



TRIXIE

Documentary film
2020 — 80 min.

Cie Nicole Seiler

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Directed by
Bastien Genoux
Written by
Nicole Seiler & Bastien Genoux
With
Beatrice Cordua, alias TRIXIE
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Nalia Giovanili
Cinematography
Bastien Genoux
Sound
Masaki Hatsui, David Lipka,
Björn Cornelius, Théo Viroton
Sound editing
Jérôme Cuendet / Alea Jacta
Music
Stéphane Vecchione
Additional music
Lucie Mauch
With film extracts by
Ludwig Schönherr, Stephen
Dwoskin, Walter Bickmann
Production
Detours Films & Cie Nicole Seiler
Support
Cinéforum, Loterie Romande



A sensitive portrait of Trixie, an extraordinary woman who testifies about her experience as a dancer and choreographer. Her personal experiences show a fascinating life alongside the great icons of dance she has known. Evolving in the heart of the German bubbling art scene, she will have marked the memories and the history of dance.

In this sensitive portrait, through words and gestures, she sketches her incredible career by addressing the intimate question of her relationship with the aging body.

Promotion
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A life through art history

Beatrice Cordua, better known as TRIXIE, is 80 years old and lives in Berlin. She performs her own role in the documentary performance *The Wanderers Peace* by Swiss choreographer Nicole Seiler, a piece about remembrance and memory. TRIXIE recounts her life spent around some of the greatest artists of the 20th century. TRIXIE dances at home, but also in ballet classes as well as in contemporary and classical choreographies. She searches through her archives which reveal her beauty as a young dancer and the grace of her current body. A body that carries a large part of the history of the 20th century.

“I was once told: with age one becomes thin and silent. I would say that I have become rather noisy and absurd. These are things I know how to do. I think old age is absurd, so I can laugh about it. Things are as they are. We can just be happy that we’re still alive. And if you’re still alive, you should take advantage of it. Age also has its advantages. I’ve put up with it..“

—
Béatrice Cordua, aka TRIXIE

Beatrice Cordua was born in 1941 in Hamburg. As a child, she saw herself becoming a violinist or ballet dancer.

So one Saturday, with my father, we went to the violin store. But it was closed... That's what determined the rest of my life. [...] He had reserves about my desires: as a gynecologist, he was afraid for my organs. He nevertheless agreed to send me to train at the Royal Ballet School in London



TRIXIE began her career as a professional dancer at the Hamburg Opera (DE) in 1959. She continues her career with engagements at the Cologne Stadttheater (DE), the Royal Winnipeg Ballet (CA), the Frankfurt Stadttheater (DE) and the Hamburg Opera (DE). She worked with George Balanchine, Todd Bolender, John Cranko, Agnes de Mille, Aurel von Miloss, Maurice Béjart, John Neumeier and many others.

Merce Cunningham, John Cage and Robert Rauschenberg came to Cologne directly after the Venice Biennale to perform the piece Winterbranch (which has since become famous). Rauschenberg was standing on the side with a chair and pushing it from right to left. That was John Cage's musical composition.» «On stage: a bunch of clothes, the dancers would change often. I don't remember everything exactly - but I was sitting with my husband in the middle of an agitated crowd. The audience threw tomatoes and eggs at the dancers! Merce even later told me that he had never forgotten this performance and that he was also very proud of it...

Discovered in 1972, through the solo of the sacrificed in John Neumeier's «Sacre du Printemps», nudity has remained an important component of TRIXIE's personal work.

I wanted to show the vulnerability that is linked to the naked body. Without any artifice... But I've never been sexy... And as I get older, I find this vulnerability acceptable. I can still bear it.

In the 70's and 80's, in parallel to her engagements as a dancer, she began a personal choreographic research and rubbed shoulders with the work of Merce Cunningham in New York (USA). She began choreographic and film collaborations with Nam June Paik, Dieter Roth, Gerhard Rühm, Ludwig Schön herr, Steve Dwoskin.

Choreographing has always been complicated. The dancers participated willingly, as did the ballerinas. But the critics and the public did not like my work. A critic once wrote: "Mrs Cordua has opened her diary and there is nothing to see in it." I started making work again later in Berlin. The first was a piece about masturbation. I had already done something similar in the 1970s. I had a camera strapped to my leg and tried to masturbate. I had to change the tape every 3 minutes... It was a bit complicated... But after a while I succeeded!





