

A DANCE THEATER EXPERIENCE
PREMIERES MARCH 24, 2018

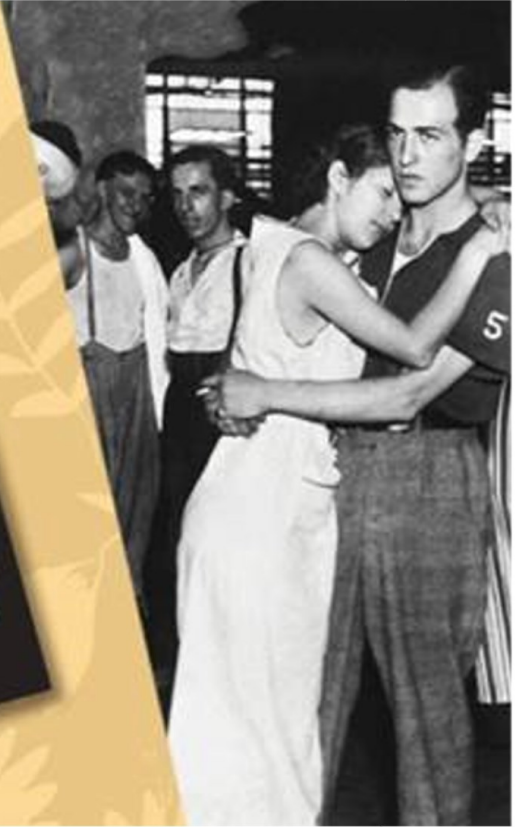
DANCE 'TIL YOU

history theatre

CREATED IN COLLABORATION WITH

COLLIDE
THEATRICAL DANCE COMPANY

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Play Guide

Book by Carson Kreitzer

Choreography by Regina Peluso



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Interview with Choreographer Regina Peluso

Where did the idea for the show begin? How did you and COLLIDE become involved?

I was doing research for another Collide! show and I came across a small article and picture of Callum deVillier's grave. I was intrigued by the marathon dancing idea, (I love dance...but what motivates someone to sign up for that many hours!?) as well as the fact that Cal had a statue of himself dancing on his grave. It was obviously the highlight of his life's work. I sent the article to Ron and he too was intrigued.

Who are your dance influences and what type of movement is included in this production?

I was blessed to study with some amazing teachers in New York, one being Andy Blankenbuehler (Tony Award Winning choreographer of *Hamilton*). He emphasized the use of storytelling before anything. While I wish I had the luxury of time to dissect the meaning of every move in the show, I always start with the emotion and intention behind what the character is trying to tell, or objective of the song itself. I like to use so many styles of dance to tell a story. While this is a period piece, obviously the movements are not sticking to that particular era. There is a mix of classical musical theatre jazz dance ("Sing, Sing, Sing"), Swing ("Don't Mean a Thing") Contemporary/Lyrical, and Ballet. I try to put in a little of everything I can.



Callum deVillier's Grave in Lakewood Cemetery; Minneapolis, MN

Could you explain more about COLLIDE and the work you typically do?

The company was founded in 2013 and we have produced 7 original jazz dance musicals. Every COLLIDE production features live musicians, a full length narrative story, professional dancers, vocalists and musicians and is family-friendly. I moved back to the Twin Cities after numerous years living and working on both coasts. Having studied Musical Theatre Jazz I felt there was a void in the dance/theatre community for this kind of dance/art form...so I founded Collide! Every Collide production is different, but this production is very much a collaboration with The History Theatre. In the recent years we have relied solely on dance to tell a story without the use of dialogue, and typically feature music that is a bit more modern. This was a fun adventure in collaborating with a playwright for the first time. We will be doing so again in our 2019 season and I am very excited to see what that brings.

