

**NYU  
SKIRBALL**

**FLORENTINA HOLZINGER**

**TANZ**

**FEBRUARY 14-15  
NORTH AMERICAN PREMIERE**

# TANZ

Concept, performance, choreography

**Florentina Holzinger**

Performance by and with

**Josefin Arnell, Renée Copraij, Beatrice Cordua, Lucifire, Luna Duran, Annina Machaz, Netti Nüganen, Suzn Pasyon, Steffi Wieser, Veronica Thompson, Lydia Darling, Jessyca R. Hauser, Florentina Holzinger**

Video Design, Live Camera

**Josefin Arnell, Jessyca R. Hauser**

Sound Design, Live Sound

**Stefan Schneider**

Light Design, Technical Director

**Anne Meeussen**

Stage Design

**Nikola Knezevic**

Stage Assistant

**Camilla Smolders**

Technical Assistant

**Stephan Werner, Dörte Wilfroth, Koen Vanneste**

Dramaturgy

**Renée Copraij, Sara Ostertag**

Coaching

**Ghani Minne, Dave Tusk**

Music Coach

**Almut Lustig**

Outside Eye

**Michele Rizzo, Fernando Belfiore**

Theory, Research

**Anna Leon**

Costume Advisor, Tailor

**Mael Blau**

Prosthetic, Mask

**Students of Wigs, Make-up and Special Make-up Effects for Stage and Screen, Theaterakademie August Everding (Munich), Marianne Meinl**

Stunt Support

**Haeger Stunt & Wireworks**

Stunt Instructors

**Stunt Cloud GmbH (Leo Plank, Phong Giang, Sandra Barger)**

Management & International Distribution

**Katharina Wallisch & Giulia Messia: neon lobster**

Tour Management

**Maira L Sunter Garee**

A production by **SPIRIT**

# FLORENTINA HOLZINGER

Florentina Holzinger's dance pieces are driven by the notion of identity, sexual and physical transgression.

Drawing inspiration as much from Viennese Actionism, body art and bodybuilding as from classical ballet, cabaret and circus; she deconstructs, performance after performance, the very definition of femininity. Along with her stage works Florentina is regularly teaching movement classes. Her work is intrinsically linked with the aim of exploring modes of embodiment and the development of practices to support a physical life in action. Her practice is heavily informed by martial arts, functional and somatic movement practices as well as every dance.

Florentina Holzinger studied choreography at the School for New Dance Development (SNDO) at the Amsterdamse Hogeschool voor de Kunsten. Her Diploma solo work *Silk* was awarded the Prix Jardin d'Europe at the ImPulsTanz Festival 2012. She collaborated with Vincent Riebeek for a trilogy of pieces, *Kein Applaus für Scheiße, Spirit*, and *Wellness* followed by *Schoenheitsabend-Tänze des Grauens und der Extase* (2011-2015). Her second solo work, *Recovery*, which premiered in 2015, is an experimental consideration on a traumatic stage accident she had suffered and critically explores various kinds of female representation as well as the potential of female corporeality.

In later works she continued dissecting the narratives of ballet. First with *Apollon* (2017), a hack on Balanchine's 1920s *Apollon Musagete*, followed by *TANZ* (2019), an action ballet that reflects on tradition and narrative departing from the romantic ballet *La Sylphide*. In 2020, she presented for the first time the work *Etude for an Emergency* at the Münchner Kammerspielen; a stunt-opera developed a musical composition for 10 bodies and a car. Since then, the work has been presented on multiple occasions as a series of site-specific works. In the same year, *TANZ* was awarded for "Best Performance of the Year" by Theater Heute and with the NESTROY Prize for Best Direction, and it was presented in the frame of Theatertreffen (Berlin).

In 2021, Holzinger created for Ruhrtriennale the big scale piece *A Divine Comedy*. For her role in this work, the artist Trixie Cordua was awarded the FAUST Award. The work *Ophelia's Got Talent* (2022) was created as artist-in-residence at the Volksbühne in Berlin, it was selected for the Theatertreffen 2023, and was awarded for Best Actress (Saioa Alvarez Ruis) and Best Stage Design (Nikolas Knezevic) by the Austrian NESTROY Award. It was awarded Best Dance Performance by the FAUST Award.

In 2024, Holzinger debuted her first opera project, *SANCTA*, a coproduction between the Mecklenburgischen Staatstheater Staatsoper Stuttgart and the Wiener Festwochen, as well as the Volksbühne am Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz Berlin, Opera Ballet Vlaanderen, Julidans and Theater Rotterdam.

# MAKING BALLET FEMINIST AGAIN

“Come on girls, bring the barres in.” Beatrice Cordua, after a long career in ballet, stands on the stage of Florentina Holzinger’s *TANZ* and leads a ballet class. The students, only women, do pliés and jetés following her instructions. *TANZ* is the third work completing a trilogy — also including the works *Recovery* and *Apollon* — in which Holzinger looks back to the history of European ballet: after Balanchine’s *Agon* and *Apollon Musagète*, here the starting point was romantic ballet and the figure of the Sylph, even if the work also turns towards later repertory, like *Swan Lake*.

Cordua’s staged ballet class looks nothing like what one would expect of it: the teacher is naked; the dancers gradually undress themselves as well; the class morphs into an orgasmic description of the students’ vaginas and to an invitation to “do the rats” — a wink to the name given to young corps de ballet dancers of the Paris Opera during the romantic period. But the more *TANZ* diverges from the aesthetics of ballet, appropriating and desacralising it, the more Holzinger’s work approaches the very raw reality that this historical dance form still carries.

