

German expressionist dance, a fundamental current to the birth and development of modern dance

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Abstract: *Through an expressive movement technique, German expressionist dance draws attention to the connection between body and soul. It is a strong means of expression of one's own emotions and of the human body. Rudolf Laban and Mary Wigman, the main representatives of this current, will not focus on the technical abilities of the dancer, but they will be the rebel thinkers of their era and of the environment where they study and explore possibilities of artistic expression. They will make dance more accessible, including to large communities of amateurs. While Nazism was emerging in Germany, stopping the expressionist creative momentum, students of the two choreographers will propagate the ideas of expressionism in America through modern dance works, starting with the 1920's – 1930's.*

Key-words: *theatrical dance; movement choir; expression dance; Nazism; modern dance; dance-theatre.*

1. General framework

In “Vid și plin Concepte fundamentale ale spectacolului coregrafic modern”, R. Ianegic dedicates a few pages to the new artistic trend called expressionism develops in Germany from the avant-garde movement before the First World War, which will extend to all areas of art: painting, literature, theater, dance, film, music, and architecture. The main feature of expressionism is the reaction of a group of artists to rigid academicism and aesthetic conventions, but also to the authoritarianism of the Second Reich (1871-1918). Their revolt proclaimed absolute creative freedom and the primacy of expression over form.

Émile Jaques-Dalcroze² helps to change the dance from its old forms, to an artistic form considered serious. By developing rhythmic sense, he guides his students towards a personal exploration of movement, and to responses that are more emotional than technical. Hence the possibility of dancing independent of music, or for the music to guide the dance, not to lead it completely. In fact, dancing without music will become extremely used in Ausdruckstanz. Expressionist dance (the name comes from the German language: Ausdruckstanz - expressive dance) is a genre of dance that appeared in Europe in the early twentieth century, which is

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² É. J.-Dalcroze (1865-1950), music teacher and composer, creates the eurythmic system. He will place his stake on a clear interaction between music and movement, breaking down the rhythm and giving it a new approach from a motor perspective. His method is based on anatomical, physiological and psychological studies and he proposes a psychomotricity characterized by an economy of energy and rapid reaction. His rhythmic gymnastics, combined with solfeggio and improvisations, was the basis of his musical preparation. The principles of his rhythmic gymnastics are based, first of all, on breathing that leads to muscle relaxation, without which Dalcroze considers that movement cannot be executed correctly. He forbade his students to wear corsets, but instead he trained them through breathing and endurance exercises. Breathing, for him, meant a fundamental natural source in their preparation, asking them to experience the variations that occurred as a result of modeling their energy and their breath flow. By investigating some basic movements (walking, running, stretching, jumping), he observes the emergence of possible new choreographic modalities. Walking is used in most of the exercises of the method, as he considered walking to be the action that can naturally decompose time into equal parts. Through exercises that included stretches, jumps, pulls between partners, the carrying of imaginary loads and canons, his method experiences the use of body weight, joints and the effects of muscle strength. Cooperation with working partners, ample body movement in space, imaginative motivation, awareness of body shape, voice alternations, movement, song and silence were other benefits achieved by his method.

part of the German expressionist movement. The movement will expand in the '20s and be halted by World War II.

Until 1914 the dance is not noticeable in Germany, although there are guest ballet shows of large foreign companies. Notable representatives of the dominating classical ballet (Sergei Diaghilev, Anna Pavlova, Mikhail Fokin), will not influence the German dance world as they are rather enthusiastic about the alternative of academic dance, an attraction of the time towards the expressive aspects of dance found in "new dance", "free dance", "new German dance", "expressive dance".

After the First World War, the exploration of dance in Germany was called *Ausdruckstanz* or *Expressionist Dance*. The pioneers of modern American dance, Isadora Duncan and Ruth Saint Denis, have been performing in Germany since 1902, and Isadora also founded a school in Berlin (1904). Through their dances, these two women will represent models for the young women of Germany, offering a new way of discovering their own identity. At the same time, society attached great importance to body awareness. There were different physical culture systems (such as Dalcroze, Mensendieck, Bode, Medau, Loheland, Günther) manifested in special schools.

