

## AND...

## FOI ET CULTURE ENCOUNTERS

With Ambra Senatore about *Scena madre\**, July 11 at 11:00,  
Chapelle de L'Oratoire

## TOUR DATES AFTER THE FESTIVAL

- November 21, 2017, Le Grand R, La Roche-sur-Yon
- November 24, Théâtre de Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines Scène nationale
- November 28-30, Lieu unique Scène nationale de Nantes
- January 29, 2018, Centre national de la danse contemporaine, Angers
- February 1-4, Théâtre de la Ville, Paris
- February 8-9, Théâtre du Merlan Scène nationale de Marseille
- February 16, Maison de la musique, Nanterre

## SCENA MADRE\*

A succession of scenes from daily life, of everyday events and unusual occurrences. On an almost empty stage, a street appears, then a wrecked ship, then a saloon, then... What ties those fragments together? What relationship will we draw between those situations? Italian choreographer Ambra Senatore cultivates surprise and tells us of the humorous discrepancies that supersede the real, but also of how movement becomes poetry when words are no longer enough. If it is difficult to say when an action begins and a scene ends, it is because her choreographic writing is all about fluidity and transition. Levels of meaning, layers of dialogue, accumulated gestures are stacked one on top of the other until it all can't but burst. It is a succession of overflows and silences born from a single matrix: the stage-mother. Written "like a rebus, or like a plot," this piece is founded on the weaving of inextricable links between people and situations. *Scena madre\** is above all the first moment of those beginnings that can seem identical but which we must leave behind, so we can choose our own path and take chances to escape. So let's open it up so we can better see what awaits us...

## AMBRA SENATORE

The Italian choreographer and performer Ambra Senatore has been the director of the Centre chorégraphique national in Nantes since January 2016. In her work, everyday life is closely scrutinised, creating discrepancies that lead to a fictionalisation of the gestures and a dramatisation of the dramaturgy of dance. At the heart of it, if movement and bodies question the framing and limits of narration, they also become abstract and blur the borders between disciplines and genres. A lover of surprises and unexpected points of view, Ambra Senatore re-arranges the real and the imagined for her dancers as well as for the audience, and likes to evoke cinema, where composition, details, and sequencing become tools. After creating solo pieces, like *EDA-solo*, *Merce*, *Maglie*, or *Altro piccolo progetto domestico*, Ambra Senatore turned to group pieces in order to talk about the collective and create ties between the people and the bodies that inhabit her stage: *Passo* (2010), *A Posto* (2011), *John* (2012), *Aringa Rossa* (2014), and more recently *Quante Storie*, *Pièces* (2016). This is Ambra Senatore's first appearance at the Festival d'Avignon.

71<sup>st</sup>  
EDITION

In order to bring you this edition, over 1,750 people, artists, technicians, and organisational staff, have worked tirelessly and enthusiastically for months. More than half of them are state-subsidised freelance workers.



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#FDA17

#SCENAMADRE

## INTERVIEW WITH AMBRA SENATORE

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***Scena madre*\* literally means “stage-mother.” It’s a title that already seems to contain a desire and a choreographic form.**

**Ambra Senatore:** *Scena madre*\* begins with a founding scene, a scene that doubles as a starting point. Instead of converging towards something, the narrative here tends to “diverge” or “splinter” from a centre. A collection of propositions are woven together, possibilities open up, and links are made and unmade towards various worlds. The beginning of my dramatic and choreographic work often rests on an everyday gesture or a trivial situation, then a shift happens, and a “pure” or “abstract” dance arises from that. For *Scena madre*\*, I wanted the shift from a so-called dramatic situation to dance to be fluid. From the start of rehearsals, the challenge was to come back to a dance that wouldn’t be a conscious transcription of the everyday but that would echo a certain form of theatricality. I try to have different time periods and costumes coexist and bump into each other, to bring together different histories of humanity.

