




GANDINI

2022

LIFE

A Love Letter to Merce Cunningham

**In collaboration with
Merce Cunningham Trust
Caroline Shaw
Jennifer Goggans**



The Observer ★★★★★

“There’s a pure pleasure in the cleverness of all this; the performers are uniformly transfixing, their smiles utterly infectious.”

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THE SHOW

Introduction & artistic process





The Financial Times

★★★★★

**“A jaw-droppingly
complex blend of dance
and juggling.”**

THE SHOW

LIFE is a juggling performance based on the choreographies of Merce Cunningham. We have spent three decades watching and being inspired by his work. At the back of our minds there was always the tickling thought: What if Merce had choreographed juggling? Is it possible to create something that, whilst clearly has its roots in the Cunningham universe, is a vector outward to another world? Something new that retains the essence of the original something which would not have existed without the source but that also has its own raison d'être?

Sean Gandini's rare mixture of devotion and invention yields what feels like a logical – yet unexpected! – extension of Merce Cunningham's choreographic innovation.

Nancy Dalva - Merce Cunningham Trust Scholar in Residence

I hope this production travels the world. Abounding in marvels, it covers a spectrum of tempi, moods, and dramatic/comic situations. It amazed me to hear Jennifer Goggans, who danced for Cunningham in 2000-2009 and the two years ensuing his death, say - eagerly - that she found Gandini's complexities yet more challenging than Cunningham's.

Alastair Macaulay – Dance critic for the New York Times

We are endlessly enchanted and elated by Merce Cunningham's geometrical universe. We don't take it for granted that we are dialoguing with one of the great choreographic bodies of work. It has been a daunting task.

Sean Gandini - Co-Director at Gandini Juggling

ARTISTIC PROCESS

At the heart of what we will do is a dialogue with Merce Cunningham's rich legacy. The idea is over a period of 18 months to imbue our company in Merce's ideas, the dancing, the geometry, the systems and the philosophy. There is philosophical aesthetic concern too, which is for the piece to have an element of metaness and self-reflection. Merce's work is in principle about pure movement and yet points to multiple narratives and interpretation.

Asking the question "what juggling would Merce have created?" is an absurdist question. Perhaps one can theatrically ask other questions: What would Beethoven's architecture have been like, Leonardo da Vinci's dancing? We would like the piece to alternate between the architectural Cunningham re-imaginings and interludes which would have a very different flavor.

We feel like there is an element of digital mathematical artwork to be integrated into the piece. The thoughts about this are still embryonic. Since the initial idea is to map a piece from one art form into another, a transmutation. We wondered about a further real time mapping of the work into another medium. Maps of maps. Geometry and exhilaration.

STARTING POINTS

Geometry

Classical juggling is rooted in very central geometries. Eye pleasing symmetries. Of central concern to us is indeed to decentralise the space we perform in. Cunningham Geometry is a very particular beast, even though it is rooted in ideas of randomness it has a cohesive aesthetic which intrigues us. One of the classic group juggling ideas, passing, where jugglers exchange objects drawing lines from points in space is a perfect vehicle for initial research into this.

ARTISTIC PROCESS

Chance Procedures

The use of randomising systems to generate material. This is part of a bigger embracing of ideas and philosophy which we feel are inherent in Cunningham's work.

Rhythm

We would be intrigued to see if it is possible to take the rhythm of feet of the nuances of steps and transform them into hand juggling information.

Subdividing the body into opposing parts

Extrapolating from Cunningham technique the idea of opposing forces has a very clear application to juggling. The juggling torso doing something whilst the legs and feet do something different. Technically more challenging to us jugglers is the idea of incorporating tilts twists and arches into juggling patterns.

Arms

We have a particular interest in the arms of the late pieces. There is an affinity with some of the research into contemporary juggling with these arms.

Virtuosity and risk

There is an inherent virtuosity to a lot of the Cunningham work we have seen. A sense of risk. A lot of performing juggling has this in it.

