

FORCES

STREB began in 1985 with Elizabeth Streb's stubborn investigation of Action, ranging from every day movements to the Extreme Action of sports, the circus and thrill rides; the impulse to action that is in our souls. Since then the company has evolved into a world class entertainment phenomenon that remains true to it's scientific and populist roots. STREB invents action ideas that are daring, yet understandable, that soar past our critical senses and land in our hearts. Now, in FORCES, Streb bands together with a whole new cadre of theater specialists: Director Robert Woodruff, Dramaturg Jim Lewis, Videographers Wendall Harrington and Erik Pearson, Composer David Van Tieghem, Lighting Designer Robert Wierzel, and Costume Designer Andrea Lauer, to create a show based on all the questions STREB has historically asked; questions that are Newtonian in nature and that veer into quantum mechanical impossible zones. Streb is on a quest to present her newest action events with a clear theatrical trajectory. If Action were drama, what is it's true story? What makes Action tick? Bowling balls fall, a floor rapidly turns to create turbulence, a 25 foot square wall is occupied by counter weighted performers and the Whizzing Gizmo invented by Noe and Ivan Espana intermittently ejects bodies. The artists and collaborators involved in the creation of FORCES, all recognized as being at the forefront of their fields, are joined by their passion to rethink the interface between people, technology, and society. FORCES is the story of Action, it is the journey to harness the invisible forces, it is the quest to mount a machine and learn it's tricks.



STREB

ESSENTIALIST ACTS

SITE SPECIFIC COMMISSIONS



*"STREB has a knack for creating intricate contrapuntal patterns in unlikely spaces. **Gravity be damned.**"*
– Los Angeles Times

Known for her singular pursuit of movement as action that stretches the limitations of the human body, MacArthur "genius" Elizabeth Streb creates site specific new work. Essentialist Acts is based on human

actions that occur in a matter of seconds, but when coupled with isolated movements of inanimate objects, create an impact that is monumentally powerful. The audience becomes a part of the work as they move freely around the space filled with video projection and sound for a visual and auditory tour de force. The work continues Streb's research into defying the natural laws of motion. Essentialist Acts is being commissioned by the Park Avenue Armory in New York City and will be premiered there in December of 2011. It is inspired by her first visit to the empty Drill Hall in 1999, after which she wrote "it is the sort of place which causes ideas to come tumbling and rushing through one's brain."

STREB

ELIZABETH STREB

DAREDEVIL

Elizabeth Streb in 1997 was awarded a John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation "Genius" Award. In 2008, Streb was appointed to the Mayor's Cultural Affairs Advisory Commission, a commission mandated by the City Charter to advise the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs. She holds a Master of Arts in Humanities and Social Thought from New York University, a B.S. in Modern Dance from SUNY Brockport from which she has received an honorary doctorate of fine arts as well. Streb also holds an honorary doctorate from Rhode Island College. Elizabeth Streb is the recipient of numerous other awards and fellowships including the Guggenheim Fellowship in 1987; a Brandeis Creative Arts Award in 1991; two New York Dance and Performance Awards (Bessie Awards), in 1988 and 1999 for her "sustained investigation of movement"; and over 20 years of on-going support from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA).

Once called the Evel Knievel of dance, Elizabeth Streb's choreography, which she calls "PopAction," intertwines the disciplines of dance, athletics, boxing, rodeo, the circus, and Hollywood stunt-work. The result is a bristling, muscle-and-motion vocabulary that combines daring with strict precision in pursuit of the public display of "pure movement."

In 2003 Streb established S.L.A.M. (STREB Lab for Action Mechanics) in Brooklyn, NY. S.L.A.M.'s door is literally open for the community to come in and watch rehearsals, take classes and learn to fly. The central idea at SLAM (besides always being public) is to mix three extreme action forms: PopAction, KidAction and Circus Arts.

Streb believes that true movement invention (the rubric of her investigations) happens accidentally with the milling together of strangers and out of the diverse movement voices that accidentally cross paths. SLAM is the Petrie dish that feeds the possibility for these new forms to emerge.

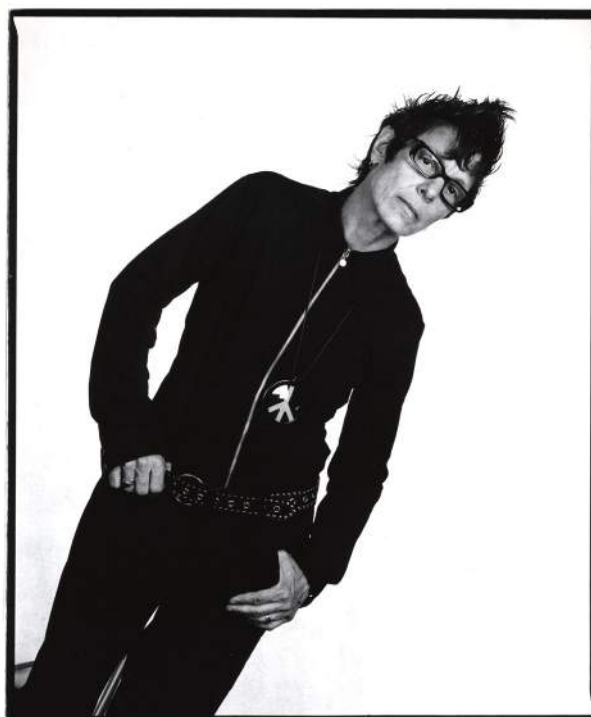


photo by Jack Mitchell

STREB

THE COMPANY

ACTION COLLABORATORS

PERFORMERS

SARAH CALLAN
JACKIE CARLSON
JUSTINA GRAYMAN
FELIX HESS
SAMANTHA JAKUS
CASSANDRE JOSEPH
DANIEL RYSAK
JAMARIOUS STEWART
FABIO TAVARES [Associate Artistic Director]
LEONARDO GIRON TORRES

TECHNICAL AND ARTISTIC COLLABORATORS

ROBERT WOODRUFF [Director]
JIM LEWIS [Text]
DAVID VAN TIEGHEM [Sound Design]
WENDALL HARRINGTON [Projection Design]
ROBERT WIERZEL [Lighting Design]
ANDREA LAUER [Costume Design]
ZAIRE BAPTISTE [VJ/DJ]
NOE AND IVAN ESPANA [Whizzing Gizmo Design]
MIT MEDIA LAB [Technical Consultation]
MATT McADON [Technical Director]
ANNE McDOUGALL [Company Tour Manager]



PRESENTATION FOLDER PHOTO BY TOM GARAVAGLIA
PRESS KIT AND GRAPHIC DESIGN BY AARON HENDERSON

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STREB

STREB HISTORY

FALL DOWN. GET UP. REPEAT.

The members of Elizabeth Streb's company, STREB (originally Streb/Ringside), combine virtuosity and technical skill with open-hearted popular appeal.

Founded in New York City in 1985 by choreographer Elizabeth Streb, the company has traveled, artistically as well as geographically, from the heights of the experimental dance world to the cutting-edge of popular entertainment.

Over the course of two decades, STREB has performed in theaters large and small and served as artists-in-residence at the world's top art museums, including Los Angeles MOCA, the Wexner Center in Columbus, and the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis.

At the same time, they have taken their slam-bam action out of hallowed halls and into the streets and sports stadiums. They've appeared in numerous public performances, free to all: at Grand Central Station in Manhattan; in front of the Cyclone roller coaster at Coney Island's fairground; and under the arches of the Brooklyn Bridge Anchorage where they flew above their audience, suspended from a 40-foot wall. They dove through glass as part of V-Day, an anti-violence-against-women event at Madison Square Garden; and mesmerized sports fans during halftime at a Seattle Sonics basketball game, and before the National Anthem over the pitcher's mound at the Minneapolis Metrodome for a Twins/Yankees game.

STREB has appeared on television, with David Letterman on CBS, surrounded by kids climbing walls on Nickelodeon, as well as in the one-hour documentary "PopAction," directed by Michael Blackwood, which plays repeatedly on PBS. And in 2004, when Cirque du Soleil celebrated their 20th anniversary, they invited STREB to perform with them in front of 250,000 people in the streets of Montreal. The event continues to air on cable television on the Bravo network.

STREB's company members have accrued no end of art-world awards. And they've won the love of generations of school children, sports lovers, TV watchers and thrill seekers, too—people who may never have felt welcomed in a dance environment. The action-engineers of STREB are top-notch performers, with years of training in ballet, modern dance, martial arts, acrobatics and circus skills. Many also have teacher's credentials and all share a keen interest in education, sociology and expanding the national appetite for live time performance.

When they're not touring the world, the STREB company's home is SLAM, the STREB Lab for Action Mechanics, in the Williamsburg neighborhood of Brooklyn. All public all the time, at SLAM they rehearse, hold classes for children and adults (starting at three years old) and for 8 weeks twice a year perform works-in-progress for the community.

In her review for The Village Voice, Deborah Jowitt best described the experience of watching STREB work:

"I feel in my own body the riskiness, the transgressiveness of her work, with people crashing to mats, hanging from bars, clinging to surfaces....if you're not one of those wincing, you'll see in the work of STREB and her courageous dancers a redemptive vision of human daring and ingenuity."

The logo for STREB, featuring the word "STREB" in a bold, black, sans-serif font with a slightly distressed or hand-drawn appearance. The letters are closely spaced and have a consistent thickness. Below the logo is a horizontal dashed line.

PUBLIC ACTION

MOVEMENT FOR EVERYONE

Inherent to STREB's work is **Public Access**, the belief that the audience for dance is much larger than generally perceived and that taking the work directly to that audience is important for the company's own creativity. Opening all rehearsals to the public and conducting curtain talks following each performance are just two ways STREB makes its action public. These are the other public-action options STREB offers:

KIDACTION CLASSES:

Workshops investigate the basic physics of movement and constructing choreography from these principles. This process fosters creativity, confidence, critical thinking, and responsibility for their partners. Participants discover the discipline of performance and how much fun moving can be. Dancers demonstrate how the movements they've taught the students form the basic building blocks of the STREB vocabulary, "PopAction." Performances by KidAction participants can be included in the actual STREB performance. Classes can be arranged for groups of students aged 5-18.

EXCHANGE EVENTS:

In addition to working with school children of all ages and levels of development, STREB has developed Exchange Events individually tailored to specific groups, such as professional artists, athletes, gymnasts, cheerleaders, boy scouts, boxing students and wrestlers, as well as physics students and theater classes. Exchange Events center on physical participation and the exchange of expertise. The classes emphasize building strength, accomplishing wild actions safely, and deepening each participant's own set of 'personal best' physical skills.

POPACTION MASTERCLASS:

STREB offers PopAction classes for dance students and professionals. Developed by Elizabeth Streb over the last 20 years, PopAction classes help dancers acquire new skills by posing unique challenges: change your base of support in a rapid fire way, physically designate specific locations in vertical and horizontal space, learn to pop the muscles to initiate action (rather than skeletally transferring weight), train for impact, learn to fly with low-to-the-ground maneuvers that increase spatial awareness, and incorporate a timing system that is not musical but physical ("felt timing"). The class confronts issues of falling and fear. STREB operates on a 'personal best' principle; the method suits all body types, ages, and skill sets.

PowerPoint:

Elizabeth Streb has developed a PowerPoint lecture that uses video, images, drawings, calculations and quotes to illustrate her unique theory of action. In her demonstration, she presents this amalgam of information to simulate an action show without the tons of stuff (and the 12 people!) required for the show. Streb's PowerPoint presentation deconstructs her approach to action, her theory and her process. It shows how humans can fly, how they land, and traces the lineage of STREB action-invention. It also addresses how a sentient audience 'sees' or experiences movement, and how we understand action on stage. How do we comprehend size, distance, speed and angle of viewing? Her demonstration shows the effect of the viewer's own frame of reference on their perception of action. What are Action's reference points? What are Movement's "vanishing points"? The lecture is a fascinating discourse from one of the world's freshest observers of everyday action.

The logo for STREB, featuring the word "STREB" in a bold, black, sans-serif font with a slightly irregular, hand-drawn appearance. The letters are closely spaced and have a slight shadow or depth to them.

STREB at SLAM

STREB LAB FOR ACTION MECHANICS



“At this point in my career, my vision for SLAM is as a beta-test for a new cultural paradigm. SLAM is an open-access venue that models a new kind of artist-driven community institution. The doors of SLAM are never closed. Performances at SLAM are not stiff, class-coded, regimented affairs; they are neighborhood happenings where the company’s longtime fans mingle with the at-risk kids from the local public schools and their parents. At the heart of this machine is the driving force of art and action, and the belief that art can provide a service to a community such that voters, taxpayers, and consumers will consider it indispensable.” —Elizabeth Streb

In January 2003, STREB moved into a then vacant former loading facility for the Dutch Mustard Company. While preserving both the space’s unobstructed dimensions (30’ high ceilings and 50’ x 100’ footprint) and physical character (exposed cinder block walls and steel I-Beams and a street-level loading gate), STREB transformed 51 North 1st Street into the STREB LAB FOR ACTION MECHANICS (SLAM), a multipurpose space which accommodates the company’s school, 150-seat performance space, rehearsal facilities, trapeze rig and administrative offices.

SLAM has become a gathering spot for the exchange of creative ideas across cultures of kids, dancers, gymnasts, circus specialists and pedestrians. SLAM is a place to experiment, a place that examines the difference between public and private, a place that is all public, all the time -- company rehearsals, which are always open to the public, happen simultaneously while aerial artists practice overhead, technicians work on equipment, children attend class, family members look on, neighborhood residents stop in.

