

# DANCING GRANDMOTHERS

EUN-ME AHN



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**Choreography and artistic direction :** Eun-Me Ahn

**Music :** Young-Gyu Jang

**Artistic advisor :** Chun Wooyoung

**Costumes & set design :** Eun-Me Ahn

**Scenography :** Sunny Im/unkwan Design

**Lighting design :** Jin-Young Jang

**Video direction :** Tae-Seok Lee

**Images :** Jiwoong Nam, Seunghwan KIM, Sangwha Lee, Taeseok Lee

**Dancers :**

Eun-Me Ahn, Hyosub Bae, Jihye Ha, Youngmin Jung, Hyekyoung Kim, Eisul Lee, Kibum Kim, Hyunwoo Nam, Sihan Park

**with the participation of 10 Korean grandmothers**

**Production / Partnership :** Eun-Me Ahn Company and Doosan Art Center (DAC).  
Coproductio festival Paris Quartier d'Eté.



**Diffusion :**



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# DANCING GRANDMOTHERS



Mix flowers, stripes and polka dots, modern urban world and Korean countryside, folkore and electro, movement and video, youngsters and elders, and turn the whole thing into a giant dancefloor... Is that a witch magic potion unknown in our lands ? Maybe, and it has the power to make the heads turn and wake the spirits up.

France had discovered Korean choreographer Eun-Me Ahn, aka “the Pina Bausch from Seoul”, in 2013 with her pop epic of Princesse Bari. Invited again in 2014 by Festival Paris Quartier d’Été, she has pleased the Parisian audience and turned the Théâtre National de la Colline in a giant dance floor with Dancing Grandmothers a no less crazy show, based on the indestructible energy of Korean grandmothers that join on stage the young dancers of her company.

A journey through time and movement that turns into collective trance.



## A JOURNEY LOOKING FOR THE GRANDMOTHERS

In October 2010, with no planned itinerary, Eun-Me Ahn started a nationwide tour along the roads, scenery and people. Together with four dancers and three cameras, they asked grandmothers they met to dance for them as they toured in the Chungcheong, Jeolla, Gyeongsang and Gangwon provinces and recorded their dance movements. Most of the grandmothers were average Korean farmers in their 60s, but some were even in their 90s. *“They all looked happy when they danced. They were happy they can still dance, and happy that someone asked them to. Their dance was so natural and exciting that it caused the young professional dancers of my company to dance with them. Each of their movements was a realistic reflection of their fierce lifestyle. Like an excerpt of a documentary movie demonstrating both past and space. The wrinkled bodies of these grandmothers were like a book that has recorded a life lived for almost a century. Each of their dance was like an epic novel presented compactly and intensively into a beautiful rhythm into a short amount of time. Whenever we met a grandmother, we could vividly see the modern history of Korea through their bodies, as if they were a history book of our country, more concrete than any written or spoken words.”*

From these meetings, filmed images in the provinces and reactions of the dancers came out a successively tender and hallu-



cinating show that combines the energies of all to finally take the audience in the vortex of its energy. A tribute to the ancient times as much as the unalterable vitality of movement. As written by Eun-Me Ahn : *"For me, movement doesn't only happen in a certain place at a certain time. It rather represent a kind of fossil destined to be operated at one time to create by its different gesture a whole universe of flexibility in which the moment stretches to infinity."*

Lola Gruber,  
(excerpt from *Festival Paris Quartier d'Été* program)



# EUN-ME AHN



*« Laugh and grow fat.  
Dance and grow fat. »*

Ah, the famous custard pie that is the confrontation “between tradition and modernity”...

How many creators have struggled to find the way to describe what is finally the lot of every artist : on the one hand to know, understand, integrate what the ancients did ; on the other to forget them, overcome them and hope to find something new. Quite a vast program...

On this level, Eun-Me Ahn that France discovered in 2013 and 2014 thanks to Festival Paris Quartier d’Été, has found new, unexpected and

exciting ways. This comes first from her own itinerary, marked as much by the learning and exploration of shamanic traditions as by the many years spent in New York or a profound friendship with the missed Pina Bausch (who invited her many times in Wuppertal). Korean and cosmopolitan, figure of the avant-garde but also choreographer of the very official opening ceremony of the FIFA World Cup in Daegu in 2002 and presented in the most important international festivals, she knows how to improve the beauties of contrast, mix polka dots, stripes and flowers, how to play with the most pop colors before switching to the most solemn austerity, how to play with the most subtle shades of androgyny, or use slowness to make trance rhythm burst...

Educated at the school of rigor, precise, demanding and of a all Korean discipline, Eun-Me Ahn is also a daredevill performer, ready for all kind of piracies. One have seen her jump from the top of a crane, then attack a piano with axe and scissors, rip off herself her fairy dress made of white ties to distribute the pieces to the audiences while performing a teddybear dance, bury herself with a clown costume under a rain of balloons, locked up behind bars in a duet with a chicken, or dressed up as a mushroom... But one would be wrong thinking it is provocation. It is rather the affirmation of a curiosity and a freedom held by work and style pushed to their most unexpected limits.



