

Statements from the Tanzmesse Community

STHLM DANS team were shocked to receive the news of the potential cancellation of Tanzmesse in 2026 due to the lack of regional funding. Throughout the years, Tanzmesse has been placing Germany and the region of North Rhine-Westphalia on the maps for thousand of professionals and institutions in the field of dance. It has enabled the German and regional dance and cultural sectors to be more attractive and more visible.

We believe that the international dance sector will be at loss with the cancellation, but mostly Germany and the region of North Rhine-Westphalia which have gained considerable recognition through the organising of a world class and respected industry event such as Tanzmesse.

**Marie Proffit, Co-Founder & Artistic Director
STHLM DANS**

Die Tanzmesse ist unverzichtbar!

Sie ist mit IDAS NRW einer der beiden Brückenpfeiler des internationalen Austauschs der vom Land NRW und den Kommunen geförderten Tanzproduktionen aus NRW.

Die Gastgeberschaft für eine internationale Plattform in NRW/Deutschland ermöglicht Einladungen und Koproduktionen im Ausland für die Künstler:innen!

Vor Allem für Produktionen der Freien Tanzszene ist der Austausch mit den internationalen Partner:innen für die Existenzhaltung entscheidend!

Bertram Müller, Gründer und ehemaliger Leiter des tanzhaus nrw, Düsseldorf

Internationalität ist für den zeitgenössischen Tanz, seine Vielfalt und seine Weiterentwicklung von großer Bedeutung.

Mit der Streichung der Internationalen Tanzmesse NRW verliert die Tanzszene eine unverzichtbare Plattform, einen wichtigen Ort der Vernetzung für die nationale und internationale Tanzszene.

Wünschenswert wäre, dass die Politik solche Entscheidung der « Restrukturierungen » in Dialog mit der Kunstszene treffen würde.

Rafaele Giovanola & Rainald Endrass CocoonDance Company

Seit etwa 2003 arbeite ich in Köln als Choreografin. Als ich 1998 nach Deutschland kam, erfuhr ich zum ersten Mal von der Existenz der Tanzmesse. Ich erinnere mich noch gut daran, wie überrascht und gleichzeitig begeistert ich war, denn ein Forum wie dieses gibt es in Japan nicht – vielleicht nicht einmal auf der ganzen Welt.

Die Möglichkeit, ein internationales und lokales Netzwerk in einem so großen Umfang aufzubauen, ist einzigartig. Die Tanzmesse hat mir als unabhängige Choreografin, die kleinere Projekte präsentiert, die Tür zu einer Welt geöffnet, in der ich internationale Kontakte knüpfen konnte, die sonst unerreichbar geblieben wären – unabhängig von der Größe der Kompanien oder einer möglichen Anbindung an feste Theater.

Die internationale tanzmesse nrw ist weit mehr als eine Veranstaltung. Sie ist ein unverzichtbares Forum für den Austausch, das Verständnis und die Weiterentwicklung des zeitgenössischen Tanzes. Ihr Fortbestand ist von unschätzbarem Wert – sowohl für die internationale Tanzszene als auch für die lokale Kultur in NRW. Während vieles heute online möglich ist, bleibt der Tanz in seiner Essenz eine Kunstform, die durch Live-Präsenz und direkte Begegnung erlebt werden muss. Sein wahrer Wert erschließt sich erst im unmittelbaren, persönlichen Erleben – eine Erfahrung, die digitale Formate nicht ersetzen können.

Angesichts der oft betonten Bedeutung einer "nachhaltigen Gesellschaft" stellt sich die Frage: Warum sollte eine Plattform, die über 30 Jahre hinweg gewachsen ist, aufgegeben werden? Statt sie zu beenden, sollten wir alles daransetzen, diese nachhaltige Struktur zu erhalten und weiterzuentwickeln.

Der Wegfall der Förderung bedroht nicht nur eine über Jahrzehnte etablierte Plattform, sondern schwächt auch die gesamte zeitgenössische Tanzszene – auf lokaler wie globaler Ebene. Die Tanzmesse ist mehr als nur eine Veranstaltung: Sie ist ein essenzielles Instrument für internationalen Austausch und die nachhaltige Entwicklung.

Yoshie Shibahara, choreographer NRW

Tanz ist Kunst, die über die Grenzen von Sprache hinaus öffnet und vermitteln kann. Internationale Vernetzung und Austausch sind hierbei nicht nur essenziell, sondern sie hält Grenzen offen, die teils auf politischer und gesellschaftlicher Ebene schon nicht mehr zu überwinden sind. Die Tanzmesse als eine der wichtigsten internationalen Plattformen für Begegnung, Vermittlung und zum Erhalt dieser mehr denn je notwendigen Kanäle kulturellen Austauschs muss erhalten bleiben.

Gerade in Zeiten wie diesen.

Felix Landerer, Artistic Director Tanz Bielefeld and Landerer&Company

An der internationalen tanzmesse nrw war die Ben J. Riepe Kompanie in den letzten Jahren auf unterschiedliche Weisen beteiligt: Als NRW-basierte Kompanie während der Pre-Days, als Kollaborationspartnerin für kleinere Veranstaltungen mit dem FREIRAUM, oder im tanzmesse-Programm mit einer aus fast tausend Bewerbungen ausgewählten Produktion für den Showcase 2022.

*Besonders während der letzten zwei Editionen war regelrecht spürbar, wie die tanzmesse nicht nur die gesamte bundesdeutsche Tanz- und Performanceszene durch den direkten Austausch, die Möglichkeit von Live-Begegnungen und Live-Erfahrungen von Kunst und Künstler*innen von allen Kontinenten nachhaltig befruchtet hat, sondern auch, wie die Stadt und ganz NRW durch knapp 1500 Kunstschaaffende zu einem „Hub“ real wertschöpfenden Austauschs der internationalen Tanzszene wurden.*

*Denn die Wirkung, die eine solch klug gedachte und ausgeführte Plattform wie die tanzmesse ganz real für Künstler*innen in und aus NRW erzielen kann- vor allem, wenn sie auch zukünftig, wie in den letzten Ausgaben geschehen, die regionale Szene derart relevant mit einbezieht - ist real und in Zahlen spürbar: Treffen, die hier möglich werden, führen zu internationalen Netzwerken, Arbeiten, die hier gezeigt werden, werden international programmiert.*

Wir selbst haben dies beispielsweise mit „Creature“ erfahren, einer Produktion, die in unmittelbarem Bezug auf die vorausgegangene Programmierung während der tanzmesse zum renommierten SAAL BIENNAL Festival nach Estland eingeladen wurde.