Programs at SLAM include STREB Extreme Action Company’s bi-annual home seasons and ongoing creative development, GO! an Emerging Artist Commissioning Program, aerial performances, the POP ACTION School, the Espana/STREB Trapeze Academy, KIC/STREB (a program for at-risk youth in partnership with the Greenpoint YMCA), summer camp, KIDS COMPANY, the ACTION OPPORTUNITY Internship/Mentorship Program, ACTION CLUB for teens and tweens as well as in-school residencies and SLAM field trips.

In recognition of its community programming and commitment to diversity, STREB has received major support for SLAM from the NEA and NYSCA, Artplace, Artography: Arts in a Changing America, Bloomberg Philanthropies, Dance/USA’s Engaging Dance Audiences program, Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, Fan Fox and Leslie R. Samuels Foundation, Lambent Foundation, Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Mertz Gilmore Foundation, Robert Rauschenberg Foundation, Rockefeller Foundation’s Cultural Innovation Program, Surdna Foundation, among others. With unprecedented support for building acquisition from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, the New York City Council, the Mayor’s Office and the Brooklyn Borough President’s Office, the company purchased SLAM in December 2007.

STREB

WORLD TOUR

FALLING EVERYWHERE

2014

SLAMSHOW: Home Season, Brooklyn, NY
Germantown Performing Arts Center: Germantown, TN
Elliott Hall of Music: West Lafayette, IN
Lied Center for the Performing Arts: Lincoln, NE
Overture Hall, Overture Center for the Arts: Madison, WI
Escher Auditorium- Benedicta Arts Center:
St. Joseph, MN
Memorial Hall: Chapel Hill, NC
Phillips Performing Arts Center: Gainesville, FL

2013

Bergdorff Goodman: New York, NY
TEDxMet:
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY
New York City Center's Fall for Dance Festival:
Delacorte Theater in Central Park, NY
SLAM SHOW: Home Season, Brooklyn, NY

2012

London 2012 Cultural Olympiad
(Performance Sites)
Millennium Bridge
City Hall
Paternoster Square
Trafalgar Square
National Theatre
The London Eye

Holland Dance Festival: The Hague
Byham Theater: Pittsburgh, PA
Krannert Center for the Performing Arts: Champaign, IL
Williams College: Williamstown, MA
SLAM SHOW: Home Season, Brooklyn, NY

2011

Park Avenue Armory: New York, NY
Whitney Museum of American Art:
Gansevoort Court, New York, NY
July 7, 8, and 9, 2011
Whitney Museum of American Art:
Community Day May 21, 2011
Whitney Museum of American Art:
Groundbreaking Ceremony May 24, 2011
River to River Festival: New York, NY
Blumenthal Performing Arts Center: Charlotte, NC
State Theatre New Jersey: New Brunswick, NJ
SLAMSHOW: Home Season, Brooklyn, NY

2010

Cultural Olympiad, Roundhouse Theater:
Vancouver, CA
Annenberg Center: Philadelphia, PA
Mary D'Angelo Performing Arts Center: Erie, PA
Memorial Hall, University of NC: Chapel Hill, NC
Rose Lehrman Arts Center: Harrisburg, PA
Schaeffer Auditorium: Kutztown, PA
Grand Opera House: Wilmington, DE
The Paramount Theater: Charlottesville, VA
V.T Law Performing Arts Center: Buckhannon, WV
Lane University Center: Frostburg, MD
Clay Center: Charleston, WV
Mandavi Center: Davis, CA
Nazareth College: Rochester, NY

2009

Carpenter Performing Arts Center:
Long Beach, CA
La Jolla Music Society: San Diego, CA
Stanford Lively Arts: Stanford, CA
State Theatre: New Brunswick, NJ
Prospect Park Bandshell: Brooklyn, NY
University of Wisconsin- Madison: Madison, WI
Institute of Contemporary Art: Boston, MA
Herberger Theater: Phoenix, AZ
STREB at SLAM: Home Season, Brooklyn, NY

2008

SLAMSHOW: Home Season, Brooklyn, NY
2007
State Theater of New Jersey: New Brunswick, NJ
Institute of Contemporary Art: Boston, MA
Marnott Hotel: San Juan, Puerto Rico
SLAMSHOW: Home Season, Brooklyn, NY
Le Festival Paris Quartier d'été: Paris, France
Mount Baker Theater: Bellingham, WA
Capitol Theater: Yakima, WA

2006

Proctor's Theater: Schenectady, NY
Kravis Center for the Performing Arts:
West Palm Beach, FL
SLAMSHOW Home Season, Brooklyn, NY
Lincoln Center Festival: New York, NY
NY City Center: New York, NY
McCarren Pool: Brooklyn, NY
Williams Center for the Arts: Easton, PA
Providence Performing Arts Center: Providence, RI
Flynn Center for the Performing Arts: Burlington, VT
Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center:
Great Barrington, MA
Walton Arts Center: Fayetteville, AK

2005

Napa Opera House: Napa, CA
Portland Institute of Contemporary Art: Portland, OR
Bumbershoot: Seattle, WA
Britt Festival: Jacksonville, OR
George Mason University: Fairfax, VA
SLAMSHOW: Home Season, Brooklyn, NY

2004

Wausau Area Performing Arts Foundation: WI
Wisconsin Union Theatre: Madison, WI
Cirque du Soleil: Montreal, Canada
Festival "Oriente Occidentale": Italy
University of Colorado: Boulder, CO
University of Wyoming: Laramie, WY
Wesleyan University: Middletown, CT
NY City Center: New York, NY
Jazz at Lincoln Center: New York, NY
Late Show with David Letterman, NY
SLAMSHOW: Home Season, Brooklyn, NY

2003

Wolf Trap: Vienna, VA
LMCC, Evening Stars: New York, NY
U.S. Military Academy: West Point, NY
Byham Theater: Pittsburgh, PA
SUNY - Stony Brook: Stony Brook, NY
Society for Performing Arts: Houston, TX
Cal Poly Art, San Luis Obispo, CA
CA Center for Performing Arts: Los Angeles, CA
Cornell University: Ithaca, NY
SLAMSHOW: Home Season, Brooklyn, NY

2002

Art at St Ann's: Brooklyn, NY
University of Arizona: Tucson, AZ
George Mason University: Fairfax, VA
Museum Contemporary Art: Chicago, IL
Ordway Music Center St. Paul, MN
Novel Hall Taipei, Taiwan
The Joyce Theater New York, NY
Chateauballon: Toulon, France
Palais Royal: Paris, France

2001

University of California-Berkeley: Berkeley, CA
Singapore Arts Festival: Singapore
Teatro Municipal: Santiago, Chile

2000

Midland Center for the Arts: Midland, MI
Power Center: Ann Arbor, MI
Central Park Summer Stage: New York, NY
Grand Central Terminal: New York, NY
Krannert Center for the Arts: Urbana, IL
Weidner Center for the Performing Arts:
Green Bay, WI
Irvine Barclay Theater Company: Irvine, CA
Scottsdale Center for the Arts: Scottsdale, AZ
Annenberg Arts Center: Philadelphia, PA
Theater/Dance Affiliates
Garde Arts Center: New London, CT
Jorgensen Auditorium: Storrs, CT
The Moore Theater: Seattle, WA
Portland Ins. of Art: Portland, OR

1999

Kravis Center for the Performing Arts:
West Palm Beach, FL
Tidewater Performing Arts Society: Virginia Beach, VA
Colony Theater: Miami Beach, FL
Hancher Auditorium: Iowa City, IA
Ohio Theater, Playhouse Square: Cleveland, OH
The Performing Arts Center: Purchase, NY
The Winter Garden World Financial Center:
New York, NY
Coney Island: Brooklyn, NY
Snug Harbor: Staten Island, NY
The Barbican Center: London, England
Maison de la Danse: Lyon, France
Theatre de la Ville: Paris, France
Brisbane Festival: Brisbane, Australia
Melbourne
Festival: Melbourne, Australia 1998
Late Show with David Letterman, NY
University of California, Davis: Davis, CA
Zellerbach Auditorium: Berkeley, CA
Irvine Barclay Theater: Irvine, CA
University of Michigan: Ann Arbor, MI
Tennessee Performing Arts Center: Nashville, TN

1997

Trinity College: Hartford, CT
Lafayette University: Easton, PA
Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts:
Washington, DC
Washington University: St. Louis, MO
Society for the Performing Arts: Houston, TX
University of Arizona: Tucson, AZ
Scottsdale Cultural Council: Scottsdale, AZ
Minneapolis Metrodome: Minneapolis, MN
The Walker Arts Center: Minneapolis, MN
George Mason University: Fairfax, VA
Jacob's Pillow: Lee, MA
The Joyce Theater: New York, NY

STREB

QUOTES

THEY DANCE YOU SWEAT

If dancers are the athletes of God, Streb's members are the gladiators. Flipping, tumbling, leaping marvels, they perform one arduous feat after another, putting their brawny bodies through punishing routines that leave their audiences grimacing and shielding their eyes.

-Claudia La Rocco, The New York Times

Streb is much more than a choreographer or even an "action architect," as she calls herself. She's an alchemist, concocting a potent brew of dance, gymnastics, and physics that transforms these elements into an exhilarating evening of movement.

-Terry Byrne, The Boston Globe

One of the greatest thrills of watching her show... is seeing space the way she does. A whole new world opens up. It feels as though you've just acquired super-powered, X-ray vision.

-Robert Johnson, The Star Ledger

"A choreographer who requires a special taste rarely appeals to a broad public. But Elizabeth Streb's pieces do both, and this paradox is the secret to her success ... One can respond viscerally to the dancers who crash against walls or to dancers curveting their bodies in space. As they fly into the air and land, inches away from one another, their split-second timing impresses with its results: rhythm, dynamics, and thrills ..."

-Anna Kisselgoff, The New York Times

"Streb's unique movement art – kin to sport, circus, physics experiment, and hard labor -- has reached a peak of theatricality and dare-all virtuosity."

-Deborah Jowitz, Village Voice

"With their sweaty athleticism and high wire daring, STREB's dancers may well be the Flying Wallendas of Dance."

-Amy Gamerman, The Wall Street Journal

"The air is filled with the sounds of grinding crashes, grunts and yells from the performers and gasps from the audience...it is all in great fun."

-Jennifer Dunning, The New York Times

"As if the law of gravity had been repealed."

-Gus Solomons, Dance Magazine

"Sweat. Grunting. Hurling bodies. Death-defying leaps. STREB dances on the edge. Split-second timing, grueling gymnastics, flying bodies. Pushing the boundaries of movement based on the laws of physics, Streb and company deliver more daring-do in one evening that most circuses do in a world tour."

-The Independent, North Carolina

"the audience devoured this fascinating, fun, and oddly funny ...choreographer ...her work is unexpectedly, mysteriously accessible. It appeals to nearly everyone ...exciting... serence... beautiful."

-Kevin Nance, The Tennessean

"Throughout the evening, STREB freed the audience from the limiting constraints of time and gravity ...aesthetically pleasing, intellectually intriguing ... truly mystifying."

-Brenda Krebs, Kansas City Star

"let the millennium come! In STREB,the American dance scene has finally an ethnic concert dance tha portrays our edgy, well-muscled, hyper-technical culture as a present-day condition, not some theoretical enemy making its approach...the dancer's resiliency is the final beauty."

-Jean Lenihan, Seattle Times

"STREB has a knack for creating intricate contrapuntal patterns in unlikely spaces. Gravity be damned."

Martin Bernheimer, Los Angeles Times

"I feel in my own body the riskiness, the transgressiveness of her work, with people crashing to mats, hanging from bars, clinging to surfaces, STREB's sophisticated architectural tracteries, built with millisecond timing in themes of combat with gravity and the forcing of human skill, are potent at inducing kinesthesia ...if you not one of these wincing, you'll see in the work of Streb and her courageous dancers a redemptive vision of human daring and ingenuity."

Deborah Jowitz, Village Voice.

[The STREB] company moves with astonishing strength and control as well as speed. The combination is amazing."

Margaret Putnam, Dallas Morning News.

"STREB's rough-and-tumble dances are about velocity, physical stamina and her unwillingness to bow to gravity without a fight."

William Harris, The New York Times

"(STREB's) work] is ... as devastatingly beautiful as it is violent and athletic."

Gia Kourlas, Time Out, NY

"Dancers...writhe from the ceiling in swivel harnesses, chuck flying meal objects and hurl themselves against solid surfaces in a seamless, roller-coaster-paced production."

-Shayne Samuels, The New York Observer

"perhaps it's a sort of quintessential slam dancing, perhaps its dance in evolution . Perhaps it's not even dance at all. Whatever it is, however, it is absolutely unique and thrilling beyond words. Crazy or not, Elizabeth Streb is a master of her art. Whatever that art may be."

-Harry Weber, Riverfront Times, St Louis

"By exploring the frontiers of performance space, and creating works that reflect the spirit of our technological age, Ms. Streb is carrying dance into a new dimension"

-Robert Johnson, The New York Times

"It's not like choreography you have ever seen before ...It's all high impact stuff – people throwing themselves against walls with bone-crushing abandon, hurtling down ropes and bouncing on trampolines...with oohs and aahs from the audience, and an effect at its best rather like a firework display."

Clive Barnes, New York Post

STREB

Flights of fancy

Elizabeth Streb, a self-described 'action architect,' has made a career of gravity-defying choreography

By Valerie Gladstone

GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

NEW YORK — "Ready, go!" screams Christine Chen as a 25-foot hamster wheel begins to rotate during a recent rehearsal. Her voice echoing in a huge garage in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, she throws herself face down from its upper reaches onto a thick red mat and lands with a noisy splat. As she rebounds into a standing position and races to the side of the room, Fabio Favares leaps onto the wheel and clamors to the top. Ami Ipapo almost smashes her head as she swings herself onto a lower rung right below him.

