THE KÖLN CONCERT
TRAJAL HARRELL

CONTENT

A dance piece to a recording of the most famous piano solo of all times – Keith Jarrrett's *Köln Concert*. Trajal Harrell's newly founded dance company at the Schauspielhaus Zürich makes its debut to this music. But before the *Köln Concert* resounds on this evening, you first hear four songs by another artist: the Canadian musician Joni Mitchell. She opens the show and the Pfauen, and thus this new season 2020/21; she prepares the stage for the music of Keith Jarrett and the dance company.

Trajal Harrell's *Köln Concert* seeks a language that allows for closeness despite the times of social distancing. The joint experience of tender people, of dancing people who show their vulnerability on the stage of the Pfauen, is a reminder of the need to remain close to each other despite everything, to have respect for oneself and for each other, and to remember that there are many stories of people who are hardly ever heard or seen. People who have been pushed into the shadows, the lonely, the addicted, the abandoned, the homeless, the sad, who proudly defy their abandonment. The Pfauen belongs to them on this evening. Thanks to Titilayo Adebayo, Maria Ferreira Silva, Trajal Harrell, Thibault Lac, Nojan Bodas Mair, Songhay Toldon and Ondrej Vidlar.

The Köln Concert
By Trajal Harrell

With
Titilayo Adebayo
Maria Ferreira Silva
Trajal Harrell
Thibault Lac
Nojan Bodas Mair
Songhay Toldon
Ondrej Vidlar

Direction, Choreography, Set, Soundtrack & Costumes
Trajal Harrell

Music
Keith Jarrett
Joni Mitchell

Lighting
Sylvain Rausa

Dramaturgy
Katinka Deecke

Audience Developement
Mathis Neuhaus

Theatre Pedagogy
Manuela Runge

Production Assistant
Maja Renn

Set Design Assistant
Ann-Kathrin Bernstetter
Natascha Leonie Simons

Costume Assistant
Ulf Brauner
Miriam Schliehe

Stage Manager
Michael Durrer

Production Intern
Moritz Lienhard

Set Design Intern
Reina Guyer

Technische Einrichtung
Ruedi Schuler

Beleuchtung
Markus Keusch
Carsten Schmidt

Ton
Paul Hug
Fabian Kubelik

Maske
Alexandra Scherrer

Garderobe
Franziska Drossaart
Tiziana Ramsauer

Requisite
Anna Harff

Technical Director:
Dirk Wauschkuhn

Deputy Technical Director:
Carsten Grigo

Reception & Foyer Manager:
Robert Zähringer

Head of Box Office:
Freddy Rodríguez

Production & Workshop Manager:
Paul Lehner

Head of Stage Technology:
Ralf Kranzmann

Lighting Director:
Rainer Küng

Audio and Video Engineer:
Jens Zimmer

Makeup Director:
Judith Janser Ruckstuhl

Costume Director:
Hanne Wulff

Women's Wardrobe Supervisor:
Cäcilie Dobler

Men's Wardrobe Supervisor:
Anita Lang

Dressing Room Manager:
Sandra Caviezel

Costume Treatment:
Susanne Boner

Props Master:
René Kümpel

Charge Artist:
Annette Erismann

Master Carpenter:
Ivano Tiziani

Metalwork Director:
Guido Brunner

Upholstery Director:
Michel Jenny

Premiere: 12 September 2020

Lenght: 45min, no break

On the third day of rehearsals, Keith Jarrett's *Köln Concert* can be heard for the first time at the Pfauen: clear and distinct notes at the beginning leading up to a simple chord. On stage are seven piano benches and six dancers, in the auditorium two assistants, behind the stage the stage manager. And in the auditorium next to the director's table is Trajal Harrell. Actually not an unusual rehearsal situation; maybe there are fewer people than usual behind the stage and in the auditorium, but nothing unusual. And yet, everything feels different. The tone of the language sounds different, and not just because people speak English; the tempo is higher than the Pfauen is used to, even though they have been working on two and a half minutes of stage time for more than three hours; the concentration is denser, the attention more tense, more focused than in the everyday events at the Pfauen. Many things are different than usual. Different aesthetics and different images of bodies, different traditions and different stories, different concepts and the synthesis of a style. Something is happening that has not happened before.