History of Dance Marathons

Desperate for money, food, and shelter during the Great Depression, people across the United States flocked to Dance Marathons for a brief reprieve. Dance Marathons had become popular in the 1920s, as a contest to see how long a person could dance continuously. One such dancer was Alma Cummings, who danced for 27 hours straight, exhausting six male partners during that time. Cummings' feat was impressive, but audiences cared very little about the technique, and much more about the actual stamina of the dancers.



Callum deVillier and
Vonny Kuchinski

The 1920s brought about a fascination with eccentric and exciting records of all kinds. The idea of dancing for as long as possible fit right in with the ideals of the Roaring 20s. Spectators wanted to see how long a contestant could loosely approximate dancing before collapsing, rather than sustain actual dance technique as Alma Cummings had. By 1928, Dance Marathons had reached even large venues, including Madison Square Garden in New York City. In this marathon, 91 couples from across the country competed for a Grand Prize of \$5,000 (about \$70,000 in today's money). The promoters of the event charged \$2.20 per seat, and 12,000 people attended daily. After 481 hours, the health department shut down the event. The nine remaining couples split all of the prize money, but the failure of this large event spurred a dip in popularity for Dance Marathons. However, the advent of the Great Depression the following year sparked interest anew.

The competitions became known as "walkathons," acknowledging how little actual dancing occurred. Despite this, the events still drew huge crowds. Often over-dramatized arguments, fights, rivalries, and erratic behavior kept crowds entertained. Weddings were also staged within the couples, and occurred while they continued dancing. Participants ranged from professional dancers who traveled from town to town competing in marathons to locals who were simply desperate for food and money.

Participants sometimes carried out everyday activities while competing, including shaving, reading, knitting, and writing letters. They also participated in special competitions to draw attention, like sprint races, and choreographed "coin dances" and the emcee would prompt the audience to rain them with a "silver shower." Contestants were fed approximately twelve times every day, with a variety of meals. They ate standing up and were expected to keep moving.

Dance Marathons were also known as Exhaustion Derbies. They were physically and mentally taxing for participants. During most events, couples were allowed to rest for about fifteen minutes out of every hour. An air horn would sound and couples left the floor to sleep on cots. They would train themselves to fall asleep almost immediately. After eleven minutes, the air horn would sound again, and contestants would begin to make their way to the floor. If a female contestant did not wake up, she might receive smelling salts and slaps. Men, however, were dumped in a tub of ice. Participants also slept standing up, leaning on their partners. As long as one partner continued moving and neither one's knees touched the floor, they were allowed to stay in the contest.



Callum deVillier and
Vonny Kuchinski

The fad ended in the mid 1930s because Dance Marathons could only come to a town once, as the attraction wore off fairly quickly. Some marathon promoters had a reputation of going to a new town and leaving before paying the bills. In addition, movie theaters and other local businesses lobbied for prohibiting the events, as they took away customers and income. By 1935, 24 states had banned Dance Marathons altogether.

Today, Dance Marathons exist as fundraisers for charities, and typically occur on college campuses. They last 12-24 hours, a perfectly reasonable amount of time.

Did You Know?

Smelling Salts are a pungent substance sometimes used as a restorative for people who are feeling faint or sleepy. They are made from ammonium carbonate and are often mixed with perfume.

Sample Menu

From the 1929 *Marathon Guide* by Dr. Everett Perlman and G.W. Nelson

7:00 AM Breakfast

Half Grapefruit
Boiled oatmeal with syrup
Soft-boiled egg
2 slices of whole wheat toast (buttered)

10:00 AM

Cookies
Glass of Milk

12:00 PM Lunch

One cup of soup
Vegetable salad with oil dressing
Cottage cheese
2 slices of whole wheat buttered bread

3:00 PM

Apples
Oranges
Celery

Dance Marathon Rules

From the Bearcat Dance Marathon
At the Kenwood Armory in Minneapolis, MN
Beginning August 29, 1928

-Dancers will be permitted to rest 15 minutes every hour from starting time, all dancers taking the rest period simultaneously.

