



ACADÉMIE  
DES BEAUX-ARTS  
INSTITUT DE FRANCE

# CHOREOGRAPHY

THE ACADÉMIE'S  
NINTH SECTION

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Editorial • pages 2, 3

News:

**European Art Explora Prize / Académie des Beaux-Arts  
Laureates of the Simone and Cino Del Duca Foundation  
Art Prizes**

Exhibition | Institut de France

Installations under the Coupole:

**Frédéric Mitterrand**

• pages 4, 5

**Académie des Beaux-Arts**

**Pierre David-Weill Drawing Prize 2020**

Virtual exhibition | [academiedesbeauxarts.fr](http://academiedesbeauxarts.fr)

• pages 6, 7

Dossier: “Choreography, the Académie’s Ninth Section”

“Enter Dance under the Coupole” by Thierry Malandain

“Dance - between universality and transversality”,  
interview with **Blanca Li**, by **Nadine Eghels**

“The challenges of Angelin Preljocaj”  
by **Dominique Frétard**

“A woman of many faces”, questions for **Carolyn Carlson**,  
by **Lydia Harambourg**

“Sets and costumes... Past and Present”,  
by **Lydia Harambourg**

“The Pina Bausch phenomenon”, by **Brigitte Terziev**

“Dance, a contemporary affair”,  
interview with **Didier Deschamps**, by **Nadine Eghels**

“Bel’s Rift”, by **Dominique Frétard**

“On dance, choreography and performance”, by **Jiří Kylián**

“The languages of dance”, interview with **Thierry Fouquet**,  
by **Nadine Eghels**

“Dance as captured by photography...”,  
by **Bernard Perrine**

• pages 8 à 45

News:

**“Charlotte Perriand, Photographies”**

Exhibition – Institut de France

• pages 46, 47

**Academics**

• page 48

Opposite: on March 13, 2019, the dancer Sabine Kupferberg,  
muse of the choreographer Jiří Kylián, during his installation as  
Foreign associate, at the Institut de France.

Photo Juliette Agnel

## number 92 summer 2020



## Editorial

### A major art

What an incredible paradox: just as the Académie des Beaux-Arts chose to salute dance with this *Lettre* dedicated to it, half the world went into lockdown and we saw images of dancers of the Ballet de l’Opéra National de Paris having to train in their living room or, for some more fortunate ones, performing a few tentative steps on their terrace.

This pandemic thus threw the considerable social disparities that exist in our country into stark relief, starting with the notion of available space. Cramped homes have been a real trial for many who, for lack of enough space to live serenely, have felt suffocated and deprived of the basic freedom to move around as they wish. More than ever before, having a reasonable amount of living space was a real privilege.

Yet, for creators in our *Compagnie*, these months of confinement have highlighted another privilege, one that may be less obvious than those related to one’s social position: the privilege of making a living from one’s passion. My fellow painters, sculptors, engravers, architects, composers and photographers have all told me that they took advantage of this forced isolation, both to gain perspective and to create more. Even filmmakers and choreographers, while they were left without their team or troupe, still worked on new projects and dreamed of another future.

Therefore, now more than ever, whatever our aesthetics or our successes or failures may be, we must remain mindful of the extraordinary privilege we have to be immersed thus at the heart of art and to be able to devote our every day to what we all dreamt of from childhood or adolescence.

The lesson to be drawn from this will be the need to share emotion with those who do not have this opportunity.

From the day I was elected, I have made it a priority to bring choreography into the Académie des Beaux-Arts as a new discipline represented by its own section. My fellows were

well aware of this when they honoured me by electing me Permanent Secretary on 1 February 2017.

“Choreography” rather than “Dance”, for we are an academy of creators, supported by unattached members, that is, artists in artistic disciplines not represented in our *Compagnie*, great servants of cultural life or patrons.

Maurice Béjart was thus elected as an “Unattached member” – a clear sign of the necessity of creating a Choreography Section, as we did on 9 October 2018.

This Section comprises four members and four correspondents. On 24 April 2019, three of the first four seats were filled by the election of Blanca Li, Thierry Malandain and Angelin Preljocaj. On 15 January 2020, two correspondents were elected, Dominique Frétard and Didier Deschamps. This group will be completed when an election is held at the end of this year.

Of course, composers have always been close to dance, and my fellows in the Musical Composition Section were the first to rejoice at the arrival of choreographers. This will not keep us from questioning them on the place of contemporary music in new ballets, on the lack of significant common projects or on many choreographers’ excessive tendency to use montages of a variety of pre-existing music rather than creating new pieces. But I look forward to what will undoubtedly be lively debates with new colleagues who have always been passionate about the music of their time.

I hope this *Lettre* will allow you to measure the extent to which the Académie des Beaux-Arts has been enriched by welcoming this major art.

**Laurent Petitgirard**

Composer and Permanent Secretary of the Académie des Beaux-Arts







## European Art Explora Prize / Académie des Beaux-Arts

The Art Explora endowment fund and the Académie des Beaux-Arts are partnering to launch a new European-wide prize to encourage the sharing of arts and culture with the broadest possible public.

In launching this Prize aimed at cultural institutions, Art Explora and the Académie des Beaux-Arts have demonstrated their intention to share culture with everyone and thus to foster in all individuals an opening up to others through culture.

Art Explora is an endowment fund created in December 2019 by entrepreneur and patron Frédéric Jousset. Its purpose is to bridge the cultural divide, particularly through the use of digital technology and itinerant means.

The rules, regulations and application forms for the Prize have been available online since 9 March to all public and private museums and art centres in Europe, at [www.artexplora.org](http://www.artexplora.org).

The three institutions awarded this Prize will share a total of 150,000 euros. The idea is to honour and amplify their innovative initiatives for the public: digital innovations, off-site actions, accessibility for the disabled, tackling cultural exclusion, new mediations, cultural discovery for children, and so on. Applications are open until 25 September. A jury of twelve, half of whom are art professionals and members of the Académie des Beaux-Arts, will elect the winners of the Prize. The prize-giving ceremony will be held in the autumn at the Palais de l'Institut de France.



## Laureates of the Simone and Cino Del Duca Foundation Art Prizes

The Simone and Cino Del Duca Foundation, which was chaired by Académie des Beaux-Arts correspondent Simone Del Duca until her death in 2004, has been hosted by the Institut de France since 2005. Simone Del Duca entrusted the Institut with the task of continuing her work in the field of arts, literature and sciences by awarding grants, prizes and aid every year upon proposals from its five Académies.

The Artistic Grand Prix is endowed with 100,000 euros, awarded annually on the Académie des Beaux-Arts' commendation, alternately to a composer, a sculptor and, this year, a painter. In view of the exceptional circumstances, the endowment of the **Painting Grand Prize** has been divided into four prizes for the benefit of the four finalists. The winners are **Guillaume Bresson, Damien Deroubaix, Pierre Monestier and Tursic & Mille**.

Since 2014, the **Confirmation Prize in Musical Composition** has included two prizes: a **Commission Prize**, endowed with 15,000 euros, which was awarded to composer **Aurélien Dumont** – commissioned to write an original work to be premiered under the Coupole of the Institut de France during the Académie's 2021 solemn session – and a **Performance Prize**, endowed with 10,000 euros, awarded as an encouragement to a young musician, who this year was pianist **Claire Désert**.

The **Confirmation Prize in Sculpture**, endowed with 25,000 euros, was awarded to **Vincent Péraro**.

The works of the prize-winners in painting are exhibited from 17 June to 9 August 2020 at the Institut de France's Pavillon Comtesse de Caen.

Above: Guillaume Bresson, *Untitled*, 2010-2012, oil on canvas, 170 x 225 cm.



On Wednesday, 5 February 2020, Frédéric Mitterrand, elected as a member of the Artistic Creations in Cinema and Audiovisual Arts Section on 24 April 2019, in the seat previously held by Jeanne Moreau (1928-2017), was instated at the Académie des Beaux-Arts by his colleague Adrien Goetz, of the Unattached Members' Section. At the end of the session held under the Coupole of the Palais de l'Institut de France, his academician's sword was presented to him by Foreign Associate Member of the Académie, S.M.I. Farah Pahlavi.

Frédéric Mitterrand was born on 21 August 1947 in Paris. After a degree in history and geography, he joined the Institut d'Études Politiques (IEP) in Paris, then taught Economics, History and Geography at the École Active Bilingue de Paris for three years, from 1968 to 1971. A cinema aficionado, Frédéric Mitterrand then began a career as manager of art house cinemas. In the early 1980s, he embarked on a new career as a producer, director and host of television programmes. On TF1, he hosted the shows *Étoiles et toiles* (1981-1986), *Ciné-Fêtes* (1984), *Acteur Studio* (1986-1987), *Permission de minuit* and *Destins* (1987-1988). He continued his career on the television channel Antenne 2 where he hosted *Du côté de chez Fred* until 1991, *Étoile Palace* (1990), *C'est votre vie* (1993), *Les Amants du siècle* (1993), *Caravane de nuit* (1994), *Ciné-Club* (1996), *Cercle des arts* (1997-1998) and *Hymne à la voix* (1999). He also hosted radio programmes from 1997 to 2006, with a

Above: Frédéric Mitterrand with, on his left, architect Jean-Michel Wilmotte and Unattached Member Adrien Goetz.  
Photo credit: Patrick Rimond

literary programme on Europe 1 and, from 2002 to 2006, the interview programme *Ça me dit* on France Culture. From 2003 to 2005, Frédéric Mitterrand also held the position of Deputy Director General in charge of programming on TV5. He was Director of the Académie de France in Rome – Villa Médicis from 2008 to 2009, before being appointed Minister of Culture and Communication in June 2009, a position he held until May 2012. As a filmmaker, Frédéric Mitterrand has directed the following



feature films: *Love Letters in Somalia* (1981), *Les Lumières de Lausanne* (1982), *Paris vu par, vingt ans après* (1984), *Madame Butterfly* (1995). During his career, he also directed numerous documentaries about historical events or figures of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: *Les Aigles foudroyés* (1997), *Un printemps 1956* or *Jean d'Ormesson, une vie ne suffit pas*. Recently, he directed and presented the documentary series *Les écrivains au péril de la guerre* on TV5 Monde. He also directed the documentary *Christian Dior, la France*, broadcast on France 3 in 2017, as well as the documentaries *Hollywood, la vie rêvée de Lana Turner* and *Trump, le parrain de Manhattan*, broadcast on France 3 in 2018. In 2020, the documentary *Apollonie: les dieux avaient raison* will be broadcast on TV5 Monde. He is also the author of several books, including *La mauvaise vie* (Robert Laffont, 2005), *La création* (Robert Laffont, 2017) and, most recently, *Le duel, Victor Hugo et Napoléon III* (XO éditions, 2019).

### Excerpt from Adrien Goetz's speech

“Your life is a movie. You're its director, stage manager, props master, you play all the roles, including the darkest ones, because you're unmatched when it comes to composing a dark painting of yourself. [...] as Minister of Culture and Communication, you added a new role in the film of your life. Cinema and writing have always gone hand in hand in your oeuvre, as you started writing with a camera. *Love Letters in Somalia* is your first book and film, which you shot in 1981 and wrote while editing it. There isn't an image in it that doesn't come from you, but what stands out as it would in a song is rhythm, phrasing, your style. In the editing room, with your dear friend Luc Barnier, you rewrote your texts. You're off-camera, never in the image, but always in the foreground – as you would be later, in another genre, in *Les Aigles foudroyés* or its sequel, *Mémoires d'exil*.” ■



Virtual exhibition | [academiedesbeauxarts.fr](https://academiedesbeauxarts.fr)

# ACADÉMIE DES BEAUX-ARTS PIERRE DAVID-WEILL DRAWING PRIZE 2020

The Académie des Beaux-Arts – Pierre David-Weill Drawing Prize was created in 1971 by Académie des Beaux-Arts member Pierre David-Weill, and has been actively supported for over forty years by his son Michel David-Weill, also a member of the Académie. The Prize encourages the practice of drawing, a fundamental aspect of artistic creation, among new generations of artists.

This year the selection committee was composed of members of the Académie des Beaux-Arts' Painting, Sculpture and Engraving Sections: Jean Anguera, Pierre Collin, Érik Desmazières, Astrid de la Forest, Philippe Garel and Brigitte Terziev.

The Prizes were awarded respectively to Atam Rasho (first prize, €8,000), Jérôme Minard (second prize, €4,000) and Baya Sadou (third prize, €2,000), and the artist collective Martinet & Texereau received a special award. An exhibition of this year's laureates, special awardees and finalists was scheduled to be held at the Pavillon Comtesse de Caen of the Palais de l'Institut de France. However, due to the lockdown measures during the Covid-19 epidemic, the Académie des Beaux-Arts has presented this exhibition in digital form on its website.

**Atam Rasho** (First Prize), born in 1985 in Senlis, is a French-Armenian. In 2016, after having worked on various animated motion pictures, he began directing his personal short film *Voix des Soupirs*, which was released in 2019. It is an adaptation from Saint Gregory of Narek's *Book of Lamentation*, a collection of mystical poems from the High Middle Ages that Armenians have venerated for a thousand years. Atam Rasho is currently working on a new short film while continuing to produce drawn works.

**Jérôme Minard** (Second Prize), born in 1983, lives and works in Lille. His work offers an immersion in fragile and unstable territories where the vegetal and the organic merge through hostile lands scattered beyond memory. Matter over-invests space to manifest the conflict between the echo of a known age and its uncertain mutation, where the one resists the other one covering it. His ink and Rotring drawings compose landscapes in the grips of enigmatic processes.

**Baya Sadou** (Third Prize), born in 1997, is currently a Master's student in Visual Arts for Journalism at the École Européenne Supérieure d'Art de Bretagne. Her drawings bear witness to the questions that preoccupied her when she was diagnosed with cancer in the summer of 2018. This year she will exhibit her works at the Festival du Journal Intime in Saint-Gildas-de-Rhuys.

**Martinet et Texereau** (Special Award) is a collective of two artists who graduated from the École Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs de Paris. They have been working since 2008 on developing a common style, which is essentially oriented towards graphite pencil drawing on paper. Their work is a safeguard, an attempt to distance themselves from objects that are insignificant yet striking, in memories of varying degrees of resonance. The way they look at everyday life also allows their gaze to linger on dwellings and common spaces. ■

[www.academiedesbeauxarts.fr/exposition-du-prix-de-dessin-pierre-david-weill-2020](https://www.academiedesbeauxarts.fr/exposition-du-prix-de-dessin-pierre-david-weill-2020)



Above: Atam Rasho, *Création*, pen and Indian ink on paper.