You can notice it in the finished result. Harrell himself opens - the evening, the Pfauen, the newly founded dance company at the Schauspielhaus. He stands near a bench by himself on the empty stage, a piano sounds through the room, Joni Mitchell

sings about an old man. Mitchell prepares the stage and opens the evening for Jarrett. Harrell soon sits sounding out the room with his arms, head and hands and the music, his upper body swaying back and forth, his feet to it. A second man enters the stage, Ondrej Vidlar, Trajal Harrell's longest stage companion (second to SHZ ensemble member Perle Palombe). He sits down beside him, together, with their dancing they open a new chapter of their story: Zurich, the Schauspielhaus. Meg Stuart has already been here, a friend of Harrell's and an important advisor for his decision to come to Zurich. But Meg Stuart has not worked at the Pfauen, and, dancing, Harrell enters the Pfauen alone at first, in 2020, and then together with Ondrej Vidlar. They dance on the piano benches to Mitchell's song "The Last Time I Saw Richard". A song about bygone youth and lost dreams, a song that describes the passing of time, and with which Harrell and Vidlar let their common past pass by, the common maturing. When the upper bodies twist, the hands cut through the air, the head follows the movement resolutely, another memory becomes present in the room: a memory of Martha Graham, the first mother of modern dance and an important reference for Harrell. Then everybody else appears: Nojan Bodas Mair and Titilayo Adebayo and Songhay Toldon and Thibault Lac and Maria Ferreira Silva, and

suddenly there it is, the new dance company of the Schauspielhaus (still to be completed by Frances Chiaverini coming back from her maternity leave). At the latest, when shortly thereafter Thibault Lac is alone on the empty stage and walks backwards to the firewall at the beginning of Mitchell's song "Both Sides", then turns around to walk step by step on the imaginary catwalk on the stage to the front, a new chapter has begun at the Schauspielhaus.

At first glance it does not appear to be so subversive: a dance piece to piano music, anything more conventional is hardly possible. Seven dancers on a proscenium stage, all dressed in long black dresses, which seems rather dignified. But the opposite is the case. In a subliminal way, this evening goes beyond boundaries, undermines expectations at the same time as it fulfills them, rejoices thievishly in the tensions that arise between tradition and the present, and at the same time pays tribute to the pioneers. In the same way that Keith Jarrett draws on his deep knowledge of music history and allows himself to bring together the most diverse musical styles in a single moment, Trajal Harrell unites his origins here. Modern and Postmodern Dance, Catwalk and Butoh, Ancient Greek and Southern American, sculptural and installation arts – the genres and styles meet on this evening. What looks like a conventional set-up on the surface be-

comes within the first movement a multi-colored and complex play with references and stories.

The audience doesn't necessarily have to know these to get close to the performance. The most profound experience is created exclusively through the dancers' and audience's joint focus on the shared moment. Perhaps those who have never heard of butoh and don't know how modern dance differs from postmodern dance will be able to experience the actual intention of this evening more easily than the connoisseur, to whom all quotations and references are obvious. Because this is not about knowledge, but about stories. Stories of the margin and of defection, of taking time out and liberation, of the struggle against contempt and the pain of the outcast. And of the beauty that can arise in these strenuous and exhausting struggles. They are a narrative of emancipation, a self-confident recognition of who and what one has become over the years, a homage to the stories one has encountered and which have inscribed themselves in the bodies and memories. That these stories in Harrell's *Köln Concert* now make use of the means and forms that have long and often been denied, lends the show a conciliatory tone – although exclusion is not a thing of the past and only small first steps of recognition have been taken. That these steps are tripping over

IT'S A NO-BRAINER

Dramaturge Katinka Deecke in conversation with in-house director and choreographer Trajal Harrell

Katinka Deecke: Do you have a theory why the Köln Concert *is so famous?*

Trajal Harrell: There is something special about this piece. You can't really put your finger on what it is, but isn't that just the mystery of all great art? Many people who love the *Köln Concert* don't particularly like Jarrett, and others who love Jarrett's music don't like the *Köln Concert*. It's very old but new, it's very classical but jazzy, it's very popular, and even avant-garde. You can feel this breath of richness in it and it's unmistakable that it leaves a mark. When I listen to it now in the Pfauen, I remember how I used to wonder how this was possible in music. I don't know any other music where someone is so physically involved in it. He is so physical in the execution of his playing and his concert manner: the way he does the pedal, the guttural sounds. In the recording I feel his body. To me, it feels like it came straight from the southern states of

America[1]. The music has a strong sense of Dixieland and swing and gospel. I love the feeling of wondering where something came from and that something came into this world that wasn't expected before.