*Die internationale tanzmesse nrw ist so mehr sein als ein reines „Aushängeschild“ in Sachen Tanz und Performance für das Land NRW und die Stadt Düsseldorf: sie erzeugt Wirkung und unterstützt NRW-Künstler*innen hier vor Ort und weltweit in Networking, Sichtbarkeit und Touring. Dieses Format als weitere Struktur der Stärkung unserer Szene zu beschneiden oder gar zu kappen wird sicherlich spürbare Auswirkungen auf internationale Gastspielreisen und zukunftsorientierte Touring-Möglichkeiten in und aus NRW haben.*

Ben J. Riepe Kompanie, NRW

My name is Nadia Adame and I am the Artistic Director at AXIS Dance Company in the United States. As an artist, born in Cologne, and advocate for the growth of contemporary dance, I value Internationale Tanzmesse NRW as an irreplaceable platform for global dialogue, collaboration, and innovation.

For over 30 years, Tanzmesse has been more than just an event — it's been a vital meeting point for artists, companies, curators, producers, and audiences from across the world. The opportunities it provides for exchange, networking, and inspiration are unparalleled. Tanzmesse plays a crucial role in bridging the gap between the local and international dance communities, particularly in North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW), a region known for its rich cultural heritage and artistic innovation. The event facilitates connections that extend far beyond the festival itself, helping to build long-term partnerships that fuel the development of contemporary dance worldwide. It is here that new ideas are shared, collaborations are born, and the future of dance is shaped. Its impact extends far beyond the arts, creating a space for dialogue that brings people together and challenges societal boundaries.

The loss of Tanzmesse would be a significant setback, not just for the dance world, but for society's cultural development as a whole. It represents a unique platform for showcasing work that pushes boundaries, fosters inclusivity, and promotes cultural exchange. I urge you to support its continuation and help ensure that this essential platform remains a force for both artistic and social change.

Nadia Adame, AXIS Dance Company, USA

I am Ana Beatriz Perez, artistic director of La Guajira dance company based in Galicia, Spain. This past edition of Tanzmesse nrw I attended for the second time to this great meeting. The first time was in 2000 as a member of Danza Contemporánea de Cuba and this last one, I attended leading my own dance company.

A festival becomes a milestone when it is able to sustain itself over time and is able to maintain a rigor and presence. Tanzmesse nrw is not just any festival, it is one of the most prestigious frameworks in Europe and the world where an artist wishes to promote and make his work visible. There are many companies that would like to participate or be programmed in this Festival, as this usually translates into future exchanges and collaborations between communities.

It is important to remember that art is transformative and culture may be the weakest link in times of crisis but it is still deeply necessary and saving. Wishing Tanzmesse nrw a long life! I raise my arm in the hope that a Festival of this caliber will not disappear.

Ana Beatriz Perez, La Guajira, Spain

As the Association of Dance Professionals of the Basque Country and together with Etxepare Basque Institute, we wish to express our deep concern regarding the potential disappearance of Tanzmesse due to the announced budget cuts. Over the years, Tanzmesse has been an essential platform for the promotion and visibility of dance on an international level. For us, it has played a crucial role in showcasing Basque artists and propelling their careers onto the global stage.

This event is not merely a trade fair—it is a vital space for cultural, artistic, and professional exchange. Tanzmesse offers unique opportunities for creators to connect with institutions, presenters, and audiences worldwide, fostering networks and opening doors that would otherwise remain closed. Beyond its role in promoting artistic careers, Tanzmesse provides a critical forum for dialogue about the challenges facing the dance community today. It is a space where professionals come together to share insights, discuss pressing issues, and seek common solutions to global problems affecting the dance sector. This collaborative spirit is invaluable in addressing the evolving needs of our art form and ensuring its future growth and sustainability. The loss of Tanzmesse would be a devastating blow to the dance sector—not only in Europe but globally. We urge the relevant authorities and institutions to reconsider this decision and explore alternative measures to safeguard the continuation of such an indispensable event. Dance, as a cultural expression and a bridge between people and nations, needs spaces like Tanzmesse to thrive and evolve.

Association of Dance Professionals of the Basque Country and together with Etxepare Basque Institute

Tanzmesse is essential for international relations and its continuation is vital. This was my second visit to Tanzmesse. Any organised activity by Tanzmesse NRW that welcomes/invites programmers in a certain focus/purpose, makes it much more easy for artists and/or their representatives to meet people for the first time and talk. (not necessarily only for distribution purposes, but also for exchange of information/experiences)

Before the Tanzmesse started I could make some appointments with people who already know us but also with new people. (the programmers follow also such a heavy, full program already). The organization of the pitches was nicely supported by the friendly Tanzmesse team and we came home with 15/20 concrete interests of which 5 are now already confirmed and arranged. I also walked Agora several times in those 2 days (not possible to stay more), but I discovered many amazing looking stands of countries/foundations with lots of money, a business-context which is not ours... As a general 'networking' opportunity I find Tanzmesse one of the more overwhelming contexts, especially if it's about making first connections.

The tanzmesse nrw is unique and irreplaceable for our work and the entire contemporary dance sector!

Compagnie Irene K., NRW/Belgium

Internationale Tanzmesse NRW has become a vital platform for connecting the global dance community, especially for those of us working with children and youth. As an organization dedicated to creating dance for children ages 4 to 12, Ingrid Olterman Dans deeply appreciates the way Tanzmesse brings together professionals from various sectors to exchange ideas, form partnerships, and build new opportunities.

What truly sets Tanzmesse apart is its broad support for the dance community. It goes beyond simply presenting performances; it facilitates essential conversations about the future of dance, offering a space for new ideas to flourish. For Ingrid Olterman Dans, Tanzmesse has played a crucial role in helping us form international collaborations that have greatly enhanced our work and introduced our performances to new and diverse audiences.

The continuation of Internationale Tanzmesse NRW is essential to ensure that dance for young people remains vibrant and connected across the globe. It's a key event for artists and organizations, offering the resources and exposure needed to meet the ever-changing demands of our field.

