# DANZA

## INTERNATIONAL



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CLOSE UP
JOHAN INGER

A DIRECTOR REFLECTS
EMILY MOLNAR

PEOPLE
ROBERT FAIRCHILD

CULTURE
DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH

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DANZA

NO.19 MAY/JUNE 2020

ENGLISH LANGUAGE


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EDITORIAL

# THEATRES TO LIVE AND BREATHE, NOT WATCH

**A floaty, ultra-romantic tulle skirt worn as a mask. Behind it is Virna Toppi, Principal dancer of Bayerisches Staatsballett and La Scala Theatre. This symbolic shot by Raoul Iacometti chosen for our cover was taken for other purposes, before anyone could have imagined the current situation. Still, the strong emotions evoked by the photograph of this Italian dancer inside a greenhouse, face covered and foot in a relevé anchored to the ground, cannot fail to remind us of the standstill, the uncertainty and the protective measures that have been imposed by the current global health emergency. A 'monster' that has unexpectedly entered and taken over our lives. While this 'monster' may have caused us to reflect on the compulsive nature of the modern world, certainly making us more aware of our finite state, our mortality and our fragility, it has also reminded us just how much art and culture can be consolatory, grounding and dynamic.**

In two months of quarantine* we've found time to read, interpret reality and even virtually visit museums as well as see some wonderful shows offered online by the world's greatest theatres. New opportunities have been opened up by technology. But is this really enough? We don't want to imagine the future of dance as a sort of Netflix instalment, instead we want to hope that we will soon be able to return to 'living and breathing' our theatres – the rehearsal rooms, the stages, the stalls, the galleries and the narrow steps of underground spaces – and sharing the emotions of live shows, for those on stage and those in the audience, as well as the ritual of theatre-going. This is certainly not to criticise the necessary action taken by the authorities in the most acute phase of the Coronavirus pandemic; but now has come the time to give signs of hope for the future, to give oxygen (never has there been a more appropriate expression) to a sector that has been severely affected by the crisis.
In this issue you will discover the wonderful *Corsaire* created by José Carlos Martínez for the Rome Opera Ballet, which only went on stage three times before the closures, and Aleksej Fadeečev's brilliant *Don Quijote* reprised with a great show of skill by the San Carlo Theatre Ballet in Naples for just a few runs. We also reviewed the final pre-lockdown performances in London by Alina Cojocaru, Viviana Durante Company and Russell Maliphant. You will read about choreographers and artistic directors who have never stopped looking to the future, eclectic characters such as Robert Fairchild, neuroscience and works by Dmitri Shostakovich, an artist whose unstoppable verve and talent would not be dampened even when faced with Soviet censorship and whose scores remain a source of inspiration for many today. Last – if only chronologically – comes Edward Clug.

Maria Luisa Buzzi

* Theatres in three Italian regions (Lombardy, Veneto and Emilia-Romagna) have been closed since 24 February. On 4 March, by Prime Ministerial Decree, all Italian theatres were closed until further notice.



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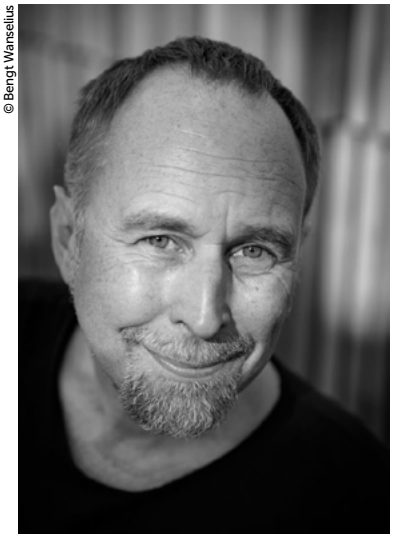
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© Bengt Wanselius

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© Michael Slobodian

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On the cover
Virna Toppi, Italian Principal dancer of Bayerisches Staatsballett and La Scala Theatre Ballet in a symbolic shot by Raoul Iacometti

THE INTERNATIONALLY-ACCLAIMED FREELANCE CHOREOGRAPHER IS PREPARING A NEW, FULL-LENGTH CREATION FOR ATERBALLETTO

# JOHAN INGER

## A two-headed Don Giovanni with Freudian overtones

BY MARIA LUISA BUZZI

ON THE VERGE OF COMPLETION, Johan Inger's eagerly anticipated full-length 2020 production for Italian company Aterballetto, *Don Juan*, was stopped in its tracks by the coronavirus – as we all were. As we await further developments and look forward to its world premiere, originally slated for the Ravenna Festival in June, we had a video call with the choreographer to ask him about the project, and much more: his early career, his elective affinities and his poetics. A prolific dancemaker with his roots in abstract dance, Inger is also an accomplished narrative choreographer, as shown by hits such as the Benois-winning *Carmen*, created for the Compañia Nacional de Danza; *Peer Gynt*, created for Ballett Theater Basel, and a version of *Petrushka* for Ballets de Monte-Carlo. A refined, sensitive observer of the human soul, he has now turned his gaze to the controversial figure of Don Giovanni. Using the Spanish title – after all, Inger lives in Seville – the Swedish choreographer talks to us in Freudian terms about a man traumatised by maternal abandonment, and his incapacity for love.



Johan Inger (© Nadir Bonazzi)





Ayaha Tsunaki and Jon Vallejo in "Carmen" by Johan Inger with the Semperoper Ballett Dresden (© Ian Whalen). Right, "4 Karin" choreography by Inger for the Dancing with Bergman's program (© Eric Berg)

**Inger, given the current pandemic that forced you to interrupt the creation on your production of "Don Juan" with Aterballetto, do you think you'll be able to unveil the work on 20 June at the Ravenna Festival?** My feeling is – though I hope I'm wrong – that it's not going to premiere in June. The world situation is too complicated. I still need four weeks of work on it: three to finish the choreography, one for setting up the production. The way things are now, it's all on hold; I can't even travel. I mean here in Spain (and where you are I imagine) I'm not allowed to leave the house. I hope things will open up in May. The idea is we try to finish the work as soon as possible; then at least it's finished and can premiere… maybe at the Ravenna Festival as planned, and if so that would be fantastic. I feel for the company and I feel their concern: this production is a big investment for Aterballetto and they plan to perform it a lot on tour next year.

**What made you choose to tackle the character of Don Giovanni?** I think his character is especially interesting today. Going beyond the age-old theme of the "serial womaniser", today the #MeToo revolution and the constant news reports about abuse and violence against women make him more relevant than ever.

**Which literary sources did you use, and who is your Don Juan?** With the dramaturg Gregor Acuña-Pohl, we discussed it a lot, we read and re-read Brecht, Molière and Tirso de Molina. But what really inspired our libretto more than anything was the Suzanne Lilar play *Le Burlador*, which is a feminist reimagining of the story of Don Giovanni. Who is my Don Juan? A very real character, a man who has suffered the huge trauma of maternal abandonment.



Johan Inger with Aterballetto's dancers in the rehearsal studio of the Fonderia, headquarter of the company (© Nadir Bonazzi)



Nederlands Dans Theater in "Dissolve in this" by Inger (© Joris Jan Bos). Opposite, Lyon Opera Ballet in "I New Then" (© MIchel Cavalca)

## MILESTONES JOHAN INGER

The Swede Johan Inger (Stockholm, 1967) had his dance training at the Royal Swedish Ballet School and at the National Ballet School in Canada. From 1985 to 1990 he danced with the Royal Swedish Ballet in Stockholm, the last year performing as a soloist. Fascinated by the works of Kylián, Inger was convinced that the next step in his dance career should take him to Nederlands Dans Theater. In 1990 the hour had come. He joined Nederlands Dans Theater 1 and was a high-profile dancer in this company until 2002. In 1995 with his first choreography for Nederlands Dans Theater 2, *Mellantid,* he officially debuts as a choreographer. Since his debut, Inger has made various works for Nederlands Dans Theater. For his ballets *Dream Play* and *Walking Mad* he received the Lucas Hoving Production Award in October 2001. *Walking Mad* as it was later performed by Cullberg Ballet received the Danza&Danza Award 2005. Inger himself was nominated by the VSCD Dance Panel for the Golden Theatre Dance Prize 2000 and received the Merit Award 2002 of Stichting Dansersfonds '79. Inger left Nederlands Dans Theater to become artistic director of Cullberg Ballet in 2003. Over the following five years he created various pieces for this company. In the summer of 2008 Inger stopped as artistic leader for Cullberg Ballet so as to devote himself entirely to choreography and produced *Position of Elsewhere* (2009) for Cullberg Ballet. In the years 2009-2015, Inger became 'associate choreographer' for the Nederlands Dans Theater creating regularly for both NDT1 and NDT2 (*Dissolve in This, Tone Bone Kone, I New Then, Sunset Logic, B.R.I.S.A* and *One on One*). As of 2015, Inger also started to make his own versions of more narrative ballets and created his *Rite of Spring, Carmen, Peer Gynt* and *Petruschka*. Inger is now established as an independent choreographer.
His works belong to the repertoire of numerous dance companies, in addition to those mentioned, around the world such as GöteborgsOperans Danskompani, Royal Swedish Ballet, Ballett Theater Basel, The Norwegian National Ballet, Compañia Nacional de Danza, Les Ballets de Monte-Carlo, Aterballetto, Ballet Vlaanderen, Ballet Staatstheater Nurnberg, Lyon Opera Ballet, Stanislavski Theater, Ballet BC, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Charlotte Ballet, National Theater Mannheim, Gauthier Dance Company, Theater Dortmund, Ballett des Saarländisches Staatstheater Saarbrücken, Staatsoper Hannover Ballet, Ballet du Rhin, Hungarian National Ballet, Semperoper Ballett Dresden, Aalto Ballett Essen, Hessisches Staatstheater Ballett, Finnish National Ballet, Hubbard Street Dance, Cedar Lake, Ballet Chemnitz, National Dance Company Wales, Icelandic Dance Company, Luzerner theater, Bern Ballet, Staatstheater Mainz, Ballet du Capitole.

**So it's a psychoanalytical take on the story?** Yes, partly. It's as though with every encounter Don Juan is seeking his mother, that's why he cannot commit to any relationship. So he is very hollow, very shallow and sad… luckily he always has his servant with him.

**You mean Leporello?** Yes, we just called him Leo but I don't want to give too much away. In our version he's really an alter ego of Don Juan.



**About the music, are you referring to the versions by Mozart and Gluck or did you take a different route?** The music for *Don Juan* is an original composition by Marc Alvarez. The score has melodic references to various past versions, including Gluck, but the overall result will be totally new.

**Could you tell us about your approach to the choreographic process, how you work with the dancers in the studio?** I always go into the studio with very clear ideas, but I don't prepare steps beforehand. When I meet the dancers I invite them to share my thoughts about where we need to go, but I don't give a lot of improvisational tasks.

**Do you remember when you first felt the desire to compose choreography?** As a young kid I loved to put on my headphones with my father's stereo and listen to music, it was always very inspiring: I got a lot of images and ideas, and I'd be dancing… Then I started to study dance and I danced for many years, but I always liked improvising on my own and trying things. I never showed anything to anyone though, not until I came to the Nederlands Dans Theater - because at the NDT *everybody* was choreographing [smiles]. In the yearly workshop, everybody did a piece. So I thought I'd try it as well. I did a very, very short work, because I thought, "If it's bad, at least it's over fast"! One very important factor was working with Jiří [Kylián, Ed.]. He always invited us to suggest, to participate. He made you feel like a collaborator in the choreographic process, so I got more in touch with my creative side working with him. After three years of workshops they asked me if I wanted to do a piece for NDT2. And that was the beginning of it.

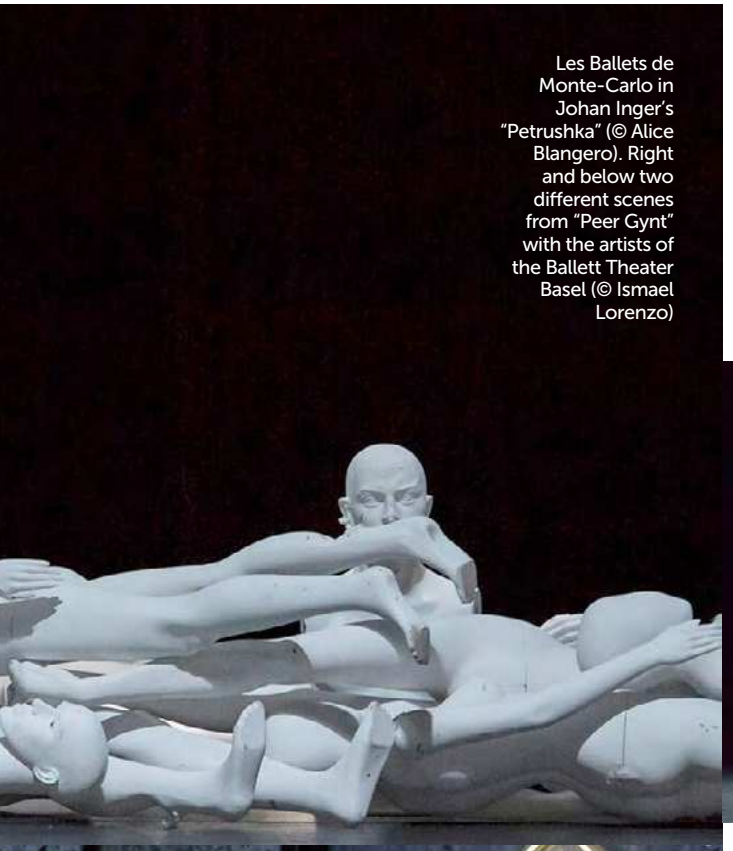


**Has your approach to choreography changed over the years?** It has and it hasn't. I think as a young choreographer you try lots of different ideas; you don't know who you are and you don't really know your strengths and weaknesses and what your language is. So it takes a long time to figure out, it's very much hit and miss: you try something and it fails; or you feel "that's not really me, even though it comes from me". At some point, I started to mix the experience that I had discovered in the abstract, more physical works, with a theatricality that I think is a part of me. Somewhere I am some form of storyteller.

**One of your statements that's often quoted is "every piece is a journey". Towards what?** I love to see a work that really touches me, that makes me laugh or cry, that makes me think and question things… That's what I mean by a journey. A journey means exploring the broad spectrum of … not humanity, because that sounds so pretentious, but of human beings. I try to be as honest as I can, and I try to find the honesty in what it means to be human beings. That's sort of my mantra.

