

## Director Wim Wenders Celebrates Choreographer in 3-D ‘Pina’

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- [Choreographer](#) [2]
- [Germany](#) [3]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [4]
- [IFC Films](#) [5]
- [Malou Airaud](#) [6]
- [Movie Review](#) [7]
- [Patrick McDonald](#) [8]
- [Pina](#) [9]
- [Pina Bausch](#) [10]
- [Rainer Behr](#) [11]
- [Regina Advento](#) [12]
- [Ruth Amarante](#) [13]
- [Wim Wenders](#) [14]



Rating: **3.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – Director Wim Wenders, famous for his magical takes on life and love in “Wings of Desire” and “Until the End of the World,” brings that same enchantment through a 3-D documentary about a rebellious and unusual German choreographer named Pina Bausch in “Pina.”

The film is hypnotizing and mesmerizing, more so for aficionados of the dance. Pina Bausch (now deceased) was a visionary in the use of organic elements and movement designed around those elements. The dancers work their activities within the framework, and create stage/screen pictures of uncompromising distinction. The 3-D work enhances these works, but not so much to make it necessary. What is on-screen is a tribute from one old friend to another, and it succeeds in that wonderful energy.

Pina Bausch was a practitioner of the Tanztheater, which means dance theater. Throughout the documentary, her works are performed, and then commented upon by the dancers past and present that have expressed her point of view. This is pure theater, in the sense that the dance movements interpret the circumstance of the action communicated, such as “The Rite of Spring,” and “Cafe Mueller.” With no dialogue, and only facial and body movements, there are emotions of joy, renewal, sorrow and sin.



Wim Wenders uses the 3-D technology to enhance the dance theater, and the cameras go on stage with the lithe bodies of the dancers as

only 3-D can. This is a use of this type of presentation that is not for action or animation purposes, but for a close-up examination of the choreographer's art and the practitioners of the art. Through intense and emotional interviews, because Ms. Bausch died while the film was being made, the expression of "Pina" becomes all feeling and being.

The film opens and closes with a rhythmic line dance, a row of movements that are simple and synchronized in an outdoor setting. Because the motions are so simple, and repeatable, it is the most accessible piece in the documentary. There is something so artistic and primal about it, the need for people to work together in a commonality, and to express a type of tribalism through the common realm. Whether it's the "Electric Slide" at a wedding, or this dance invention by Pina, the same human purpose comes to the forefront.

The interviews are so passionate, again speaking about Pina both before and after her demise. There is such an appreciation for her contribution to the art, and the dancers on-screen who elucidate this contribution, either through their dancing or words, gather a remarkable obituary for a relatively obscure but relevant person and art form.

The actual dance pieces are the expressive examples of Pina's life. "The Rite of Spring" features a stage that contains a thick layer of peat moss – what better was to anticipate and celebrate the ancient Rite. The best piece is "Cafe Mueller." Dealing with blindness and repetition, the use of simple chairs and tables in a cafe become props for the randomness of life, as the movements manifest themselves in an almost infinite loop.



Dancers in a Modern Setting in 'Pina'  
Photo credit: Donata Wenders for IFC Films

Where the film is less successful lies in the attitude of the receiver. Dance fans will revel in the wild movements and interpretive synchronization. Non-dance persons might feel a sameness in some of the individual works. The final piece, "Kontakthof," deals in themes that are similar to the earlier "Rite of Spring." Obviously, Wenders wanted to showcase the best of Pina, but perhaps another piece that was separate from another naturalistic setting would have made for a less repetitive feel.

Dance fan or not, everyone is a movement fan, especially when relating that movement to the rhythms of everyday existence. Somehow, Pina Bausch was able to connect the dots between reality and fantasy, with good friend Wim Wenders gratefully available to evolve that viewpoint forward, and to a wider audience.

*"Pina" continues its limited release on January 20th. See local listings for show times, theaters and 3-D presentations. Featuring interviews with Pina Bausch, Regina Advento, Malou Airaud, Ruth Amarante and Rainer Behr. Written and directed by Wim Wenders. Rated "PG"*



[15]

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- [9] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/pina>
- [10] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/pina-bausch>
- [11] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/rainer-behr>
- [12] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/regina-advento>
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