Ingrid Olterman Dans, Sweden

*Die Internationale Tanzmesse ist
ein Ort des Handels,
ein Ort des Friedens,
ein Ort des Tauschs...
Menschen handeln mit offenen Karten, spielen mit freien
Körpern und frischen
Ideen.
Sie tauschen Choreographien, Stimmen,
Sprachen.
Sie balancieren auf Grenzen und zertanzen Mauern.
Sie hinterlassen Denkfiguren und setzen Zeichen.
Die Internationale Tanzmesse ist eine Agora der Kunst,
nicht des Kriegs,
Ist ein Statement für das, was wir
Menschsein nennen.
Wer diese Agora schließt,
zerstört eine Weltbibliothek,
Sorgsam aufgebaut, gehütet und stets
erweitert.*

Claudia Friedrich, Journalistin, NRW

Die Entscheidung, die Förderung der Internationalen Tanzmesse nrw - eines der Leuchtturmprojekte für den zeitgenössischen Tanz in Deutschland und weit darüber hinaus - einzustellen, können wir in keinsten Weise nachvollziehen.

*Die Internationale Tanzmesse nrw ist die einzige europäische Fachmesse und ein Ereignis mit gleichermaßen nationaler wie internationaler Strahlkraft und aus der Tanzlandschaft nicht mehr wegzudenken. Über 30 Jahre hinweg haben es die unterschiedlichen Leitungsteams zusammen mit dem hochprofessionellen Team des nrw Landesbüro Tanz und vielen weiteren Beteiligten geschafft, Künstler*innen, Produzent*innen, Theaterleiter*innen und Festivalmacher*innen aus der ganzen Welt biennial für sehr intensive Messetage zusammenzubringen.*

*Die Möglichkeit, in kürzester Zeit eine enorme Anzahl von Vorstellungen unterschiedlichster Formate und Stile sowie Pitchings für neue Projekte aus der ganzen Welt zu sehen, dazu mit den Kolleg*innen Fachgespräche zu führen und neue Kooperationen zu planen oder Stücke für Häuser oder Festivals zu buchen, ist enorm attraktiv - im besten Sinne einer Messe. Hinzu kommen die vielen Workshops, Gesprächsrunden und Panel zu einer großen Bandbreite aktueller Themen, in deren Rahmen ein Austausch auf hohem fachlichen Niveau gewährleistet ist.*

*Das Tanzbüro München ist regelmäßige Teilnehmerin der internationalen Tanzmesse nrw - wir nutzen die Veranstaltung sowohl als Plattform, um die Münchner Tanzschaffenden zu präsentieren als auch, um uns mit den (inter)nationalen Kolleg*innen zu vernetzen. Hieraus sind schon zahlreiche Kollaborationen entstanden, u.a. das internationale Austauschprojekt Meeting Points mit den Kolleginnen aus Schottland.*

*Gerade die letzte Ausgabe an der wir - wie an vielen davor - teilgenommen haben, war sowohl in der Vielfalt und Diversität der präsentierten Vorstellungen als auch im Rahmenprogramm für die Fachbesucher*innen von hoher Qualität.*

Angesichts der insgesamt bedrohlichen Weltlage, Kürzungen in vielen Städten und Ländern sowie des zunehmenden Rechtsrucks halten wir es für wichtig, Projekte, die für (künstlerische) Qualität und Diversität, den Austausch unterschiedlichster Nationalitäten, Religionen und unterschiedlicher weltanschaulicher Vorstellungen auf Augenhöhe sowie die Verständigung auf einen zivilen Umgang miteinander über alle Unterschiede hinweg nicht fallen zu lassen.

*Auch für die Stadt Düsseldorf und das Bundesland Nordrhein-Westfalen ist die Veranstaltung mit ihren vielen dezentralen Vorstellungen - viele davon auch für die Bürger*innen besuchbar oder kostenfrei und niederschwellig im öffentlichen Raum erlebbar - ein nicht zu unterschätzender Standortfaktor, der in die beteiligten Städten ausstrahlt und im Messezeitraum mehrere hundert Besucher*innen nach Düsseldorf bringt.*

*Für die Fachbesucher*innen ist die internationale Tanzmesse nrw wichtiger Teil des professionellen Lebens und auf dem gleichen Level wie Cinars, YPAM oder die ICE Hot Nordic Dance Platform. Wie Sie sicher wissen, gibt es in Europa kaum vergleichbare Formate von entsprechender Größe und dem Renommée der Tanzmesse. Dementsprechend würden wir es sehr begrüßen, wenn Sie ihre Entscheidung, sich aus der Förderung der internationalen Tanzmesse nrw zurückzuziehen, überdenken würden. Denn einmal zerstörte, gut funktionierende Strukturen wieder aufzubauen, kostet wesentlich mehr, als sie beizubehalten.*

Simone Schulte-Aladag & Tina Meß, Tanzbüro München

Wir als Tanz Institution in NRW, selbständige Tänzer:innen/Choreograf:innen der freien Szene mit internationalen Kooperationspartner:innen und als bildende Kunst Liebhaber und Liebhaberin, sind von den Kürzungsmassnahmen geschockt und direkt betroffen.

Internationale Begegnungsmomente, Festival und Messen sind für Vielseitigkeit und multikulturelle Weltanschauung Essenziel.

Die Tanz Station - Barmer Bahnhof und ihr gesamtes Team und Menschen ihrer Community, solidarisieren sich mit den von den Kürzungen Betroffenen Institutionen, Organisationen, Companien und Künstler:innen.

Das lebenswichtige Ecosystem unserer demokratischen Kultur ist in Gefahr!

**Thusnelda Mercy & Pascal Merighi, Tanz Station
Barmer Bahnhof, NRW**

*Sehr geehrte Ministerin für Kultur und Wissenschaft Ina Brandes,
sehr geehrter Minister der Finanzen Dr. Marcus Optendrenk,
sehr geehrter Ministerpräsident Hendrik Wüst,*

mit großer Sorge haben wir zur Kenntnis genommen, dass die vom nrw landesbuero tanz getragene internationale tanzmesse nrw ab der nächsten Edition 2025/2026 aus der Förderung des NRW-Kulturministeriums herausfallen soll.

