

CREACIÓN 2021 • 2022

L'OISEAU malandain | stravinski DE FEU



Hugo Leyer, L'Oiseau de Feu © Olivier Houeix

le cratère
SCÈNE NATIONALE D'ALÈS

THÉÂTRE
NATIONAL DE
LA DANSE
chailloT



malandain
ballet | biarritz



STATEMENT OF INTENT

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 "neo-classical" 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 Cendrars. 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 Firgyes 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

music
choreography
costume design
lighting
costume maker

Igor Stravinski
Thierry Malandain
Jorge Gallardo
François Menou
Véronique Murat, Charlotte Margnoux

ballet for 22 dancers

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

Donostia Kultura - Victoria Eugenia Antzokia -Donostia / San Sebastián (Espagne) – Ballet T, Chaillot-Théâtre national de la Danse – Paris, Théâtre des Salins, Scène nationale – Martigues, Le Cratère – Scène nationale Alès, Opéra de Reims, La Rampe – Scène conventionnée Echirrolles, Opéra de Saint Etienne, Théâtre de Sartrouville, CCN Malandain Ballet Biarritz

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 Fokine'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.

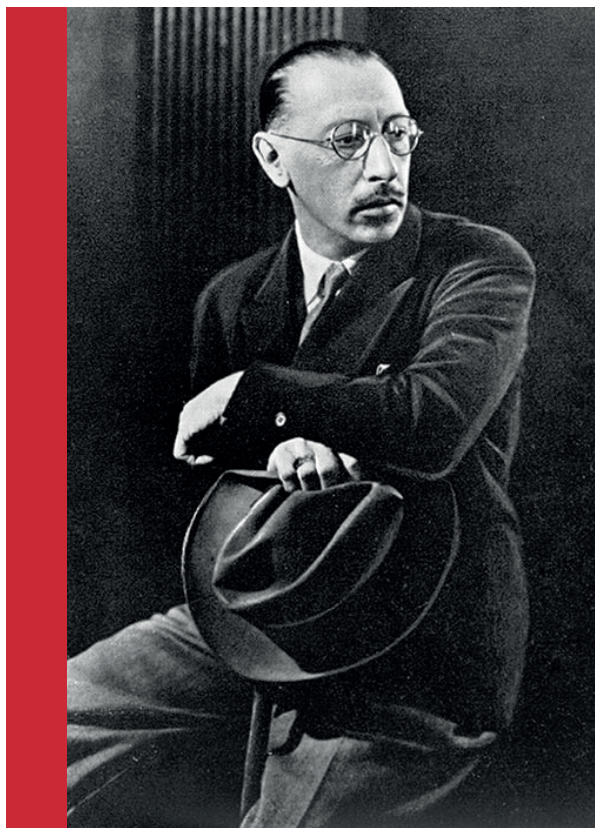
■ Thierry Malandain, February 2021

⁽¹⁾ Memories and Commentaries by Igor Stravinsky, Robert Craft 1959, pg.33

⁽²⁾ Maurice Béjart, 1970

⁽³⁾ Le Journal, June 27, 1910

A FEW FACTS ABOUT STRAVINSKY



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-Élysées 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

THIERRY MALANDAIN



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

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 attractiveness.



PRESS ARTICLES

“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 overflowing 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



www.malandainballet.com



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