

**THIS IS AN  
INVITATION FROM  
FREELANCE ARTISTS  
IN DANCE TO ENGAGE  
IN A DISCUSSION  
WITH THE CURRENT  
CULTURAL POLICY  
MAKERS.**

**THE GOAL IS TO MOVE THE FIELD OF THE PERFORMING ARTS INTO THE 21ST CENTURY**

**Network  
For Choreography  
& Related Arts**

De Constant Rebecqueplein 20b  
2518 RA Den Haag  
Nederland

Subject: Proposal for Network for Choreography & Related Arts

Monday, May 9, 2011

To the Secretary of State for Art and Culture, Mr Halbe Zijlstra.  
Members of the House, Public Officials,

We are a group of freelance dance artists, uniting to speak out in the recent debate on proposed cuts to cultural funding. Our group present can only be described as fragmented. However, as we reflect upon the current times and our opportunities for the future we see this as a challenge and a necessity to define our role and responsibility in the arts sector from our own perspective.

Recent documents of public policy that threaten our community -by their centralization of the sector and their reinforcement of institutional dependencies- have been brought into our discussions. We are very concerned that our position is more vulnerable than ever. We wish to mitigate a limited perception of our field and its institutionalization. We denounce that the cultural landscape of tomorrow will be determined by a small group of authorities. We uphold instead that the essence of a vibrant, contemporary art climate should be the exchange between artist and audience.

In history, the role of the artist in relation to society has been in constant change. Today, the freelance artist is and will remain an essential asset to the arts as well as an engine to the cultural climate in the Netherlands. We view these times as a crucial moment to reaffirm this role and to prescribe a new environment for freelance artists in the dance world: a network for choreographers and related artists.

A Network for Choreography and Related Arts – a draft proposal.  
Our document is a summary of how we envision the creation of this network model. The proposal is not a fully detailed business plan, nor is it a policy paper. It is a concept that we are excited to share.

This proposal was developed during a series of gatherings involving a total of 70 independent artists. 440 people have signed an earlier version online. The proposal has been repeatedly discussed with independent artists from other disciplines, scientists operating within arts policy, philosophers and sociologists, and with experts from the industry.

**Three principles form the basis of the concept:**

- As described, a network structure can serve a broad circle of stakeholders, partners and audiences – in dance, its adjacent sectors and in other disciplines.
- Forming a network is an investment in an innovative and fruitful future, one that will promote and encourage quality, dynamism, cross-pollination and new relationships.
- The freelance artist is the ideal player in a network structure.

**Brief description of the concept**

Freelance dance and performance artists want to shape their working conditions in a new and forward-looking manner. A strong and established network could promote the main characteristics of this group, that is: the power to innovate, a naturally strong entrepreneurial attitude and the possession of a diverse group of collaborators and audiences. Our community is calling for a context in which creative and innovative projects can obtain the space to work that fits the trends of our time at both national and international levels.

The Network will be a physical and virtual place where the formerly fragmented freelance dance scene can meet. As a response to recent developments in society, in terms of community building and network-

king, the Network will provide a set of physical and virtual functions to increase opportunities, visibility and demand. Key guidelines for use of the Network will be accessibility, transparency and common interest. We will strive for an integrated policy in the sector and for the closing of the gap between partners and public. The Network will provide the foundation for entrepreneurship, innovation and growth.

**We invite you to consider the essential importance of the independent artist in the 21st century.**

The freelance artists within this Network are engaged in the consideration of a long-term investment and the necessary reformulation of their relationships to the government, the public, to other artists, and unto themselves. We feel that all parties should be engaged in this conversation, as art and society have a mutual interest.

We wish for you to consider...

