

IDEA'25 AND FORM DANCE PROJECTS PRESENTS

RESONANCE

BY JAMES BATCHELOR & COLLABORATORS

Resonance unites three generations of Australian dancers in a moving celebration of memory, connection, and reinvention.

At its heart is a conversation between past and present, as Batchelor's meditative choreographic style engages in a curious dialogue with the legacy of Tanja Liedtke – a rising star in the Australian dance scene whose life was tragically cut short in 2007, on the eve of her ground-breaking appointment as Artistic Director of Sydney Dance Company.

Featuring dancers who worked closely with Liedtke and an intergenerational cast, including local guest dancers in each city it tours to, *Resonance* honours the dancer's body as a living archive. It becomes an intimate act of choreographic transmission – one that celebrates dance as a language of friendship, transformation, and enduring connection.

CREATIVES

Lead Artist, Choreographer, Producer - James Batchelor

Dramaturg, Producer - Bek Berger

Composer - Morgan Hickinbotham

Performed and realised by - Chloe Chignell, James Batchelor, Leah Marojević

with Amelia McQueen, Anton, Kristina Chan, Theo Clinkard, Aleisha Brown, Alice Collins, Astrid Cahill, Charlotte Whelan, Claudia Vales, Daniella Sywack, Edie Burgess, Eloise Watts, Grace Fuz, Ines Omodiagbe, James Snashall, Jera Wynyard, Madi Smith, Mahalia Adamson, Michiko Kogawa, Nala Davies, Poppy Nowlan, Shoshana Auerbach, Sofia Montano, Sophie Donald, Soraya Moncelet, Rose Giunta

Light Designer - Katie Sfetkidis

Costume Designer - Theo Clinkard

Venue Partner - Sydney Dance Company

SDC Head of Training - Linda Gamblin

SDC Pre-Professional Coordinator for *Resonance* - Madeline Harms

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Resonance has been generously supported by the Tanja Liedtke Foundation, assisted by the Australian Government through Creative Australia, its principal arts investment and advisory body, supported by ACT Government through artsACT, Michael Adena & Joanne Daly, Keir Foundation, Initiative LUNA PARK e.V. as part of the project „LUNAPARK.Residenzstipendien“ funded by the Berlin Senate Department for Culture and Social Cohesion, QL2 Dance, Canberra Theatre Centre New Works, Goethe Institut and our circle of friends via the Australian Cultural Fund.

The *Resonance* team would like to give special thanks to Kurt & Gerlinde Liedtke, Shane Carroll, Sol Ulbrich, Julian Crotti, Paul White, Sophie Travers, Fenn Gordon, Josh Tyler, Kerry Batchelor, Matthew Drummond, Steven McMillan, Linda Gamblin, Madeline Harms and Critical Path

FATES INTERTWINED: TRANSFORMING LIEDTKE'S ARCHIVE

BY JAMES BATCHELOR

There has been something deeply humbling as a choreographer now in my 30s, in letting go of the pressure to define my own artistic identity and to instead focus on my contribution to a bigger picture of cultural labour and expression. For the past three years, my path converged with Tanja Liedtke's.

Tanja Liedtke made lasting impressions on audiences with her magnetic charisma, clarity in dramaturgical vision and virtuosic skill as a performer and choreographer. In 2022, I was approached by the Tanja Liedtke Foundation to gauge my interest in leading a project that would deal with Tanja's legacy, marking 15 years since her passing.

The paths we traverse extend beyond our consciousness. In *Resonance* (2025) and my previous work *Shortcuts to Familiar Places* (2022) I have navigated authorship with choreographers no longer with us; Tanja Liedtke (1977-2007) and Gertrud Bodenwieser (1890-1959) respectively. Working from traces, embodied memories and inherited context has been richly generative in my practice. Whether we make this a focus or not, I would argue that we are always inhabiting, resisting adopting and renewing ideas in relation to those that have come before us.

We can consider this corporeal plurality in the frame of scholarly thinkers such as André Lepecki, who invites a view of the body itself as an archive, an accumulation of gestures, thoughts and techniques passed from body to body. For Lepecki, choreography is "a dynamic system of transmission and of transformation".¹ To luxuriate in that thought, I give myself the permission to be influenced. Curiously, I feel most myself when embodying Bodenwieser's ecstatic breath, eccentric spirals and sublime figure 8s - as passed down dutifully by Ruth Osborne, Carol Brown and Eileen Kramer.

I didn't know Tanja Liedtke. I didn't know Gertrud Bodenwieser either, yet my connection to them arrived via intergenerational transmission. When I was first approached by the Tanja Liedtke Foundation, it took me a moment to situate myself. I felt honored that they saw something in my potential to navigate something so important to them. But what would be the internal motivation for me? What would I have to say about her work that could contribute something meaningful to her legacy and the dance field?

