



Press Release Next Steps // 19.03.2025

10 projects selected

Next Steps boosts Hesse's dance scene with around 500,000 euros

Next Steps provides dance professionals in Hesse with tailored development opportunities at every stage of their careers – whether they wish to deepen their artistic practice or enhance their professional skills. Funding is available for individual artistic projects as well as for initiatives aiming to effect structural change and improve working conditions in the sector.

We received 109 proposals as part of the first round of applications. Applicants ranged from recent graduates of Hessian dance training programmes to professional choreographers, dancers, ensembles, theatres, production houses, artist networks and higher education institutions. The total amount of all grants awarded was 4,37 million euros.

At the meeting of the selection panel on 11 March 2025, the panel members Esther Boldt, Raphael Moussa Hillebrand, Hanna Knell, Philipp Schaus and Melanie Suchy chose 10 projects for funding, including 6 projects in strand A (one-year grants ranging from 5,000 to 25,000 euros) and 4 projects in strand B (multi-year grants up to 50,000 euros per year).

Statement by the jury:

We have selected projects that we hope will provide a strong impetus for the dance scene in Hessen and that demonstrate a high level of aesthetic, content-related and structural diversity. It was also important to us to support different generations of artists as well as different regions within Hesse and to strengthen existing networks. It was remarkable how many dancers deal with vulnerability and resilience – this is where dance once again becomes a social seismograph.

Christiane Riedel, Chair of the Crespo Foundation:

Supporting artists was a cause close to the heart of our founder, Ulrike Crespo. With Next Steps, we are one of the regrettably few foundations in Germany that are dedicated to funding dance. The diversity of applications we received is a striking testament to both the creative potential of the Hessian dance scene and its need for funding.

Riccarda Herre, Isabel Niederhagen (Programme Directors), Madeline Ritter (Artistic and Executive Director) Bureau Ritter:

The overwhelming response to Next Steps speaks for itself: the dance scene needs reliable support, especially in times of reduced public funding. Art does not thrive in isolation – it requires space, resources and reliable infrastructure. Thanks to the support of the Crespo Foundation, we can help with providing these foundational things, giving dance professionals the opportunity to develop their artistic practice.

The Next Steps funding programme was launched in autumn 2024 by the non-profit organisation Bureau Ritter, generously funded by the Crespo Foundation.

The second call for applications in strand A opens on 8 September 2025. To find out more, visit: www.next-steps-hessen.de.

Funded projects of the first call for application:

1. Strand A (one-year grants)

Applicant: Raha Dehghani Vinicheh, Giessen

Project: Veltroyer

“Veltroyer” is a performative mourning ritual that draws on traditional Jewish and Iranian practices to mourn the loss of more-than-human worlds. The project is the result of an ongoing collaboration between Raha Dehghani Vinicheh and Anna Lublina. In 2023, they explored Jewish mourning rites as part of a residency at ID_Tanzhaus Frankfurt and developed a collective ritual themselves, which included obituaries for extinct bird species in poem form. Together with artists Julie Weitz, Jerry Lieblich and Darya Voskoboynik, they will now continue their research into ecological grief, also incorporating Persian mourning rituals and traditions. The results will flow into the conception of a dance piece.

Applicant: Patscharaporn Distakul, Offenbach a. M.

Project: Sipping from the Soup of Legends

Patscharaporn Distakul grew up in two very different cultures and societies: on the one hand in Europe, where she perceives areas such as religion, science and philosophy as being very separate from each other; on the other hand in Thailand, where she experiences the boundaries between them as fluid. Here, for example, communication with the spirit world is part of everyday life. In “Sipping from the Soup of Legends”, the Offenbach-based artist explores traditional Thai folk legends, rituals and practices from the perspective of an artist whose biography spans two continents. The performance also pays homage to stories that have not found their way into official history books and to the oral transmission of knowledge. The audience is invited to experience how the artist evokes and reconnects with the knowledge of her ancestors that flows through her contemporary female body.

Applicant: Nora Goßmann, Frankfurt a. M.

Project: HOUSEaHOLICS – DANCE and MUSIC – CULTURE – COMMUNITY

House is an African-American-influenced club dance style that has found a safe space in the queer ballroom community. In Germany, there is often a lack of structures to make this culture, which sees itself as diverse and inclusive, visible and accessible. As part of the Next Steps funding, “HOUSEaHOLICS” brings dancers, DJs and cultural professionals together and in exchange – through jams, dance and knowledge transfer workshops and club events. The project thus creates a sustainable structure for the house dance scene in Hesse and Germany. It strengthens networking with international players, secures safe spaces for marginalized communities and promotes house as an artistic and cultural practice.

Applicant: Malin Harff, Gießen

Project: HOW TO BREATHE IN TIMES OF CRISIS. Teach us a song for recovery, dear Alga!

Malin Harff has had to severely restrict her artistic activities over the past two years due to her long Covid illness. As part of her funding, she wants to work with her company to establish a way of working that combines her disability with her professionalism.