# EUN-ME AHN

## IN A FEW DATES

**1963** - Birth in Republic of Korea

**1974** - Begins to dance, initiates herself to Korean shamanic practices, discovers the work of Isadora Duncan and western countries contemporary dance

**1986-1992** - Dances with Korean Modern Dance Company and Korean Contemporary Dance Company in Séoul

**1989** - Graduated from Seoul E-Wha University

**1994** - Departure for New York City. Graduated from Tisch School of the Arts

**1999-2000** - Receives Manhattan Foundation for the Arts Award and New York Foundation for the Arts Award

**2001** - After several visits to the Pina Bausch Festival à Wuppertal, she presents three solos from the *Tomb* there.

**2001-2004** - Returns to live in South Korea where she is appointed Artistic Director of Daegu Metropolitan City Dance Company for which she creates, amongst others *The Little Match Girl* and *Sky Pepper*

**2002** - Choreography of the Fifa World Cup opening ceremony in Daegu in South Korea

**2007** - Creation of *Symphoca Princess Bari*, a choreographic adaptation of a Korean legend, that will be presented at Seoul ARCO Art Center in Korea, Tanztheater Wuppertal Pina Bausch Festival in Germany, BOZAR in Belgium, Edimburgh Autumn Festival in Scotland...

**2011** - Creation of *Dancing Grandmothers*, a work inspired by the gestures of Korean old ladies.

# IN THE PRESS

## Le Monde

**Rosita Boisseau**

Regularly invited by Pina Bausch in Wuppertal from 2001, Eun-Me Ahn only crossed French border one year ago, in 2013, on the invitation of Paris Quartier d'Été. And thank God, she's back again !

Eun-Me Ahn's secret desire was to meet «pure bodies» to transfuse [the grandmothers] energy to the nine young dancers of her company. « *The Grandmothers are like a History book of our country, far more concrete than any written or spoken words.* », says Eun-Me Ahn.

On stage, the grandmothers become bombs of exuberant energy, pleasure, seduction and public success gift-wrapped in the same present that is *Dancing Grandmothers*.

## TV5 Monde

**Isabelle Soler**

Eun-Me Ahn present us her *Dancing Grandmothers*. In 2010, the bald head choreographer has traveled through the rural provinces of Korea. She met women, often old, often farmers, but also pharmacists, butchers, and even homeless. She asked them to dance for her on hits of their young days. And what she witnessed was the intact pleasure to find their youth, of which a part had never left. « *Their dances were so natural and so exciting that it caused the your professional dancers of my company to dance with them. Each of their movement was the reflection of their fierce lifestyle. It was like watching a documentary movie demonstrating both past and space. With every grandmother we met, we could vividly see Korean modern history through their bodies.* »

## Ballet 2000

**Sonia Schoonejans**

*Dancing Grandmothers* stages about fifteen old ladies led by the nine members of the company in a dancing vortex during one hour and a half. Taken away by a musical score in which traditional Korean sounds and contemporary remixes blend into each other, the bodies

evolve on stage without ever jostling, like they are used to overcrowded Asian cities. Entrances and exits succeed to each other at a tremendous pace, young and elders turning around, spinning with joy. It is hard to talk about a style where it is rather about a cauldron bringing together past and present, tradition and modernity.

Quickly, one forgets the time as one forgets the age, and at the end of the show, the audience, invited to go up on stage, joins the dancers of all age to dance with them. Success guaranteed.

## Danser Canal Historique

**Thomas Hahn**

Après les saluts, la moitié de la salle rejoint les danseurs. Rave party sur le grand plateau du Théâtre national de la Colline, en compagnie des danseurs de Eun-me Ahn, tout de pink vêtus, et des *Dancing Grandmothers*, absolument authentiques. Cette pièce légère et joyeuse traduit au plus près la philosophie de vie de la chorégraphe la plus excentrique de la Corée du Sud, à vérifier par les couleurs éclatantes de son costume traditionnel, le hanbok, et ses propres attitudes. « *Autorisons-nous toutes sortes de folies, et nous vivrons plus heureux !* »

## Umooove

**Louise Dutertre**

Eun-Me Ahn, pass a beautiful score with all these performers. *Dancing with grandmothers*, is a performance of an incredible generosity, an undeniable sharing, between old and young people, but also between them and us, the audience. Incidentally, at the end of the show, the audience is invited to share the stage with the performers. There is a very large freedom in this proposition. Hard to resist being carried away by the energy of all sides. Finally, what a pleasure to see dance like a collective movement, connecting generations. Lets recognize without any reserve this engagement of the choreographer and all her performers.