

CHAPTER VI

WHERE (SPACE) AND WHEN (TIME): *LUNA'S* PLACES AND LOCATIONS, TIME AND TIMINGS

Where and when did the *Luna* event take place? The particular temporal organization and physical settings and configurations of *Luna* not only provided a fundamental descriptive component of this ethnography, but formed a crucial part of the event framework through which the meanings of *Luna* have been interpreted.

In Snyder's model of the dance event (1988, 1992), each macro- and micro-level of event activity was associated with a particular variety of time and space. In her scheme, as in mine, time and space refers to the event's historical era and geographic locations on the macro-level, but they also take the form of the day-to-day activities and the physical places and spaces where the event took place. On the smallest micro-level, and described in some detail in the previous chapter on what happened, *Luna's* space and time were seen as the elements of choreographic spacing and timing within the dance composition. Although some aspects of *Luna's* time and space are common to many Western performing arts events in general, some of the particularities of *Luna* described below also distinguish this dance event as unique among other contemporary dance events of its kind, and mark it as different in form and function from other dance forms that cohabit the Montréal urban landscape such as competitive sport dancing and break dancing.

And so in this chapter, the specific shapes, textures, temperatures, light and colors of these spaces, places and stagings, contribute to describing

the unique character of the dance being made and to the meanings that it has come to have for its participants. Like Small (1998), I am certain that the way in which spaces are designed and organized reflect the art views of the previous participants. For example, in the kinds of large-scale theaters in which *Luna* was performed, artists and audiences were kept completely separate from each other, and technicians were kept invisible to spectators. And for instance, a floor-to-ceiling scrim curtain created both a projection screen and the division of *Luna's* stage into two superimposed areas (foreground and background), giving the choreography a unique spatial configuration and metaphoric “universe” of two domains.

The factor of time also emerged from the *Luna* data as a multi-faceted phenomenon, implicating an art historical era, minutely scheduled timetables, the experience of its transformation from “real” to “theatrical” time, and the complex timings and time signatures of the movement phrases. At least three characteristic ideas about time emerged from the data: (a) that time was precisely measured and meticulously managed, (b) that the theatrical time of the choreography was designed to take participants’ consciousness out of ordinary, everyday time and into an imaginary choreographic universe and (c) that *Luna* was meant to be a futuristic dance “of its time” providing glimpses of a near, possible future for the interface of science and art.

6.1.2 Space as place

The places in which the event unfolded can be described both in terms of their actual physical locations and their socio-cultural characteristics and histories. My attention in the field was drawn to several kinds of spaces at once, under the influence of Snyder’s hierarchy of dance event levels (1988).

This section begins with a general survey of the types of places in which dance event activities were located. It then takes a wide-angled

examination of the physical locations of the event, then moving in closer to consider the municipal settings and neighborhoods, and the outer environments of the buildings which housed the dance event activities. It will then focus in more tightly on the functional design of the buildings' interior spaces while paying special attention to the organization of *O Vertigo's* offices and studios, and two of the theater buildings in which they performed.

6.1.1.1 General survey of the types of places

Where in the world did this dance event take place? The field was initially located in Montréal, but the event also moved to other cities on three continents as it "went on the road." In other words, as brought to the forefront in Amit's anthology on the subject (2000), *Luna's* field was mobile and multi-sited.

The largest quantity of my fieldwork was done in *O Vertigo's* offices and studios in the east end of Montréal, where the creative and administrative processes took place. I also attended four of final public performances of *Luna* in theater buildings, invariably located in downtown city centers. The dance event also took me to places like a performing arts marketplace event in a hotel ballroom, other dance studios around the city where auditions and workshops were held, and to a technical rehearsal and filming session in a city-sponsored cultural center. I followed the *O Vertigo* dance company on one of their tours of *Luna* to the *Théâtre du Saguenay* in Chicoutimi, and later sought out some of the traces left further afield by their residency and premiere performance in Lucerne's *Lucern Theater* and the New York City performances at the Joyce Theater, through interviews with programmers and dancers, and by way of critiques written by dance specialists about the *Luna* performance.

