

RECK FILMPRODUCTION

presents

[bödälä]  
DANCE THE RHYTHM

Direction  
Gitta Gsell

With Claudia Lüthi, Elias Roth, Lukas Weiss, Anja Losinger, Sabrina Wüst,  
Anne-Marie Rojahn, and dancers from Central Switzerland and Toggenburg

Switzerland 2010 - 78 min / color / 1:1.66 / Dolby Digital

**Production**

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in coproduction with Swiss television  
and SRG idée suisse

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[www.dance-the-rhythm.com](http://www.dance-the-rhythm.com)

## **SYNOPSIS**

A fast-paced film about people whose feet are their primitive and powerful instrument of artistic expression. Beginning with "Bödälä" in Central Switzerland, this film journeys from tap dance and flamenco to Irish dance. The rhythmic stamping of the shoes is reminiscent of ethnic ritualistic folk dances. Evolving from the "dances of the folk" are show and competition dance. The film provides insight into passionate dancers and people who express joy, desire and sadness through rhythm with their feet.

Starting in Switzerland, a journey from tap dance to flamenco and Irish dance.

*"Dance is a telegram to the earth with the request for abolition of the force of gravity."*  
Fred Astaire

## **PRESS RELEASE**

Who would have thought that Swiss folk dances could be connected with the American tap dance or the wild Irish Dance or even with the fiery Spanish Flamenco? Director Gitta Gsell set out to trace the roots of Swiss folk dance and encountered Swiss dancers who, with enormous pleasure and energy, express their passion for the „floor telegram“, tapping and stomping on the ground in the form of dance. The wide span encompasses the young, congenial Toggenburg and Central Swiss Bödälä dancers, the internationally renowned tap dances of Lukas Weiss from Biel, the aficionada of the Irish Dance, Sabrina Wüst from Canton Aargau and the artistic, musical modification of Flamenco created by the Bernese dancer Ania Losinger.

While the roots of their dance forms come from all over the world, the protagonists have one thing in common: their contagious love for dancing, for beating a rhythm with their feet! A documentary film with loads of music in the legs and bursting with the joy of life!

## PROTAGONISTS

**Claudia Lüthi** manages her own hairdresser salon in Hemberg, Toggenburg. She is a charismatic, very congenial young woman with a mind of her own and an independent lifestyle who loves to dance the Bödälä. She is a Bödälä fan of the young generation and, as a woman, dances audaciously in what is considered a man's realm. She was the first woman in the area to take up this dance. She learned to dance the Bödälä from an ex-boyfriend who brought the dance from Central Switzerland. It was he who encouraged her to try this dance that is usually reserved for men.

Laughingly, she tells how more and more women are beginning to dance the Bödälä now that there is the Bödälä tournament in Toggenburg. She goes out dancing because of the music; she likes this down-to-earth folk music. It is lots of fun and really energizes her. She loves to dance to it – and preferably the Bödälä. Her partner, too, should love folk music and enjoy dancing. She would like to preserve the tradition and pass it along to her children. Claudia Lüthi is one of the co-organizers of the Bödälä competition in Toggenburg.

**Elias Roth**, from Hemberg in Toggenburg, is a cheerful man whom people instantly like to listen to. The farmer and carpentry foreman says of himself that he is a kind of day laborer, a jack-of-all-trades. He goes hiking, plays music (accordion and bass), loves to carve wood and is an impassioned dancer. Elias learned the Bödälä in Central Switzerland. When he was 19 years old, one of his colleagues took him along to a meeting at the traditional folk costume club, which he had just joined. Elias also goes to discos now and again, but more because of his buddies – not because of the music. It is traditional folk music that sets his feet tapping. He is on the committee for the Bödälä competition. Elias is single. He hopes that his future partner will also enjoy folk music and dancing. He may court a woman by dancing the Bödälä and Gäuerlen, but he has nothing against being courted by a woman, either.