I drifted back to my memory of watching *Twelfth Floor* at what was then The Australian Choreographic Centre in Canberra. I was 13 and part of the resident Quantum Leap youth dance ensemble. The use of the architecture of the black-box theatre (which the scenography for the stage version of *Twelfth Floor* was later based on) and the quirky characterisation of the dancers felt notable for its choreographic crafting of a complete theatrical world. Performers Paul White and Anton would also go on to choreograph pieces that I performed in Quantum Leap. Later on, whilst studying at Victorian College of the Arts, I did a secondment in Anton's work at *Legs on the Wall* in Sydney. After graduating, one of my first jobs as a professional dancer was at Tasdance in Launceston, where we performed a piece of repertoire by Liedtke *Enter Twilight*. These memories illuminated various layers of relation to Tanja and her collaborators that I had not previously considered.

¹ Lepecki, A. (2010). The body as archive: Will to re-enact and the afterlives of dances. *Dance Research Journal*, 42(2), 28-48.

The prompt from the Tanja Liedtke Foundation was open and generous - I understood it as stemming from their desire for the next generation of dancers to draw inspiration from Tanja. I saw Tanja as someone who could bring people together around an ambitious vision and as having an artistic perspective informed by living between Europe and Australia. Maybe there was something I could learn from her.

From there began a three year process of research and development of *Resonance*, beginning with reaching out to the people that knew Tanja's work best. Together with Dramaturg Bek Berger, I created a methodology of listening, tracing and gathering. An archive embodied as a network in the form of collaborators, conspirators, partners, friends: Sol Ulbrich, Sophie Travers, Fenn Gordon, Shane Carroll, Kristina Chan, Paul White, Anton, Amelia McQueen, Julian Crotti, Josh Tyler, Craig Bary and many more. Developing and nurturing these relationships was at times challenging and non-linear. The weight of Tanja's memory and the complexity of grief were an inextricable part of the process. Yet so was the joy in remembering. These conversations illuminated a many-layered web of relationships, fates intertwined, narratives which I feel I am part of too.

I spent time in the archive of Tanja's rehearsal and performance videos, which was compiled by Paul White and stored at the Mediathek für Tanz und Theater in Berlin. I also met Anton, Kristina and Amelia in dance studios in Australia, inviting them to 'transmit' and 'transform' memories of their work with Tanja in the spirit of Lepecki. My invitation to them was to remember in a way that feels relevant and brings pleasure. Amelia brought a costume and her notebook from *Twelfth Floor*, striving to be as faithful as possible in her transmission. Anton had me moving in a state of exhausting muscularity and ceaseless discomfort. Kristina improvised soft wind-like spirals and micro-stacking structures, noting that she had little desire to remember particular phrases of movement. I feel privileged to have been part of these tender and intimate moments of remembering and honouring their dear friend and collaborator.

Profound and fruitful as they were, as I entered the studio to begin the creation process, I remained unsure of what to do with Tanja's archive. Unlike Bodenwieser who lived a long life and left behind a large body of work, Liedtke's life was cut short; creating just two major works *Twelfth Floor* (2004) and *Construct* (2007).

On face value, my work looks very different to Liedtke's. Her work sat more in the genre of dance theatre; dealing with narratives and characterisation within crisply crafted movement sequences. My work is more like poetic meditation, gentle brushstrokes of movements, looping patterns, cultivating essences and energies. This meeting point proved to be a driving creative impetus in *Resonance*, a friction that produced surprising and exciting material. Starting from seeds of ideas planted by Tanja, or passed down memories from Amelia, Anton and Kristina, material evolved through choreographic intervention. Filtered through the aesthetic tastes and collaborative efforts of Leah, Chloe, Bek, Morgan - our instincts in transforming Tanja's archive speak to the distance of then and now, Australia and Europe. It says as much about our similarities as our differences. Echoing Tanja might here be an invitation to look inward and ruminate on our place in this history, ultimately leaning towards who and where we are now in the present.

It wasn't until I arrived at Sydney Dance Company to lead a two-week workshop with students in the Pre-professional Year training program in 2024 that I began to imagine *Resonance* as a multi-generational production. We watched the documentary that was made shortly after Tanja's passing; *Life in Movement*. This stimulated long discussions on Tanja's significance to the younger generations who did not know her, with an immediate proximity to the unfolding story in that very building. As I saw the material that had been filtered from Tanja's cohort through my collaborators in Berlin now to a third generation, the archive transformed in front of my eyes. It landed for me then that we were meeting the brief set out at the beginning of the project. Whether directly or indirectly, we were dancing Tanja's legacy, which is something that must be alive in the bodies of

dancers and in live performance. Dance which is a form that is in movement and liveness *must* transform, and it is that capacity for change that enables a legacy to be carried on and meet new contexts.

Resonance flowed into a form as if there was only one fate; a symphony of moving parts, close to 60 artists across three cities spanning three generations, an unwieldy budget, several partners, somehow creating an undeniable case to come into being. I feel immensely humbled by the work and thankful to the invitation and support of the Liedtkes and all the artists and supporters who have contributed. It has been a deeply touching process, a landmark not just for me but in various ways for many of us. I look forward to the moment of meeting audiences and anticipate with excited curiosity the unfolding of new archives that contribute to the continued transformation.

—

This essay appears alongside other written contributions in a printed booklet that will be available to take home after the performance.