"Watch out," yells choreographer Elizabeth Streb, 56, pushing her oversize black eyeglasses back on her forehead and rising to her feet from a nearby chair. Throwing up her hands, she acts as if it were the first time she'd seen her phenomenally athletic dancers almost hurt themselves. In fact, injury comes with the territory. But to her, it's worth it. "I know what wild action does to people," she says. "I know how chaotic it is and how it incites the spirit."

Streb brings "STREB vs. Gravity," a series of spectacular acts including the thrilling "Revolution," with the wheel, and the lyrical "Orbit," to the Institute of Contemporary Art Thursday through Feb. 25. Accompanied by pop hits, with a set by Michael Casselli lit with red and blue lights and video projections of letters, numbers, photographs, and text serving as a constantly moving backdrop, the show dazzles in every way.

Since establishing her company STREB in 1985, the choreographer has been devising the most

acrobatic and daring work in modern dance. It's won praise and appreciative gasps everywhere the group has performed, including Grand Central Station, Coney Island, and at halftime of a Seattle SuperSonics NBA game. Acknowledging her intrepid and inventive approach, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation honored Streb with a "genius award" in 1997, which she used to study math and read philosophy.

After making sure Ipapo is OK, Streb steps away to explain her approach, which is always based on physics. "I start by coming up with questions like, 'Can you provide yourself

with a completely frictionless surface?'" she says. "Then I develop a prototype of the environment with my designers before taking it to a structural engineer who builds it. I bring that into the studio and start developing vocabulary with the dancers. They engage in what I call reckless play. That's where I get my material. I think of them as method engineers and myself as an action architect."

Slight and intense, her short black hair worn in a Mohawk, Streb still looks like the motercycle racer she was as a rebellious young woman growing up in Rochester, N.Y. Her experience as a downhill skier in the area only increased her inborn passion for risk. Later, she earned her degree in modern dance from the State University of New York in Brockport and studied with choreographers such as Viola Farber and Margaret Jenkins. But only the work of Merce Cunningham truly fascinated her, and no one served as her model, except perhaps motorcycle daredevil Evel Knievel.

Streb describes "Revolution" as one of the most confounding pieces she has created. Taking a seat at a makeshift desk on which sit a computer and drawings of the wheel, she says, "Every dancer must make two choices as the wheel turns — first, how to stay on, and second, how to make their movements coexist with the others. They can't see each other when they are on the outside of the wheel. They never see each other, all they can see is the inside of the wheel. The forces that are generated can be very surprising."

Streb points to a drawing that illustrates the dancers' various positions. "They only know someone has jumped off when they hear him or her shout a command," she says. "They create all the commands, odd names like 'Hercules' and 'Maple Syrup.' It makes all the difference who is on and who is off. They could hit someone if they don't know. They wear milks and the entire set is miked. Everything is amplified so the audience fully appreciates what feats these guys accomplish." As protective and reassuring as a mother with her dancers, she says affectionately, "They are my heroes."

Streb's warm and enthusiastic manner, plus some business savvy, have helped her establish a vital base in the Williamsburg community. Until four years ago, she lived a nomadic existence, like most contemporary choreographers, traveling from studio to studio to rehearse. But her ordeal was compounded by her use of a lot of big, heavy, cumbersome equipment.

Realizing the need for a permanent base, she convinced local politicians and real estate developers to help finance the renovation of the warehouse, formerly a mustard factory, and give her a reasonable rent. In exchange, she happily agreed to provide neighborhood



"STREB vs. Gravity" features "Revolution" (above), which choreographer Elizabeth Streb devised as a dazzlingly complex piece for her acrobatic New York company.

kids and adults with classes and shows. "I wanted to make this place a bit like the corner bodega," she says, "where people would want to hang out."

STREB IN ACTION

To see a video of the performers, go to boston.com/ae/theater_arts

One need only visit SLAM, the Streb Laboratory for Action Mechanics, to see how well she has succeeded. The place is alive from morning to evening with classes, rehearsals, and birthday parties. Children and teenagers take over the space, eager to be taught by Streb's dancers what she calls "pop action." This involves learning how to climb walls, bounce on trampolines, and use her flying apparatus. She describes her technique as "the ability to fly, low to the ground, and fall from ever-

moving farther and farther away from each other. Bathed in blue light, they look like underwater swimmers in a dreamlike grotto.

Pleased with their work, Streb lets all the dancers go for the day. But before they leave, they rest for a few moments. Performing such dangerous moves creates camaraderie, and they sit around together, sharing snacks and tips on how to better accomplish certain moves. They have no doubt about the value of doing Streb's work. "I love the constant challenge," says Dee Ann Nelson. "You develop a progression of skills that's never-ending."

Ipapo adds, "When you confront fear on a daily basis, it translates into other areas of your life. You really grow."

Streb will speak about her work Tuesday at 7 p.m. at the Museum of Science. For information, visit mos.org/art.

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Photographed by Jason Bell in New York City

THE PUNK

ELIZABETH STREB

If modern dance world has a William Blake—an artist unbound by physics, untainted by reason, unabashed in the audacity of vision—it's Streb. From her Williamsburg warehouse studio, she has concocted a new grammar of movement, one in which dancers fall from great heights and pop up, one in which gravity is only a suggestion and swinging cement bricks beg a sadistic game of Frogger. With leaps and bounds and high impact, Streb has redefined—as much as Alvin Ailey, Fokine, and Merce Cunningham before her—the limits of human movement.

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STREB

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June 7, 2010

Keeping the Artists in Williamsburg and Attracting the Bankers

By **CHRISTINE HAUGHNEY**

Some New Yorkers — no matter how uncreative their jobs and lives may be — love to mention how they live in neighborhoods once romantically settled by poets, painters and musicians.

Developers often talk up these histories when selling apartments.

But while many of them think of artists as place holders for lawyers and investment bankers, Douglas Steiner, one developer struggling to sell units in the vastly overbuilt Brooklyn neighborhood of Williamsburg, is betting it pays to keep artists in the neighborhood even after wealthier buyers move in. He is hoping the deal he struck with the choreographer Elizabeth Streb will help the sales of his \$1 million-plus town homes and apartments.

“She’s part of what makes Williamsburg attractive,” Mr. Steiner said while he and Ms. Streb sat in her warehouse, which was filled with dancers swinging from candy-colored curtainlike ribbons and troupe members rehearsing on a yellow steel mouse wheel contraption called the Whizzing Gizmo. “We wanted to preserve that artistic character.”

Mr. Steiner and Ms. Streb make an unlikely pair. Mr. Steiner, the reserved heir to an industrial real estate fortune and chairman of [Steiner Studios](#), jokes about how his father’s definition of a beautiful building is property with “positive cash flow.” Ms. Streb speaks in bursts of enthusiasm about how “action is a panacea” for children and how she runs her troupe like a contrarian [Lincoln Center](#).

Ms. Streb has plenty of reasons to dislike landlords: For more than a decade she fought to stay in her rented 3,000-square-foot SoHo loft, finally winning the right to buy it for \$130,000 in 2008.

When Mr. Steiner bought the North First Street building that houses [Ms. Streb’s studio](#) and performance space in 2006, she had been there for three years paying \$5,000 a month in rent. A former food storage center, it was overrun by pigeons and squirrels when she moved in and

smelled so strongly of tamari that Ms. Streb had the scent sandblasted from the concrete floors. The concrete walls were so porous that on some winter days she sent dancers home because it was too cold to rehearse.

Even though Ms. Streb thought her studio was doomed to become a residential development, she boldly asked Mr. Steiner to sell her the building. He refused. Then he realized he needed the backyard for a development project he was assembling, but Ms. Streb was entitled to use it for at least three more years under her lease.

So over lunch close by at [Fabiane's Cafe](#), Ms. Streb told him she would let him have the backyard if he would sell her the building. They sealed the agreement with a handshake and a cherry Tootsie Pop that Mr. Steiner gave to Ms. Streb. In 2007, the troupe, Streb Extreme Action, closed on the purchase with financial help from the city and the borough president's office; if the troupe sells the building, it must be to another nonprofit organization.

Mr. Steiner said he did not make money on the deal because he sold the property to the troupe for the same amount he had paid for it, \$1.3 million. But he did keep the backyard space. And he said that the recession meant he would lose money on the broader development project: nine town houses on North First Street, 114 luxury apartments at 80 Metropolitan Avenue and 50 apartments at 58 Metropolitan that are all tucked around Ms. Streb's building. But he said he would like to build in Williamsburg in the future, which he said had not become "homogenized" like Manhattan.

He also formed a friendship of sorts with Ms. Streb. Mr. Steiner attends Ms. Streb's annual fundraisers and calls them among the best parties of the year. He marvels at how the dancers climb on walls, and how at Ms. Streb's building he met Philippe Petit, who keeps part of the wire he used to walk between the World Trade Center towers and who holds clinics at the studio. Ms. Streb is even considering selling her SoHo loft, which would probably fetch more than \$1 million, and buying a neighboring town house Mr. Steiner built.

By then, Ms. Streb could be one of only two people from her troupe in the neighborhood, where she would join Fabio Tavares Da Silva, the associate artistic director. He has been able to stay because his partner's friend works in real estate and helped them find an affordable rental. Other troupe members commute from Washington Heights, Bedford-Stuyvesant and Philadelphia.

But some local families have connected with Ms. Streb's studio. Jenny Williams, a painter who has lived in the neighborhood since 1992, has been sending her son, Whitman, 10, and daughter, Clementine, 8, to classes there since the studio opened. She said her daughter learned to do splits,

and her son became more coordinated. Most of all, the family has a place to go.

“When people ask me why I would want to raise kids in New York City, it’s one of those places that is sort of the reason,” she said.

That is what Mr. Steiner is counting on. In December, Nanette Guarda moved into a \$1.125 million apartment at 80 Metropolitan with her husband, Michael Guarda, her 7-year-old daughter, Natasha, and her 6-month-old daughter, Gemma. Ms. Guarda said Natasha already “peeks in there every time we go by.” For her family to take classes there, she said, “it’s really a matter of time.”



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Photo by Tequila Minsky

Mayor Bloomberg and Whitney Museum Director Adam Weinberg helped choreographer Elizabeth Streb take a bow after her unique groundbreaking performance.

The Whitney returns to its roots with Downtown groundbreaking

BY LINCOLN ANDERSON

Under a de rigueur white tent, from whose roof hung hundreds of turquoise-colored shovels suspended by clear filaments, the Whitney Museum of American Art broke ground Tuesday on its future home on Gansevoort St. in the Meatpacking District.

Opening the event, three men pounded African drums with thin sticks, building from a slow, minimalist beat to an ear-splitting crescendo. Mayor Bloomberg took the stage and assured the audience that this would be a “groundbreaking groundbreaking.”

Indeed, the event’s finale saw the Streb Extreme Action Company put an avant spin on the concept. Wearing a black helmet, Elizabeth Streb strode forward and stood under what looked like a thin yellow water tank. A rope was then pulled and, not water, but dirt (i.e. ground) came pouring down on her. Meanwhile, amid the recorded sounds of bulldozers and shattering glass, the other dancers each, in turn, dove through clear panes of glass, breaking them.

The new, \$720 million museum building — nine stories tall and occu-

pying 200,000 square feet — is scheduled to open in 2015. It will have 50,000 square feet of indoor gallery space, half of it for showcasing the Whitney’s permanent collection, the other half for special exhibitions and artist projects. The structure will feature an 18,000-square-foot gallery for temporary exhibits that will be the city’s largest, column-free museum gallery space. There will also be 13,000 square feet of outdoor gallery space for art exhibitions, projects and per-

Continued on page 14

C.A.S. to sell two Sullivan buildings to condo developer

BY ALBERT AMATEAU

The Children’s Aid Society has agreed to sell two Sullivan St. properties that are home to the Philip Coltoff Center in the South Village for \$53 million to Broad Street Development, which plans to convert the historic buildings to residential condos.

Children’s Aid, which has been in the Village for 119 years, announced last December its intention to sell the buildings at 209-219 Sullivan St. in order to

fulfill its mission to serve the neediest children living in poverty.

The sale does not include the society’s annex at 177 Sullivan St., which is still on the market.

Richard Buery, president and C.E.O. of Children’s Aid, said on Tues., May 25, that the society would continue to provide nursery school programs at the Coltoff Center for currently enrolled children and their

Continued on page 8

City Planning gets an earful on N.Y.U. superblocs plan

BY ALBERT AMATEAU

The Department of City Planning last week heard testimony from 45 people and received 50 pages of comments from Community Board 2 on the proposed environmental review of New York University’s plan to redevelop its two South Village superblocs over the next 19 years.

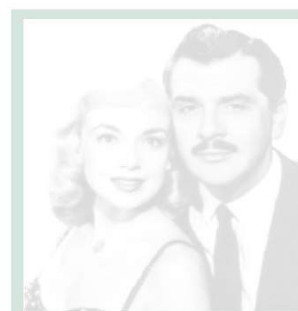
The two May 24 scoping sessions were the public’s chance to influence the study issues in the coming environ-

mental impact statement, or E.I.S., on the university’s plan to build a total of 2.5 million square feet in the Washington Square Village superbloc, between W. Third and Bleecker Sts., and in the Silver Towers superbloc, between Bleecker and Houston Sts.

City Planning will accept written testimony on the project until June 6.

“We commented on every

Continued on page 6



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Major museum moment as the Whitney breaks ground

Continued from page 1

formances.

