

# COMPAGNIE MYRIAM GOURFINK

LOLDANSE

- Direction  
artistique

MYRIAM GOURFINK  
33, rue des Panoyaux  
75020 Paris  
France

TEL. +33 (0)1 43 44 87 70  
PORT. +33 (0)6 63 42 85 27  
[loldanse@free.fr](mailto:loldanse@free.fr)  
<http://www.myriam-gourfink.com/>

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## Presse – 2019



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<https://witnessperformance.com/dance-massive-quake/>

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Dance Massive: Quake

by [Andrew Fuhrmann](#) March 27, 2019

### Andrew Fuhrmann on the intense minimalism of Myriam Gourfink and Hellen Sky's *Quake*

In *Quake*, **choreographers Myriam Gourfink and Hellen Sky** – respectively Polish-French and Australian– have created a concentrated hour-long slow-motion performance in which the spectacle of almost-immobility approaching but never quite achieving actual immobility is raised to the level of cosmic drama.

The work is performed against an enveloping soundscape of distortion and sporadic fremescence created by Australian composer and double bassist **Mark Cauvin and Polish-French composer Kasper Toeplitz**, Goufink's long-time collaborator. The pair use a combination of live instrumentation and heavy digital processing to create a sort of densely unmusical fugue. It's an extreme sonic experience, composed in real time, but the effect is somehow ethereal. This is the roar of the jet stream, not the sandblaster.

Gourfink, currently based in Paris, is well-known for the intensity of her minimalist performances. This show has similarities to **her Breathing Monster**, a solo work which has toured extensively and was performed at [Dancehouse](#) in 2013, but here the presentation is more theatrical, with a more immersive visual aesthetic.

*Quake* is both a performance and an installation. It's a total environment, a cohesive atmosphere of fascination. The back room in the Magdalene Laundries at the Abbotsford Convent is already a moody space, with its peeling green paint and heavy rafters, but Niklas Pajanti's artful lighting creates a relaxed, almost romantic ambience. The performance space at the centre of the room is surrounded by piles of cushions and suggestive heaps of white and black plastic, with only a few chairs against the walls.

In one corner of the stage there are columns of feathers strung from the rafters, as if tumbling from the sky. Some are dark brown, others are banded brown and white, like hawk feathers. There are pink flamingo feathers and a column of white feathers, each stamped with the same motto in red: "I am the Cosmos".

There's also a single strand of conductive thread glowing neon blue. Like the feathers, this thread reaches from the floor to the rafters; it's an evocative detail, suggesting the thinnest sliver of blue sky running between the earth and the outer reaches of wherever.

As the performance begins, the thinness of this glowing thread is matched by a thin high-pitched whine, as Toeplitz and Cauvin cautiously worry at their instruments. Seen from across the room, the movement of the two dancers is at first all but imperceptible; soon, however, a kind of barely pulsing quiver can be detected. As the minutes pass and the accompaniment becomes louder and more layered, a lateral twisting and rising intention emerges, but so slowly that it's difficult to visualise the trajectory. It's difficult even to know if the two are performing in unison or following their own patterns.

From where I'm sitting, I can see both the screen which Toeplitz is using and a monitor on the floor near the dancers. A digital timer is clearly visible on both screens, and I imagine that most people in the audience can also see it. This adds a discordant narrative element to the performance. The clocks create an expectation and a concomitant anxiety. We know

that the show is only an hour long, but the performers, both the dancers and musicians, are slow and painstaking in their composition. Will *Quake* fit into an hour?

Without the clocks, it would be easy to slip into quasi-religious bombast when describing this performance, or at least to invoke ideas of the sublime or the numinous or the mythic. But the constant reminder of seconds and minutes passing creates an effect of containment or constraint. As the performance swells to its climax of maximal volume and minimal movement, it almost feels as though a boundary were being tested, as if the show were pressing against the limits of its allotted time. That limit, of course, does not give way; and the final fifteen minutes of *Quake* feel something like an ebb tide as it recedes into itself. This is nonetheless a powerfully allusive performance. As in earlier pieces by Gourfink and Toeplitz, there's an impression of near weightlessness as the dancers fluidly orchestrate their gestural minims. The details of the installation, however, seem to link this weightlessness to images of flight. One thinks of those hawks, for instance, rising on a thin line of sky, gripped by narrow currents of air. It's an image of controlled bodies, tensed, all but motionless – soaring.

***Quake*, choreography and performance by Hellen Sky and Myriam Gourfink, sound design and performance by Mark Cauvin and Kasper T. Toeplitz, lighting design by Nik Pajanti. Presented by Dancehouse as part of Dance Massive at Abbotsford Convent, Magdalen Laundries, 1 St Heliers Street, Abbotsford. Closed.**

## FJORD REVIEW

MARCH 30 2019

<https://www.fjordreview.com/dark-night-jill-orr-quake-hellen-sky/>

**Gracia Haby**

**Sky**, together with **Myriam Gourfink**, and music by **Mark Cauvin and Kasper T. Toeplitz**, have constructed a complimentary geography of blanketed islands to negotiate. Electric blue cabling tumbles from the rafters, and feathers, perhaps plucked from the birds that earlier squawked for Orr, flutter not as nature but as a mobile. The former laundry is once more transformed, while still remaining an unsettling space in which to drop anchor. One of the last to enter, I find a spot on the dusty floor. At the centre, **Sky, Gourfink, Cauvin and Toeplitz** wait and yet have already begun. The measured, barely perceptible movements of Sky and Gourfink harpoon me to my spot. The slow thought of their actions making the movements of the audience slumped and repositioning themselves on the patchwork of beanbags look fast and furious. The contrast, the different planes, a sensory delight! “In a world that moves too fast, the ‘players’ invite us to reflect on the nature of movement and affect in our relationship to environment and landscape, palimpsests of histories, digital interfaces and cellular structures . . . . Breath[ing] new meaning into everything that we see, hear and feel.”<sup>5</sup>

And I bob on, pins and needles be damned. (It could have been hours. Was it?)

