

***Pina* dance film**

Name

Course

Institution

Instructor

Date

*Pina* was created in 2011 by Wim Wenders, the film is massive and tender tribute to the life of choreographer Pina Bausch. This is not simply a documentary but rather a reimagining of dance on film with choreography by Bausch and the cinematic vision of Wenders. The film promises extensive insight into the realization of Tanztheater, a very specific dance theatre that blurs the boundaries between dramatic storytelling and performance (Wenders, 2011). While based on dance, this film goes way beyond simple dance films and offers the viewers an opportunity to watch the characters and the dancers perform scenes that reflect the desire for love, loss, and strength. The documentary shows how filming, editing, choreography, and sound design work together to make the film. This way, Wenders makes sure that the camera is not merely capturing the dances but is actually participating in the narrative. *Pina* repurposes dance on screen through the intense work of Bausch in collaboration with cinematic elements that enhance its directing depiction of human feelings and relations.

Pina Bausch's choreography shows a detailed analysis of the human condition through devotion to focusing on love, fear, and strength, together with exploring more of everyday people's actions as they are transformed into artistic movements. Her Tanztheater approach subverts the conventional definitions of dance by incorporating dramatic gestures such as facial expressions, objects, and vocalization, which makes her works easily understood yet profoundly meaningful (Fazenda, 2021). Bausch's choreography is not only shown in front of the spectators, but it is also something that can make people think about their lives.

One of the most expressive part in *Pina* is the performance of *The Rite of Spring*. In this piece or performance, the work is beyond conventional definitions of stage, for it means using the floor which is dark and made of loose soil; and not only as a positive setting for the piece, but as an active, even live, part of the choreography (Wenders, 2011). The soil is not just a stage on

which the performance takes place; it engages the dancers, clings to their skin, getting uprooted by their own movements, thus representing the influence people have on the land. Indeed, the choreography in this sequence appears to be primal as well as visceral and the dancers' sharp movements alternate between power and the submission (Daly, 2019). They stick their hands into the ground as if they want to get freedom or as if they seek nourishment from the ground. Therefore, whenever they use their bodies to roll over the ground, they leave impressions which with time wear away on the analogy of the cycle of life.

Another feature of this piece is the instances of the recurrence of the subject, both thematically and visually. Several dancers do jumping and every time, they hit the ground. Apparently, their bodies recovering as though caught in an unending loop of renewal and struggle. It recreates the life cycle, which includes birth, growth, deterioration, and rebirth, and thereby depicts the unchanging ability of man to push on regardless of the conditions of hardship (Daly, 2019). The coordinated movements of all these members of the ensemble produce a hypnotic rhythm, and this slowly pulls the audience into the emotional part of the dance. This repetition only serves to bring the themes of persistence and inevitability while also emphasizing the emotional and physical endurance of the dancers as their movements embody the essence of human existence.

Bausch's ability to turn ordinary, daily gestures into powerful messages can be observed in other segments of the film. In *Café Müller*, for example, some of the components that form choreography includes memory, loss, and loneliness. The stage is filled with chairs, and the dancers move between these chairs by appearing to be clumsy, which gives the real picture of human emotions and relationships. The dancers often fall, are tripped, or hit by the objects and each other's movements, a metaphor for the unpredictability and fragility of life (Fazenda, 2021).

One of the striking images is a dancer falling and a partner catching her, only to release her again. This episode of falling and being caught several times over fits the theme of dependency and trust in relationships and evokes both unease and comfort. There is another level of emotional involvement through the difference in tempos and dynamics. Often, a dancer may perform slowly as if they are weighed with something, and the next moment, the very same dancer can perform with great speed and energy that convey a sense of desperation or urgency (Daly, 2019). This brings out an element of tension that makes the audience involved in experiencing a full spectrum of emotions in one session.

Elaborations of props and set also augment Bausch's choreography and movement in her work. In *Café Müller*, the chairs are used specifically as barriers to symbolize many different types of problems that people encounter in their lives. These intentional connections with these props, such as rearranging them, knocking them over, or using them as supports, show how humans try to manage a particular environment in which they find themselves (Fernandes, 2021). Through concentration on these specific human activities, Bausch's choreography becomes traditional dance, which presents a deeply personal view of people's lives to the viewers.

