

# Dance Medicine Congress in Frankfurt reported

by **Richard Gillmore**, former dancer, Massage Therapist for the Stuttgart Ballet and member of the German Dance Medicine Association, tamed e.V.



Sponsors tables. Photographer: Matthias Kotsch



Dr. Liane Simmel, president of tamed, Tanzmedizin Deutschland. Photographer: Matthias Kotsch



Dr Corinne Jola Phd, MA, Choreographer from Glasgow. Photographer: Matthias Kotsch



Photographer: Richard Dunkley. Dancer: Roland Cox

## Richard Gillmore, former dancer, Massage Therapist for the Stuttgart Ballet and member of the German Dance Medicine Association, tamed e.V. reports on the 11th congress for dance medicine which took place earlier this summer.

This event left dance medicine fans euphoric, and with good reason. The 11<sup>th</sup> Congress for Dance Medicine, which took place from the 14 to the 16 May 2010 in Frankfurt's University of Music and the Performing Arts, was arranged by the German Dance Medicine Association, tamed® e.V. Around 250 participants saw presentations of a very high level, whether lectures or workshops.

In the first block of lectures, mobility was the connecting factor, applied before the career, during, or after the fact. This conference began with Dr. Boni Rietveld, from Den Haag. He discussed the joint mobility required in order to succeed as a professional dancer. The next speaker was Dr. Liane Simmel, who presented a lecture about hypermobility and its relationship to proprioception, the sense of one's own body in space. It seems that the dancers with extreme, pathological hypermobility do not reach the echelons of principal dancers. They suffer too frequent injuries. Their more unstable joints tend to lack the necessary sensory control. Dr. Simmel was followed by Andrea Schärli from Zürich, who spoke of her study on the negative effects of stretching for the ability to jump. While a stretch of the calves did not show any significant results,

stretching the hamstrings before jumping appears to diminish the height of the jumps. The last lecture of that block addressed a situation many older dancers have to deal with. Dr. Martin Ihle, from Berlin, spoke of the various forms of hip replacement operations. Living with the pains of arthritis is no longer the best option, but what kind of implant to use varies greatly according to anatomical factors, age, symptoms etc.

One lecture that was eagerly anticipated was the report about the study done by one of the founding members of tamed®, Dr. Elisabeth Exner-Grave. The fact that dancers work just as hard as elite athletes is no surprise to people close to dance. Now it is a proven scientific fact, which could change the care granted to dancers by their health insurance companies. So far, athletes in Germany receive an extended amount of rehabilitation. Their therapy can last twice as long as that offered to dancers, who are classified as artists. Now we hope for change.

While Dr. Anita Ginter's lecture may have been hard to follow due to the complicated biochemical factors involved, those who also heard her workshop received answers to questions about human nutrition. She presented the new food pyramid, with fruits and vegetables plus healthy oils in the base of the chart, lean meats, fish, milk products, nuts and beans on the second level. Dr. Bettina Bläsing reported on her study about learning movement and memory in dance. Dr. Eileen Wanke spoke twice, once about the health situation of dance teachers in Germany and later about possibilities for senior citizens to dance.

Among the many high points in this conference was the presentation by Dr. Christian Larsen, from Zurich. He explained fundamentals of his therapeutic concept Spiraldynamik®. The presentation included photos demonstrating the evolutionary twist of the neural segments in both arms and legs. His method has helped people to avoid operations, such as those for bunions. Dr. Corinne Jola came from Glasgow to report on the question of where the dance audience looks. High legs seem to affect us more, but only because they are closer to the center of attention, the face and head. This poses questions about what is important for training.

The last four speakers all involved their audience actively in the physicality implied by their thought processes. In his lecture, J. Lemmer Schmid, from Marburg introduced the listeners to the satisfying feeling of flow through self-awareness. Dr. Anja Weber from Berlin then picked up on that theme, extending it to a method for maintaining emotional equilibrium in spite of the stress of dance. Just as these two lectures were a perfect pair, the final two both dealt with the cambré. Peter Lewton-Brain showed that varying approaches to this movement may not show much on the x-ray, but make an important difference in the appearance of the dancer. To lengthen the back first seems to make a more physiological movement, but also a more aesthetic line. Javier Torres continued this theme to demonstrate the functional and aesthetic improvement of the cambré by releasing the coccyx area. The movements proposed to and carried out by the audience during this final section helped many tired brains to still absorb something of value in spite of the long, intensive week-end.

The programme of these 15 lectures was complemented by 32 workshops interspersed between blocks. This also gave opportunities to think about the new concepts with the bodies. The workshop subjects ranged from dance therapy and sport science through Pilates, Gyrokinesis, Chi Kung, Bartenieff fundamentals, Feldenkrais, and also Eric Franklin's Ideokinesis. The high level of information was presented in this congress in a manner which allowed one to still understand what it meant. A new form was also used in one block of workshops. The Moving Time encouraged participants to wander from one open workshop to another within that specific hour. During the entire conference, conversational networking was easily possible around the refreshment table and at the sponsors displays. Dance presentations by students and teachers of the University during the opening ceremony and at the end of the first evening helped to round out the experience. Numerous participants also had the opportunity to see a performance *I don't believe in outer space* by the Forsythe Company, connecting dance medicine specialists even more to the demands in professional dance. The next Congress of Dance Medicine by the German Dance Medicine Association will take place in 2012, from 18 to the 20 May. ■

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