**On several occasions it's been music that inspired your most successful pieces, like "Bliss"(Keith Jarrett), or "I New Then"(Van Morrison). How does your choreographic process change when there is a plot to tell like in "Carmen" or "Don Juan"?** It changes in a sense. If I have a very clear script, a clear dramaturgy, I know I have to tell the story from beginning to end. Sometimes you have existing music, like in *Carmen* you have Shchedrin or Bizet, and then of course the music is describing very clear situations. In that sense, yes. I'm very clear where I need to go, "Now we go *here*, I have to explain *this* and I have to capture *that* feeling". It's not always easy, but there is a certain relief because you're leaning on a story, you're not making it up as you go. Making a slightly more abstract work like *I New Then* or *Bliss* is different. Bliss was very much about responding to the music, it was trying to capture the feeling, the essence of Keith Jarrett playing.

**You gave up directing the Cullberg Ballet a few years ago, and then you went freelance. Is freelance choreography more difficult than being able to develop your ideas with your own company?** There are two sides to every coin. I directed the Cullberg for five years so I've been able to weigh





Les Ballets de Monte-Carlo in Johan Inger's "Petrushka" (© Alice Blangero). Right and below two different scenes from "Peer Gynt" with the artists of the Ballett Theater Basel (© Ismael Lorenzo)

the good with the bad. With directing, creatively it was fantastic. The dancers got to know me very well, so it was a very effective way of working. But then, of course, you have the "price" of directing people on a daily basis in practical terms, which I found a little less interesting, and maybe also a little in conflict with choreographing.

Sometimes I think "Oh yeah, maybe it would be nice to try to have a group again", but then I try to remember my time there and I think, there's probably a better solution. Like being the 'house choreographer', so I could advise and guide the dancers, but only focus on what I'm good at and leave the other responsibilities to professionals who are certainly more suited to them than a choreographer.

**Can you tell us about your longstanding relationship with Aterballetto…** These things are both professional, and also very personal. You just feel a bit more at home in certain places than in others, and you don't know why. With Aterballetto, I felt that they had just started to recover from the departure of Bigonzetti with all his works, and were trying to find a new identity. I thought it would be interesting to be a part of that, and the feeling was mutual. I always felt very, very appreciated in many ways, by the dancers and the people working there.




**Do you already have new commissions for 2021? If so, for which companies?** Yes, next season I will do a work for the Gothenburg Dance Company in Sweden, a new half-evening piece. I will start creating in January and the premiere is in March 2021. It will be based on human ambition – how we constantly try to move and grow and expand, and find ourselves, struggling to achieve our goals.

I'm still looking for the music. I have to say I've now been sitting in this quarantine for four weeks and I thought I'd get super creative but I'm not [laughs]. I'm looking for music but I'm not really inspired at the moment, I don't know why. •

## WHEN AND WHERE 'DON JUAN'

**20, 21 June,** Ravenna Festival, Teatro Alighieri, Ravenna, Italy
**15 July,** Theatre Antique (open-air), Vaison La Romaine, France
**22 July,** Teatro Sferisterio (open-air), Macerata, Italy
**9 October,** Teatro Comunale, Ferrara, Italy
**14-17 October,** Théâtre Chaillot, Paris, France
**23 October,** Teatro Rossini, Pesaro, Italy
**31 October- 1 November,** Teatro Valli, Reggio Emilia, Italy
**20 November,** Teatro Verdi, Pisa, Italy
**28 November,** Teatro Le Muse, Ancona, Italy

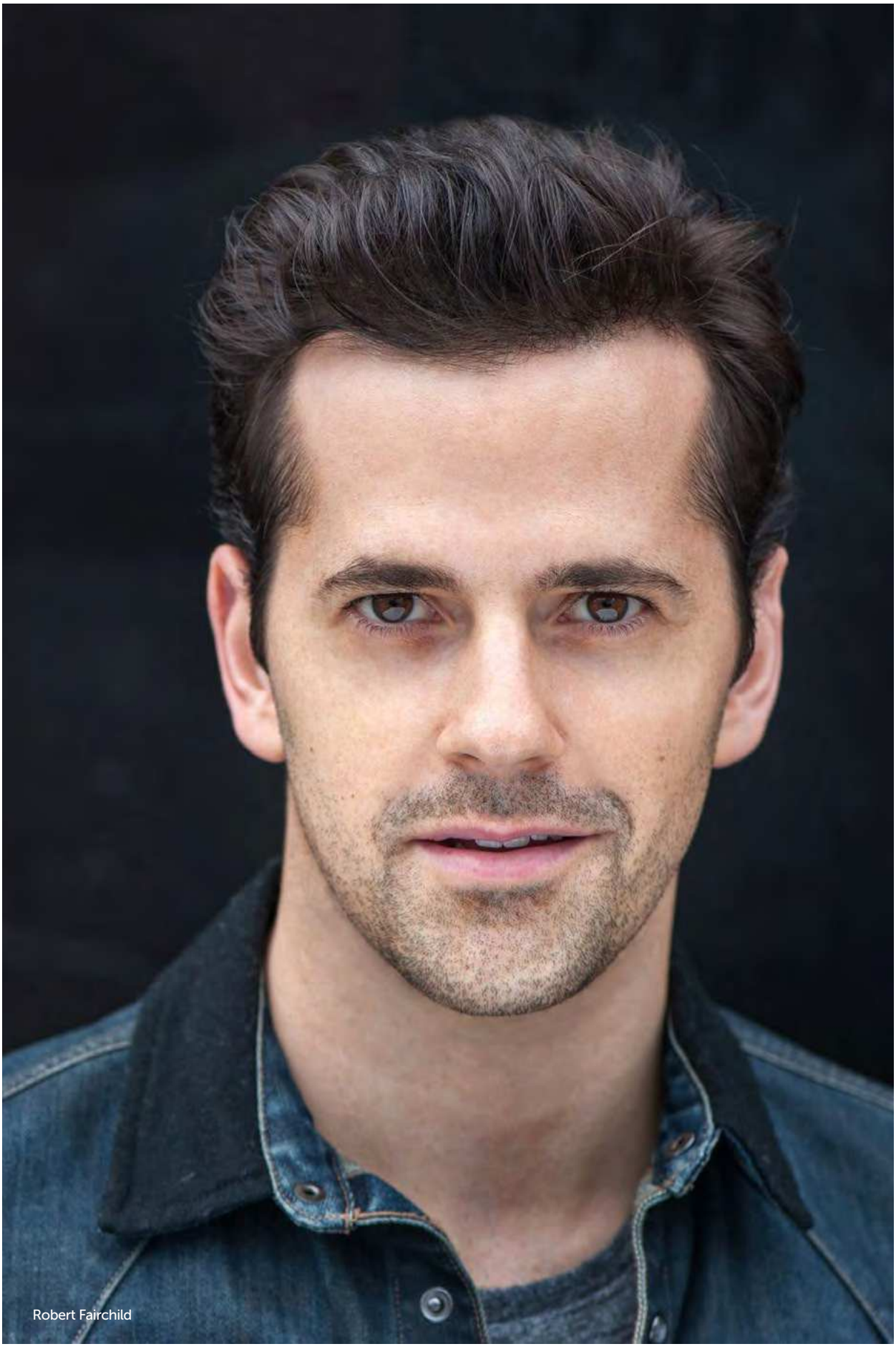
FROM BALANCHINE TO GENE KELLY:
THE STORY OF A NEW YORK CITY BALLET PRINCIPAL
WHO DECIDED TO START A NEW CHAPTER

# ROBERT FAIRCHILD

## "My next step will be to write a musical"

BY SILVIA POLETTI

FROM THE ROOF OF A SKYSCRAPER, from the slopes of Colorado, from within the four walls of home. Robert Fairchild uses social media to constantly communicate his unstoppable desire to dance. He'll hop from a tap routine to freestyle. Then there's modern jazz and a pinch of ballet. After all, "dance is a man's game", to quote the famous television documentary in which Gene Kelly transformed athletic movements of some of the most famous sports personalities of the time (such as the boxer Sugar Ray Robinson) into dance steps.



Robert Fairchild

In Robert's case, there's nothing foreign about evoking Gene Kelly. It reaffirms the idea that there's a symbolic fil rouge connecting the legendary Hollywood star to the dancer from Salt Lake City. And it's not simply because Fairchild gave an electrifying performance in the role of Jerry Mullighan in the acclaimed theatre version of *An American in Paris* (choreographed and directed by Christopher Wheeldon), the famous cinema musical starring Kelly and Leslie Caron set to music by Gershwin. In fact, it's because Kelly is the reason why Fairchild became a dancer and, later, a fully-fledged artist. He spoke to us shortly before the Gala Les Etoiles in Rome, where he duly danced an extract from the musical that established him as a star, alongside Balanchine's *Apollo*, another title not chosen by chance given that Balanchine, too, has featured heavily in Robert's career. But let's start at the beginning. "When I was four years old I was jumping around the house and writing about wanting to be like Gene Kelly and dance in musicals when I grew up. I have to say that fate has really given me a helping hand", he says.






Two different scenes from the musical "An American in Paris" by Christopher Wheeldon (© Johan Persson)





Fairchild in "Apollo" by George Balanchine at the Gala Les Etoiles 2020 in Rome (© Alessandro Sambuchi)



Fairchild with the Principal dancer of ABT Stella Abrera at the Gala Les Etoiles 2020 in Rome (© Alessandro Sambuchi) and in the rehearsal studio with Tiler Peck and Christopher Wheeldon in New York (© Andrea Mohin)

**First came the New York City Ballet…** This was a direct consequence of having trained at the School of American Ballet, which I attended since I was fifteen years old. It all happened quite naturally: I joined the company as an Apprentice in 2005 and in 2009 I was named Principal Dancer. And you know what? Now, when I think about it, I think it was thanks to Balanchine that I wanted to study ballet. There's nothing more American than his dance, you can feel it in the dynamics of the movement; it's really jazzy, crisp and snappy. Take *Duo Concertante*, which, not by chance, I did for my farewell to the company. I've always asked myself why I love it so much and then I realised: it's because its like tap dancing but with ballet shoes. And that's also the case with *Apollo,* which dates back to the 1920s!

**In 2014, aged just twenty-seven and with your entire career ahead of you, around the same time you were hired for "An American in Paris", you decided to leave the NYCB and ballet. Did you reflect on this decision or was it impulsive?** When I discussed it with Peter Martins, at the time director of the NYCB, he said to me: "you're the youngest Principal to ever leave the company". He added: "Remember there will always be a place for you here, Robbie". I don't know if it was an impulsive decision but I sometimes think I learned so many important things in such a short time at the NYCB that I wasn't meant to stay there forever. I remember that before my last show I was terrified of feeling lost after the curtain came down. Instead, when I saw it come down I was filled with joy. So I said to myself: "Ok, that's fine. Let's turn the page."

**I must say that when I watched you in "An American in Paris", which was screened in cinemas in Italy [courtesy of Nexodigital, Ed.], what struck me was the absolute naturalness with which you dance, sing and act… it all seems to come out easily, expressively, giving the impression that you are capable of perfectly mastering each technique. Virtuosity is replaced with poetic realism, very much in keeping with Gene Kelly...** That means a lot to me because that's exactly what I'm aiming to achieve. Kelly was the greatest at it. For my part, I've always looked for this input in dance, when I'm at the bar I am really hyper-critical and I meticulously study every detail on myself but when I go on stage I don't want to think about it for a second. What will be, will be… the audience wants to see 'you' on stage, feel your emotions… When it comes to singing and acting, of course, I went on a real boot camp with some of the best teachers in the business as soon as I'd been selected at the auditions. I was going to be surrounded by top level actors and singers and I needed to get to their standard.



**After "An American in Paris" you worked on other legendary musicals such as "Brigadoon" and "Carousel", not forgetting your appearance in the film version of "Cats". And also you played Ted Shawn, one of the forefathers of modern dance, in "The Chaperone", a film about Louise Brooks, who studied under him before becoming a Hollywood star…** I'd already danced at Jacob's Pillow [Shawn's residence and today home to America's oldest and most important dance festival, Ed.] and I'd started doing

my research on him. The fantastic thing about acting is you can really delve into a character, entering to some extent into his way of thinking. I find his fight for male dance and his efforts to create a dance school for young men absolutely fascinating. It was something Gene Kelly also tried to do. It's my dream too and so I feel even more strongly that there's a link that passes from Shawn to Kelly and from Kelly to me…



**Dancer, singer, actor and director. Who is Robert Fairchild today?** Goodness! Actually, at the moment I'm writing a musical. An idea came to me a little while ago and I ran straight to the computer to write it down. It's an electrifying act of creativity. When you're a dancer you generally transfer to your body the story the choreographer wants to tell. But now I finally feel like I've found my place. The idea springs from a reflection on today. As a type of show musicals have always been stereotyped in terms of genre, in a 'boy falls in love with girl' sort of way. But times have really changed; now there's much more freedom within the roles. I think it's fantastic that young people refuse to be defined beyond being human. Isn't this what really counts after all? This is the first time I can express my emotions and create something made to measure for me. I often wonder how Gene Kelly would put everything together today, someone who, let's not forget, danced and acted and choreographed and directed himself. Perhaps I'm subconsciously following in his footsteps again. One thing is certain: I want to find out what I'm capable of. Because, after all, who better than me to create something that fits me like a glove? •



Fairchild and Tiler Peck, Principal dancer of NYCB in Balanchine's "Divertimento" (© Paul Kolnik). Above in a frame from the movie "Cats" directed by Tom Hooper

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From August the outgoing director of Ballet British Columbia will take up the reins of the Nederlands Dans Theater in Holland

