

PAULA KARHUNEN

Tanssiproduktioiden tuki ja tuotantoehdot Valtion produktiotuen kehitys ja merkitys 1991–2008

Support and conditions of Finnish dance productions. Trends in
and importance of state grants for dance productions 1991–2008



TILASTOTIETOA TAITEESTA N:o 39
FACTS ABOUT THE ARTS No. 39

Taiteen keskustoimikunta

© Paula Karhunen ja Taiteen keskustoimikunta 2008

Kansi: Kari Piippo

Taitto: Jussi Hirvi

ISBN 978-952-5253-71-9

ISSN 0788-0278

♪ F.G. Lönnberg

Helsinki 2008

Facts about the Arts
Publication no 39
Arts Council of Finland
Helsinki 2008

Paula Karhunen

Support and conditions of Finnish dance productions

*Trends in and importance of state grants for dance
productions 1991–2008*

English Summary

Research project

The publication reports the results of the project on the Grants and Subsidies for Dance Productions (GDP)⁵⁷ allocated by the Finnish National Council for Dance (NCD).⁵⁸ The aim of the project was to examine the amount, scope and impact of the GDP. The study is related to a larger project focused on the impact of discretionary support to the arts. This project, carried out by the Research Unit of the Arts Council, has earlier produced two publications⁵⁹.

The research project on the GDP consisted of two parts. The statistical part concentrated on the amount of and trends in appropriations, applicants and recipients of the support scheme in question. The evaluative part of the study examined the importance of the support from the point of view of applicants. This part is based on an e-mail survey directed to those who had applied for a GDP in 2005 and 2006. The survey data also provided infor-

57 The support is allocated in the form of grants to individual artists and in the form of state subsidies to collective bodies (dance companies). Here the reference used is "Grants for Dance Productions" (GDP).

58 The system of Arts Councils comprises the Central Arts Council, nine national, art-form based councils, two grant boards and regional arts councils. Each of the nine national art councils is an expert body subordinate to the Ministry of Education in matters relating to a specific form of art. They are composed of a maximum of 11 members appointed by the Government for a three-year term. National art councils annually award artist and project grants and art-form specific support.

59 Publications on discretionary support to cultural organisations (Oesch 2004) and on the effects of state quality support on photographic literature (Karttunen 2005). At the moment, the projects related to support for children's culture, as well as multicultural elements in artist support are ongoing.

mation about the process of producing a dance production in Finland. The data clarifies factors such as the overall funding of respondents' productions, the share of unpaid work involved and the time used for a production, as well as the number and composition of personnel in dance productions.

The structure and support of the Finnish field of dance

The Finnish dance field is characterised by relatively small size (the number of dance professionals is approximately 700–800 persons), freelance activities and the lack of infrastructure in comparison with other fields of performing arts. In general, the production field of Finnish dance can be divided into four groups: 1) "big" companies, i.e., The Finnish National Ballet and Helsinki Dance Company⁶⁰, 2) dance companies subsidised by law⁶¹, 3) independent dance companies and 4) productions by individual choreographers. In addition, since 2004 five Regional Dance Centres have been producing and supporting dance in their respective regions. The main objectives of the Regional Dance Centres are to further the availability and accessibility of dance as an art form and to increase employment among dancers. Besides the aforementioned, several dance festivals offer dancers and choreographers opportunities for both performances and commissioned works.

Table 1. Actors in the field of Finnish dance and the number of performances in 2006/2007

	<i>N</i>	<i>Performances</i>
Individual choreographers*	41	397
Independent dance companies*	24	650
Dance companies subsidised by law	11	1340
Big companies **	2	131
Dance festivals***	25	~500
Regional dance centres *	5	444
Total	108	~3 000

* Those having produced a premiere in 2006.

** Finnish National Ballet and Helsinki Dance Company.

*** Data from 2007. All festivals whose programme includes dance. The number of dance festivals concentrating solely on contemporary dance is 14.

Source: Dance Information Centre, Regional Dance Centres.

60 Helsinki Dance Company is a part of the Helsinki City Theatre.

61 The Act on the Financing of Education and Culture regulates the amount and share of subsidies for cultural institutions (theatres, orchestras, museums, libraries) by the state and municipalities.

