwang performances in Wuppertal and vice versa. Also at the meeting were Joanne Endicott and Mari DiLena, Wuppertal colleagues who became my co-reconstructors on this ambitious project.

Columbus, 2012

All reconstructions are difficult. There is no score for *Wind von West* and Pina did not leave a lot of notes regarding it. What few notes and sketches found in the Bausch archives were shared with Jo, Mari and I. Of much greater value to us were the archive's five performance videotapes of *Wind von West* recorded in Wuppertal and on tour between 1975 and 1979. Videotape technology was then in its infancy so you can imagine the quality of these tapes. The images are dim and grainy – they often have ghostly after-images in a dancer's wake. But using these old videos, the three of us were able to recreate Pina's choreography.

Because Jo lives in Germany, Mari lives in New York and I live in Columbus, Ohio, we were forced to work independently with the videotapes at the start. It was agreed that Jo would be responsible to learn her solo role, Mari would cover the female chorus roles, I would cover the male chorus roles, and we would all learn the other soloist roles. We did not, however, consider which of the five videos best represented the choreography. As you can imagine, different performances with different casts over a four-year period show differences, even when the choreography remains relatively the same. These discrepancies would be the source of some friction between the three of us when teaching the work.

As important as the videos were the kinetic and personal memories that Jo, Mari and I had of dancing *Wind von West*. We performed it dozens of times in Wuppertal and other European cities as well as in eight Asian countries on the company's first international tour in 1979. Jo created the lead female dance role and Mari and I danced demi-solo and group parts. (The cast consists of thirteen women and ten men.) I always loved dancing this work, even in the open-air theater in Jakarta with bats swooping overhead! The chorus movement is serene and flowing, with the body and arms often carving large and smaller circles in space. *Wind von West* solidly grounded us dancers and required our complete concentration. I now realize that it was the perfect start to an evening that would end with the formidable physical and emotional challenges demanded in Pina's *Sacre*.

The Wuppertal and New York productions of two *Wind von West* reconstructions, including the sixteen student dancer exchanges, would be very expensive. To offset costs, the Pina Bausch Foundation, directed by Salomon Bausch, applied for a grant from Tanzfonds Erbe, an initiative of the German Federal Cultural Foundation.

Essen Rehearsals, January – March 2013

Equipped with our ghostly videotapes and our faded memories, we began rehearsals in the beautiful Hans Zullig Haus studios at the Folkwang. We worked six days a week for seven weeks with nine undergraduate dancers, four graduate dancers and ten dancers from the Folkwang Tanzstudio, a professional company in residence at the school. We started by teaching the chorus material to everyone. Variations of this material appear in some of the solo sections as well. Starting together also helped create a sense of ensemble/community that is necessary for Pina's work. This rehearsal technique was successful and we repeated it at Juilliard.

Jo, who had created the female solo role in the original production, was responsible for teaching and coaching her role. She, Mari and I taught and coached the other solo and group roles. We were fortunate to have the original male soloist, Ed Kortlandt, coach his part for a few rehearsals. Pina's choreography for these solos is very specific and very detailed. Coordinating the physical movement specifics, dynamics, musicality, personal investment and other performance issues required in these solos was the most difficult part of the reconstructions.

One fundamental aspect is common to all of Pina's work—her movement is not only motion but also emotion. This emotion, however, must be discovered through the experiencing of the movement. It is not imposed from the outside. Perhaps this is something Pina learned from performing the works of Kurt Jooss and Antony Tudor in her student days. It is an aspect which also connects her work with traditions of German pre-World War II Ausdruckstanz (Dance of Expression). This aspect presents formidable technical and artistic challenges for today's dancers. We were fortunate in having the Folkwang dancers, who have seen much of Pina's work, as the cast of our 1st reconstruction of *Wind von West*.

much importance to the actions of the top of the sternum in Pina's work. This probably stems from her work with Jooss and her long-time partner, Jean Cebron. It is a key component to the experiencing and expression of emotion in Pina's choreography. I look forward to continuing with Mira our discussions regarding this and other issues relevant to her writing an excellent dance score.

