



**Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker**  
**Work/Travail/Arbeid**

*Rosas* **WIELS**



# The Project

The point of departure for the project *Work/Travail/Arbeid* is the simple question: What would it mean for choreography to perform as an exhibition? After all, the apparatuses of theater and museum remain so distinct—from their respective architectural arrangements and institutional significations to their horizons of expectation and protocol. While theater dance is traditionally performed for a fixed duration and with the dramaturgy of a punctual event, on a stage before a seated, frontally facing audience, the exhibition presents artworks in a space framed by public opening hours, over a duration of several days, weeks or months, where visitors enter and exit at will. The re-conceptualization of what a live choreographed piece could be if entirely subjected to the time, space and conditions of the exhibition formed the basis for Anne Teresa De Keersmaecker's development of *Work/Travail/Arbeid*.

A dance piece treats time (of the spectator, of the performer) in terms of the experience of a defined beginning and end. The exhibition, on the other hand—traditionally static and unchanging once it opens—could perhaps never be (might never need to be) experienced for the entirety of its duration. This fundamental difference between how time operates in each prompted the choice of the choreography *Vortex Temporum*—an oeuvre, as its name implies, specifically concerned with time—as the foundation for *Work/Travail/Arbeid*. De Keersmaecker's *Vortex Temporum*, choreographed to the eponymous musical work by the late French contemporary composer Gérard Grisey (1996), premiered on stage in October 2013. As a choreographed piece, involving seven dancers and six musicians (piano, flute, clarinet, violin, viola, cello) and a conductor of the Ictus ensemble performing live, it underscores the centrality of music to De Keersmaecker's choreographies. No less rigorously than the way Steve Reich's minimalist music undergirded the choreography of *Fase*, De Keersmaecker's first choreography from 1982, the “vertigo of duration,” of Grisey's composition gives way to the choreographer's own temporal exploration in *Vortex Temporum*, and ultimately also *Work/Travail/Arbeid*.

Both equally bring together several central principles of De Keersmaecker's entire oeuvre, including the contraction and dilation of time conditioned by the spatial composition and bodily movement; the transposition of musical writing into spatial and kinetic rhythms and counterpoint; a predilection for precise but sparse staging, lighting and costumes;

as well as the use of the geometry of spirals, circles and pentagons so as to regulate the proportions in space, duration, light and relations between the dancing bodies. Indeed, in so far as the choreography of *Vortex Temporum* consciously concentrates and condenses the concerns that have been the core of De Keersmaeker's thinking and practice, from her earliest pieces to her most recent, it is among the most "retrospective" of the choreographer's pieces to date.

*Work/Travail/Arbeid* importantly relates to this new choreographic work, yet its form is a radically reconceptualized understanding of the experience of *Vortex Temporum*. This is not simply dance brought into the museum but dance rethought as an exhibition. To that end, there is no arranged time in the day when the "performance" begins to interrupt the usual workings of the museum or art space; this is not an event that the public comes to at a specific, announced time. It is on, like most works of art in a museum, from the moment the public opening hours begin and until they end, and yet it is not one performance of the piece after another over a whole day either. *Vortex*'s original choreography, made in the condensed time of Grisey's composition (about 55 minutes), is here expanded in cycles of 9 hours, in which each hour offers another choreography, another combination of dancers (and musicians) in the multiple spaces of the exhibition. De Keersmaeker composes 9 days where each day is also different, as it comprises a different order of hourly choreographies, following a logic that has itself been "choreographed."

The result is a temporal rhythm of differences in repetition, where it will be unlikely that, if they return on another day, the visitors find the same choreography in the same hour and room. As such, De Keersmaeker's exhibition project focuses on physically expanding the site and experience of a dance work and allowing a more detailed observation of its various parts, that is, bodies and/or instruments that make up the musical and dance counterpoint in *Vortex*. The project will unfold varying combinations of dancers alone, dancers with musicians, musicians playing alone, etc., which make up the composition of *Vortex* as it is danced on stage. In the exhibition these reconfigurations of dance and music will be spread across multiple separate spaces (exhibition galleries), and across a thoroughly reshaped duration, thus offering a counterpoint similar to what an exploded view in architecture provides, whereby the architectural model presents the construction of a house with all its parts dismantled.

