

Dossier

Until the moon is born in the west (WT)

by Lea Bethke



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Production Data

Filmtitel:	Until the moon is born in the west (WT)
Length:	22 min
Format:	4K, Color
Genre:	Experimental Dance Film
Shooting Period:	October 2020 / August 2021
Shooting Days:	6 Days
Location:	Berlin
Completion:	March 2022
Planned Distribution:	Dancefilm Festivals Art- and Experimentalfilm Festivals, z.B. CPH Dox, Berlinale Shorts etc. TV-Stations like ARTE Gallery context
Fundings:	BKM Kurzfilmförderung 
Current State:	Postproduction



Synopsis

„Until the moon is born in the west“ is a dance film, narrating the path of one human being on the run through movement and sound: From the feeling of hopelessness in a destroyed home, the suffocating fear when being on the run at sea to desolation and all the hopes when arriving in Berlin.

In a shattered home in between armistice and bombing raids Joy tries to just live and move on from the burden of her story. Expelled from her native country the bare hope of a promising future as her impulse, she decided to gather all her courage and make her way under water through the Mediterranean sea. The battle for survival begins.

At the end of this journey she finds herself in the turmoil of a foreign metropolis facing new challenges moving between approximation and alienation.

Together with dancers, who have experienced war, had to leave their familiar surroundings and have now found a new home in this foreign city Berlin this short film constructing a choreography from movement, image and sound, which makes the experience of assault, departure and arrival observably.

Director's Notes

This is not a new story. It is a story that repeats itself every day, every hour, every minute: a person leaves his bombed-out homeland and risks his life on the way across the Mediterranean to the West, driven by the mere hope of a future. Every day, people set out on this journey. For some the beginning, for others the end without return. And that is precisely why it is important not only to tell their story again and again, but to tell it anew.

With "Until the moon is born in the west" I want to find a way to retell the story of a refugee, her path to Germany, from a fresh perspective, in a different language: as a dance film.

The idea didn't come from anywhere. In the past two years, as part of documentary film projects, I met and spoke with many people who came to Berlin in recent years for very different yet similar reasons. Their stories and their strength have touched me deeply, and made me realise how little I, as an educated middle-class German, really understand and, above all, feel, despite (or because of) the inflationary reporting on migration.

I asked myself, how can one make it tangible to people like me what the millions of people who flee are going through?

Words often fail. That's why I wanted to find a language that works without letters: dance.

For many it may seem unusual to make such a story tangible with and through dance. For me, however, it is the most obvious thing of all. A dancer myself, I learned my cinematic craft self-taught by filming dance videos.

Here I feel like a fish in water. As a filmmaker, I am interested in the body in all its forms and non-forms, and in the movement that creates meaning in the visual.

I am aware that I am telling a story here that is not my story. Therefore, I would like to develop the short film together with choreographers and dancers of different origins who have experienced war, flight and/or arrival in a foreign country. I want to let them tell their journey from their own perspective, give an inside view.

Above all, I am interested in feelings; in making the experience of war, flight and arrival in a foreign country tangible for the viewer. In doing so, I don't want to limit myself to one country, but rather create a *multi-place* that stands as an example for all the countries where war is raging - in every form.

The script serves merely as a roadmap, on the basis of which something sincere can grow in collaboration with the dancers and the choreographers Raphael Moussa Hillebrand and Medhat Aldaabal. Because this is their story. But not only. It is the story of our time.

The dance film is divided into three acts:
I attack, II awakening, III arrival.

The departure or escape, the heart of the short film, is filmed underwater to make the unyieldingness and threat to life of the sea omnipresent. The dancers move in a state between life and loss of the same, but only one will make it.

Stylistically, "Until the moon is born in the west" pairs dance with moving image and sound:

Dance: In a mixture of choreography and improvisation, I would like to explore the following questions: What does the body experience in war? What moves it to set out? What feelings accompany it on the run? How does it react and change between the poles of rapprochement and alienation?
Can a person overcome the history of his body?