*Die exzellente Arbeit der letzten künstlerischen Leitung von Isa Köhler und Katharina Kucher hat veranschaulicht, wie essentiell dieses über 30 Editionen gewachsene Branchentreffen für den internationalen zeitgenössischen Tanz ist. Sie haben bewiesen, wie wichtig es in unserer heutigen fragmentierten Zeit ist, interkulturellen Austausch zu haben und dass es trotz des wachsenden ökonomischen Drucks weiterhin eine Plattform für Künstler*innen und Programmgestalter*innen gibt.*

Weitere Einsparungen würden das Ende dieses Formats der globalen Verständigung und der Vernetzung der internationalen Tanzwelt bedeuten und wären ein enormer Verlust für NRW und Deutschland als Standort für zeitgenössischen Tanz.

*Die Tanzmesse hat über Jahre die gesellschaftspolitische Relevanz der Kunstform Tanz beeinflusst. Hier geführte Diskussionen zu Themen wie Inklusion, Nachhaltigkeit und Barrierefreiheit haben global Einzug in die Arbeitspraxis von Künstler*innen gehalten.*

*Nicht zuletzt war die tanzmesse nrw ein Netzwerktreffen, wo man in kürzester Zeit ein Programm sichten konnte, das im Anschluss in vielen anderen Festivalprogrammen Aufnahme fand. So wurde das nachhaltige kuratorische Sichten von Produktionen und internationalen Trends im Tanzsektor ermöglicht. Das vom HAU Hebbel am Ufer / Tanz im August geleitete Creative-Europe-Projekt Big Pulse Dance Alliance war in den letzten Jahren regelmäßiger Besucher der tanzmesse nrw und konnte hier wichtige Verbindungen mit Kurator*innen knüpfen, die sich daraufhin weiteren Netzwerken anschlossen, die ebenfalls von der EU gefördert wurden.*

Wir appellieren an Sie, Ihre Entscheidung zur Förderung der tanzmesse nrw zu überdenken. Sie würden eine Ankerinstitution der internationalen Kulturbranche verlieren, die ihresgleichen sucht. Mit freundlichen Grüßen, auch in Namen der

HAU-Intendantin Annemie Vanackere
Ricardo Carmona - Künstlerische Leitung Tanz im August

Im Namen der Repräsentanz Taiwans in Deutschland (Taipeh Vertretung in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland) möchte ich unsere ausdrückliche Unterstützung für die internationale tanzmesse nrw zum Ausdruck bringen.

Die internationale tanzmesse nrw ist seit 1994 nicht nur ein Aushängeschild für zeitgenössischen Tanz, sondern auch ein bedeutender Akteur in der internationalen Tanzlandschaft Deutschlands und weit darüber hinaus. Insbesondere möchten wir hervorheben, dass die internationale tanzmesse nrw nicht nur von herausragender Qualität, sondern auch von unschätzbarem Wert als Katalysator für künstlerischen Austausch, Vermittlung und Wissenstransfer, internationale Tourneen und Kooperationen ist.

Die internationale tanzmesse nrw war und ist in den vergangenen Jahren ein einzigartiges Forum und eine wichtige Bühne für die Tanzkompanien des Inselstaates Taiwan, wo sie sich mit großem Engagement auf internationaler Bühne und vor und mit internationalen Profis präsentieren können.

Die tanzmesse ist eine einzigartige und herausragende Veranstaltung und ein unverzichtbarer fixer Termin und unersetzlicher fester Bestandteil des internationalen Reisekarussells taiwanischer Tänzer, Performer und Choreographen.

Wir möchten daher betonen, wie wichtig die kontinuierliche Förderung dieser Institution ist, um die erfolgreiche Arbeit der internationalen tanzmesse nrw auch in Zukunft zu gewährleisten. Es ist unerlässlich, dass Künstlerinnen und Künstler weiterhin von den einzigartigen Möglichkeiten profitieren können, die die internationale tanzmesse nrw bietet.

Mit Nachdruck sprechen wir uns für den Erhalt und die Stärkung der internationalen tanzmesse nrw aus, damit auch unsere seit vielen Jahren existierende wertvolle globale Vernetzungs- und Zusammenarbeit und der Kulturaustausch mit Taiwan weiter existieren und fortgeführt werden kann.

Diese Institution ist nicht nur ein Herzstück der deutschen Tanzszene, sondern auch ein wertvoller Partner im internationalen Kulturaustausch.

Prof. Dr. Shieh Jhy-Wey
Botschafter Taiwans in Deutschland

Die geplanten Kürzungen der Tanzmesse stellen einen erheblichen Verlust für die Tanzszene dar. Die Tanzmesse war stets ein unverzichtbarer Ort des internationalen Netzwerkes, an dem kultureller Austausch nicht nur ermöglicht, sondern aktiv gelebt wurde. Hier trafen Künstlerinnen, Veranstalterinnen und Förderer aus aller Welt aufeinander, um innovative Projekte zu entwickeln, grenzüberschreitende Kooperationen zu schaffen und die Vielfalt des zeitgenössischen Tanzes sichtbar zu machen.

Gerade in einer Zeit, in der internationale Zusammenarbeit und kultureller Dialog essenziell sind, wäre es ein fatales Signal, dieses einzigartige Forum durch finanzielle Einschnitte zu schwächen. Wir brauchen Räume wie die Tanzmesse, um Brücken zwischen Kulturen zu bauen und die künstlerische Vielfalt zu fördern. Deshalb fordern wir dringend, die geplanten Kürzungen zu überdenken und den Fortbestand dieses bedeutenden Netzwerks zu sichern.

Elisabeth Schilling, choreographer Luxemburg

RUBBERBAND proudly supports Internationale Tanzmesse NRW, recognizing it as a cornerstone for fostering international relations in contemporary dance. As an innovative dance company with a global vision, we understand the critical importance of forums where artists, producers, and cultural stakeholders converge to exchange ideas, showcase work, and build networks. Tanzmesse provides this unparalleled platform, enabling connections that transcend borders and spark new collaborations.

For RUBBERBAND, Tanzmesse is not only an opportunity to present our unique blend of contemporary and urban dance to a diverse international audience but also a vital space to stay attuned to global trends and practices. This biennial event stands out for its commitment to diversity, innovation, and dialogue, making it an irreplaceable gathering for the dance sector.

By participating in and supporting Tanzmesse, we affirm our dedication to advancing the global contemporary dance landscape. This event's ability to bring together key players from around the world aligns with our mission to push boundaries, create meaningful exchanges, and strengthen the cultural fabric of the international dance community. For RUBBERBAND, Tanzmesse is not just a market; it's a source of inspiration and a bridge to the future.