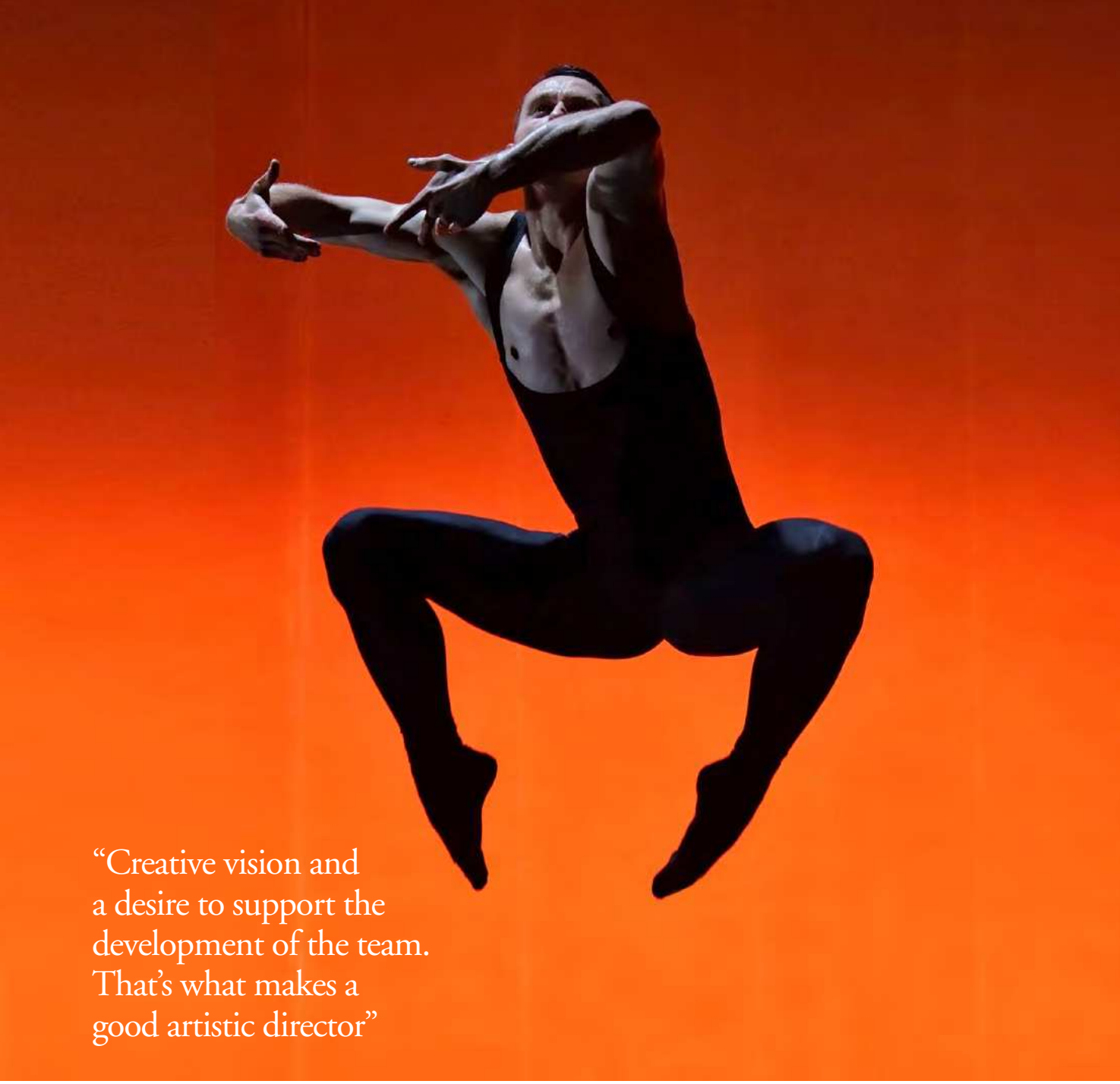
# EMILY MOLNAR



Artists of Ballet BC in "Bedroom folk" by Sharon Eyal (© Michael Slobodian)

BY CARMELO A. ZAPPARRATA

EMILY MOLNAR, BORN IN CANADA in 1973, is a fully rounded artist who takes inspiration from a deep-rooted sense of humanism. Formerly a dancer at the National Ballet of Canada and later at the Frankfurt Ballet under William Forsythe, since 2009 she's been artistic director of Ballet British Columbia, a Vancouver-based company that she's brought to international attention. For her, leadership is a service that should be responsibly provided to the collectivity. Many new adventures await her in Europe. This summer she will hand over the Ballet BC baton to Medhi Walerski to move to The Hague where she will take up the reins of the Nederlands Dans Theater in the role of artistic director. We met Molnar at the Teatro Sociale in Trento where she was for the first and only appearance of Ballet British Columbia in Italy. We were dazzled by her personality and her desire to strike up a real connection with whoever she's talking to, journalists included.



"Creative vision and a desire to support the development of the team. That's what makes a good artistic director"

**Emily Molnar, how would you describe your ten-year experience as Artistic Director of Ballet British Columbia?** It's been one of the richest experiences I've had. First of all, running Ballet BC meant being able to work with a special group of people over a period of time. From the beginning, we examined the idea of what a company is and reflected on dance practice and the creative process. We worked on developing the individual and collective voice inside the organization and generated 45 new works over ten years. "What does the act of collaborating really mean?", that question drove our thinking and enabled us to dive deeper into our art making. Then, when I took up my position at Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity, I was able to expand what I was building at Ballet BC into a larger multidisciplinary training platform. Personally, I feel these past ten years have confirmed the power of what dance can be and why we need it in the world today. It's one of the most beautiful art forms, the way it articulates human expression and brings people together.

**Let's talk about the 45 new pieces in Ballet BC's repertoire. Why did you decide to build a 'conversation' with certain choreographers?** Ten years ago, I proposed a conversation with our audiences around the definitions of "contemporary" and "ballet". At that time Ballet BC was known in Canada as a contemporary ballet company with a mostly neo-classical repertoire. It was important to me that, going forward, Ballet BC's identity should be driven by a vision as a creation-based company that was encouraging the boundaries between ballet and contemporary dance to blur, helping to inform our approach to the creative process in new ways. To do so, my proposal was to collaborate with as many different voices



in contemporary dance as possible. I wanted to open the doors and see what we could learn from that diverse conversation and how it could influence our artists, audiences and Ballet BC's repertoire. With each new creation, we learnt new tools and new ways of looking at composition and performance. We were inspired to learn this by working with emerging and established choreographers from across Canada and around the world; on a number of occasions Ballet BC was the first company to introduce internationally recognized choreographers to Canadian audiences. For me, when choosing a choreographer I am inspired by their commitment to their craft, their vision for dance as a language and their desire to have a conversation with our artists.

Emily Molnar in the rehearsal studio with Ballet BC (© Michael Slobodian). Below, the dancers Gilbert Small and Nicole Ward in "16 + a room" choreographed by Molnar (© Chris Randle)

**Two repertoire titles are by Italian choreographer Walter Matteini.** Yes, we have also had the pleasure of working with renowned choreographer and Artistic Director Jacopo Godani. Both exciting artists. I think that Walter Matteini is a beautiful poet, very sincere. I was introduced to his choreography through a work he created for





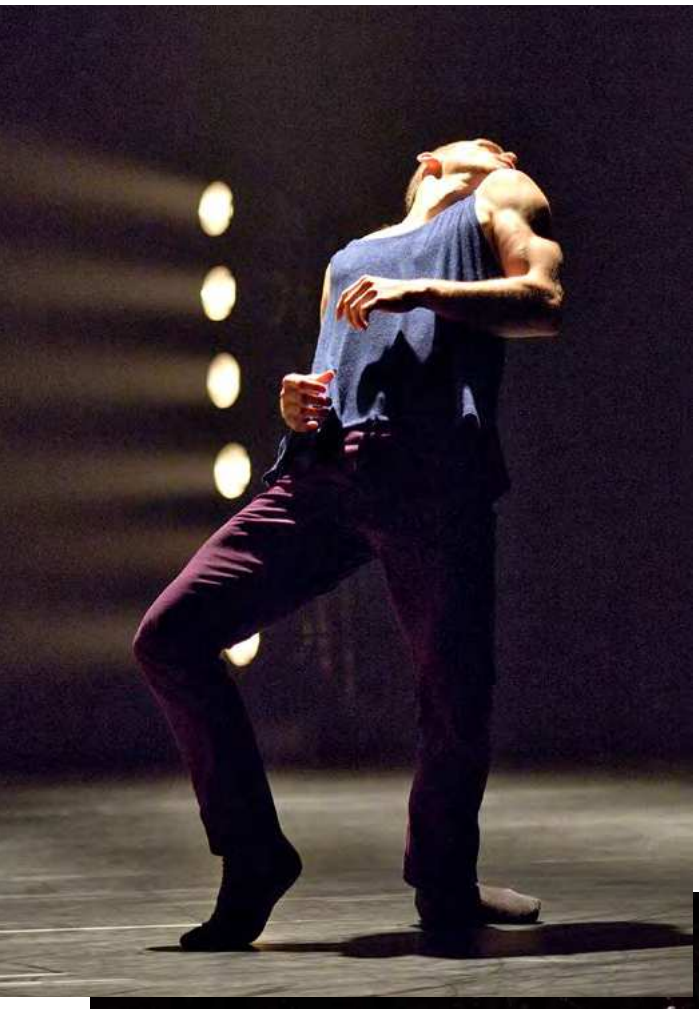
Tara Williamson and Darren Devaney, Ballet BC, in Molnar's "RITE" (© Michael Slobodian)

Aterballetto. Our relationship with Walter started with one of his existing works and then I asked him to come back to create something new, which became *Lascia ch'io pianga*, a work that explores the individual unconscious.

**In your opinion, what qualities does an artistic director have to possess to lead a cultural institution?** Leadership is crucial to the integrity of a healthy society and is needed in many areas, not just positions of authority. I think it's about being able to take responsibility, moving past one's self, towards a bigger picture and the needs of the people who are a part of it. As an artistic director, it is important to me that the vision for the company also holds a vision for the art form. I care about how and why we are dancing today and the difference it is making. Communication, listening and transparency are key attributes to meaningful leadership. In my opinion, a great artistic director is one who not only has an inspired creative vision but also a desire and ability to support the development of those helping to realize that vision. I'm fascinated by human potential and dance is a wonderful vehicle for that conversation. Every day dance continues to help me better understand myself and the world.

**Do you think it makes sense to maintain a hierarchy in a dance company?** It's an interesting topic. What we have done with Ballet BC is propose that all members of the company are considered soloists within a group. I experienced that as a dancer with Frankfurt Ballet and wanted to share that approach with Ballet BC. It means that each member is important and responsible as an individual but also collectively, as a group. This philosophy allows for a sense of ownership and equality. There will always be hierarchies; they are essential and a part of the natural progression of life. We are striving for excellence but doing so by making everyone equally important in achieving that aim. As Erik Bruhn, former Artistic Director of The National Ballet of Canada, used to say: "every person on the stage is important to the whole no matter their role". I strongly believe in this and the effect it has on how we make art and how audiences experience it. Collective voice with purpose is a beautiful and deeply moving act.

**Are female choreographers given enough space on today's world stages?** Dance is a female dominated profession and there are many extraordinary female voices in it. Look around the dance world and you'll see talented women as dancers, choreographers and artistic directors. It's true, we see more women choreographing in contemporary dance than in the classical ballet world. I think there is





Artists of Ballet BC in "Solo Echo" by Crystal Pite (© Sharen Bradford). Above, Brandon Alley in "To this day" by Molnar (© Michael Slobodian)

work to do there but not due to a lack of gifted female voices in classical ballet. As an artistic director, I feel it is my responsibility to make sure that any dance artist who has the desire to choreograph has equal opportunity. We also need to start earlier in our education systems, to encourage equal opportunity and support young women as they build the confidence and trust in themselves to follow their interests.

**How do you work as choreographer? Tell us about your creative process.** As you'll often see in my works, I always credit "in collaboration with the artists". As a choreographer, I love to work closely with each dancer, asking them to engage their personal perspective. I will often propose a number of ideas and ask the dancers to research and solve them with me: I am interested in the creative variations and intelligence of their diversity. From there we start together to build a movement vocabulary, the lexicon of that specific work. My process is constantly evolving, often requiring much trial and error, improvisation and reworking. I have been very lucky - my recent works were all created for Ballet BC where the dancers are extremely generous, creative and curious, giving me permission as a choreographer to try anything.

**As a female Canadian artist, do you have anything in**

**common with choreographers Aszure Barton and Crystal Pite, both of whom you invited to create for Ballet BC?** I admire both women greatly. Aszure, Crystal and I share similar backgrounds. Aszure and I graduated from Canada's National Ballet School while Crystal and I both danced for Frankfurt Ballet with William Forsythe. I'm excited by choreographers who are interested in using the body as the primary form of expression on stage. I think all three of us share that interest in the body and the desire to investigate the physical poetry of the dance. Having said that, I would never dare to compare myself.

**Your past experiences in Europe and Canada led you to cross paths with two important names in dance: William Forsythe and Margie Gillis...** Both have been enormous mentors to me. Bill is an incredible creative force in my life. I met him when I was sixteen. I still remember one of the first creations I performed with Frankfurt Ballet: a process of eight weeks in the studio going through Bill's sixty different improvisational modalities. My world has never been the same since! Bill's body of work exists on a scale and trajectory uniquely his own. Working with him taught me many things, one being the importance of taking risks. His work has revolutionised our perspective on dance and his appetite to investigate and test the boundaries of theatre and the language of dance continues to provide a constant source of learning for me. I had the pleasure of meeting Margie later in my life, at around twenty-six, a time when I was renewing my commitment to dance and my relationship with performance. Margie's tremendous artistry and power as a performer ignited a newfound trust in the ability dance has to transform a room, an audience. Her creative instinct is able to enliven the theatrical space of her own work and that of others, in ways most people can't even begin to imagine. I am deeply grateful that my life has brought me to Margie and Bill, two sincere and deeply complex artists.