The Golden Age of German expressive dance took place during the Weimar period³, and in fact corresponds to modern dance in search of its own form and direction. The economic collapse after the First World War required a redefinition of society's values and an exploration of artistic forms. In an attempt to develop a new aesthetic of dance instead of all that had been borrowed, changes in mindset have mediated the development of creativity and the propagation of free dance. The new dance sought to gain freedom of movement, which is why the dancers focused on expressing their emotions more than on the artistic technique. Thus, the emotional expression comes to the forefront in expressionist creations.

The main features of German expressionist dance are:

- solo practice;
- group dances (Laban and Wigman);
- movements emphasize the loss of universal harmony and human problems: anxiety, revolt, insecurity of life, conflicts, pain;
- there is a mystical dimension in the expressionist dance in which the connection between man and the cosmos is emphasized;
- the expression is gestural, auditive and visual;
- boundaries are broken in dance, gestures and movements are performed at maximum intensity;
- exploring human emotions (dance is an emotional expression, not a necessarily pleasing aesthetic);
- movement is approached freely;
- unity between spirit and body;
- some dances do not necessarily represent an image of reality, but the expression of a negative image of the choreographer's vision;
- allegorical characters: death, war, peace etc.;
- theatricality.

Themes of expressionist dance: internal emotion, the expression of self-awareness through corporeality, the connection with other bodies and external forces, the spiritual connection with other persons. There are different ways of expression: if Wigman is concerned about the relationship that man has with cosmic forces, Jean Weidt supports the cause of communism and fights for a more beautiful society, and Valeska Gert expresses a harsh attitude towards bourgeois society through her dances.

³ Unofficial name of Germany between 1918-1933. Officially, the name of the republic has been *The German Reich* ever since 1871.

The main exponents of German expressionism in dance are: Rudolf von Laban (1879-1958: the most complex theoretician, inventor of the most complete dance scoring system, *Labanotation*), *Mary Wigman* (1886-1973: appears a tragic vision of existence in her works, which she considers ephemeral, violent expressionism resulting there from), and Kurt Jooss (1901-1979: the first choreographer who combines dance with theatrical art).

1.1. Nazi Influence

Through a detailed analysis, S. B. Levine presents in her work “From Ausdruckstanz to Tanztheater: The Search for a German Aesthetic in Dance” the consequences of Nazism on German dance. Hitler understood that German art can play an important role in his goal of imposing Germany as a global superpower, in which the Aryan race dominates. And that the masses can be conquered more securely by artistic messages than by harsh political ideology. Nazism will use a theatrical aesthetic, with mass meetings and performances in which visual and physical means will dominate. Dance will be manipulated and become a carrier of the ideology of the Nazi party and an expression of submission to Hitler and his regime. On the other hand, any art form that, in the opinion of the power, threatened the Nazi ideals was rejected and was denied the right to freedom of expression.

Modern art suffered from being regarded as dangerous because it supported the individual and less the collective.⁴ Expressionist dance rejected the standards imposed by French academic dance⁵, and was already looking at new ways of expressing the body, which meant a recanting (denial of ideology) of the ideology of the party, in which collective identity and unity represented the pillars of German society (a society that was to be above all other global powers).⁶ Expressionist art also suffered because of its influences of African art, primitive influences, and mystical aspects. The Aryan race itself was considered superior because it was related to the mystical beings who were above human status.

Hitler clearly opposed expressionist art in the visual arts, but he did not express an official opposition to expressionist dance. For example, Mary Wigman's choreographic contribution to the 1936 Olympics is highly appreciated, but after that time, the party no longer turned to her artistic services. The representatives of the dance understood that they would be allowed to live and create only if they respected the direction dictated by the party. Therefore, some dancers will give up artistic expression that did not suit the regime. One example is that of Laban and Wigman, who declared their affiliation with Nazism on their own, without being constrained. However, although Laban was able to demonstrate to the Nazis his ability to transform dance into a form of meeting through which political messages could be transmitted, nothing was certain when it came to the political regime. For the inauguration of the Dietrich-Eckart open-air theater in the Olympic Complex, in July 1936 he prepared a large work “Of the Spring Wind and The New Joy”, with 1000 dancers from 32 countries. He will try to use dance in the form of expressive communication and at the same time as a propaganda tool. But it seems that the work did not match the expectations of the regime, and from that moment on, Laban was removed, and more than that, he was removed from the pages of German dance history. The regime opposed the manifestation of individual expression and influenced famous choreographers to attack the individuality in *Ausdruckstanz*. The association with Jewish dancers or artists, and homosexual relationships were real problems. Choreographer artists had a choice between keeping their aesthetics and

⁴ The synchronicity of the *movement choirs* showed a common goal, expressed in numerous meetings and propaganda tactics.

