

## CHAPTER V

### THOSE WHO PARTICIPATED IN *LUNA*: THEIR IDENTITIES, BACKGROUNDS AND ROLES

The analysis of “who” [...] has special significance because it concerns roles and memberships: who makes the dance, who does the dance, who helps the dance become reality, who views the dance [...]. The configurations are as varied as the societies in which they occur [...]. (Kealiinohomoku, 1976, p. 238)

As Kealiinohomoku points out, the matter of who participated in the dance event is more than a question of biographical events and sociological facts. As portrayed in the capsule portraits in this chapter, *Luna*'s participants also revealed how they articulated, understood and carried out their distinct roles and relationships within the parameters of the dance event.

These participant (and institutional) biographies portray some of the social and art world characteristics of the groups to which they belonged – whether as spectator, artist, student, technician, administrator, personnel or dance specialist. Embedded within these narratives of people's lives in the dance world are also initial insights, discussed in more depth in the third section of the thesis, about how dance event participation had come to bring meaning to their lives. They also reveal how they came to formulate their particular views about art in general and contemporary dance in particular. And of course, these biographies also contain fragments of events and ideas about Québec's dance history, as recounted by its protagonists.

This chapter then is a collection of capsule “dance biographies,” drawn from the data, of more than 50 *Luna* participants. This represents a small sampling if it is taken into account that *Luna* was a relatively large-scale event involving ultimately scores of event-makers and thousands of audience members. But a wide array of participants are portrayed, dancers and non-dancers, those with a life-long commitment and those with a short-term or momentary involvement. They are organized into five sections (and further subdivided into sections on individuals), each one isolating a participant group with distinct roles in the event: (a) the dance company itself as an entity, (b) the dance company’s artistic members, (c) the dance company’s and presenting venues’ directors, personnel, technicians, and *O Vertigo*’s dance students, (d) expressive specialists who were either dance presenters, funding agents or writers, and (e) members of the audience.

These profiles were drawn from the available data. In search of individual and collective identities of *Luna* participants, I charted (Tables A1 and A2, B, C, D1 and D2) and discussed briefly a certain number of their social characteristics. In the case of the dancers, dance students and audience members, I made collective interpretations of these variables in search of parameters and patterns. As well as biographical material, I have also incorporated into this chapter, discussions of pertinent themes that arose as free nodes during the coding process and clarify their collective identities and roles. Differences in the organization and content of each section were the result of the nature of the data type referenced.

Since this chapter is largely based on data from individual interviews with participants, all citations within the biographical profiles (but not the other sections) can be presumed excerpts from these interviews, unless otherwise indicated. They will not be written in throughout the text in order to keep the text from becoming overburdened with parenthetical references.

## 5.1 The *O Vertigo* dance company

At the epicenter of the dance event, the *O Vertigo* dance company was the organizational entity that produced the choreographic work and employer to the artistic members and personnel who created, performed and managed the dance performances. An apt illustration of sociologist Becker's network of people whose cooperative activity is required to produce an artwork (Becker, 1982, p. xi), the *O Vertigo* dance company as a legal entity is a cultural organization founded in 1984. It is a not-for-profit corporation whose central mission is to produce new choreographic works by its founder Ginette Laurin (Appendix F). Two opposing analogies to describe the company arose regularly during fieldwork and interviews, and are examined below: (a) that of *O Vertigo* as a "huge machine" and (b) of the company as a family-like group.

### 5.1.1 A large-scale non-profit corporation: "the huge machine"

Newest and youngest company members Patrick Lamothe and Mélanie Demers as fieldwork began, perhaps because previously accustomed to working with more informally structured dance groups and companies before joining *O Vertigo*, expressed their perception of *O Vertigo* as an overwhelmingly large and business-like entity. As Lamothe exclaimed, "It's a bit straight, *une grosse machine* (a huge machine), so different from what I am used to as an independent [artist]!" (FN: 8-1-00). Other kinds of dance event participants in this study spoke of the company variously as large-scale, artistically important and noteworthy, of high quality and skill, popular, well managed and successful. Lamothe added that he did find it luxurious to be able to work every day for months on end at the creative process, and that *O Vertigo's* success at booking tours would allow him to

realize a long-cherished dream of traveling the world (I-PL). German dance programmer Walter Heun, longtime supporter and commissioner of Laurin's choreography, articulated his estimation of *O Vertigo* in this way: "It is important to support also artists who [like Laurin] have been pioneering the art form and have now developed a mature form of presentation that addresses [itself] to larger audiences. [...] [*O Vertigo*] is artistically interesting, it is still 'real' dance, and it offers a lot of visual impressions and it presents a movement repertory of a high virtuosity" (I-WH).

At the time of the *Luna* event *O Vertigo* had indeed become one of Québec's largest, best-funded and most prolific dance touring companies. Provincial funding agents counted them among the top ten most important companies in size, budget and touring. A three-year plan was in action and the operating budget, as executive director Lagacé carefully conceded, was ample enough to give them "the necessary resources to achieve what Ginette artistically wants to do [...]" (I-BL). They rented their own building full-time and employed 10 dancers for 42 weeks a year with an option for them to work more weeks if they desired. Already in 1994, the company had enough income from grants to pay operating expenses, and the size of the investment by co-producers (European and U.S. presenters) in the creative costs of new work was large enough to nearly cover the entire expenses of making *Luna*. (Although when the Texan composer was fired, the University of Texas cancelled their financial contribution, costs had to be cut and less technology was consequently used in *Luna*.) These "choreographic commissions" from non-Québécois presenters, along with the "very good fees they were making" (e.g. earning) according to Laurin, allowed the company to claim an unusually high 40% of their revenue as self-earned (i.e. not directly from public funding sources) (I-HB1). As a large, well-established institution, *O Vertigo* was also able to pay for part of the dancers' training and health insurance costs, and to offer salaries to the dancers of 450\$ to 700\$ weekly (before taxes were deducted). These salaries were among the highest in

Montréal for contemporary dancers and well above the required norm set by the *Union des Artistes*.

Over the years they had gradually developed an administrative structure with full-time personnel: executive, artistic, technical, production and communications directors along with a communications assistant and a receptionist. Part-time workers included extra touring staff (costume mistress and technical assistant), and two touring agents. Contractual artistic collaborators for the *Luna* project were costume, sound, and visual designers (who also executed their designs), photographer, filmmaker and camera crew, and graphic artists. In Becker's wide view of who actually contributes to the making of the art work (1982), one might also include in this larger circle those who manufactured the dance floor, designed computer software for the visual effects, and so on.

The mandate of this company of artists and administrative personnel was to produce new choreographic works, but they also engage also a cluster of auxiliary activities, including reconstructing older works, that are described in the next chapter. For example, as I entered the field the company was undertaking many projects at once: planning for an annual summer dance workshop and school shows, rehearsing a duet touring program prepared for Montréal's network of *Maisons de la Culture*, undertaking the revival of a previous work to be danced by a Brazilian dance company, negotiating commissions to create choreography for two other artistic events, "touch-up" rehearsals for older repertory in preparation for upcoming summer tours to the U.S., participation in a television program, and other projects as well. Concerning the psychological and artistic benefits of the recent reconstruction work with older choreographies, dancer Rodrigue explained to me one day in the field:

[...] since the last two years, the company has been reviving and touring and creating [choreography] at the same time. More

layers and kinds of activities than ever before. [Ginette] has enjoyed this phase, and says with some pride that we are one of the few companies in Montréal that doesn't always "throw away" their older work. (FN: 6-6-00)

During the meetings I observed everyone being given the chance to voice their ideas. But as dancer Demers intimated to me one day "there is a hierarchy which becomes apparent after some time, the result of people's tenures and other factors" (I-MD). In our interview, technical director Proulx compared the structure of *O Vertigo* (and other companies with a single artistic director) to that of the repertory theatre groups with which he had previously worked, in which multiple directors make decisions and so power was de-centralized among several people. He revealed his own difficulties in working with the *O Vertigo* structure:

With *O Vertigo*, there is one artistic director who makes all of the creations. And so you work for someone, for an individual. As for me, I find that I am at the mercy of every shift in one person's moods [...] no matter what kind of title is given to anyone as director of this or that, there is nothing that passes above this person.<sup>1</sup> (I-JP)

As well, a hierarchy in salary was developed by and for the dancers, ironically through a democratic exercise. Dancer Barry told me the story of how several years ago administrators gave to the dancers the responsibility for working out a salary policy for themselves to replace the previous practice of idiosyncratic individual negotiations. As a group, the dancers decided to recognize seniority in what became a three-tier pay scale. (I-RB/AB)

In terms of the choreographic creation on a day-to-day basis, who is in control and making decisions? Observation of creative processes revealed

patterns of give-and-take among dancers and choreographer, although Laurin always remained the final authority, as illustrated by this dialogue between the choreographer and long-time dancer Gould, who was also Laurin's ex-life companion:

Ken remarks that Kha and Patrick aren't using the same grip for their lift as he does. Ginette responds, "They have the right to use a different grip than you do." Ken: "Do I have the right to suggest something else to them?" Ginette: "Yes. But Patrick has the right to not listen to you!"<sup>ii</sup> (FN: 10-5-00)

This verbal exchange between choreographer Laurin and dancer Gould suggests one of the ways in which a continual, if subtle, negotiation took place in which Laurin's vision was mediated through her dancers' bodies and personalities.

### 5.1.2 A "very strange" artistic family

For dancer Riede, the experience of working with the company wasn't like being part of an institution but rather "very much like a very strange family! (laughter) [...] I feel like I have a very personal relationship to every single person. They're not my best friends [but] I find there's a very friendly exchange, always, and the constant desire to live in a good way [in] the time that we have with each other" (I-AR). Even Lamothe spoke of his delight in being around fellow dancers who coached him, and that when they go onstage and on tour they "are a family" (I-PL). Riede agreed, remarking that, "when we're on tour we get into being with each other much more. And then we start exchanging stories from our lives" (I-AR).

The family metaphor for *O Vertigo* was reinforced to my mind by the fact that there were four co-habiting couples of life partners among company members, and that I overheard the dancers on several occasions planning outside social activities together during the *Luna* project. I noted frequent laughter as dancers worked, and little acts of support and affection among them too numerous to count, for instance: “A lift between Mélanie and Simon is extended into an improvised rocking. At little interludes Chi takes a moment’s pause to give Simon a long hug and massage, Anna massages David’s shoulders.” (FN: 8-9-00)

In the kitchen there was a wall covered with group photos taken on tour, and other personal mementos contributed by dancers (photo 16). Not only was there a list of members’ birthdays hanging on a kitchen bulletin board, but there were even informal company birthday celebrations in the kitchen with cake and candles.

If *O Vertigo* was like a family, then Laurin’s role might be seen as its sensitive, benevolent matriarch. Throughout my fieldwork sessions, she consistently behaved in a humane and caring manner towards her dancers’ physical and psychological well-being. She engaged them personally in making contributions to the creative process in many ways that I will describe in the following chapter. Rehearsal director Brisson affirmed this view that Laurin distinguishes herself among her choreographer peers by the quality of her listening and communication with the company dancers. And dancer Barry (Brisson’s life partner) spoke of Laurin as someone who “has tremendous courage in terms of being a creator. She is often – as Raymond pointed out – confronted with doubt or insecurity but it never prevents her from being able to communicate. If you have something to say to her or to discuss, she is open to the point that sometimes she will be hurt.” Brisson concluded that the results of this “good chemistry” among the dancers and choreographer could be seen in the work itself and in the longevity of the



dancers' tenure with the company, many staying for 5 to 10 years. (I-RB/AB)

## 5.2 *O Vertigo's* artistic members

What kinds of people were the arts professionals who created *Luna*? In what environments were they brought up, under what circumstances did they begin dancing, and how did they articulate their role in the dance-making and the world of dance? The artists engaged in the *Luna* project were a choreographer (the dance maker), 10 dancers (the dance "interpreters"), an apprentice, a rehearsal director, and three main artistic collaborators (for the soundscape, lighting design, technological imaging, stage setting and costumes).

As a way to begin delineating the notion of "artist" particular to contemporary dance events like *Luna*, the interviews with dancers and artistic collaborators revealed three artistic values which formed a nearly complete consensus among them. These were the desire and necessity for passion about ones' artistic work, "being true to oneself" when making art, and the core value of their artistic lives: a propensity for creativity.

There are also clearly set out social norms in Canada and Québec for distinguishing professional artists from non-professionals established by public funding agencies. For the practical purposes of deciding who may have access to public funding, the 2003 Canada Council for the Arts eligibility criteria at the time of this writing read:

Professional artist: someone who has specialized training in his or her artistic field (not necessarily in academic institutions), who is recognized as such by his or her peers (artists working in the same tradition), who is committed to devoting more time to the artistic activity, if financially feasible, and who has a history of public presentation. » (Canada Council for the Arts, 2003).

All of the artists in *Luna* who are profiled below, with the exception of the pre-professional apprentice, fulfill these government-ordained criteria.

Certain characteristics of Canadian artists, extracted from data in the 2001 Canadian census, had just been made public by specialist consultants as this study was being prepared. Statistics Canada defined arts practices as a kind of social work they described as “the production or transmission of creative products and services.” According to Hill Strategies researchers (2004), their data confirmed that Canadian artists in the non-profit sector as a group, and in comparison to the population in general, demonstrate the following traits: (a) a high level of education (40% have a university diploma), (b) in majority self-employed and female, (c) earn a very low income, an average of 23,500\$ as compared for instance with about 25,000\$ for the average Montréaler (Ville de Montréal, 2005), (d) as a group have more than tripled in size in the last 30 years. These general characteristics begin to form a group portrait for the individual artists portrayed below.

The stories of the *Luna* artists to follow include details about their backgrounds and family histories, education and values, and the historical era and socio-cultural environment in which they lived and worked. Certain characteristics of the dance creators are summarized in Table B: role in the dance company sex, year born, number of years in dance, year they joined *O Vertigo*, home city, parent’s economic status, and education.

### 5.2.1 Choreographer

Choreographer Ginette Laurin was born in 1955 and raised in revolutionary times. When she was still a toddler, the province of Québec was experiencing the first wave of *The Refus Global* movement, discussed in the introductory chapter. Just as Laurin came into young womanhood, she

visited a New York City dance milieu in the throes of postmodern experimentation. In an interview with Henri Barras, as research for his book portraying her life and work (Barras, 1995), Laurin spoke of this historic period as “effervescent” in which the timing of events was fortuitous. As she told it, there were many Montréal artists coming of age at the same time and motivating each other, going to performances in New York and exchanging ideas with artists in different disciplines (I-HB1).

During the two interviews with Barras (I-HB1 and HB2)) Laurin described growing up in a “poor and simple” Québécois family, with strict parents. They lived in the Le Gardeur district, an eastern suburb of Montréal. As the eldest of five children, the task that fell to her was to take maternal responsibilities for her younger siblings. Her grandfather was a farmer, her father a builder who constructed their many homes with his own hands. She received a strong Catholic upbringing from her parents, patterned after the very restrictive moral code of the Duplessis period in Québec. On the other hand, the Catholic nuns who schooled her were highly motivating and she learned to love school. It was during her early education that her father introduced her to classical music concerts and she took piano lessons with the nuns. She also began her studies of gymnastics that lead to “circus-like” performances and eventually to participate in local competitions. Her fateful choice to study gymnastics at eight years old was a matter of the sheer pleasure and joy she procured from the movements of her body. This irrepressible physicality led her to participate in a summer workshop with the *Grands Ballets Canadiens* in 1972, and soon after to become an apprentice and then member of one of Québec’s two Modern Dance companies at the time, *Groupe Nouvelle Aire*. It was when this dance company’s director Martine Époque took a two-year hiatus to study abroad that Laurin was first given the chance to try her hand at choreography. She was to be the only member of her family who would choose the vocation of professional artist.

Also during the Barras interviews (I-HB1 & 2), Laurin distinguished certain seminal values about children and spirituality from that period and that were carried forward into her professional life and choreographic outlook. Her love and desire for children continued throughout two marriages and were manifest in her bond with the three children she bore. During my fieldwork in 2001, they were aged 24, 20, and 12 (the two eldest from the first and the youngest from her second marriage). She explained that her children were essential in keeping her life balanced, and have obliged her to have a “simple and orderly life, keeping her feet on the ground.” She also claims they are a great source of inspiration for her choreography and have “helped her to reflect on society and on what she would like to say.” For instance, one day during fieldwork her youngest son was present in the dance studio and I was able to witness some of the dynamics of this maternal relationship even as Laurin was rehearsing:

Ginette’s youngest son is playing with balls and mats, “amusing himself” as he says (to me). He is disruptive once in awhile, but Ginette tolerates his interruptions and distractions to some degree before sending him into the other room. He comes over to sit on her lap several times, even though he is almost as big as she is. And once, while the dancers are practicing by themselves Samuel begins a you-lift-me-I-lift-you game with Ginette, which she seems to know and enjoy. One of the dancers remarks, “He is so well loved!” (FN: 9-15-00)

As for her strong religious upbringing, Laurin told Barras that she finds its impact in her work in a non-literal fashion. She is no longer a practicing Catholic. It is a certain personal notion she has retained of “the conscience, the soul” that is important to her. By way of example, angels often figure in

her choreographies, as in sections of *Luna*, as if to represent a “second conscience” (I-HB1).

And so Ginette Laurin became a full-time choreographer with her own dance company *O Vertigo*, constituted in 1984. In the summer of 2001, the choreographic archives at Tangente confirmed that Laurin was one among 60 choreographers at work in the province of Québec. For this kind of creator-run contemporary dance company -- Laurin is not only the artistic director but also the sole choreographer -- it is the choreographer’s envisioning of a new work around which the company structure and activities are conceived. As the most recent website text for *O Vertigo* proclaims, “O Vertigo is first and foremost Ginette Laurin” ([www.overtigo.com](http://www.overtigo.com), 2004). How precisely has Laurin defined her role as company choreographer? She was frequently at work in her office and attending staff meetings. Her multiple roles in the company also found her introducing her work to neophyte audiences at the *Journées de la Culture* open house, hosting a presenter’s showcase in her studio during the CINARS performing arts marketplace event<sup>1</sup>, directing auditions for a new male dancer, sitting at the lighting console during public performances while making mental notes about the performance, and of course, creating and rehearsing her work with the dancers and artistic collaborators. As Laurin explained to Barras (I-HB2), since the demands of these responsibilities (and her family life) had led her in 1992 to stop dancing and performing, she has tried to find time to incorporate training into her schedule to keep in touch with the physicality of dancing. She confessed to Barras in 1995 that after 3 years of absence from dancing she felt anguished about being cut off from the work of the dancers. At the time of working on *Luna* she was practicing yoga.

