

Resource developed by Danii Zappia 2024

Images: Ralph Alswang, Stephanie Berger, Christopher Duggan and Jamie Kraus

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Suitable Year Levels

Year 3 – Year 12

Genre

Extreme Action

Experimental Dance

Warnings

Physical risk taking and dangerous stunts are part of this performance.

Themes

Risk and danger Reframing the concept of art and dance

Resilience and testing human limits

Synopsis

Taking flight by pushing the boundaries of aesthetics and kinesthetic bravery, the STREB Extreme Action Company revisits their roots with a retrospective of founder, Elizabeth Streb. *Time Machine* is a journey through Streb's career that explores her classic solos from the 70s and 80s, early equipment experimentations from the 90s, and jaw-dropping extreme action opuses with the large scale "action machines" the company has since become known for from the early 21st century. This historic look back connects the line from the company's experimental past to the extreme action of their current and future works.

Background Information

The members of Elizabeth Streb's company, STREB EXTREME ACTION, are referred to as EXTREME ACTION HEROES, and combine virtuosity and technical skill with openhearted popular appeal. Founded in New York City

in 1985 by choreographer Elizabeth Streb, the company has travelled, artistically as well as geographically, from the heights of the experimental dance world to the cutting-edge of popular entertainment. For over forty years, STREB EXTREME ACTION has performed in theatres large and small, served as artists-in-residence at the world's top art museums, and taken its work into the streets and sports stadiums.

Production

Music

Streb's approach to creating movement using 'felt timing' rather than musical timing is evident in the sound design of the production. Her aim is to have the action and movement at the centre of the work, where the forces of gravity and the physical impulses of the performers create the rhythm of the piece rather than it being created by a musical composition. The sound of the impact of the performers' bodies is clearly audible. This is a creative choice which serves to emphasise the extreme nature of the choreography and action and highlight the physical timing inherent in the work.

The music and sound design help to create atmosphere and support the intensity of the movement and are accompanied by the performers speaking to the audience occasionally.

Set Design

The large prototypic 'Action Machines' which the performers interact with dominate the stage. These are key to the development and success of the work. The huge semicircular wheel and a solid human team of Action Heroes work together to test the limits of gravity in order to generate human flight. The Action Machine serves to create both the physical and dramatic structure of the piece and can be considered another member of the ensemble.

Lighting

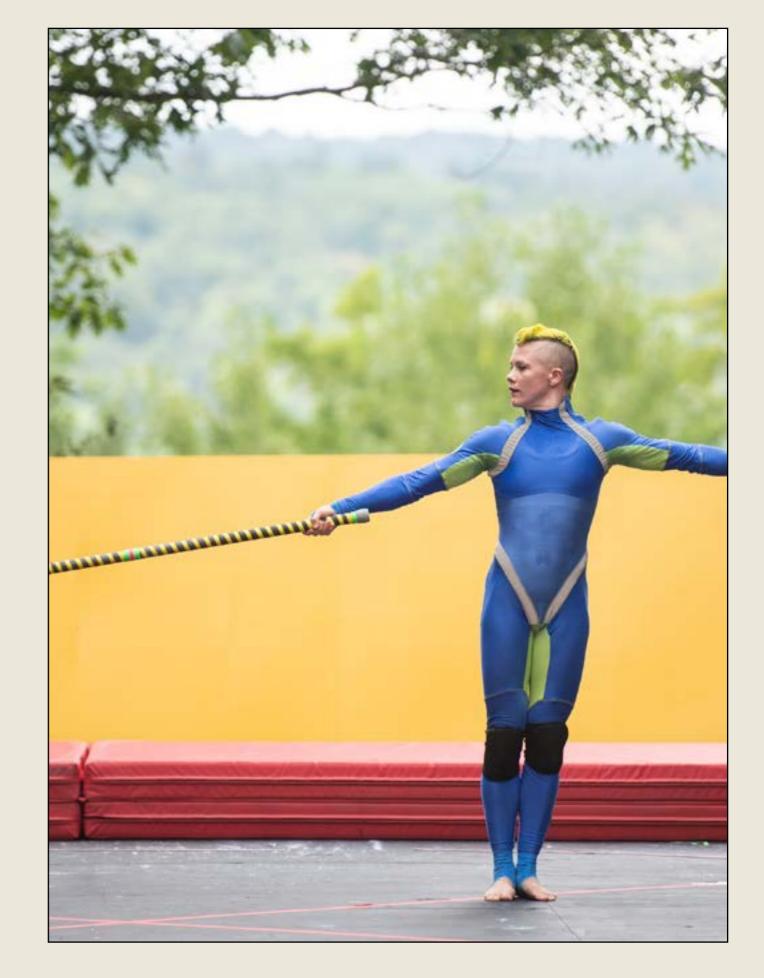
As a physical formative performance, lighting is not part of the narrative and is there simply to enhance and add illumination to the action on stage.