**Sabrina Wüst** qualified in December 2007 for the world championship in Belfast and is preparing for it with her trainer, Anne-Marie Rojahn. She lives in Klingnau and during the day she works as a fully trained hotel clerk. She often spends her evenings and weekends practicing. She loves to dance, even though her doctor tells her that she will not be able to strain her bones for many more years. Dancing gives her a great sense of her body. She practices with enthusiasm when she is not working in her full-time job, encouraged by her friends and family. In her youth, Sabrina played volleyball and swam. But after she saw «Lord of the Dance» in television, she was totally fascinated by the footwork of the dancers and fell in love with the Irish Dance.

**Anne-Marie Rojahn**, from Basle, is Sabrina's teacher and trainer in the film and we also see her as a dancer and choreographer. She was the first dancing teacher on the European continent to pass the TCRG (Irish Dance Commission) examination. She grew up in Norway and began her dancing career at the age of 5, with Norwegian folk dance. At 12 she discovered tap dancing and studied it and Irish Dance at the Royal Academy of Dance in London. Today she has her own school of

dance in Basle, the «Rojahn Company». Anne-Marie knows the Irish Dance scene very well and has delved into the historical background of this dance form. She is presently working on qualification to become a jury member for the Irish Dance competition.

[www.rosaid.com](http://www.rosaid.com)

**Lukas Weiss**, from Biel, has been a passionate and professional dancer and choreographer for years. Lukas expresses himself verbally very deliberately and thoughtfully. He has a wide range of knowledge and loves to convey it as he dances, through his movements and dynamism. His search for his own Swiss roots led him in 2006 to the production of the dance theater piece «alpine tap». In «alpine tap» traditional dance forms from Central Switzerland (Bödälä/Gäuerlen) serve as his source of inspiration, which he then transforms into new forms of expression. For Lukas, dance means the creative interpretation of rhythm and music. In his percussive dance he communicates with his public not only through the visual aspects but also through sound. He loves to experiment with different sound effects – whether sandy earth or metal plate. He explores dance as a method of communication. At the age of 12 he began with Afro-Rhythm and when he was 15 he discovered tap dancing. He has continually expanded his knowledge and skills in workshops and has been the star guest on many large dance shows. Lukas has succeeded in spanning the arc of his talents from commercial dancing at galas, shows and company events to artistic performances on the stage. Lukas Weiss works with the best Swiss tap dancers: in his formation «Friends & Rhythm», for example, with «Les Frères Surbeck» (the Surbeck Brothers), Fabrice Martin and Sophie and Emilie Rupp, among others. All of these dancers have been Swiss and world champions in various dance categories many times.

[www.lukasweiss.ch](http://www.lukasweiss.ch)

**Ania Losinger**, from Gerzensee in Canton Berne, has fulfilled her dream of uniting music and movement, of finding a creative form of expression for both in a single person, with her instrument, the Xala. When Ania talks about her form of dancing, she is very concentrated and captivates her audience. She has “expanded” Flamenco in an interesting way, dancing and yet, at the same time, taking part in the musical „happening“ that accompanies it – even influencing it through the way she moves. She loves this upright, proud style of dancing. Although Flamenco calls for unbelievable discipline and strenuous physical training, dancing it was always connected with great passion. She simply had to dance! After 14 years of classical Flamenco, however, she outgrew it. Through experimentation she worked to transform a wooden floor into a „sounding“ floor. Together with Hamper from Niederhäusen she developed the Xala, an ultra-large xylophone. Through this instrument, her form of dancing has also changed. The work with the Xala is an on-going research project, with which she has been able to realize her dream of creating a synthesis between music and dance. A kind of meditation, it seems that as Ania concentrates, she becomes permeable – so that the vibrations created by her movements flow unhindered into the space around her. She practices every day in order to attain this ideal condition. For several years now she has had the good fortune to develop and perform her compositions and dance her choreography with

her life companion **Matthias Eser**, who plays the Marimba. Ania Losinger has brought a new dimension into dance. She performs not only on musical stages but also in galleries and art museums.

