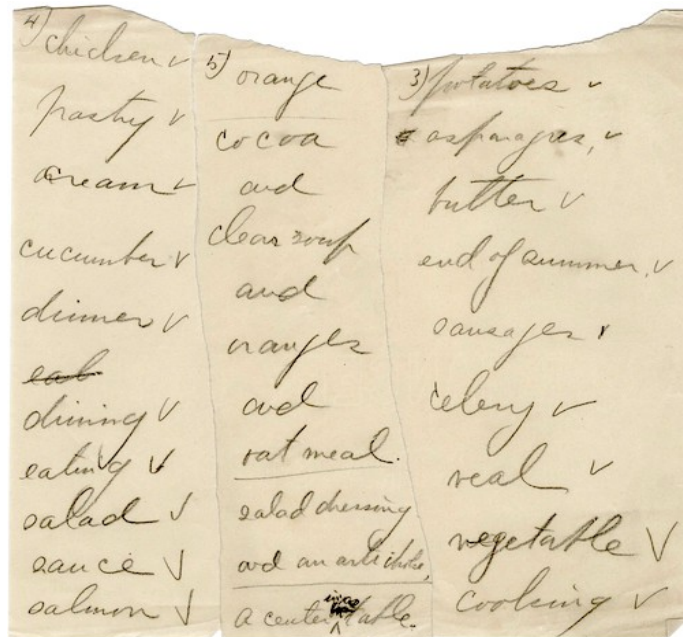


FOR WANT OF A BETTER  
presents  
**PUSH**



Tender Buttons Gertrude Stein manuscript

Annie Hanauer , Ingvild Marteim Olsen : dance

Deborah Lennie : voice

Patrice Grente :sound

Christophe Bisson : film

Yoan Vincent-Falquet : lights

<https://www.forwantofabetter.com>

contact : Deborah Lennie forwantofabetter@gmail.com

Supported by the National Choreographic Centre in Caen, Normandy, France

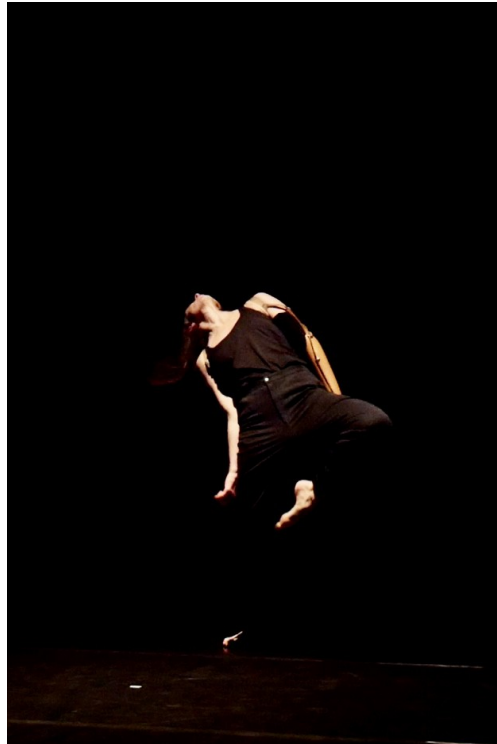
Théâtre du Champ Exquis, National Conventined Théâtre for the Arts and Youth, Normandy, France

## PUSH

Initiated by Deborah Lennie, PUSH is a collective creation freely based on extracts from Gertrude Stein's *Tender Buttons*, for two dancers, two musicians and film. PUSH invites us to reflect on the fragmentation of our lives: here we are, thrown into life, we didn't ask to be born and somehow we have to make sense of it all.

In French, English and Norwegian, PUSH plays with the music hidden in language and the dance buried in movement. Like a kaleidoscopic narrative.

Through this fragmented language, we can perhaps catch a glimpse of an escape route towards sensitivity.



Annie Hanauer, PUSH

## TENDER ... but STEIN

Gertrude Stein's writing is considered to be one of the catalysts of modernist literature, and her offbeat approach to language is a veritable invitation to reinterpret reality. "Tender Buttons" (1914) was her first decisive work, and published on the eve of WWI. It can be read as "an act of liberty in the face of conventions, both of language and society"<sup>(1)</sup>. It is a radical, fragmented, liberated form of writing, as pertinent today as it was when it first appeared over a century ago. In both poetry and prose, Stein uses words in a very concrete, practical way, and at the same time she is at the cutting edge of abstraction. In the three parts of *Tender Buttons* - objects \* food \* rooms - she uses vocabulary from everyday life, but plays with it, turning grammar and syntax upside down, destabilising us in the process. Everything seems familiar, yet nothing makes sense in the way we're used to.