- ...involving freelance artists in the national cultural policy. Their creative, entrepreneurial capacity, expertise and resilience are essential to the development of the cultural landscape.
- ...making freelance artists partners in decisions regarding budget reductions—they are underrepresented in the current consultation and advisory bodies, especially when it comes to the design of power structures and the delegating of responsibilities.
- ...joining us in imagining the future. We strongly believe that the arts sector, the public and all related partners, including the government, would benefit from recognizing the advantages of such a network. It will enrich the cultural landscape.
- ...the consequences of the proposed measures: a loss of specialized expertise, a waste of thousands of hours of training and education, and a sector of society disenfranchised of their ability to work.

With your cooperation we wish to find creative solutions. We would very much like to engage with you and others involved on a personal basis in this conversation.

On behalf of the Network, we the undersigned sincerely send our best regards and await your reply,

*Jette Schneider* {coordinator Danslab, co-initiator Network}

*Jack Gallagher* {choreographer, teacher, researcher}

*Bruno Listopad* {choreographer, artistic consultant, teacher}

*Giulia Mureddu* {choreographer, performer}

*Keren Levi* {choreographer, teacher, performer}

*Diane Elshout* {dramaturge, researcher, choreographer}

*Eline Tan* {performer, draft advisor}

## WHY THIS INITIATIVE?

### FREELANCE ARTISTS IN DANCE WISH TO RE-DEFINE THEIR WORKING CONDITIONS:

- Artistic processes and their results can be applied more widely than they have been until now. Given the current structure supporting the performing arts and dance [in the Netherlands], which is vertical and essentially centralized, we see the creative potential of freelance artists as underutilized.
- Freelance artists wish to increase their own function and role in the current system and form. Presently, they remain the weakest group in this system and also in an ongoing debate in this country. The importance and contribution of the freelance artist to the cultural climate should not be underestimated.
- New information technologies and social structures, such as social networking, offer possibilities to promote the creative potential, entrepreneurship and income-producing abilities of freelance artists.

**By following a comprehensive policy, we aim to limit centralization and sector delineation, and support innovation and development.**

## WHO ARE WE?

### FREELANCE ARTISTS IN DANCE ARE THOSE WHO CONTRIBUTE TO THE DANCE FIELD BY EXECUTING, CREATING AND SUPPORTING THE PRODUCTION OF DANCE AND ARE PROFESSIONALLY ENGAGED IN THE FIELD AS:

- Choreographers, dancers and performance artists
- Dramaturges, counsellors, dance teachers and researchers
- Artists / persons from other disciplines as multi-, inter-and trans-disciplinary partners

## OUR STRENGTHS AND QUALITIES

### FREELANCE ARTISTS IN DANCE...

- form the basis of an important source of inspiration, creativity and innovation in the sector.
- question existing conventions and propose alternative perspectives.
- develop new and flexible ways of production, distribution and presentation.
- work with various partners and constantly establish new connections.
- reach new audiences who are challenged, amused and stimulated.
- implement and disseminate creative knowledge which is gained via their work.
- are key players in providing a positive contribution to the development of various artistic strata in society.

**We are innovators. The artistic sparks of our work inspire organisations and businesses, within and outside of the arts.**

## WHAT DO WE WANT?

**"LET US MOVE THE FIELD OF PERFORMING ARTS INTO THE 21ST CENTURY."**

### WE WANT TO USE OUR STRENGTHS TO PROMOTE THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ARTS AND THE IMPORTANCE OF ART IN SOCIETY BY:

- stimulating an integrated policy: fewer one-sided dependencies and greater fostering of mutual interests between small and large parties engaged in the field.
- promoting diversity and innovation by using the strengths and qualities of freelancers to ensure and enhance the quality of artistic production as a long-term investment in the development of the arts and their importance to society.
- increasing visibility and collaboration by connecting the creative links in our social community, strengthening and achieving synergy. We wish to respond to current social and socio-economic trends.