[www.xala.ch](http://www.xala.ch)

**Othmar Betschart**, from Ibach, Schwyz, is folklorist and a member of the traditional folk costume club there. He dances the Bödälä and was in his day the Tanzschenk ("dance caller") at dance events. It was the Tanzschenk who actually led the dance. He also always had several "Tanzschenk" girls at each event and it was his responsibility to „give“ these young ladies as dance partners to the young men who had come alone. Betschart's uncles, all of them farmers, had a special expression for «getting the adrenalin flowing» or «getting all worked up» (literally "from pitching hay - ghei): «Er chund is Ghei» (he's coming into form) or «is Ghäu» (He's excited). Whenever a young man danced with a girl, got „carried away“ and wanted to show what a super guy he was, his expanded version of the Bödälä («is Gäu cho») became known as «gäuerlen». Othmar Betschart has written numerous articles about how Bödälä/Gäuerlen came into existence.

**Dr. John Cullinane** from Cork/Ireland has been dancing since he was eleven years old. When he was young, his teacher hit him on his knees whenever he lifted his legs higher than knee level. Today the dancers kick their legs as high as their heads. John Cullinane began to write about the Irish Dance when he realized that there was absolutely nothing recorded as to the historical background of this dance. His experiences and his commitment as dancer and dance teacher in Cork flow into his stories about the history of the Irish dance. Dr. John Cullinane teaches at the University of Cork in Ireland. He is a Master in the Irish Dance and Vice Chairman of the Irish Dance Commission. He continues to fight for recognition and appreciation of this folk dance – both in the media and among the public. He is pleased that the whole world discovered the dance through the Riverdance show. He still remembers the times when he taught in Cork for very little money and when the dance form was totally ignored by the public.

### **Other participants**

Bödälä - Gäuerlen

**Hansruedi Arnold**

**Helen Kennel**

**Frowin Neff**

**Regula Hollenstein**

**Othmar Bürgler and Hedi Tschümperli**

**Albert and Annemarie Holdener**

**Bruno Steiner and Yvonne Bürgler**

**Thomas Imhof and Madeleine Zwingli**

Tap Dancing  
**Fabrice Martin**  
**Frères Surbeck, Dorel & Costel**  
**Laurent Bortolotti**  
**Martin's Tap Dance Company**  
**Emilie Rupp**  
**Andreas Jakopec**  
**Guest appearances**

Irish Dance  
**Students of the Rojahn Academy**

Narrator  
**Ruedi Roth**

Chlefeler / "Castanet" players  
**Franz Portmann**  
**Walter Inderbitzin-Stadler**

Whip crackers  
**Werni Fässler-Gantenbein, Albert Marty-Blaser, Christian Suter, Kari Annen**

## **MUSIC**

Title music  
**Peter Bräker**

**Ländlertrio Chuchirascht Illgau**  
**Handorgelduo Rickenbacher-Heinzer Illgau**  
**Handorgelduo Imholz-Zehnder Bürglen**  
**Ländlertrio Nidwaldner Buebe Ennetmoos**  
**Ländlerquartett Tanzboden, a.o., Ebnat-Kappel**  
**Trio Schwzyerländli**  
**Ländlertrio Gantegruess Schwellbrunn**

"Playing Around" by Victor Cuno

"Everybody" by Martin Solveig

"The Road to Emily's Bar - Uncle Tom's Cabin" by Gerry Conlon & Seamus O'Sullivan.