(1) Introduction of french translation of *Tender Buttons* (*Tendres Boutons*, éditions NOUS, 2005).

(2) Isabelle Alfandary in the postface, *Ibid*, p. 89.

The performance is in three languages, so it is perfectly clear that understanding the meaning of the words is not the question here. We're not making sense but rather making sensitivity. We're more interested in how these languages articulate, juxtapose and interact in their musicality, and how the body resonates to this music hidden in the words. In PUSH, For Want of a Better's research focuses on this question of articulation and disarticulation, of language, sound and body as a representation of social questions, not as a narrative.

#### A LEAVE

In the middle of a tiny spot and nearly bare there is a nice thing to say that the wrist is leading. Wrist is leading.

*Tender Buttons* excerpt



PUSH in-situ Ingvild Marstein Olsen-Deborah Lennie, Musée des Beaux Arts CAEN.

## BODY / ANYBODY

In Stein's work, language is fractured like a disjointed body, like a puppet off its string. Hence the very direct relationship to physical work in this piece. Stein's fragmented language, like a cubist painting, nevertheless reveals an off-center center, a sensitive axis, even if it remains difficult to recognise. Here, too, the body is in motion, disjointed and fragmented, and yet it's a body that stands upright, that moves and circulates, we don't quite know how. In a very sober scenography, with just a small half-dismantled piano in a corner, drawn by the light and the bodies in the space, the movement leaves traces in the spectator's gaze, like words on a blank page, and the voice in the ear. The members of a body that juxtapose themselves without grammar, one might say, in a syntax that doesn't resemble us. In what language do these bodies speak to us? we might ask. Recognition/non-recognition. The work of dancers Annie Hanauer and Ingvild Marstein Olsen explores the limits of bodily disarticulation as it meets sound,

space and voice on stage. The relationship between Stein's text, in its approach to language and its approach to the body, resonates in PUSH's work. And the spectator will find themselves gently confronted with questions: where are our fractures, our stammerings? Do I sometimes feel disjointed? Do we really understand each other so well, even when we speak the same language? What is a misunderstanding, after all?



## SOUND

In Gertrude Stein's writing, the work on the sound of words takes on as much importance as their meaning, in their rhythm, their "percussiveness", their timbre, their juxtaposition... There is such a musicality in the textual material that the PUSH manuscript could almost be considered a score. Here, it will be approached as such. The sounds of three languages will be present in this piece, each for its own musicality. Just as the meaning of words remains in abeyance in Stein's work, the sound work in this piece will be based on the evocation of a sound universe, rather than the imposition of a soundtrack. Electronic sounds merge with concrete sounds, blurring the boundary between words and music. Almost sound poetry. We try to let the spectator's imagination come to meet the work, and we leave room for it to enter. To not fill the silence. To not dictate what there is to hear. Sound as matter. Matter to enter the body and make it resonate.

### A METHOD OF A CLOAK.

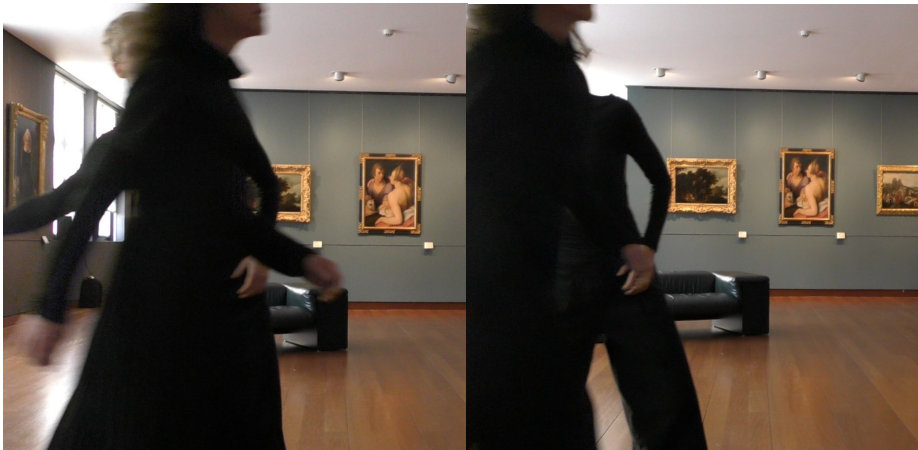
A single climb to a line, a straight exchange to a cane, a desperate adventure and courage and a clock, all this which is a system, which has feeling, which has resignation and success, all makes an attractive black silver.