Romantic ballet was feminised: in stories centered around female protagonists, in its cult of female star dancers, in its overwhelmingly female corps de ballet, it celebrated and adulated a dancing womanhood. But this womanhood was to a great extent constructed through a male gaze upon it — from the dance critics engaging in detailed, almost voyeuristic descriptions of female dancers’ bodies to the well-off Paris Opera patrons who could have access backstage, to the thinly disguised sexual market of the *foyer de la danse*, and from there to librettists writing ballet scripts in which women were victims in unhappy endings.

In *TANZ*, the all-female cast has learnt this lesson. The women on stage are followed, closely looked at, turned into images available to the audience, through the projection of their acts and bodies filmed in real time. But the person operating the camera is also a woman, and her lens doesn’t only function for the satisfaction of voyeurism, but also transmits the effort and concentration of the dancers, the work and exertion of their muscles. When the ballet class is over, and the performers engage in other activities of what Holzinger calls “Sylphic Studies,” any victimhood is effaced as the dancers defy gravity, pain, fear, mental and physical barriers.

Romantic ballet was attracted to the mysterious Other: in several works of the romantic repertory, a juxtaposition is created between humanly inhabited, relatable settings and supernatural realms found in nature. It is in the magical

settings in nature that many of romantic ballet’s feminine figures dwell. These may be enchanting and/or enchanted creatures like wilis and sylphs, impersonated through a dance of elevation, pointe work contributing to the sense of weightlessness and suspension emanating from the dancers; complex scenographic tricks like trap doors and pulley systems assisted in the illusion, with dancers risking accidents to fly across the stage. Romantic ballet’s feminine, supernatural figures were also, at times — like *La Sylphide*’s Madge — evil anti-heroines like witches, staged by employing the imagery of the — persecuted and tortured — “witch” in European history.

*TANZ*, at a time when the figure of the witch is re-appropriated by feminism and ecofeminist approaches align struggles for women’s rights with the protection of nature, has once again learnt this lesson well — all too well. Midway through the piece, the stage background turns into a forest image. The performers impersonate and give birth to animals or transform into ghosts, highlighting their not-fully-human nature; a contemporary witch crosses the stage on her (electric) broom. But most crucially, the dancers strive against gravity and towards flying: on pointe, or using ropes and counterweights, or climbing on suspended motorbikes. The Sylph had wings attached to her costume, at the level of her shoulder-blades; Odette rippled her arms, engaging from the shoulder-blades outward, to impersonate a swan; both were ethereal and beautiful, concealing the effort required in order to have wings and fly. Towards the end of *TANZ*, a performer’s shoulder-blades are literally attached to mechanical wings; the effort, pain, determination and power needed for this are made evident: here, ballet is not an illusion, it is very much real.

*Anna Leon is a dance historian working primarily through research, curatorial theory projects and teaching.*

## GO BEYOND THE STAGE

**Discover more about *TANZ*** and the production’s cultural and historical contexts with online interviews, essays, articles, reading lists, and many other digital resources.



**Scan for online resources and dramaturgical insights into this production.**  
**Or visit [NYUSkirball.org](https://www.nyuskirball.org).**

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# NEXT @ NYU SKIRBALL

## **Robert Wilson: Mary Said What She Said**

*February 27–March 2 | North American Premiere*

Academy Award nominee Isabelle Huppert and the legendary director Robert Wilson reunite to chart the life and torments of Mary Queen of Scots, whose passions cost her a crown. "Breathtaking." — *The Guardian (UK)*

## **International Contemporary Ensemble: Composing While Black**

*March 22*

The International Contemporary Ensemble performs work by and with four composer-performers from the renowned experimental music collective, the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM). Composer-performers from both collectives join together to create exciting, all-new hybrid compositional-improvisative works.

## **Brokentaklers & Adrienne Truscott: Masterclass**

*March 28 & 29*

Blending the savagely comic discourse of Adrienne Truscott with the slick dramaturgy of the internationally renowned theatre company Brokentaklers, *Masterclass* is a parody like no other — uncovering truths about privilege, power and the hold they have over our so-called great artists and the positions and opportunities they are granted.

## **Daniel Léveillé Danse: Amour, Acide et Noix**

*April 11 & 12*

In this revival of a 21st-century masterpiece, *Amour, acide et noix* (2001) speaks of four dancers' solitude, but also and most specifically, of the infinite tenderness of touch, the harshness of life, and the desire for avoidance or escape from these bodies, often so heavy. Offering nudity as frank and free of false modesty, the skin is the body's one true costume.

## **Seán Curran Company: PATH and Everywhere All the Time**

*April 18 & 19*

Seán Curran Company makes its NYU Skirball debut with two works: the world premiere of *PATH*, a 30-minute work reflecting on the phenomenon of the Camino de Santiago — the ancient Catholic pilgrimage route across northern Spain to the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in Galicia — and Curran's own spiritual wayfaring; and *Everywhere All the Time* (2018), which explores the relationship of humans with the natural environment.

## **Łukasz Twarkowski: The Employees**

*April 24-26*

Marking the North American premiere of Łukasz Twarkowski, one of Europe's most acclaimed directors, this visually striking adaptation of Olga Ravn's acclaimed novel offers a mix of theater, film, and installation in an exploration of what it means to be human.



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