-Food and liquids will be furnished Dancers at all times under proper sanitary conditions, but no food will be allowed Contestants other than that furnished by Management, unless passed on by Chief Judge in attendance. Service Table will be provided for Dancers to eat from while in motion.

-Each Contestant must have sufficient clothing to appear neat and tidy throughout the Contest.

-All entrants will be subject to a thorough examination by Competent Physicians who comprise the medical board before entering the dance. These Doctors will reject any person whom they believe is not in proper physical condition to enter the contest. Their decisions are accepted as final. These same doctors will examine the Contestants from time to time during progress of this dance. They may order any couple to leave the floor of this Dance at any time, when, in their opinion, a continuation of their dancing might prove injurious.

-Contestants will be allowed a two-minute medical attention in case of emergency, during dance periods, in the Emergency room provided on Dance Floor.

-Contestants will be allowed to wash and shave on the Dance Floor, during and of the dance periods from 6am to 10am each morning, and from 4pm to 5pm each afternoon, but during no other dance periods.

-Contestants while on the Dance Floor must be actually in touch with each other, and actually dance three or four minutes each twenty minutes while on the floor, balance of the time keeping in motion to dance rhythm.

-All Contestants will be allowed trainers of their own sex only, in their rest quarters during the rest period. No men will be allowed in the women's rest quarters, except professional Doctors and Nurses. Rest quarters will be located adjoining dancing floor, provided with emergencies, cots, and all necessary requirements.

-Contestants will not be allowed to change partners, and the failure of either one is the cause for elimination from the Contest.

Disqualification for violation of any section of these rules can be ordered by the Floor Manager at any time.

Callum deVillier

Callum deCallum deVillier was born on January 19, 1907 in Pilot Mound Township, Minnesota. In his 20s, he competed in and won twelve Dance Marathons across the United States. He set his first world record in 1928 at the Kenwood Armory in Minneapolis. He later set his final world record for dancing 3,780 hours in Somerville, Massachusetts in 1933. During the Somerville Marathon, he married his dance partner, Vonny Kuchinski. Following their world record, Cal and Vonny went on to dance in a few more Marathons. They also had nightclub appearances across the country, but eventually split up. Cal went on to marry Helen Steinbach, and later, Marjorie deVillier, who is still living Villier was born on January 19, 1907 in Pilot Mound Township, Minnesota. In his 20s, he competed in Dance Marathons across the United States, and set the world record for dancing in a Dance Marathon for 3,780 hours.



He was married to his dance partner, Vonny Kuchinski in 1934, the year after they set the world record. Cal went on to marry Helen Steinbach, and later, Marjorie deVillier.



After his Dance Marathon career ended, Cal opened a hair salon in St. Louis Park, Minnesota. In the late 1960s, Cal sent a letter to the Guinness Book of World Records, requesting that they recognize his record, as it had been incorrectly attributed to another dancer. He sent articles and programs from the Marathons to prove his legitimacy and the record was changed officially shortly before Callum died at the age of 66 on June 12, 1973.

deVillier new hair styling salon opens
Nov. 29 in Knollwood Plaza

Mr. deVillier, European and American coiffure designer, winner of many trophies, including an International Grand prize for the most original coiffure creation, formerly of Fifth Ave., New York, and Harzfeld's fashionable Petticoat Lane Salon, Kansas City, and consultant to world's leading fashion centers.

Mr. deVillier will feature his own personally devised ORIGINAL INIMITABLE SILHOUETTE CURL CUT (actually curl cuts hair with least tendency)

Consultations cordially invited without charge

OPENING PERMANENT WAVE SPECIALS
(regular franchised stock factory priced)

Regular 20.00 conditioning perm.	12.75
Regular 15.00 creme	9.75
Regular 10.00 oil	7.75

deVillier coiffures 8416 Knollwood Plaza WE 5-3888

Ad for Callum deVillier's Salon

Dance 'Til You Drop Timeline

1923 March 30th-31st Alma Cummings danced for 27 hours, exhausting 6 male partners in that time.

October 29th The Charleston was introduced in the Afro-American Broadway Musical *Runnin' Wild*. It became a lasting symbol of the 1920s Jazz Age.

