

L'ORCHESTRE LES SIÈCLES AND L'ASSOCIATION DU 48 PRESENT

AFTERNOON OF A FAUN

JEUX

THE RITE OF SPRING

A RECREATION OF VASLAV NIJINSKI'S CHOREOGRAPHIES
MUSIC : CLAUDE DEBUSSY AND IGOR STRAVINSKY



RENEWING THE MODERNITY OF NIJINSKI, DEBUSSY, AND STRAVINSKY

To celebrate Ballets Russes in the twenty-first century means to pay homage both to an avant-garde movement, which successfully brought together artists whose work was decisive throughout the twentieth century, and to the artistic director (impresario), Diaghilev, whose instinct and talent unveiled the greatest artists of the last century. At present, Les Siècles is recreating the orchestra of the Ballets Russes as selected by Serge Diaghilev, including period string and wind instruments crafted in French workshops, and the manner of playing taught at the Conservatoire de Paris. The Orchestra of the Ballets Russes was, above all, French in essence. With a symphony orchestra featuring instruments played in the early twentieth century, a veritable philological reflection on interpretation, and scores by the period's maestros, François-Xavier Roth and the musicians of Les Siècles are restoring the works of Claude Debussy and Igor Stravinsky to their original glory.

Dance is reinvented here, through dialogue with the archives of the time, by choreographer Dominique Brun and thirty contemporary dancers. Three of the four choreographed pieces by Vaslav Nijinski are honored in the program: *Afternoon of a Faun*, created in 1912; *Jeux* and *The Rite of Spring*, created in 1913. These pieces are emblematic of the revolution occurring within Western art at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The works, whose dances are authored by Nijinski, permit a transversal approach to the burgeoning artistic context of music, from Claude Debussy to Igor Stravinsky; of literature, from Stéphane Mallarmé to Jean Cocteau; and of painting, from Léon Bakst to Nicolas Roerich via Valentine Hugo. In many ways, Nijinski's choreography represents a break from the classical ballet of the nineteenth century. The public of 1913 discovered a dance of extreme precision and unparalleled radicalness whose modern biases - the rejection of virtuosity, the invention of postures, the involvement of immobility - heralded Nijinski a pioneer of contemporary dance. These works, misunderstood by the public of the time, were the object of resounding scandal. Today, they are considered masterpieces, veritable myths in the history of dance and music.

These three works are subject to a process of reactivation and interpretation of Nijinski's dance, though three different forms:

-For *Afternoon of a Faun*, the recreation rests upon the choreographic score that Nijinski himself wrote in 1915 and which was translated into Labanotation in 1991.

-For *The Rite of Spring*, in the absence of a choreographic score, the historical reconstitution relies on the period's archives of the piece: annotations, photographs, drawings, press reviews,

and testimonial accounts.

-For *Jeux*, the choreographer deploys a process of creation that is liberally and poetically inspired by drawings of the piece made by Valentine Hugo in 1913.

These different approaches allow for Nijinski's dances to be released from the historical oral tradition where they are generally confined. Thanks to the interrogative detours sparked by the diversity of historical sources that document the works, the fantasy of authenticity that plagues the discourse of dance reconstitution is extricated. The different craftsmanships within the same program - recreation, reconstitution, and invention - allow for a resolutely contemporary tension to transpire between them. This triptych aims to remind us that the link between history and creation, -that dance has at times lost - must be alive, mobile, and continually renewed in order to found future works.