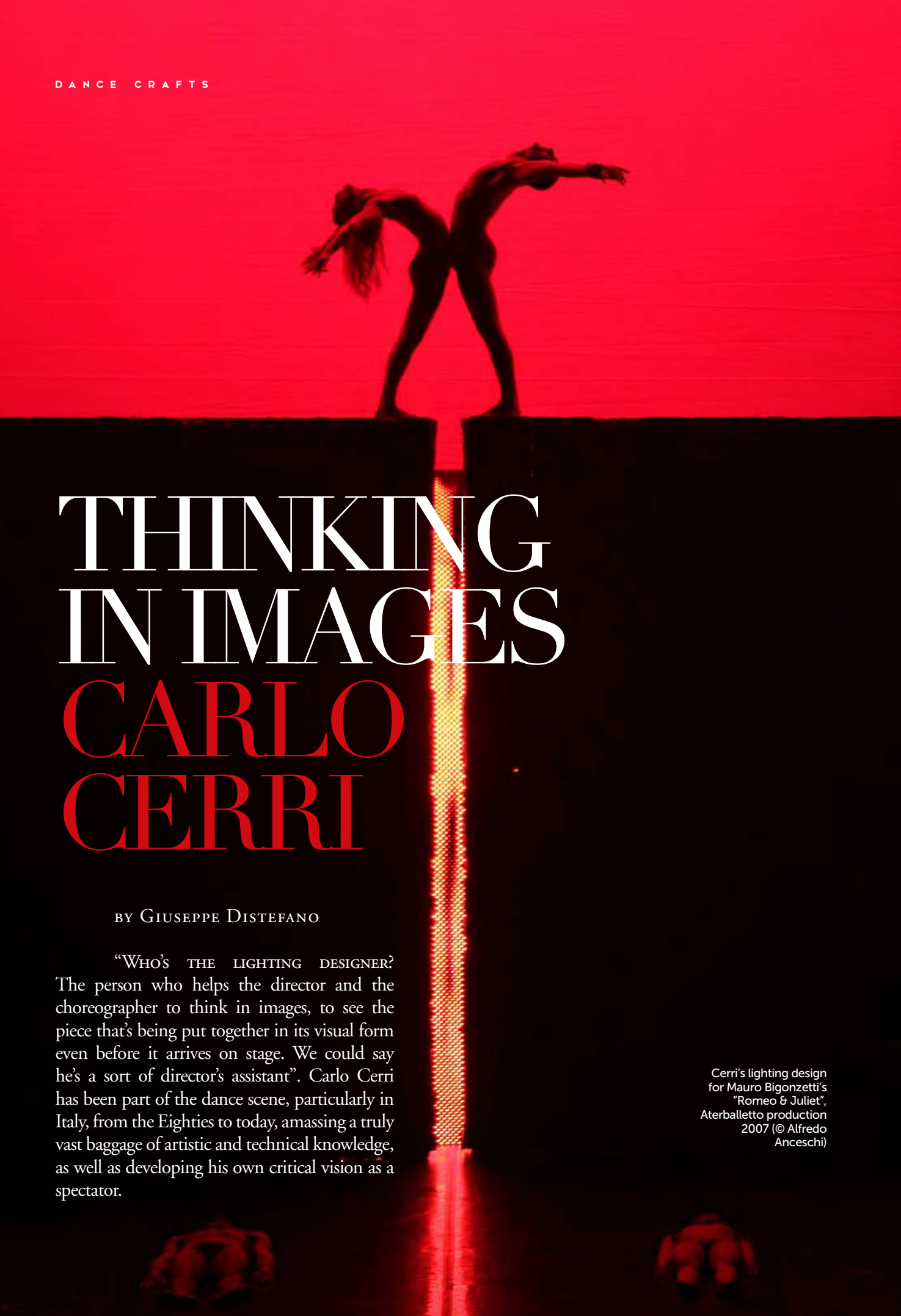
**You have been appointed the new artistic director of Nederlands Dans Theater. So, you'll be returning to Europe...** Yes, I am very excited. I start with Nederlands Dans Theater this August and my first programming season will be 2021-2022. I am inspired by NDT's beautiful legacy and honoured to have this opportunity to support a new era of creative collaboration and exchange. It will be important to me that NDT feels it can continue to thrive as a leading creation house, focused on quality and creativity and the nurturing of the many inspired voices that make up the company. It is an ideal time to be opening the doors and introducing new voices, approaches and types of offerings for our artists and community while also celebrating and learning from the company heritage. •



# THINKING IN IMAGES CARLO CERRI

BY GIUSEPPE DISTEFANO

"WHO'S THE LIGHTING DESIGNER? The person who helps the director and the choreographer to think in images, to see the piece that's being put together in its visual form even before it arrives on stage. We could say he's a sort of director's assistant". Carlo Cerri has been part of the dance scene, particularly in Italy, from the Eighties to today, amassing a truly vast baggage of artistic and technical knowledge, as well as developing his own critical vision as a spectator.



Cerri's lighting design for Mauro Bigonzetti's "Romeo & Juliet", Aterballetto production 2007 (© Alfredo Anceschi)





National Moravian-Silesian Ballet Theatre in Bigonzetti's "Rossini Cards", title for which Cerri designed the lighting. Right, Mauro Bigonzetti and Carlo Cerri (© Cristiano Castaldi)

**What training did you have?** I didn't have any specific technical training. It was through good luck and chance that I entered the world of theatre. It was love at first sight.

**Let's talk about Rome in the late Eighties.** They were exciting times. Having spaces available to present in and produce pieces for, combined with widespread desire to take risks in terms of experimentation even among organisers and directors, made it easy to fall in love with that world. Even if you came from completely different experiences you could choose to take that path and meet great talents along the way, those who – as if in a renaissance workshop – would pass on their skills and stimulate others. Among the many experiences, all key to my formation, the decisive encounters were with Leo De Berardinis and Maurizio Viani.

**You started out with Balletto di Toscana. What memories do you have?** I arrived in the November of 1989 on the request of Fabrizio Monteverde for his production of *Romeo and Juliet*. I was swept away by what was, at the time, a river in full flow. I'd come from experiences with self-run dance companies that had just a few dancers and there I found myself with larger companies that had worked with great guest choreographers, under the guidance of two forces of nature Cristina Bozzolini and Riccardo Donnini whose aim was to bring the company and Italian dance up to the standard of other European companies and to provide a space for new talented choreographers. There was a need to experiment bolstered by the possibility to do so. It was a real hotbed. With each new production I had the real sense that I was taking steps forward. I started my collaboration with Monteverde at the time of his company Baltica. My first work *Casa Messner* was truly unforgettable! I remember the deep satisfaction on opening night, after seeing the images that we'd created flash by. My instinct told me that this was the job for me.

**You have worked closely with Mauro Bigonzetti for thirty years and it remains possibly your longest lasting and most fruitful artistic union, one that continues today. Is there one creation that you're particularly attached to?** It's hard to choose. I'd say *Turnpike,* one of his earliest pieces: formally extremely elegant, highly musical and with overwhelming energy. When I happen to restage one of his old pieces I always notice new things, which I'd perhaps cast aside or missed - things that lead me to add different elements into the work, giving it a deeper reading. Recently, when I was restaging *Les Noces* for the German Mir Dance Company, I rediscovered the power and complexity of what is both a fluid and evocative piece. I experienced new emotions.





Two lighting designs by Carlo Cerri for Bigonzetti's creations: "Caravaggio" (above) interpreted here by Vladimir Malakhov and Polina Semionova (© Lieberenz) and "Cinderella" for La Scala Theatre Ballet (© Brescia-Amisano)

**What creative processes does the lighting designer go through, from the point of conception to the staging of a ballet? Do you have a specific work method?** It's important to see as many rehearsals as possible, to be contaminated by and wrapped up in the piece that's being created, to read the images that the music, in most cases, brings with it. I film some of the rehearsals and I study the piece in as much detail as possible, I try to get caught up in a vortex in an attempt to find the central theme that, once it has been laid bare, will guide us from the first to the last image.

**How would you define the lighting designer?** It's hard to define. A live show, like a film, is a succession of images that are constructed to convey the author's intended meaning, even if that meaning is purely abstract. It's essential not to look for images to put on show but instead to think in images (and possess the technical knowledge to be able to transfer them to the stage). Then, in an exchange with the director, develop them further. The lighting designer is perhaps a sort of assistant director.

**What dynamics need to be created within the relationship with a choreographer in order to reach an understanding of intent and outcome?** You have to have a real affinity, mutual esteem and openness. On many occasions the director, rightly, wants you to realise exactly what he or she already has in mind; but at that point there are many excellent technicians who are capable of doing miracles once it's been explained what image needs to be created. These are the situations I personally always try to avoid.

**Often the lighting can really contribute to "saving" an otherwise less than successful show. Would you agree?** Depending on your own subjective experience, you may judge a show according to how you read some elements that may appear to suffer more than others. I personally always tend to read and, therefore, judge a show as a whole. If it works or redeems itself then it's because all the elements are balanced.

**You've worked and continue to frequently work abroad at the request of many choreographers, companies and theatres. How do work dynamics differ from those in Italy?** Organisation and planning; time and rehearsals on stage: all things that are, at times, a dream for us. Our rhythms would be unthinkable abroad. Around twelve to eighteen months before a show's premiere you have to sign a contract. For example, in January 2021 I'll be working with the dance company in Dortmund and already in mid-March we did a Bauprobe, as they're called in Germany, a first rehearsal on stage to check whether the stage design and lighting ideas are feasible. This does happen in Italy too but only in very few important places that have many resources, also in terms of organisation, at their disposal.

**Which have been particularly significant experiences and collaborations abroad?** They've all left an important mark but I'd like to mention three moments of real emotion: getting up on stage at La Scala, Berlin and Leipzig, and having worked for Alvin Ailey's company.

**Your next projects?** Mauro Bigonzetti's *Madina* at La Scala, which has been postponed; a work by the young choreographer Wubkje Kuindersma for the Dutch National Ballet in Amsterdam; a new creation by Philippe Kratz at the Staatsballett in Munich, and two for the Dortmund dance company with choreography by Xin Peng Wang. •



Ballett Dortmund in
Bigonzetti's "Alice"
(© OOOPstudio)

# THE DANCE SCENE



Maria Kochetkova and Daniil Simkin, guest artistis in Fadeečev's "Don Quijote" with the San Carlo Theatre Ballet (© Francesco Squeglia)



Claudia D'Antonio and Alessandro Staiano as Kitri and Basilio in Fadeečev's "Don Quijote" in Naples (© Francesco Squeglia)

## THE SAN CARLO THEATRE BALLET

# A RUSSIAN-STYLE "DON QUIJOTE"

NAPLES A sparkling *grand ballet* bursting with colour and dances, Aleksej Fadeečev's *Don Quijote* opened at the Teatro di San Carlo in late February. It was the final injection of beauty, energy, acrobatics and virtuosity before all of Italy's theatres were forced to close due to the coronavirus pandemic. Fadeečev created his version for the Bolshoi during his time as director, and it entered the Teatro San Carlo's repertoire in 2013; here, with the Neapolitan ballet company directed by Giuseppe Picone, it found its ideal incarnation. It has now been revived with the staging from the Tbilisi National Opera Ballet Theatre, directed by the star Nina Ananiashvili; the choreography was remounted by Tatyana Rastorgueva and Ekaterina Shavliashvili, with input from the ballet master Andrei Fedotov. This *Don Quijote* showcases a company that's full of life, impeccable in the ensemble dances, technically self-assured, expressive and with a markedly artistic inclination. Its premiere was crowned by two outstanding dancers, Maria Kochetkova and Daniil Simkin. The couple seems relaxed to the point of recklessness in tackling airborne turns, and when it comes to the lifts (he literally tosses her into the air) the audience is left gasping. After all, at less than five feet tall Kochetkova is an incredibly light-footed force of nature capable of 'invading' the stage in a whirl and challenging the knife-wielding toreros; Simkin is an innately elegant virtuoso who seems immune to gravity and displays an uncommon charisma in the pantomime scenes. The fake suicide scene is hilarious, and the courting scenes and scuffles with his rival Gamache (Gianluca Nunziata) are also fun. In the grand pas de deux they are superlative. The audience thoroughly enjoyed it and broke into wild rounds of applause even before the scene was over. The lustre did not wear off the following evening when the excellent 'in house' principals Claudia D'Antonio and Alessandro Staiano took to the stage. D'Antonio's temperament, courage and speed stood out and won everybody over right from her first entrance and the first-act pas de deux with castanets and tambourines. Her wonderful *grands jetés à la russe* were both elegant and bold at the same time. Staiano as Basilio displays absolute technical clarity, as he and his beloved are swept away on lively polkas, seguidillas, fandangos, gipsy interludes and the torero dances that are a high point of this production. Also worthy of note is Luisa Ieluzzi as the street dancer Lucia, and a fine performance from Anna Chiara Amirante as the Queen of the Dryads. The overall impression is of a company that is good at what it does and has fun entertaining us, with immense charm.

Maria Luisa Buzzi

## MARTÍNEZ'S "CORSAIRE" FOR THE ROME OPERA BALLET

# A WHIRLWIND OF TURKISH MERCHANTS, SLAVES AND PASHAS

ROME Concise, pulsing and 'modern'. The new *Corsaire* created by José Carlos Martínez, commissioned by director Eleonora Abbagnato for the Rome Opera Ballet, sparkles and succeeds. A *Ballet à grand spectacle* according to the canons introduced by Petipa in the Imperial Theatres, *Le Corsaire* has crossed the centuries, enriched with additions and new layers of choreography and music, becoming an increasingly splendid conundrum of slaves and pirates, shameless merchants and rich pashas. It is certainly opulent, as well as intricate. And so Martínez – former étoile of the Paris Opera and one-time director of the Compañia Nacional de Danza – took on the title





Leonid Sarafanov and Olesya Novikova as Conrad and Medora in "Le Corsaire" by José Carlos Martínez with the Rome Opera Ballet. Above, Michele Satriano, Birbanto (© Yasuko Kageyama)



Rebecca Bianchi, Gulnare, and Walter Maimone, Lankedem in "Le Corsaire" by José Carlos Martinez at Rome Opera Theatre (© Yasuko Kageyama)

in a successful attempt to slim down the story, render the introduction of the dances fluid and reduce the length of the piece (to just two acts) without, however, giving up its sumptuousness, its choral flavour, its grand pas and those variations that real balletomanes certainly couldn't do without. His libretto may concentrate on the five main characters – Medora the slave (Olesya Novikova), Conrad the pirate (Leonid Sarafanov), Lankedem the shady merchant (Walter Maimone), Birbanto the cheating corsair (Michele Satriano) and Gulnare the slave (Rebecca Bianchi) – but there is no shortage of beautiful choral dances for both the male and female corps, such as the pirates' spectacular *danse des bottes* in the first act and the imposing tableau of the *Jardin animé* in the second, in which the female corps de ballet – dressed in delicate tutus in lilac and green hues without garlands – transform the Pasha's dream into palpable reality set to Delibes' delicate notes. If anything, Martínez takes his artistic license in other passages that regard technical skill: the closing of the *pas d'esclave* without the fouettés because the sinuous Rebecca Bianchi – accompanied by a surprising Walter Maimone – is kidnapped by a group of prisoners before the finale and the omission of the three variations in the *pas des odalisques*. The ballet is any case packed with virtuosity; it's enough to see the splendours put on display in the pas de deux (here a pas de trois) in which Medora introduces herself to the Pasha in the celebrated *finesse d'amour* in which Novikova's weightless gentleness is enhanced; the grand pas de deux in the cave in which the Russian guest couple shines and Sarafanov appears never to touch the ground. There is also the lyrical pas de deux added by Martínez to the final act when, following the sinking of the ship – rendered through video – Medora and Conrad meet again on a deserted beach and joyfully dance their love, set once more to the enchanting music of Delibes' *Sylvia*. Francesco Zito's stage design was 'recouped' from the Theatre's workshop and still works extremely well - the only flaw being the odalisques' tutus worn over Oriental-style trousers – as does the surprisingly beautiful musical collage created by Maestro Alexei Baklan who stepped onto the podium to conduct the Roman Orchestra. In short, both choreographer and company rise to the challenge. It's just a shame that the Covid-19 pandemic put a stop to the show after just three runs. Maria Luisa Buzzi



Begoña Cao, Viviana Durante Company, in "Five Brahms Waltzes in the Manner of Isadora Duncan" by Frederick Ashton (© David Scheinmann)

## VIVIANA DURANTE COMPANY
# ISADORA NOW





Viviana Durante Company in "Unda"; below in "Dance of the Furies" (© David Scheinmann)

LONDON Viviana Durante, one of the most scintillating young ballerinas of the Royal Ballet, is now artistic director of her own small company and making a name in rescuing forgotten works. Here she turns her attention to Isadora Duncan.

