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Queering Pina Bausch: Tanztheater For Queer BIPOC Artists

by

Lu Chen

A critical essay submitted to the faculty of Macalester College
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Degree of Bachelor of Arts with Departmental Honors in Theater and Dance

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I dedicate this essay to my mentor Professor Wynn Fricke, who introduced me to the life-changing artform dance and selflessly nurtured me for the past four years; to Dr. Ananya Chatterjea, who taught me to dance for social justice; Sister Patricia Brown, who kept me grounded at Macalester College; Toni Pierce-Sands, who kept me moving in my senior year; to Bob Rosen who introduced me to Physical Theater, and Dr. Cláudia Tatinge Nascimento who encouraged me to commit to a Theatre and Dance major and to finish this essay.

Abstract

Pina Bausch's *Tanztheater* ("dance-theater" in English) revolutionized global dance theater performance. From a feminist perspective, Bausch mixed movement with theatrical design elements and film techniques to express emotions and sentiments of women-men relationships, and the boundary between performing and being displayed. Inspired by German Expressionist Dance and post-World-War-II avant-garde movements across Europe and the United States, her movement language and text were visceral in expressiveness through repetition, alienation, montage technique, and emotive gestures (Helden 134). In this essay I explore how Bausch's approach to dance-theater can welcome dancers who stand outside of the German choreographer's identity as a white European woman.

For example, what does a safe creative space look like for queer Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) with disabilities? Queer performance art, cyborg theory, and queer embodiment theory have encouraged queer artists to reimagine a reality with gender fluidity and to reject binary thinking (Haraway 3). This essay discusses the aesthetics and methods of Bausch, cyborg theory, and queer dance, to explore how we may create Bausch-inspired performance by and for queer BIPOC movers with limited rehearsal time, technique training, and disabilities.

Why Queering Bausch?

A woman in a slick pastel-pink dress with little tension in her muscles stood on the stage. A group of men in professional black suits repeated a gesture that patted and poked her body. While some of them would merely give her a touch on the nose or a rub on her hair, they were

doing it again and again. The manipulation of the inert woman's body became increasingly punitive, like insects feeding off a host. Eventually, they were moving her limbs and body around as if they were playing with a plastic doll. This dramatized enactment of the patriarchal norm that men could make contact without consent made visible the harassment of a voiceless woman. The repetition conveyed that a countless number of men had the power to manipulate her body and that these tiny harassments were hurtful and objectifying. *How did Pina Bausch notice such a subtle gender dynamic and put it on stage?* I have been contemplating this question since I first watched this excerpt of Pina Bausch's *Kontakthof* (1978) over a year ago.

Born in Solingen, Germany in 1940 and deceased in Wuppertal, Germany in 2009, Pina Bausch was raised in her parents' café, often playing underneath one of the tables observing people (Climenhaga 4). This might be why she developed such an observant eye that captured everyday interactions. She received her dance training at the Folkwang School in Essen under Kurt Jooss, who incorporated elements of *Ausdrucksstanz* (also known as German New Expressionist Dance) and reformist ballet that engaged with socio-political themes (Climenhaga 7). In 1973, Bausch renamed *Wuppertal Ballet* the *Tanztheater Wuppertal* to develop her style inspired by *Ausdrucksstanz* and German Avant Garde theatre that expressed sentiments and emotions of the mundane, and most of all revealed patriarchic relations between men and women from a feminist viewpoint. The development of Bausch's *Tanztheater* resulted in many international co-productions for the *Tanztheater Wuppertal* in Italy, Spain, Vienna, United States, Hong Kong, Lisbon, Budapest, Brazil, Istanbul, Tokyo, Seoul, India, and Chile. Today, *Tanztheater Wuppertal* is still restaging Bausch's works and keeps their obligation of recognizing no borders in humanism (Helden 145).

Despite the theatricality and brilliance of Bausch's work, many of her dancers struggled in her rehearsal: falling again, again, and again, frantically running around, screaming, laughing... Bausch's productions required endurance, professional training in western dance, and maximized emotional vulnerability. At a liberal arts college such as Macalester College, the Theater and Dance Department's dance concerts welcome all bodies and with all levels of training. Meanwhile, its dance students often pursue a major that is not Dance. Considering these factors, rehearsals must accommodate their schedules and engage them. As a student choreographer, how could I make Bausch-inspired dance-theater and curate a rehearsal space that felt safe to queer bodies and minds? In this project that I call *Queering Tanztheater Pina Bausch*, I will investigate Bausch's dance-theatre making process with a special interest in emotive gesture, repetition, and ensemble work. To use her methods for queer artists of color with disabilities and all levels of dance training, I will connect her choreographic processes to queer theories and social justice (with an emphasis on disability justice and anti-racism) in the hopes of avoiding re-traumatizing the dancers and with an eye to transforming emotional pain into creative energy in the rehearsal room. The research process was the foundation for choreographing a collaborative dance-theater piece with fellow artists at Macalester College. Here I offer connections between *Tanztheater* and queer theories and social justice as an inspiration for future endeavors in queer dance-making.

What is Dance-Theater?

To form schools is dangerous because it stops the fantasy...The feeling about what is happening in the world is always a new movement.

