

# AWARDS 2024



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(© Tiziano Ghidorsi)



BALLET COMPANY PRODUCTION

## Serata Benjamin Millepied

CHOREOGRAPHY Benjamin Millepied  
Rome Opera Ballet



Bianchi -Satriano in "Closer" by Millepied (Musacchio-Facilla-MUSA)

A choreographer in the Balanchinian tradition, with an acutely musical sensitivity, Benjamin Millepied is a world-renowned star whose choreographies have been commissioned and performed by some of the world's most prestigious companies. For the Rome Opera Ballet, in partnership with the Festival Equilibrio, he created a wonderfully refined chamber double-bill set to a minimalist Philip Glass score: the ethereal duet *Closer*, set to the piano score *Mad Rush*, was dazzlingly performed at the Auditorium by the lyrical, cohesive couple Rebecca Bianchi and Michele Satriano. Meanwhile *On the other side*, a 2016 work for eight performers inspired by Balanchine's *Jewels*, was remodelled into an updated version for dancers from the Rome Opera Ballet. It's a piece of pure choreography in an abstract style, flecked with hints of stories of love or social interaction; eras and styles mingle, leaving space for group dances, duets and individual personalities to portray our fragile society, ever in search of love.

CONTEMPORARY PRODUCTION

## Age of Content

CHOREOGRAPHY (La)Horde  
Ballet national de Marseille

In *Age of Content* (La)Horde grapples with the controversial world of video games, specifically *Grand Theft Auto*. The choreographers create a complex dramaturgy of images, sounds and gestures, in which the dancers of the Ballet National de Marseille – associate company at Festival Bolzano Danza for the period 2021-2024 – interact with the animated shell of a car. First they lack an identity, like the non-player characters of the game itself; then they take on human features but unnatural gaits, as violent scenes are layered over explicitly sexual allusions. We are thrust into the chilling, dehumanised world of our times in this show, which is a manifesto for Gen-Z, imprisoned in a limbo between reality and the virtual world. But the choreographers don't simply want to paint a gloomy portrait of 21<sup>st</sup>-century youth: in the second half, the dancers regain their natural physicality, and launch into a powerful, redemptive dance, an engaging collective celebration that points to a brighter future, referencing the shining example of Lucinda Childs.



Ballet de Marseille "Age of Content" (© Andrea Macchia)

CHOREOGRAPHER

CONTEMPORARY BALLET

## Juliano Nunes



Juliano Nunes (© Nicha Rodboon)

The Brazilian Juliano Nunes, resident choreographer at the Philadelphia Ballet, has already made his mark on prestigious international dance companies. Nunes tackles the prestigious, fragile subject of the academic ballet language, using it as a basis for his lively, bold contemporary version, updated with an abstract twist. In particular, in 2024 he made his debut at the Rome Opera Ballet with the world premiere of *Women*, for 24 dancers, skilfully modulating technical, stylistic and dramaturgical aspects for a refined, powerful new work. His training in Rio de Janeiro and later Germany, and his experiences with Forsythe, Wheeldon, van Manen, Kylián, Naharin, Cherkaoui, Grigorovich and Khan have given Nunes his own personal style, which he develops in an eclectic, original way.

CHOREOGRAPHER  
CONTEMPORARY DANCE

## Rafaële Giovanola

Research into movement and an awareness of the social construct of the body, in order to reinvent the forms to perform onstage. Swiss choreographer Rafaële Giovanola conducts pure research, following

neither concepts nor narratives. She prefers to start every project from scratch, from purely physical research on the body, as it has "not yet been formed", to quote the academic Laurence Louppe. Giovanola is a former dancer with the Frankfurt Ballet and William Forsythe, and in 2000 she and the German dramaturg Rainald Endrass founded the CocoonDance Company. She has a beguiling ability to lead the spectator to explore alien forms of the human body and flip what they already know, using the principles of regenerative movement, and reflection on all forms of movement, from parkour to Thai boxing and ballroom dancing. Her glossary, contained in the free app Moveapp, is a breath of fresh air and a real surprise for audiences. Our award – which comes after the *Faust* she won in 2022 for *Sphinx*, created for tanzmainz – is given for *Hybridity*, *Standard* and *Sphinx*, which we finally saw in Italy at the 2024 Milanoltre Festival.



