L’OISEAU DE FEU
malandain | stravinski

LE SACRE DU PRINTEMPS
harriague | stravinski
The musicologist Gianfranco Vinay wrote the following about Igor Stravinsky, “If Stravinsky had not reached artistic maturity by writing music for the Ballets Russes, he would not have been the Stravinsky we know. But the opposite is also true. If Stravinsky had not collaborated with the Ballets Russes, not only would we be deprived of several masterpieces, but the artistic careers of several choreographers would not have been the same. Imagine Fokine’s career without Petrouchka, Nijinsky’s without The Rite of Spring, Massine’s without Pulcinella and Nijinska’s without Les Noces (‘The Wedding’)! In all these cases, Stravinsky’s music was a great catalyst, unleashing new creative energies, allowing the stylistic personalities of various choreographers to be highlighted. In [George] Balanchine’s case, the impact was even greater and longer lasting, giving rise to one of the most fruitful and original artistic collaborations in the history of music and dance.”

Since then, collaborations between Igor Stravinsky and Terpsichore’s disciples have continued to be fruitful, and now, the Malandain Ballet Biarritz is part of this beautiful continuity by double-billing Thierry Malandain and Martin Harriague, an associate artist at the Centre Chorégraphique National.

The Firebird, a danced tale by Michel Fokine which was performed at the Paris Opera by Serge Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes in 1910, will be the third encounter between Thierry Malandain and the composer’s score. First in 1991, with Pulcinella, the choreographer, associated at the time with his Compagnie Temps Présent at the Saint-Etienne Opera, undertook a rereading of this ballet by Léonide Massine, who in 1920 borrowed from the Comédie-Italienne and inaugurated the musician’s “neoclassical” style. Then in 2011, Thierry Malandain performed a duet entitled Entre deux for the Dutch company Introdans accompanied by the Concerto in D for string orchestra.

For Martin Harriague, after Sirènes (‘Mermaids’) created in 2018 for the Malandain Ballet Biarritz and noticed for its environmental message, celebrating nature with The Rite of Spring, created by Vaslav Nijinski at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in 1913, was a first step into the world of the Russian musician, but flowed naturally and profusely.

Furthermore, the two choreographers and the composer are all linked by common bonds. First and foremost, the Basque Coast: Thierry Malandain has been working there since 1998, Martin Harriague is originally from Bayonne and following Gabrielle Chanel’s advice, between 1921 and 1924, Igor Stravinsky settled in Anglet, then in Biarritz where he composed a few major works, while his brother-in-law, Grégoire Baliankine opened a Russian cabaret in Biarritz frequented by Pablo Picasso, Alexandre Benois, Jean Cocteau and Blaise Cendars. Other common denominators are a deep attachment to dance and ballet, a pronounced taste for rhythmic formulas and an inclination towards melodic innovations.

According to the six handshakes theory of the Hungarian Fírjyes Karinthy, any person on our planet can be connected to any other person through a chain of individual relationships comprising no more than six people. With the advent of social networks and globalisation, the degree of separation would only be three people. One would then be tempted to assert that dance - like other artistic disciplines - also has the marvellous power to connect people beyond the passage of time and beyond the contingencies of our day and age.
THE FIREBIRD

Length 30 minutes

PREVIEW 11 september 2021 Biarritz • Festival Le Temps d’Aimer
PREMIERE 28-29 september 2021 Alès • Scène nationale Le Cratère
CREATION 4 > 12 november 2021 Paris • Chaillot - Théâtre national de la Danse

Coproducers

Partners
Théâtre Olympia d’Arcachon, Le Parvis - Scène nationale de Tarbes Pyrénées, Théâtre de Saint Quentin-en-Yvelines - Scène nationale, Festival de Danse Cannes - Côte d’Azur France

Foreword
A danced tale by choreographer Michel Fokine with music by Igor Stravinsky, The Firebird premiered at the Paris Opera on June 25, 1910 performed by Serge Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes. “Ivan Tsarevich one day sees a marvellous bird, all gold and flames; he pursues it without being able to catch it, and only succeeds in plucking one of its glittering feathers, thus begins the libretto taken from traditional Russian tales”. But it is not the portrait of this bird that we are going to draw, nor is it the one George Balanchine made in 1949 based on this theme about the 1945 orchestral suite for the New York City Ballet. Stravinsky who took three suites from his ballet in 1910, 1919 and 1945, said, “I prefer Balanchine’s choreography for the 1945 version of The Firebird suite to Fokin’s ballet ensemble and for the music as well – the music for the complete ballet is too long and the quality is inconsistent” (1).

