

EXPERT ARTICLE
by Michael Tucker (MADT 2021)

Chairs, Shoes, and Newspapers. The Inspirational Role of Props in Choreography

In the world of dance, the body is the vessel for communication, expression, and storytelling. Infinite combinations and ways of movement and locomotion, combined with rich and nuanced possibilities of bodily and facial expression, enable the dancer to connect and communicate with an audience. As intriguing as the body is in its pure form. I have always enjoyed using a prop as a source of choreographic inspiration thus transforming ordinary objects and movement into extraordinary catalysts for creativity. Props not only enrich the visual and narrative aspects of a performance, but also challenge dancers to explore new dimensions of movement. Props also play a crucial role in storytelling within a choreography. Each prop carries inherent symbolic meanings that can be leveraged to convey complex narratives and emotions which in turn challenge the audience's concept of these often everyday objects. Props significantly influence spatial dynamics, serve as focal points around which movement can be structured, and guide the audience's attention. Props can divide the space, establish boundaries, or create a sense of intimacy or distance. By incorporating these items into my work, I have been able to unlock a myriad of possibilities, infusing my choreographic narratives with originality and surprise.

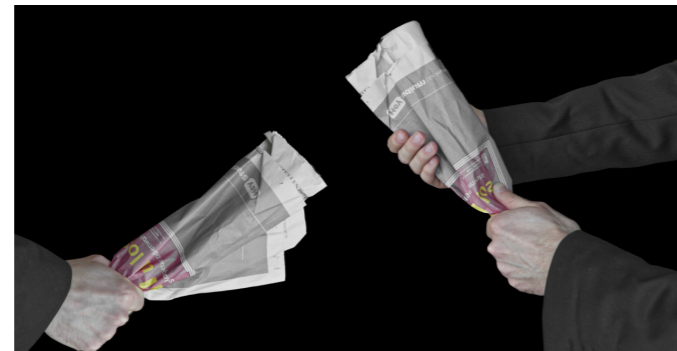
Over the past years, I have used a multitude of props in my choreography. Stools, newspapers, shoes, bed sheets, sunglasses, and even umbrellas have all come into play, with each object introducing its own unique constraints, opportunities, and character. Each prop has the ability to significantly expand, constrain, or enhance the movement vocabulary available to dancers, acting like an extra appendage or even a dance partner.



A bar stool, as used in "Little Night Dreamers", a piece I created for the apprentice program of the Semperoper in 2020, created the perfect structure to create the illusion of cycling in mid-air, whereas small stools in my piece "Es Reicht!" for the O2 class of 2023, provided multiple surfaces and levels for dancers to sit on, weave around and look under. Similarly, a newspaper also used in "Es Reicht!", with its lightweight and flexible nature, was able to be used and manipulated in various ways. Dancers could crumple it, fold it, swat it, flutter it, hide under it, and explore rhythmic sequences with it. Even a mundane item such as a shoe can be employed creatively to represent aspects of identity and can be used in other ways than just on one's foot. Dancers might wear it on their hands as seen in my latest creation, "Foot", for the 2024 O2 class, creating a multitude of distinct and bizarre optical illusions. Additionally, the ability to give the shoes their own distinct personalities and drive makes for exciting theatrics.

Incorporating props encourages innovation and improvisation in the choreographic process. When dancers and choreographers are prompted to think creatively about how to utilize these objects in novel ways, new movement ideas and thematic explorations appear/emerge. Props, like chairs, newspapers, and shoes are invaluable tools in choreography, providing endless possibilities for creative expression. They enrich the movement vocabulary, enhance storytelling, shape spatial dynamics, and inspire innovation.

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UNIVERSITY NEWS, ALUMNI NEWS AND MORE

A Visit to Palucca

Remembering is not an easy matter. My heart was pounding when I recently visited my school in Dresden after 15 years. I physically felt that I was a child again and also a professionally experienced dancer all at the same time. Two of my friends came with me.

I had hardly stood in front of the porter's office when hidden memories from the past worked their way up into the present. When passing by, this is where I used to receive letters and postcards from my parents, and sometimes also small presents - books signed by Palucca. These were treasures.

