



Inauguration of Choreographer Jiří Kylián

To the Académie des beaux-arts

(foreign associate member)*

Wednesday, March 13, 2019 at 15:30



© Anton Corbijn

On March 13, 2019, the choreographer Jiří Kylián will be officially inaugurated to the Académie des beaux-arts by his colleague Hugues R. Gall, member of the section "membres libres".

Jiří Kylián will become member of the Académie on April 25, 2018 in the seat of painter Leonardo Cremonini.

During the ceremony which will take place in the Coupole of the Palais de l'Institut de France, Hugues R. Gall will announce the installation of Jiří Kylián but before inviting the latter, according to custom, will praise his predecessor.

On this occasion, William Christie, member of the section "membres libres" of the Académie des beaux-arts, will conduct the ensemble *Les Arts florissants*.

During this proceeding, Her Royal Highness Princess de Hanovre will hand over the sword to the academician.

* The foreign associate members, statutorily 16, are elected among artists or foreign personalities contributing by their action to promote the artistic creation in the world.

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Jiří Kylián



Photographer not known

Dancer and choreographer Jiří Kylián was born in 1947 in Prague, Czechoslovakia.

In 1962 he was accepted as a dance student to the Prague conservatory. Although this era was totally controlled by the omnipresent communist party, many of the teachers were excellent, as their own education was rooted in the liberal and democratic pre-war Czechoslovakia. The teacher Zora Šemberová had a decisive influence on Jiří.

In 1967 he received a scholarship to study at the *Royal Ballet School* in London. There he met the choreographer John Cranko, who offered him a contract with his Stuttgart Ballet. Before taking up the contract, he returned to Prague, where in the meantime, there was an uprising against the communist rule lead

by Alexander Dubček. His attempt to create « Socialism with a human face » was crushed on August 21, 1968 by the Warsaw pact forces. One week later Kylián left for Stuttgart, where Cranko encouraged him to create some of his earliest choreographies. In the early seventies, he was invited as a guest choreographer to the *Nederlands Dans Theater* in Holland. In 1975 he was asked to become its artistic director.

Kylián's creation of *Sinfonietta* at the Charleston Festival in 1978 was a true breakthrough, giving *Nederlands Dans Theater* international fame and recognition. The company began to travel extensively (*Metropolitan Opera House, Paris Opera, Prague Spring Festival* ...).

Realizing the importance of education of young dancers, he created a Junior company, NDT 2. But he also recognized the value and the specific quality of older dances, which lead him to the creation of a Senior company, NDT 3. Together with his colleagues Hans van Manen, Mats Ek and William Forsythe he created its world première. This event was immediately accepted by the public and by the media as an important new development. NDT 3 had an immediate positive impact on the dance community. In fact it simply proved that *all ages can dance*.

In 1987 *Nederlands Dans Theater* built its own home - studio spaces and a theatre designed by architect Rem Koolhaas. Kylián remained affiliated with *Nederlands Dans Theater* for 34 years. In the past years, his focus has been more on video, film and photography. The award winning films *Car-Men* and *Scalamare*, and the photo installation *Free Fall* were created in close collaboration with his muse and his lifelong partner Sabine Kupferberg.

Hugues R. Gall



© Roberto Granata

Hugues R. Gall, who was born in Honfleur on 18 March 1940, was elected to the section "membres libres" of the Académie des beaux-arts on 18 December 2002, where he took over the chair previously occupied by Daniel Wildenstein.

After studying at the Institute of Political Studies in Paris and the Sorbonne in German literature, he began his career in the offices of Edgar Faure at the Ministry of Agriculture and then at the Ministry of National Education, where he was responsible for artistic education. At that time, he worked with Marcel Landowski to establish the bachelor's degree with a musical minor, as well as the artistic education department at the University of Vincennes. He was then appointed project manager in the office of Edmond Michelet, Minister of State for Cultural Affairs.

After serving as Secretary-General of the Union of National Opera Houses from October 1969 onwards, he was the deputy administrator of the National Opera Theatre with Rolf Liebermannde from 1973 to 1980. He was the General Director of the Geneva Grand Theatre from 1980 to 1995, and finally Director of the Paris National Opera from 1995 to 2004.

From 2005 to 2009, he was a State Councillor Extraordinary, Vice-Chairman of the Nureyev Foundation (until 2008) and the Professional Chamber of Opera Directors (CPDO), a member of the Board of the Veolia Environment Corporate Foundation from September 2004 onwards, a member of the Board of Directors of the Foundation France Television, and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Institute for the Financing of Cinema and Cultural Industries (IFCIC). In November 2007, he was elected president of the French Youth Orchestra.

In March 2008, he was elected director of the Claude Monet Foundation in Giverny by his colleagues at the cademy of Fine Arts. Over the past ten years, he has led many projects there: the restoration of the living room /studio in 2011, followed by Claude Monet's bedroom in 2013, and the acquisition in 2016 of nearly 70 hectares of land in the communes of Giverny, Port-Villez and Vernon.

In 2018, the Foundation welcomed nearly 700,000 visitors, making it one of the most visited artist homes in France, and the second most visited cultural attraction for tourists in Normandy after Mont Saint-Michel. He was re-elected on 11 April 2018 for a five-year term at the head of the Foundation.

