

REPORT: Opinion on professional dance training and rehearsal opportunities in Vienna -JUNE 2023

In March 2023, the IGFT conducted an open-ended, short survey on dance training and the rehearsal space situation in Vienna. The survey targeted professional dancers and performance artists in Vienna. The purpose of the brief questionnaire was to collect current opinions and identify any challenges in this area. This survey builds upon the previous survey conducted in 2020 and the insights gained from the associated symposium titled "Creating Spaces for the Independent Scene" ("Freie Szene – Orte schaffen").

The survey was conducted online from March 7th to March 27th, 2023, and was distributed through the IG Freie Theaterarbeit newsletter, member communications, and their social media channels. Participants were explicitly encouraged to share and disseminate the survey. The questions were presented in both German and English and were answered in both languages.

Hard Facts:

- The survey was completed by 97 individuals, including 82 women, 13 men, and 2 non-binary or other gender identities.
- 6 respondents were aged 18-25 (6.2%), 49 were aged 26-35 (50.5%), 26 were aged 36-45 (26.8%), 11 were aged 46-55 (11.3%), 2 were aged 56-66, and 3 were 65 years or older (3.1%).
- Using rating scales, participants were asked to indicate their level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the situation. Additionally, a voluntary comment section was provided, which was frequently utilized.
- The questions asked were:
 - From a practical perspective, which districts would be suitable for rehearsal spaces if opportunities were available in all districts?
 - How satisfied are you with the availability of affordable rehearsal spaces in Vienna?
 - How satisfied are you with the availability of affordable, professional dance training in Vienna?
 - Do you wish for a rehearsal and working center for the independent performing arts in Vienna? (Multiple rehearsal spaces of different sizes in one building, meeting and working spaces, etc.)
 - What ideas should the IGFT consider on this topic?
 - Would you like to add anything else on this topic?

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- What is your age?
- How do you identify your gender?
- Are you a member of IGFT?

Summary

The responses consistently highlight a strong demand for centralized, affordable, and professional training opportunities. In order to meet the high artistic and technical standards of professional dancers, it is essential to provide them with sufficient opportunities to stay fit and maintain, build, and refine their dance techniques.

There are several initiatives in Vienna that aim to offer precisely that. However, it becomes evident that these current offerings are not sufficient.

Inevitably, the discussion touches upon the issue of training cessation or reduction at Tanzquartier Wien. A significant portion of the responses specifically reference TQW and express highly critical views of the available offerings there.

Training situation

Wie zufrieden bist du mit dem Angebot an leistbarem, professionellen Tanztraining in Wien? / How satisfied are you with the affordable, professional dance training available in Vienna?

Semantisches Differential, geantwortet 97x, unbeantwortet 0x

	-2	-1	0	1	2	
Sehr unzufrieden / very unsatisfied	30	33	24	9	1	Sehr zufrieden / very satisfied

Sehr unzufrieden / very unsatisfied | -2 | -1 | -0,8 | 0 | 1 | 2 | Sehr zufrieden / very satisfied

66 individuals indicate being dissatisfied to very dissatisfied with the availability of affordable, professional dance training in Vienna, which accounts for nearly 65% of the respondents. The responses largely focus on the lack of challenging professional training, affordability, accessibility, and barriers to the limited training opportunities that exist. Additional training costs burden the already low-income situation of the artists.

Positive examples mentioned include ProDance (Initiative for Dance and Movement Art), Huggy Bears, and tanz theater performance at WUK, with a desire for the sustainability of these offerings.

In addition to contemporary dance and technique training, there is a particular need for opportunities to maintain fitness through ballet, yoga, pilates, and training in various dance genres. To maintain the strength and routine necessary for artists to develop pieces and performances, there is a need for low-threshold and centralized offerings in suitable spaces, meaning those that are spacious enough, with adequate height, and equipped with appropriate flooring, as well as technology, lighting, and heating.

"[...] The contemporary dance scene is characterized by a diversity of techniques and demands that dancers demonstrate a wide range of skills. It is crucial to provide financial support to dance professionals to help cover training costs."¹

"Having professional training at multiple locations with various offerings such as yoga, pilates, hip hop, etc., accessible through a yearly or monthly membership fee, along with the provision of free rehearsal spaces, would be highly beneficial."

