

Frankfurt University of Music and Performing Arts (Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst, Frankfurt am Main)
Department of Contemporary and Classical Dance

1. What is the institution trying to do?

The aims of the course of studies in contemporary and classical dance is the training of professional dancers within a degree program that encourages their personality as a dancer with great individual artistic expression, who master a wide range of classical and contemporary dance techniques at their command and who are able to understand dance as an art form in an artistic, historical and social context.

Furthermore, the aims of the course of studies are to enable the students to act self-confidently and responsibly in groups, give their positive input as well as to develop social and political commitment.

2. How is the institution trying to do it?

To reach the above-defined aims a teaching model based on seven pillars, which are linked to each other, has been created. This will lead to an integrated course of studies.

1. Technique

2. Creativity

3. Body Awareness

4. Theory

5. Projects

6. Interdisciplinary work

7. Performances

The importance of each pillar, expressed in credit hours, is as follows:

1st year

Technique: 56%

Creativity: 10%

Body Awareness: 12%

Theory: 12%

Projects: 5%

Interdisciplinary work: 0%

Performances: 5%

2nd year

Technique: 56%

Creativity: 10%

Body Awareness: 8%

Theory: 12%

Projects: 7%

Interdisciplinary work: 2%

Performances: 5%

3rd year (focus on Classical Dance)

Technique: 50%

Creativity: 3%

Body Awareness: 6%

Theory: 14%

Projects: 14%

Interdisciplinary work: 8%
Performances: 5%

3rd year (focus on Contemporary Dance)

Technique: 40%
Creativity: 7%
Body Awareness: 10%
Theory: 15%
Projects: 15%
Interdisciplinary work: 8%
Performances: 5%

4th year

Technique: 40%
Creativity: 22%
Body Awareness: 0%
Theory: 13%
Projects: 10%
Interdisciplinary work: 5%
Performances: 10%

1. Technique

Technique is a combination of acquired body experience and processes of reflection. As such a sound technique is a basic requirement for professional dancers. A creative handling of technique is important in teaching as well as in performance/execution. Technique enables a broadening of individual ways of expression, a wider scope of what and how to express something. Technique may increase the individual expression of a dancer.

Today the term technique is used in a wider context, a wide range of techniques (philosophies) are at disposal: classical technique, alignment techniques, release techniques, minimal techniques, Cunningham, Limón, Graham, folk dance, jazz, placement, Tai Chi, breathing technique...

The various techniques taught can and should be complimentary and influence each other. It is necessary to find a balance between teaching an overview and in-depth knowledge in certain sectors.

Taught are basic techniques of

contemporary dance, characterized by release techniques, partnering, process-oriented and interdisciplinary work,

classical dance, based on the Russian method with point work, variations, Pas de deux, floor barre and neo-classical approaches.

modern dance (Limón, Graham, Cunningham, Horton in intensive workshops)

folk dance from various countries, including Flamenco and the use of castagnets, a playful handling of rhythm with unusual meters and an individual creative analysis with the authentic material is taught.

It is equally important to analyze movements, to transpose information from one technique to another and for the teacher it is important to indicate parallels and links between the techniques, and to work with images.

In order to facilitate a better understanding of anatomic links, a more efficient use of muscles systems and the energy flow, technical aspects are further broadened by body awareness methods such as Feldenkrais and Alexander technique (see also 3. Body awareness).

Apart from Intensive workshops with alternating teachers, which enable the students to quickly take in new information, it is important to work on contemporary and classical technique with the same teachers over the period of one semester.

2. Creativity

Nowadays dancers are not only expected to be mere interpreters but are also required to participate as individually thinking and choreographically creative partners in artistic processes. Therefore, another focus is to enhance creativity and spontaneity. This is done by offering seminars on:

Improvisation

Composition

Action Theatre

Contact improvisation

Improvisation Technologies.

In improvisation classes various approaches are used to enhance creativity such as feeling one's body, its different systems and qualities of movement. Authentic Movement or experiential Anatomy, different body images, the use of the voice and creating variations on given movement sequences will be explored. The class will visit exhibitions; discuss art, architecture, texts, drawings and writing. In addition problem solving, where students work together to find a solution will be encouraged.

The different improvisation and composition classes are intended to lead to a greater individual expression in dance.

3. Body Awareness

Fundamental to dance and movement classes is an in-depth knowledge about the body and a sharpened perception taught in classes of body awareness methods such as Feldenkrais, Alexander technique or Body-Mind-Centering (BMC). Training one's perception leads to a wider awareness and efficiency of movement. Movement analysis allows for the recognition of patterns of movement and their re-structuring minimizing the danger of injuries.