Into what kind of a choreographer had Laurin fashioned herself? The Barras’ interviews (I-HB1) revealed the powerful influence of the more

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<sup>1</sup> CINARS was originally the acronym for *Conférence internationale des arts de la scène*, currently called the International Exchange for the Performing Arts.

creative and improvisational orientations of the dance milieu in the '70s, her contact with interdisciplinary “happenings”, and the choreographies of American postmodernists Trisha Brown and Meredith Monk. But she was especially taken by the performances “that were a little bit crazy” of visual artist Andy Warhol. Closer to home, she spoke of also being struck by the intuitive experimentations of the Québec Automatists, with whom she worked as a dancer:

I worked with Françoise Sullivan who is a choreographer and painter and I worked a little bit with Marcel Barbeau who is a painter, and they would use this method of working with the idea of automatism. So they would ask the dancer to improvise and they paint at the same time without thinking, moving really fast. And I think I took a little bit of that way to create [and just put] myself into a very specific state of mind and...and...just moving and trying to find the proper way to move that would go with the world that I want to explore, without thinking. Just trying to be very spontaneous. (I-GL/PS)

She contrasted her own creative style with that of Martine Époque, whom she spoke of as a “very mathematical” choreographer, one who would prepare everything at home before arriving at the studio with the finished choreography. Laurin had discovered an affinity for a collaborative process with her dancers that was “less cerebral” as she puts it. On her website she explains her views about artistic collaboration: “The company provides an ideal context for each artist’s development, a place where ideas are solicited, welcomed, discussed, and put into practice.” She continues by presenting her dance-making ethos and attitudes towards dancers: “With the performers’ willing complicity, Ginette Laurin plumbs their creative resources, their memories and their emotional responses. Deeply involved in the creative

process, the dancers leave the imprint of their strong personalities” ([www.overtigo.com](http://www.overtigo.com)), 2004). Throughout my fieldwork I noted her way of working with the dancers as playful, humane and exuberant. In her role as artistic director, Laurin was in charge of writing a project proposal for fundraising, directing the creative process for the new work, providing insights and corrections to the work, and making all final decisions about the choreography. And along with her rehearsal director Raymond Brisson (profiled in the next section), she also remained responsible for the evolution and performance quality of the work throughout its touring life: “It’s my role along with Raymond to do whatever we must so that the dancers are always available to give something and also to receive something [from audiences]”<sup>iii</sup> (FN: 5-2-00). *Luna* costume designer Denis Lavoie, himself a former dancer and choreographer, described his view of the choreographer’s role as all-encompassing and a matter of faith: “The choreographer is the master, the one-person orchestra. It’s them, their vision. It’s they who must be believed”<sup>iv</sup> (I-DL).

### 5.2.2 Rehearsal director

Raymond Brisson was born and raised in Montréal, a bit east of downtown in a French area called the East End. During our interview (March 4, 2002) he recounted how it was that his family was initially poor, his bohemian father a champion amateur boxer who won Golden Globes at the *Palestre National* (later to become the *Agora de la danse* dance center). But soon after his parents married, when his father was already 36 years of age, the boxer became a bus driver at the request of his new bride. And so his family entered the relative economic stability of the middle class.

The bus driver’s son Raymond dreamed of becoming a visual arts teacher. But one day during a group fasting séance with friends he fell in

love with a girl who did ballet dancing. Loving the way she moved and “her shapes,” he became attracted to dance classes at age 19. The dance world appealed to his desire for an artistic *métier* and to travel the world:

[...] I finished mourning my desire to be a visual arts teacher and I found in the dance a language, a form of communication and a musicality that I realized I loved very, very much. Also, I was interested in traveling more and more. And dance, this universal language, would be able to offer me the chance to work anywhere in the world, to travel while meeting people.<sup>v</sup> (I-AB/RB)

It is interesting to note Brisson’s belief in the universal nature of dance in light of the insistence of dance anthropologists that it is not.

He began to dance seriously with neo-classic ballet company *Entre-Six*, and to tour. This led him to live in the dance mecca of New York City, where he met people from everywhere in the world – a period which “opened huge horizons” for him, stimulated his curiosity, this desire to dance and to communicate. He enjoyed his career as a dancer until one day a debilitating knee injury caused him to shift his work in the dance world to the supporting role he played in the creation of *Luna*: that of rehearsal director. He describes the responsibility of his multi-faceted work as:

[...] a role in evolution. It’s a difficult role to define. Some call it *répétiteur*, rehearsal director, assistant choreographer, assistant, artistic director...Its a little bit of all those things. I often summarize it as an ‘accompanying’ role. I accompany the dancer, the artistic director [...] I accompany the choreographer in



following what they are seeking, I help the dancer also with his own integrity as an “interpreter<sup>2</sup>, and as an individual.”<sup>vi</sup>  
(I-AB/RB)

In concrete terms, Brisson sat routinely by Laurin’s side, taking notes and exchanging quiet conversation with her as rehearsals progressed. He gave supplementary notes to the dancers after Laurin had shared her own, at the end of discrete work sessions. “Ginette begins (giving notes) and asks if Raymond has things to add. He often does.” (FN: 12-6-00) At times he interjected comments about certain specific physical coordinations, technical details, timings, spatial organization, movement qualities and the visual focus of dancers. He directed entire rehearsals and performance set-ups when Laurin wasn’t there. I noted that to all appearances, he spoke with assurance and had gained the implicit trust and respect of the dancers and choreographer.

But there were additional tasks undertaken by Brisson that expanded his role and made him even more indispensable. Company timekeeper, it was he who took care to keep everyone on schedule and even negotiating and creating the scheduling grids (Appendix K, and discussed in the previous chapter). He also intervened frequently on the dancers’ behalf in advocating for their needs – especially while on tour. And it was also Brisson who videotaped the new dance material, chose music to accompany rehearsals (until the composed sound score was ready), and took charge of the rehearsal studio lighting (alternating between daylight, stage lights, and the overhead work lights). His role as rehearsal director was varied and multi-faceted.

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<sup>2</sup> This is a Montréal term for dancer, borrowed from the French equivalent *interprète*.

### 5.2.3 Dancers

At the time of the *Luna* project there were 10 dancers in the *O Vertigo* company. Six were interviewed individually and all appeared in fieldnotes. I also interviewed an apprentice dancer, and a replacement dancer who was with them on a temporary contract. This section begins with a synthesis of the dancers' characteristics and backgrounds. Several thematic discussions follow, about ideas that emerged as prominent topics from the data: the *métier* of dancing, the role of dancers and dancers' bodies. And finally, a short biographical profile is offered for each of the dancers with the key facts and events in their development towards and within the dance profession. A videotaped interview with each *Luna* dancer was included on the *Luna* CD-ROM (Appendix S).

#### 5.2.3.1 Socio-economic characteristics

Certain social characteristics of the dancers were compiled and charted (Table 5.2) from information they provided during interviews and in their biographies in programs: gender, age, number of years in professional dance and with *O Vertigo*, home city and national identity, perceived social class of their parents, nationality, educational background and dance background. Four of these identifying characteristics are discussed briefly below in order to begin a profile of this group of dancers as a whole.

(a) Age. *Luna* dancers ranged from 25 to 39 years of age. Some were recent company members near the beginning of their professional dancing careers, while others were approaching the usual retirement age for dancers (in their late 30's). (The only *Luna* artists over 40 years of age were the choreographer and rehearsal director.)

(b) Education. In terms of education, four of the *Luna* dancers had a university education (dance, arts or other), and the remaining 6 finished their

pre-professional training through dance academy programs of various kinds. This was a relatively high level of education as compared to the Montréal population in which only 13% had professional training and 25% a university education (Ville de Montréal, 2005).

(c) Nationality. The national identities of those dancers interviewed were expressed by them as Québécois(e), African-American, East German, Québécoise-Haitian and Vietnamese. Among the three not interviewed were an Australian (of Asian heritage), another American and an English Canadian. The dancers came as frequently from small towns as from large urban centers. All of the small-townners had moved to large cities in order to finish their pre-professional training.

(d) Social class. Perhaps the most intriguing social statistic to emerge from the interviews is the following: all but one dancer came either from poverty-stricken or from lower and middle class families (like their audiences for the large part as seen in the previous section). Two questions are implied, but not in the scope of this study. The first: why did so few of the *Luna* dancers, whether Québécois, English-Canadian and foreign-born, emerge from the well-to-do classes? Is it possible to presume that wealthy parents don't foster the métier of artist in their offspring? It is interesting to note that although these dancers were earning relatively low incomes (in terms of the population in general) but had acquired the education and artistic tastes of their wealthiest patrons. This makes it difficult to situate them squarely in the usual class continuum that is based strictly on income. And so a second question arises of whether dancers can be seen to constitute a particular class in and of themselves, in the earlier historical sense of class as a circle of acquaintance and associations. The dancers themselves will speak about their own ideas about their social class in the biographies that follow. In reality, the dancers live and work in a fluid movement across social classes.

### 5.2.3.2 The *métier* of dancing.

What are the parameters that distinguish a dance professional from a non-professional in the Montréal dance world? The official criteria of funding bodies mentioned above – peer recognition, special training, and professional performance experience – are only part of the story.

Referring to dance events in a general sense Ronström (1989) asked the question “what competence is required to dance?” (p. 25). As if in answer, after four years of dancing and touring with *O Vertigo*, Demers annotated her interview transcription with a newfound realization: “I still love dance with the same fire and passion [as before] but I can now conceive of it as a meticulous *métier*, like that of a clockmaker or jeweler”<sup>vii</sup> (I-MD). This perception is likely a testament to the detailed, complex aesthetic and working process of choreographer Laurin.

In a similar sense as did Kealiinohomoku (1976) when she distinguished part-time “dancers” from vocational “Dancers”<sup>3</sup>, choreographer Laurin spoke of two kinds of dancers: those who dance occasionally for their own pleasure (without professional ambitions) and those who choose the career in dance as their life’s work. Her own attitude towards dancing in her youth reflects a similar distinction:

You must be picked out early in the dance world, especially women, but you can always do it for pleasure. As for me, to not have been picked out wouldn’t have been too disappointing because I danced a lot for pleasure’s sake and continued to study at night. I had no career plan, that’s certain. You mustn’t aspire

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<sup>3</sup> In her dissertation, Kealiinohomoku (1976) proposed a cross-cultural distinction between the concept of “dancer” as someone who “is a dancer during a limited time and only while he is dancing” from that of the “Dancer” whose “title is not limited in time” and where “appropriate sanction and an ethno-domain specific to this point must be operative”(p. 23).

too early, in this kind of *métier*, to make a career in dance. The idea of passion must come first.<sup>viii</sup> (I-GL1)

Laurin is actually proposing that it might be important for career dancers to be certain that their emotional attachment to dancing is strongly established before aiming to make dancing a career. Besides the evident love for creativity, Laurin and several of the *O Vertigo* dancers also bore witness in the interviews to the emotional fulfillment they have received from audiences.

Montreal dancer-researcher Pamela Newell (2003) pointed to an increasing awareness in Montréal of the dancers' contribution to the dance when discussing the local French word for dancer: "In the 1980's, adopting the term *interprète* was an important political gesture for dancers in Québec. This change in terminology brought the public's attention to the process of interpretation behind a choreographed work" (p. 19). One sign of this recognition was demonstrated at the end of a performance of *Luna* when Laurin always left the first bow to the dancers alone. Also, dancers' biographies were always included in all programs and publicity materials, and previews and reviews of *Luna* almost always included mention of their names and qualities.

### 5.2.3.3 Dancer's perspectives on their role and work

How did the dancers describe their role in the creation and performance of *Luna* and the work of dancing for Laurin? Several dancers provided diverse verbs and metaphors to describe the work of being an *O Vertigo* dancer (in *Luna*): (a) using the body to translate reality into poetry, (b) the dancer as a tool for the choreographer, (c) cultivating one's inner garden, (d) finding out what goes on between the movements, (d) staying alive in the movement.

In the summer of 1998 as I was doing exploratory interviews, Demers was still a new member of *O Vertigo* and explained her understanding of the work of a dancer: “ This work... I think it’s the work of ‘representation’. It’s about trying to translate reality into a poetic mode. And it’s [done] through the body. “<sup>ix</sup> (I-MD) For Demers, the dancer’s body was a conduit to transform the stuff of real life into poetry.

In another vein, Rose proposed the work-a-day concept, quite common in the contemporary dance milieu, of the dancer as a “tool” for the choreographer’s use: “As a dancer, I was allowing myself just to be a tool, you know, and so ‘O.K., what do you want me to do?’ and I’d try to do it. [...] It’s about trying to express yourself through this movement that’s given to you.” He developed this idea further as we spoke by saying that when choreographers work with dancers in terms of a more creative exchange (as does Laurin), then “you’re more than a tool, you’re you.” (I-DR) He further developed this thought by reflecting on the way in which the dancer’s individual and artistic personality becomes part of the choreographic aesthetic when the choreographer calls upon their creativity.

Speaking specifically about the kind of creative interpretation that dancers are required to do with Ginette Laurin, long-time company dancer Rodrigue told me about the strong intuitive connection she has always felt with Laurin’s “inner universe” which it is her “task to transmit.” She also called to my attention that the dancers’ work on the newly made choreography only began at the premiere performance, at which time a long process of change and maturation starts. She also elucidated an important metaphor that Laurin uses throughout her working process with the dancers, that of “cultivating one’s inner garden.” Laurin herself explained her garden metaphor as a kind of essence, in this way:

[...] we say that we are working on our ‘interior garden.’ It’s something that the dancer will learn during the creative process.

He will try to find the essence of his role, or of the dance in general, and how to continue to cultivate that. And often in rehearsal, after 20 or 40 performances, normally they do about 80 performances of the same piece...then sometimes, we come back to the essence. We try to remember what we were thinking about when we created the section, what I was looking for, what I was referring to, what we were talking about, and what was that little spark that touched off the creation of that section. <sup>x</sup> (I-GL2)

During my conversation with Rodrigue I remarked that Laurin doesn't seem to frequently give the dancers precise meanings and motivations to help with interpretation of the movements they are creating and learning. Rodrigue replied by explaining how psychological work of the inner garden metaphor functions to guide her choices about motivation :

We understand the ambiance, for example. It's up to us to nurture this garden here, which has a certain color, a certain odor. It's up to us to say what flowers don't grow there and so we don't put them in there. Do you understand? There is room for us to bring an interpretation, but it all remains within an ambiance, a precise kind of universe.<sup>xi</sup> (I-MR)

Dancers Riede and Barry concurred that creative process work with Laurin is a progression from the physical and psychological tasks of learning the movements and mastering their mechanics, to that of making a personal investment in the task of artistic interpretation. Barry put it this way: "She lets us work physically first to see what happens movement-wise. And if she is clear enough, she'll start to give us direction. We also propose things [...]" (I-AB). She later described the dancers' interpretive work as being left

on their own to “find out what goes on between movements.” She elaborated: “That’s sort of our work, and it always has been. We find a sort of rhythm, a timing, and a shading in what is happening in between” (I-AB).

In the notebook I had left in the studio for the dancers to read, Riede penned her thoughts about how she goes about her task as a dancer in creating *Luna*:

For me, personally, at first there is only the movement. Ginette gives only the movement, without any suggestions for meaning. So, for quite a while I am just trying to work at it technically. Then after a while Ginette might say: 'Yes, I like the interpretation', without me really knowing what I did. It seems to me Ginette likes things very natural, without any imposed interpretation. Only later on she gives more detailed directions, sometimes very specific, but mostly more vague. The real meaning behind every gesture is completely up to us, I feel. Once I have the basic technical part integrated into my body I start wondering about the meaning. I go by what it means for myself and what I would like to express, even if sometimes it is only the joy to move. In some sequences I search for meanings for every single gesture, but that takes a really long time and somehow never ends, even when we have been performing the piece for quite a while, since I keep changing or clarifying the meaning to stay interested and alive in the movement. (Written comment by Antje Riede, date unknown, fall 2000.)

Riede’s account of a creative process reconfirms that Laurin engages her dancers to “be themselves”, as Rose would say, to invent personal variations



on the given movements and to formulate their own interpretations within the parameters of their “inner garden.”

#### 5.2.3.4 Dancers’ bodies

Not surprisingly, the data revealed copious references to the bodies of dancers, bodies that were at the epicenter of the *Luna* dance event. After all, at the moment of performance it was the dancers’ bodies that were on display for audiences and on which all attention was focused.

The appearance, health, and physical states of the dancers’ bodies were frequent themes that arose throughout the interviews with *Luna* dancers and fieldnotes about what they said and did. As well as insider views from the dancers themselves, comments about dancers’ bodies were offered up in critiques by dance writers and through remarks by audience members.

Within choreographer Laurin’s intuitive Automatist approach to dance-making, movements were composed directly onto and with the dancers’ bodies rather than the choreographer’s. Inside the dance studio and backstage with *Luna*, the dancers, the choreographer and rehearsal director spoke of their bodies as an “instrument” or “tool” to be trained, mastered, conditioned, and controlled.

During a public interview with Szporer at Jacob’s Pillow, Laurin explained, “I like my dancers to look like ordinary people, all sizes and ages” (I-PS). In the interviews with Barras (I-HB1) she elaborated on this conscious choice of hiring a variety of physical types, adding that she didn’t want her company to have the uniformity of a *corps de ballet* and that she has realized that an exceptionally tall man, for instance, could enrich her choreography and make it more interesting. During fieldwork I indeed observed that, unlike the uniformity imposed on dancers in the classical ballet (Wulff,

1998), *O Vertigo* dancers embodied individualistic styles through their clothing and grooming, both in the rehearsal studio practice clothes and when fully costumed onstage. They were not only of different heights, body types, shapes, but also of various ethnicities. Through the morning training regimes they chose for themselves (for Laurin didn't impose a company class), they actually shaped their bodies to suit their personal tastes and needs, in consultation with the choreographer and her needs. The dancers' preferences in personal appearance became somewhat modified onstage, as costume designers and make-up artists imposed on their bodies the designs they had conceived for *Luna*.

As for views of dancers' bodies from non-dancer participants, audience and critics often spoke of the dancers as attractive. But at least one critic judged them harshly: "the company seems to be not very well trained and some of the dancers seem to be bogged down by considerable overweight" (Schmidt, 2001). It was clear that certain physical standards concerning body type and weight were in operation, even if not explicitly required by the choreographer. Like athletes, their bodies were strengthened and toned by the intense physical work of dancing. Expressed admiration for their youthful, athletic appearances was a recurring motif in the *Luna* audience focus groups, and even a distinct motive for coming to see dance for some audience members.

The health of the dancers was an on-going, recurring concern throughout the event. I discovered that the *O Vertigo* dance company provided some of the necessary medical insurance for injuries, and encouraged individual training programs, in response to their dancers' needs. Laurin regularly invited guest teachers into her studio to teach a company class. Dancers' injuries were the outcome of the highly physical demands of this kind of work in which abnormal stresses were put on the body and exhaustion was a continuous challenge. Chronic and on-the-spot injuries were often in view during my fieldwork and I occasionally took an

inventory. On one day for instance I asked dancers about their injuries and observed: toes with tape wrapped around them, split skin on foot soles, lumbar pain, infection on a foot arch, and a left groin muscle pulled (FN: 11-10-00). Other days yielded a similar list of dance injuries. The reasons were numerous and as I discovered included: chronic weaknesses, floor surfaces that provided either too much or not enough traction, but especially the creative process in which “There are frequent false and inefficient moves that cause dancers to wince with discomfort as they learn the best way to coordinate them” (FN: 10-4-00). Some injuries were serious enough to require medical assistance, others were discretely nursed and dressed as dancers worked. Each dancer practiced a physical routine during rehearsals and performances that favored healing. Laurin remained attentive and sympathetic to her dancers’ physical limits. For instance, I observed her stopping rehearsal routinely if someone appeared to have been injured, sometimes asking dancers if they were ready and able to continue with a demanding run-through. Rose and Barry told me that she had allowed them to take time off without the loss of their contract when they suffered debilitating injuries.

