



## Outdoor dances

How did dance manage to leave the stage? How did dance manage to leave dancehalls and theatres?

To take a look outside, in theatre hallways, in streets, forests, museums ...

When dance moves outside, it uses the front-stage, and occasionally even horizontality and weightlessness. Its spectacular and performative aspect is, as such, questioned, shifted; its creative codes are shook up.

During different periods of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, alternative movements moved dance away from the stage and the theatre to rediscover the body, to reintroduce ritual, organic dance in the Monte Verità community, dance that was highly-personal and inspired by everyday realities for the members of the Judson Dance Theater, dance that was urban and responsive to its environment at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### 1. The Monte Verità Community

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, artists and thinkers of all persuasions joined together to seek out new avenues of creation and of life in reaction to the codes and conventions of the then bourgeois society.

Just imagine, a community perched in the Swiss-Italian mountains where the psychoanalyst Carl Gustav Jung, the painter Paul Klee, the writers Hermann Hesse and James Joyce, the dancers Rudolf Laban, Mary Wigman, Isadora Duncan and Suzanne Perrottet would meet. In this community that focused on naturism, spiritualism, vegetarianism and a myriad of utopian ideals, the developments of psychoanalysis opened the doors of individuation, of the unconscious, of self through which the arts and poetry, theatre and dance rushed in.

Weary of Dalcrozian rhythmic methods that were over-subservient to the musical establishment, Mary Wigman and Suzanne Perrottet got closer to Rudolf Laban, who had been invited to the community since 1912 to create the “École de l’art du mouvement” (School for the movement arts).

In response to the war and to the old social order, Laban organized a celebration in 1917 known as “Hymne au soleil” (The Song to the Sun) which lasted all through the night and brought together spectators and dancers.

This “choral work” echoed Pagan, Greek and Roman rites (Laban spoke of “primitive culture”) and illustrated forms that the choreographer would hold dear, such as circles, “cyclical dances” and “choral dances”.

Although Isadora Duncan only stayed there a few times, Mary Wigman created her “Danses extatiques” (Ecstasy Dances) and her well-known “Danse de la sorcière” (Witch Dance) at Monte Verità; it was there in the community that she developed her improvisation work and let herself be inspired by what she called her “vital impulse”.



## **2. Anna Halprin**

Ever since she started out back in the 1940s, Anna Halprin has always quested after dance that corresponds to her personally, where the movements would be the most faithful messengers of her reflection, echoing her personality. She aims to return to the essence of movement, the one that existed before the spectacular and codified dance performed in theatres.

Her dance provides an opportunity to react when confronted with the world of humans, ideas, politics, the city and also when confronted with nature, the forest, beaches and parks. As such, the human community, the beauty of nature become settings that inspire her performances.

She starts off with everyday movements that she calls “tasks” and illustrates them through improvisation scenarios which she proposes to her work groups.

Her trust in the power of the body, which she experienced on a personal level when she had to fight against her uterine cancer, led her to develop a curative approach which she called “Healing Dance” and which she proposed in workshops organized for AIDS and cancer patients.

In North Carolina, with her architect husband, she created a house made of wood that comprised a dance stage overlooking nature; and she suspended gigantic netting among the redwoods of her park.

The dance that she developed over the course of her workshops, encounters and reflection, lives and breathes in this location and stretches right across the country to the beaches of the Pacific and to the surrounding cascades.

## **3. Trisha Brown**

At the beginning of the 1960s, the postmodernism, a New York movement originating in the Judson Dance Theater, questioned the relationship between the stage and performance, and the spectacular.

Trisha Brown, one of its initiators, brought dance out onto the streets, into parks, unto the facades and roofs of New York.

The workshops that she held in alternative locations developed the art of improvisation and decorticated the process of creation. She even strived to implement techniques for memorizing the improvisations! These workshops were melting-pots for choreographic matter that would then sustain the improvisations and performances that she proposes in situ, her “instantaneous compositions”.

In her work, “Roof and Fire Piece”, the dancers were positioned on the roofs of various buildings, the public everywhere around, also on roofs but also on pavements and hanging out of surrounding windows. Trisha Brown not only proposed innovational dance but also offered spectators a one-of-a-kind status. As such, spectators had a wide variety of perspectives over the performance, and the dancers had a wide variety of axes through which they could express themselves.



#### **4. Thierry De Mey**

“To free dance from its scenic pervasiveness, it had to be provoked, thrown out and had to face the outside world”. - Thierry De Mey

With the advent of video in the 1980s, choreographers and filmmakers played on space, time, axes and perspectives by proposing choreography that was created for image and was referred to as “video dances”.

Dance exists beyond the stage, beyond the moment, beyond the eyes of the public which is, as such, convened in a deferred way.

Thierry De Mey, music composer and filmmaker, and Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker, choreographer, have established an exemplary duo since this period of time. They produce Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker’s dance in locations that are always surprising, natural or urban. The dance, which is, however, intensely composed, lets itself be inspired by the beauty of nature or by surrounding architecture. The choreographic composition is reworked for the camera. As such, it is revealed in a different manner based on the axes and the values of the plans chosen when the video is shot and based on editing techniques and rhythms.

Thierry De Mey, who has also worked with Michèle Anne De Mey and Wim Vandekeybus, complements his technical savoir faire with an immense yet ever-discreet, instinctive, minimal, infra and cellular poetry.