Pina Bausch, in an interview with Cristina Durán

Dance-theater today remains undefined because one could argue that “everyone is a dancer because everyone moves,” while on the other hand American modern dance pioneer Martha Graham would say, “it takes ten years to be a dancer” (Graham 5). The term “dance theatre” goes back to the 1920s in Germany, where Rudolf von Laban was a pioneering figure (Climenhaga 12). Laban incorporated choral elements and spatial analysis of movement but did not specify the content of dance theatre (12). His students Mary Wigman and Kurt Jooss further developed his ideas and specified the relation between content and form. Yet, dance scholars have been increasingly rejecting the Eurocentric position to include understandings of dance coming from other continents and cultures. European avant-garde theater and post-modern dance and experimental theater in New York City inspired Pina Bausch to incorporate all performing artforms in her works. Today, dance-theater is a dynamic performance art form that uses movement with text, song, spoken word, and other theatrical design elements. In an interview for *Dance Magazine* titled “When Dance Becomes Theater,” *New York Times* dance critic Siobhan Burke offers contemporary dance-theatre makers’ comments on their contents and processes (31). Annie-B Parson from Big Dance Theatre in the United States describes dance-theater as an expressionist framework with no hierarchy in various artforms. Elements such as props, singing, and text are of equal power in expressiveness. Others find the term dance theater difficult to define. Choreographer Faye Driscoll finds theater-based artists use the term “physical theater” or “experimental theater” more to refer to such forms and thus the categorization seemed arbitrary (1). Burke emphasized the constant crossing of boundaries in art. While their position placed art forms without hierarchies, Burke, like many other dancemakers, sees dance as a fundamental element. This is perhaps due to the structure of a dance collaboration where the choreographer is

usually the one to get commissioned and then seek out artists from different disciplines, which is similar to Bausch's creative process. However, centering dance does not mean that dancers constantly move. Not only do other visual and audio elements have substantial expressive power, but also movement is present in the musicians' fingers and mouths, in the props or scenic design elements, and even in the proscenium arch's curtain and in the air. When the cohort breaks the conventional boundaries of dance, every movement in the rehearsal becomes valued, thus forming a stronger bond among the collaborators. When a choreographer expands their boundaries of dance, they devise the performance space as an architect at work in the ephemeral realm.

Bausch's way of expanding the boundaries of dance theatre included experimenting with unconventional elements of performance such as cassette tapes, signing American Sign Language in a rose flower bed, and knee-height water where dancers would roll and slide. The resulted in clashing images that sculpted alternative worlds in her late career onstage. Bausch's *Tanztheater* was a combination of dance, theater, mime, and music that used stage design, props, lighting, and décor to enhance elements of acting, dancing, singing, and emotive gestures (which would be discussed later) (Helden 146). Her inspiration came from her collaborators, former training in German New Dances, and avant-garde movements in the theater.

Tracing *Tanztheater*: History of German Dance Theater and Other Influences

Laban first used the term "dance theater" in the 1920s to describe dance performances based on the harmony between the movement and spatial pathways (Fernandes 4). His choreography was often abstract, with a non-linear narrative (Savrami 30). He defined dance as "human movement that creates compositions of lines in space which show a structural

development, a build-up leading to a climax, a solution, and an ending” (30). This dramatic effect in dance later inspired experimental dances to be emotion-based. Laban was in favor of improvisational, nonnarrative-based *Freier Tanz* (Free Dance), which later influenced the development of *Ausdruckstanz* (Helden 140). “I do not believe that dancing should tell a story or have a meaning... I create my dances and then begin my search for the ideal music, for the music that will best reveal my mood in the movement” (140). Laban and his students recognized dance as a separate art form from music. Later he developed Laban Movement Analysis (LMA) based on pedagogy *Tanz-Ton-Wort* (Dance-Tone-Word or Dance-Music-Word) Improvisations, in which his students used voice, small poems, or dance in silence to bridge the gap between intellect and body (140). He taught *Freier Tanz* classes in Munich, Germany and began to seriously reform conventional practices of choreography. Using a non-linear approach that disrupts time, Laban focused on reconstruction and transformation of traumas and the fragmented way they were stored in our memory (45). Traumatic events are caused by factor(s) such as pain, loud noise, or heartbreak. Trauma makes it hard for one to recall every detail of a traumatic moment since a large amount of stress associated with the event often leads to memory loss or fragmented memories. Laban experimented with retelling a traumatic event according to how memories were recalled: in fragmentation. His pedagogy and analysis later influenced experimental theater, dance, and movement therapy.

Laban’s German students Mary Wigman and Kurt Jooss both contributed to *Ausdruckstanz* (also known as “Neue Tanz” or German New Dance), a rebellion against classical ballet and a search for individual expression within universal struggles and human desires (Fernandes 3). With the rise of avant-garde theaters in Europe, Wigman aimed to express human vulnerability, ugliness, and mundanity. She created her famous 1926 *Hexentanz* (Witch Dance),

a choreography that drew from eccentric and graceless movement to break away from ballet's conventional views of beauty. On an empty stage, Wigman sat bare feet with legs open and messy hair, lifted and released her limbs with a stomping noise repeatedly (19). Her creative process often started with improvisation without music to sharpen the corporeal sensations and expressiveness (19). Wigman was also interested in the balance between ecstasy and logic to form the most effective choreography (Savrami 25). Laban and Wigman's approach that separates dance and music became a popular method among Western dance experimenters (Olson 38). Despite her emphasis on experimentation, Wigman also suggested that a dancer had to work on their material until the result became what they wanted it to be (Savrami 27). By that, Wigman did not mean that a dancer should be a technical virtuoso, but rather that they needed to internalize the choreography to fully embody the dance.

