

Michael MONTANARO

Michael has a background that has crossed the boundaries of many different art forms. Accomplished as a composer, musician, actor and trans-disciplinary artist, he is best known for his work in the field of dance. A graduate of the Hartford Conservatory, Michael has performed with the Boston Ballet, Berkshire Ballet, Les Grands Ballet Canadiens and Le Groupe de la Place Royale. In 1980, he was named Assistant Artistic Director of "Le Groupe", a position he held until 1985. During his five years with "Le Groupe" Michael became well known as a prolific and talented choreographer, creating over 15 original works. He returned to Montreal to form his own company, Montanaro Dance and as Artistic Director and choreographer developed a repertoire of interdisciplinary work, which used cutting edge technology to create theatrical, imaginative and magical environments for his choreography. Works created for Montanaro Dance include Parallel Lines; East of Egypt; The Theory of Everything; Un Temps Perdu de Zman Doe, which was specifically created for the Vieux-Port de Montréal, and later revised for traditional theatres; Non Angli Sed Angeli, which was praised as the "Best Dance Performance" by the "Singapore Straits Times": in its wrap up coverage of the 1992 Singapore Arts Festival and Montanaro Dance Un-Plugged. From 1985 to 1996 he also created "A Matter of Seconds" for Québec-été Danse; "The Beginning of the End" for Winnipeg's Contemporary Dancers; "When you Least Expect it, Here I am"; for Le Groupe de la Place Royale and "Two Stepping in Brazil" for the company Danse Partout. In 1989 Michael choreographed "The Audition", a film produced by the National Film Board to celebrate their Fiftieth Anniversary. 1994 was a year of experimentation beginning with a nine-week residency at the University of Arizona's "Institute for Studies in the Arts" where he collaborated with a team of multi-media artists on a work using video sensing technology. Time in the Eye of the Needle, a 50-minute interactive work was presented both in Arizona, in 1994 and in Montreal, in 1995, as part of the International Symposium on Electronic Art. In 1997 he worked with Montreal's Centaur Theatre on the production of Shakespeare's "A Winters Tale" and the Opéra de Montréal's multi-media version of Carl Orff's "Carmina Burana". In the summer of 1997 after completing a three-week residency at the University of Calgary, where he both choreographed and performed, Michael began work on both the feasibility study and concept for a high tech image based theme park to be located in Portugal. Upon his return from Portugal he completed work on the documentary, "Montanaro InTime". In the Fall of 1998 Michael became a full time faculty member of Department of Contemporary Dance, Concordia University and in 1999 took on the position of Chair. In 2001-2002 Michael took a leave of absence from Concordia University to work with the Cirque du Soleil on "Varekai", which opened in Montreal on April 24th 2002 to rave reviews and is currently on a 12 year world tour. Michael returned to Concordia in June 2003 to resume his duties as Chair becoming a tenured member of the faculty in 2004. During that same year he was commissioned to choreograph a work for two members of the *National Skating Dance Team*. In 2005 his research into movement led to a consultancy position on a team of sports medicine doctors from both McGill and Stanford Universities investigating injuries related to the physical and artistic training of athletes and artists at the Cirque du Soleil. In 2006 as well as presenting at the WISP conference in western Australia, Michael continued his creative work with Cirque du Soleil and was co-creator of a multinational performance piece for the Kyoto Accord Conference in Montreal. In 2007-08 Michael was a collaborator on "d_verse", a Hexagram funded project led by PK Langshaw. That same year he began creation/research on the SSHRC funded project entitled *Frankenstein's Ghost*, which is set to premier in summer of 2011. Currently Michael is working with Sha Xin Wei's Topological Media Lab and with members of Hexagram investigating new structures for movement based immersive environments. This past September he completed work on "AME" the first work in a series of short dance films entitled "Dances for small spaces". The project, funded by Bravo!Fact, Cirque du Soleil and Concordia University is an attempt to use movement to extend the natural relationship we have with architecture by exploring the complex dynamic of confined spaces and the impact that restriction has on the creation of movement vocabulary.