To the right: Sadou Baya, *Self-portrait in hospital*, chalk. Martinet & Texereau, *Passage 7*, 60x50 cm, graphite pencil, 2019.

Jérôme Minard, *Fuir et disparaître*, 75 x 55 cm, ink on paper, 2018.





In June 1982, in the amphitheatre of Arles, photographer and academician-to-be Lucien Clergue captured Maurice Béjart, with the Ballet du XX<sup>e</sup> Siècle, rehearsing his creation *Thalassa Mare Nostrum* to music by Mikis Theodorakis.

# CHOREOGRAPHY

## THE ACADEMIE'S NINTH SECTION

With the creation of the new Choreography Section composed of four seats, the Académie des Beaux-Arts – which already included choreographer Jiří Kylián among its members, as a Foreign Associate – is decisively stepping into dance and highlighting the importance of an ancestral artistic discipline. Choreography has now be acknowledged as indisputably relevant through the quality and diversity of its productions as well as the enthusiasm of its audiences.



# ENTER DANCE UNDER THE COUPOLE<sup>(1)</sup>

By **THIERRY MALANDAIN**, member of the Choreography Section

In its plenary session of 25 April 2018, on the initiative of Permanent Secretary Laurent Petitgirard, the Académie des Beaux-Arts created a "Choreography" Section with four vacant seats. Aside from the Czech choreographer Jiří Kylián, who was instated as a Foreign Associate Member of the Académie in March 2019, the heir to the royal academies of the Grand Siècle had hosted only one choreographer since 1816: Maurice Béjart, who was elected as an Unattached Member in 1994. On 24 April 2019, the members of the Académie filled three of the four seats in the new Choreography Section by electing Blanca Li, Angelin Preljocaj and Thierry Malandain.

"Here, there is no need to begin with praise of the Arts in general", Abbé Charles Batteux, a member of the Académie Française and of the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-lettres wrote in 1746: "Their benefits are self-evident enough: the whole Universe is full of them. They are the builders of cities, who rallied scattered men, polished them, softened them, made them capable of society. As they are destined to serve us, to charm us [...], they are called the Fine Arts par excellence. Such are Music, Poetry, Painting, Sculpture, and the Art of movement or Dance".<sup>2</sup>

Looking far back, people have danced for as long as they have had legs. Yet Christian thinking, unsettled by Platonic dualism which emphasized the soul's independence from the body, was indecisive in the choice between spiritual and carnal, between the body as altered by original sin and the body as created in God's image, that has to be mastered according to the idea that an ideal beauty exists. Thus, times when dance was worshipped have been few and far between, especially since John Chrysostom and other saints claimed to see, in "the most spontaneous manifestation of human joys"<sup>3</sup>, "the devil's claw". After the Renaissance and its humanists, who placed man back at the heart of the world, contempt for the flesh was temporarily discarded. At the dawn of the Classical age, despite the conflict between the Jansenists steeped in moral austerity and the Jesuits whose teaching based on trust in man and faith in God willingly accepted the laws of Terpsichore, the century of Louis XIV saw the triumph of dance. Dancing until he "sickened himself" and conquering his solar title on the stage, one of his first actions as king was to elevate dance to Academic ranks.

"Wishing to restore the said Art in its prime perfection, and to elevate it as much as can be done: we have deemed it appropriate to establish in our good city of Paris a Royal Academy of Dance, following the example of those of Painting and Sculpture, composed of thirteen of the oldest and most experienced in the said Art...".

Thus in 1661, as he deplored the decadence of an Art "recognized as one of the most honest and most necessary to

form the body", Louis XIV established the Académie Royale de Danse. After the Académie Française (1635) and the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture (1648), this society was the third Académie Royale to be established in France. But while it was "difficult to imagine that dance and instruments, which had lived in harmony for several centuries, could grapple in ours"<sup>4</sup>, its establishment dealt a terrible blow to the Parisian corporation of dancing masters and instrument players, which was then attached to the Ménestrandie de Saint-Julien (1321), the sole body vested with the power to issue the Lettres de Maîtrise authorizing men and women

to teach dance. As Guillaume Dumanoir, an ordinary chamber violin whom Louis XIV had promoted king and master of minstrels and all instrument players, said, "Ever since language was purified, the word minstrel has meant master of dancing; dance has never been separated from instruments, and it is impossible to teach this art without them".<sup>5</sup> Dumanoir's arguments never did bend the King's will but in 1691, after years of legal battles, Louis XIV needed to irrigate his depleted treasury by selling new charges, and the brotherhood shared the right to grant Lettres de Maîtrise with the Académie Royale de Danse.



1. Serge Lifar, *Bulletin n°11 de l'Université de la Danse*, 1970.
2. *Les Beaux-arts réduits à un même principe*, 1746, p. 6.
3. *Au fil des jours*, Georges Clemenceau, 1900, p. 313.
4. Établissement de l'Académie royale de danse en la ville de Paris, 1663, p. 3.
5. Bibliothèque de l'École des chartes, 1843, Volume 5, p. 280.

Left-hand page: Claire Lonchamp in *Beauty and the Beast*, choreography by Thierry Malandain to music by Piotr Ilitch Tchaikovsky, created for the 17th Lyon Dance Biennial, 2016.  
Photo credit: Olivier Houeix





With the queen's ordinary dancing master François Gallant, Sieur du Désert, as chancellor, the thirteen "academists" were to meet "to deliberate on common affairs" on the first Thursday of each month at the Louvre, in the Tuileries, and later in a cabaret under the sign of the Wooden Sword. There is some irony in this overarching symbol of a wooden sword, so foreign to the realities of the coming battles. They were charged with perfecting and correcting abuses and defects in "the fine dance" that Jean-Georges Noverre compared, in *Lettres sur la danse et sur les ballets* (1760), to "a mother tongue" ("the study of the fine dance leads to all genres; it is the key to them: this study is to art what rudiment and grammar are to purity of language"<sup>6</sup>). On the other hand, an *Academic Discourse* (1663) showed, contrary to the claims of the Brotherhood of St. Julien, "that dance in its noble part does not need musical instruments and is in all ways absolutely independent of the violin". It stated its advantages as that which "corrects the natural defects of the body and changes its bad habits; and which gives it that winged appearance and that grace which exudes so much well-being"<sup>7</sup>. Yet the general consensus is that no trace of this early academy's activity has reached us. It should also be noted that, apart from what time and men have destroyed, and what has not been exhumed from the archives where so many dreams sleep, the most ephemeral of all arts has little written past. Generally speaking, rules and steps are transmitted orally from generation to generation, just as troubadours passed on legends and songs in the past.

It is known, however, that Chancellor Pierre Beauchamp, dancer and composer of the King's ballets and dance master at the Jesuit college Louis-le-Grand, laid down "five positions" which served as a foundation for the codification of classical dance. He also developed a writing system that his disciple Raoul-Auger Feuillet published under his own name in 1700. Thanks to *Chorégraphie, ou l'art de décrire la danse par caractères, figures*

*et signes démonstratifs* (Choreography, or the art of describing dance by demonstrative characters, figures and signs), more than three hundred "engraved dances" were disseminated throughout Europe. Earlier, in 1688, "His Majesty's academician for dance", André Lorin, gave the "greatest monarch in the world" a manuscript containing the Contredanses he had brought back from his trip to England, in which he had noted tunes and explanations of steps. Otherwise, academicians, who performed in shows or taught their art while directing dances and ballets, trained the people "fully entitled to teach dance" in various places, as they did aspiring candidates or students enrolled at the Académie Royale de Musique. This institution was hosted at the Paris Opera, a temple of lyrical and choreographic art where teaching was institutionalized under Louis XIV with the creation of a Conservatoire royal de dans (1713). While this conservatory was accessible only to dancers of the Opera, "some children, often from the families of artists in the troupe, found their place there, but it was not until 1780 that the first regulations attested to a school entirely devoted to them"<sup>8</sup>. That was precisely the year when, due to financial difficulties, the Opera passed under the control of the Menus-Plaisirs du Roi, the department in charge of the Court's ceremonies, festivals and shows. Significantly, from its creation in 1669, with the revenue from performances as its sole income, the Opera was under concession to a private entrepreneur. The first of those entrepreneurs was poet and theorist of "French comedy in music" Pierre Perrin. After being swindled by his two associates and imprisoned for debt, he was stripped of his privilege in favour of Jean-Baptiste Lully, who turned the Académie d'Opéra into the Académie Royale de Musique in 1672. To compensate for the "huge expenses" incurred to "contribute to the advancement of the Arts in our Kingdom", the privilege of establishing an "opera academy of music and French verse" in Paris and other cities

was granted to Perrin for twelve years. Representing works other than his own was thus punishable by a fine and a confiscation of theatres, machines and costumes. When Lully's monopoly extended to dance, "the catch-all, grab-all Florentine" and his successors would fiercely negotiate the transfer of the privilege from provincial entrepreneurs.

In 1749, faced with the Opera's financial situation, in order to "prevent and counter the total collapse of a show, which makes one of the city of Paris' most beautiful embellishments today"<sup>9</sup>, Louis XV sold the privileges not to a private individual, but to the city of Paris. As this royal gift proved to be an unbearable burden, in 1776, after having put it back under private concessions for some years, Louis XVI temporarily placed the Opera under the control of the Menus-Plaisirs. This did nothing to pull it out of dire straits, though, nor did it appease the sentiment that had been elicited earlier that year by Noverre's appointment as ballet master of the "leading theatre in the universe", not by virtue of seniority, as was customary, but by the will of a pupil who was his pride and joy: Marie-Antoinette. This, to Noverre's academic assistants Jean Bercher, known as Dauberval, and Maximilien Gardel, was a humiliation.

The Opera did not admit Noverre's innovations that broke with its habits. Yielding to intrigues, the man who is still thought of as the French creator of ballet eventually stepped down in 1781. By then, the Académie Royale de Danse, which had last been presided over by dance master of the Enfants de France, Michel Jean Bandieri de Laval, was no more. The date and reasons for its dissolution are unknown. But in 1819, dancer, ballet master, author and songwriter Jean-Étienne Despréaux, who wished to restore a title he deemed "honourable to the Art of Dance" – and signed his letters as "member of the Académie Royale de Danse since 1778" until his death – argued: "No ordinance has changed it, why abandon it?"

In 1793, amidst revolutionary turmoil, the other Académies Royales still hosted at the Louvre suffered the same fate. They were re-established in 1795 under the first form of the Institut de France, which was then divided into three classes including literature and fine arts. In 1816, under Louis XVIII, the term "Académie" was attached to the Institute again, and a third organization was created within it: the Académie des Beaux-Arts. It was then divided into five Sections: Painting, Sculpture, Architecture, Engraving, and Musical Composition. It did not include Dance. According to Despréaux, Chancellor Bandieri de Laval, who died in 1817, was concerned about this: "Laval senior, President of this Academy of Dance, has made some representations to the King to re-establish this Academy and have academicians appointed to fill the vacant positions: for there are only me, Despréaux and [Pierre] Gardel left of the twelve members at the beginning of the Revolution".<sup>10</sup>

Under the second Restoration, on the initiative of some of the elders, efforts to reinstate the academy were renewed. To this end, on 6 July 1819, Pierre Gardel, Auguste Vestris, Louis Milon, Charles Beaupré, Jean-François Coulon and A.J.J. Deshayes met at Despréaux's residence. "We gathered", Despréaux wrote, "to agree on the means of re-establishing the Academy. Each spoke his way of thinking". A second session took place on 8 July. "The

same individuals gathered, the project was read, amendments were asked for". Again, on the 10<sup>th</sup>, Despréaux wrote: "Deshayes came to ask me to sign the petition. I hesitated for various reasons, which I shall keep to myself. Finally, as Dean... *I signed. I do not believe in its success*".

And indeed, Louis XVIII did not allow them to reform an Academy whose role – to supervise the training of each individual in an art particularly useful for giving grace to the movements and actions of the body and its professional application to theatre – had, over time, been confused with that of the Opera. While their "petition" probably remained unanswered, it ended with: "it is still time to prevent the degradation of this art". There was a sense that, due to the negligence of men and governments, French ballet would decay. "There were also worldly and bourgeois prejudices against this profession, which was deemed too fanciful. Above all, there was the old Jansenism or *Jansenist mindset, which ruined so many things in France*"<sup>11</sup>, commented art critic and historian of the church, Maurice Brillant, in 1929. That same year, Pope Pius XI, named the holy Cure of Ars, patron saint of all parish priests of the Universe, asserted that "those who indulge in *dancing are ripe victims for Hell*".

Closer to us, Serge Lifar was then directing *The Creatures of Prometheus* at the Opera. He may have been excluded from heavenly bliss for working only towards his perdition but, as prime dancer and ballet master, he engaged in endless endeavours to promote the art of choreography, as instanced by his desire to revive the Royal Academy of Dance of 1661. As he wrote in 1944 to Louis Hautecœur, who was to be elected Permanent Secretary of

the Académie des Beaux-Arts in 1955, "*Ten years ago now, I undertook a campaign in the press to advocate for an Academy of Dance*". That year, Lifar clarified his goal by choosing thirteen members, as had Louis XIV, but his project never materialised. He nevertheless founded the Institut de la Danse and later the Université de la Danse, whose newsletter published his acceptance speech at the Académie des Beaux-Arts in 1970: "Today, by welcoming me among you, [...] you have engraved a new page in the cultural history of France *by giving choreographic art its letters of nobility – or rather by restoring them to it*". In fact, on 24 June 1970, Lifar was elected as a correspondent of the Academy (in the Sculpture Section) and it was not until 25 April 2018 that dance, "the daughter of harmony, *et de tout temps entrée pour quelque chose in the education of men*"<sup>12</sup>, made its entrance under the Coupole. ■

6. *Lettres sur la danse et sur les ballets*, 1803-1804, lettre XV, T. IV, p. 83.

7. Établissement de l'Académie royale de danse en la ville de Paris, 1663, p. 3.

8. *Histoire de l'École de Danse*, Sylvie Jacq-Mioche.

9. *Correspondance littéraire Grimm & Diderot*, lettre au marquis d'Amezaga, 1776, p. 177.

10. *Le Monde artiste*, 19 août 1906.

11. *Ouest-Éclair*, 29 mai 1929.

12. *Le Maître à danser*, Pierre Rameau, 1725.

Left page: Serge Lifar rehearsing with the Dutch Ballet in 1961.  
Photo credit: BNA Photographic



# DANCE - BETWEEN UNIVERSALITY AND TRANSVERSALITY

Interview with **BLANCA LI**, member of the Choreography Section  
By Nadine Eghels

**Nadine Eghels:** What were the main stages in your career as a dancer and choreographer?

**Blanca Li:** The first step was when I became a gymnast at the age of twelve, in the Spanish National Rhythmic and Sports Gymnastics Team. It was my first experience as a top-level performer with extreme demands, which taught me the importance of work and willpower.