Another student of Laban was German dancer, teacher, and choreographer Kurt Jooss. He engaged in the avant-garde dance form *Neue Tanzbühne* ("New Dance Stage") as a response to Wigman's *Neue Tanz* (Arendall 24). Scholars suggest that Jooss' focus on socio-political problems pointed clearly to the post-Expressionist movements *Neue Sachlichkeit* or the New Objectivity (Walther 90). Humor, irony, caricature, and realistic drama were Jooss' expressive tools. Jooss and fellow dancer Sigurd Leeder created the Jooss-Leeder method, which consisted of "tension and release, weight and strength, three basic rhythms and the flow of movement" (99). As Bausch's teacher, Jooss sharpened Bausch's articulation of movements and orchestral use of the dance ensemble (100).

Tanztheater: Bausch's Post-German New Dance

During the symposium 1985 *German and American Dance: Yesterday and Today* held in New York, German dance critic Jochen Schmidt said, “The break really came in 1973. In that year, Mary Wigman and John Cranko died. At the same time, Pina was appointed director of the Wuppertal Ballet” (Helden 146). At the early stages of *Tanztheater*, the form was largely influenced by Pina Bausch’s training with Jooss, which emphasized ballet and story-driven narratives (147). Although Bausch’s desire to present dramatic expression aligned with *Asudruckstanz*’s objective, she later strongly rejected this form because of its formalism (Climenhaga 15). In a 1978 interview, Bausch expressed that there was “a great danger in narrative-based ballet”, in which movement sequences were habitual from ballet training, so the aesthetic choices came across as a “strange sort of vanity” (Servos 25). Instead of focusing on the forms of dance, Bausch believed that “we ought to be getting closer to one another again” (25). Her way of bringing people closer was to bring the attention of cast members to each other’s organic improvisation based on their stories and to select movement and drama from their truth. This approach led to close relationships among her collaborators and produced performances that were often about sentiments and emotions that often revealed a feminist viewpoint about the patriarchal relations between men and women. *Tanztheater* soon became a controversial art form that invited its audiences to experience different levels of shock, surprise, laughter, and anxiety (Helden 156). *Tanztheater* aimed to capture real-life experience and often considered the spectator-performer relationship. In *An American Perspective on Tanztheater* Susan Manning wrote, “Like her contemporaries in theater, Bausch combines a visually rich production style with techniques drawn from Russian theater maker Konstantin Stanislavski and German playwright Bertolt Brecht, and the result approaches Artaud’s idea of a theater of cruelty” (61). Manning argued that such vision aimed to shock audiences through gesture, image,

sound, and lighting so that Bausch's choreography would inspire the audience with the "fiery magnetism of its images and acts upon them like spiritual therapeutics whose touch can never be forgotten" (61).

From a theatrical perspective, it is worth considering how Bertolt Brecht's theater theories and their focus on socio-political issues may have informed Bausch's dance-theater (Climenhaga 120). There are three theatrical techniques from Brecht's toolbox that appear in Bausch's work: *gestus*, *Verfremdungseffekt*, and montage. Foundational in Brecht's Epic Theater, *gestus*, of which *gestich* as the adjective, means "both gist and gesture, an attitude or a single aspect of an attitude, expressible in words or actions" and *gestus* as "the domain of attitudes which characters have in relation to each other" through tone voice, movement, or facial expression (Willet 42). *Gestus* emphasized the power of movement and provided a frame where a choreographer can build each gesture as action. To achieve Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt* (Distancing Effect or Alienation Effect), meant "stripping the event of its self-evident, familiar, obvious quality and creating a sense of astonishment and curiosity about them" (Sharma 934). Scholars describe this as an acting technique that breaks Realism's premise that the audience should empathize with the character, rather than examine their actions critically. For that, the actor "steps out" or separates themselves from the character to comment on the action instead of impersonating the character (Sharma 934). Such a split prompts audiences to de-naturalize the power structure in the relationship between characters and imagine alternatives. Such approach is present in many of Bausch's works. In *Kontakthof* (1978), performer Endicott ate an apple on stage, casually walked to another dancer (Jean-François Duroure), and asked, "can you show me that step we learned in Wuppertal?" (Arendell 51). Facing the audience, Duroure began to move his pelvis in a half circle along the horizontal plane. Endicott interrupts him, "wait... pull your

jacket up, I can't see anything" (51). By reenacting a rehearsal process, they displayed the process of dance-making and the artistry of being a dancer. This echoed to Brecht's idea that performers and characters are separate. Several scenes in Bausch's pieces revealed the dancer's rehearsal and learning processes (51). The use of repetition also made the emotive gestures habitual (Helden 167). In Bausch's choreography, these physical and behavioral patterns separate people from each other. Bausch's decision to show moments like this one raised the question as to whether the process of performance-making was worth the audience's attention; and, if not, what would be worth watching? Similar to Russian film-maker Sergei Eisenstein, Brecht used montage to create a dramatic shock effect. Brecht's epic theater brought mundane, everyday scenes to the stage and provoked spectators to take action in daily situations (102).

Bausch's collaborator Jan Minařík, one of the only few dancers from Wuppertal Ballet who followed her after Bausch's time in that company, was in her first dance operas. He was later featured in her more theatrical works such as the 1977 *Blaubart (Bluebeard. While Listening to a Tape Recording of Béla Bartók's opera "Duke Bluebeard's Castle")* and *Kontakthof*. Dominique Mercy was another member of the Wuppertaler Ballet who continued working with Bausch after she left the company. Mercy often played the outsider or the master of ceremonies in her pieces, a recurring theatrical role in Bausch's dance-theater.

