

batterydancecompany

Dancing to Connect

Touching the hearts and minds of young people through dance

Professional dancers from New York City will bring their art form into Berlin, Stuttgart and Freiburg schools in the summer of 2008. Reaching out to five schools in each municipality, teaching artists of Battery Dance Company and Drastic Action will engage approximately 300 teens in programs under the title of "Dancing to Connect".

Dance is a universal language and its appeal as a vehicle for self-expression has been demonstrated amply through earlier versions of the Dancing to Connect project in eight high schools in Freiburg and Breisach during summers of 2006 and 2007. Following up on their successful experiment and having built international bridges between the U.S. and Germany through the art of dance, the American dancers will expand their outreach in 2008.

Partnering with the U.S. Embassy in Berlin, U.S. Consulate General in Frankfurt, and various German government, corporate, foundation and non-profit institutions, Battery Dance Company will foster German-U.S. amity and understanding while displaying the cutting-edge teaching and performing style that have won accolades around the world.

Throughout all of these programs, the thematic core of tolerance, integration and inter-cultural understanding is embedded into the choreography and addressed while building dance skills. The *lingua franca* (English) and the universal languages of dance and music build communicative bridges among students who represent diverse populations, immigrant and native, high-performing and educationally-challenged, Christian and Muslim. Likewise, the American professionals cross bridges in mentoring their youthful German charges.

Dance facilitates self-respect, an important pre-requisite for developing tolerant behaviour. During the workshops the students explore their own feelings and sensations, some new and surprising. They relate to each other and to the teaching artists across generational, gender, ethnic, religious and social differences, converting their explorations into physical expression. The discovery of the *self* goes hand in hand with the discovery of the *other*.

The workshop programs will culminate in performances as part of the opening of the new U.S. Embassy in Berlin, the opening of the American Days Festival in Stuttgart, and the finale of the theater season in Freiburg. These illustrious occasions, combining the fascinating spectacle of teens unlocking their creativity with the verve of top-class professionals from New York City will serve as a wonderful tribute to the Dancing to Connect participants, their schools and sponsoring organizations.