**Monte Verità (1900-)**

During the first two decades of the [twentieth century](http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/2), Monte Verità, a hill on the west side of [Ascona](http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ascona) in southern Switzerland, was the site of a ‘life-reform’ movement. An unprejudiced rural population made it possible for activists, writers, and artists to establish a non-hierarchical social model. The goal was to create community models of the future in the field of diverse reform movements. Monte Verità translates as ‘Mountain of Truth.’

During the years from 1900 to 1920, Monte Verità was synonymous with ‘the anational cooperative social form, modern child-rearing, the position of women in future society, mystical freemasonry, social restructuring, art, ritual dance of earlier and non-European cultures, and a culture of expression in education, life, and art. A healthy diet, natural healing, housing reform, clothing reform, writing reform, women's liberation, cultural reform, and settlements.’[[1]](#endnote-1) With Rudolf Laban and his students Mary Wigman, Katja Wulff, Suzanne Perrottet, and Maja Lederer, Monte Verità came to epitomize body reform and expressionist dance. There Laban implemented his ideas of movement art, word art, sound art, and form art and he developed his *Gesamtkunstwerk* ideas, which led him to total theatre. Laban's expressionist dance is characterized by performances in outdoor spaces, the inclusion of naked bodies, and experimentation with group dances based on ideas from ancient theatre and Jaques-Dalcroze's rhythmic studies. All of these ideas and practices influenced later developments in *Ausdruckstanz*, as German modern dance was called, by Laban, Wigman, and their many peers.

In 1927-28 dancer Charlotte Bara had a small dance theatre built, the Teatro San Materno. Newly renovated, the dance theatre is now back in operation, alongside several museums and a conference center that mark the site where, as one cultural historian wrote, ‘the counterculture began.’[[2]](#endnote-2)

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**References and further reading**

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**Suggested Paratext**

Laban Dancer on Monte Verita

<https://search.yahoo.com/yhs/search?p=rduolf+laban+monte+verita+ascona&ei=UTF-8&hspart=mozilla&hsimp=yhs-003>

**Notes**

1. H. Szeemann (1980) *Monte Verità—Berg der Wahrheit*, Milan: Electra Editrice, 128. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. M. Green (1968) *Mountain of Truth: the Counterculture begins, Ascona 1900-1920*, Hanover: University Press of New England. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)