



# ULYSSE

## 2021

contact cie / Céline Kraff  
+33 (0)4 76 00 63 69 / +33 (0)6 31 33 82 06  
[celine.kraff@gallotta-danse.com](mailto:celine.kraff@gallotta-danse.com)

press relations France / Opus 64  
Arnaud Pain  
+ 33 (0)1 40 26 77 94 > [a.pain@opus64.com](mailto:a.pain@opus64.com)

distribution/ Le Trait d'Union  
+33 545 94 75 95  
Thierry Duclos  
[td@ltddanse.com](mailto:td@ltddanse.com)

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Choreography  
Jean-Claude Gallotta

Choreography assistant  
Mathilde Altaraz

Dramaturgy  
Claude-Henri Buffard

Reconstruction and Transmission  
Mathilde Altaraz et Thierry Verger

with  
Axelle André, Naïs Arlaud, Alice Botelho, Ibrahim Guetissi, Fuxi Li, Bernardita  
Moya Alcalde, Clara Protar, Jérémy Silvetti, Gaetano Vaccaro, Thierry Verger

music by  
Henry Torgue et Serge Houppin

lighting design  
Manuel Bernard

costume design  
Chiraz Sedouga

production  
Groupe Émile Dubois / Cie Jean-Claude Gallotta

coproduction  
Le Volcan - scène nationale Le Havre  
Théâtre-Sénart, Scène nationale

with the backing of  
MC2 : Grenoble  
and Théâtre de l'Arsenal de Val-de-Reuil - scène  
conventionnée d'intérêt national « art et création pour la danse »

## TOUR SCHEDULE

### 2021-2022

> October 5 to 6, 2021  
[ Le Volcan, scène nationale - Le Havre ]

>> January 13 to 14, 2022  
[ Scène nationale - Sénart ]

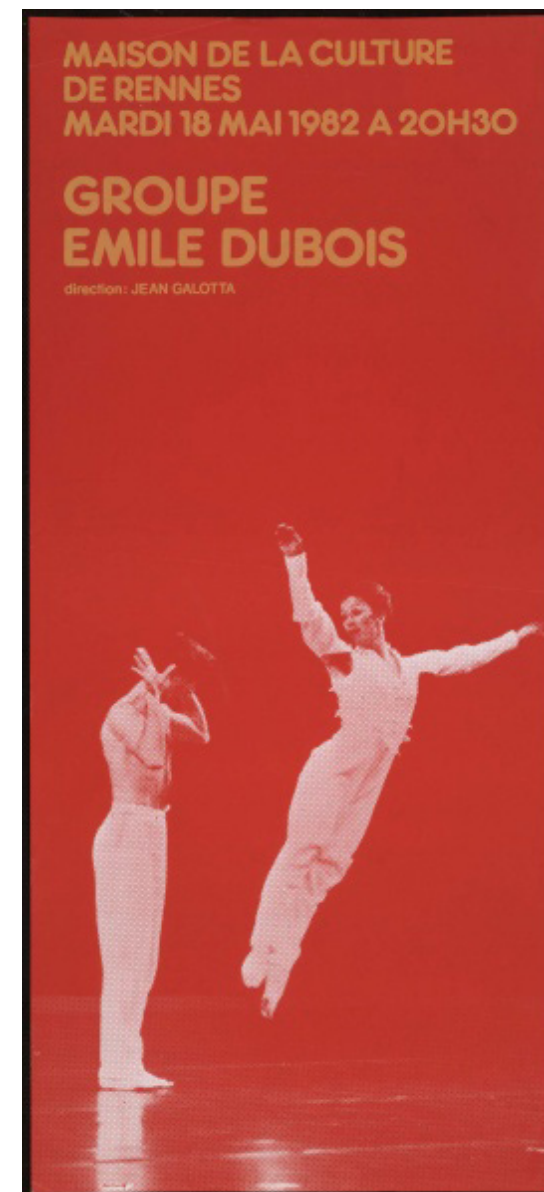
>> March 23, 2022  
[ Opéra (Biennale de la danse EMOI) - Limoges ]



## PROJECT NOTE

For a repertory work to be revived and restaged, certain factors are essential: a shared desire, a conviction, an impetus. It was during a meeting with Jean-François Driant, director of the Maison de la culture du Havre, that the project was formed of reviving *Ulysses*, the seminal choreographic creation of 1981. Often asked about artistic work that contributed to the existence of contemporary dance in France and to which reference has regularly been made since, Jean-François Driant turned to Jean-Claude Gallotta for some answers. This proved very timely indeed as over the years Gallotta has made it his mission to alternate creation and repertory work. His *Ulysses* has gone through several versions in its forty years, including the famous *Variations d'Ulysse* staged by the choreographer at the Paris Opera in 1995.