Rubberband Dance, Canada

I am writing to express my shock and dismay at the news that the NRW Ministry of Culture has decided to stop funding the Internationale Tanzmesse NRW and IDAS NRW. This decision will undoubtedly undermine the international profile of Nord Rhein-Westfalia as a leading cultural region in Germany and Europe, and create irreversible damage to the NRW dance sector and the international dance community as a whole.

Scottish Dance Theatre has attended Tanzmesse for more than two decades, being invited to showcase our work onstage and regularly taking part in networking and artistic exchange events. This is an invaluable platform to meet with the international dance community and to get to know local artists from the NRW region. For example, in my recent visit to Tanzmesse in August '24, I had the opportunity to meet Düsseldorf-based choreographer Alexandra Waierstall and explore the potential of future collaborations.

From a personal perspective, Tanzmesse has played a vital role in my professional career as a choreographer. As an independent artist, I was invited to perform with my company Joan Clevillé Dance in 2016. This enabled me to strategically raise my international profile, expand my professional network and gain further

opportunities to present my work. As a direct result of my participation at Tanzmesse, I was invited to present my work at the 2017 edition of the tanzmainz festival.

In short, I appeal to the relevant authorities to reconsider their decision to stop funding Internationale Tanzmesse NRW and IDAS NRW and to fully reinstate their subsidy. It is hard to believe that a region would willingly relinquish their leading role in the cultural sector after years of strategic investment. And it is alarming to see a lack of understanding of the deep impact that such a decision would have on artists, organisations, audiences and communities.

**Joan Clevillé (he/him), Artistic Director,
Scottish Dance Theatre**

Being a major international event in a country where dance is deeply embedded in the cultural DNA, Tanzmesse enhances the region's reputation far beyond national borders and plays a vital role in the international infrastructure of the dance sector. This event serves as a cornerstone of the field, interconnecting dance professionals across disciplines, encouraging and validating emerging talent, and facilitating exchanges that drive innovation. Preserving Tanzmesse guarantees continued growth in the creative economy and sustained leadership for the region on the world stage.

Polina Bulat, producer & journalist, Ukraine

Tanzmesse is a global hot spot of innovation in dance! It is the largest such platform and festival in the world and should we find it that it is unable to continue - the development of dance world wide will suffer. I deeply hope that NRW will reconsider its funding commitments towards this incredible melting pot of ideas. In a deeply divided political and social world - dance remains one of the most human ways of coming together to learn and exchange. We need Tanzmesse!

Katherina Radeva, artist, choreographer and co-artistic director of Two Destination Language, UK

There is no society without art, and no art can thrive without platforms to nurture its growth. Tanzmesse offers an essential space for dance artists to become ambassadors of their cultures and countries, fostering connections with international guests who can amplify and share transformative, meaningful, and life-changing dance experiences.

Germany has long been a role model for all European countries, setting a standard of excellence and support for the arts. Please continue to inspire us—protect and cherish what you have built over the years!

Avatâra Ayuso, Choreographer UK

Mit großer Bestürzung haben wir von der bevorstehenden drastischen Fördermittelstreichung durch das Ministerium für Kultur und Wissenschaft des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen für die internationale tanzmesse nrw erfahren. Durch den Wegfall dieser Förderung ist die Zukunft der tanzmesse unmittelbar gefährdet. Damit droht der unumkehrbare Verlust des größten, innovativen Veranstaltungsformats dieser Art, das dem Bereich Tanz gewidmet ist. Ein Bereich, dessen Bestehen ohnehin fragil und durch Kürzungen real gefährdet ist.

Über das gesamte über 30jährige Bestehen unserer Tanzcompagnie Sasha Waltz & Guests hat die tanzmesse nrw einen wesentlichen und engagierten Beitrag zum internationalen Dialog sowie zur Entwicklung von Netzwerken und Beziehungen im Tanz geleistet. Dieser ist für uns als nationaler und internationaler Kulturakteur, als auch für die gesamte lokale und internationale Tanzszene von außerordentlicher Bedeutung.

Die tanzmesse nrw ist ein innovativer Ort für internationale Beziehungen mit globaler Reichweite. Die tanzmesse nrw ist einzigartig und unverzichtbar und ihre Fortführung unabdingbar.

Wir möchten die Ministerin Ina Brandes hiermit aufrufen, die angekündigte Kürzung zu überdenken und zurückzunehmen, um den Fortbestand der internationale tanzmesse nrw zu sichern.

**Karsten Liske, Tourmanager Sasha Waltz & Guests,
Germany**

I am writing this letter to express my sincere gratitude to Katharina and Isa, Co-directors of internationale tanzmesse nrw 2024, and their team for their generous support when we participated in the tanzmesse with my ten Japanese colleagues in August 2024, and state that the internationale tanzmesse nrw is an indispensable platform for Japanese and international dance professionals.

The internationale tanzmesse nrw held the edition 2022 when the world was still recovering from the pandemic which affected many dance professionals in the world. The smooth resumption of international exchange after the pandemic, especially in the dance sector, was made possible by the fact that the tanzmesse endured the severe period of the (post-)pandemic and has continued to promote international networking and implement the biennial event. After their successful 15 editions spanning 30 years, the tanzmesse has become an indispensable platform for many dance professionals, of which Germany, North Rhine-Westphalia, and Düsseldorf should feel more proud and continuously support.

YPAM, established in 1995 as the Tokyo Performing Arts Market (TPAM) and renamed itself as the Yokohama International Performing Arts Meeting in 2021, is a space where professionals get together from across Japan, Asia-Pacific, Europe, and other parts of the world, in order to explore new possibilities for contemporary performing arts. At YPAM2024 held between November 29 and December 15, more than 530 professional participants from home and abroad gained knowledge of

contemporary performing arts, inspiration from peers, and network for the creation, dissemination, and vitalization of performing arts. It was my pleasure to organize the Japanese delegation to the internationale tanzmesse nrw 2024. The participation enabled us to reconnect with our colleagues in Europe and other parts of the world and to explore new possibilities for future projects. We, as one of the most influential platforms in Asia, deem the internationale tanzmesse nrw as one of the crucial partners of our international activities. It is my heartfelt wish that the internationale tanzmesse nrw continues its activities and fosters future artistic creation and collaboration.