The exhibition is envisioned for museal spaces, for which the choreography of *Vortex Temporum* is specifically constructed. The spaces should be white and empty, connected to and connoting the “white cube” of the museum rather than the “black box” of theater and dance. Physically, they will reveal the drawing of the choreographic floor plan according to the spatial composition of the dance movement, yet the performing space isn’t delimited by anything else but the white, empty walls. These spaces are “coordinated” in time, simultaneously presenting one choreography dismantled in its bodies and instruments even though the dancers and musicians are synchronized in various orders of the composition. The visitors are left to act as they would in any exhibition: to move freely, come close to or mingle with the dancers, and compose by their own movement the whole of *Vortex*. Potentially interrupting or reorienting the path of dancers as well as isolating the bodies that usually dance together in a staged performance has the effect of amplifying the sculptural quality of movement, thus enabling a three-dimensional view of the architecture of movement with all the idiosyncrasies of particular dancers – all of which is impossible to present on a theater stage for a theater audience and according to the time of a single performance. The result is a project that transforms the very material and conditions that have long been essential to dance, and in particular the rigorous structuring and choreographic *écriture* for which De Keersmaeker is known, into an entirely new exhibition form.

***Work/Travail/Arbeid* was initiated by WIELS and curator Elena Filipovic and is a co-production of WIELS, Rosas and De Munt/La Monnaie, supported by Rolex and opening in the context of Performatik.**

**The exhibition will take place at WIELS over a duration of 9 weeks from March 20 to May 17, 2015, featuring the original and most extensive version of the project. All subsequent versions are conceived to be exhibited for a duration of 9 days, with an exhibition choreography specifically devised and composed for the concrete spaces of other museum venues.**

*The dancers and musicians of Vortex Temporum will be involved, as well as the dramaturge Bojana Cvejić and the choreographer’s assistant Femke Gyselinck. The visual aspect of the composition will be developed with the artist Ann Veronica Janssens.*



Image above: *Work/Travail/Arbeid* rehearsals at WIELS, Brussels (2014)  
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Images above: *Vortex Temporum* (theater version) rehearsals at Rosas and Ruhrtriennale, Bochum (2014)  
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# Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker

After studying dance at Maurice Béjart's Mudra School in Brussels and at the dance department of New York University's School of the Arts, choreographer Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker started her career with *Fase, Four Movements to the Music of Steve Reich* (1982). She founded the Rosas company in 1983, on the occasion of the creation of *Rosas danst Rosas*. Both works provided a quick international breakthrough and have been restaged at different occasions, most recently in the project *Early Works* (2010). From 1992 until 2007 De Keersmaeker was resident choreographer at De Munt/La Monnaie, the Brussels opera house, creating a wide range of works that have been presented all over the world. In 1995 Rosas and De Munt/La Monnaie jointly set up the international educational project PARTS, the Performing Arts Research and Training Studios. Former students of the four-year curriculum have taken up strong positions as dancers and choreographers in Europe and beyond.

From the beginning De Keersmaeker's choreographic works have focused on the relation between music and dance. She has worked with compositions ranging from the late Middle Ages to the 20th century, premiering creations of George Benjamin, Toshio Hosokawa, and Thierry De Mey and collaborating with various ensembles and musicians. She has also investigated different genres such as jazz, traditional Indian music, and pop music. She has a great affinity with Steve Reich's compositions and has worked with his music in pieces such as *Fase* (1982), *Drumming* (1998), and *Rain* (2001). Her choreographies present an ever-evolving marriage between a refined sense of compositional architecture and a strong sensuality or theatricality. This unique signature has been recognized with many awards, most recently the Samuel Scripps American Dance Festival Award (2011).

De Keersmaeker has also left the confines of pure dance and has ventured into the realms of dance and text, creating performances that blend the different disciplines: *Kassandra*, *Speaking in Twelve Voices* (2004), *I said I* (1999), and *In Real Time* (2000). She has also directed operas: *Duke Bluebeard's Castle* by Bela Bartók (1998) and *Hanjo* by Toshio Hosokawa (2004). Several of her works have also been turned into autonomous dance films, directed by Thierry De Mey, Peter Greenaway, and De Keersmaeker herself, among others.



In recent years, she has strongly rethought and refined the core parameters of her work as a choreographer. The close collaboration with artists such as Alain Franco (*Zeitung*, 2008), Ann Veronica Janssens (*Keeping Still Part 1*, 2008; *The Song*, 2009; and *Cesena*, 2011), Michel François (*The Song* and *En attendant*, 2010), Jérôme Bel (*3Abschied*, 2010), and Björn Schmelzer (*Cesena*, 2011) prompted her to reconsider the bare essentials of dance: time and space, the body and its voice, its potential to move, and its relation to the world. Her recent productions have been characterized by cooperation with visual artists Ann Veronica Janssens and Michel François.

These experiences generated a growing interest in interactions with the visual arts. She was invited to perform of *Violin Phase* in the atrium of the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York in 2011. In 2012 she reworked *Fase* for the opening of The Tanks, the performance spaces at Tate Modern in London. In both situations the new spatial setting gave the audience the possibility of experiencing the performances from multiple viewpoints, breaking the frontality of the performance and emphasizing the core elements of the work.