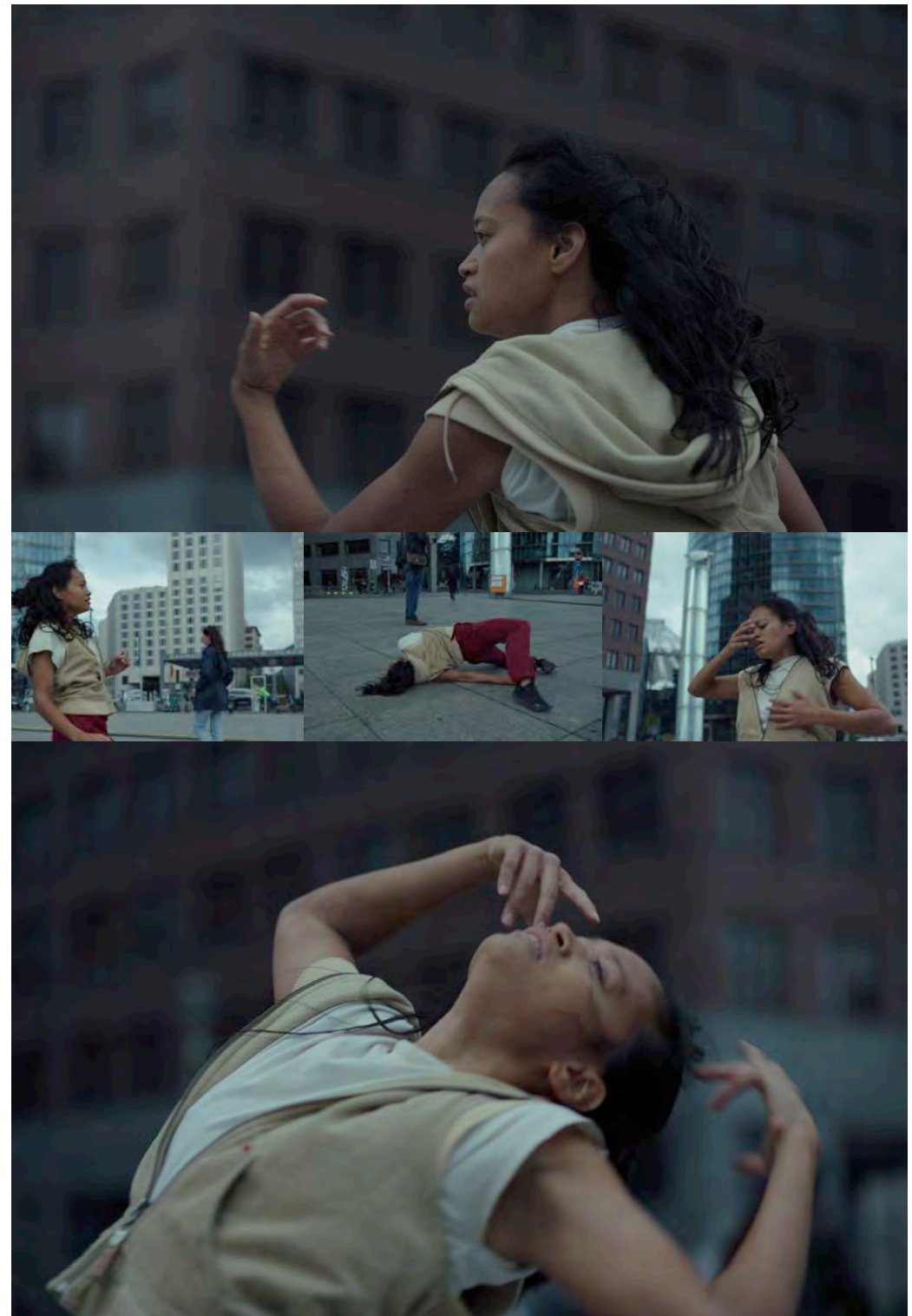
Image: Dance movements are taken up with a dynamic camera and thus enriched and expanded. Close-ups are played with, directing the viewer's focus and creating a claustrophobic closeness to the protagonists and their emotions, but also long shots that give the viewer free rein to see and interpret. Sandy tones dominate together with the colour blue of the sea and red of the blood of irreparable wounds.

The tone is sombre and surreal, but hopeful.

Sound: The images are accompanied by experimental sound, which plays with sounds of war, escape (such as the pattering of feet, the roar of waves and screaming silence) and arrival in a big city. And music is created from these sounds. This sound is paired with musical surfaces.