**WE PRESENT**

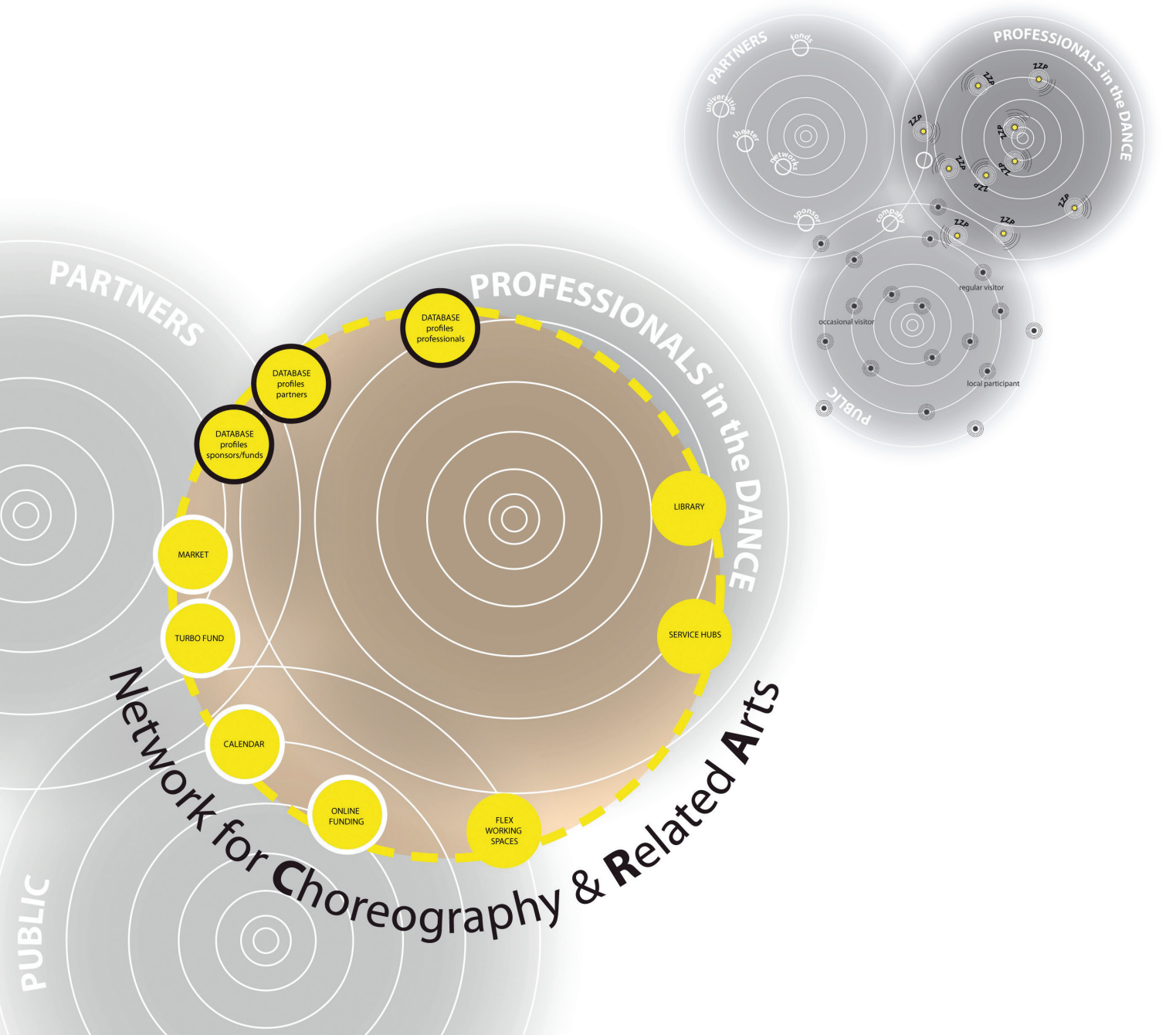
**Network for Choreography and Related Arts**  
**AN INSPIRING WORKING ENVIRONMENT FOR THE**  
**FREELANCER IN DANCE**

*This network will be a virtual and physical space:*

- Where freelance artists can connect with each other and each other's work.
- Where cooperation and responsibilities for functions such as production, distribution, presentation and public outreach can be fostered.
- Where artists can connect to partners inside and outside the art sector.
- Where new ideas will be given optimal opportunities to be conceived and developed further.
- To support and streamline process- and project-oriented work.
- To strengthen the local and international importance of the artists and their work, as well as their visibility.
- To increase the scope and accessibility of freelancers' creative potential to other sectors.
- That will continue to develop in order to generate the proper working conditions that each emerging generation of artists demands.

