



Temporary. Final version will be posted online after the seminar.

Do not take into account the durations which correspond to the version that will be available in the archives after the seminar.

Quote: Sophie Lespinasse-Milan, *Danced spiritual life of Teresa of Avila and current witnesses*, Historical insights: reminiscences of Theresa by Nathalie Guillemé, online seminar n°12, Dance and Spirituality/Christianity, International Council of Dance, 22/11/2025.

"Danced Spiritual Life of Teresa of Avila and Current Witnesses" Historical Insights: Reminiscences of Theresa by Nathalie Guillemé, dancer-choreographer

Introduction (00'17")

I draw on the work I've done in collaboration with Catherine Ingrassia, specifically on the dance style of that era, to try and imagine what she might have danced, how she might have danced, since each era is marked by a particular style, fashion, and musical style that even reflects the prevailing mindset of the person in that time.

What I propose is to embody a form of music and dance from Teresa's time, without, of course, claiming to dance exactly like her. It's a suggestion I offer you.

Thérèse dansait dans la clôture avec ses sœurs. A la chapelle, dans les couloirs des cellules, dans les jardins... avec castagnettes et tambourin (01'00")

[Video]

[Text]

What grace God has bestowed upon you by placing you in a sanctuary where,
if He grants you this folly of which I speak and you manifest it,
you will find only encouragement, and not blame;
it would have been quite different in the world,
where such sentiments are so rare that I am not surprised they are criticized.

Blessed are the souls who have the fortunate lot of living separated from the world!

Teresa of Avila

[Video]

She improvised verses and dances, inspired by the movements she had practiced, particularly in courts. (02'25")

[Video]

[Text]

Oh! What celebrations, what demonstrations
she would make, if she could,
so that everyone would understand her joy!
This is what other saints must have felt
who went into the deserts
so that, like Saint Francis, they could



sing aloud the praises of God.

Teresa of Avila

[Video]

And so, she cheerfully went off to found her convents... (03'25")

[Video]

Workshop sessions: the metamorphosis of the butterfly (03'55")

Silk comes from a seed that resembles tiny peppercorns.

When the silkworm has grown, it begins to spin silk
and to build the dwelling where it will die.

Let this mystical worm die.

Dead to the world, it transforms into a small white butterfly.

Raised in the prayer of union, the soul no longer recognizes itself.

There is the same difference between its past state and its present state
as between that deformed silkworm and the small white butterfly.

Teresa of Avila

[Video]

And the sun shines through the stained-glass window of the angel to illuminate the butterfly's wings (04'57")

[Video]

Credits (05'50")

Filming locations:

Cloister of Évreux Cathedral

Church of St. Cyr and St. Julitte in Arthies

Recording sessions on October 4 and November 2, 2025,
supplemented by previously unseen archival footage from Nathalie Guillemé (2023).

Music:

"La Magdalena" (Tourdion), from the libretto presented by Catherine Ingrassia
Vocal and organ improvisations (including Nada te turbe from Taizé): Odile Jutten
Readings* and singing of Nada te turbe from Taizé: Sophie Lespinasse-Milan

Nathalie Guillemé has practiced Loïe Fuller dance since 2015 (Ave Maria)
and introduced it in churches in 2019 (Évreux Cathedral, Auch Cathedral, etc.).

Since then, this approach has inspired other Christian dancers,
such as Raphaëlle Hubin for her first performance.



International Dance Council, official partner of UNESCO
Dance and Spirituality Program, Dance and Christianity Group
Seminar n°12 of November 22nd, 2025
"Danced Spiritual Life of Teresa of Avila and Current Witnesses"
Historical Insights: Reminiscences of Theresa
by Nathalie Guillemé, dancer-choreographer By Sophie Lespinasse-Milan (09'40")



Work by Sophie Lespinasse-Milan.

* References to the texts (the quotations are excerpts, sometimes combined;
please consult the original source),
in The Castle of the Soul or The Book of Mansions:
texts 1 & 2, 6th Mansion, Chapter 6 &
text 3 (spiritual metaphor of the butterfly), 5th Mansion, Chapter 2.
First published in 1577,
this book is considered the spiritual testament of Teresa.

Dedication (06'15")

To Théodore & Lucas
Josette, Jean & Richard
Elisabeth & Pierluigi

final image (06'20")

"Danced Spiritual Life of Avila & Current Witnesses"
Presented for the first time on November 22, 2025,
during seminar no. 12 of the Dance and Christianity group.

Dance and Spirituality Program
of the International Dance Council,
Official partner of UNESCO.

LOGO:
Dance and Spirituality
International Dance Council

Memories of a day that was as chilling as it was warming... (06'30")

[Video]

**A final nod to the Augustinian sisters of the Sanctuary of the Black Madonna of Paris,
in Neuilly-sur-Seine... (08'40")**

Shooting attempt #1
Shooting attempt #2
Shooting attempt #3
Shooting attempt #4



International Dance Council, official partner of UNESCO
Dance and Spirituality Program, Dance and Christianity Group
Seminar n°12 of November 22nd, 2025
"Danced Spiritual Life of Teresa of Avila and Current Witnesses"
Historical Insights: Reminiscences of Theresa
by Nathalie Guillemé, dancer-choreographer By Sophie Lespinasse-Milan (09'40")



Shooting attempt #... more calmly

Dear Nathalie, Thank you for your patience during the long and repetitive takes and reshoots, both outdoors and indoors... (09'20")