

Dance Medicine is alive and well in Germany

By **Richard Gilmore**, Masseur of the Stuttgart Ballet, Board of directors of TaMeD e.V., the German Association of Dance Medicine



Company: Tilted Productions
Production: TrAPPED, touring the UK
from April 2009, see www.tilted.org.uk
Choreographer: Maresa von Stockert
Dancer: Lise Manavit
Photographer: Merlin Hendy

Despite the stock market fall, the German dance Medicine Association has continued growing and prospering, but what have we been doing and what is the condition of the country's dancers? Do they benefit from our efforts, or do they live still in their own world and suffer the same old health concerns as always. How much dance science is being done in the German speaking territory? Although my view of the dance world is mostly limited to my own workplace, these are the questions I would like to address.

From its humble beginnings with nine founding members in 1997, the German TaMeD e.V. has grown close to 400 members. They come from all over the Federal Republic, but also from other countries, including Switzerland, Austria, and the Netherlands to join us in our yearly symposia. These meetings take place in different cities with only two repetitions thus far. Our 10th anniversary symposium was a return to the Palucca School of Dance in Dresden. Each year we select a main theme for the conferences, so there is always a new aspect of medical concern for dancers being discussed. The focus may be on the hip or the back, the legs, the psyche, or on growth spurts. The movement sessions accompanying the lectures are intended to apply the knowledge from the lectures directly to the body and better incorporate the theory into life.

Aside from these yearly symposia, we offer numerous courses in our Dance Medicine Certificate programme. The curriculum includes anatomy and physiology, prevention and rehabilitation, nutrition, psychology, and practice.

We are making plans for our 11th symposium, which will be taking place in 2010 since the IADMS conference will be held this year in Den Haag, which should be close enough for most of our members to visit. We do not want

to compete against the interest in such a highly qualified meeting, but rather wish to encourage our members to experience such a stimulating international assembly.

A search for independent funding of university studies was difficult enough before the stock markets fell, and now it seems next to impossible. However, in spite of this frustrating aspect, in my working situation I do see certain improvements. Our dancers are eager to take advantage of the Pilates floor exercises we regularly offer as a relatively new addition to our working week. They also studied with considerable interest, the Dance Medicine Brochure instigated by TaMeD's Dr. Liane Simmel in association with the insurance company, Unfallkasse Berlin. While I have been on duty as masseur for the company for the past 22 years, for five years now we have also had a visiting osteopath adding to the medical support for the dancers. Our teachers also have added exercises to their classes which formerly were not included in the routine, but add important preparation to the warm up. Perhaps the most complimentary improvement I have seen is that a couple of dancers have also expressed an interest in learning more and to consider massage, pilates, gyrotomics, or other physical therapeutic professions as a new direction for their lives, for later when that fateful day arrives. So it seems that the consciousness for our work has increased and that some of the association's efforts are trickling down to the dancers' daily lives. And still there always seems to be so much more we would wish for. I keep telling myself: patience Richard, patience. ■

To read a fuller report from Richard Gilmore visit www.danceuk.org and look in the publications and resources section at Dance UK News selected articles.