"I am a big fan of ProDance's training program (Initiative for Dance and Movement Art). They provide training specifically for freelance dancers, similar to what I have experienced in Amsterdam and Berlin. The level of training at Tanzquartier is often too low for us professionals."

¹ All the quotes have been checked and adjusted for spelling, grammar, and gender inclusivity. The intended meaning of the statements has not been altered. German answers have been translated into English.

"As I mentioned before, there is a lack of quality and quantity in the available training options. This is especially concerning for maintaining the fitness and strength that are crucial for dancers. If one doesn't train autonomously, it is easy to fall behind. I would like to see a different offering at Tanzquartier that is less experimental and truly caters to the needs of dancers."

Tanzquartier Wien

20 responses specifically addressed, and others indirectly referred to, the training situation at Tanzquartier Wien. It should be emphasized that, as evident above, none of the questions were implicitly or explicitly related to TQW. The offerings there have been significantly reduced. There is a great deal of dissatisfaction within the independent scene in Vienna regarding these limitations, with many feeling excluded or abandoned due to the strict curation. Additionally, there is a lack of sufficient training opportunities for professional dancers and performers.

There is a widespread lack of understanding as to why TQW, as a European dance house, does not seem to meet the demands of the professional dance scene, with little diversity and only a very small group of people being able to access the available offerings. This is deeply regrettable, especially considering that TQW is centrally located and easily accessible for many.

There was also a sense of regret expressed over the fact that these limitations have caused TQW to abandon its role as a networking hub for the dance and performance scene.

"As the Tanzquartier Wien (TQW) no longer fulfills the function of a meeting point for contemporary dance training and exchange, it would be desirable to have an alternative for the independent scene."

"The problem is that there should already be a center called Tanzquartier where all styles and dancers of various genres should come together [...]."

"The dance house we have should function as a welcoming space for professionals in the dance field, with regular open calls and annual auditions for productions to invigorate the dance scene and foster exchange within the community."

"The most important thing is to have affordable and daily training, both in contemporary dance and ballet, ideally in a central hub that connects the scene. There is a significant demand for such a center, as Tanzquartier Wien has been primarily focused on promoting performance art for several years, leaving the (contemporary) dance scene in Vienna without a home."

"The situation with 'training' at Tanzquartier is actually unacceptable. How can it be okay for the institution to receive substantial subsidies for a training program that is not utilized by the dancers? This training is attended by all sorts of people, except for professionally trained dancers. Usually, only about five people participate, individuals who are not even involved in the performing arts sector, which is truly incredible."

"We need a rehearsal and work/performance center for independent performing arts/dance (unfortunately, TQW is hardly a performance venue for the independent dance scene in Vienna). It would be important to establish in writing and legally that the owner of the premises must adhere to a predetermined 'instruction paper,' which the artists can enforce, ensuring it becomes a center for the independent scene in Vienna."

"Alongside all other types of professional training, there should be a professional classical training program. The fact that this option has been cancelled at Tanzquartier is a poor reflection on Vienna as a dance city."

"It is long overdue to establish a dance house (or a house for performing arts). Tanzquartier had this mandate, but it seems that they are not fulfilling it sufficiently. Structures and professionalization of the scene need to be created if Vienna wants to compete with other cities and prevent an exodus. This includes a meeting center for the scene, as well as rehearsal and technical facilities."

"It is necessary for the situation at TQW, as it is, to be heard outside. Who is actually checking the numbers? The target audience? Shouldn't TQW act based on the needs of the community? Due to this ongoing situation, the Initiative for Tanz und Bewegungskunst, unfortunately now without funding, provides professional training that is otherwise available all over Europe or the world. This training allows dancers to stay in shape between engagements. It is truly deserving of support!"

"What I miss the most is a training center where I can maintain my fitness at affordable prices, including yoga, pilates, strength, and endurance training in addition to dance training. Previously, there used to be affordable training options at Tanzquartier. However, since the new management took over, this is no longer the case. The training does not meet the requirements of a dancer. Perhaps a training center could be established where all dancers can stay in shape."

"I don't understand why the morning training at TQW has been significantly reduced. The one-hour classes starting at 9 am were always well-attended and served as a perfect warm-up for dancers who had rehearsals afterward. Currently, there are only classes from 10-11:30 am, which is too late for working dancers, and the classes starting at 5 pm are too early. As a result, there is no longer an offering at TQW for professionally working dancers who are not unemployed."

