

# LES SAISONS

malandain | guido · vivaldi

CRÉATION 2023



malandainballet.com



MINISTÈRE DE LA CULTURE

PRÉFET DE LA RÉGION NOUVELLE-AQUITAINE



Nouvelle-Aquitaine



BALLET BIARRITZ



MAIRIE DE BIARRITZ

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VICTORIA EUGENIA

malandain  
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Hugo Layer © Olivier Huetix



Based on an idea by Laurent Brunner, Director of Château de Versailles Spectacles, and Stefan Plewniak, Violinist and First Conductor of the Royal Opera of Versailles, this ballet intertwines Antonio Vivaldi's famous *Four Seasons* with several pages of *Le Quattro Stagioni dell'anno* (*The Four Seasons of the Year*), a little-known work by Giovanni Antonio Guido, contemporary and compatriot of the «red priest».

As for its accomplishment, beginning with arithmetic, under the influence of the number four, closely linked to creation, balance, and harmony, we can first say that Guido's *Seasons* awake memories of «belle danse» (baroque dance), which emerged in the seventeenth century from the ideal of governing one's body and mind, and moving with grace, accuracy and lightness. The number four is also associated with the Earth and the wheel of life, which does not always turn round smoothly, if not completely askew, given the ugliness, stupidity, and inhumanity that proliferate. With Vivaldi's *Seasons*, we are moved by a more natural, more human form of dance.

Finally, we spice things up with some poetic fantasy, and with these two words, you've got the basics. Against a backdrop of black petals spread across the horizon, winged beings mourn the loss of spirit and clarity. Why? Because the *Seasons* is only a ballet and there is nothing more serious than unbelievable things.

Thierry Malandain



# THE SEASONS

Music  
Choreographer  
Set and Costume Designer  
Lighting  
Costume Production

Set production  
Accessories production  
Set and props assistants

Ballet Masters  
Ballet

Antonio Vivaldi & Giovanni Antonio Guido  
Thierry Malandain  
Jorge Gallardo  
François Menou  
Véronique Murat, Charlotte Margnoux  
assisted by Anaïs Abel  
Frédéric Vadé  
Annie Onchalo  
Nicolas Rochais, Gorka Arpajou, Félix Vermandé,  
Raphaël Jeanneret, Christof t'Siolle, Txomin Laborde-  
Peyre, Maruschka Miramon, Karine Prins, Sandrine  
Mestas Gleizes, Fanny Sudres et Fantine Goulot

Richard Coudray, Giuseppe Chiavaro, Frederik Deberdt  
for 22 dancers

Length 60 minutes

Proposed by the Royal Opera of Versailles

## Premiere

November 25th, 2023 at the Palais des Festivals in Cannes - Cannes Dance Festival - Côte d'Azur France

Premiere with Versailles Royal Orchestra conducted by Stefan Plewniak

December 14th - 17th, 2023 - Royal Opera of Versailles

## Principal co-producer

Château de Versailles Spectacles - Royal Opera of Versailles

Orchestre de l'Opéra Royal de Versailles

## Co-producers

Festival de Danse de Cannes - Côte d'Azur France

Teatro Victoria Eugenia - Ballet T - Ville de Donostia San Sebastián

Opéra de Saint-Etienne

Theater Bonn - Allemagne

Teatro la Fenice - Venise (Italie)

CCN Malandain Ballet Biarritz

## Partners

Opéra de Reims

Espace Jéliote d'Oloron Sainte-Marie

Théâtre Olympia d'Arcachon

## Sponsorships

Fonds de dotation Malandain pour la Danse

Suez

Association Amis du Malandain Ballet Biarritz

Carré des Mécènes du Malandain Ballet Biarritz





# STATEMENT OF INTENT

Having unfurled their passionate energy long before their publication in Amsterdam in 1725, the Four Seasons of Vivaldi form a cycle of four violin concertos naturally named *Spring*, *Summer*, *Autumn* and *Winter*. Each title has three movements, whose main purpose is not virtuosity. New at the time, they were preceded by sonnets attributed to Vivaldi and provide a succession of pastoral scenes descriptively celebrating nature.