The activeness in the Finnish dance field have increased to a great extent during the past two decades. This is shown, for example, by the number of performances and premieres, as well as by the number of active choreographers and international tours. Presently, about 200 dance premieres are produced annually in Finland. This is double as much as ten years earlier. The majority of these premieres are produced by independent dance groups representing contemporary dance.

The supply of dance performances has also increased over the past ten years being now 50 per cent higher than in 1997. The average annual growth in dance performances has been 5 per cent. Growth in performances by individual choreographers has been even higher, annually over 40 per cent. Over half of the dance performances produced presently are carried out by companies supported by The Act on the Financing of Education and Culture (Table 2).

Table 2. Volume of Finnish dance performances 1997–2006

<i>Year</i>	<i>Big companies</i>	<i>Companies supported by law</i>	<i>Independent groups</i>	<i>Individual choreographers</i>	<i>Total</i>
1997	170	985	459	69	1 683
1998	140	956	469	224	1 789
1999	127	1 157	683	224	2 191
2000	133	1 357	771	220	2 481
2001	159	1 377	480	77	2 093
2002	128	1 350	374	121	1 973
2003	135	1 363	555	225	2 278
2004	113	1 355	556	214	2 236
2005	139	1 314	567	365	2 366
2006	131	1 340	650	397	2 473
Average 1997–06	138	1 255	556	214	2 156
Average annual growth 1997–06	– 2 %	4 %	7 %	42 %	5 %
Proportion % in 2006	5 %	54 %	26 %	16 %	100 %

Source: Dance Information Centre

The support for Finnish dance follows the above-mentioned division of the field. The National Ballet, Helsinki Dance Company and eleven dance companies are financed either according to special appropriations (National Ballet⁶²) or according to the Act on the Financing of Education and Culture, which came into operation in 1993. As for individual choreographers and independent dance groups, the bases of financing are discretionary

62 The National Ballet is a part of the Finnish National Opera, which as a national institution receives over half of its operational expenditure from the government.

subsidies allocated by the Finnish National Council for Dance. Regional Dance Centres as well as dance festivals are financed directly by the Ministry of Education.

Professionals in the field of dance can apply for and receive many types of support from arts councils. The main support schemes are what are called artist grants (working grants for 0.5 to 5 years). Project grants and special art-form based support schemes are directed to certain artistic projects such as performances or education.⁶³ Dance artists can also receive support for projects connected to children's culture as well as travel grants and artist-in-residence grants. Moreover, regional arts councils⁶⁴ allocate artist and project grants to artists, and state subsidies to regional art organisations.

*Table 3. State support for dance in 2007**

<i>Support form</i>	<i>Euro</i>
<i>Allocated by the Arts Council</i>	
Artist grants (0.5–5 years)	390 030
Artist professors**	46 440
Artists-in-residence grants	4 000
Grants and subsidies for dance productions (GDP)	172 000
Project grants	70 000
Project grants for children's culture	35 000
Regional arts councils	247 400
State prizes	15 000
Subsidies for dance theatres outside the scope of the Financing of Education and Culture Act	432 000
Subsidies for the promotion of dance culture	40 000
Travel grants	33 840
	1 485 710
<i>Allocated by the Ministry of Education</i>	
Regional dance centres	600 000
State support for dance theatres by the Financing of Education and Culture Act	2 148 870
Subsidies for dance organisations	257 000
	3 005 870
Total	4 491 580

*The Finnish National Ballet and dance festivals are excluded.

** The Arts Council has eight posts for artist professors who are considered to be particularly competent artists. Artist professors receive a monthly salary for practising creative artistic work in their field.