The demands of dancing in studio and onstage also put the *O Vertigo* dancer’s bodies in particular physical and psychological states of being. One result of the physical intensity of dance work was an experience that Riede described as “feeling alive” in her body, as if she were “opened up” when dancing (I-AR). This heightened sense of aliveness was also claimed by many of the dancers as one of the motives that keeps them dancing. During the performance itself, there is the extraordinary heat and brightness of the stage lights to contend with. About this physical challenge, Barry remarked to me: “[...] the body develops something to adjust to this intensity [of stage light and heat]” (FN: 9-5-00).

The phenomenon of “stage presence” was described by several dancers as a kind of heightened state of being in the body and mind,

pleasurable for some and stressful for others. For instance, as described in Chapter IV section 4.9.2 and during the pilot project, I observed this phenomenon from backstage at an *O Vertigo* performance (not *Luna*). Demers walked slowly towards the stage from the wings, transforming her energy from that of waiting to entering. It was like an intensifying, sharpening, “thickening” of the mind and body’s energies. I glanced outward towards the brightly lit stage and was already beginning to feel the heat of the stage lights. I described it as a glowing, charged space, separate from but intensely observed by about six hundred pairs of eyes (FN: 8-18-00). From my vantage point I suddenly realized that one key to perceiving the changes in the dancers’ bodies and minds as they performed, and recuperated from performing, was during the moment – only a matter of seconds -- when they made the passage between backstage to onstage and back again.

#### 5.2.3.4 Biographical profiles

The following nine capsule profiles of nine full-time *O Vertigo* dancers (Appendix R), one replacement dancer, and one apprentice dancer integrate data. For the three dancers who were not available to be interviewed, an excerpt from the biographical entries on the company website were used to completed their dance biographies. Through these life stories it is possible to catch a glimpse into the dancers’ lives, and most significantly the conditions and environments in which they were raised and came to be a dancer. They also contains clues to the kinds of meanings that dancing came to hold in their lives, and as to how they formulated the aesthetic views over time that guided their understanding of dance.

*Profile #1: Mélanie Demers, company dancer.* Mélanie is a cultural mixture of Haitian and Canadian, but never knew her Haitian father. Her mother was of modest means but always encouraged her career choice of dancer, declaring that her daughter's happiness was the most important thing. Demers remembers having always been "a mover," dancing socially in clubs. And this desire to be an artist and to dance channeled her into the contemporary dance profession because, as she put it, of the opportunity to do so that Canadian society had offered to her. She trained first at the *École de danse de Québec* in Québec City. Then for the next 3 years she studied at *Les Ateliers de danse moderne de Montréal* where she received pre-professional training in dance technique, somatics, interpretation and also did some choreography. She was in her 6th year as a dance professional, both choreographing and dancing, when she became an *O Vertigo* company member in 1998.

*Profile #2 : David Rose, company dancer.* Rose is African-American and was raised in Philadelphia. He once intimated that he feels equally kin to both his parent's cultures: Caucasian American and Afro-American. He was a high school wallflower who "wanted to dance, but there was, like, this certain step that you had to do properly in the right way and my body didn't care to fit into that form." So he took John Hines' ballet class as a hobby until he couldn't afford it anymore, his father refusing to support his dance training. So the people at the dance studio asked him to be in the end-of-the-season show in lieu of payment, and so he began performing. As an engineering major in university, he joined the "moderny" dance club. One day he auditioned for the training program with the Phildanco dance company. Despite an intervening stint in the army and a sprained ankle, the director took him into the program and soon after in 1985, into her company. Soon after entering the professional dance world, he dropped out of college. Rose later came to Canada to dance with the Winnipeg Contemporary

Dancers, and he then moved to Montréal to perform with choreographer Jean-Pierre Perreault. As his website biography proclaimed, “His characteristic combination of mellowness and energy drew the attention of Ginette Laurin, who recruited him in 1996” ([www.cam.org/-overtigo/html](http://www.cam.org/-overtigo/html), 2001) and he has been dancing with *O Vertigo* ever since.

*Profile #3 : Kha Nguyen, replacement dancer.* Nguyen is Vietnamese, grew up in Canada from the age of 7 and his parents were very poor. He began his studies in the pure sciences, what he called the more “natural path” in terms of his parents’ choice for him, his disposition and aptitudes. But he threw himself into the visual arts, and took a modern dance class after their divorce when he was 20 years of age, because “my father had left, and I could [now] do what I wanted to do.”<sup>xii</sup> He continued taking dance classes at CEGEP, and finally auditioned for the professional training program at *Les ateliers de danse moderne*. At first he didn’t pass the audition, and so took a year of preparatory technique classes to be finally accepted. He completed the entire three-year program, and began dancing with younger choreographers, doing some of his own dance creating, and dancing for larger companies in special projects. Preferring for the moment not to join a large company full time, he was pleased by Laurin’s offer of a temporary contract to replace dancer Rose on paternity leave, in the last few months of rehearsal and first performances and tours of *Luna* in 2000 and 2001. As a replacement dancer he needed to “fit into a role that another dancer created, and this is quite different from ‘owning the movement’ through a creative process” (FN: 9-16-00). Nguyen was pleased by the temporary opportunity to work with *O Vertigo* because he “likes what they do [...]. But [he added] the structure of a company in itself, on an everyday basis, doesn’t suit him.”<sup>xiii</sup>

*Profile #4 : Patrick Lamothe, company dancer.* Lamothe grew up in the small town of Acton Vale in Québec, raised in a poor single parent family by his mother. Since he was a young child, he had loved creating characters like those he had seen in large theatrical productions. Despite the lack of support from his mother who found the métier of dancing to be too dangerous and financially insecure, he decided while still in CEGEP at 19 years of age that he would one day be onstage where he could live intensely and communicate strong emotions. He completed his professional training at *Les ateliers de danse moderne*, and then was hired to choreograph for a CEGEP dance troupe. He also began dancing for young choreographers and making his own work, and never imagined being in a large dance company. One day he was invited to an *O Vertigo* audition. He entered the company in 2000, the newest member at the time of this study. Laurin asked him to cut his shoulder-length blonde hair and to begin ballet training when he joined. I observed him progressively adapting his rebellious views to the company culture and to Laurin's aesthetic.

*Profile #5: Marie-Claude Rodrigue, company dancer.* Rodrigue was born to a poor family in a small village in the Beauce (southeastern Québec). When still a child, her mother became deaf and so she invented a personal physical "language" that her mother could comprehend. Two other things that she claimed tempered her inclination towards dancing : doing gymnastics with her mother along with a television animator, and ice skating with her parents as soon as she could walk. Her first glimpse of a dance performance was during a visit to her cousin in a larger town who took her to the cinema to the movie "Flashdance." By the age of eight, she began training for competition skating and became a young champion. Too poor to hire teachers, she would imitate the best skaters, and along with her mother would choreograph her own routines. But by age 18, she realized that to get further she would need to pay instructors. Lacking money, she

one day burst out emotionally: “I had this anger inside me because I saw that it was only children of rich parents who were able to do it. And so I said to myself : THAT’S IT! I’m going to dance with my feet on the floor and it won’t cost a cent! “<sup>xiv</sup>. She told her CEGEP career counselor that she wanted to dance, who after some research directed her to the *Université du Québec à Montréal*’s dance program. With no dance experience her résumé was at first rejected, but she went to the auditions anyway looking like a country girl lost in the big city, as she put it. The dance professors watched as she performed her own dance composition (like the protagonist in “Flashdance”!) and she was accepted. She chose the teaching option and finally became a graduate. As she did her university studies she also took extra dance classes, as if to accelerate her training, and after graduation completed three more years at *Les Ateliers de danse moderne*. About this period she exclaimed “I was really a maniac [about dancing]! “<sup>xv</sup>. She then spent a year in France and Spain on a study grant, and one day a dance teacher recommended her to Laurin. She is now in her 15<sup>th</sup> year as a dance professional. With 12 years at *O Vertigo* she was one of the more senior company members. Rodrigue’s company role extended beyond dancing new works, and as I entered the field she was just being sent to South America to supervise the remounting of Laurin’s previous choreography on another company of dancers.

*Profile #6 : Antje (Anna) Riede, company dancer.* (Antje is her original German name, but she uses Anna now.) Riede grew up in East Germany under a communist regime, without any notion of economic class. Her father was a teacher who had students from his classroom dancing in a children’s dance company. Antje also performed with them regularly. She was only three, but he sent her to experience dancing which was “a bit of ballet, folklore and free.” Her mother traveled with the company and sewed their costumes. When she was 14 her family managed with great difficulty



to move to her grandmother's house in West Germany, but when she was 17 the wall dividing East and West Germany came down. But for a hiatus from 12 to 14 years old, she continued dancing in different dance companies, discovered the catharsis of doing dance improvisation in a school in Freiburg, and then completed a 3-year program in dance therapy to "free herself from her past." At 21 she was off to New York City to see if she "was good enough" and whether she really wanted to dance. After two years in the big city, a friend insisted with vehemence that she take the *O Vertigo* summer workshop where she fell in love with the company after the first week of work. At the end of the course Laurin "came to [me] and she said that she really liked the way I was moving and that she was looking for a new dancer and if I would come to the audition." She went back to New York for a few months afterwards, trained really hard, and ended up joining the company in 1998.

*Profile #7 : Anne Barry, company dancer.* Barry grew up in "very comfortable" economic circumstances in Deep River, Ontario. She described her background as "very English, very scientific, very intellectual." Her small home town was dominated by career scientists, and it wasn't until she was 18 that she thought of dancing as a possible career choice when her father told her that she would always dance spontaneously around the kitchen. During her second year at university when she was 20 years old, her life was still without a clear direction and she began taking dance classes at the *Groupe de la Place Royale* studios for her own enjoyment. It was finally the combination of her first heartbreak, the "go with your heart's desire" philosophy of author Ayn Rand, and her dance teacher's insistence, that pushed her towards professional training in dance. She went to study at the Toronto Dance Theatre, the only school that would accept her at such an advanced age. What she found there were many other women her own age who were "coming into a change," and together they rented another studio

and did “a lot of creative work.” Those first years of training were “a way of exploring and discovering herself within the dance” and of emotional flourishing. She continued her training in London, New York and Paris. Her professional life as a dancer began with *Montréal Danse* and *Compagnie Marie Chouinard*. She joined *O Vertigo* in 1991, and at the time of *Luna* was one of the longest-standing members of the company along with Rodrigue and Gould. She was also the oldest dancer in the company at the time of this study in 2001, and was given a key solo in the *Luna* choreography as the looming figure in the moon dress that was to appear as an emblematic image for the piece on the first posters (photo 10).

*Profile #8 : Isabelle Greaves, company apprentice.* Greaves was raised in a middle class family on *Ile Perrot*, a suburban community just off the west end of Montréal Island. She began doing gymnastics at seven years old to the point of entering competitions, but hated being judged. So she turned to the less competitive métier of artistic dance. Over the next three years, her training began with ballet and *ballet-jazz* at a local studio and as a performer in the studio dance troupe. It was through conversation with a friend who was a university dance student that she realized dance could be her major. She completed a bachelor’s degree in dance, and her goal at the moment of our interview was simply to be able to dance in the profession, without knowing yet where and with whom. Laurin noticed her during one of *O Vertigo*’s summer workshops and called to ask her to be a teaching assistant with her for a university class. Through this close rapport she was able to negotiate a temporary, non-salaried position for herself as company apprentice during the time of the *Luna* event, as long (said Laurin) as she was able to work autonomously. In her role as company apprentice I observed her acting as a surrogate partner for an absent dancer, executing technical lighting cues during rehearsal, learning all of the dancers’ roles and

participating fully in company life. But she was never, alas, called upon to perform onstage in *Luna*.

*Profile #9 : Kenneth Gould, company dancer.* (Not interviewed.) Gould was one of the founding members of *O Vertigo*, and a former life partner of Laurin. He studied ballet and modern dance techniques, and danced with the Brian Webb Dance Company in the Western Canadian city of Edmonton, and the Dancemakers company in Toronto. He also created and toured his own choreography, and from 1988 to 1997 taught dance in a Montréal CEGEP. Many times I saw him boldly pressing forward his own ideas and views while always ceding to Laurin's authority, and frequently provoking laughter in his role as the well-loved company clown. I noted in my fieldbook that Ken clearly had a special role and place in the company, having been Laurin's life partner during seven years and the *O Vertigo* dancer with the longest standing of all. I noticed that he always deferred to her controlling vision, even when he was only questioning small details and ideas. He was vocal, playful and warm in his interventions during rehearsals and often made everyone laugh (FN: 10-20-00).

*Profile #10: Chi Long, company dancer.* (Not interviewed.) Chi is visibly Asian (photo 7), but with English as her mother tongue because born and raised in Australia. She began dancing professionally in her home country with the Canberra Dance Theatre. In 1991 she moved to Montréal where she immediately joined *O Vertigo* while still continuing to dance with various independent choreographers onstage and in dance films. Although vividly playful in her behavior and dress, Long was a discrete and introspective kind of dancer. It was during the touring of *Luna* that (much to my surprise) she ended her 10 years working with Laurin to join another large Montréal dance company, *MC2 Extase* directed by choreographer Marie Chouinard.

*Profile #11: Donald Weikert, company dancer.* (Not interviewed.) Like Rose, Weikart is an east coast American, but was raised in Boston. He moved to Montréal at first to study biology, but ended up choosing to dance. After studies of ballet and modern dance, he began his career with *O Vertigo*. He soon moved on to dance with Québécois company *Lalala Human Steps*, only to return in 1997 to work again with *O Vertigo*. Weikart served as the “company intellectual” during *Luna*’s creation, applying his university science education to the artistic needs of Laurin. During creative processes of *Luna* he was called upon to search for texts in the field of astrophysics, bringing forward texts some of which later became part of the *Luna* choreographic composition and soundscore.

#### 5.2.4 Artistic collaborators

For each new choreographic project, a team of artistic collaborators is chosen by Laurin to work closely with her in developing the costumes, lights, stage and visual design and props for the choreographic creation itself. For *Luna*, these collaborators designed the sound score, visual imagery and stage lighting, and costumes. All of these close collaborators stated unequivocally that their function in the creation of *Luna* was to accompany and aid the choreographer or as Morgenthelar said, they were just “braining in” with the company and: “The way it is, the company’s structure, it’s not that you’re part of a collective. It’s [Laurin’s] company. And we’re contributing to work to create her vision. That’s something that has to be clear.” (I-AM) But interestingly enough, he also affirmed his belief that in the end, it is really the audience who is his client and for whom he is working. (I-AM)

There were also more peripheral artistic personnel in this “network of cooperation” hired in by *O Vertigo*, like graphic artists and writers, who

participated in creating marketing materials for the *Luna* event. Examples are artist Rober Racine who penned a poetic commentary for the *Luna* program (Appendix F), Catherine Caron who designed the website, DIA Multimedia who produced the CD-ROM (Appendix S), and photographers Benoît Acquin, Laurent S. Zeigler and George Anderhut who created the images used on the posters and in press materials and later on in newspaper articles (photos 10, 11 and 12). I also spoke with Danièle Gingras, the designer of the CD ROM (Appendix S), while she was working for Dia Multimédia. Not only did this electronic press kit fulfill its practical role as a publicity tool, but Gingras told me that as a graphic work of art it had won the Grafika prize for innovation<sup>4</sup>. These participants were encountered only briefly, or not at all, in the *O Vertigo* studios in the course of fieldwork. But the artifacts I collected bore witness to the images and texts on paper, in film and in electronic form that they created for purposes of publicizing and promoting *Luna* to the public at large and to the expressive specialists, especially in the period just leading up to the live performance. These images and texts became part of the framing devices, as Foster (1986) called them, which both aroused expectations and influenced interpretations of the choreography by spectators and expressive specialists. In my work as dance presenter, I think of these kinds of texts and images as “clues” or “keys” to choreographic meaning.

I met the lighting, sound and costume designers in the *O Vertigo* studios and theaters infrequently, on only 8 out of the more than 70 sessions that I attended. And five out of eight of these visits by collaborators came in December 2000, towards the end of the creative process period. On the other hand, certain stage props, materials and theatrical costumes, the visible results of their designs, began accumulating early on in the rehearsal studios. These elements proved crucial to choreographic choices: the standing lenses,

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<sup>4</sup>From a phone conversation with Danièle Gingras on May 10, 2005.

the moon-like dresses, fragments of the soundscore, wireless microphones, computer-controlled projections. And so it seems that much of the negotiating, consultation and creative brainstorming between the choreographer and her artistic collaborators took place outside of the rehearsal studio itself.

The following descriptive accounts of the three main artistic collaborators for *Luna* have been assembled from the data of two interviews (with light/visual and sound designers), a text on the costume designer by Guylaine Massoutre (1999) that was based on an interview, program notes from the Montréal performance (Appendix F) and notes from field observations and informal conversations with them.

#### 5.2.4.1 Composer and sound designer

The conception of a sound score for *Luna* began with the story of an American composer named Darden Smith, from a Texas university whose intention it was to co-commission and present the final work. I interviewed him during the pilot project in Jacob's Pillow, where he and Laurin had allotted some time for an initial dialogue together. He told me that he was self-taught, intuitive, and had invented his own notation. (FN: 8-17-00). Back in Montréal, I ran into Smith once again at the *O Vertigo* studios, where I witnessed a somewhat tense exchange between choreographer and composer, tinged I thought with sarcasm (FN: 9-20-00). Two days later at a dance performance I met dancer Demers who told me that Smith had been sent away permanently, earlier that week. When the dancers came in for Tuesday's rehearsal, Laurin announced simply that Smith would "no longer be there with them." Demers confessed to me that "it was a little difficult for her that there was no discussion about it, nor the chance for them to say goodbye." (FN: 9-22-00) I found out later that when Smith left the project,

the Texas university commission and performance opportunity were consequently cancelled. It became clear to me from this incident that Laurin was fully in charge of the creative vision.

One month later I met Jean Gaudreau in the *O Vertigo* studios. It was he who, along with Richard Bélanger form the “sound design” company Larsen Lupin. In the *Luna* program notes (Appendix F) Larsen Lupin described themselves as a duo formed six years ago with several identities: musician, sound designer, sound engineer who create sound landscapes and original compositions in various domains of the performing arts. Gaudreau spoke of his work for *Luna* as that of “finding and collating sound.” He explained that Laurin had found herself with a pressing deadline to complete the sound score after dismissing Smith, and so had called him in to work with her. At present he was spending a lot of time looking for sound propositions in music stores. I noticed that day how clear Laurin was about what kinds of sound effects she needed by way of comments like “That’s too much, too much beat <sup>xvi</sup>” (FN: 10-26-00) .

Laurin explained that she and Gaudreau had worked together on musical montages and music recording for many of her choreographies. Laurin elaborated their current working method together on *Luna* in this way:

I come with musical propositions, but they’re very incomplete. I come with propositions to give atmosphere, ambiance. I had already found certain musical pieces for certain sequences, and for him, it was a matter of completing [the choices]. He did a particular kind of research, sometimes he will create sounds for the piece. And, in the end, he assembles all of that together. <sup>xvii</sup>  
(I-GL2.)

And so in the end, the sound and music for *Luna* was an ambient soundscore in support of the choreography, rather than the negotiation of a

musical composer's artistic vision with that of Laurin. The final score was a complex assembly of sounds from various sources and musical genres. This score was overlaid with recordings of the dancers singing and reciting texts, and integrated with their live amplified vocal sounds in performance.