⁵ An example of a radical attitude against the traditional body line found in ballet was the dance of M. Wigman from “Hexentanz I”, in which she was lying on the floor, crouching, with her back curved.

⁶ Hitler will rely on the concept of *Volksgemeinschaft* – the people’s community.

aligning their aesthetics and choreographic concerns with the regime that was fixed on common ideals instead of individual expression.

The opening of the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin represented the image of Nazi cultural identity. Art was beginning to be seen as a threat to the unity of the regime, which is why all artistic forms were forbidden for the public, and the documents from 1940-1945 regarding dance were archived at Potsdamer Staatsarchiv and were accidentally discovered in the 1980s. In those years, dancing still happened in private locations, in front of small audiences. Mary Wigman herself kept her students by teaching dance classes in her own apartment. The only references to dance that were made were related to the teaching of dance in schools. And these to determine who could study and practice dance, and which breeds were genetically born for it.

2. Rudolf Laban (1879 - 1958)

„He was above all else an artist/researcher who is emerging more clearly as the father of modern dance in Europe and the leading dance theorist of the twentieth century.”⁷

Rudolf Jean Baptiste Attila Laban de Varalja is a Hungarian innovative theoretician, dancer, choreographer and teacher, who worked in Germany and England. He is recognized as the father of modern European dance. As early as 1910 he opened a school in Munich where he experimented with the dance-sound-word relationship. He fought to give dance the status of autonomous art at the expense of the primacy of music that was fashionable at the time. He also rejects the return to the art of ancient Greece, in favor of the research of the movement environment in the industrialized society. He does not declare himself against the ballet, but on the contrary, he sees his dance as a development of ballet in the era in which he lives.

He was a contemporary of painter Wassily Kandinsky and composer Arnold Schoenberg, all three showing the world a new way of expression, each of them upholding the spiritual foundation of their chosen form of art. In addition to the Delsarte method⁸, he had studied at the School of Fine Arts in Paris (Écoles des Beaux-Art) and Rosicrucianism (esoteric order appeared at the beginning of the seventeenth century that taught esoteric truths from antiquity), which will influence him in his career by approaching life in the form of a spiritual quest.

In 1912, in Monte Verita, Ascona (Switzerland), he has the opportunity to artistically experiment rural farm life with his dancers, with its specific activities (gardening, building, cooking, weaving). Convinced that humans must be in harmony with nature and the cosmos, and feeling the fear that industrialization will wipe out the human side by turning people into automatisms, Laban will seek to find ways to combat this tendency in Ascona and celebrate success in community work.

⁷ *International Encyclopedia of Dance*. Vol.4. 2004. New York: Oxford University Press, p. 95.

⁸ François Delsarte (1811-1871), a representative figure for the 19th century, turns from a musician to a fervent researcher of the gesture-voice-emotion relationship, due to a series of unfavorable circumstances. The anatomical studies and the analyses performed on the reactions of people in the street and in hospices will help him offer a starting point to pioneer dancers (of the 20th century). Because he considers the *Christian Trinity* (the perfect unity of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit) to be the basis of all the elements and aspects of life and the universe, he will organize his conclusions in the form of a system based on the numerical tree and multiples connected with the trinity. He will also opt for „*The Law of Correspondence*”⁸, which referred to a fixed relationship between the physical and the spiritual (in other words, between movement and its meaning). Unlike the technique of classical ballet (which was highly popular), Delsarte will intervene with a new approach to the body, giving importance to the chest, face and arms, rather than the legs, which he considers are only meant for movement and totally inefficient for expressiveness. The method was based on gestures that supported respiratory flow, balance control and relaxation (limiting body tension), all for the sake of a light and natural declamation.

His image as inventor and philosopher of dance begins to become stable with the event “Song to the Sun” (1917, Switzerland), held on a hill during a Masonic festival. The dances were performed in three parts: Part 1 at sunset; Part 2 at midnight; and Part 3 at dawn. In a setting consisting of sun, moon and fires, it included processions, voices, movement, and involvement of the public.