"They want me to dance cheerful things. I do not like cheerfulness. I love life."
VASLAV NIJINSKI

AFTERNOON OF A FAUN

(1912)

INSPIRED BY THE STÉPHANE MALLARMÉ POEM (1876)
PLOT JEAN COCTEAU (1912)
MUSIC CLAUDE DEBUSSY (1894)
CHOREOGRAPHY VASLAV NIJINSKI (1912)
CHOREOGRAPHIC NOTATION VASLAV NIJINSKI (1915)

Afternoon of a Faun, Nijinski's first work, was created at the Théâtre du Chatelet the 29th May, 1912 in Paris. The show was jeered by the public, forcing Diaghilev to immediately repeat it. The scandal fueled by the press attracted the public to the following shows, and the piece remained in the repertoire of the Ballets Russes until the company's closing. The work was inspired by the eponymous poem by Stéphane Mallarmé and the music of Claude Debussy. Nijinski's *Afternoon of a Faun* is not entertainment but a kind of manifesto in which two refusals can be read: a refusal of virtuosité and a refusal of lightness. As opposed to classical ballet, Nijinski does not put forth bodies attempting to defy the laws of gravity. He abandons the great jumps - which had made him the principal dancer of the Ballets Russes,

idolized by the Parisian public - and the efforts at virtuosity in order to return to walking. Critics of the time highlighted the gestures uniquely characteristic of *Afternoon of a Faun*: the rigor, or indeed austerity, of the writing; the intentional angularity of the poses; the particular comportements of the head; the lengthy inactivity of postures. In 1915, Vaslav Nijinski undertook the dance notation of *Afternoon of a Faun* in a system of movement notation (Stepanov) that he had learned at the Mariinsky Theatre of Saint Petersburg in Russia, during his training as a dancer. 70 years later, this score would be transcribed into Labanotation - among the most utilized systems of movement notation today - after thorough examination by two researchers, Ann Hutchinson-Guest and Claudia Jeschke. The recreation, directed by Dominique Brun, is based

on the score's possibilities. Through its reading - which necessarily implies an act of transposition - the signals written in the score can be incarnated in the dancers' bodies. As with the interpretation of a literary text or a musical score, Dominique Brun and her dancers take possession of this exceptional archive in order to deliver an interpretation that breathes new life into Nijinski's dance. In parallel, other documents are summoned for the work: accounts from critical reviews of the time, including those of Nijinski's sister, and the collotypes of Baron Adolf de Meyer. The visual plan, however, is envisaged with more distance: the backdrop and Bakst's rock are transposed into a pared down staging.



Faune © Ivan Chaumeille

FAUNE

Conception et choreographic recreation
Dominique Brun (2007) inspired by Vaslav
Nijinski

Choreography and notation (Stepanov system)
Vaslav Nijinski

Translation to Labanotation Ann Hutchinson-
Guest et Claudia Jeschke

Music Claude Debussy, interpreted by
Les Siècles, directed by François-Xavier Roth

The Faun Sylvain Prunenec, or Johann Nohles

Nymphs Caroline Baudouin, Clarisse Chanel,
Laurie Peschier-Pimont, Mathilde Rance,
Enora Rivière, Julie Salgues, Lina Schlageter

Costumes Sylvie Skinazi inspired by Léon Bakst

Lighting Sylvie Garot et Raphael Vincent

Running time 10 minutes

JEUX

(1913)

PLOT AND CHOREOGRAPHY **VASLAV NIJINSKI**

MUSIC **CLAUDE DEBUSSY**

COSTUMES AND BACKDROPS **LÉON BAKST**

Nijinski's second choreography was created on May 15th, 1913 by the Ballet Russes at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in Paris. It represented the first of Debussy's pieces written for the ballet, as requested by Diaghilev – *Afternoon of a Faun* builds upon his musical work prior to 1894, titled *Prelude to an Afternoon of a Faun*. While simultaneously composing the choreography to *The Rite of Spring*, Nijinski was preparing *Jeux*, a difficult work according to critical review that combined “modern” movements (inspired by tennis and golf) with classical dance (girls dancing in pointe shoes, but with parallel feet). The ballet was coolly received by the public and critics. Only Debussy's music survives to present time; the dance, for its part, disappeared.

