

## AND

### THE WORKSHOPS OF THOUGHT

Site Louis Pasteur Supramuros de l'Université d'Avignon

*La Grande Table d'été*, with Emanuel Gat, *France Culture*, July 20 at 12:45

*Fighting the fight: discussion with Phia Ménard and Emanuel Gat*,

Fondation BNP Paribas, July 22 at 14:30

### WEB-TV

A web documentary about the show is produced by the Young Culture Reporters and will be available on [festival-avignon.tv](http://festival-avignon.tv)

## TOUR DATES AFTER THE FESTIVAL

- September 9, 2018, Beethovenfest, Bonn (Germany)
- November 7 and 8, Frankfurt LAB, Frankfurt (Germany)
- December 14 and 15, deSingel campus international des arts, Antwerp (Belgium)
- January 9 to 13, 2019, Chaillot-Théâtre national de la danse, Paris

72<sup>th</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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#FDA18

## STORY WATER

*"A story is like water*

*You heat up for your bath*

*It carries messages between the fire*

*And your skin"*

Just like water in the Sufi poem—which gives its name to the show—carries messages from the fire, the body is the vehicle between Emanuel Gat and dance. *Story Water* brings together on the stage of the Cour d'honneur of the Palais des papes dancers and musicians caught in the same intense white light, which sublimes, through movement, a story told in real time, never exactly the same from one night to the next. All are carried away into the same present by the music, be it mathematical and meditative like Pierre Boulez' or wild and physical like Rebecca Saunders's. A music composed by the choreographer and the musicians according to the logic of a dance in which the ensemble becomes attuned in time with every individual performer. Together, they build before our eyes a choral piece, incredibly free, in which dance, music, and painting enter a dialogue via the bodies. A reminder that Emanuel Gat has spent the past 25 years exploring the infinite potential of human relationships.

## EMANUEL GAT

A dancer and choreographer, Emanuel Gat founded his company in 2004. His first shows, *Winter Voyage* and *The Rite of Spring*, won a Bessie Award. In addition to the music, he also handles the lighting and scenography of all his shows. After working with the Maison de la Danse in Istres, he was an associate artist of the Festival Montpellier Danse, then of the Chaillot-Théâtre national de la danse and the scène Nationale in Albi. He is regularly invited to create shows for prestigious companies such as the Ballet of the Opéra de Paris or the Candoco Dance Company. *Story Water* is his first collaboration with the Frankfurt Ensemble Modern, a collective of musicians often called on to perform 20<sup>th</sup>- and 21<sup>st</sup>-century music.

## ENSEMBLE MODERN

Founded in 1980, the Ensemble Modern is a unique formation, directly managed by the musicians themselves according to the principles of direct democracy. Every year, they perform about a hundred concerts in the most prestigious concert halls and festivals in the world. The ensemble is known for the quality and diversity of its projects, which include concerts and concert films, but also video and dance shows. They have built lasting relationships with renowned artists such as Peter Eötvös, Steve Reich, George Benjamin, Helmut Lachenmann, or Hans Zender.



FESTIVAL D'AVIGNON 72°

JULY 19 20 21 22 23  
COUR D'HONNEUR DU PALAIS DES PAPES

# INTERVIEW WITH EMANUEL GAT AND ENSEMBLE MODERN

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## **What's the place of this new creation in your career? What is it about?**

**Emanuel Gat:** It's a continuation of my work. From where I stand, I've been working on the same piece for the past twenty- five years. It's a piece that evolves depending on the circumstances. And *Story Water* zooms in on a specific moment in my career, in my evolution. The starting point for a piece is never the idea of a show. The show always finds its origin in the process of dance itself, in the continuous process of creation and its principles, a subject in and of itself. For the past five years, I've tried to understand how to create a show without creating any precise structure or fixed score for the dancers. It's not about improvising, but about structuring real time. In *WORKS*, for instance, the music and its tempo were determined by the dancers themselves during the performance. The montage was, too, since they freely chose the order of the different sequences. The show created itself as it was performed. With *Story Water*, I tried to follow this idea all the way through. In a "live show", what I'm interested in is the word "live"! And to live is to react to what's happening. That's why my shows are always evolving and questioning themselves from performance to performance.

