

Tess Voelker

Tess Voelker is both a dancer and choreographer , born in 1997 in San Francisco. She grew up between Chicago and the east coast of the USA. She began with competitive jazz dance , then trained in ballet from the age of 11 with the Rock School for Dance Education and Barbara Sandomato School of Ballet in Philadelphia. After graduating high school in 2015 from Walnut Hill School for the Arts in Boston , she trained at Joffrey Ballet Chicago while spending her weekends studying improvisation methods with a small contemporary dance company founded by Ronn Stewart. While training , she has gone on to win awards from both the YoungArts Foundation and Youth American Grand Prix. Her professional career started in 2016 when she moved to Germany to join Ballett Dortmund for a year before joining Nederlands Dans Theater II in 2017 , and then the main company NDT I in 2020. That same year , Aurélie Dupont recognized Tess for her own improvisation style and commissioned her , thus becoming the youngest choreographer to create for the Paris Opera Ballet at 23 years old. Since 2023 , Tess has become her own solo artist ; resulting in choreographing original work for Ballet d'Jeri , Eisenhower Dance Detroit , as well as for herself for performances at places like La Gaîté Lyrique in Paris or with MacKay Productions.

In her teachings , Tess steers away from focusing on strict physical language or experience , but rather aims to tap into a source more equivalent to one's " inner child " through the ethereal and confronting vehicle of music. It is about exploring , witnessing , ergo understanding one's own improvisation and knowing that creativity emerges through a practice of open-mindedness and non-judgement ; whether that be on others , the situation at hand, or most importantly , on one's self.

Quite similarly , Tess's choreographic work focuses on the individuation a dancer inevitably brings to a role. Tess strives to hybrid the physical language of *dancing* and *acting* , stripping away the dancer's need to prove ability or expression through an extreme format. One of her many morals as a choreographer speaks to this - *it's not so much that less is more , but rather about how to get the most out of the least.*