One of the most international opuses with more than a thousand recordings to date, not counting concerts, catalogues of telephone on-hold music and adverts, this universal hymn to nature, rediscovered in the mid 20th century, has the ability to please. Hence its immense popularity, hence also the weariness, or even the rejection that the work can arouse. Thus, after Igor Stravinsky stated in 1959, "Vivaldi is greatly overrated - a boring fellow who could compose the same form so many times"(1), people talked about easy music to the point of saying, such as the composer Luigi Dallapiccola, or Stravinsky again(2), that "the red-headed priest" composed "the same concerto five hundred times". This is not true and completely unfair.

That being said, in all their grandeur, in terms of their promise, it is true that the Venetian musician's Four Seasons have been heard so often, exploited so much to the point of misunderstanding, that in response, having become truly old repetitive melodies, they can be irritating, cause total indifference, or in our case, overwhelm us with gloomy thoughts. And even more so in today's disillusioned and corrupt climate, where nature's deterioration constitutes an existential threat. In contrast, since the word nature literally means birth, Giovanni Antonio Guido's *The Four Seasons of the Year* should, because of their unique nature, provide a breath of fresh air, renewal and a reason for hope.

Published in Versailles around 1726, but perhaps earlier than Vivaldi's, since they may have been written around 1716 for the opening exhibition of four oval paintings by Jean-Antoine Watteau representing *the four seasons* which adorned the Paris mansion of Pierre Crozat, Treasurer of France, patron and collector. As for Guido, a first-rate Genoese violinist, he served Philippe d'Orléans, Regent of France, before entering the service of his son Louis. Written in the French form of Suite de danses, like Vivaldi, the score sets four anonymous poems to music - *Les Caractères des saisons*. Guido attempted to describe

seasonal changes by adding notes of green, blue and very light pink. But also rural deities, as in *Les Saisons* by Abbot Jean Pic, performed at the Royal Academy of Music from 1695 to 1722, with choreography by Louis Pécour. Accompanied by melodies composed by Pascal Collasse and Louis Lully, the ballet had four "entries", a sacred number associated with creation, balance and harmony. Four doors that we will cross through to walk on the paths of idealism.

How far will we go like this? I don't know... Guido's bowing respectfully imitates the course of the seasons, but we are at the theatre, where everything is false and gets lost in the atmosphere.

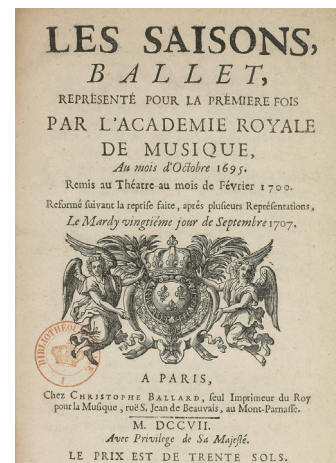
This is the nature of the choreographer's problem with the limits of his art. Whereas the solution, if we wish to continue gazing at nature when it opens its heart to spring, is to respect it without limits or pretence.

After the hymns to humanity and the living which comprised *Le Sang des étoiles* (2004), *Noé* (2017), *la Pastorale* (2019), *Sinfonia* (2020) and *L'Oiseau de feu* (2021), ideally, *Les Quatre Saisons* should not become false in its attempts to be real.

■ Thierry Malandain, October 2022

(1) Conversations with Igor Stravinsky, Robert Craft, 1959, p.84

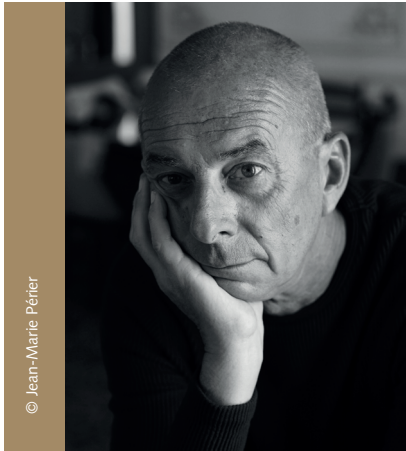
(2) Vivaldi : Amour de la Musique, Marc Pincherle, 1955, p.55





# THIERRY MALANDAIN

Director and choreographer



Member of the Academie des beaux-arts of the Institute of France and 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

**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 XIX<sup>th</sup> 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 450 events per year – and support to artists and companies thanks to the «Accueil Studio» programme.

To assist the development of young ballet choreographers, an International Competition is organised by the Biarritz CCN every two years, jointly with the Bordeaux National Opera Ballet and the CCN Ballet of the Opera National du Rhin. Thierry Malandain and his teams pay special attention to supporting ballets and choreographers.



