

Artist Lab

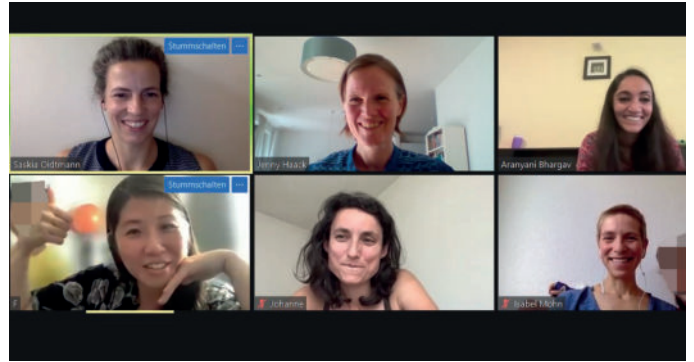
Get labelled:

Parents in Theaters!

Evaluation Lab of AgTanz und Elternschaft (Dance and Parenthood working group)
1st July–31st October 2023

How can parents and carers in the midst of their daily chaos participate as an audience at dance events?

During several experimental labs from July to September 2023, we, the “Ag Tanz und Elternschaft” (Dance and Parenthood working group) designed the Kids & Caregivers Rider as a recommendation for action for event organizers. Developed on the basis of interviews, exchange meetings, feedback and pilot formats with two Berlin venues, important insights into the needs of caregivers, parents and families as audiences were incorporated in the rider.



Twelve artists from the Dance and Parenthood working group were involved in the labs, as well as six guest artists, ten interview partners, nine children of the working group’s artists (aged 1.5 – approx. 9 years old) and visitors with children at the pilot events.

How can dance and performing arts events be made accessible to parents and caregivers as audiences, by considering for example family-friendly spaces, facilities, scheduling, formats and a welcoming culture? What has changed for the target group as an audience during the pandemic?

Four phases shaped our evaluation of the situation and development of the Rider:



1 Ask the network: What best practice experiences have you had in dance and the performing arts? What worked, what didn't and why? Which methods and formats emerged during the pandemic that promote accessibility?

The working group deliberately broadened the perspective of the lab to include an international focus and invited three network partners from outside Europe. In addition to the exchange with three nationwide artists' initiatives, further cultural perspectives could hereby be included.

Here a few quotes from the guest artists and the artists of the Dance and Parenthood working group:

Performances that happen in the late evenings obviously interfere with important winding down activities such as dinner, bath time, reading and bedtime.

I have often taken my children to friends' dress rehearsals when there was no other audience that could be disturbed. This way they also got to see the behind the scenes and they found this exciting.

Formats that were aimed at a small audience were often open to having children, as a kind of small community came into being for the duration of the performance.

When my older daughter was little, I took her to many theater performances. I often felt uncomfortable because I was almost always the only one attending the performance with a child. My daughter, of course, sensed this, and she tried hard to keep quiet, which is not in her nature.

In the early days of stage theater, audiences were quite loud and they actively participated in what was happening on stage.

My experience here is that as soon as there is orchestral music, the sound level is so loud that nobody is bothered by the children.

I like this from the artist-parents.com resource: As an organization, be explicitly welcoming to artists with families. Be breastfeeding-friendly; stay in contact with artists when they become parents. The art does not need to be family friendly, but the institution should be.



After a circus performance in the theater, I remember how exuberant my son was, full of energy (...). He would have loved to perform his own acrobatic show immediately afterwards. As we were still in the dressing room at the time, with lots of people, this was not so easy, and it was very difficult for him to understand this. A room to let off steam after the show would have been great.

At la TOHU Cité des arts du cirque in Montreal, there was a mini stage in the lobby so that children could play and recreate moments of theater before and after the show.

I find that museums and galleries are much more advanced in this field and have much more to offer. They often create family-friendly spaces connected to the museum's shops and cafes. In the Pompidou Center, there are also audio guides for children that are connected to their permanent exhibitions available in the seating areas.