At the age of 17, I went to study contemporary dance in New York City with Martha Graham (in person) and was able to achieve my goal, to become a choreographer and performer. That training was extraordinary and very enriching for me, as was the artistic melting pot of performance art, music and street art – which is now gradually achieving recognition as contemporary art – in which I was immersed in New York for all those years. It was there that I understood that I was a creator and a choreographer.

Then one of the major steps was the first show that I created for my troupe for the Universal Exhibition in Seville in 1992, *Nana and Lila*, after which I founded my company in Paris with the aim to perform this show at the 1993 Avignon Off festival. That was the beginning of my career in France, which has lasted for 27 years, with tremendous public recognition.

The next step, which seems crucial to me in my official recognition as a choreographer, was when the Opéra National de Paris invited me to choreograph the ballet opera *Les Indes galantes* with William Christie and Andrei Serban, and then to direct and choreograph *Shéhérazade* for the Ballet de l'Opéra. An equally important period in my career was my involvement as director and choreographer for a musical I had written, *Le Défi*. This allowed me to fully step into the world of cinema, which I haven't left ever since.

I can't list here all the collaboration that followed, with so many artists, but each one of them was an important step for me: from Michel Gondry (for the video to Daft Punk's *Around the World*,

which I choreographed) to Anselm Kiefer, Jean-Paul Gaultier, Pedro Almodovar... And, of course, many other people were of great importance in my career, including Jean-Jacques Annaud, Jonas Åkerlund, Édith Canat de Chizy, and Maywa Denki, to name but a few.

Finally, I think that the ultimate accolades were my appointment as director of the Teatros del Canal in Madrid, and my election to the Académie des Beaux-Arts.

**N.E.:** Did you work as a dancer and choreographer simultaneously from the outset, or did you start with one and then the other?

**B.L.:** When I decided to become a dancer, my goal was to become a choreographer too. In my artistic career, I've always wished to create and perform at the same time, so these two things have happened simultaneously for me. Of course, there have been shows in which I wasn't on stage, of which I was only the choreographer, as there are shows in which I enjoy performing freely, improvising and having fun, and where the choreographer in me stays more in the background. From the start, these two practices went hand in hand, and I've always conceived of them as the two "legs" of a single activity. I've never been able to live without dancing, but I've never been able to live



*The Garden of Delights*, inspired by Jerome Bosch's painting, directed and choreographed by Blanca Li. Created in 2009 for the Festival Montpellier Danse.

Photo credit: Arnold Jerocki

without creating either. As long as my body and mind can do both, I don't plan on stopping either one.

**N.E.:** What is your position regarding dance teaching? Do you have perspectives, or do you develop action in this field?

**B.L.:** Personally, I've never been very involved as a dance teacher, it's not part of my vocation. On the other hand, I've worked a lot with children through my creations, and led workshops with my company for primary schools in underprivileged neighbourhoods. I've discovered that dance brings a lot to children: it allows them to build self-esteem, to value themselves beyond more academic disciplines where they often have difficulties, and also to develop all sorts of skills (interpretation, social and physical interaction) that are not sufficiently reinforced in school. I'm very interested in working with children... I think there would be significant benefits in further developing this work. Dance is not only for professionals, although I have great respect for high-level professional training (I also had the pleasure of running a top-level training centre in Andalusia, where junior professional dancers gained access to the best troupes in the world). It should be within everyone's reach and allow everyone to live better with and within their bodies, to enjoy them and to be socially at ease. Leisure

and school dance practice should therefore be generously encouraged at all levels.

**N.E.:** Music is obviously paramount in your work as a choreographer. But what place do you give to other artistic disciplines – cinema, photography, painting, or even poetry and literature?

**B.L.:** I see all artistic disciplines as part of the same world. I love to collaborate with other artists on their creations or my own, whether they are painters, filmmakers, photographers, poets or writers; for me, it has always been an extremely fruitful. I experienced this from a very young age, as my siblings and I liked to combine different arts – music, cinema, literature – and it always came very naturally to me from then on (one of my brothers is a musician and one of my sisters is a filmmaker). I think that transversality and the taste for collaboration with other artists are part of my identity, whether I'm serving others or asking them to serve my creations. I also like to create unclassifiable things that don't necessarily correspond to the definition of a particular discipline. Throughout my career, I've been fortunate enough to work with wonderful artists and creators who've taught me a lot. It's very rewarding to share a creation with another artist.





**N.E.:** How do you make dance, an immemorial and universal practice, coexist with increasingly sophisticated technologies?

**B.L.:** Since my early days in New York, where I started to use video as an alternative method to record dance and choreography, I've been interested in all the tools available to me, and these tools were progressing rapidly at that time. I love all new technologies; I'm a bit of a geek and I like to think that, thanks to technological progress, it has become possible to incorporate things into my creations that couldn't have been in them a few years back.

That's what prompted me to put robots on stage and to use virtual reality and, in general, all kinds of technologies, to project images, to build musical worlds live, in a way that's both artistic and playful, but always at the service of creation. Of course, dance remains fundamentally very primitive and universal, and in general I like to keep a timeless aspect in my shows. I want technology to blend into this more universal thing, it has to be more than just a novelty and remain relevant for decades, to survive beyond the effect of discovery.

Technology also allows us to work at a distance while travelling or during lockdown, as it did recently, and thus share creation with artists and people thousands of miles apart. It's a wonderful tool for creators.

**N.E.:** You've just joined this brand-new Choreography Section at the Académie des Beaux-Arts, which hosts different artistic disciplines. What projects would you like to propose, present and develop within this framework?

**B.L.:** The opening of the Choreography Section at the Académie des Beaux-Arts is a first step towards the recognition of dance as an art form in its own right, but I think we need to develop this recognition further and allow dance to be valued by the public and institutions alike, much more than it is at present. This recognition could be manifested through prizes and endowments awarded in the field of dance, or by promoting transversality and collaboration between artistic disciplines, including dance. I think that the role of the Académie is also to help dance to become part of the compulsory educational curriculum from nursery school to university.

**N.E.:** Dance is universal... and international. You're originally from Spain, where very recently you became the director of a large choreographic centre in Madrid. You work all over the world. And you are a member of a very French institution. How do you experience these multiple affiliations?

**B.L.:** I've just been appointed director of the *Teatros del Canal*: it's both a theatre with three auditoriums of different sizes and

a choreographic centre with nine rehearsal studios. It's quite an exceptional complex for creation and for the public. In this centre, I want to develop choreographic creation and make a special place for local, national and international dance companies. I'll also programme all types of shows in the three halls of the theatre because I think that diversity is what allows the public to better appreciate all disciplines. In addition to dance, there will be opera, theatre, music, circus.

Sharing my life between Madrid, where I head the *Teatros del Canal*, and Paris, where my company is based (the next show will be created in Paris, but with partners in Spain, Canada and Luxembourg), I'm on an "overlap" between two cultures and two countries, my native country and my adopted country. I really enjoy this situation because dance is a universal language that knows no borders. Communicating through movement and dance is one of the creative activities that doesn't need translation or major cultural adaptation, and it always works very well all over the world, provided we respect and appreciate everyone's culture without preconceptions, of course. My activity knows no borders and I've always felt at ease everywhere. I've felt like a citizen of the world ever since my stay in New York, and I've always enjoyed meeting other cultures. Now, living between Madrid and Paris is just another step in my international journey, a step that seems completely natural to me. ■

Top: *Solstice*, directed and choreographed by Blanca Li, music by Tao Gutierrez, premiered in 2017 at the Théâtre National de Chaillot.  
Photo credit: Patrick Berger

Opposite: *Corazon Loco*, choreographed and directed by Blanca Li, music and text by Édith Canat de Chizy. Premiered in 2007 at the Théâtre National de Chaillot.  
Photo credit: Arnold Jerocki





# THE CHALLENGES OF ANGELIN PRELJOCAJ

“ Angelin Preljocaj or the certainty of bedazzlement. Not that his dance is simple, it is very complex, very elaborate, with flares of instability, but it flows, one might say, as from a spring. And that spring is the man himself, Angelin Preljocaj, the embodiment of a born dancer. From the moment he wakes up, he is animated by an urgency to move, a music of the body from which a continuous flow of ideas emerges, as he explains in Florence Platarets’ film *Danser l’invisible* (broadcast in 2019) which follows the choreographer throughout the creation of *Gravité*.

It is a matter of dancing the weight of bodies, and therefore their lightness. Seeking to show the dance but also the space it creates and constantly disrupts. The choreographer often compares the physics of bodies, one of his obsessions, to the quantum physics of dark matter, like galaxies and stars spinning, albeit on a human scale, on the scale of his art: gravitation of the body – gravitation of thoughts – inextricably entangled.

While he was creating *Gravité*, Angelin Preljocaj was also working with inmates of Les Baumettes prison in Marseille, but this time on the weight of the incarcerated body trying to open itself through movement. Here again, a film recounts this experience: *Danser sa peine*, directed by Valérie Müller, awarded the Fipadoc Grand Prix in March 2020.

In the autumn of 2020, Angelin Preljocaj will venture to offer his own version of *Swan Lake*, the apotheosis of the classical ballet signed in 1894 by Marius Petipa and Lev Ivanov. Tchaikovsky’s score should impassion the music lover Preljocaj; he has always seen challenges as a strong motivation.

This is what is currently happening for the choreographer, who created his company in 1985. He was welcomed in 1996 in Aix-en-Provence, where he is now the master of the Pavillon Noir, a customized building designed by Rudy Ricciotti to resemble a brutalist cage, clad with broad concrete crossbars. It bears witness to the violence that the architect felt upon first watching the Preljocaj Ballet’s dance. This cage is nevertheless wide open to the outside world and the city, allowing passers-by to see the dancers in their daily training. Pavillon Noir: a name he conceived of as a rallying cry and a mark of recognition, a salute to the unique feat in France for a dance artist to obtain such a place, such a theatre. Far from trends and fashions, Angelin Preljocaj has always known what he wanted.

Both in France and abroad, he has received all the awards and distinctions. On 24 April 2019, he was elected as a member of the Académie des Beaux-Arts within the new Choreography Section.” ■

**DOMINIQUE FRÉTARD,**

Correspondent of the Choreography Section



*Gravity*, choreography by Angelin Preljocaj, music by Maurice Ravel, Johann Sebastian Bach, Iannis Xenakis, Dimitri Shostakovich, Daft Punk, Philip Glass, 79D. Created in 2018 as part of the Lyon Dance Biennial.

Photo credit: Jean-Claude Carbonne



# A WOMAN OF MANY FACES

Questions for **CAROLYN CARLSON**, dancer, choreographer, visual artist  
Interview by Lydia Harambourg

**Lydia Harambourg:** The public knows you as a dancer and choreographer, and it will soon discover you as an artist who draws images. What, to you, are the connections between these activities?

**Carolyn Carlson:** In the duration of a life's journey, I have the impression of entering into an immense field of threads; interconnecting, crisscrossing, layer over layer in a time-space realm, a synchronicity of events unfolding in a continuous flow. A field of inherent gifts. My work as an artist who dances, performs, choreographs, writes poetry and draws images, is an accumulation of experiences revealing a tapestry of collective filaments connecting within the web of the universe beyond our comprehension of unknown energies.

I perceive myself as a messenger: ideas enter my mind without knowing where the source comes from.

The still-point where the dance begins, drawing on paper the veins of an arabesque, a spontaneous poem on a string. Image and poetry that share the same perceptions as a gesture that moves the air.

A mystery compressed in infinite moments of creation. Ephemeral, Imprinted. Original.

**L.H.:** Tell us about your multiple forms of training, as a dancer, calligrapher, poet...

**C.C.:** "I am a self-taught poet, drawing and calligraphy artist, influenced by a Zen master. In New York in the 1960s, I made an important discovery while taking a Zen meditation course. We had to spontaneously draw an image in ink in a single breath. The results of our "breath of ink" were impressive to see paper, without any judgment. There, I found a key to my work, the joy of making spontaneous gestures without any idea in mind but the sole fact of *doing*. In addition to my master Alwin Nikolais' compelling principles, I found other ways to extend dance to paper and writ. John Davis was also a great influence, who once told me:

*"To really understand what you want to give to others as a performer or choreographer, write it down and draw your visions".*

His confidence in my work led me to write poems and draw in ink. And I think that my improvisation work with Nikolais fostered my calligraphic work, which can be compared to imaginary and spontaneous solos. [...]

My influence began with ensō, the Zen circles of enlightenment. A calligraphy brush stroke that creates a circle expressing the totality of our being. Carl Jung refers to the circle as an archetype of the Self as the totality of oneself<sup>1</sup>. Ensō is perhaps the most common element in Zen calligraphy. It symbolizes enlightenment, power and the universe itself. It is a direct

expression of the "moment-as-it-is". Besides these circles, the Japanese master offers a transmission of poetry outside the circle, as a means of direct communication to the human mind. This revelation was the beginning of my series of drawings of circles, as a meditative state but also as a trace of permanence, while dance lives and dies in the instant when it is performed. It was also the beginning of forty years of studying Buddhism, which is part of my life as an artist and as a woman. Ensō in itself deserves its own reward. It has no cause outside itself and has no effect other than itself<sup>2,3</sup>.

**L.H.:** How does one go from being a dancer to being a choreographer?

**C.C.:** The transformation from dancer to choreographer as one in the same has been with me since my childhood. There was no division. I loved to improvise for hours in my spontaneous nature to feel free, compose little dances step by step, my brothers were the public with generous applause, what a joy to complete a sequence of a self-made puzzle. A gift already visible.

The experiences with my master, Alwin Nikolais, in New York at the age of 22 lanced my career as performer and choreograph, interlacing threads that connected my destiny as an artist. A quantum leap of revelations. The genius of Nikolais's composition classes gave me permission to believe I could choreograph, a self-observation where I intuitively knew the future that lay ahead. As a dancer I was at the height



of exhilaration, improvising Nikolais's ideas, then set to the choreographic completion of his creations, which to this day are the keys I unlock with my own company.

Nikolais's concepts of time-space-shape-motion opened doors of prolific inspirations and tools to pursue my journey on the creative path with devotion and passion.

**L.H.:** What are you searching for in ephemeral spatial writing? You speak of choreography in research.

**C.C.:** Charisma, a luminous presence, is one of the first qualities in a choreographic work where a performer possesses an aura, giving an inner light from within to without, an energy that compresses the distance between the observer and the observed. A word I call generosity. It is not only the steps that are vital, it is within the dancer whose intentions embody an inner fire, invites the mindful presence of transcendence serving the form.

