Dances that plug in
Tangente focuses on the electronic body

Tangente, which shows more than 30
dance productions a year, employs next
to nothing to make its programs more audience-friendly. It labels them.

There's the Moment/Homme series and the Geometrica, an Assistance
suite, the Série des Majeurs, which em-
phasizes the most experienced choreo-
graphers and even one called Le Corps
Électronique, for choreographers who
use electronics in their works.
The focus this weekend and next is
on the electronic body.

Meant to attract techie spectators,
the electronically enhanced dances
are, fortunately for those of us who
struggle with the most basic computer
programs, not hands-on. Nope, we sit
in our usual seats and watch electronic
bodies do their thing in the black box.

Massimo Agostinelli's Oneirose, cur-
cently playing at Tangente, deals in
dreams with three live dancers, a digi-
tally edited video and 3-D animation.
Starting Thursday, Isabelle Choini-
ère's Communion takes over, with the
soloist wired for sound and visuals
that catapult the viewer into the braw-
new world of virtual reality.

I attended the dress rehearsal of
Oneirose, a work that has been stewing
in the choreographer's mind for years.
since he met a healer who described to
him a recurring dream he had as a
child in South Africa. In it, the choreo-
grapher taps into memories of a tran-
quility-looking house on a hill.

STRONG TECHNIQUE

Agostinelli is a lyrical choreographer
much enamoured of dancers with
strong technique and good line. He has
Maryse Carrier, Patrick Lamothe and
France Mongrand swirl, stretch and leap
in front of a screen on which he projects
surreal and illogical dream sequences.

A bed flies, a house deconstructs, a
woman in black stockings races about
in terror, crayon-coloured balloons
float and a blue sky is strewn with
fluffy pink clouds. Umbrellas dance
on the screen while on stage, with similar
dream-like quixotic reasoning, a
woman in a huge skirt smooths all
stress away with slow hip rotations.

There's a non-electronic work by the
30-year-old choreographer on the same
program, offering a chance to see an-
other dimension of Agostinelli. Mar-
guerite is a five-minute miracle cre-
ated for dancer Sylvain Brochu. While
this is a purely traditional solo with
roots in an old-world theatre style
known as buffoon, it is noteworthy for
its brilliant interpretation and the silly
humour and smirks it engenders.
Agostinelli says he loves to laugh, and
in Marguerite he and Brochu share this
pleasure completely.

DANCE
LINDE HOWE-BECK

BETTER KNOWN AS TEACHER

Agostinelli is a multi-faceted talent
who is better known as a teacher than
for his indelible choreographies and
cinematographic and videographic
projects produced at home and abroad.

A decade he has taught at Les
Ateliers de Danse Moderne de Mon-
tréal, a training ground for profes-
sional contemporary dancers. He teaches
his repertoire as well as bouffon, a
grotesque outgrowth of commedia del-
'arte theatre that he has adapted for
dancers.

"It's an in-your-face, confrontational
style that forces students to play
against their public," he explained.

"Bouffon is parody - it makes fun of
taboo and makes people laugh at
themselves."

There's no humour or laughter of
any kind in Communion, an extraordinary
multimedia creation by Isabelle Choini-
ère, Jimmy Lezato, Alexandre
Burton and Michael David Smith. Work-
ing in dance, video, sound and computer
graphics, they have created a work they
say is "electronic scarification, an alle-
ration of synthetic skins resembling an
opening toward another tacitly"

Performed by Choinière, Commu-
nion returns for the third time to Mon-
treal after touring the world for a cou-
ples of seasons, scoring high marks at
international video and electronics
festivals. A trail of postcards chroni-
cles Communion's successes. Most re-
cently, the show played in Brazil, Ar-
gentina, Holland and the U.S.

SEDUCTIVE FUSION

Communion and its predecessor, Le
Partage des Peux, introduced me to
this seductive fusion of dance and tech-
nology. I marvelled at the compact
dancer's ability to raise issues of limi-
tations of skin and soul, individualism
and collection, internal and external.
She's a time-walker, crossing bound-
aries between past and future with only
a pause in present.

With minimal visual equipment -
she wears all sorts of sensors and mon-
itors that trigger a myriad of effects -
Communion celebrates the body actu-
ally and virtually Choinière's basic hu-
manity is called into question as we
watch her video image and her com-
puter-animated self merge and divide
in shimmering blue waves. She is both
more - and less - than human. Her
essence appears to grow and then is re-
duced to the point of disappearance.
It's scary and wonderful and certainly
as new world as I've ever dared to view.

Massimo Agostinelli's Oneirose and
Marguerite are performed tonight at
8:30 p.m. and tomorrow at 7:30 p.m.
in Le Corps Electronique at Tangente, 860
Cherrier St. E. Isabelle Choinière brings
back Communion next Thursday
through May 31 at 8:30 and June 1 at
7:30 p.m. Tickets are $15 and $12. For
reservations, call 525-1500.

"It's an
in-your-face
style that
forces
students
to play
against
their
public.
Bouffon
is parody -

fun of
taboo and
makes
people
laugh at
themselves."