"Until the moon is born in the west" is less a realistic picture of our society than a poetic film that follows the logic of a dream.

Lea Bethke



Exposé



" Until the moon is born in the west " is an experimental short film that moves between dance and drama, combines documentary with fictional elements and tells the story of a person on the run in poetic images.

In three acts, it illustrates the emotional world of a person who decides to leave her bombed-out homeland and risk her life by fleeing across the Mediterranean Sea, driven by the mere hope of a future.

3 Acts:

- I Attack
- II Awakening
- III Arrival

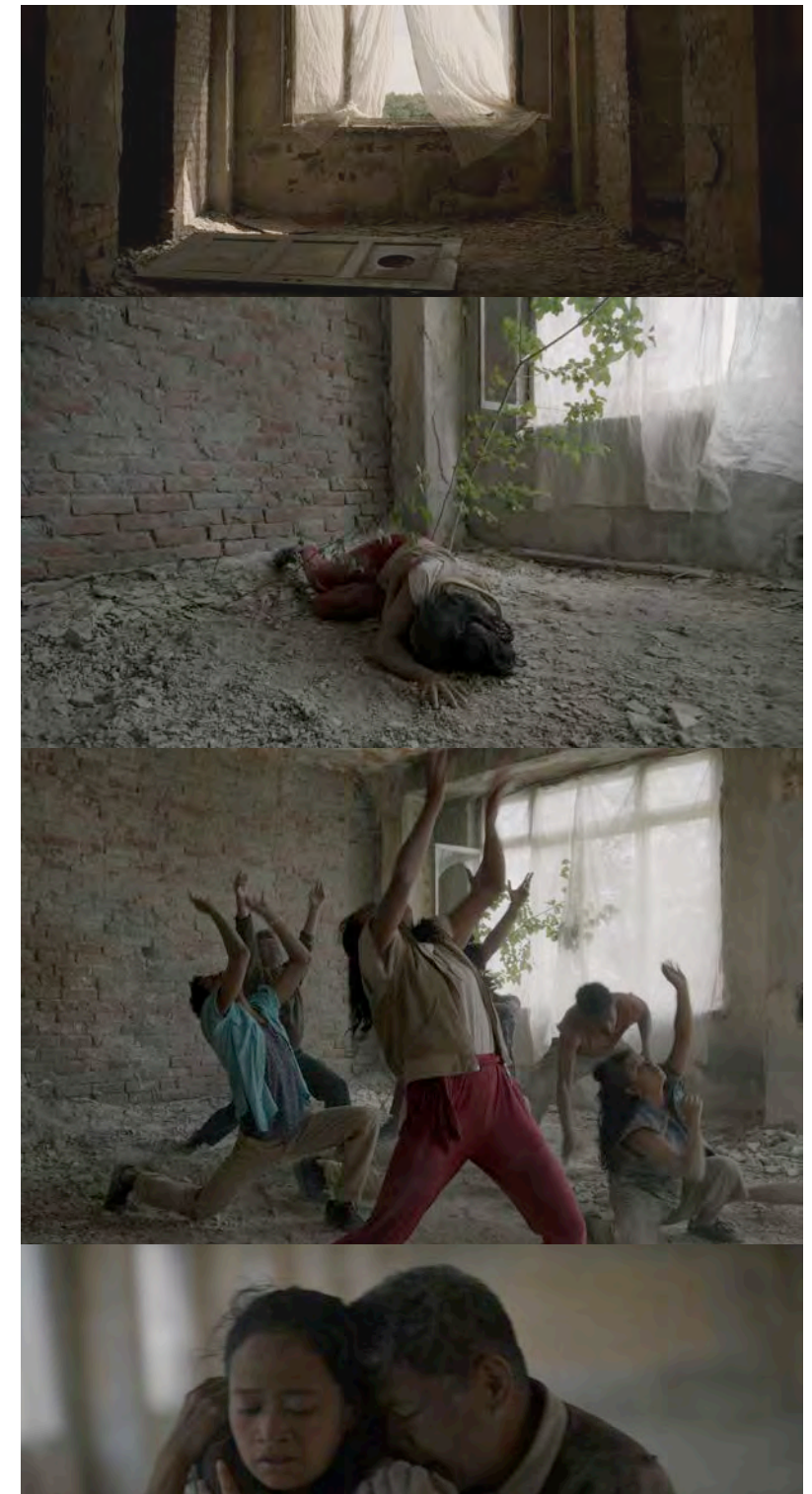
Act 1 *Attack*

A bare room framed by ruins. Soft steam on the ground. The air tastes like intrusion. It is calm, almost unpleasantly calm. It feels as if the silence tears apart the air. Sizzling noises in the distance. At first barely noticeable, slowly swelling up. Fugitive movement streaking the sight. Like blinking your eyes. A ray of light is breaking through the dark room wrapping the rubble in warm light. Subtly beautiful. You could assume, dawn is near.

Armistice. On the fridges of the room we can see a person crouching down in between the wreckage. Her name is Joy. At first sight she is barely noticeable. Is she old, is she young? It is hard to tell. Her body is completely covered in a grey mass. Her movements depict the weight on her body. Making it unbearable to breath. With every movement she gains momentum, becomes faster, becomes airy and vivid. A rollicking dance begins. Her facade starts to crumble. Clearly you can make out parts of her face.

Stamping feet mix with the howl of sirens. She knows. It's almost time. *Attack.* And she knows she is not alone. In between the wreckage you can see it, more bodies rise. In parts they are covered in the same grey mass. They move towards her, surround her. A fight begins. The group breaks up and begins to move in sync. Their choreography describes their daily lives in the war zone.

Darkness covers the entire room in complete silence. Slowly a pile becomes visible. A pile of human bodies. Motionless. As if they were just another part of the wreckage. Hesitantly three bodies arise from the pile. One of them is Joy, the other her father. And the third is a stranger named Ali. Ali approaches them tentatively. Tenderly, father and daughter touch each other, knowing that this could be their last touch. In silent agreement, Ali and above all Joy part from their father. Holding hands they run towards the edge of the house. Quietly the night resting on them like a blanket. Beneath the water has calmed down. That night looking out onto the sea their hopes are tremendous. They jump. A heavy smell of cement is in the air.



Act 2 *Awakening*

Free Fall - - - and impact. As if a great load were taken from them, the cement flows to all sides and detaches itself from their bodies. With a feeling of weightlessness they sink to the bottom of the sea.

