



Human Landscape Dance

**Human Landscape Dance** is a 501(c)(3) non-profit incorporated in the District of Columbia. Our mission is to promote the appreciation and understanding of contemporary dance. Our organization develops national and international cultural exchanges through shared performances, education, and dance videos.



ellen rosenberg photography





## Press

Human Landscape Dance is on Washington DC's  
"...Dream Team of local troupes...."

—The Washington Post

"...Human Landscape Dance explored the underbelly of  
myths and folk tales with ingenious choreography and  
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"...it is pitch-perfect and an element of humor and  
suspense is subtly added..."

—The Philadelphia Inquirer

"Shute emphasized the physicality of Cinderella's labor,  
while Szegda got to wear the ball gown and go to the ball  
with Alexander Short, her prince."

—CriticalDance

"...intimacy is a trademark of Shute's choreography."

—Gazette.net



## **Review: Human Landscape Dance and Code f.a.d. Company at Dance Place** *The Washington Post*

By Pamela Squires, Published December 9, 2012

The pairing of two companies on different levels was in-your-face clear Saturday at Dance Place. Local company Human Landscape Dance explored the underbelly of myths and folk tales with ingenious choreography and staging by founder Malcolm Shute. In comparison, Raleigh, N.C.-based Code f.a.d. Company's exploration of fashion designers as new gods killed an interesting theme with banal choreography.

Human Landscape Dance is grounded in contact improvisation. Shute put this to good use in "Aurora's Dream," which revealed what Sleeping Beauty was dreaming about all those years. The dream looked a cross between Disneyland and Hieronymus Bosch. The prince was a deviant for having crept into her bedroom. Bad fairies threatened her safety.

In a separate piece, Amanda Abrams was brilliant as the long-suffering Penelope weaving away as she waited years for her husband, Odysseus, to return. For most of "Penelope and Odysseus/Waiting," Abrams remained in a chair, almost magically defying the limits of scale and reach that this imposed. Her arms spoke volumes. In her hands, repetition became a powerful force. What a riveting mover she was.

Shute's final tour de force was the disembodied head of Medusa, performed by Heather Doyle, using eyes, eyebrows and soundlessly moving mouth to convey wonderment at all that she no longer had to bother with now, like painting her toenails. It was delightfully humorous and weird.







## **Review: Spacetime Dance & Human Landscape Dance in 'Topographies: Dance for Land, Air, and Water'**

*Dance Metro DC*

By Val Oliphant, Published November 17, 2018

Katie Sopoci Drake's contemporary dance style and Malcolm Shute's contact choreography intertwined in an exploration of how we interact with our built and natural environments on Saturday evening at the Dance Loft on 14. The performance ping-ponged between pieces by the two choreographers performed by their respective dance companies, Spacetime Dance and Human Landscape Dance, and culminating in an intimate duet between them.

Shute's first piece, "*Tsuru no Ongaeshi* (Crane)," retold a Japanese myth about a crane who turns herself human after falling in love with a farmer. Olivia Serrill, dressed in white, began kneeling on the floor. She dove her torso forward, revealing a man dressed all in black, Alexander Shute, directly behind her. Stitch by stitch, she sewed her arm to his and together they moved as one, arms fluidly flapping. They tumbled over one another without ever losing their physical connection.

As the storm surged in "Crossing," four dancers clad in bright green quietly rolled to the back corner of the stage. "Moss" looked at the transition from life to death, through the parasitic relationship of moss and grass in a Japanese garden. Two couples rolled on top of one another, demonstrating codependency and intimacy akin to young lovers as they cartwheeled, backbended, and contorted over and around each other.

The evening ended with Shute's beautiful but thematically incongruent duet, "Eurydice," danced by Drake and Shute. I couldn't figure out how this classic Greek myth fit into the narrative of the rest of the show. In the final moment, Eurydice grabbed her husband's face and forced him to look her in the eye, the first moment they have made eye contact the entire dance. As he does a double-take, a look of awe and longing flashed across his face — it was a truly touching moment. In a world where many are glued to their devices, we are losing our ability to fully see and connect with what is around us. While not the message of the original myth, it was the perfect ending note for the show.