2.1. Important contributions to dance

In his rich career, he has a new approach towards the body and costumes, he likes to use improvisation, he makes decisions with his dancers, he uses little or no music. He uses non-metric sounds and rhythms, movements performed with the whole body as opposed to studied movements, the roles of the dancers are interspersed, despite the supremacy of soloists in theaters and companies. The training of his students consists of gymnastics exercises to increase flexibility and strength, and improvisation, so that each one can discover their own style of movement. He also emphasizes the understanding of the rhythm of movement in space, and the understanding of the dynamics, relaxations and tensions of movements. A number of innovations in his activity should be underlined:

- Through him, community dance gets a new face and a new approach.
- The relationship of the dancer with the environment in which they move and with their other partners was important to him. He expressed this through group improvisations, through the form adopted for the group and through expressive movements.
- Through his artistic creativity he managed to distinguish his activity from the physical culture systems existing in Germany.
- For him, like the ideas of mystic and composer G.I. Gurdjieff, movement dominates over all things, and everything is in motion through change and flow: tension, relaxation, rotation, oscillation, swing, attraction, rejection, rhythm, mobility, pulsation etc.
- He developed the concept of *movement choir*, a form of movement for amateur groups, through which he tried to celebrate community work and life. Some of his works are “Dawning Light” 1923, “Death of Agamemnon” 1924, “Rhythms of Twilight” 1925, “Titan” 1927, “Everyday Life and Festival” 1929. The movement choir emphasized the need for each person to interact socially. For Laban, the conduct of the crowd did not matter, but rather the interdependence between the members of the group.
- He sought to develop a system of movement notation by going through what already existed, through the systems of Raoul-Auger Feuillet and Pierre Beauchamp. He will develop an extensive study of movement in all possible forms, from the perspectives of space, rhythm, time of development, weight and body fluidity. He gathered theories related to movement in space under the name of *Choreutics*, and those related to the quality of the movement, *Eukinetics*. Starting from the image of an imaginary sphere, *Kinesfera*, he places the dancer in the middle of it, thus creating synchronized motion (of the body and of the sphere), which will create movements by means of the trajectories between different points of the unfolding space. In 1927 he reached the end with the help of Jooss, Sigurd Leeder⁹ and Dussia Bereska, and in 1928 he

⁹ Leeder Sigurd (1902-1981), dancer, choreographer and one of the greatest modern European pedagogues. His meeting with Jooss in 1924 will open a collaboration that will extend over 23 years. He will learn the concepts of dynamics (Eukinetics) from Laban, and spatial harmony from Jooss, which he will use in his classes. His studies are recorded in *Kinetografie*, where he translated the ideas of movement into symbols, which he then applied in teaching and choreography. He teaches his pedagogical method of modern dance as co-director with Jooss at Folkwang Schule in Essen.

published *Kinetographie Laban* in Vienna. In 1926 he had published *Choreographie*, where he explains his thinking and the various problems related to notation. The concepts of spatiality (choreutics) and movement dynamics (eukinetics) will help him later conceive *Labanotation* (choreology and kinetography). The research refers to the moving body, developed through a series of exercises based on spatial scales and rhythmic studies for the movements themselves, improvisation and creativity.

- The term *Tanztheater* has been associated with the name of Laban since 1927.
- Through his contribution, *Schriftanz*, the first dance magazine, appeared in 1928. Various people from the world of dance contributed to it, and it included questions, debates related to dance, its aesthetics and its history. In '32, it was taken over by *Der Tanz* magazine, but starting with '33, the latter becomes part of the Nazi manipulation machine.
- He opened schools throughout Germany, in Italy, France, Hungary, the Netherlands, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, and by 1929, 21 schools were known to have been opened. Through these schools, he wanted to give teachers dance training, train dancers for his companies, and prepare amateurs for movement choirs.
- From the desire to place dance among the other serious arts, Laban tries to get rid of the effeminate image associated with dancing. He creates masculine dances that include attractive movements for the strong young German, eager to develop an athletic body. In this sense, the Hamburg male movement choir is the best example of amateur dancers. He creates impressive roles for men in theater (the madman from "Narrenspiegel", Don Juan, the Tyrant from "Gaukelei", the Servant from "Komödie").
- After 1936, when he left Germany for England, he developed a new career in different fields: education, recreation, industry, drama and therapy. He also works in English schools for a period, holding training sessions within summer schools.

His work will not be lost, but it will be carried on in the '30s both in Europe and in America by his, Jooss' and Wigman's students. *Choreology* is replaced in America with terms such as: Kinetography, Labanalysis, Laban Movement Analysis, Labanotation. In London, there is the *Laban Center for Movement and Dance* where one can learn choreological concepts adapted to contemporary requirements. There is a close archive between 1900-1942, with movies, photographs, documents and audio tapes.