**THE NETWORK WILL CONSIST OF THE FOLLOWING:**

- An online database of personal profiles of Network members
- A database of activities and workplaces for different phases of production (linked to pre-existing art discipline networks)
- An online database of partners from all disciplines, within and outside of the arts (listing and intermediary function)
- A marketing and publicity function with notifications of activities (Calendar of Events)
- Service-hubs = identification and scouting for individuals with excellent connecting qualities (e.g. Facebook, LinkedIn)
- A barter function = exchange of tangible and intangible property (e.g. Time / Bank)
- A library and a process for further knowledge development: documentation, exchange, open access (e.g. Wikipedia)
- Flex work spaces, trainings, get-togethers (meeting and connecting)
- A mandate to leverage the existing infrastructure towards promoting its own functionality and enhanced output
- Funding functions for projects: turbo funds (see below), online funding, crowd funding



## FINANCING

THE SYSTEM PROPOSED TO FINANCE THE NETWORK IS BASED ON SEED FINANCING (MICRO-FINANCING), WHICH AXES ON INDIVIDUAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP. ITS USE INCREASES EFFICIENCY, FLEXIBILITY AND RESULTS, ACCOMMODATES RISK-TAKING AND STIMULATES INNOVATION.

*How are we going to fund the Network's operation?*

- Membership: Contributions from the artists
- Revenue from orders from institutions and companies
- Sponsorship for small businesses / self-employed workers (material, legal procedures)
- Support system of "Big supports Small" in which large cultural institutions contribute to opportunities for freelancers with a percentage of their total budget. Quid pro quo in mutual agreement.

*What possibilities will the Network offer for the financing of art-production?*

- Equipment: the Network will provide basic services that will keep production costs low
- Entrepreneurship:
  - \*As freelancers gain revenue from a multitude of income sources, the Network will reinforce entrepreneurship and individual financial performance
  - \*Spin-off into other art projects areas will be capitalized upon
- Turbo Funds: Micro Financing
- A new and alternative funding system for and by Network members:
  - \*Effective Dynamic Flexible: "less money for more grants?", rapid decision-making
  - \*self-regulation of artists, rather than reliance
- Online Funding / crowd funding

## HOW DO WE ORGANISE THIS NETWORK?

### ACCESSIBILITY, TRANSPARENCY AND COMMON INTERESTS

#### ORGANISATION

- Flexible organisation around a number of functions: Coordinators, Business Managers, Web Designer, Communication-agent to partners / public
- Committee of freelancers based on a rotating system, Service Hubs

#### MEMBERS

##### First circle: freelancers in dance and beyond

- Their work practices will be further streamlined and enhanced by the Network.
- From diverse backgrounds and bringing different perspectives and artistic preferences, their diversity enhances the whole and promotes productivity and innovation.
- They each contribute to common interests, take care of the growth of the Network.

##### Second circle: partners

- Collection of an extensive network of local, national and international collaborative partnerships both within and beyond the infrastructure of the choreographic discipline
- Each partner extends the range beyond their own discipline
- Relationships to the network will be characterized by equality, and based on sharing and mutual benefit.
- Clustering of partners in the network creates an added value by participating in a strong and innovative community

##### Examples of partnership

**Presentation, products and expertise:** production houses, companies, festivals **Research & Development:** universities, industry, government **Education:** schools, amateurs, public education **Entrepreneurial Development:** Arts & Business, coaching offices, banks, business **International Affairs & Exchange:** TRANSartists, Dutch Residency Creative Network, Creative City **Social and Community Work:** local authorities, cooperative building societies, developers **Visibility and Identity:** Social Media, Internet companies, banks and private sponsors **Knowledge:** Universities, Estate of Art Criticism, TIN, independent reviewers **Social and Financial Affairs:** FNV Kiem, policy makers and specialist unions

##### Third circle: the public

The network sees the public as a partner. It does this through the development of new strategies of accessibility, transparency, participation and exchange of artistic knowledge. By applying various means of distribution and presentation, the public is actively involved. As a result, the network moves closer to its existing audience, thereby also attracting new audiences.