Like Balanchine, we use the 1945 concert suite, Maurice Béjart, whose version I danced in 1979 at the Ballet du Rhin, having danced the shorter version from 1919 at the Paris Opera in 1970. A bird of hope, or a revolutionary icon guiding partisans wearing battledress, Béjart explained in his foreword, “Stravinsky, a Russian musician, Stravinsky, a revolutionary musician. [...] The Firebird is the phoenix rising from its ashes. The poet, like the revolutionary, is a firebird” (2).

For our part, we should remember that birds symbolise the connection between heaven and earth, even that the phoenix decaying to be reborn personifies the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of Christ in Christianity. For the rest, in his commentary on the score, the composer Reynaldo Hahn wrote in 1910, “a very pure, very strong breeze, coming from high above” (3). Hence the temptation to make The Firebird a courier of light bringing consolation and hope to the hearts of men, like Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of nature who conversed with his brothers the birds, whether they were beautiful, radiant with great splendour, or mere sparrows.

Thierry Malandain, February 2021

(1) Memories and Commentaries by Igor Stravinsky, Robert Craft 1959, pg.33
(2) Maurice Béjart, 1970
(3) Le Journal, June 27, 1910
THE RITE OF SPRING

Igor Stravinski
Martin Harriague
François Menou et Martin Harriague
Mieke Kockelkorn
Véronique Murat, Charlotte Margnoux
Frédéric Vadé
Françoise Dubuc, Nuria López Cortés
for 18 dancers

Length 35 minutes

PREVIEW 11 september 2021 Biarritz • Festival Le Temps d’Aimer
PREMIERE 28-29 september 2021 Alès • Scène nationale Le Cratère
CREATION 4 > 12 november 2021 Paris • Chaillot - Théâtre national de la Danse

Coproducers

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Théâtre Olympia d’Arcachon, Le Parvis - Scène nationale de Tarbes Pyrénées, Théâtre de Saint Quentin-en-Yvelines - Scène nationale, Festival de Danse Cannes - Côte d’Azur France

Foreword

The relationship between man and nature fascinates and worries Martin Harriague. Which he already evoked in his recent choreographic creations (Sirènes, Fossile, Serre) – the rebirth of the living, its power, the struggle for its survival – Stravinsky’s iconiclastic and brilliant work for the Ballets Russes contains everything, and more. In many ways, The Rite of Spring was revolutionary progress, both in its choreography by Nijinsky and the score.

Harriague decided to use the myth while respecting the composer’s original intention illustrated by a pagan rite, “it is an obscure and immense sensation when nature renews its shapes, and it is the vague and profound disorder of a universal impulse,” Stravinsky explained in an article that Martin Harriague uses as a reference (CND, Montjoie magazine, May 29, 1913). Jacques Rivière, the NRF’s insightful director, spoke at the time of a “biological ballet”, “spring in its effort, in its spasm... one would believe we were attending a drama under a microscope”.

The complex rhythmic hammering that gives the work its wild and threatening force suits Martin Harriague’s explosive and earthy body language. This time he renounces all physical lyricism because the music makes him do so; he concentrates on the expressive power of primitive movement and fractal figures through which the group coils, unfolds, contracts as the living reappears, and makes its way everywhere before exploding.

To Nijinsky, who had dared to make this transgressive break with classical language, Harriague borrows the trampling of the spring Augurs who “mark the pulse of Spring with their footsteps”. The quotes from the original ballet stop there, but the entire piece shows a willingness to draw on the music’s expressiveness, which was particularly brilliant under the baton of Teodor Currentzis, to bring Stravinsky’s vision to life. One physically feels the wild energy and timeless fear that inhabits this group confronted with the violence of the living, purified by the rite. We perceive the savagery and the necessity of the final offering of the chosen one, a feminine principle embodying the energy of spring, the sap, pure and healthy, which rises, an allegory of the living that rises towards the light.