By doing this, he takes us on a journey into a world filled with pure movements, with organic resonance, fractal images where extreme formalism, high technology and highly-sensitive poetry blend in harmony.

#### **5. Antoine Le Menestrel**

A highly-accomplished climber, and dancer at the end of the 1980s in the Roc in Lichen and Retouramont companies, Antoine Le Menestrel was one of the members of this little band (Laura de Nercy, Bruno Dizien, Fabrice Guillot, etc.), which not only took dance out of its front-stage setting but also out of its horizontality. Climbing-dance, vertical dance explores building facades, the Verdon gorge, showcasing dancers and also décors and video projections.

Antoine Le Menestrel continues to tackle the ascension of highly-improbable facades, with grace and a method of crawling from another world. Facade and wall dancer, he recently climbed the extraordinary facade of the Cour d’Honneur of the Palais des Papes (Popes’ Palace) in Avignon. In “Inferno” by Romeo Castellucci and then in “Cour d’Honneur” by Jérôme Bel.

When he writes to, he signs off with: “Vertically yours”.



## 6. Julie Desprairies

*Dance and architecture,  
Body and building,  
Dance reflecting bodies against building design.*

For around fifteen years, Julie Desprairies has been developing her “choreographic environment” work by occupying architectural sites.

A building that provokes actions, movements, gestures from the dancers and the amateurs with whom she works always determine her performances.

Projects are long-term, requiring several months of assimilation, several dozen artists to understand the physical context, the conceptual intentions and to, ultimately, propose a choreographic happening, an artistic ritual, a sort of celebration of the site.

She reveals to the inhabitants of the places their own dance, the framework becomes structure, the architecture of the bodies “moulds” itself into that of the place.

This extract from “Là Commence le Ciel” (The Sky Begins There) mirrors “Roof and Fire Piece” by Trisha Brown. Julie Desprairies restaged signal-gestures by positioning the dancer located on the porch at 500 metres from the dancers located on the towers. These gestures are taken from a dance discovered in the municipal archives and created by a teacher for their pupils for the Fêtes de la jeunesse villeurbanaises (Villeurbane Youth Celebrations) in 1966.

Through dance, Julie Desprairies centre stages the architecture of this district of Villeurbanne, built in 1934 and referred to as “Les Gratte-ciel” (Skyscrapers). The majesty of these towers and of the avenue is highlighted by the sole presence of the dancers’ bodies.

As the choreographer says: “Making a group of people, who are 500 m apart, dance together is spectacular, using only the process of the relationship of bodies borne by the city... that is the magic of dance!”

## 7. Foofwa d’Imobilité

Born Frédéric Gafner, he defines himself as “dancer, choreographer and dance researcher in practice and theory”.

Classical dancer then Cunninghamian, since 2000 he has been an across-the-board performer in his partnerships and in his areas of research. We could also add that he is a crazy inventor, staunch advocate of dance and its history, scenic and multimedia dabbler.

He creates extravagant performances where practice and theory blend together: a history of dance in his own style “Histoires Condansées” (Condanced histories), a tribute to the great figures who disappeared in June/July 2009, “Pina Jackson in Mercemorian”, and online dance lessons and workshops between Geneva and New York “Télépédagogia”.



In “Kilometrix.dancerun.4”, which focuses on his research on sport and dance, he has created the concept of danced runs or racing dances – danceruns - which he has performed in the towns that he has travelled through: Paris, Lyon, Zurich, Cairo, Bologna.

A sort of court jester of the artistic marathon, he invites urbanites, citizens to follow him using any mode of transport they wish over a distance of 5 to 15 kilometres. A videographer on roller-skates accompanies him and at the end of the race screens the video and initiates the discussion.

## **8. Kitsou Dubois**

Installations, productions, staging, in situ creations, conferences, etc.

Dance and the arts, arts and science, dance and the circus, her career and her creations are multi-discipline yet she only has one quest: gravity.

For many years now, in close collaboration with the CNES (National Centre for Space Studies), the ESA (European Space Agency), she experiments micro-gravity and weightlessness during parabolic flights with her team of dancers and circus artists.

Kitsou Dubois explores the expanded, dilated body, which shifts its limits and experiences the alteration of weight. She plunges performers into spheres where gravity is altered.

Their movements disrupt our points of reference: top/bottom, horizontal/vertical, weight/weightlessness, to influence the perception that we have of our inner space, and concurrently, of our environment.

In “Trajectoire fluide” (Fluid Trajectory), she combines the projection of videos where the dancers move under water, a trampoline, elastics, chairs, where circus dancers overcome the laws of weightlessness and balance... for the duration of a dance.



**To go further:**

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Excerpts selection

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Text and bibliography selection

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Production

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After years in dance-studies, at the Conservatoire d'Avignon, then at the National Center of Contemporary Dance of Angers, Julie Charrier is moving towards the production of documentary films and live performances captations mainly centered around contemporary dance for many production companies. As a consultant, then editorialist, she participated in the birth and development of Numeridance.tv. She coordinates for the ACCN and the Ministry of Culture, delegation to dance, the digitization of the French choreographic heritage and created the site [www.30ansdanse.fr](http://www.30ansdanse.fr). She is responsible for the artistic direction and production of the 360 "Histoires d'espaces" collection, which questions the new possibilities that virtual reality offers to live performances.

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