

association pour la
danse contemporaine
genève

adc 30^{ans}

Deborah Hay

par Dance On Ensemble

Tenacity of space

du 12 au 14 mai 2017

vendredi à 20h30, samedi à 19h, dimanche à 18h



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Contact presse

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Note d'intention

Dance is my form of political activism. It is not how I dance or why I dance. It is that I dance.

The *Tenacity of Space* represents a catastrophic loss of learned dance behavior. Rather than rely on their physical bodies and what they can do, the DANCE ON quintet was encouraged to relentlessly notice everything in their visual field to support their moving bodies. "Immensity is within ourselves. It is attached to a sort of expansion of being that life curbs and caution arrests..." (Gaston Bachelard, *Poetics of Space*)

Recognizable movement is not an element in my work. Instead I create conditions that are intended give rise to an atmosphere of indefinable logic for both the dancer and the audience. What keeps me interested in *Tenacity of Space* is what I cannot name or point to in watching how the DANCE ON ENSEMBLE responds to my choreography.

« Tenacity of Space » is a phrase I found while reading *Harvest*, a recent Jim Crace novel. It was my second reading of the book and I turned to it during my five weeks with the ensemble. The phrase leapt out perhaps because of two particular issues in the news, one being Trump's ascension to power and the other being the Syrian Diaspora. During my second week with the dancers I felt a need to somehow reference these disempowering world conditions in the dance being made. Changing the title from *Nothing is Outside* to *Tenacity of Space* changed how we continued to work together.

Deborah Hay

Compagnie Dance On Ensemble

Le projet DANCE ON voit le jour grâce à Riccarda Herre, ancienne danseuse, et Johann Kresnik, qui travaille dans l'organisation internationale DIEHL + RITTER. Christopher Roman rejoint le projet en 2014 et accepte de devenir le directeur artistique de celui-ci. Dance On Ensemble est composé de six danseurs et danseuses : Brit Rodemund, Ty Boomershine, Jone San Martin, Amancio Gonzalez, Ami Shulman et Christopher Roman.

Quand un danseur exceptionnel continue à danser après 40 ans, il offre quelque chose de précieux à la danse et au public. C'est là le postulat du Dance On Ensemble. Basé à Berlin, cette compagnie réunit des danseurs passés chez Forsythe, Béjart et autres ballets renommés qui ont développé, avec le temps, une nouvelle virtuosité.

Dans ce monde où l'image que l'on se fait de la danse est construite à partir du corps virtuose des jeunes danseurs, les changements physiques dus à l'âge se voient déconsidérés. Très peu de compagnies engagent des danseurs de plus de 40 ans. Pourtant, l'intelligence physique et l'expérience vécue s'ajoutent aux connaissances techniques et à la conscience profonde de l'impact de son propre corps en mouvement.

Le projet de cette compagnie vise donc à thématiser cette dévalorisation des « seniors » qui affecte notre société en général et, ainsi, mettre en lumière la valeur de l'expérience et l'enrichissement philosophique qui en découle.

Interview

Interview by Claudia Henne with members of the Dance On Ensemble: Madeline Ritter (Artistic and Executive Director), Ricarda Herre (Project Coordination) and Christopher Roman (Artistic Director and Dancer)

Berlin, 12 mars 2015

Question (CH): 'DANCE ON' sounds like a prompt. Do dancers aged 40+ need prompting?

Madeline Ritter: 'DANCE ON' doesn't have this implication for us. Rather, our central question is: how does dance benefit if dancers continue dancing? How does the audience benefit?

Christopher Roman: It's actually to continue your contemporary dialogue, intellectually and physically, and to actually show others that it doesn't have to end in the way that people think it needs to end. That this experience and this accumulation of things can be incredibly rich and vastly productive. It actually touches people emotionally, not by the mere fact that you're old and being put on stage, but by the fact that you are embodying an expression of being that people can relate to. The expression of what life is and sharing that expression to the point where people are touched and say 'that's how I feel' or 'I don't feel that way but I relate' – I think that is what DANCE ON can celebrate: continuing the idea of dance beyond the constructs of what society says it should be.

Is it more difficult to be older in ballet than in contemporary dance, because of the technique for example?

Ricarda Herre: I think there is a big difference because classical technique is really designed for young bodies. In state-funded theatres where ballet is danced, or where ballet technique is used, the age up to which you can dance is more clearly set than in contemporary dance. You are measured on the basis of the quality of your technique. In contemporary dance, however, expression also has a role to play, or you can use the body in a different way.