We both had a great evening. I put this largely down to the fact that we felt welcome, both by the staff and the other audience members. (A parent who attended an evening performance with a seven-year-old daughter)

The children hung out on the playground at the same time as the performers and were encouraged to stay. The location and audience were ideal and encouraged each person to behave as they wished. (On an outdoor performance on a playground)



Quotes on formats that came out of/emerged during the pandemic:

Increased opportunities for remote working, learning and networking in the arts

Digital formats are practical for breast-feeding mothers

Digital formats enable time-independent use

It's practical to be able to view things from home, hybrid formats

ambivalent towards digital formats, as they include additional screentime and tend to be experienced more as background noise, but good for research and companies that are geographically distant

Accessibility can be promoted with e.g. digitality, the recording of performances/ live streaming, (...) however, it is only a certain kind of "access" because it loses the "live" in "live performance"

Smaller, immersive and hybrid formats became possible

Urban space as a playground and meeting place

Outdoor events in the countryside

Alternative, site-specific formats tend to be more accessible than theater

Site-specific performances, as all audience members often have to move and the children do not have to sit still

During the day and outside, but little used due to homeschooling and additional work due to conversion of own professional practice/conversion to digital formats – There was no free time

Overload of screentime, therefore little use of online formats



2 Dialogue: Discussions/interviews with event organizers on family-friendly criteria

Inge Zysk:

“From the event side, I think it’s important that a field or a perspective opens up, and people can see that this is nothing special. It is simply part of it, just as the topic of accessibility is discussed everywhere. For me, accessibility simply means access for everyone and that includes children. You simply have to adapt to the fact that you have to create a different level of accessibility than for other people.

Of course, it is worth considering whether childcare should be offered at some point in the future. However, I think that’s a completely different field and topic, because of course it’s about having skilled workers at hand; it’s no longer just me going to a cultural event with my children and us having an experience together.”



Matthias Mohr:

“In our work, we try to appeal to a very broad audience of different ages and from different walks of life, which of course includes families.

Families or single parents, or simply people who want to experience art here with children. Perhaps they just want to meet or spend the day here, in a place where art also takes place and other participatory moments can happen.”





3 For the future: Testing and evaluating formats with venues

We consider dance and theater venues as lively, open and permeable spaces. Places where caregivers, families and children are considered and valued as potential audiences.

Lab in cooperation with Tanzfabrik Berlin (8th–9th Sept. 2023)

The Dance and Parenthood working group was approached by Felicitas Zeeden, a dramaturge from Tanzfabrik, last winter to discuss how the venue could become more family friendly. On this basis, we approached Tanzfabrik in the summer to get them on board for our test run for a family- and carer-friendly event as part of the Artist Lab “Get labelled: Parents in Theaters!” We agreed on Tanznacht, as the format of a mini-festival lent itself well to a family-friendly event. The coproducer of Tanznacht, Inge Zysk, was immediately open to talking to us and suggested various ways of organizing the event.

Our common goal was to make Tanznacht an event that would welcome carers and children without being an explicit event for children and young people.

We planned various facilities, from a play corner, a fully equipped changing table and outdoor elements, to making the family-friendly facilities visible and communicating them clearly. Tanzfabrik proposed a workshop especially for children.



An unusually large number of people with children turned up on both days of Tanznacht. The children seemed to be a natural part of the event.

Tanznacht was communicated as a relaxed performance and was very suitable for this test run because its duration of 25 hours enabled all caregivers, with and without children, to take part in the event. In addition, the audience had the opportunity to walk around and the sound was regulated by headphones, so that neither the children's noises were perceived as disturbing, nor was the sound of the performance too loud for children.

The atmosphere and the openness of the staff and the space had a very positive effect on the children coming and staying.

In questionnaires and discussions, it was repeatedly noted that the design was perceived very positively. The wish was expressed that, as a next step, venues should also offer childcare.



Lab in cooperation with Radialsystem (17th Sept. 2023):

Matthias Mohr, artistic director of the venue Radialsystem, was from the very beginning open to a pilot project for family-friendly events. The anniversary event on the 17th of September 2023, in which Sasha Waltz & Guests' youth dance company would perform "In C-next generation" and for which a young audience was expected, was well suited for this.

For our pilot project, the Dance and Parenthood working group equipped the "play area" with comic books, Duplo Lego, soap bubbles and crayons on several picnic blankets. On the glass wall of the foyer, young visitors could sign or paint their names in the "creative guest book" on a large paper wall. The cube on the 2nd floor was converted into a "quiet and chill area".

Some of the material was already available at the venue, some was on loan from the Dance and Parenthood working group. It was possible to create a relaxed atmosphere with manageable material costs, in which children and their accompanying adults had the space before and after the event to reflect on what they had experienced and let it sink in, and perhaps also talk or play with other visitors.