For Dominique Brun, this piece represents a choreographic creation that takes inspiration from seven pastel drawings by Valentine Gross-Hugo, themselves like suspended moments of a dance engulfed by time. The immobility of the drawings leads the choreographer to consider them as blind landscapes -

a wall with no exterior opening: the attitudes of the body can be seen, but not Nijinski's movement. This creation thus proposes imitation, a copy of Nijinski's Faun dance which is the only testament of his writing today. Nijinski's gesture is pushed to the extreme towards a writing that resumes the manner until becoming - almost - mannerist. Each dancer is invited to examine the details of attitudes that can be seen in the drawings of *Jeux*. These include the curve of the wrist, the inclinations of the hands and the head, the orientations of the chest, the support of the legs, the half-pointe. To these attitudes, which are like ornaments, can be added the structural work on walking and immobility. Finally, a long immobility occurs at the moment of their choosing. The choreographic montage brings together the different individual partitions in order to bring forth, through the composition, a sort of plainchant of immobility. Time appears indivisible, bodies progressively stunned by the drawings.

JEUX, STUDY FOR SEVEN BLIND LANDSCAPES

Conception and choreography
Dominique Brun (2016), assisted by
Sophie Jacotot, inspired by the drawings of
Valentine Gross-Hugo and the choreography
of Vaslav Nijinski

Music Claude Debussy, interpreted by
Les Siècles, directed by François-Xavier Roth

Dancers Sophie Gérard, Johann Nöhles,
Enora Rivière, Julie Salgues, Sylvain Prunenec,
Vincent Weber

Lighting Sylvie Garot
Running time 20 minutes



Drawings of Jeux by Valentine Gross-Hugo (1913)

THE PLOT OF JEUX

« The scene is a garden at dusk; a tennis ball has been lost; a boy and two girls are searching for it. The artificial light of the large electric lamps shedding fantastic rays about them suggests the idea of childish games: they play hide and seek, they try to catch one another, they quarrel, they sulk without cause. The night is warm, the sky is bathed in pale light; they embrace. But the spell is broken by another tennis ball thrown in mischievously by an unknown hand. Surprised and alarmed, the boy and girls disappear into the nocturnal depths of the garden.» Vaslav Nijinski

THE RITE OF SPRING

(1913)

PLOT NICOLAS ROERICH AND IGOR STRAVINSKY
CHOREOGRAPHY VASLAV NIJINSKI
MUSIC IGOR STRAVINSKY
COSTUMES ET BACKDROPS NICOLAS ROERICH

The Rite of Spring was created at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in Paris on May 29th, 1913. The music is presented here in a previously unreleased version. François-Xavier Roth, with the exceptional authorization of Boosey & Hawkes publishers and with the contest of musicologist Louis Cyr, has worked to restore *The Rite of Spring* as it was given on opening night. This work, whose history intermingles with that of the first world war, was only released eight years after its creation and suffered throughout Stravinsky's life diverse modifications and corrections at the hands of both the composer and others. This musicological work restores the score to its original glory, allowing us to hear better than ever the full modernity and radicalness that would resolutely usher in the music of the twentieth century.

Although the music remains with us, it is important to highlight that nothing remains of the original dance: no written score, no film from the time. Dominique Brun proposes here a historical reconstitution that builds on research work conducted by two historians, Sophie Jacotot and Juan Ignacio Vallejos, to rediscover the archives of the work from 1913, assemble and analyse and interpret them, but also to expose the images, writings, and context that allow for a recreation of movement where the archives are lacking.

While remaining close to the archival sources - which constitute for the choreographer true writing constraints -, Dominique Brun renounces the fantasy of an illusionist reconstitution of Nijinsky's choreography and instead affirms writing choices. To do this, she takes note of the sole testimonial of Nijinsky's choreographic writing that we possess: the partition of his first piece, *Afternoon of a Faun*. In addition to this exceptional archive are the archives of *The Rite of Spring*: the testimonials of those who danced in or watched the show in 1913; the press reviews; the annotations to the dance on the musical score of Marie Rambert (assistant to Nijinsky) and by Igor Stravinsky; a rich iconography composed of several photographs by Charles Gershel and drawings by Valentine Gross-Hugo, Emmanuel Barcet or Nicolas Roerich. These documents propose postures (hunched bodies, bent backs, bowl legs, locked elbows), actions (stamping, trembling...), dispositions of groups in space (huddled, asymmetric...), rhythmic indications (distribution of rhythms between groups, meter unique to the dance), methods of composition (repetition...) and at times the qualities of movement. Interpreted, commented, and cross-checked with other references, these documents irrigate the imagination of the choreographer and the dancers, giving a contemporary sensibility to the work of reconstitution.

