



# Swiss Dance Awards 2013

## Award winners

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## Awards

### «Swiss Dance Award»: 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 ballettmainz 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.”*

### «Special Dance Award»: 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.”*

## Awards

### «Outstanding Female Dancer»: Yen Han

US-Chinese Yen Han, born in 1973, has been a member of the Ballet Zurich, Switzerland's largest professional ballet company, since 1994. She studied under Stefan Mucsi and Paul Maure in Los Angeles, at the Hartford Ballet School in Connecticut and at the San Francisco Ballet School before completing her training at the Beijing Dance Academy. In 1991, she was a semi-finalist at the Prix de Lausanne. Her first professional work followed with the Jeune Ballet de France and the Ballet de l'Opéra de Nice. Yen Han is the only soloist in Zurich to have danced under three ballet directors: firstly Bernd Roger Bienert, then Heinz Spoerli for 16 years from the 1996/97 season and Christian Spuck since the 2012/13 season. She won the Friends of Ballet Zurich dance prize in June 2013.

Yen Han has shone in countless roles covering the whole of the classical repertoire, including Spoerli's "The Firebird", "The Nutcracker", "La fille mal gardée", "The Rite of Spring" and "Giselle", as well as modern creations such as "moZART". Heinz Spoerli said this about her in a 2009 interview with Tages-Anzeiger: "Yen Han is an incredible dancer. She is never the same twice." She has performed as a soloist in many works by such renowned choreographers as Hans van Manen, William Forsythe and Jiří Kylián, most recently wowing audiences and critics alike with her role as Aurora in Mats Ek's "Sleeping Beauty". She also teaches at her own ballet school in Zurich.

Brigitta Luisa Merki, Member of the Jury:

*"Yen Han is one of Switzerland's best-known female dancers. Her successful career has been a constant stream of outstanding performances in both classical and contemporary dance. Her virtuosity, coupled with a fantastic versatility in the interpretation of a wide range of roles, makes Yen Han a truly exceptional dancer and an extraordinary artist."*

## Awards

### «Outstanding Male Dancer»: Foofwa d'Immobilité

Frédéric Gafner alias Foofwa d'Immobilité wurde 1969 geboren, studierte an der Ecole de Born Frédéric Gafner in 1969, Foofwa d'Immobilité studied at the Ecole de Danse de Genève and was a member of the Ballet Junior. He danced with the Stuttgart Ballet from 1987 to 1990 and was a key member of the Merce Cunningham Dance Company in New York from 1991 to 1998. He then began his solo career and in 2000 founded Neopost Ahrrt in Geneva. As part of this organisation, he produced solo performances, group pieces, video works and educational projects. Foofwa d'Immobilité has won a number of international dance awards, including a bronze medal at the International Dance Competition in Jackson, Mississippi back in 1986, the Professional Level Prize at the Prix de Lausanne in 1987, New York's coveted Bessie Award in 1996 for his exceptional artistic achievement in Merce Cunningham productions and the Swiss Dance and Choreography Prize in 2006.

Foofwa is one of Switzerland's most technically accomplished dancers and continues to inspire the contemporary dance scene in a variety of ways. He has a superb command of many dance languages, ranging from classical ballet to modern forms. This comes to bear not only in his own works, but also in his "Histoires Condansées", wherein he uses dance demonstrations to trace the history of dance through the 20<sup>th</sup> century. His dancing always incorporates a refreshing touch of humour, not least in the stage name he chose back in the 1990s, which plays on the French words *fou* – meaning crazy – and *immobilité*, i.e. the opposite of movement (dropping the second "m" as part of the joke).

Karin Hermes, Member of the Jury:

*"The dancer Foofwa d'Immobilité challenges us and breaks with convention. His artistic radicalism draws on the outstanding technical ability he has displayed time and again both in Switzerland and abroad. This virtuosity as a dancer enables Foofwa d'Immobilité to switch from one style to another with ease and offer equally brilliant interpretations of contemporary and historical works."*

## Competition: «Current Dance Works»

### «Sideways Rain»: Alias Cie / Guilherme Botelho

Whereas Alias's previous works have dealt with individuals, emotions and relationships battling their fate, "Sideways Rain" takes a global view and does something minimalist and radical with it. A seemingly endless stream of people move across the stage from left to right individually, in pairs and in groups. Reflecting evolution, they creep, crawl, wriggle, walk, run, race and stand still, sometimes being overtaken and sometimes going with the flow. They all strive towards a fate that seems to slip through their fingers. "Sideways Rain" is time marching on, life rushing by, a physical metaphor for life that, aided by its soundtrack, develops an intoxicating and hypnotic force.