In a clever piece of marketing, posters of Durante in flowing chiffon proclaim, 'Don't let them tame you', a quote from Isadora herself. One of the problems in delving into historical dance, is the difference in our attitude to bodies. Today, it is simply not possible to get worked up to any serious level of excitement by an uncorseted lady, and it is also difficult to capture the pillow-softness of those well-rounded dancers. Isadora was an inspirational performer and marked a turning point in dance. She has her most memorable tribute in Frederick Ashton's solo, *Five Brahms Waltzes in the Manner of Isadora Duncan*, which captures the freedom of movement and interpretive qualities unique to her.

Sadly, due to injury, Durante was not dancing the final performances but Begoña Cao gave a pitch-perfect performance injecting the right level of passion into the extravagant gestures. The hint of the prima donna is there as she proudly brandishes her billowing scarf, the defiant trademark of her status as an artist and independent woman. There was deep sincerity in Cao's approach to the period theatricals as she tossed handfuls of petals and gave herself wholeheartedly to the opulent movement.

The restaging of Duncan's *Dance of the Furies* was less successful. Surrounded by hints of Greek temples, votive offerings and a water feature, this was Isadora taking a stand against the popular image of women as beautiful and submissive. The Furies, the 'daughters of the night' who exact divine retribution are an exciting feature of Greek drama but with little focus for their anger, the fiery, grotesque movement lacked an imperative.

Joy Alpuerto Ritter's *Unda*, with original music composed and performed by Lih Qun Wong and danced by all six company members, including Ritter, concluded the evening. Her choreography, influenced by Duncan's movement and interpreted by the mix of ballet and contemporary trained artists but would have benefitted from a stronger dose of the Ritter of today. Too much of the long 40-minute work seemed trapped in a time warp, unable to become the exciting 'contemporary dance in the manner of Isadora' that it could be. However, it was another brave and interesting evening from Viviana Durante who is fast creating her own niche market. Maggie Foyer



Russell Maliphant and Dana Fouras in "Maliphantwtorks3" (© Julien Broad)

# THE CORONET
# "MALIPHANTWORKS3"

LONDON The iconic Coronet Theatre has the charm and clutter of a retro junk shop while Russell Maliphant is a clean-cut model of classic contemporary dance. Amazingly, the two have found a perfect fit. With excellent lighting, a good stage and seating that wraps cosily round the stage, it offers the best venue in London to view Maliphant's work. In *Maliphantworks3* two duet and two short films are performed by Maliphant and partner Dana Fouras and offer an hour or so of beautiful images and quality movement.

Maliphant's style is distinctive: a three-dimensional flow of movement, shaped in light and focused on depth and detail rather than variety. In *The Space Between*, he works with lighting designer and video projectionist, Panagiotis Tomaras, who magics the air into the sea, bathing the two dancers in liquid light. Each movement spawns a cascade of ripples as the watery patterns play on the dancers' muscles. The surrounding walls are also alive with projections and only when the dancers get to their feet, do we begin to define features. Maliphant has a soft power that makes floorwork both elegant and weighty while Fouras works in a more linear plane and together they are spellbinding. Dancing in close contact or finding their own trajectory, their movements mesmerise like the flow of the water. The sound score by Fouras links it all together and amazingly the 30-minute duet is over far too soon.

*Film One* features Fouras, the lush melodies of Rachmaninov and an amazing layered coat. Like Loïe Fuller, with her butterfly wings, the movement whips the layers of fabric into patterns in the air. In *Film Two*, Maliphant works with a yellow elastic sling testing gravity and suspension. Feet centred, he circles around finding variety in simplicity. Camera work by Joe Hallgate augmented the dancers' movement, but with little choreographic mileage, four minutes each was about right for a pleasant diversion.

The final *Duet*, and sadly it probably will be the last time we see the couple dance together, as Fouras has announced her retirement, is a familiar and well-loved work. It's intimate and never sentimental, with powerful lifts and honest emotion. The poignant mix of Fouras' sound score, contrasting the atmospheric recording of Caruso singing *Una Furtiva Lagrima* and the quiet finish as they walk off, side by side, is perfect. Maggie Foyer


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## SADLER'S WELLS THEATRE

# ALINA COJOCARU AND FRIENDS

LONDON It's become almost a tradition for ballerinas to create a platform to present their choices of dance, and now it's the turn of Alina Cojocaru, one of the best loved dancers. Like Shakespeare's Cleopatra she's a woman of 'infinite variety', moving effortlessly from grand dame to gamine waif. Rather than going for cutting edge virtuosity, she makes the evening a very personal space of precious moments in dance, film and music.

It was also an evening of Cojocaru and friends. It was a joy to see her again dancing with partner Johan Kobborg, this time in Tim Rushton's *Reminiscence*, complementing Arvo Pärt's *Spiegel im Spiegel* in unadorned neo-classical simplicity. It's a conversation in handholds and tender playfulness by a couple who have mastered every great ballet pas de deux and now make it seem like a walk in the park.

In *Faces*, the first of two short films, directed by another long-standing collaborator, Kim Brandstrup, he goes under the skin to find the soul of the ballerina. The camera finds focus of Cojocaru's eyes and hovers there. It's honest, brave and has the penetration of a Rembrandt portrait. *Kiev* goes back in time to the studio where Cojocaru first learnt her art. In atmospheric monochrome, the camera trails through corridors to rest on three archetypal ballet teachers, who stare back at the lens. Briefly, we see Cojocaru at the barre silhouetted against the window.

*Les Lutins*, choreographed by Kobborg, is guaranteed to raise a smile and included violinist Charlie Siem who with Cojocaru was in the original cast in 2009. Siem also opened the show with cellist, Margarita Balanas, playing a whirlwind performance of Handel's *Passacaglia* arranged by Halvorsen. Here he gets to play with the same ferocity in brilliant repartee with Marcelino Sambé and Takahiro Tamagawa. The footwork sparkles, the turns whizz and Cojocaru in belt and braces, concludes on a comic highpoint.

Juliano Nunes' *Journey*, danced by the choreographer, Dominic Harrison and Cojocaru showed an innovative style of modern ballet. Cojocaru, strong and fluid, wrapping like a vine around the men's bodies, was thrust high in lifts and partnered with skill and precision.

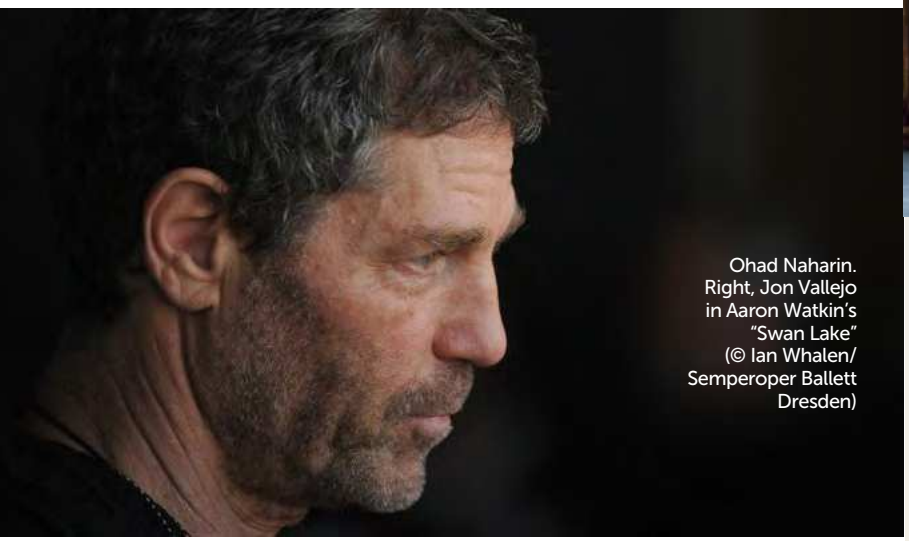
Frederick Ashton's, *Marguerite and Armand*, boasted two fine protagonists. Cojocaru's Marguerite, a charming flirt, goes through a sea change, as she loses her heart to the young man. Francesco Gabriele Frola's Armand was a revelation. Beautifully danced, he gave himself heart and soul in a powerful performance. Strangely, it didn't gel into the expected partnership but gave balance to a memorable evening. Maggie Foyer



Alina Cojocaru and Juliano Nunes, dancer and choreographer of "Journey". Opposite, Cojocaru with Johan Kobborg in "Reminiscence" by Tim Rushton (© Andrej Uspenski)



**In the hope that things will quickly return to normal and curtains will soon be rising again, here you will find new offerings for the coming season in Europe.**



Ohad Naharin. Right, Jon Vallejo in Aaron Watkin's "Swan Lake" (© Ian Whalen/ Semperoper Ballett Dresden)

## PARIS OPERA BALLET
# NAHARIN AND KYLIÁN NEW ENTRIES

PARIS Introduced by the sumptuous *Défilé,* the traditional Gala evening opens the Paris Opera Ballet's 2020/2021 dance season with a programme that brings together Victor Gosvsky's *Grand Pas classique,* Jerome Robbins' *In the Night* and Crystal Pite's *The Seasons' Canon.* The Paris company's coming season, conceived by director Aurélie Dupont, will present two creations in the wake of the Ballets Russes: Sharon Eyal will revisit *L'Après-midi d'un faune,* a piece she created in 2017 specifically for the Paris Opera Ballet, while Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui will present a new production of *Shéhérazade.* Among the new offerings to become part of the repertoire is Ohad Naharin's *Sadeh21* (the Israeli artist's second title to be performed in Paris following *Decadance*) and Jiří Kylián's *Stepping Stones,* a piece that pays tribute to the memory and legacy of dance through Egyptian cats that become guardians of tradition on stage. For the Christmas celebrations the return of a Rudolf Nureyev gem has been announced, in the form of his final work *La Bayadère* from 1992 with scenery and costumes by Ezio Frigerio and Franca Squarciapino, while Roland Petit will be celebrated on the tenth anniversary of his death with the revival of the full evening *Notre-Dame de Paris* and a program of his famous creation *Le Jeune homme et la Mort* and *Le Rendez-vous,* a work inspired by a text by Prévert for which the stage design conjures Paris of the Fifties. Pierre Lacotte's adaptation of *Le Rouge et le Noir* has been shelved for economic reasons while the guest Belgian visionaries Peeping Tom stand out with *Diptych,* extravagant couple Gabriela Carrizo and Franck Chartier's most recent creation. A guaranteed fixture is the performance by the Paris Opera Ballet School directed by Elisabeth Platel in a programme comprising Roland Petit's *Les Forains,* the story of an itinerant troupe of artists set to music by Henri Sauguet, José Carlos Martinez's *Scaramouche* and Nils Christe's *Symphonie en trois mouvements.*
www.operadeparis.fr



# SEMPEROPER BALLETT

DRESDEN Semperoper Ballett Dresden, under the guidance of Aaron S. Watkin for the last fifteen years, has given the title "dancing in the future" to its coming season. Two new works are set to enter the repertoire: Johan Inger's *Peer Gynt,* created for Ballet Theater Basel in 2017, the second piece the choreographer has entrusted to the company following his hugely successful *Carmen,* as well as the triptych comprising Balanchine's *Serenade,* Crystal Pite's *Plot Point* and William Forsythe's *Playlist (EP).* There are also plenty of changes to report on the company front: Italian Carlo Di Lanno, once a La Scala dancer who became Principal when he moved to San Francisco Ballet in 2014, is finally returning to Europe to join Watkin's company as a Principal along with his colleague Sofiane Sylve, tasked with a dual role in Dresden as both Principal and maître de ballet. This same dual role has been handed to the Brazilian star Marcelo Gomes, former Principal at the American Ballet Theatre. For Watkin's restaging of *Swan Lake* the appearance of Maria Kochetkova and Dmitry Semionov – both Russian Principals and currently freelance dancers – has been announced. Semionov will dance in the role of Solor in the restaging of *La Bayadère.* The British choreographer David Dawson has been appointed as the company's "associate choreographer" from the coming season.