You've said Jarrett is "your" composer. What defines a good composer for a choreographer?

It's hard to say. As soon as you hear the music, you just know that it was written for you. "Your" music also brings you closer to your dancing. You're searching for your dance when you're a choreographer and all of a sudden you hear this music and it opens up a whole world. My work is enriched by Jarrett, it develops further through the encounter with his body of work. But I had so much respect for this work that it took me 20 years before I wasn't afraid to dance to his music publicly. 20 years is quite a long time when you consider that it is all about getting involved with "my" music...

The evening does not start with Jarrett, instead there is an exposition of four songs by Joni Mitchell. What does Joni Mitchell have to do with Keith Jarrett?

I feel like Joni's a bit like Keith. In Jarrett I found "my" composer but in Joni Mitchell, I've probably found my "singer." When I was at Yale, I saw a piece by the Yale Dancers to Joni Mitchell's "All I Want" (*he sings*: "I am on a lonely road and I am travelling...") and it was only then that I really understood what modern dance[2] is. I will never forget this song and these women doing the dance – I was completely blown away. Since then I always wanted to do Joni Mitchell; which, again, took me 20 years to do.

I was concerned with the question of how I should deal with the *Köln Concert*, how to contextualize the beginning music when it sounds in the auditorium for the first time. And then I had the idea that Joni Mitchell could be the opening act for Keith Jarrett. I don't think Joni Mitchell would open a concert for many artists, but I bet she would do it for Keith Jarrett. Just like him, Joni also has a strong sense of the piano in a lot of her work, they both have a strong connection to the blues. I think she always sings the blues somehow and Keith Jarrett was the same – he's playing the blues in a certain type of way.

Keith Jarrett is famous for improvisation, for great improvised solo recitals on the piano, and the Köln Concert *in particular is one of the most border-crossing improvisations in music history. What does improvisation mean to you and your work?*

At the beginning of rehearsals, we work a lot with free forms: everything is quite free, there is a lot of leeway, I absorb a lot from the spontaneous ideas of the dancers. As we go on during the rehearsals, they become less and less free and it's not very free by the end. But even if the choreography during the performance does not evolve from the moment, we try to always create this space of freedom even if it's not there: make it feel like it's the first time it happens. I am always interested in being in the moment, in the now, completely focused. The choreography is not free, but the moment must be free. That is what I am working on. Jarrett is a great teacher in that way. I know I will never have the experience of hearing the *Köln Concert* like the people who heard it that night at the Cologne Opera House in January 1975. We hear the record and we can hear it again and again and you feel this sense of freedom run through the music.

When I think about great art, it has a lot to do with being in the moment: I want the audience to feel that it's happening right there and then, only in this moment to moment, with them in the room, and that's something we work on. He's a great teacher to understand what goes into that recipe.

Does your relationship to music change when you are on stage? Is there a difference between you as a dancer and you as a choreographer?

I'm not the kind of choreographer who can sit back and watch the picture that is created in front of him. It still has to go through my body and that's such a nightmare. Even when I just watch, I see my body in all of it and I know that I've been through it. The choreographer in me has ideas, but I don't believe in them until the dancer in me signs the contract. The dancer has to get in there and know that it works. As a choreographer, I can have all these ideas, but they don't mean anything until they go through the dancing body. I see the difference it makes when I put my body through it, because I can share much more information with the dancers. There's a certain level of knowledge I can only get from being in

it physically and digesting it. I can't do it with my mind. I don't think I will continue choreographing after I stop dancing.