Rafaële Giovanola

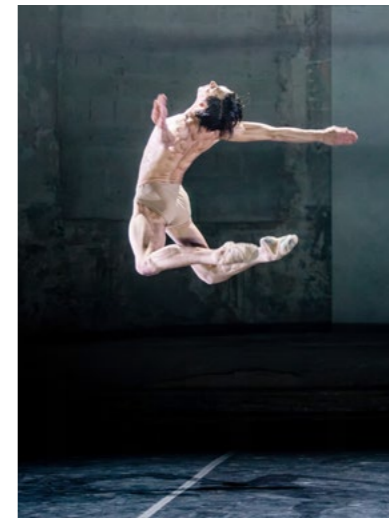
DANCER-CHOREOGRAPHER

## Friedemann Vogel

Die Seele am Faden/Soul Threads

"My body is the instrument of my soul", says Friedemann Vogel. The German dancer's real, sculpted muscular body and the artificial body of the marionette, as theorised by Heinrich von Kleist in his essay *On The Marionette Theatre*, met to create *Die Seele am Faden/Soul Threads*: impressive in both performance and aesthetic terms, this choreography was created by Vogel along with the visual artist and

choreographer Thomas Lempertz, and had its Italian premiere at the Spoleto Festival. A dazzling solo drawn with the breath, skin, bones, tendons, brain and heart – aided by the live music and lighting design – truly embodies the power and the beauty of the battle between man and robot. As one of the few international ballet stars who can



Friedemann Vogel "Die Seele am Faden" (© Andrea Veroni)

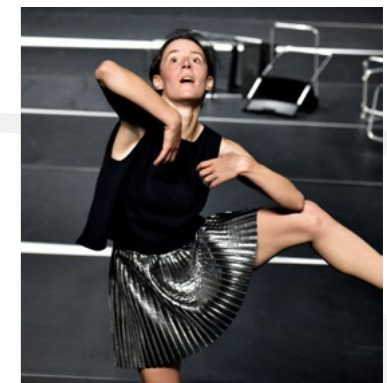
claim the title of *Kammertänzer* – Germany's highest honour for a dancer, bestowed on him in 2015 – Vogel is widely acclaimed for his moving performances in both dramatic and contemporary ballets. In *Die Seele am Faden/Soul Threads*, he masterfully evokes weight and lack of gravity with lightness and vigour, leaving a profound impression in terms of choreography and delivery, and reflection on the subject matter.

DANCERS

## Manon Parent

As one of Ioannis Mandafounis' loyal collaborators, the French dancer Manon Parent, based in Berlin, is also a dancemaker – working alongside the Greek choreographer – and above all, an incredible performer in *Scarbo*, with a breathtaking, abstract yet concrete solo that we saw at Torinodanza Festival. The French dancer possesses a solid musical background, and her research has always focused on the relationship

between sound and physical movement, and the dialogue between the different art forms. In *Scarbo*, set to live piano music by Ravel, Parent unleashes a quiet yet furious vitality; she distributes it adeptly to reveal the deepest aspects of her personality, by sharing actions, moods and feelings expressed with free, impulsive movements, in a way that seems random but in fact signals an accuracy and naturalness that seem to come about in the moment. Treading the line between physicality, mind and soul, her dance and stage presence have a magnetic effect on the audience, who feel compelled to share on an intimate level without filters, obstacles or embarrassment.