And so although the *Luna* choreography was principally conceived and created within its home studios in Montréal, it was completed during a residency in Lucerne, Switzerland. It was there that finishing touches were given to the costumes, make-up and lighting, and the opening performances took place. *Luna* was then mounted and presented on tour (as articulated in the hyperbolic prose of publicists):

[in] more than 70 times in forty cities in Canada, the United States, France, Switzerland, Germany, England, Scotland, Hungary, Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, Italy and the Czech Republic where it was applauded by more than 30, 000 spectators. (Laplander, 2000; Appendix I)

In the widest possible sense, the dance event was also conceived, planned, created, discussed and evaluated in the various restaurants, cafés, homes, studios and offices where event participants lived, worked or socialized, in Montréal and in the other cities to which it traveled.

6.1.1.2 Event locations: province, city, neighborhood and buildings

The physical locations of the *Luna* event reveal much more, of course, than the latitude and longitude, the height and width of its dancing grounds. They also situated it in particular political, economic, socio-cultural and physical environments that fostered (and sometimes hindered) its creation and presentation. Although this is neither a historical nor geographical study, I have sketched out below some of these contexts to give a sense of place to the goings on.

(a) The province of Québec, city of Montréal. The creative processes and four performances of *Luna* took place in *O Vertigo's* home city of Montréal, situated in the province of Québec in the northeastern part of North America. It is one of Canada's three largest cosmopolitan urban centers, along with Vancouver and Toronto, with a population of about 3 1/2 million people living within the Montréal Metropolitan area according to the last statistics available in 1996 (*Ville de Montréal*, 2005). The metropolis was built on an island and is surrounded by the waters of the St. Lawrence Seaway. Montréal is situated in the comparatively temperate climate of the southern part of the province with about six months of winter weather, although several weeks of markedly sub-zero temperatures. And looking to the south, the city is only an hour's drive from the United States' border, and in proximity of eight hours drive from North America's most prolific art dance mecca (in terms of sheer quantity of dance and dancers) of New York City.

The province of Québec is the geographic seat and last preserve of Canada's distinct French-speaking Québécois culture, one that shares a common linguistic, historical, literary and artistic heritage. Dance historian Tembeck (1988a) traces the "cultural awakening" of Québécois to an economic crisis in 1930 in which the established order was rejected, leading to what is now called The Quiet Revolution (*La révolution tranquille*). This phase of social change led to the 1948 manifesto *Le Refus Global* whose signatories were artists, including dancers like Jeanne Renaud and Françoise Sullivan. She further noted that in "the frantic race towards the modernization of Québec, the gesture posed by those who signed the *Refus Global* was of an evident symbolism. It broke with the past, whatever it was. The notion of individuation of discourse became more and more pronounced. The image of the artist that was brought forward was that of a rebellious and liberating intellectual" (p. 8). This was still part of the artistic ethos that I encountered

in 1977¹ when only a new immigrant to Québec, that is the notion of dance as a site from which to provoke social discourse and as a pathway to freedom. I believe this is still a strong element of the dance climate in Montréal contemporary dance today, as will be seen especially in the later discussion about the meanings of *Luna* in the lives and minds of its Québécois participants.

Montréal is also a cosmopolitan urban environment, and the population also includes several waves of immigrants from many parts of the world, and the subtle but certain presence of First Nations people (who mostly live on nearby reserves like Kahawake). It is interesting to note that choreographer Laurin, although of Québécoise heritage, has always chosen to reflect this fact of cultural diversity in her choice of dancers (the *Luna* cast included dancers of Québécois, German, Asian-Australian, Vietnamese, English Canadian and American nationalities). And, as was noted in her short biography in the previous chapter, Tembeck herself was an Egyptian immigrant to Canada.

(b) The Hochelaga-Maisonneuve neighborhood, downtown Montréal and Chicoutimi. The *O Vertigo* dance company works out of their permanent studios and offices in the low-income, industrial neighborhood of Hochelaga-Maisonneuve in the eastern end of the city. Company technical director Jocelyn Proulx calls the area “*l’industrie perdue*,” literally meaning “an industrial area that is lost” (in the sense of forgotten, deserted or forlorn). In contrast, and to the immediate north of their studios looms the massive Olympic Stadium tower and Botanical Gardens, preferred tourist destinations. And one long block to the south is the neighborhood’s heritage center piece: the lively and colorful Marché Maisonneuve farmer’s market and community center. During the period of my fieldwork, the dance

¹ See Tembeck (1991, 1994a) for a historical account of Québec artistic dance.

company was engaged in a long-term project, hoping to renovate and move their workplace, as Laurin confided to me one day in the kitchen, to an even less expensive (because shared with Théâtre Ubu) and more centrally located heritage building.²

The professional dance performances (other than informal in-studio showings) included in this study all took place in downtown areas, as did all other presentations of *Luna* throughout its touring itinerary. In Montréal, the *Monument-National* building where the festival performances were held, was wedged between two neighborhoods with strong characters, but unrelated to the contemporary art world: the Chinatown and sex trade districts.

