



Motionhouse Biography

Motionhouse - creation, inspiration, participation

Motionhouse creates remarkable dance theatre, fusing images, action and dynamism to surprise, challenge and delight.

Established in 1988 by Kevin Finnan and Louise Richards, Motionhouse creates new work of outstanding quality that is accessible and in demand for middle scale touring. Since its launch the company has toured seventeen full-scale productions, built up a formidable educational programme for schools and colleges across the UK, trained dozens of dancers, pushed contemporary dance into the aerial arena by combining choreography with sling and bungee skills, and developed large-scale site-specific dance spectacles with increasing ambition. Motionhouse also creates short festival pieces for performance in a wide range of public places and spaces.

Underpinning the work is a long-standing and continuing intention to balance a commitment to artistic adventure with the desire to always be exciting, appealing and stimulating to the broadest audience. The popularity and success of Motionhouse amongst audiences, programmers and also within the educational world has established it as one of the most exciting dance theatre companies in the UK.

"Choreography is not just about making steps, it is a process of exploring ideas and people."

Kevin Finnan, Motionhouse Artistic Director

"A company of memorable excellence"

The Stage

Motionhouse Dance Theatre

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Artistic Director: Kevin Finnan kevin@motionhouse.co.uk

Executive Director: Louise Richards louise@motionhouse.co.uk

Current Dancers: Claire Benson, Junior Cunningham (Rehearsal Director), Olivia Quayle and Alasdair Stewart (all UK), Fernando Pasquini (Italy), Laura Peña Nuñez (Paraguay) and Philipp Stummer (Austria). Giorgio de Carolis (Understudy) (Italy)

Programme Manager: Jo Valentine jo@motionhouse.co.uk

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A history – 1988 to 2008

- **Motionhouse Dance Theatre** was founded in 1988 under the artistic direction of Kevin Finnan and Louise Richards.
- **1989 - *A Curious Day*** – Motionhouse's first major project, Southern Arts Board's first dance and education project, toured to schools before being invited to London and the Far East. The first of many collaborations with musicians Harry Dawes and Simon Prince.
- **1990 – *The Ticking Man*** – explored the mechanics of deception and the nature of truth and lies. The company's research took it to HMP Grendon Underwood near Aylesbury to work with staff and inmates. Simon Dormon created his first set for the company and music was composed by Harry Dawes and Ray Lee.
- **1991 – *The House of Bones*** – the study of victims of ancient and modern plague and our social attitudes. A mesmerising vocal score was provided by Paul Newham.
- **1992 – *Speed and Light*** – an explosive dance theatre and film experience collaborating with filmmaker Christophe Gowans and composers Ray Lee and Harry Dawes.
- **1992 – *The Curtsy Play*** – inspired by a chapter from the book *The Female Malady* by Elaine Showalter describing the plight of the female psychiatric patients in Paris in the early 20th century. The piece, choreographed by Louise Richards, was created with a Bonnie Bird British Choreography Award.
- **1993 – *Arcadio/Déjà Vu*** – inspired by *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Gabriel García Márquez featured a set by Spanish installation artist Rosa Sanchez.
- **1994 – *Punch*** – three men struggle on a totem of male imagery choreographed by Kevin Finnan and the company and featuring music by Jesus Jones, Kronos Quartet, Curve and Sundial.
- **1994 – *Flying*** – performed on, in and around a giant steel set created by long-term collaborator Simon Dormon and steel artist Davey Boyle. Music by French composer Alain Bauman. Premiered at Warwick Arts Centre.
- **1995 – *Geisha*** – one of a series of commissions by Warwick Arts Centre in celebration of its 20th anniversary, choreographed by Finnan and Richards about role play and identity, and featuring a giant fridge and chaise long.
- **1996 – *Delicate*** – plundering the dark underbelly of human need and desire with a script by A.L Kennedy and a score composed by Howard Skempton, played live by Birmingham Contemporary Music Group.
- **1998 – *Faking It*** – the company's tenth anniversary piece about power games and theatrical illusion.
- **1999 – *Twisted*** – explored the news that something has been released into the atmosphere – since it cannot be seen or smelt how do we know it's there?
- **2000 – *Atomic*** – piece about tiny worlds and shared spaces. Toured to over 130 venues and spaces, both indoor and outside. Atomic marked a new era for the company as it heralded the realisation of the multi scale touring for which the company are still acclaimed.
- **2001 – *Fearless*** – huge touring piece, which explored our phobias – fear of falling and flying, of open or closed spaces and took place in, on and around a massive Simon Dormon tubular steel framework. The piece opened Moving Parts 2001, Birmingham's festival of contemporary dance and physical theatre.
- **2002 – *Volatile*** – explored the mystery and struggle involved in trying to communicate truthfully to someone else and took place on another gigantic steel set. Original music by Sophy Smith and Tim Dickinson. A triumphant return to London's South Bank.
- **2004 – *Dancing Inside*** – a ground breaking dance project designed and run by Motionhouse with nine residents of the country's first purpose-built therapeutic community at HMP Dovegate in Staffordshire. After twenty months of periodic engagement, the men and the company performed to the prison community.
- **2004 – *Road To The Beach: The Edge*** – a large scale production combining visual performance, giant sand castles, dancing diggers and extreme sports performed on the beach at Watergate Bay, Cornwall in June 2004 by Motionhouse together with 1000 children and adults from local schools and the Cornish community. This landmark project was created in collaboration with The Works, Creative Partnerships Cornwall and The Extreme Academy. This production included the first incarnation of our acclaimed ***Machine Dance*** performed by 4 dancers and 4 JCB diggers.