Manon Parent "Scarbo" (© Jean-Baptiste Bucau)

DANCERS

## Alice Raffaelli

Alice Raffaelli is an enigmatic dancer. Her restless presence attracts the gaze, charismatically teasing out the innermost meaning of her projects. Having trained at the Civica Paolo Grassi in Milan, she has been dancing for several choreographers for years. She is part of Enzo Cosimi's vivid universe, with impactful performances including her uninhibited freshness



Alice Raffaelli



in *Calore*, her nocturnal side in *Welcome to my world*, and her multi-faceted substance in pieces like *Coefore rock&roll*; and she had a key role in 2024's *Venere vs Adone*. Among her most notable recent performances are the hypnotic *Stuporosa* by Francesco Marilungo (2022) and, as an actress, *Death in Venice* by Liv Ferracchiati, presented at the Spoleto festival in 2024. Raffaelli is also involved with Milanese artistic collectives who share an interest in cross-disciplinary work, such as Kokoschka Revival, Fragile Artists and muovimi.

## NEWCOMER CHOREOGRAPHERS

**Leïla Ka**

She was the revelation of the 2024 European scene. A choreographer as well as a dancer for just over five years, with *Maldonne*, her first, hour-long ensemble piece, Ka has shown a fervent talent for composition. The thirty-four-year-old French artist got into theatre acting as a teenager, and was encouraged to dance by Maguy Marin, who chose her for her cast of young talents for the transmission of *May B*. While she drew the critics' attention with her debut creation *C'est toi qu'on adore* (2020) and *Se faire la belle* (2022), it was with her female quintet *Maldonne*, which had its Italian premiere at the Festival Oriente Occidente, that she fully expressed herself: she gave form and substance to a paroxysmic, ever-surprising score in which women's fragility and spirit of rebellion resonate through simple, rhythmic gestures, displaced movements, falls and more dramatic scenes.



Leïla Ka

## NEWCOMER CHOREOGRAPHERS

**Giovanni Insaudo**

After starting his career as a dancer with Junior Dantzaz, Gärtnerplatztheater in Munich and Lucerne Theatre Dance, Insaudo soon developed his interest in choreography when he founded the I VESPRI dance collective, while continuing to create works for a range of international companies. Insaudo's talent has been recognised with awards at the 12<sup>th</sup> Copenhagen International



Giovanni Insaudo

Choreography Competition and the 18<sup>th</sup> Certamen Internacional de Choreography Burgos-New York. He is very active internationally and now in Italy too, establishing his own specific style of movement: the body becomes the ultimate expression of contrasting dynamics, a narrative tool used with sound and lighting to create an occasionally cinematic atmosphere. This can be seen in *Diva*, where he explores the diva archetype and her idealisation in popular culture; and in *I've seen that face before*, which delves into the inner life of the performer in that delicate moment between the end of a performance, the dancers' return to the stage and their curtain call. Both productions were for DANCEHAUSpiù, Milan.

## NEWCOMER DANCERS

**Eliana Stragapede**

Eliana Stragapede

Dancer, choreographer and freelance teacher Eliana Stragapede (1996) is based in Brussels. She performs with Club Guy & Roni and has been with the Belgium company Peeping Tom since 2020. Having also made her debut as a choreographer, creating *Amae* with Borna Babić, Stragapede is above all a performer of impeccable technique and vigour. We were able to admire these qualities in the most recent Peeping Tom productions. Her sinuous, flexible body is capable of contortions and unfaltering lines, and she controls her movements with precision and intense expressivity, moulding them into incredible extensions and plasticity, vibrating with energy and a poetic touch. All of this comes through in *Amae*, a duet on the theme of love in all its forms.

## NEWCOMER DANCERS

**Linda Giubelli**

A ballet dancer known for her solid technique and lively temperament, Linda Giubelli joined La Scala Theatre Ballet in 2019, fresh out of the Academy Ballet School. After being made Soloist in March 2023, she has performed various roles, including her debut as the lead in MacMillan's *Romeo and Juliet*. She has also proven her talent in minor yet technically significant roles in many ballets, including Manuel Legris' *Le Corsaire* (as one of the odalisques and Zulmea), Ratmanský's



Linda Giubelli (© Brescia-Amisano)

*Coppélia*, Nureyev's *Swan Lake*, and *La Bayadère* (Gamzatti). As an intensely dynamic dancer, she has also stood out in contemporary titles, from *Serata William Forsythe Blake Works V* to David Dawson's *Anima Animus*, and appeared in several new creations including *Memento* by Simone Valastro and *Reveal* by Garrett Smith, both in 2024. In October and November, she gave excellent performances as Manon in Neumeier's *La Dame aux Camélias*, and Green in *Dances at a Gathering* by Jerome Robbins. And she ended the year in a triple role as Louise, the oriental doll (Act I) and the Spanish dancer in Nureyev's *Nutcracker*, the opening title for La Scala's 2024-25 ballet season.

