

LE GRAND CONTINENTAL®

Testimonials

MONTREAL

Amateur dancers

“Initially, I embarked on this dance project as you sign up for a fitness activity. Instead, I took part in an extraordinary laboratory of joyful humanity.” Jean-Marc Deschamps

“I participated in a 30-minute dance, a larger than life experience that helped me grow as a human being.” Marie Turgeon

“An inclusive adventure that was festive, demanding, touching, impressive and physically and artistically stimulating. A very moving piece and so extraordinarily well organized, coordinated and orchestrated. Delightful, intelligent and inspiring.” Nathalie Coupal

“In the 10 most beautiful moments of my life, the experience of *Le Grand Continental* comes right after the birth of my children and a few other exceptional events.” Patricia Labrie

“I’ve become a real *Continental* fan, turning the pages of a book using the “peanut butter” movement, running down the sidewalk with my daughters on the way to school, constantly humming the melodies at work, and most especially, imagining that I see my colleagues from that great adventure at every street corner! There’s a great void in my heart, for I’m missing 210 people! And now I also have to relearn how to walk.” Mélisa Langlois

“An army of massive joy and delight. [...] 7 lines by 30 columns of concentrated happiness [...] *Le Grand Continental* is not just a simple choreography. Behind the anecdotal square dance reworked for modern tastes lies a very rich human experience that I had never previously enjoyed. And behind the choreographer is one of the most humane, gentle, gracious, inspiring, accessible and talented individuals I have ever met.” Normand Miron

“My head is full of music and my body full of movements. It wants to do them again and again until I know them by heart. My living room is too small, but I’ll find a solution! Thank you, Sylvain. Thank you for your generosity, your patience and all your talent. I rediscovered the pleasure of dancing, of dancing simply for pleasure.” Maria Pavlidis

“Getting 65 people to dance and keeping them in a great mood for two and a half months is a hard thing to do, but he [Sylvain Émard] managed to do so. That’s incredible!” Patricia Gazzoli

“Thank you is not strong enough a term. What I want to say, Sylvain, is that you have accomplished a great human work that allows many people to realize a dream. I love your new conception of dance. I think it’s a great way to arrive at the quintessence of this marvellous art form.” Serge Beaudoin

Spectators

“[...] I loved it. Some anniversaries go by unnoticed, and then there are those that we’ll remember all our lives because of a special moment, an instant... This is one of them... Thank you for this wonderful gift!” Clémence Fuzeau

"An uncontrollable desire to groove takes you by surprise, with energy capable of making hearts dance... Take my advice. Go see it and live the experience!" Raphaël Monteillard

"Sylvain Émard is a hero. He highlighted the cool aspect of Montreal and the unifying force of dance. He showed that each of us contributes to the dynamism of our city! Thank you and bravo!" Nicole Brien

"One of the great joys of living in Montreal: 375 dancers from all walks of life who performed with panache on a huge open-air dance floor. Thank you all for the joy, commitment and audacity!" Anne-Marie Grandtner

"Superb choreography. Very inspiring! [...] A must for the years to come." Sylvie La Pierre

"Stunning dancers and choreography! Music and lighting that make you want to dance! I hope there will be many more to come!" Charles D'Amboise

"It should become a tradition!" Jean G. Turgeon

MEXICO CITY

Amateur dancers

"*El Gran Continental* is a dance, a union that became part of my life and part of my being." Andrea Nuñez

"*El Gran Continental* has no border, no limits. Dance is life, reflected and conveyed in each step; it allows us to be free. " German De La Rosa

"Few human actions have such a liberating dimension as dance. We move our bodies as we please in order to create pleasure. He who dances proves that he is master of himself. If 149 people join with him, moving to the same rhythm, then the experience of freedom is transformed into a collective celebration. And in bringing that dance into the public sphere, it becomes a veritable manifesto – to one and all, we proclaim that we are free. [...] The thin and the heavyset, the young and the not so young, the pale and the dark, the short and the tall, the agile and rhythmical along with the physically impaired, here in a space where human bodies freely express themselves – through dance and in all their beautiful diversity and their surprising similarity – declaring their presence on this great continent. Blessed are those who live in it." Emilio Montemayor (For the complete version of this testimonial, please see the text *Bailar* attached)

NEW YORK

Amateur dancers

"This has been the most incredible experience I have lived. I have never experienced the camaraderie that I found here, whereby I am your left leg and you are my right leg, and if you can't do the step, then neither can I, because we need each other." Iliana Quinones

"It was an incredible two months of serious personal growth. Learning the steps activated parts of my brain that had never previously received a workout, but it was astonishing how quickly the process became easier. I remember nearly despairing the first two or three rehearsals -- four weeks later I found myself learning in a wholly different way, shutting out the chattering part of the brain and allowing the moves to settle immediately in my muscle memory." Corinna da Fonseca-Wollheim

"This is a lot of fun, with a lovely democracy to the art of it, and Sylvain's choreography and music choices along with your [Deborah Lohse, rehearsal director] ancient understanding of how to turn the English language into feeling the movement is – to borrow a simple phrase from an ole macho cat named E. Hemingway – quite *fine*." Tom DeMott