Of course, your production of the Köln Concert *is rehearsed at an unusual moment in history. We had originally planned to present a showcase with some of your great ensemble productions at the beginning of this season, but then we had to reschedule because of the coronavirus. When we asked you what you could imagine showing under corona conditions instead, you suggested the* Köln Concert. *How difficult was it to adapt to the special conditions?*

Not very difficult, not really. When you asked me to do a piece under corona conditions, I thought of the piano benches. I've been using them for a while in several pieces and I thought that was the best way to authentically deal with this situation. I started to think about what I would do if there was nothing but these piano benches on stage. That brought me to the idea of dancing to music. Soundtrack is big in my work, but I've never actually worked with a specific piece of music at the center of my work. Of course, I've done literature *Romeo and Juliet*, *Antigone*, *Cat on the Hot*

Tin Roof, but I have never done a piece defined titularly by the music. Then, when I had the piano benches, I knew the piece of music: the *Köln Concert*. I didn't know if I was ready yet to choreograph *The Köln Concert*, but this is what I wanted to do. Then I took some weeks to know if I could really do it and I listened to it and listened to it. I thought: "If you're not ready now, you'll never be ready." And I felt it was good to be a little not-ready. I was scared of it, the *Köln Concert* is after all Jarrett's masterpiece, but the only way is to keep learning from Jarrett and try to be in his world. In the end, I am glad that due to the coronavirus I was forced to strip down in some ways to this: piano benches and music.

The Köln Concert *at the Pfauen is the first production where the dance company, which you have founded at the Schauspielhaus, presents itself. Can you describe the vocabulary, the style you want to develop with this dance company? What is the quality and language of the movement? Which images of the body? Which traditions?*

It's a complicated thing to develop a language and a style that has enough definition

and specificity but yet can grow in its topography on different bodies. My legacy, I am very clear about that, is influenced by voguing, I developed runway language as a dance procedure into the history of dance. Starting from there I layered the experiences I had looking at Butoh, the dances of Greek Antiquity, and at Modern and Postmodern Dance. Of course, there's a kind of academism about it; but in the end, it is simply a matter of bringing dance on stage together with a group of dancers who are part of this debate and who are committed to this path with their bodies.

To me, being given this space at the Schauspielhaus Zürich and forming a new company meant I had to step into a kind of maturity. During the lockdown and quarantine, I had time to reflect on myself. I think, finally, I was able to take an assessment of where I've been and where I want to go. It's about developing a vocabulary that I share with a group of dancers. Philosophically, I'm not into pure replication; I don't want to copy paste myself. Each of them is a different example of how the material is processed in different bodies and develops over the years. It is not simply a question of what I contribute or in which direction I

want to develop our language; instead, the company is this language, is this knowledge, this body history, is all the different areas that ultimately compose our dance. I find it interesting that *The Köln Concert* is now our first play at the Schauspielhaus and not *The Deathbed of Katherine Dunham*[2] as originally planned. *The Köln Concert* will probably be like a calling card for these people who have now come here to the Schauspielhaus Zürich to dance. It is a dance piece to music, which is a clear and powerful convention we're playing with; giving it this emblematic place and feeling and in some way it's very liberating to get there.

Here in Zurich, we now have time to continue developing a common language that we have been working on for many years. We are allowed to be patient, things are allowed to unfold bit by bit. You can't fly there just by reserving a ticket; it takes time to form a dance company, to feel comfortable, and to have all the parts of your body and mind that have gone through the experiences. This is quite a wonderful opportunity. It's a big deal. Not every choreographer has the resources to do that: being able to build a company and a language. Working on your own company takes time to

integrate it in your life. You have a different mission and everything is seen through a different prism, through which you watch what is happening and what you yourself and others do. It's about having the stamina to explore the ultimate possibilities: to find out where you stand, your potential, and what your impact on the world might be.

The day before yesterday at rehearsal you said, "Movement is only an excuse to dance." What did you mean by that?

Well, I have to go back a little bit. It's been a big concern in dance for a while, certainly since the early 1960s in Postmodern Dance how dance relates to an audience and the public, even with their bodies. This idea of "all movement is dance" was really important: that dance could include all different kinds of movement and different kinds of behaviors and ways of being in the world with the body and that all of it could be material for the dance. But this idea reached a point of often not being interesting anymore. Of course, every movement can be a dance but it's not that interesting to watch on a stage always. Boredom can be impactful in art. But general definitions in art without refinement often peter out. So, I, myself, became very involved in the question: what is dancing? I want to look at dance and how it differentiates itself from movement and in the dialog I have with the performers, dancers and artists with whom I work. I pull together a lot of strands of culture, history and physicality to make a particular kind of dancing. So, it's not that I have a fixed sense of what dancing is, but I'm trying to refine these strands that I'm bringing into a dancing body. When people say they like watching dance, I always wonder why they say dance and not movement. How is dance different from movement? A significant part of my work and the dialogue with the dancers is to create a "dancing body," to allow dance to happen. A lot of our work now is about trying to build this dancing body; that what one is watching is dancing. The thing I want you to see is dancing and the thing I want people to enjoy and relate to is dancing. I want them to be able to comprehend this particular realm of activity. The rehearsal the day before yesterday is a good example of this: we were talking about a simple movement phrase that we were rehearsing. I was trying to get the dancers to fill

out the rest of the space and I said "movement is an excuse for dancing" because I wanted them to know that they needed to bring this other stuff – the ingredients to make it go into movements that are connected together as dance.