Costumes

The company wears matching uniforms rather than costumes which allows for the wide range of movement and other demands on the performers. The uniform clearly communicates that they are a cohesive troupe or team whose ensemble work is the essence of the performance, rather than individual performers who are representing characters with a singular narrative. Their performance is experiential (to be experienced) by the audience as opposed to being understood as a story. The audience experience is often visceral. This is a physical response (gasps, pulse rate spikes etc.) to the thrill and shock as the performers push their bodies to its limits.

Dramatic Form/ Convention

Extreme Action, a new art form invented by award-winning performer Elizabeth Streb, takes choreography beyond dance to defy gravity and pushes the human body to its limits. Elizabeth Streb describes it as, 'a mixture of slam dancing, exquisite and amazing human flight and a wild action sport'.



Curriculum Links

This education resource has been developed with links to the Australian Curriculum. Activities have been created to reflect each of the achievement standards, depending on the year level, including content descriptions within each learning area and the general capabilities. The resource aims to provide teachers with information to help prepare students before attending the performance, as well as structured learning activities for the classroom after viewing the performance.

General Capabilities

The Arts Learning Area has a natural link to the elements of the General Capabilities. Specific learning activities have been linked with the following icons:



Literacy



Critical and Creative Thinking



Personal and social capability

Dance

Developing practices and skills

Years 3 and 4

AC9ADA4D01

experiment with and practise skills for moving safely and expressively using fundamental movement skills and the elements of dance.

Year 5 and 6

AC9ADA6D01

develop and practise technical and expressive skills using safe dance practice and the elements of dance.

Year 7 and 8

AC9ADA8D01

develop safe dance practice and use of expressive and technical skills and, as appropriate, genre- or style-specific techniques.

AC9ADA8D02

reflect on own and others' dance works and/or practices to inform choreographic choices and use of technical and expressive skills.

Years 9 and 10

AC9ADA10D01

develop and refine safe dance practice, expressive and technical skills and genre- or style-specific techniques.

AC9ADA10D02

reflect on own and others' use of the elements of dance, choreographic devices, structure, genre- or

style-specific techniques and/ or technical and expressive skills to inform their choreographic or performance choices.

Creating and making

Year 3 and 4

AC9ADA4C01

use the elements of dance to choreograph dance that communicates ideas, perspectives and/or meaning.

Year 5 and 6

AC9ADA6C01

manipulate the elements of dance and/or choreographic devices to choreograph dances that communicate ideas, perspectives and/or meaning.

Year 7 and 8

AC9ADA8C02

apply technical and expressive skills and/or genre- or style-specific techniques to communicate ideas, perspectives and/or meaning.

Year 9 and 10

AC9ADA10C02

apply technical and expressive skills and genre- or stylespecific techniques to enhance communication of ideas, perspectives and/or meaning.