SACRE # 2

Choreography Dominique Brun (2014),
assisted by Sophie Jacotot, inspired by Vaslav Nijinsky

Music Igor Stravinsky interpreted by
Les Siècles, directed by François-Xavier Roth

Dancers Julie Salgues (l'Élue), Caroline Baudouin, Marine Beelen, Garance Bréhaudat, Lou Cantor, Clarisse Chanel, Judith Gars, Sophie Gérard, Anne Laurent, Anne Lenglet, Virginie Mirbeau, Marie Orts, Laurie Peschier-Pimont, Maud Pizon, Mathilde Rance, Énora Rivière, Marcela Santander, Lina Schlageter, Roméo Agid, Matthieu Bajolet ou Clement Lecigne, Fernando Cabral, Sylvain Cassou, Miguel Garcia Llorens ou Diego Lloret, Maxime Guillon-Roi-Sans-Sac, Corentin Le Flohic, Johann Nöhles, Edouard Pelleray, Sylvain Prunec, Jonathan Schatz, Vincent Weber.

Lighting Sylvie Garot

Costumes Laurence Chalou

Backdrops Atelier Devineau

Running time 35 minutes



Sacre # 2 © Marc Domage

"Today when I hear Stravinsky's superb work, so arrogantly constructed, I often deplore no longer having at the same time these violent images of green and pink, white and red, these volumes of simple inevitable attitudes, these colored groups curved onto ground under the gust of sounds such as the field of oats under the western wind, these heavy hard movements, cutting the air with a primitive cruelty".

VALENTINE GROSS-HUGO



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LES SIÈCLES

Formed in the summer of 2003 by François-Xavier Roth, Les Siècles comprises outstanding young players pooled from the very finest French ensembles. Roth's founding ambition was for his orchestra to offer a new approach, not only to repertoire but also to the nature of the concert form.

With a vast period-instrument collection at its disposal, spanning the baroque, classical, romantic and modern eras, the orchestra's repertoire is notably wide in range. Les Siècles is one of a small number of ensembles to employ period and modern instruments, playing each repertoire on appropriate instruments. Its flexible and historically informed work delivers a unique strand of creative programming.

François-Xavier Roth and the musicians of Les Siècles have made a distinctive mark at home and abroad, presenting an orchestra for the 21st century. They have given well over 200 performances in France alone, including regular performances in Paris (Philharmonie, Opéra Comique) and appearances at leading festivals throughout France. In addition to its work in France, Les Siècles is increasingly visible on the international scene. Its global profile has been magnified in recent seasons with concerts in Germany, Belgium, the

Netherlands, Luxembourg, the United Kingdom, Portugal, Italy and Japan.

Their latest disc, Stravinsky's *Firebird*, has received great critical acclaim in the international press: the 2015 Academy Award in *Geijutsu Magazine* (Japan), the Edison Klassiek Prize in the Netherlands, the Preis der Deutschen Schallplatten Kritik in Germany, Switzerland and Austria, Record of the Year in the *Times*, Disc of the Week in the *Sunday Times*, Gramophone Choice, Editor's Choice in the *BBC Music Magazine*, 5 stars in *Classica*, and best existing recording of *The Firebird* in "Le Jardin des Critiques" on *France Musique*.