Special thanks to Nuria López Cortés, Choreographic Artist.
DIFFUSION 2021- 2022

2021

SEPT 11  Biarritz • Festival Le Temps d’Aimer  PREVIEW
28 - 29  Alès • Scène nationale Le Cratère  PREMIERE

OCT 2  Cremona (Italie) • Teatro Amilcare Ponchielli
8  Tarbes • Le Parvis, Scène nationale Tarbes-Pyrénées

NOV 4 > 7  Paris • Chaillot - Théâtre national de la Danse  CREATION
9 > 12  Paris • Chaillot - Théâtre national de la Danse
16  Colombes • L’Avant Seine

DEC 4  Udine (Italie) • Teatro Nuovo Giovanni Da Udine
7  Fréjus • Théâtre intercommunal le Forum dans le cadre du Festival de Danse Cannes - Côte d’Azur France
10 - 11  Martigues • Théâtre des Salins, Scène nationale
16 > 18  St Quentin-en-Yvelines • Scène nationale
22 - 23  Biarritz • Gare du Midi
25 - 26  Biarritz • Gare du Midi

2022

FEB 2-3  Vannes • Scènes du Golfe - Théâtre Arradon - Vannes
18  Logroño (Espagne) • Riojaforum - Palais des congrès

APR 24  Oviedo (Espagne) • Teatro Campoamor

MAY 3  Mérignac • Le Pin Galant
5 > 7  Donostia / San Sebastián (Espagne) • Victoria Eugenia Antzokia
21 > 23  Reims • Opéra

Programming under development
IGOR STRAVINSKY

Russian composer, pianist, and orchestra conductor (naturalised French then American) (Oranienbaum, 1882 – New York, 1971)

Igor Fyodorovich Stravinsky (1882-1971) could be considered as the Picasso of 20th century music. As a self-explorer, endowed with a rare ability to change models and structures while keeping his style intact, he was constantly reinventing himself.

Born in Russia, the son of musicians, he decided to devote himself entirely to music after his father’s death. Rimsky-Korsakov was his teacher, who also taught him orchestration. The beginning of his career was marked by his meeting with Diaghilev. His composition The Firebird, a ballet choreographed by Michel Fokine for the Ballets Russes at the Paris Opera in 1910, made him famous. In 1913, at the new Théâtre des Champs-Elysées in Paris, the production of The Rite of Spring, with revolutionary choreography by Nijinsky, provoked mockery and scandal because of the music’s originality and the unconventional choreography that did not follow traditional codes. Stravinsky was an experimenter who sought quintessence, new sound alliances, ritual, and even the sacred. His music provides a benchmark for modernity, originality, and inventiveness.

Exiled following the Russian Revolution, he spent his early years in Switzerland, then in France. He continued on his way, met Picasso, composed neoclassical works such as Pulcinella, and engaged in religious works with Messe (‘Mass’). Stravinsky was elusive.

He had a relationship with Coco Chanel and following her advice, he moved to Biarritz in 1921 where he lived with his family, Picasso, Chanel, Cocteau and many others for 3 years. It was during this period that he composed works such as Noces and Mavra, then went into exile in California and was buried in Venice, Italy, the city he loved the most.

Sources medici.tv, France Culture, France Musique, Fondation Igor Stravinski
Author of a repertoire of more than 80 choreographies, Thierry Malandain has developed a very personal vision of dance, closely linked to “Ballet”, where priority is given to the dancing body, its power, virtuosity, humanity and sensuality.

The search for meaning and aesthetics guide a powerful and sober style, which can be both serious and insolent, based on the pursuit of harmony between history and today’s world. Thierry Malandain’s troupe is comprised of dancers with classical dance training who express themselves in a contemporary way via Thierry Malandain’s choreography.

“My culture is that of classical ballet and I confidently remain attached to it. Because while I readily admit that its artistic and social codes are from another time, I also think that this heritage from four centuries represents invaluable resources for dancers. A classical choreographer for some, a contemporary one for others, I play with it, simply trying to find a dance I like. A dance that will not only leave a lasting impression of joy, but that will also restore the essence of the sacred things and serve as a response to the difficulty of being.”