COLLABORATORS



Caroline Shaw

Music

Grammy Award winning and New York based composer Caroline Shaw composed an original music for LIFE inspired by John Cage's music



Jennifer Goggans

Cunningham Consultant

Jennifer Goggans who was with the Merce Cunningham Company between 2000 and 2011, and is now member of the Merce Cunningham Trust is our Cunningham consultant. We worked with her to dive deeper into the Cunningham technique.

COLLABORATORS



Guy Hoare

Lighting Design

As with 4x4, Meta and Spring, Award-winning lighting designer has created a simple and stunning design

02



INFORMATION

Press, marketing, credits, technical information



**The Guardian - The best
dance of 2022**

**“The jugglers made
rhythm visible, just like
Cunningham did, in
abstract puzzles with a
lot of human heart”**



PRESS

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“The jugglers made rhythm visible, just like Cunningham did, in abstract puzzles with a lot of human heart”

The Observer ★★★★★

“There’s a pure pleasure in the cleverness of all this; the performers are uniformly transfixing, their smiles utterly infectious.”

The Financial Times ★★★★★

“A jaw-droppingly complex blend of dance and juggling.”

The Guardian ★★★★★

“You can imagine the ever-curious choreographer would have loved this little gem of a show.”

The Times ★★★★★

“The compact performance has been assembled with enough unpretentious charm, skill, wit, and warmth to please those who do or do not know of the work of that late, great American choreographer.”

Full press coverage:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/n3yc51745nlv6ar/AABZCMNRhE4aeS9SdOPc9V-sa?dl=0>

MARKETING

Images:

All images of the shows are available in HD here:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/qqce737o743ocam/AACwHEwdlkuyxOKtJXNJvRKCa?dl=0>

Trailer:

The trailer is available (and can be downloaded) here:

<https://vimeo.com/668750003>

Duration: 65 minutes (no interval)

Age range: 8+

Around the show:

The short documentary Six Sides of Cunningham by the Walker Arts Center is a great introduction to work of Merce Cunningham. The video can be screened in the foyer or embedded in your website: <https://vimeo.com/683367653/8a14d1e251>

Full Marketing pack available on demand at info@gandinijuggling.com.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

LIFE exists in different versions:

- An indoor version with 9 performers on stage
- An outdoor version with 4 performers on stage
- A modular version to adapt to different spaces
- A special version indoors or outdoors with live music vocals by Caroline Shaw

Technical:

- Ideal stage dimensions for the 9 performers version: 12m wide by 10m deep, with clear height above stage of 6m.
- Minimum size of performing space – 9m wide by 7.5m deep, with 5m height. Please discuss other sizes with the company.

Technical rider available on demand: info@gandinijuggling.com.

Touring Party:

- 9 performers
- 1 rehearsal director
- 1 technician
- 1 producer
- 1 musician for the version with live music (from New York, USA).

CREDITS

Director: Sean Gandini

Assistant to the director: Kati Ylä-Hokkala

Rehearsal director: Emma Lister

Cunningham Consultant: Jennifer Goggans

Lighting design: Guy Hoare

Composition and voice: Caroline Shaw

Additional Choreography: Anna Chirescu

Performers: Benjamin Beaujard, Sean Gandini, Jennifer Goggans, Kim Huynh, Sakari Männistö, Erin O'Toole, Jose Triguero, Yu-Hsien Wu, Kati Ylä-Hokkala

Executive Production: Gandini Juggling

Images: Dolly Brown

Video: Alice Underwood

With the support of : Merce Cunningham Trust (New York, USA) Théâtre de la Ville (Paris, France); Danse Élargie (Paris, France); London International Mime Festival (UK); Maison des Jonglages (La Courneuve, France); Lighthouse, Poole's Centre for the Arts (UK); Dance East (Ipswich, UK); Arts Council England (UK)

EDUCATION

One of the most joyous occasions in Gandini Juggling touring life is when we meet a good juggler who tells us that they did a workshop with us many moons before.

This seemingly obvious realisation pushed us to embark on an educational drive. We find that there is a shortage of performers with the specific skill sets they need as well as that there is a shortage of female jugglers.