KONVENTIENEN DURCHFÜHREN IST EIN PROZESS

DIE KOMMUNIKATION IST DIE VORAUSSETZUNG FÜR VERSTÄNDNIS

KOMMUNIKATION intern & extern

mit fremden Augen sehen...



FINANZEN

PERSONAL AUSSTATTUNG

ELTERN KOMMEN MIT KINDERN UND DIESE SIND PUBLIKUM UND KÜNSTLER*INNEN VON MORGEN!

ZUKUNFT

PARENTS in THEATERS



Tanz und Elternschaft

muriel Bitorzycki



4 Be the utopia: Art action – What would going to the theater with children ideally look like? (22nd–23rd Sept. 2023, Public spaces in Berlin)

Together with our children, we designed posters and then put them up in a joint – and masked – action in the courtyard of DOCK 11, where both people from the dance scene and families come and go. Our inspiration: the Guerilla Girls, whose poster campaigns and public appearances with gorilla masks draw attention to various forms of discrimination in the art world.

We want to draw attention to the fact that parents and caregivers are not included in cultural participation. By involving our children, we demonstrate that it is possible to create and experience art transgenerationally if certain parameters such as time, space and formats are considered in a new way.





Kids and Caregivers Rider

How can cross-generational understanding and acceptance of families and children as audiences grow in the theater? In front of, on and behind the stage? What circumstances make it easier to attend a performance with children and which formats are particularly suitable for families and caregivers?

“Parents in the theater!”, “Theater for all!” as suggestions for slogans quickly made connections to our own working conditions. One artist from the working group suggested: “Are children killing artists’ careers?” And another, with a polar bear mask, suggested a quote loosely based on Sara Ahmed: “Courage to be a killjoy”. The art action was shared live on Instagram.

- ✳ Formats where free movement and individual interruptions are possible or where there is a level of background noise. Events which are free of charge or inexpensive and/or offer additional services
- ✳ Formats that take place during the day, allow for planning ahead and late entry, as punctuality with children can be difficult to achieve
- ✳ Site-specific and outdoor formats, participatory and interactive formats, installations, open rehearsals, small audiences, performances with an intergenerational and diverse cast
- ✳ Hybrid or digital formats due to time flexibility
- ✳ Plays and formats adapted to family-friendly criteria with regard to sensory stimuli and other trigger factors, among other things

Kids and Caregivers Rider
- a recommendation for action

Our concern is to think of dance and theatre venues as lively, open and permeable spaces. Places where caregivers, families and children as potential audiences are considered and valued.

What can you implement immediately or in the near future? What resources do you already have to establish a sustainable and forward-looking, family-friendly concept for events and/or for your venue? What is still missing and/or for your financial resources?

Broken down into individual categories, the Caregiver Rider is a practical guide to action for the dance and the performing arts fields as audiences.

Conceived by Ag Tanz und Elternschaft as part of the evaluation lab Artist Lab / Get labelled! Parents in Theaters! Berlin, 2023

Communication
How do you transparently communicate about programmes, performance spaces and the general conditions of events while taking into account parents, caregivers and children as audiences you are living in? This is expressed, for example,

Public and press relations
Transparent communication regarding:

- Start time and duration of the show, breaks (text and/or trailer)
- Trigger warning for sensory stimuli (e.g. strobe lights, high volume levels), sexualised or violent content
- Accompanying programmes, mediation or additional offers

With the audience
How do you address your audience at the venue to promote understanding and acceptance of all present? For example,

- Indications and visualisations on site, for example via signage
- An opening or welcome speech that explicitly welcomes children, parents and caregivers

Internal / Team
Do your (guest) artists know about your family-friendly conditions? Do you inform your employees in all departments about family-friendly offers and your venue's resources? For example, you can inform them on:

- The location of changing tables, a breastfeeding corner, a prism storage room
- The responsibilities of the staff in relation to family-friendly offers and to awareness concepts
- Further training and awareness-raising opportunities for staff, also by external experts

Formats
What circumstances make it easier to attend a performance with children?
Which formats are particularly suitable for families and caregivers?