1. Carl Jung, *Aion. Researches into the Phenomenology of the Self*, Bollungen serie XX, Princetown University Press, 1959, p. 11.

2. John Daido Looi, "Preface", in *Audrey Yoshiko Seo, Ensō. Zen Circles of Enlightenment*, Weatherhill, Boston and London, 2007, p. 15.

3. Extract from *Writings on water*, exhibition catalogue, Musée la Piscine, Roubaix, interview with Hélène de Talhouët, Actes Sud, 2017.

Left hand page: *Dialogue with Rothko*, choreography and interpretation of texts by Carolyn Carlson, original music and cello by Rémi Nicolas. Premiered in 2013 at the Colisée, Théâtre de Roubaix.

Photo credit: Laurent Paillier

Top: Working sketch by Carolyn Carlson for *The Tree (Fragments of Poetics on Fire)*, the last piece in a cycle inspired by Gaston Bachelard. Premiere planned for 2021.



My work as leader-director is to find each individual's unique talents.

My company members are my companions in tenacity and perseverance. Devoted and ready to face each new creation. The challenge begins with an Idea. Day one, I bring my drawings, poems, photographs, books to read, texts of profound insights, stage designs and music. Then come the discussions where the dancers share their own thoughts and insights. Ground Zero begins.

We improvise for weeks on the thematic sequences. Often times I am surprised with their propositions, which are innovative and by chance go into other directions of which I could not imagine. Again, like I worked with Nikolais, give and take is the formula for stimulus creating dimensions that reveal a privilege of uniting common goals.

**L.H.:** Could you tell me about your working methods and how your different disciplines are juxtaposed and interact?

**C.C.:** Working in silence before the music arrives. I select music of spatial ambiances that are linked to what I call poetics in a time structure of harmonic energies that reach heart-mind feelings, that offer the public a listening ear that moves interior spaces; meditative, emotional, perceptive, dance-inducing, melancholic, memorable, uplifting, etc. The time span of sequences in silence enhance the progression of the musical interludes.

To place the choreographic patterns, I create drawings on an empty stage, diagonals, lines, vertical – upstage – downstage, a stationary solo in a confined area, broken spaces in multiple formations, circular-serpentine paths, entrances-exits from the wings. All this is calculated according to the sequences. Transitions are the most important in spatial designs, allowing rhythms in time-space to enhance the changing dimensions of ebb and flow.

Lights create the space with lightness and darkness, which is paramount to all of my creations. To project with a luminous aura or retreat to a glow of interior darkness is a poetic task of visible-invisible emotions as in a poem, creating within the observer perceptions of reflection.

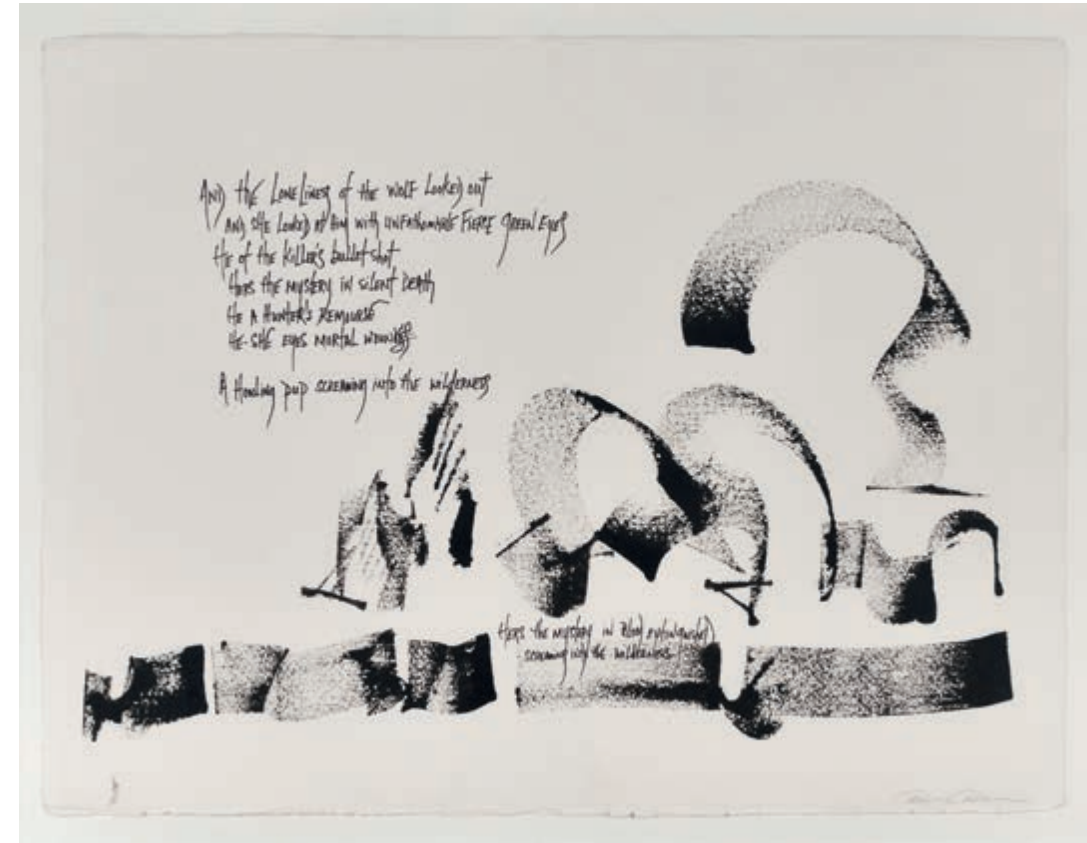
All of us are together in a joined collaboration; lighting designer, composers of original music, dancers, costumers, scenographers, visual artists, production managers, the crew behind the scenes. I am grateful for each artist's participation, where each risk the challenges, knowing they will be the instruments for placing the parts into a whole, a gestalt of complicity.



**L.H.:** And drawing?

**C.C.:** "I think of nothing when I draw. Hand and heart take part in the spontaneous action of brushstrokes. Sometimes I already have an idea of something to paint, then, in the freedom of the gesture, I am always surprised to see what comes out of it. Sometimes my drawings are close to what I had visualized, other times I am pleasantly surprised. Drawing consists in emptying one's mind so that the unexpected can happen. My experiences guided me to the realm of visual poetry. Circular and mystical forms that contain the endless unanswered questions of humanity seeking to unravel the mysteries of life. Images are powerful, they don't need words. Sometimes I feel the need to write a short sentence, in the form of a haiku, to do justice to the inspiration that I have drawn, other times I simply let the image speak for itself. In my poems, sometimes the words come first and then an ink drawing is added as a splash in the margin. In dance, image is of paramount importance. Sometimes I annotate the ink trace, or the movements of the choreography, after the fact, as another way of expressing their perceptive qualities, of rounding them off, of giving meaning to our existence. My eyes, words and mind are guided by my dreams and imaginary journeys that provoke my inner visions. To share a slice of life with others, to transmit what I see inside. I never seek balance between words and images, I do what I intuitively feel in the moment.

The drawings are skeletons of the inner gesture captured, a movement of the mind fixed on paper. A meditative act leaving its mark in time, leaving the trace of a conscious presence. Ink



dancing on canvases, drawn by the breath of the hand. I draw what I can't dance... leaving an imprint forever on paper".<sup>4</sup>

**L.H.:** When will the public discover your drawings?

**C.C.:** Gallery owner Isabelle Gounod chose my calligraphic works with poems for the Contemporary drawing art fair *Drawing Now*. She made her personal selection in close regard and with an astute eye. Our connections share the same spirit. Regarding the pandemic, we are planning an exhibition in the fall, by which I am very honoured.

**L.H.:** In conclusion, you are constantly an artist at work...

**C.C.:** "I couldn't say why I'm doing all this: dancing, teaching, choreographing, writing, drawing... The need to create is inherent to each artist in their development. If one seeks the secret of any art form, it is all contained in the inexplicable and enigmatic love for one's work. The desire to leave a trace, every art form is a journey, a memory... Seen vertically, it is a profound ascent into the realm of mystery. Seen horizontally, it is a vast stretching of time and space. Seen in a circle, with no beginning or end. Every art form has a life drive. I would like to cite a beautiful Kandinsky quote: What everyone sees and feels is the proof of the validity of an act. There is no reason to try to define what is ephemeral, which by nature is indescribable<sup>5,6</sup>.

Art is a universal language sharing myriad forms of expression, where each person can feel themselves as part of a cosmic dance, a poem to stimulate the imagination, an image revealing a thought, a music to travel within.

As observed, the observer weaves threads in their own unique tapestry of collective experiences as the observed. My works are open, leaving the spectator to make their own imaginative stories.

To perceive is to be moved by seeing into what is. Only Love is the immense energy. ■

4, 6 Excerpts from *Writings on Water*, exhibition catalogue, Musée la Piscine, Roubaix, interview with Hélène de Talhouët, Actes Sud, 2017.

5. Vassily Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, Dover Publications, 1912.

Drawings by Carolyn Carlson, Indian ink on wave paper: *Masters don't die*, 1994, 41.3x31.6 cm, courtesy Carolyn Carlson *The wolf looked out*, 1995, 57,5 x 77cm, courtesy Carolyn Carlson et Galerie Isabelle Gounod. Sélection Master Now / Drawing Now 2020.



# SETS AND COSTUMES... PAST AND PRESENT

By LYDIA HARAMBOURG, Painting Section Correspondent

## The stage curtain opens...

Sets have been consubstantial with the history of theatre from its very beginnings, and tastes in decoration for theatre, opera and ballet have evolved through a series of stages over the centuries. The first sets were the actual architecture of ancient theatres, given as a stage setting, before mobile decoration appeared during the Roman empire. It was not until 1580 that the oblique perspective introduced by the architect Palladio was transposed to stages. After King Louis XIV created the l'Académie Royale de Danse in 1661, thus endorsing the status of ballet, much importance was granted to machinery for fairy-tale simulation, an example of which is Lully's *Le Triomphe de l'Amour* (1681). The great innovation of working scenery in 1830 went hand in hand with a search for scenic and illusionist effects, with the introduction of gas – and later electric – lighting. At the same time, machinery evolved to allow supernatural effects, as in Ciceri's sets for *The Sylph*. Painters were the first decorators to offer trompe-l'oeil in three dimensions. According to the title of an early 19<sup>th</sup>-century work preserved in the Bibliothèque de l'Opéra, they were dubbed *The Masters of Secrets*, who had to “vow to represent the magnificence of palaces, the immensity of cathedrals, the forests, the seas and the plains, in a word, the infinity of the horizons and the depths of the sky”. These prescriptions would be followed for more than a century. Modern art later reoriented sets towards an inventiveness that renewed their place in performances, while at the same time choreographic innovations were introduced.

The big change came in 1909, with Serge de Diaghilev's Ballets Russes in Paris: a brilliant, sometimes scandalous programme with Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* (1913) featuring sets and costumes in the primitive taste of Nicolas Roerich. But the great decorator attached to the troupe was Léon Bakst, who mixed folklore and tradition – *L'Oiseau de feu* (1910), *Daphnis et Chloé*, *L'Après-midi d'un faune* (1912) – not unlike his Russian colleagues Serge Soudeïkine, Mstislav Doboujinsky and the last heir of a narrative tradition, Alexandre Benois.

The turning point was brought about by contemporary painters, pioneers of aesthetic revolutions: Sonia and Robert Delaunay (*Cleopatra*, 1918), Matisse (Stravinsky's *Song of the Nightingale*, 1920), and Michel Larionov (Stravinsky's *The Fox*, 1922). Stravinsky's ballet music inspired Natalia Gontcharova (*The Wedding*, 1923), while André Derain returned to classicism and provided sets and costumes for *The Magic Toyshop*, to music by Rossini. As early as 1916, it was Picasso who introduced modernity into the Ballets Russes with the creation of *Parade*, to a libretto by Jean Cocteau and a score by Érik Satie. Between classicism and fantasy, its imaginary introduced a poetic, humorous dimension, serving a vision that was de-structured according to Cubist principles. Manuel de Falla's *Three-Cornered Hat* (1919) and Stravinsky's *Pulcinella* (1920) followed. His associate in the invention of Cubism, Braque, was commissioned in the 1920s to write *Les Fâcheux*, to music by Georges Auric. With Marie Laurencin (Poulenc's *The Does*, 1924), André Bauchant, Georges Rouault and even Coco Chanel in collaboration with Henri Laurens for Darius Milhaud's *Le Train bleu*, a new aesthetic introduced a way out of painted sets.



This principle of an illusionist setting in relation to naturalist painting persisted for decades, notably with the romantic ballets that Pierre Lacotte restaged, and with creations that gradually lost the narrative realism which lasted after the war. With the very talented painters Lurçat, Brayer, Carzou, Chapelain-Midy and Leonor Fini, and many decorative painters such as Pierre Clayette, Jean-Denis Malclès, Jacques Dupont and so on, all prestigious translators of supernatural and fairy-tale worlds, the vision in these creations was indeed “visionary”. And now? Those who are still dream builders and associates of artistic creation have other means, new techniques where the play of light and visual and phonic devices (which can replace a score) interact with contemporary choreography. In phase with the return of the total work of art, perspective, architecture, movement, gesture, space, light, and sound intertwine dance with the visual arts.

## A few examples

In 1968, Merce Cunningham wrote the choreography of *Rain Forest* to minimal electronic music by David Tudor, a disciple of John Cage. Andy Warhol's moving set, *silvers pillows*, was integral to the ballet corps. The set moved according to the seriality process to produce the kind of hybridization between art and everyday life that is typical in creations of the sixties. The ballet was performed at the Joyce Theatre in New York.

Making paintings dance was what Matisse dreamt of when he painted *The Dance* in 1909-1910. There is no doubt that he would have liked contemporary ballet and specifically Carolyn Carlson and Olivier Debré's *Signes*, to a score by René Aubry. In this ballet, which was premiered in 1997 at the Opéra Bastille, Carlson used painter Olivier Debré's gestural writing as a motive and transposed his sign in painting to choreography. Here, movements are in unison with pictorial lyricism while colours come to life in dancers' bodies. This mirrors Merce Cunningham's definition of dance: “It gives you nothing back, no manuscripts to store away, no paintings to show on walls and maybe hang in museums, no poems to be printed and sold, nothing but that single fleeting moment when you feel alive”. Sets went virtual in James Turrell's ballet *Bridget's Bardo* (2008), where light baths sculpt light and bodies into cosmic spaces. As for Daniel Buren, he imagined a graphic sketch to accompany Maurice Ravel's ballet *Daphnis et Chloé*, choreographed by Benjamin Millepied (Opéra Bastille, 2013). The play of light is an actor in its own right in *Tree of Code*, a ballet by choreographer Wayne McGregor with electro-pop music by Jamie xx from the band *The xx*. Its choreography was transformed into a dazzling and vertiginous kaleidoscope by Danish visual artist Olafur Eliasson.