#### 5.2.4.2 Visual designer

Axel Morgenthaler is Swiss German, born to a father who was a practicing artist in many mediums and a mother who had taught weaving for 30 years. Despite this artistic household, he found himself in his teens at first fascinated by electronics (and mathematics also), which he studied in a public trade school in Switzerland. In searching for a creative outlet, he took private music classes to play the saxophone, "an instrument [that] really fit into what I was listening to. [...]." He began exploring multiple aspects of musical production like performing, organizing and selling music. But he then became attracted to theater, and attended a conservatory to study acting. One of his professors asked him to participate in his show by designing the lights, and he started to think about visual creation in the performing arts. He joined forces with an architect friend, and one project led to another. And so, as he told it, "one day I woke up and I said 'Well, I'm a lighting designer'" even though he was the only one in his home town of Bern in 1985 doing that kind of work freelance, who was not an employee of a large theatre. There were no teachers at the time for other than the "techniques" of lighting, and so he taught himself with only books and other people's works as references. In the fourth year of a dance festival in Switzerland for which he was technical director, *O Vertigo* "came by" and he "really liked the show, touched on the level of how the music, the lights and the performers were all connected." He had also visited Montréal and was touched by its charm. By way of a personal connection he met and began working with Laurin. He



was hired 10 years ago as her visual designer, and was technical director of the company as well for the first couple of years.

By the time of *Luna*, his sixth collaboration with Laurin, Morganthelar had come to call himself in the program notes a “lighting and visual designer with multiple talents as scenographer, light designer and multimedia theatrical artist.” He described his work as “exploring new visual, architectural and theatrical concepts through the raw material of light, as well as such media as video and film.” He began by doing design with light only to realize that “the stuff I do is so dependent on the surfaces where the lights are falling.” From his background in interior design he became involved on the “canvasses where the lights fall”, i.e. the scenography (curtains, dance floor, etc.) and even the costumes. In this way he realized that he had “a much greater palette of expression”, and defines his aesthetic as “a dialogue between material and light.” He contrasted his contemporary vision with that of designers of more traditional historical theater with a kind of metaphoric artistic ethos about space: “I’m more interested in the boundaries where we have more ephemeral space and [where] you have this kind of fine dialogue between transparency, translucence, and this kind of ephemeral space.” And when he describes using immaterial haze with which to create “virtual walls with light,” I am reminded at once of both Surrealist artists’ dreamscapes and new technological experimentation. He also practices as a freelance designer who makes between ten and fifteen creations a year, a situation which he speaks of in a positive light as “giving the [*O Vertigo*] company enough outside influence to create something unique every time.” And he comes to each new creation in a state of mind he called “well-structured amnesia” about the previous piece, because after many year of collaboration he felt that “the danger of repeating oneself becomes great.”

His relationship with current technical director Jocelyn Proulx appeared to be particularly significant, as I observed them engaged in intense conversations several times. Proulx confirmed the nature of this

exchange when he told me that Axel “dreams in technicolor. He does his work as a creator without constraints. [...] And so I bring him down to earth, finding a way to move in the sense of his ideas [...] within budgets and production constraints given to me by my bosses”<sup>xviii</sup> (I-JP).

As for his collaborative working process with Laurin and so his role in creating *Luna*, Morgenthelar believes that their intuitive exchange of ideas benefits from a confidence that has grown between them over the years. He feels that it is only in long-term relationships, like the one he has evolved with Laurin, that it is possible to “get to know the finer points of what the person’s private, poetic environment is, so you get to know, to express their desire of what to put on a stage.” He even co-authored the *Luna* project proposal along with Laurin, developing a technical section about the integration of new technologies and especially the optical lenses and video projections (Appendix I).

I was present the day Morgenthelar and Laurin began to work on the video projection of images on Barry’s moon skirt. I recorded details of their temperate, seasoned negotiations, which Morgenthelar characterized as “an improvisation.” Ginette began by talking to him about the resolution of the projection and the need for darkness. Together they watched images chosen by Axel stream by in silence, 35 to 45 seconds long apiece: stars, waves, birds flocking, volcanic-like fire, etc. Laurin responded “It works, it doesn’t work, or not bad” for each. Then she said “And what if we went with the images like that, but shorter, 30 seconds?” Morgenthelar proposed his view about which ones he liked and explained why. Laurin then responded, “Take out all that is pale.” Morgenthelar said that the beginning one in black and white was good perhaps “but not at the beginning”<sup>xix</sup>. He said he wanted now to see the images with the accompanying sound. (FN: 12-18-00) And this was the way in which, after all the years, they managed to mesh their aesthetic sensibilities.

#### 5.2.4.3 Costume designers

Denis Lavoie formed the Trac Costume company with fellow dancer Carmen Alie in 1986, devoted to costume design and creation for the performing arts. By the end of my fieldwork in 2002, they had decided to finally split up the company and to work independently. In the course of our interview, Lavoie told me how he came from the northern Lac St-Jean region of Québec at 19 years of age to pursue studies in Montréal. After taking off again on his “youth trip”, as he calls it, traveling to Vancouver on the Canadian west coast, he returned with the conviction that he wanted to be a dancer. He became a subsidized apprentice for three years with the *Eddy Toussaint Ballet-Jazz* dance company, and then earned his B.A. in dance at the *Université du Québec à Montréal*. After dancing professionally with the *Montréal Danse* company and trying his hand at five choreographies, he decided in his 30's to shift his career to costume design. It came as no surprise, his mother having been a seamstress and “raising him in her fabric store.”

Although possessing no formal training in design, he had begun even while dancing to “draw what he envisioned on the moving body.” Lavoie further explained that he visualized each costume as “having a story of its own.” Over the years, his aesthetic preferences had led him to an aesthetic style that he described as colorful, employing natural fabrics and those that suggest depth, and having light reflective properties. (Massoutre, 1999, p. 152)

Lavoie was clear about the dynamics of his relationship to Laurin and his role as costumer: he is completely at the service of the choreographer and her vision. As he put it, “she is the master!” But he further nuanced his working method with her when describing two possible avenues of

collaboration that he has experienced with various creators. In the first, he worked in parallel, in the same direction, as the choreographer's ideas. In the second way of working he would superimpose a completely different set of ideas by way of the costumes, which has brought different layers of meaning to the creator's work. In the case of *Luna*, he first attended rehearsals and allows many images to emerge that he suggested to her. She kept only a few. He gradually began to make decisions even while the work was being created, with the intention of following the choreographer's ideas as they developed even at the times when they were more or less clear. (Massoutre, 1999, p. 154)

For the *Luna* project, he and Alie designed the much publicized moon-shaped white dresses (Photos 8 and 10, Appendix S video sequences and photos) that Lavoie calls the "theatrical dresses" (*robes-théâtre*). Their creative designs needed to take into account parameters given to them by the visual designer and choreographer, an example of the kind of interdependence enacted among *Luna's* artistic collaborators and their aesthetic outlooks. These parameters included the consideration that video images would be projected onto the exterior surface and also that live video projections of dancing from underneath the same skirt, would be seen by the audience. The second set of costumes were more like individualistic everyday clothing, with two different layers for each dance, one in neutral tans and beiges and the other brightly colored, that they would remove in the course of the dance. The idea of the costume changes was an outcome of his philosophy that in a one-hour work, it was necessary to have elements that would refresh the gesture and enliven the piece by causing it to be seen "in another light." In referring to this set of costumes, Lavoie told me how he needed to follow the process of creation through studio visits, watch how the choreographer sees the dancers in their choreographic universe, and how the dancers dress themselves in rehearsals. By paying attention to all of these small things, he has succeeded in making costumes that are well liked by both choreographer and dancers. In the case of these *Luna* costumes, he and Alie produced

detailed technical designs for the costume shop in Lucerne, Switzerland where they were to be actually cut and sewn during a two-week residency. But because the costume shop staff at the *lucernertheater* weren't used to making dance clothes and rigid in their attitudes [towards the dancers' suggestions], "the cuts and fit were completely wrong with not enough fabric under the arm to facilitate movement." Carmen Alie traveled overseas to Lucern to join them, and had to make many of the bodices and sleeves completely over again. (FN: 3-1-01)

### 5.3 *O Vertigo's* personnel

The dance company artists were supported in their creative and performing activities by extensive "networks of cooperative people" to prepare and present the dance event. Certain characteristics of those interviewed and part of a student focus group, are summarized in Tables 5.3, 5.4.1 and 5.4.2.

This section also includes a brief discussion of 10 out-of-town dance students (professional dancers) who were part of a focus group and who were attending *O Vertigo's* 2001 summer workshop and so learning choreography from *Luna*. Teaching these summer workshop students was one of the company's important supplementary activities, bringing in extra income and employment for the company and dancers and providing a pool of dancers from which to identify candidates for the company.

*O Vertigo* dance had its own executive, communications, and administrative directors along with several assistants, as did each of the theaters in which they performed. These administrative teams worked in various capacities to manage the overall event project, market and publicize the performances, budget and fundraise for the dance company and venue, work with members of the boards of directors, widen audience interest and

carry out related community projects, act as agents to develop and plan tours, manage the audience at the performances (“house managers”), run the box office and make ticket sales and reservations, and to do the general secretarial work in the front offices. The technical staffs included technical directors, their assistants, lighting, sound and electronic media technicians, a dance company costume mistress, and other stage crew as required.

The descriptive sections below will delineate the backgrounds and roles of those who were interviewed by way of example. These were *O Vertigo*'s executive director, a member of their board of directors, an audience development consultant at the Auditorium Dufour, and the *O Vertigo* technical director. Within their profiles I will also briefly discuss what other members of their staff and crew said and did, working from information gleaned in the field.

### 5.3.1 Executive director and his staff

*O Vertigo*'s executive director Bernard Lagacé (Photo 4) proved to be a friendly but fairly private man, even though I have known him professionally for over a decade, providing minimal answers to my questions and little information about the company's budget. (As mentioned earlier, he denied access to financial details except for a 1-page summary of *Luna*'s project budget, Appendix M). He did agree to hold a face-to-face interview in which he told some of his dance life story and administrative visions, offered friendly casual conversation spontaneously on several occasions, but didn't go into depth about his art world views. His reluctance to expose the dance company's budget to public view I can only surmise (not wanting to appear as prying) as a protective gesture, thinking that it could lead to some kind of criticism by the community.

His early training was in interior design. Lagacé in fact was “going into architecture” when he encountered choreographer Pierre-Paul Savoie of the *PPS danse* company. At first invited to design sets for a new piece, he gradually became involved in the administrative processes. When a choreography of *PPS danse* called *Bagne* proved successful with audience and presenter, he began building a network of contacts for touring the work. In 1999 he launched his own business to represent several local choreographers called *Montréal en orbite*. In May 2000, just a year before our interview and as the *Luna* project was just beginning, he received a call from Laurin asking him to join her company. “And this is how I came to sit in this chair [of the executive director for *O Vertigo*].” (I-BL)

Lagacé described his management role to me as “making sure that Ginette would get the conditions, optimal conditions to create what she had in mind.” As he put it, his tasks include creating a plan, formulating a budget, finding “the right partners to make it happen,” and then negotiating necessary budget revisions with Laurin. He described it yet another way when he said “I see my role within that project [*Luna*] as being a facilitator somehow to accommodate all the artistic needs with a reality aspect [for which we need] to establish parameters.” He also felt that an important goal for him as the “[creation of] bridges between the administrative and the artistic elements of ‘this big corporation’.” Lagacé praised the cooperative and flexible attitude of Laurin, as he had experienced it in these negotiating processes. For instance, he revealed to me that the loss of a grant from the Langlois Foundation led to a “less impressive” (as he put it) technology component for *Luna*, requiring a revision of the artistic possibilities. And one day he exclaimed that he couldn’t wait for the dancers to come home from touring so that he could get into the studio, in direct contact with the dancing, to inspire his promotional efforts and his work of “trying to put [*Luna*] on the stage of the world.” In an emotional burst of support for considering the

artistic process as the main function of the dance company, Lagacé exclaimed, “The [choreographic] work is [*O Vertigo*’s] raison d’être...it is!” (I-BL)

As I entered the field, *O Vertigo*’s administrative staff, including the executive director, had been recently hired. The administrative director managed accounting and contracts, the director of communications took on all tasks related to public relations and publicity, and the receptionist provided general secretarial services. The original receptionist Chloé Myers, and the next one hired Corinne Faucher, were required to answer the phone and to operate a buzzer for the front door. They were the initial, frontline contact for visitors and callers – veritable gatekeepers. Both were always cooperative and eager to help me in my search for information. One quiet afternoon, Faucher confided to me her life story in the arts. She revealed with pride that she had studied contortionism and trapeze at the local circus school, eventually teaching the techniques at a summer camp. One day when she began to gain weight and also realized “the toll the circus life takes on the body,” and so she decided to reorient her nascent performing arts career into arts management (FN: 6-7-00).

The “official” gatekeeper who was assigned to negotiating with me in the beginning was administrative director Evelyne Follain, soon replaced by Eric-Abel Baland. Although I didn’t have much contact with her in the end, it was she who initially discussed my consent form with the company and the conditions for my access to the offices and studios. Another staff member, communications director Sylvie Ménard, developed the visual concepts and distributed the *Luna* press kits, “stats” (audience attendance statistics) and archived press texts – and cheerfully gave me access to any materials and archives I requested.



### 5.3.2 Board of directors' president-founder

*O Vertigo* was established in 1984 as a legal entity (first as *Léveillé danse* and then *Lévéillé-Laurin danse* along with choreographer Daniel Léveillé) in the apartment home of arts “animateur” Claude Gosselin. He served as its founding president and lent them the charter of his own contemporary arts organization as a basis for formulating the legal description the fledgling company. He remains a member of the board of directors to this day, a volunteer group of directors from various sectors of the artistic and business world who are legally responsible for the management and financial health of the non-profit corporation *O Vertigo danse inc.* Artistic organizations in Canada who receive substantial public monies are obliged to incorporate and form this entity.

Gosselin was the only member of his family to become interested in the contemporary arts and to audaciously accept new art forms. Even in his youth he began making art and organizing cultural events. When still in college, he voraciously attended theatrical productions, music concerts, cinema clubs, *boîtes à chanson*, and more. Despite studies in art history at the *Université de Montréal*, his interest remained that of doing cultural “intervention”, as he explained it, the mounting real-life contemporary arts events (in the sense of public displays) rather than in simply theorizing about past art histories.

He practiced several different art world métiers before founding his own company *Centre international d'art contemporain* (CIAC) in 1983, dedicated to promoting contemporary visual art forms through large-scale events. Art critic for the French-language newspaper *Le Devoir* in Québec from 1972-1974, he founded the first performance art office at the Canada Council for the Arts where he worked as a funding agent from 1975-9. His next position was that of curator at the Montréal Museum of Contemporary Art from 1979-83, until in 1983 he launched his own company with a first major exhibition event

called *Les 100 Jours d'arts contemporains*. He was drawn into the dance world by dance colleagues, together members of an interdisciplinary circle of artists who had participated in the social and artistic revolution in Québec called *Le Refus Global*. It was choreographer Jeanne Renaud, a founding mother in the '40s of Québec modernist dance, who convinced him to involve himself in the founding of what was to become *O Vertigo*.

He calls himself an arts *animateur*, a French term without precise English-language equivalent, but suggesting someone who is an organizer and facilitator of events. He articulated his role as an artistic member on the Board of Directors of *O Vertigo* in this manner:

[...] my function is to assure that Ginette is artistically defended. Because on a board of directors there can be a tendency, at times, to move towards the business end in order to make the company profitable – cutting three weeks of salary and [so] putting the dancers on unemployment, or doing less choreography. As for myself, I have always been the one who defends the point of view of Ginette, and so to avoid the company losing its image.<sup>xx</sup> (I-CG)

And so, as well as directing his own arts organization and mounting large-scale events in the visual arts world, for over 20 years Gosselin has discreetly supported the legal and financial stability of *O Vertigo* as a founding (and continuing) member of its board of directors.

### 5.3.3 *Théâtre du Saguenay's* dance *animatrice*

It was at the age of 20 that Lise Clément began to frequent the universe of artists, where she met her painter husband. She was born and raised in Montréal into a family, which “Of course!” as she exclaimed as if it were

common knowledge, had misgivings about an artistic vocation for their daughter. Working with artists was perhaps too fragile and not a very serious career choice, they thought. She later took a course in film script writing at the *Sorbonne* in Paris, but later discovered that her real *métier* was writing. At the time of our interview, she had been “steeping herself in the arts” for over 25 years. Clément and her husband moved back to Chicoutimi, where he taught art at the local university and she became a free-lance communications consultant about 14 years ago. Her work in this field had proved to be quite vast and varied, from writing and producing a local history project with sculptors to organizing an art film festival.

She had only recently discovered dance on film, while a member of a programming committee for the art film festival, and with dance it was “love at first sight, a real discovery.” When Marie Talbot, director of the *Théâtre du Saguenay*, called her less than a year ago to offer a contract as dance *animatrice*, requiring work in audience development and educational outreach for the season’s dance series, she had the time and inclination to accept<sup>5</sup>. Clément understood her task for the *Luna* presentation in Chicoutimi as one of “getting people to come out,” as she put it, through communications and media strategies. From previous involvement with arts producing in the region, she had come to think of the Chicoutimi population in general as insular, inclined to make up their own minds, but also culturally-minded. Because she felt that there was a general attitude by many local people that dance simply didn’t interest them, she decided that her role was to change this perception. She also expressed to me her belief that the key to getting people out to see dance for the first time was to arouse a spirit of discovery.

It was while sitting in on a film showing about the work of popular, Montréal dancer Margie Gillis that she found her publicity campaign idea for

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<sup>5</sup> Funding for dance presenters in Québec cities and towns outside of Montréal to employ “dance *animateurs*,” in essence audience development agents, is part of a long-term project initiated by Montréal dance companies and now an independent non-profit organization called *La danse sur les routes*.

the dance series, and found the slogan “*La danse, c’est du bonbon*” (in English the equivalent of something like “Dance is a sweet treat”). And so during the year previous to the *Luna* performance in Chicoutimi she sent out candies, wrapped inside “beautiful” little gift packages containing publicity messages for the *Luna* presentation at their center. She also phoned teachers to distribute the candies to students, spoke about dance in radio interviews, launched ticket give-aways, and organized workshops for the *O Vertigo* dancers in a local dance school. The candy strategy, she affirmed, was a big hit (*a fait fureur* in the original French) as she put it, according to the feedback she had received. And in fact, the performance of *Luna* was nearly sold out, attended by the largest audience yet for contemporary dance at the *Théâtre du Saguenay*.

She confessed to me in our interview that she “[...] was not at all specialized in dance. I was new to dance, “<sup>xxi</sup> and so was obliged to learn about *Luna* and contemporary dance at the same time as her audiences. She claimed that her dance education was much enhanced by her consequent experiences, reading materials about dance and *O Vertigo*, accompanying dancers Ken Gould and Anne Barry to workshops, and listening to their ideas during a radio interview and personal discussions. And because the director of the *Théâtre du Saguenay*, Marie Talbot in the end didn’t consent to according me an interview for my research project because she was “too busy,” Clément was given the task of negotiating my entry as gatekeeper to the field of the Chicoutimi performance of *Luna*.