The city of Chicoutimi was a 6 1/2 hour bus ride northeast from Montréal, and had one main street about 12 blocks long. From downtown there was a beautiful view of the Fjord Saguenay that ran alongside, a landscape of river and hills. The *Théâtre du Saguenay* in which *Luna* was performed was perched high on a grassy hill, in isolation on the far side of town but part of the massive, sprawling campus of the *CEGEP de Chicoutimi*, a post-secondary educational institution.

It is interesting to recall from the last chapter that the vast majority of audience members in the focus groups identified themselves as urban dwellers, including those from Chicoutimi and surrounding smaller towns. At least in the case of *Luna*, but also from my extensive experiences as a dance presenter, it appears that contemporary dance is largely an urban artists' practice, rarely present and flourishing in the isolation of rural settings as do, for instance, some musicians, writers and visual artists.

(c) Workplace building: the *O Vertigo* studios. The *O Vertigo* offices and studios were housed in a rented one-story storefront industrial building

² After many years of lobbying, a newly elected conservative government in Québec turned them down in fall 2004, and they finally moved their studios into subterranean spaces in Place des Arts downtown in 2005.

(see photo 2) and my drawing of the interior spaces (Appendix H). The dance company developed their choreographic project *Luna* in close proximity to a Cuisinart sales company with little awareness of the artistic goings-on next door, as I discovered one day when I knocked on their door to ask a few questions. In the center of their workplace and in-between the studio and office spaces was the kitchen area (photos 3 and 9). It was a space whose only natural light came from a skylight, and contained table and chairs, sofa, and bulletin boards filled with company memorabilia and activity grids. Just off the kitchen were bathrooms. In practice, small meetings and company break times were held in this space, set up to accommodate discussions, reading, writing, socializing, eating and drinking. Office spaces were at the front of the building. The receptionist and other assistant employees worked in an open entrance area and hallway filled with plants and natural light (see photo 4). This area led to four enclosed office spaces offering private space to each of the four directors: artistic, general, technical and communications.

At the back and behind the kitchen were one small (photo 6) and one large (photo 5) dance studio. The small one included storage space for costumes and equipment, and provided an auxiliary rehearsal space (usually) away from the watchful eyes of the choreographer and rehearsal director who worked mainly in the large one. It also provided an additional place for tasks requiring room to spread out, e.g. assembling press kits, costume fittings.

The large dance studio was the creative nexus in which artistic director Laurin, her artistic collaborators and dancers spent most of their time immersed in the processes of choreography. It had the look of an industrial building: massive gray cinderblock outer walls and huge silver duct tape-wrapped ventilation tubes running across the high ceilings (photo 6). Stage equipment and storage spaces added to this factory ambiance. Another bulletin board was filled with photos, announcements, and appreciative

letters from schoolchildren to the dancers from company school workshops. There were black window curtains to block out the daylight almost entirely when working with theatrical lighting, a wall covered with tall mirrors, benches, tables and chairs for technicians and onlookers. Brightly colored exercise balls and mats in relief to the gray room, were lying around for the dancers to use during the break times for personal off-time bodywork.

This large studio served as a surrogate to the theaters in which *Luna* would eventually be performed. And so as soon as the basic set pieces and costumes were finished, they were brought in and gradually over four months they accumulated around the perimeter of the studio: the tall lenses on stands (see photos I and 7), black “flats” (cloth panels) simulating the eventual “wings” (offstage spaces) of the stage, larger-than-life sized silky moon-like dresses (see photo 8), and a transparent “scrim” (transparent cotton curtain, called “*tulle*” in French) that separated the stage space into two areas upstage and downstage.

Because the administrators and choreographer were ever attentive to dancers’ comfort and safety, the air was kept well ventilated by ceiling fans, cool in the summer and warm enough in the winter to facilitate the physically demanding dance-making. There was a sound system in the corner, and a bookcase full of archival company videos, videotapes for use during creative process, and music compact discs. Some kind of ambient sound, usually chosen by the rehearsal director in accordance with the mood desired by the choreographer, was usually playing as the dancers worked, eventually replaced by the music chosen and arranged that would accompany the final choreography.