Bausch beautifully said in an interview that "The challenge was to keep the diversity of the many emotions that left us speechless" (Arendell 28). With the rise in Europe of avant-garde movements and post-modernism in after World War II, Bausch found her power as a choreographer. She pushed herself and her dancers to display their personalities and emotions through physical actions and emotive gestures. Scholars attribute her style to German Neo-Expressionism, or "transavantgarde", an artistic movement in reaction to Wigman's

Ausdruckstanz and German Expressionism. The “transavangarde” movement came as a response to reject conceptual art and minimalism from avant-garde movements of the 1970s and resulted in an organic, expressive artform. Working in the context of an art movement that yearns for raw expression of emotion, Bausch investigated the strongest ways to express her dancers’ personalities and emotions by employing theatrical and cinematic techniques such as repetition, montage, and emotive gestures as motifs. In her works, she brought in music, a sea of flowers, and dozens of chairs, often set in abandoned spaces to construct her vision and render her feelings.

Dramaturgy of Tanztheater Pina Bausch

Telory D. Arendell, a scholar of Pina Bausch, neurodiversity, disability studies, performance studies, and screen dance, explores Bausch’s paradoxical use of “aggressive tenderness” and “tender aggressiveness” in *Pina Bausch’s Aggressive Tenderness: Repurposing Theater through Dance*. In her book, Arendell explains that in Bausch’s creative process, aggression pushes towards action, while tenderness asks for care and patience (Arendell 3). The balance between risk and patience was Bausch’s central aesthetic tactic. In Bausch’s later works, the moment of tenderness, often a kiss or an embrace, was short-lived and immediately followed by violence. In *Blaubart*, women and men had short moments of tender caressing and kissing and then all of a sudden men were pushing women and mime raping them against the concrete wall. Such moments revealed the violence or cruelty that co-existed with love in male-female relationships. Arendall studied under Kurt Jooss, who repeatedly urged her to find movement from “within” by “letting technique inhabit content’s stories as its prime motivator” (3). The “within” describes an inside-out process, to make the inner truth move the artists. In Bausch’s

Café Müller (1985), the “within” that Jooss described appeared when the German choreographer moved solemnly on stage with her eyes closed. Such state of “in-betweenness,” which expressed sensorial experience, differed from the work of post-modern choreographers such as Merce Cunningham, who was primarily interested in the abstract geometry of movement and in the exploration of rhythm of the composition.

Bausch was the first choreographer to collaborate with a dramaturg. In *Dramaturgy in the Making: A User’s Guide for Theatre Practitioners* Tréncsenyi posited dramaturgy as the action of recognition and arrangement of patterns (Tréncsenyi 21). In dance-theatre, one might frame the role of a dramaturg as “a translator of text into stage pictures of text into stage pictures as well as corporeality into a language that the audience can understand in an embodied way” (24). Yet, Bausch’s dramaturg Raimund Hoghe viewed dramaturgy differently from how it emerged in modern German theatre practices (35). Bausch led Hoghe to pursue a “new, collaborative method” in the relationship between choreographer and dramaturg (35). In the rehearsal room, Hoghe collaborated with her on this approach as he composed words to “gain insights yet keep secrets” (Arendell 73). Hoghe wrote in his journal about the process of creating *Bandoneon*, “Two weeks into the rehearsals and key motifs are emerging: small ‘moments of tenderness and aggression,’ and memories of experiencing the same thing differently” (73). Hoghe’s role was to be fully present at the rehearsal and be “observant but not intrusiventelligent, and gentle (73). This type of approach to developing a piece’s dramaturgy would be later recognized by dance dramaturg and theorist Guy Cools and Tréncsenyi as *decentered dramaturgy*. In an interview, Hoghe responded that to be a dramaturg was to build a clear structure with elements of time, space, and rhythm coming together in a piece (74). Another common element both Bausch and Hoghe valued was an empty space. Arendell drew a connection to Bausch’s view of empty space

to experimental composer John Cage's usage of silence: it's not boring at all, rather full of drama and dynamic.

Bausch In Rehearsal

“How does it feel to be near someone who is not there?” American choreographer Anna Sokolow, who taught Bausch at Juilliard in New York City, asked this question to her dancers (Warren 119). Bausch asked personal questions to her dancers such as “show me in movement the memory of the first time you laughed very hard?” or “how do you behave when you've lost something (Arendell 20)?” At other times, Pina Bausch would show a picture and say, “do something with this” (Arendell 21). Questions asked in rehearsal were essential to the quality of the expressive movement their dancers generated. At the same time, improvising without music allowed their dancers to connect body and mind as they layered bodily sensations and cognitive thinking. I note that Queer Embodiment Theory also explore the mind-body connection. Such an approach elicits particular movement qualities as it generates organic and sensation-inspired movement. This creativity process brings vulnerability and offers a range of expressive possibilities. It also serves as a bonding force to the cohort since the sentiments are close to every dancer.