"THE FIVE ELEMENTS" & "XALA 1 2 3" by

Ania Losinger and Matthias Eser

## **CREW**

Idea, Script & Direction

**Gitta Gsell**

Camera

**Hansueli Schenkel**

**Peter Guyer**

**Patrick Lindenmaier**

**Gitta Gsell**

**Heidi Hildebrand**

Original Sound

**Dieter Meyer**

**Patrick Becker**

Editor

**Bernhard Lehner**

Assistant Editor

**Rebecca Siegfried**

Title Music

**Peter Bräker**

**Werner Haltinner**

Sound Design & Mix

**Christian Beusch** Magnetix Tonstudio Zürich

Sound Editing

**Christian Beusch & Guido Keller**

Color Correcting

**Patrick Lindenmaier**

Andromeda Film, Zürich

Lighting

**Salvatore Piazzitta**

Assistant

**Benjamin Weiss**

Title Graphics

**Peter Volkart**

Production Management

**Franziska Reck & Gitta Gsell**

Location Manager & Stage

**Marisa Koch**

Assistant

**Michael Seger**

Make-up

**Sophie Reck**

Redaktion SF  
**Urs Augstburger**  
Redaktion SRG SSR idée Suisse  
**Alberto Chollet**

A production of RECK Filmproduction Zurich  
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Succès Passages Antennes

## TECHNICAL DATA

Duration / Length	78 min.
Format	35mm 1:1.66 Dolby digital
Original Version	Swiss German, English with German subtitles
Film locations	Gäuerlerabig Rubiswil, Turnhalle Ibach / Ibach gym Dreikönig, Hauptplatz Schwyz / Epiphany Celebration, Main square in Schwyz Bödälä contests in Hemberg and Ebnat-Kappel Restaurant Rössli, Seedorf Cattle Show Hemberg Lüthi Farm, Ebnat-Kappel Landgasthof Krone, Nesslau Farmer's fair Gädelmontag, Illgau Beauty salon Black & White, Hemberg Volkshaus Biel 'Friends in Rhythm 2008' City theater of Biel 'alpine tap' Nuithonie Theatre, Villars-sur-Glane World Championship, Waterfront Belfast Hotel Sonne, Krummenau La Rosa Dance Studio, Warteck Building, Basle Open air swimming pool Gried Klingnau Musikfestwochen Meiringen 2008 Handeck power plant - KWO Hasliberg AG Atelier Folke Truedsson, Röschenz

## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Five years ago, when I visited the tap dance school for dancers 60 and above, I was amazed. With great passion those 60-90 year-olds were beating a rhythm on the floor with their feet. What is it that makes people stomp on the floor with so much enjoyment?

During my search for stamping and stomping in Swiss dances, I discovered the folk dances of Central Switzerland. Dance forms such as Bödälä and Gäuerlen are hardly known in Switzerland although they originate from our own cultural tradition. Only in recent years has a recollection and rediscovery of the folk culture taken place, as a result of globalization and «western cultural unity». I have tried to assemble some of these «treasures of the primitive folk culture» before they are totally lost through modernization. There are varying opinions as to whether the folk dance should be maintained in its original form or if and how it should and must develop further. For the «modernizers» the folk dance must not grow stiff and stale and become a museum piece. For the «traditionalists» it must not be misused as a show for the public or for competitive purposes. In «Bödälä – Dance the Rhythm» I have sought out dancers who move within this area of tension.

When we look at the four dance forms presented in the film, the question quickly arises – what is tradition and how do we as modern human beings deal with it? We come closest to the original folk dance with the archaic Bödälä dancers in their traditional costumes. Here we perceive its ritualistic aspects through the repeated stomping of the shoes as their feet move in circles. With each of the other dance forms, we are removed a bit more from the roots of the dance. When the competitors perform the Irish dance at the world championship, dancing and jumping to the limits of their abilities, it reminds us of serious sport competition. When the tap dancers in glamorous costumes synchronously dance their complicated step routines and figures, we find ourselves in the midst of show dancing. And when the Flamenco dancer plays her Xala, the acoustic floor, in the turbine room of the Grimsel power plant, we feel the meditative and artistic spirit of her performance. Yet with each of these dance forms we can feel the origins.