In *Pina*, the dancers are not only performers; they are storytellers who convey messages through their gestures, movements, and glances. This concept is clearly portrayed through Bausch's choreography as the individuality of each dancer is captured with a shared, unifying story (Kourlas, 2023). It is this tension between the personal and the universal that makes her work so engaging. Whether the visceral intensity of *The Rite of Spring* or the vulnerability of *Café Müller*, Bausch's movement allows the audience to recognize themselves in the dancers and thus establishes a profound connection that remains almost palpable after the performance has ended.

Wim Wenders' usage of 3D cinematography in the film *Pina* innovates the way the dance performances are captured on the screen, as those can bring the viewers closer to the choreography created by Pina Bausch. This technique converts the flat, observational analysis of traditional film into a three-dimensional space where texture, depth, and movement take center stage (Banes, 2018). Wenders positions the camera in the midst of the choreography so the audience feels like they are part of the performance, thereby achieving a heightened sense of the immediacy of the dances.

One of the most effective uses of this approach can be seen in the Café Müller scene. Thus, the camera is no longer positioned at a distance from the dancers; it actually weaves itself through the chairs and around the dancers (Fernandes, 2021). This approach reflects such stage poses that closely resemble the chaos of the movements throughout the stage and give an unclear sense of the tension. The shots of the Dancer's faces provide such a small sign of their facial expressions, which are furrowed eyebrows, trembling lips, and shifting glances that express emotional turmoil and vulnerability. Such shots not only pull the audience into the performer's personal space but also underscore the emotional impact of the choreography so that the audience can literally sense the weight of each move and gesture.

The dynamic use of camera angles enhances Wenders' cinematographic work of *Pina*. Shots of the high pitch, like the *Vollmond* (Full Moon) sequence, give a view of the collective dancing in the water. This prospect reflects the fascination of splashes, ripples, and reflections, which assume the function of the dancers' movements (Foresman, 2019). This simple element of using water, quickly reacting to the lights, and turning the spot into a living, breathing element of

the choreography. Thus, high-angle shots stress the unity and people's energy, the dancers' choreography, and coordination with both other dancers and their surroundings.

On the other hand, low-angle shots are used to focus on the monumentality of single dancers. By filming the performers from below, Wenders instills their movements in a sense of grandeur and power, as if the dancers are larger-than-life figures (Banes, 2018). This technique is especially beneficial in solos, in which the viewer's attention is drawn to the physicality of a performer, his or her strength, grace, and vulnerability. The use of high and low camera angles is constantly done throughout the film, thus preventing the two aspects of Bausch's work – its capacity to stress both the individual and collective, intimate and the grand. The transitions between the settings demonstrate the most profoundly Wenders' cinematic ingenuity (Foresman, 2019). There is one scene in which a character starts dancing alone on the narrow, dim stage, and all her actions are limited by the stage's frame. Suddenly, entire sequences change and are shot on open ground on a sunny day, where the same choreography is done in the background of rolling hills and endless sky. This transition opens up the context of the performance, implying that feelings and messages of Bausch's creation are not bound by a definite place or era. Instead, they are timeless and cross-cultural or geographical barriers.

Another level of depth is the selection of outdoor locations for shooting, thereby enhancing visual language. Forests, cliffs, city streets, and other natural settings play a part in the presentation of the performances, giving an emotional setting to expand the choreographic pattern. For instance, the movement of wind, light, and shade on the performers' bodies creates a dynamic relationship between choreographers and their environment (Kourlas, 2023). These elements, shot with great skill in cinematography by Wenders, turn each scene into a protagonist that plays an active part in the storyline.

The editing transitions in *Pina* work to link together the varied performances and locations, presenting a coherent and accurate relation of the themes of Bausch. To help the audience follow his storytelling, Wenders uses match and cut continuity to provide the audience with a rhythm that sequences the film to the rhythm of the dance (Banes, 2018). This editing style strengthens the thought that Bausch's work is not just about individual pieces but more a unified fabric of the human experience.

Wenders offers one of the most inspiring editing performances, juxtaposing a duet on a stage with a completely bare background and the people's group dance in an urban plaza. This special kind of duet, with expressions of affectionate closeness in its strict, controlled dynamic, is about introspection and solitude (Higgins, 2015). These dynamics are significantly different from those of the ensemble piece, which is filled with life and activity as dancers engage with the society around them. The change from these two scenes is also an effective demonstration of Bausch's ability to shift between the individual and the public spheres in her choreography.