In 1987, the American painter Paul Jenkins produced a flood of colours and forms in the pantomime ballet *Shaman's Prism*, to Maurice Dutilleul's *Métaboles* (1965). In this endeavour, he was following in the footsteps of Calder, the sculptor, who had imagined infinite movement echoing his mobiles and kinetic art for Joseph Lazzini's ballet to the same composer's music (performed in 1969 at the Théâtre Français de la Danse, since renamed Théâtre de l'Odéon, in Paris). Jenkins thus invented “the synesthetic idea of a ballet of colours”. For this ballet, of which he directed the choreography, synopsis, and spatial setting for the performance, the set became virtual to echo a mutation through colour.

Video likewise supplanted the use of a set and underpinned a much lighter synopsis to make room for choreography alone, for movement in a space made tangible and palpable in unison with ephemeral choreographic writing. ■

Left page: James Turrell, *Bridget's Bardo*, *Ganzfeld Piece*, installation at the Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, 2009.  
Photo credit: Florian Holzherr

Above: Watercolour by Léon Bakst (1866-1924) for the ballet *Afternoon of a Faun* – the sets and costumes of which he also designed – depicting Vaslav Nijinski. First performed by Serge Diaghilev's Ballets Russes at the Théâtre du Châtelet, Paris, May 1912.



# THE PINA BAUSCH PHENOMENON

By **BRIGITTE TERZIEV**, member of the Sculpture Section

**A**lthough she was born in 1940 in a devastated Germany, this tall, severe-looking young woman would find a path, through her very personal conception, to revolutionize the performing arts and the way dancing theatre was conceived of in the seventies.

Her working method and training, albeit from another era, brought a breath of fresh air to the choreography of her time. The strange realism that she introduced, where the dancers also became actors and mimes, allowed her shows to blossom into a modern form of opera.

Between the two wars, the most preeminent German Expressionists were, among others, Mary Wigman, Rudolf Laban and Kreutberg. Of them, only Kurt Jooss and his famous *Green Table* have survived in people's memories.

In her youth Pina Bausch attended the school directed by Kurt Jooss, himself a disciple of Rudolf Laban and of his work on the psychophysical vibrations of body movement in real space. Here, dance was not an end in itself; the main focus was on gestures or the adventure of movement generated by emotion. This was teaching that allowed the dancer to mobilize internal energy for the benefit of a more intense external impulse.

As a child of the Second World War, Pina found herself involved in what her masters had taught her: the fundamental importance of establishing this way of listening to the human body's internal impulses. Projecting this energy outside of oneself with no taboo was a means to infuse on-stage expression with a creative potential that could emerge only in dreams. The inter-war period, riddled with pervasive humiliation and the internecine wars of Europe, had created favourable ground for this development. Dance, the most visceral means of human expression, could shatter the shackles of conventions, and this art opened an innovative battlefield to fight against the turmoil outside. Then, an explosion of freedom occurred... It began with theatre, in the 1950s, with a tumbling series of movements in Europe: in Poland, Tadeusz Kantor showed the way to total theatre, with for instance *The Dead Class*, and its disturbingly silent characters that made dancers out of actors. Later, Jerzy Grotowski extended this approach to the body in theatre called "poor", where the performance space was shared between the audience and the actors to enhance the emotional communion. There was also the theatre of the absurd in France, with Beckett and Ionesco, as well as Antonin Artaud's theatre of cruelty. They had all but stepped into danced theatre... In 1970, Pina Bausch was able to define and modernize it.

In the seamless movement from the stage space of theatre to dance theatre, each dancer-actor was enabled to dare additional movements of their own creation, for Pina Bausch approved of this authenticity of feeling. At the Tanztheater in Wuppertal, which had remained very classical until then, she formed and built a revolutionary new contemporary ballet.

Above all, she taught total concentration of each dancer. Thus, the aesthetics borne by muscular virtuosity was not an objective; instead, Pina demanded that everyone show sincere internal emotional density in the role they played. In her show *Café Müller*, the main heroine (Pina herself) seems to be a sleepwalker, sustained by her pain to the brink of death. Her body expression is so poignant as to create the cathartic effect that Antonin Artaud cherished in his theatre of cruelty.

In her show *Kontakthof*, tragicomedy is frontstage with another universal theme: hierarchy and the social conditioning of men and women. Two worlds confront each other with their codes, their mannerisms and their fears. Yet they also complement each other in their impossible seduction, tacitly expressing their incommunicability as an act of faith, on a deeper level than they would in simple social satire: a sort of mourning ceremony or grotesque yet majestic parade where the dancers seem to proudly drown their melancholy. They walk in a perpetually moving circle, a rite that forces them to adopt absurd attitudes and movements, the secret logic of which they somehow seem to know.

At the heart of all Pina Bausch's shows we find an inexhaustible theme: the teeming human comedy of this planet. With its multiple and engaging facets, jubilant with emotion and sarcasm, this common thread connects her performances which are increasingly packed with vital energy. The choreographer loved to travel, was inspired by the different cultures she encountered, and enriched her shows with their diverse expressions.

Béjart, a great master of choreography, constantly outdid himself in prowess and talent. When he had to work with a large number of dancers on stage, he worked as a sculptor to construct the space with his basic material: human mass.

As for Pina Bausch, it was not as a sculptor but rather as a draughtswoman that she seemed to draw cosmic positions made of vanishing lines and perpetual movement. Strangely enough, her choreography was sober, yet at the service of a baroque world's anarchy, the contrasting threads of which she pulled with mordant joy.

Influences in painting are attributed to her as well. Thus,



expressionism rubs shoulders with surrealism in her oeuvre. As she was a neighbour of the Belgian heritage, a cousin figure can be found in James Ensor, through his clownish fairy tale aesthetics. Further away, the first surrealist of the late Middle Ages, Hieronymus Bosch and his *Garden of Delights*, might also have been a source of inspiration for her as incongruous animals unexpectedly find their place in some of her shows, like strange paintings to meditate on. An example, amongst others: the hippopotamus in *Arien* and the flashes of colour that made her show *Nellken* so successful.

She could also draw her audience into realms of extreme gravity, as in her *Rite of Spring*, with its poignant dramaturgy.

Pina Bausch was constantly close to her dancers to find creations to add to her repertoire on a daily basis. Since her death in 2009, it has been very difficult for her company to maintain this level of enthusiasm.

With Pina, emotional density and fairylike, baroque visual impact erupted in scenes about human farce or great tragedy.

Behind her austere schoolteacher's physique, "the magician" Pina Bausch concealed an appetite for life and an independence of mind that was embedded in her very flesh and bones; a fierce talent for transposing situations as abrupt as they were comical and that could get straight to the point: to captivate her audience. ■

Above and right page: Pina Bausch with the dancers of Tanztheater Wuppertal, during rehearsals for *Café Müller*.

Photo credit: Wolfgang Kunz



# DANCE, A CONTEMPORARY AFFAIR

Interview with **DIDIER DESCHAMPS**, correspondent of the Choreography Section

Interview by Nadine Eghels

**Nadine Eghels:** You are at the head of the Théâtre National de la Danse de Chaillot, in the heart of Paris. While the cultural site is historic, the institution is young. How was this institution born?

**Didier Deschamps:** It was created almost a century ago, but it was only about a decade ago that, in view of the development of choreography in France, the abundance of creation, the legacies of dance, the wonderful encounters with audiences, and the challenges ahead, the Ministry of Culture deemed it high time to endow the choreographic sector with a national theatre like the five others that were already dedicated to theatre or music. In the 2000s, Ariel Goldenberg, who came from the world of international theatre, headed this institution, along with choreographer José Montalvo, who was charged with introducing and starting to develop an activity around dance, as artistic director. In 2008, given the success of this first stage, it was decided to entrust Dominique Hervieu with a choreographic mission at Chaillot. I was appointed as his successor in 2010 and took up my duties in 2011. In 2016, with the agreement of the Ministry of Culture and in coherence with this recent development, I saw it fit to rename this place "Chaillot - Théâtre National de la Danse". This was not easy, because some key personalities considered that this place was historically dedicated to theatre. I, for one, consider that every venue is at the service of a project, and that projects evolve. Dance, in all its forms, has undeniably undergone considerable change in recent years, and it seems normal that cultural infrastructure should follow and support it.

**N.E.:** What are the elements that guide you, in the very vast landscape of contemporary dance, to establish your programmes?

**D.D.:** Chaillot has two halls: the Jean Vilar grand hall, with 1,147 seats, and the new Firmin Gémier hall, which we have totally recreated in the form of a black box, a perfectly versatile space that can accommodate various stage devices, with a capacity of around 400 seats, depending on the configuration. There is also another smaller room, which is dedicated to artist residencies; a sort of workshop to welcome artists from all over the world. As a national theatre, Chaillot's function is to present the broadest possible spectrum of contemporary choreographic creation. This doesn't mean that we don't present classics, but since great ballets are already programmed elsewhere - at the Opera, among other venues - they are not our

priority. Nevertheless, we do always want to give cultural reference points to the public, with standards that make up our choreographic literature, and at the same time to present a very broad field of creation embracing different contemporary forms, from hip-hop to performance art, each form itself offering an increasingly broad field of approaches. Of course, we are cautious not to fall in any pigeonhole, as this would contradict our vocation of universality.

**N.E.:** What is the heart of your mission?

**D.D.:** Most fundamentally, our mission is to address the broadest and most diverse audience possible. The best way to achieve this is broadly diverse programming. We have a responsibility to present French productions, but we also want to show choreographic approaches from all over the world. The world at Chaillot, and also Chaillot in the world, since we produce a series of shows that we broadcast throughout the world (about a hundred performances a year).

In addition to our two halls, we also produce shows in other parts of this vast and splendid place, such as the large foyer, corridors and staircases. Artists love to work in these atypical spaces, and the public is very fond of this type of offer.

In the two halls, Vilar and Gémier, we present about forty different shows every year, totalling about 230 to 270 performances, depending on the season, in series of various lengths. Half of these shows are from abroad and the other half represent the French scene. Note that fifty percent of these shows are co-produced by Chaillot, which is essential in the dance economy; co-productions between companies allow works to come to life and to survive. Our role is therefore decisive.

*Soulèvement*, solo show, choreography and interpretation by Tatiana Julien, music and sound by Gaspard Guilbert, 2019.  
Photo credit: Hervé Goluzia





**N.E.:** Programming requires selection. How do you operate?

**D.D.:** Selection is based on a set of articulated criteria, none of which are strictly enforced as this has nothing to do with applying rigid standards! My teams and I are committed to finding an overall balance.

The first criterion, and this is the DNA of this institution, is artistic quality, which does not exclude works intended for all audiences. I advocate for the notion of “popular”, as opposed to “populist”, as did Vilar and Gémier. It’s always good to remember that, especially in this day and age.

Then comes the notion of risk taking, which sometimes occurs in unexpected places – that’s how our work stays alive!

Finally, there are more personal choices. Programming is also a signature. In maintaining diversity, I strive to favour offers with very different forms in terms of aesthetics and approaches, while remaining centred on the body in movement through space, and to steer away from some of the excessive postures that have flourished in France.

**N.E.:** What do you mean by that?

**D.D.:** For a time, non-dance, or conceptual dance, was often the only form favoured by many programmers. Those days are now over; it was an important phase, but a phase nonetheless. It contributed enormously to reflection, and led to the current generation’s creation, which continues to reinvent itself and to give rise to new forms – through processes that are not radically new, by the way, but with new orientations, original points of entry. I consider that there has been an imbalance on most French stages, and today it is a question of restoring a real place to forms that have never really disappeared, that have been constantly renewed, and that preserve the future because they touch on questions of dancers’ training. To keep

alive forms that give prominence to the body in movement is to ensure that choreographers have performers who master a number of languages to work with, and this kind of training takes fifteen years to complete. This is why the balance of the forms presented within a program is essential, it is our responsibility as programmers.

Our second responsibility is to guide the audience in the joyful ability to find oneself in front of playful, new, possibly disturbing forms. The function of art is to open new paths, to change its audience’s gaze by enriching it, to remain available for life’s ongoing march – and art sometimes precedes it. It is a matter of constantly maintaining a balance, in which we present forms that the public will easily recognize, and other, more disconcerting, forms too. In short, the goal is to conceive a comprehensive programming that allows audience members to understand and enjoy works, or to come back even if they haven’t totally enjoyed some, because they know that, overall, those works have contributed towards enriching their perspectives.

**N.E.:** How do you navigate between loyalty and openness?

**D.D.:** Among other parameters for analysing a program, dance has the particularity of existing only when it happens. For music, there is an industry that addresses this problem. For dance, it’s a bit like theatre but with the particularity of having no text. The text is in the moving bodies of dancers. In order to create a culture of dance, one must legitimately be able to present its authors – choreographers – to allow people a view into their approach and a way to follow their work over the long term. How is a choreographic work constituted? What paths does it take? It is therefore necessary to be faithful to the artists, to present pieces from their repertoire and their current creation. In order

for the public to be able to understand the work of an author, programming must remain faithful over the years and, at the same time, must also remain dedicated to renewal, research and discovery, both aesthetic and geographical, since dance is a constantly evolving universal language. People dance all over the world.

I am committed to offering Parisian audiences scenes from different parts of the world, that enrich their gaze. At a time when exclusion and closure are on the upturn throughout the world, it is essential to keep the borders of art and culture open. And dance can contribute to this. ■

*Top: La Pastorale, choreography by Thierry Malandain, music by Ludwig van Beethoven, 2019.*

*Photo credit: Olivier Houeix*

*Left-hand page: festive and uncommon events, when the public and artists occupy atypical theatrical venues:*

*The “Entrez dans la danse” ball, 2017.*

*Photo credit: Nora Houguenade*

*In Tout doit disparaître, Philippe Decouflé invites the public to stroll through the theatre, 2019.*

*Photo credit: Sigrid Colomyes*





*Jérôme Bel*, 1995, first performance in Brussels as part of the Bellones-Brigittines festival.  
Photo credit: DR

There are times when one really wonders, “What on earth happened? And why did it happen so fast?” How could a single dancer, Jérôme Bel, with a single piece – which, as an assertion of his commitment, he named after himself – manage to call into question the development of the enthusiastic and uninhibited movement that had emerged in the early eighties under the name of Jeune Danse Française? This ever so fragile young movement had barely finished moving into the new national choreographic centres offered by Jack Lang, when it was already under attack – with the astounding result of its partial transformation or disappearance.