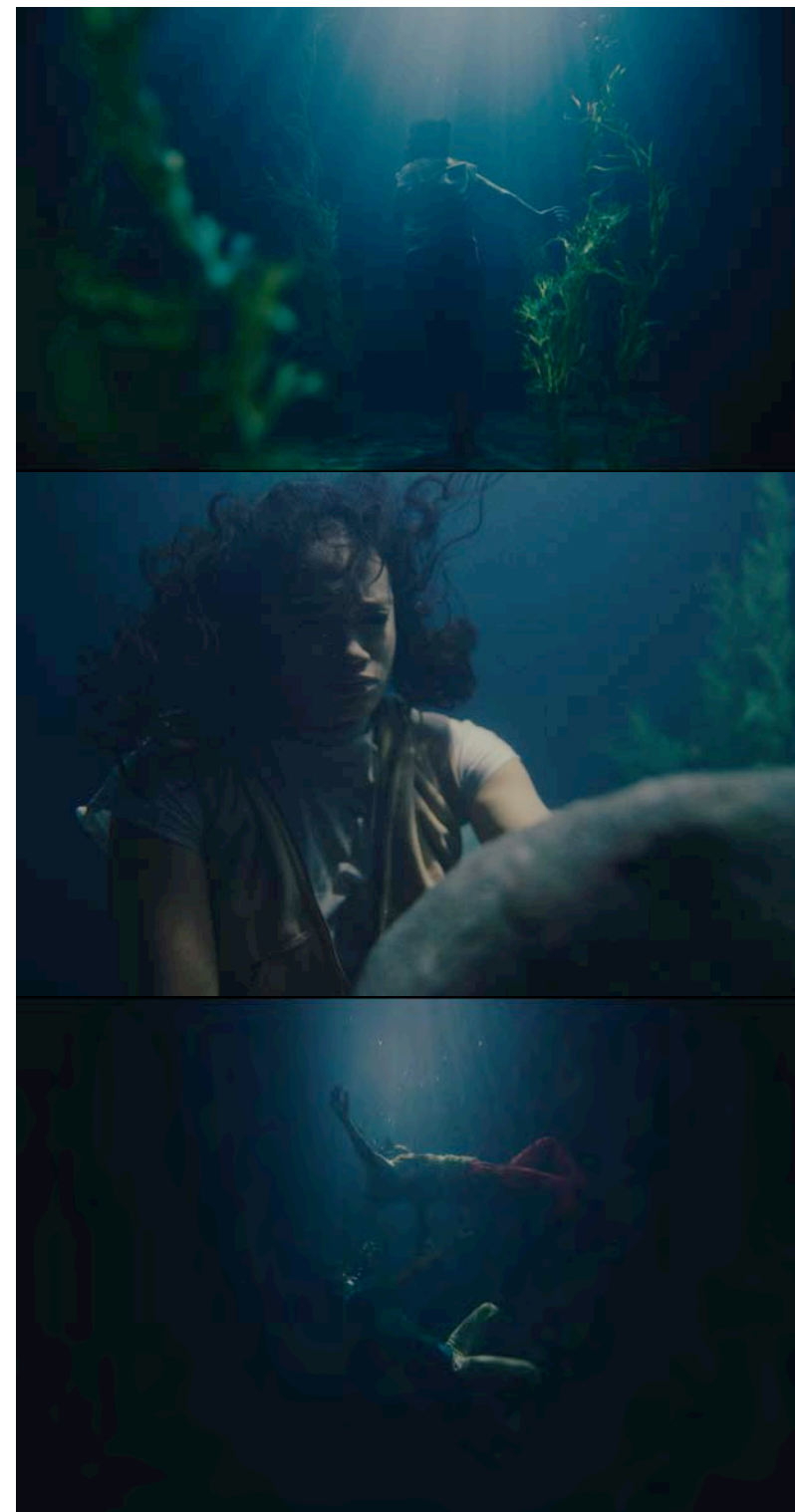
Light-footed, their feet touch the ground. Their hands struggle for hold. A mixture of thirst for life and fear dominates their gestures. In slow motion they move forward. Ali struggles with his powers, but his body does not give up yet. Help is far from being forthcoming. A dull melody accompanies them from far away.

The sound gets louder and louder until they see a cemetery in the distance. They drift closer and closer to the silent stones. When they finally arrive, Joy gently places her hand on one of the gravestones. They stand there like a memorial. Immovably conquered and covered for eternity by the mantle of the sea. A mass grave invisible to the world on the surface.

Panic seizes her, she looks around for Ali. Gone. No, not yet. They hurry past further into the deep blue.

A light becomes visible that breaks through the surface of the water. The end is near. Wave noise mixes into the muffled melody. A hopeful dance begins, which quickly becomes a struggle for survival. The sea winds mercilessly around the bodies of the dancers. Threatening, vehement and uncompromising, the water beats around itself. The air becomes scarce. They struggle with their lives. Joy reaches for Ali's hand. But too late. His lifeless body drifts into the distance.

Drenched by the sunlight that breaks the water into a thousand reflections, Ali joins the sea of deceased stones that remind for eternity of a possible life. With her last strength Joy pushes herself upwards into the light.



Act 3 *Arrival*

Gasping for air, she shows up. The rising sun wraps the surroundings in a bright blue. The sea is restless and Joy has problems keeping her head above water. Memories of the people she lost threaten to pull her back into the depths. She struggles with her traumatised body. And finally she manages to pull herself to the shore. For a short moment she remains on the ground. Soaking wet she gets up.

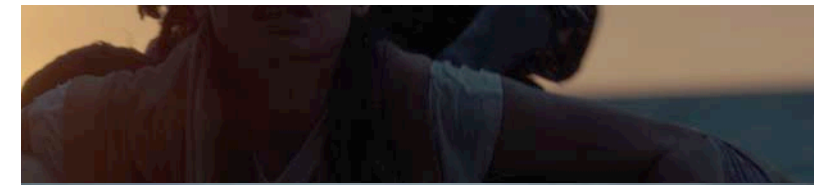
Once more she looks out at the sea. Then she averts her gaze and drags herself and her exhausted bones forward, step by step until she collapses, all strength gone.