Author's notes

TRIXIE (the film) is a staged documentary, in the same way that *The Wanderers Peace* (my show about Trixie and on which the film is based) is a staging of reality, and in the same way that everyone, in his or her life, organizes his or her own presentation of self.

TRIXIE is a research on the career of the eponymous figure of German dance. In 2015, I created the stage show *The Wanderers Peace*, and in doing so, I met an incredible woman who has lived through almost a century of art history. She lived this story through her body. A body today quite transformed, which was that of an atypical dancer and which still contains this surprising personality, who prefers, still today, at 80 years old, to dance naked rather than to get tangled in a costume.

I was trying to focus on the

notion of memory, of remembrance. That of the body, mainly. Like memory, the body fades with time. In the same way that memory is a current representation of a past reality, the body, at 80 years old, is a transformed image. While remaining the witness of a history, the elderly body is nevertheless an object of the present: it is important for me to remain in this dialectic. It is by evoking the present that we speak of the past. It is by describing a certain image of History that I try to build my present. The idea was not to create a filmed version of the show, but to use the show (and all the research undertaken for this production) to get even closer to TRIXIE's character, her body, and all the archives it contains. As a choreographer, the body is an important object of attention for me. Nevertheless, it seems to me that the theme of aging, wisdom and spirit - always young! - enclosed in a worn envelope is a universal theme.

With this film, I wanted to continue these explorations on the memory and remembrance of the body, to go where stage work cannot go, that is to say, as close as possible to the dancer: visually close to her body, but also in her intimacy. But also in her apartment in Berlin (a real archive!), in her wardrobe, in her street, in her neighborhood, but also on tour, backstage and in rehearsals.

I wanted to get closer to the doubts, fears and anxieties one feels when one's body's aging, when one remains the last of a generation; to be able to get to the bottom of that spark of joy that illuminates the gaze at the evocation of a young girl's past, of the love of a life; of the beauty of a body worn out and sometimes tired, but alive and fulfilled after a passionate life.

Nicole Seiler

tell the story of this irreversible and inescapable process? The understanding of her body is remarkable because it is her working tool, in the accomplishment of morphological feats on a daily basis.

She realizes early enough that she can never be the ballerina she dreamed of being. This relentless observation will leave a bitter taste to this day. A gap between a childhood dream and a career record that seems to be diametrically opposed.

The enormous discipline that a career as a dancer requires, in addition to a healthy lifestyle, are consequent and yet she finds her way with choreographers who will build partnerships of excellence with her. Her commitment, her bewitchment, her obstinacy, despite her lack of coordination, she says, are used as assets and as a mark of originality.

She brought nudity to the stage with «Le Sacre», a ballet by John Neumeier that made her a dance legend. She incarnates from then on a radical posture on the relation which she maintains with her body; nudity as one and only costume and this, already, at the beginning of the Seventies..

She has an unlimited admiration for choreographers who will not want her. Then there is the moment of the necessity to give up dancing as a performer. That's the reality for any career as a professional dancer. How to organize this transition? By teaching or becoming a choreographer herself? Beatrice Cordua will never have any real success with her own creations. Then it is the Parkinson's disease that she will have to fight on a daily basis. Her questioning the disease, which pushes her to reinvent a new way of walking, are particularly touching. There are many themes and contextual elements that can

be addressed. Her rich memories of anecdotes, frustrations and pleasures also reveal the changing conditions of dance production and the arts scene over several decades. TRIXIE's personal story is gradually blending with a more universal story: that of international dance.

Over the years, I have become something of a specialist in this biographical subject. After 15 years of experience in portrait film, ambitions have grown to advocate today for a methodology that is beyond the subject.

The performing arts community, which I encountered for many years as a video creator but also simply through mandates to record stage works, is one of my favorite subjects. How to translate these scenic propositions through images? What points of view should be adopted to best convey the point or ideas defended?

Thinking about how to film the shows is part of this author's perspective, since I am the one operating the camera for this documentary. To impregnate myself with the flow of the scenes and their internal energy in order to try to sharpen the point of view and enhance the dynamics of the shots to accompany or accentuate the substance of a choreographic sequence, for example. To adapt the value or the distance of the subject, to be inspired by the energy of the performer, and as choreography is a language in its own right, it is necessary to know its codes and uses.