#### 5.3.4 Technical director and stage crew members

“I am just a guy who comes from the suburbs, with all the meaning that carries, the suburbs. [I’m] someone who was apolitical, without culture ...zero! <sup>xxii</sup> “ (I-JP). Suburban-raised Jocelyn Proulx, technical director for *O Vertigo* during the *Luna* project, didn’t find the ambition to be “anything in

particular” until the age of 20. After being refused for police training and trying computer science, he “had a flash” one day as he read the program offerings at the local CEGEP. When his eye fell upon the category of “Theater/production” he thought of his friends studying at the *Ste-Thérèse* theater school, and without so much as a single experience of a live theater performance he realized quite spontaneously “That’s what I want to do, that’s what I want to try!”<sup>xxiii</sup> He remembered feeling struck strongly by the idea, and that it had happened quite intuitively, or “automatically” as he put it. He realized that theater production work brought together so many things that he had done in his life, like the manual skills developed while doing farm labor. This was the end of his adolescence, as he said, and he was just beginning his intellectual development.

He consequently raced through the end of his school courses and then enrolled in the three-year program in theater techniques at the *Collège Lionel-Groulx in Ste-Thérèse*, graduating in 1983. Twelve years of professional work in various Montréal theater companies followed suit. He was initially hired as production manager in charge of all aspects of producing the technical end of performances, and acquired a taste for the job. But his heart was also set on stage lighting, and so he carried on a parallel free-lance career in this field as well as managing the *Théâtre Opsi* group of which he was co-founder. This was a period of working 60 to 70 hour weeks. One day he was called on by a “head-hunter” (employment recruiter) who offered him the job as technical director of *O Vertigo*. At the time of our interview, he had been worked with the company for 6 1/2 years.

He found the transition from theater to dance a difficult one because they seemed to be “two different worlds.” At *O Vertigo*, he had only one director (Ginette Laurin) to account to for everything, and had to learn what he needed to do on his own without someone to guide him. Not only did he have “everything to learn about dance, but as well he had to learn how to

look at dance [and] on what to base the changing of stage effects, how to deal with that as a technician.”<sup>xxiv</sup>

Proulx’s work at *O Vertigo*, as I observed it, proved to be much more than the technical set-up and running of performances. He also had to negotiate closely with *Luna* artistic collaborators to modify their technical needs and desires according to production and budget limits given to him, another example of how the network of cooperation functioned in the *Luna* event. And as he put it, every decision he made had to meet the approval of the ultimate authority at *O Vertigo*: choreographer Ginette Laurin.

I also had occasion to dialogue with three *O Vertigo* stage crew members and to observe and chat a little with the technical crew working full-time at the *Théâtre du Saguenay* in Chicoutimi. *O Vertigo* technician Alain Ouellette was hired to assist Proulx in technical tasks when the company performed. He offered me his dance story one quiet day at the *O Vertigo* studios. Ouellette had set out originally to be a dancer and earned his B.A. in dance at the *Université du Québec à Montréal*, but now finds himself fortunate to have found this job that keeps him connected to the dance world he loves. As a technician, he sees his work as being there to simply “do as he is told” and not as involved in the creative side of the work. But he loves the chance to travel, and the excitement of being part of a live moment performance. (FN: 12-15-00) *O Vertigo*’s costume mistress Danielle Lecourtois is an old friend of mine, and was a promising young choreographer a decade ago. Like Ouellette, she had redirected her former career as a dancer-creator and now travels with the *O Vertigo* company on tour where her task in the *Luna* dance event was to clean, repair and otherwise take care of the dancers’ costumes – sometimes even making emergency repairs during the performance. I also caught her on one occasion in the dressing rooms exercising her skills as performer by entertaining the dancers at their make-up tables by putting on comical wigs, perhaps her informal company role. *Monument-National* technician Yvan Thibault took a few moments of his time

to provide insight for me into the workings of the technical crew at the Montréal venue. From his point of view, the recently renovated *Monument* (the local nickname for the *Monument-National*) is one of the most beautiful theater halls in Montréal. And he also considers it a particularly pleasant working environment in comparison with his past experiences working at the downtown opera house *Place des Arts*. At the Monument everyone helps each other out, he explained, and so unionization hadn't been necessary. The technicians there had come together and asked for their own contract conditions, and the management agreed to them. There were three house technicians forming this crew: a chief machinist, a chief electrician and a chief sound person. *O Vertigo's* technical crew members Ouelette and Proulx worked in tandem with them to set up and to run the performance. (FN: 9-22-01) In stark contrast to the *Monument-National*, the *Théâtre du Saguenay* had a full technical crew of 12 union stage crew workers. There were so many in fact for the occasion that I came upon some with apparently nothing to do as *Luna* was setting up, and so they were just sitting around and playing on the computer or chatting. All the while as I watched, the *O Vertigo* crew moved as quickly as possible to ready technical systems for that evening's performance in the space of one day (FN: 12-4-01).

#### 5.4 *O Vertigo* dance workshop students

Every spring or summer in Montréal the *O Vertigo* dance company offers a workshop, taught by Laurin and the company dancers to a group of international students. Workshop students were selected by audition and came from across Canada, the United States, Mexico and parts of Europe – places where *O Vertigo* had been touring and so became known to local dancers.

A focus group was spontaneously convened for purposes of this study on August 11, 2001 with a group of 10 out-of-town students attending the 2001 edition of the *O Vertigo* summer dance workshop (brochure in Appendix P). This discussion gave me the opportunity to provide an international perspective on the *métier* of contemporary dancer, as well as the nature and role of dance workshop students in the socio-economic life of the *O Vertigo* dance company.

The workshop consisted in three weeks of intensive contemporary dance training, much of which put the new choreography of *Luna* into pedagogical use. According to executive director Lagacé, it also provided additional work for those company dancers who enjoyed teaching, and preferred to stay with the company for a longer period of time each year, and a way of financing the on-going operations of the company (FN: 8-8-01). The workshop also provided a pool of potential new talent for the company, as evidenced by company dancer Riede and company apprentice Isabelle Greaves entry into the company by way of participation in a the summer workshop.

Certain group characteristics of the 10 focus group students, gathered from the survey forms (Appendix E) are discussed briefly below and summarized in Tables 5.4.1 and 5.4.2:

(a) Age. Student focus group members were 20 to 39 years old, with seven in their twenties and three in their thirties. None were forty or over, mirroring the youth-dominated and relatively narrow career span of professional contemporary dancers in Montréal previously discussed.

(b) Gender. Eight out of 10 dance students were women. The small number of men in the student focus group actually did reflect the extremely small number of men in the workshop, as is true in Montréal contemporary dance training programs as well. Despite the small number of male dancers in training, most large and professional dance companies employ an equal number of dancers of both sexes, as was the case with *O Vertigo*.



(c) Profession. On their survey sheets during the focus group, nine of the 10 students cited dance world occupations as their vocation. They called their work alternately: dancer, dance teacher, choreographer, dance student, designer. (A tenth dance student entered a question mark at this place on the survey form.) It is interesting to note that on the line reserved for vocation, none of the dance workshop students wrote in the daily jobs that most young dancers are obliged to do for basic financial support (commonly jobs like waitress, massage therapist and art class model). This is likely indicative of the distinction they were making between the vocation of professional artist and the various supplementary jobs they do strictly for economic survival.

(d) Income. Seven out of 10 dance students (both young and mature dance professionals) claimed incomes that hovered at and below poverty level, which didn't even cover the basic cost of living. Of these seven, one lived at home with no income at all, and the other six claimed an income of the 0 - 15, 000\$ a year bracket. These out-of-town workshop participants were in an even lower income bracket than their Québécois dancer counterparts.

(e) Education. The student focus group members by-and-large were university-educated, as were the *O Vertigo* dancers. Two had completed professional training in dance academies and studios, four had university degrees in theater or dance, two came from university trainings outside of dance. Only one student claimed only a high school diploma and no other formal arts training.

(f) Place of residence, whether urban, suburban or rural. I asked focus group students where they were currently residing and dancing. Five of the 10 lived in or near the large urban centers of New York City and Mexico City. One claimed to be in transit, three from smaller cities and two from a dance company in Mazatlan, Mexico. All perceived their municipal environments as urban, and so none claimed to reside in rural or suburban settings.

(g) Ethnicity/cultural identity. Focus group members included four nationalities: two Americans, one Canadian, one German, and five Mexicans. The prominence of Mexican dancers in the workshop in 2001, I know from insider knowledge, is likely the result of the cultural exchange projects being carried out between *O Vertigo* dance and a prominent Mexican dance company, as well as the company's recent touring across Mexico. The answers penned by the dance students on their survey sheets moved beyond national borders when asked about ethnic/cultural identity. They variously identify themselves with a continental region ("East African"), a national region ("North Mexico"), a humanistic longing ("universal"), as of mixed identity ("mongrel", "with diversity", and "eclectic"), and even with pejorative stereotypes ("white" and "WASP"). One student even wrote in the poignant response " [I'm] German and I'm lost " perhaps in testimony to a kind of cultural confusion that exists in the midst of a moment of great global mobility and mixing of cultures and identities.

Interest in attending the workshop was generated by word-of-mouth among dancers, as the focus group disclosed (FG4). Three specific incentives emerged from the focus group conversation and also through informal conversations with the students (FN: 8-8-01): (a) they had felt inspired by the company's aesthetic after attending a performance in their city; (b) they were looking for an intensive training session in the summertime and this workshop was convenient; or (c) they came because of Montréal's reputation as a dance mecca and lively cultural city center.

In the course of the focus group conversation, some of the workshop students spoke about what drew them into the professional dance world in the first place. The Americans explained: Sarah Poole had idolized her older sister by following her into a first ballet class which she immediately adored; while Andrea Lieske's mother enrolled her in a creative dance class to canalize her "wild dancing" on the handball court. Among the Mexican dancers: Ruby Tagle was heading into engineering when she discovered her

natural talent for dance at an audition for the university dance group; Bernardo Rubenstein was a child gymnast who grew too tall for the sport but was instead invited to dance in high school; and athletic Jacob Morales Montaña “wanted to learn to dance [and wanted to know] the feeling of being [onstage] in the theater.” As with the *O Vertigo* dancers, an evident physicality and love for the body’s expressivity, that was already manifest in childhood, appeared to be one of the motifs underlying the career choice of professional dancer. (FG4)

### 5.5 “Expressive specialists”

Who were those participants who created and maintained a credible definition and evaluation of what was going on in the *Luna* event? Musicologist Ronström (1988) called them the “expressive specialists” whose expertise was useful in defining dance event decorum and criteria. With a perhaps a touch of irony, he defined these event participants as the key persons whose role it is to provide “the special knowledge which is needed [to] define what we are supposed to do [...] and how to do it properly” (1988, p 26). In terms of the *Luna* event, I have included those expressive specialists who wrote and published interpretive texts about the dance event in their capacity of journalist, critic or researcher<sup>6</sup>. But I have also placed here, because of their arts expertise and decisive power in establishing artistic criteria, those who judged the *Luna* project proposal and those who presented the performances to the public: funding agents and the peer juries they defer to, and the professional dance presenters who directed the theater venues.

These *Luna* expressive specialists included below served a dual function in this research project. Some provided me with theoretical

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<sup>6</sup> All of these expressive specialists had seen the *Luna* performance by the time of our interviews but for Tembeck, because her terminal illness prevented a second post-*Luna* interview.

grounding for this research project as was seen in the literature review, but together they form a distinct category of non-dancing but dance professional participants in the *Luna* event.

As I will discuss below, these specialist participants contributed various kinds of ideas about the *Luna* event. Their ideological frameworks assisted dancegoers, the art world-at-large and myself as researcher in apprehending, understanding and evaluating the dance event. As was true for all dance event participants, the expressive specialists also drew from a matrix of ideas and beliefs about art and artists, as well as their own experiences, in forging their ideas. Their interpretations and evaluations were disseminated orally and in written form in public media such as newspapers, radio programs, research reports, catalogues and programs for audiences, government policy papers and books. Among them are also teacher-scholars, notably Tembeck, who carried their points of view into university classrooms and academic conferences.

Although an expert cultural *animateur*, with studies in art history and considerable expertise in arts practices, *O Vertigo* board member Gosselin was not included among the expressive specialists. In fact, he critiqued this specialist function with scepticism, finding that judgments of these experts were too influential and too predominant in the art world. In his own words:

[...] I don't develop an enormous amount of theory about the work of artists. I am satisfied with simply presenting the work.  
 [...] Because there is the didactic of the strong statement, [which is to say that] when people see an idea developed in a text, it becomes for them a better work. I have difficulty with that  
 [...]”<sup>xxv</sup> (I-CG)

### 5.5.1 Six dance presenters

The dance presenters (my word for the vocation) described their dance world function and role in diverse ways. They called themselves variously producers, programming directors, department heads, associate directors, artistic directors, booking agents, and more. All were responsible for becoming familiar with the work of contemporary dance companies from around the world and for making programming choices at the theaters where they work. But each one also undertakes many auxiliary responsibilities and tasks according to the nature of their institution and the position they hold in the organization. Some of the dance presenters were hired to direct already-existing venues (*Lucerner Theater*, *Théâtre du Saguenay*, *Maison de la Culture Mercier*, *The Joyce Theater*), while others built and founded the organizations for which they worked (*Joint Adventures*, *Tanzhaus NRW*, the *Festival international de nouvelle danse de Montréal*). All of them but the Montréal festival presented dance seasons throughout the year, within a local theater building. And only the Montréal festival, and *Joint Adventures* on occasion, had no permanent residence but rented and produced large-scale events during short periods and in several venues around town.

As well as booking performances, some of the European presenters had budgets ample enough to invest financially as “co-producers” of the new creation, offering money and/or residency rehearsal support to dance companies before the premiere. As part of his work, *O Vertigo*'s executive director Lagacé traveled to “rally new [co-production] partners for the next creation” and to “get them [...] to come to Montréal” to experience the company and new work-in-progress in person (I-BL). I attended the CINARS arts marketplace event in December 2000 in Montréal where a large group of dance presenters from Europe, Canada and the U.S. was able to see excerpts from *Luna* before it had been shown to the public. I spent time at the *O Vertigo* CINARS booth with Lagacé and also Menno Plukker (photo 17), the

company touring agent as they worked on booking proposals. Some of the presenters who attended the *Luna* showcase (a special private showing in their behalf) were long-time supporters of the company, and others were experiencing Laurin's choreography for the first time. I observed their mixed reactions to the *Luna* excerpts, and noted that as a whole the producers watched attentively, or as dancer Riede put it afterwards, "respectfully." As the dancing progressed, some of the watchers literally sank lower in their seats and fidgeted, but their attention stayed nevertheless focused on the dancing. But it seemed as if they were not all equally absorbed, nor watching with the same intensity and viewpoint. This was later nuanced in five informal conversations, in which some of them confided to me that they felt *O Vertigo's* work was some of the most compelling and successful dance around, while others were not yet sure what to make of it. (FN: 12-1-00)

The profiles of presenters below were pulled together from interviews with four of *Luna's* presenters: Boucher, Wexler, Schwartz and Heun. Two other presenters – Beaulieu and Garneau -- were only able to give me a few minutes of their time in conversation, to which I added a few contributions about them from fieldnotes and my insider knowledge of their work. Included in these portraits are socio-economic characteristics (Table 5.3), details from the story of what drew them into the dance world, and how they recounted coming to choose the vocation of dance presenter.

*Profile #1: Sylvain Garneau, agent culturel pour la Maison de la Culture Mercier in Montréal.* Garneau cancelled our scheduled interview and soon after left his position at the *Maison de la Culture*, leaving me only able to report on a few aspects of his work from our brief encounter in his office on March 3, 2001. Garneau was one of a network of "Cultural Agents," a city employee appointed by a municipal body to run and operate one of the city-funded *Maisons de la Culture* of which there were 11 in the city of Montréal. This network was created in the '80s as part of a new municipal social policy that

recommended more access<sup>7</sup> to the arts for more of the city's citizens. A *Maison de la Culture* complex was set up in the various neighborhoods, each with a lending library, a theater space and art gallery at its disposal – sometimes all in the same building, other times scattered around the area. And most important of all, in terms of the mandate to “democratize the arts” the tickets to performances (and entry to most all of the public services) were nearly always free of charge.

As I have learned from repeated joint projects together, the *Maison de la Culture Mercier* is in a southeast neighborhood that is relatively poor and dominated by retired persons. Although housing a well-equipped theater with a stage and seating area, considered ideal by local artists for mid-sized dance performances, I was told by their staff that little contemporary dance is performed there because the neighborhood population prefers more traditional art forms.

And so what Garneau was able to explain, in our short encounter, was that he tries to support contemporary dance in another way by lending the stage to technical residencies. It was on his stage that *O Vertigo* dance was first able to develop their lighting, sound and visual imagery in a theatrical setting outside of their studios (during the week of January 4-10, 2001), and later on the theater space at the *Maison de la Culture Mercier* was again given to *O Vertigo* for the project of filming *Luna*.

*Profile #2: Louise Beaulieu, general manager of the Théâtre du Saguenay in Chicoutimi, Québec.* Beaulieu was a former ballet teacher who had become the general manager and booking agent (as communications consultant Clément called her) in charge of choosing the programming for the Auditorium Dufour in Chicoutimi, Québec. Clément informed me that Beaulieu was very involved with the local dance community, works closely with her colleague

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<sup>7</sup> In practice accessibility was accomplished by establishing the culture houses throughout the island, and by offering free entry to neighborhood residents.

Marie Talbot, the communications director, in making programming choices, and also had management responsibilities.

Beaulieu proved difficult to contact, impossible to sit down for an interview. In our sole phone conversation, she referred me to Clément “for my needs” and indicated that she would likely be too busy to give me any more time. We did manage to have a spontaneous 5-minute chat backstage at her theater on the evening of *O Vertigo*’s performance in Chicoutimi. She told me that she had known the dance company for many years and had “bought the *Luna* performance on speculation,” meaning that she booked *Luna* before it was even created. And then, as we spoke, she unexpectedly cancelled part of our former agreement about giving me access to her audience, by telling me that she had decided that morning not to allow me to record the post-performance audience talk, which she herself would be directing. She said it was because she feared making the audience nervous by the presence of sound recording equipment. “[The tape recorder] might make them flee. There is a risk of inciting them to leave.”<sup>xxvi</sup> (FN: 11-3-01 and 11-4-01)

*Profile #3 : Martin Wexler, programming director of The Joyce Theater in New York City.* Our interview took place in his office at the Joyce Theatre in NYC, a few weeks after the *Luna* performance at this venue.

Wexler grew up in Syracuse, upstate New York, to a “typical middle class” family who were supportive of the arts. He was given piano lessons in his youth, and began performing jazz-and-tap choreography in high school musicals. After trying modern dance in college, he liked it well enough to add dance as a double major to that of economics, doing interdisciplinary “independent projects based on the economics of the performing arts.” But he was not secure in his artistic talent, and in the force of his drive and determination to have a career as a dancer. So he chose to “stay in the dance world, but hopefully work in a field or an area where jobs were a little more secure, and more long lasting.” He began his career as an administrative



assistant at The Joyce Theater, and “grew from there into” his position as the director of programming.

He described his role and tasks at “the Joyce” quite clearly and succinctly. In his own words, he is responsible for selecting the companies that will perform there, whether as self-producing rentals or as Joyce productions. He reviews applications, travels around to see performances live, and selects the companies he feels are most appropriate for the Joyce season. It is Wexler who interprets the historical mandate of the Joyce Theater to present a wide range of middle-sized dance companies to the public.

