

## The Total Dance Dream

◆ bauhaus, corps, humain, realitevirtuelle

par Centre Phi  
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**Ballet is usually not among the first things that come to mind when we think of the Bauhaus. Yet, it was probably through dance that the most influential modernist art school of the 20th century came closest to its ideal of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, the total work of art. *Das Totale Tanz Theater* and *Vast Body*, two works presented in the *>HUM(AI)N* exhibition at the Phi Centre, invite us to step into the utopian universe of the Bauhaus and revisit the ideals of Oskar Schlemmer, its “Master Magician,” and to embody the dance theories of abstract art pioneer Wassily Kandinsky.**

Created by German painter, sculptor, designer and choreographer Oskar Schlemmer, *The Triadic Ballet* (1922) revolutionized dance and performance art through its use of sound, light, colour, form, and movement. A true celebration of the emerging industrial era, the ballet relies on multiples of three: three acts, three colours, three shapes and three dancers. Schlemmer saw the human body as a mathematical system, which he translated into abstract and stylized geometric forms in three-dimensional space.



as he named it, would be fully adaptable to any kind of performance, like most of the multipurpose spaces today, and host an impressive 4000 seats. "Such a theatre would stimulate the conception and fantasy of playwright and stage director alike," wrote the architect. "For if it is true that the mind can transform the body, it is equally true that structure can transform the mind."

Although such project was never realized due to the German financial crisis of 1927, Gropius would probably have been delighted to see his ideas come to life in *Das Totale Tanz Theater*, an interactive virtual reality installation celebrating 100 years of Bauhaus. Fusing music, dance, sculpture, architecture, and virtual costumes, the work highlights important concepts from the modernist school, such as interdisciplinarity, collaboration and transparency. In the spirit of the Bauhaus, scenography was the first element created for the experience. It is revealed in two levels: a see-through 360° projection on a circular mesh stage allows for observers and participants alike to be part of the spectacle. Then, with our headsets on, we experience a 620-metre high architecture inspired by Tatlin's Tower, the Monument to the Third International (1919-1920) – another monumental structure that never saw the light of day. An interactive dancing journey follows as we move upwards in the dance theatre.

“ ***Dance movements should start with one's own life, with standing and walking, leaving leaping and dancing for much later.*** ”



Dancer and choreographer Richard Siegal was invited to develop four choreographies following Schlemmer's principle that the costumes should restrict and dictate the performers' motions. The movements were captured using body scanning and motion capture techniques, creating an archive of 800 different movements which became the

Standing next to it in the gallery, *Vast Body* is a collaborative experiment on movement, where Montrealer Vincent Morisset set himself to the seemingly impossible task of mapping all movements of our upper bodies. He drew inspiration from Kandinsky's *Dance Curves* (1926), an essay accompanied by four abstract drawings referring to photographs of German performer Gret Palucca. As opposed to Schlemmer, Kandinsky's approach to dance was purely abstract: he reduced movement to the formal tensions created by points, lines and planes, thus removing the bodily presence from the stage.



In a similar manner, Morisset went on to dissect movement to its purest form, inviting choreographers Caroline Robert, Kathy Kasey, Louise Lecavalier and France Bruyère to create the widest spectrum of possible positions in front of a camera. Their choreography was decoded by an artificial neural network that tries to replicate the visitor's movement on the fly. In the installation, dancers Louise Lecavalier, Rachel Harris and Caroline Robert replicate our sharp, slow, graceful or awkward movements in an inner and outer dance, for to see ourselves through another's body might be one of our ultimate performances.

Morisset is currently working on another iteration of *Vast Body*, which will include a multitude of different body shapes. In *Das Totale Tanz Theater* and *Vast Body* we wear costumes: the former is a virtual one, and the latter is created by social conventions, and shape our daily movements. In that sense, by simply moving we can become part of a much larger dance. For, as Schlemmer puts it: "dance movements should start with one's own life, with standing and walking, leaving leaping and dancing for much later."

By *Tanha Gomes*

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#### À propos du Centre Phi

*Le Centre Phi, c'est des salles qui se transforment au gré des activités: lancement, conférence, colloque, projection, exposition, concert, spectacle, installation interactive. C'est des studios de création et de production, avec la technologie la plus sophistiquée, mise au service des besoins*