

Stream from the Heeder factory in Krefeld

7000 dance steps on four square meters

June 4, 2021 at 5:59 p.m | Lesedauer: 5 minutes



Kai Strathmann and his wife Chun Zhang founded the Yibu Dance Company in 2019. In their current production they go to the limits of perception. Photo: City of Krefeld

Krefeld . The young company Yibu Dance shows an extraordinary production at the festival "First and Further Steps" in the factory Heeder. She translates the molecular structure of a strand of DNA into contemporary dance.

By Isabel Mankas-Fuest

The dance company Yibu Dance was a guest at Fabrik Heeder with their new piece. In "Whirling Ladder / Between" they go to the limits of perception and show 7000 steps on four square meters - a minimalist piece in a small space with all the more movement. This is the challenge that Yibu Dance takes on.

Their everyday life is strongly characterized by efficiency: training in the morning, teaching at noon and performing on stage in the evening - freelance dancers often have several jobs in order to be able to live from their art: "We are driven," says Kai Strathmann, "always on the Looking for impulses and new projects." Together with his wife and Chun Zhang, the two founded the company "Yibu Dance" in 2019 after completing their studies at the Folkwang University of the Arts. At the end of May they were guests at the orphaned Heeder factory as part of "First and Further Steps" and premiered their play "Whirling Ladder / Between" - albeit without an audience.

▮ INFO

One production as a stream, one live

Whirling Ladder / Between by Yibu Dance will be available to watch online on Wednesday 9th and Thursday 10th June from 7pm to 10pm. The link to the online premiere: <https://vimeo.com/552270516/cfa00a1e00> (available free of charge until 10 p.m.).

On Friday, June 18, at 8 p.m., Céline Bellut and her company will perform "Hold on" at Fabrik Heeder.

Info www.firstandfurthersteps.de

The performance will be streamed free of charge between 7 p.m. and 10 p.m. on Wednesday, June 9th and Thursday, June 10th, and probably in fall as part of "Move!", according to the plan.

Production is about relationships - a broad topic that Chun Zhang looks at from an unusual perspective: "In microbiological geometry, nothing stands for itself, we took a very close look at that using the example of base pair geometry." the double strand of DNA or RNA - better known as the DNA double helix. But where is the connection between molecular structure and contemporary dance? Zhang and Strathmann explain: "We kept zooming in on this complex thread and found something interesting: The pattern in which the base pairs interact reminds us of choreographic notations."

Even more precisely: the four types of bases in DNA fit together specifically. A always mates with T, and C always mates with G. Those micro-movements at the genetic level eventually become the template for the duo's actual movements — "It's a bit nerdy," Zhang admits, but that's just the kind of piece she's always had want to do.

So much for the very theoretical approach. Circumstances set the practical framework: during the months of lockdown, the couple realized they couldn't do their planned four-dance piece, so they opted for the duo piece. When it comes to connections or relationships, dealing with closeness and distance is inseparable - an experience that everyone has had in the past few months. "The relationship between us forms the basis, we are constantly busy reacting to our counterparts, which is why the piece consists 100 percent of movement," reveals Strathmann, who also composed the music for the piece.

The dancers are happy that they were able to bring their piece to the stage in Krefeld and are looking forward to autumn, when they will be able to dance it in front of an audience.

The artists got to know each other while studying at Essen University of the Arts. Both of their final productions were nominated for the prestigious Kurt Jooss Prize in 2019, which Zhang eventually won with her play *Being Far Away From*. Both pieces play with borderline experiences - a theme that runs like a red thread through their individual and joint productions. Strathmann has danced in the urban dance scene for a long time - first in Los Angeles, then throughout Europe. Today he incorporates these experiences into his choreographic work and draws on different dance styles such as poppin, LA style and ballet. Zhang was born in Shanghai, to study, where she learned not only contemporary dance but also the traditional Chinese martial art Wing Chun. And although she had a secure position as a lecturer at the conservatory, she decided to study in Essen. "Here we got to know movement compositions that usually tell a story, but you don't always have to tell a story, you can also choreograph in order to choreograph," emphasizes Zhang, emphasizing that she wants to break away from traditional compositional techniques. Similar to Wing Chun, she is concerned with the greatest possible efficiency of the movement - it forms the core of her latest choreographic implementation: "We have left out everything that is not absolutely necessary," says Chung, who describes herself as a "logic person".