Exploring and Responding

Year 7 and 8

AC9ADA8E01

investigate ways that dance works, performers and/or choreographers across cultures, times, places and/or other contexts use the elements of dance, choreographic devices and/or production elements to communicate ideas, perspectives and/or meaning.

Year 9 and 10

AC9ADA10E01

investigate performers' and/or choreographers' use of elements of dance, choreographic devices, genre- or style-specific techniques, conventions and/or production elements to communicate and/or challenge ideas, perspectives and/or meaning in dance across cultures, times, places and/or other contexts.

SACE Stage 1 Dance

Understanding Dance

UD1 Knowledge and understanding of dance practices, such as the use of the body, dance skills, dance elements, structural devices, production elements, and/or safe dance practices.

UD2 Knowledge and understanding of appropriate language and terminology relevant to the dance context.

Creating Dance

CD1 Application of skills using safe dance practices and techniques in presenting and/or creating dance works.

Responding to Dance

RD2 Investigation into different cultures, historical periods, or dance traditions.

SACE Stage 2 Dance

Understanding Dance

UD1 Knowledge and understanding of dance practices, such as the use of the body, dance skills, dance elements, structural devices, production elements, and/or safe dance practices.

UD2 Knowledge and understanding of appropriate language and terminology relevant to the dance context.

Creating Dance

CD1 Application of skills using safe dance practices and techniques in presenting and/or creating dance works.

Responding to Dance

RD1 Critique and evaluation of a dance presentation, performance, or choreographic piece.

Science

Physical sciences

AC9S4U03

Year 4

identify how forces can be exerted by one object on another and investigate the effect of frictional, gravitational and magnetic forces on the motion of objects.

Questioning and predicting

AC9S4I01

pose questions to explore observed patterns and relationships and make predictions based on observations.

Performance Literacy

As students engage with and view live theatre, they develop a deeper understanding of the language of performance art. They develop literacies allowing them to 'read' the gestures and movements of a performer, and an understanding of the intention of the set, costume, lighting design and reflect on how they contribute to the narrative. Students consider the intended meaning of the playwrights, directors and/or artists' in choosing a setting, character, or artistic form as well as what they are looking to communicate through their work.

Attending live theatre and responding to performances, addresses the criteria for Literacy in line with the Australian Curriculum General Capabilities

...students become literate as they develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to interpret and use language confidently for learning and communicating in and out of school and for participating effectively in society. Literacy involves students listening to, reading, viewing, speaking, writing, and creating oral, print, visual and digital texts, and using and modifying language for different purposes in a range of contexts.

Art is a means of expressing emotion, a way of transmitting feelings, culture, beliefs and values between the creators and performers of the work and the audience or viewers. Some art is created for the explicit purpose of eliciting a strong emotional response from the audience and there is a myriad of emotions that students will experience when they are viewing live performance from happiness to anger, surprise, annoyance, and confusion, just to name a few.

The **Before the Show** activities are designed to support students to develop these literacy skills, knowledge and understanding in relation to their Adelaide Festival experience.

The **After the Show** activities are designed to provide students with the opportunity to discuss, analyse and comprehend their responses to the show. Having a strong knowledge and understanding of theatre terminology will support students and extend their vocabulary as they describe their theatre experience with authentic language.









Theatre Etiquette

The French word etiquette, meaning 'requirements for proper behaviour', was adopted by English speakers in the middle of the 18th century. This can sound a bit formal but understanding theatre etiquette helps an audience understand what to expect and how to get the most out of their theatre experience.

Depending on the age of an audience the expectations can vary. Theatre designed for very young audiences will have different expectations and will often invite and encourage participation. However, as the content becomes more complex and audiences mature, there is an expectation that students will have developed an understanding of the difference between enthusiastic participation and thoughtless disruption.

Group discussion: Why does it matter?

Students to talk about the theatre being a shared space and respecting other audience members attending the performance.