Forms of dance that do not belong to ballet or modern dance are often considered unimportant in terms of aesthetics and beauty and thus are given little recognition. But dance forms like ballet are still very young compared to the «primitive, natural» folk dances. The folk dance is full of energy and power. No matter how the dances portrayed in the film are performed, their origins are perceptible and have, through their loud stomping, something archaic about them – even today – striking a nerve in our innermost being.

## **BIO-FILMOGRAPHY GITTA GSELL**

Born in 1953 in Zurich. 1979-89 Resided in New York. Since 1990 lives in Zurich.  
1977-79 Attended the F+F, Schule für Experimentelle Gestaltung, in Zurich. 1980-82  
School of Visual Arts, New York,  
Bachelor of Fine Arts. 1982-84 Hunter College, New York, Master of Fine Arts in  
Combined Media. Since 1977 scripts and direction of theatre and performances.  
Since 1981 screenplays and direction of films and videos.

2010 Bödälä – Dance the Rhythm  
2005 Irène Schweizer (documentary)  
2004 Lilo & Fredi (fiction) / augenblickeN (documentary)  
1999 Virus-L (short film)  
1997 Propellerblume (fiction)  
1995 Lilo in der Tanzbar (short film)  
1994 Uma passagem/Umgezogen (documentary)  
1990 Cornelia Forster – Künstlerin (documentary) / Perception/Tension (music film)  
1987 Don't Stand on the Ocean (fiction)  
1985 Immer diese Ewigkeit (music film)  
1984 A.R.T. (documentary)  
1981 Goodbye (experimental film)

## **RECK FILMPRODUKTION GmbH**

RECK Filmproductions in Zurich was founded in 2000 by Franziska Reck and focuses mainly on the development and production of documentary and experimental film – especially film essays – for cinema and television.

Franziska Reck has been actively involved in the world of film for twenty years, energetically promoting independent filmmaking in Switzerland. Beginning as a film distributor at the Filmcoopi in Zurich (1983—1990), she continued building up the distribution and promotion of Swiss films as director of the IGV/CID (1993-2000) and as freelance film producer herself (since 1990).

RECK Filmproductions stands for – and features – interest in the lifestyles and the diverse forms in which people express themselves, as well as the fascination in images – whether documentary, staged or experimental in nature. In the centre of the search are human encounters, images depicting what happens when different cultures come together.

## **Filmography**

2010 BÖDÄLÄ – DANCE THE RHYTHM by Gitta Gsell, documentary

2009 ISA HESSE-RABINOVITCH – The Movie Game by Anka Schmid, documentary

2008 FEDERICA DE CESCO by Nino Jacusso, documentary

2008 MONSIEUR SELAVY by Peter Volkart, short film  
2008 MUSIKLIEBE by Yusuf Yeşilöz, documentary  
2007 RAJA'S REISE by Karl Saurer, documentary  
2006 SWEEPING ADDIS by Corinne Kuenzli, documentary  
2006 ZWISCHEN DEN WELTEN by Yusuf Yeşilöz, documentary  
2005 IRENE SCHWEIZER by Gitta Gsell, documentary  
2005 TERRA INCOGNITA by Peter Volkart, short film  
2004 NAMIBIA CROSSINGS by Peter Liechti, film essay  
2003 DIETER ROTH by Edith Jud, documentary  
2002 ONOMA by Nino Jacusso and Gitta Gsell, 9 short films for Expo 02  
2001 VIRUS-L by Gitta Gsell, experimental short film  
2000 TRANSITO by Nino Jacusso, documentary  
1996 A PROPOS DE JOYE by Isolde Marxer, documentary  
1992 TRAUMZEIT by Franz Reichle, documentary

**In Production:**

2005 – 2010 MIT DEM BAUCH DURCH DIE WAND by Anka Schmid, documentary  
2007 – 2010 WENN DER HALBMOND SPRICHT by Sandra Gysi and Ahmed Abdel  
Mohsen, documentary