That was Bel’s rift: the story of a schism. An epistemological rupture, as philosophers say. The piece, *Jérôme Bel*, is a premeditated blow. It was performed on 1 September 1995 at the Centre d’Art Contemporain du Mouvement des Brigittines, in Brussels, and then at the Théâtre de la Bastille in Paris. So strong and striking was this blow that, nearly twenty-five years later, its ramifications still run deep in the world of dance.

*Jérôme Bel* is not only a success. It’s a passion. One either vehemently defends it or disbelieves in it. In its story, the fact that its author was not a choreographer but a renowned and remarkable dancer, is paramount. This is a performer who, beyond discourse, physically took it upon himself to rethink dance – and succeeded. After literature, music, the visual arts, and forty-two years after Roland Barthes’ seminal book, in this one Jérôme Bel piece, dance finally found its own “writing degree zero”. Ideas, rather than their materialization, were the priority – an endeavour to get rid of the body, and therefore of dance.

The soil in which this rift germinated was a conjunction of a historical moment with a movement that was endogenous to dance. Dancers gathered in a kind of contemporary and urban jacquerie. They made their position official at Montpellier-Danse as early as 1988: they accused choreographies, of which they were the performers, of being disconnected from reality, namely the trauma of AIDS and its casualties, and the massacres of

## BEL’S RIFT

By **DOMINIQUE FRÉTARD**, Correspondent of the Choreography Section

civilians during the first Gulf War and the war in ex-Yugoslavia, among others. They felt responsible for this frivolity because, through their improvisations, they participated very closely in elaborating many creations. This way of working led them, not without anger, to raise the issue of their status and of credit for their work. Should choreographers alone be credited and remunerated for work that is most often collective?

Breaking out of their unchosen anonymity, these dancers laid the foundations of a revolt against authority. “Enough”, they said, “of glorified bodies and vain virtuosity”. To think the body, one must stop it from dancing. This totally defied everything they had been trained, coached and prepared for.

It was violent. Wherever the body is at play, the unconscious mind ruminates.

Jérôme Bel, who is inclined to be solitary, chose to withdraw and study. To steer clear of empty words, he acquired a sound theoretical background. From Barthes to Rancière, from American theorist Peggy Phelan<sup>1</sup> to Foucault, he read everything there was about theatrical representation strategies, in an effort to understand what happens when “live people in the dark watch other living ones in the light”. From Greek amphitheatres to modern buildings, he passionately studied the architectures that produce thought, democracy or power, openness or confinement, and act on the very form of the works.

*Jérôme Bel* is not a scathing attack but a slow combustion device, built to last. It is a penumbra, where light is shed equally on the stage and on the audience. All come together for a rite of initiation with new words, new gestures. It is a first step in a direction, a proposal from which there is no turning back. Naked bodies, raw of all eroticism, of all idealization. Three men and two women are ready to engage in a detailed presentation of their identities, both social and sexual. Everything is said about skin, flesh and muscles; organs and functions, flows and fluids. Saliva and urine leak out. A simple light bulb illuminates one, then the other. And the spectator who has seen the five protagonists has not forgotten them. Claire Haeni, Laurence Louppe, Eric Affergan, and Frédéric Seguet, the author’s associate from day one, and the author himself, Jérôme Bel. Only Laurence Louppe, a singular critic, is not a dancer.

This is the manifesto piece, the starting block where it all began.

1. *The Ends of Performance* (with Jill Lane), New York University Press, 1998.



This rift is not just a French story, it resonates far beyond our borders. But at the time, in the 1990s, it probably could only have happened in France. In the United States and Germany, contemporary dance was constituted and strengthened through numerous ruptures, from the early twentieth century to the 1970s. We did have Maurice Béjart in France, but he was already long gone and his story had left a bitter taste, as he had to leave France for lack of support. This is what Bel's rift exposed: the weakness of a French contemporary dance scene that was constructed without ever opposing anything, not even the omnipotence of classical ballet, and that lacked proper foundations. It pointed to the soft belly of a filiation that had never been questioned and which therefore made it so necessary and urgent to come to a sudden halt.

The need to put things into words also turned out to be an act of defiance towards choreographers' profession – the one that perpetuates itself with costumes, music and sets – which they experienced as an overly voluntarist ordering of movement, the antithesis of the momentum that leads to dance. By positing that, as an inalienable starting point, dance must be put back into the hands of the dancers, *Jérôme Bel* hit hard. He aimed for the head, for authority. Mission accomplished.

Everyone is a dancer and a choreographer: dance would be conceptual or not be. It became everyone's business. Around Bel, a few names: Boris Charmatz, Xavier LeRoy, Eszter Salamon, Emmanuelle Hyunh, and Christophe Wavelet. From 1995 to the year 2000, they came together around various pieces and discourses. In 1998, Alain Buffard created *Good Boy*, a wildly inventive solo about AIDS. The movement developed despite the drawbacks of dance by and for dancers. The audience followed at first, but eventually felt excluded for lack of clear messages.

Bel, however, sold out everywhere. As for the audience, from the very beginning he had included it in his research on what is at play during a performance. Conceptually, however, he never took his eyes off dance. In 2002, he ventured to create his first group piece with many dancers, which he entitled *The show must go on*. It also became a landmark. To eighties disco-pop tunes, dancers dressed in brightly coloured t-shirts and trousers dance the nightclub way, singing the hits, headphones on their ears. In the hall, the audience starts to move in the rows; some want to get on stage. The dancers on stage fall down; some don't get up again. At the end, they're all on the floor. Did they die of fatigue? Bel says the play was inspired by singer Freddie Mercury of the band Queen, who died of AIDS. It was a worldwide success. The audience saw it as an invitation to have a good time. Was it a misunderstanding or an unresolved contradiction in the artist's message?

He learned his lesson. At any moment, the audience can take power over an artistic proposal that seeks to include them. As

a result, ten years went by before he returned to making group pieces. "I don't want to be loved, I want to be understood", Jérôme Bel insisted, quoting the director Fassbinder. And he worked on it.

How could he maintain this dialectic, this paradoxical evidence, in the long run? By approaching it head-on. He therefore devised a way to move forward by accepting a commission from the Opéra de Paris. In order to entrench more deeply the rift that he had created, the perspective of this work inspired him to suspend his pieces, as counterweights, to the history of dance in the twentieth century. Classical ballet was his first test. To stay in control of his career, he chose three modes of isolation. To begin with, he isolated himself from dancers and avoided working with them as much as possible, "so distrustful was he of his own dancing body when he was in the studio". He then isolated styles and personalities that were of interest to him in the history of dance. Finally, he found the performer who would be the sole representative and narrator of his choices.

This "less is more" rationale allowed him to extract the essence. Jérôme Bel opted for solos. A lone dancer on the immense stage of the Opéra Garnier: what more stimulating way could



there be to verify and materialize contradictory hypotheses on relationships between performers and their audience. He was careful to individualize the performer, and he named his piece by the first name and surname of the person with whom he designed it. Thus, *Véronique Doisneau* speaks of the daily life of a ballerina at the Opéra de Paris, and it is astounding; *Pichet Klunchun and myself* shows the powerful gestures of a traditional Thai dancer; *Cédric Andrieux* invites us into Merce Cunningham's world, and *Lutz Förster* into Pina Bausch's...

In 2005, Jérôme Bel decided to stop dancing. He wished to devote all his efforts to directing dance – a way of asserting that he did not by any means see himself as a choreographer. His experiments with solos brought him closer to what he was looking for. Everyone is responsible for what they say, for what they show. They all individually sign what they commit to. It is a pact of equality, of emancipation, and this story of dance



told by the performers themselves arouses keen interest. Thus liberated, dance emerges, irreducible. As he acknowledged in an interview on the radio station France Culture, "*It's an ore vein, a gold mine*". Aware that every vein eventually runs dry, he turned towards theatre. To create the solo *Danses pour une actrice* in 2020, he chose actress Valérie Dréville. As he explained: "*Some twentieth-century choreographies are as eloquent and significant as the most accomplished pages of literature*". In the mid-2000s, an unexpected tidal wave engulfed conceptual dance and brought the body back in focus. Artists who were determined to install joyous chaos made themselves heard. It was the thunderous arrival of gender and sexuality theories across society. The body has a sex, and sexes are political<sup>2</sup>. It was also then that everything that contemporary dance had always rejected crashed through its doors: street dancing, ballroom and cabaret dances

and even folk dances. A French-American version of Voguing, a dance born among homosexuals in African-American ghettos, with its extravagant balls, made itself a place. A *Baroque Ball (shade)*, a piece by Frédéric Nauczyciel created in collaboration with several transgender voguers from Baltimore and the suburbs of Paris, was performed at the Centre Georges Pompidou. Marginalized people come to the center, and dance deterritorialized itself.

Jérôme Bel stood on the sidelines. After *The show must go on*, he was still hesitant to get involved in group pieces again. In 2012, after having turned it down at first, he finally accepted a proposal from the Hora Theatre in Zurich, whose actors are disabled. The title *Disabled Theater* speaks volumes about how these artists, who express who they are through a hundred percent stage presence at every performance, were an obstacle to the very possibility that Jérôme Bel could direct them.

**"It was unlike anything seen so far. Could Bel have succeeded in reducing the irreducible essence of theatre?"**

That is exactly the presence he wanted on stage. In 2017 he created *Gala* for professional, amateur and disabled dancers, based on a central idea in the learning of dance: gesture transmission through imitation. It is a piece about sharing, which is prepared while being performed, with few or no rehearsals, to preserve the ineffable aspect of gesture in its emergence as best it can be, avoiding the temptation to "do better". Bel was wary of both beauty and perfection. He still occasionally corrected some slack here and there, but he wondered if it would not be better to let it settle in and observe its ability to cause a shift in the piece.

Throughout the show, applause surged, like moments of irrepressible delight. It was unlike anything seen so far. Could Bel have succeeded in reducing the irreducible essence of theatre? Performers and spectators, together and each in their own place, fully gave the show its form and freedom.

Retrospectives, exhibitions, accolades, he got them all, received everything. He is invited to give lectures and interviews; his words carry weight.

On 23 September 2019, he announced that, "*for ecological reasons, the R.B./Jérôme Bel company will no longer travel by aeroplane*". AFP picked up on the news, and the New York Times published an article about it. As an artist and citizen, he will cast filmed performances or send a repeater. He is thus imagining another way of broadcasting his work to infinity. It is a model to be reinvented, that will inevitably influence creation and the relationship with performers. What will Jérôme Bel choose? ■

2. Some choreographers of this movement are Gaëlle Bourges, Frédéric Nauczyciel, François Chaignaud, Gisèle Vienne and Cecilia Bengolea – amongst others, of course.

In the middle: *Pichet Klunchun and myself*, created by Jérôme Bel, commissioned by Tang Fu Kuen for the Bangkok Fringe Festival, 2004. Right page: *Gala*, 2015, created by Jérôme Bel in Brussels as part of the KunstenFestivalesArts. Photo credit: DR.



# ON DANCE, CHOREOGRAPHY AND PERFORMANCE

By **JÍŘÍ KYLIÁN**, Foreign Associate Member

Singing and dancing, art forms that I call “naked arts”, can exist without costumes or instruments, without the slightest addition to our bodies. They can happen and be accomplished anywhere and anytime. We are born naked, without qualities, and we produce two actions when we are born: movements and cries. Our first cry is our first song, just as our first instinctive movement is our first dance. Above all, these two actions are essential and primary. Throughout our lives, we realize that many of our movements do not necessarily obey any form of rationality. We also understand that our physical behaviour can be worked on and organised into a sequence of figures of the body in movement – dance. The value of this activity is not determined by its durability, but rather by its ephemeral and fleeting nature. Its moving figures die at the very moment they are born; they dissolve like a poem written in an ink that fades as it dries, and survive only in the memory of the dancer’s body. They are always unique and cannot be copied or reiterated. Song and dance are siblings, but dance is perhaps the most personal of those two. It is easier to recognize someone through the eyes than through the ears, because our visual reading of others is based on reality, while our auditory perception is rather related to understanding and interpretation. This means that we can be deceived much more easily by the disguise of a voice than by a physical disguise: a human voice can lie, body language cannot. This is why so many incantations and rituals make regular use of it. Dance and movement form the basis of almost all shamanic rituals, which are intended to help us understand our physical reality and our relationship to the spiritual world, as well as to strengthen the bonds that unite us to the community whose beliefs we share.

Our physical expression can take a multitude of forms, representing different states of our mind or psyche. This has led to the emergence of a peculiar genre: professional dance, an organized, cultivated and precisely codified art form. What

does it mean to be a professional dancer or choreographer? Above all, it means accepting the fact that our bodies are truly capable of producing art on their own. This simple fact is already a contradiction in itself: how can we call the figures produced by our bodies works of art when we are so crucially aware of all our physical imperfections? We generally consider our body as an “instrument” capable of producing art, but hardly as an “art piece” in itself. And the imperfections and corruption that affect our body are precisely our greatest asset. Far from incapacitating us, all of these inadequacies contribute to our ability to become “*objets d’art*”. This has been said before, but I insist on repeating it: a dancer’s fragility is their greatest strength. And although most dancers are perfectionists, their personality is not determined by perfection, but rather by the sum of the flaws and shortcomings they face throughout their lives.

## Representation

In our daily lives, we spend a lot of time looking at ourselves in the mirror and asking ourselves many questions, both rational and irrational. Dancers do this constantly, day after day, as a never-ending ritual. It has nothing to do with narcissism or complacency. It’s an attempt to come to an agreement with what we are... and to consent to it.

Dancing in front of an audience is a very strange act, to say the least, and can be perceived as exhibitionism, self-indulgence or narcissism. But to experience dance, when it speaks to us in its most secret voice, is to realize that, far from being a parade of any kind, it is an act of introspection and self-examination. A deeply felt dance performance has the power to awaken a multitude of emotions in us, more than any other art form.

## Choreographers

With the dancers, choreographers create a “motion” intended to elicit “emotion” in an audience. This way that choreographers have of collaborating with the performers of their work is very unusual, and certainly very different from what happens in all other methods of creation. In the process of making dance, choreographers use the bodies of others to visualize their imagination. But while it is true that they are “experimenting with

Left: *Mémoires d’oubliettes*, 2009, choreography by Jiří Kylián, with Aurelie Cayla and Kenta Kojiri, Lucent Danstheater, The Hague.  
Photo credit: Jason Akira Somma



live human beings”, it is also true that they spend a great deal of time and energy trying to understand how the bodies, minds and emotions of these live human beings work.

This requires acute sensitivity on both parts – dancers and choreographers – and a shared willingness to contribute freely towards the result. After accumulating all the necessary information, the dancer becomes a messenger, a link between the choreographer and the audience – which hopefully this will result in a mutually beneficial exchange.