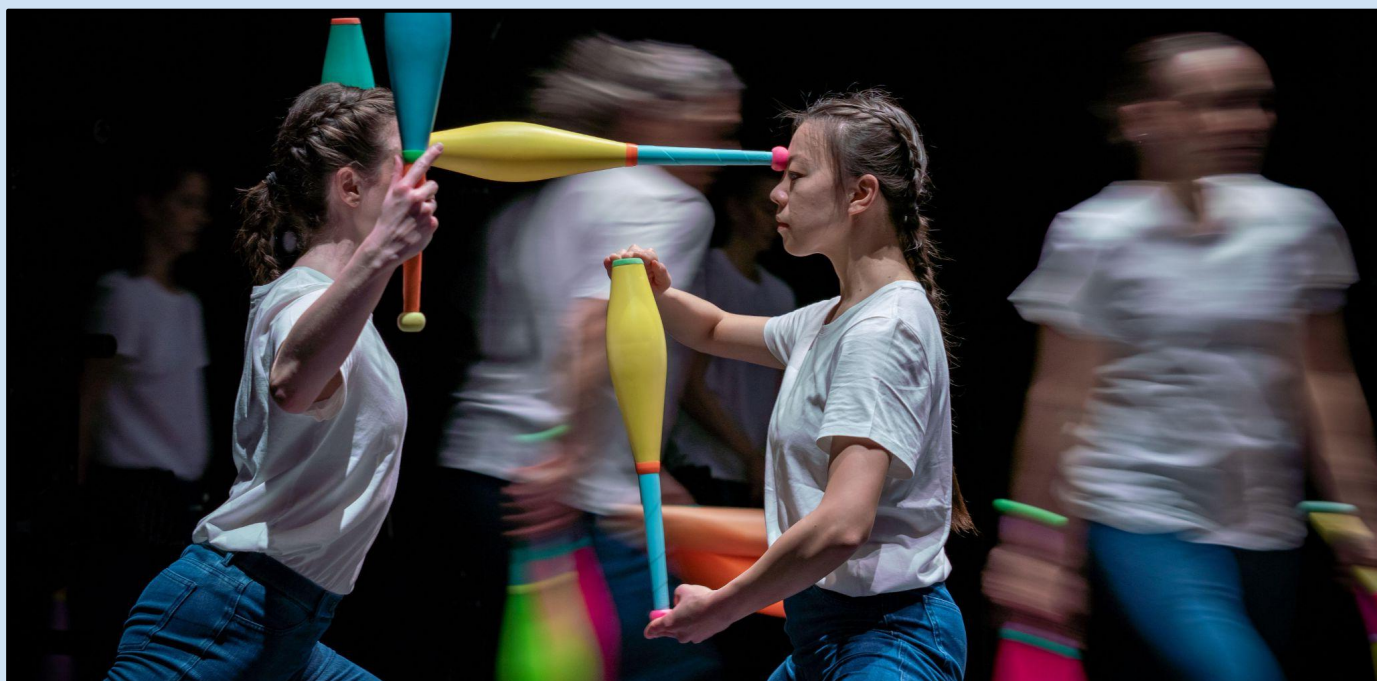
So, to plant seeds for the future Gandini Juggling's aim is to inspire, educate and motivate acting as highly experienced facilitators, teaching in not only the world's best circus schools but providing workshops in community centres and cold church halls...

We have a range of workshops available, aimed at both professional jugglers/performers and those that are new to the art form:

- Each workshop last 2 hours and will be led by 1 or 2 performers.
- Group size can range from 20-30 participants, depending on space.
- Workshops and lecture can take place in person or online
- All of the workshop titles below can be used as lecture topics.

For more information, contact info@gandinijuggling.com.

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ABOUT US

Biography and contact



The Guardian
***Gandini is at the forefront
of British circus' quiet
revolution***



THE COMPANY

Formed in 1992 by world-renowned jugglers Sean Gandini and Kati Ylä-Hokkala, Gandini Juggling continues to be at the vanguard of contemporary circus, reinventing and reinvigorating juggling for the 21st Century.

Gandini Juggling celebrates juggling in all its facets, exploring not just what juggling is, but what juggling can be. Currently an ever-evolving ensemble made up of a virtuosic core group of jugglers, they regularly expand to include up to 20 performers for specially commissioned events and performances. Ferociously prolific, they are constantly creating new works, which range from radical art/juggling fusions to accessible theatrical performances, from choreographic studies to commercially commissioned routines.