A year ago, when you and the dancers had just arrived in Zurich, you gave them an assignment for the next few years, and you repeated this assignment at the beginning of the rehearsals for Köln Concert*: you asked the dancers to work on their "Butoh mind". What do you mean by that?*

Oh. That's a tough question. Let's say it like this: Until some years ago I was a choreographer simply doing his work. Then I met my dancing "parent" in the Butoh dancer Kazuo Ōno[4] and only then did I become a dancer. Before I had been involved in researching Butoh but mainly through looking at the work of Ōno's colleague Tatsumi Hijikata[5]. Then I saw Ōnos great solo *Admiring La Argentina*[6] and it just blew me away. Ōno was perhaps in his mid-70s when he danced it, Hijikata had choreographed it for him. I could not believe what I saw. Through this solo I realized that this is what dance means to me. So, I just had to go

into that deeply and made a piece about it called *The Return of La Argentina*. And then I started dancing from a different place.

Part of our technique, if you want to call it technique, is based on the runway. The other part is Butoh and what I call "Butoh mind." But it's very hard to explain because it's caught up in a lot of language of avant-garde dance practice that these people in Japan created in the 1950s, 60s and 70s. So, "Butoh mind" has a lot to do with accepting that the dancing body is not just a body of strength but it's a body that is in decay. Dance is often about being springs of life, about embodiments of life and strength and beauty. Butoh is also about death, weakness and sickness, and this is an important element of life too. We started to bring these elements together: something that wasn't just about glamour and beauty but something that was about ugliness, sickness; bringing together the body of the mannequins on the runway with that of the feeble, the prostitutes, the people living on the margins of society, drug addicts and beggars. This is the history of Butoh, the other side of life embodied in Butoh. When you bring all that information and representations into the dancing body and start

thinking about the dancing body not just as an emblem of perfection but as an emblem of real imperfections you start to feel differently about yourself on stage. It takes a lot of time to change this mindset and allow yourself to show aspects of yourself that you may have thought should not be seen or don't look good on stage. But the more I did it, the more I found people were touched by the work. Even if the audience may not know the background and what Butoh is, they often let themselves be affected by this kind of dance.

I used to dance from a place of trying to achieve or represent something; now I'm really dancing from a place of the trashcan somehow. You don't care so much, you let it all hang out. And by letting it all hang out, you find a new kind of freedom. I also think something comes with age. That's beautiful about Butoh that it's not like other dance where the body has an expiry date. Butoh has no parameters. They don't even define it. The fact that I'm trying to define Butoh is not "Butoh mind". The point where you start to define it, you lose it. It's always ungraspable. But when you allow yourself to dance from that place that you can never be perfect, something else happens. Peo-

ple feel that. Because "Butoh mind" is invigorating. I feel this in myself and I can also recognize it in the dancers that we are in "Butoh mind" when we dance: where you are able to show the things about yourself that aren't beautiful. The other side of beauty. People recognize it because they know its inside of themselves. We all know it even though we might not admit it: We have both parts. That becomes beauty. Beauty is becoming... Butoh mind: it's a lifelong thing.

The tradition of the Schauspielhaus Zürich is located in a very specific form of the performing arts, which is linked to literature, language, acting, and the institution itself stands for power, influence and hierarchy. Although this tradition is diversified and developed, it can be claimed that the traditions and stories you refer to are different from those the theater represents. How do you position yourself in it?

One way I position myself is that my work will have to change when moving to such an institution and I'm excited for that. I think that here in Zurich I came to the notion that it's where I'll change to the next period of my work: after Runway / early-Postmodern Dance in the

first phase, and then Butoh / Modern Dance, now the third phase is coming. That's one thing to know that the Schauspielhaus is a place where I can change. Until now my work was very much connected to Asia and that's still part of the work I do; but I really felt that it's time for a change.