**IN A FEW DATES**

1959 Born in Petit-Quevilly (Seine-Maritime, France) He followed the teaching of Monique Le Dily, René Bon, Daniel Franck, Gilbert Mayer and Raymond Franchetti.

1977 He had a career as a dancer at the Paris National Opera, the Ballet of the Rhine and the French Ballet Theatre in Nancy.

1986 Ended his career as a dancer to found the company «Temps Présent» in Élancourt (Yvelines).

1992 Settled in the Opera of Saint-Étienne as an «Associated company».

1998 Was appointed by the French Ministry of Culture to the head of the new Centre Chorégraphique National in Biarritz.

2004 Nomination for the Benois de la danse and Critic Awards «Best international performance » at the XIXth International Ballet Festival of Havana in Cuba for Les Créatures.

2005 Culture Award of the Sabino Arana Fondation in Bilbao.

2006 Received his second nomination for the prize at the Benois de la danse with L’Envol d’Icare created for the Ballet of the Paris National Opera.

2009 Once again appointed artistic director of the Dance Festival in Biarritz «Le Temps d’Aimer la Danse».

2012 Award for Une Dernière chanson by the «Syndicat de la critique».

2014 Taglioni European Ballet Award «best choreographer» in Berlin for the ballet Cinderella.

2017 «Best company » of the year Award by the « Association professionnelle de la Critique » for Noah.

2018 Nomination for the Benois de la danse for Noah.

2019 Appointed at the Académie des beaux-arts in the Choreography Department.

2020 SACD 2020 award in the Choreography Department.
A polymorphous choreographer, Martin is intermittently a set designer, dancer, performer, lighting designer, composer, musician, and singer... and he likes to combine an array of disciplines to explore various media and formats such as ballet, opera, video, fashion shows, small groups, large-scale productions, and even duets.

His writing never ceases to be singular in the course of his personal projects or collaborations with other artists. He sees his dance as a dance... that dances. Physical and explosive, it is quite often earthy; the movements are thus firmly anchored in the ground, and gravity is never far away.

And then, driven by a sense of drama not devoid of sarcasm, Martin seeks to give substance to emotions through an accepted theatricality, and it is easy to feel what makes him vibrate positively... or negatively in our day and age.

Martin Harriague also says, «I believe in the power of the virtuoso body combined with different art forms, I believe in its ability to change our perception of the world to make it better.»

IN A FEW DATES

1986 Born in Bayonne
2005 Began contemporary and classical dance with Jean-Marc and Michèle Marquerol in Bayonne
2007 - 2008 Joined the Ballet Biarritz Junior, directed by Thierry Malandain
2008 - 2010 Dancer at the Ballet National de Marseille, directed by Frédéric Flamand
2010 - 2013 Joined the Noord Nederlandse Dans (Netherlands), directed by Stephen Shropshire, where he made his choreographic debut with Of Suits Spots & Fur which became part of the company’s repertoire in 2011
2013 - 2018 Member of the Kibbutz Contemporary Dance Company (Israel), directed by Rami Be’er
2014 2nd Place Choreography Award – International Choreography Competition in Stuttgart, Germany
2015 Scapino Ballet Rotterdam Award at the Hanover, Germany competition
Audience’s Choice Award and 3rd Place Choreography Award – for Beauty and the Beast at the Copenhagen, Denmark competition
Audience’s Choice Award and 2nd Place Choreography Award – for You Man at the Stuttgart, Germany competition
2016 Audience’s Choice Award, Critics’ Choice Awards and 2nd Place – for Prince at the Young Neoclassical Choreographers’ Competition in Biarritz
2018 Appointed Associate Artist at the CCN Malandain Ballet Biarritz
2019 Nominated for a 2019 Golden Mask Award for Pitch – Best Contemporary Production, Best Costumes
CCN MALANDAIN BALLET BIARRITZ

Created in 1998 in Biarritz on the initiative of the Ministry of Culture, and the Town of Biarritz with the support of Nouvelle-Aquitaine Region and the Atlantic Pyrenees Department, Malandain Ballet Biarritz is one of 19 National Choreographic Centres (NCC) in France today.