ITALIAN PRODUCTION  
LARGE SCALE**Notte Morricone**

CHOREOGRAPHY **Marcos Morau**  
CCN/Aterballetto

*Notte Morricone*, created by Marcos Morau for the CCN/Aterballetto Company's sixteen dancers, is a work of remarkable impact and originality. It is a resounding, poetic flight of fancy, a gift to the audience from the entire theatrical "machinery". Through metaphorical dance, often playing on the theme of doubles, this Italian co-production of international scope has created an echo-filled montage of choreography, music and set design. It takes us through different worlds, exploring Morricone's personal and artistic path through a nocturnal dimension. The dance is accompanied by extracts of his unforgettable soundtracks for films such as *Cinema Paradiso*, *Once Upon a Time in America* and *Sacco*



"Notte Morricone" (© Alice Vaccandio)

and Vanzetti. The musical adaptation and direction are by Maurizio Billi, recorded by the Luigi Cherubini Youth Orchestra, and blended with Alex Röser Vatiche and Ben Meerwein's sound design. Other notable team members were Silvia Delagneau for the costumes, and Marc Salicrù for the set, packed with objects such as metronomes, a grand piano, music stands, sheet music, dolls with Morricone's features, and moving walls. The Aterballetto's sixteen artists were formidable in giving body and voice to Morau's imagery, as a multifaceted multiplication of the composer, led by two principal performers, Leonardo Farina and Giovanni Leone.

ITALIAN PRODUCTION  
MID SCALE**La Duse**

CHOREOGRAPHY **Adriano Bolognino**  
and **Rosaria Di Maro**  
COB Compagnia Opus Ballet

On paper, connecting and identifying with Eleonora Duse – the actress who transformed the use of theatre by introducing her own, new function – to create a pure dance show, was a daunting task. And yet, profoundly inspired by this character and what they discovered about the greatest Italian actress through their extensive research, Adriano Bolognino and Rosaria Di Maro pulled it off. They managed to translate the spirit of 'La Duse' into dance with magnificent balance, extending her reflections on the female condition into the bodies of

the nine dancers cast in the project, along with Di Maro herself. Produced by COB Compagnia Opus Ballet, this is Bolognino's third work for the Florentine company founded by Rosanna Brocanello. Every aspect of this refined production has been carefully curated (choreography, music, lighting, costumes, scenery) and it leaves beautiful images in the spectator's mind, all laid out in a rigorous spatial design that revolves around unisons in the first half, and powerful solos in the second.



"La Duse" (© Mario Spuotti)

## ITALIAN DANCERS ABROAD

**Elena Bottaro**

Principal dancer – Wiener Staatsballett

The tormented soul of Marguerite Gautier, the protagonist of John Neumeier's *La Dame aux camélias*, won Elena Bottaro a promotion to Ersten Solotänzerin at the Wiener Staatsballett. She has been with the company since making her debut there in 2014, having trained at La Scala Ballet School. Vicenza-born Bottaro has precision, gracefulness and a lyrical-melancholy temperament. On stage, this makes her the ideal personality for roles combining both plot and emotion, such as Neumeier's version of the courtesan. Her hard work and perseverance have paid off, as she has climbed the ranks of the Austrian company. Its director Martin Schläpfer has provided plenty of support, particularly in the past year, by giving her greater responsibility and motivating her with each new title. She was among





Elena Bottaro (© Ashley Taylor)

the stars of the 2024 programme and stood out in the roles of Giselle and Marguerite, dancing with the other Italian Principal, Davide Dato, and in productions of *Coppélia* by Lacotte, *Les Sylphides* by Fokine, and Schlöpfer's *The Sleeping Beauty*.