Motif-Building and Emotive Gestures

Dance scholar Ciane Fernandes explains that Pina Bausch used “emotive gesture” in her choreography (29). Stemming from German Neo-expressionist ideology, “emotive gesture” sought to express through movement experiences considered to be universal and thus recognizable by all spectators (40). Bausch was interested in the effectiveness of expression,

rather than showing off technical virtuosity. To discover the deep meaning of a single gesture, she often repeated one image or gesture until it revealed its deepest associations and its power while the body and mind processed the sensation (58). A strong example of this choreographic approach is evident in Bausch's 1975 *Das Frühlingsopfer* ("Rite of Spring"), a work that explored primal feelings and movement, gender, and the struggle between individual and community. At the beginning of Bausch's *Rite of Spring*, a woman lies on her belly on the dirt, her face gently and slowly caresses a red cloth. Viewers soon understand that the woman's holding of the red cloth means that she is the chosen virgin to be sacrificed for her community. Another woman enters and starts to run frantically. She too wears a white dress with the same ponytail. She stopped in the front left corner of the space and pulled her dress up to cover her face, exposing her thin and nearly naked body. Then a group of six women stands behind the two, with different gestures such as covering the head or crouching down, which evokes the relatable experience of grief. The slowness in the mourning pose makes each female figure become distinct image of a mourning ensemble to create a montage effect and to increase the intensity of expressiveness. The group of female dancers slows down to almost stillness as Igor Stravinsky's music score becomes quiet. In faint lighting, the women audibly try to catch their breath from physical exhaustion. After frantically running in the center of the stage to comfort, breakaway connects with others, the female dancers gather in a circle—then a single woman emerges in front of the group and gradually descends to the floor with her torso upright, legs wide open. The dramatized images with the dissonant, percussive, and eerie quality of Stravinsky's music revealed the horror of sexual trauma experienced by women.

Bausch and her peer choreographers gradually found movement and choreographic structures to bridge seemingly separate elements (Arendell 122). How could dance, which exists

only ephemerally, capture the present moment? How could an artist respond to a life experienced as a bombardment of sensations that arrive at great speed? To its innumerable and ever-changing combinations of emotions? In Bausch's process, she often used repetition, motif-building, and montage technique to dramatize the stage to express the intensity of feelings.

Repetition-Transformation

In *Café Müller* (1978), a man and a woman wear modern, gendered costumes: the man in a white button-down shirt and formal pants, the woman in a white dress. The man in a black suit, played by Borzik, repeatedly rearranges chairs and tables, which acts as the obstacles between the couple. The woman is falling apart, with her messy hair and stumbling steps. Borzik places her arm around her partner's neck, making them kiss by placing her lips on top of his. She is eventually carried by the male partner in the air horizontally, then he dropped her to the floor with a pounding sound. Borzik repeats the sequence of bringing them together. She drops on the floor again and again, and Brozik put them together again and again at an increased pace. About seven repetition later, she no longer uses Borzik's assistance but throws herself at her partner only to fall again. The repetition of running toward the man and falling off his arms transforms the dire situation of being in an endless loop to represent the conflict of failing to communicate in a relationship for which there is still longing.

Repetition in Bausch's *tanztheater* neither alludes to a linear progression of time nor denies its social construction. Rather, her works consistently upset the progression of expectation, exposing a split between movers and audience to achieve Brecht's Alienation Effect (Fernandes 125). They bring a sense of emptiness instead of wholeness; an increased distortion that provoked multiple and unexpected interpretations, "Dance is the absence, dissatisfaction,

and constant reconstruction of itself and its participants” (145). Fernandes suggests that the future transforms the past while repeating it, becoming a “retro-active working-through the past” (129, 145). In an interview, Bausch said, “I don’t repeat, I try again” (Arendell 107). Bausch’s rehearsal director Daphnis Kokkinos thinks that “when you try again, something changes about the work” (107). By trying again, the dancer revisits the sensation, and each time builds on the previous emotional intensity. Eventually the phrase or gesture gets transcended or abstracted to something beyond the realistic world.

Montage Technique

A large portion of Bausch’s choreographic methodology is based on the filmic concept of montage technique, in which images connect with each other through physical juxtaposition or seemingly random succession that builds to multiple understandings (Arendell 25). Arendell associates Bausch’s montage technique with the term “tonal montage,” coined by notable Russian filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein (29). This technique consists of using a series of images that share a general tone, or the “emotional tone” of the entire piece. These different shots or images are juxtaposed with the same visual or sound elements in order to convey an emotion such as elation, isolation, or helplessness (Eisenstein 75). Arendell states that the specific branch of montage technique, “tonal montage,” is arguably “by far the most accurate way to describe the sort of emotional sound” that takes “primacy in any Bausch piece” (30). This mode of expression radically complicates the social issues portrayed in Bausch’s work by pulling various elements together and creating a sense of surrealness (38). Her technique aims to create a multi-faceted story or re-create the mood of each story rather than telling it through linear narratives (39).

Differently from Laban's beginning – climax – end structure, Bausch ruptured the viewer's expectations by using incongruent motifs and imaginative props.

In *Arien* (1979), fairytale queens with grotesque dresses and makeup put on by their partners onstage, plunge into movement phrases and litanies (Birringer 92). They look and sound nonsensical in comparison with the old Italian song *bel canto* arias (sang by Beniamino Gigli) and Beethoven's *Moonlight Sonata* on a cassette tape. "What do you think of arias?" Asks one of the dancers as she put thick makeup on her face. "I associate them with blood-red fingernails and torture," another answer (Birringer 96). The absurdity and eeriness of the piece distance spectators from the stage. The audience cannot be sure whether it is the words, songs, or movement that make the performance incongruent (95). At a certain moment in the same production, a naturalistic-looking hippopotamus, disguised by two movers, appears while two dancers kiss each other on top of a chair. The sleepy-looking hippopotamus offers comic relief with a sense of danger (Kisselgoff 70). While the hippopotamus seems irrelevant, spectators have been "trained" from the previous montages to accept the animal's presence by the many clashing images such as classical music and nonsensical conversations that preceded its appearance. To avoid a linear narrative, *Arien* was deliberately inconclusive and perhaps its montage aimed to be a "resolution" (92).