Strathmann stands for the concentrated load of emotions, paired with a differentiated movement vocabulary. For Zhang, "Whirling Ladder / Between" has a special meaning: "In this piece I asserted my movement composition for the first time and gained self-confidence that we should live out exactly what is inside of us."

Dance performance "Move" in Krefeld

When genetic codes are danced

October 7, 2021 at 4:22 p.m | Lesedauer: 2 minutes



With "Whirling Ladder / Between" Chun Zhang and Kai Strathmann had their online premiere in June, now they are showing their piece in front of an audience. Photo: Ursula Kaufmann

Krefeld . "Whirling Ladder / Between" has already had its premiere in Now the fascinating piece by the company Yibu Dance comes to the stage. It combines genetic structures with Chinese martial arts.

(ped) Can the smallest structures of the body be represented in dance? And what does that have to do with traditional Chinese martial arts? The Yibu Dance company wants to show it on Saturday, October 9th at 8 p.m. in the Heeder factory. Their production "Whirling Ladder / Between" had its online premiere in June this year at the Krefeld Festival "First & Further Steps". Now follows the live stage premiere.

Yibu Dance was founded in Velbert and drew attention to itself with its experimental staging style, which builds on the interaction of bodies and indirectly also of dance and audience.

In Whirling Ladder / Between, Chun Zhang and Kai Strathmann weave the Chinese martial art of Wing Chun and base-pair geometry: everything is connected here. The audience experiences the process of "transformation". Every step, every shift of weight brings a new relationship and situation into the picture.

The "Physical Introduction" will set the mood from 7 p.m. (included in the admission ticket).

Saturday, October 9, 8 p.m., Heeder factory. Tickets for 13 euros, reduced 7.50 at www.krefeld.de/kartenreservierung



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Online Premiere: First&Further Steps Systemisches System



Online Premiere: First&Further Steps

Systemic system

Yibu Dance demand their audience with “Whirling Ladder | Between “a lot

Night review by Rico Stehfest

It doesn't take much to recognize the twisted ladder from the title as human DNA. Chun Zhang and Kai Strathmann knit these as carefully and minimalistically within 50 minutes. To do this, they move in the stream from the Heeder dance factory in Krefeld in a darkened room on a bright dance floor, the illuminated field of which is hardly two meters by two meters. Dark pants, dark, glittering tops, identical. You are the base pair. And they have a lot to do. Completely intimate, they act together towards a common goal, absorbed in themselves, introspectively. There are just a few small steps that you take, forwards and backwards. Everything else, upper body, arms, remains without expression. Regardless of the change in perspective the camera adopts, they remain turned away from the viewer for a long time, accompanied by fragmentary, restrained sounds.

This minimalist, reduced approach, this repetitive, is the process of "knitting" the DNA. And that is precisely what is not varied, so it is not exciting for the viewer. Variations move in an extremely limited set of possibilities. To equate that with a lack of complexity, however, would mean misunderstanding the matter. Initially, this reduction is nothing but a fact. "Aus-Druck" is exactly what this is not about. Instead, it is the observation that is in the foreground, the active pursuit of this pattern. The camera moves mainly in the area of the frog's eye view; if she changes to a central perspective, a color filter is placed over the stream, which tends to be a bit sepia. It's as if someone were suddenly looking at the process differently. Nevertheless, the audience is left with nothing but this view from the outside. That puts attention to the test. Nothing is easier than dismissing this supposed non-action as boring. If there is an unexpected cut that is followed by a brief focus on the footwork, it looks almost exciting, so little variety is sown.