Of special note was the surface and resilience of the dance floor, which in my experience I have found to be a seminal feature of professional dance spaces. The dancing surface was so important to *O Vertigo*, in fact, that the dance company went to the trouble and expense of transporting their flooring along with them on tour. A key to the movement style of each contemporary

choreographer is established by the kind of friction they choose to create in the contact between the dancers' foot soles or footwear and the dance floor surface, i.e. to what extent the dancers can either slide or stick to the ground as they dance. Laurin's *Luna* dancers were barefoot on the rubber surface, requiring sure-footedness to accomplish her intricate movements, rather than slipperiness under their feet. And having a familiar surface underneath them, which could cover any potentially dangerous irregularities of stage floors in unfamiliar theaters, was a factor in keeping physical conditions amenable to dancers' safety and *Luna's* choreographic quality intact.

As suggested above, the ambiance of the large studio was gradually transformed over the four months of creative work on *Luna* from a utilitarian everyday workplace into a prototype for the large-scale theatrical stages on which they would be performing. One day in late November I entered the studio to the smell of rubber and paint: the new dance floor for *Luna* had arrived! This time the ever-present black surface was marble textured with white, black, blue and purple paint applied in splotches and streaks. Towards the end of the creation process the curtains were most often completely sealed in order to complete the change over to the theatrical effects made possible by artificial lighting sources in a darkened space. The "real world" of the working dancers in a studio had fully become the theatrical time and space of *Luna's* "imaginary choreographic universe."

(d) Theater buildings: the *Monument-National* and *Théâtre du Sagnuenay*. The *Luna* choreography was designed for a traditional frontally-oriented Western performing arts facility and theater in which there were completely separate spaces for the activities of audiences, administrators and artists, as Christopher Small (1998) observed in his ethnography of a prototypical Western music concert hall.

The architecture of these kinds of buildings and the ambiance of their interior spaces are significant environments through which the public enters

and exits, framing the live performance and setting the tone and so influencing their experience. The two theaters included in *Luna* fieldwork shared certain conventional features and functions, but also displayed individual variations and differences on theatre building conventions.

The *Monument-National* (*Monument-National*, 2005) was a heritage building built in 1893 with an elegant Neo-Renaissance façade. The entire building was painstakingly restored as closely as possible to its original state in 1993. It is owned and managed by the *École nationale de théâtre* and houses the French division of their professional theater school, a café, and three performing spaces of which the largest is the 804-seat *Salle Luger-Duvernay* (a mid-range theater in the Montréal context) in which all three Montréal performances of *Luna* took place. As for *Théâtre du Saguenay* (*Rideau*, 2005), actually owned by and contained in one wing of the CEGEP, it contained a 971-seat performance space called the *Auditorium Dufour* built in 1963 and 1964. I approached the theater by climbing up the steps of a steep hill overlooking the fjord, and through its huge parking lot. About its Modernist architecture I noted “a dirty but flamboyant modernist façade in disrepair, [stylistically] out of synch with the buildings attached to it” (FN: 11-3-01).

Audience members arriving at both venues entered by way of a lobby area where the box office was to be found. Once again, the spaces were made of the elegant marble floors and wood stairways of Neo-Renaissance style. The gray, cement block entrance area of *Théâtre du Saguenay* had ample room for the entire waiting public, and was hung with displays about past and the present performances at the venue. The *Monument-National's* waiting area was comparatively quite small, causing the crowd to spill out either onto the sidewalk or into the adjacent café in which refreshments were on sale, as they waited for the doors to open to the *Salle Duvernay*. Figure 6.1 below proposes a schematic representation of the kinds of spaces, their functions and spatial relationships, found inside the theater buildings in the *Luna* study and discussed in this section:

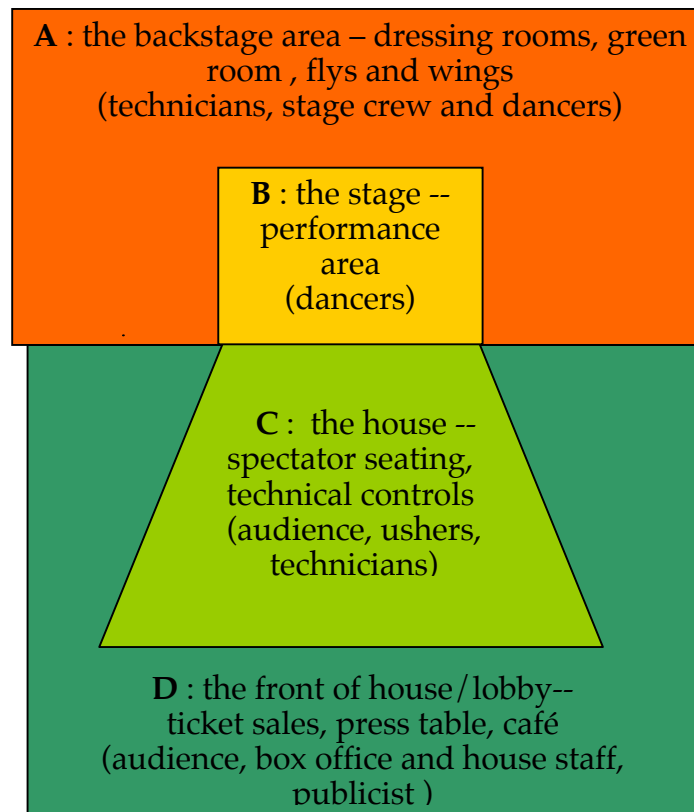


Figure 6.1 Organization of spaces inside theater buildings: schematic representation of distinct areas, their personnel and activities.

Montréal theaters commonly have a café that provides a place for audience members to sit and talk before and after the performances, and during intermissions, and in a few cases are managed so that they bring in extra income. The *Monument-National's* café had a contemporary design, and was visible to passer-bys on the street through large windows. It was busy on performance nights, but administrator Bonin³ explained that its mandate was also to serve the theater school as an additional “cultural space,” diversifying their activities to include exhibitions, receptions, news

conferences, book and CD launches, and other events. On the chilly winter evenings of *Luna* performances, it sheltered and enhanced the comfort and sociability of the occasion for spectators, and as Bonin confirmed, it brought in a little extra income (as was also the case for their theater rentals) for the school. A closed room that was equipped and designed to be a café at the *Théâtre du Saguenay* was tucked away discretely, invisible behind a closed door on the far end of the lobby. It was not operational before the *Luna* performance I attended, but was when general director Louise Beaulieu opened it afterwards to accommodate an audience talk that she facilitated between *O Vertigo* artists and audience members. At this talk, chairs were placed around the room in an intimate semi-circle, but no beverages and refreshments were either served or on sale.

At the appointed time, in both venues, the waiting audience members were called to take their seats in the part of the theater space reserved for spectating, the house (or auditorium). These seats were pre-assigned and chosen by spectators according to availability as they purchased their tickets, and were arranged in parallel rows arranged in a deep curve in the *Auditorium Dufour*. These seats were steeply “raked,” meaning built in a sloping upwards fashion like bleachers so that spectators looked forwards and downwards at the dancers. In contrast, spectator’s brass and velvet seats were arranged in horizontal straight lines in the *Salle Luger-Duvernay*. In this theater, the stage was built upon a raised platform that was higher than the heads of seated front row spectators, the remaining seats sloping slightly upwards from front to back. There was a single balcony which curved along the side walls. Each seat in every case literally offered a different unique perspective on the performance, the option to choose (at the time of ticket purchase) and so to view the dance up close or far away, from the middle or a side point of view.

² From a phone conversation with *Ecole National de Théâtre’s* administrative assistant Anne-Marie Bonin on April 1, 2005.

Also in the house area and traditionally hidden from the audience because placed behind them -- although not the case in the *Auditorium Dufour* where it was in plain view in the middle of audience seating -- a technical booth was located, from which stage effects were controlled. The technicians manipulating sound, lights, and video projection needed to see the stage action for "sight cues" (visible cues for technical changes) from their positions either in this booth or from the backstage wings.

At both venues, as required by the *Luna* choreography, the stage area only became visible to the audience when the huge curtains were opened, this not being one of those contemporary performances in which performers are made visible (as some are) from the moment that spectators enter. The curtains were opened and the stage suddenly illuminated. Goffman (1974) ironically characterized this convention of stagecraft as "opening up rooms so that they have no ceiling and one wall missing" (p. 139).