- Transparency: sharing knowledge and experiences by making the creative process public/transparent. Also, looking to related areas (galleries, classrooms, city squares, apartments, clubs, and the support of commercial / mainstream activities) or by encouraging the redefinition of the functions of established locations / places (the theatre presents both the product and the artistic process, is a meeting point, a community centre).
- Closing the gaps: The public as a partner, shareholder, concerned party. Involve the public in hosting and participation concepts. Desires and needs become the starting point of creative production, artistic means are used as working material.



# CHANGES AND SIDE EFFECTS OF THE NETWORK

stimulating an integrated policy: fewer one-sided dependencies and greater fostering of mutual interests between small and large parties engaged in the field.

## EFFECT 1:

### HIERARCHICAL STRUCTURES BECOME MORE FLEXIBLE

- A shift to non-linear flexible structures and the renewal of an outdated, vertical development system
- A positive result for a wide circle of stakeholders, partners and public: in the choreographic sector, related sectors and related disciplines
- The freelance dance artist is strengthened in his function and leads a productive role in society

promoting diversity and innovation by using the strengths and qualities of freelancers to ensure and enhance the quality of artistic production as a long-term investment in the development of the arts and their importance to society.

## EFFECT 2:

### MICRO FACILITATION WITH MACRO RESULTS

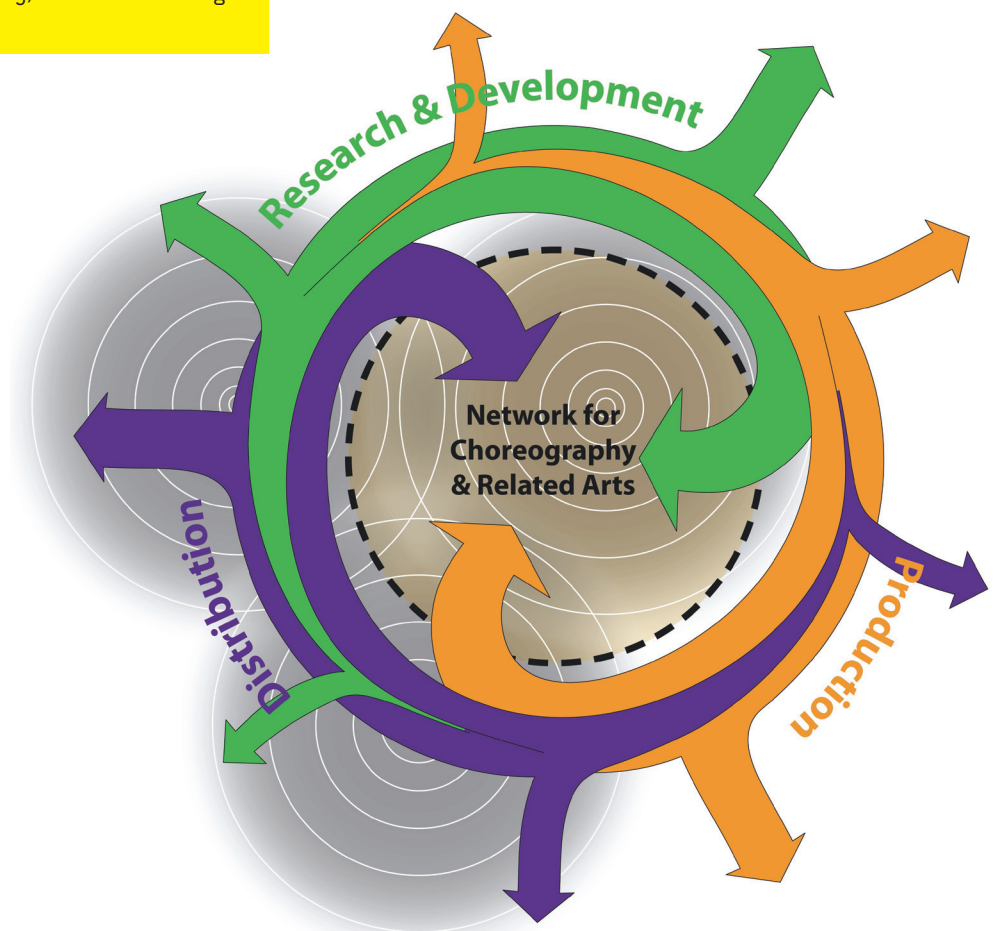
- "Seed financing" creates the base for entrepreneurship, innovation, and growth.
- Fragmented freelance work-sector is collectively strengthened.
- Committed activism, collaboration and new entrepreneurship are stimulated.
- The diversity of dance ecology -by differentiation of processes, production, distribution and presentation models- is increased.
- Adequate budgets for more instead of fewer players in the field are provided, strengthening the result as a consequence (more is more).
- We commit to current developments in society, in terms of building communities and networks.