#### ITALIAN DANCERS ABROAD

### Luca Acri

First Soloist – The Royal Ballet

Born in 1994 into a family of dancers, Luca Acri started out at their ballet school, the Acri-Horimoto Ballet Academy in Japan. His precocious talent took him to the 2010 Prix de Lausanne as a young finalist. He is one of the most versatile dancers at The Royal Ballet, where he graduated after completing his training. Promoted to First Soloist in 2019, he has performed in numerous principal and supporting roles in the repertoire, including *Coppélia*, *The Nutcracker*, *Giselle*, *The Sleeping*



Luca Acri

*Beauty*, and *La Fille mal gardée*. His professional growth has been enriched by various contemporary and neoclassical titles, and he has created roles in *Never Known* by Joshua Junker (2024), *Connectome* by Alastair Marriott, and *The Age of Anxiety* and *Symphonic Dances* by Liam Scarlett. In 2022, for the 30th anniversary of Kenneth MacMillan's passing, he impressed in *Mayerling* as Bratfisch, the witty and touching coachman of Crown Prince Rudolf, a role he performed with flair and solid technique. Most recently, he delighted audiences in the en travesti duet of the ugly sisters, alongside Gary Avis, in Frederick Ashton's *Cinderella*.

#### ORIGINAL SCORE

### Kim Gordon

takehome

CHOREOGRAPHY Dimitri Chamblas



Kim Gordon

Dimitri Chamblas used the razor-sharp music of Kim Gordon, guitarist with the legendary American rock band Sonic Youth, to create a work that seems as elusive as a happening yet follows a precise design. Tinged with melancholy, anger, and pain, *takehome* feels like a plea for dance and music to bring us back to a welcoming, human dimension. Voices, bodies, amplified guitars, and gazes directed at the audience, cheeks streaming with tears and blood, come together to deliver a moving tribute to the world's forgotten people, captured on the brink of vanishing. Gordon's music becomes performance, imbued with a power that is both life-affirming and subversive.

#### LIGHTING DESIGN

### Fabiana Piccioli

Die Seele am Faden

An Italian lighting designer with a multifaceted career, Piccioli embarked on her freelance career after working as technical director and lighting designer for Akram Khan Company (2005–2013). She has created lighting and set designs for the Royal Opera House in London, the Paris Opera, the Royal Ballet of Flanders, the English National Ballet, Rambert, Les Ballets de Monte-Carlo, and the Aakash Odedra Company, collaborating with choreographers such as Kim Brandstrup, Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui and Carlos Acosta. Already a three-time winner of the *Knight of Illumination Awards*, she receives our award for her impactful lighting design for the staging of *Die Seele am Faden* by Vogel-Lempertz in the unique setting of the Church of San Simone in Spoleto.

#### LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT

### Virgilio Sieni

Since the late 1970s, Virgilio Sieni has pursued his prolific career in dance, transmission, and choreography with determination and creative originality, over a forty-year journey encompassing research and creations exploring the languages of the body. His work, both in Italy and abroad, has focused on training professional and amateur dancers of all ages, and he has developed participatory community projects with an interdisciplinary approach connecting dance, music and visual arts. He has created numerous works with the Virgilio Sieni Company, which he founded in Florence in 1992 after nine years with Parco Butterfly. Notable pieces on tour include *Sonate Bach – Di fronte*



Virgilio Sieni (© Rita Antonicelli)

*al dolore degli altri*, *Cecità*, *Satiri*, *Nudità*, and *Un amico*, with cellist Mario Brunello. Other memorable works include *La casina dei biscotti*, *La natura delle cose*, *Paradiso*, *Goldberg Variations*, *Il Cantico dei cantici*, and *La Mer*. Over the years, he has tackled thematic cycles such as Greek tragedy and fairy tales, urban projects, works combining the body and puppets with Mimmo Cuticchio, and a decades-long project with blind people. In Florence, his activities revolve around his directorship of Cango Cantieri Goldonetta, the National Centre for Dance Production, which was designated a Centre of Significant Interest for Dance in 2022. In 2007, Sieni founded the Academy of the Art of the Gesture, and the School of Gesture and the Landscape in 2018. Awarded the title of Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the French Minister for Culture in 2013, he was director of the Venice Biennale Danza from 2013 to 2016.