Surrounding the stage and dancers in both theaters, but invisible to spectators, were various backstage spaces. Their size and shape varied in each venue, with *Auditorium Dufour* as the larger and more massive of the two, but their components were the same. The upper areas above the performers, called "the flies," were reserved for stage lights and pulley systems to raise and lower stage set pieces. More stage lights were positioned at the sides of the stage, and over the heads of spectators, to provide all possible angles. The side offstage wing areas were hung with black curtains that hid from the audience's view backstage goings-on and the dancers as they exited and waited to enter the stage, keeping spectator's attention only on the choreographic work itself. In other words, *Luna* was not one of those contemporary performances that sought to reveal the inner workings of the raw stage space, but one that created the illusion of an imaginary place. The backstage also included dressing rooms with chairs, counters and brightly lit mirrors for the dancers, with sinks and showers for washing up afterwards. Dressing rooms at the *Auditorium Dufour* were in a

corridor space just behind the stage, and in the *Salle Luger-Duvernay* they were tucked farther away from the performing area on an upper floor. Both theatres provided a “green room” area for the dancers to relax in and socialize during their off time, a cozy kitchen with sofa and overstuffed chairs at the *Monument National* but just a large cement block room with folding tables with some snacks for dancers at the *Auditorium Dufour*. The inner mechanics of the performance took place in these various backstage spaces with a flurry of constant activity: the complex and demanding costume changes of *Luna*, dancers’ brief offstage moments of recuperation and preparation, technicians’ manipulation of lighting, sound and video projections.

The stage area for the *Luna* choreography was divided into spaces, by design, with the floor-to-ceiling scrim (transparent) curtain into two parts, a deep foreground area and a more shallow background corridor. According to which areas were illuminated, these two spaces became alternately or simultaneously visible. In practice, when light fell upon it, the thin curtain became an opaque backdrop, but when the area in back was illuminated it became a filmy transparency revealing what was going on behind. This same curtain also served later in the piece as a projection screen. During the performances of *Luna*, as with all theatrical performances, the stage space was sculpted by a pre-planned lighting design into ever-changing zones of varying shapes, sizes, colors and textures through the use of stage lights and video projections. The dancers moved in and out, appeared and disappeared in these so-called (in the language of stage technicians) “pools and washes of light.” (Film clips of these effects can be viewed on the *O Vertigo* CD-ROM, Appendix S.)

6.1.2 Time and timing

The temporal aspects of the *Luna* dance event appeared in the data in four distinct guises, each operating on a different event level (Snyder, 1989). Moving once again from macro to micro levels of the dance event, the notion of time arose in terms of *Luna*'s art historical context, the minute scheduling and time management of company activities, and the "real" time of the everyday world versus the "choreographic" time of the theatre. The micro-level of the time factor was the actual timing of the dance movements, which will be described in the chapter on choreographic meaning.

The sequence and duration of dance event activities was detailed in a previous chapter in which the phases of *Luna* were recounted in detail. But to recapitulate the general temporal framework for this discussion of time: the entire enterprise of *Luna* occurred over a period of approximately three and a half years and administrative planning began in spring 2000, and the last performance in Prague took place in late fall 2003.

6.1.2.2 The art historical context of *Luna*

The *Luna* choreography and dance event was created in the fall of 2000, the beginning of what came to be called the New Millennium. In the original 2-page project (Appendix I), penned by choreographer Laurin and her visual art collaborator Morgenthelar for purposes of the company's grant application, there was a clearly articulated orientation towards futuristic research and innovation: "[this projects aims] to develop a new approach to the moving body by applying recent technological and scientific developments" (project proposal, Appendix I). Its creators, artistic peers and other arts specialists consider *Luna* as contemporary (and so not as traditional) in the sense that it seeks to represent aspects of the current-day world and its possible futures.

Dance historian Tembeck (1988a) recounts her view that Québécois dance has had a history distinct from that of the rest of North America because of the hegemony of the Catholic Church whose influence on society was pervasive until the 1950s. She discussed a discriminatory mode of thinking that was fostered by the church in which the dancing was considered a sinful practice (p. 7).