## Review: Hot and Cold at the Painted Bride

*The Philadelphia Inquirer*

By Marilyn Jackson, Published June 1, 2010

In the Philadelphia/Washington DC Exchange concert over the weekend, Anne-Marie Mulgrew and Dancers Company joined with DC's Human Landscape Dance, each presenting two works representative of their companies. Both have a reputation for working in site-specific arenas, each well-known for using parks, walls, even city sidewalks to create a mise-en-scene. In this case they brought their works to the Painted Bride stage, with some mixed results.

Human Landscape Dance chose two works that translated well to the indoors. Amanda Abrams, Alexander Short, and company founder Malcolm Shute performed in each, opening the show with *January Night*. A world premiere, Shute's soundscape of creaking ice and melting snow recalled our recent brittle and blizzardy winter. Drifting over one another on a representation of a snowbank, the three pajama-clad friends passed their time thwarting the cold and fending off the boredom of being snowed in.

More challenging, *Closet Dances* also employed the dance style known as contact improvisation to create the look of the three individuals locked in a "walk-in closet" from which they try to escape—but not without getting in one another's way.

From my perspective, contact improv choreography can be too undifferentiated. But when it is pitch-perfect and an element of humor and suspense is subtly added, as it was here, it succeeds. To Shute's industrial score, the three try squeezing out of the closet door (the stage's sole prop). Only Abrams squeaks through, leaving the men gawking in disbelief.





## Review: Pleasure in Plunging into the Stream

*thINKingDance*

By Beau Hancock, Published Dec 12, 2014

I dove into Vervet Dance's curated evening of five works featuring artists from throughout the region. In *Persephone and Demeter*, Malcolm Shute and his Human Landscape Dance reimagine Persephone's journey into the Underworld. Alexander Short and Shute roll effortlessly together as the roiling, muddy currents of the underworld's River Styx. Becoming Hades, Shute rests alongside Eliza Talbott (Persephone) on Short's back. Shute presses and prods Talbott as she struggles away from his grasp, until his hand reaches her mouth to feed her the pomegranate seed that will lock Persephone into his world. Ultimately, Talbott's Persephone sits with her mother, Demeter (Nicole McClam), at the stage edge, Demeter's stunned gaze revealing Persephone's fate.

*Aurora's Dream*, Shute's second offering, follows *Sleeping Beauty*, danced with commanding poignancy by McClam, through her centuries-long stream of consciousness, dominated by a looming Prince and frenzied Lilac Fairy. This version of the tale is no idyllic vision of peaceful slumber, but reveals instead the torturous reality of a hundred years stuck inside one's head with evil visions and disconnected dreams for company.

After dipping my toe into the potential of these artists' works I left wanting more.







## Press

### Preview: A Dream Team for Contemporary Dance

*The Washington Post*

By Rebecca Ritzel, Published Dec 29, 2013

**Human Landscape Dance: The company:** “We are an experimental dance troupe,” says member Malcolm Shute. We often take familiar stories and deconstruct them, making substitutions and exposing glitches that show the work in a new light.”

**The work:** Usually, if you’re seeing “Cinderella” in dance, you’re seeing a ballet. This abstract version of the fairy tale will feature both male and female Cinderellas, asking pointed questions about which gender should be home scrubbing the floors.

**What’s next?** The company is planning a Central American tour for May and is at work creating dances to be filmed and released online.



### Review: Modern Moves Festival

*CriticalDance*

By Carmel Morgan, published Jan 15, 2014

Presenting a new take on Cinderella was Human Landscape Dance’s piece by the same name. Malcolm Shute, the choreographer, in a clever twist, shared the role of Cinderella with Mary Szegda. Shute emphasized the physicality of Cinderella’s labor, while Szegda got to wear the ball gown and go to the ball with Alexander Short, her prince. In the beginning, in a section called “Broom,” Shute’s long hair practically swept the floor as he swung like a pendulum in the grip of Short, who before becoming the prince, took the role of Mother. Instead of offering a coherent narrative, Human Landscape Dance’s Cinderella seemed aimed to provoke dialogue about gender roles in its deconstructed version of the classic storybook tale.