Feldenkrais is taught in a group on a regular basis and students may make individual appointments. Students will also receive an introduction into Pilates and the use of devices used in Pilates in order to stabilize and strengthen the center. Students learn to treat their body more carefully, to listen to its needs, to perceive injuries in time and to cure them in order to be able to dance on a high level for a long time.

Since November 2004 the HFMDK is offering a yearly series of interdisciplinary workshops on body awareness methods and Movement Studies geared for Musicians such as Alexander technique, Ideokinesis, Body-Mind Centering, mental training, Gyrokinesis, Pilates and other topics.

4. Theory

The aim is to work on the intersection between theory and practice. An in-depth understanding of dance as art will be developed through courses in Music Theory for dancers (4 semesters) and Anatomy (2 semesters), Dance History (4 semester), Introduction into academic research, Theory and Aesthetics of Dance and Theatre, Dance Pedagogy and a series on Dance video / Dance film.

Basic knowledge of dance, its functions and historic forms are taught in theory classes in order to understand contemporary productions in the context of dance and cultural history. During the weekly series of Dance video / film new and historical recordings of dance, dance theatre and ballet productions as well as dance video productions will be presented, intersections between dance, film and music or body images and gender topics will be addressed. Students may also borrow video tapes from the comprehensive Videotape library. Basic knowledge of music theory and rhythmic will be taught, full score reading and listening to music will train the perception of sound and music analysis. Further emphasis is on recognizing musical forms closely related to dance and those which are not related to dance.

Students will have to write performance reports and present a written analysis of 20 stagings in dance, theatre, music theatre, performance.

There will be interdisciplinary intensive seminars and lectures regarding stage rights, contract law and subsidies.

Each student must write an extensive **Thesis** (120 hours):

A research project on a specific issue taken from one of the theory courses.

This thesis should demonstrate the student's ability to work with scientific research methods, seek appropriate information and source material and to evaluate the material in a cohesive and literate manner.

5. Projects

In order to guarantee comprehensive and above all practice-oriented studies, students are introduced into relevant new dance techniques by international guest choreographers. Research related projects in choreography and learning about different working methods in choreography, teach students to cope quickly and in a flexible way with the various demands in professional life.

Projects comprise very different approaches. Referring to choreographies they can be very "technique oriented" or "product oriented"; they may also include other forms of artistic, process-oriented movement research.

Project classes also consist of defining a problem, developing and realizing one's own work. Creating one's own choreography is part of the bachelor requirements. This includes finding a topic, develop a concept, create the respective movements, choreography, explore and assimilate experience as well as finding a working method and form of presentation including feed-back and discussion.

Classes in composition are preparatory. They consist of Laban principles as well as concept development, inquiries regarding contents and social contexts.

Interdisciplinary classes with the composition department for musicians are also offered, for instance in co-operation with Isabel Mundry, professor of composition. The classes address topics such as SOUND–BODY–SPACE or IMAGE–MUSIC–DANCE, or during the winter semester 06/07 with Julian Klein addressing topics of „Space/ Place“.

Invited for projects have been until now choreographers such as Marguerite Donlon (Director Ballet Saarbrücken), Nicole Caccivio, Roberto Galvan, Marek Rozycki (State opera Berlin), Dimitri Simkin (State theatre Wiesbaden), Alan Barnes, Christine Bürkle, Ayman Harper, Thomas McManus, Nicole Peisl, Richard Siegal (all Ballett Frankfurt), Marco Santi (Dance theatre Osnabrück), Toulia Limnaios, Jo Siska, Sabine Lemke, Regina Baumgart, Kathy Rylands, Jennifer Hanna, may ex-members of the S.O.A.P. company, Rui Horta (Frankfurt) as well as José Biondi, Jan Kodet, Dietmar Janeck, Olga Cobos, Peter Mika, Annette Lopez-Leal, Abou Lagraa and many other independent artists.

Another example of projects is the participation of 10 students as performers in a series of stagings of "Human Writes" by William Forsythe.

6. Interdisciplinary work

Exciting developments in dance often take place at intersections between other sectors and art forms. The HfMDK offers a number of possibilities for interdisciplinary work, which is increasingly popular. Interdisciplinary projects and seminars taught for students of various disciplines, departments and universities allow encounters with other forms of art and performance, testing cooperation, exchange of knowledge, all of which leads to exciting differing points of view and interpretations of what was seen, heard or experienced.

Since 2005/06 there is a series of workshops called „Body in Theatre“ with special offers for interdisciplinary movement training in the performing arts including seminars in Action Theatre (Sten Rudstrom), Physical Theater (Nigel Charnock), Dance/Theatre (Wanda Golonka), vocal training according to Linklater, Lecoq methods taught by Thomas Prattki, Improvisation (Michael Schumacher).