2.2. The Movement Choir

„The main aim of movement choir must always be the shared experience of the joy of moving. It is to a great extent an inner experience and, above all, a strengthening of the desire for communion.”¹⁰

Rudolf Laban remains known for the development of movement choirs, but Martin Gleisner is among the most important leaders of the movement choir, leading such choirs for socialist work communities. The latter also organized festivals where he used speech, singing and movement choirs. In his book *Tanz für Alle* (1928), he describes the movement choir as a contemporary folk dance, which had cultural and educational significance.

When Laban prepares the choir for the 1936 Olympics, the production is rejected by the regime, which calls on Wigman, who will perform "Lament for the Dead." She will be assisted by Lisa Ullmann, who will later assemble the first movement choir in England, at Plymouth. There, the movement choir meant a call to the community, and at the same time an educational instrument for modern dance in schools.

¹⁰ Ibid. p. 477.

In America, the concept will be introduced by Laban's student, Irmgard Bartenieff. Through her classes, she emphasized the need for individuals to move together within the choir, in which each individual is part of the group, but retains their individuality. She led movement choirs in therapeutic form, through which participants can escape daily stress.

3. Mary Wigman (1886 – 1973)

By her real name of Marie Wiegmann, she will dedicate herself to creation, pedagogy and interpretation. After studying for 2 years at the Dalcroze school in Hellerau, she became Laban's assistant until 1919. She was the best-known solo dancer in Europe at the time, and by the end of the First World War she had already gained international acclaim. The model from which Wigman's creation begins seems to be a 1917 event produced in Zurich, in the Dada Gallery, where some dancers associated and collaborated with Tristan Tzara, Hugo Ball and other Dadaists and performed masked, on gongs and drum sounds or in silence. All other elements of the performance (music, costumes, décor) were subordinated to dance. Concerned more about the essence of dance, and less about aesthetics, she will create a new choreographic language through her own body. Being called a dancer, succeeding by breaking free of the tradition of academic dance, was a battle won for Wigman, the expressionist movement and obviously modern dance.

Main Characteristics:

- She follows the pedagogical model used by Laban and also takes the dimension of movement in space from him. However, if Laban does not completely reject ballet, Wigman will instead work completely distanced from the form of classical movement.
- Her interest in humanity and the occult is manifested in dance through what she called “ecstasy”. She strives to investigate the organic, primitive movement. Her dances are close to trance, reminiscent of the archaic society in which the cathartic function was important.
- She exploited various cultural influences, as in “Hexentanz I”, where she focuses on traditional dances in Asia. She will wear a mask and costume similar to those used in the Japanese theater Nō. Researchers regard her wearing of a mask while dancing as a support in her attempt to reach the feeling of universality, because her desire was to dance by paying attention to simple emotions in order to connect with others.
- Spatial dimension is an extremely important aspect for the dramatic expression she gives to dance, her body moves consciously between the ends of space, in an unconscious inner dialogue.
- She does not have a specific vocabulary to use but she focuses on a specific movement motive for the respective dance performed between narrative and abstract. The themes are chosen from her own life, which is why her solos convey an inner tension.
- Characteristics of solos: they are arranged around a single theme, and are part of a cycle of dances; there are a number of repeated beginnings and endings; energetic and silent states are alternated; they proceed to a culminating point, followed by a collapse; several themes are grouped into a larger ensemble; the beginning image reappears at the end.
- She dances a lot in silence or accompanied by percussion (various drums and Javanese gong). She first improvises and then records the dance.

- She allows the audience to have an individual interpretation and understanding through her dancing.
- Thinking that spiritual messages would have a greater impact, by the end of the 1920s, she would also be attracted to working with large groups of dancers. She invokes Wagner's ideals, just as Pina Bausch will later do. (Examples: "Totenmal" - choirs organized with individual figures such as the War Demon, which represented the feeling of sensing death, which was still left in the German subconscious; "Monument to the Fallen", with over 60 dancers, a big production, with several interludes, performed during two and a half hours).
- She led her first complete group work, "The Seven Dances of Life", in 1921. Other group works include: "Scenes from a Dance Drama" (1923-1924), "A Dance Fairy Tale" (1925), "Dance of Death" (1926), "Celebration" (1927-1928).
- She did not resist the aesthetics imposed by Nazism, but she presented the spirit of the time and place where it took place.

