



As usual, I have no discipline when it comes to narrowing down my favorites to 10 best. There are way too many performances and people that I loved.

On another note, the deaths of two giants, Merce Cunningham and Pina Bausch, cast a shadow over the whole year. But they also reminded us that great artists were and are in our midst.

Best dramatic dancing

- Karine Plantadit, a wild one in every way, in Tharp's *Come Fly With Me*, Alliance Theatre, Atlanta.
- Marie-Agnes Gillot, ecstatic in *Blue*, by Carolyn Carlson at Dance Salad in Houston
- Stella Abrera, sweetly embodying the hint of story in Ratmansky's *Seven Sonatas*, at ABT's season at Avery Fisher Hall
- Samuel Lee Roberts, alarmingly extreme in his portrayal of suffering in *In/Side*, Robert Battle's solo for the Ailey company, at NY City Center

Best new principal dancer

Tiler Peck of NYCB: so piquant, so real, so willing to play with the music

Most consistently gorgeous modern dancer

Linda Celeste Sims of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater

Most hilarious performances

- Mugen Kazama of Tulsa Ballet in MacMillan's *Elite Syncopations* at the Joyce
- Parisa Khobdeh as a tipsy lady in Paul Taylor's *Offenbach Overtures* at City Center

Most elegant contemporary duet passages

- Hee Seo and Marcelo Gomes in section IV of Kudelka's *Désir* at ABT, at the Met
- Megumi Eda and Zoko Zoko in Karole Armitage's *Itutu*, at BAM

Most unusual stage presence

Eyar Elezra of Batsheva in Ohad Naharin's *Max*, *B/olero*, and *Hora*

Most riveting performance by a nondancer

Actress Juliette Binoche in *In-I* (2008), her collaboration with Akram Khan, at BAM.

Best revivals

- Paul Taylor's *Scudorama* (1963), an oddball, anarchic view of society, City Center
- The Joffrey's version of Nijinsky's *Rite of Spring* (1913), as monumental as ever, Auditorium Theatre, Chicago
- Mark Dendy's *Afternoon of the Faunes* (1996), a brilliant, autoerotic version, at Fall for Dance

Worst Broadway revival

West Side Story: How can anyone ruin such an all-time great musical?

Best new musicals

- *Billy Elliott*
- *Fela!*
- *Memphis*

Most inexplicable dismissal

The Merce Cunningham Dance Company did not renew the contract of their best dancer, Holley Farmer.

Most transformed dancer

Holley Farmer in Tharp's *Come Fly With Me*

Most amazing extended tantrum

Georg Reischl in Forsythe's *Decreation* at BAM

Most electrifying new work

Ohad Naharin's *Hora* for Batsheva Dance Company at Suzanne Dellal Centre, Tel Aviv

Best new ballets

- Ratmansky's *Seven Sonatas* for ABT, to Scarlatti: beautiful and witty
- Benjamin Millepied's *Quasi Una Fantasia* for NYCB: a daring choice of music, a command of shifting masses, at David H. Koch Theater

Best documentaries

- *Jerome Robbins: Something to Dance About*, Part of Thirteen/WNET's American Masters series, directed and produced by Judy Kinberg and written by Amanda Vaill
- *Every Little Step*, directed by James D. Stern, about auditioning for the remake of *A Chorus Line*

Least helpful documentary

La Danse: The Paris Opera Ballet, by Frederick Wiseman. The hubris of not identifying the dancers and choreographers!

Best set design

- Line of real fire for Jorma Elo's *Rite of Spring* for Boston Ballet, the Wang Center, Boston
- Revolving electric fans that threw fascinating shadows, by Burt Barr for Jodi Melnick's *Fanfare* at The Kitchen

Best new trend

Flash mobs on YouTube

Best Ballets Russes dancing

Boston Ballet's Larissa Ponomarenko in Fokine's *Le Spectre de la Rose*—this must be how Karsavina danced!

Most mesmerizing U.S. premiere

Trisha Brown's transporting *O zlozony/O composite* (2004) with Laurie Anderson's whispering score, and three étoiles from Paris Opera Ballet, at BAM.

Most dazzling U.S. premiere

- Wayne McGregor's confounding *Chroma*, performed by eight astounding dancers of The Royal Ballet, the Kennedy Center

Best onstage lovers

Diana Vishneva and Marcelo Gomes in MacMillan's *Romeo and Juliet* on gala night at ABT. Bodies entwining and surrendering to each other, a really convincing kiss. She was super dramatic and he super ardent, at the Met.

Best battle of the sexes

Les Grands Ballets Canadiens in *Noces* by Stijn Celis at Fall for Dance: After you get past the whiteface, the choreography was superb.

Most rousing finale

The last section of Mark Morris' *Grand Duo* at Fall for Dance

Most exuberant farewell

ABT's Nina Ananiashvili: She embraced each corps member, conducted the orchestra, and bourrée'd like a dying swan in front of a line of dancers—and, was spontaneously lifted by Angel Corella at the end of that line, at the Met.

Most low-visibility farewell

As the lead in Ashton's *A Month in the Country*, Alexandra Ansanelli's final performance in the U.S. with The Royal Ballet (unannounced), at the Kennedy Center, was lushly romantic.

Most heroic reconstruction

Frank Andersen and his colleagues spent months remaking the 133-year old Bournonville ballet, *From Siberia to Moscow*, for Nina Ananiashvili's State Ballet of Georgia in Tbilisi.

Most dance-packed tiny county

Israel. Finally, I was able to attend International Exposure, the annual 5-day festival at Suzanne Dellal Center in Tel Aviv. About 28 choreographers and companies showed work and more than 100 presenters and journalists from around the world attended. Ranging from unbearably intense to sweetly innocent, the work showed a raw honesty and willingness to experiment. I wanna go back.