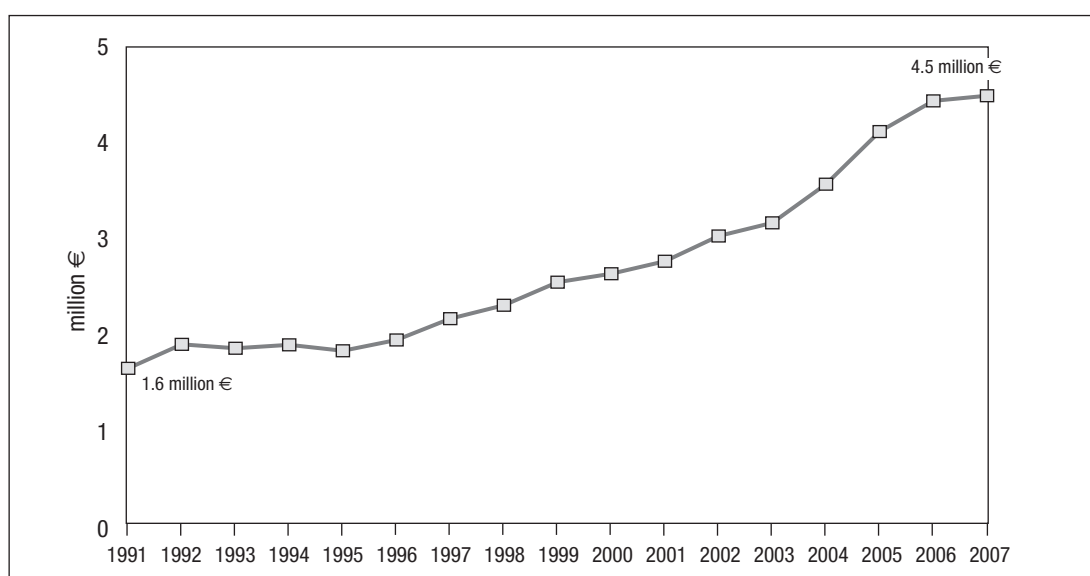
63 At the moment, the following are special support schemes for dance: Grants and Subsidies for Dance Productions, Subsidies for Dance Theatres and Ensembles outside the scope of the Act on the Financing of Education and Culture, Subsidies for the Promotion of Dance Culture.

64 Regional arts councils (13) award grants and subsidies to individuals and organisations in their respective regions.

In 2007, altogether 157 dance artists, working groups or collective bodies received a total of € 1.4 million from arts councils. In addition to this, the Ministry of Education allocates support for dance theatres, regional dance centres, and others. In 2007 the total sum of state support for dance was almost € 4.5 million. (Table 3.)

The growth in support for dance has been quite significant considering that in 1991 the support was € 1.6 million (in real value, converted according to cost-of-living index) (Figure 1.). The annual growth in support has been on average seven per cent. However, dance still receives only a small proportion of the support allocated to the arts, namely, six per cent of the total Arts Council support and one per cent of the government's art and culture budget (2007).

Figure 1. The trend in state support for dance in 1991–2007 *



* In real value (2007). The Finnish National Ballet and cultural festivals are excluded.

Grants for dance productions (GDP) in 1991–2008

The idea of a special support scheme focusing on the costs of dance productions first came up at the end of the 1980s. The reason for the need of special support was that existing support schemes were mainly directed to "artistic work" and not to the expenses of individual productions. At the same time, the NCD emphasised that the key challenge in dance policy was to assist the growth in dance productions and in so doing expand the attendance at dance performances. For this purpose the NCD proposed a special appropriation for the state budget in 1990 and the proposal was put into effect the following year as part of the GDP.

The main objective of the GDP was to increase the number of Finnish dance productions by helping to cover expenses incurred by, for example, salaries, performance spaces and marketing. According to the first distribution instructions by the Ministry of Education the supported productions were obliged to be "experimental" by nature. However, this condition was waived after a few years and in fact it was clear from the beginning that the support form was meant to assist all professional dance activities.

Since the first year of operation (1991), the appropriations directed to dance productions have multiplied and the average annual growth in support has been 20 per cent. However, since the starting level was low (about € 30 000 in real value) the sum allocated for this purpose can still be considered as rather modest. At the moment, the proportion of the GDP is 4 per cent of total state support for dance and 14 per cent of the total support allocated by the NCD.

The total number of applicants for dance support is generally rather low even in the Finnish context (compared to, say, the visual arts). In this context the proportional growth of applicants for dance support appears to be considerable. For instance, the number of GDP applicants is tenfold compared with the starting point in 1991 and the average annual growth has been 17 per cent. In recent years an average of 100 applicants have applied annually for one or more dance productions.⁶⁵ The support has been granted annually on average to 38 applicants. Recently, the awarding policy of the NCD has slightly altered and the number of awarded grants has been higher than earlier, with the result that the number of recipients has been somewhat lower (under 30 persons/collective bodies) (Table 4).