German writer Norbert Servos explains that Bausch's approach in *Arien* is in the widest sense "phenomenologically-determined" (Helden 145). The results are a series of moving impressionistic pictures (Climenhaga 118). In the case of *Arien*, seemingly random elements do not disturb the performance's reception; rather, they create an inner logic that made its characters relatable even if they were surreal. This technique originates movement on the characteristic "emotional sound" of the piece to create a tonal montage (Eisenstein 75). This technique could

also be seen in *Blaubart*, *Nelken*, and other works. Although this method at times leaves the audience confused, the abstracted pattern transcends a timeline and fit the timeless topics of her works such as gender equality which pulls audience back to an experience of emotions. When *Arien* was performed at the Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM), it was “the most chaotic scene ever staged on the BAM Opera House stage” (Birringer 97). *Arien* created an experience of wild visualization of emotions and resulted in a shock effect and at the same time revealed how intense feelings can be.

Queering *Tanztheater*

Committed in performance and expressiveness, Bausch’s dancers fall, sprint, and scream repeatedly for *Blaubart*. This original French folklore tells a story of a wealthy man murdering his wives one after another. Later “bluebearding” was used to describe a man’s behavioral pattern of hurting women. Bausch threaded the piece with gestures and movements that indicate the women’s abuse. The female dancers fall loudly time and time again on the floor mostly covered by fall leaves. Women are paired up with men in black suits to show scenes of sexual violence. Throughout the show, they listen to an opera playing on a radio by the lead male dancer, who is also the “predator” of the lead woman dancer. This work displays the emotional intensity of a tragic tale and the dancers undeniably invest immense amounts of physical and emotional pain. Bausch’s dancers are pushed to the limit, and exhibited their exhaustion and pain quite openly onstage (Routledge 145). Impressed by the performers, the startling images, wearied by the remorseless repetition, the grimness, the bitter underlining of genders, the godlessness, such works spoke volume to me in a patriarchal, gender-binary society.

Bausch's works such as *Rite of Spring* represented only heteronormative relationships. The women are in nearly transparent nude dresses and the men dressed in black slacks with no shirt. The men dance angularly and aggressively to the more powerful music. Each gender group move in unison, furthering a dichotomy. These patterns make it clear that gender is a defining characteristic of the piece. While it is effective at showing societal normalcy and the damage it could do, it omits the experiences of people with TGNC (transgender and non-confirming) identities, since her dance exists only in the gender-binary world. There is no third gender or representation of agender, genderless, or non-binary people. Moreover, Bausch's theatrical spectacles depends upon a notion of civilized behavior and the expectations of society that may then be exposed through irony or subverted by absurdity. No matter how much her performers hurl themselves numbly at walls or grovel on the floor, their costumes suggest a Western-centered society, rather than a timeless space. The clothes people wear often suggest pre-World War II middle class society (24). Most of Bausch's dancers are about the same height and with a lean or unusually thin figure. This might be due to the professionalism and the rigorous movement training it required of her dancers and a sense of unison Bausch wishes to create.

To be inclusive of dancers who have different levels of training, and of different dances is queer and disability justice. This is because queer people of color are at a larger risk of developing mental illness, which can be recognized as invisible disabilities when it becomes a chronic illness. Other disabilities such as chronic pain prevent people to engage in performance because of the intensity of rehearsal, especially in technical rehearsal. Queer people of color in an undergraduate setting or spaces with non-professional dancers carry often too many responsibilities and too much stress. To queer *Tanztheater* in such setting, I will use queer

Embodiment Theory and Cyborg Theory in the hope my find my way of creating Bausch-inspired and disabilities, QTBIPOC-inclusive performance.

To Queer Dance is to Free Ourselves of Limitations

Queerness is essentially about the rejection of a here and now and an insistence on potentiality or concrete possibility for another world.

Muñoz 2009:1

What does it mean to *queer* an artform? In the introduction to the edited volume *Queer Dance: Meanings and Makings*, Croft suggested that “no single entity marks something as queer dance, but it is rather how textures press on the world and against one another that opens the possibility for dance to be queer” (Croft 1) The concept of “queer as a verb” reimagined experiences of queer artists in dance and theater. This is because dance and dance theater, like everything else, were built for cis-het (cisgender and heterosexual) and mostly White bodies. The intersectionality of gender and racial identities explains how queer non-white people are a more oppressed group than those who are only queer or only BIPOC groups.

Choreographer and professor Erica Gionfriddo (EG) from the repertory program *In the Ether* at The University of Texas Austin explained queering as a verb to describe the process of an active state of imaging beyond our dominant reality (Fisher 3). Gionfriddo used a) Embodiment Theory b) Cyborg Theory, and c) “Body Without an Organ” to explain queering dance theater. Embodiment and Cyborg Theory explain how interactive humans and technologies were and that we could use them to our advantage, rather than being pessimistic about technology when it is already inseparable from our lives (Fisher 4). EG queered Bausch’s version of *Rite of Spring* (1975) with a focus on climate change. They reimagined the original

frail woman as planet Earth. Bausch centered on the brutal sacrifice of the virgin and the female collective in her version of *The Rite of Spring* (1975). EG took Bausch's idea of transforming the male-female story into a feminist view and used their own imagination to address climate change by embodying Mother Earth's sacrifice. This is an example of breaking the boundary between human and the environment.