The school's special atmosphere - it is hard to describe. One still feels it and feels it again and again, expressed through the new students who we passed. We experienced it in the classical ballet class with Olga Melnikova or the costume department with Martina Drieschner - approachable, open, friendly, respectful and relaxed. And not to be forgotten, also Leo Ziems from Public Relations. I felt welcomed like a member of the family who could tell about "what it was like earlier".

On our way to the Archives, I told my friends about the jokes we played in our recesses. I was especially touched while reading a hand-written letter from my father requesting the admission of his daughter into the Palucca School. That was in 1966 - I stayed until 1973. The school was my home for seven years. When I left the school as an officially recognised Stage Dancer, I had more than only a Certificate. I was influenced by Palucca's spirit, by an artistically and spiritually valuable training.

My time at the Palucca School was very special - a time that one calls life.

Brigitte Bätz



UNIVERSITY NEWS, ALUMNI NEWS AND MORE

Jack Rexhausen wins the Dresden Excellence Award

On April 27, I had the great honour of receiving the Dresden Excellence Award – the City of Dresden Science Award for my Bachelor Final Project "AnnA". This prize is awarded annually to four exceptional academic theses in Dresden. A final project from each graduate level (Bachelor, Master/Diplom, Promotion and Habilitation) is selected by the commission.

This year, my artistic Bachelor thesis was the first of its kind among the winners, something that makes me very proud. As Mayor Dirk Hilbert emphasized in his speech, this bridges the gap between the scientific hub and the cultural hub that is Dresden. "Dresden is excellent in both areas", says the Mayor.

At first, it felt strange, as creator of a dance piece to stand next to scientists who had made ground-breaking progress in fields such as biology and medicine. Perhaps this also shows how important the arts are. But can they offer the world anywhere as much as the sciences? After receiving this prize, it became clear to me: No, the arts cannot bear comparison with the sciences, but the converse is also true. Both are essential for a functioning world.

Science and other academic efforts make today's life possible. But the arts give us something that is worth living for.

My Bachelor project "AnnA" is a highly personal choreography on the topic of mourning. I had the great honour to be able to present this work last year with my dance partner Luccio Navarro in the Semperoper during the Palucca University of Dance Dresden Soirée. At first, I was very nervous performing before such a large, anonymous audience. However, this performance showed me how powerful the art is. I was able to tell my story without fear and without having to say a word. The audience's applause showed me this.

All in all the process from the creation to the presentation in the Semperoper to the Excellence Award is proof for how important the art is - not only for the good of all, but also for every artist personally.

Jack Rexhausen



PALUCCA - ALUMNI
JULY & AUGUST 2024

Welcome to the final Alumni Newsletter of the 2023/2024 Academic Year.

A year full that was full of activities, creative projects and also some beautiful moments of recognition. For those of you who saw the BA work, "Anna" of our 2023 BA Dance graduate Jack Rexhausen, you will know exactly why he received the Dresden Excellence Award in April. A powerful work that represents a creative mind combined with physical prowess and a strong message.



The standing ovations and award were very well deserved. This sends a strong message out, that our city of Dresden believes in and supports the development of such talented young artists in their celebrating our differences and challenging the existing borders between the various fields. Now dancing with Ballet Preljocaj, we look forward to his upcoming projects as an Alumni. Jack is someone, like many of you, with such an incredible range of talents, I am very keen to watch and follow his next moves.

Also at this point, I wish to thank all the Alumni that I have had the chance to get to know over these past 18 years. I look very much forward to staying in touch and to hopefully see many of you back on Campus to celebrate all of your achievements together, for our 100 Year Jubilee. There are many exciting events and special occasions in the planning and let's keep our Alumni Network as alive, dynamic and inspiring as can be.

Please do, share your latest projects, adventures and stories with us and until then, wishing you all the best and enjoy your Summer!

Prof. Jason Beechey
Rector and Head of the MA Dance Teacher programme

Dresden Excellence Award awarded for the first time for a choreography by a Palucca graduate

The Dresden Excellence Award is awarded to excellent scientific work in Dresden every year. This can be exemplary subject-specific work as well as interdisciplinary work over the entire range of scientific subjects.

"For the first time, a prize is being awarded for choreography and with this also the presentation from the academic field Dance", says the city's Mayor, Dirk Hilbert. "We are bridging the gap between Dresden as a scientific hub and a cultural hub - Dresden is excellent in both areas".