*Tender Buttons* excerpt



## IMAGE/INE

In PUSH, Christophe Bisson's visual work meets Stein's world both in its imagination and its process. Using the stop-motion film technique, the films are constructed from photos that follow one another so rapidly it gives the impression of movement. There is a sort of resonance with Stein's writing process in Tender Buttons. The film in its very method of fabrication, is both articulated and disarticulated. The viewer has the impression of continuous movement, when in actual fact it is a series of freeze-frames. A collage of images, as it were, which leave us with an impression, a feeling, and remind us of something we can almost identify with yet not completely. The image works on this notion : can we ever be truly sure of what we are seeing? The film that opens PUSH for example evokes several images, difficult to clearly identify yet vaguely of reminiscent of something. Different people see different things. By using the stop motion technique for some of the films, Bisson also evokes the historical aspect underlying this performance. The techniques of stop motion were being used at the time, photography becoming film.



### ET BLAD

I midten av et lite, nesten nakent sted er  
det en pen ting å si at håndleddet fører.  
Håndleddet leder.

Tender Buttons was published in the year of the declaration of WW1. The western world was exploding. Stein, as though sensing this geo-political tension, was doing to language what was being done to the world. The PUSH project is an encounter with this intriguing text from 1914 that leaves room for the spectator and his or her own imagination. The political implications of the questions that arise are obvious. Stein, through her writing and her person, challenges us with notions of belonging and identity, rejecting any standardised form of representation of reality. So how do we articulate our differences? Must we all become the same ? How are we similar, familiar, strange? And how do we make sense of the social fractures in which we live today? PUSH gently invites viewers to question their own lives in relation to these fundamental issues, and just to feel the PUSH towards sensitivity.

## ARTISTS' BIOGRAPHIES

DEBORAH LENNIE she/her

<https://www.forwantofabetter.com/>

<https://deborahlennie.bandcamp.com>

Deborah Lennie was born in New Zealand and grew up in Australia. After studying singing and classical piano at the National Conservatorium of Music in Sydney, she went on to train as an actress at the Actors' Centre Sydney. In 1996 she moved to France. She is interested in the relationship between voice, body and space and she has worked with choreographers Rachid Ouramdane, Annie Hanauer; in film with Christophe Bisson Fred Hocké; in sound poetry with Sonia Chiambretto, Luc Bénazet and Benoît Casas; and with musicians Patrice Grente, Jean-Baptiste Julien, Naoto Yamagashi and François Chesnel, among others.

In 2011, she founded the company FOR WANT OF A BETTER... and is now its artistic director. The company has performed in France, Norway, Macedonia, Russia and Ukraine and has received the support of the Regional Council of Normandy, the City of Caen, Caen la Mer Normandie Communauté Urbaine, the French Ministry of Culture, the Institut Français, the Théâtre du Champ Exquis Scène Conventionné d'Interêt National, the National Choreographic Centre, Caen Normandy.

Since 2020 she has been an associated artist at the Théâtre du Champ Exquis, a Scène Conventionnée d'Intérêt National Art, Enfance, Jeunesse.

ANNIE HANAUER she/her

<https://www.anniehanauer.com/>

Annie Hanauer is an independent dance artist born in Minnesota USA. Now based in London, UK, Annie has performed, choreographed, toured, and taught extensively around the world for 15 years. She is a member of the UK's Equity Dance Committee and is interested in the power, wisdom, creativity, and resilience of people who have been 'othered', stemming from her own experience as a disabled person.

As a dancer Annie frequently performs internationally with long-time collaborator Rachid Ouramdane, choreographer & director of Chaillot Theatre National de la Danse (France) and has in the past performed with the Paris Chamber Orchestra, Cie For Want of a Better, Emanuel Gat Dance, Lea Anderson, Wendy Houston, Boris Charmatz among others.

Annie's choreographic work has been supported by LAC - Lugano Arte & Cultura (CH), Teatro Danzabile (CH), Migros Cultural Percentage Dance Festival Steps (CH), IntegrART(CH), Arts Council England (UK), Siobhan Davies Dance (UK), CCN2 Grenoble (FR), Candoco Dance Company (UK), and The Place (UK).

In addition to her own choreography, Annie has created touring work for Candoco Dance Company (*soft shell*), Theater Münster (*Madrigale von Krieg und Liebe*), Mobius Dance (*Curious Playground*), ZHdK Zurich University of the Arts (*paper landscapes*), and as Cowles Visiting Artist 2020 at the University of Minnesota (*IMPULSE*).