The particularity of Malandain Ballet Biarritz is that it is made up of 22 permanent dancers trained in classical technique and whose expression in Thierry Malandain’s choreographies is contemporary. Today Malandain Ballet Biarritz is one of Europe’s most widely seen companies with 100,000 spectators per season and almost 100 performances per year, including a third abroad.

As a National Choreographic Centre, Malandain Ballet Biarritz also works intensely in terms of public awareness of dance – with on average over 350 events per year – and support to artists and companies thanks to the «Accueil Studio» programme.

Its local presence has led it to forge fertile partnerships with numerous cultural actors in the Euro-region. It has thus constructed the «Ballet T» project, a partnership between Malandain Ballet Biarritz and San Sebastian’s Victoria Eugenia Antzokia, with support from Europe and the Aquitaine Euskadi fund. Its aim is to spread choreographic art in the Basque Country, by co-producing and disseminating choreographic works, and also through awareness campaigns and audience mobility within the Euro-region.

The Communauté Pays Basque and the Diputación Foral de Gipuzkoa supports Malandain Ballet Biarritz for his actions in Iparralde and Gipuzkoa in the territorial cooperation and in the development of the territorial attractivity.
“Without having to resort to supporting set design, Malandain demonstrates gestural and musical creativity.” (…) “Although Harriague has taken the liberty of diverting the meaning of the Sacre parable, transforming a pagan drama into a Christian sacrificial rite, his version remains interesting, counterbalancing the rather Apollonian ballet that precedes it (L'Oiseau de feu or Firebird), with a whirlwind of dishevelled movements, by the same troupe possessed by the demon of dance.”
- Toute la culture, Nicolas Villodre, 13 September 2021

“Malandain and Harriague, flamboyant each in their own way” (…) The former, with great delicacy and finesse, the latter with overwhelming energy endowed with a theatrical sense of staging - they have corporal intelligence and dramaturgy in common.”
- Sud Ouest, Céline Musseau, 14 September 2021

“If you know a little about Malandain’s career, you’ll see once again his obsessions with purity, the dream of infinity, the liberation of the aching body, obtained by the body itself. If we ignore them, we discover a moving and superbly drawn fresco, where the colours alternate, carrying mystical values, and on which the gripping, tormented and smooth figure of Hugo Layer as the Bird stands out, undoubtedly the dancer with the most perfect technique, the most expressive of the company.” (…) About Sacre du printemps (Rite of Spring): “The work of the brilliant Martin Harriague, a rising star in French and notably Basque choreography, appointed Associate Artist at the CCN Malandain Ballet Biarritz in 2018, unquestionably refers to the origins of a primitive Russia evoked by Nijinsky. To do so, he has rediscovered trampling, the presence of the ancestor, the dynamics even more violent than at the time of creation, when the dancers were not accustomed to so many acrobatics, and the sacrificial rather than erotic spirit, in a hymn to reborn nature, which nevertheless must be broken in order to live again. Certainly, it is not the typical Harriague, but the fresco is impressive, and the end overwhelming (…).”
- Concertclassic, Jacqueline Thuilleux, 14 September 2021

Thierry Malandain (…) chose the 1945 concert suite for this new choreography of L'Oiseau de feu, the same one chosen by George Balanchine to whom he clearly pays tribute in this refined neoclassical choreography, extremely elegant in luminous costumes by Jorge Gallardo”. (…) About Sacre du printemps: “… the pagan rite, rigorously synchronised and danced very energetically by the company’s magnificent dancers.”
- Concertonet.com, Olivier Brunel, 14 September 2021

About L'Oiseau de feu: “Thierry Malandain gives his version today. A delight. (…) Russian folklore is no longer relevant - here it’s the elevation of the soul.”
About Sacre du printemps: “One thing is certain - Martin Harriague is a true choreographer.”
- Les Echos, Philippe Noisette, 14 September 2021

“Quite a plethora of ideas that we will not detail here as it is a treat to discover them.”
- Le Figaro, Ariane Bavelier, 15 September 2021

“Martin Harriague’s Sacre du Printemps (…) is definitely full of beautiful moments and is very promising.”
- Les Balletonautes, Cleopold, 18 September 2021