**The Academy for Theater and Digitality**
is a globally unique model project for digital innovation, artistic research and technology-oriented education and training for all areas of the performing arts - on, in **front of** and behind the stage.

**Why unique?**
We are not here for producing – we are founded by the city of Dortmund, the State Northrine Westphalia, the Federal Gouvernment of Germany and the European Community only for research and development as a free place where people are supported with time, space and money to be able to work on different topics without the pressure to produce results; for this we have been integrated into the structures of one of the largest municipal theaters in Germany – up to 760 employees -, which is already well positioned with opera, drama, ballet, the philharmonics and a children's and young people's theater, and we now are working here as our own division and yet in collaboration with all the other departments, for example in the European PlayOn Cooperation and especially during the pandemic situation.

**Character:**
Under my direction, the Academy, as the sixth division of Theater Dortmund since 2019, is dedicated to researching the structural conditions of artistic and technical action on stages, which are significantly shaped by digitalization. Central features of the work at the Academy are artistic-technical and artistic-scientific research, prototypical development, application-related testing, practical consulting, cultural-political structure building and networking from a local up to an international level between actors from culture and science, (cultural) politics and business.

**Establishment phase of the academy and focal points of work (2019-2021):**
The operation is first and foremost characterized by the artistic-technical research work of the (international) fellows, who conduct prototype and application-oriented research for five months on the development of digital tools and methods between sensor technology, actuator technology, robotics, XR, VR, AR and so called artificial intelligence. These Fellowships are funded by the Federal Cultural Foundation). This is complemented by a pilot project that the academy has launched with the Helmholtz Association/ Helmholtz Information and Data Science Academy (Germany's largest postgraduate training network in the information and data sciences), as a research fellowship in an encounter between science and art.

I may have to mention, that we, in opposite to he normal theatrical behaviors, are a curating institution; the management does not specify the content- we are looking for the people with the best ideas and not for the best people for our ideas…

The research and development is accompanied on the one hand by technology-oriented further education (workshops and tutorials) and on the other hand by the initiation of a master's degree program "Digitality in the Scenic Arts" (working title) with Dortmund University of Applied Sciences and Arts (FB Design and FB Informatik). The central goal of education and training is the professionalization in the application of digital technologies, of software and hardware, and the renewed connection of art and science in theory and practice, in discourse and language - ultimately preparing artists and technicians for a changed job market at diverse performing arts institutions.

We are trying here to explore the old issue of communication between technical and artistic staff at the highest possible level and appropriate to the new technologies - in order to facilitate practical work on the stages with a common language.

In addition to research, continuing education and training, the Academy, with support from state funds from "Neue Künste Ruhr" (NRW Ministry of Culture and Science), has founded the collaborative project "Digital Co-production Lab" together with the Storylab kiU of Dortmund Univercity of applied Science in 2022. Thus, over a period of two years, an application-oriented research and, above all, development area will be established at the Dortmunder U, in which research gained from the academy and the UAS will be further developed and brought to application. Here, after prototypical research, which both the Academy and Storylab kiU enable in complementary areas, the application-related development of digital tools and their practical testing will be implemented in iterative processes: conceptualization, artistic-technical research, development, practical testing, application and evaluation now go hand in hand. In addition, the lab makes the knowledge gained fully available to institutions in the performing arts and media arts.

**Consolidation completed:**
At the beginning of 2022, the Academy will enter its second project and funding phase - the scope and nature of the work at the Academy has changed significantly as a result of the pandemic, which (has) triggered an immense surge in development: In addition to its core tasks, in the two and a half years of its existence the Academy has provided comprehensive and practical advice to an immense number of actors on a regional, national and international level - artists in a wide variety of theater professions, students in bachelor's and master's theses as well as lectures and discussions during a wide variety of courses, independent regional ensembles and artist groups, structural universities and colleges, numerous theaters in the German-speaking world, theater festivals such as. Ruhrfestspiele, Ruhrtriennale, Berliner Festspiele and Berliner Theatertreffen, the Humboldtforum in Berlin, Goethe-Instituts in Europe, Central Asia and South America, as well as a number of national cultural institutions and the Federal Ministry of Finance. In addition, there have been lots of reports in print, radio, TV and on the net, as well as a number of publications - here, special mention should be made of the Theater der Zeit workbook 'Tranformers'; a special honor was the invitation to the FAUST Theater Award ceremony, in the context of which the organization and implementation of the annual conference of the Dramaturgische Gesellschaft in virtual space (mozillaHubs) was recognized as an outstanding performative event during the pandemic.

Two and a half years after its founding, the Academy is where the founding team would have expected it to be after ten years at the earliest: the Academy has established itself in the long term as a central player and will hopefully close the circle of research, development, testing, producing and knowledge transfer. In the long term, we‘d like to consolidate network of actors from the fields of culture, science, and business through the formation of cultural policy structures.

**Our questions are more urgent than ever:**
How does the theatre react to these changes? With which narrative patterns, experimental set-ups and technological inventions? What know-how do theatre professionals need now? What tools can and must the theatres themselves develop? For which professional fields of the performing arts do we, as technology-oriented artists, have to offer new opportunities for further education? Which are the upcoming new possibilities of narration, catalysed by new technologies? Which social debates can be taken up or even initiated in theatres through the use of digital technologies? What are the issues of post-digital modern age? How can technology – as a tool of production and object of observation – be sensually experienced and discussed in an open artistic space?

 **ETC Survey**
The pandemic has done a great deal to raise awareness of the opportunities and possibilities of new technologies in relation to theatrical performance. Slowly but surely, forms of working away from the classic peep-box system with physical co-presence have developed in almost all theatrical institutions - and, if I may believe the reports of experience, also with the accompanying and growing joy in the meaningfulness of this work. New knowledge was generated, new vocabulary learned. New forms of artistic work could be experienced and used, even if forced, without the permanent pressure of companies that had long been working at the limits of what was possible. New audiences were reached, new channels of communication opened up. A different form of discourse is also recognizable. Gathering experience, passing on knowledge - these are the urgent tasks of our time!

Through the founding of several networks, we have discovered how great the need for exchange is, first bottom up in the Theaternetzwerk.digital, a decentrally organized network with now more than 40 participating theaters in the German-speaking region, then top down in the Deutscher Bühnenverein, the Employers' Association of German Theatersand finally in the formation of political opinion and will – it would take too long to explain all our initiatives by now.

This survey will play a major role in formulating common goals, in enabling targeted communication, in order to be able to develop an internatioal perspective: In the artistic work, in the communication of technology and art to obtain new forms of play, in the control of the institutions and in the then hopefully also solidifying financing of the structures by the political authorities.