„I think it is a real pity that at TQW it is not possible anymore to receive PHYSICAL dance

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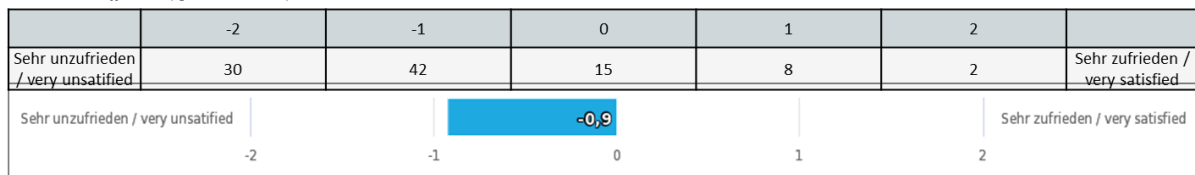
training every day, where you stay in shape as a performer. I think it is great day expand their horizons to a broader sense of training, but it shouldn't go on the cost of dancers that want to keep in shape and up to date on a very practical daily dance training."

"I would like to see a different offering at Tanzquartier that is less experimental and truly caters to the needs of dancers."

Rehearsal space situation

Wie zufrieden bist du mit dem Angebot an leistbaren Proberäumen in Wien? / How satisfied are you with the availability of affordable rehearsal spaces in Vienna?

Semantisches Differential, geantwortet 97x, unbeantwortet 0x



Question: From a practical perspective, which districts would be suitable for you to rehearse if there were possibilities in all districts?

Antwort	Antworten	Verhältnis
1010	61	62.89%
1020	53	54.64%
1030	51	52.58%
1040	54	55.67%
1050	59	60.82%
1060	81	83.51%
1070	81	83.51%
1080	61	62.89%
1090	55	56.7%
1100	23	23.71%
1110	7	7.22%
1120	22	22.68%
1130	7	7.22%
1140	14	14.43%
1150	41	42.27%
1160	38	39.18%
1170	29	29.9%
1180	27	27.84%
1190	15	15.46%
1200	18	18.56%
1210	8	8.25%
1220	7	7.22%
1230	2	2.06%
Keine der Möglichkeiten käme für mich infrage.	1	1.03%

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The rehearsal space situation in Vienna is in a similarly constrained position: there is a struggle for space and accessibility, as well as affordability. Many dancers and performers live in an extremely precarious situation, making it difficult or even impossible for them to afford additional funds for rehearsal spaces. This situation has been exacerbated recently by inflation and a significant increase in energy costs. On the other hand, publicly funded spaces are often not wheelchair accessible or located so far outside the city that artists rarely utilize them.

Space owners, on the other hand, find themselves in a position where they have to offer their spaces at high prices in order to cover fixed and energy costs. As a result, they often fail to fulfill their personal desire to offer the spaces at affordable rates and support the independent scene, leading to a loss of customers from within the artistic community. There is a lack of funding for such spaces, and requests for support have been rejected, citing the "commercial nature" of the spaces. Additionally, the responses indicate a lack of recognition and appropriate funding for the scene, which restricts its diversity. There is also a need for more transparency in the allocation of funds and positions.

The participants were given the opportunity to indicate which districts would be suitable for them to rehearse purely from a practical standpoint, assuming there were possibilities in all districts. It is not surprising that the inner districts (1010 to 1090) were favored, with the 6th and 7th districts receiving 81 votes each, and the 1st and 8th districts receiving 61 votes each. The outer districts 1150 and 1160 were still considered viable options for around 40% of the respondents. Similarly, but significantly, the responses regarding the outer districts (1210 with 8 votes, 1110, 1130, and 1220 with 7 votes each, and finally 1230 with only 2 votes) were not surprising. This means that the recently opened Seestadt Studios, publicly funded and managed by ImPulsTanz, are likely to be suitable for only a few of the artists. The same applies to the TRAP circus hall in Simmering, which is difficult for many Viennese artists to use in their daily lives due to the long distances that need to be travelled back and forth. This is even more challenging for individuals with childcare responsibilities.

Accessibility and barrier-free access are crucial for artists, but many rehearsal spaces do not meet these requirements. The long commute also becomes a significant factor. It has been suggested that rehearsal spaces funded by the City of Vienna should exclusively be wheelchair accessible.