The new Downtown Whitney will be located next to the southern end of the High Line park, at Gansevoort and Washington Sts., but will not be directly accessible from the elevated park. The museum entrance will be at street level. Security concerns were reportedly the reason why the High Line and Whitney won't connect directly.

About 500 people filled the tent at Tuesday's groundbreaking, just off the West Side Highway.

Flanked by screens flashing signature works by American artists, from Hopper to Basquiat, the mayor called the Whitney one of New York's "most popular and revered institutions." He said the museum's moving to the Lower West Side is another example of how the city continues to open up neighborhoods for new uses by utilizing rezoning and targeted investment.

For the Whitney to relocate to the Meatpacking District "would have been unthinkable a generation ago," he noted. "Here in the Meat Market, the investment was in an old railroad trestle — the High Line," he said. "Now the Whitney, together with the High Line, will establish this neighborhood as one of the most exciting in this city — or any city."

Bloomberg noted the city has made a \$55 million capital commitment to the museum project, which will create 530 construction jobs.

The mayor also praised the unique mix of the block, which, along with the High Line, is also home to eight meatpacking businesses — virtually the last remnant of the former Meat Market, which once saw the area teeming with hundreds of meat businesses.

"Only in New York can you mix the way we do," Bloomberg said, "and that's the strength of New York — whether you mix uses, or ethnicities." He noted that the city has given a 20-year lease extension to "The Co-op," the remaining meat businesses on the block, which carries a deed restriction dating back to the Astors for market use.

The relocation of the Whitney below 14th St. also represents a return to its roots. In 1914, sculptor Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney established the Whitney Studio in Greenwich Village to present exhibitions by living American artists. In 1931, the Whitney Museum of American Art — the first museum devoted exclusively to American art, a radical concept then — opened on W. Eighth St. The museum moved Uptown in 1954, and in 1966, into its current building at Madison Ave. and 75th St. designed by Marcel Breuer and Hamilton Smith. The Metropolitan Museum of Art will occupy the Whitney's E. 75th St. building once the new Gansevoort St. museum is completed.

The new Whitney strategically also will be just south of the Chelsea art gallery scene — the world's largest art gallery district.

Bob Hurst, president of the Whitney's board of directors, said the new building will allow the museum to take it to the next level.



Photo by Tequila Minsky

Choreographer Elizabeth Streb redefined the term "groundbreaking" with her performance-art piece for the occasion at the Whitney Museum site on Tuesday. After all the "ground" had poured out of the tank, the mayor, the Whitney's director and others grabbed shovels for the traditional digging-in photo.

"We now have the opportunity, with this beautiful location, with an incredible building by Renzo Piano, to be the defining museum of modern and contemporary American art," he said.

Hurst noted that the Whitney has already raised more than \$500 million toward the project's construction and endowment.

Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney's granddaughter, Flora Miller Biddle, said she was lucky to have seen the museum in every building that it was in. She said the Whitney has been able to flourish, "while keeping its intimacy, its heart and soul."

"The Whitney is an idea — neither a building or place," stated Adam Weinberg, the museum's director, "and ideas need room to grow." The concept of a Downtown Whitney on Gansevoort St. is "brilliant," he said. He assured it will continue to be a museum that is always open to young and upcoming artists.

Speaking to the significance of the new museum, Borough President Scott Stringer said, "This a great moment for the borough I represent — but it's also a great moment for the world that we live in."

Cradling a small white model of the future museum building in his arm, architect Piano described it as a "25,000-ton meteorite coming down and landing by the High Line." But, he said, by creating an overhang along the museum's Gansevoort St. side and leaving the sidewalk open beneath it, the feeling will be as if the building is "flying." This will model the openness of the space under the adjacent High Line, and create an exciting public space.

"What makes a museum a great cultural place is that they fertilize down," Piano explained. "They create human places, they create life. That's the reason this building doesn't 'touch down,'" he said of the overhang.

Afterward, David Reck, chairperson of Community Board 2's Land Use and Business Development Committee, called the Whitney, "great, overdue. This is one of the good things about being on the community board," he said of the exciting project. Museum officials, from the start, have reached out to the community, he said, and are "good people to work with."

David Gruber, chairperson of C.B. 2's Arts and Institutions Committee, said the new museum will be "a neighborhood changer."

Reck recalled it was the Dia Art Foundation that initially had the idea for a museum at the end of the High Line. But when the Dia project fell through five years ago, the Whitney stepped in — "with a world-class architect," he added.

At a press conference afterward, asked if the meatpackers would still be on the block in, say, 50 years, Bloomberg said he couldn't say.

"I don't know," he said. "We have to have industry as well as art. We have to have food as well as housing."

He added that cultural institutions, like the Whitney, "fuel the city's tourism boom," and that it's expected that 50 million tourists will visit New York City in the next year.

He said that, ultimately, the Downtown Whitney's inspiration was the acclaimed, Frank Gehry-designed Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain.

Asked her thoughts on the new Whitney, Amanda Burden, commissioner of the City Planning Department, said, "It's extraordinary. It's going to be a signature cultural icon in terms of its design, and also an important building at its location." Saying she was intrigued by the various spaces in the building's design, including its outdoor plazas with views of the city, she said eagerly, "There are already a dozen places I want to be in that building."

Burden said the correct term for the area under and near the overhang on Gansevoort St. is a "largo," meaning a public square that is narrower than a "piazza," or plaza.

Speaking later in his office around the corner, John Jobbagy, head of the meatpackers' co-op, said, "We're thrilled and happy that the Whitney's going to be our new neighbor." He had been seated in the second row during the groundbreaking ceremony.

Some firefighters from Engine 3, Ladder 12 on 19th St. in Chelsea stopped in to buy meat. He sells to the first-responders "for cost," without any profit.

"We want to thank the mayor and the city for extending our lease and allowing us to keep making a living and supporting our families," Jobbagy said. "It's no joke in an economy like this."

The meat businesses have scant interaction with the parkgoers flocking to the High Line, since the meatpackers start at 4 a.m. and finish around 11 a.m., right when the number of people coming to the park starts to rise. It will likely be the same with the museum's visitors, he predicted.

Occasionally, tourists do stop to take photos of the "beef quarters" hanging on hooks outside his place, he said.

The New York Times

THE Arts

SATURDAY, JULY 16, 2011



RUBY WASHINGTON/THE NEW YORK TIMES

By the Water, Pretending to Be Water

Members of the Streb Extreme Action Company performing "Human Fountain" at the World Financial Center Plaza as part of the River to River Festival. Review, Page 5.

Airborne Bodies And Balls

For its "Extraordinary Moves" programming, the River to River Festival took to the air with the aid of — in order — skirts, balls and bodies. (This is what is

**GIA
KOURLAS**
DANCE
REVIEW

known as saving the best for last.) On Thursday evening performances by the Australian group Strange Fruit, the juggler Michael Moschen and the

Streb Extreme Action Company took place under a glaring sun at the World Financial Center Plaza.

The backdrop, overlooking the Hudson River, was a blend of shimmering water, crisp blue sky and cottony clouds. Truthfully, it was a little distracting, even with the garish appearance of Natalie Abbott, Nami Hall and Emily Ryan, who, in Strange Fruit's "Three Belles," wear bloomers, shiny bustiers and a mountainous arrangement of flowers in their hair. (It's a concoction that a 6-year-old girl with a princess fixation and equal worship for purple and pink might have thought up.)

Climbing three 14-foot poles, the dancers fasten belts around their thighs and raise their long hoop skirts to their waists. Once

"Extraordinary Moves" continues through Saturday at the World Financial Center Plaza, 220 Vesey Street, near 12th Avenue, Lower Manhattan; rivertorivernyc.com.

safely positioned on the poles, which are as pliable as antennae, the performers, in this work's best moments, seem to float in the clouds. They act out brief scenes as gossiping coquettes or engage in slow-motion fights, but most of their aimless swaying is monotonous. Apparently, strippers aren't the only ones hard pressed to think of new ways to move on a pole.

Mr. Moschen, the celebrated juggler, presents a selection of short works that express his admirably no-nonsense approach to his art. Throughout the performance he addresses the crowd — this showing is geared toward the younger set — and at one point explains that his ambition is "to use rhythm and space in my own way."

Incorporating three balls, as

well as the patter of his toes and heels, Mr. Moschen demonstrates his deftness at drawing lines — or the illusion of them — in space. While the harsh angle of the sun wasn't in his favor on Thursday, he was unflappable as he revealed the basics of juggling with the steady resolve of a geometry teacher. It was cute but got a little pedantic.

The main attraction is Elizabeth Streb's new "Human Fountain," inspired by the Bellagio Fountains in Las Vegas, and it doesn't disappoint. Ms. Streb is a rare choreographer whose work looks amazing outside: in "Human Fountain" the juxtaposition of sky, steel and flesh add up to a breathtaking convergence of materials.

The dancers take their spots on a three-tiered structure — it rises

30 feet — designed by Ms. Streb and Hudson Scenic Studio. Dropping like logs, they fall horizontally through the air and land on thick mats to mimic the speed and frequency of shooting water. It seems inconceivable, but with lightness and force, the dancers show the distinction between a graceful arc and a harsh, humorous spurt.

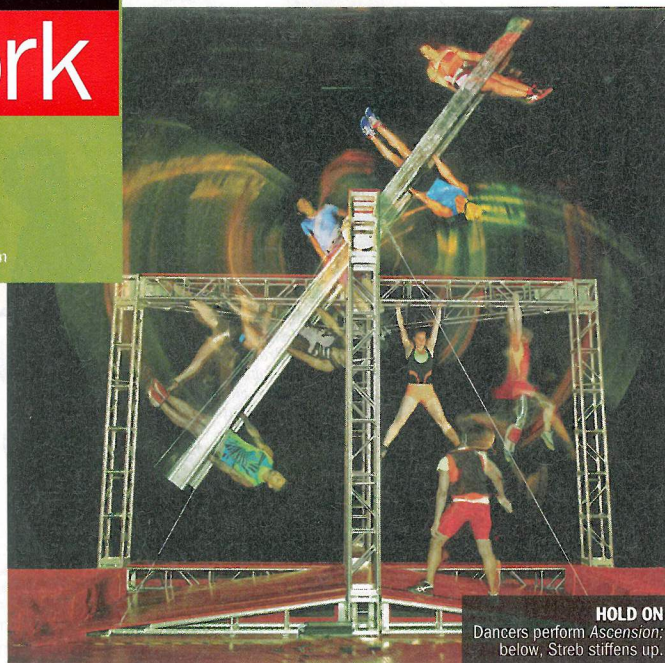
For the company, which operates with military precision, getting to the right spot on time might be even more harrowing than jumping. (You can even sense the performers' brief flash of trepidation.) Watching "Human Fountain" is to live a little vicariously, but even better, the piece is about what you see in a delicate split second: the point at which danger and beauty hang in the air.

Edited by Gia Kourlas • dance@timeoutny.com

Streb!

Before she kicks up some action at the Olympics, the hardware junkie takes over the Armory.

By **Gia Kourlas**



HOLD ON
Dancers perform *Ascension*; below, Streb stiffens up.

In 2010, Elizabeth Streb defied gravity in *Man Walking Down the Side of a Building*, a momentous revival by Trisha Brown performed at the Whitney Museum. Still, this may be her biggest year yet: Not only is she choreographing events at the upcoming Olympics—on one day in July from morning to night, she and her dancers will fall, dangle and climb all over London—but beginning Wednesday 14, her company offers *Kiss the Air!* at the Park Avenue Armory. Included in the episodic evening are *Ascension*, in which dancers demonstrate an eternal climb on a 21-foot rotating ladder, and *Human Fountain*, a heroic translation of the Fountains of Bellagio in Las Vegas. (The dancers pour forth like water.) Before a day of rehearsals at her Williamsburg Streb Lab for Action Mechanics, the choreographer spoke about her obsession with daredevilry.

I think your work is going to look amazing at the Armory.

The place is so huge. How can you take a human being and have it mean anything in such an enormously vast spatial terrain? I felt that I could handle it. This is the first formal presentation we've done in Manhattan since Lincoln Center Festival—it's a whole theory I have about how long it takes to make an evening work.

What's your theory?

It's not as if I have a master plan for the action I make or the structural containment for the process—meaning my business. But now I have an action lab in Williamsburg, which has provided me with an enormous amount of freedom, a more flexible way of dreaming of the future. I love the Joyce, but I didn't want to do that. You could say that I'm just walking in the dark and

going toward whatever light I find interesting. For us, the investigation is so clumsy and time-consuming. We on the inside are like ants on an ant farm.

And it has to be so precise?

It has to be perfect every time. My journey about seeing if I can find a real move has been futile in a way—maybe a human can't do a real move. Maybe you would die trying. Darwin was right about our adaptive capacity that allows us to be sitting here right now. Otherwise we'd be dead. I suspect that a lot of what I ask them to do is not just anti-intuitive, but it wouldn't belong to the human species. That's why they're balking at the jump [in *Human Fountain*]. But what's so brave about this particular group is that they'll keep figuring out how to make themselves push through.

What's the idea behind *Falling Sideways*?

That uses a piece of action equipment called Air



MORE ONLINE!

To read a complete interview with Elizabeth Streb, visit timeoutnewyork.com/dance.

Rams. You step on this ramp, and it ejects you. We're up to 30 psi—pounds per square inch. We've had a bunch of injuries with it, so I'm very gun-shy about the darn thing. I really would like to go up to 40 psi.

What kinds of injuries are your dancers getting?