Since their inception the Gandinis have performed over 6,000 shows in 50 countries. They continue to perform at many of the most prestigious festivals and venues throughout the world. These venues range from Contemporary art museums in France to Opera houses in Germany, from theatres in Lebanon to tents in Argentina. Closer to home the Gandinis can be seen performing at the UK's major outdoor festivals and theatre houses including London's Royal Opera House, English National Opera, The Royal National Theatre and Sadler's Wells.

In creating their work Gandini Juggling collaborated with a wide range of cultural leaders, initially teaming up with the pioneering and influential dance artist and choreographer Gill Clarke. The Gandini's continue to be influenced by a range of disciplines, which include amongst others, composers, ballet choreographers, fashion designers, computer programmers, sound designers, set makers and mathematicians. They have spent several seasons working with orchestras, choreographing juggling patterns to a wide range of classical compositions and have had music specially composed for them by leading composers Tom Johnson, Nimrod Borenstein and Gabriel Prokofiev.

THE COMPANY

In addition to performing, Gandini Juggling is very much in demand at leading circus schools. Teaching workshops, creating performances and supporting the next generation of circus artists. Alongside this, Gandini publishes books and delivers virtual classes to support the wider understanding of the beautiful possibilities of juggling, for jugglers and non-jugglers alike. The Gandini's have an insatiable thirst for juggling pieces and a fiery desire to collaborate, communicate and provoke. They aim to reposition juggling as a versatile, engaging and malleable art form for our times.

SEAN GANDINI

Sean Gandini is one of the pioneers of contemporary juggling. Working as a performer, choreographer and director he has, for over 25 years, pushed the boundaries of juggling as a discipline and as an art form.

Growing-up in Havana, Cuba, Sean was fascinated by Magic and Mathematics, but shortly after he began juggling, prompting a life-long fascination with all aspects of the art form. Sean's professional career began in the 1980s, regularly performing in London's famous Covent Garden and touring with various theatre companies – including the pioneering Ra-Ra Zoo. In 1991, with Kati Ylä-Hokkala, he co-founded Gandini Juggling and together they have been at the forefront of experiments into what juggling is and what juggling can be.

Sean is a prolific creator. Whether working with the technicality of 'pure' juggling, crafting spectacular street art shows, or exploring the ways juggling might blend with other art forms, Sean is guided by a natural curiosity and delight in the myriad possibilities of throwing objects into the air.

This has led to the creation to a diverse array of shows, including the playful Sweet Life; the fiendishly complex celebration of the London Olympics Twenty/Twenty; and their smash hit, the darkly humorous and theatrical homage to Pina Bausch Smashed.

THE COMPANY

KATY YLÄ-HOKKALA

Kati Ylä-Hokkala is one of her generation's iconic jugglers. As a co-founder of Gandini Juggling she has built a reputation not only as a highly-skilled technical juggler but is also renowned as one of the leading innovators in dance-juggling.

Kati's professional career began in the 1980s, performing with the influential Ra-Ra Zoo. In 1991, with Sean, she co-founded Gandini Juggling. Since then she has been instrumental in the company's experiments into the possibilities of juggling, including working to create unique 'two-person sharing' juggling patterns.

A former rhythmic gymnast, Kati's distinctive ability to combine movement with extremely complex coordination is second-to-none. In this she has crafted an intimate and extensive knowledge of the relationship between dance and juggling. Knowledge that has ensured that Gandini Juggling's work is always of the highest technical standard. Kati's own performances are always accompanied by a unique calm precision, a precision that comes from decades of throwing whilst standing on one leg. Kati has used this same calm precision to steer Gandini Juggling for the past 25 years.

Kati has performed in all of Gandini Juggling's works since 1991, performing in over 2,500 shows throughout the world – in art galleries and palaces, in town squares and in stadiums, in intimate theatres and on the stages of some of the world's most iconic venues. In recent years Kati has co-directed many of the company's pieces.

CONTACT



Do you have any questions?

For further information please contact our
office: info@gandinijuggling.com