I position myself as someone who creates work in a European context – although I will never fully belong anywhere, that's just me, always one foot out. Maybe that's from growing up in a small town: you always want to get out of there as quickly as possible... I like the change, the back and forth, the "to-ing and fro-ing." Trinh T. Minh-ha who's a filmmaker and professor at UC Berkeley, and who's written extensively on feminism and postcolonialism, and like bell hooks has talked a lot about "to-ing and fro-ing," meaning how to move from the margins to the center and back again to the margins, and how there one can position a space of the imagination. This movement between margin and center is a vital force. This is what I strive for. I'm not only situating myself somewhere culturally or nationally. I'm moving through and between and that gives me a lot of space for my imagination. If I

position myself in any way, I always try to problematize my position. In this problematization lies a gap between knowing this is something I can approach and knowing that I am something else. In this gap I can prescribe an imaginative process. And its only mine. It's the only thing in this world that I really feel that I own. The only thing that is uniquely and utterly mine. I try to share it, but you can't take it away from me. Unless I let you – but I'm so protective of it. It's a beautiful thing to have an imagination.

We have now talked a lot about dance and movement, about the history of your work and about the traditions in which you place yourself. Now, I would like to address a topic that struck me a few days ago during our first stage rehearsal for The Köln Concert*: it seems that you are the first Black person to direct at the Pfauen.*

Oh Dear! Wow!

What are your thoughts on that?

Switzerland is not my home culture. In that sense, I do not "know" how to precisely understand it. Of course, I have been working internationally for many years and also a lot in Europe,

and I have already done a few "firsts" in that way. And they've been important for other artists and my grandparents (both sets dead.) What's interesting and problematic is that I don't access it like that. Of course I would in the United States because I know the history there and I could judge what certain steps mean, just as Kamala Harris is now the first black woman to run for Vice President, I understand exactly what it means. But here in Switzerland, I don't know precisely. It's not the culture of my youth. I didn't grow up thinking: I have to be the first Black person to direct at the Pfauen. This step, that I am the first, means nothing and something to me. Of course, I think it's wonderful AND sad, but I don't work from that place. Perhaps the fact that I don't follow these classifications and don't define myself through them makes it easier for me to avoid the pitfalls, because I don't know the pitfalls here and I don't know how dangerous they might be. Again, the "to-ing and fro-ing" by Trinh T. Minh-ha, is so integrated in my work. I'm happy if I can tear down some of these walls and make access for other people. I don't have a problem being the one but I'm not working on it. I understand how important it is that someone who

looks like me is now at the Schauspielhaus and is directing at the Pfauen. I'm honored. But I'm not making it my business. It's a look, but it's not the only look. Maybe that has something to do with the fact that I come from the southern part of the United States of America. I grew up with the dialogue of race in southern life and history. I grew up on MLK Jr Drive. I know about slavery and the US Civil Rights movements in the 1950s and 60s. I did cultural studies and feminist theory in college: bell hooks, Gloria Steinem, Alice Walker and many more. It's so integrated in me and my work. When you come to see my work, you're not just going to see the possibly first Black person directing at the Pfauen, you're coming to see the first, second, fourth, fifth, sixth, tenth, twelfth all rolled into one with the ones who didn't get the opportunity and the ones who didn't even ignore it. For I am not only one but carry with me the many whose thoughts I have absorbed. There are these hurdles and I don't deny them. But the fact that I am perhaps the first Black person to direct at the Pfauen does not define me nor my work. Again, I am honored enough but honest enough to know we are late to class. I'm practiced in being

the first or only brown person in the room. And, whether these firsts are true or not, nothing in the work changes for me. Because I know that all these people and stories are an integral part of my work, my dances, and my plays. In articles they've often written about me as "The Next Martha Graham." I thought it was an important step in the class. Let's see what they come up with in Europe. Maybe they will skip it and someone will be called "The Next Trajal Harrell." (Ha, I better be dead!) That said, I fight for differences on every level in the work. That all goes back to "Butoh mind". It's a no-brainer.

You have been working internationally for many years and over the years you have acquired a very heterogeneous audience of different languages and backgrounds: Dance experts and educated people, teenagers and seniors, heterosexual cis-people and various queer communities, wealthy whites and activists of color. What does he / she / they look like, your ideal spectator?