Hiromi Maruoka

Director, Yokohama International Performing Arts Meeting

Internationale Tanzmesse NRW is the most prominent community forum in the world of contemporary dance. It stands out with its exhibition area, discussions, lectures, works-in-progress studios, and an up-to-date artistic programme, completing a full-scale caption of the genre. Now significant funding cuts from the Ministry of Culture and Science of the state of North Rhine-Westphalia threaten the very existence of this largest dance platform for international exchange, networking, development, and promotion.

On behalf of Municipal Foundation Plovdiv - European Capital of Culture 2019 and One Dance Festival, we firmly support Tanzmesse NRW and its team. Amid the current financial difficulties and unclear future, we hope decision-makers find alternative solutions to preserve Tanzmesse's unmatched heritage and keep its bright story going. As a cultural institution and independent operator from Bulgaria, we understand that organising such an event is challenging, long and complex, and financial indicators cannot measure its impact and added value.

In 2024, Bulgaria made its first-ever participation at the world's largest professional contemporary dance forum. It gave us access to the international dance dialogue, presenting our contemporary scene and the talents that evolve it with devotion and determination. It was a historical opportunity, unprecedented in scale and significance, that allowed multinational professionals to know the work of over 20 Bulgarian choreographers and companies. For a country like Bulgaria, which is constructing its stand on the international cultural map, the forum is a stepping stone to recognition and pride.

Each edition of Tanzmesse NRW gathers thousands of dance professionals, boosting the local economy and turning Düsseldorf into the world capital of contemporary culture. For countries, institutions, managers, artists and creators, the forum is one of the most long-awaited and prominent events. It is where talent grows, innovative voices arise, partnerships forge, and brave ideas flourish. Tanzmesse NRW is a key foundation of international cultural exchange that transcends borders, languages and differences. Its rich programme always catches the boiling energy of the global scene, a truly diverse artistic selection. It allows less known countries, but full of talent, to stand out alongside the leaders in the field. Audiences in Germany also have the opportunity to experience quality content long before the rest of the world. We hope Tanzmesse continues its mission to promote contemporary dance. It will prove that today's performing art is not a spending but an investment in social capital, bringing people together, creating solidarity and tolerance, inclusion and broader horizons to freedom of expression and withstanding democracy.

Victor Yankov, Plovdiv 2019 European Capital of Culture Foundation & Elianna Lilova, Artistic Director One Dance Festival

The Internationale Tanzmesse NRW has been a vital hub for global dance for over 30 years, fostering international collaboration, innovation, and cultural exchange. The recent funding cuts from the North Rhine-Westphalia Ministry of Culture threaten the future of Tanzmesse, a key platform connecting artists, curators, and audiences worldwide. Its loss would severely impact professional partnerships and disrupt the global dance community. Tanzmesse's significance extends to IDAS NRW, which has facilitated international connections for 15 years, further strengthening the region's role in the field of contemporary dance. Without this funding, North Rhine-Westphalia risks isolating itself from important cultural exchanges.

We call on the state government to restore funding for Tanzmesse and IDAS NRW. These initiatives are essential not only for the region's dance scene but also for sustaining global artistic collaboration. Supporting Tanzmesse ensures the continued vitality and growth of contemporary dance worldwide.

Laurent Meheust & Louise Costelloe Co-Presidents EDN

It is with great concern that we have received information indicating that Tanzmesse is at risk of losing its financial support, jeopardizing its continued existence as a vital platform for the international dance community.

Performing Arts Hub Norway (PAHN), Performing Arts Iceland, Circus & Dance Info Finland, and The Danish Arts Foundation's Committee for Performing Arts, who are behind this support letter, have actively participated in Tanzmesse for years through the Nordics Combined network, which consists of Performing Arts Hub Norway (PAHN), Circus & Dance Info Finland, The Swedish Arts Council, Swedish Arts Grants Committee, The Danish Arts Foundation, and Performing Arts Centre Iceland. Tanzmesse is a crucial arena for promotion, networking, and development of Nordic and international dance art.

Why is Tanzmesse so Important?

Tanzmesse represents an essential platform for dance artists from the Nordic region and beyond. It provides a unique opportunity for artists to present their work on Europe's largest and most influential stage for dance art. This visibility creates significant opportunities for international collaboration, as artists and companies can establish long-term partnerships, secure touring opportunities, and develop meaningful connections with presenters, curators, and fellow artists from across the world. The event is not merely a marketplace but also a space for knowledge exchange and artistic dialogue.

Through workshops, meetings, and informal networking opportunities, Tanzmesse fosters insight, competence, and a deeper understanding of the global performing arts landscape. The meeting of art across borders is more essential than ever, and Tanzmesse plays a pivotal role in facilitating these encounters for dance and choreography — an art form that, by its very nature, transcends language, breaks down barriers, and unites people across cultures. What could be more urgent than this in our times?

Losing Tanzmesse as a platform would represent a significant loss for the entire dance art field in Europe and weaken our collective ability to create international opportunities for artists. We therefore strongly urge you to maintain and ensure the necessary financial support for Tanzmesse, enabling it to continue its vital role as a bridge-builder, innovator, and meeting place for dance artists from across the world.

**Hege Knarvik Sande, CEO, Performing Arts Hub
Norway**

Fridrik Fridriksson, CEO, Performing Arts Iceland

**Tove Ekman, Director, Circus & Dance Info
Finland**

**Gitta Malling, Head of Committee, The Danish Arts
Foundation's Committee for Performing Arts**

We are writing to express my deep concern regarding the recent decision by the NRW Ministry of Culture to discontinue funding for the Internationale Tanzmesse nrw and the International Dance Artists Service (IDAS NRW). This decision jeopardizes the future of these pivotal institutions and poses a significant threat to the international networking and development of the dance scene in North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW).

For over three decades, the Internationale Tanzmesse nrw has served as the largest professional meeting for contemporary dance, bringing together approximately 1.500 dance professionals from over 50 countries every two years in Düsseldorf. It has been a vital platform for artistic exchange, knowledge transfer, and the promotion of international tours and collaborations. The Tanzmesse has played an essential role in maintaining and expanding networks that have been cultivated over 30 years, contributing significantly to the global visibility of dance professionals from NRW. Similarly, IDAS NRW has been an indispensable component of dance promotion and funding for over 15 years. As an interface between artists and presenters, it has strengthened the visibility of NRW's independent dance scene, established long-term contacts, and provided strategic support to artists.