This creative process is strongly influenced by two factors: the dancer and the choreographer must develop their creation within a very narrow and disciplined schedule, which means that they must be “inspired” within a specific space and time frame. This creates pressure; in fact, all choreography is created under pressure. Moreover, the creative process does not take place in the choreographer’s intimate space, but in a rehearsal room full of dancers, assistants and observers.

Other artists can create their work in solitude, in the sole company of a pencil, paper, brush, canvas or block of marble. Their work is entirely of their own making. The creation of dance, however, does not take place in the choreographer’s head or in the dancer’s body, but in the space and time of their encounter, the space and time between them. Outside of this equation, any attempt is bound to fail.

### Dancers

In the “choreographer-dancer-spectator” triangle, only the dancer is connected to the other two components: the



Above: Nancy Euverink in *Toss of a Dice*, 2005, choreography by Jiří Kylián, Lucent Danstheater, The Hague.  
Photo credit: Joris Jan Bos

Top: *Anonymous*, 2011, choreography by Jiří Kylián, with Sabine Kupferberg and Cora Bos Kroese, Corzo Theater, The Hague.  
Photo credit: Jason Akira Somma

choreographer and the audience. Dancers are messengers between those two parties. They need all the information and confidence necessary to produce something they can believe in, something that touches a sensitive place in them and, consequently, in their audience. Choosing to become a dancer impels opposite forces, with an abundance of physical energy on the one hand and, on the other, the great anxiety and fear of physical exposure. And the awareness of the brevity and intensity of life at the peak of one’s abilities as a dancer can add to that anxiety. Dancers live and function under pressure. Their professional experience is affected by the complicated and often difficult process of self-acceptance; they spend a considerable amount of time trying to come to terms with their physical appearance and their mistakes and inadequacies. But although they may feel trapped in their body, dance gives them the opportunity to escape from it and to communicate with their surroundings in a deeply human and sometimes original way.

### About audiences

The audience is only directly connected to the dancers. Being faced with dance has a very direct impact. Be it negative or positive, our reaction is usually immediate and spontaneous. Although dance may seem to be the counterpoint to our intellectual world, it is in fact its Siamese twin, and should be accepted, respected and cultivated as such. And it doesn’t matter how we see or appreciate it: it lives with us throughout our lives, from the womb to the grave. Life is movement and movement is life: life is dance. It has the power to strengthen us, to give us hope, courage and inspiration.

### What it all means to me

Dance in its traditional form does not use words, but it is certainly able to convey messages that other art forms cannot. Compared to language, dance has unlimited possibilities of expression. A sophisticated language may have a few thousand words, but only one for something as complex and inexplicable as love, for example. Dance is never as explicit as language, but it has a vocabulary of unlimited richness, capable of expressing emotional nuances for which there are no words in any of the 6900 languages spoken today. Dance can convey sensations, complex relationships or dramatic situations in a nutshell. Its brevity, speed and lightness can be compared to poetry, especially short poems from Asia, which can capture a philosophical thought or complex emotion in very few words. Or to the art of calligraphy which, similarly, is the unique trace of a moment in the artist’s life and can never be repeated.

I am trying to describe dance in words here, but I am at a loss for words. Not only because I am doing this in a language that I learned late in life, but also because words fail to satisfy my need to fully express what I feel. It’s just not possible!

We must not lose contact with our physical being: although I see our existence as a simple comedy of errors, I remain an optimist because I believe that our physical being gives us the opportunity to take us closer to the roots of our existence. It opens the door to our imagination and allows us to make a laughing or crying matter of our failures, faults and insignificance.

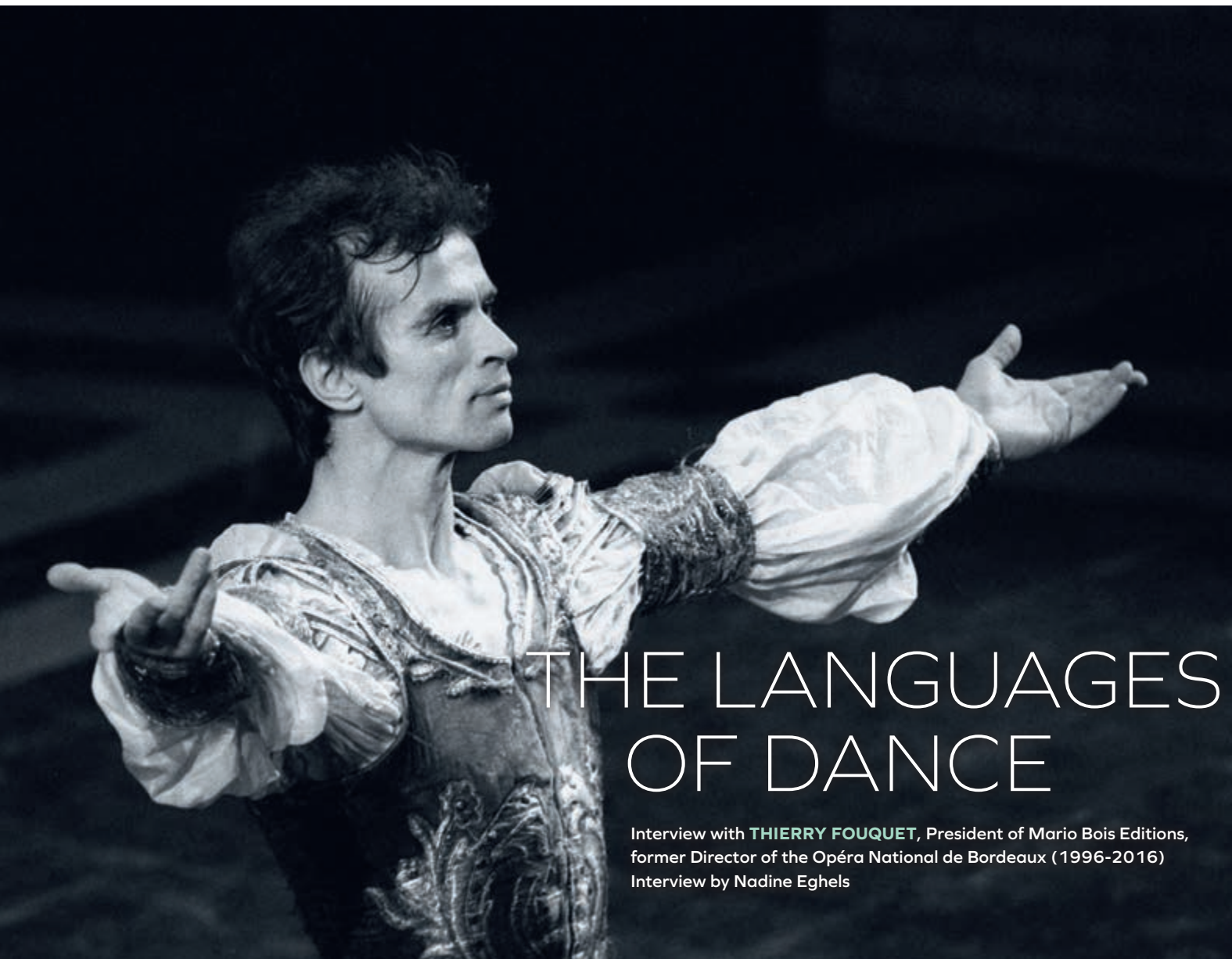
I heard someone a little while ago talking about the art of dance. He was talking about constructing one step, then another, then

learning the whole thing and seeing how it all made sense or not. That certainly is true, but it’s not that simple. A lot of experience, psychology and, quite simply, a lot of life go into constructing a step, no matter how abstract or illustrative it is. Every step we construct inevitably reflects who we are.

Dance is not just a visual or aesthetic activity – it is an emotional experience. Whether we like it or not and admit it or not, we are emotional creatures. We live our lives, and all our artistic production is a reflection of that. Whether it is painting, sculpture, music, literature, poetry, or dance.

Nietzsche wrote: “I would believe in a God who could dance” – and I feel like I understand him very well. But I realize that I spent a lot of time sitting in a chair writing this article about dancing, instead of moving and dancing, as we all should! ■





# THE LANGUAGES OF DANCE

Interview with **THIERRY FOUQUET**, President of Mario Bois Editions, former Director of the Opéra National de Bordeaux (1996-2016)  
Interview by Nadine Eghels

**Nadine Eghels: What is your background with regard to dance?**  
Thierry Fouquet: I joined the Opéra National de Paris in 1974 and later became its administrator for Ballet. I changed assignments, but in 1982 Rudolf Nureyev was appointed Director of Dance and he asked me to come back to work alongside him, which I happily did until 1985. After that, I conducted the Opéra-Comique and returned to the Opera to work with Hugues R. Gall as Deputy Director. It was then that Alain Juppé asked me to come to Bordeaux, where I headed the Opera from 1995 to 2015.

**N.E.: So you have assisted the development of dance over the last forty years?**

T.F.: In the institutions where I've worked, the Opéra de Bordeaux and the Opéra de Paris, the ballets have a broad classical base. Managing Nureyev's repertoire means being very involved in maintaining classical dance and technique. There has obviously been an evolution of choreographers towards "contemporary" dance, but for the great classical ballets, it's always difficult to find contemporary choreographers who are also able to use the language of classical dancers. This is necessary to avoid depriving them of structure, which can lead to accidents when they have to alternate between very contemporary forms and the classical repertoire for which they were trained.

**N. E.: Physical commitment is different...**

T.F.: Classical dancers work for more than ten years to train their bodies to do something totally abnormal from a physiological point of view: we're not made to walk on the tip of our toes! So the problem for a ballet programmer of a company such as the Opéra de Paris or Bordeaux, which are initially oriented towards classical dance, is a matter of dosage; it's a question of maintaining a certain amount of classical dance so that dancers continue to practice it, because that's what keeps them in shape and maintains their level of excellence, while also offering them the opportunity to work with contemporary choreographers.

**N.E. : Did you experiment with this alternation at the Opéra de Bordeaux?**

T.F.: We invited Carolyn Carlson twice, and it went very well. The experience was very interesting for the dancers, who were able to enter a much more dreamlike universe than that of classical dance. But we also had to offer them other contemporary choreographers who have more of a classical language, like Forsythe, Kylián or Malandain, choreographers who use the classical base and might put a little spin on it but don't deny it. The other concern is that young contemporary choreographers often do pieces for two, three or four dancers. So when you put them in front of forty dancers, they're overwhelmed. On the other hand, choreographers like the aforementioned three or Matts Ek, or Akram Kahn, are very talented artists who know how to create for classical dancers without doing any damage.

And they work in their best interest, as they have a sense of theatricality and an inventiveness in terms of movements that benefit them.

**N. E.: How can we avoid losing this classical language, is there a notation for dance?**

T.F.: There are several types of notation. While they're not widely used in France, they are used enormously in English-speaking countries, especially the Benesh notation. In England, many dancers learn this notation in order to be able to redo certain ballets. Although they don't render the quality of expression that choreographers want, it does allow them to define certain movements, so it helps. And now there's video, which was in its infancy forty years ago. Today, even with a telephone, you can record movements and work every night on what you've been able to film during the day.

But classical dance is maintained above all by the schools, which are still very numerous throughout the world: at the Opéra de Paris and in conservatories in France, the Covent Garden school in England, the Russian school in Saint-Petersburg as well as in Moscow, the NY City Ballet in the United States, and so on.

**N.E.: What have been the main directions of your work at the Opéra de Bordeaux?**

T.F.: My first job was to recruit a dance director. I chose Charles Jude, a *danseur étoile* at the Opéra de Paris, one of Nureyev's and other choreographers' favourites. He started to create great classical choreographies for Bordeaux, with all the available dancers (about forty), and he raised the level of quality by presenting great ballets from the classical repertoire. At the same time, he followed in the footsteps of Nureyev and of all the great dance directors with whom he had worked at the Opéra by inviting contemporary choreographers either to present ballets they had already created or to create new ones – as did Carolyn Carlson, with whom I had already worked in Paris.

**N.E.: How did you perceive the evolution in dance's audience?**

T.F.: I see it fit to speak of audiences, plural. It's not the same at a performance of *Swan Lake* as at one of the latest contemporary production. I think there's still a large audience for the great classical ballets. And, separately, a more contemporary audience, that of the Théâtre de la Ville and now Chaillot, which has become a national dance theatre. However, this audience can also be found at the Opéra de Paris ...

**N.E.: Are the boundaries of dance becoming increasingly blurred?**

T.F.: Forms are more and more fragmented and boundaries increasingly blurred in contemporary dance, which has opened up to other disciplines, such as video, cinema and theatre. There are more and more bridges between the arts. Both classical dance and opera require very specific training that does not allow one to do everything. In contemporary dance, boundaries fade more easily. Asking a classical dancer to speak on stage would likely result in a flop... just as a contemporary dancer would be unable to dance on pointe, but could speak, act or sing on stage. There are a thousand means of artistic expression that are much better suited to contemporary dance than to classical dance!

**N.E.: How has the relationship between dance and music evolved?**

T.F.: The relationship to music is an essential component of dance. There are several types of cases. The score can be composed at the request of dancers or of a choreographer, as did Tchaikovsky for Marius Petipa in the nineteenth century. Or ballets appropriate existing music, sometimes written beforehand for other ballets, as happened when Maurice Béjart took up *The Rite of Spring* in a version that had nothing to do with the original. Or choreographers use fragments of different compositions within the same ballet. And then there are choreographies that are created alone, with music being added afterwards. We now see choreographies without music, with sounds, text or images. The ties between composers and choreographers are slackening.

In the nineteenth century, the composer was dependent on the ballet master. When Tchaikovsky composed *Sleeping Beauty* for Petipa, he followed very precise instructions, such as: "I want eight measures in three beats at such and such a time for the Queen's entrance, it must not last more than one and a half minutes", or "there, I want a waltz that must last ten minutes". Some composers wouldn't have stood for it.

Thus Stravinsky, when he composed *The Rite of Spring*, collaborated very little with Nijinsky, who was a young and inexperienced choreographer. One of the things that caused scandal at the creation stage was this dichotomy between complex music and immature choreography. Choreographers who created new shows to this music had time to "digest" it and use its full force, especially since they had recordings of the orchestral version, unlike Nijinsky who had to set his choreography to a piano reduction. The libretto created by Nijinsky has left its mark, and Béjart, as well as Pina Bausch, have kept the main theme of the sacrifice of the "Chosen One", that that animates the score.