## **There is in *Story Water* a form of intimacy that embraces all the performers, giving us the impression that they're always connected and never isolated, even when they're dancing solos. How do you work with your dancers?**

**Emanuel Gat:** Ours is a horizontal collaboration. If I were to decide alone of the choreographic material we're going to use, every one of them would be directly under my responsibility. It would have the effect of isolating them from one another as well as in their relationship to the work being built. I'd much rather everyone have a hand in what's happening. I ask questions and they answer them, together. For the show to work properly, the dancers have to talk to another. And to achieve that result, I have to step back and let the dancers handle the choreography. Those constant exchanges mean that the show can never be controlled by outside elements like the music, the spaces, or the light. The dramaturgic result of this process allows the audience to understand what's happening between the dancers, and how. It's a metaphor for human relationships, that's what I'm trying to showcase first.

## **Tell us more about the lighting, which is also a fundamental aspect of your shows, and a central element in the way you approached the Cour d'honneur of the Palais des papes.**

**Emanuel Gat:** It's an important aspect of my artistic research that's almost independent from my choreographic research. I've always tried to understand how it works on the stage, what it brings to the visuals and to the music. Light is a musical tool that unfolds through time with its own dynamics: it goes up, down; it has strong moments, and weaker ones... I like to use spotlights

that make noises when you turn them on. The musical dynamics of light is something that can be seen, heard, that is perceptible on its own. The lighting is never subordinated to the rest of the piece: the choreography takes place within its own powerful logic. I don't shine a light to the left of a movement because it takes place on the left. I don't lower the light to tell people that we're entering a darker passage... The lighting is at the heart of my approach to the Cour d'honneur. The sun shines on us whatever we need to do, it's not there to serve the performance. The lighting in this show is the sky above the performance and the 2,000 people in the audience.

## **Among the musical pieces used in *Story Water* is *FolkDance*, co-written by Emanuel Gat and Ensemble Modern. A score co-composed based on processes used in choreographic writing. How did you approach this new way of composing music, but also of working on the stage with the dancers?**

**Ensemble Modern:** The starting point of this work we composed together, *FolkDance*, is our first meeting with Emanuel Gat in 2015, in Frankfurt. Ensemble Modern regularly experiments with guest artists, to explore what a collaborative work could look like, as well as its potential. During that first meeting with Emanuel, we quickly realised we were mostly interested in the following question: how to bring together choreography and music to turn them into an artistic language within which both elements would be equal and thus create something new? What we're trying to do is therefore neither a dance show with music nor a musical performance with dancers, but rather an exchange between those two art forms, with their own independent aspirations, which leads to the fading of physical and musical borders between them.

## **Rebecca Saunders and Pierre Boulez are the other two composers of *Story Water*. Why did you want to bring together those two composers, with their diametrically opposed styles: one physical, the other mathematical?**

**Ensemble Modern:** Pierre Boulez is one of the cornerstones of post-1945 music. To us, his importance both as a composer and a conductor cannot be overstated. As for Rebecca Saunders, she's one of the most important personalities in contemporary musical creation, and we recently started a new collaboration with her. Both those composers include extremely physical elements in their music: Rebecca Saunders's is in tune with the dynamic gestures of the musicians, especially those of the solo bass player in *Fury II*. As for Pierre Boulez, he himself considered that his work *Dérive 2* was particularly suitable for dance. It's an idea conductor Franck Ollu had already suggested to the ensemble some time ago. In spite of its seeming dryness, this music develops a real force of aspiration and a form of sensuality which can create a hypnotic effect and a deeply physical sensation.

Interview conducted by Francis Cossu, translated from German  
by