

Every year, Pittsburgh continues to surprise dance enthusiasts with an array of performances throughout the season. This top ten list of best performances does not include our impressive ballet companies, or every spectacular contemporary show presented. It would be impossible to see everything. Here is a sampling of the best of 2015.

1. Malpaso Dance Company at the Kelly-Strayhorn Theater

As part of the KST's World Stage Series, this contemporary Cuban company presented two works. The dancers displayed a high-level of technique, proving their capability of anything from balletic lines to contemporary floor-work to Capoeira-type cartwheels. Everything about the evening - the unexpected choreographic choices and the flawless dancing - was perfect.

2. *Between* by Attack Theatre

This show was Attack at its finest. The incredibly creative artistic duo, Michele de la Reza and Peter Kope, divided the theater (George R. White Studio) into two performance spaces. de la Reza and Kope both performed, challenging themselves to choreograph something different for their 20-year anniversary. The piece had humor and poignancy, a delicate balance the company does well.

3. *(a) Long Here* by The Pillow Project

Pearlann Porter created this movement and art installation that explored the notion of time. One highlight of the evening was Porter's artistic projects on duration; she glued individual grains of rice onto a canvas in a work that took 80 hours. The movement high point was Taylor Knight's solo; his movement was videotaped each night and then projected onto a wall behind him the following nights. Creativity oozes out of Porter. This show was one of her best.

4. *Beckett and Beyond* by Beth Corning

In this show, Corning (director of CorningWorks and The Glue Factory Project) took on two Samuel Beckett works - Act Without Words II and Rockaby. She performed alongside Franciose Fournier and Yvan Auzely, all of whom boast impressive careers. The most exciting piece was Corning's solo, Rockaby. Corning played the part of a woman at the end of her life. She sat mostly stationary for the 20-minute piece, evoking emotion with a few simple words and subtle expressions. The solo was brave and incredibly moving.

5. *Red Rover, Red Rover* by Shana Simmons Dance

This short piece was presented at the Kelly-Strayhorn Theater's Alloy Studios, in collaboration with The Moving Architects from NYC. The trio explored borders and boundaries. The dancers moved as one unit, connected to one another with impressive partnering, but also through their eyes and emotions. The piece showed off Simmons' choreographic skills, and the dancers' precision and prowess as veterans in the field.

6. *Loving Black* by Anthony Williams

In a fourteen-month journey, Williams turned a short dance quartet into an evening-length production at the New Hazlett Theater, as part of the CSA performance series. The piece explored stereotypes of black men, and commented on the Black Lives Matter movement. The production included acting, singing and dancing, in a thought-provoking collaboration between Williams, Billy Wayne Coakley (playwright), and Anqwenique Wingfield (singer/composer).

7. *Ailey 2* at the August Wilson Center

This renowned group brought three works to the Pittsburgh stage. The first two, *Hissy Fits* by Dwight Rhoden and *Something Tangible* by Ray Mercer, explored the complex nature of romantic relationships. The final piece, Ailey's signature work, *Revelations*, closed the show. The performers' technique and performance quality was some of the best in the country.

8. Dance Africa Pittsburgh at the Kelly-Strayhorn Theater

This uplifting performance was founded and hosted by Dr. "Baba" Chuck Davis. The evening featured adult and children in several works of music, drumming and dance by the Kule Mele African Dance and Drum Ensemble, the Balafon West African Dance Ensemble. The evening's theme was "healing" and fused traditional and contemporary movement. This unique program worked to uplift us and remind us of our oneness.

9. *WaywardLand* by Jil Stifel and Ben Sota

As part of the New Hazlett Theater's CSA performance series, Stifel and Sota collaborated on a piece that blended modern dance with contemporary circus. The piece included a 150-pound German wheel and stilts. Instead of going for death-defying tricks that are overdone, the dancers (four, total) created a whimsical world that both surprised and entertained.

10. Maree ReMalia at the Three Rivers Arts Festival

In the small theater of the Trust Arts Education Center, Maree ReMalia presented *now is now* and *Multiple Bodies Project*. The first was an exploration of how we exist among "personal and global conflict," performed by Pittsburgh favorites, Anna Thompson and Taylor Knight. The second looked at sexuality, censorship and other related issues. ReMalia performed the duet with Jil Stifel. Both pieces represented the experimental side of dance, with humor and uniqueness.