Les Siècles are also the creator and featured players of the TV show "Presto", which has been broadcast regularly on France 2 since 2007. They've recently created their own record Label "Les Siècles Live" in partnership with *Musicales Actes Sud*. 11 recordings in this collection have already been released, comprising pieces by Stravinsky, Berlioz, Saint-Saëns, Matalon, Liszt, Dubois, Debussy and Dukas.

FRANÇOIS-XAVIER ROTH

François-Xavier Roth, born in Paris in November 1971, is one of the most charismatic and enterprising conductors of his generation. In September 2011 he took on the role of Principal Conductor of the SWR Sinfonieorchester Baden-Baden und Freiburg. In 2015 he becomes General Music Director of the City of Cologne (Gürzenich Orchester and Opera of Cologne).

His repertoire ranges from music of the seventeenth century to contemporary work and encompasses all genres: symphonic, operatic and chamber. In 2003, he founded the innovative orchestra Les Siècles, which performs contrasting and colourful programmes on modern and period instruments as appropriate, often within the same concert. With Les Siècles, he has given concerts in France, Italy, Germany, England and Japan. To mark the centenary of The Rite of Spring in 2013, they performed the work on period instruments on tour including performances at the BBC Proms and the Alte Oper, Frankfurt.

Recent and forthcoming highlights with SWR Sinfonieorchester Baden-Baden und

Freiburg include the complete cycle of symphonic poems by Richard Strauss, also released on disc. Roth is also developing a cycle dedicated to the music of Pierre Boulez. With the orchestra, he has premiered works by Philippe Manoury, Yann Robin and Georg-Friedrich Haas and collaborated with composers Wolfgang Rihm, Jörg Widmann and Helmut Lachenmann.

Future engagements include major projects with the London Symphony and BBC Symphony Orchestra as well as appearances with the Vienna Symphony, Bavarian State Opera, Bamberg Symphony, Netherlands Radio, Danish National Radio, NHK Symphony, Gothenburg Symphony and Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestras.

Outreach projects are an important aspect of François-Xavier Roth's work. He is the conductor of the groundbreaking LSO Panufnik Young Composers Scheme and, with the Festival Berlioz and Les Siècles, founded the Jeune Orchestre Européen Hector Berlioz, an orchestra academy with its own collection of period instruments. Roth and Les Siècles also devised "Presto", their own te-

levision series for France 2, attracting weekly audiences of over three million.

Equally dedicated to opera, performances of Ambroise Thomas' Mignon (2010), Offenbach's Les Brigands (2011) and Delibes' Lakmé (2014) at the Opéra Comique in Paris received critical acclaim. In 2014, Roth makes his Berlin Staatsoper debut with Morton Feldman's Neither and in 2015 conducts Richard Wagner's The Flying Dutchman with Les Siècles.



© Marc Borggreve

DOMINIQUE BRUN

CHORÉGRAPHE

Dominique Brun danced in the 1980s with Jean Gaudin, Daniel Larrieu, José Caseneuve, Michèle Etti, and more recently with Virginie Mirbeau and today with Sylvain Prunenec. With the ensemble *La Salamandre*, she authored from 1981-1988 ten pieces, including *Waka Jawaka* which took third place at the International Competition of Bagnolet. She was also an assistant and choreography advisor to director Klaus Michaël Gruber for Rossini's *La Cenerentola* (1985). Following training at the Conservatoire national supérieur de musique et de danse in Paris, Brun became a dance recorder in the Laban system. She co-founded the *Quatuor Albrecht Knust* (1994-2003), an ensemble with whom she worked on the recreation of dances from the historical repertoire, based on scores established in Labanotation (Doris Humphrey, Kurt Jooss, Steve Paxton, Yvonne Rainer and Vaslav Nijinski).