She played an important role in achieving the desired balance between avant-garde, modernism and mass culture that Nazism desired, to result in a distinct German aesthetic. If at the beginning of her career she avoided music in favor of silence, and preferred circular narratives, during Nazism she would work on music and using a linear narrative. An austere and authoritarian figure in her dance studios, she changes style during the regime. During the *Ausdruckstanz*, she would dance as a soloist representing a spiritual being instead of a human, but during the regime she starts to portray femininity, turning towards the idea of domesticity, the family ideal being appreciated by the party. Through "Dance of Silent Joy" (1934) from the "Women's Dances" program, she will represent the feminine ideal (using excessive hand movements and an animated mimicry), as well as respectable qualities, which consolidates her safety within the regime. Because under Nazism, instead of promoting experimental artistic activity, concepts were imposed that were to glorify Germany's past and to impress the spectators, the dance cycles of the '30s, those of groups such as "Women's Dances" (1934), or those of solos such as "Autumnal Dances" (1937) do not bring anything new anymore, but are rather copies of old works.

Influencing each other, Wigman and Laban are founders of modern dance, they draw important lines of modern dance through the Kinosphere and Dinamosphere (the qualities of movement and the typology of a flow of inner movements), the energy and the span of time, by recording and shortening the dance. Moreover, along with her dancers, Wigman contributed to the emergence and development of the German modern dance movement. In the work "Dansul în secolul XX" (I. Ginot, M. Michel, 2011) some of the dancers and choreographers who crossed her studio are mentioned: G. Palucca¹¹, H. Kreuzberg¹², D.

¹¹ Gret Palucca (1902 – 1993), between 1920 and 1930 she was one of the best-known dancers in Germany. After getting started with Wigman, she will distance herself from the dramatic style of her teacher and set up her own school. Through improvisation, she will try to find her own form of expression to support her pedagogy. Her style is characterized by wide, swaying movements, rhythmic rotations of the legs, and combinations of hands. In 1939, the Party forbids her performances and her school is closed. But in 1949 her school will be incorporated into the state system of dance training. Through the classes she teaches, she will continue the tradition of expressionist dance and will carry it abroad through the summer courses attended by foreign students as well. She will establish the Art Academy of the German Democratic Republic.

¹² Harald Kreuzberg (1902 – 1968), Czechoslovak dancer, choreographer, actor and teacher, he remains one of the most impressive expressionist dancers. Although he only studies as an amateur in Wigman's school, he is quickly noticed for his interpretation. He is remarked by his theatricality and his dramatic humor, his costumes and masks specific to his deeply dramatic style, sprinkled with comic movements. He goes through several institutions which recognize his talent: Hanover (dancer and ballet master), the Berlin Opera (solo dancer), Krolloper Berlin (dancer). In 1927, at the Salzburg Festival, he receives international recognition after his role as a master of ceremonies in "Turandot". Also, during the same festival, he will introduce words in dance for the role of Puck in "A Midsummer Night's Dream". He also takes part in the 1936 Olympics with group choreography, "Weapons Dance", but solo and duet dances will remain characteristic of his creation. In the latter part of his life he had solo appearances in opera productions and as an actor and he dedicated himself to his school in Bern.

Hoyer, B. Trümpy, Y. Georgi, K. Jooss, S. Linke, G. Bohner, H. Aldutzutz, M. Terpis, V. Skoronel.

Wigman's "Totenmal" performance was considered one of the most over-the-top political works suggesting an opposition to war. But another important personality of the *Ausdruckstanz*, Kurt Jooss, will bring yet another pacifist demonstration through the show "The Green Table" (1932). This choreographer is the most difficult to characterize, because although he meets the characteristics of the movement that will influence him in the creation of works with political accents, he will move away from expressionism quite quickly to propagate modernism, feeling that his creativity was being limited.

4. Kurt Jooss (1901-1979)

Dancer, teacher, ballet master, company director and modern choreographer. Like Laban and Wigman, he does not have special dance training, but he will not reject the conceptions of ballet. Between 1926-1927, he studied ballet with Leeder in Paris. Since then he understands that only by studying ballet just like modern dance one becomes capable of moving in any form, thus concluding that the academic technique is useful to modern dancers as well. In his schools, he introduced ballet classes in addition to modern dance. After the second Congress of Dance in 1928 in Magdeburg, he already begins to be perceived as a spiritual leader of dance, though he reminds others that he is Laban's student.