The average amount of GDP applied for has in recent years been € 7 000–8 000, and the awarded grants on average € 4 000–5 000. The present NCD (nominated for 2007–2009) has increased the grant sums to an average of € 8000. With the exception of a few cases, the sums awarded to individual productions over the years have not covered all the costs of the productions. Therefore, other support is required in order to carry out a production.

Public support of some sort is a precondition for contemporary dance professionals to work as artists. As a result, it is typical that applicants apply for support regularly year after year. Especially in this support form it has been common that some applicants submit an application almost every year. The total number of applications during a period of almost two decades has been over 1 400, while the number of different individuals applying (overlapping cases excluded) is about 600. However, every year there are also new applicants (on average almost half of the applicants each year) and some of them receive support, although not often on the first try⁶⁶.

65 Dance companies can apply for and receive grants for "activities", i.e., for more than one production.

66 Of the new applicants each year on average 27 % have received a grant.

Table 4. Applicants, recipients and sums of the GDP in 1991–2008

<i>Year</i>	<i>Applicants</i>	<i>Recipients</i>	<i>Total sum (€)*</i>
1991	13	3	35 670
1992	16	3	34 790
1993	36	15	135 980
1994	42	18	169 110
1995	57	25	146 210
1996	78	30	149 280
1997	92	39	179 300
1998	98	43	190 110
1999	100	35	187 880
2000	89	30	127 220
2001	77	37	159 530
2002	94	40	157 080
2003	114	40	176 260
2004	112	47	175 930
2005	91	31	174 380
2006	101	42	172 000
2007	94	27	172 000
2008	113	26	200 000
Average	79	30	152 370
Total	1 417	531	2 742 730
Excl. overlapping cases	607	267	–

* In real value (2007).

During the past 17 years over 500 dance performances and other projects have been supported by the GDP. The number of annually supported productions has grown from three (3) to an average of 40 productions. The main recipients of the support have been individual choreographers with dance works representing contemporary dance.

The types of target groups of support have slightly changed during the years examined. In the 1990s the proportion of amateur activities (i.e. folk dance) was higher, although it has never made up a significant part of the support. From the beginning of the 2000s the share of productions (and applications) representing flamenco dance and other ethnic or folklore type dance productions has risen, but they are still a rather small part of the supported productions. All in all, the main target groups have always been productions of contemporary dance, and their share has actually increased over the last couple of years.

Dance productions and the GDP

When assessing the role of the GDP in relation to dance productions, information about the total budget of the production is vital. Since the grant report⁶⁷ does not provide data on the total budget, an e-mail survey was carried out in order to get more information about the productions of applicants using this form of support. An additional aim of the survey was to map out opinions concerning the support scheme and the process of application. The survey data also provided information on issues such as the working time used in productions, the variety and number of occupational groups used, grounds of payments and the proportion of unpaid work.

The survey was directed to those who had applied for the GDP in 2005 and/or 2006 (N = 156). The response rate was 46 per cent. The rates for certain subgroups were, however, better. For example, of the dance companies, 52 per cent answered the questionnaire, and of those who had received a GDP, 62 per cent filled in the questionnaire. In contrast to these, those who had applied but not received a grant were not eager to answer since the response rate among them was only 35 per cent. All in all, the results should be interpreted as indicative although there are no indications of bias.

Table 5. The research population and respondents

	<i>Research population</i> %	<i>Respondents</i> %	<i>Response rate</i> %
Applied in 2005	40	39	45
Applied in 2006	47	51	51
Applied both years	13	10	33
GDP awarded	42	56	62
No GDP awarded	58	44	35
Individuals	79	76	45
Collective bodies	21	24	52
N	156	72	46 %

According to the survey, applicants were rather satisfied with the support scheme and the application process as such. However, the level of distributable grants, the duration of decision making and the lack of transparency in the criteria of awarding grants were criticised. The majority of respondents wished for larger grants in order to cover the costs as much as possible. Also, faster decision making was called for. Further, there seemed to

⁶⁷ All GDP recipients must fill in a grant report within a year after receiving the grant. The obligatory part of the report includes only information and receipts about the use of GDP, not the whole financing of the production.

be confusion about the criteria on which the decision making is based. Respondents pondered whether the decisions are made according to artistic qualifications of the production or on the basis of other criteria, such as residence, education level, reputation or personal relationships.⁶⁸

Respondents considered the support scheme as important and functional with regard to their productions. However, most of them reported that the production most likely would have taken place without the GDP but with (even) lower salaries and smaller personnel than was the case when the support was granted. Still, the majority (60 %) of those who did not receive the GDP were able to carry out the production in one way or another. The reason for this in most cases was that they received other (public) support for the production. Over 80 per cent of those who did not receive the GDP but carried out a production reported another form of support.