**You’ve talked of a splintered or inverted dramaturgy for *Scena madre*\*, halfway between theatre and dance.**

That’s right. I start with a “scene-mother,” an encounter, and from there I splinter and fragment. Since I wanted to reaffirm the central place of dance, we started working right away on principles of accumulation and repetition, basing our work on improvisations to create movement. *Pièces* (Rooms), my latest creation, was very theatrical. I wanted with *Scena madre*\* to come back to that latent desire to have a choreographed score coexist with dramatic performance, in order to create a more dynamic dance. It could have been two separate chapters, but the point of my research was the constant cohabitation of those registers, so that dance could exist in its own right. And so dance accompanies what I call “outbreaks of humanity,” that is, scenes in which the audience will be able to recognise some of the characters that were present in the dramatic parts. Presences that furtively “pass through” the dancers’ bodies.

**There is in your work a palpable attention paid to the gestures and details of everyday life.**

I am indeed very much moved by what I observe out on the street and in public places, by all those moments when you’re surrounded by human beings you don’t know. To watch is to witness bits and pieces of existence. It then becomes possible to imagine where this woman came from and where she’s going, what her story is or what she’ll become. I’m moved by humanity itself, by the human beings I encounter, as different as they are similar, and by the fact that I encounter them at a specific moment without knowing what came before and what comes after. Paying attention to those moments and to those tiny details that makes it possible to open up your imagination.

**You don’t like to reveal too much about your work before it is ready, you often talk of the importance of surprise.**

A creative process is like a journey that surprises you. Within the company, we like to say that we’re planning a trip but that once we’re on our way, we discover other landscapes, we meet new people. The way forward keeps inventing itself and surprising us. And that’s what I want to give the audience: a journey full of surprises, a form that reveals itself, a network of stories that weave themselves together. As an introduction, we offer a framework for the performance, it guides the eye and opens up wider and wider. I’m not trying to fill people with wonder, not in the sense of baroque wonder, but I like the idea of sharing a surprise with the audience. My shows are a little like rebus or crime stories, with interwoven, multiple-choice stories. There’s a throughline, and at the same time there are a lot of possibilities. If everyone’s life is unique and precious, it also shares a lot of similarities with other lives. You often feel compassion for others because we are the same. There’s a political dimension to that idea of an encounter. History makes us face the question of the encounter with the other.

**You’ve talked about a “treatment of image and sound as if the stage were a screen.” Does that correspond to a desire to introduce an “indirect” cinematic presence on a dance stage, where everything is in the “here and now?”**

My work on composition in my group shows has often been compared to that of cinema. When I’m creating, I feel like I’m trying to guide the spectator’s gaze, to help it focus on details the way a camera would. If cinema has the distinctive characteristic of projecting a work on the two dimensions of a screen, it contains the memory of a third one. It is of course a more distant relationship, but we sometimes come out of a film feeling like we lived the situations the characters on the screen were going through. In my shows, we often call out to the public, through the dancers’ gaze, or when they leave the stage; it’s a third dimension we’re very aware of. Hence this constant back-and-forth between the magical and fictional relationship of the show and the reality of the “here and now.” This dissociation reminds me a lot of the work that happens in cinema, during filming, when you have the same kind of constant back-and-forth between the scenes being shot and reality. I want to show this fragment of time “between the inside and the outside” that the audience doesn’t usually get to see. Those moments where the actors enter and exit the action, their roles, their characters in between takes to become themselves again.

**What does the asterisk in *Scena madre*\* refer to?**

It reminds me a little of automatic writing. It could be longer, it doesn’t define the title, it doesn’t restrict it but opens it up towards different paths, as far as possible. The truth is, this title, like all titles at the moment of creation, is temporary. I never want to close the door on a title. The question of opening and closing things is a constant in my work. That’s how it is for my shows as well, even after the premiere, I’m still changing things, adding details to the form. If the writing is very precise, the meaning is never closed. It’s a way for me to open up the show and to offer several different meanings.