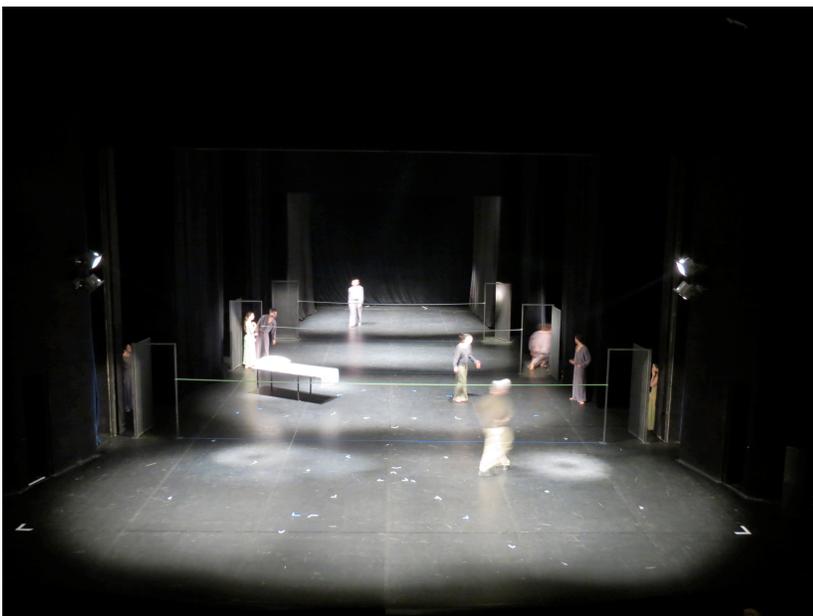
At one Juilliard rehearsal, I showed the dancers a copy of a note Pina had written during the creation of *Wind von West*. At the bottom of a page and barely legible were three words in her neat handwriting – Geburt, Liebe, Tod (Birth, Love, Death). These words perfectly describe the arc of the Stravinsky evening as a whole, as well as having resonance within each of the three separate pieces. I shared this with the cast to stimulate their imaginations. Eve Jacob, a cast member, wrote about this in a beautiful article for the **Juilliard Journal** (Dec. 2013/Jan. 2014, pps. 1, 18) (<http://www.juilliard.edu/journal/1312bausch>) based upon her reactions to learning and performing the work. She also writes as follows concerning discrepancies among the reconstructors:

“...Di Lena, Giffin, and Endicott had varying opinions regarding movement and musicality. In rehearsals, hearing many musical cues, like “faster” from one director or “slower” from another, fine-tuned our awareness of the music. Conversations about the placement of each finger in relation to the arm, the degree of bend in the knee, or the exact angle of the head cultivated our attention to detail. Ultimately, this level of specificity was effective, allowing us to maintain integrity toward Bausch's stunning work.”

On October 29 and 30, we gave a lecture-demonstration about *Wind von West* as part of the 2014 Works & Process at the Guggenheim series. The panel consisted of Jo, Mari, Lawrence Rhodes and me with Deborah Jowitt as moderator. A video of the event may be seen on YouTube (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mmrIB4puZDo>).

Wuppertal Performances, November 2013

Accompanied by Juilliard Dance Division head Lawrence Rhodes and Dance Production Manager Keith Michael, eight Juilliard dancers traveled to Germany and were integrated into the Essen cast. At our put-together rehearsals, I was surprised to discover that we had inadvertently taught some of the phrases differently to the two casts. These were mostly slight differences in timing which were easily ironed out. It's amazing how quickly these little changes occur even when you try to teach the piece exactly the same. Preventing this is among the many very good reasons for creating a Labanotation score of *Wind von West*.



The recreated set and costumes required for the production brought us much difficulty. The beautiful set design of Rolf Borzig consists of three stage-to-teaser and wing-to-wing scrims with doors on the stage right and stage left sides of each. This creates in effect four separate rooms with a table/bed stage right in room two. The only access between rooms is through the doors. Of course we taped the rehearsal studio floor to simulate the scrim and door placements but dancing with the real ones on stage presented many problems. The original doors closed themselves after someone passed through but the new doors didn't. Some times the soloist must run full speed between the second and fourth rooms in dim lighting that makes the scrims and doors almost invisible. And we had multiple casts to tech!

Wind von West setting at Wuppertal, Germany. © Keith Michael



Wind von West performance at Wuppertal, Germany. © Keith Michael

The costumes were even more difficult. The originals still exist but are too fragile to be worn in performance. The casts of twenty-three dancers in each school plus the sixteen exchange dancers plus multiple castings of some solo roles adds up to a lot of costumes! Some dancers could thankfully share costumes but not others. The fact that meters are used in Germany where the costumes were made and feet are used in the US made body measurement exchanges very problematic. Thank God for Mari and Jo with this – it almost drove me nuts!

Despite all these difficulties, the Stravinsky evening was performed in its entirety for the first time since 1979 on Nov. 22, 2013 at the Opera House in Wuppertal where it originally premiered. The young casts danced brilliantly and the evening was a great artistic and critical success.