Bertram Müller, Member of the Jury:

*"Encounters with the choreographer Guilherme Botelho and his work are an invitation to be fascinated by the scope of his imagination as it creates magical spaces and surreal worlds. With his company Alias, he has amassed an outstanding oeuvre over many years in which choreographic virtuosity reinvents itself time and again through an inexhaustible language of movement. In 'Sideways Rain', it is his rigorous reductivism that impresses. The dancers retain their individuality despite the conformity in the constant flow of bodies. 'Sideways Rain' is being – it is a true masterpiece of contemporary dance."*

### Alias Cie / Guilherme Botelho

Brazilian choreographer Guilherme Botelho was born in 1962 in São Paulo and danced with the Ballet du Grand Théâtre de Genève for ten years before founding the Geneva-based company Alias in 1993. Since then, Alias has addressed the big themes of human existence. The idea of fate is a constant presence in its productions, which typically feature accidents, coincidences and things falling from the sky (water, paper, plaster...). Alias has enjoyed international success with its works, numbering around 20 to date, and has won several awards, including the Swiss Dance and Choreography Prize from the Corymbo Foundation in 2008.

## Competition: «Current Dance Works»

### «Disabled Theater»: Theater HORA / Jérôme Bel

Theater HORA has made a name for itself in Switzerland and abroad as a professional theatre company run by and for people with mental disabilities. The piece “Disabled Theater” was created with the aid of French choreographer Jérôme Bel, whose successful dancer portraits highlight the uniqueness and authenticity of his performers and shatter the conventions of theatre and dance. At first, Bel graciously declined the theatre group’s advances. When he saw their work, however, he became aware of their incredible potential. “Disabled Theater” tells the story of his first encounter with the performers of Theater HORA. With their help, he explores a form of theatre that knows no rules. The performers are quite simply themselves as they step onto the stage, state their name, occupation and disability and, with their dancing, demonstrate “what they’ve got”. Their authenticity, uniqueness and lack of inhibitions at once touch, unsettle and shame the audience, and they never fail to get people talking.

Christian Spuck, Member of the Jury:

*“With Jérôme Bel’s ‘Disabled Theater’, Theater HORA has succeeded in producing an emotionally overwhelming dance and theatrical piece. Treading a fine line between performance and exposé, this dance is deeply touching in its honesty. The performers manage to express the self striving for freedom. The dance’s pure authenticity is infectious, and it speaks straight from the heart. Provocation, directness and confrontation are expertly combined in a masterwork that simply cannot be ignored.”*

### Theater HORA

Theater HORA was founded in 1993 by theatrical coach Michael Elber. It took its name from the character of Hora in its first production, which was based on Michael Ende’s story “Momo”. Theater HORA has been working with guest directors and choreographers since 1998. Its aim has always been to promote the artistic development of people with mental disabilities and give them a professional platform on which to show their extraordinary abilities to a wide audience. At the 2013 Theatertreffen festival in Berlin, mentally disabled actress Julia Häusermann was awarded the Alfred Kerr Acting Prize.

## Competition: «Current Dance Works»

### «From B to B»: ZOO / Thomas Hauert

The journey “From B to B” starts in Brussels, where Thomas Hauert lives and works, and ends in choreographer Àngels Margarit’s home city of Barcelona. It is a journey of discovery for the duo as each explores the other’s life and working methods. Communication becomes a challenge. Their body language cannot be translated into words. The language that simultaneously binds them together and keeps them apart plays a key role in the piece. Starting with the letters of the names Thomas and Àngels, Catalan author Marius Serra created new words with which the two experiment in order to understand each other’s work. “From B to B” is a puzzle for both the dancers and the audience.