The sound aspect in *Pina* is just as significant and powerful as the visual one since it supports the actors' emotional resonance of the performances through a curated auditory landscape. Every piece choice enhances the intonation and rhythms of the piece, from the high-impact Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* to the ethereal, ambient tones used in introspective pieces (Higgins, 2015). The music underlines and enhances the key actions of the dancers, calling the audience into the emotional center of each performance.

Pauses are as important as the music they demonstrate and make people focus on the physicality of dancers and the sounds produced by them. For example, in *The Rite of Spring*, the absence of music in some of the pieces underlines the physical contact between the characters and the soil. The sound of the hands scraping through dirt, striking the ground, and bodies

moving along the stage provides an auditory feeling that places the audience right in the middle of the performance.

Ambient sounds, like the faint murmurs of nature or the rustling of fabric in outdoor locations, enhance the film's multisensory experience. These are the things that anchored the performances to their settings and could be the sound of footsteps reverberating through a vast theatre or the distant hum of city life in an open square (Adshead-Lansdale & Layson, 2006). Thus, Wenders and his team incorporate these elements in the sound design, making sure the film adds to the film's emotional and narrative richness.

The combination of editing and sound design can be best observed in the transition between each of the performances that occur both indoors and outdoors. For instance, there is a scene where a dancer performs a solo dance on a stage with the lights off and a soft melody playing in the background to form introspection. As the scene moves to an open field with sunlight, the music slowly dies and is replaced by the sound of the wind blowing and birds chirping. This change of auditory and visual experience not only makes the appreciation of the emotional impact but also highlights Bausch's themes, where she was able to capture not only the essence of confined spaces but also the vastness of the natural world.

In *Pina*, editing and sound design are not only technique but they are part of the narrative. Thus, by employing all the senses at once and having them interdependent on each other, Wenders manages to provide a genuine depiction of Pina Bausch that evokes the sense of movement, passions and the very meaning of existence.

*Pina* is not a mere appreciation of the arts of dance but a reflection on existence itself. Thus, the combination of the topics and the cast of the film and the choice of locations chosen also speaks supporting the message of Bausch's work in relations to social and cultural frames



(Kourlas, 2023). It is also in this film that the dancers from different origins are helpful in diversifying the cultural value of the film. People reveal their impressions and perspectives on Bausch's works as part of the show and the show itself, and allows to see how the choreography is changing their lives and careers (Adshead-Lansdale & Layson, 2006). The stories support beauty in dance and convey the significance of and in personal and ensemble dance. A highly touching narrative was told by a dancer who described how the different dance pieces of Bausch assisted them in dealing with their own vulnerabilities. This reflection contrasts with a solo performance in which the movements of the dancer portray the theme of strength and fragility, which is an intensified visual depiction of their emotional journey. The aspects of shooting in the different locations also contribute to the general theme of the film by depicting love, loss, and survival. Performances set in urban surroundings, natural landscapes, and stages indicate that dance can act as a bridge between different contexts and cultures.

In conclusion, Wim Wenders' *Pina* is a splendid synthesis of choreography, cinematography, and, particularly, editing and, at the same time, an inspiring reflection on the prospects of the human condition via the lens of Pina Bausch's Tanztheater. Thus, making the audience feel the spatial and emotional environment of the performances, the film goes beyond the typical formats of dance and moves towards the realm of art that is as timelessly stunning as it is practically revolutionary. Thus, this paper has shown that, by examining particular scenes and approaches, *Pina* conveys the spirit of Bausch's work while pushing the boundaries of cinematic storytelling. *Pina* helps the audience involve themselves in the issues that can be essential in our world and remember that the art of dance will forever be powerful.

## References

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### Summaries of Sources

**Adshead-Lansdale, J., & Layson, J. (2006). *Dance History*. Routledge.**

This book provides a consideration of the developments of dances with respect to their social, cultural, and historical backgrounds. It explores the nature of general dance and its relation to transformation in society. The authors contribute to the understanding of how choreography can inform as well as influence the experiences of humans. This source is useful to comprehend the historical and cultural context of dance as an art form, which enhances the interpretation of Pina Bausch's choreography in *Pina*.

**Banes, S. (2018). *Writing Dancing in the Age of Postmodernism*. Wesleyan University Press.**

**<https://www.wespress.org/9780819562685/writing-dancing-in-the-age-of-postmodernism/>**

Banes examines the relationship between postmodernism and dance. The author particularly pays attention to how dance became innovative in terms of organizing art. The author focuses on movements and choreographers who revolutionized the understanding of dance as a medium. This source provides information needed in the paper to analyze Bausch's work, particularly her unique approach that incorporates dance with theatrical narrative.