Calif sprains mostly. When you jump, you normally plié—but this is a half second. It's a shock. A plié is just the wrong thing to do. The wise thing would be to not mess around with these things, but I think about the music industry. Why did I, right away, start using so much equipment? Certainly, the music industry did not regard the human voice as sufficient to carry all the language of meaning and content that sound could carry, so they started inventing stringed instruments. The body has to enter into and deal with a condition. What moves can I do that will have any poignancy or meaning? Then comes the timing and rhythm of each action.

In terms of timing, there's the safety issue as well as the aesthetic issue, right?

Right. I try not to premeditate rhythm. Physical timing is radically different from musical timing and if it could be named, it would have a completely different set of apertures and integrals. It would be like searching for the iambic pentameter of action. My dream is that the timing and the pure kinesthetic experience ends up giving the audience an experience and not a story: It skips the brain and goes to the gut.

Kiss the Air! is at Park Avenue Armory Wed 14–Dec 22.

Listings

If you want to be listed

Submit information by mail or e-mail (dance@timeoutny.com) to **Gia Kourlas**. Include details, dates, times, address of venue with cross streets, nearest subways, contact information and admission price, if any. **Deadline is**



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Kyle Abraham *The Kitchen*, 512 W 136th St between Tenth and Eleventh Aves (212-255-5793, thekitchen.org). Subway: C, E to 23rd St. 8pm; \$12. In *Live! The Realest MC*, Abraham explores our current digital age. The piece features Rena Butler, Elyse Morris, Chalvar Monteiro, Rachelle Rafalides and Hsiao-Jou Tang.

*** Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater** New York City Center, 131 W 55th St between Sixth and Seventh Aves (212-581-1212, alvinailey.org, citycenter.org). Subway: F, N, Q, R to 57th St. 8pm; \$25–\$135. Robert Battle programs his first season as artistic director of the Ailey company. Works include the premiere of Rennie Harris's *Home*, as well as the company premieres of Paul Taylor's *Arden Court*, Ohad Naharin's *Minus 16* and Battle's *Takademe*. The season also showcases new productions of Joyce Trisler's *Journey* (1958) and Ailey's *Streams* (1970). Program: *Memoria*, *Arden Court* and *Revelations*.

*** Yoshiko Chuma & the School of Hard Knocks** gallery onetwentyeight, 128 Rivington St between Essex and Norfolk Sts (212-674-0244, galleryonetwentyeight.org). Subway: F to Delancey St; J, Z, M to Delancey–Essex Sts. 7–9pm; suggested donation \$10. Chuma, joined by performers Saori Tsukada and Sophia Harb, presents "Occupation Layer: PALESTINE." The installation includes excerpts from *6 Seconds in Ramallah*, created in collaboration with members of the Palestinian El-Funoun Dance Troupe, which explores challenges of identity for dislocated populations.

*** Martha Clarke** Joyce Theater, 175 Eighth Ave at 19th St (212-242-0800, joyce.org). Subway: 1 to 18th St. 8pm; \$10–\$59. The choreographer joins playwright Alfred Uhry in the creation of *Angel Reapers*, an evening-length work that explores the redirected passion of the celibate followers of the 18th-century Shaker movement and the life of its founder, Ann Lee.

*** Merce Cunningham Dance Company** BAM Howard Gilman Opera House, 30 Lafayette Ave between Ashland and Pland St. Felix St, Fort Greene, Brooklyn (718-636-4100, bam.org). Subway: B, D, N, Q, R, 2, 3, 4, 5 to Atlantic Ave–Pacific St; G to Fulton St. 7:30pm; \$20–\$80. For its final performances at BAM and as part of the two-year Legacy Tour, the company will perform Cunningham classics including *RainForest*, *Roaratorio*, *BIPED* and *Split Sides*. This will likely be one of the last chances to see these dances, as the company will disband at the end of this year. Preceding tonight's performance is a

High-flying crash course in Extreme Action

By LEIGH WITCHEL

Last Updated: 2:02 PM, December 19, 2011

Posted: 10:59 PM, December 18, 2011

Everything about Elizabeth Streb's "Kiss the Air!" is an exclamation point. She's been on the scene a quarter-century, making pieces she calls PopAction — a bit of traditional dance mixed with a lot of acrobatics, often set in unlikely places: One of them this summer took place on a 21-foot rotating ladder in Gansevoort Plaza.

This time she's brought that ladder indoors, to the immense drill hall in the Park Avenue Armory, where her fearless performers bungee-jump into a shallow pool, get yanked around on pulleys and catapult themselves across the floor.

The show is as much arena concert as circus act. David Van Tieghem's rock music is pounding, lights are pulsing and huge video screens line the hall. An emcee riles up the crowd, who sit on bleachers on two sides of the hall.

The performers, in bright red unitards and stunt harnesses, shout and line up like football players at the start of a game. They climb towers at each end of the space and slide down a cable strung the length of the hall until . . . WHAM! They crash into padding.

Unlike dancers or acrobats, these "action engineers" don't try to make anything look fluid or easy. They love slamming into things — including each other — and revel in the rough-and-tumble difficulty of the work. Whooping and screaming at each other and us, they put gymnastics through boot camp.

Occasionally it goes too far. The biggest show-off in the company, Daniel Rysak, intentionally inched slowly toward a rotating ladder until he was clouted on the chin by one of the rungs. That's fun to watch — if you're 12.

The high point is a cascading fountain made of falling bodies instead of water jets. The performers launch themselves from multiple levels of a platform, free-falling onto mats. It has the surreal beauty of cliff-diving, only timed and synchronized.

The final section, which involves real water and the bungee cords, is a dampener — literally. The performers soak themselves and splash water everywhere. In Blue Man Group style, the folks in the first three rows in front of the bleachers get ponchos.

Streb Extreme Action Company offers extreme P.T. Barnum showmanship. Your kids will love it. But if you're not an adrenaline junkie, even 70 minutes of nonstop exclamation points feels like too much.

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News



Extreme dance: choreographer Elizabeth Streb's company will perform at landmarks

Comedy, art, music and 10 million free tickets... it's the Olympic culture festival

CULTURAL OLYMPIAD

Louise Jury
Chief Arts Correspondent

DON'T laugh yet, but a group of comedians is planning to mark the Olympics by sailing from London to Edinburgh in a canal barge.

Organisers admit the journey – one of the highlights of the 2012 Festival unveiled today – has “comedic disaster at its core” as there is no direct canal link between the two capital cities.

It is one of several madcap ideas to celebrate the Games, with a life-size inflatable Stonehenge “bouncy castle” by Turner Prize winner Jeremy Deller heading from Glasgow to London.

Highlights of the 12-week festival, the culmination of the four-year Cultural Olympiad, include Julie Walters at the National Theatre, Meera Syal at the Royal Shakespeare Company and Juliette Binoche and Cate Blanchett at the Barbican.

Many events are free, including a day of “extreme dance” planned by American choreographer Elizabeth Streb and her company at landmark locations across London. Previous projects include performers throwing themselves off New York's Brooklyn Bridge. The narrowboat journey –



Spectacle: colourful Central Park Bridge in the Olympic Park, Jeremy Deller's bouncy Stonehenge and inset, Noisettes singer Shingai Shoniwa

vision of the Pleasance theatre, which has venues in Islington and Edinburgh – would see comics perform impromptu shows for webcast on the canalside before arriving in Scotland for the Edinburgh Festival.

The London 2012 Festival runs from June 21 to September 9 and will showcase 25,000 artists in 12,000 events and performances at more than 900 venues nationwide. A 140-page guide to the programme, which includes 10 million free tickets, was published today. Other highlights include indie rockers

Noisettes at the BT River of Music concerts, and Stephen Fry interviewing Olympic legends such as Ed Moses.

A pop-up Thames-side banqueting house will be created in the shape of a pineapple, while BMW cars customised by artists from Andy Warhol to David Hockney will go on show in Britain for the first time in a London car park.

The BBC Symphony Orchestra will perform with urban artists led by Ms Dynamite at Waltham Forest Town Hall, Hackney Empire is reliving highlights of its comedy roots in Ha Ha Hackney, and there will be a theatrical walking tour of Stratford. The BFI Southbank is raiding its archives to

See all the pictures from today's launch of the Olympiad standard.co.uk/olympiad



mount a celebration of Britain's comedy divas from Joyce Grenfell to Sally Phillips. Royal Opera House chief Tony Hall, chairman of the Cultural Olympiad Board, said the line-up was even better than he had hoped.

He said: “So many people will be watching the Games. But they will also see a festival of arts and culture the likes of which we have never seen before, a great showcase for the UK and what the UK is best at.”

Stephen Fry said: “It's only right that we use the opportunity to showcase our world-leading arts and culture when the eyes of the world are on us.”

■ Details at london2012.com/festival

The Star-Ledger

Dance Review:

STREB Extreme Action at the Park Avenue Armory

Published: Saturday, December 17, 2011

By Robert Johnson/The Star-Ledger

The spirit of defiance raises a fist in the works of choreographer Elizabeth Streb.

Currently appearing under the insolent title "Kiss the Air," at the Park Avenue Armory, her company — STREB Extreme Action — specializes in the kinds of things we routinely forbid children to do (and that they do anyway when no one is looking).

Her acrobatic dances knock the stuffing out of people, and her trespasses leave telltale skid marks. Ironically now hundreds of people are looking, and Streb has filled the cavernous Drill Hall with equipment that catapults her dancers through space and tests the stuff they're made of. They introduce themselves one-by-one, tethered to a wire and careening down from a crow's nest high above our heads. Waving or gleefully paddling the air, they arrive suddenly at the end of the line colliding — splat! — with a suspended mattress. Hanging loose in its frame, the bumper rocks and twists from the impact.



Stephanie Berger
STREB Extreme Action performs "Kiss the Air!" at the Park Avenue Armory.

Only a kid could get such a thrill from wiping-out. Yet Streb's dances are purposefully hit or miss. They aim either to take a blow, accepting full consequences for the decision to move, or to scrape past a potentially lethal force. At the end of "Ascension," as a giant propeller spins nearby, the dancers avoid beheading by the narrowest calculations. Underlying this work are both a search for authentic experience and scientific interest in the body's elasticity. Streb squeezes and prods her dancers to make their muscles "pop."

They may look as if they're just flopping and bouncing, as they demonstrate the calisthenics of "PopAction," but their moves are precisely calibrated. Just how carefully everything is measured can be judged from the finale of a piece called "Human Fountain," in which the whole crew leaps simultaneously from a scaffold three stories high, and everyone lands neatly side-by-side, face-down on the mat.

"Kiss the Air" is Streb's biggest show since 1993, when her dancers rappelled down a wall at the Brooklyn Bridge Anchorage. At the corners of a long, rectangular space divided into three zones (like a circus) towers reach for the distant ceiling. The equipment includes rings and bungee cords, and devices borrowed from movie stuntmen: the Air Rams that give flying leaps a delightfully unexpected boost; and the Jerk Vests that yank a dancer through space as if an explosion had just blown her body through a wall.

Giant video screens capture the action in slow-motion and offer close-ups. Ironically, as we watch Samantha Jakus struggle to maintain her grip on a revolving ladder, the fixed camera makes it look as if the world is spinning around her when, in fact, she's the astronaut hurtling in a dizzy orbit.

In the title number "Kiss the Air," the dancers belly-flop and back-flip in a shallow pool, splashing audience members in the front rows (plastic covers are provided). Registering the force of impact, the churning foam gives yet another sign that something big and unafraid is coming through.

STREB Extreme Action

Where: The Park Avenue Armory, 643 Park Ave., between 66th and 67th Streets, in Manhattan

When: Today, Tuesday to Thursday, 7 p.m.; with matinees today at 2 p.m. and tomorrow at 3 p.m.

How much: \$35. Call (212) 616-3930 or visit armoryonpark.org.

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Life arts



She's for the high jump

The vigorous, death-defying creations of choreographer **Elizabeth Streb** are coming to London **By Keith Watson**

DROPPING in at rehearsals for Elizabeth Streb's One Extraordinary Day, it feels more like A&E than a dance studio. Bandaged knees are par for the course but here, it's the noses that stand out – there are plastered booters all over the shop. That's what you get when you throw yourself off a 6m-high platform and land flat on your front. Performing with Streb (pictured right) is not for the faint-hearted and many drop out, unable to cope with the livewire New Yorker's physical rigour. But for those who make the grade, it's one long thrill ride.

For though they may be the flying wounded, there's a sense of exhilaration in the air. Wave after wave of dancers, more than 30 in total, from both the US and Britain, fling themselves off the scaffold practising Human Fountain, one of Streb's signature works. It's a gravity-defying adventure playground, sparking a tangible sense of team spirit among the performers.

There's a hush when one woman lands slightly askew. 'You OK, Jo... whiplash?' asks the dance captain. 'Yeah!' 'You going again?' 'Yeah!' Round of applause from the other dancers. And Jo's off, scurrying up a ladder, back to the top.

Streb, who's been perfecting her 'pop action' style for three decades at her Brooklyn studio called, appropriately enough, SLAM (Streb Lab for Action Mechanics), laughs when asked why she thinks more people haven't copied her style.

'It hurts,' she says simply. 'The human body is having to survive this enormous explosion of action,

Sure, I have experience that tells me it's going to hurt. But I also have experience that tells me I'll be OK.'

Before Health and Safety freaks out, it should be noted Streb goes to great lengths to ensure the safety of her dancers, with elaborate calling rituals designed to ensure everyone knows their place. 'You can't have two people falling on top of each other, that's not good,' she says with a semi-mock shudder.

She prefers the term 'action architect' to choreographer, a tag that fits perfectly with One Extraordinary Day, an audacious attempt to use London landmarks as the jumping-off point for aerial

media and word of mouth. It's flash mob in the air; it's also a perfect fit for the Olympics, Streb's collision of gymnastics, parkour, dance and stunts bridging sport and art with muscular grace.