There is also a need to book or rent spaces on an hourly or daily basis, not just on a weekly or monthly basis. Discussions about vacancy and interim use in Vienna have already taken place at the "Freie Szene - Orte schaffen" symposium (2020). Artists highly support this idea if the spaces can meet the aforementioned requirements. There was

also a focus on creating a permanent space for exchange and networking.

Affordability is another major concern. 72 of the respondents are dissatisfied to very dissatisfied with the availability of affordable rehearsal spaces in Vienna, while only 10 expressed their satisfaction. The concept of interim use is mentioned again here. Many artists are burdened by the additional costs of rehearsal and workspace, which have been further increased due to inflation and the associated rise in energy costs. The precarious employment situation of dancers and performers does not allow for additional expenses. Suggestions include providing free rehearsal spaces to allow non-funded professional projects the opportunity to develop. There is a desire for hourly booking options at affordable prices, with the Klaviergalerie in the 7th district (1070) mentioned as an example.

"Accessibility!"

"I would love to have free rehearsal spaces. As a dancer, you already earn very little, and then you have to pay for your training. And if you just want to go to a studio for a few hours for yourself, you still have to pay for it. I really like the example of the rehearsal house in Graz, which is funded by the city."

"Short-term rentals. Spaces for hourly bookings. A system like the Klaviergalerie, affordable spaces/studios that can be booked by the hour."

"More possibility for affordable rehearsal space when not in a production."

"In terms of the needs for rehearsal time in the independent scene, they are usually irregular. How can other existing rehearsal spaces be supported through funding so that they can offer lower prices for the independent scene?"

"We need more accessible and affordable rehearsal spaces in the core zone of Vienna. The emphasis is on accessibility! And anything provided by the city in terms of funding should be wheelchair accessible. Having 50% of accessibility in a location that requires a long commute is not enough! Alternatively, the city should provide funding to make existing studios accessible where feasible!"

"The lack of accessibility is actually my biggest concern and issue, even for rehearsal and training spaces."

"The new 'affordable' rehearsal spaces are still too expensive for me. Where can choreographers go who haven't received funding yet but still want to work professionally?"

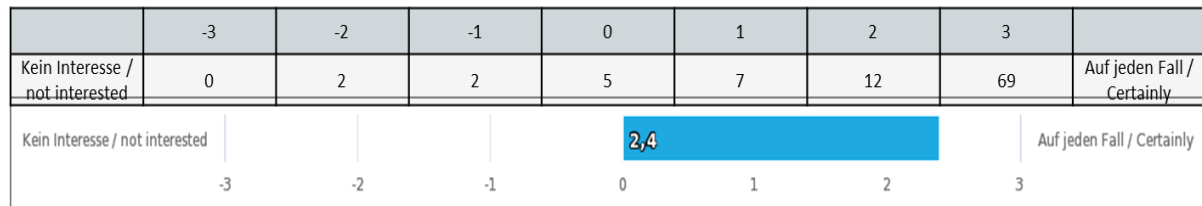
"I have done a lot of rehearsal in interim use projects. It would be nice if art were given greater importance. A space or spaces where you can feel at home and work well on a

permanent basis."

Working and rehearsal centre

Wünschst du dir ein Proben- und Arbeitszentrum für die freie darstellende Kunst in Wien? (Viele Proberäume unterschiedlicher Größe in einem Haus, Begegnungs- und Arbeitsräume etc.)? / Would you like to have a rehearsal and work centre for the independent performing arts in Vienna? (Many rehearsal rooms of different sizes in one building, meeting and working spaces, etc.)?

Semantisches Differential, geantwortet 97x, unbeantwortet 0x



It is evident that there is a need for a working and rehearsal space, or a house for the independent scene, to create a dedicated place for artistic development, rehearsal, training, and performances. This would also help alleviate the increasing pressure from energy costs and other expenses. Particularly, networking and community-building are of utmost importance for artists, and it becomes even more significant when there are insufficient opportunities available for them. With a centrally and conveniently located house of their own, this need could be met. While the IGFT can organize meetings for exchange and networking, it cannot replace a long-overdue, permanent structure for the entire scene. Therefore, we are willing to continue the conversation with the city of Vienna and bring in international good-practice examples to develop possibilities.

Artists yearn for opportunities to connect and a meeting center, a place that belongs solely to them, where they can feel "at home" and interact with international guests. Such a house in a relatively central location is urgently needed. A house is required that dedicates itself to the independent performing scene in Vienna on a daily basis, providing artists with the space and connections they need to unfold their potential.