This leaves the viewer plenty of room for reflection. How can such a reduced work be memorized in the sequence of its steps for the performers? Is there a recognizable knitting pattern? How "long" is human DNA actually? Can this ever come to an end? Is this introspective the result of the permanent corona ego turned inward?

About halfway through the performance, something like a break in or breakout into the third dimension occurs: the legs of the two performers buckle, in the knees, in the hips, causing movements from top to bottom and back. If you pause, the path will fork. If both performers have previously worked "in concert", synchronously or at least with one another, now differences, differences, discrepancies become recognizable. Just as minimal as everything before, but still not to be overlooked. The same goal is pursued in individual ways. This leads to a new kind of togetherness: the one supports, supports the other, serves him, helps. What is it? Evolution? Customization? It is being different, becoming different. A process whose supposed simplicity reveals nothing about the final result.

Once again online this evening at 7 p.m. here at [TANZwebKREFELD.de](https://www.tanzweb.org/krefeld/)



WHIRLING LADDER | BETWEEN©Ursula Kaufmann

By Rico standing party | June 10th, 2021

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PERFORMANCE IN KREFELD

The power of repetition

October 10, 2021 at 4 p.m. | Lesedauer: 4 minutes



Chun Zhang and Kai Strathmann - Yibu Dance - in their performance "Whirling Ladder, between". Photo: Ursula Kaufmann

Krefeld .At the Move Festival for contemporary dance in the Heeder factory, Yibu Dance challenged itself and the audience to persevere.

Von [Christian Oscar Gazsi Laki](#)

Both of them must have sore muscles as hell - or maybe not, because what the choreographer and performer couple Chun Zhang and Kai Strathmann showed that evening obviously requires a lot of training. In a very unusual performance as part of the "Move!" Festival for contemporary dance in the Heeder factory, this time it was less about particularly extroverted expression, about emotions and feelings translated into movement, or about a "story". No, it got repetitive and in such an obsessive way that the work demanded a lot from both the performers and the audience. In its minimalism, however, the "piece", which lasted a little less than an hour - although this term fails here - sparked enormous energies, through which more and more sequences filled with a special feeling for time, for repetition and increase, reduction and repetition.

DNA as inspiration for repetitive "steps"

"Whirling Ladder, between", the title of the production by Yibu Dance, which incidentally already premiered as a video production in the format "First and further steps" in the midst of the pandemic, is about sequences. It is about repetitive sequences of small movements that consist of different "steps" and shifts in weight, accompanied by minimalist "sounds" that are interspersed with different "rhythms" like a Morse code that is incomprehensible to human ears. By the way, Kai Strathmann created the sounds himself - he is also responsible for the music.

The inspiration for this was on the one hand - as one learns from the artist couple - the geometry of DNA base pairs that carry the information of our genes like a kind of biological "spiral staircase" in the body. On the other hand, the two name the Chinese martial art Wing Chun as another source for the nucleus of choreography. Which is surprising, since the hands of the two performers will constantly hang down on the body.

Info

Festival

“Move!” The “Krefeld Days for Modern Dance” take place between September 24th and November 13th in the Heeder factory. Maps and further information online.

krefeld.de/de/kulturbuero/move-krefelder-tage-fuer-modernen-tanz/

But that is not the only peculiarity or specialty of this work, which as a whole at the end of the day seems a bit like a cryptic courtship dance of an alien species that apparently has a completely different feeling for time and space; or, if you want it a little less raptured, like a long-forgotten archaic ritual to conjure up a no less forgotten deity of patience. That should not imply criticism, but neither should it smooth out what cannot be smoothed out: Yibu Dance has created a work that is certainly extremely intelligently constructed, but which also has a deliberate length and a meditative monotony that should not be for everyone. Basically, it is a study of observing movement. The - perhaps scientific - rear structure, the "16 ways of moving as a couple", which would like to relate to human DNA, is more of a nice background information, but not really a key.