## THE SYDNEY MORNING HERALD

[https://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/dance/audience-transfixed-by-unnerving-performance-20190322-p516iv.html?ref=rss&utm\\_medium=rss&utm\\_source=rss\\_feed&fbclid=IwAR0EK8nVC7WvwD\\_1u1CuAaMSu1dpaP50sw-YK4rzm535iW8oA2d1opeJNAo](https://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/dance/audience-transfixed-by-unnerving-performance-20190322-p516iv.html?ref=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_source=rss_feed&fbclid=IwAR0EK8nVC7WvwD_1u1CuAaMSu1dpaP50sw-YK4rzm535iW8oA2d1opeJNAo)

### Audience transfixed by unnerving performance

By Kim Dunphy

March 22, 2019 — 12.12pm

### DANCE MASSIVE

Hellen Sky and Collaborators' *Quake*. *CREDIT: GREGORY LORENZUTTI*

### QUAKE ★★ ★★

#### **Hellen Sky and Collaborators, Abbotsford Convent, March 21-23**

Hellen Sky and colleagues' *Quake* took place in the Abbotsford Convent's newly refurbished Magdalen Laundries, a space that evidenced its disturbing history in the distressed patina that remains on the walls.

It was set up like a cosy, hippy lounge room, with comfy furniture including inflatables and beanbags for the audience to relax on. This was augmented with roof hangings of natural materials, leaves and feathers, and piles of blue electric lights on the floor.

#### Fresh start as Abbotsford Convent reopens historic laundries

Add to shortlist

The performance, however, significantly juxtaposed this setting – it was the most unc cosy and unnatural event.

The dancers were almost inhuman in the sustained quality of their movements: dreamlike, remote, bound and weightless. The score might have been: “Cross the floor of the space, pass each other and then turn your body inward. Take more than an hour to do this.”

Blue lights, like stigmata, glowed on the hands of dancers **Sky and Myriam Gourfink**, adding to the eeriness, along with the music (live and electronic) **by Mark Cauvin and Kasper T. Toeplitz**. This included a double bass played in most unexpected ways – at one stage like a handsaw, almost cleaving the instrument's strings.

This show was long, especially for a contemporary dance work. Considering the show's starting time of 10pm on a school night, the large audience nevertheless seemed transfixed. They sat with focused attention for the entire 70 minutes, appropriately matching the performers' rapt intensity.

# LA TERRASSE

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DANSE - ENTRETIEN / MYRIAM GOURFINK

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## Myriam Gourfink crée *Glissement d'infini*

ENTRETIEN / MYRIAM GOURFINK

CENTRE POMPIDOU / CHOR. MYRIAM GOURFINK

Publié le 23 mars 2019 - N° 275

Chorégraphe de mouvements qu'impulse la respiration, d'une lenteur qui devient virtuose, Myriam Gourfink crée *Glissement d'infini* au Centre Pompidou. Dans cette pièce de quatre heures pour cinq danseuses, inspirée par la figure du serpent, le public est invité à entrer et sortir à sa guise, à se mouvoir comme bon lui semble.

D'où est venue votre envie de travailler à partir de la figure du serpent ?

Myriam Gourfink : En dansant en pleine nature. J'explorais le mouvement dans un endroit où la terre était très meuble, aussi chacun de mes appuis glissait. J'ai ensuite transposé l'expérience en studio en étudiant le spectre des appuis glissés : de l'effleurement, en passant par le contact, jusqu'au transfert de poids. Essayant toutes les combinatoires, j'ai abandonné la reptation au profit d'un jeu plus inattendu : le glissement de la tête, des mains et pieds au sol, pour soulever coudes, genoux et bassin. « La chorégraphie joue avec une gradation de contraintes concernant la motricité de la tête. »

Comment cela impacte-t-il la danse, votre vocabulaire ?

M.G. : C'est essentiellement la contrainte de garder la tête au sol, qui a, pour ainsi dire, opéré une mue, ou plus concrètement un changement de mes habitudes motrices. En effet, dans le travail que je développe depuis vingt ans, dont le principe est de laisser des respirations très amples guider le mouvement, la tête se soulève ou se dépose au sol spontanément pour faire contrepoids. La contrainte, consistant à garder constamment la tête au sol, oblige à trouver de nouvelles circulations et une intensification du gainage. Toute la dramaturgie de *Glissements d'infini* est une évolution des mouvements de tête, celle-ci une fois soulevée devient l'initiatrice du mouvement. La chorégraphie joue avec une gradation de contraintes concernant la motricité de la tête.

Que change dans votre composition le fait de créer pour un espace non frontal, pour un public nomade dans un temps long ?

M.G. : En explorant en studio, le temps long ainsi que la forme non frontale se sont imposés. C'est donc la pratique qui a conduit au choix du format. La juxtaposition des indications de glissements et des contraintes concernant la tête génèrent des déplacements sinueux. Ces chemins sinueux, plein de retournements, induisent un temps long et appellent la proximité du public. Ces sinuosités sont l'emblème de ce projet, elles proposent délibérément un corps inefficace, qui savoure son rapport au sol, à l'espace qui l'entoure et au temps.

Propos recueillis par [Delphine Baffour](#)

[Myriam Gourfink crée \*Glissement d'infini\*](#)