After that, there were a lot of choreographers who worked directly with composers, as did Roland Petit with Kosma, Dutilleux, and so on – collaborations that were different every time. He also worked on Messiaen's *Turangalila* symphony... but he worked on it himself, it wasn't a collaboration and that's why Messiaen refused its revival. He had also done a ballet, *Le Jeune Homme et la Mort*, to music by Messiaen, who would not allow it to be performed. He then slightly adapted Bach's *Passacaglia and Fugue in C minor (BWV 582)*, and it worked. But the closest collaboration was between Petipa and Tchaikovsky, as their correspondence attests. And despite these constraints, Tchaikovsky composed fantastic music! ■

Left page: Rudolf Nureyev in the *Romeo and Juliet* that he choreographed, music by Sergei Prokofiev, 1977.  
Photo credit: DR



# DANCE AS CAPTURED BY PHOTOGRAPHY...

By **BERNARD PERRINE**, Correspondent of the Photography Section



**"D**ance photography has bad press", claimed Jean-François Chevrier, in 1985, in the magazine *Photographies*<sup>1</sup>. This is perhaps because of the antinomy between dance and photography: "one being the art of movement that develops in space and time, vanishing as it is created, and the other seizing a moment out of time to inscribe it on a medium". Yet, as Dominique Fourcade has pointed out, "when modern dance arrived, its alter ego (photography) was waiting to signify it". Despite this and in spite of the numerous essays that theorize their relationship, not a single chapter is devoted to dance photography in the many histories of photography – although it is admittedly easier to list the photographers who did not cross paths with choreography or dance than those who did (see page 45).

From photojournalism to portraiture, from scientific photography to fashion photography, choreography and dance have featured in all of photography's practices and aesthetic currents. However, for a variety of reasons, its most frequent use is confined to what is usually referred to as "applied photography": that which serves to promote the "show", that is, which serves as an illustration, and which allows dancers to see themselves dancing and choreographers to visualize or check their choreographies. It is, one could say, a mechanized reproduction where still images, videos, and films have become critical tools that, in the course of the evolution of technologies, have

incorporated the creative process. In spite of the backdrop or the set, this is a reporter's task. Some will focus on gestures, others on sequences, and others on light or aesthetics. This is the realm of "beautiful" photography that illustrates coffee table books on dance, such as William A. Ewing's *The Fugitive Gesture: Masterpieces of Dance Photography*.

It can also, in a way, measure the antinomy between dance and photography: one is an art of movement that develops in space and time only to "vanish as it is created", while the other exalts its dynamism and its rhythm and yet is unable to communicate a continuum of nuances.

The act of photographing can thus be seen as something that freezes a dance but is not that dance; "photos taken, not photos made", as photographer Pierre Corratgé lamented about his series on Carolyn Carlson. Between freeze frame and still image, could this be the *Impossible image*<sup>2</sup> that Michelle Debat speaks of. In this work she developed an aesthetic project on the basis of which photography was used as a conceptual object to question dance and, in return, to reflect on these two arts of the ephemeral that "invent writings in which time is simultaneously the subject and the material of an image of the 'vanished'". A dialectic takes place around this triptych of the arts of the "impossible image": photography, dance, choreography.

However, when one has the opportunity to attend a photo session for a performance (be it dance or another art), or a

politician's press conference, one observes – or rather, hears – that the crackling sounds of camera shutters are almost synchronous, following a gesture, a movement of head, hand or gaze.

Could this be the "right moment" that Charlotte Rudolph wrote of in *Tanzphotographie*<sup>3</sup>, prompting Mary Wigman to claim that "only Charlotte Rudolph understands the meaning of her dance"? It actually seems to be the opposite, for the photographer is trying to show these moments of transition as passages of failure ("Übergangsmoment"); what, in dance, is "dying", to borrow Dominique Fourcade's term. Yvonne

1. *Photographies* No. 7, May 1985. *Images de la danse* Dossier: Loïe Fuller, Mary Wigman, Oskar Schlemmer.

2. *L'Impossible image : photographie-danse-chorégraphie. Lettre Volée*, 2019

3. Charlotte Rudolph (1896-1983), *Tanzphotographie in Schrifttanz*, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Schrifttanz, May 1929.

Martha Graham (1894-1991) performing her own choreography in *Letter to the World*, captured through Barbara Morgan's (1900-1992) lens, 1940 © Barbara and Willard Morgan photographs and papers, Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, UCLA.



Rainer, who is labelled as the most iconoclastic postmodern choreographer, banished these strong points, these tensions, these paroxysmal climaxes, to promote a transitional choreography, an “anti-photography”. This was her experiment in *Trio A* in 1966: “Neutralizing the emotional disposition of the audience means deactivating the (photographic) snapshot that can occur in the onlooker’s mind when he/she has a gripping experience”.

Martha Graham’s photographer, Barbara Morgan, argues on the other hand that “Every dance has peaks of emotional intensity; moments when the dance ‘speaks’ to the audience. These are moments when the form of the dance is in closest unison with the original compulsion which gave it birth. (...) Dance photography deals with definite moments of expressive action”<sup>4</sup>. She sees these as moments that memory retains, and therefore that photography must record in order to transmit them.

Paradoxically, Yvonne Rainer borrowed from this memory by inserting gestures found on photographs into her creations. This was a common practice in the 1960s, a particularly memorable example being Steve Paxton’s for the Judson Dance Theater. It even went beyond simply reproducing dance photographs, and integrated photographs of everyday scenes, from movements in sports, jumps, or all sorts of miscellaneous themes left to the dancer’s inspiration, who thus became a choreographer by proxy. Photography thus took on a “performative dimension”, while the question of its status was raised. The photographic image ceased to be memory and became an “index”, an imprint, maybe even a temporary appropriation, what Barthes would call an “it has been there” – that is, if the photographer himself does not become a dancer or the dancer a photographer, as has been known to happen! When Henri Cartier-Bresson photographed the *Dances in Bali*, Joseph Morder referred to his way of photographing as a kind of dance, if not a trance, even. It is a wonderful body language, that Julie Perrin<sup>5</sup> described thus: “The gesture of the photographer himself: body stretched by the concentration of the gaze, body suddenly at a standstill facing the object of his imaginary photograph, body folded towards a detail to be reached, wandering in search of a subject to capture... Pauses that highlight a choreography of the gaze”. Much like that of Hans Namuth, as described by Rosalind Krauss<sup>6</sup>, when he was photographing Jackson Pollock.

Through publications, exhibitions, projections and now

festivals<sup>7</sup> devoted to it, photography gives a sublimated image of dance. This seems to be due to its ability to actuate a disconnection between the gestures and movements of dance and the symbolic construction of a work, as Isabelle Waternaux’s research shows. A pseudo-reconstitution that generates another reality in the studio where, as Laurence Louppe<sup>8</sup> explains, “photographic and choreographic devices construct each other” to give rise to an improvisation that erases all reference to the performance and forms a sort of “portrait in movement”. These creations also raise the question of what these photographs, which are not strictly “dance” photographs, say about dance. Or, in other words, “how dance makes an image”.

While, as I have mentioned, Charlotte Rodolf’s photographs are faithful and useful to the history of dance, for the history of photography their interest is purely documentary. They are images of *these dances* and not *of dance*.

Finally, as Samantha Marenzi points out in her analysis of *The Art of Dance*<sup>9</sup> in *Photographies*<sup>1</sup>, we should not overlook the fact that, in association with dance, photography ensures a certain transmission of practices, mainly in contemporary developments. Simultaneously however, she points out that photography has taken advantage of this to appear in the sphere of Art alongside the “Olympus of figuration”. Yet, when in 1916 and 1920 Arnold Genthe published *The Book of the Dance*, a set of ninety-two dance photographs in the pictorialist style, he was far from simply replacing drawn illustrations by mechanical images. For photography “enlarges the range of possibilities for visually recording ephemeral phenomena and opens a fruitful dialogue with the arts of movement, which are gaining a new place in modernity”. ■



## ...photography as captured by dance

For technical reasons, photography was unable to capture movement in its early days, until Etienne-Jules Marey’s geometric chronophotographs reduced bodies to undulating lines, akin to Oskar Schlemmer’s “stick dance” or William Forsythe’s film. While Nadar asked the mime Charles Debureau to pose for “*têtes d’expression*” in 1854, in the second half of the nineteenth century, the studio founded in 1845 by Charles Reutlinger immortalized all the celebrities of the world of dance, from Loïe Fuller to Cléo de Mérode, la Belle Otero, Liane de Pougy... and Colette, a dancer at the Moulin Rouge. He was soon challenged to it by other studios such as those that Alinari, Appert, Benque, Carjat, Liébert, Meyer & Pierson, Pierre Petit, Thouvenel, and others opened. And, as early as 1862, Eugène Disderi had classical dancers pose for him. In parallel, although many artists such as Matisse, Rodin, Picasso – or Andy Warhol, taking up Barbara Morgan’s famous 1940 photograph of Martha Graham – became passionate about dance, only Degas was initiated into the practice of collodion photography, and assiduously photographed dance.

Like Hugo Erfurth, Dresden’s most famous portraitist, Arnold Genthe and Edward Steichen (Isadora Duncan on the Acropolis), Mary Wigman helped to transmit, by extension, the memory of a certain visual culture of dance.

Dance is a recurring theme in Man Ray’s oeuvre, and even more so in that of Brassai. From *Diaghilev Dancer*, *Ballets Russes* (1930) to

the *Couple at the Bal Nègre* and *Ballet School* (1953), the author of the *Graffitis* chose to show a counter-example, to be a photographer of slowness of sorts – the photographer of living matter animated by a statuary impulse. Many other photographers’ names, too many to list them all, would join these celebrities on this list. Among them were Adolf de Meyer and Eugène Druet with Nijinski (1910); Henri Manuel with Mistinguett around 1912; Nicholas Muray with Ruth Saint Denis in 1914; Alvin Langdon Coburn with Michio Ito around 1916; Edward Weston with his *Fantastic Dancer* in 1921; André Kertész with his *Satiric dancer* in 1926 or, the same year, Man Ray with Serge Lifar; George Hoyningen-Huene with Josephine Baker (1929); Albert Renger-Patzsch with Mary Wigman (1931); Barbara Morgan with Martha Graham in 1941<sup>4</sup>; George Platt Lynes with his “dance portraits” of Katharine Hepburn and Gloria Swanson in the mid-1940s; Serge Lido who “idealized” the dance of Serge Lifar and the whole French neo-classical movement throughout the 1940s; Philippe Halsmann and his “breaking bounds” with Merce Cunningham leaping next to Martha Graham sitting on a chair (1947); Marc Riboud with Jean Babilée (1952); Roger Pic with Béjart and the Ballet de l’Opéra in the 1960s; William Klein with Kazuo Ōno in 1961; Cecil Beaton with Rudolf Nureyev in 1966; Annie Leibovitz with Mikhail Baryshnikov; Jean-Paul Goude with Mia Farrow in 2008; Robert Doisneau with *Le ballet contre l’Opéra*, to illustrate a special issue of *Le Point* in 1956; Lord Snowdon with Rudolf Nureyev for *Life magazine* in January 1965 and Richard Avedon also with Nureyev in the 1960s and then with Margot Fonteyn and Martha Graham (1967) and Merce Cunningham and John Cage (1960); Gilles Tapie with Sylvie Guillem throughout the 1980s; Jeanloup Sieff with Carolyn Carlson in 1974. Gérard Uféras should also be mentioned, for all his reports on the great European dance houses, as should Jack Mitchell and his work with Alvin Ailey and the American Theater (1961-1994). And the list goes on...

Top: Photographer Edward Steichen (1879-1973) immortalized Isadora Duncan dancing on the Acropolis in 1921.

4. Barbara Morgan (1900-1992), *Martha Graham: sixteen dances in photographs*, Duell, Sloan and Pearce, New York, 1941.

5. “Choreography as seen through the lens of photography. Time in composition: Rainer, Paxton and Charmatz” (2012), transl. by Patricia Chen, electronic version published in 2019 on the website [www.danse.univ-paris8.fr](http://www.danse.univ-paris8.fr)

6. Rosalind Krauss in *Le photographique: pour une théorie des écarts* (Macula, 1990), p. 92.

7. “Mouvement (capturé)” Limoges International Biennial of Dance Photography. “Dancing Machines”, Frac Franche-Comté, which was to take place from 2 February to 26 April 2020, extended until 16 August 2020.

8. Laurence Louppe, *Poétique de la danse contemporaine*. Éditions Contredanse, Brussels, 2000.

9. Isadora Duncan, *The Art of Dance*. New York Theatre Art, 1928, with reproductions of original drawings by Leon Bask, Antoine Bourdelle, Jose Clara, Maurice Denis Van Deering Perrine, Auguste Rodin, Dunoyer de Segonzac and with photographs by Arnold Genthe and Edward Steichen.



Pavillon Comtesse de Caen – Palais de l’Institut de France

# “CHARLOTTE PERRIAND PHOTOGRAPHIES”

From 13 February to 15 March 2020, the Académie exhibited a selection of photographs by French architect and designer Charlotte Perriand (1903-1999), as an extension to the major exhibition of her work at the Louis Vuitton Foundation.

The exhibition was curated by Lélia Wanick Salgado. She was eager to discover and share another facet of the multiple talents of Charlotte Perriand, an exceptional woman with a temperament so robust as to make her fearless, and whose great creativity and strong personality had always fascinated her.

This exhibition is structured around the main themes explored photographically by the artist from 1927 to 1940 – the rural world and natural objects that she, Fernand Léger and Pierre Jeanneret described as “art brut”, industrial constructions, mountains, and so on – thus showing a lesser-known side of the artist and revealing a very singular sense of composition and poetics.

It also made it possible to call into question the different dimensions conferred on photography by a woman committed to the progressive artistic and industrial project of the inter-war period.

The exhibition presented 48 photographs that have rarely been publicly exhibited. They were selected from the Charlotte Perriand photographic collection managed by her daughter Pernelle Perriand-Barsac and her son-in-law Jacques Barsac. It will soon be presented by the Académie at the Maison de la Photographie in Lille and then in Annecy. ■

Curator: Lélia Wanick Salgado



Above: Permanent Secretary Laurent Petitgirard with Lélia Wanick Salgado, to his right, and Pernelle Perriand-Barsac.  
Photo credit: Patrick Rimond



Above: Block of ice in the Fontainebleau forest, circa 1935.

Opposite: Fishing nets, Bakarac, Croatia, 1929.

Right: The East face of the Aiguille du Grépon and the Vire by bicycle, Chamonix, circa 1930.

Photo credit: Charlotte Perriand







Ruth Amarante in *Iphigénie en Tauride*,  
with Pina Bausch's Tanztheater Wuppertal, Sadler's  
Wells Theatre, London, 2010.

Photo Bettina Strenske



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