



## 20 years of FREISCHWIMMEN – platform for performance and theater is about to end

FREISCHWIMMEN has been the platform for performance and theater in German-speaking countries since 2004. As a network, we have not been selected for further funding 2024-2025 by the funding program „Verbindungen fördern!“ of the Federal Association of Independent Performing Arts (BFDK). This means that the joint production platform of 8 theaters from Germany, Austria and Switzerland is now threatened with an end after 20 years.

### Funding on a long run = sustainable funding

Since 2004 FREISCHWIMMEN has been committed to the development and promotion of artistic work and biographies of young artists on the level of national and international qualification: As a grown network in the middle segment of production houses in German-speaking countries (currently: SOPHIENSÆLE Berlin, Schwankhalle Bremen, HochX Munich, LOFFT-DAS THEATER Leipzig, FFT Düsseldorf, Theater Rampe Stuttgart, Gessnerallee Zurich and Brut Vienna), we offer young artists from the performing arts a support of several years that opens up space for artistic development, builds trust, creates sustainable production structures and enables international visibility.

### Visibility through FREISCHWIMMEN

Thus, the network has accompanied many now internationally successful artists at the beginning of their artistic careers: Milo Rau, Monster Truck, God's Entertainment, andcompany&Co., Thom Luz, Herbordt&Mohren, Fräulein Wunder AG, Turbo Pascal, Markus&Markus, Billinger&Schulz, Caroline Creutzburg, Simon Mayer and many other directors and groups have taken an important step in their artistic biography with FREISCHWIMMEN and have been able to establish connections internationally. Up to now there have been **86** groups and individual artists. Their development serves as a model for future generations of artists and for the cooperation of funding partners and institutions with the independent scene.

### FREISCHWIMMEN closes a gap in professionalization

With residencies, workshops, showings and labs, FREISCHWIMMEN promotes individual artistic development, process-oriented work and the joint exchange on aesthetics and working methods among the participating artists and with the partner houses.

With co-production contributions, guest performances in the production house network and a biennial festival, FREISCHWIMMEN offers solid production support and international visibility. Moreover, FREISCHWIMMEN strengthens the transfer of knowledge between the houses and enables them to substantially develop their own strategies in the future fields of diversity, accessibility, sustainability and power-critical work, which benefits artists in the regions associated with the network houses.



**FREISCHWIMMEN stands for a continuous, qualified and qualifying artist support.**

We operate nationwide and especially support scenes and houses from structurally weak regions. This also includes smaller, but locally very relevant production houses such as the HochX in Munich, the Schwankhalle in Bremen or the LOFFT in Leipzig. All network partners have only a minimal artistic budget and cannot fund FREISCHWIMMEN from their own resources. The network activities were made possible until 2020 through punctual project funding; with „Verbindungen fördern!“ FREISCHWIMMEN received funding of €1,500,000 in 2020-2023. For 2024-2025, despite a reduced funding amount, a targeted, innovative and sustainable funding for artists was proposed and 600.000€ were applied for. Only in a funded network can we offer artists contemporary professional payment, working conditions and opportunities for process-oriented work.

We are the only network that has been able to offer cross-border support from the very beginning and, together with our partner institutions in Switzerland and Austria, enable an artistic exchange in the German-speaking world that would otherwise fall through the cracks of all other funding programs.

It is clear: FREISCHWIMMEN holds an important intermediate position between the large production houses and the houses in the area and can thus accompany artists on their way from regional to national and international visibility. As the Freischwimmen meets Rodeo Festival 2022 in Munich has shown, FREISCHWIMMEN also has a cultural-political effect and is a significant push factor for the further development of the local independent scenes - and cross-genre. FREISCHWIMMEN has created a form of sustainable artist and structural support that is still exemplary!

Due to the funding cancellation, the network is threatened with an end after two decades of successful work. And this, of all things, in the year in which the network wanted to celebrate its 20th anniversary as part of the X Tage Freischwimmen Festival in Stuttgart.