So have the people applying for DANCE ON been classically trained?

CR: I prefer to talk about 'experience' than 'trained' in the traditional sense, which sounds rather institutionalised. If you're going to be an expert at dance, I think it is important, at a certain age, to have embodied experiences of a variety of different dance forms. I don't think that everybody needs to have been classically trained, but there has to be a variety of different forms to call yourself an expert and to say that I am a mature, experienced artist who is able to represent the work of different choreographers. I think you have to have an adaptability and that means classicism, that means ideas of modernism and post-modernism, and it also means theatrical constructs, ideas of contemporary and pop culture, or hip hop. I want to know everything about my form, everything that's possible, and when there are gaps in my knowledge I want to be very concrete about trying to fill those gaps in my knowledge.

Are you looking for particularly expressive dancers?

CR: Absolutely. I think we want six different personalities in this group and people who can handle the idea of working with a variety of choreographers. The dancers will really have to be autonomous, self-motivating in what she or he can offer to the choreographic process.

MR: DANCE ON is really a dance heritage project too, as everyone brings their own heritage to it. We talk about a dancer's 'embodied knowledge', which is also experience passed on to the audience, so it's great the project covers a range of dance styles. As an observer, I can discover these works from very different angles. I can well imagine that an experienced audience will be able to look at individual dancers and say, 'I can see Lucinda Childs there,' or 'I recognise Forsythe there.'

CR: The dancers who have actually answered our call for applications are also interested in going beyond the constructs of what they have been used to. Putting yourself in front of other choreographers can be very exciting for people who may have only worked with one or two choreographers throughout their careers. To actually see really interesting choreographers and directors coming to make works is also an opportunity to continue growing as an artist.

To what extent is working with different choreographers a challenge for the dancers?

MR: That was always the idea: to bring together different approaches, styles, even different points of view, which is exactly why we need these experienced dancers. In the talks we had before the start of the project, we regularly heard opinions from experienced dancers like, 'Simply carrying on dancing and joining another repertoire company, I've been there, done that, it's not worth carrying on for that.' So what does make it worth it? There seems to be something in this project that makes it worth it, that answers the question why someone continues to dance.

So are there dancers who don't want to continue dancing?

RH: Yes. I'm one of those dancers who didn't want to dance any more, for example, because I wanted to do something different. Every dancer asks themselves at some point, 'Do I want to continue dancing or not?' There are even dancers who decide to end to their careers, but these aren't the dancers applying for DANCE ON.

Have the choreographers been given guidelines in terms of content?

RH: We have not specified any topic. We decided to give the choreographers a 'wild card'. The result will be both full-evening and shorter pieces.

Will the choreographers get to know the ensemble in advance?

MR: Our experience since the start of the project has been that the idea is so appealing that the choreographers said yes before knowing who the dancers were. So they have a kind of 'blind date' with the ensemble.

CR: It's a process in which the character of what DANCE ON represents and the people representing it has brought some trust. Madeline has a very respected place in the dance community. And over the years I have tried to also develop a report, giving respect and hopefully receiving respect as well within the dance community. In the artistic team, there is a lot of integrity, and in what the artists are walking into is a lot of respect and a high level of care and artistry.

Are the choreographers ready to deal with the topic?

MR: It varies. One choreographer I spoke to said, 'Dancers simply get older. That's normal for me. It's not an issue.'

CR: I think they want to work with these dancers because of their experience. For instance, one

of our choreographers has done a lot of work with up-and-coming, newer dancers and the idea of working with mature dancers is incredibly interesting for her, perhaps because it would take her work in a different direction.

MR: The key moment for me was when I invited Mikhail Baryshnikov and Sylvie Guillem to Heilbronn – he was 54 at the time, she was 46. I was blown away by what the two of them did. They're naturally exceptional artists. Everyone enjoys creating a work for them. And that also links in with DANCE ON: to say that it can't be the case that choreographers only create works for these two superstars.

CR: But I also think the world of dance is opening up. The contemporary idea of dance is changing. Approaches are changing: older dancers can be on stage, and the trick of the piece is not how high the leg goes up or how many turns you do but an attitude towards dance and an ability to inhabit space choreographically. Many more people can be invited to represent dance or be part of the dance world.

DANCE ON has been granted substantial government funding. How many opponents did you have to win over?

MR: Convincing politicians is always a matter of having a strong idea. With DANCE ON, it was the CDU politician Rüdiger Kruse who got involved. He had already campaigned for state funding for the counterpart to DANCE ON, the National Youth Ballet. The fact that someone was openly taken by an idea made it clear to me there was a chance for our project. It was obviously a great achievement to win this support.