*Profile #4 : Diane Boucher, associate director and programmer of the Festival international de nouvelle danse de Montréal.* Montréal born and bred, Boucher was raised by a father with only a sixth-grade education who worked on trains for Canadian Pacific . Her family was “very, very middle class” she explained, and not “cultivated” in the artistic sense. There were no books or records in their home. Her parents would have preferred her to become a bilingual secretary, and she doesn’t know what generated her interest in the arts. But she did remember how she came to work in the arts field.

Her artistic immersion began at university when the time came to choose a major. She hesitated between anthropology, art history and religion, because fascinated by the study of human beings as they engaged with “the sacred.” She finally chose anthropology, but it was anthropology of art, as a meeting place for her combined interests. Never wanting to be an artist herself, she had a passion for being close to artists because “[...] for me, the sacred is very, very much present in artists, and they are perhaps those who come closest to the sacred on a daily basis through their work “<sup>xxvii</sup> . She began mounting visual arts exhibitions while still studying museology, and just by chance found herself after graduation working in a museum and eventually presenting performances there.

In the early '80s, Boucher, Chantale Pontbriand and myself began to develop the idea of an international dance festival in Montréal, which we eventually co-founded in 1985. We worked together as a programming committee, as members of the festival's board of directors, and each of us took charge of a certain area of work for the biannual event. (My own role as special projects manager was to develop community outreach activities such as classes, audience talks and school shows.)

Boucher was named Vice-President and Associate Director, but prefers to compare her work with that of museum curators who work closely with artists to develop exhibitions. When I asked her to describe the work she does, she answered simply that she "takes care of a festival." Her duties also involved grant-writing, fundraising, programming consultation, establishing contacts with all manner of people involved in the festival, and even some work in publicity (where she produced 60-second television "spots"). As she explained, all of these activities gravitated around the core mission of the festival, which was from her point of view "to give full value to artists' work." <sup>xxviii</sup>

Boucher articulated the mission of the festival and her role and work in this way:

[...the festival is] a link between the public and art, and the choreographer. And so we do everything we can so that the public comes to understand what the artist is trying to say. [...] It means choosing [artists] who have something to say and say it in an interesting, articulate way and finding the best way to transmit what they want to say to the public in general, to the wider public, to everyone. In order to do this, we use all possible means whether texts, films, presentations, workshops, all kinds of things [...].<sup>xxix</sup> (I-DB)

In 2003, both Boucher and I left the festival. Boucher is currently reorienting her career as an independent dance development agent, working on international exchange projects with her extensive network of dance presenter colleagues.

*Profile #5. Stefan Schwarz, head of the stage department at Tanzhaus NRW in Düsseldorf, Germany.* The interview took place in the noisy café of the *Raffinerie* arts center in Brussels during a dance showcase event we were both attending.

The first signs of Schwarz's future vocation in the dance world were his childhood love for athleticism. He showed a marked interest, as he put it, in basketball, jumping and running. He also mused that his inclination towards the arts may have also been a form of rebellion against his technically-minded engineer father, and the comfort of his middle class environment. He noted his mother's interest in the visual arts as a stimulant. And then in Düsseldorf in the '80s, when he was 16 years old, a former girlfriend took him by chance to a dance class. After this initiation he "[...] invested more and more time, [actually] dancing myself, [performing in] stage productions, watching a lot of things." He danced in small companies, and enrolled in the "cultural studies" of theater, music and dance. Schwartz described this unique university program in Hildesheim, called *Kultur Pedagogik* (Pedagogy of Culture), as a study of the "'transfer of culture' to any sort of audience in the more pedagogical sense, but also in the transfer of arts through stage or through radio, through television."

He began practicing and teaching Contact Improvisation, and eventually wrote a master's thesis about the dance form in the framework of postmodern dance. When he was 28, he began "moving around to see things [...] and then started organizing things." Seven years ago he became head of the stage department at Tanzhaus NRW in Düsseldorf, a new nation-wide network founded in Germany to foster dance, and since their move to a new

building a couple of years ago his work “has become a much bigger thing with much more intensity and a broader view internationally.” He called himself a programmer, but in his role as dance organizer his interest was shifting from putting on performances to becoming more involved in the production aspect of choreography. He explained production as the “process of developing pieces and supporting artists in this process to see how they can realize their idea.” He supported these artistic production residencies with rehearsal space, promotion, contacts and even helped artists sell their work to other presenters.

*Profile #6: Walter Heun, dance producer for the Lucerntanz series in Switzerland and the Joint Adventures production company in Munich.* I had the chance to observe Heun interacting with Laurin, and conversed with him in a café, on his visit to the *O Vertigo* studios on October 11, 2000. Since he had no time for an in-depth interview at that time, a year-and-a-half later I posed four questions to him in an email exchange on May 3 and 5, 2002.

Walter Heun flew to Montréal from Munich expressly to preview the creation of *Luna*. He was sitting and conversing with Laurin, on October 11, 2001, as they watched the company rehearsing several sections of the work-in-progress for his benefit. As they talked out loud I overheard Laurin providing insights to aspects of the work, and particularly as to how it would be developing in terms of the eventual use of optical lenses, certain kinds of costumes and technological imagery. At one point Heun he whispered to me his view of Laurin’s working process: “I’m always amazed how Ginette has a very clear idea early on about what she will be using, and is so efficient in her rehearsals.”

Walter sent me the story of his dance background in a succinct email correspondence. In it he cited three crucial “moments of initiation” that had contributed to his interest and entry into the professional dance milieu:

- (a) He liked watching the girls as they were doing jazz gymnastic classes in the sports department, at first only for the pleasure of watching them dancing. With a touch of wry humor he continued that, “after exams we had a final party with theatrical performances for which I convinced 9 other male ‘dancers’ and a female choreographer to produce two dance pieces on ‘how the girls do it.’ ” It was his first dance producing work!
- (b) He was an aficionado of late ‘70s and early ‘80s dance films like *Hair*, *Flash Dance* and *Fame*. From watching these films he felt “this strong impulse to express my emotions through movement.”
- (c) He took some seminars to “intensify his interest” in dance at the university where he was studying theater.

To his mind, entry into the work of dance producing began at the moment when his political consciousness about the arts was raised: “[I] pulled out a piece of paper and a pen [...] in the right bar at the right moment [...] to note the complaints of the dancers and choreographers about the funding situation in Munich in 1984.” The term dance producer is not a comprehensive fit, he wrote, to explain the many roles he plays in the production of dance these days: festival director, manager of a dance company, a cultural funding body, a dance politician, and an artistic director (of his own production company) (I-WH).

It was Heun who offered *O Vertigo* a two-week residency just before the première of *Luna* that he consequently presented in the Lucerne opera house in January 2001. For this residency Heun provided support space and staff to facilitate the final stage of costume construction and other technical aspects of *Luna* in an effort to “open the Lucern opera house to the co-producing dynamic happening in Europe” (FN: 10-11-00).

### 5.5.2 Dance funding agents

Two “dance agents” from Canadian federal and provincial government arts funding offices were encountered in the course of fieldwork. Monique Léger visited the *O Vertigo* studios one afternoon, and I later obtained an in-depth interview with Line Lanthier. Both of are dance colleagues I have known for over 20 years, at first in their past role as young choreographers when they came to danced their own choreographies at *Tangente*. They had now each become full-time professional government employees at arts councils, laboring to improve financial aid to the dance world and create the policies that help dispense available funding judiciously.

Their role in the *Luna* dance event was principally as proponents in the process of financing the company’s operations and choreographic projects. More specifically, their role was to participate in formulating cultural policies, advising their artistic clients and supervision of the jurying processes. Their funding programs also offered general support to project for career development for the *O Vertigo* dancers. Because the mandate of the so-called arms’-length “arts councils” (in contrast to the more politicized model of “cultural ministries” and “heritage portfolios”), for which they worked, was to provide funding to artists informed by their own insider knowledge and which responded to the real needs and practices of dance artists. The staff of these arts councils is usually composed of artworld experts with professional artistic experience as was true for Léger and Lanthier.

At these arts councils in the Canadian and Québécois contexts, it is juries of “artistic peers” who make the decisions about which projects will receive grants and bursaries to help pay for sustaining or project costs for their artistic creations. Lanthier offered me a critical essay by arts administrator Sygoda (1996) about the peer jurying process in the United States, which had been a key influence on her understanding of the corollary

phenomenon in Canada. In this text Sygoda distinguished between juries of different sizes, criteria, types of applications, and degrees of openness to the public, but opined that “the power to select and convene a panel is where the true power lies” (in other words, with the funding agents) because “the real guidelines are in the hearts and minds of the panelists” (p. 55). At this time, including the period of *Luna*’s grant applications, jury composition at the *Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec* and the Canada Council for the Arts includes a varied sampling of peers who are fellow artists, arts administrators and arts presenters.

Francophone Monique Léger spent much of her dance career as a performer and choreographer working in Vancouver on the west coast of Canada before leaving to work in Canada’s capital city of Ottawa. She was one of several dance agents working for the Dance Office of the Canada Council for the Arts. Léger and I have often spoken together about cultural policy in dance, and I have participated on a consulting committee in her presence. Léger paid a personal visit to the company on October 13, 2000. She spent most of the afternoon in Lagacé’s office in a meeting with him behind a closed door. She emerged from the meeting during a first rehearsal break to speak with the company dancers about how they might apply for grants to advance their career and skills. At a later break in rehearsals, Laurin joined Léger and Lagacé for about 10 minutes, but otherwise left most of the fundraising meetings and work to Lagacé. (FN: 10-13-00)

Lanthier is a Québécoise who grew up near a small town north of Montréal, *St-Antoine des Laurentides*. A country girl from a poor family, she was raised on a farm with no exposure at all to dance, but with parents ready to support her in anything she chose to do. She traces her desire to dance back to the second grade in elementary school, when she experienced a one-time only expressive movement exercise during physical education class. One day, sitting there in her blue shorts in the gymnasium, the teacher asked students to move like a flower that was opening. It was a seminal moment

that remained in her mind for many years. In high school she continued to nourish her interest in expressive movement with after-school gymnastics practice and a Modern Dance class. At university she danced as recreation while earning a degree in psychology. By that time she knew that she wanted to consecrate her life to dancing. She spent a couple of years in university dance programs, but had reached the end of training resources in universities at that time, and so declared herself a dance professional. She soon became a member of choreographer Karen Jamieson's fledgling dance company Terminal City Dance in Vancouver. Although she tried her hand at choreography for a short while, Lanthier found herself gradually assuming administrative duties for Jamieson's company, and then became an apprentice in tour and festival organization. After ten years of living in Vancouver, Lanthier moved back east again and worked for the *Montréal Danse* company and the *Conseil des Arts du Canada* before taking her current job as a "dance officer" for the *Conseil des Arts et des Lettres du Québec* in her home province. (I-LL).

As a member of a peer jury chosen by Lanthier, and at another point an artistic "client" as *Tangente's* artistic director under her supervision, I experienced first hand the way in which she interacts with the artistic community in her role as dance agent. In the governmental structure for which she works, it is through different kinds of consultation (councils, committees, personal evaluations and juries) with the artistic community that definitions, criteria and evaluations are formulated for determining the kind and amount of public funds that artists will receive. In the course of our conversation, Lanthier elaborated on her engagement in arts policy debates and her role in choosing criteria, peer evaluators and jury members to judge artistic work



### 5.5.3 Dance writers and broadcasters

There was a group of expressive specialist *Luna* participants who were especially dance literate (knowledgeable) and who had chosen the vocation of producing written and oral discourse about dancers and dancing. Although they were rarely able to earn a living wage at this kind of work, unless as a university professor teaching and researching, they see themselves as professionals. Among those who wrote about *Luna*, I interviewed freelance writer Phillip Szporer, journalists Stéphanie Brody and Linde Howe-Beck, and late historian Iro Tembeck. In addition, the last part of this section includes a description of 38 dance texts about *Luna* published in newspapers, magazines and websites. Among the texts included here are also Barras's book-length story of Laurin's life in dance (Barras, 1995) and excerpts from the first history book on Montréal dance by Tembeck (1991).

#### 5.5.3.1 Métier of dance writing

In the first year of *Luna*'s creation and touring, over thirty dance critics and journalists from Montréal, Canada, the U.S. and Europe published texts and/or spoke on public radio about *Luna*. Some of these specialists were observed in the field, past conversations with them over two decades were also brought to memory, and four were interviewed.

The four dance writers interviewed called their role in the dance world variously: scholar, historian, critic, writer, journalist, educator, and even pioneer. Two used Québécois expressions to name what they do: *chroniqueur de danse* and *animateur de danse*. All had some background in the professional dance world as dance students and performers and began dancing in childhood. As long-standing members of the Montréal dance community, each was able to carry a historical perspective into their texts. Each was

engaged in numerous projects and ventures in the dance world. They came to the Montréal dance world from diverse cultural backgrounds: Spzorer is Polish-Canadian, Linde Howe-Beck is English Canadian, Tembeck was born in Egypt but raised in a British environment, and Brody is a Québécoise whose father was of Jewish-Eastern descent. Some of the descriptive analysis in this section (and in the chapters on meaning), concerning the role of dance specialists who write and speak about dance, is guided by aesthetic philosopher Shusterman's essay (2002) on the logics of arts criticism and his three critical approaches: (a) descriptivism (those who describe); (b) prescriptivism (those who tell us how to interpret); and (c) performativism (those who take a creative role in making sense of the artwork) (pp. 36-43). All three critical perspectives appear in various combinations in the profiles developed below of the four dance writers.

These dance writers' lives in dance and dance writing were guided by a particular, individual ethos and beliefs about the value and meaning of the art form. Their profiles below delve into the backgrounds that fostered their dance views and how they articulated and went about enacting their roles in the dance event.

#### 5.5.3.2 Four biographical profiles.

*Profile #1. Philip Szporer, freelance dance writer and broadcaster.*

Szporer is an Anglophone Canadian of Polish and Russian origin. At the time of this study, he had been watching professional dance for 20 years, writing about it for 18 years. While in his early twenties, he did some Modern Dance training and performing with the Sekai Dance Theatre in Montréal. In 1983, Szporer began to talk about dance on radio, what he called doing a spoken "dance column." At the time of our interview, he was writing on dance for the weekly *Hour* newspaper, and was a radio commentator for

three radio broadcasting outlets. During the pilot project at Jacob's Pillow with *O Vertigo*, Szporer had been hired for the summer as a "scholar-in-residence." I observed him there organizing and carrying out audience talks with Laurin, one of which I used as data for this study (I-GL/PS). He has also been hired by Tangente and other venues as a "*dance animateur*" whose job, as he put it, has been to create links between the art work, audiences and the wider community. He has also embarked on other "dance ventures" that involve him in "various aspects of processes with different people," like creating a "dance diary" of a rehearsal process. He also frequently traveled abroad, advocating and advising dance communities and organizations about development projects. His writings have been published in magazines, and he has presented scholarly papers at dance conferences.

He generally called himself a freelance dance writer, and holds a performativist view of dance writers and critics "as an integral part of the art form" and even as a kind of historian. With over two decades as an insider to and interpreter of the contemporary dance milieu, Szporer claimed "I've been witness to a lot of [growth and development], and I know some of the participants. [...] Therefore my role is not simply to critique a movement per se, in other words a gesture [...] but I've seen the movement of the art form [across time]." He has born witness to "[...] how things have developed from studio performances to on-site location performances, to the building up of spaces, the migration of spaces, how audiences perceive dance because of those spaces, how the people who run certain organizations and festivals determine the menu sometimes. [...] and I know some of the participants or the players."

He also described his role in the wider community as giving a "window to activities going on" and awakening an interest for dance in the novice dance-goer. At the same time, he "speaks to" the dance lover who attends performances frequently. And a third readership and listener he has kept in mind is the dance professional who "reads his reviews in a very

particular way.” He credits his liberal arts education for leading him to incorporate into his writing and radio talks historical, sociological and psychological elements which “[bring] in all the elements that make up a person.” (I-PS)

*Profile #2. Linde Howe-Beck, professional journalist and dance writer.*

Now in her sixties, Howe-Beck is Montréal’s elder dance writer. Howe-Beck began her career in the professional dance world at only 3 years old in ballet classes. Her ballet studies continued until 18, when she began working as a “television dancer” while still in university. It was “ [...] June Taylor kind of stuff. Radio City Music Hall kind of stuff.” Howe-Beck enthused, “I loved it. I loved musical theater. I did that sort of stuff. I did summer stock [theater].”

She became a newspaper journalist and editor. In 1974, while entertainment editor at the Montréal daily English-language newspaper *The Gazette*, she started writing about dance. It began as an experiment in which she wanted to experience the “horrific deadlines” of her arts critics, but at the same time she wanted to relieve the music critic of his dance duties because he had taken a clear dislike to the emerging postmodern dance on the Montréal scene. In a descriptivist frame of mind, Howe-Beck felt a “keen sense of responsibility” to fairly represent the dance community in her newspaper. When she first began writing about dance she felt “like a fish out of water” because having only a little dance history and performance experience in her background, but no training in arts criticism. She had to “find out very quickly why I didn’t like things.” She went looking for more exposure, even attending a 1977 dance critic’s conference to meet in person the protagonists in her new field. It was important for Howe-Beck “to keep an open mind” about the new contemporary dance work. As a younger journalist and critic, her first priority was always to her readers and next to the dance community. But after almost 25 years watching and writing about

dance, she now wanted to “get her needs met as someone who is writing about dance,” as she said, and so has begun to intervene in programming choices by advocating for artists she felt needed to be seen.

*Profile #3. Stéphanie Brody, chroniqueur de danse.*

Brody told this story about how she chose her artistic vocation: “I was small, and I was looking at *Le Devoir*, and I said to myself, ‘This is what I want to do,’ How the hell I was going to get there, I had no idea. Now I’ve figured it out. I don’t know [why but] I just love the idea of explaining to people what artists do.” Her passion for art interpretation was to take many forms.

Brody is a bilingual Montréalais who speaks French and English with equal ease. She was one of the few participants in this study who was born into an artistic, well-to-do family. Her parents sent her to a high school that emphasized art, history and general culture. She studied ballet throughout childhood until at 16 years old, as she explained, “my body kind of ‘gave way’ (she laughs) and my shape started to come in, and that was that!” She got “side-tracked” away from dance until working for the CISM radio program *Concordanse*. Over ten years of radio hosting, she has interviewed young choreographers and delved into “the process [of dance making] and how it is done.” She began her professional career by working with François Colbert at the moment when he was creating a new arts administration program at the *Hautes Études Commerciales*. Moving on to become the first employee at the cultural consulting agency *Cultur’Inc.*, she found her mentor in company director François Arcand. Together they undertook “all kinds of [sociological] studies, market and otherwise” about the artworld in Canada (for instance, *Cultur’Inc.* and Decima Research, 1991). When Arcand finally changed careers, Brody continued on to work as an arts administrator at the *Jeunesses Musicales* organization. It was one day during a showcase performance of “*La Voisine*” by Dulcinée Langfelder that Brody experienced a

pivotal moment when the power of movement brought tears to her eyes. She also participated in an arts management program at the University of Waterloo including theory of funding and marketing, and an apprenticeship at the *Grands Ballets Canadiens*.

