

Cher Ulysse

On its creation, in 1981, *Ulysses* was presented as “a continuous activity lasting one hour thirty minutes”. The ballet thus wrote one of the first chapters in the new French choreography. Jean-Claude Gallotta laid white on white – sets, floor, costumes – a dance in the form of a breakaway from and tribute to the American reference model.

The piece was revived in 1993, and is back again in 2007. Changed? Certainly. Unchanging? Of course. Ever the same and inevitably different. Because, in a quarter of a century, the world has turned on its own axis ten thousand times, and not always in a perfect circle, and often drunk on its own abjectness. Dance can no longer respond through its own beauty and innocence. Already, in 2001, Jean-Claude Gallotta had offered a dark counterpart to *Ulysses* with *Nosferatu*, at the Paris Opera. His *Ulysses* has therefore journeyed through the last two decades just as Homer’s Ulysses journeyed across the seas, and Joyce’s Ulysses journeyed through his day on 16 June 1904. Today, the choreographic parchment is bound to bear the traces of these odysseys. A few scraps, memories and feathers are attached to the man’s coat.

“Dear Ulysses,” says Jean-Claude Gallotta. His choreography is first and foremost a missive. But this missive does not say that the world does not recognise the man who returns; on the contrary, it says that the returning man does not recognise the world, in which he cannot find the siren who acted as his guide.

“Dear Ulysses, your sudden arrival caused a great storm in 1981. Today, seeing you enter stage left, more fragile, more secret, into a faded white setting and to more tormented resonances, we said to each other that the time had come for our reunion and recognition”.

Claude-Henri Buffard

– January 2007 –