Tiziana Conte, Member of the Jury:

*“Contemplative and light-footed, playful and gripping, humorous and poetic – ‘From B to B’ is a journey, centred around encounters, through a physical, musical and linguistic dialogue between two generous and mature artists: Thomas Hauert and Àngels Margarit. It is an extremely personal work that provides space for a successful experiment in mixing techniques and languages – an experiment that lends structure to the piece. Aided by original and unadulterated body language, different experiences and bodies form and reform ideas of sense and beauty. The work is the result of a study spanning improvisation and dramaturgy, conveying an almost childlike astonishment emanating from the creative alchemy between two artists.”*

### ZOO / Thomas Hauert

Thomas Hauert was born in Grenchen in 1967 and trained at the Rotterdam Dance Academy. He later danced with Rosas, David Zambrano and Pierre Droulers before founding his own group, ZOO, in Brussels. ZOO’s début production “Cows in Space (1998)” was a big hit, touring in Belgium and abroad and winning two prizes at the renowned Rencontres chorégraphiques internationales de Seine-Saint-Denis. Hauert has since choreographed more than 15 pieces. In 2005, “modify” was awarded the Swiss Dance and Choreography Prize by the Corymbo Foundation.

## Competition: «Current Dance Works»

### «Diffraction»: Cie Greffe / Cindy Van Acker

“Diffraction” is a piece for six dancers and a lighting rig. The name refers to the physical phenomenon whereby both sound and light waves are bent when they encounter an obstacle. What happens when this is applied to a motion that affects a dancer? The four female and two male dancers with whom Cindy Van Acker has developed six solo performances in recent years are brought together on stage for this piece. They come up against the inquisitive eye of light, which becomes their co-star in the form of movable neon tubes. Their bodies melt into the fluorescently lit surroundings, and it remains unclear who or what is causing the movement – the dancers or the light itself.

Patrice Delay, Member of the Jury:

*“Everyone who attends a Cindy Van Acker performance leaves with the feeling that they have experienced something which demanded their full attention. Her piece ‘Diffraction’ is an orchestration of movement in light and sound, a choreography for six dancers that is intense and marvellous, austere and earnest. Over the past decade, Cindy Van Acker has built up a remarkable oeuvre which has helped to raise the profile of Swiss dance way beyond our national borders.”*

### Cindy Van Acker

Belgian choreographer Cindy Van Acker (born 1971) danced with the Royal Ballet of Flanders before moving to Geneva, where she was hired as a dancer by the Grand Théâtre de Genève. She began to choreograph her own pieces in 1994 and launched her international career with the solo production “Corps 00:00” in 2002. In 2005, she represented Switzerland at the Theatre Biennale in Venice. She choreographed famous director Romeo Castellucci’s “Inferno” (2007) and “Parsifal” (2011).



## June Johnson Dance Prize

### **«Dark side of the moon»: Asphalt Piloten / Anna Anderegg**

“Dark Side of the Moon” refers to the Moon’s hidden face, which remains unseen from the Earth. This piece delves into the mysteries of the imagination and the desire to discover somewhere altogether different but real. The city is the natural backdrop that inspires the fantastic universe depicted. Rocks are revealed, that which is dark and invisible is illuminated to produce a fairy tale in black and white in which a lightness of touch leaves its mark on the monumental aspect of the scenes created. “Dark Side of the Moon” is an original fantasy. The dancing, music and sculptural and video installations explore a world of fantastical creatures and show the city’s architecture in a new light.

The Asphalt Piloten are an artistic collective featuring a range of disciplines and nationalities. Headed by Swiss choreographer Anna Anderegg, who divides her time between Berlin and Biel, they create performances for public spaces. These always take place in towns or cities, in urban environments, among the people, images and sounds that go with them. Borrowing from street art, choreography, electro music and improvisation, contemporary and monumental art, the artistic leanings of this collective are alternative but nonetheless recognisable. This “in situ” project is as powerful as it is fragile. The Asphalt Piloten were awarded the Kultur- & Kreativpiloten Deutschland award by the German Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology in 2013 for their unconventional approach.

Beate Engel, Stanley Thomas Johnson Foundation:

*“The Asphalt Piloten fly over unsafe territory and leave behind temporary traces in urban environments. Everyday settings become the stage for multimedia performances that appear spontaneous and yet are precisely attuned to the specific backdrop. Together with her group, the young choreographer Anna Anderegg takes her audience on a voyage of discovery from the pavement to the moon – and beyond. Her new piece ‘Dark Side of the Moon’ sheds light on the world behind what is visible: a world that is distant and magical”.*