One of the characteristics of contemporary dance productions is that in many cases the choreographers take care of many things. Besides making a choreography and probably also dancing, they carry out other duties as well. In over half of the respondents' productions the choreographer also had other professional duties. In most cases these were the work of a producer, light designer or stage designer. All in all, in over 80 per cent of the respondents' productions (N = 74), some of the personnel handled more than one professional task.

The number of personnel in the productions proved to be small. Over half of the productions were carried out with a total personnel of 6 to 10. The number of dancers was also relatively small. One fourth of the productions were solo performances and 54 per cent were produced with 2 to 5 dancers.

A widely known problem in contemporary dance is low attendance. This is partly due to the low number of performance venues, as well as to the lack of resources for having more than just a few performances. This situation was also confirmed by the survey on GDP applicants' productions. For example, the average number of performances was nine and earnings from ticket sales in most cases were very low or almost non-existent.

One of the objectives of the study was to examine the amount of unpaid work in professional dance productions. It has been common knowledge that unpaid work is more the rule than the exception in the field of (contemporary) dance. The results of the survey confirm that the majority of dance productions are carried out partly with unsalaried work. However, it was not common that the whole production would have been executed without salaries. "Only" one tenth of the respondents' productions (N = 72) were carried out completely without salary (work was in some cases compensated by in the form of a grant).

68 The NCD has recently made public certain criteria, such as artistic quality and importance of the project, regional equality and a realistic and balanced budget.

The unpaid work was mostly done by dance professionals (dancers and choreographers). The lowest share of unsalaried work was reported among stage designers and costume designers. This seems paradoxical: in a dance production, supported by allocations for dance, professionals from other (art) fields⁶⁹ are more likely to be paid for their work than dance professionals. On the other hand, one consideration is that the money is at least targeted in the right direction if it has made a dance production possible.

In cases where salary was paid it was generally under the level of the collective labour agreement in the field. The salary was determined exclusively according to the collective labour agreement in only ten per cent of the respondents' productions. In the majority (52 %) of productions the basis for salary was both the labour agreement and other grounds.

Conclusions

The data examined in the research project showed that the GDP is a functional support form fulfilling its objectives. However, the importance of the GDP in monetary value is not so essential since it makes up only a part of the total budgets of Finnish dance productions and the support scheme as such is not enough to guarantee the execution of the production. According to the research data, the proportion of the GDP was on average one third of the total budget of dance productions. However, the policy definitions of the present NCD concerning higher grants for individual productions might change the situation in the future.

The research data also verified that it is possible to carry out a dance production without the GDP but the conditions would then be even more difficult in terms of preparation time, monetary compensations and so on. Once again, although it is possible to carry out a production without the GDP it became evident that public support of some sort is a prerequisite for producing a dance production in Finland. Even dance artists and companies with international reputations and a relatively large audience cannot work without regular public support. As for the GDP, it seems clear that it has helped the realisation of many dance works. Even though the support has been rather modest in monetary terms, it has fulfilled its objectives especially during this decade by concentrating on (contemporary) dance productions.

The research project mapped out development needs and opinions concerning the support form in question. Some suggestions concerning improvement of the support scheme were made. These were, among others, a faster and more transparent decision-making process. Also, more application possibilities during the year were suggested (at the moment applica-

69 Such as photographers, light designers, sound designers, musicians.

tions can be submitted only once a year). However, the most important and often mentioned demand was an increase in the money awarded as GDP.

Finnish dance productions have several common features which were distinguished through the data examined. In short, a typical dance production is a contemporary dance work which has been prepared in less than half a year and rehearsed for less than three months. Daily working time has usually been under five hours. A typical dance work there has an average of four dancers and a personnel of ten. The average number of performances is nine.

The study confirms the well-known fact that an essential prerequisite of the viability of Finnish contemporary dance is the promotion of freelance productions. This is not possible without public support. One can rightly assess that the special support scheme (GDP) which represents the only regularly awarded public grant directed specifically towards dance productions has worked favourably to create many Finnish contemporary dance works.