- Discuss the shared role of audience and performer, each is dependent on the other to ensure a great performance.
- Remind students that just as they can see the performers, the performers can see them!
- As a class exercise, compile a list of all the roles and tasks it

takes to bring a live performance to the stage.

- What experiences have they had when their engagement with the performance was compromised by others in the audience?
- What is the role of the audience?
 What responsibility do they have to the performers on stage?

Theatre protocols to share with students

When in the foyer they should:

- Go to the toilet before going into the theatre.
- Follow the directions of the front of house staff.
- Turn off mobile phones.
- Wear a mask if required.

When the lights go down:

- This is a sign the performance is about to start. It is time to end chats and be quiet.
- Cover coughs and sneezes.
- No eating in the theatre. Only water bottles are allowed.

For senior students writing the review in the darkened auditorium can be disturbing for the performers, particularly if using a mobile phone as a torch. Plus, all the performers can see is the top of the student's head. Why would this be disturbing for the performers?

Photographing and filming is not permitted because:

- It can disturb the actors on the stage and break their concentration.
- Intellectual property is paramount. The production on stage is the intellectual property of the theatre company therefore no photographs or filming is allowed.
- You will be missing the detail

you cannot see through the viewfinder

Five broad groups of children whose responses as audience are characterised as:

- Technicians children who are more interested in the technology than the performance, deconstructing the performance techniques employed in the show.
- Narrators children who talk through the performance, asking questions, commenting on actions.
- Dramatists children who immediately imitate what they see, participating through their own actions.
- Mystics children who are completely engrossed in the sensory aspects of the experience.
- Spectators children who hover around the edges, playing with whatever, they can find, apparently not engaged, but often able afterwards to recall what they saw.

Ask your students which group they think they would be. Does their response match your observation?

Before the Show

ACTIVITY #1

Elizabeth Streb trains her Action Heroes to land in order to be able to fly. She has had a lifelong quest to 'defy gravity and fly the only way a human can — by mastering the landing.'

Sir Isaac Newton proposed the Theory of Universal Gravitation and is often pictured sitting under a tree with an apple falling on his head. His theory concerns the attractive force (push or pull) between any two masses. Gravity only becomes noticeable when at least one mass is very big (a planet for example). Gravity can be simply described as the force which pulls objects to the Earth.

TASK - Gravity

- In pairs, create a list of 10 items which you have ready access to and which you can easily lift. Divide them into two lists: 5 items which will fall softly and 5 items which will fall faster or harder.
- 2. Test these theories. Drop the objects and note which ones fall hard and fast and which fall slowly and softly. (No breakages, please!)
- 3. Next, theorise about how the use of hardware, other objects, or mechanics (possibly air force) might keep these objects in the air the longest.

4. Being careful of others and your surroundings, test your theories by experimenting with both dropping and throwing your chosen objects to determine which object has the best flight capabilities. How might props or mechanics be incorporated into your performance to explore the theory of gravitation?

How might performers interact on stage with the props you have just experimented with?

What type of music or sound design would help to support a performance moment using one of these props?

TASK - Laws of Motion

Elizabeth Streb says, 'My dancers and I see the rehearsal as a laboratory for testing scientific principles on the body.'

Generate 5-10 movements or actions through experimenting with a scientific principle of force listed below to create movement for performance. Use a combination of props and bodies in motion.

- Floating and sinking
- Pushes and pulls
- Waves
- Friction
- Magnetism

Years 3 and 4

AC9ADA4D01

AC9S4U03

AC9S4I01

Year 5 and 6

AC9ADA6D01

Year 7 and 8

AC9ADA8D01 AC9ADA8D02

Years 9 and 10

AC9ADA10D01

AC9ADA10D02

Stage 1 & 2

CD1



Critical and Creative Thinking

After the Show

DISCUSSION

1. Elizabeth Streb feels strongly that her work does not fit into the categories of dance or acrobatics but has called her approach Extreme Action.