'I am an action specialist,' she says when asked to define her style. 'I'm outside dance. When I was doing dance training, I kept waiting for that moment to happen: when are we going to fly? And it didn't happen. So I climbed up a ladder and threw myself off – I wanted to know how it felt.'

SHE'S not lost that yearning for liberating physical sensation. As much scientist as she is artist, Streb's starting point for pop action was the early photos of Eadweard Muybridge, analysing the body's movements.

'It's that first snap of muscle – the pop – that first initiates movement,' she says. 'It's instinctive. The joy is to make a move that's never been done by a human body before.'

A mass of engaging contradictions, Streb is an academic who talks of 'movement as a causal system' but her work is an adrenaline rush of accessibility. She's an artist with a tech head's love of kit and hardware. She's warm and chatty company, with the scientist's abstract disconnect. Why does she love dance? 'I love to hear the sound of the liver as it squishes past the spleen,' she grins.

Given the physical pyrotechnics she pulls off, has she not been drawn to the movies?

'There's an appeal in that,' she muses, 'but, for me, it's all about the moment. My obsession is creating magic in live time.'

With Streb pulling the strings, One Extraordinary Day promises to be just that. One Extraordinary Day is coming to London soon. Check @SurprisesSTREB on Twitter

thrills – and one of the highlights of the London 2012 Festival. Shrouded in secrecy, the idea is to unleash a set of seven Streb spectacles on bridges and buildings, the audience generated on the day by social



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FOR ANOTHER GREAT CELEBRATE THE CITY OFFER SEE TOMORROW'S METRO

Festival's dancers and guerrilla tactics draw the crowds

As if on cue, a beautiful sun emerged yesterday morning from behind clouds over the Thames as seven "extreme action" dancers dangled off the Millennium bridge to the delight of around 250 people.

Three hours later and a mile east, 10 times that number watched the choreographer Elizabeth Streb, 62, and two of her dancers make their way - slowly - down the outside of City Hall. It was heart-stopping to watch.

"I was a little terrified," admitted Streb. "But I was having a lot of fun."

The events were among seven guerrilla performances at London landmarks taking place as part of the London 2012 festival. Each was shrouded in secrecy until the power of social media brought out crowds that increased in number throughout the day.

The Millennium bridge event was - unsurprisingly since it was at 7.30am - the most sparsely attended. Small children were more intent on throwing pebbles, stones and bricks into the low tide as the dancers spun on their bungee ropes in a performance called Waterfall. A solitary duck swam upstream, bemused by all the kerfuffle.

The dancers were choreographed precisely, their performance lasting for around 15 minutes until four support boats came in to get them down.

At City Hall, Streb and her two dancers performed Skywalk - an abseil down the outside of the Norman Foster-designed glass building on the Thames' south bank.

Streb admitted she did not have to do it herself, but said she wanted to thank the mayor's office for backing the London 2012 festival and give something back to the project, which is her company's biggest ever. "I hope this doesn't sound obnoxious but I wanted to pay tribute to the building and what it represents," she said.

Brooklyn-based Streb, who has been called the Evel Knievel of dance, blends her choreography with stunts, circus and sport. She performed her sky walk wearing a very striking pair of gold boots designed by John Fluevog. "I had been having nightmares about whether the boots would stick," she said. "Every time we went on to another piece of glass it was completely different. It was like an ice skating rink. Sometimes you put your feet ahead of you, sometimes you put your feet behind you and leave them there and just sink in to your harness and maintain your balance."

Streb spent two years combing London for the best locations for the festival. There were polite nos from some locations - the dome of St Paul's, for example - while others were too expensive, such as Tower Bridge.

After City Hall, the Streb bandwagon moved to Paternoster Square, just north of St Paul's, where eight dancers performed on the spokes of a 28ft aluminium wheel.

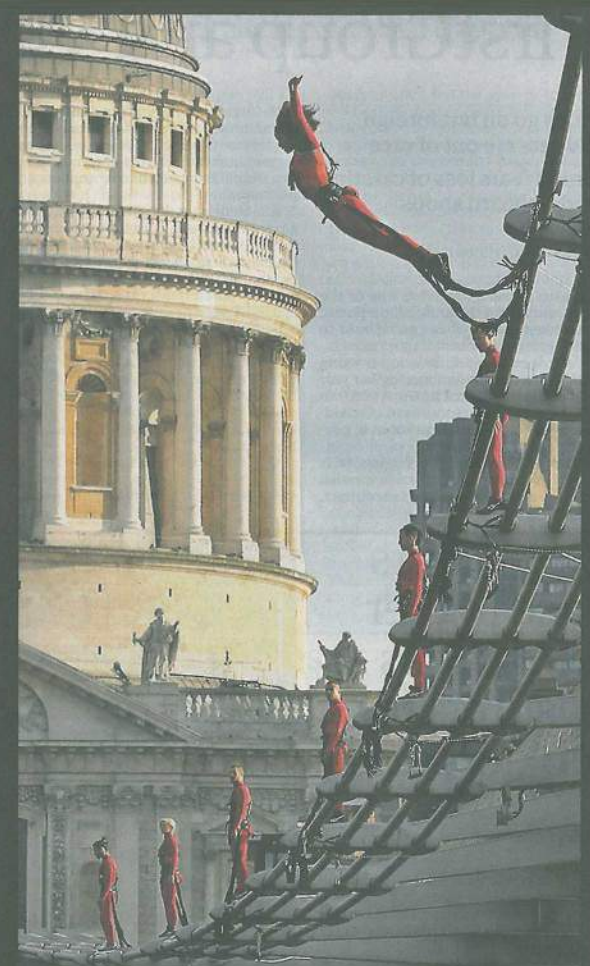
Two performances took place in different parts of Trafalgar Square before an evening performance called Speed Angels outside the National Gallery. The spectacular finale was performed on the London Eye at 10.30pm; 32 dancers performing on the spokes of the wheel.

The mayor Boris Johnson said he was thrilled that the Streb company was in London. "In an unprecedented summer of supreme sporting competition and world-class cultural events, the awe-inspiring jeopardy they will bring to our landmark buildings promises to be one of the most mind-blowing highlights of the year."

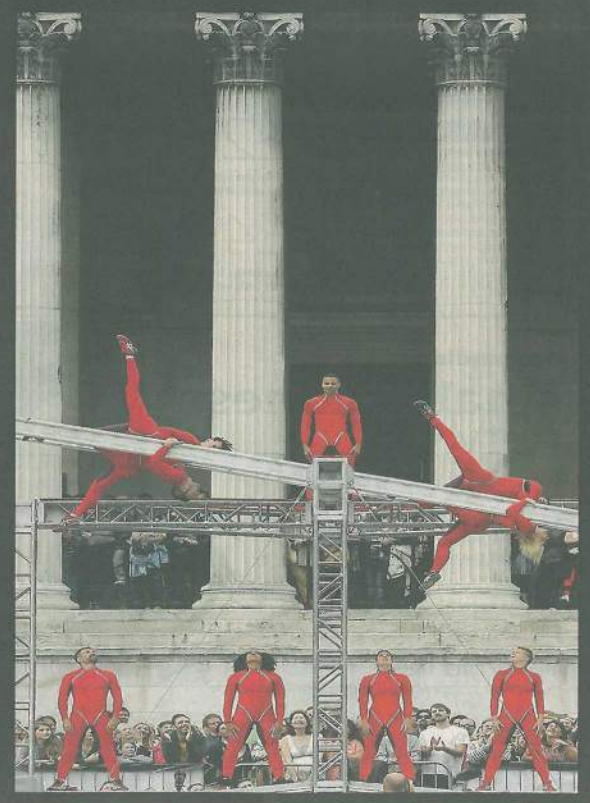
Ruth Mackenzie, director of the London 2012 festival, said it was all about once-in-a-lifetime events. Certainly the capital is unlikely to ever see anything like Streb again.

Mark Brown

Choreographer Elizabeth Streb said she was terrified but also had fun



Guerrillas in our midst
"Extreme action" dancers putting on guerrilla performances yesterday for the London 2012 festival at landmarks around the capital, including City Hall (left), the Millennium bridge and the National Gallery
Photographs: Dan Kitwood/Getty Images



Take it to the bridge Choreographer unleashes daredevil dancers around London



PHOTOGRAPH: JULIAN ANDREWS/PA

16-17»

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THE TIMES

The day London jumped for joy

One Extraordinary Day was part of the Cultural Olympiad



Valentine Low
July 16 2012

As the early morning sun broke through the cloud over the Thames yesterday, and most sensible people were still safely tucked up in bed, 29-year-old Jackie Carlson pulled on her red jumpsuit, looked down at the river and leapt off the Millennium Bridge.

And while it did seem a little early to be bouncing over the river, with just a safety harness and a bungee rope, there was a good reason to be performing a reckless stunt like that at such an early hour.

This was One Extraordinary Day, a day of escapades on some of London's most famous landmarks, and they had a whole load more reckless stunts to get through before bedtime.

There was the spinning ladder routine in Trafalgar Square, a National Theatre production that involved being hurled at dizzying speeds by winches, and a dance number on the spokes of the London Eye. And the Human Waterfall, in which a never-ending stream of performers threw themselves into space from platforms up to 6m high.

But perhaps most extraordinary of all there was the Sky Walk, in which three dancers — or were they acrobats? — walked down the outside of City Hall.

It was not so much that it was exhilarating to see people walking down a round, glass building (which it was), as that one might have thought that a woman of 62 would have found something a little stressful to occupy a Sunday. But then again, Elizabeth Streb is not most 62-year-olds.

The New Yorker is the founder of [Streb Extreme Action](#), a group of performers who have been hanging, swinging and throwing themselves off things for nearly 30 years. Yesterday, dressed all in black save for her gold boots, she took over the London skyline.

Part of the Cultural Olympiad, the day's events were kept a closely guarded secret until the first performers lined up in their red outfits on the Millennium Bridge at 7am.

“I was wondering what these people in red were,” said Thomas Gorczynski, 39, off for a cycle with his son Greg, 12. “Are they performers? Or joggers? Unbelievable. But that’s London.”

They jumped, they spun, they tumbled over and over and did a mid-air freakout until it became hard to watch without feeling queasy.

“They were awesome. But I’m surprised they weren’t sick,” said Greg.

“The last month I was pretty terrified,” said Ms Streb. “I had nightmares, but once I was up on the roof I was fine.”

Even from down on the ground it was possible to see the performers’ feet slip as they made their way down. “Maintaining a 90-degree angle was intricate, and therefore very scary. A few times I only slipped an inch, but it felt as if I was slipping forever.”

Fortunately she had her gold boots. Part Barbarella fantasy, part glam rock craziness, they were made specially for her. They held up well. “My boots, I will love them for ever,” she said.

As for the point of it all, Ms Streb hopes that a memory of the day will live forever too. “I want to create a memory based on action, people doing things that are wonder-filled, dangerous . . . Things people only dream about.”









Flight Patterns | Elizabeth Streb's Extraordinary Day

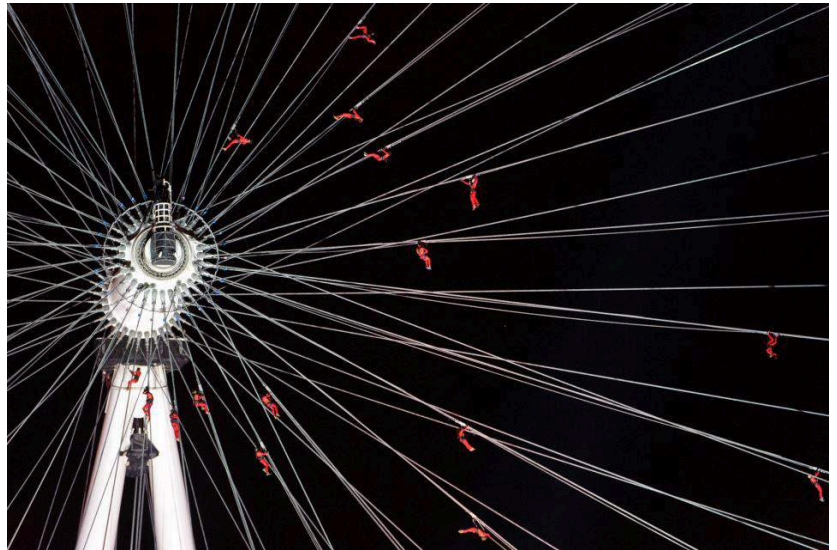
CULTURE | By JULIE SCELFO | JULY 16, 2012, 1:00 PM

The New York Times Style Magazine

Standing on a small platform 200 feet above the ground, at the center of the London Eye Ferris wheel, Elizabeth Streb, the 62-year-old “extreme action” choreographer greeted 32 dancers, one at a time, as they hooked themselves to a

spoke with a carabiner and jumped out into the air.

This was just one of dozens of extraordinary feats performed as part of “One Extraordinary Day,” a series of seven surprise performances at various London landmarks that happened Sunday, courtesy of the London 2012 Festival and the mayor of London. Although the London International Festival of Theatre, which produced the event, began



One Extraordinary Day culminated with “The Human Eye” at the London Eye, where 32 performers navigated every other spoke of the giant Ferris wheel. *Julian Andrews/Eye R8*

publicizing it two weeks ago, the details were kept secret until Saturday night, when messages sent via social media channels invited an audience to gather, flash-mob style, at 7:30 a.m. Sunday at the Millennium Bridge, where seven members of the Brooklyn, New York-based **Streb Extreme Action Company** performed acrobatics while bungee-jumping to the river below.



