

# dance 2008 TOP 10



Peter Chin stuck it to Harper, then transmitted the invisible.



Bill T. Jones's Chapel/Chapter shook up World Stage.

## GLENN SUMI'S Top 10 Dance Shows

Our premiere dance venue got a face-lift and new name, two U.S. superstar choreographers made spectacular appearances and a local luminary celebrated a lifetime of work. Here's what moved me greatly in 2008.

### 1 PREMIERE DANCE THEATRE 25 Fleck Dance Theatre, September 25-27

The theatre turned a quarter-century and received a new name, the Fleck, with one kick-ass show as a party. A who's who of artists who'd performed there over the years got up to recount a dance-related story and then improvised movement. **Peter Chin**, who had an amazing year, stole the show with his whimsical rant that included a dig at the Harper government.

### 2 MOZART DANCES MacMillan Theatre, June 6-8

One-time enfant terrible **Mark Morris** and his company launched **Luminato's**

dance program with three full-length works demonstrating what world-class modern dance is all about. Most exciting was the fest opener, an exuberant, sunny, gorgeous triptych performed flawlessly to live Mozart piano sonatas.

### 3 CHAPEL/CHAPTER Enwave Theatre, April 16-19

**Bill T. Jones** took on murder, the legal system and organized religion in this hypnotic, beautifully suggestive work about justice and forgiveness. Most intriguing design of any dance show this year, and a highlight at World Stage.

### 4 VANISHING ACTS Fermenting Cellar, May 21-24

**Danny Grossman** helped revolutionize Toronto's dance scene, and this look back at some of his company's three-decade history was a dance aficionado's dream. Full of old handbills, taped interviews and hilarious photos, it also gave us the ageless icon getting up to do push-ups for one of his signature works.

### 5 TRANSMISSION OF THE INVISIBLE Enwave Theatre, February 7-10

Examining the legacy of Cambodia's Khmer Rouge genocide, **Peter Chin** em-

ployed a mix of Cambodian and Canadian dancers, richly textured multimedia elements and choreography that made dance ecstatic and urgent.

### 6 THE SEAGULL Four Seasons Centre, November 14-23

A Chekhov ballet might seem a contradiction in terms – where's the story? – but **John Neumeier** imaginatively transplanted the Russian master's tragicomedy to the changing world of dance itself, providing a half-dozen juicy roles for the **National Ballet of Canada**. It's a work that will grow richer each time you see it.

### 7 LOST ACTION Fleck Dance Theatre, November 26-29

Shows like this mesmerizing look at violence and war demonstrate that BC choreographer **Crystal Pite** deserves her status as an international dance star. Performed before a curtain of poppies (!), Pite's choreographic images were burned into the mind.

### 8 24 PRELUDES Four Seasons Centre, March 9-16

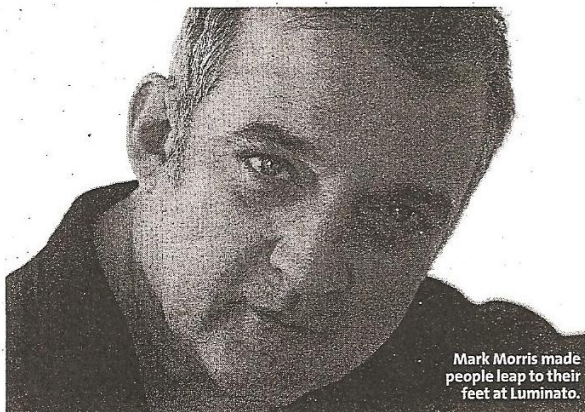
**Marie Chouinard's** cheeky 1999 work set to 24 preludes by Chopin upstaged the other works on this **National Ballet** mixed bill, especially a silly work set to Rolling Stones songs (see below). Chouinard knows how to show off the human body in space like no one else.

### 9 LA PORNOGRAPHIE DES AMES Fleck Dance Theatre, November 12-15

Nothing got intermission audiences yapping like **Dave St-Pierre's** dissection of love and sex. This alphabet of human cruelty smeared our faces in provocative images but also offered up redemption and catharsis.

### 10 BLOODLETTING & OTHER PLEASANT THINGS Dancemakers, October 22-November 2

Montreal choreographer **Tony Chong** and a fluid **Dancemakers** ensemble pushed our emotional buttons in this playful, visceral look at anger. Non-narrative dance at its edgiest. © glenns@nowtoronto.com



Mark Morris made people leap to their feet at Luminato.

## Dance duds

### ROOSTER/THE FIDDLE & THE DRUM

**Karen Kain** is doing great things at the National Ballet (see above), but these two pieces, meant to draw audiences to classical dance by way of the **Rolling Stones** and **Joni Mitchell**, weren't up to the company's high standards. (To be fair: the National didn't dance **Jean Grand-Maitre's** simplistic FATD; the **Alberta Ballet** did.)

### SO YOU THINK YOU CAN DANCE CANADA?

I have nothing against **Nico** and pals. But let's hope even a fraction of the millions of viewers buy tickets to a live dance show in 2009. GS

# Best of Toronto Stage

The acts include a mix of some of the edgiest stand-up, sketch and character work around anywhere. Ride-out's working on creating an online channel to be run out of the place. YouTube and Hulu, look out. Oh, and the bar also comes stocked with some decent snack food, doing away with a trip to the corner store for that mid-show sugar buzz.

## Comedy website JAREDSALES.COM

There's no shortage of funny viral videos, not to mention amusing comedian blogs, out there. But nothing beats the freshness and great production values of filmmaker, comic and producer Jared Sales's site. His original Web series, like Casual Connections (made with Pat Kelly), are highly addictive and star some of our top comedy talents. It's easy to navigate, full of handy listings and frequently updated – in other words, comedy crack.

## Dancer/choreographer/ designer

PETER CHIN

While lots of people talk the talk when it comes to avant-garde art, Peter Chin walks the walk – and it's a pretty memorable strut. The Renaissance man of the dance world is de-

voted to innovation. His vision is so complete that, in addition to creating movement and dancing, he often designs the costumes for his performers to wear.

A show by Tribal Crackling Wind – Chin's company – assaults the senses, teasing the intellect and boring into the subconscious. At the recent star-studded unveiling of the Fleck Dance Theatre, Chin stole the show with his hypnotic, gibberish-sounding routine that drew on his background in pan-Asian dance forms – watch those arm movements – and also managed to include hilarious digs at the Harper government that drew cheers.

## Ethnic comedy night KENNY ROBINSON'S NUBIAN DISCIPLES OF PRYOR

Non-white comics are finally getting the recognition they deserve, and much of the credit should go to funny guy Robinson, whose monthly room at Yuk Yuk's helped nurture the careers of everyone from old pros like Russell Peters, Jean Paul and Trey Anthony to newbies like Dana Alexander and Gilson Lubin. Robinson even lets a couple of brave white acts – armed with solid edgy material – face this notoriously tough crowd.

## Theatre couple Nina Lee Aquino



## Author MAGGI

Poet, novelist Helwig loves to it whenever Her 2008 (Coach House) full work that ment – deal homelesne stars Toront