From your experience of the performance, describe which moments best reflected Elizabeth Streb's description of her performance style as, 'a mixture of slam dancing, exquisite and amazing human light and a wild action sport'.

2. 'What makes the work both witty and cruel, is not just the oddity and diffculty of the continuous stunts, it's the timing and spatial constraints. Straddling a line line between playfulness and self-destruction' Elizabeth Streb.

In what ways did the performance make you laugh and/or thrill or scare you?

How are timing and spatial awareness vital to the safety of the performers and the success of the performance?

3. The company has called this piece, *Time Machine* because it reflects the development of the Extreme Action performance style over time.

Discuss how the mechanical set pieces were used in increasingly more creative or extreme ways.

How did the performers' interaction with the set develop as the performance progressed?

4. The production has been described as achieving, 'the aim of staying in the air as long as possible'. How is the idea of light

explored and experimented with throughout the performance?

5. How is the notion of resilience reflected in the performers' work? Reflect on the repetition of falling and getting up in the performance and how human physical limits are tested.

Flight

- How do her performers achieve flight in a way that is different to birds?
- How does hardware and machinery play a role in this?

STREB Extreme Action Company: Forces youtube. com/watch?v=Y2-L3Crg30Y GAUNTLET by STREB

Extreme Action upon which the new work FALLING & LOVING is built: youtube. com/watch?v=hiWl_vjwQX4 Elizabeth Streb at

TEDxMet: youtube.com/ watch?v=8lqLaCWCXLg

ACTIVITY

Elizabeth Streb sees rehearsal as a laboratory for testing scientific principles on the body. Her POPACTION methodology incorporates the techniques listed below and also intertwines dance, athletics, boxing, rodeo, the circus, and Hollywood stunt work.

1. With a partner or a small group, experiment with one or more of the ideas listed below to generate

a range of actions.

2. Then, drawing on your knowledge of other genres of movement (dance, athletics, boxing, rodeo, the

Year 3 and 4

AC9ADA4C01

Year 5 and 6

AC9ADA6C01

Year 7 and 8

AC9ADA8E01

AC9ADA8C02

Year 9 and 10

AC9ADA10E01

AC9ADA10C02

Stage 1 & 2

RD1 RD2

UD1 UD2



Literacy



Creative Thinking
Personal and

Social Capability

circus, and stunt work), combine your some of your group's actions with elements of these genres.

POPACTION methodology techniques:

- change your base of support quickly
- physically occupy specific locations in vertical and horizontal space
- imitate flying using low-to-theground manoeuvres
- spatial awareness
- a timing system which is physical and uses muscle memory ("felt timing" rather than musical timing)
- falling
- landing
- momentum
- precision
- safety

About the Company

CASSANDRE JOSEPH (Co-Artistic **Director/Action Hero)**

Cassandre Joseph was born and raised in Brooklyn, New York. Her investigation in movement began at age four with the sport of gymnastics. She earned several state and regional titles over 20 years as a competitive gymnast. She graduated from Cornell University with a B.A. in English Literature and studied journalism at Temple University's graduate communications program. Joseph joined STREB in 2007, was appointed Associate Artistic Director in 2017 and then Co-Artistic Director in 2022. Joseph has been the Creative Director of the STREB Kid Company since 2010 for which she has choreographed and self-produced three evening length works.

JACKIE CARLSON (Senior Action Hero)

Hailing from Detroit, Michigan, Jackie Carlson has studied ballet, jazz, lyrical, tap, and gymnastics since the age of 6, winning many awards and scholarships including Miss Dance of Michigan in 2000 and "Most Outstanding Dancer '01" with NYC Dance Alliance. She spent five consecutive summers on full scholarship at The Milwaukee Ballet School, before moving to New York City right out of high school to join

Dance Theatre of Harlem, Jackie joined STREB EXTREME ACTION in 2008 and in 2021 was promoted to Senior Action Hero.