A few hours later, behind St. Paul's cathedral, dancers swung in circles from a 24-foot spinning wheel. At 3 p.m., on the north terrace of Trafalgar Square, in front of the National Gallery, a dancer shouted "Skin of the teeth!" before walking slowly into the path of a spinning 21-foot-tall aluminum ladder, until it was a mere finger's width away from his face. At 8 p.m., in front of the National Theatre, three dancers flew like angels about 100 feet off the ground, higher than several birds flying past.

The crowds that gathered included Streb's longtime partner, the journalist Laura Flanders; Albert Maysles of "Grey Gardens" fame, who was shooting footage for one of at least two documentaries under way about Streb and her work; and an array of locals who either received an alert from the London 2012 Festival or happened upon the events by chance.

Despite the pop-up feeling of the

event, more than a year of preparation had gone into it. About a dozen dancers from Britain joined in the show, although some who auditioned changed their minds after attempting the Human Fountain, a piece inspired by the fountains at the Bellagio hotel in Las Vegas that entails diving off a platform three stories high and landing prone. "A number of the U.K. dancers were not really prepared for the impact-based nature of Elizabeth's work," said Kimberly Cullen, Streb's producing director, acknowledging that "blood and headaches" are par for the course. "So the fact that they were being asked to fall facedown from 30 feet was very foreign to them, and they were scared."

Overcoming fear and testing physical limitations are at the heart of Streb's work. Just as George Mallory, the British mountaineer, gave his rationale for wanting to climb Mount Everest as "because it's there," Streb describes feeling compelled



to test out and push past the boundaries most people, and even most dancers, take for granted, like obeying gravity. Testing limits is for her as fundamental as breathing. “If you stay within a set of already ordained activities, I don’t think you really can come up with anything new,” she said at the cast’s late-night after party at the National Theatre. “It has to be extreme and dangerous, and therefore probably brutal. You have to experience something to be able to adapt, to find something new.”

To that end, there aren’t many risks Streb isn’t willing to take, and yesterday she walked down the entire side of the curved, glass-covered City Hall building, flanked by a dancer on either side. “It was like an ice skating rink,” she said afterward.

The sun shone most of the day, which was especially helpful to the dancers who had rehearsed on the London Eye several nights earlier in the wind and driving rain.

Bystanders were stunned by the

dancers’ bravery. “I’ve never seen anything quite like this,” said Chelsea Milne, 19, a student at the University of Southern California who was visiting London and came upon the spectacle. “This is incredible. They look like Cirque Du Soleil. It’s so crazy they’re suspended that high. I think it’s awesome.”

“Pretty gutsy,” observed Zach Wood, an 11-year-old student who came from Brixton, a neighborhood in South London, to see the London Eye event with his mother. “I’m scared of heights, so I wouldn’t do it.”

Streb, too, was in awe, not only of her dancers, she said, but of the rigging crew who had gotten everyone through the day safely. “They’re hardware whisperers. That’s what I call them,” she said. “Let’s face it,” she added later, “without hardware, there’s no extreme action.”



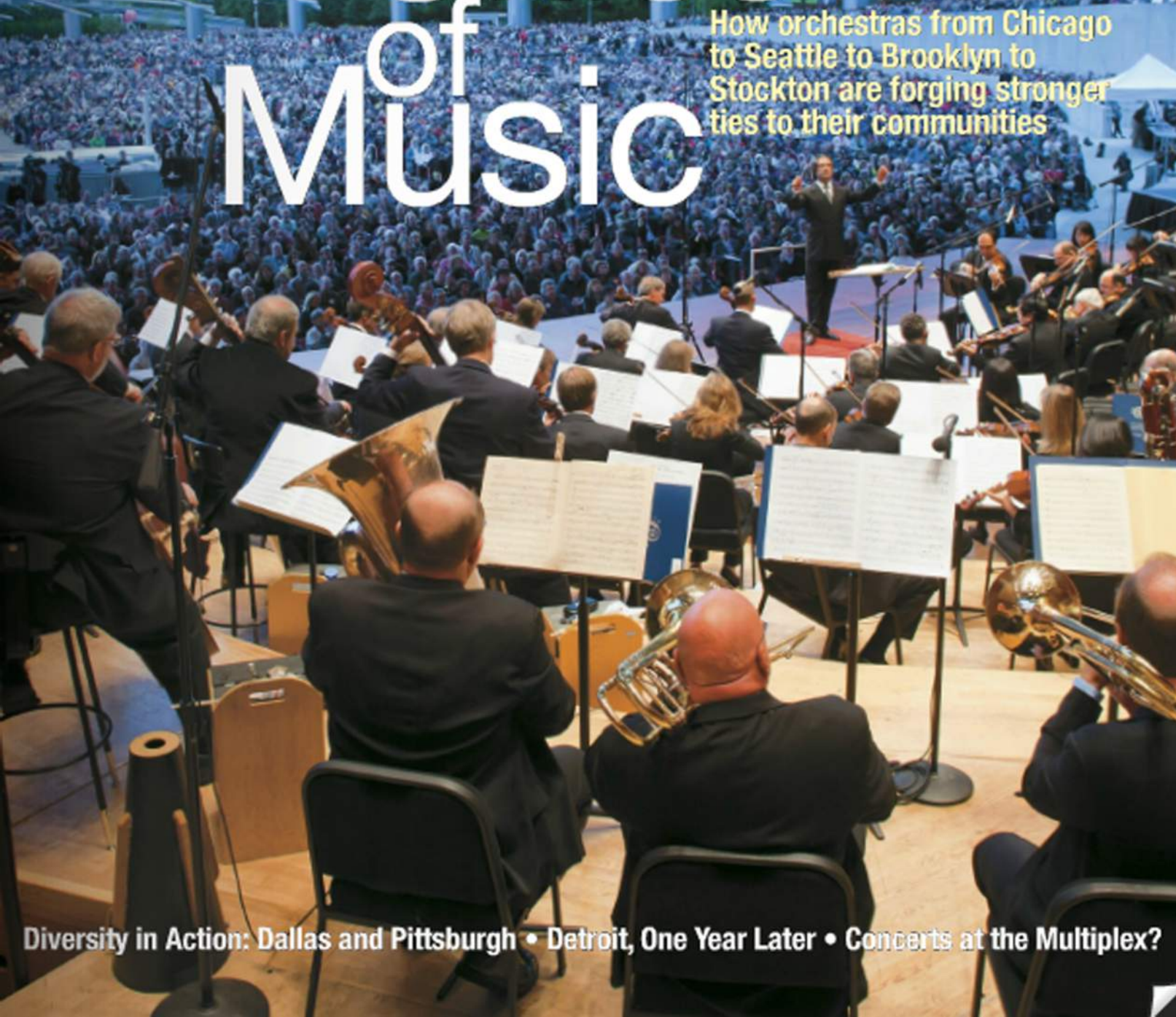
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THE MAGAZINE OF THE LEAGUE OF AMERICAN ORCHESTRAS

Cities of Music

How orchestras from Chicago to Seattle to Brooklyn to Stockton are forging stronger ties to their communities



Olympic Feats

The arts may just overshadow the Olympics in London this summer when the massive twelve-week [London 2012 Festival](#) gets underway with more than 25,000 artists from 204 competing Olympic nations bringing music, theater, dance, comedy, and art to London. The festival—from June 21 through September 9—includes one-off events such as *One Extraordinary Day: Streb Action* (above), in which American choreographer Elizabeth Streb and her Extreme Action Company will conduct a “surprise” event throughout London; and *Connecting Light*, an art installation spanning the 73 miles of Hadrian’s Wall by the artists’ collective YesYesNo. Martin Creed’s sound work *All the bells in a country rung as quickly and loudly as possible for three minutes* will take place across the U.K. on July 27 to mark the opening day of the Olympic Games. Daniel Barenboim and his West-Eastern Divan Orchestra will perform a complete Beethoven symphony cycle and works by Boulez; also represented are the Juilliard Orchestra; the BBC Symphony Orchestra; the London Symphony Orchestra; the São Paulo Symphony; and the St. Louis Symphony.

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THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

ON AUG. 22, WE WATCHED AS 20 PERFORMERS FROM STREB EXTREME ACTION LEAPED, FLIPPED AND DANCED FROM 30-FOOT SCAFFOLDING IN THEIR FIRST RUN-THROUGH OF "HUMAN FOUNTAIN."

ELIZABETH STREB, THE GROUP'S ARTISTIC DIRECTOR, OVERSEES DANCERS AS THEY SET UP FOR REHEARSAL.

IT'S GOING TO BE A HERCULEAN GUT-BUSTER.

BUT FOR NOW, YOU SEE HERE THE SEMIOTICS OF MAT CONSTRUCTION.

THE PERFORMERS "TALK-WALK IT," CALLING OUT THEIR DIVES AND CONFIGURATIONS IN RAPID SUCCESSION TO LOCK IN THE SEQUENCE TOGETHER...

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TYRA BANKS!

IN A MANEUVER CALLED "QUARTET HOUDINI," FOUR PERFORMERS FLIP FORWARD BEFORE LANDING ON THEIR BACKS...

STREB KEEPS ITS REHEARSALS OPEN TO VISITORS...

I'M SWEATING.

OH GOD.

FABIO TAVARES, ON WHAT IT'S LIKE TO HIT THE MAT...

WHEN IT'S A BAD HIT, YOUR BRAIN GETS JARRED WITHIN YOUR SKULL.

BUT A GOOD HIT IS VERY SATISFYING.

AFTER THE RUN-THROUGH, MS. STREB ADDRESSES THE DANCERS...

I THINK YOU GUYS ARE STARTING TO SEE WHAT THIS MONSTER IS...

"HUMAN FOUNTAIN" RUNS AT THE DELACORTE THEATER IN CENTRAL PARK ON SEPT. 16 AND 17.

Text by Lizzie Simon, illustrations by Danny Hellman

Food-stamp spending by \$40 billion over 10 years. A3

■ Rain continued to soak parts of Colorado after three days of flooding. Forecasters warned of possible flash floods. A6

■ The Pakistani Taliban killed a general in a roadside bombing and issued new con-

such action.

He found little of either. Congress's top leaders weren't informed of the switch until just an hour or so before Mr. Obama's Rose Garden announcement and weren't asked

Obama publicly. The United Kingdom pulled the plug on a joint operation two days after indicating to the White House it had the votes to proceed. Compounding the confusion, the same day a potential breakthrough

events shed light on what could prove a pivotal moment for America's role in the world.

Through mixed messages, miscalculations and an 11th-hour break, the U.S. stumbled

Please turn to page A12

◆ Kerry embarks on a mission to sell the Syria deal..... A13
◆ Russia vaults to the center of the international stage..... A14

Unsportsmanlike Conduct: Retailer Ends Era of Manu Havu Returns

Oddballs for the Long Haul

Health Law Faces Skepticism

"All the News
That's Fit to Print"

The New York Times

Late Edition

Today, plenty of sunshine, chilly early, then milder, high 72. Tonight, clear and moonlit, low 56. Tomorrow, mostly sunny, seasonable, high 75. Weather map, Page A20.

VOL. CLXIII . . . No. 56,263

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THE NEW YORK TIMES, WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2013

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PHOTOGRAPHS BY JULIETA CERVANTES FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Fall for Dance Streb Extreme Action Company in "Human Fountain," at the Delacorte Theater in Central Park on Monday night. The show was a celebratory prelude to this festival's 10th installment, at City Center.

"All the News
That's Fit to Print"

The New York Times

Late Ed

Today, windy, snow
then rain or snow sh
Tonight, clearing, wi
morrow, mostly sun
50. Weather map

VOL. CLXII . . No. 56,069

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NEW YORK, FRIDAY, MARCH 8, 2013

Urban Athlete

Falling Softly (Well, With a Thud)

By HILARY HOWARD

HUMANS can fly. This is the idea behind PopAction technique, a movement system developed by the choreographer Elizabeth Streb. Her dancers apply its principles to the daredevil antics — like running up walls and falling off trusses — for which they are renowned. (Last summer they bungee-jumped off the London Millennium Bridge to celebrate the Olympics.)

The technique is taught as the signature class at the Streb PopAction School, which is run out of the company's performance space: a converted warehouse outfitted with scaffolding, safety nets, silks, trampolines and trapezes, in Williamsburg, Brooklyn.

The night I took PopAction, it was hard to focus because of the other colorful events surrounding our group. On one side a pregnant woman performed a split with her legs bound in aerial silks. On the other side a trapeze class featured acrobats (many of whom had missed their connections)

Streb PopAction technique classes cost \$15; \$135 for a 10-class card. "Forces! The Movical" will present the technique on a professional level, April 4 through 28; (718) 384-6491 or streb.org.



Fabio Tavares da Silva, above left, teaching a class in which students, above and below, flip in the air and learn how to fall. The technique was developed by the choreographer Elizabeth Streb.

landing in the safety net.

Fabio Tavares da Silva, the associate artistic director of Streb, taught PopAction on this night. There were about a half-dozen participants, mostly 20- and 30-something dancer types, including a Streb company member. The class started off gently enough, with each of us introducing ourselves while stretching and massaging areas

of the body. But soon we were up on our feet, working on the "vertical pivot," a way of contracting or popping your body in different directions. "The vertical pivot is to PopAction what the plié is to ballet," he explained.

We then graduated to combinations that joined vertical pivots with small bits of airtime ("flying"), like leap-

frogging from a crouch to a push-up position, and then using torso strength to flip our bodies up in the air, rotate and land on our backs. Thud. The class resonated with satisfying "thuds."