- **2005 – Renaissance** – With *Machine Dance* at its heart, Renaissance was an extraordinary dance spectacle performed on waste land in London's East End and featured cranes, pyrotechnics, unbelievable aerial work and the physical dance imagery for which Motionhouse is known for.
- **2005/6 – Perfect** – the third in the trilogy (after *Fearless* and *Volatile*) was a daring, emotionally charged piece of dance theatre laced with breathtaking aerial and filmic images. Danced on a bed of sand, Perfect was about our relationship to time.
- **2005 – Dreams And Ruin** – a stunning site-specific promenade performance, was staged at Witley Court in Worcestershire with 250 local performers and the five-strong Motionhouse team. Dreams and Ruin was developed in partnership with DanceFest, Worcester Arts Workshop, ACE Dance and Music and Angela Woodhouse.
- **2005 – Chaser** – the company's satellite barfly piece, has been staged at railway platforms, shopping centres, theatre foyers, pavements and cafes throughout the country. It continues to tour extensively alongside Motionhouse main productions and as festival performance at various street arts festivals and events in the UK and abroad. Chaser was created with the support of Lichfield Garrick, *mac*, Solihull Arts Complex and Birmingham Hippodrome.
- **January 2006 – Audience Award** at the 2005 Critics Circle National Dance Awards.
- **2007/8 – Driven** – took the audience on a roller coaster journey of colliding social themes; love and loss, jealousy and desire, ambition, longing, socialising and isolation. Driven attracted large audiences throughout the tour, performing to over 10,000 people in total and received consistently excellent feedback. Driven took Motionhouse full throttle into our twentieth year.
- **2008 – Run!** – An epic performance spectacle for Greenwich and Docklands International festival exploring sport and dance, created in collaboration with the acclaimed composer Errollyn Wallen and featuring a giant copper globe, hot air balloons and giant projected images
- **2008 – Underground** - with Underground Motionhouse is yet again breaking new ground, performing increasingly at various festivals in the UK and Europe. Underground was commissioned by Fierce Festival, Birmingham Hippodrome and Without Walls.
- **July 2009 – Audience Award** at MiraMirO Festival, Ghent
- **2009 – Scattered** – Motionhouse's latest middle-scale production Scattered premieres at Warwick Arts Centre on 2 October 2009. Scattered combines highly physical dance theatre and aerial imagery with film and graphics, creating a feast of visual effects. We are collaborating with Logela Multimedia, digital innovators from the Basque region of Spain, to create a unique visual performance event.
- **2009/10 – Cascade** – The latest outdoor performance spectacle Motionhouse is developing, to premiere in summer 2010.
- **2009 – Development of Crow** – Motionhouse's *Crow* has been shortlisted for the *Artists taking the lead* commission in West Midlands. *Artists taking the lead* is part of London 2012's Cultural Olympiad and challenged artists across the UK to submit ideas for works of art to celebrate 2012.