Her most recent work are *Partita 2* (2013), a duet with dancer and choreographer Boris Charmatz, set to Bach's *Partita No. 2* and *Vortex Temporum* (2013), on the music of Gérard Grisey. In *A Choreographer's Score*, a two-volume monograph published by Rosas and Mercatorfonds (May 2012 / July 2013), she offers wide-ranging insights into the making of her four early works as well as *En attendant* and *Cesena* in conversations with the performance theorist and musicologist Bojana Cvejić.



Images above: *Fase* at The Tanks, Tate Modern, London (2012)  
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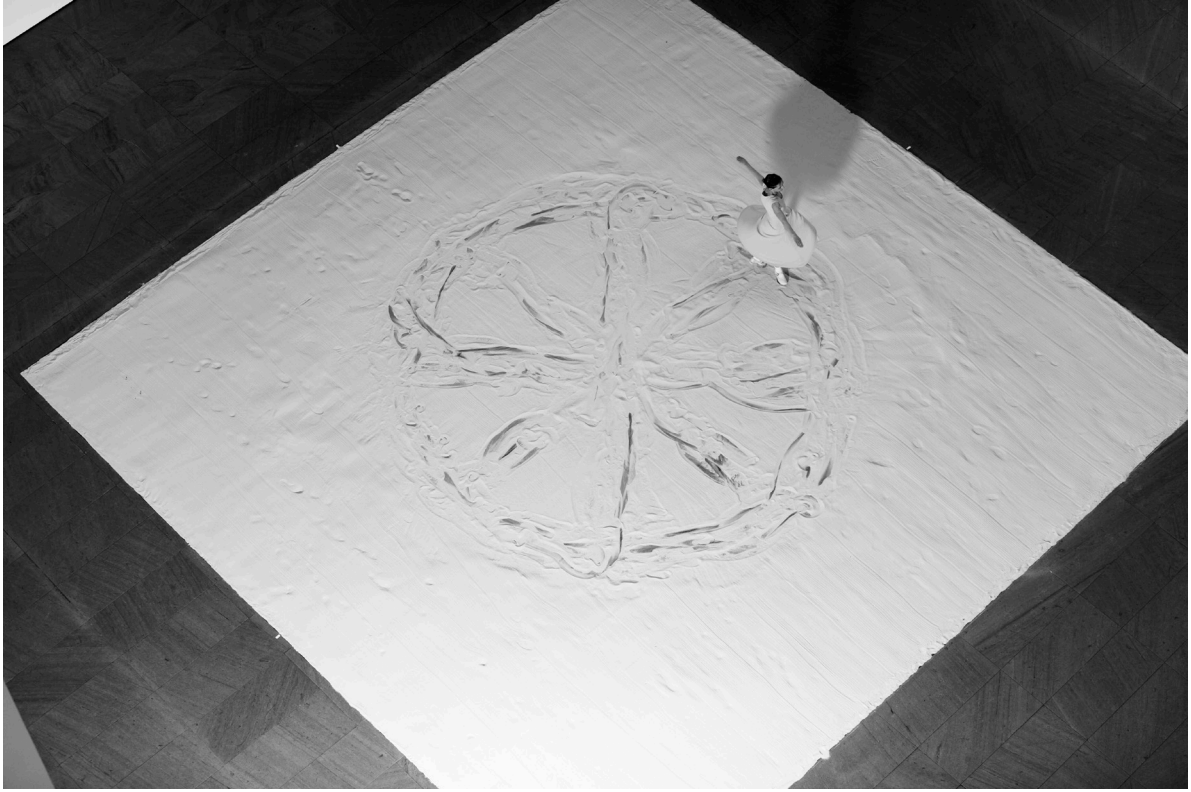


Images above: *Fase* at The Tanks, Tate Modern, London (2012)  
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Images above: *Violin Phase* at MoMA, New York (2011)  
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# Work/Travail/Arbeid

## **Concept & Choreography**

Anne Teresa De Keersmaecker

## **Curator**

Elena Filipovic

## **Music**

Gérard Grisey, *Vortex Temporum* (1996)

## **Dramaturgy**

Bojana Cvejić

## **Assistant to the Choreographer**

Femke Gyselinck

## **Scenography**

Ann Veronica Janssens

## **Technical Management**

Joris Erven

## **Artistic Coordination & Planning**

Anne Van Aerschot

## **Costumes**

Anne Catherine Kunz

## **WIELS Contemporary Art Centre, Brussels**

March 20 – May 17, 2015



# Practical information

Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker: Work/Travail/Arbeid  
March 20 — May 17, 2015  
Curated by Elena Filipovic  
WIELS Contemporary Art Centre, Brussels

## Press conference

March 18, 2015 at 11.00

## Opening

March 19, 2015 at 19.00, in the context of Performatik

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