

The support through the LUTSF award allowed me to research into the work of Jewish exile modern dance pioneer Tile Rössler [Tehila Ressler] (1907 - 1959). Rössler was born in 1907 in Tarnow, Poland, grew up in Berlin and studied dance with Mary Wigman and Gret Palucca in Dresden. Between 1931 and 1933 she was appointed co-director of Palucca School in Dresden, but had to leave her post immediately after the National Socialists came to power. Rössler emigrated to Tel Aviv in 1933, where she opened her studio to teach and create solo works which she performed in Palestine and later in Israel, Switzerland and the USA. She died in Tel Aviv in 1959. My research aims to reactivate Rössler's work by drawing on materials from the archives of the Akademie der Künste (AdK) in Berlin and the Beit Ariela Dance Library in Tel Aviv. Drawing on letters, examination papers and employment records, as well as costume drawings, photographs and essays written in German by Rössler and her young students at the height of the tragedy of the Shoah in 1944 it re-articulates and commemorates her almost forgotten emancipatory and radical legacy and as pedagogue and thinker.

My research project was divided into three phases:

- preparation and consultation with relevant scholars and archives in Germany and Israel
- a two week visit to Berlin to meet scholars and to undertake archival research at Akademie der Künste Berlin in September 2023
- a two week visit to Tel Aviv to meet relevant scholars and to undertake archival research at Beit Ariela Dance Library in November 2023.

The preparation period was very exciting, as I was able to receive brilliant support by Israeli scholars and dance practitioners Yonat Rothman, Judith Ingber, Henia Rottenberg, Ruth Eshel, Yael Barkai and the Israel Dance Library. The contact with Rothman and Rottenberg has continued up to now, and they have fed brilliantly into my research with detailed information and great enthusiasm. I was able to further my connection to relevant Ausdruckstanz- and Exile-Dance scholars Laure Guilbert, Irene Sieben and to producer Kirsten Seeligmüller, which prepared for meaningful meetings and exchanges on the topic of Rössler's exile in 1933 and her relation to Palucca Schule. I was also able to develop connections to relevant archives in Berlin, Dresden and Tel Aviv.

The scholarship enabled me to spend two weeks in Berlin in September 2023, to meet with scholars, and to spend five days with archival research on Tile Rössler and her employer Gret Palucca at Akademie der Künste (AdK) in Berlin. This was very fruitful, informative and at times very moving. It allowed me to gain new insights into the reluctant history of German Modern Dance between 1933 and 1945. I am currently in the process of getting relevant materials scanned for further use.

The archival research offered a wonderful insight into the work of Rössler as a student, teacher and then later director of Palucca Schule Dresden from 1931 to 1933.

It clarified how Rössler later replicated teaching and learning models experienced and probed in Dresden at her own school in Tel Aviv until 1959, setting out a reflective and holistic education for professional dancers, dance teachers and gymnastic teachers. AdK holds very interesting material and data on Rössler within their Palucca collection.

These include Rössler's two major school examination papers and grades from 1928 which evidence her pedagogical vision and cultural astuteness. Here she sets out her motivation as a student and future collaborator educator who aims to work organically 'with her students':

'[...] Lay people immediately sense intuitively whether a teacher is teaching from "above" or working "with them". By teaching in this way, we give all students the opportunity to be free and uninhibited in our lessons. [...]' (Rössler, 1928; AdK Palucca 6810 translated by the author)

In her examination papers Rössler proposes a reflective and democratic model of education for dance pedagogues which 'should give the students the opportunity to observe applied pedagogy' and which includes 'discussion evenings where students can talk about dance problems and exchange their opinions' (ibid). Such education should foster the individual abilities of each student. Her writings about the development of the field of gymnastics and dance reveal Rössler's cultural 'social' motivation which underpins her professional studies as a Jewish and Zionist woman practitioner:

'I think gymnastics can be tremendously developed if there are people there who can fully absorb, who are "fertile fields". I long for such a fertile field. I believe I can find it in Palestine, in those children's colonies and workers' settlements. But if I only devote myself to dance, I see a suitable field for me there too. Because Hebrew music is my music and Hebrew melody is my melody. And to test myself and to see if it's not all just fantasy and imagination, I want to go to a Hebrew stage in Germany or Russia later, work with the people, to find out whether I am on the right path. ' (ibid)

Rössler was able to develop her educational ideas through her appointment as director of Palucca Schule in 1931, after working in theatres in Berlin and East Prussia. Employment- and pay- records at AdK Archives evidence Rössler's move from teacher to school director, but her work at the school was cut short through her dismissal by Gret Palucca in April 1933.

The AdK archives include a press-notification by Palucca Schule to the German body-culture organisation - Deutscher Körperbildungsverband - from April 1933 to announce that 'Frau Rössler had to leave the school' (AdK material Palucca 6556, translation by the author). The letter confirms information given by scholars Irene Sieben and Yonat Rothman (2023) that Gret Palucca dismissed all of her Jewish students and colleagues immediately after the Nazis came to power in early 1933. Details on the circumstances of dismissals of Jewish students are held in the Tel Aviv Beit Ariela archives through the writings of dancer Yardena Cohen (Rothman 2024). Further AdK archive material sheds light on Palucca's entanglement with both the Nazi- and later Socialist- German cultural sphere and power structures.

The correspondence from 1958 of gymnastic teacher Selma Weissbrod, who had survived the Holocaust in hiding in Berlin and then emigrated to Israel, with Palucca Schule also offers an uncomfortable read (Adk Archives Palucca 5302). Weissbrod seeks support for a pension application for the seriously ill Rössler in Israel from Palucca Schule, to receive some certification and evidence of employment of Rössler at the school. While the response of the school is friendly, no written confirmation of Rössler's position as school director are hinted at or given to Weissbrod – with the explanation given that all school records from prior to 1945 had been destroyed in the Dresden bombings. Within my research in the Berlin archives I easily accessed Rössler's examination papers, wage-slips, and employment records. Rössler died in poverty in 1959.

Due to the outbreak of the war in Israel in October 2023 I was not able to continue my research in Tel Aviv, though I have been in regular exchange with Israeli scholars about Rössler and the circumstances of her exile and later highly influential career as an educator in Israel. I am planning a presentation for the 2024 GTF (German Association for Dance Research) conference on 'In -visibilities/(Un-)Sichtbarkeiten – Moderner Tanz Re-Visited' at Folkwang Universität Essen in autumn 2024. I am currently trying to get copyrights to Rössler materials through Beit Ariela in Tel Aviv for future publications and of course would love to continue my research there in the future. I am truly grateful for the support through the Lisa Ulmann Travelling Scholarship Fund to allow me to undertake this timely research to shed further light on hidden and reluctant histories within the European Modern Dance heritage.

**Dr. Thomas Kampe 27/03/2024**