We are very happy that Jack Rexhausen has shared his story with us in the Alumni News section.

TanzNetzDresden presents: Tanzkalender Dresden (Dance Calendar Dresden – immediately available every month

"It was time to bring together the dance events in this city and publish them on one sheet of paper thus exposing and making the diversity and richness of the dance scene in Dresden accessible. The scene has long been interconnected and it was simply high time to celebrate this unity and bring it to the attention of the world outside. The Dance Calendar is an attempt to display the dance scene in Dresden with all its facets and make it accessible for all. It is new, it is good and it is straightforward. Simply Dance"



„Tanzpädagogik – Tanzvermittlung: Grundbegriffe. Methoden. Anwendungsbereiche.“ (Dance Pedagogy - Teaching Dance: Basic Terminology. Methods. Applications) / Michael Obermaier, Claudia Steinberg, Rita Molzberger, Krystyna Obermaier (Editor). – Bad Heilbrunn: Verlag (Publisher) Julius Klinkhardt, 2024. – 622 pages. – € 29.90

ISBN: 9783825259228

In this reference book, the subject of teaching dance is approached in an interdisciplinary manner by a number of authors. The topic is handled from an anthropological, (sport) science, educational-philosophical, and artistic perspective.

The book is structured in four parts: the historical-systematical framework, the methods and goals pertaining to teaching dance, examples of conveyance and applications, and educational policy positions. An overview of definitions of key terms, from aesthetic, education, choreography, and rearing, to creativity, bodiliness, music, nature, and playing can be found by those interested in a detailed glossary at the end of the book.

This compendium about dance pedagogy in the German-speaking countries is a scientifically grounded basic work on the topic area of the aesthetic-cultural educational process in dance and is designed for students and teachers as well as for those interested in dance.



Cigarette Collector Cards

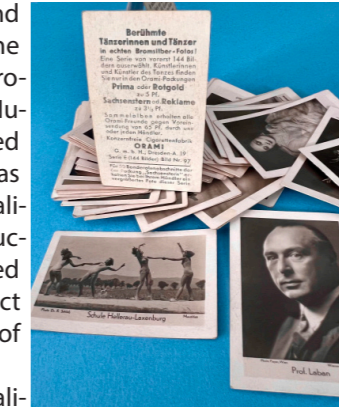
Dresden's cigarette industry has a remarkable history which began in the late 19th century and which made the city one of the most important tobacco processing centres in Germany. Numerous factories were founded under well-known names such as Yenidze and Jasmatzi. Industrialisation enabled the mass production of cigarettes, which lowered the prices and made the product available for a wider spectrum of the population.

The companies focused on quality and innovative advertising in order to stay competitive in the field. One example for this is the cigarette collector cards which became a popular means of advertising beginning in the 1920s.

The "Cigarette Cards" are an important chapter in the history of advertising and everyday culture. The small cards were originally added to the cigarette package as a form of reinforcement to stabilise the package. But this was quickly recognised for its advertising potential. The collector cards covered a broad spectrum, from sports and movie stars to nature and technology, even to historical events and cultural topics. The series "Famous Dancers" is one of the rarer motifs and was more a small series with its 144 images. Fifty of these images from the series are now part of the University's Archive and they await completion.

The series of images were often collectible in special albums which could also be purchased. Cigarette collector cards thus became a mass-medium and as such were a precursor of today's modern collector cards and are of particular interest for dance historians.

Our deepest thanks for this donation go to Hans-Jürgen Freudenberger.



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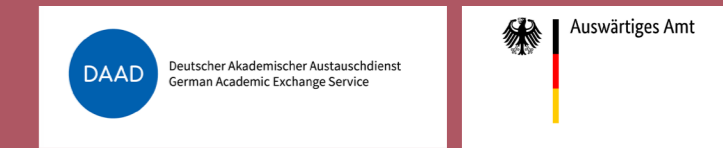
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The next Alumni Newsletter will be published in September 2024. Alumni contributions can be sent to alumni@palucca.eu until the editorial deadline on 31 July 2024.

Erfahren Sie mehr über unsere Veranstaltungen:



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