NAILAH CUNNINGHAM (Action

Nailah Cunningham was raised in Portland, Oregon. They began their movement training at a nonprofit arts school, Portland Metro Arts, where they trained in ballet and modern dance. In 2017 they chose to pursue movement as a career and moved to New York to start training on scholarship at The Ailey School. In 2019 Cunningham was honored to perform at Lincoln Center with the company in Alvin Ailey's Memoria before graduating in 2020. Throughout 2021 they worked with 98 Art Collective as their featured movement artist. Cunningham joined STREB in March

D'SHERRICK (DEE) WILLIAMS (Action Hero)

Born and raised in Marshall, Texas, D'Sherrick (Dee) Williams spent his childhood spinning in colorguard and kicking in Karate. In 2022, he earned a Bachelor's degree in Dance from Northwestern State University. Williams has studied various dance forms, including Hip-Hop, Modern, Tap, Jazz, Ballet, and Partnering. Williams spent

the summer of 2021 in Canada teaching dance at a camp for the arts. There, he furthered his pedagogic skills as well as his deep love for choreography and free, raw movement. Williams has been a member of STREB EXTREME ACTION since 2022.

ANDREA LAISURE (Action Hero)

Andrea Laisure is from Long Island, New York where she competed in gymnastics and judo starting at age 6 until she began dancing in High School. In 2021, she graduated from Muhlenberg College with a double major in International Studies and Spanish. During college, found a passion for aerial arts where she performed in two productions with Atlas Circus Company. After college, Laisure completed a full time circus program at Aircraft Circus Academy in London, and then joined STREB EXTREME ACTION as a project based dancer and is in her second season with the company.

SARAH PEREZ (Action Hero)

Sarah Perez is a dance artist from France and is a recipient of many gold medals from France National Dance competitions. With her crew, she finished second in France at the international hiphop competition, one of the most prestigious competitions in the world, qualifying her for the world championship finals. In 2021, Sarah moved to New York and graduated from the Peridance Certificate Program. Perez has performed in videos for monotronic, Caural, Ryan Serhant, Sabrina Lonis, Sony, alpha and RSVLT. She is also a company member with Faustine Lavie Dance Project. This is Sarah's second contract with STREB EXTREME ACTION.

KAI RIZZUTO (Action Hero)

Homegrown in Brooklyn, New York

Kai Rizzuto started his movement journey at age 4 at the STREB Lab for Action Mechanics. He trained at SLAM for 12 years, where he became a founding member of the STREB Kid Company. In 2012, Rizzuto began training in hip hop dance at The Beacon School, and eventually continued to SUNY Purchase where he majored in Mechanical Sound Engineering and Design and was named a student director of Sabotage Dance Team for three years. Rizzuto is grateful to have found his way back to STREB in 2023.

JAYLEN TAYLOR (Action Hero)

Jaylen Taylor is from Canton, MS. He is a 2023 graduate of New York University Steinhardt's Dance Education program with a MA in Teaching Dance in the Professions: ABT Pedagogy. Taylor graduated from The Jackson State University with his Bachelors in Journalism and Media Studies with a concentration in Integrated Marketing. Taylor has performed in Italy and on world-renowned stages such as Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center. At NYU he was a member of NYU's Cheer Competition Team, a peer representative for SDEA. This is Taylor's first season with the STREB EXTREME ACTION.

LUCIANY GERMÁN (Action Hero)

Luciany Germán is a dancer/model born and raised in the Bronx, New York, attended Lehman College where she studied modern dance and began her journey with STREB through the SLAM Remote program in 2013. Luciany has performed in various productions with STREB, notably the Picasso Circus at the

Musée d'Orsay, and in FALLING & LOVING, a collaboration between the SITI Company and the STREB Extreme Action.