Québec's contemporary dance milieu is rooted in the seminal artist-led cultural revolution towards secularism, the 1948 *Refus Global* in which Québécois poets, singers and writers created the contours which were to characterize the emerging consciousness of a Québécois culture. They were joined by dancers, visual artists and musicians who together created a new kind of modernist art, and signed a socio-cultural manifesto. Choreographer Ginette Laurin is a direct disciple of that Québécois artistic and social movement, and its Automatist credo. When describing choreographers Sullivan and Renaud's 1948 Automatist dances, Febvre (1988) might have been speaking of Laurin when she wrote: "[...] the path towards the final product is carried by a sort of intuition of what must be, and which [the choreographer] knows the sense only afterwards [...]"ⁱⁱ (p. 2). And Sullivan (1948) defined the new understanding of dance in her manifesto: "Above all the dance is a reflex, a spontaneous expression of emotions that are vividly felt"ⁱⁱⁱ (p. 5)

But the historical era concurrent with the conception of *Luna* (and my ethnography as well) is commonly called "an information age" by sociologists and journalists alike, because of the proliferation of knowledge through computer technology, among other things. These new technologies have also led researchers to new considerations of the human body in the light of cyberspace, themes that were at the core of *Luna's* choreographic concept. These ideas, for instance were, and still are, at the center of attention of a global network that calls itself the International Society of Electronic Arts, whose members I encountered during their 1996 symposium in Montréal.

The *Luna* proposal also advanced ideas about the artistic use of technologies and how the body can be examined more closely through lenses. From his European standpoint, where a neo-conceptualist school of dance was gaining momentum and which put less emphasis on dancing itself, Heun situated Laurin as “a pioneer of the dance form” who makes work which is “still ‘real’ dance,” although adding the remark that she was “not on the forefront of artistic discourse nowadays” (I-WH). But with *Luna*, Laurin had positioned herself within the larger professional dance world as a contemporary choreographer “of her time,” an inventive creator who looks towards the future rather than recreating the past.

6.1.2.2 Scheduling

Time was manifest as well in the minute scheduling of activities at *O Vertigo*. There was “no time to lose”! As a relatively large-scale professional dance company with complex operations, their time needed planning and managing with every minute accounted for and managed by timekeepers.

The temporal parameters of company operations were defined by its directors, according to the cycles and demands of its choreographic creations and consequent tours. As working arts professionals, the time, duration and other conditions of the *O Vertigo* dance company members’ labor in creating and presenting the dance event were agreed upon by contract. Most company activities were organized through the business-like precision of scheduling grids, posted on the kitchen’s bulletin boards. From the largest to the smallest increments of time, these schedules included, among others (a, d and e in Appendix K):

- (a) a calendar of annual dates for company work time and time off
- (b) a communications plan with deadlines for publicity and promotional activities

- (c) the type and duration of dancers' studio work sessions with the choreographer and artistic collaborators
- (d) the timing and sequence of day-to-day activities while on tour
- (e) the "cue sheet," a minute-by-minute breakdown of discrete sections in the choreography with increments in seconds

The company timekeeper on a day-to-day basis, as fieldwork revealed, was rehearsal director (*répétiteur*) Raymond Brisson. Among the many roles he assumed, it was his voice I frequently noted calling out the endings and beginnings of breaks, rehearsals and even dance phrases. His task was to keep everyone and everything on schedule and on time, and to negotiate these timings with the dancers when necessary. His management of company time allowed choreographer Laurin to keep her own attention to time attuned to the micro timing of choreographic actions, phrasing, entrances and exits.

The public showings of *Luna* were produced in professional theaters, their progress minutely scheduled by the venue and dance company technical directors. The *Luna* dance event was not a spontaneous, informal gathering! Audience members were required to arrive in the entrance halls with pre-purchased tickets in hand before the doors to the theatre space were opened. The performances began at 8 PM precisely with no latecomers given access, and all of the choreographic and technical elements of the performance were minutely timed. Even the brief time at the end of the performance allotted for audience socializing, and for the cleaning up and "winding down" of performers and technicians, was strictly managed by building regulations and employee contracts. Every minute of the *Luna* performance and choreography seemed to me to be accounted for and controlled.

6.1.2.3 “Real” and “theatrical” time, choreographic timing and off-time

Several distinct experiences of time for participants ran throughout my fieldnotes. As with space, there was a gradual transformation during the in-studio creative processes from the artists’ work-a-day attitude towards doing things in a “real” time attitude (e.g. practice a balancing sequence, get the timing right on this lift, take a sip of water, adjust rehearsal clothes) towards the theatrical time of *Luna* (enter into the flow of movement, heightened perception of audience watching, state of “presence” in one’s stage persona, etc.). As for the audience, they experienced a sudden shift within seconds, from everyday to choreographic time, at the moment when the curtain rose to reveal the dancers.