#### EXPANSION OF REPERTOIRE

### MM Contemporary Dance Company

Grosse Fugue

CHOREOGRAPHY Maguy Marin

As it has developed from a choreographer-led ensemble to a repertoire company, Michele Merola's MM Contemporary Dance Company has had a string of hits, bringing recent masterpieces to the attention of Italian audiences. Our award recognises the company's acquisition of *Grosse Fugue* by Maguy Marin into its repertoire in 2024, a piece originally created in 2001 for four women. It offers twenty minutes of intimate, continuous dialogue between music and dance, set to Beethoven's challenging *Grosse Fugue*, performed live at many performances by the Haydn Orchestra soloists. The work's growing complexity, interwoven with vital energy, vertigo, and despair, makes the contrapuntal interplay and fugues of each instrument in the string quartet visible in the dancers' bodies.

## FRANCE

Year in review by Isabelle Calabre

In an Olympic year packed with new works on the theme of sport (including Olivier Dubois' *Podium* for the Paris L'Été festival), the best of the more 'traditional' pieces – despite its unusual subject matter – was Angelin Preljocaj's *Requiem(s)*. Unveiled on 17 May at the Grand Théâtre de Provence (Aix-en-Provence), with a soundtrack ranging from Medieval to electronic music, this ritual dance consists of a sequence of sensitive tableaux that explore the different sides of grief, and of the memory preserved by those left behind. The vibrant choreography is excellently performed by the Ballet Preljocaj. A surprise came from Martin Harriague, the new director of the Ballet de l'Opéra d'Avignon, for whom he recently created the remarkable *America*. His intricately crafted duet on romantic relationships, *Crocodile*, performed by Harriague himself alongside Emilie Leriche, proved a huge hit at the Le Temps d'Aimer la Danse festival in Biarritz on 7 September. Finally, a special mention goes to the reconstruction of Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker's *Drumming XXL*, performed on 5 June at the MC 93 in Bobigny by 60 dance students from the École des Sables (Senegal), P.A.R.T.S. (Brussels), and CNSMDP (Paris). A true delight.



Martin Harriague "Crocodile" (© Stephane Bellocq)

## UNITED KINGDOM

Year in review by Maggie Foyer

The UK is often stereotyped as mired in tradition, and there is some truth to this. London has seen more than its fair share of *Swan Lakes* this year, with the ENB's Sangeun Lee offering a truly magnificent *Odette/Odile* and auspicious debuts from Royal Ballet dancers, Mariko Sasaki and Joseph Sissens. There is amazing young talent emerging in Royal Ballet dancers Casper Lench and Emile Gooding, who gave promise of an exciting future with ironclad technique that covers both classical and contemporary dance. However, Marcelino Sambé who excels in every role he touches tops my list. He showed pure Ashton delivery as Oberon, embodied Des Grieux in MacMillan's *Manon* and brought the role of Jimmy to life in McGregor's *MaddAddam*. In a dearth of new ballets, it was a joy to see Johan Inger's *Carmen* in London. It has a powerful message that bypasses the stereotypical settings to make a ballet valid for today. There was the exciting rebirth of London City Ballet in an inaugural season at Sadler's Wells. A crossover between dance styles and a major development towards inclusivity was the Legacy programme at the Linbury celebrating Black dancers and curated by Joseph Sissens. Twelve short works and a slew of guest artists revealed how much talent there is to hand. On the contemporary stage, Jonathan Goddard in Mark Bruce's *Frankenstein* was a thrilling Gothic fantasy, while Ben Duke's Lost Dog Company reimagined Medea as *Ruination* with Jean-Daniel Broussé, as Hades in a performance bathed in mercurial quicksilver. One of the most surprising and magical evenings of the year was at the tiny Coronet Theatre, when Ambiguous Dance Company from Seoul performed *The Belt – the Past and Future*. Imagination was wild and unbounded and the dance ecstatic as they turned the entire building into a performance platform.