Well, we could say that the demographic change is a broadly discussed topic, nothing new – we know of villages where only elderly people live. DANCE ON just presents a different aspect of that subject. Would you be irritated by such comments?

MR: No, not at all. A key aspect of the project, which is very important to me personally, goes beyond dance itself: it is about the value of older people. Dance will stand out in the cultural-political sense, and in the sense of being an entertaining art form, but it is also a personal goal for me to show that, through an artistic project, dance can actually make a socially relevant statement.

Politicians have latched on to the idea. Dance experts too – they will be accompanying the project. How do they see it?

MR: Our focus isn't purely on dance theory, as our interest in the topic of 'dance and age' takes in humanities and natural science, medicine, neurosciences and sociology. Which area has already researched this topic? In conjunction with our project, we want to highlight and explore untapped aspects of research.

In Reinhild Hoffmann's Callas in Bremen, it was clear to see that the audience was made up of people who had seen the piece 25 or 30 years ago and wanted to see it again, which means that these spectators were reliving their own memories of the performance. Is that something that we can also expect from DANCE ON?

MR: I think there are two related aspects here: initially each choreographer and director attracts its own audience, but our project also represents its own theme in addition to that, and we're keen to discover who our audience is.

CR: I think one achievement that can come out of this is that age is no longer an issue. So it is important to reflect on it, discuss it, talk about it – and what better way to represent the topic than through dance itself? The people who mostly feature as ‘legends of dance’ are the choreographers. To some degree rightfully so, but I do believe that this core group of six dancers has the potential to be part of a legacy – part of how you can do it, in collaboration with these very distinctly different and brilliant choreographers. We are going to be a very significant part of that dialogue in contemporary dance.

How difficult or easy was it to find co-operation partners?

MR: We gathered letters of support, to win over politicians, and everyone was immediately on board – the artistic directors of the major ballet companies in Germany as well as international venues such as Sadler’s Wells and many others. The response surprised me. It’s partly because we’re all a bit older and have a large network.

And then there’s DANCE ON LOCAL. What can we expect from that?

CR: Part of being older and experienced also means you have been quite busy sharing your knowledge, which means we’re all expert performers and artists but also experts in communicating our experience. Part of LOCAL is to be able to take this knowledge out into the community and deal with the idea of age together with older lay people. It’s about showing what our art form can do for them in terms of intellectual and physical engagement and maybe happiness, as well as seeing what we can learn from them.

The first time I came across this topic was via NDT III. Did that company have a different focus?

MR: We see Jirí Kylián’s NDT III as a reference project. I invited the ensemble to my first festival. It was the first time my father had seen dance and he was enormously impressed. I think NDT III’s special quality is that it addressed people directly. Many people who saw NDT III remembered the experience for a long time afterwards. And that is our reference point: to give spectators a profound experience and long-term memories.

Do other countries have a different attitude towards ‘dance and age’?

MR: There are countries that show great respect for age. The great, old Butoh stars come from Asia. Respect for age is part of their culture. I think the issue in Germany is similar in many European countries, especially in those that are leaders in contemporary dance and which have produced all the big names in the past 20 or 30 years.

One idea is for the project to become established in the long term. But maybe it won’t turn out as expected. How open-ended is it?

MR: The end is open and that’s a fact. My experience is that each project has its own dynamic, so we can’t answer that question today. I believe, however, that DANCE ON has the potential to continue and that we will continue to find partners. The idea is so broad we couldn’t possibly exhaust it in two years.

CR: I haven’t even thought about that. But I feel that it’s an important and necessary project that emphasises a certain aspect of art that is often neglected. To bring this to light will, I think, arouse a great deal of curiosity and be very successful.

Biographies

Deborah Hay

Deborah Hay, born in Brooklyn in 1941, is regarded by critics and historians as one of the most influential representatives of postmodern dance.

She trained with Merce Cunningham and danced with the Cunningham Dance Company during the 1964 world tour. She was an original member of the Judson Dance Theater, making dances since the early 1960s, collaborating with different many artists and mainly choreographing for untrained performers. Since 2000 she has worked exclusively with experienced performers.