To celebrate the 40th anniversary of his choreography as well as the 60th anniversary of the Maison de la Culture du Havre, Jean-Claude Gallotta will be presenting a revival of *Ulysses*, combining the energy of today's dancers with the spirit of the original work.  
C.-H.B.



## GENESIS

With *Ulysses*, my intention has always been to pay homage to choreography and stage the architecture of space lightheartedly.

Rather than theorize about dance, I wanted to play with certain situations in modern and classical ballet by filling them with more personal details and movements. For example, I used – and sometimes debunked – symmetry, perspective, entrances and exits, ensemble steps, sequences between the group and soloists, duets, split lifts, counts, quartets, multiple centers, marches, arabesques, and so on. The physical and sensual sides of the dancers shine through quite naturally, while tiny « cracks » announce or recall other more tormented choreographies.

Once the composition was complete, I had to give it a title. I decided to call it *Ulysses*, because of the complexity of the choreography which hindered me as a dancer from penetrating it easily. Like Homer's hero, I experienced my own exile and the impossibility of reaching my own choreographic shores.

The oceanic music of Henry Torgue and Serge Houppin, and the dreamy white of the costumes also influenced me in my choice.

The title also brought to light the many correspondences that arise between Homer, Joyce and the choreography.

I invite you to share these correspondences, to awaken the « soursik » in you and together rekindle our forgotten dreams.

Jean-Claude Gallotta





## THEY ARE TALKING ABOUT IT

« *Ulysses*, a tribute to Homer and the Irish writer James Joyce, is a ballet blanc (literally « white ballet ») in every sense of the word. The performers are carried away by whirlwinds of gestures, each more excited and epicurean than the next. They rise to the challenge of space as if to swallow up the world and more. Appetite, energy, love of dance, this stellar *Ulysses* has the panache of the adventurer in love with life. Gallotta signs a skilful choreography, a network of diagonals that cross and uncross at the discretion of lively counterpoints, recalling something like changes of mood. »

Rosita Boisseau Ina.fr, 2016

« A cult choreographic creation, now the reference of a generation (). *Ulysses* reveals Gallotta's extraordinarily precise choreography, using the principles of repetitive dance. The choreographer has made the most of the all-white set design and the very rigorous architecture of the construction lines. The dance of micro-gestures, almost barely dared, the lifts, the multiplication of action, allay what could have been a coldness of form. () It is an ironic creation, casual and forever young. »

Philippe Verrière, Danser Canal historique, mai 2020.

## CONVERSATION WITH JEAN-CLAUDE GALLOTTA

*Ulysses, 40 years later... This Ulysses belongs to choreographic history. It is considered as one of the cornerstones of the new French dance. What can you tell us about the context when it was created in 1981?*

Originally, my intention was to create an «event», in the manner of Merce Cunningham : a continuous whole made of existing choreographic « bits ». But beyond the performance, I wanted to see if I could master a choreography over a longer stretch of time, to create an event that would form a complete work. A ballet, a real one. A purely choreographic ballet, without a libretto, without « theater », guided only by movement.

If this work has become emblematic, it is undoubtedly because it arrived at the right time. Perhaps, back then, we had tired of neo-classical dance. By standing under the banner of «ballet» and proposing a long form of the event, *Ulysses* became known as one of the foundational acts of a new choreographic period.

*You use the expression « ballet blanc »...*

That's correct. When I first started, I wanted to «create like». I subscribed to the idea that every choreographer had to create his « ballet blanc » (literally « white ballet »). It's a bit like most composers who try their hand at a Requiem. By this I mean «pure» ballet, something celestial, immaculate, enchanted by the idea of perfection, a ballet of pure movement. This is what I did, in my own way. For me *Ulysses* is a « ballet blanc », but with a touch of Buster Keaton... !

*Ulysses is the work to which you have returned most often, yet you once said that it was not your favorite work...*

For a long time, I thought the work was too classical. I wouldn't say that anymore. On the contrary, having returned to it again and again over the years, I have begun to see that while remaining the same, it is capable of changing its nature. It is more pliable and flexible than it seems. It has a certain modernity. Looking at it in that light, I am able to work with it in each of the periods it passes through.