The discontinuation of funding for these institutions not only undermines the cultural infrastructure of dance in NRW but also diminishes the region's reputation as Germany's foremost "dance region." The absence of the Tanzmesse and IDAS will weaken structural support for dance and hinder international exchange, leading to long-term cultural, economic, and socio-political losses. The international cultural exchange facilitated by platforms like the Tanzmesse is of paramount importance. The loss of such a platform would be a setback for contemporary dance and intercultural dialogue.

We urge the state government and the NRW Ministry of Culture to reconsider this decision and reinstate the necessary funding for the Internationale Tanzmesse nrw and IDAS NRW. Preserving these institutions is crucial for the continued growth and international engagement of the dance community.

**Association of Professional Dance Companies of Catalonia,
Spain**

The Internationale Tanzmesse nrw has been an essential platform for independent dance artists and companies in Denmark, providing unique opportunities to connect with global networks, develop careers, and showcase their artistic visions to international audiences. For Danish dance artists, it has been a gateway to international collaboration, fostering artistic innovation and professional growth.

For decades, Tanzmesse has played a vital role in bridging the gap between local artists and the global stage, offering exposure and access to resources that are otherwise difficult to obtain. Danish dance artists have benefitted immensely from the relationships forged and the visibility gained at Tanzmesse, leading to invitations to perform abroad, co-productions, and partnerships that enrich not just individual careers but the independent performing arts sector

as a whole. Losing this platform would have profound consequences for the international dance field.

International opportunities such as Tanzmesse are critical to ensuring the continued vitality and relevance of the independent performing arts. Without spaces like this for exchange and visibility, Denmark's dance sector risks fewer avenues for its artists to connect with new audiences and collaborators across the globe.

Above all, the closure of Tanzmesse would be a significant loss for Germany and for the dance scene in North Rhine-Westphalia. This internationally renowned event has positioned Germany as a global frontrunner in contemporary dance, attracting thousands of artists, presenters, and industry professionals from around the world.

Without Tanzmesse, Germany risks losing its central role as a hub for artistic exchange and innovation in dance, which would diminish its global influence and cultural leadership. Udviklingsplatformen for Scenekunst urges the NRW government to reconsider this decision.

Preserving Tanzmesse is not just about maintaining a single event; it's about sustaining a unique infrastructure that has empowered countless artists, promoted cultural dialogue, and created lasting global connections. Without it, the independent dance sector in Denmark, Germany and beyond faces a significant setback in its ability to exchange and collaborate internationally. At a time when fostering dialogue across borders is more urgent than ever, dismantling such an influential cultural event diminishes the opportunities for artistic exchange that drive creativity and mutual understanding.

We stand in solidarity with the international dance community in advocating for the continuation of Tanzmesse and its essential contributions to the world of dance. Its loss would be an irreplaceable detriment to artists, institutions, and audiences alike.

Anne Dalby

Udviklingsplatformen for Scenekunst, Denmark

I had the privilege of participating in Internationale Tanzmesse NRW for the first time in the Summer 2024, where I presented a choreographer from South Korea in an Open Studio. Although my involvement was brief, it left a lasting impression on me. Tanzmesse provided a benchmark of a true "performance arts marketplace," offering a learning environment for discovery, exchange, and collaboration within the global contemporary dance community.

Even as a first-time participant, I could see how Tanzmesse fosters meaningful connections among choreographers, dancers, presenters, and producers. The international scope and focus on networking at Tanzmesse create opportunities for both established and emerging artists.

I strongly urge the decision-makers to reconsider the proposed funding cuts. Losing Tanzmesse would diminish and undermine the cultural standing of North Rhine-Westphalia. By maintaining support, you safeguard an essential bridge for international collaboration and a better future for contemporary dance.

Jiwon Chung, choreographer, South Korea

I am writing to express my wholehearted support for internationale tanzmesse nrw as the Creative Director of ODC Theater in San Francisco, a leading institution in the presentation and development of contemporary dance. ODC Theater is one of only a few remaining dance only presenters in the United States and my attendance at Tanzmesse in 2022 and 2024 has had direct effects on our strategic growth, artistic expansion, and the way we approach partnerships and participation in the dance field. The Tanzmesse festival has been an invaluable cornerstone of the international dance community, fostering cross-cultural dialogue, collaboration, and innovation for over 30 years. The potential loss of funding for the 2026 edition poses a profound threat not only to the festival itself but also to the broader global dance ecosystem that it so vitally nurtures.

Tanzmesse provides an unparalleled platform for artists, curators, and cultural leaders to convene, exchange ideas, and forge meaningful connections. For ODC Theater, Tanzmesse has served as a crucial gateway for engaging with the international dance community, allowing us to deepen our understanding of diverse artistic practices and build relationships that enrich our programming and resonate with our audiences in the United States. It is THE place that I go to see relevant work in the dance field and find inspiration for ODC Theater's ongoing operations and programmatic vision.

What sets Tanzmesse apart is its steadfast commitment to inclusivity and its role as a meeting ground for cultures. I have felt not only safe and welcome as a solo traveler and touring producer, but at ease, joyful, and hopeful about the world of dance when I have been in Dusseldorf attending the festival. It is not merely an event but a vital hub where dialogue transcends geographic and linguistic boundaries and a shared celebration of dance is felt in the turnout and participation of individuals gathering, watching, and dancing together. The festival's ability to convene a global community—from North Rhine-Westphalia to San Francisco and beyond—embodies the very essence of what dance can achieve: connection, understanding, and shared humanity. The loss of Tanzmesse would mean more than the cancellation of a biennial event; it would signify the erosion of a critical infrastructure that supports the international dance community.

The loss of funding and struggle of artists on the ground in the United States every day and look to our global partners as leaders and examples of a better, stronger, and more stable world of dance. I hate to think that other governments would follow in our suit. Losing Tanzmesse would leave a void in opportunities for artists and institutions to come together, exchange perspectives, and inspire one another toward new heights of creativity and impact. The festival's absence would be acutely felt, particularly by those who rely on it to gain visibility, expand their networks, and access resources that enable their work to thrive.