Top and right, Staatsballett Berlin in "Nutcraker" by Medvedev-Burlaka after Petipa (© Bettina Sto). Below, a painting by Toulouse-Lautrec: the French painter inspired Kader Belardi for his new creation for the Ballet du Capitole

## KADER BELARBI
# TOULOUSE-LAUTREC IN DANCE

TOULOUSE Kader Belarbi's new creation for his company Ballet du Capitole de Toulouse *Toulouse-Lautrec*, which should have premiered at the end of May, has been postponed and is now set to be performed from 4 to 8 November for the opening of the new season. Set to original music by Bruno Coudis, *Toulouse-Lautrec* tells the story of the famous painter, a slave to his small body and the gazes of others, through the illustrious encounters in his life. This title is added to *Les Saltimbanques*, another new creation scheduled by Belarbi for June 2021 based on his own libretto and inspired by Picasso's famous canvas *La Famille des saltimbanques* and Rainer Maria Rilke's fifth *Duino Elegy*. In December the company will perform Thomas Edur's *Bayadère* after Petipa, a new addition to its repertoire (the production was created for the Estonian National Ballet in 2013), while in April we will see the ensemble perform in an evening by Carolyn Carlson – who will be restaging *If To Leave Is To Remember* (2006) and *Wind Women* (created at the Teatro Massimo Palermo in 2018) – and in Thierry Malandain's *Nocturnes*. www.theatreducapitole.fr



## STAATSBALLETT BERLIN
# BIG SEASON

BERLIN Staatsballett Berlin has announced as many as 102 shows for the 2020/2021 season, spread across the three locations available to the company - Deutsche Oper, Staatsoper Unter den Linden and Komische Oper. Due to the Coronavirus crisis it is almost certain that the program will be subject to change. Pending further updates, here we present you with the official program that was announced last March. There are four world premieres and six restagings and Tanztheater Wuppertal should be guesting with *Nelken* in August 2020. The outgoing artistic directors Sasha Waltz and Johannes Öhman have commissioned a piece that will see the company's 92 dancers involved in the performance of Alan Lucien Øyen's newest creation for which music and titles are still a work in progress (on stage in September) and Marcia Haydée's version of *Sleeping Beauty* is scheduled for October. Next up will be the *The Four Seasons* diptych and *Chroma* by David Dawson and Wayne McGregor respectively (in December) and an evening dedicated to Mats Ek, performed by Berlin dancers (in April) for the first time. On the classical repertoire side Patrice Bart's *Swan Lake* after Ivanov and Petipa, Vasily Medvedev and Yuri Burlaka's *Nutcracker* after Petipa and Cranko's Onegin will all return to the stage. The premiere of *Sym-phonie*, Sasha Waltz's new creation that was scheduled for the current season but had to be cancelled due to the Covid-19 emergency, will go on stage in October. Among the restagings are Emanuel Gat's Sunny and the Ekman/Eyal evening with *Lib and Strong*. www.staatsballett-berlin.de

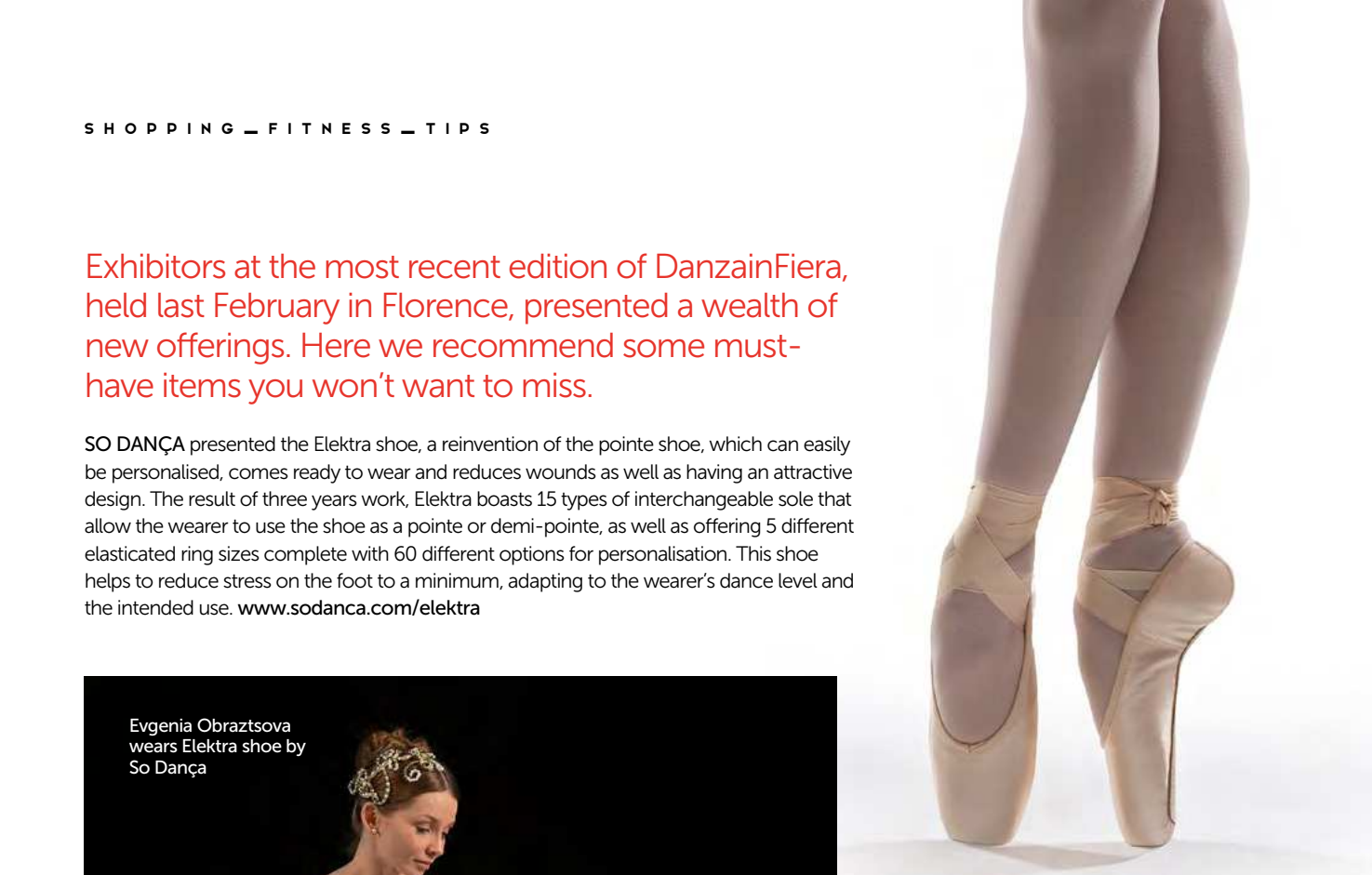
## Exhibitors at the most recent edition of DanzainFiera, held last February in Florence, presented a wealth of new offerings. Here we recommend some must-have items you won't want to miss.

**SO DANÇA** presented the Elektra shoe, a reinvention of the pointe shoe, which can easily be personalised, comes ready to wear and reduces wounds as well as having an attractive design. The result of three years work, Elektra boasts 15 types of interchangeable sole that allow the wearer to use the shoe as a pointe or demi-pointe, as well as offering 5 different elasticated ring sizes complete with 60 different options for personalisation. This shoe helps to reduce stress on the foot to a minimum, adapting to the wearer's dance level and the intended use. **www.sodanca.com/elektra**



Evgenia Obraztsova wears Elektra shoe by So Dança

**BLOCH** presents BLOCHSOX™, the new professional dance sock that gives you stability in your turns, support in your jumps and perfection in your lines. Designed to offer comfort and support thanks to grip control lines on the sole and elasticated compression that controls the calf and provides greater protection to the ankle, BLOCHSOX™ facilities movement and helps you to improve your performance and push your limits. **www.blochworld.com**



**GRISHKO** In September 2019 Nikolay Grishko, founder and President of Grishko Ltd., presented a new brand name for his famous products exclusively for the American market: **NIKOLAY™**.
Having used his world-renowned last name for over 30 years, In 2019 Mr. Nikolay Grishko took the strategic decision to introduce the new brand, presenting his first name to American customers, as a result of litigations with an ex-distributor and licensee in the USA. This decision allows US customers to access the extended range of Grishko Ltd. (Moscow, Russia) products including those that were previously not available on the US market.
The NIKOLAY™ products are made at the same Russia-based factories by the same skilled workers and feature the same characteristics that the US market was accustomed to under the Grishko name.
**www.nikolay-world.com**



Dusty Button in the new Blochsox

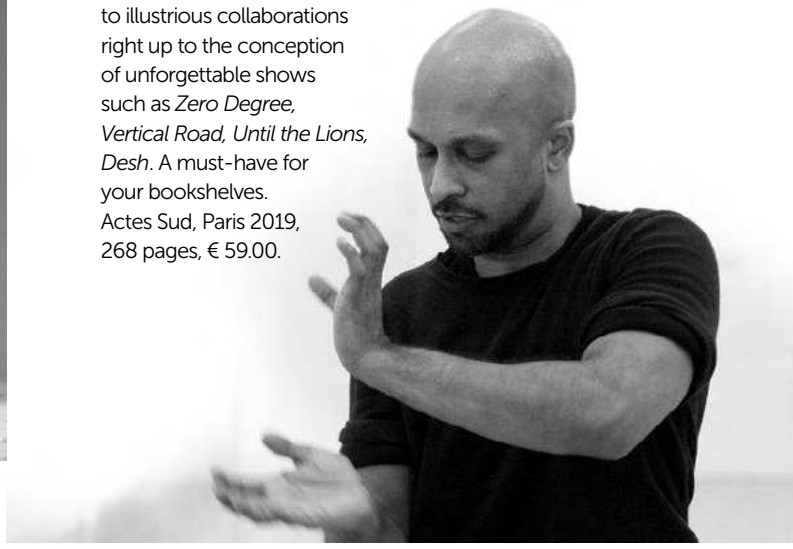
From Vienna comes flooring for dance, created by **FLOORWINGS** (official Tüchler's brand), where the parent company has been supplying theatres and schools across the world since 1968. The dedicated dance range has been created in collaboration with professional dancers in order to ensure the quality and efficiency of the products, to achieve perfect "confiDance", the sensation that the dancer has when he or she moves over quality support. Whether it's parquet, one of the 3 types of sprung flooring or one of the 7 vinyl options, whether it's fixed or transportable, every Floorwings product is conceived to support dance, the most dynamic jumps and the most daring heights in the best way possible, providing maximum safety and comfort on landing. In recent weeks the brand has launched the new #DANCEATHOMESET kit, developed for home use by professional dancers. Find out more at **www.floorwings.com**



## AKRAM KHAN
# THE FURY OF BEAUTIFUL THINGS

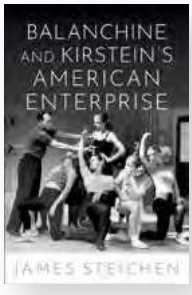



A monograph on Akram Khan, which follows those already published on Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker, Carolyn Carlson, Pina Bausch and Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, for the French publisher Actes Sud takes the reader on the discovery of the entire creative universe of the Anglo-Bengali choreographer who has conquered the world. A precious photographic book divided into two parts: the first gathers together rehearsal scenes in black and white; the second, the emblematic shows in full colour. *Akram Khan: The fury of beautiful things* also presents a text in which Khan tells his story from the beginning to illustrious collaborations right up to the conception of unforgettable shows such as *Zero Degree, Vertical Road, Until the Lions, Desh*. A must-have for your bookshelves. Actes Sud, Paris 2019, 268 pages, € 59.00.



# BALANCHINE AND KIRSTEIN'S AMERICAN ENTERPRISE

How was the American ballet created? Who made it happen? And why? We know that thanks to George Balanchine the ballet started to be considered an art form also in the USA – above all an American art form. What is lesser known or commented upon is the important support of Lincoln Kirstein for the success of the enterprise. It is indeed he we have to thank for the realisation of Balanchine's American dream: to found a school and later a company, the legendary New York City Ballet. In this meticulously researched book James Steichen explores the pivotal period of the early years of the Balanchine-Kirstein collaboration revealing the full extent of Kirstein's role and offering a new look at some iconic titles, including Serenade, Apollo, and Concerto Barocco. *James Steichen, Balanchine and Kirstein's American Enterprise*, Oxford University Press 2019, Hardback £ 22.99




# THE COLLABORATION

In *The Collaboration* the US composer for ballet and contemporary dance companies, tv and film Damien Simon offers an accessible description of the process followed between choreographer and composer when commissioning original music. His experience has led to him putting together a concise manual that summarises each step of the collaboration, the processes that are implemented through the development of synergies between the two professionals and how the spectacular work takes shape. The appendix also contains a glossary for music beginners. *The Collaboration* is available on the author's website for $ 12.



# DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH

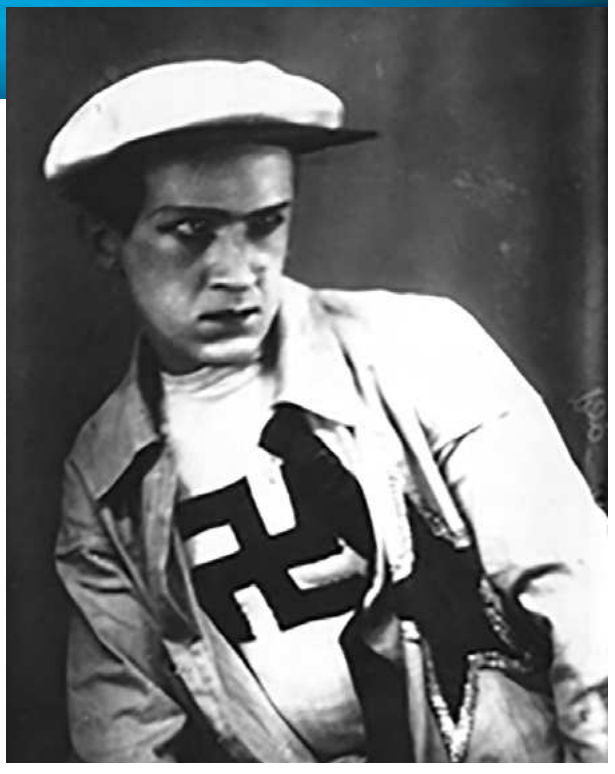
## From "The Golden Age" to "Shostakovich Trilogy", the art of the great russian composer, treading the line between totalitarianism and freedom, has inspired countless choreographers



by Sergio Trombetta

What is the 1920s American hit *Tea for Two* doing in a Soviet ballet from 1930? There's a reason. It, along with tangos, fox trots and slow dances, was the perfect example of bourgeois music to act as counterpoint to the jolly Soviet soundtrack of marches, waltzes and galops. The good guys and the bad guys. The West and the Soviet world. The choice was made by Dmitri Shostakovich, when composing the score for *The Golden Age*, which opened in Leningrad on 26 October 1930 at the GATOB Theatre (later the Kirov, now the Mariinsky once again). It tells the story of a Soviet soccer team visiting a Western country, 'Fashland', where examples of internationalist solidarity contrast with jazz-age interiors, and decadent socialites dance and quaff champagne while admiring a diva that bears an uncanny resemblance to Josephine Baker. All laced with a heavy dose of parody and sarcasm.







Opposite, Vladislav Lantratov with the Bolshoi Ballet in "The Golden Age" by Yuri Grigorovich (© Damir Yusupov). Here two archive images of the first version of the ballet in the 1930s

People have started talking about *The Golden Age* again. The theme is covered in Dmitrij Braginskij's essay *Il balletto calcistico di Šostakovic* in the recent anthology *Dmitrij Šostakovic, il grande compositore sovietico* (Fondazione Mudima, Milan). The book is a collection of historic and more recent essays on the multi-faceted life and art of one of the greatest musicians of the twentieth century.

