

# Pina Bausch, pioneering choreographer

BY DANIEL J. WAKIN

Pina Bausch, a German choreographer who combined potent drama and dream-like movement to create a powerful form of dance theater and influenced generations of dance-makers, died of cancer Tuesday, her company said. She was 68.

Ms. Bausch had received a diagnosis of cancer just five days earlier, said Ur-

## OBITUARY

sula Popp, a spokeswoman for the Tanztheater Wuppertal-Pina Bausch. Ms. Bausch's family did not make public the exact nature of the illness, Ms. Popp said. As recently as June 21, the choreographer had stood on stage after a performance of her most recent work, which is untitled, Ms. Popp said.

Ms. Bausch, whose roots were in pre-war German Expressionism, helped change the perception of what could be brought into a dance performance — a deep sense of theatrically, apparently disconnected and sometimes absurd episodes, elaborate and unusual sets, like a carpet of carnations and a collapsing wall.

Her base was the industrial city of Wuppertal, but the company was a fixture at Sadler's Wells Theater in London, the Théâtre de la Ville in Paris and festivals around the world. This sum-

mer, the company was expected to appear at the Spoleto Festival.

In the United States, Ms. Bausch has been a regular at the Brooklyn Academy of Music since 1984. B.A.M.'s executive producer, Joseph V. Melillo, said he had attended a performance of Ms. Bausch's new work in Wuppertal on June 12 and that she seemed tired but no more so than usual after having created a new piece. "She was Pina, loving and enjoying the company of all of us who had come to be at the premiere, celebrating with the dancers who had worked so hard," he said.

Mr. Melillo described Ms. Bausch as creating a new dance form — tanz theater — by transforming a pure formal dance background through "her own passions and technique and discipline." He added, "The whole scale of Pina Bausch's tanz theater no one had ever seen before."

Ms. Bausch established a method of creating dances that was widely copied.

She would begin rehearsals by asking specific questions of the dancers — about memories they had, about their daily lives — and create mini-dramas from their responses. The dance would grow out of that work, as well as a sense of place derived from the foreign residencies. The ideas and feelings were often harsh — frustration and alienation, cruelty and pain. She was quoted as say-

ing that she was "not interested in how people move, but in what moves them."

Ms. Bausch started dance study at 14, at the Folkwang School in Essen, which was directed by Kurt Jooss. After graduating in 1958, she received a government scholarship to continue her studies in the United States, working with José Limón, Anthony Tudor and others at the Juilliard School in New York City.

She quickly joined Tudor's company, the New American Ballet at the Metropolitan Opera and also worked with Paul Taylor. But her time there was short. In 1962, Ms. Bausch returned to Germany and joined Jooss's Folkwang Ballet as a soloist. She took up choreography in 1968, making her first work, called "Fragment." She succeeded Jooss as company director the following year.

By 1973, she took over a company in Wuppertal, which was quickly renamed Tanztheater Wuppertal, creating her first work there, called "Fritz," with music by Wolfgang Hufschmidt. But what really captured the dance world's attention was a 1975 production of Stravinsky's "The Rite of Spring," in which the stage was covered with dirt.

Her influence is clear in the work of European choreographers like Jan Fabre, Anne Teresa de Keersmaeker, Sasha Waltz and Alain Platel.

Roslyn Sulcas contributed reporting.