Joy wakes up on busy street in the turmoil of the big city. Slowly she touches her body and moves her limbs to stand up.

Overtaxed by the volume and the mass of people moving forward in lockstep, she continues walking slowly. It is as if the people would not perceive her. She closes her eyes. People's murmur mixes with street noises and a soft melody can be heard.

The melody becomes louder and louder until only it can be heard. Joy begins to dance from the walking. The eyes are still closed, completely introverted.

Maybe even in a kind of trance she moves through the people and starts to turn around herself.



Lead *Joy Alpuerto Ritter*



Joy Alpuerto Ritter has her roots in the Philippines. She emigrated to Germany at the age of 4 and grew up in Freiburg. In 2004 she graduated from the Palucca Dance School in Dresden. Her repertoire ranges from ballet and jazz to hip hop, breakdance and voguing. She has participated in dance battles such as Voguing out

Berlin, Defipayette, Funkin stylz and Juste Debout. As a freelance contemporary dancer she has worked with choreographers such as Christoph Winkler, Anja Kozik, Constanza Macras, Wangramirez and Heike Hennig.

In 2011 she joined Cirque du Soleil as a dancer and aerialist in the Michael Jackson Immortal World Tour and toured the USA, Canada and Europe for 2 years. Since 2013 she has been a dancer with the Akram Khan Dance Company. In 2016 she was nominated by the National Dance Awards UK for "outstanding female dancer" (modern) in the performance "Until the Lions". With her own solo work "Babae" she found international resonance as a choreographer and is one of the Aerowaves artists 2020. Since then Joy has been creating her own work and working as an (associate) choreographer with Akram Khan, Chen Shi-Zheng, Riz Ahmed, Viviana Durante, Florence + the Machine and supporting other academic institutions in Austria, Germany, Italy and Beijing.

Cast

The performers are dancers with strong acting skills and different dance styles. The group is made up of people from different backgrounds who have one thing in common: They had to experience war and/or have left their family environment and find/found a new home in the foreign city of Berlin.

Dancers: Joy Alpuerto Ritter, Ali Enani, Marcelo Omine, Lujain Mustafa, Mouafak Aldoabl, Osman Osman, Joana Kern und Exocé Kasongo





Lea Bethke is a filmmaker and dancer. She came to Berlin in 2012 for her film studies at the *Freie Universität Berlin* and stayed. Self-taught, she learned camera techniques, editing, producing and directing. Since 2016, she has been running her own production team, *99 Motions Production*,

with which she successfully realises commissioned works for c/o Berlin, Sasha Waltz & Guests, the Flying Steps Academy, HZT Berlin, Heimathafen Neukölln, the Bode Museum, Die Urbane and various artists such as the Massoud Godemann Trio and Stimulus. At the end of 2018, she was accepted into the mentoring programme of the *Film Network Berlin* of the *DFFB* (mentor: Michel Balagué), in 2019 she founded her own production company *Sinne Film*, and is currently working on her first own films: the dance short film "Until the moon is born in the west" and the documentary "Cinegeek" about the Filmkunstbar Fitzcarraldo in Kreuzberg.

The thematic focus of her filmic works is on the body in all its forms and non-forms, and the movement that creates meaning in the visual. With an often activist approach, she tells stories that stir and touch. She combines the arts and cultures in documentary, experimental and dance film.

Having grown up between two homes - Iran and Germany - and having independently chosen the Netherlands as his third home, Director of Photography Jonas knows how to actively and quickly change his perception. This has taught him curiosity, openness and



the courage to embrace the unknown. Standing behind the camera, he is thus able to implement what he has learned, transform what he sees into emotions and thus bring the soul of the film itself to life.

www.jonaskolahdoozan.de (Akt 1 und Akt 3)

and
Jacob Sauermilch

www.jacobsauermilch.de
(Akt 2)