Throughout the dance event there were also scheduled and spontaneous off-time moments such as dancers’ lunch and work breaks, and periods of the calendar year when dance professionals are not working for the company. In this notion of off-time, I also include the times for audience and artists’ recuperation from their concentrated participation, in other words times which allowed them to relax, chat, take a drink or stretch.

Early in the creative process of *Luna* the artists who were creating the choreography worked with focused intensity during daily four-hour studio sessions from 1-5 PM. They took care not to “waste” any of the contractual time agreed on for engaging in creative process with the choreographer. All worked at first in reference to natural everyday time, especially during the period when the dancers were learning and exploring movement sequences. They proceeded with intense efforts to learn and to “naturalize” the difficulties of timing in the new choreography. Gradually the freshly designed paraphernalia of costumes and props, soundscape, lighting and video projections, and the dance floor, arrived in the studio. As these layers of media were added to the movement, the sense of an impending “other

world time” began to crystallize. The final theatrical realm of *Luna* appeared to be set in some imaginary dreamlike time outside of the real world of the performers and spectators. Goffman (1974) pointed to this transformation one of several “transcription practices which render stage interaction systematically different from its real-life model” (p. 144).

The moment of public performance onstage in a theater building contained all of those temporal genres operating at one and the same time: natural, theatrical, off, and rhythmical time frames. Participants experienced them one at a time, shifting their temporal mode from one to another at various times. The extra-ordinary (not everyday) choreographic timing of the *Luna* performance was made manifest onstage. This dance realm was peopled with performers moving in prearranged rhythmical patterns in relationships with the time signatures of a shifting soundscape (see filmed examples on the CD ROM). From my observation point in the backstage wings one night at the *Salle Ludger-Duvernay*, I could also see the technical crew manipulating *Luna*’s stage effects, props and costumes. They moved with the concentration and urgency appropriate to what had to be accomplished, but in the natural time attitude of workers undertaking task-like activities. Dancers exiting into the wings backstage took the time to release the intense efforts of performing in theatrical time into the lesser intensity of natural time, if only for a few seconds. Facing the dancers when onstage were the spectators, devoting a couple of hours to live inside the choreographic universe, the theatrical time of *Luna*. When I sat among them I remarked that occasional moments of fatigue or distraction drew their attention away from the stage, as they shifted their time frame back and forth between the “real life clock time” of their evening out to see a dance performance and their immersion in the extraordinary theatrical time of the *Luna* performance.

6.2 Conclusion

The elements of time and space that formed one of the frameworks for the *Luna* event, emerged from the data in several guises in accordance with different macro-and-micro levels of activity (Snyder, 1989). And so the notion of time was seen as the art historical era in which the dance was made. But it was also considered as the dance company's time management of daily and long-term activities and participants' experiences of real and theatrical time as well as their recuperative off-time moments. And finally time took the guise of timing, in other words the temporal patterns and qualities of the dancing itself. As for space, the widest lens took in the geographic settings, and was then narrowed in to look at the physical surroundings of the *O Vertigo* studios and theatres where *Luna* was performed, moved inside the buildings to describe their organization and architectural spaces, and finally pinpointed the spatial design of the choreography's scenic elements and movements.

Through this detailed account of where and when *Luna* took place, it has been possible to locate certain unique characteristics of this particular event, but also some of those that it has in common with other contemporary dance events. In the following chapters these accounts of where and when *Luna* was situated will give context to participants and researcher's interpretations and evaluations. For instance, that the *Luna* choreography has a contemporary art outlook, takes place in large traditional theaters, tours to many countries and is minutely managed with tight schedules, will be seen as phenomena which impacted on the meanings that the event came to have for its participants.

Original French texts.

ⁱ “[...] la course effrénée vers la modernisation du Québec, le geste posé par les signataires du *Refus Global* est d’un symbolisme évident. Il rompt avec le passé, quel qu’il soit. La notion de l’individuation du discours devient de plus en plus prononcée. L’image de l’artiste que l’on véhicule désormais est celle d’un intellectuel contestataire et libérateur.” Iro Tembeck

ⁱⁱ “[...] le parcours vers le produit final est-il porté par une sorte d’intuition de ce qui doit être, et dont elle connaît le sens a posteriori [...].” Michèle Febvre

ⁱⁱⁱ “Avant tout la danse est un réflexe, une expression spontanée d’émotions vivement ressenties.” Françoise Sullivan