Examples like the rehearsal house in Graz, Theaterhaus Berlin, Centquatre in Paris, or DeSingle in Antwerp are mentioned as role models. Such a house should be able to offer training programs, free rehearsal spaces, and performance opportunities for artists.

However, concerns about accessibility are also apparent. Many seem to have experienced curatorial concepts that select a very one-sided program or prefer performance art over dance.

"A meeting space to bring new artists together, community building, creative participative space for transdisciplinary arts, space to train, rehearse, create, share, talk, get people together."

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"To ensure that no one is disadvantaged in terms of location (e.g., more than 40 minutes of travel by public transportation), it should either be centrally located or there should be two centers in different locations to balance the geographical distribution."

"We need an open space/center where a clique doesn't immediately take over and determine the direction. It would require a kind of rotating curatorial team that has actual decision-making power and oversees the fulfillment of tasks, including impartiality, openness to all, and accessibility."

"It should be reasonably centrally located, affordable, and provided to a large number (if not all) of artists in a fair and alternating manner. Additionally, such a center would provide opportunities for networking and exchange among artists."

"Potential inspiration from Graz: They have a rehearsal house for the independent scene. The challenge in Vienna is that there are many more artists and groups. How is it financed? What is the allocation process like? Which building is it? What infrastructure does it have? Is circus, for example, possible?"

"I would like to have a house for dancing/training that is always accessible to everyone (similar to Graz)."

"It is crucial to recognize and embrace the existence of various dance styles and not just limit the focus to the 5-10 choreographers in Vienna showcased at Tanzquartier. There is also a growing interdisciplinary practice between dance and acrobatics, which is sometimes overlooked or not considered contemporary enough."

"In such a center, memberships should be possible so that members have free access and can rent rehearsal spaces. The center should be centrally located in the city and affordable! Having different studio spaces plus a meeting center like a café would be great. Kitchen facilities and showers should be available."

"Take inspiration from Theaterhaus Berlin."

"There needs to be a training center for dancers that offers relevant and affordable training (Tanzquartier is not regular or often relevant!). A flat-rate payment of around 80 to 100 Euros per month should allow access to as many classes as desired. It is crucial to have a center where dancers come together and build a strong community, including welcoming dancers from outside of Austria."

"What is specifically missing is a meeting place, a pin board, and experimentation alongside established creation processes."

"It would be desirable to have a center where both rehearsals and performances can take

place, with good accessibility for dancers and the audience. Examples of well-functioning institutions for various artistic projects include Centquatre in Paris or DeSingel in Antwerp."

"A rehearsal and working center for the independent performing arts in Vienna is long overdue! It would be even better to create such meeting centers in each district for people! Only those who have space can truly develop!"

"There is no shortage of ideas, motivation, and offerings, but a competitive mindset prevents effective networking, and competition intensifies when funding is not distributed fairly. There needs to be a (fair) source that supports the necessary investments to bring everyone to an equal level, enabling the provision of affordable professional training. Profit training should not be seen as a business but rather as an elevated form of education."

"There should be a space available for the independent scene to rehearse, and since there are so few chances to receive funding, there should at least be performance venues without having to pay exorbitant amounts to rent theaters to showcase works. In addition, a funding system is needed that would enable not only the same selected individuals to receive support for their work, and not just once every six months for a year later, but continuously."

Expectations of the City of Vienna / Department of Culture

The messages to the Vienna City Culture are mixed, but there is a strong interest and many good ideas on how to improve the situation.

It is clear that there is a need for more transparency and diversity in the allocation of funding and access to spaces. These are two of the main principles of the Fairness Code, which was created in collaboration with the IGFT, the Federal Ministry for Arts, Culture, and Civil Service, and the federal states. Institutions also seem to lack transparency in their operations. There is a lack of space and structure for open exchange among like-minded individuals. Many scene developers, especially those who have moved from abroad, express difficulties in establishing themselves in the scene and forming social connections.

This includes the inclusion of diverse forms of dance and performance and the need to consider them in a differentiated manner. There are indeed many intersections in the scene, which also lead to the development of new forms of art. However, the different manifestations need to be recognized as equal and accordingly made visible.