MATTHEW MCADON (Technical Director)

Matthew McAdon has been collaborating with STREB for fifteen years and is entering his ninth year as STREB's Technical Director. With a background in mechanical and scenic design, prototype design, live performance technology, stunt rigging and technical direction, McAdon has collaborated with organizations such as Bang On A Can, American Repertory Theater, The Barclays Center, Lincoln Center, City Center, the Delacorte Theater in Central Park, the Natural History Museum, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Hammerstein Ballroom, Bloomberg, the 2012 Cultural Olympiad, Unusual Rigging, Sapsis Rigging, Mountain Productions and Hudson Scenic. MFA Scenic Design, CalArts.

Technical Director)

Jelani A. Lewis was born in New York and raised between New York and Antigua in the Caribbean nurturing him into the individual he is today. Lewis began working with STREB in 2013 and currently holds the position of Assistant Technical Director, a diverse position which includes the structural build of STREB's iconic Action Machines to the management of the technical crew. Lewis holds his BA in Psychology and AOS in Biology from the College of Staten Island and holds a Trained/Certified Surgical Occupational Technologist

PAUL PIEKARZ (Audio Engineer)

Paul Piekarz has been working in live sound and video in New York City City across all applications since 2010. Piekarz has worked with companies such as Oxygen Eventworks, Frost Productions, and Good Room. Piekarz joined STREB in 2011 as their Audio Engineer.

ELIZABETH STREB (Founder/ Co-Artistic Director)

Elizabeth Streb founded the STREB Extreme Action Company in 1979 (then Ringside Inc.), and established SLAM (STREB Lab for Action Mechanics) in Brooklyn, NY in 2003. Streb is recipient of the MacArthur "Genius" Award, the Guggenheim Fellowship, a Doris Duke Artist Award and a USA Fellowship Award. Streb holds a MA in Humanities and Social Thought from New York University, a BS in Modern Dance from SUNY Brockport, and three honorary doctorates SUNY Brockport, Rhode Island College, OTIS College of Art and Design. JELANI LEWIS (Assistant Streb was a featured speaker at TED2018, is the subject of two documentaries: Born to Fly and OXD, and her book, STREB: How to Become an Extreme Action Hero was published in 2010.

Extra Resources

STREB

streb.org/elizabeth-streb/

STREB presents TIME MACHINE

Elizabeth Streb explains some key ideas in her work.

youtube.com/watch?v=Y3eY5pWcglc Elizabeth Streb's

Action-Hero Choreography

Elizabeth Streb discusses her POPACTION methodology.

youtube.com/watch?v=DK4a3lrv3Q0 STREB Extreme Action

Company: Forces

A trailer for the piece Forces.

youtube.com/watch?v=Y2-L3Crg30Y

GAUNTLET by STREB

Extreme Action upon which the new work FALLING & LOVING is built GAUNTLET by STREB Extreme Action upon which the new work FALLING & LOVING is built. A collaboration between SITI Company (Saratoga International Theater Institute, founded by Anne Bogart and Tadashi Suzuki), and Streb EXTREME ACTION

youtube.com/watch?v=hiWI_vjwQX4 Elizabeth Streb at

TEDxMet

An excerpt of the Time Machine performance.

youtube.com/watch?v=8lqLaCWCXLg

My quest to defy gravity and fly, TED2018

Over the course of her fearless career, extreme action specialist Elizabeth Streb has pushed the limits of the human body. She's jumped through broken glass, toppled from great heights and built gizmos to provide a boost along the way. Backed by footage of her work, Streb reflects on her lifelong quest to defy gravity and fly the only way a human can -- by mastering the landing.

ted.com/talks/elizabeth_streb_my_quest_to_defy_gravity_and_fly?language=en

Dancers Soar and Hearts Leap at STREB's TIME MACHINE, BY ALEX ALDAMA (MAY 17, 2023)

A review of Time Machine.

Dancers Soar and Hearts Leap at STREB's TIME MACHINE - The Greenline

(northbrooklynnews.com)