**Daly, C. (2019). *A Perplexing Pilgrimage: The Spectator as Mitreisender in the Tanztheater of Pina Bausch*.**

**<https://pure.roehampton.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/407760/CAMPBELL.pdf>**

This article analyzes the experiences of the spectators during the performance of Pina Bausch's Tanztheater. According to Daly, Bausch effectively negates the spectator-performer

divide by producing an investment in an emotional narrative. This view is one of the principal reasons for the sense of identification viewers have with what is presented in Pina, especially in *The Rite of Spring* and *Café Müller*.

**Fazenda, M. J. (2021). The sorrow and the hope of a dancer: remembering Still/Here twenty-five years after the première of Bill T. Jones' dance piece. *Etnografica*, vol. 25 (2), 493–511. <https://doi.org/10.4000/etnografica.10455>**

Fazenda reflects on the narrative and emotional capabilities of dance and compares the individual testimonies and universal themes. Although it specifically discusses Bill T. Jones's work, the article contributes to an understanding of how choreography can offer important messages. This source aids in understanding Bausch's capacity to symbolize life's difficulties through simple body movements.

**Fernandes, C. (2021). *Pina Bausch and the Wuppertal Dance Theater: Repetition and Transformation*. Philpapers.org. <https://philpapers.org/rec/FERPBA-2>**

Fernandes addresses the question of repetition as a structural principle and how Bausch uses it in her choreography. The article discusses how her work explores elements of human frailty and strength in the symbolic gestures and stage properties. This is seen in the portrayal of pieces such as *Café Müller*, in which chairs symbolically embody the instability of interpersonal relations.

**Foresman, R. (2019, February 17). “Pina” and Paradox. The New Yorker. <https://www.newyorker.com/books/double-take/pina-and-paradox>**

This review focuses on the contrasts in Wim Wenders' Pina that contain large, public performances alongside personal, private moments. Foresman shows that with the help of cinematographic decisions Wenders strengthens in the works of Bausch the notes of togetherness

and loneliness. The source is very useful in understanding the 3D aspect of Wenders and how he incorporated different camera angles to dominate the audience through the performances.

**Higgins, C. (2015, February 13). *Wim Wenders taps into 3D for documentary on Pina Bausch*. The Guardian; The Guardian.**

**<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2011/feb/13/wim-wenders-pina-bausch-documentary>**

Higgins discusses how Wim Wenders utilized 3D cameras to capture the depth and rich details of Bausch. This article shows how the technology enhances the viewers' experiences regarding the choreography's emotional and physical aesthetics. This source is appropriate for the paper because it helps to further investigate how Wenders' approaches to the filming of Bausch's Tanztheater.

**Kourlas, G. (2023, December 26). What if Dance Could Save the World? *The New York Times*.**

**<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/12/26/arts/dance/dance-in-2023-the-cool-genre.html>**

Kouralas looks at dance as a tool for creating change since it is a language that transcends cultural and geographical boundaries. Choreography is at the emotional core and social relevance of the piece, which aligns with the paper's topics of collaboration and strength in the context of *Pina*.

### **Self-assessment**

I felt somewhat prepared to write the final paper, given my interactions with the course work and previous exposure to Pina Bausch's choreography. It was interesting to analyze the film Pina and its unique combination of dance and cinematographic components. The rubric and guidelines can help me identify the paper form and adhere to all the requirements of the given assignment.

Further, my opportunity to use a variety of academic sources allowed examining the main topics, such as choreography and cinematography, which are critical to the discussion. There were still areas of deficiency that could have been examined in terms of how they might be strengthened to improve my performance. I understood that I had gaps in my knowledge of some choreographic and cinematic terms, which restricted me in analysis.

However, there are some weaknesses I noticed as well; there was a lack of time that could have been utilized for detailed research, fine-tuning of arguments, and transitions between the sections provided in my paper. One disadvantage is the lack of a peer or an instructor check before submitting the assignment, which means I couldn't notice what needed to be changed in the middle of the writing process.

Therefore, to improve I would use more time to read more on the field of dance and terminologies used in filmmaking. If I had begun my research and writing earlier, I would have been more diligent and would have explored the topic more thoroughly. Asking for others' opinions during the drafting stage would also give another angle and healthy suggestions to step

up the performance of the work. Doing these kinds of steps would not only enhance the analysis but would also boost confidence when confronting the contents of the subject.