

Issue 27 (2020)

Book Review

***Pina Bausch und das Tanztheater: Die Kunst des Übersetzens***

by **Gabriele Klein**, Transcript Verlag, 2019. 449 pp. € 34.99 (\$38.42)

Katherine H. Paul

University of Cincinnati

How to Cite: Paul, Katherine H. "Book Review: *Pina Bausch und das Tanztheater: Die Kunst des Übersetzens* by Gabriele Klein". *focus on German Studies 27: Spielformen des Authentischen*, no. 27, 2020, pp. 87–90. doi: 10.34314/FOGS2020.00008.

***Pina Bausch und das Tanztheater: Die Kunst des Übersetzens***

by **Gabriele Klein**, Transcript Verlag, 2019. 449 pp. € 34.99 (\$38.42)

Katherine H. Paul

Gabriele Klein's recent book pays homage to the life, work, and *Fortleben* of Pina Bausch and her *Tanztheater*. Bausch's *Tanztheater* has become known around the world as a unique exploration of the limits of dance and how it can be stretched and molded to incorporate elements of nature, humanity, culture, community, music, and ritual. With unusual props, costumes, and a marked departure from conventional dance and even from other cutting-edge modern dance techniques, Klein notes that Pina Bausch's radical work is in embedded in a larger artistic revolution in Germany during the 1960s and 1970s.

Much has been previously published about Pina Bausch and her individual works, which is where Klein's book comes in. Klein puts the focus "nicht auf die Choreografin oder auf einzelne Stücke," rather on "die künstlerischen Produktionen des Tanztheaters Wuppertal Pina Bausch" (11). In order to do this, Klein designates a chapter for each of the elements of Bausch's work on which she focuses: the works themselves, the company, the process (*Arbeitsprozess*), solo dances, reception, and theory and methodology.

Each section offers a unique perspective on Bausch's work. In the first chapter "Stücke," Klein neither works chronologically through Bausch's career, nor does she follow a standard and played out theatrical-analytical or artistic-analytical approach. She also includes that dance is not purely physical and she ends the myth that dance cannot be translated into words by doing just that in this first chapter. The following chapter "Compagnie" focuses on the unique and particular ensemble that makes up Das Tanztheater Wuppertal. Klein focuses on the diversity of the ensemble and the hierarchy-free group that it exists as, while also focusing on the importance of the *zeitgeist* of the group, which came

together at a time in Germany when democracy was rather new. The chapter titled “Arbeitsprozess,” the third chapter, narrows in on the artistic process associated with Pina Bausch’s work. Klein looks at the process of developing each piece, pinpointing specifically the “Research-Reisen” (173). This chapter also explores the process of passing the materials on inter-generationally both within the Tanztheater Wuppertal, as well as to other dance companies. “Solotänze” is concerned with the difficulty associated with translating on several levels, including that of director/choreographer to dancer, how does one evoke specific emotions without stifling individual emotions?; that of dancer to dancer, how does one translate the moves and emotions specific to their dance to another individual or group? The question of translation and describing dance in text form has long plagued choreographers and dancers. Klein points to Bausch’s use of a specific dance language among her ensemble to communicate firstly the movement and then how to master the emotion. In the fifth chapter “Rezeption,” Klein discusses dance critique in more general terms before discussing how this has affected Bausch’s work and its reception. Klein points out generational differences in the nearly forty years of performances by the Tanztheater Wuppertal, stating that they are making their own attempts at translating Bausch’s work into a legible form. She also addresses not only the expectations of the critics, but also the perspective of the audience in relation to performances and how they translate their experience into words. In her final chapter, “Theorie und Methodologie,” Klein investigates the blurred lines between popular dance and artistic dance and aesthetic and social practices that Bausch’s work at the Tanztheater Wuppertal has created.

Klein’s text offers a new comprehensive view on Pina Bausch’s work, forgetting the conventional chronological overview in favor of a more holistic approach to understanding Pina Bausch as an artist. This text would make a great companion to any dance-centered or theater-centered curriculum, particularly those focusing on modern dance, especially those

specifically dedicated to Pina Bausch and her work. This work accentuates Bausch's contribution to the art of modern dance and offers a unique perspective on the person behind the performance.