Filming a face, a portion of the body, such as the feet or arms, affects the understanding of a posture as a whole. Fragmentation also makes it possible to enter into the interiority of interpretation and to grasp the stories that the performers are telling to restore a feeling.

Author's notes

In my documentary projects, I attach a lot of importance to stories and testimonies of atypical personalities. I like to create contemporary portraits that reveal each time a sensitive and singular vision of our world. Testimony is a delightful subject to work with and is always loaded with countless little treasures that one must know how to unlock to tell the complexity of life. Beyond the attempt to extract as much juice and vital energy as possible from Trixie's words, which describe the life journey of a free and emancipated woman, the aim is to formulate a strong reflection on the journey of a woman in her seventies and her relationship to her aging body. Who better than a dancer to

Detours Films, Lausanne (CH)

Detours Films (2014) is a cinematographic approach to apprehend reality, to immerse oneself in life trajectories, to question the political positioning of the contemporary world, or to flirt with movement and matter. Speech and encounters are the keystones of this visual, often documentary, approach. It is a way of valuing the inner worlds of people who are atypical or who are at odds with established norms.

Cie Nicole Seiler, Lausanne (CH)

The Nicole Seiler company was founded in 2002 in Lausanne (Switzerland). The choreographer's artistic approach has led her to varied formats, and since the inception of the company she has created 30 projects: stage shows, video works, site-specific works, performances and installations. Since 2004, the company has been touring internationally. As of the end of 2020, it will have given over 750 presentations, in more than 400 venues and forty countries, in Europe, North America, South America, Africa, Asia, Russia and Australia.

Since 2010, Nicole Seiler has been exploring the complex links woven by two of a show's essential elements: image and sound. This formal research has resulted in several projects in relation to the description of dance and movement. *Amauros*, a stage project created in 2011 and adapted as a video installation in 2014, plunges the spectator into obscurity, their imagination stimulated by precise description and evocative sound effects. *Un Acte sérieux* (2012) is a playful interactive performance that reveals the infinite strata of the language of dance. *Small explosion with glass and repeat echo* (2012) was the company's first show to be entirely described for a visually impaired and blind audience. *Sekunden später...* (2017) is a stage project that makes use of description as a surreal effect. *Palimpsest* (2018) takes the concept even further. This collection of geo-tagged sound pieces, accessible via smartphone, makes visible in the public space a history of the choreographed locations, via meticulous audio description alone.

The company's repertoire, made up of diverse forms, also includes site-specific projects: *K Two* (street performance, 2007), *Living-room dancers* (apartment performances and films, 2008), *Willis* (choreographic installation in a forest, 2014) created at the °far festival in Nyon (CH), and presented in 2015 at the Fabriques festival in the Jean-Jacques Rousseau park (F).

Since 2018, Nicole Seiler has been including voice in her working method. More than the link between voice and body, she considers the body as a complete instrument, as vocal as it is choreographic. This is evidenced by pieces such as *The rest is silence* (stage project, 2020) and *Wouah!* (stage project for young audiences aged 4 and up, 2020).

The Nicole Seiler company produces its own shows in collaboration with Swiss and international theatres and festivals. It receives regular support from public funding bodies (Ville de Lausanne, le Canton de Vaud, Pro Helvetia), as well as private foundations (Loterie Romande, Fondation Ernst Göhner, Thomas Stanley Johnson Foundation, Sophie and Karl Binding Foundation, CORODIS, etc.).

Bastien Genoux
Film director

Born in Lausanne in 1976, his training as a photographer allows him to tame the frame and the light and leads him to become a film director and cinematographer. In 2004, he founded Le Flair, a film production collective within which he began a significant connection to the performing arts. These multiple collaborations generate atypical films and allow him to sharpen his visual language. He also perfected his shooting skills through numerous experiences as a cinematographer on feature and short films of all genres. He created Detours Films in 2014 to better meet his aspirations and deepen his sensitive approach to reality. Meetings and collaborations with creators from different aesthetic worlds are the keystone of his artistic approach.

