

Ausbildungskonferenz Tanz AK|T (Dance Education Conference)

On 6 February 2007 representatives of Germany's state-funded dance training institutions set up the Ausbildungskonferenz Tanz or AK|T for short. It is a consortium of state-run institutions involved in training dancers in Germany (first and postgraduate degrees and diploma in performance) and sees itself as a national advocacy group working to strengthen the position of professional dance training in Germany. It plays an active role in discussions on the training situation for dance, speaking as one voice for the profession.

The ways in which it works towards this goal include:

- representing common interests in national bodies;
- stepping up collaboration among individual dance institutions, while at the same time sharpening the profile of each individual institution;
- networking with international partners

Excerpts from an interview with spokespersons for AK|T

Dieter Heitkamp, Professor and Director of Contemporary and Classical Dance at Frankfurt University of Music and Performing Arts (HfMDK); Artistic Director of the 3rd Dance Education Biennale 2012 Frankfurt am Main

Jason Beechey, Professor at and Rector of Palucca University for Dance in Dresden

Christine Neumeyer, Professor in the classical and Spanish dance departments at Mannheim University of Music and Performing Arts

Vera Sander, Professor and Head of the Center for Contemporary Dance at the Hochschule für Musik und Tanz Köln

“Before the Dance Education Biennale began, there was little or no communication within Germany and across the state-funded dance institutions. Now we know each other far better and enjoy a lively exchange of ideas. For AK|T the journey is the destination. We are seeking to be a strong voice for dance and the Dance Education Biennale helps us to do that. We come together to build something for the future.

There are even enquiries from people from other countries. I had enquiries from France and Australia, for example. They asked questions such as “How can it be that all the heads of these schools get together around one table and do something together?” In other countries the schools are often in competition with each other - “classical versus contemporary,” for example. Here we are in agreement: dance is dance and has to look to the future. Working together makes us stronger and we are delighted if other countries can follow our lead in that respect. It is also great to hear what the students say about it. They learn a great deal. Different teachers, different workshops, different venues – they discuss with each other and share their experiences. That is often their first contact with other training methods.” *Jason Beechey*

“The Biennale is not a competition; it is a forum for communication. That is something special.

It is a platform on which students and teachers come together – where they work on content and agree on a theme; in 2012 that theme is about dance as an element of cultural heritage.

Everyone will be working on it in advance and the presentations and workshops will all centre on it.” *Dieter Heitkamp*

“Heritage in dance is an important theme. Dance is a transitory art form. We don’t have the same notation systems as in music to enable us to simply read something hundreds of years later and reconstruct it.

Dance has to find its own special ways. And we are in the process of discovering them now.” *Christine Neumeyer*

“The biennale is a wonderful platform for working on the theory and practice of dance.

There is a permeable quality about our work. It is a time of very intensive communication, particularly within the different groups.” *Vera Sander*

“The fact that the Ministry of Education and Research has decided to continue to support the Dance Education Biennale over the next few years is very good news. I think it is the result of many years of work, the result of previous biennales.

Then the political signal came. The ministry had recognised that the biennales had a very important national function. I think they were also convinced by the fact that the different schools engaged in a discussion of content and set up a serious partnership.” *Dieter Heitkamp*

“People at the ministry did not think that we could actually coexist so peaceably. They expected more in-fighting. That has not been the case; from the outset we have worked together in a spirit of cooperation. I am sure that convinced them”

It was Tanzplan Deutschland who set the ball rolling. The theme was sustainability. Funding goes to projects that are sustainable. It also depends on people, on convincing people. There were two women at the ministry who were very important for us: Dr. Steffens and her successor Dr. Ehrhard. They understood what we were about. That was important in getting the whole thing off the ground, something which the minister Dr. Schavan then supported – a national forum for exchanging ideas about dance.” *Christine Neumeyer*