

THE GLOBE AND MAIL 



Eric Gauthier and Isabelle Pollet Villard in Hans van Manen's *The Old Man and Me*

Year in Review

Flights of fancy and leaps of faith: Dance in 2011

Paula Citron

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In the world of dance, 2011 was a pretty tame year. Very few concerts blew me out of the water, which is not to dismiss the many choreographies of worth.

With the world seeming to decay around us both economically and environmentally, choreographers tended to retreat into themselves, explore abstract topics, or dissect relationships. Here are the winners (and losers) of the very subjective Paula Citron Dance Awards for 2011, in alphabetical order.

Best Bodies in Space Award: England's Wayne McGregor, for *Entity*, which toured to Montreal, Ottawa and Kingston, Ont., and in which imaginative combinations of bodies translated into magnificent, complex and intriguing choreographic patterns.

Best Dance Initiative Award: Toronto's Matthew Jocelyn, artistic director of Canadian Stage, for

Rabbit Out of the Hat Award: Ballet BC's artistic director Emily Molnar, for bringing the Vancouver company back from bankruptcy with a hard-edged contemporary-dance repertoire.

She Made Me Cry Award: Montreal's Jocelyne Montpetit at Toronto's CanAsian International Dance Festival, for *Nuit, Nacht, Notte*, her haunting butoh homage to her late Japanese master, Kazuo Ohno.

Still One of the Greats Award: James Kudelka, for the fascinating *AllOneWord: The "See" Series*, performed by Toronto's Coleman Lemieux & Compagnie, with each vignette, about seeing or being seen, choreographed to the same piece of music, Heinrich Ignaz Franz von Biber's *Guardian Angel* passacaglia.

Were They in the Same Ballpark? Award: Toronto's ninth international competition for the Erik Bruhn Prize, where the judges chose three completely different winners (for best male and female dancer, and choreographer) from those who garnered the Audience Choice awards.

Young College Try Award: Despite amateurish qualities, Toronto hip-hop artists are branching out into dance theatre. Most notable were Baby Boyz Dance Group's *Three Boyz, Three Countries & One Dream*; and *Enter the Shadow* by b-boys Lee Pham and Jon Reid.

PAULA'S PICKS OF BEST PERFORMERS

Each in their own way, these stars of the dance world stood out as the very best of 2011

Breakout Performance: Gadfly's Klorofyl

Better known as urban dance artists under the co-direction of former Montrealers Ofilio Portillo and Apolonia Velasquez, Toronto-based Gadfly transformed itself into a first-class contemporary dance company with *Klorofyl*, inspired by the Japanese classic movie *The Seven Samurai*. The dancers began as burnt-out warriors, before gradually bonding as a fierce tribe in an effort to survive.

Under the Radar Gem: EXpose

The April twinning of choreographers Alvin Erasga Tolentino and Martin Inthamoussú (the first from Vancouver and of Filipino background; the second a Uruguayan who spends part of each year working in Germany) was a match made in heaven. Their delightful *EXpose* in Vancouver was a coming-out celebration of both homosexuality and gender politics, told through a droll series of images. The ending, with the men in formalwear with red stiletto heels, was brilliantly funny and poignant.

Choreographer of the Year: Mi Young Kim

Kim celebrated 60 years as a professional dancer in 2011, and she deserved every tribute that came her way. She almost single-handedly established Korean dance in her new homeland through her Korean Dance Studies Society of Canada and the Mi Young Kim Dance Company. She also encourages ethnic diversity through the biennial, multicultural Soo Ryu Dance Festival.

World-beating Company of the Year: National Ballet of Canada

How smart is artistic director Karen Kain? Delivering two original superhits by red-hot choreographers – Christopher Wheeldon's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and Alexei Ratmansky's *Romeo and Juliet* – in the same calendar year was an incredible feat. Not only were both shows