



Detailed information about the award winners

Martin Schläpfer

Martin Schläpfer was born in 1959 and grew up in the Appenzell region. At the age of 15, he switched from figure skating to ballet. Just two years later he was chosen as the best Swiss dancer in the Prix de Lausanne and used the grant he received to spend a year at the Royal Ballet School in London. He was then recruited by Heinz Spoerli for the Basel Ballet – the start of a dazzling, ten-year stint for the charismatic soloist. After periods as director of ballet at the Stadttheater Bern from 1994 and ballet-mainz from 1999, he has worked at the Deutsche Oper am Rhein since 2009.

For the Federal Dance Jury, the main criteria for the selection of Martin Schläpfer were his commitment to dance and his remarkable achievements in the field. He heads one of the largest ballet ensembles in Germany, where he pursues a new repertoire policy with over 70 performances per season and audience attendances of 90 percent. His own choreographies give expression to his great musicality and represent a revival of contemporary classical dance.

In the words of Esther Sutter Straub, chair of the Jury: “With his Ballett am Rhein in Düsseldorf, Martin Schläpfer has reached the pinnacle of international choreographic development. Yet for all that, his feet remain firmly on the ground – a reflection of his sensitivity and awareness of all around him, and of his dedication to his dancers, whose individuality, for Schläpfer, always takes centre stage. As a choreographer, Martin Schläpfer maintains the delicate balance between high artistic aspiration and profound humanity with the same ease that characterised him as a dancer.”

Théâtre Sévelin 36

The Théâtre Sévelin 36 in Lausanne was established by Philippe Saire in 1996, originally as a residence for his company. At the time, he was one of the pioneers of independent dance in Switzerland. Born in Algeria in 1957, he grew up in Lausanne and received his dance training from figures including Noemi Lapzeson in Geneva. The work of Théâtre Sévelin 36 is concentrated on three core areas: national and international guest performances; supporting the local scene; and mediation activities, studios and dance workshops.

The Théâtre Sévelin 36 is honoured by the Federal Dance Jury as one of the most important locations for the development, appreciation and mediation of contemporary dance in Switzerland.

Caroline Minjolle, jury member, said: “The choreographer Philippe Saire has not only produced creations that have shaped the history of contemporary Swiss choreography but has also reaffirmed his enduring commitment to dance by creating an institution that is unique in Switzerland, the Théâtre Sévelin 36 in Lausanne. There, he and his team work tirelessly to create, promote and disseminate national and international works through a constantly renewed dialogue with numerous artists from other fields.”