PORTLAND

Amateur dancers

"It's like snowflakes out here – we're all different, but we come together into one big happy family." Brad Faubion

"Gosh, I loved this! Thank you for putting on such a fabulous event! Filled my heart with joy." Sarah Hart

"Today was one of my favorite days in my whole life; what a gift this has been. Thank you Sylvain for making such a universal heart felt dance and for sharing it with so many in the world. Here's to next time!!! *Le Grand Continental* lives in us all!)" Kimberly Ross

PHILADELPHIA

Amateur dancers

"People all over the world, Join hands, Start a love train, love train' * Philly, you blew us (NY) away. Thank you for an awesome weekend. The love train is growing..." Lisa Ivrin, New York edition

"AWESOME, PHILLY! We are the NYC 'alumni' of *Le Grand* who lived thru this experience this past June, through thunderstorms, heatwaves, injuries and drop-outs. Lots of 'non-dancers', 'former dancers', 'never-did dancers' and of course, some up-to-snuff dancers... ages 10 and up, up, up... we all had a blast and all LOVE Sylvain! So glad we can share him with you." Gale Citron, New York edition

Spectators

"We saw you today at the Art Museum!! Absolutely fantastic! Made me wanna dance!" Joni Bernstein

*Reference to *Love Train*, by The O'Jays, a popular song of the *Philly Soul* musical movement in the 70's. This song was remixed in the sound design created for the section specially choreographed for the Philadelphia edition.

BOSTON

Amateur dancers

"Yes, I am dancing as part of *Le Grand Continental*. I am a recently retired pediatric occupational therapist with very limited formal dance training, but I love to dance. Everything about this experience has been amazing. One night, a small group of us were practicing with the music. For some reason, at a particular time in the dance, (not necessarily a beautiful section or anything) I could not contain myself, and shouted, 'I love this part!' Hard to explain the connection between my movements, the music, and just something beyond... But what came next was really the ultimate surprise – 3 or 4 other people shouted 'Me too!' These are people of all ages, all walks of life, who I hardly know – yet we experienced some kind of shared joy. Gratitude." Barbara Golder

VANCOUVER

Amateur dancers

"Just squelched an urge to soldier walk to the printer at work. Don't want to lose all I've learned!" Cheryl Rossi

"At the same time rehearsals started in November I got a notice announcing that, after 8 years in Canada, I was finally a permanent resident! *Le Grand Continental* experience was the BEST welcome to Canada party I could have ever imagined – thanks to you all for making me feel so warm in my new home." Diane Tucker

"It's a celebration of movement. It is the Rockets combined to the Ice Capades, combined with any chorus line you have ever seen." Peter Dickinson

"The audience is going to see just everyday people, like themselves, that have dared to learn something new, try something new and they will be able to tell that we are not professional, but in no way they will think that what we are doing is a small production." Micheline Albert

"A part of me wishes I could have been on the outside of the show to really appreciate how it looks from the outside of it. But I wouldn't have given up my opportunity to be inside and dance in it, because it was so much fun. It's a high, you know. Your adrenaline flying. Everyone gave their full power, their full commitment." Lara Barclay, rehearsal director

Spectators

"Discovered yesterday that I cry at small-town parades, weddings, and large scale community dance performances. *Le Grand Continental* at the PuSh Festival was so beautiful. It spoke to effort, joy, aging, isolation, neighbours, and the beauty of diversity. And the dance was rocking hot! Thanks to all the dancers." Kendra Fanconi, Artistic Director, The Only Animal

"What I am really reminded of is what the word community actually mean. [...] People supported each other, being together, learning from each other and being there for one another. It's pretty basic." Joyce Rosario, associate curator, PuSh Festival

"I though it was fantastic. Everybody had so much fun and it's so great to see a piece of such a joy. Today. These days. Usually, everybody is pretty dark, pretty cynical. This group was full of enchanted joy and energy and they were pushed right to the end: they got faster and faster. So, I though it was thrilling!" Spectator interviewed as part of the documentary *Between the Lines* on the Vancouver edition of *Le Grand Continental*®.

WELLINGTON

Amateur dancers

"You Dancers have implanted the most incredible images in people's minds – years later they will remember it. I think we have changed the vibration of the city and brought more connection and more joy to people's lives. You should feel very very proud that your focus and commitment has left a lingering magic in the heart of the city – it will never be the same. You will never be the same. I will never be the same." Lyne Pringle, rehearsal director

"Working on this project raised my physical, emotional, social and mental health." Anna Sheffield

"I cannot believe how amazing this whole experience has been. I shall cry when it's over – sad crying, then happy crying and more sad crying and then more happy crying..." Ngapera Stewart

CHILE

Amateur dancers

"As I was preparing to head to the square, I already felt a touch of nostalgia. It's our last performance. But nostalgia is a mix of sadness for what is about to end and joy for what we have experienced!! I feel privileged to have experienced this great adventure with all of you [...]" Rodrigo Bassaletti Contreras

"Tomorrow, our dream continues!!! Let's rest and relax to be more alive and awake than ever so that our last performance and this wonderful experience be engraved in our memories. A dream come true. " Marce Müller

TORONTO

Amateur dancers

"I am one lucky person and enjoyed every minute of our 3 months together." Dorothy Gordon