Embodiment Theory

Embodiment theory centers on the idea that the mind and body are one entity. It demonstrates the vital role of the body in attaining and maintaining a healthy, productive relationship with self and others to function in society. Sharing our dances or seeing other queer dancers on social media could be helpful for queer embodiment. Gionfriddo transfers the concept of three-dimensional bodies' representation in the digital world onto the stage (Fisher 2). They place dancers in front of a camera-projection loop so that the dancer has multiple selves projected on screen, each one's movement slightly lagging behind the previous. In Bausch's rehearsal of *Blaubart*, the dancers lie on the floor, with closed eyes, listening to a former performance recording of Pina Bausch's "Bluebeard". The practice of mindful reflection allowed the dancers to open their senses to the sensations of lying down in a thick layer of wilted leaves in a largely-empty room while listening to the former production and all the energy of this work. They are listening to sounds from the past that "evoke a world of brutality and tenderness, irrationality and sadness", familiar to those who have seen Bausch's powerfully dramatic, dreamlike works" (Climenhaga 130). The tonal montage effect made transitions seem natural since the sound element created a feeling offered a connection for Gionfriddo and other queer artists, Identity is fluid, ever-changing, and not fixed. Queer dance theater thus should capture

the complexity of life. One way of achieving this is to juxtapose images that present a diversity of expressions of emotion and connect them with an element such as sound.

Cyborg Theory and Bodies Without Organ

Donna Haraway, feminist cyborg scholar and author of wrote *The Cyborg Manifesto* (1985) writes, “A cyborg: a hybrid organism, physically, mentally and virtually a creature with fluid internal orders, a fluid sense of self or identity” (Haraway 29). This concept of fluidity makes the cyborg “a combination of wonder and of truth, of metaphor and concrete reality” (34). Haraway uses this concept of cyborg to resist “the traditions of 'Western' science and politics: the tradition of racist, male-dominant capitalism, progress, the appropriation of nature as resource for the productions of culture... the relation between organism and machine has been a border war” (2). The cyborg in Haraway’s manifesto is “resolutely committed to partiality, irony, intimacy, and perversity” (3). Cyborg theory rejects norms that limit our imagination and creates a binary sense of self, a black-or-white, this-or-that understanding of who we are or can become. Cyborg theory in the queer context argues that not only the gender and sexuality exist on a spectrum, but there are also fluid boundaries between imagination and realities (Haraway 138). The cyborg version of gender is changeable and ever changing.

Haraway also explained how information technology links people around the world. New chains of affiliation, exploitation and solidarity are formed with technology (Weigel 2). “We are all cyborgs,” EG argues (Fisher 3). Since there is a virtual space through social media and other online forums, EG suggested we use social media for real connection. During *In the Ether*, EG blurred the boundary between imagination and reality. This is particularly useful in the context of reimagining Bausch’s work across space, time, and the gender spectrum. EG’s placed a live

camera facing the projection screen that is behind the dancer, so that the camera captures the dancer and the projection screen, which results in multiple reflection of the mover, with each frame lagged behind the previous one. The movement pattern with the feedback loop create a canon of movement, that are embodied in a two-dimensional version of the performer. This is an example of blurring the boundaries of reflection and reality, human and technology, and the two-dimensional and three-dimensional world. This design centers the idea that technology has become a part of us. By embracing technology, EG and their dancers connects cyborg theory and performance-making to associate ourselves with our screens.

“Bodies without organs” is an extension of Cyborg Theory to reject the physical limitation (Fisher 4). EG describes that when we imagine our bodies can shape-shift its physical form, the body is fused with the environment and thus the space and mover became one entity. The bizarre-sounding theory has its practicality in the reimagining of our relationship with the surrounding environment: technology, nature, object, and temperature. This theory also transcends physical limitations and invited us to imagine a world beyond the material reality. In this context, one could bring in spiritual and ancestral powers and energies, which are common to practice in many nonwhite cultures. Another topic of EG’s theory is to remove the hierarchy in movement. Instead of trying to look aesthetically pleasing or following a specific technique, they encourage queer movers to evoke a sense of “play” instead of the seriousness that many dance students associate with dancemaking. Through the practice of “continuous movement,” usually over forty minutes of non-stop movement practice, EG and their colleagues investigate how movements are influenced by surroundings and what innate desire our brain-mind-body entity has in the moment.

Elizabeth Freeman and Temporality Queer Theory

French philosopher Michel Foucault, describes in *The History of Sexuality* (1976) the moment when the terms homosexuality and heterosexuality were invented. He attributes sexual and bodily norms to “ensure population, to reproduce labor capacity” (Deutscher 37). Contemporary queer scholar Monaghan argues that Foucault’s explanation was “an emergent heterosexual ideology shaping the temporality of labor, social life, and politics” (Deutscher 98). When describing sexuality and gender, Foucault made the mistake of omitting genders and sexualities outside of the conventional binaries. As an alternative, Monaghan’s colleague Elizabeth Freeman offered “reimagine ‘queer’ as a set of possibilities produced out of temporal and historical difference” to illuminate “the manipulation of time to produce both bodies and relationalities (or even non-relationality)” (McBean 159). Freeman offers what a queer alternative to heteronormative linear temporality might look or feel like, or how it might be represented or experienced (McBean 99). In response to Freeman, Monaghan, in their article *On Time* asks, “can time be queered?” What would a queer temporality look like? How might it be experienced? What would its political worth be? And, perhaps most importantly, is there future for queer theory itself (McBean 45)? “Queer Temporalities” makes us rethink how queer as a concept is always entangled with temporality.