Now at 36, Brody worked as a dance journalist and critic (*chroniqueur de danse* is the term she prefers) at the French-language daily newspaper *La Presse*. She had been writing either previews or reviews for dance performances at the pace of twice a week for the last 10 years. Remaining interested, since her radio days, particularly in “[...] what’s happening behind the scenes, how people get ideas [...]” and the notion of *éducation publique* (meaning public education but also refers to the concept of arts literacy), her interviews with artists always lasted a little over an hour. But space for her texts in *La Presse* is usually limited to 30-40 lines and she is required to avoid over-analyzing for this wide-ranging readership. She has found it difficult to develop much educational depth and discussion of process within these parameters. Brody described her writing process as very intuitive and, because she loves the act of writing, “there’s something a little poetic” in her texts. When critiquing choreography, Brody has tried to be as objective as possible. But more the descriptivist, she doesn’t believe it is her role to interpret the meaning of work for readers and audiences. She has seen herself “[...] more as a filter for the average dance spectator.” (I-SB)

*Profile #4. Iro Tembeck, pioneering dance educator, historian and critic.*

Tembeck “has been involved in dance since the age of 5.” Because she “used to jump up and down a lot” her parents sent her to dance class. Her mother was a painter, but otherwise she was surrounded by businessmen and lawyers. At a British primary school in Cairo, Egypt, where she was raised, she studied the Greek revival dancing of Isadora Duncan from age 5 to 7, which she called “barefeet dancing with hoops, scarves, and balls, to find the figure eights, etc.” Her talent recognized by family and teachers, she was

then sent to the Sonia Ivanova Ballet Academy in Cairo. Since she “was not a short tutu type [but] a long tutu type”, she often did character dancing and was “placed in solo situations.” She later became an opera ballet dancer and did some “commercial” television dancing. (I-IT)

She came from Cairo to Montréal in 1967 at the age of 20 with no money, to visit the World Exposition and her brother, and to discover “the New World.” She experienced jazz and contemporary dance with enthusiasm, and soon left ballet behind. With a B.A. already gained, she continued her studies of English Literature at McGill University in a Master’s program and earned a professional dance teacher’s degree from the Canadian College of Dance (now called Ryerson). Tembeck began teaching “period dancing and fundamentals of movement” in dance studios and at the McGill Theatre Department. She auditioned for the *Nouvelle Aire* modern dance company where she danced and choreographed from 1972-77, and later founded the Axis dancers’ collective. (I-IT)

But as she explained, “(she sighs), I kept saying ‘I’m at the university and I’m trying to make people move, and I’m in the studio...and I would like to make them think.’ “ This led her to pioneer the teaching of dance history in Québec, her first opportunity being with the *Académie des Grands Ballets Canadiens*. She characterized herself as a dance historian, critic and educator and was a full-time professor in the *Département de danse* at the *Université du Québec à Montréal*.

She spoke of her main role as that of social missionary and historian, actively intervening to create meaning, very much in the spirit of Shusterman’s performativism. For Tembeck it was imperative to give “visibility to a theoretical subject that was not sufficiently made use of, which was the growth of dance in Québec.” She saw Montréal dance as a very specific kind of dance culture, not to be “summarily put into either North America or Canada at large, or the Francophone countries.” With a minor in history and her “Egyptian psyche” the “idea of roots” was vital to her. As

touched on in Chapter II, she felt strongly that in the New World, ‘with modern buildings, modern things [...] we have forgotten ... the yesterday.’ There is then an “aspect of preservation” in her texts, although paradoxically she also insists that her own perspectives and environment keep shifting and so does her writing. She expressed her understanding that the work of the historian as a matter of subjective interpretation (see also Tembeck, 1994c). In her own writings on choreography she interprets, analyzes and comes up with arguments about choreographies, while thinking always of the broader picture and of previous works. Expressing pride in having “pioneered many things,” she did indeed pen the first book-length dance history about the development of professional dance in Montréal (Tembeck, 1991) and collected the first historical archives on the early period. She summarized her life’s desire in our interview as “always [have] been wanting to make people or help people perceive dance as an integral part of society. To build bridges between the dance colony and the rest [of the community-at-large].” (I-IT)

### 5.5.3.3 Additional dance journalists and reporters.

Although I had only met six of them in person, 20 journalists and critics are included in this study by way of (and because of) the texts they wrote about *Luna*. Some were vocational dance historians, others dance critics, reporters and/or researchers who had garnered special knowledge of the contemporary dance world through studies and life experiences. Each had honed a personal perspective about dance and dance discourse, including a set of criteria to evaluate and interpret choreography and public performances. A few were career journalists with only a general knowledge of the arts and of dance, simply announcing details and features of the coming performance of *Luna*.



Their writing was published in books, weekly and daily newspapers, magazines, and on websites. The texts varied in length from a single paragraph (e.g. brief announcements of the performance) to a couple of pages (in Tembeck's book for example, 1991). For the most part, the radio programs had been actually conceived by the radio hosts themselves, out of a personal interest in educating the public about contemporary dance. As witnessed in the above profiles, the duration of the radio shows gave considerably more room to develop in-depth interviews and ideas about dance than did the newspapers.

The forms of dance discourse developed by these specialists ranged from descriptive genres (announcements, descriptive analysis of performances), to informative educational approaches (including historical and social contexts), and critical evaluations of the choreography and the particular performance reviewed. The texts offered differing perspectives and each was tempered by their personal art views, how they perceived their artworld role, and the literary style of the writer.

A closer, more detailed look at the content of the previews and reviews of *Luna* yielded a wide range of aspects and subjects: descriptive accounts of the choreography, the dancers training and skills, the mise-en-scène and music, the size and reactions of audience, the local presentation context, contemporary dance aesthetics and history; evaluations of the dance's form and content and interpretations of *Luna's* meaning.

And finally, as witnessed by the 4 previous profiles, these texts were created with a specific "readership" in mind, and the writers were obliged to follow the parameters that formed the policy of the institutions producing and disseminating their work for a "target readership." As Szporer suggested in his profile above, it is possible to imagine 3 distinct kinds of readers: those who were novices to the dance world, those who already frequent performances regularly, and the professional artists themselves (I-PS).

## 5.6 *Luna* audiences

How did spectators behave during the *Luna* performances, and what kinds of conventions guided their spectating? How did they come to be interested in contemporary dance spectating? What kind of people were those came to see *Luna*?

In the course of my fieldwork I observed various kinds of spectators watching *Luna* and held three audience focus groups immediately after performances in the cities of Montréal and Chicoutimi. Twenty-two people in all participated in the groups, and they included first-time, occasional and frequent participants as well as five artworld professionals.

### 5.6.1 Audience behavior

Although seemingly axiomatic to those familiar with contemporary dance, it is worth remembering that the very definition of the performing arts in Western culture implies a presentational event (Nahachewsky, 1995) in which artists perform onstage for observing spectators. *Luna*'s visual designer Morgenthelar described the performing arts spectator in a commonsense way as "[...] somebody [who] goes from home or from work into a theatre, and pays money and sits down to see something [...] for whatever reason, desire, they go into a space and they sit down for you [the artist performing onstage]. They try to be quiet and concentrate. They don't talk [...]." (I-AM)

As well as the visible relationships between performers and spectators, this study looks at how audience members behaved among themselves both individually and collectively, and also the more subtle interactions among spectators and *Luna*'s technicians, company and venue personnel, and various expressive specialists. In other words, in their role as spectators,

*Luna's* audience members not only paid for a ticket and watched the dancers perform, but they also perceived the visible effects of the technicians' work from backstage, interacted with box office personnel and ticket takers, some read newspapers previews and reviews, and some read program notes for the performance and studied the *Luna* poster prepared by *O Vertigo's* directors and staff.

*Luna* spectators attending the performances at the *Monument-National* and the *Théâtre de Saguenay* shared and demonstrated collectively certain learned and agreed-upon behavioral codes, or theatrical frames (Goffman, 1974) for most contemporary dance spectating, as described in the previous chapter. For instance, they sat still and in the dark while intently watching the dancers performing onstage in front of them. They didn't applaud physical feats of dancers as is usual in classical ballet and ice-dancing for instance, holding their applause until the ending point of choreographies when performers bow to them. In practice, as I have observed through the years, breaks in these protocols or mistaken behavior due to inexperience are usually corrected by their immediate companions and/or family members, other fellow audience members and sometimes even theatre personnel. And although the *O Vertigo* dance company is self-defined in their promotional materials as contemporary and innovative, choreographer Laurin had not been among the genre of non-conventional artists who seeks to alter or challenge theatrical conventions of dance-going concurrent with the *Luna* performances.

### 5.6.2 Initiation into the dance world

What was the nature of *Luna* spectators' first contacts with the professional dance world? While the focus group format did not leave enough time for members to recount an elaborate story about how they came

to attend *Luna*, they were asked how their first contacts occurred. They spoke of how they became aware of dance as an art form, saw their earliest dance performance live or on television, and finally sat before their initial contemporary dance presentation (which for 5 of them some was *Luna*).

Attending contemporary dance events like *Luna* was not a matter of birthright in the cultural context of Montréal. There is no systematic social mechanism by which Montréalers in general were introduced to dance spectating. For audience members like those in the focus groups, attending dance performances was a practice engaged in by a small subculture of Montréalers outside of their workplace activities.

Focus group spectators described their reactions to first dance performance experiences as ranging from “not very fond at first” and so requiring repeated exposure before a taste was acquired, to those who found themselves “immediately hooked.” The latter even spoke of their experience in terms of being fatally stricken, as if falling in love or becoming addicted:

I have to do this. I have to go again and again. It's like an addiction. (Hobden, FG1)

What really started getting me hooked was seeing *La chambre blanche* by *O Vertigo* about ten years ago. And I just thought ‘I've got to see more of this.’ It seemed to be about me, in a way that just kept me going to the theater and hoping it would happen [again]. (Wilson, FG2)

These spectators' narratives revealed that initiation into contemporary dance spectating occurred at various stages of life and through a variety of means. It is interesting to note that, although contemporary dance spectators in general are relatively well educated (as shown in the next section), not one of the 22 focus group spectators

mentioned their educational institutions as the site of first contact or knowledge of dance.<sup>8</sup>

Although there was no single point or means of entry for their initial dance world and contemporary dance spectating experiences, I discovered in these focus groups 6 recurring motifs in which they: (a) were drawn into the dance world through dance classes; (b) had been brought to a performance by friends and relatives; (c) had discovered professional dance performances on television; (d) attended a popular dance performance (one that was well-known to the population in general); (e) came to *Luna* from professional interest as a fellow artists or arts educator; and (f) spontaneously chose to see *Luna* out of curiosity and a taste for the arts in general.

Youth and university dance classes provided fertile first contacts for some focus group spectators. Three women spoke about reluctantly taking ballet lessons as a small child, a practice that led all of them to develop a life-long interest in dance. Echoing the other two, Dura recalled:

My mother dragged me to ballet when I was six years old. I wasn't very fond of it at that age. I'd rather do things like climb trees. [But now] I just go [to dance performance] because I want to enjoy and think that's what gives meaning to the world. (Dura, FG1)

And Jerry Antonyk, who described himself as a dedicated dance spectator, discovered contemporary dance classes as a young adult at Concordia University in Montréal:

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<sup>8</sup> The exception was Jerry Antonyk, whose dance education began “accidentally” through a university dance class for non-dance majors.

I started getting interested accidentally at university [...] I wanted to do some exercise [...] and then I saw there was an extra-curricular activity in contemporary dance<sup>9</sup> so I decided well, I'll take it up. [...] I enjoyed it but found out my body couldn't do it! But I like the creativity behind it and I made friends in the dance community through the course, and I started to go to see dance performances. (Antonyk, FG1)

At least half the spectators in the focus groups mentioned that they had attended *Luna* in the company of acquaintances, relatives or work colleagues, as an occasion for socializing and/or by way of being introduced to an activity their dance-going companions already enjoyed. For instance, one mentioned that her first dance performances had been “opportunities to go out with friends” and one family had brought their daughter to *Luna*, her first experience with live contemporary dance (FG3). Another spectator told how his mother was an artist-writer who frequently took him along to all kinds of artistic performances as a child, and another was introduced by her brother to an earlier *O Vertigo* presentation. And after their retirement, two sisters had embarked on an epic journey together to initiate themselves to various kinds of arts events (and foreign lands), paid for by their recent lottery winnings. In their study of Québec arts spectators, Cloutier and Pronovost (1996) proposed the concept of “networks of sociability,” illustrated by these *Luna* spectators, networks which they theorized as being more powerful determinants than people's ever-changing patterns of personal cultural practices.

Television proved to be another entry point into dance spectating for at least four focus group members. Enthusiastic “bar dancer” Jimmy Simard implied that watching professional dancers on television had actually incited and stimulated his desire to experience a live performance: “I [had] already

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<sup>9</sup> Two university dance departments in Montréal, at the *Université du Québec à Montréal* and Concordia University, offer various kinds of dance classes to non-majors.

watched dance performances on television [...] but to see it live is even better, even more stimulating” (FG3). Tembeck writes about an earlier period beginning in 1952 when Montréal’s nascent ballet community brought their choreographic productions to television (1988a) “sporadically and then in a more constant manner” (p. 8), and there are currently two arts-specialty television stations available to Montréalers, *BravoArts!* and *ArTV*, who offer and even produce choreographies for the camera, interviews with dancers, and dance documentaries as a regular part of their programming.

Six out of 22 in this focus group (and maybe others who neglected to mention it) confirmed that their first exposure to a live professional dance performance was by way of one of Québec’s widely popular offerings, dance events that had attracted spectators in the thousands: the Christmas classic of *The Nutcracker*, charismatic solo dancer Margie Gillis, *Le Dortoir* by the Carbon 14 theater company (in which dancing was featured), or the German dance company of Pina Bausch at the *Festival de nouvelle danse* de Montréal. (The latter two, although quite contemporary, became unusually popularized by way of wide media attention, critical acclaim, large publicity campaigns, and subject matter that garnered interest from a wide audience.) Their initial experiences led these six focus group members to a long-term commitment for dance in general, and eventually to develop a taste for contemporary dance in particular.

The five arts professionals (not dancers) who joined the *Luna* focus groups came to their first dance performances as a matter of vocational interest. As visual artist Kevin explained: “I think I got turned on to dance when I saw Pina Bausch [eighteen years ago]. [...] I’m a visual artist and you know, for me it’s a way of acquiring different types of information” (FG2). These artist-spectators emphasized their passion for seeking out arts experiences in general, and depicted themselves as colleagues of the *O Vertigo* artistic creators.

And finally four first-time contemporary dance spectators, who had joined the focus groups, claimed that it was out of a spirit of curiosity, or love for expressive bodies and movement in general, that they had chosen to come to *Luna*. For instance, one student spectator spoke of his intense personal interest in the arts and a teenager told me of having chosen to accompany her parents to the *Luna* performance because of her life-long fascination for the beauty and grace she finds in dancing.

Of what importance are these first contacts? I propose that the circumstances and reactions to a first dance experience may provide significant grounds from which dance appreciation, a dance ethos and future engagement as an audience member might develop. The critical importance of first arts exposure, in particular those that occur early in life, were also confirmed by the cross-Canada study of arts “consumers” (*Cultur’Inc* and Decima Research, 1992). The results included the finding that Canadians who had been exposed to the arts as a child were far more likely to become interested in them later in life. I would suggest that future studies of spectators’ initial dance experiences might do much to illuminate the nature and the impact of this crucial time and place of entry into the professional dance world.

### 5.6.3 Characteristics of the focus group members

At the beginning of audience focus group discussions, members voluntarily filled out survey sheets (Appendix E) in which I asked for their name, income level, gender, place of residence, profession, education and cultural identity. A summary the answers they provided when they filled out the form (in Tables 5.1.1 and 5.1.2) were the basis for the discussion below.



In this section, I will also look at implications of these characteristics in view of determining the nature of the *Luna* event, and introduce comparative statistics from various North American audience studies (*Cultur'Inc* and Decima Research, 1991; CROP, 2001; National Endowment for the Arts, 1992 and 1997; Samson Bélair, 1990; Sussman, 1998).

(a) Education. The contemporary dance spectators in these focus groups had a relatively high educational level, with 15 out of 22 (68%) having some university education or possessing a university degree (Table 5.1.1). In comparison and according to the last statistics available (in 1996), only a small proportion or 25% of the general population of the Montréal metropolitan area were university educated (*Ville de Montréal*, 2005).

The tendency of contemporary dance audiences -- variously called modern<sup>10</sup>, "dance other than ballet," postmodern or *nouvelle danse* in survey questionnaires -- to be relatively well-educated in comparison to the public-at-large was also confirmed in the findings of several large-scale studies of arts and dance audiences made in the U.S.A. by the National Endowment for the Arts (1992; 1997), across Canada (*Les Consultants Cultur'inc* and Decima Research, 1991), and in Québec (*Samson Bélair*, 1990; CROP, 2001). In the case of the 2001 *Festival international de nouvelle danse de Montreal*, where *O Vertigo* performed *Luna* and the focus groups were convened for this study, the CROP audience poll of 1,295 spectators also concluded that "the clientele of FIND is highly educated as compared to the population in general (72% were at a university level)" <sup>xxx</sup> (CROP, 2001, pp. 1-2).

At least two questions arise from these findings that merit further attention from researchers. Is the activity of watching contemporary dance, at least for North American audiences, considered an intellectual pursuit

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<sup>10</sup> Sussman (1996) points out in her analysis of the National Endowment for the Arts studies, made in 1992 and 1997, that the term "modern dance" was so often misunderstood by informants in the NEA studies as to cause the findings on this kind of dance to be negligible.

requiring a relatively high level education and in consequence attracting the highly educated? In fact, I found (as a later chapter will explain) that *Luna* focus group spectators expressed at least five categories of motivation for contemporary dance-going, with “intellectual reflection” being cited as only one among others. The second question: is the large percentage of highly educated spectators in contemporary dance audiences the result of an educational system that doesn’t tend to introduce students to the kind of knowledge required to appreciate the contemporary arts until they are at higher levels of education? It is a fact that in Québec the few nascent programs for teaching dance in the elementary and secondary schools are once again on the decline because of budget cuts.

(b) Income. Another common feature among these 22 focus group members was their relatively modest income level. From the evidence of these discussions and survey sheets (Table 5.1.1) it appears that attending the *Luna* performance was the choice of mainly middle income arts-goers, the average income of Montréalers being about 25, 000\$ (in the last available statistic on the website of the *Ville de Montréal*, 2005), but virtually no low income workers at all (at least none were detected in all of the research here). Only six out of 22 spectators<sup>11</sup> (27%), but none of the artists among them, earned more than 30,000\$ a year (four out of the six higher earners might be members of the upper middle or wealthy classes, having indicated earning over 45,000\$ a year).

It is tempting to presume that ticket prices in Montréal are a deciding factor for spectator’s choice of performance, but in fact the cost of the ticket for the *Luna* presentations included in my fieldwork varied from a relatively costly 32\$ general admission to a more accessible 15\$ for students. (As a point of comparison with other artistic events in Montréal: a ticket to the cinema currently vacillates between 8\$ and 12\$, while seeing a popular music

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<sup>11</sup> One spectator left a blank in answer to the question on income.

spectacle in the largest venue in town hovers around 50\$+). In Chicoutimi the tickets were 24\$, but reduced to 15\$ for accessibility to the CEGEP students in the surrounding buildings; in New York City they were more expensive, at 32\$, with a reduction to 19\$ for those who paid to be members of the theater; and at the Montréal presentations, tickets were sold at 30\$ and 25\$ (depending on seat location) with a more reasonable 15\$ for students and seniors.