A ballet about football, then, commissioned from a composer who was a die-hard soccer fan. It's a fun combination. In fact, the way that *The Golden Age* came about in the late 1920s was far more complex, and fulfilled the intentions of the Soviet party officials: a new repertoire for a new audience, that would reflect a political aesthetic based upon a juxtaposition of the Soviet world and the capitalist enemy, the bourgeoisie, the religious caste. The characters were little more than cardboard cut-outs; what really mattered was the slogan, the billboard-like contrasts (*plakatnost* in Russian, from the word *plakat* for poster).

*The Golden Age* was created in response to a public competition in the late 1920s, to create a contemporary libretto that was to feature revolutionary themes, concreteness and realism, crowd scenes, and be simple enough to appeal to all. Aleksandr Ivanovsky's entry won; the score was commissioned from Shostakovich, while three choreographers were tasked with putting the three acts into dance: Vasili Vainonen, Leonid Jakobson and Vladimir Chesniakov. Given his interest in the era's most

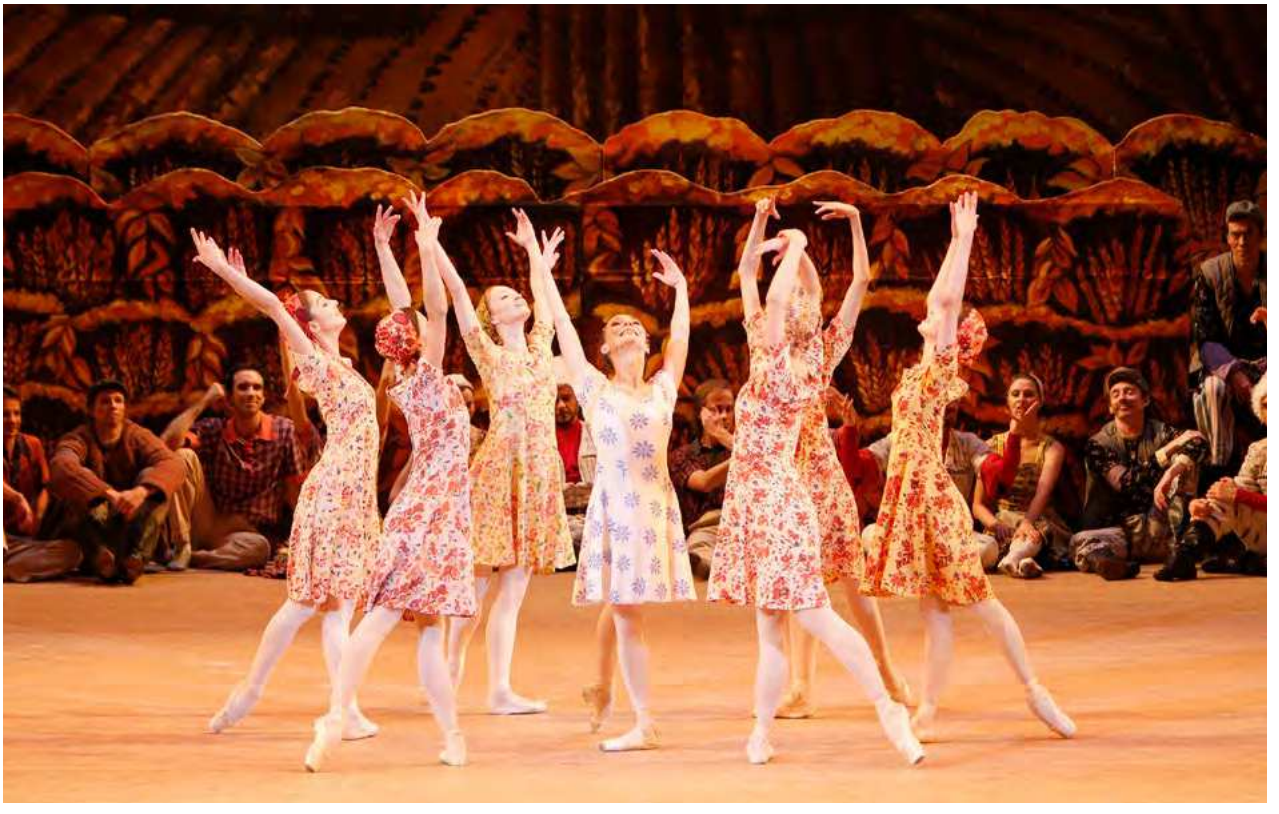


innovative forms of dance, Jakobson was given the scenes that focused most on physical culture, enthusiasm for parades and shows. The Oransky ballet *Futbolist* had recently premiered in Moscow. One of the performers in the *Golden Age* in Leningrad was the great Galina Ulanova. She said, "My role was as an athlete-komsomolka [member of the Young Communists]… I appeared in a bathing costume with a rubber swimming cap… our dance was made up of acrobatic figures, very complex combinations that imitated artistic swimming and dives".

The ballet was met with a lukewarm reception from audiences, and removed from the repertoire after just a few performances. Shostakovich would return to dance not long after this, with *The Bolt*, which premiered on 8 April 1931 at the GATOB, and was choreographed by Fyodor Lopukhov. This time, the clash takes place in a Soviet factory, between good workers and idle, drunken louts led by Lenka Gulba. At the beginning of the first five-year plan, productivist society was caught up in the battle against saboteurs. The ballet opens with a fun scene showing a group fitness class in the factory; it continues, among industrial machinery and the inn where the "antisocials" gather. This production, like the previous one, was not very successful either.

Things were very different in 1935 with *The Bright Stream*. Times had changed, and ballet was now required to have a plot, and more substantial characters; this was the time of 'drambalet'. The composer adapted to these requirements, to a certain extent. *The Bright Stream* is the name of a Kolkhoz in southern Russia where a troupe of dancers turns up at harvest time. The characters were certainly more substantial this time, but crucially the theme was not agricultural collectivization. The ballet is a fun comedy centred around a flirtation between a ballerina and her partner on the one hand, and the farm manager and his wife (a former dancer) on the other, with an added dose of intrigue. One summer's night the ballerina masquerades as a boy, and the male dancer dresses up as a sylphide, complete with pointe shoes and a tutu (with a Trockadéro effect

Left, Bolshoi Ballet in Alexei Ratmansky's "The Bolt" and below in "The Bright Stream" (© Damir Yusupov). Opposite from top: San Francisco Ballet in "Shostakovich Trilogy" by Alexei Ratmansky (© Erik Tomasson) and Dutch National Ballet in the same title (© Hans Gerritsen)







ahead of its time), and they pretend to succumb to the advances of a couple of elderly pensioners.

It was a hit. The ballet was soon reprised by the Bolshoi in Moscow, to equally glowing reviews. The performers included Sulamith and Asaf Messerer, Maya Plisetskaya's uncle and aunt. However, in early 1936 not long after the notorious censorship of the opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*, Pravda also panned *The Bright Stream*: it was accused of being "a fake ballet" because it did not reflect the reality of life on collective farms.

After that, Shostakovich focused mainly on symphonic and chamber music, and he never again tackled opera or dance. However, many people continued to base works on his ballet scores.

*The Golden Age* was revived by Yuri Grigorovich in 1982, but with a totally new libretto: the story was now set in the NEP (New Economic Policy) era in the late Twenties, and juxtaposed a group of young fishermen with a gang of criminals; it was set in a cabaret named The Golden Age. Alexei Ratmansky staged productions of the other two ballets in the Noughties, also at the Bolshoi. In fact, *The Bright Stream* was the pivotal production that led Ratmansky to become the Bolshoi's artistic director.

Other Soviet-era works based on Shostakovich include Boyarsky's *The Young Lady and the Hooligan* in 1962; while in 1961 Igor Belsky choreographed the *Leningrad Symphony*, a dramatisation of the *Seventh Symphony* dedicated to the siege of Leningrad.

Meanwhile, a more recent musical "theft" is Jean-Christophe Maillot's *Taming of the Shrew*. Alexei Ratmansky is still particularly fond of the great composer: he created the *Concerto DSCH* (with DSCH being a musical motif alluding to the initials used by Shostakovich) set to *Piano Concerto N° 2* for the New York City Ballet; it later became part of La Scala Theatre Ballet's repertoire; then came *Shostakovich Trilogy*, a full-length work comprising three pieces, namely the *Ninth Symphony*, *Chamber Symphony* and *Piano Concerto N° 1*. As always with Ratmansky, non-narrative music is used to carve out realistic fragments that remain enigmatic and elusive. The *Trilogy* was created for American Ballet Theatre, and has since been remounted for the San Francisco Ballet and the Dutch National Ballet. •

Edward Clug also meets Shostakovich for his new "The Master and Margarita"

# BULGAKOV'S SATIRE AND ROMANTICISM SET TO MUSIC BY SHOSTAKOVICH AND SCHNITTKE

BY SERGIO TROMBETTA



Edward Clug

MOSCOW The set is an old, disused public swimming pool, with shabby furniture arranged in it. Above it are fifteen doors: these are the changing rooms, from which characters from *The Master and Margarita* come in and out. Or rather, were supposed to come in and out; for the ballet, choreographed by Edward Clug and scheduled to open at the Bolshoi Theatre, New Stage, Moscow on 20 May, has been pushed back to next season due to the Coronavirus. Nevertheless, it's worth discussing it now, because Mikhail Bulgakov's masterpiece has been set to music by Dmitri Shostakovich and Alfred Schnittke, two composers who had an equally complex relationship with the Soviet regime. Not only that, but the production was well on the way to being completed. Besides, there has always been a sort of curse overhanging this title: Yuri Grigorovich attempted it years ago but never managed to complete it. Is Woland's spirit up to his old tricks again?
Legends apart, we asked Edward Clug, director of the Maribor Ballet in Slovenia, to tell us about how his work came about, and what makes it special.

**After "Petrushka", what made you decide to adapt "The Master and Margarita" for the Bolshoi?** The idea took shape five years ago, when I suggested it to Christian Spuck at the Zurich Ballett, but then we opted for *Faust*. Then I did *Peer Gynt* for Maribor, which was my second full-length ballet. Eventually, the director of the Bolshoi, Makhar Vaziev, asked me to create a full-length work; in the light of my two previous experiences, we settled on *The Master and Margarita*, which also contains many Faustian elements.

**What does it mean to stage Bulgakov's masterpiece in Moscow?** It means bringing to life a novel that's set in and around the city's landmarks, in some cases just steps from the Bolshoi. It means breathing the same atmosphere that he did, because Bulgakov worked at the theatre as a librettist and consultant from 1936. It's a challenge, but an advantage too because you don't have to spell everything out: the Moscow audience is familiar with the story.

**Why did you choose Shostakovich and Schnittke?** They are two interrelated musical worlds. Bulgakov's prose ranges from realism to satire, from fantasy to romanticism. There are iconic moments that are suited to ballet: the Variety Theatre scene, the devils' dance. At that point I realised that Shostakovich could represent half of the scenes in the ballet. I started from his string quartet. It evoked the spirit of the era; the lives of the composer and the novelist overlapped for several years. Bulgakov wrote this novel between 1928 and 1940.
I also used extracts from *The Golden Age*; in Shostakovich you have sarcasm and satire, perfect for Woland and his cronies.

**What about Schnittke?** It's perfect for the more mystical moments. Once again, I chose chamber music, which will in part be performed by a string orchestra.

**How will the ballet be structured? Have you already chosen the soloists? How far along is the project?** It will be made up of two acts, each lasting around 50 minutes. There will be about sixty performers. For the role of Margarita, I've rehearsed with Ekaterina Krysanova and Olga Smirnova. For the Master, I chose Denis Savin and Artem Ovcharenko. But we will have four different casts eventually. I've already spent three weeks working with them, during which we focused on a pas de deux and a solo; but we still need around eight more weeks of rehearsals. •





Olga Smirnova and Artem Ovcharenko in the rehearsal studio. Below, a portrait of Dmitri Shostakovich

## MILESTONES

Edward Clug, director of the Ballet of Maribor and internationally renowned choreographer with a contemporary style, was born in 1973 in an area inhabited by the German minority in Beius, Romania. At the age of ten he enrolled at the National Ballet School in Cluj-Napoca. In 1991, two years after the fall of Ceausescu's regime, he was hired at the Slovenian National Theatre of Maribor where he was to spend his entire career. He began to collaborate with the Slovenian director Tomaž Pandur who, in 1996, commissioned the artist's first choreography for one of his shows. The success of this first foray led Clug to take on more choreographer projects.
In 2003 he was appointed director of the Ballet of Maribor. In 2005 came his first big success with *Radio and Juliet*. Under his directorship the company has acquired international recognition and has been well received from America to Russia. The recipient of numerous prizes, he has been invited to choreograph for important dance companies including the Zürich Ballett, Nederlands Dans Theater 1 and 2, Moscow's Bolshoi, Vienna, Lisbon, Montreal and many others.



# VISION AND NEUROSCIENCE

BY ROSSELLA BATTISTI

DANCE IS AN ART based upon dynamics and physicality; however, the main medium it uses to communicate is sight: that of the dancer, who studies him or herself in front of a mirror to check the correct posture, or learns the movement to perform by observing a teacher or choreographer. For several centuries, before the advent of video recordings, the most direct way to teach a ballet was to pass it from performer to performer. In some cases, although it relied upon an individual's memory, it was even a way of reproducing the nuances of a movement more accurately than could be achieved by a system of notation.



In his film *The Turning Point*, Herbert Ross shot a cameo about the legendary Alexandra Danilova giving a ballet class to the character played by a young Leslie Brown. The web is a treasure trove of countless other poignant examples of these precious legacies being passed on in person, from Alicia Alonso to Maya Plisetskaya.



"Benvenuto umano" by Italian dance group CollettivO CineticO. Opposite, "Orbo novo" by Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui (© Julieta Cervantes)

The relationship established between dancer and spectator also depends on vision; the New York Times critic John Martin credited that relationship with the ability to convey an aesthetic message through metakinesis. In his book *The Modern Dance*, Martin wrote "Movement, then, in and of itself is a medium for the transference of an aesthetic and emotional concept from the consciousness of one individual to that of another". What he meant was that the 'muscular empathy' that a spectator experiences while watching a dancer perform is part and parcel of the artistic message. It was 1933, and Martin simply thought he had expanded a philosophical concept first discussed by Plato, by applying it to dance. In fact, he had unconsciously prefigured the existence of mirror neurons; these are the neurons that are triggered when we see movements, and they allow us to recreate and imitate them. Through this process, known as "embodied simulation", we can read and "live" the gestures, movements and expressions that we observe in others, and automatically echo the emotional states connected with them. This recent discovery was made by two Italian scientists, Giacomo Rizzolatti and Vittorio Gallese; the Indian neurologist Vilayanur Subramanian Ramachandran has said that the discovery of mirror neurons "will do for psychology what DNA did for biology".