Brun then became engaged in personal research situated at the nexus of her interest in the history of dance and contemporary choreographic creation, creating *Siléo* (2004) from a text by Wajdi Mouawad and dances from the interwar period. She co-authored with François Chaignaud and Natalia Tancer a solo interpreted by François Chaignaud that took first prize at the competition "Jeunes Talents" organised by the ADAMI. She conceived and executed *The Faun - A Film or the Making of the Archive* (2007). This pedagogical DVD contains two filmed versions of *Afternoon of a Faun* as well as

interviews and texts illuminating in a multidisciplinary manner the work. Brun co-authored with Virginie Mirbeau the solo *Medea Stimmen* for the *Météores* festival in Le Havre. She recreated for the 62nd Avignon festival *Afternoon of a Faun* in the show *Faun(s)* by Olivier Dubois. She also created with Latifa Laâbissi a slow version of *Witch Dance* by Mary Wigman (2009).

Brun reconstituted for the film *Coco Chanel & Igor Stravinsky* by Jan Kounen (2010) dance extracts of Nijinsky's *The Rite of Spring* (1913) from the period's archives, and choreographed successively the creation *Sacre # 197* (2012) then the historical reconstitution *Sacre # 2* (2014) through which she brought together a diptych of 30 contemporary dancers. The creation of *Jeux*, scheduled for October 2016 at Paris Philharmonie, will conclude the series of creations consecrated to Vaslav Nijinsky's oeuvre.

Brun finds passion in teaching contemporary dance and regularly takes part in advanced dance trainings such as "Exerce" (CCN of Montpellier) or "Essai" (CNDC of Angers) at the Université Paris VIII, the Fondation Royaumont, and the Ecole d'Art of Cergy Pontoise. She also passes down *Afternoon of a Faun* and *The Rite of Spring* to young high school dancers for the Baccalauréat's dance elective.

EXTRACTS FROM PRESS REVIEWS

About the disc STRAVINSKY, *The Rite of Spring* (recreation of the score as heard at its 1913 premiere) / *Petrouchka* (version 1911) François-Xavier Roth, direction



Disc of the Year in Japan, in Geijutsu Magazin
Disc nominated to Victoires of Classical Music 2015, in the category Best Recording of the Year
Disc taking 8th place in list of the year's best recordings, all musical genres, in the Times
Coup de coeur France Musique

BBC MUSIC MAGAZINE

Orchestral Choice September 2014

A revelatory Rite of spring - Diemel Jaffé is bowled over by Les Siècles' period instrument approach
Prior to *The Rite of Spring*'s publication, several of the original score's details were altered to mitigate its perceived difficulties. Here, now, is a chance to hear the Rite close to how Stravinsky originally conceived it for its 1913 premier in Paris – an exciting prospect in itself : more than that, this is an exciting, visceral performance, culminating in a ferocious final dance. (...) Most striking, though, is the revelation of hearing the Rite played by the instruments of its time. The austere soundworld of the beginning, with timbres conjured as it were from a past civilisation, is utterly unlike anything else from that era. Even using brass instruments not as powerful as the American-style monsters that are standard today proves an advantage, as they balance more readily with strings and woodwind, allowing far more evocative detail to be heard.

THE HERALD SCOTLAND – Juillet 2014

The result? Completely different textures with more intimate and detailed lines, a clarity I simply have not heard, and a very different sound-world that will either pin you to your seat or bring you

to your feet: it did both to me. I could not stop listening and am listening still. [...] Seek them out if you do not know them. They will open your ears.

THE SUNDAY TIMES - Album of the week

As heard at the scandalous 1913 world première” is the gist of Roth's claims for this first period instrument recording of *The Rite* - with special permission from Boosey & Hawkes, which usually only authorises performances of Stravinsky's 1967 edition. It's certainly hard to imagine the first performance, under Pierre Monteux, being as well played as this, as Les Siècles follow up their revelatory account of the complete *Firebird* score.

The sound of their French-made turn-of-the-century (mostly 1880s to 1920s) instruments throws fresh light on these modern masterpieces : a tuba, two-thirds the size of modern ones, by Adolphe Sax, inventor of the saxophone; and wonderful Buffet Crampon clarinets and bassoons. *The Rite*'s famous bassoon solo is played without the octave key invented to make this very music less difficult to play. One can't listen with 1913 ears, of course, but there's a palpable sense of freshness with more astringent gut strings that convey the abrasiveness of Stravinsky's writing better than their modern metal equivalents.