Hay has written 4 books: *Moving Through the Universe in Bare Feet* (1975), *Lamb at the Altar* (1994) about the creative process that led to her dance of the same name, *My Body, the Buddhist* (2000) reflecting on embodied knowledge, and *Using the Sky*, an elaboration of her process. In 2012 she was selected for the inaugural Doris Duke Artist Award. Hay received an Honorary Doctor of Dance from Helsinki Theatre Academy and in 2016 she became a Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres in France.

Christopher Roman

American born artist Christopher Roman began his formal training with The School of Cleveland Ballet continuing at The School of American Ballet in New York City. He was subsequently invited into the ranks of the Pacific Northwest Ballet and as a soloist and principal with Edward Villella's Miami City Ballet, Les Grands Ballets Canadiens in Montreal, The Pennsylvania Ballet, Ballett Frankfurt and The Forsythe Company performing a huge array of important choreographic works, originating over forty roles and touring every major venue worldwide.

Brit Rodemund

Brit Rodemund, born in Berlin in 1971, was trained at the Staatliche Ballettschule Berlin from 1982 to 1990. She was a finalist at the Prix de Lausanne in 1989 and a year later won the Grand Prize in the National Ballet Competition in the GDR. From 1990 to 1995, she danced at the Deutsche Staatsoper Berlin, from 1991 as a soloist. At theatres in Berlin, Essen and Nuremberg, she has danced in choreographies by Rudolf Nurejev, George Balanchine, Patrice Bart, Nacho Duato, Maurice Béjart, Maryse Delente, Ramon Oller, Birgit Scherzer, Mario Schröder, William Forsythe and Daniela Kurz, for example. She has been a freelancer since 2000 and works with various artists.

Ty Boomershine

Ty Boomershine, born in the USA in 1968, studied dance at the Fort Hayes School for the Performing Arts in Columbus, Ohio, completing his studies with a Bachelor of Fine Arts at Stephens College in Columbia, Missouri. In addition to dancing with various companies (e.g. the Lucinda Childs Dance Company, Emio Greco | PC, the Merce Cunningham Repertory Ensemble, the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company), he has also performed in various works by individual choreographers. He was involved – as rehearsal manager and dancer – in the Field Dances in Robert Wilson's opera *Einstein on the Beach*. Since 2007, he has been Artistic Assistant for Lucinda Childs. He has been presenting his own choreographic works since 1993.

Jone San Martin

Jone San Martin, born in Donostia/San Sebastian, Spain, in 1966, studied dance with Mentxu Medel at the Institut del Teatre in Barcelona and at Mudra International in Brussels. She was a dancer at the Ballet Nacional de España, at Ulmer Theater, with Jacopo Godani in Brussels and at the Ballet Royal de Wallonie in Charleroi. She joined Ballett Frankfurt in 1992 and had been

a dancer at The Forsythe Company since 2005. Since 2000, she has choreographed many of her own works.

Amancio Gonzalez

Amancio Gonzalez, born in Portugalete in the Basque Country, Spain in 1967, began studying dance at the age of 20 at the Estudio de Danza Ion Beitia in Las Arenas, continuing at the Centre International de Danse Rosella Hightower in Cannes. From 1999 to 2005, he was a dancer at Ballett Frankfurt under the direction of William Forsythe and later joined The Forsythe Company. Since 1994, he has been creating his own works, which have been performed at festivals including Torino Danza and the Montpellier Dance Festival.

Distribution et crédits

Chorégraphie Deborah Hay

Interprétation et collaboration artistique Ty Boomershine, Amancio Gonzalez, Jone San Martin, Brit Rodemund, Christopher Roman

Assistants de création Jeanine Durning et Ros Warby

Direction artistique de DANCE ON ENSEMBLE Christopher Roman

Lumières Tanja Rühl

Musique Matthe Kuhlmeier

Costumes Judith Adam

Direction technique Benjamin Schälke

Assistante chorégraphie Katharina Rost

Photographies Dorothea Tuch

Coproduction ADC- Association pour la Danse Contemporaine, Genève ; tanzhaus nrw Düsseldorf

Avec le soutien de Nationale Performance Netz (NPN), Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Kultur und Medien conformément à une résolution du Parlement allemand, Programme Europe créative de l'Union européenne dans le cadre de DANCE ON, PASS ON, DREAM ON

Ténacité et promesses, deux visages de la création signés Deborah Hay

Tenacity of Space

du 12 au 14 mai, réunit des danseurs professionnels matures du Dance On Ensemble

Quand un danseur exceptionnel continue à danser après 40 ans, il offre quelque chose de précieux à la danse et au public. C'est là le postulat du Dance On Ensemble. Basé à Berlin, cette compagnie réunit des danseurs passés chez Forsythe, Béjart et autres ballets renommés qui ont développé, avec le temps, une nouvelle virtuosité. L'intelligence physique et l'expérience vécue s'ajoutent aux connaissances techniques et à la conscience profonde de l'impact de son propre corps en mouvement.

