

## AND...

FAITH AND CULTURE ENCOUNTER  
with Raimund Hoghe, July 24 at 11:00, chapelle de l'Oratoire

## TOUR DATE AFTER THE FESTIVAL

- September 9, 2018, La Bâtie - Festival de Genève (Switzerland)

## CANZONE PER ORNELLA

Before becoming a dramatist then a choreographer, Raimund Hoghe used to write portraits, both of famous and unknown people, which were published in *Die Zeit*. That habit remains at the heart of his work as a choreographer, under the guise of solos addressed to famous figures—Joseph Schmidt, Judy Garland, Maria Callas—or to some of his favourite performers—*Songs for Takashi* or *Musiques et mots pour Emmanuel* (*Music and Words for Emmanuel*). They always take the form of a “musical offering,” where his performers express their art through a presence deeply aware of the effects of music and of time, of the imaginary resonance of a voice and a melody. Ornella Balestra—widely recognised for her work with Maurice Béjart—is one of those dancers able to best embody this mixture of intensity and reverie that characterises Raimund Hoghe's dance (see his *Swan Lake*, *4 Acts*, *Boléro Variations*, *Quartet*, or *La Valse* (*The Waltz*)). In *Canzone per Ornella*, the choreographer brings together for his dancer music and texts by Pier Paolo Pasolini, both those that have already been explored and those that are still to be experienced, playing with her ability to strike the perfect balance between virtuosity and entertainment, between enigmatic presence and movie-like figure.

## RAIMUND HOGHE

A writer and dramatist for Pina Bausch, Raimund Hoghe has spent the past twenty-five years creating a challenging choreographic body of work, alternating solos and group shows—*Sacre – The Rite of Spring*, *Swan Lake*, *4 Acts*, *Boléro Variations*, etc—which revisit major works in the history of dance. Each of his shows rests on a tiny thread, a fabric made of gestures, shapes, and melodies, which he imbues with the thickness of memory. Letting the music spread through the bodies, his rituals take form in a space conducive to all kinds of associations. Raimund Hoghe's first show in France was *Verdi Prati*, performed in 1993 at the Festival d'Avignon.

72<sup>th</sup>  
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## INTERVIEW WITH RAIMUND HOGHE

**You're presenting a solo piece at the Festival d'Avignon created for Ornella Balestra, a dancer who's worked with you for years now. What place do those shows created "for" your dancers have in your work?**

**Raimund Hoghe:** I created two shows for Takashi Ueno, *Pas de Deux* and *Songs for Takashi*. I created *Music and Words for Emmanuel* with Emmanuel Eggermont. Among those shows created for people, I could add *Evening for Judy*, a tribute to Judy Garland, and *Sarah, Vincent et moi*, which became *Sarah et moi* once Vincent Dunoyer was no longer able to appear onstage. Those names, which appear in the titles, are beautiful.

**There's a real story of trust and fidelity between you and your performers...**

It's true, but at the same time there are also new encounters, new performers who appear in my work. It's been the case with Marion Ballester, or with Korean dancer Ji-Hye Chung who danced in *The Waltz*, and with whom I'd like to keep working. Often, those are chance encounters, not auditions. That's how it happened with Takashi, whom I met randomly in Japan, or with Emmanuel, whom I met at the Angers school. I do sometimes have auditions for specific projects, like *Young People, Old Voices*, but it's often the product of chance. The trust I build with those dancers, and which they share with one another, is very important. Sometimes, I invite dancers to perform with me, and it doesn't work. For *The Waltz*, for instance, I worked with young dancers who ended up not staying on the show. Ornella, Takashi, Marion, Emmanuel... the dancers with whom I often work have a great inner strength—which is required for this meticulous work. It's not a question of physical form or of innate talent—being able to lift your leg very high—but a quality of presence, of attention: they can connect to a music, embody it, let themselves be carried by what it evokes. Those dancers are otherwise very talented on a technical level, but that's not what matters. Sometimes, I think it has something to do with age, with a form of wisdom—but that's not always the case. Lorenzo De Brabandere was only 18 when we started working together. I'm currently working on a new version of *Young People, Old Voices* in Portugal, called *Momentos of Young People*. The dancers are all between 18 and 22, and some of them are very talented. They are themselves, they don't try to be a copy of someone else.

**Those solo pieces for your dancers sit halfway between the dialogue and the portrait. How important is the form of the portrait for you?**

It's a very old story, which has to do with more than just dance. Before working in this field, I wrote portraits—portraits of famous and unknown people alike for the newspaper *Die Zeit*, which were collected and published. I had some recognition in Germany for that work before I moved to the theatre... The portrait is a form that's always interested and attracted me. I started working on the stage by creating solos for Pina [Bausch]'s dancers, like *Forbidden Fruit* or *Geraldo's Solo*. And little by little, I started performing solos myself.

The solo is really the foundation of my work, right from the very beginning. Nowadays, I alternate between group pieces and solos, I need that balance.

**Those portraits are always based on music, which you can see in their titles: *Songs for Takashi*, *Canzone per Ornella*. What music did you choose for this creation?**

There are new songs—pieces I've never used, but also some pieces that are part of our shared history with Ornella, like *The Bolero*, or *Swan Lake*. I want there to be music we used in our creations together, our first collaborations, as a way to reawaken that memory on the stage. The space and the context of the show will also play an important part. Working with Ornella, we tried to think about the way the music would resonate outside—a dialogue with nature. We can play certain songs really loud, whereas the emphasis would be too much for others. "It comes to me"—that's the only way I can. I listen to music, and it leads me from one point to another. I chose the music based on the different characters she played—like Carmen. But I'm no composer, the overall structure unveils itself little by little as I work. It's the same for solo pieces, with Ornella for instance. I come up with ideas, I make her listen to them, I see how she reacts, how she connects to this or that piece, this or that text. I've always worked like that, going from one point to the next, without necessarily thinking about what comes after. I try to perceive the spaces music opens up at a specific moment.

**Throughout your work, one finds many female figures. Is there something in particular that you find interesting in those artistic "icons"?**

It's art I'm interested in. I find Maria Callas or Judy Garland interesting because of the way they mastered their art. The other important aspect is the fragility of the human being: working with the flaws and grey areas. The goal is to touch both their status as icons and the complexity of their being. I believe art should be demanding: when you look at the music or movie industry today, you just have to turn on your television to be struck by the chasm separating those great artists and what mainstream culture produces today...

**Ornella Balestra's presence in *The Waltz* feels very compact, she expresses a lot with very little. You've performed a duet in which she wears a blindfold and you hold a mirror. It can be read as a metaphor of the relationship between the choreographer and the dancer...**

Yes, it comes from Richard Strauss's *Knight of the Rose*... That scene is a direct expression of the music—when the Marshal holds a mirror and talks about growing old... There's a marvelous performance of it by Elisabeth Schwarzkopf. But here, it works both ways... It's as much me guiding her than it is the other way around. There's a very strong connection between us in that scene. She's the one who forces me to look in the mirror.

Interview conducted by Gilles Amalviand translated by Gaël Schmidt-Cléach