Because of its specific geographic location, Malandain Ballet Biarritz has forged fruitful partnerships with many Euro-regional cultural participants.

This is how the “Ballet T” project came to be, which is now managed by the Pôle Chorégraphique Territorial (Regional Choreographic Centre) in conjunction with the Basque Country Community.

The CCN has been responsible since 2021 for the Le Temps d’Aimer Dance Festival which takes place every year in September. The 2023 edition attracted 34 000 spectators for 109 events throughout the Basque Country Community with an eclectic, international programme.





# ABOUT THE LATEST PRODUCTIONS



## **L'Oiseau de feu :**

"Thierry Malandain is giving his version today. Bewitching. (...) Russian folklore is no longer relevant, we're witnessing the elevation of the soul here."

■ Les Echos, Philippe Noisette, September 14, 2021

## **La Pastorale**

*Produced in 2019 - Chaillot - Théâtre National de la Danse (National Dance Theatre) - Paris*

"Timeless, almost abstract, the dance here magnificently expresses the poignant paradoxes of human beings, from duets to ensemble movements."

■ La Terrasse, Agnès Santi, November 24, 2019

## **Marie-Antoinette**

*Produced in 2019 - Royal Opera of the Château de Versailles*

"Malandain made the tasteful decision not to overload the stage, playing with frames wielded by the dancers and with slightly quirky costumes."

■ Les Echos, Philippe Noisette, March 29, 2019

## **Rêverie Romantique**

*Produced in 2018 - Victoria Eugenia Antzokia - Donostia/San Sebastian*

"Everything celebrates romantic ballet in its details and its ensembles. Malandain incorporates its delicateness as well as its frenetic effect. It's a delight."

■ Le Figaro, Ariane Bavelier, June 7, 2018

## **Noé**

*Produced in 2017 - Chaillot Théâtre national de la Danse (Chaillot National Dance Theatre)*

"Malandain's piercing style is self-sufficient and doesn't need to be overplayed. His dance to stay alive is open-bodied."

■ Le Monde, Rosita Boisseau, May 16, 2017

## **La Belle et la Bête**

*Produced in 2015 - Royal Opera of Versailles*

"It is marvellously beautiful, with an abundance of choreographies that truly place him at the forefront of French choreographers."

■ Le Figaro, Ariane Bavelier, December 20, 2015

### **Nocturnes**

Produced in 2014 - Opera of Reims

"Thierry Malandain has created a choreographic gem, which Jean-Claude Asquié's lighting enhances with a dark glow, with chiseled dramaturgy, shrewdly musical and intelligent."

■ Danser Canal Historique, Agnès Izrine, November 14, 2014

### **Estro**

Produced in 2014 - Victoria Eugenia Antzokia - Donostia/San Sebastian

"With next to nothing (...), he sets the scene for a celebration that is both dramatic and joyful, where an inconsolable mother's suffering is transcended by the irresistible joy of dance."

■ Ballroom, Isabelle Calabre, July 8, 2014

### **Cendrillon**

Produced in 2013 - Royal Opera of Versailles

"It is apparent in his work, where everything points to a search for what is right and eloquent, in order to avoid the clichés and heaviness of a narrative ballet as much as possible. The entire work is lively, inventive and ingenious at times."

■ Le Nouvel Observateur, Raphaël de Gubernatis, June 7, 2013

### **Une Dernière chanson**

Produced in 2012 - Opera of Reims

"Awarded the 2012 Grand Prize by the Syndicat de la Critique, Une Dernière Chanson (...) is a real gem. Each song is treated with incredible intelligence and tenderness, and forms a true live portrait of incomparable lightness."

■ Alta Musica, Olivier Brunel, September 9, 2012

### **Silhouette**

Produced in 2012 - Hôtel de Silhouette in Biarritz

"Accompanied by Beethoven's music, Frederik Deberdt dances (...) with feline presence and total control of his body. It is incredibly pure, infinitely delicate and strangely beautiful."

Toute la Culture, Sophie Lesort, November 11, 2014

son corps. C'est d'une incroyable pureté, d'une infinie délicatesse et d'une étrange beauté.»

■ Toute la Culture, Sophie Lesort, 11 novembre 2014



Miyuki Kanei & Daniel Vizcayo. Noé © Olivier Houeix



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**BIARRITZ**



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**BALLET** 

  
**VICTORIA EUGENIA**  
*Amusements*



**DONOSTIA  
SAN SEBASTIÁN**



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