Choreographer *Raphael Moussa Hillebrand*



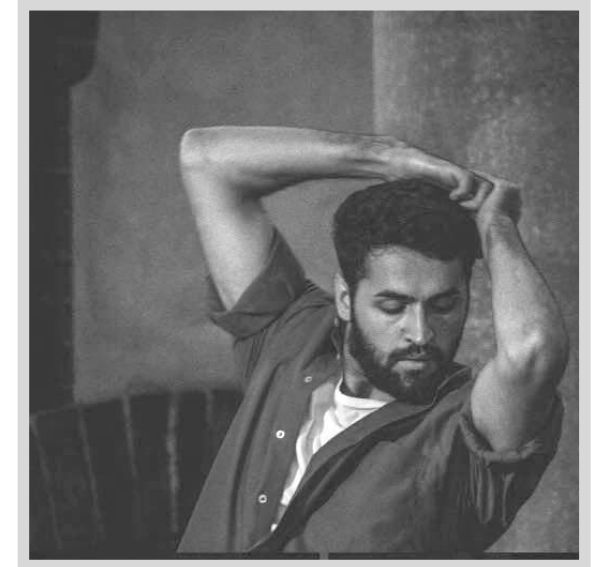
Raphael Moussa Hillebrand is a choreographer, director and curator. He was born in Hong Kong and grew up in Berlin. He always uses his polycultural background to realise his own visions and picks up on this instinct for socio-political issues

as well as translating cultural facets and identities. He regularly leads cultural and collaborative programmes around the world and develops various creations with local dancers. In June 2014, he completed his master's degree in choreography at the HZT Berlin. His pieces (including POW_2045 (2014), Auf meinen Schultern (2019)) are shown nationally and internationally. As a member of the groups Battle Squad and Animatronik, he is an integral part of today's hip-hop community. He is also the brainchild and founding member of the world's first hip-hop party: Die Urbane. A hip-hop party with which he campaigns for decolonisation as well as empowerment and cultural diversity, among other things. On the occasion of the German Dance Award in October 2020, he received a special honour for outstanding development in dance.

As an experienced diver, Raphael choreographed the second act of "Dust beyond the winds".

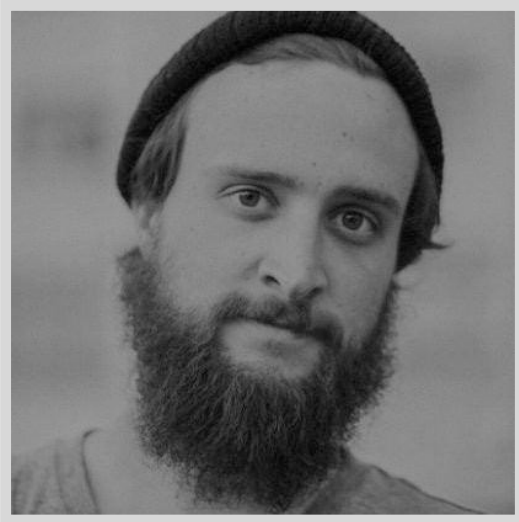
Medhat Aldaabal Choreographer

Medhat Aldaabal is a dancer and choreographer from As-Suwayda', Syria. He studied dance and acting at the Higher Institute for Dramatic Arts in Damascus and started working for Enan Dance Theatre after graduating.



From 2007 to 2009, he studied medicine at the Al-Adawi Health Institution in Damascus.

After Medhat was wounded in the fight against Assad troops, he fled to Germany in June 2014. He quickly established himself in the Berlin dance scene and now dances with Sasha Waltz & Guests. In his dance theatre pieces, arrival and life in a foreign country are constant themes. Medhat has taken over the choreographic direction of the first and third acts.



Jonas Harmsen is Founder of Monic Films GmbH and Senior Editor in the heart of Berlin. As a freelance editor he has already worked for renowned production houses and agencies including tapeTV and Heimat Werbefilmagentur

Together with e.g. director Irja von Bernstorff and Monic Films, he has already produced numerous documentaries for international broadcasters. Among them 'Children of the Climate Crisis' on ARTE and 'The Farmer and I' which was shown at the Max Ophüls Film Festival.

Monic Films is a Berlin-based production company and has been a creative meeting point for international filmmakers for 4 years. The combination of the in-house production team and numerous freelancers has created a community of passionate filmmakers in Berlin Mitte



that offers all kinds of film formats. From classic documentaries to music videos and elaborate advertising film productions.

www.monifilms.de



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