With the piece “HOW TO BREATHE IN TIMES OF CRISIS”, she will venture back into the world of work and artistically explore the parallels between her physical exhaustion and the exhaustion of the planet. Climate crisis, mineral extractions and Long Covid – for Malin Haff, they are directly linked. The Giessen-based artist understands Long Covid as a multisystemic disease that resembles our collapsing ecosystem in its total systemic collapse. “HOW TO BREATHE IN TIMES OF CRISIS” examines the state and breathing of the world – with the help of the physicality of Long Covid, soprano Alga, three mixed-abled performers and the finite and most sought-after raw material in the world, sand.

Applicant: Jeanne Eschert, Frankfurt a. M.

Project: Bed Fold Reading

For many chronically ill people, the bed is the forced center of their lives. While others meet in conference rooms, at events or on the street and feel part of a democratic exchange, bedridden people are often isolated and excluded from cultural and social life.

Jeanne Eschert, who is chronically ill herself, wants to enable bedridden people to participate in dance and cultural spaces and make their bodies present on stage. Using a method she has developed herself, she will read the imprints that the bedridden body leaves behind in the sheets. She examines these folds as traces of a choreography that not only refers to a past movement, but also to the people's ability to act and their presence. In bedfold reading sessions, the Frankfurt artist will talk to dancers and bedridden people about their body movements and feelings and document them. This will result in a book of images and poems, which will be presented at a public event.

Applicant: Verena Piwonka, Kassel

Project: Strolling through Hessen's scenes

The collaboration between Verena Piwonka and Gab Branco began in 2024 with the project series “Spaziertänze – tanz dich durch Kassels Innenstadt”. The events took place at various locations in public spaces with the aim of bringing the full range of dance performances into people's everyday lives. Developing this approach further, the duo is now planning a tour through six Hessian cities. In Kassel, Korbach, Giessen, Fulda, Frankfurt a. M. and Wiesbaden, they will connect with the local dance scene and develop a site-specific performance in the urban space with a local artist. Passers-by are invited to watch or actively participate in the performances. In this way, the project enables people who have never come into contact with dance as an art form to gain low-threshold access and opens up the urban space for creativity and exchange.

2. Strand B (multi-year grants)

Applicant: Hannah Dewor, Frankfurt a. M.

Projects: Closer with Consent

While the job of intimacy coordinator has already been established in the film industry as a reaction to the #metoo movement, the development of a comparable job description for dance is still in its infancy – even though touch and physical contact are intrinsic to this art form more than almost any other. The Next Steps project by Frankfurt artist Hannah Dewor is therefore doing pioneering work in Hesse to further develop and establish the professional field of Intimacy Choreography. With her own further training, the implementation of introductory workshops, the founding of a (supra)regional network, the organization of the first exchange LAB for Intimacy

Choreography and the development of an accessible website, trauma-sensitive and consent-based working methods are being promoted in the dance scene.

Applicant: Produktionshaus NAXOS, Frankfurt a. M.

Project: Ausbau der Tanzinfrastruktur des Produktionshaus NAXOS

The NAXOS production house is a key stakeholder in Frankfurt's independent scene and aims to improve production and performance conditions for dance professionals in the region through targeted infrastructural measures. This includes the installation of a modular sprung floor and a flexible sound and lighting system, which will enable dance to be presented in a large stage space in the future. In addition, an online calendar is being developed in collaboration with ID_Tanzhaus, which makes the availability of rehearsal rooms transparent and enables reservations to be made. In addition to this – also in cooperation with ID_Tanzhaus – the establishment of a regular showcase series is planned as an effective format for increasing the visibility of regional and supraregional dance artists.

Applicant: Dance Nexus, Wiesbaden

Project: DANCE NEXUS: Netzwerk und Strukturen für Sichtbarkeit, Förderung und Verbindung der freien Tanzszene

The DANCE NEXUS network project will strengthen the dance scene in Wiesbaden, Mainz and the surrounding area in the long term and give it greater visibility. The cooperation with a local ballet school enables dance professionals to use rehearsal rooms free of charge. The monthly Dance Nexus Atelier (DNA) format in varying rooms offers artists a stage for work-in-progress presentations as well as a framework for dialog with the scene and the audience. In addition, residencies promote open-ended artistic research and close a gap in the regional funding system. In addition, cooperation with other Hessian networks such as tanz*werk Kassel and ID_Tanzhaus is being sought. The aim is to jointly develop formats that increase the visibility of the Hessian dance scene on a regional and supraregional level.

Applicant: Panama Vergara, Frankfurt a. M.

Project: ANYBODY WALKING?

“ANYBODY WALKING?” will not only sustainably strengthen the ballroom community, but also the queer BIPoC space in Hesse and further develop ballroom as a cultural movement. The project focuses on the importance of Ballroom as a historically grown and resistant culture - especially as the movement is increasingly commercialized and appropriated. The initiators place particular emphasis on the passing on of knowledge, the preservation of culture and the empowerment of Black, queer trans people. The Kiki Balls offer a protected stage on which participants can try out the skills they have learned and present themselves in an authentic ballroom setting. At the same time, they increase the visibility of ballroom culture in Hesse, create new networks for dance professionals and set an example for inclusion, self-determination and artistic freedom.

If you have any further questions, please contact:

Contact

[Press and Communications](#)

Esther Ningelgen (Communications Director, Bureau Ritter)

T: 030 – 402033205

Mail: e.ningelgen@bureau-ritter.de