INGVILD MARSTEIN OLSEN she/her

Ingvild Marstein Olsen is a Norwegian dance artist, performer and choreographer who



works across Norway and the European dance scene in theatre, site-specific, and gallery contexts. Ingvild is interested in collaborative work across different cultural fields. In 2022 she created the multidisciplinary work *River Being*, which currently tours across Europe. Ingvild is also working on a collaborative production *Økohelter*, an immersive performance about Norwegian forest ecosystems. In 2019 she worked closely with Panta Rei Danseteater in an evolving role as a performer, choreographer, and coordinator. Since 2017 Ingvild has worked with choreographers: Katrine Kirsebom (CODA 19), Pell Ensemble, and IJAD Dance Company, she has collaborated with and toured the work of Rahel Vonmoos and Alison Curtis Jones. She co-choreographed PUSH for the french company For Want of a Better (2022) Ingvild has also choreographed and toured her own work SMACK (co-choreographed with Vera Stierli and Olivia Edginton), and solo work In Series and En Som Lytter.

In 2015 Ingvild graduated from Laban with a BA in Contemporary Dance, and again in 2016 with an MA in Dance Performance (Transitions Dance Company). During her time with Transitions she collaborated with choreographers: Dog Kennel Hill Project & Theo Clinkard.

Her artistic practice has been recognised in Hedmark (Norway) where Ingvild received Sparebanken Hedmarks Talentstipend in 2015, 2016 and 2017.

PATRICE GRENTE he/him

<https://festival-interstice.net/>

<https://fiasco-records.bandcamp.com/>

Patrice Grente is a double bass player who has worked extensively in jazz and improvised music for many years. He has toured throughout Europe and the world in different groups and has created soundscapes for theatre, dance, installations and film. In his personal research, he explores sound as an entity and works with electronics, field-recording, musique concrète and sound installations. He has worked with artists such as Phil Niblock, Jérôme Noetinger, Pan Huysen, Paul Dunmall, Luc Bénazet, Deborah Lennie, Jean-Luc Capozzo, Benoit Casas, Sonia Chiambretto, Yumiko Nii, Fred Hocké, Guillaume Bellanger and others in the fields of art, dance, theatre, sound poetry and performance.

In 2011 he created the independent label FIASCO RECORDS, devoted to improvised and experimental music. He is a member and programmer of TYMPAN, a jazz and improvised music collective based in Normandy, France.

He is co-founder and programmer of the international arts and performance festival INTERSTICE in Caen, France.

CHRISTOPHE BISSON he/him

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christophe\\_Bisson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christophe_Bisson)

Christophe Bisson, born in 1969, lives and works in Caen. After studying philosophy at the Université Panthéon-Sorbonne, where he obtained a DEA with first-class honours in 1994, he turned his attention to the visual arts and has had numerous solo exhibitions in France and around the world (Paris, Budapest, Barcelona, Kiev, Vilnius, New York, Moscow, etc.).

In 2007, with New York filmmaker Maryann De Leo, (Oscar for best documentary film 2004), he made the documentary *White Horse*, which attracted considerable attention at international festivals. Nominated for a Golden Bear at the Berlinale, the film was subsequently broadcast

on the American network HBO.

His films have been shown on television (HBO, Canal+) and at prestigious French and international festivals such as the Viennale, Cinéma du Réel and FID Marseille, Berlin Festival(2008), Viennale (2008), Cinéma du Réel (2008), In-dieLisboa (2009), Queens University, New York (2009), HBO 2009, FID Marseille 2013, As Vozes do Silêncio - Porto, Portugal 2013, Signes de Nuit - Paris (2013), FESDOB, Festival du Film Documentaire de Blitta, Togo (2013-2014), Festival Doc en Courts, Lyon (2014), Akipel, Jakarta International Documentary & Experimental Film Festival, Indonésie (2014), CINECOA - Festival Internacional de Cinema de Vila Nova de Foz Côa, Portugal (2014), Projection spéciale à la SCAM, Paris, France (2014), Festival Traces de Vie, Clermont-Ferrand, France (2016) Exposition «Bâtard - Pour des rencontres interspécifiques», Cinéma du réel, Paris (2016), Karlovy vari International Film Festival (2016), FID Marseille (2016) PRIX DES LYCEENS, CINEMA IN TRANSGRESSION COMPETITION - SPECIAL MENTION FOR THE NIGHTAWARD, International Festival Signes de Nuit, Quito (2016) & International Festival Signes de Nuit, Paris (2016) Séance spéciale à la Villa Medici, Rome (2016), Festival Porto/Post/ Doc, Porto (2016), Festival First Look, Museum of the Moving Image, New York (2017), «O Solitude», Beursschouwburg, Bruxelles (2017) États généraux du film documentaire, Lussas (2017), FID MARSEILLE (2019), DOC LISBOA (2019), Museum of the moving images, New York (2020)