



Pina

Director: Wim Wenders
Country: Germany
Date: 2011

A review by Peter Bradshaw of *The Guardian*:
(This review is of the 3D version of the film; we will be showing a 2D version).

Wim Wenders's deeply intelligent 3D tribute to the work of the modern dance choreographer Pina Bausch was conceived as a collaboration with her. Bausch died during the production in 2009, and the resulting film achieves a poignant, elegaic quality, shot through with an overwhelming sense of loss, both on the part of Bausch's dancers, whose thoughtful interviews and dance sequences form the film's backbone, and the director himself. Bausch was a reticent figure, wary of personalities and insistent on letting her work speak for her. She would undoubtedly have been a distant figure in this film had she lived, but now her absence has a sombre, almost tragic quality. The dancers seem like grownup children who have lost a parent, or even apostles of a spiritual movement whose leader has met some kind of sacrificial destiny.

My colleague Judith Mackrell has already offered her expert verdict on the effect of 3D in filming dance. To her judgment, I can only add that for me, the shapes and forms of the dancers have an overwhelming physicality. The choreography has the air of a mysterious rite, released from the traditional arena of the theatre into the streets, though it is fundamentally filmed head-on, as if through a proscenium arch. (The director has said his inspiration for the film was the U2 3D concert movie.)



If its meaning can be summed up – though it is arguably the point of an abstract artform that it can't be summed up – it is probably in the words of a dancer who asks, "What are we yearning for? Where does all this yearning come from?" We spend our lives yearning, and then, in the shadow of mortality, our yearning is redirected backwards, a yearning to understand our past lives, our youth, and again forwards – a yearning to understand the point of our death. Wenders's movie uncovers the crucial state of yearning in Bausch's work.

Bausch was famously the director of the Wuppertal Tanztheater, where she created pieces such as her Cafe Müller in 1978; this is a very European film, and the artistic practice described in it seems very German in its high seriousness and high-mindedness. Could Bausch have flourished in the same way in Britain, with its broadloid Boulevardpresse and its irony'n'celebs media culture? Perhaps not. But then again, she is perhaps not an obvious fit with Wenders, with his fascination with Americana and pop music. Nonetheless, he has created a tremendous film that sets out to make the new 3D technology an integral part of what is being created – a film with clarity and passion..

From: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2011/apr/21/pina-review>

Extracts from an interview with Wim Wenders:

What inspired you to make this movie about Pina?

My first encounter with Pina took place 25 years ago. Until then, I had not much interest in dance. It was very limited. I thought it did not concern me. It wasn't really for me. And then, one night, I saw a double bill of Pina's Café Mueller and Le Sacre du Printemps against my will. My girlfriend forced me and it changed my life. It really was a life changing experience. I cried through the entire night helplessly, not understanding what was happening to me. Something big was happening and my body understood it and my brain lagged far behind, but it eventually caught up and then I knew. Pina and I got to know each other. I told her we have to make a film together. This is really extraordinary and I think between the two of us we can do something. Pina was skeptical but eventually she picked up on the idea, and then she started to push me and said "Wim, let's do it. Let's not just keep talking about it." That's when I got into trouble because then I had to come up with the goods and find out how to do it. That's when I got into deep trouble, because with each piece I saw of Pina's, and I saw all her pieces, every year I saw the new one, and each time I realized I couldn't film it. My craft wasn't good enough. I didn't have the goods to really do justice to her work. It took us 20 years.

What changed and made you realize you were ready to do it?

It changed one day on a day I did not expect anything would happen except some fun. It was a sunny day in May 2007 in Cannes. U2 played on the steps of the Festival Palais. It was nice. There was a huge crowd and afterwards we were all invited in to see a concert film, U2 in 3D. I put on the glasses for the first time. I didn't expect anything but seeing a concert film with a gimmick. From the first moment on, I almost didn't see the film. I just saw the possibility. I saw the answer to 20 years of hesitation and 20 years of not knowing what to do. I saw the answer was there. There was a tool that allowed me to be with Pina's dancers and to be in the water swimming with the fish and not just looking from outside at the aquarium.

Is it better than a live performance because you're in the middle of it?

You are in a privileged position, yes, but that you could do before. You could go with a regular camera into the middle of the stage, but you still wouldn't feel that you could touch the dancers and that you were really there. The physicality of Pina's dance was not approachable before there was 3D, before there was not only space and depth but also volume to the body.

What went into choosing the four pieces you used in the film?

Pina's first thing was we need to decide because the pieces that you want to film, that we want to film, they have to be on the agenda of the theater. We have to rehearse them. They're going to have to be public performances. Otherwise, we can't film them. Together we selected these four pieces. Café Mueller and Le Sacre du Printemps we didn't even have to discuss. It was right away on the table. They were the two big classics of the company. That was for sure. Then, we wanted to select a more modern piece and we went for Vollmond because it was Pina's most successful piece of the century and she loved it and the dancers loved it. It had this attraction that it had all the water on the stage, and that, of course, would be gorgeous for 3D. So there was also no discussion. Vollmond was also [chosen] immediately. And then, we had three out of four. It could only be four because four was the maximum for one season, and we couldn't afford to shoot for longer than one season so we had to reduce it to four. The fourth was a long decision. It took Pina and I weeks because all of a sudden selecting the fourth piece meant leaving everything else out. We had different favorites for a while and we finally decided on Kontakthof which is now in the film because it's the only piece in dance history that is performed by three generations [of dancers]. That was something that really interested me a lot. Pina was also intrigued by the idea that I would film it so that we could cut through these different generations. That's why we finally selected Kontakthof. Then, once it was on the schedule of the dance theater for the 2009-2010 season, for fall-winter, we had a start date. Pina and I started to write a concept and actively prepared the film together.