Seminars in lighting are given in cooperation with the Mousonturm.

Another example of interdisciplinary projects in cooperation with other departments and universities (HFMDK, the University of Applied Sciences Mainz and the Catholic Academy Rabanus Maurus, who initiated and financed this project) was the music-dance-video-installation *Das Blaue Fleisch* created in 2004 and performed in the Frankfurt cathedral. The work was built upon the "Elements" in the work of Yves Klein with texts from *Blue* by Derek Jarman. 25 dancers, one actor, one singer, four composers, five musicians, ten video artists (students of the department Media Design from the University of Applied Sciences Mainz) participated under the artistic direction of Prof. Isabel Mundry (composition), Lutz Gregor (video), Prof. Dieter Heitkamp (dance) in cooperation (choreography) with Nicole Peisl (Ballet Frankfurt).

7. Performances

Performances allow the students to apply the experience made in techniques of body awareness, creativity, theory, projects and interdisciplinary processes, to the stage or other performance sites.

In order to gather as much experience on stage as possible, the outcome of various projects are presented three times a year in a series of stagings consisting of different programs, usually in March, May and July.

Students thus acquire performing skills, may prove their quality as interpreters of extremely different styles and are given the opportunity to undertake their first steps in choreography. In order to reach a wider audience students perform not only at the

university but also at the Gallus Theatre and at the Mousonturm in cooperation with the Theatre Academy of the State of Hesse.

The concept of the program varies according to the location. At the Gallus Theatre there will be stagings of guest choreographers and students' works, at the Mousonturm contemporary and neoclassical productions will be shown, and at the HFMDK the whole range of artistic and pedagogical work can be seen.

ZuKT opens up new locations for dance in the city: the Frankfurt cathedral, the Museum for Communication or the Offenbach Fair.

ZuKT is regularly invited to guest performances with varying programs at theatres in the Rhein-Main-Region, such as Bad Homburg, Gießen, Kassel, Mainz, Marburg, Wiesbaden and Würzburg.

In June 2005 ZuKT received the prize of the audience at the Theatre Day of Hesse in Wiesbaden.

On the organizational and structural level ZuKT is trying to support the realization of the aims of the study course by building strong networks for instance within the Department of Performing Arts at the HFMDK. Other partners are:

The Theatre Academy of the State of Hesse which includes four universities with study courses in performing arts and all state and municipal theatres in the state of Hesse, Tanzlabor_21/Tanzplan Frankfurt Rhein_Main, other universities in the region during the Festival of Young Talents, or European universities in Rotterdam, Amsterdam, Bytom and Vienna (exchange programs for teachers and students).

3. How does the institution know if it works?

Among others graduates get engaged at theatres (e.g. Saarbrücken, Oldenburg, Augsburg, Osnabrück, Würzburg, München, Braunschweig, Flensburg, Pforzheim in Germany, NDT II or Itzik Galili in The Netherlands), Sasha Waltz, or in projects of the independent dance scene, or realize their own projects. Most graduates work in the field of dance on a long term basis, either as dancers, choreographers, in dance pedagogy or they succeed in other related professions in theatre or cultural management, dance science, physiotherapists and teachers, which proves the success of the study course.

These possibilities are reflected in the modules of the study course which offer approaches for lifelong learning and working in other art fields, and which confront students with very diverse areas of inquiry.

Surveys and feedback from choreographers, art directors and workshop guest teachers who work with the students or graduates in companies or in projects also show whether the concept works. An independent evaluation as it is done in The Netherlands still has to be developed.

Furthermore, it is difficult to evaluate whether the study course is merely reacting to market demands or whether it is actively taking part in the future development of dance.

4. How does the institution change in order to improve?

The university tries to provide flexible structures in order to create room for further development and new areas of interest for instance by introducing the new 4 year Bachelor program which allows students to choose their focus on Classical or

Contemporary Dance starting with the 3rd year, and by providing the opportunity for long-term internships in the 4th year.

Supported by Tanzlabor_21/Tanzplan Frankfurt Rhein_Main two 2year Master programs Contemporary Dance Pedagogy (starting winter semester 07/08) and Choreography/Performance (starting winter semester 08/09) will be developed in cooperation with the Institute for Applied Theatre Sciences in Gießen. A survey among former students will help to evaluate what worked well and what was missing in the study courses.

By further training the team of teachers will be acquainted with new approaches.

Opening the academic field to a wider public through Lecture Demonstrations, Masterclasses, training for professionals, enlarging the existing dance videotape archives in the region, programs for dance in schools, and the creation of a new project company with graduates from universities in cooperation with Tanzlabor_21/Tanzplan Frankfurt Rhein_Main have been further steps to improve the study course and to strengthen the structures for dance via networking.