The celebrated director Peter Brook insightfully pointed out that "Neuroscience is beginning to understand what theatre has always known", and that includes dance; but what's certain is that these studies are revolutionising our parameters of percep-



Trisha Brown Dance Company in "Set and Reset" by Trisha Brown with scenery and costumes by Robert Rauschenberg (© Stephanie Berger)

tion, and with them, the very criteria by which we understand our surroundings.

Let us return to sight, for example. When we open our eyes, do we see reality as it actually is? Humans have been pondering the question for centuries, from Plato to The Matrix; today, the answer from neuroscience is no. Only ten percent of the information that our brain uses comes from sight; the rest comes from other neural regions and is used to (re)construct our image of the world.

A variety of factors – including the type of upbringing we've had, the influence of the society we live in, our level of education, the experiences we've had – produce a series of filters that adjust our vision and, consequently, the way we process it. Stimulated by everything it sees, the brain alchemically blends and transforms the data, creating new synapses and new memories; in this way, it learns and evolves through a complex series of perceptions. In fact, we could describe this not as a vision of reality, but as an internal construction of its representation, or rather a personal representation. *Our gaze is no longer innocent,* says Romeo Castellucci, theatre director. It is certainly not neutral.

More so than other arts, dance exploits the rules of attention that are triggered by vision. Like movement, for example. If we stare at the same still image for a long time, sooner or later we reach a state of "blindness". Movement intercepts and reawakens neuronal activity, but after a certain period of time has elapsed, something new must occur. Identical movements on a loop shorten the attention span, unless tiny modifications intervene to involve other parts of the body or other dancers. In this case, Trisha Brown's brilliant *Set and reset* comes to mind. However, movement and novelty are not enough to keep attention high; there is a need for structure, as William Forsythe is well aware, having dedicated practically all of his works to breaking down and re-composing dance.

In his book *The Good, the True and the Beautiful. A Neuronal Approach* (Yale University Press 2012. Original French edition *Du vrai, du beau, du bien: Une nouvelle approche neuronale)* Jean-Pierre Changeux postulates and demonstrates a trio of factors that stimulate neurons towards "aesthetic" pleasure: the novelty, combination and harmony of the parts. It's a sort of guarantee of "beauty", as the Ancient Greeks intuited, which is indeed a critical yardstick that can be applied to most dance works. More specifically, Ivar Hagendoorn in his essay *Dance, Choreography and the Brain*, recalls the recent theories whereby people's attention is caught by "an appraisal of novelty and/or complexity on the one hand and an appraisal of comprehensibility on the other". This would explain the difference of opinion that sometimes arises between the critics and the general public, as well as the reason why many artists' work becomes more complex and refined over the course of their careers. Hagendoor explains, "Whereas the audience will usually see a performance once or twice, the choreographer is, of course, totally familiar with his or her own work. […] Similarly critics, whose job is to watch and critically evaluate dance performances, are likely to have a different benchmark than the average person in the audience".

In the dance world, the British choreographer Wayne McGregor has for many years, and in various ways, cultivated his interest in technologies and in the findings of neuroscience. This ranges from 2004's *AtaXia*, commissioned from him by Cambridge University's Department of Experimental Psychology – in which he explored the interaction between the body

and the brain – to *Dyad* (2009), based on a study of creative cognition, and produced in collaboration with a team of cognitive researchers from the University of San Diego, California.

Another choreographer with a fascination for neuronal short-circuits – but in an aesthetic rather than experimental sense – is Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui. In *Orbo Novo,* created in 2009 for the now disbanded Cedar Lake Contemporary Ballet, he was inspired both by the different qualities of the two sides of the brain, and by the autobiography of neuroanatomist Jill Bolte Taylor. Bolte Taylor had a stroke requiring a lengthy rehabilitation period, which provided her with precious information on how the brain works.

In the Italian dance world, one of the first to tap into the discoveries of neuroscience for creative opportunity was Francesca Pennini: in 2017's *Benvenuto umano*, she entered the stage blindfolded, while the performers of CollettivO CineticO wore visors connected to smartphones giving them a digital image of Pennini's movements, which led to a reverberation between actions and effects. It was essentially a performance based on the mechanisms of mirror neurons, and presented a new perspective of the world through a map of signs and imagery, from Chinese medicine to the circus.





Wayne McGregor's "Ataxia" (© Ravi Deepres). Below, from MOMA archive a historical black and white photo of "Set and Reset" (courtesy MOMA New York)

Alessandro Sciarroni's approach is to create a sense of disorientation; in 2015's *Aurora*, he staged a match of goalball, a sport designed specifically for athletes with a vision impairment; the light (and therefore vision) was gradually dimmed for the audience, who were thus forced to do without their sight, and to resort to other means of perception in order to experience the performance.

But in our brief exploration let us not forget Merce Cunningham, the distinguished elder and trailblazing revolutionary. In as early as 1986 he took an interest in creating a software prototype to digitally simulate choreographic movements through motion capture technology. It was called Life Forms, and the American choreographer intended it as a further step towards the recreation of chaos and chance so beloved of him and John Cage. Working on the computer could offer infinite variations of movement, and freed the choreographer from his own mental patterns. It was a step forwards into the abstraction always practised by Cunningham, who throughout his career instinctively sought to distance his work from empathy. Breaking down the sequences of a movement with 'choreography by chance' (like tossing a coin to decide the order), strips the spectator of that connection between a familiar movement and an emotional reaction, which neuroscientists have now proven does exist.

In *Biped* (1999), Cunningham took his use of Life Forms to extremes. The "electronic suggestions" were not always achievable by actual dancers, and in rehearsals Cunningham would run through the final checks, not without some discomfort for those taking part in the experiment. Paul Kaiser and Shelley Eskar's virtual set then came into play, blending the virtual dance (taking care to render the movements plausible) with that of the dancers, for a disorienting, evocative effect. It was incredibly contemporary and ground-breaking, as almost all of Merce's works would come to be considered over time. •

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# CALENDAR

**Notice to readers: in the following calendar you will find an overview of upcoming international and Italian events announced, postponed or cancelled up to 29 April, 2020, closing date for the drafting of this issue. We suggest you visit the relevant theatre or festival websites to check for updates.**

## INTERNATIONAL

**BELGRADE**
**Belgrade Dance Festival**
www.belgradedancefestival.com
**Postponed to September and November 2020**

**BERLIN**
**Tanz Im August**
www.tanzimaugust.de
(August 7-29)

**DRESDEN**
**SEMPEROPER**
www.semperoper.de
**All the performances have been cancelled**

**LUDWIGSBURG**
**FORUM AM SCHLOSSPARK**
www.forum.ludwigsburg.de
**Les Ballets de Monte-Carlo**
(June 6,7)
*Cinderella*
Chor. J.-C. Maillot
**Compañia Nacional de Danza**
(July 17,18)
*Por vos muero/Pulcinella/White darkness*
Chor. N. Duato, B. Li

**LUGANO**
**LAC**
www.luganolac.ch
**All the performances have been cancelled**

**MOSCOW**
**BOLSHOI THEATRE**
www.bolshoi.ru
**Bolshoi Ballet**
*Lady of the Camellias*
(May 12,13)
Chor. J. Neumeier
*Master and Margarita*
(May 21-24)
Chor. E. Clug
**Postponed**
*The Winter's Tale*
(May 26,27,30)
Chor. C. Wheeldon
*La Sylphide* (June 2,3,4)
Chor. A. Bournonville
*The Taming of the Shrew* (June 6,7,27,28)
Chor. J.-C. Maillot
*La Bayadère* (June 19,20,21)
Chor. M. Petipa

**STANISLAVSKY THEATRE**
www.stanmus.ru
**Stanislavsky Ballet**
*Giselle* (May 17,18)
Chor. J. Coralli, J. Perrot, M. Petipa
*La Bayadère* (May 22,23)
Chor. N. Makarova
*Tyll/Aurea/Minus 16* (May 27,28)
Chor. A. Ekman, G. Montero, O. Naharin
*Variations/Wings of Wax/Kaash* (June 12,13,14)
Chor. V. Burmeister, J. Kylián, A. Khan
*Suite en blanc/Petite mort/The Second detail* (June 18)
Chor. S. Lifar, J. Kylián, W. Forsythe
*Manon* (June 30, July 1)
Chor. K. MacMillan

**NEW YORK**
**American Ballet Theatre**
www.abt.org
**All performances have been cancelled**

**New York City Ballet**
www.nycballet.com
**The Spring Season is available in streaming until May 29**

**PARIS**
**PALAIS GARNIER**
www.operadeparis.fr
**Nederlands Dans Theater**
(June 3-7)
*Kunstkamer*
Chor. P. Lightfoot
**Ballet de l'Opéra de Paris**
(June 24 – July 12)
*Play*
Chor. A. Ekman

**ST. PETERSBURG**
**MIKHAILOVSKY THEATRE**
www.mikhailovsky.ru
**Mikhailovsky Ballet**
*Spartacus* (May 12,13,14, June 29,30)
Chor. G. Kovtun
*La Bayadère* (May 16,17, June 5,6)
Chor. N. Duato
*The Sleeping Beauty* (May 20,21,22, June 18,19)
Chor. N. Duato
*La Fille mal gardée* (May 24)
Chor. F. Ashton
*The Nutcracker* (May 28,29)
Chor. N. Duato
*Don Quixote* (June 9,10)
Chor. M. Petipa
*Cinderella* (June 12,13)
Chor. R. Zakharov
*Le Corsaire* (June 20)
Chor. J. Perrot, M. Petipa
*Swan Lake* (June 23-26)
Chor. M. Petipa, L. Ivanov

**MARIINSKY THEATRE**
www.mariinsky.ru
**Mariinsky Ballet**
*Serenade/ In the Night/ Push Comes to Shove* (May 13)
Chor. G. Balanchine, J. Robbins, T. Tharp
*La Bayadère* (May 14,15,16)
Chor. M. Petipa
*The Legend of love* (May 19,20,21)
Chor. Y. Grigorovich
*Giselle* (May 24)
Chor. J. Coralli, J. Perrot, M. Petipa
*Le Parc* (June 2)
Chor. A. Preljocaj
*The Sleeping Beauty* (June 4)
Chor. M. Petipa
*Don Quixote* (June 9,11)
Chor. M. Petipa
*A Midsummer night's dream* (June 21)
Chor. G. Balanchine

**STUTTGART**
**OPERNHAUS**
www.stuttgart-ballet.de
**Stuttgart Ballett**
*Mayerling* (May 6,7,16)
Chor. K. MacMillan
*Death in Venice* (May 9,15,17,23,26,30)
Chor. B. Britten
*Falling Angels/Petite Mort/ Le Jeune Homme et la Mort/ Bolero* (May 29, June 2,6,11, July 15,18)
Chor. J. Kylián, R. Petit, M. Béjart
*The Taming of the Shrew* (July 5,9,10,13)
Chor. J. Cranko
*Ballet week* (July 22-29)
Chor. Vv.Aa.

**VIENNA**
**Impulstanz**
www.impulstanz.com
**Postponed to 2021**

**ZURICH**
**OPERNHAUS**
www.ballett-zuerich.ch
**Ballett Zürich** (June 9)
*Emergence*
Chor. S. León, P. Lightfoot, C. Pyte

## ITALIAN

**BERGAMO**
**Festival Danza Estate**
www.festivaldanzaestate.it
**Postponed to August/ September 2020**

**CASTIGLIONCELLO**
**Festival Inequilibrio**
www.armunia.eu
**Postponed to September 2020**




**FLORENCE**
**Fabbrica Europa Festival**
www.fabbricaeuropa.net
**Postponed to September/ October 2020**

**FOSSANO**
**Festival Mirabilia**
www.festivalmirabilia.it
**Postponed from 1 to 6 September 2020**

**MERATE**
**Caffeine**
www.piccoliidilli.it
**Postponed to October 2020**

**MILAN**
**TEATRO ALLA SCALA**
www.teatroallascala.org
**All performances have been postponed until further notice**

**Festival del Silenzio**
www.festivaldelsilenzio.com
**Cancelled**

**NAPLES**
**TEATRO DI SAN CARLO**
www.teatrosancarlo.it
**San Carlo Theatre Ballet**
(July 31-August 2)
*Come un respiro/Bolero*
Chor. M. Bigonzetti, G. Picone

**Napoli Teatro Festival**
www.napoliteatrofestival.it
**Postponed to September 2020**

**PALERMO**
**TEATRO MASSIMO**
www.teatromassimo.it
**Teatro Massimo Ballet**
(June 18 -24)
*Les Liaisons Dangereuses*
Chor. D. Bombana

**PARMA**
**ParmaDanza**
www.teatroregioparma.it
**Cancelled**

**RAVENNA**
**Ravenna Festival**
www.ravennafestival.org
**FND/Aterballetto**
(June 20,21)
*Don Juan*
Chor. J. Inger

**ROME**
**TERME DI CARACALLA**
www.operaroma.it
**Rome Opera Ballet**
(June 30 – July 2)
*Strictly Gershwin*
Chor. D. Deane
**Gala Roberto Bolle and Friends** (July 14-15)
Chor. Vv. Aa.

**SPOLETO**
**Festival dei Due Mondi**
www.festivaldispoleto.com
**Postponed from 27 to 30 August 2020**

**TURIN**
**Festival Interplay**
www.mosaicodanza.it
#InterplayDigital on Mosaicodanza social channels
*Graces digital/Match 2*
(May 20)
Chor. S. Gribaudi, V. Pitrinaite
*To da bone/Posare il tempo*
(May 22)
Chor. (La)Horde, C. Catarzi
*Trial/If you could see me now* (May 26)
Chor. T. Hoang, A. Schuitmaker
*Sopra di me il diluvio/Young blood* (May 28)
Chor. E. Cosimi, A. Pérez
*Les Miserables/Gonzago's rose* (May 30)
Chor. C. Massari, F. Tardito, A. Rendina
**Live programme is postponed from September to November 2020**

**VERONA**
**TEATRO RISTORI**
www.teatroristori.org
**FND/Aterballetto** (June 4)
*La tempesta*
Chor. G. Spota
**Compagnie Hervé Koubi**
(June 11)
*Le nuits barbares*
Chor. H. Koubi

**VENICE**
**Biennale Danza Festival**
www.labiennale.org
**Postponed from 13 to 25 October 2020**

**VIGNALE MONFERRATO**
**Vignale Monferrato Festival**
www.piemontedalvivo.it/vignale-monferrato-festival/
**Cancelled**