THE TIMES – Juin 2014

It's certainly hard to imagine the first performance, under Pierre Monteux, being as well played as this [...]. The sound of their French-made turn-of-the-century instruments throws fresh light on these modern masterpieces.

THE GUARDIAN – ANDREW CLEMENTS

Roth brings lithe transparency and subtle shading (...) The score emerges as a more fascinating than usual intersection between Stravinsky's Rimsky-tinged heritage, the groundbreaking modernism that he was establishing for himself, and the French refinement that he was absorbing in Paris.

THE SUNDAY TIMES – Décembre 2013

DISC DEBUSSY, BEST CLASSICAL DISC 2013

Debussy's greatest orchestral masterpiece revealed in pristine, vibrant colours by Roth's pioneering period-instrument band.

THE INDEPENDENT - Juillet 2013 MICHAEL CHURCH
Roth and his ensemble apply the notion of instrumental 'authenticity' to repertoire from all eras, and their concert of French ballet music made a fascinating journey.

THE TIMES - Juillet 2013 GEOFF BROWN
In this scintillating Prom, François-Xavier Roth and his marvelous period instrument band Les Siècles took an extra step toward musical authenticity. [...]
Les Siècles think as one, feel as one. They even bow to the audience as one, with an elegance uniquely French.

THE GUARDIAN - Juillet 2013 ANDREW CLEMENTS
There may be countless period-instrument orchestras nowadays, but Les Siècles founded by conductor François-Xavier Roth, is a very distinctive one. Fascinating!

FINANCIAL TIMES - Juillet 2013 RICHARD FAIRMAN
Here was what you might call the shock of the old. [...] This was quite an undertaking. Different instruments were needed for each period and the orchestra for The Rite of Spring was huge by period-instrument standards. It was another Prom spectacular!

THE SUNS - Juillet 2013
DEBUSSY, DISC OF THE WEEK

The transparency of sound from gut strings means the woodwind and brass soloists emerge as if naturally from the orchestral texture. In such an "impressionist" score as La Mer, with its evocations of waves, wind and sea birds, this is all gain: listen with refreshed ears. The coupling is a Debussy recording premiere: the rediscovered suite of 1883-84 (a student work indebted to Chabrier, Delibes and Massenet), with the orchestration of the third movement, Rêve, newly completed by Philippe Manoury. This delightful music may not be mature, vintage Debussy, but is a welcome addition to the catalogue.

With regards to Dominique Brun's choreographic recreation :

LE MONDE, 23 MAI 2013 ROSITA BOISSEAU
In the Steps of Nijinski: Recreating a ballet that has been forgotten by history is a long-term endeavour. Lying somewhere between a police investigation, an archaeological site, and documentary research, this work necessitates historical expertise and scientific rigour, as well as the capacity for projection and interpretation. A tug-of-war presides over all efforts to reconstitute a lost choreographic work. This is especially true when it comes to myth, a revolutionary work and an artistic scandal of the twentieth century, as is the case for The Rite of Spring, created in 1913 by Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971), with choreography by Vaslav Nijinski (1889-1950).

Thus the matter turns to suspense, with The Rite of Spring a prime example - as well as a living paradox. Yet although there exists more than 200 re-readings of the work - and not in the least that of Maurice Béjart in 1959, which contributed to the score's reinvigoration and the memory of ballet, as well as that of Pina Bausch in 1975 -, there exists only one reconstitution of the ballet by Vaslav Nijinski. This reconstitution is the patient, loving, and passionate work of American dance historian Millicent Hodson and English art historian Kenneth Archer, who after 15 years of intensive research presented the piece in 1987 with the Joffrey Ballet of Los Angeles. Since then, they have collaborated with a number of other companies around the world including the Mariinsky Ballet, which will celebrate its 100 year anniversary with The Rite of Spring on May 29th where it was originally created, the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in Paris.