I'm an old whore. I love them all. If you look at it on the surface I don't make work that a lot of people should like, but rather that is suitable for a smaller and selected group of people.

So, it was a surprise that my work sold out houses and big festivals, this was weird. But this attention from the audience exists maybe because I'm in love with my audience. I don't discriminate. I just have to love them all, that's the only way. I usually can't wait for the opening night: standing on stage and watching them, seeing them enter. I love that, I love them. Once I even threw my whole touring schedule overboard just to play one last performance at the Münchner Kammerspiele to say goodbye to the audience. I couldn't bear the thought of not being with these people. There were so many people, many older people that talked to me after the show and thanked me. I even made a piece for them in Munich, *Morning in Byzantium*. It is a play for "the old white man" who is going through a difficult time right now. I wanted to give him some love. What would that look like? It was 2018. It might look different in 2020, but it was / is an important inquiry and exercise alongside imagining love for "very young blue women," etc etc. But it is exhausting to love the audience unconditionally and it takes a lot of energy. It's easy to go on stage and do it for yourself; but to love and think about the audience, it takes a lot. Maybe

that's even the reason why I never worked permanently at a theater before Zurich, instead I only ever went on tours, travelling constantly from one place to another. Because if you stay in the same place, you inevitably fall deeply head of over heels in love with the audience.

NB: To learn more about the context of Trajal Harrell's work and the different traditions and concepts he works with, you can find four video introductions on the homepage of the Schauspielhaus Zürich on the following topics: "Voguing and Postmodern Dance", "Butoh and Modern Dance", "Performance and Visual Art Practice" and "Movement on The Runway or The Catwalk."

[1] Harrell is originally from Douglas in Georgia, USA.

[2] Modern Dance is a dance style that emerged in the first half of the 20th century to contrast Classical Ballet. As a pioneer, the American Martha Graham in particular has shaped this form of dance, which gives absolute priority to feeling and is characterized by powerful, dynamic movements, carried by the breath of the dancers.

[3] *The Deathbed of Katherine Dunham* was supposed to premiere in April 2020, but due to the lockdown, the premiere had to be postponed until March 2021.

[4] Kazuo Ōno (1906 – 2010) was a Japanese dancer and co-founder of the contemporary expressive dance Butoh.

[5] Tatsumi Hijikata (1928 – 1986) was a Japanese choreographer and co-founder of Butoh together with Kazuo Ōno.

[6] *Admiring La Argentina* is a solo by Kazuo Ōno from 1977, choreographed by Tastumi Hijikata. With this production, the two Butoh founders paid a danced homage to a Spanish flamenco dancer: Antonia Mercé, who was only referred to as La Argentina by her admirers, was a world-famous artist in the 1920s and 30s whose influence extended far beyond the dance world. In 1926 Ōno had seen a guest performance of her in Tokyo, which moved him so much that 50 years later he, together with his colleague Hijikata, dedicated a piece of his own to her: *Admiring La Argentina*. Trajal Harrell, for his part, took up this gesture with his dance *The Return of La Argentina* (2015), and in turn paid tribute to the two Butoh founders. *The Return of La Argentina* can be seen at the Schauspielhaus Zurich in September 2020.

The American choreographer Trajal Harrell gained global recognition with his series of works *Twenty Looks or Paris is Burning at the Judson Church*, and is now a regular guest on the international dance and visual arts circuit. The unique style of Trajal Harrell's works is a result not just of the unusual way in which he is influenced by dance languages that might seem very distant from each other, such as Voguing, Postmodern Dance and Butoh, but also and above all of the fragility and humor that pervade all his works. Aesthetically, his pieces are always an homage to the people standing on stage. He clothes them in carefully selected fabrics, draws major inspiration from developments in haute couture (which he sometimes uses directly on stage), and his highly personal style of movement turns his performers into unusual and autonomous beings. He also performs in most of his productions himself. In recent years, his work has not just been increasingly adopted in the visual arts world; he has also directed a succession of powerful productions for the theater.

These include for example his adaptations of Sophocles' *Antigone*, or the free adaptation he developed of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, which is also part of the repertory of the Schauspielhaus. With *The Köln Concert* to the music of Keith Jarrett and Joni Mitchell, Harrell's newly founded dance company of the Schauspielhaus enters the stage.

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