## CONVERSATION WITH JEAN-CLAUDE GALLOTTA

In 2007, the revival was called Dear Ulysses, the music was no longer the same, and the curtains of the set were «lowered» like the sails of a boat... Your Ulysses attempted to reflect an era less dazzling than that of the 80s...

With my 2007 version I wanted to examine a particular moment in history, the beginning of the 21st century that we were just entering. Today, in 2021, I'm looking to position the performance differently. I want to show more of a choreographic work of art capable of resisting the moody fluctuations of our society. This 2021 *Ulysses* will not allow itself, or at least not consciously, to be tainted by the tone of the current times. I don't want it to tolerate the times, on the contrary, I would like it to enlighten them, so to speak. Thus, by returning to the sources of 1980, I am not succumbing to nostalgia, far from it. The aim is to challenge the fears, the anxieties, the uncertain future, with a violently alive work of art.

In 2021, few spectators will have seen the original version. Was this a factor in your decision to revive it?

I wouldn't say that it figured directly in my choice, even if the revival of a creation always aspires to attract new spectators. No, I'm just happy to take a fresh look at it. This choreographic work, which has been revived many times, still interests me as such. It even makes me want to draw it out and continue it. I'm starting to look at it as part one of a two-part work. Part two will be a sort of « ballet noir » (black ballet) entitled *Penelope*.

Do you have any ideas on how you will approach the work in rehearsal?

Nothing specific. I don't really want to have ideas at this stage. I will wait to be in the rehearsal studio. The performers, with their personal physical and choreographic qualities, will help me find answers. They are the ones who will bring about changes to the choreography.

## CONVERSATION WITH JEAN-CLAUDE GALLOTTA

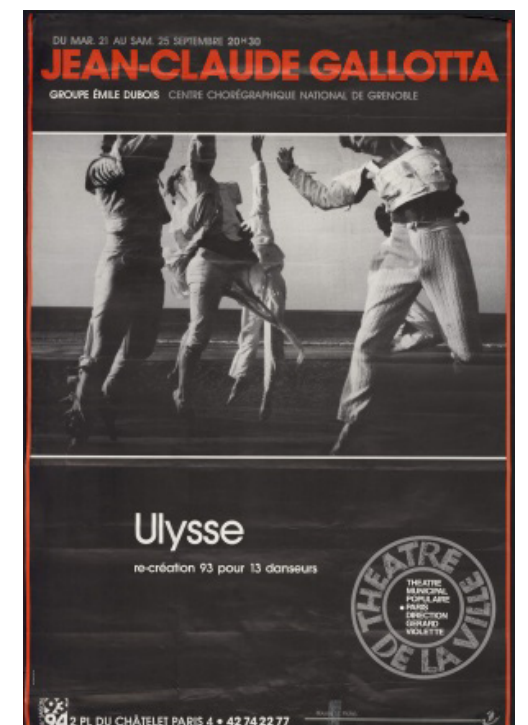
Do you think you might try to create a full reproduction of the original 1981 work, down to the smallest detail?

It would be in vain. I work with what is alive, palpably alive here and now, which means the vibrancy of physical bodies present on stage. Such aliveness escapes all manner of control. It would be a denial of the essence of dance to attempt a museographic approach to this choreography. Of course I impose a written choreography but the dancer brings his energy and his own proposals to the rehearsals. If one of the dancers finds a better solution for such and such a movement, I adopt it.

Your work oscillates between abstraction and figuration. With Ulysses, could we say more precisely that it is made of a certain gestural language that you have invented, made of small everyday gestures, unusual, unexpected, sometimes funny, arising mischievously as part of a classical scenic language.

Absolutely. In a sense it is a ballet which is unashamed of movement, by that I mean all movements of the body whatever their primary origin might be. It is a freedom that comes from the 80's. I can think of no reason not to reclaim it today. I even wonder if it is not fundamentally urgent to do so.

Interview by Claude-Henri Buffard



All the latest news about the company are on our website:  
[www.gallotta-danse.com](http://www.gallotta-danse.com)

- Photos Guy Delahaye -

The Groupe Émile Dubois / Compagnie Jean-Claude Gallotta is backed by the Ministry of Culture and Communication-DGCA and the DRAC Auvergne - Rhône-Alpes, the Région Auvergne - Rhône-Alpes and the Département de l'Isère. It is supported by the Ville de Grenoble for its activities within the city.