A new production is currently underway, which will be released in spring 2014. On this occasion, the ballet will be recreated by contemporary choreographer Dominique Brun, who has already undertaken Afternoon of a Faun, the first work choreographed by Nijinski in 1912 and scored by Claude Debussy. This story began in 2008 when, on the request of director Jan Kounen who sought to include several "extracts" of The Rite of Spring in his feature film Coco Chanel & Igor Stravinsky, Dominique Brun reconstituted eight minutes of the piece. "Evidently, I benefit from the work done by Hodson and Archer", indicates the choreographer, who received assistance in the research and heritage of the dance. "I recognize the enormous work in deciphering the archives that they undertook, although the discovery of new documents has allowed me today to propose another reconstitution of The Rite of Spring". And a passionate alternative, that enriches the heritage and the future of dance. (...)

Nijinski's Energy: As opposed to Hodson and Archer, Dominique Brun's work, supported by two researchers from the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS), does not rely upon testimonials from those who saw the piece. However, as with her predecessors, Brun has attentively scrutinized the drawings of Valentine Gross (1887-1968) - who sketched some 70 views of the ballet and finalized five pastel drawings. In this vein, Brun read his commentaries and listened to radio shows recorded in the 1950s with the French painter. She also consulted the press and studied in-depth several fundamental texts, such as the critique by Jacques Rivière (1886-1925). Nonetheless, the

most important factor in her reflection was the publication, in 1991, of the sheet music to *Afternoon of a Faun*, written in 1915 by Nijinski himself. "This sheet music, which is unique, testifies to the writing of Nijinski", observes Brun. She relates the sense of movement within Nijinski, the energy... And the uniqueness of the document in providing these indications. "When reconstituting today a piece 'in the style of', it is necessary to find the choreographer's style in his previous works".

In the space of 40 years, the discovery of new documents and the evolution in their analysis has changed the method of work of researchers. As with archeology and the reconstruction of an ancient fresco, it is preferable today to leave some spots blank. Dominique Brun has chosen to fill the choreographic gaps with what she describes as the "body of Rite". "This body, already present in *Afternoon of a Faun*, is that of a primitive creature with unfocused legs and feet. He will seal off the voids like choreographic cement, consolidating the fresco by producing a manner of being. My objective is to redirect the modernity of *The Rite of Spring* by leaving behind the fantasy of authenticity that marks discourse of dance reconstruction".



Sacre # 2 © Marc Damage

EXTRACTS FROM JACQUES RIVIÈRE'S ARTICLE "THE RITE OF SPRING", NOUVELLE REVUE FRANÇAISE 59, NOVEMBER 1913.

[The choreographer Nijinski] no longer has any attachment to classical dance. Everything has recommenced, everything is ready to start work, everything is reinvented. The novelty is so brutal and so raw that the public cannot be denied its right - which it exercises only too conscientiously - to rear before it. This is, in my opinion, the renunciation of "sauce".

In breaking movement, in bringing it back to simple gesture, Nijinski brought forth expression in dance. All angles, all breaks in his choreography prevent the sentiment from fleeing. Movement closes in on itself, contains it; through its perpetual change in direction, it removes all openings; it is imprisoned by brevity. (...) There is something profound and secure in this chained up dance. Everything it loses in spirit, in energy, and in whim, it gains in meaning.

The novelty of *The Rite of Spring* is the renouncement of the dynamic sauce, the return to the body, the effort to increasingly tighten natural steps in order to hear only the most immediate indications, the most radical, the most etymological. Movement is reduced to obedience: it is constantly brought back to the body, attached to it, pulled backward by it, as someone whose elbows have been seized and who cannot flee. It is movement that does not leave, that is forbidden from expressing romance, movement that takes orders at all moments.



Sacre # 2 © Alain Julien

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