Feature-length documentaries (director and cinematographer)

2020 TRIXIE

Documentary by Bastien Genoux (Detours films – 80min)

2018 Me Duele la Memoria
Documentaire de Bastien Genoux et Lara Heredia (Detours Films - 72min)

2015 Visions Singulières – créateurs singuliers de Mayenne

Doc. by Bastien Genoux and Mario Del Curto (Detours Films – 57min)

Short documentaries (director and cinematographer)

2019 Les fenêtres tiroirs
Doc. by Bastien Genoux and Mario Del Curto (Detours Films – 45 min)

2019 La maison des Rails
by Bastien Genoux (Detours Films – 30min)

2018-2015 Reconversion des danseurs professionnels

Doc. by Bastien Genoux (Detours Films – 10 x 4min)

2017 Prix de Littérature de l'Office fédéral de la culture 2017

Doc. by Bastien Genoux

(Detours Films - 9 x 5min)

2016 Prix de Littérature de l'Office fédéral de la culture
Doc. by Bastien Genoux (Detours Films – 9 x 5min)

2014 Linda Naeff, les couleurs habillent la souffrance
Doc. by Bastien Genoux and Mario Del Curto (Detours Films – 25min)

2013 Yvonne Robert, une femme qui vient de l'ombre
Doc. by Bastien Genoux and Mario Del Curto (Le Flair – 28min)

2012 Henriette Zephir, le souffle des esprits
Doc. by Bastien Genoux and Mario Del Curto (Le Flair – 18min)

2010 Macoto Toya
Doc. by Bastien Genoux and Mario Del Curto (Le Flair – 14min)

2009 Living Room Dancers
Doc. by Bastien Genoux (Le Flair – 23min)

Nicole Seiler
Choreographer

Works and lives in Lausanne, Switzerland. Born in 1970 in Zurich, Nicole Seiler studied dance and theater at the Scuola Teatro Dimitri in Verscio (CH), the Vlaamse Dansacademie in Bruges (BE) and at Rudra Béjart in Lausanne (CH). As a performer she collaborated in the creation of numerous works with companies such as Cie Buissonnière (Philippe Lizon), le Teatro Malandro (Omar Porras), Allias Compagnie (Guilherme Botelho), Cie Philippe Saire, Massimo Furlan as well as other companies abroad. She founded her company in 2002 in Lausanne. Since 2004, the company tours internationally.

Distinctions and awards:

ROTAS VIRTUAIS at the Festival International de Théâtre du Caire (EG) with Collectif ROTAS.

2018 Second best performance award for Un acte sérieux at the Festival Teatr Magica, Theater Institut, Samara (UK)

2018 Special Jury Mention «original idea» for Amauros (1) and (3) at the Dance on Screen Festival, Graz (AU)

2014 Winner of the Leeds International Screendance Competition, 28th Leeds International Film Festival (UK), for the video-dance Amauros (3)

2009 Prix Culturel Vaudois Danse by the Fondation Vaudoise pour la Culture (CH)

2008 Special Jury Mention, Festival II Coreografo Elettronico in Naples (IT) for the two choreographic videos plug-play and devant-avant

2007 Scholarship from the Leenaards Foundation (CH)

2007 3rd prize, O Festival Tapias, Rio de Janeiro (BR) for the choreographic videos One in a million and 4 clips for aufnahmen

As an artist Nicole Seiler is regularly invited to teach, give workshops and masterclasses as well

as participate in forums and symposiums around the world. For example: at the Manufacture, Haute Ecole des Arts de la Scène in Lausanne, Sapienza University in Rome, Jakarta University of Art in Indonesia, University of Arts in Asuncion, Paraguay, Tanzhaus NRW in Düsseldorf, Yerevan Opera in Armenia, Attakkalari - Center for Movement Arts in Bangalore, India, Theater of Nations in Moscow (Territory Festival), Ca'Foscari University Foundation in Venice, etc.

Parallel to her work as a choreographer she is also interested in questions of cultural politics. Throughout the last years has been on the board of different associations and foundations such as Pro Helvetia - Swiss arts council, Danse Suisse, far-festival des arts vivants, Nyon, SSA – Société Suisse des Auteurs, etc.

Since 2018 Nicole Seiler is co-curator at ADN Danse Neuchâtel.