1928 June 30th--Dance Marathon at Madison Square Garden in New York City shut down after 481 hours

August 29th--The Bearcat Dance Marathon (pictured) began at Kenwood Armory in Minneapolis, MN.

Callum deVillier and Violet Kahl competed as Couple #22 and set a world record at that time, dancing for 1,448 hours.



September 5th-- Prompted by the attempted suicide of a participant who placed 5th, the city of Seattle passed an ordinance prohibiting Dance Marathons.

1929 October 24th--The Stock Market Crashed, signaling the beginning of the Great Depression.

1930 March-- More than 3.2 Million people are unemployed in the United States

November--Nearly 6,000 individuals began selling apples in New York City for five cents each.

1931 February-- Food Riots broke out across the United States. In Minneapolis, hundreds of people smashed windows of a grocery store and took fruit, canned goods, bacon, and ham. Seven people were arrested.

February--Resentment toward foreign laborers increased and 6,000 Mexican-Americans were deported.

March--3,000 unemployed workers marched on a Ford Motor Company Plant in Michigan. Four people were killed.

December-- Bank of the United States in New York collapsed

1932 November--Franklin Delano Roosevelt won the Presidential Election in a landslide

1933 March 4th--FDR was Inaugurated as President of the United States.

March 12th--FDR begins his Fireside Chats, which were radio broadcasts that brought hope to Americans across the nation.

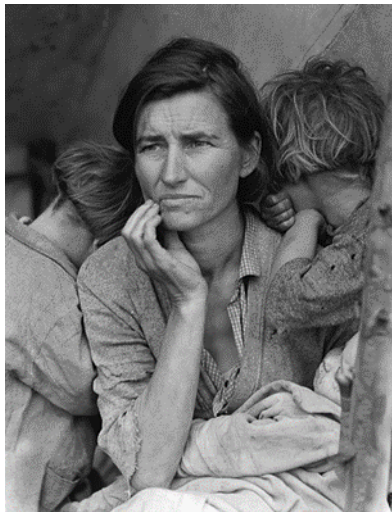
June 3rd—Callum deVillier and Vonny Kuchinski set the world record for Marathon Dancing. They danced for 3,780 hours (from December 28, 1932 to June 3, 1933) in Somerville, Massachusetts

October--The Civil Works Administration was established as a program to employ over Four Million people.

1935 The National Endurance Amusement Association (NEAA) was established in an attempt to regulate and set standards for all endurance shows, including Dance Marathons.

April--The Works Progress Administration was created. The program employed 8.5 Million people from 1935-1943 at a monthly salary of \$41.57. The WPA created American Infrastructure, and it also put writers, artists, musicians, theatre directors, actors, and dancers to work.

August--The Social Security Act of 1935 was signed into law.



August 21st--Benny Goodman's radio broadcast introduced Swing Music, and therefore Swing Dancing, to mainstream white culture.

By the end of 1935, 24 states had banned Dance Marathon events.

1936 March--Photographer Dorthea Lange visited a pea-picker's camp in California and took photographs of harvest workers. She created the "Migrant Mother Series," which became a universal icon for the Great Depression.

November--FDR was elected to his second term.

1938 April--FDR asked congress for \$3.75 Billion to stimulate economy

1940 November--FDR was elected to his third term.

Did You Know?

Before 1933, Inauguration Day took place in March. The 20th Amendment, which was ratified in 1933, moved Inauguration Day to January 20th to help solve the problem of a "Lame Duck" period after Election Day. FDR's Second Inauguration was the first to occur on January 20th.

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