New York City Performances, December 2013

Eight Folkwang dancers joined the Juilliard cast for three performances at the Peter Sharp Theater in New York. *Wind von West* was danced as the last piece on *New Dances PLUS*, a program of new works. Because we had performed the work in Germany and were sharing the same costumes and scrim, the technical rehearsals at Juilliard went smoothly despite the fact that the stage space was less deep than in Wuppertal. The main difficulty here was that the work would be danced for the first time with live music. The excellent musicians, including two vocal soloists, a women's chorus and five instrumentalists, were led by the talented young conductor Yuga Cohler. Issues of tempo, dynamics and conductor/dancer cues were worked out in studio and stage rehearsals. The New York audience was also captivated by Pina's work. Gia Kourlas in her *New York Times* review (Dec. 17, 2013) described *Wind von West* as "...both haunting and haunted... Nothing is obvious in this hypnotic work..."

Columbus, 2014

I returned to my home in Ohio exhausted from the effort required to reconstruct these two productions of *Wind von West*. It had taken a year of preparation and many months of work in Germany and New York to make these happen. Despite all of this, I was extremely proud and happy to have worked with Jo, Mari, Dominique, Salomon, the Pina Bausch Foundation, the Wuppertaler Tanztheater, the Folkwang University of the Arts, and the Juilliard School on this large project for *Pina40*. I hope Pina would have been pleased.

In retrospect, I am glad that we did not designate only one of the five videotapes to use in our reconstruction. Although this caused problems, it also allowed a richness into the process which might not otherwise have occurred. We three strong-willed reconstructors fought over a few details of exact movement and timing, but I believe the results were true to our experiences of dancing *Wind von West* so long ago. The dancers saw our passion for the work and were inspired by it.

Much still needs to be done. For the Pina Bausch Foundation, I am writing what is called a Regiebuch (Director's book) for both *Wind von West* and *Zweite Fruhling*. These are word descriptions of where people are on stage and their general performance actions. But much more important to me is seeing that the Labanotation score for *Wind von West* gets completed. Funds must be raised to accomplish this. Anyone able to contribute to the creation of the first Pina Bausch Labanotation score is asked to contact the DNB. We will be very thankful for your help with this project, which could open doors for the creation of other Bausch scores.

DNB 75th Anniversary in 2015

Do you know that next year, **on May 15, 2015, the Dance Notation Bureau (DNB) will celebrate its 75th anniversary!**

To celebrate, honor, and lead up to this landmark anniversary we have created a special Facebook page at www.facebook.com/DNB75anniversary, which was launched on Friday May 16, 2014 and will continue through next May 15, 2015.

It is very important that during our 75th anniversary, we acknowledge and celebrate ALL of the dedicated Labanotation practitioners who have helped the Dance Notation Bureau become the world-class arts service organization that it is today. We hope that former and current Labanotation students, teachers, staggers, notators, researchers, and fans of Labanotation will spread the word to their fellow alumni about this very special web page. This is YOUR page and while the DNB will be posting some amazing images and documents from its archive we are depending on YOU to make this page a success.

Here's what we would like you to do over the upcoming year...

Facebook members—please post selfies or your own dance videos with your DNB birthday wishes. Have an old photo that you could share with us? We would LOVE to see old friends or notation events again and introduce them to a younger generation. A recent photo would also be fab—perhaps something from the last ICKL, your notation class, staging from score, or any notation symbols you see in your daily life? Have a good notation story? Well, write it up and share it with us! As we are the DNB don't forget notation! If you have a page of a notated dance that you want us to read, this is your chance. If you want to remember a colleague who is no longer with us, your memoriam would be appreciated. Teachers, PLEASE get your students involved as well! Basically, any posts that relate to the DNB, Labanotation, or a Labanotation practitioner will be welcome.

Not a Facebook member? NOT A PROBLEM! Do you know that you can still go to our Facebook page(s) and see what has been posted? And, if there is something that you want to share with the notation community but don't want to create a Facebook account just send it to library@dancenotation.org or mail it to 111 John Street, Suite 704, New York, NY 10038. One of our Facebook editors will get it into the correct format and post it for you—there is no excuse not to join the party.

This is a yearlong party and we hope that you will celebrate with us. If you've lost touch with us this is a great year to reconnect with our community by going to our webpage at dancenotation.org—to find newsletters and other important information about the organization—or visit us daily at facebook.com/DanceNotationBureau to catch up on dance and notation news from around the world!!