increasing visibility and collaboration by connecting the creative links in our social community, strengthening and achieving synergy. We wish to respond to current social and socio-economic trends.

## EFFECT 3:

### "BUILDING NEW BRIDGES": RELEVANCE TO SOCIETY

- A new capacity to share, collect and apply artistic knowledge via accessibility, transparency and use.
- A redefinition of relationships between artist and public
- The attraction of new audiences, new relationships and connections with other disciplines, cultural activities and partners



"Once again, all advice and proposals from the cultural field seem to deal with the closed Dutch system of funding for arts. Solutions are being sought for again at the same drawing table of this system: within a closed system where one has to fight for one's position, where parties are put opposite one another; within a government that stands apart from this field and administers it with policies, with a single desired outcome in view: to set up a basic infrastructure, resulting in an ever-smaller foundation on which to work.

The refreshing thing about this initiative is that there is no drawing board involved. There is movement. Movement, that stays in motion. No fixed mechanisms, but an unceasing flow of human capital. People who roll up their sleeves and get to work themselves. People, who open the doors of the system on all fronts. The true sense network-feeling, where one's contribution to another, through the network, also benefits one's own interests.

The same performativity, which the creators put into their performances, the same temporality of contact with the audience: that is what makes this initiative contemporary and inspiring!"

*Toine Minnaert*  
teacher / researcher Arts Policy and Management  
Utrecht University

"I think it's very good that this group formulates an ambition and then looks at what mix of funding sources can be used. These sources provide more than just money: they provide a broad commitment from various parties and give different perspectives for essential, sound financial management, an economy that ensures independence because they want to avoid dependence on a single source. "

*Eric Holterhues*  
Head of Arts and Culture  
Triodos Investment Management BV

"What the performing arts in general and dance in particular are able to do, is, such as metaphysics: multiplying the possibilities of experience. The design and structure of this particular initiative makes this not only possible, but also necessary. In that sense it provides an adequate answer to what can only be seen as the greatest threat for The Society: the re-scaling and narrowing of possibilities of experience, purely based on misunderstanding and resentment."

*Tim De Mey*  
assistant professor of Theoretical Philosophy  
Erasmus University Rotterdam

"A robust network for freelance work in the cultural sector is essential for the survival of the entire dance industry. Major dance centres initiate very little innovation and added value by themselves, but depend on spontaneous developments and events in the margins and on their fringe, which they parasitize. Only freelance work guarantees innovation and success, by committing individual artists to continually look for new commissioners, new forms of production, new partnerships, new consumers and new forms of distribution."

*BAVO*

"THERE IS  
MOVEMENT.  
MOVEMENT,  
THAT STAYS  
IN MOTION."