Chloë L. Zimberg, Creative Director ODC Theater, San Francisco, California, USA

On behalf of Danscentrum Sverige, the national organization for independent professional dance artists and organisations in Sweden, I am writing to express concern about the recent reports of significant budget cuts to tanzmesse NRW. tanzmesse NRW is a vital platform for the international dance community. Over a period of 30 years, tanzmesse NRW has made a significant contribution to international dialogue as well as to the development of networks and relationships that are of great importance for both the international dance scene and the local dance scene in NRW. As a biennial event and trade fair, it fosters collaborations, touring opportunities and co-productions that impact the artistic landscape across Europe and beyond. It serves as a gateway to opportunities for countless artists and organizations, bridging the gap between creators, producers and presenters.

Düsseldorf, as the host city, is a leading meeting place for businesses of all sizes. The free dance sector's organizations are part of the creative cultural industries, contributing to the cultural economy and engaging audiences across Europe and the world. tanzmesse NRW is the key networking platform for dance organizations worldwide, gathering delegations from more than 50 countries representing every continent of the globe, aiming to fostering partnerships that transcend borders. The reported financial cuts threaten to undermine the event's role as a hub for artistic exchange and innovation. Reductions in funding could compromise its ability to nurture emerging and established German and international artists and weaken the networks built over decades.

We urge you, as policymakers, to reconsider these budget cuts and recognize the indispensable value of tanzmesse NRW. Supporting this unique event ensures the growth and visibility of contemporary dance and reinforces Germany's leadership in the global cultural sector.

Amy Fee, General manager Danscentrum Sverige, Sweden

We, the Associate Curators, write with profound concern regarding the decision to withdraw funding from Internationale Tanzmesse NRW, a move that threatens the existence of the world's largest international choreographic fair. While we understand that Germany and NRW in particular is facing significant political, social, and economic challenges, we urge you to reconsider this decision. Cutting ties with the external world and reducing support for culture during times of crisis has never benefited those in need. On the contrary, it is precisely during such times that culture and international connections become lifelines for resilience, cooperation, and progress.

Tanzmesse has, for decades, served as far more than a cultural event: it is an engine of artistic innovation, a meeting point for diverse perspectives, and a critical force for cultural diplomacy. By fostering global connections, Tanzmesse strengthens NRW's reputation as a region of cultural leadership and progressive values. Its closure would not only isolate the dance community but would also diminish NRW's role as a global player in the arts sending a signal that the region is turning inward at a time when international collaboration is needed most.

The loss of Tanzmesse will be felt globally but most acutely in NRW itself. You risk weakening a cultural infrastructure that generations have built, and losing the economic, social, and cultural benefits that Tanzmesse brings. Beyond its artistic impact, Tanzmesse supports cultural workers, strengthens local economies, and positions NRW as a dynamic and outward-looking region. By allowing it to disappear, NRW would turn its back not only on artists but on its own identity as a progressive and internationally connected state.

Germany's crises are real. But history shows that cutting culture during hardship does not solve economic or political problems. Rather, it exacerbates isolation and stagnation. Our question is: Will NRW sustain its role as a leader in the global cultural community, or will it retreat when leadership is needed most?

We implore the government of NRW to recognize Tanzmesse not as a burden, but as an opportunity: a platform for innovation, cultural growth, sustainability and unparalleled leadership in an uncertain world. Reconsider this decision and secure Tanzmesse's future for the artists, for the audiences, and for NRW's continued relevance in the global cultural landscape.

**Associated Curators of Internationale Tanzmesse NRW
(2021-2024)**

Julia Asperska (PL)

Dan Daw (AU/UK)

Natacha Melo (UY)

Quito Tembe (MZ)

I am writing to express my strong support for Internationale Tanzmesse NRW and to emphasize its importance for the contemporary dance sector, international cultural exchange, and the development of the arts.

My name is Amanuel Solomon, and I am the founder and CEO of KATIM Disability Awareness and Support, a non-governmental organization based in Ethiopia, Africa. Tanzmesse has been instrumental in enabling us to build meaningful connections and networks that significantly benefit our day-to-day work. Thanks to this program, we have been able to share and exchange experiences and works on a personal level, fostering a deeper understanding and collaboration across borders. We've been performing and spreading positive awareness all around our country, and recently, we shared our moments and performances with all the members, which garnered a lot of positive feedback and honors. This program has greatly encouraged us to continue our mission, and we were looking forward to working closely with Tanzmesse to cultivate contemporary dance further. As a disabled artist, I was particularly eager to share new insights with the members and colleagues within this platform.

It is deeply disheartening to hear about the financial challenges Tanzmesse is facing. The proposed cuts threaten to dismantle this vital platform, which would result in an irreplaceable loss for the global dance community and beyond. I urge the funding bodies to reconsider this decision and to continue supporting Tanzmesse in its mission to foster international cultural exchange, artistic innovation, and inclusivity.

**Amanuel Solomon, Founder and CEO KATIM
Disability Awareness and Support, Ethiopia**

Statement on the Funding Cuts for internationale tanzmesse nrw

It is with great concern and disappointment that we have learned of the imminent and drastic funding cuts announced by the Ministry of Culture and Science of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia for internationale tanzmesse nrw.

The withdrawal of this essential funding places the future of internationale tanzmesse nrw in immediate jeopardy, threatening the irreversible loss of the largest global and most innovative event format solely dedicated to dance.

For over 30 years, internationale tanzmesse nrw has been a pivotal force in fostering international dialogue and cultivating networks and relationships within the global dance sector. Its impact on the artistic ecosystem and the development of the performing arts, both regionally and internationally, has been profound. Tanzmesse has opened vital opportunities for artists, promoted reflection on sustainable production and touring models, and facilitated collective work on equitable practices within a global context.

internationale tanzmesse nrw is a unique and indispensable platform with far-reaching international significance. Its continuation is vital to the dance community and to the broader cultural landscape. For IETM - the largest and oldest network in the performing arts, a decision to defund internationale tanzmesse nrw, means losing one of its most important and valuable international partners. This suggestion comes in a global landscape where international artist work and collaboration across borders is under threat; due to political trends characterised by isolation, extremism and polarisation. For Germany to take such a step, being the world's third largest economy, a country globally respected for its democratic and progressive policy and strong support for the arts; this imminent funding cut, comes as a shock.

I respectfully urge Minister Ina Brandes to reconsider and reverse the proposed funding cuts, ensuring the preservation and future of internationale tanzmesse nrw,

**Ása Richardsdóttir, Secretary General IETM,
Belgium**