Thesauruses

les 4 et 5 juillet, est créée pour les jeunes danseurs de la première classe sortante du Bachelor danse de la Manufacture à Lausanne

Les douze premiers étudiants du Bachelor en danse contemporaine terminent leurs études. Pendant trois ans, ils se sont entraînés aux formes de mouvement les plus variées (kung fu, Cunningham, release, flying low, escalade, volley-ball, danse Hongroise, voguing, hip hop...), ont rencontré une large palette d'artistes (Lia Rodrigues, Eugénie Rebetez, Foofwa d'Imobilité, Gregory Stauffer, Mark Lorimer, Fabrice Mazliah...). Ils ont travaillé dans la forêt, en montagne, chanté et joué au théâtre pour enrichir et raffiner leur danse. Ils présentent ici deux créations de fin d'étude.

Thesauruses

Chorégraphie de Deborah Hay

Suivi de :

Schismo – Dance protocol

for invisible presences

Chorégraphie de **Alejandro Ahmed**

Avec : Krisztina Abrányi, Ana-Marija Adomaitytė, Sarah Bucher, Alexia Casciaro, Audrey Dionis, Cédric Gagneur, Laura Gaillard, Alex Landa Aguirreche, Marc Oosterho, Romane Peytavin, Pierre Piton et Maryfé Singy

Autour de *Tenacity of Space*

Vernissage du livre *Mon corps, ce bouddhiste*, traduction augmentée du livre de Deborah Hay, en présence du traducteur Laurent Pichaud

Le soir de la première, à 19h le 12 mai à la salle des Eaux-Vives

Animé par Alexandre Demidoff

«My body, the buddhist» de Deborah Hay, une traduction augmentée de Laurent Pichaud et Lucie Perineau. Editions des Presses du réel, Collection Nouvelles scènes / Manufacture, 176 pages.

Cette recherche met à jour la spécificité littéraire de la pratique de la chorégraphe américaine Deborah Hay.

Issue de l'avant-garde chorégraphique des années 60 et encore très active aujourd'hui, elle est l'auteure de quatre livres (le dernier est paru à l'automne 2015), d'une vingtaine d'articles et d'une quinzaine de partitions textuelles qui témoignent tous, à leur manière, du rôle majeur de l'écriture comme moteur et outil de son processus chorégraphique.

Pensés originellement comme un outil de documentation de sa danse à la fin des années 60, ses écrits sont devenus progressivement un outil d'expérimentation prêt à accompagner le processus chorégraphique. L'aspect le plus récent de cet engagement dans l'écriture lui fait aussi concevoir certains de ses écrits comme des outils directs de transmission de sa danse.

[Lien sur le site de la Manufacture](#)

Atelier d'échanges et de mouvements

sur les questions de notations en danse chez Deborah Hay, animé par Laurent Pichaud.

Mardi 6 juin de 17h30 à 20h30 au studio de l'ADC de la Maison des Arts du Grütli.

Inscription indispensable sur www.adc-geneve.ch

À venir à l'adc

Mette Ingvarlsen, *69 Positions*

31 mai au 2 juin - Salle des Eaux-Vives

La Manufacture - Bachelor danse

travail de sortie de formation

***Thesauruses* de Deborah Hay** suivi de

***Schismo : dance protocol for invisible presences* d'Alejandro Ahmed**

4 et 5 juillet - Salle des Eaux-Vives

Infos pratiques

Lieu de la représentation

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82-84 rue des Eaux-Vives
CH - 1207 Genève

Accès

Bus n° 2 et n° 6 / arrêt Vollandes

Réservation

www.adc-geneve.ch ou par téléphone 022 320 06 06

Les billets sont à retirer le soir de la représentation, au plus tard 15 minutes avant le début du spectacle (ouverture de la caisse une heure avant la représentation)

au Service culturel Migros 7, rue du Prince à Genève 022 319 61 11

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Information

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Plein tarif : 25.-

Passedanse : 20.-

AVS, chômeurs, passedanse réduit : 15.-

Etudiants, apprentis, - de 20 ans : 15.-

Carte 20 ans 20 francs : 8.-

(les places ne sont pas numérotées)

Tarif réduit sur présentation d'un justificatif: carte Le Courrier