It is likely that the largely middle class, professional and well-educated spectators felt comfortable with the values and ideas expressed at these performances, from the informal dress code to the innovative style and content of the dances. This fact is made clear in the *Cultur'Inc.* and Decima Research study (1991), in which the psychographic profiles of Canadian arts-goers demonstrated that by-and-large they attended contemporary art in the interest of intellectual pursuits.

(d) Gender. The focus group discussions didn't yield any conversation about the sexes, but the gender composition of the groups raises the subject of male and female participation in the audiences the contemporary dance world in general and this dance event in particular.

Of the *Luna* focus group members, 10 were women and 12 were men (Table 5.1.1). In other words, despite the fact that equal representation of the sexes was not an explicit goal, I received an almost equal number of each sex to the post-performance discussions. In fact this is not representative of the gender breakdown of most contemporary dance audiences in which women have been usually predominant (*Les Consultants Cultur'inc* and Decima Research, 1991; CROP, 2001; National Endowment for the Arts, 1992 and 1997; Samson Bélair, 1990; Sussman, 1998). It is impossible to say why I happened to secure the participation of this unusually large proportion of men, but four of them came along to accompany their wives who expressed the initial interest in focus group participation.

In contrast, the CROP study summary (2001) of spectators attending the festival in which *O Vertigo* performed -- the 2001 edition of the *Festival international de nouvelle danse de Montreal* -- found that among spectators at this festival, 70% were women (pp. 1-2). And an extensive 1992 cross-Canadian audience study, in the category of occasional dance spectators who had seen one or two contemporary dance performances during a previous season, yielded a similar gender breakdown of 67% women and 33% men (*Cultur'inc* and Decima Research, 1991, p. 287).

These North American audience profiles provide evidence that, despite the large proportion of men in the small sample of the *Luna* focus groups, attending performances is a predominantly female preoccupation in this geographical context. A comparison of the three existing CROP studies from the *Festival international de nouvelle danse de Montréal* gives conclusive evidence of an increasing feminization of their audiences (2001). This notion of contemporary dance as predominantly a female activity correlates with the low number of men registered in professional dance training programs like the *O Vertigo* summer workshop, and is reinforced also in some of the biographies of male dancers in this chapter (I-PL, I-KN, I-DR).

(d) Age. The audience focus group members ranged in age from 16 to 66 (Table 5.1.1). As it turned out, this focus group sample of 22 spectators falls within such a wide age range -- from student spectators in their late teens to professionals at various career stages, and including retired persons -- that the views of several generations of dance-goers (spanning six decades) were recorded in this study.

The age range of the 22 *Luna* focus group members resembled in fact that of the *Festival international de nouvelle danse de Montréal* in general, as confirmed by the CROP survey (2001). The CROP consulting firm found that 26% of festival spectators were under 24 years, 47% between 25-44 years, and a last 27% were over 45 years.

It appears that, at the time of this study, contemporary dance in Montréal in general was attended by a large span of age groups, although predominated by adults who had not yet reached middle age, and more rarely young children and senior citizens. In the *Luna* audience focus groups, the youngest member was 16 year old Andrea Simard who had come along with her parents and found passion and emotion in the choreography, while the oldest was Jeannine Hubert had waited 65 years to discover the pleasure, as she put it, of admiring young and agile bodies dancing skillfully and energetically (FG3). And so a specific category of age seems not to have been a determining factor, nor a marked characteristic of those who chose to attend *Luna*.

(d) Profession. All of the spectators in the three *Luna* audience focus groups were either students, artists or white-collar professionals: 3 pre-university students, 2 retired sisters (of whom one had been a nurse and the other a secretary), 3 were practicing dancers, three were teachers of various kinds, 2 visual artists, a music professor, a linguistics researcher, a hand-sign interpreter for the deaf, an osteopath (specializing in dance injuries), a tour manager, a medical secretary and a project manager, a translator, a salesman, and an *intervenant en démystification* (a term for which I was unable to find an English translation) (Table 5.1.1).

Thus people from a wide variety of vocational orientations found themselves attending my post-show focus groups. Not surprisingly, many focus groups members were directly or indirectly involved in the art world, and so motivated to stay after a performance to enrich their evening's experience. But most fascinating to my mind were those whose day jobs suggested no evident connection to the arts. For these working people, as proposed above and we shall see in a later section, dance-going is a choice and interest practiced within their non-working hours. And so for some, as a

later chapter will reveal, dance-going brought the kinds of meaning to their lives that their workplace didn't provide.

The CROP consultants (2001) came to similar conclusions about the professional and student composition of the *Festival de nouvelle danse à Montréal* audiences. They expressed this idea in terms of four employee types: “[...] it (the festival audience clientele) contained many professionals (45%), semi-professionals, technicians and white collar workers (45%) [...]”<sup>xxxi</sup> (pp. 1-2). They added that the 2001 festival had attracted an unprecedented proportion of students at 25%, principally from the artistic disciplines (CROP, 2001). Only 5% of those interviewed claimed vocational orientations outside of professional and white-collar, while in my own study there were none at all. This can be seen to correlate with the characteristic of higher education, which is usually a prerequisite for entering these kinds of vocations, as is clearly the case among *Luna* focus group members (Tables 5.1.1 and 5.1.2).

(f) Ethnicity / cultural identity. The answers to the “cultural question” from focus group members ranged from a proposition of national identities such as Québécois, Canadian and Swedish; to regional allegiances expressed as *Saguenéenne* (from Saguenay), *Jeannoise* (from Lac St-Jean), “*un bleuet*” (“a blueberry” and so from the blueberry-producing Lac St-Jean region), and *Iles de La Madeleine* among others; to hyphenated hybrid nationalities such as Canadian-Ukrainian, Irish-Canadian, and *Africaine-Québécoise moitié-moitié* (African-Québécoise half and half) (Table 5.1.2).

Of what importance might be these various cultural identities when determining the nature and meaning of the *Luna* dance event? This kind of event, as exemplified by these focus groups, includes dancing and non-dancing participants from a vast array of cultures. Each of the regional and national groups cited by audience focus group participants (Irish, Québécois, African, Swedish, etc.) has a particular history with, and set of values

concerning, the body, dance and dancing. As dance anthropologists have been contending for several decades, these culturally distinct groups possess certain historic, aesthetic movement preferences and themes for their adherents and an ever-evolving national folkdance style with regional variants, as embodied in their own traditional and vernacular social dances. And so the cultural background of *Luna* spectators (and all participants), an inevitable part of their education and upbringing, contributed in some way to determining the character of their choreographic outlook and so the manner in which *Luna* was experienced and interpreted. Although the effects of cultural identity were not discussed specifically during the focus groups, evidence of cultural influence on the understanding of dance events will arise throughout this study.

(g) Place of residence. All but 3 audience focus group members were currently living in Montréal or Chicoutimi, where the dance performances were held, or drove in from nearby towns and cities. Of the remaining three, one didn't write in his place of residence, one was from Victoria, British Columbia, and another from Sweden (Table 5.1.2).

In the province of Québec there is very little professional contemporary dance developing outside of metropolitan Montréal. And from information gleaned during my recent participation in a consulting committee for the *Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec*, regional encouragement of professional dance outside of Montréal will not become state policy any time soon<sup>12</sup>. With the exception of countries that have developed a policy of “arts decentralization” (supporting the growth of the arts in smaller centers as in Holland, England and France), contemporary dance performances throughout the Occident are largely concentrated in large cities.

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<sup>12</sup> At the beginning of this consultation session I asked my assembled colleagues for permission, which they granted, to paraphrase some of the ideas that would arise for inclusion in my doctoral thesis.

In terms of the *Festival international de nouvelle danse de Montréal*, where *Luna* was performed, the small proportion of out-of-town tourists attending was reflected also in the CROP audience study (2001). In their summary, the CROP consultants concluded that only 10% of the audience came from outside of the metropolitan region of Montréal.

Those focus group spectators like Renaud who came from smaller cities like Sherbrooke and smaller still towns like Alma, spoke about the lack of access to dance in their locality, the difficulty of getting to see dance and their commitment to traveling long distances to see performances when necessary and possible:

[...] there aren't many performances in the region, so you have to get yourself there even if you're from Alma! [Alma] is pretty far away [for us], so we don't get to all of the dance performances. Because when it's winter, and there's a snowstorm, you don't go to Alma!<sup>xxxii</sup> (FG3)

The most striking factor in terms of the spectators' place of residence was that 18 out of 22 spectators identified themselves as urban dwellers, whether from large or small cities and towns. Among the other 4, one couple drove into see dance in Sherbrooke from a rural town (*La Patrie*) and two others who lived in nearby cities thought of themselves as suburbanites (e.g. living in residential areas on the outskirts of large cities). Since most contemporary dance is created in urban environments by artists who are urban-dwellers, as I know from experience, perhaps it is no surprise that this kind of cosmopolitan art doesn't draw massive interest from rural and suburban spectators. The vast majority of choreographers in Québec are urban dwellers, as is true for Laurin, and from my own observations they tend to generate work (with exceptions of course) that reflects urban dweller's themes and views. There is so little interest for contemporary dance in smaller Québec communities



outside of Montréal (as demonstrated by ticket sales and general lack of knowledge of these forms) that-- which is cause and which effect? – few performances are even brought in by local arts presenters for them to see.

## 5.7 Conclusion

This massive collection of stories recounts the diverse twists and turns of *Luna* participants' lives in dance. But more, among and between the lines of the tale-telling is a group portrait of how this small sub-culture of Montréalers came to engage in a dance practice for which there was (and still is) scant social sanction. It can now be imagined the way in which they form a cooperative network and how the roles of each one meshed with one another through their individual contributions.

Through their oral histories and written texts has emerged a sense of the environments in which they were raised, as they hindered or instigated an emerging sensibility of the contemporary art world. The diversity is stunning and demonstrates that there was clearly no single path to their engagement with dance. Attempts to reduce this chapter to a neat, succinct "figure" failed over and over in the face of the complexity of this matrix of interrelated lives and roles. Only a few common patterns emerged from the text: (a) they were comparatively well educated; (b) many were irrepressible "expressive movers" from their youth and seekers of creative outlets, and (c) with only a couple of exceptions (dancer Barry and dance writer Brody) none came from the wealthy classes.

Also inscribed into the texts in this chapter are the dance views and notions that animated their actions in the dance event, the ways in which they went about their participation and glimmers of insight as to why. And so this copious weave of lives in dance lays part of the foundation for Part III of this

ethnography in which I will more closely examine the kinds of meanings that the dance event and the performance of *Luna* came to have for each of them.

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Original French texts

<sup>i</sup> “Chez *O Vertigo*, il y a une directrice artistique qui fait toutes les créations. Donc, tu travailles pour quelqu’un, pour un individu. Et pour moi, tu es à la merci de tous les états d’âme d’une seule et unique personne [...] on a beau donner des titres à n’importe qui, directeur général de ..., il n’y a rien qui va passer en haut de cette personne.” Jocelyn Proulx

<sup>ii</sup> Ginette : “Ils ont le droit à une autre prise que vous.” Ken : “Est-ce que j’ai le droit de leur suggérer quelque chose?” Ginette: “Oui. Mais Patrick a le droit de ne pas l’écouter.” From fieldnotes.

<sup>iii</sup> “C’est mon rôle à moi et Raymond de faire en sorte que les danseurs soient toujours disponibles à envoyer quelque chose et à recevoir aussi.” Ginette Laurin

<sup>iv</sup> “Le chorégraphe est la personne maîtresse, c’est la ‘personne orchestre,’ c’est sa vision, c’est lui qu’il faut croire.” Denis Lavoie

<sup>v</sup> “[...] j’avais fait le deuil d’être professeur d’arts plastiques et je retrouvais dans la danse un langage, une communication et une musicalité que je me rendais compte que j’aimais beaucoup, beaucoup. Aussi, le voyage m’intéressait de plus en plus. Et la danse, ce langage universel, me permettait finalement d’aller travailler un peu partout dans le monde, de voyager tout en travaillant et de rencontrer des gens.” Raymond Brisson

<sup>vi</sup> “[...] un rôle en évolution. C’est un rôle difficile à cerner. Certains l’appellent répétiteur, directeur des répétitions, assistant chorégraphe, assistant à la direction artistique...C’est un peu tout ça. Je le résume souvent à un rôle ‘d’accompagnateur.’ J’accompagne le danseur, j’accompagne la directrice artistique. [...] Les accompagner à la poursuite de ce que la chorégraphe cherche. Aider le danseur aussi avec sa propre intégrité en tant qu’interprète, en tant qu’individu.” Raymond Brisson

<sup>vii</sup> “J’aime toujours la danse avec le feu et la passion [comme auparavant] mais je peux maintenant la concevoir comme un métier méticuleux comme celui de l’horlogier ou de l’orfèvre.” Mélanie Demers

<sup>viii</sup> “Il faut très vite être identifié en danse, surtout pour les filles, mais tu peux tout de même le faire par plaisir. Pour moi de ne pas avoir été identifié n’aurait pas été une si grande déception puisque je dansais beaucoup par plaisir et je continuais d’étudier le soir. Je n’avais pas de plan de carrière, ça c’est certain. Il ne faut pas dans ce métier-là aspirer tout de suite à faire une carrière en danse. L’idée de la passion doit venir avant.” Ginette Laurin

<sup>ix</sup> “Ce travail-là, je pense que c’est un travail de ‘représentation’. C’est d’essayer de traduire la réalité dans un mode poétique. Puis c’est à travers le corps.” Mélanie Demers

<sup>x</sup> “[...] nous ont dit travailler sur son ‘jardin intérieur.’ C’est quelque chose que le danseur va apprendre pendant le processus de création. Il va essayer de trouver l’essence de son rôle, ou de la danse en général, et comment continuer à cultiver ça. Et souvent, en répétition, après 20 spectacles ou 40

spectacles, normalement ils font à peu près 80 spectacles d'une même pièce... alors, parfois, on revient à l'essence. On essaie de se rappeler à quoi on a pensé quand on a créé la section, qu'est-ce que je cherchais, à quoi j'ai fait référence, de quoi on a parlé, c'est quoi la petite étincelle qui a parti la création de cette séquence-là." Ginette Laurin

<sup>xi</sup> "On comprend l'ambiance par exemple. C'est à nous de nourrir ce jardin-là, qui a une certaine couleur, une certaine odeur, c'est à nous de dire les fleurs qui ne vont pas dans ça, on ne les met pas dans ça. Comprends-tu? On a de la place pour amener l'interprétation, mais ça reste dans une ambiance, un univers précis." Marie-Claude Rodrigue

<sup>xii</sup> "Mon père étant parti, je pouvais faire ce que j'aimais." Kha Nguyen

<sup>xiii</sup> "[...] j'aime bien ce qu'ils font [...] Mais la structure de la compagnie en tant que telle, tous les jours, ça ne me convient pas." Kha Nguyen

<sup>xiv</sup> "...j'avais une rage à l'intérieur parce que je voyais que c'était juste les enfants riches qui pouvaient le faire. Et je me suis dit : FINI! Moi je vais danser sur le plancher et ça ne coûtera pas un 'cent'!" Marie-Claude Rodrigue

<sup>xv</sup> "J'étais vraiment maniaque!" Marie-Claude Rodrigue

<sup>xvi</sup> "C'est trop, trop de beat." Ginette Laurin

<sup>xvii</sup> "Moi, j'arrive avec des propositions musicales, mais c'est très incomplet. J'arrive avec des propositions pour donner l'atmosphère, l'ambiance, certaines pièces musicales que j'ai déjà trouvées pour certaines séquences, et il s'agit, pour lui, de compléter. Il fait une recherche particulière. Parfois il va créer des sons pour la pièce, et il fait l'assemblage de tout ça à la fin." Ginette Laurin

<sup>xviii</sup> "[...] rêve en couleurs. Il fait son travail de créateur, il crée sans contraintes. [...] Et moi je le ramène sur terre, mais il faut que je trouve une façon de le ramener qui va aller dans le sens de ses idées [...] à l'intérieur de budgets et de contraintes de production qui me sont donnés via mes patrons." Jocelyn Proulx

<sup>xix</sup> "Ça marche, ça ne marche pas, pas pire. [...] Et si on allait avec les images comme ça, plus court, 30 secondes? [...] Enlèves tout ce qui est pâle." [...] "Presque, mais pas au début."

<sup>xx</sup> "[...] ma fonction c'est de m'assurer que Ginette soit défendue artistiquement. Parce que dans un C.A. on peut avoir tendance, des fois, à aller du côté des affaires pour rentabiliser la compagnie – on coupe trois semaines de salaire [et ainsi] on envoie les danseurs au chômage ou on ne fait pas de chorégraphie. Moi, je me suis toujours arrangé pour défendre le point de vue de Ginette et éviter qu'on devienne une compagnie sans trop d'image." Claude Gosselin

<sup>xxi</sup> "[...] je n'étais pas du tout spécialisée pour la danse. J'étais 'neuve' pour la danse'." Lise Clément

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<sup>xxii</sup> “Je suis un garçon qui vient de la banlieue, avec tout ce que ça comporte en signification, banlieue. Quelqu’un d’apolitique, sans culture, zéro!” Jocelyn Proulx

<sup>xxiii</sup> “C’est ce que je veux faire, c’est ce que je veux essayer.” Jocelyn Proulx

<sup>xxiv</sup> “[...] j’avais tout à apprendre sur ce qu’est la danse [et] sur quoi on se base pour lancer des effets, qu’est-ce qu’on fait avec ça comme technicien.” Jocelyn Proulx

<sup>xxv</sup> “[...] je ne développe pas énormément la théorie autour de l’oeuvre de l’artiste. Je me contente de la présenter. [...] Parce ce qu’il y a la didacture du *statement of force*, [ce qui veut dire que] quand les gens voient un texte, une idée développée, alors là, l’oeuvre devient meilleure. J’ai un peu de difficulté avec ça [...].” Claude Gosselin

<sup>xxvi</sup> “[L’enregistreuse] peut les faire fuir. Ça risque de leurs nuire...” Louise Beaulieu.

<sup>xxvii</sup> “[...] pour moi, le sacré, c’est très, très près de l’artiste, et ce sont peut-être les personnes qui touchent, d’une façon quotidienne, le plus près le sacré à travers leurs oeuvres.” Diane Boucher

<sup>xxviii</sup> “Mettre en valeur le travail d’artiste.” Diane Boucher

<sup>xxix</sup> “[...] on est un peu le lien entre le public et l’art, et le chorégraphe. Donc, on fait tout pour que le public comprenne ce que l’artiste essaie de dire. [...] C’est de choisir les gens qui ont quelque chose à dire et le disent d’une façon intéressante, articulée, et trouver la meilleure façon pour transmettre ce qu’ils veulent dire au public en général, au grand public, à tout le monde. Et, à travers ça, utiliser tous les moyens possibles que ce soient des textes, des films, des présentations, des ateliers, que ce soient toutes sortes de choses [...].” Diane Boucher

<sup>xxx</sup> “[...] la clientèle du FIND est fortement scolarisée comparativement à la population en général (72% niveau universitaire) [...]” CROP

<sup>xxxi</sup> “[...] elle [la clientèle du FIND] regroupe beaucoup de professionnels (45%), de semi-professionnels, de techniciens et de cols blancs (45%) [...].” (CROP, 2001)

<sup>xxxii</sup> “[...] il n’y a pas beaucoup de spectacles en région. On se déplace même si on est d’Alma! C’est quand même un peu loin. Alors, on ne se prend pas tous les spectacles de danse puisque l’hiver, quand il y a une tempête, on ne se déplace [pas] à Chicoutimi.” Emma Renaud