Social Justice and Dance Theater

Indian American choreographer and dance theater scholar Ananya Chatterjea uses “White dance” to describe a particular way of inhabiting locations in contemporary dance without ever having to mark its cultural lineage because of the White-dominant dance culture in the United States and Europe (Chatterjea 72). Chatterjea points out that “white dance” scholars and

institutions often misplace dances of other cultures incorrectly or randomly to display a false sense of embrace of diversity (74). For instance, the online archive of Jacob's Pillow randomly places dances into "international" or "cultural" categories, which leaves out the complex histories of non-White dances and exotifies them by using ambiguous and inaccurate terms (78). To create a dance theater for queer people of color in the United States, the choreographer needs to research on both queer and dance in a global context. For instance, performances of gender identity and sexuality by hijras, "the third gender" (which remains an oppressed group today) in South Asia have awakened audiences' imaginations since the Kama Sutra period (400 BCE–200 CE) (Emon 45). The choreographer should also value dancers' intelligence and knowledge in the way Bausch did. In her later years, Bausch traveled internationally and intentionally cast dancers from all over the world. In the process, she often incorporated these dancers' diverse movement patterns into her choreography. She was curious about her cast members' personal truths. *Queer as A Verb* suggests that the brain-mind-body is an inseparable entity. This theory recognized kinesthetic (body) intelligence and the connection between cognition and physical sensation (Werther 9). Contemporary queer choreographers of color often relate queerness to their identity to stay grounded.

In *Birds of Paradise* (2020), queer Brown choreographer Guillermo Perez says that "finding dance in all bodies is what I love. Our identities intersect and become affected. We complicate but also restore each other...really, it's about the moment before the act. The self-talk that makes it happen" (Perez 3). Here, celebration becomes as authentic as resistance when queer artists come together to process trauma and form relationships. Due to the body image issues that largely happen with transgender youths with disability, choreographers should make sure they feel safe, beautiful, and celebrated. To create a safe space for queer artists of color with

disabilities, choreographers should avoid misgendering and ableist language, and ask for consent when it comes to documenting and physical contact. Other related issues are confidentiality and accommodation. Since dancers of color often dance in a variety of genres, choreography should adapt to the dancers' bodies and some of the fundamental movement habits (such as a pointed foot versus a flat foot). When dancers share personal experiences, the level of abstraction of the resulting movements should be a tool to ensure dancers are comfortable sharing their stories onstage and avoid a direct narration of the ensemble's trauma. One exercise to avoid unnecessary pain is to "build the room": write down the expectation of the rehearsal rooms such as "no yelling in the studio" to avoid sensory overload and re-traumatization.

When working with artists with visible disabilities, disabled dance scholars Harmon, Marsh, Whatley, and Wood in *Dance, Disability, and Law* conclude that the principle of inclusion is based on the recognition that first, "non-traditional bodies embody many forms, capacities, and ideals" (Whatley 189). Secondly, traditional and non-traditional bodies both hold or characterize the beauty of form, line, surface in dance; and third, "no bodies are static: we are all unique and all in transition, gaining and losing functions, capabilities, and movement as we move through time and nature" (189). Moreover, many disabled people developed unusual abilities that abled bodies might not possess. For example, disabled dancer Clair Cunningham had gained heightened spatial awareness from avoiding being bumped into, falling, or slipping in crowded streets over years of using a crutch (190). By navigating this ablest society with infrastructures and social norms designed for abled bodies, disabled people carve out different ways in their daily life and gain embodied knowledge that do not go away on stage (277). The crutches also taught them to respect their own timing, their relationship with being observed in public, and self-esteem, and efficiently allocate their energy (278). They thus suggest a new

aesthetic that focuses on showing unique ways of moving as resistance to norm and ableism. Cunningham's choreography came from their interaction with their crutches. The crutches demand extra precision and care in dance to avoid injury or impact when landing from a jump (278).

Revisiting *Tanztheater* and Reimagining Future of Queer Dance

Bausch and her *tanztheater* popularized and encouraged dance theater to use techniques of theater and film (Climenthaga 10). She used montage techniques, repetition-transformation, and emotive gestures to devise choreography. Bausch also worked with a dramaturg Raimund Hoghe, and former Wuppertal Ballet members to create a theatrical experience. Her *Tanztheater* centered the joy, pain, and violence in everyday situations, which helped her ensemble establish a strong bond. By contrast, her props and scenic designs contained clashing images and sometimes an empty space to create a dramatic and alienation effect. Yet her characters often represent White, post-WWII societal structure and skinny bodies, omitting others' experience. To practice her approach of dance-theater making for queer artists, especially queer BIPOC artists with disabilities, it is essential to incorporate racial and disability justice in the process of research. Choreographers should need to be open to learn from their dancers about the complexities of their experiences. To put Bausch's work on queer bodies is to use her devising methods such as asking intimate questions, repetition-transformation, montage technique, and collaboration of design and to avoid a representation of only the Western (and post-colonized), middle-class, heteronormative society.

Haraway's *The Cyborg Manifesto* (1985) mapped out the feminist cyborg theory that explain the fluid boundary of dream and reality; technology and physical body, and the

everchanging genders (Haraway 34). Cyborg theory and Embodiment theory created a theoretical basis for queer performing artists to work flexibly with their surroundings, resources, and collaborators. It also explained how digital art would assist a performance.

Freeman's temporality of queer theory told us the queer timeline when linearity was not the only way to view time. Nostalgia, memory, future, and imagination were all relative when making queer performance (McBean 25). These theoretical frameworks fit well with both queer artist's needs to reject the binary way of thinking and preserved the radicalness and authenticity that Bausch aimed for. However, this essay provides a limited range of research in terms of queer theory and intersection of queer dance and disability studies. Further research and practices of queering dance theater should continue to investigate at intersections and might consider disabilities and racial justice.

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