

Elisabeth Schilling

BRIDGE-BUILDER ACROSS ART FORMS AND CULTURES

COVER STORY

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In a world where boundaries often divide and voices can be drowned in a cacophony of noise, **Elisabeth Schilling** believes the most important thing is belonging, the kind that emerges when diverse people gather to co-create, to see and experience each other anew. From the heart of Luxembourg to stages across Europe and beyond, Elisabeth has always been captivated by the unknown: that fertile ground where dance and music meet, revealing dazzling new ways of sensing, imagining, and understanding our world.

As **Artistic Director of Elisabeth Schilling & Company**, her story is one of forging connections across languages, disciplines, and perceptions. Whether she brings dance to bustling public spaces or collaborates with musicians inspired by the likes of György Ligeti, Elisabeth's deepest fulfillment comes in those moments of reciprocity. Here, every team member, every audience participant, steps into something larger: the shared act of creativity.

For Elisabeth, the lasting power of art is not in singular interpretations, but in inviting each individual to find their own meaning, ensuring that no one is left behind in a world so often pulled apart. It is this vision rooted locally, reaching globally, and always devoted to making art accessible, relevant, and alive that shapes every project she leads.

Forging Connections Through Movement

Elisabeth Schilling & Company is a contemporary dance company based in Luxembourg, proudly associated with the country's leading theatre, the Théâtres de la Ville de Luxembourg. The company's mission is simple yet powerful: to create meaningful connections between art forms, between people, and between places.

Founded by Elisabeth in 2016 as a modest solo initiative, the company has since evolved into a thriving mid-scale ensemble, renowned for original productions that blend movement and music in innovative ways. Over the years, Elisabeth and her company have forged strong networks across Europe and beyond, regularly performing on international stages while remaining deeply rooted in Luxembourg.

At the core of Elisabeth's work lies a profound artistic curiosity: a drive to explore the limitless possibilities of movement in dialogue with music, visual art, and design. From the outset, collaboration has been central to her approach, evolving from intimate partnerships with individual artists to leading full creative teams supported by a dedicated backstage crew.

Beyond creation, Elisabeth Schilling & Company is deeply committed to accessibility. Each production is accompanied by tailored outreach initiatives that bring dance to audiences of all backgrounds from major theatres to intimate performances in care homes, schools, and hospitals. The company strives to ensure that the transformative power of dance reaches far beyond traditional venues, sharing its impact widely across society.

Elisabeth is continually inspired by the layers of meaning that emerge when movement is intertwined with visual art, sound, scent, and design layers that invite new realms of imagination. In her creative process, she is guided not by predetermined meaning, but by a curiosity for form and its potential. For Elisabeth, creating art is a journey into the unknown, a fertile ground for new ways of seeing, sensing, and experiencing the world.

Making Dance Accessible Beyond the Stage

Elisabeth's approach to dance is deeply influenced by the histories and expectations embedded within every performance space. She recognizes that cultural traditions have long shaped not only which art forms flourish in certain venues from black box theatres and white cube galleries to concert halls and community centres but also which audiences have access to them. While Elisabeth cherishes the theatrical magic and heritage of the black box theatre, her artistic curiosity constantly drives her to seek out new contexts and unconventional spaces.

This passion for exploring beyond traditional venues has led Elisabeth to stage projects in public spaces, where dance becomes an unexpected part of daily life, as well as in striking and unusual sites such as old churches, abandoned houses, rural landscapes, and galleries. She is especially moved by the social mission underpinning her company's outreach: bringing dance directly to care homes, children's homes, and hospital spaces where audiences can no longer come to the theatre and where art can offer a vital sense of connection.

Elisabeth's vision for her company is both locally rooted in Luxembourg and outward-looking toward Europe and beyond. She is committed to nurturing a rich network of partnerships at home while continuously expanding into diverse cultural contexts and audiences across borders.

What sets Elisabeth Schilling & Company apart is the company's wide-ranging repertoire: from internationally touring productions and innovative, site-specific projects to deeply personal outreach in community and care settings. As Elisabeth looks to the future, she aims to deepen this unique balance growing internationally while never losing the human intimacy and inclusivity at the core of the company's work.

Ultimately, Elisabeth strives to lead a company that is at once globally resonant and intimately responsive, a company that contributes meaningfully to the international artistic conversation while offering care, inclusion, and connection to those who might otherwise be left without access to the transformative power of art.

Pursuit of Connection and Accessibility

Elisabeth regards music second only to nature as one of her greatest sources of inspiration, celebrating the extraordinary diversity of styles, compositional techniques, and sonic textures available today. She recognizes the profound and centuries-old partnership between dance and music as one of the deepest artistic relationships in human history, continually reinventing itself through time. Elisabeth frequently reflects on how music moves and how dance sounds, seeking to explore the dynamic space where these art forms intersect beyond traditional expectations of mirroring or accompaniment.

In her acclaimed work HEAR EYES MOVE, Elisabeth collaborated with dancers to interpret all 18 Études for Piano by the Hungarian composer György Ligeti. This project marked an extraordinary artistic journey, given both the complexity and richness of Ligeti's music. She considers Ligeti among the most fascinating and inspiring composers, whose emotionally profound and intellectually intricate music provides a boundless choreographic palette full of layered textures and possibilities.

