

Top Ten Contemporary Dance Performances of 2014

Pittsburgh's contemporary dance scene continues to grow and surprise. From the large-scale productions the Pittsburgh Dance Council presents to our local favorites, it is impossible to see everything the city has to offer. 2014 brought many shows I was unable to attend. For example, the great Carmen de Lavallade graced the Kelly-Strayhorn Theater (KST) stage with her one-woman show. Andre Koslowski expanded an old work, also for the KST. And many Pittsburgh artists produced smaller shows in site-specific locations. Here are the ten best performances, from what I was lucky to see this past year.

1. Sidra Bell Dance New York in *garment* at the Kelly-Strayhorn Theater

New York choreographer, Sidra Bell, wowed the audience in a thought-provoking piece focused on identity. Her company members were some of the most unique and talented artists I had ever seen, and her choreography exploded with creativity.

2. Wayne McGregor/Random Dance in *Far* at the Byham Theater

The London-based company took inspiration from the Age of Enlightenment, as well as images by 20th century artist, Francis Bacon. Each dancer possessed impeccable technique, while the lighting design gave the piece an otherworldly feel.

3. Shana Simmons Dance in *PASSENGER* at the National Aviary

This exquisite show was part of a nationwide effort (Project Passenger Pigeon) to bring awareness to the centennial anniversary of the bird's extinction. The evening-length performance took place at the National Aviary on the North Side.

4. Attack Theatre in *Histoire du Soldat* at the Pittsburgh Opera

In this two act show, the company displayed their ability for musicality and theatrics. The dancers proved strong in both the acting and movement required from the choreography.

5. Maree ReMalia/merrygogo in *The Ubiquitous Mass of Us* at the New Hazlett Theater

In ReMalia's hour-long work of performance art and dance, each artist pushed beyond their personal boundaries to create a piece with incredible humor and intrigue, even without a story-line.

6. The Pillow Project's *In the Blink of a Decade* at The Space Upstairs

Pearlann Porter's company celebrated their ten year anniversary with a party and performance at their home in Point Breeze. The evening included some of their best work of new and old.

7. Gia T. Presents in *Frameworks* at the Wood Street Galleries

Gia Cacalano premiered her new, local group of dancers in a choreographed, evening-length work. The piece played with the art installation in residence, similarly to Cacalano's previous improvisations in the gallery.

8. Marjani Forté in *being Here.../this time* at the Alloy Studios

New York choreographer, Forté, investigated mental illness, addiction, and poverty in America for this haunting trio that took place in multiple locations (installations) throughout the studio space.

9. Corningworks in *Recipes Our Mothers Gave Us* at the New Hazlett Theater

Beth Corning partnered with Francoise Fournier, a French-Swedish dancer, and Maria Cheng, a Chinese choreographer, playwright and actor in a dance-theater performance that explored the "recipes" they had been taught for success.

10. Reed Dance in *Just Us...The Journey Continues* at The Alloy Studios

Greer Reed chose six works for this program, a blend of older and newer repertoire. The physical prowess of the dancers and the emotional choreography had the audience on their feet.