

AND...

YOUNG AUDIENCE SHOWS

The Imperfect, Olivier Balazuc, July 22 to 26, Chapelle des Pénitents blancs

CINEMATIC TERRITORIES

Cycle of films for children and animation workshops, July 10 to 23, Utopia-Manutention

THE YOUNG SPECTATOR'S GUIDE AND VISITS FOR THE FAMILIES

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TOUR DATES AFTER THE FESTIVAL

- October 11-15, 2017, L'apostrophe scène nationale de Cergy-Pontoise et du Val d'Oise
- January 12-13, 2018, Théâtre de Vanves
- January 16-18, Auditorium de Coulanges, Gonesse
- January 22-26, Théâtre Paul Éluard, Bezons
- February 7, Espace Malraux, Joué-lès-Tours
- February 9-10, La Pléiade, La Riche
- March 10, L'Antarès, Vauréal
- March 30-31, L'Orange bleue d'Eaubonne
- June 1st, Le Carré scène nationale de Château-Gontier

IT'S A LEGEND

Like a fairy tale, *It's a legend* gives younger audiences the opportunity to explore the art of movement in six chapters. From academic classicism at the court of Louis XIV to theatricality in the work of Pina Bausch, Raphaël Cottin's show is a visual book from which emerge some of the greatest choreographic revolutions that transformed the relationship to the stage of artists, but also of audiences. Evoking Isadora Duncan's free dance, Rudolf Laban's pedagogy and analysis of movement, or the abstraction of movement in Alwin Nikolais's work, *It's a legend* is a modern series in which portraits and practices endlessly echo and contradict each other. Onstage, dance is thought, told, and shown, unless it is doing the telling and showing, jumping from one end of the history of choreography to the other. The desire of this young choreographer, who for the first time will not be dancing in one of his shows, is not only to share the great changes in the history of choreography, but above all to awaken a veritable "thirst for dance." Alternating poetic and unusual images, *It's a legend* assures with serious levity that the poetry of movement and the autonomy of the body are linked to those of the mind...

RAPHAËL COTTIN

After graduating from the Conservatoire national supérieur de danse in Paris, Raphaël Cottin danced for Stéphanie Aubin, Christine Gérard, Odile Duboc, and Daniel Dobbels. In 2008, he joined the company directed by Thomas Lebrun—who became director of the Centre choréographique national in Tours in 2012—with whom he danced in France and abroad. A certified trainer, he teaches Wilfride Piollet's technique, *Flexible Barres*, which focuses on training and on the autonomy of the dancer's work. With his company La Poétique des Signes, he created seven shows as a choreographer between 2008 and 2015, including *Les 7 premiers jours (The first 7 days)*, a quartet for which he worked with dancer Lola Keraly, flutist Cédric Jullion, and actress Sophie Lenoir, or *Buffet à vif*, co-written with Pierre Meunier and Marguerite Bordat for the Sujets à Vif of the Festival d'Avignon in 2014. The recording of movement using Labanotation is at the heart of his practice and inspired his new show for younger audiences, *It's a legend*. In 2018, he will be joined onstage by ballet dancer Jean Guizerix for his newest creation, *Parallèles*.

71st
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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INTERVIEW WITH RAPHAËL COTTIN

What made you want to write *It's a legend*?

Raphaël Cottin: For the first time in my career, I wanted to remain offstage, to make other people dance. Dance is at the heart of *It's a legend*, and I needed to step back to create the show. I've been working on Labanotation for years now, and as a result I've been interested in teaching methods in general; it was then natural for me to think of creating a show for younger audiences. The line between the theorisation of movement and its teaching is a fine one, because those two practices constantly borrow from each other. Many "Laban schools" were founded in the 1910s and '20s in Germany, then in England, where the choreographer exiled himself in the 1940s and '50s. Research about somatic movement was in its infancy back then, it was the beginning of an idea universally recognised today: that our learning motor functions as children forms the basis of any kind of movement. Laban dedicated an entire book to his thoughts on the teaching of art and movement in public schools in England, entitled *Modern Educational Dance*. He mapped the territories of movement so as to better explore them, thanks to very simple and accessible indications, which correspond for instance to action verbs or instructions to isolate movement. It is through that approach that I became interested in how we talk to children about movement.

