

**PHANTOM EXHIBITION****Steve Paxton & Contredanse****BOZAR – Centre for Fine Arts, Brussels  
23.03.2019 – 31.03.2019**

*Phantom Exhibition* is the fruit of a meeting between a dancer and a publishing house, the life's work of Steve Paxton, the manifestation of a dance in word and image, a story told by dancers.

For almost 60 years the dances and teachings of Steve Paxton have questioned the body in its reality. Dance that reveals itself within movements as subtle and elemental as the standing position or walking. How do our bodies relate to gravity? What principles underlie our movement in space? How do social codes condition our movements and behaviour? Is dance an occasion to rethink these relationships? Taking as point of departure the fundamentals of existence and elements that can define a culture, Steve Paxton questions our consciousness and that which can elude it. The inquiry is as much physical as it is philosophical or existential. An ode to the body and its senses, a field of exploration and of knowledge, for Steve Paxton dance is an art, an art of living.

Contredanse was founded in 1984 by the dancer Patricia Kuypers. This Brussels association, still active today, supports choreographic creation, notably by organising workshops and events, producing a journal, and running a documentation centre and publishing house. Through the written word and various media, Éditions Contredanse seeks to document artistic and educational practice, translate reference works and provide tools for exploration and reflection on contemporary dance.

In 1985, Patricia Kuypers was invited by Steve Paxton to participate in creating the play *Ave Nue*, performed in Brussels. This marked the beginning of a long collaboration between Contredanse and Steve Paxton which, in addition to a number of texts and articles published in the journal *Nouvelles de Danse*, culminated in 2008 with the publication of *Material for the Spine – a movement study*, the fruit of five years' work by Steve Paxton, Baptiste Andrien and Florence Corin. On the basis of documents produced during this period, a video installation and, 10 years later, the book *Gravity* and its French translation *La gravité* were all brought to the public by Contredanse.

***Material for the Spine - a movement study / une étude du mouvement***  
www.materialforthespine.com

"With *Material for the Spine*, I am interested in alloying a technical approach to the processes of improvisation. It is a system for exploring interior and exterior muscles of the back. It aims to bring consciousness to the dark side of the body, that is, the 'other' side, or the inside, those sides not much self-seen, and to submit sensations from them to the mind for consideration." Steve Paxton

More than four hours of an interactive publication present the exercises and reflections that underlie the techniques in "*Material for the Spine*", developed progressively by Steve Paxton since 1986. Extracts from workshops, lectures, archival footage of performances, and motion capture sequences, all constitute audiovisual explorations in which notions of gravity, weight and space are combined with studies of walking, analyses of movement and observations on the connections between technique and improvisation.

Accessible online at [www.materialforthespine.com](http://www.materialforthespine.com), on sale at the BOZAR Bookshop, at Contredanse and at the online shop - [www.contredanse.org](http://www.contredanse.org).

**Credits:**

Steve Paxton in cooperation with Contredanse (Baptiste Andrien & Florence Corin). Interface and web development by Emeric Florence and Sébastien Vanvelthem. English language – French translation and subtitles by Denise Luccioni. With the assistance of the following institutions: L'animal a l'esquena (Celrà, Spain), the Centre National de la Danse (Pantin, France), the Wallonia-Brussels Ministry of Culture and Education (Dance Service), the City of Brussels (office of the alderman for Fine Arts), the Cocof and the Centre National du Livre (Paris, France).

Contredanse, 2008-2019.

### ***Gravity - La Gravit  - Gravity audio***

In this book Steve Paxton traces a lifetime in the company of gravity. In a concise prose, memories of his first flights and dance lessons, meditations on walking, a dream of weightlessness and ponderings on the conditions of life are all pieces in a puzzle that reveals the natural force that affects us all.

On sale at the BOZAR Bookshop, at Contredanse and at the online shop - [www.contredanse.org](http://www.contredanse.org), in bookshops.

#### **Credits:**

This book was published by Baptiste Andrien and Florence Corin (for Contredanse), Lisa Nelson and Steve Paxton. The French translation was by Denise Luccioni. With the assistance of the following institutions: The Wallonia-Brussels Federation Ministry of Culture (Dance Service), the City of Brussels (office of the alderman for Fine Arts), the Cocof and the Centre National du Livre (Paris).  
Contredanse, 2018.

### ***Weight of sensation - a video installation***

Originally created in 2009, this installation immerses the visitor in a gravitational experience. The audiovisual sequences were filmed when producing the digital publication *Material for the Spine - a movement study* and since reworked on the occasion of each presentation.

#### **Credits:**

Design and creation: Steve Paxton, Baptiste Andrien and Florence Corin for Contredanse. Filmed by Baptiste Andrien and Florence Corin. Programming: Florence Corin with Isadora software. Appearing on screen: Steve Paxton, Baptiste Andrien, Charlie Morrissey, Paola and Marti Ramis-Munoz, Scott Smith. With the assistance of the following institutions: L'animal a l'esquena (Celr , Spain), the Centre National de la Danse (Pantin, France), the Wallonia-Brussels Federation Ministry of Culture (Dance Service), the City of Brussels (office of the alderman for Fine Arts), the Cocof and the Centre National du Livre (Paris, France).  
Contredanse, 2009-2019.

*Phantom Exhibition* is part of the event *Steve Paxton: Swimming in Gravity*, a collaboration between Contredanse, Charleroi danse, BOZAR - Centre for Fine Arts and the TICTAC art centre, in the framework of BRUSSELS, DANCE ! Info : [www.contredanse.org](http://www.contredanse.org)

**Steve Paxton** was born in the United States in 1939, he trained in gymnastics and classical dance before following the teachings of Merce Cunningham, who himself was part of a tradition of artists and teachers that were at odds with the previous generation: Martha Graham, then Ted Shawn and Ruth Saint-Denis, Isadora Duncan. In the 1960s, Steve Paxton was a founding member of Judson Church, in the same vein as the workshops of composer Robert Dunn, who himself was inspired by the methods of John Cage. Judson's experimentations, and later on those of Grand Union, challenge the traditional performance, highlight the political issues of the time, namely the Vietnam War, but also redefine dancer-performers as singer-songwriters, and develop the collective processes of improvisation and decision-making. Steve Paxton's partners in this include Yvonne Rainer, Trisha Brown, Robert Rauschenberg and Lucinda Childs. These trends have a major influence on the emergence of contemporary dance in the United States and beyond. In the 1960s, Steve Paxton resorted to prosaic everyday movement to create such remarkable first works as *Flat* (1964), *Satisfyin Lover* (1967) and *State* (1968). He is one of the instigators of Contact Improvisation, a dance in which partners play with gravity by maintaining a tactile contact between each other and negotiate their exchanges of weight through touch. From the observation of movements of the spine between two bodies in contact, he developed a meditative technique, "Material for the Spine", present (a posteriori) in several of his works, including *Goldberg Variations*, *English Suites* and *The Beast*. Steve Paxton pursues a long-term collaboration with dancer Lisa Nelson - *PART* (since 1979) and *Night Stand* (since 2004). Throughout his career, he has received numerous awards, including three New York Dance and Performance Awards, or Bessies, and a Golden Lion from the Venice Biennale in 2014. He lives in Vermont.