Once again, the use of vacant spaces and interim use with appropriate conditions is mentioned, and there is a request to make them available and consider how spaces are allocated to whom by whom. Accessibility and inclusivity are key points that must be prioritized. Furthermore, there are several space owners who would be willing to

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provide their spaces at a low cost or even for free, but they are unable to cover their fixed costs in this way. Many have tried to obtain funding for this purpose but have been rejected because they are considered "commercial."

In general, the survey participants express the desire and need for more space, their own house, and the need to be seen and taken seriously. They want to be active participants and shapers of Vienna's art scene.

"I run a dance studio in Vienna where rehearsals and profit training also take place. I offer it to these groups at a very affordable rate, although I can hardly cover my fixed costs through this, but it is important for me to support the scene. I have already been to you to inquire about funding opportunities and have also been in contact with MA7 for this reason (less successful because dance studios are considered commercial and not eligible for funding). It would be great if there were simpler ways in this regard."

"More (large) spaces in central locations equipped for dance training and rehearsals, while still being accessible; affordable rental options even for shorter periods (e.g., half-day rentals); consideration of different artistic forms of dance in training programs and allocation of rehearsal space; more transparency from the city regarding funding for infrastructure projects (is there a fund for this now or not??)"

"Getting the city to understand the importance of regular, professional, affordable training."

"Including diversity in dance forms and practitioners."

"Each space that is not used should remain open for everyone to come by and practice. Creating a schedule that artists of the city of Vienna can register for, to know which studio is available to use."

"Including vacant spaces (contacting the City of Vienna/establishing cooperation) > temporary use?"

"Negotiating with the City of Vienna about potential spaces that can be provided to the independent art scene for usage. Creating a consortium of organizations and artists who are willing to participate and join efforts and knowledge to make this happen."

"There has been a lot of constructive feedback from the scene on this topic in recent years, which has been repeatedly conveyed to the responsible cultural policymakers. Unfortunately, it does not seem that they take it seriously or respond to it. The needs of artists who do not benefit from regular or long-term funding (and therefore cannot afford to rent rehearsal space for a whole week, for example) are generally disregarded."

"I believe it is important for places that offer opportunities, whether it's a studio or an artistic

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research/residency space, to be met in a non-hierarchical manner in terms of funding possibilities from the city."

"I would not recommend working as a dance practitioner in Vienna's independent scene because this scene hardly exists - no money, no well-paid jobs, each institution does its own thing, no exchange, favouritism regardless of Tanzquartier, WUK, brut, MA7. As an outsider, there is no possibility to get in, almost no auditions, [...]."

"Support art outside of operas and theaters. Provide more funding to external artists who are trying to build something in Vienna, not just to those who have connections. Vienna's contemporary dance scene is incredibly unknown around the world, but Vienna has so much potential!"

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The IGFT asked what topics they should include in their agenda in this context. One aspect mentioned was engaging in dialogue with organizers of training opportunities, including tanz theater performance at WUK and Pro Dance Vienna. This also involves providing support to create appropriate funding options.

Another major request is to provide space for exchange and networking. This seems to be a central concern – having workspaces and meeting places that allow various artistic expressions to coexist and develop on an equal footing.

Lastly, we were asked to expand the aforementioned process to the federal states, as there is clearly a need there as well.

In general, we regularly survey our members and stakeholders in the scene on various topics and concerns. We also continually inquire about whether and how we should adapt our offerings and address the needs and demands of artists in Vienna and Austria. We compile these concerns, formulate demands and proposals, and present them to the relevant authorities.

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Retrospection (German):

Umfragebericht zum Angebot/Nutzung von Probe – sowie Arbeitsräumen (2020)

Teil 1: Dokumentation “Freie Szene – Orte schaffen”

Teil 2: Power Point Präsentationen der Beiträge / Anhang

Further links:

Rehearsal space platform of the IGFT: proberaum.freietheater.at

The IGFT on Social Media:

Facebook: [IG Freie Theaterarbeit](#)

Facebook IGFT member group: [IGFT Mitglieder Community](#)

Instagram: [@ig_freietheaterarbeit](#)

Twitter: [@ig_theater](#)

www.freietheater.at

www.theaterspielplan.at

zirkusinfo.at

We are a member of EAIPA – European Association of Independent Performing Arts:

Website: www.eaipa.eu

Facebook: [EAIPA European Association of Independent Performing Arts](#)

Instagram: [@eaipa_association](#)

Twitter: [@eaipa_assoc](#)

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