What do we see exactly? At the beginning a dark room, in which a rectangular spot of light appears. This is where the performance begins with initially quite inconspicuous, almost casual and casual-looking “steps”. You don't see the faces of the two for a long time, they have their backs to the audience, making them look even more dehumanized like two figures in a machine in which programmed processes are running. But none of this has anything mechanical in the nature of the movements. The way they move their feet forward, then left or right, then sideways, with or without a heel, later even twice, synchronously, that is, together and then in opposite directions, is almost reminiscent of a ghostly "shaking". Like impulses from a code that “runs” - here the image of the DNA again fits very well as an aid - and controls the muscles of the two. Sometimes next to each other, then also changing the position, but with the exception of very few resting poles, where the upper body also plays a role for a short time, with an exclusive focus on "footwork".

The feet and legs move constantly, briefly and purposefully the two dragging their socks across the white dance floor. Or lift your feet slightly. In the meantime they turn both "figures" with their backs to each other. And there is also another movement, a kind of "squat", which mixes with the foot patterns. Seeming infinitely. Without break. In the end it builds into such a rapid rhythm that you actually have to worry about the leg muscles of Chun Zhang and Kai Strathmann.

Small exhibition in the foyer also showed "notation" of the movements

Probably also out of enthusiasm for this physical performance, there was of course long-lasting applause for the two who founded "Yibu Dance" as a production unit in 2019. Since 2015, the first day of their master's degree in choreography at the Folkwang University of the Arts, they have been working together in a team. What you need to know: He was initially in the IT industry (but that was a long time ago) and originally comes from urban dance, she went through traditional Chinese dance training.

A small "exhibition" in the foyer was also exciting to see. There you could see different "notations" - a kind of written fixation of the movement - of the performance. Film excerpts by Maurits Boettger illuminated individual "scenes" of the performance and a photo series by Ursula Kaufmann showed the different stages of the dance process.

de.yibudance.com

CONTEMPORARY DANCE IN KREFELD

How micro-movements become dance

June 5, 2021 at 08:00 | Lesedauer: 4 minutes



Kai Strathmann (left) and Chun Zhang in their performance "Whirling ladder, between". Photo: Ursula Kaufmann

Krefeld . The series "First and further steps" by the Kulturbüro Krefeld shows a premiere of Yibu Dance as a stream on June 9th.

Von [Christian Oscar Gazsi Laki](#)

There is currently a lot of experimentation going on in the sphere of contemporary dance. With borders, border crossings, with the exploration of movements and where and how they arise, but also with analogies, for example in nature or in the sciences. The Krefeld format for the young dance scene in NRW "First and further steps" also focuses on such things. This year, however, still under the difficult conditions of the pandemic, especially for the world of dance, which currently allows more, but still makes many things impossible. As before, the word of the hour is "digital" despite all openings, also for the duo Yibu Dance. Even if there seem to be plans for a face-to-face event with "Hold on" by Céline Bellut in the Heeder factory on June 18, according to the website - the WZ will provide an announcement with the Corona rules promptly.

And how well does it fit that there is a newly established website for the format maintained by the Kulturbüro Krefeld, with all the information, freshly and nicely prepared - such a novelty. The cultural office's planned website is still in the works - the WZ reported - but apparently this small but very fine website offers a really nice foretaste of what the public will expect in the future when they are looking for cultural events in Krefeld.

The DNA and martial arts as a model for a dance performance

Due to the pandemic, the premiere (June 9) of the new piece by Yibu Dance - these are Chun Zhang and Kai Strathmann - will only take place online. Yet. The duo was actually invited to "First and further steps" in the Heeder factory in 2020, but can now finally show their new work - at least virtually, but the pandemic has also made it a legitimate path, even if it feels like it and cannot replace what is perceived in the presence. It will be interesting to see whether the filigree movements of Chun Zhang and Kai Strathmann, which are full of suspense, can also unfold their full power on the screen. If you talk to the two, one thing becomes clear right from the start. They think holistically, more in overall-conceptual, performative works of art, where not only movement and scene play a role, but also sound (created by Strathmann himself) is part of the overall composition. Highly concentrated.