Personal characteristics and contributions to dance:

- Kurt will develop the dance philosophy of his teacher, Laban;
- together with L. Sigurd, he contributes to Laban's notation system;
- the messages of his performances were clear and presented moral values;
- the movements had a narrative behind them (he did not create abstract works);
- the themes were moral, often sprinkled with garish humor;
- he gives equal importance to both the theme and compositional form;
- he works in complicated rhythmic patterns and with various modern techniques;
- he is not a supporter of the round scene;
- he uses makeup, masks (like Wigman and Laban) - "Strange Septet", "Beltsames Septet", "Green table";
- he frequently uses mime and frozen gestures;
- he changes the décor in plain sight, with the curtain open.

His most appreciated show is "The Green Mass" (1932), where he shows a change in interpretation characteristic of the expressionist movement. The show will remain in history as the most controversial dance creation after "The Ritual of Spring" (1914) choreographed by Vaslav Nijinski in Paris.¹³ In 36 minutes he presented contradictory social archetypes (such as was the character Death interpreted by Kurt himself). In contradiction with the Aryan ideal that represented the German citizen full of power and vitality, excluding from it the possibility of a mistake, death is presented as a normal human event. Ever since "Totenmal" (Wigman), death had remained a harsh theme, through which human vulnerability was acknowledged. Unfortunately, the premiere of the show took place in a time when the anti-war attitude could not attract the vision of the rising regime. But, through this show, a protest against the horrific war, Jooss manages to present dance as a means to portray political and social issues. He earns the 1st place at the *Archives Internationales de la Danse* (1932), in Paris, Jooss being the only exponent of the German expressionist dance which will receive an official recognition of its value in Europe at that time. Despite this recognition, in 1933, when Nazism was installed, Jooss is promised privileges if he were to skip mentioning the name of

¹³ This show is considered the first modern dance in the history of the dance.

the Jewish composer (Fritz Cohen) and if he would fire him and two other Jewish dancers. Jooss refuses, changing the company name to *Les Ballets Jooss*, going into exile. He will become the choreographer who started no less than five dance companies of his own.

“The Green Table” was directed in 1964 at the Munich Opera. It is then reproduced by large companies and theaters such as the National Ballet in Amsterdam, the Joffrey Ballet in New York, the Cullberg Ballet in Stockholm.

Among Jooss' impactful works, we can mention: “Pandora” (1944) which represented a forecast of what humanity would experience, the atomic bomb; and “Journey in the fog” (1952) which is a continuation of “The Green Table”, in which he presents the deprivations of war that he experienced in England. There are four scenes which include: the loneliness of exile, the feeling of claustrophobia during prison, the mourning, the restlessness of the period of trying to rehabilitate. The show ends in the form of a celebration of life.

5. Dance-theater, the descendant of expressionist dance

Immediately after the end of World War II, ballet reappears in West Germany and expressionist dance remains in a cone of shadow for a while. *Ausdruckstanz* was considered too emotional and much too connected to the Nazi regime, while grandiose ballet shows managed to avoid these correlations. However, Jooss' pacifist artistic vision and Laban's concern for space and time constituted a point of return towards the old tradition and caused choreographers who had broken away from the rigidity of ballet to start experimenting with expressionist themes immediately after the war. The memory of the restrictions imposed by the Nazi regime on their creativity causes them to become even more fierce and determined to step out of the shadows. After the war, the rigidity of communism in East Germany led to a strong migration of artists to West Germany, where the development of German dance aesthetics will continue.

This becomes the right time for updating German dance under a modern interpretation. Among the choreographers who respond to this initiative are Hans Kresnik and Gerhard Bohner. But it is a woman who will bring German dance to an internationally recognized level. In this context *Tanztheater* reappears, a term which had been first used around 1927 to identify a developing dance style within the new forms of expressionist dance. In *Das Grüne Tisch* (1928), Kurt Jooss explains this concept as an association between choreographic art and the art of theater directing, and that both names have a mutual contribution. The concept will be reinstalled through **Pina Bausch (1940-2009)**, and then through J. C. Gallotta, G. Appaix, P. Gentill. In 1962, Jooss set up his fifth company with Pina Bausch, *Folkwang Thanz Studio*. The preparation time at the school led by Jooss helped her assimilate the emotion and expression that were part of the ideologies of the expressionist dance leaders. Pina used the triangle studied in detail by Laban, time-space-sound, in her entire creation. The influences of rigorous training in classical ballet, and on the other hand, the freedom of expression and the emotion taken from the expressionist dance, will be found merged in her performances, in which she will insert both free-movement parts and choreographic pieces sprinkled with technical aspects. This was her way of contributing to the development of the aesthetics of German dance. Her name is closely related to the movement *Ausdruckstanz* and continues to be among the few figures related to the post-modern dance movement.