A constant theme in Elisabeth's creative philosophy is the pursuit of accessibility without sacrificing artistic integrity. She follows a two-step process: first, she allows her artistic curiosity full freedom in the studio, rigorously exploring form and movement; then, she thoughtfully opens the work outward, designing multiple entry points for diverse audiences to connect meaningfully



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with the piece. Recognizing the multiplicity within audiences ranging from those seeking entertainment to others desiring deep intellectual or emotional engagement she addresses this diversity by fostering a broad spectrum of engagement.

Elisabeth's commitment to accessibility extends well beyond the performance itself. She creates numerous pathways for audience involvement, including post-show conversations, interdisciplinary events blending art with science and philosophy, workshops, open rehearsals, and commissioned literary works inspired by the pieces. Public voices become part of installations, and many supporting resources are made freely available online, ensuring that engagement is inclusive and unhindered by circumstance.

For Elisabeth, the quest to deepen connection between people and art is an ongoing passion and perhaps even an obsession constantly asking how new bridges can be built and doors opened so that each individual can find their unique way into the world of dance and music. This pursuit shapes the continuing evolution of her artistic vision and the work of Elisabeth Schilling & Company.

Nurturing Hope and Human Connection Through Dance

Born in a remote rural area with limited exposure to culture, Elisabeth's passion for dance was evident from a very young age. Her insatiable curiosity for art and artistic expression has always been a driving force in her life. This personal journey has instilled in her a profound empathy for children in rural regions, individuals facing illness, and those with limited financial means groups who often have restricted access to the arts. Elisabeth is deeply moved by the challenges faced by people in care homes and by children whose families may be unable to introduce them to music, dance, museums, or theatre. With her Mat lech program (Luxembourgish for With You), she has initiated a humble yet heartfelt effort to make art more accessible, aiming to bring moments of

joy, inspiration, hope, and connection to those who might otherwise feel excluded. For Elisabeth, ensuring that no one is left behind in a world marked by division is an unwavering priority.

The highlight of her daily routine comes through collaboration when her team and partners unite to accomplish something as one. Leading a dance company is never without its challenges, but Elisabeth finds strength and fulfillment in human connection and the conviction that every voice matters. She believes their collective differences are a source of strength, and she cherishes those shared moments of achievement that emerge despite obstacles.

For Elisabeth, every venue, evening, performance, and audience is significant. Each encounter, every conversation, exchange, and show—has shaped her artistic path, nurturing her growth and reinforcing her commitment to ensuring the transformative power of art reaches those who need it most.

Guiding with Sensitivity and Shared Purpose

Elisabeth believes that leading a creative, international team requires recognizing the individual needs and strengths of each member. For her, leadership is fundamentally an act of attentive listening, resonance, and reciprocity cultivating a genuine sense of “we.” She is convinced that collective success emerges only when every person is empowered to act with empathy, share responsibility, and bring their full intelligence and creativity to the table.

Elisabeth's role as a leader centers on sensing what her team needs to move together harmoniously toward shared goals. The most satisfying moments, she finds, are those when true reciprocity flourishes when each team

member discovers their unique place within a greater whole. This spirit of co-creation, rather than solitary effort, forms the core of her leadership approach.

Her years as a performer served as a laboratory for understanding leadership within creative spaces. Elisabeth became deeply interested in observing how others guided groups paying close attention to their language, methodologies, and the ways they inspired excellence. These experiences as a dancer among peers striving for something larger than themselves have greatly influenced her own path, shaping the methodology, vocabulary, and style she uses to guide her team today.

Decade of Innovation, Collaboration, and Artistic Exploration

As Elisabeth approaches the 10th anniversary season of Elisabeth Schilling & Company, she reflects on how receiving awards and recognition has been a profound source of strength and encouragement not only personally but also as a unifying force that brings her team closer together. Each accolade reaffirms the meaning and purpose behind their creative endeavors.

The milestone season promises much to celebrate, with three major group pieces touring internationally, each representing a distinct facet of the company's artistic vision. In late September 2025, the company will premiere Sensorial Symphonies, a deeply immersive work developed over two years. This innovative piece explores the question: what if humans could feel the world as plants do? Set to a reimaged



score combining Rachmaninov's Piano Concerto No. 2, Pascal Schumacher's marimba arrangements, and the evocative sounds of The Plant Philharmonic, it invites audiences into a multi-sensory experience where plants become central protagonists in a living symphony of nature's interconnected systems.

The company will also revive *Fluorescence in Decay*, a full-evening meditation on transformation, renewal, and the cycles of nature. Featuring Anna Meredith's dynamic reinterpretation of Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*, this work melds classical familiarity with experimental creativity, captivating audiences across generations.

Continuing its successful tour, *HEAR EYES MOVE*. Dances with Ligeti remains a treasured exploration of the complex relationship between music and dance. The choreography set to all 18 *Études* for Piano by György Ligeti has captivated audiences from Avignon to Boston and Ludwigsburg and is slated for upcoming performances at prestigious venues such as the Philharmonie de Paris and the Konzerthaus Kiel.

Together, these works underscore Elisabeth's ongoing commitment to innovation, accessibility, and artistic depth as she and her team embark on a decade of creative achievement and international collaboration.