The show is built like a book made up of chapters which, if we stick with the metaphor, begins like a fairy tale.

Yes, *It's a legend* is made up of five chapters and a conclusion; the central part is about Rudolf Laban's art of movement, and the title itself already establishes many structural and metaphorical elements. Each of the five parts corresponds to a key figure in the history of dance, someone whose vision revolutionised the practice and perception of dance in his time. The stories follow one another with a rhythm that corresponds to the cultural resonance of each of those artistic "revolutions," which allows us to keep grabbing a younger audience's attention over and over again. The introduction is indeed similar to that of a fairy tale. The show opens with the character of Louis XIV and a classical vision of dance, an upheaval in the art of choreography at the time of princes and princesses... But rather than retrace an encyclopedic history of dance, I wanted to show several steps that tell the story of the modernity of dance within its own time. After the 16th and 17th centuries of the introduction, the audience is thrown directly into the world of Isadora Duncan at the end of the 19th century, without any precise chronological indication. With Louis XIV, we have the codes of theatre, the vocabulary of academic dance, diplomacy, a court education; with Isadora Duncan, we enter the autonomy of movement as a reaction against that classicism, without trying to theorise this new practice. *It's a legend* is told from the points of view of the people who caused those small revolutions in the ways we thought and practiced choreography. Rudolf Laban, for instance, made possible a democratic vision, a democratic goal even for dance, by saying that it should be accessible to all. The chapter dedicated to him is at the heart of the

play, just like his thinking is at the heart of my own practice of dance. With Alwin Nikolais, we delve into abstraction, which serves as a door to pure imagination, where an isolated element—a colour, a rhythm—can become poetry. The human body—a particularly athletic example—disappears, to be replaced by movement, by the line. The return of theatricality with Pina Bausch seems then entirely natural, with a dance that reintroduces a less exceptional body, with its grace and its disgrace. I want to make the audience want to know more, to give them a veritable thirst for knowledge about dance.

***It's a legend* opens a dialogue between historical, artistic, even poetic revolutions. What form does it take on the stage?**

I want different choreographic times to enter in a dialogue, notably by marrying the unusual and the quotidian. The same way your thoughts are constantly bouncing from one idea to another, the dramaturgy revolves around a succession of aesthetic and semantic breaks. We're playing with a constant flow of unexpected poetic images, sometimes arising through the dissociation between the text (read in voice-over by actress Sophie Lenoir) and the dancers' movements. The dramaturgy should find its place somewhere between fantasy and well-being. The very simple scenography plays with the archetypal image of the space of the theatre (a dark room), a place where imagination is free to roam. Inspired by works by Oskar Schlemmer and Alwin Nikolais, the scenography is made up of a network of rubber bands and lines that delineate the space of the stage and connect it to the dancers, like rays emanating from their bodies. This light and minimalist set-up is put through transformations in terms of point of view and space, creating simple and evocative contrasts. Light also plays a primordial role, in order to play on intensity and on chiaroscuro, in order to create powerful spatial and temporal transitions.

A text accompanies the different chapters, writing a sort of captioned history of dance.

I have indeed written the text to conform to the choreographic revolution initiated by every character as it may have been experienced by their contemporaries. That's why some parts feature more narrative elements and are written in a specific style, like the story of dance under Louis XIV, which begins almost like a fairy tale. It's at once academic and educational. In other parts, the text seems incomplete, it only cites the words spoken or written by the artists themselves, which is the case with Isadora Duncan for instance, or it imitates the minimalist aesthetics of Alwin Nikolais's dance and the theatrical and busy aesthetics of Pina Bausch's characters. I like the way each of those "characters" leads to a unique relationship to writing and to language, sometimes diametrically opposed to the one right before it. Like the text, the musical creation by David François Moreau accompanies some of the chapters; the show alternates between moments of musical quotations that evoke history and original compositions that allow for an aesthetic dialogue with dance.

Interview conducted by Moira Dalant and translated by Gaël Schmidt-Cléach