Next up were movement combinations that went across the floor, similar to what happens in a more traditional dance class. But we moved across mats. PopAction — and the Streb performers in general — depend on specialty mats that are firm but can also take impact.

One sequence involved running a few steps into a front flip, landing on your back (thud) and then using a series of pivots and jumps to face in the original direction again. For the terrified and inexperienced, Mr. Tavares da Silva suggested not actually flipping onto their backs in the beginning, but doing a modified somersault. That was my choice.

As the class progressed, I noticed that the time spent in the air — flipping, jumping and pivoting — was increasing. As were the thuds. This was on purpose.

"Since the 'humans can fly' concept is the whole premise of this class, there's a lot of ... landing," Mr. Tavares da Silva said. "We want you to learn how to fall safely."

Falling, literally falling, was the final segment of the 90-minute workout.

We took turns falling, in a straight line from a standing position, both backward and forward, onto cushier, more forgiving mats. The proper way to do this is to stay straight and not let your body bend or give at all. Think of those corporate retreat trust falls — but with no one catching you — and that's pretty much the idea.

From there, we graduated to a truss, which Mr. Tavares da Silva kept raising. Many class veterans did the same vertical falls from five or six feet up. I opted for a modified six-inch option, and I felt pretty good about that. The forward vertical fall is especially terrifying, as you are falling onto your face.

I was lucky; I survived the experience intact, with only a light rash on my nose as proof of the face smash. It wasn't exactly flying, but it was definitely, free-falling, and it was fun.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY MELANIE FIDLER FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

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"All the News
That's Fit to Print"

The New York Times

Late Edition

Today, clouds and sun, warmer, high 69. Tonight, cloudy, showers, low 56. Tomorrow, a morning shower, some afternoon sun, warmer, high 78. Weather map, Page D9.

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ANDREA MOHIN/THE NEW YORK TIMES

Streb Extreme Action Company performing hair-raising, physical feats at the Streb Lab for Action Mechanics in Brooklyn, where audience members are encouraged to talk freely and take as many pictures as they desire.

Daredevils Take Flight and Land Safely Near Your Lap

You'd have to be a little dead inside not to get a visceral thrill from sitting in front of a dancer who takes a 25-foot swan dive and lands — face first — on a mat inches from your feet.

**GIA
KOURLAS**

DANCE
REVIEW

The most recent edition of "Forces!," the choreographer Elizabeth Streb's audacious two-part show, doesn't so much push the boundaries of strength and endurance as it removes them. In the 13-number production, performed Thursday, the Streb company offers a pro-

gram of "Action Events" — a selection of finely choreographed physical feats — at the Streb Lab for Action Mechanics, the company's theater and studio in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. Life is different here: Audience members are encouraged to talk freely and take as many pictures as they desire.

Throughout "Forces!," which "Forces!" continues through April 28 at the Streb Lab for Action Mechanics, 51 North First Street, Williamsburg, Brooklyn; (718) 384-6491, streb.org.

is co-directed by Robert Woodruff. Ms. Streb appears on video to discuss her ideas and inspirations, including the Wright brothers. She quotes them as saying, "If you really want to live, you have to mount a machine and learn its tricks."

The first half breezes by more quickly than the second, which includes a couple of sections that, though sweetly intended, simply last too long. "Roboto" features a dancer acting like a robot while his robot companion — a small toy version — stiffly learns to walk. In "Harmonic Motion"

dancers, crawling on the floor, are filmed from above to make it look as if they're walking on the Moon. It's not Ms. Streb at her technical or whimsical best.

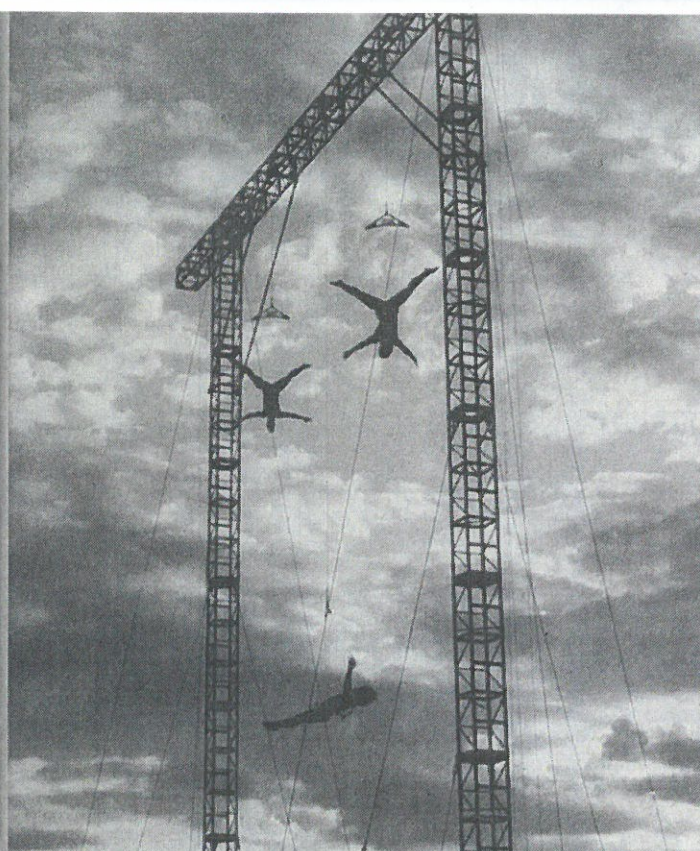
But the rest of the show is a rush, as much for its daredevilry as for the way the cast members work together. Along with the machinery that they're grappling with, there is the group itself: a machine of bodies. And with that comes the realization that these performers, no matter how muscle-bound, are made of flesh and blood. Before a plunging fall, you see it: The eyes glaze over, the

spine stiffens and, in that instant, the body springs into action.

"Artificial Gravity" places the dancers on a precariously spinning floor, while, in "Fly," Jackie Carlson is strapped into a harness attached to a turning girder. Again and again she is whirled into rotation. For some reason, as she soars through the air, the repetitiveness never gets dull. Her strength is the pliability of her torso; ballet is in her bones.

"Invisible Forces" showcases the daring Cassandre Joseph caught in a structure that resembles a hamster wheel atop an ice

cream cone. As it spins she calmly walks inside, every so often taking a leap in defiance of gravity. And in "Crush" a steel beam hangs from the ceiling on a chain spinning as dancers duck and slide underneath it — mere moments, it really does seem, from decapitation. "This part is so scary," the child next to me said without taking his eyes from the stage. In "Forces!" Ms. Streb continues along her singular path to a place that can still manage to frighten little boys, but in which, for the performers, fear is not an option.



TOM CARAVAGLIA/AUBIN PICTURES

Physical limits being tested in "Born to Fly: Elizabeth Streb vs. Gravity," a documentary directed by Catherine Gund.

A Pursuit That Leaps, Crashes and Swings

By the time we hear the words "Being careful in an action enterprise is really frowned upon at Streb," they're pretty much redundant. We've already seen

**JEANNETTE
CATSOULIS**

**FILM
REVIEW**

their speaker, Elizabeth Streb, an intense dancer and choreographer in her 60s, guide her troupe through moves that would give a mixed-martial-arts champion pause.

It's easy to see why "grisly" is one of Ms. Streb's favorite adjectives. In "Born to Fly: Elizabeth Streb vs. Gravity," dancers — every one of whom, we're forced to conclude, must be bonkers — hurl themselves against plexiglass panes and dodge flying I-beams with the commitment of cultists. (Ms. Streb's stage sets often seem dedicated to the building sites where her father, who died in 1982, worked as a bricklayer.)

"Eventually, you'll destroy yourself," one former company member ruefully admits. But, until then, it's all joy and motion in this dazzled and breathless documentary by Catherine Gund, who traces Ms. Streb's artistic journey through Haight-Ashbury in

Born to Fly

Elizabeth Streb vs. Gravity

Opens on Wednesday

Directed by Catherine Gund; directors of photography, Kirsten Johnson, Albert Maysles and Ian McAlpin; edited by Alexander Meillier; music by Adam Crystal; produced by Ms. Gund and Tanya Selvaratnam; released by Aubin Pictures. Running time: 1 hour 22 minutes. This film is not rated.

the 1970s to the warmly cluttered SoHo loft she shares with her longtime partner, the journalist Laura Flanders. Performance and rehearsal footage reveals an architect's eye for symmetry, and an oeuvre — including one number derived from a medieval torture device — dedicated to overcoming limitations of physics and physiology.

A singularly focused and avant-garde talent, Ms. Streb bends the messy rush of risk to her indomitable will. And if wounded buildings and jarred joints follow along, they're just the price you pay when your lifelong quest is to see human beings fly.

Books of The Times. Weekdays.

DANCE



Elizabeth Streb creates works in which dancers jump from heights and dive through panes of glass.

FLYING TIGERS

A new movie, at Film Forum, looks at the risk of injuries in dance.

IN CATHERINE GUND'S DOCUMENTARY "Born to Fly," which opens on Wednesday, at Film Forum, the choreographer Elizabeth Streb says that when she went to college she wanted to enroll in the phys-ed department but that all the women looked to her like lesbians, so she majored in dance instead. Apart from the fact that she later became an enthusiastic lesbian, Streb's career has more or less unfolded from that decision. Her troupe, the STREB Extreme Action Company, produces what most people would call dance, but you certainly need a physical education in order to perform it. Her dancers jump from great heights, dive through panes of glass, hurl themselves against walls, hang upside down from wires and scream. Cushions are used, as well as harnesses and the like, but, to Gund's and Streb's credit, the film does not suggest that this kind of dancing is really good for you. The dancers speak quite casually about injuries. "I got hit by a steel I-beam once, but it was not a big-deal thing," one recalls. "In my world," Streb says, "part of the deal is that you walk into the room and you agree to get hurt." She wants to take physical action "across the Great Divide, across the Red Sea, or some sea," and you can't do this while trying to protect yourself.

These days, Streb's work is starting to be more visual, less crash-bang. At the end of the movie, she says that when a piece of hers succeeds it's because she has been able to show "physical archetypes" that spectators recognize—an experience that makes them "quake inside." I think that's true, but mystic joys are only part of her secret. Streb would not be Streb if her programs didn't include a heavy dose of punk: theatre of cruelty, or at least of impoliteness. The last time I saw a show of hers, it was preceded by an announcement that we should remember to turn our cell phones on. Aply, the company is based in a former mustard factory in Williamsburg. This fall, rehearsals are open to the public.

—Joan Acocella

▼ Film

Last Action Hero

In *Born to Fly*, Elizabeth Streb conquers the world

BY ALAN SCHERSTUHL

The title's inexact, but it's catchier than the truth would be: *Born to Strive and Leap and Scrape Up Against Flight*. For some 40 years, Elizabeth Streb has pitted herself and her dancers not against gravity but against our earth-bound ideas of dance. For Streb and her bounding troupe, gravity's no enemy — it's the greatest of all dance partners.

Since her choreography left the ground, Streb has sent her performers, currently known as the Streb Extreme Action Company, soaring over stages worldwide, in trusses or upon reeling apparatuses or just winging out to glide and crash. In clutch-your-heart performance she has demonstrated not that the air is a domain our bodies might master, but that it is urgent and necessary that we sometimes try to — and also to know how to angle yourself when the sky chucks you back. Rather than slipping our earthly bonds, Streb and company seize them, soar with them, and then live to do so again.

Squint a little and the Streb troupe's mass vaulting from trampolines (seen in *Born to Fly*) might suggest the boom/bloom of fireworks/flowers, but what tickled at my mind as I gaped was a pod of

dolphins I once lucked into observing: Again and again they breached, seeming to revel in the launch and the splash, in the joy of motion and of stealing a moment from an element not their own.

These days, Streb's art suggests stunt work as much as it does dance. What does it say about the state of Hollywood action filmmaking that this year's most dashing derring-do transpires in a doc about a choreographer? (It's not for nothing that she titled a book *How to Be an Extreme Action Hero*.) There's much in *Born to Fly* to thrill to, dream with, flinch from: dancers leaping from a great whirling wheel and smacking onto mats far below; dancers ducking and leaping a wickedly spinning I-beam or cinder-block. Those last performances, each featuring just a single prop on an austere stage, suggest both high-minded performance art and the anxious, repetitive tri-

als faced by old-school videogame characters.

How did Streb grow from promising downtown choreographer to MacArthur Fellow to deviser of whip-fast torments even Super Mario might blanch at? Catherine Gund's doc thumbnails the history but avoids much detail, and the questions that richen Streb's work languish un-

THERE'S MUCH HERE TO THRILL TO, DREAM WITH, FLINCH FROM.

plumbed: Is this dance? Is this circus? Is this — witness Streb's squad caroming into a sheet of thick plastic — cruel? I wasn't surprised to see Kickstarter thanked in the credits. For all its marvelous performance footage, this is a celebration rather than an examination. Anne Bogart, Bill T. Jones, A.M.

Homes, and others show up for a dinner at Streb's place, but the filmmakers get none of them to discuss her work.

Missed opportunities aside, *Born to Fly* is more than welcome. There's no discounting the pleasure of catching Streb on the big screen. The finale involves performances in London on the eve of the 2012 Olympics. Streb herself, now in her sixties, dons a truss to walk down the glass face of London's City Hall. (It's that '02 Norman Foster building that looks like an alien's motorcycle helmet.) At sunset her dancers spider out onto the spokes of the London Eye and cavort there as it spins. Your head will spin with it. New York's action hero has bested Bond in his own town.

Born to Fly: Elizabeth Streb vs. Gravity
Directed by Catherine Gund
Aubin Pictures
Opens September 10, Film Forum



Courtesy Aubin Pictures