Info

Reihe

Plans Due to the pandemic, the premiere of Yibu Dance could only be realized as a video. The piece was recorded in the Heeder factory and can be seen via stream as part of "First and further steps". Premiere on June 9th at 7pm. The link can be accessed free of charge until 10 p.m., as well as on Thursday, June 10, from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. Further productions are planned as part of the series. The performances of the Cie. Les Enfants du Pain Perdu and the Cie. The city reports that entretemps have to be cancelled. "Hold on" by Céline Bellut is planned for June 18 (8 p.m.) but in attendance. A separate announcement with information will follow.

firstandfurthersteps.de

In "Whirling Ladder, Between" the artist couple draws an analogy to "microgeometry", as they call it, the "double helix". The spiral shape that can be found in human DNA, but also in anatomy - "that's the most natural form of movement for us humans," says Zhang. But the two are also interested in the "micro-movements" that they want to translate into their art. Here, on the one hand, they draw on the example of nature, but on the other hand they add another level. The martial art Wing Chun, which the two are researching, but which both have been accompanying for a long time.

Here the "Between", the "Between" also gets its hermeneutic meaning. As is so often the case in dance art, which here once again meets martial arts, the "actual" takes place in the intermediate space, in the transition. "The base pair geometry serves as a blueprint for 16 ways to move as a pair," says Yibu-Dance's website. Micro-movements at the genetic level would become the model for the "actual movements of the duo", which - like in Wing Chun - are "centered, minimalist and absolutely efficient". abstracted. "We're more essentialist," stresses Zhang. With these "means" Strathmann has once again created sound structures that accompany the movements.

And what exactly will the audience see? "It's very minimalist," says Zhang. The two dancers move in a four square meter area and they will "take about 7000 steps in 50 minutes" - without a break. "It's not an everyday room," adds Strathmann. The room will be designed with light; the two are also concerned with a "psychic" depth, with a mental space. They don't want to reveal more.

Since earning a master's degree in choreography from Folkwang University of Arts, Chun and Kai began collaborating and creating as a team, founding Yibu-Dance. Actually, they originally come from different spheres. "We already had independent dance careers before our Folkwang days," says Kai Strathmann. Zhang comes from a traditional Chinese dance background and Strathmann's art grew out of the urban scene. Worlds that cannot be cast off, that in a certain way always have an effect, even if only indirectly in reminiscences; two aspects that can be related to each other. Fascinating.

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MOVE FESTIVAL IN KREFELD

Yibu Dance live in the Heeder

October 4, 2021 at 7:00 p.m | Lesedauer: A minute



The performance by Chun Zhang (right) and Kai Strathmann is very minimalist.

Photo: Ursula Kaufmann

Krefeld . "Whirling Ladder / Between": In June 2021, the production had its online premiere at the Krefeld Festival "First & Further Steps". Now the performance can be experienced on site with an audience at "Move!".

The Move Festival continues. On Saturday, October 9, at 8 p.m., the company Yibu Dance will come to Krefeld with their production "Whirling Ladder / Between". In June 2021, the production had its online premiere at the Krefeld Festival "First & Further Steps". Now the stage premiere follows live in front of an audience in the Heeder factory (Virchowstraße 130).

In the production, the company Yibu Dance from Velbert not only shows the “compelling interaction of human bodies, but indirectly also of dance and audience. Chun Zhang and Kai Strathmann weave the Chinese martial art of Wing Chun and base-pair geometry with artistic precision: everything is connected,” reads the announcement. Stylistically precise, their micro-movements and minimalistic media fill the stage, guiding the audience through the process of “transformation”: every step, every shift of weight brings a new relationship and situation into the picture. The "Physical Introduction" format invites the audience from 7 p.m. to engage in the performance with their bodies and all their senses. The admission ticket is also valid for this.

But there is also a lot to be found in the foyer: a short film by Maurits Boettger artfully captures details of the stage performance and shows its character in a clear and minimalist way. A picture wall presents photographs by the photographer Ursula Kaufmann.

Tickets for "Move!" can be reserved online at the Cultural Office. editor

krefeld.de/kartenreservierung
