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Ressort: Kunst, Kultur und Musik

Tao Ye's 13 & 14

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The performance Tao Ye's 13 & 14 for TAO Dance Theater confirms his status as one of the most rigorously visionary choreographers working today. Operating within his Numerical Series, he pushes abstraction to an extreme while never losing sight of the dancers' humanity. His oft-quoted belief that "the body is dance, and dance is body" is not a slogan here but a methodological core.

In this performance every choreographic decision begins and ends with the disciplined, listening body. 13 unfolds as a study in relational geometry. Thirteen dancers in sand-to-grey tones move like a single organism continually reconfiguring itself. There is no narrative, yet an unmistakable emotional topography emerges from the shifting proximities, spirals and accumulations. Tao's form-strict approach—limited motifs, oscillations in tempo, relentless repetition—creates a kind of choreographic pressure in which micro-differences suddenly become monumental.

Within this apparent uniformity, each performer's timing, weight transfer and focus registers with exquisite clarity, allowing individuality to surface inside a collective pulse rather than in opposition to it. The muted costumes, designed by Duan Ni, emphasize contour and continuity, making the body's lines and group patterns read like graphite drawings in motion. Where 13 is tonally restrained, 14 opens into chromatic exuberance. The introduction of color—vivid, playful costumes—reframes the same formal rigor as something almost festive, without diluting its intensity. Set against the steady tick of a metronome, the choreography charts a vast spectrum between stillness and propulsion.

Tao uses the metronome not merely as a musical device but as an external measure against which the dancers negotiate agency: when do they obey, when do they resist, when do they expand time within a fixed grid? The piece becomes an intricate exploration of rhythm as both constraint and liberation. What makes 13 & 14 so compelling is Tao Ye's refusal to separate technique from philosophy. These works are impeccably constructed, yet they never feel sterile. They invite us to watch how bodies think, how they relate, and how structure can paradoxically make freedom visible. It is this combination of uncompromising formalism and palpable human presence that places Tao Ye among the most important choreographic voices of our time.

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Annette-Kolb-Str. 16
D-85055 Ingolstadt
Telefon: +49 (0) 841-951. 99.660
Telefax: +49 (0) 841-951. 99.661
Email: contact@european-news-agency.com
Internet: european-news-agency.com

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**Redaktioneller Programmdienst:
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Annette-Kolb-Str. 16
D-85055 Ingolstadt
Telefon: +49 (0) 841-951. 99.660
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