The term *tanztheater* will reappear in critical reviews of the 1980s, to identify the choreographic activity of Jooss's two famous students, namely Pina Bausch and Reinhild Hoffman (b. 1943 - a fan of parodies, in which she uses an open stage, contact with the public, trying all the codes that appeared in the representations from the beginning of the 20th century), and of Wigman's student, Susanne Linke (b. 1944) – an advocate of solo choreographies, where she is noted for her extreme sensitivity and sheer audacity of gestures.

Dance-theater has become the most widespread form of choreographic manifestation in the history of German dance. It used the themes found in *Ausdruckstanz* and created a form of dance in which the aesthetics mattered less, focusing on expression and emotion as main aspects.

6. Conclusions

The birth of modern dance is correlated with the rise of Isadora Duncan, but the truth is that it emerges simultaneously in two different parts of the world: in Germany through Rudolf Laban, Mary Wigman, Kurt Jooss, and in America by Loïe Fuller, Isadora Duncan, Ruth Saint Denis, Ted Shawn. Before the outbreak of World War I, a new artistic movement was born in Europe (*expressionism*), which will represent a transitional period in which dancers are looking for a new vocabulary towards modern art. The beginning of modern dance becomes clear with Wigman's initiative to use the human mind, body and emotions in a dance born of one's own impulses.

The emergence of modern dance is recognized earlier in Germany than in other parts of the world, because besides Laban, Wigman and Jooss, there were other choreographers who contributed to the imposition of the expressionist dance movement (Valeska Gert, Gret Palluca, Anita Berber, Harald Kreutzberg, Hanya Holm etc). They have all been acclaimed worldwide and have brought a significant contribution to modern choreographic art. And because some of them were not as well known as Wigman and Laban, they had the opportunity to explore and push the boundaries of dance even further beyond.

Well known American dancers gain international recognition in a time when German dance faces worldwide rejection because of the socio-political situation. But the German branch, less visible than the American one due to the seriousness of the political situation, was an essential source in the development of modern dance. For example, in 1927, H. Kreuzberg will be introduced at an artistic event in New York as an important representative of modern dance, which is proof that representatives of German expressionism were already perceived as part of a new dance movement.

The notation system invented by Laban, *Labanotation* (or *Kinetografie*), remained one of the most complex notation systems for rhythmic movements, and a way of collective knowledge and education of people. Even today, it is a system used effectively to study and reproduce modern dance choreographies, such as those of J. Robbins, H. Holm, D. Humphrey, G. Balanchine, M. Graham¹⁴, and also for choreographers from musical comedies. This system offers a better recording of the structure of the entire choreography, the specificity of each movement and of each performer than its filming.

As far as Wigman is concerned, critics and dancers from across the ocean have recognized her contribution to dance and have placed her among the pioneers of modern dance with Isadora Duncan and her descendants, Martha Graham and Doris Humphrey ever since the 1930s. Wigman's students have become prominent figures in the world of dance. Of these, the most important name remains that of Hanya Holm, who will represent the connection between the expressive, free ideas of the German expressionist movement and the radical ideas of postmodern dance. She will influence a new generation of choreographers in America who will develop their own expressionist dance formula. In France, Jean Weidt (Laban's student) will train the first modern dancers. Laban's method is used in the UK as well and the "Laban Center" will become Europe's most important modern dance school.

Although affected by Nazism, the German expressionist movement was a platform for modern ideas which emphasized the fact that freedom of expression offers a multitude of

¹⁴ Jerome Robbins, Hanya Holm, Doris Humphrey, George Balanchine, Martha Graham - famous choreographers of modern, neoclassical dance and 20th century musical comedies.

choreographic possibilities. The innovations and concepts of its representatives remain important milestones in the history of dance, which modern and postmodern dancers will use as guides.

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