**The consequences for the entire independent performing arts scene are severe:**

- Loss of an important institution of artistic production in the German-speaking countries
- Loss of opportunities for residencies and guest performances, e.g. in the context of a biennial festival
- Loss of international networking and visibility of artists and groups
- Break-off of the intensive exchange between artists and houses of different regions, which is essential for the development of aesthetic expressions of the independent scene.
- Stagnation of the thematic and practical examination of important future topics as well as the discontinuation of initiated developments in the area of the reduction of barriers, access, attracting new audiences, etc.

**Sustainable networking needs strong connections and allies**

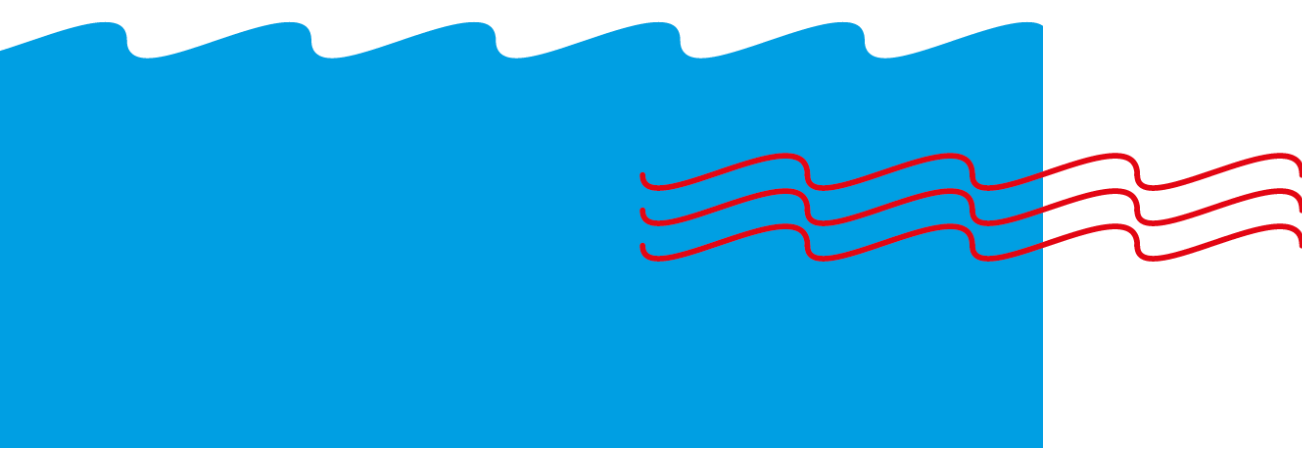
The cancellation of funding for the years 2024-2025 in the federal program „Verbindungen fördern!“ leaves us stunned and is in no way comprehensible to us. The program was created to enable the promotion of cross-federal network structures and thus create a reliable, sustainable and collegial transfer of art and knowledge. Especially harsh: FREISCHWIMMEN was significantly involved in the genesis and development of this program!

We ask ourselves what sustainability means in this context, when the longstanding successful work of a network in the field of artist support comes to such an abrupt, even brutal end. We see the strengths of our

network precisely in the well-practiced, trusting and appreciative cooperation of the production houses and their ability to jointly respond to the needs of the artists.

In the coming post-pandemic years, our cultural scene needs networks and alliances more than ever. Only by working together can we meet the challenges of creating the best possible conditions for artistic work in the future. FREISCHWIMMEN wants to and must continue to be part of this process in order to assume responsibility towards the scene - whether and how we can continue this work as a network is uncertain. In order to maintain and further develop the grown structures of FREISCHWIMMEN, we now need courageous, transparent and substantial decisions from partners, supporters and funders, which are decisions for the professional free performing arts.

Because FREISCHWIMMEN should not drown!



## The Network FREISCHWIMMEN:

SOPHIENSÆLE Berlin  
FFT Düsseldorf  
Gessnerallee Zurich  
Brut Vienna  
Theater Rampe Stuttgart  
Schwankhalle Bremen  
LOFFT – DAS THEATER Leipzig  
HochX Munich

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