- Formats that take place during the day, allow for planning ahead and late entry, as to punctuality with children can be difficult to achieve
- Site-specific and outdoor formats, participatory and interactive formats, installations, open rehearsals, small audiences, performances with an intergenerational and diverse cast
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Staff
Who takes care of family-friendly services, resources are already available to members of staff? Where is external support needed? There are the following options:

- Mediation formats and external experts
- Responsible employees and external experts for family-friendly offers and the accompanying programme
- A contact person during the event
- Parenting expertise in the team

Additional offers and accompanying programme
What offers can you implement to make events attractive for audiences of families and caregivers?
Some ideas for this:

- Mediation formats, e.g. workshops, introductions, tactile tours
- Awareness-raising formats for audiences at family-friendly events
- Childcare
- Culinary offers

Initiatives

- Experts: mschaft @elternschaft.de Jen e.V.
- Tanznetz - https://tanznetz.dresden.de beyond reproduction https://mothering.in wordpress.com/about-beyond-reproduction/ Bühnenmütter e.V. https://www.buehnenmuetter.com
- Moks - https://www.moks.berlin
- Other Writers Need to Concentrate e.V. https://other-writers.de
- RE-DANCE - https://re-dance.work/about/ kunstkind berlin https://kunstkindkind.com/ Balancing Act https://balancingactcanada.com/en/about/ Dance Mama - https://www.dancemama.org
- PIPA - https://pipacampaign.org/

Staff

- sockets

Initiatives

- sockets

Credits: Artist Lab / Get labelled! Parents in Theaters! an evaluation lab of the Ag Tanz und Elternschaft, responsible body: ZDF/Jugendkulturrat
Tanz Berlin e.V. (ZTB). The nationwide Artist Lab are a measure of the Performing Arts Fund, financed with funds from the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media within the framework of NEUSTART KULTUR.



outlook



The two pilot events with Tanznacht and Radialsystem in Berlin can serve as exemplary models for further collaborations with event organizers. Our starting points: What initial steps can be implemented with the organizers' existing resources, what needs longer preparation times or additional funding? What role does the working group play as a team of experts providing external support? An important finding is that the welcoming attitude of the organizers, their public outreach and visibility play an important role in attracting the target audience. Furthermore, the internal communication of family-friendly formats to the event team at all levels of work requires clear information channels.

The criteria for family-friendly events outlined in the Kids & Caregivers Rider and an associated label will be communicated to event venues. Further cooperations and pilot formats should further advance the implementation of family-friendly events.

Credits

Artist Lab / Get labelled: Parents in Theaters!
an evaluation lab of the AgTanz und
Elternschaft, responsible body:
Zeitgenössischer Tanz Berlin e.V. (ZTB)

Participating artists of the working group:
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Saskia Oidtmann, Linda Scholz, Steffi
Sembdner-Erfurt, Diana Thielen, Johanne
Timm, Jasna Layes Vinovrški, Maria Walser

Collaboration:
Athina Lange, German Sign Language
Mayra Wallraff, photography and camera
Nora Wetzel, camera, editing and
photography
Murielle Biedrzycki, graphic recording
Fiona Tretau, design label
HIT, design rider and documentation

Online lab guests:
Daniela Lehmann, dance artist,
TanzNetzDresden
Patscharaporn Krüger-Distakul, dance artist,
re_dance, Frankfurt
Mathilde Bonte, dance artist,
Silent Cosmonauts Kollektiv, Freiburg
Aranyani Bhargav, dance artist,
New Delhi, India
Faye Lim, dance artist, Singapur
Julie Lebel, dance artist, Foolish Operations
Society, Vancouver, Canada

Interview partners:
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Deiara Kouto, assistant outreach Martin
Gropius Bau
Athina Lange, actress and mother
Diana Mammana, coordination education
& outreach Martin Gropius Bau
Tatiana Mejia, dance artist
Clara Meister, project lead and curator
artificial intelligence Martin Gropius Bau
Matthias Mohr, artistic director Radialsystem
Wibke Storkan, dance artist
Daniella Strasfogel, musician, performer,
theater maker
Inge Zysk, coproducer Tanznacht Berlin

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With thanks to the drugstore dm for
sponsoring the necessities for the changing
tables.

The nationwide Artist Labs are a measure
of the Performing Arts Fund (Fonds
Darstellende Künste e.V.), financed with
funds from the Federal Government
Commissioner for Culture and the Media
within the framework of NEUSTART
KULTUR.

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