Since 1995, Hugues R. Gall has been an Honorary Citizen of the Republic and Canton of Geneva.

Photos available for the press



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10 photos - from top to bottom :

1. Bella Figura, 1995, © Joris Jan Bos
2. One of a Kind, 1998, © Joris Jan Bos
3. Tar and Feathers, 2006, © Sharon Mor Yosef
4. The making of Silent Cries, 1986, © Joris Jan Bos
5. Anonymous, 2011, © Joris Jan Bos
6. From the photo installation, Free Fall, 2016, © Jiří Kylián
7. Last Touch First, 2008, © Robert Benschop
8. Petite Mort, 1991, © Daisy Komen
9. Gods and Dogs, 2008, © Daisy Komen
10. Scalamare (film), 2017, © Jiří Kylián

The making of the sword

With my inauguration as a new member on the 13th of March 2019, the Académie des beaux-arts recognizes the importance of a new section for Choreography. This makes me obviously extremely proud, because the art of dance has been a grossly neglected art form for a considerable time.

At the inauguration every new member is presented with a sword, symbolizing his profession. The Sword, as attribute of the newly elected member of the Academy, dressed in his fine costume, is a weapon to be used only in defence of arts and culture. Furthermore, it symbolizes the specific universe of every artist who is admitted to the Academy. But how to make a sword that symbolizes the art of dance and choreography....?

It was not an easy task. After contemplating many different possibilities, I came across an image of a beautiful small statue of a female dancer. This statue, which looks like it was created by Matisse or Picasso, is in fact a work of art created 5,500 years ago in Egypt. She was excavated by Henri de Morgan in 1907 from Tomb 2 at the site of Ma'mariya in Egypt. This statuette is from the pre-dynastic period. It is much older than the pyramids and the hieroglyphics, which means that nothing is known about her. The only obvious fact is, that she is a dancer. She is also known as the « Bird lady », because instead of a head she has a beak, and her arms resemble wings.

The meaning and significance of this occasion is, that the art of choreography is elevated to a new level. That is why I decided that this « Bird lady » should stand on wings, taking her to new adventures.

And here is a small tragi-comical anecdote connected to this: I have telephoned a man who has a large collection of stuffed animals and asked him if he had a pair of small bird wings, which could be scanned and recreated in metal. As he explained to me that unfortunately he didn't have anything which I could use, just in that moment a dead bird fell from the sky, and landed right in front of my feet....?! I took this bird, a finch to this man. He prepared them with love and care so that the wings of this bird could be «immortalized» as part of my sword. Another difficult task was to obtain a perfect 3D digital scan of the ancient Egyptian sculpture. I have found out that she «lives» now in the Brooklyn Museum in New York.

I have asked a very talented photographer, Jason Akira Somma, whose mentor I was a few years ago, to try to organize the scanning. By strange coincidence the space in which the « Bird lady » enchanted thousands of viewers for many years, had to be restored, and the « Bird lady » had to be removed from public view. Jason took this opportunity and scanned her in a « Chambre séparée ».

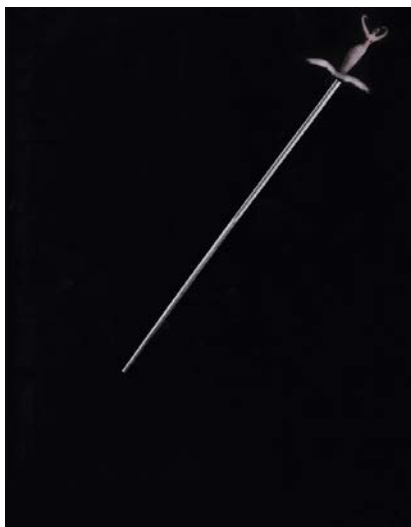
Having obtained the most essential parts of the handle of the sword, I needed to find a black smith to assemble the parts and make the sword. Two friends, graphic designer René de Haan and painter Ilya Walraven, were instrumental in finding the very best black smith in the Netherlands to actually physically make it. His name is Dave Wijngaarden from Alkmaar.

None of this could ever be realized without a totally dedicated and tireless support of Carmen Thomas, the director of Kylián Productions.

Sword's photos available for the press



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7 photos - from top to bottom :

1. Egyptian 'Bird Lady', 5500BC with wings
2. Sword, design by Jiří Kylián
3. Dead bird, wings
4. Dead bird
5. Dead bird
6. Jason Akira Somma filming the Egyptian statuette
7. Dave Wijngaarden, le forgeron de l'épée, Atelier Alkmaar © Jef Bracke

The Académie des beaux-arts

The Académie des beaux-arts is one of the five academies composing the Institut de France. With 63 members in 9 artistic sections, she strives to promote and encourage artistic creation in all its expressions and ensures the defence of French cultural heritage. It continues its missions of supporting the creation through the numerous awards it awards each year, an active policy of partnerships with cultural institutions and its activities of advising public authorities. To carry out these missions, the Académie des beaux-arts manages its heritage consisting of gifts and legacies, but also important cultural foundations such as the Fondation Paul Marmottan Monet (Musée Marmottan Monet in Paris and Bibliothèque Marmottan in Boulogne-Billancourt), the Fondation Claude Monet in Giverny, the Villa Ephrussi de Rothschild in Saint-Jean-Cap-Ferrat and the Fondation Jean et Simone Lurçat in Paris.

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