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**LE CORPS  
DU BALLET NATIONAL  
DE MARSEILLE**

EMIO GRECO  
PIETER C SCHOLTEN

**V**

**M** BALLET  
NATIONAL  
MARSEILLE



# LE CORPS DU BALLET NATIONAL DE MARSEILLE

## Concept and Choreography

Emio Greco | Pieter C. Scholten

**Soundscape** Pieter C. Scholten

**Lights design** Henk Danner

**Costumes** Clifford Portier

16 dancers

**Production** Ballet National de Marseille

**Collaboration** ICKamsterdam

**Duration** 1h10

**Creation** with 21 dancers - 03.14.2015 - Théâtre National de Marseille - La Criée

## Genesis of the project

*Le Corps du Ballet National de Marseille* was the first piece created and performed by Emio Greco and Pieter C. Scholten, as directors of Ballet National de Marseille.

Greco and Scholten's quest for a new identity for the CCN de Marseille undeniably takes a close and critical look at ballet. Both men acquired experience of the technique in their youth. With one starting out as a man of theatre and dramaturge and the other a high-profile performer for Jan Fabre, the starting point for their encounter back in 1995 was based on a quest for a different dance: a new approach centred on the classical technique and Greco's powerful physical identity.

Invited by the Ballets de Monte-Carlo (2011) and then by the Dutch National Ballet (2013), Greco and Scholten were able to approach these two very classical ensembles with an eye and a technique that have been skilfully nurtured since their first artistic manifesto, the solo *Bianco* (1996). This desire to seek out and make new contributions to the ballet technique has also been inspired by Elias Canetti's famous book *Crowds and Power*. The themes of synchronicity and the relationship between the individual body and the collective body are central to it. This course of action has enabled them to tackle classical ballet's organisation and hierarchy.

Greco and Scholten are interested in ballet's technical contours, but also in its social and even political contours. "It's an artefact, an iconic word that contains a whole world in itself." Used in various ways, the word has acquired a wider status than that of the technique standardised from Louis XIV onwards, to the point of being used in a general way as a sort of metonymy: "ballet" can mean dance in general in its different forms.

*Le Corps du Ballet National de Marseille* is the "ideal" project for launching Greco and Scholten's process for the BNM's new identity. This creation has enabled them to continue their earlier research and introduce new momentum to the dialogue between classical and contemporary dance that characterises their work.



## IDENTITIES

For Greco and Scholten, everything began with and around ballet, so it is logical to return to these fundamentals in Marseille as well.

*Le Corps du Ballet National de Marseille* is both a new beginning and a reinvention for the choreographers and for the company itself.

In this case, identity does not just mean the identity of the classical technique. Greco and Scholten are interested in the company and in its past, but they are also interested in each performer's contribution to creating the show. The objective is not to construct new aesthetic figures, but to start from each person's energy (and that of the company and city too).

"We'd like to be even more specific and explore in even greater depth in the quest for an identity. Seeking out the sources of ballet and, in a very constructed way, seeking a confrontation with our language. With and through but also by the bodies of the BNM's dancers."

The confrontation with Greco and Scholten's own language will be undertaken individually and in a group in order to understand each person's contribution and their physical identity and in order to form a close-knit, united group in the image of a corps de ballet, thus forming a body in its own right. "At the same time we're trying to remain innocent and unaware, to learn with the dancers and from them. Our work will also consist of reading their language and their bodies."

For this creation, the musical research has established a genuine "lexicon of synchronicity", illustrated by references to some of the most famous classical scores for ballets such as "The Nutcracker" but also to astounding musical editing directly echoing the "patchwork" identity of Marseille.

Greco and Scholten's approach does not mean starting with a blank slate. Quite the opposite in fact. The identity of the company, shaped by its founder Roland Petit (1924-2011) and his inventiveness, is of particular interest to them during this first creation.

Faithful to their desire to create a lasting dramaturgy that can develop over the years and be inspired by both the past and present, in *Le Corps du Ballet National de Marseille* Greco and Scholten intend to look back at IERI (yesterday) to better express OGGI (today) and, in this present day filled with challenges, start again with the ambitious DOMANI (tomorrow) being planned for the CCN de Marseille.



## BALLET NATIONAL DE MARSEILLE

Founded in 1972 by the choreographer Roland Petit, the Ballet National de Marseille (BNM) was one of the first companies to be denoted a National Choreographic Centre in 1984. It has been in its present building since 1992. The BNM was run by Marie-Claude Pietragalla (1998-2004) and then by Frédéric Flamand (2004-2013), with both of them opening the Ballet up to new artistic experiences.

At the helm of the BNM since September 2014, Emio Greco and Pieter C. Scholten's plans involve continuing the artistic approach and work they began with ICKamsterdam, the international choreographic arts centre they founded in Amsterdam. They have developed a universe and a writing that borrow as much from the classical vocabulary as they do from postmodern dance. In their programme of activities at the BNM entitled "the body in revolt", they deal with the place of the artist in society, and in the activities called "le corps du ballet" they undertake research into a new form of contemporary ballet.

Today the BNM has 26 permanent dancers and 5 apprentices and currently offers a new repertoire on tour.

## EMIO GRECO I PIETER C. SCHOLTEN

When the former – a dancer born in southern Italy – and the latter – a director of alternative theatre in the Netherlands – pooled their talent in the 1990s, they turned their creative partnership into a choreographic adventure.

Starting in 1995 from curiosity about the body and its inner motives, they created their first work, a solo entitled *Bianco*. This formed the first part of the *Fra Cervello e Movimento (Between Brain and Movement)* trilogy. It was accompanied by an artistic manifesto about the body and seven principles of the body's logic. This manifesto formed the basis for the new language they went on to create.

To describe their work and its originality combining rigour of research and imaginative power, a new term was coined: «extremalism». From the early days of their company named EG I PC, Emio Greco and Pieter C. Scholten have developed a universe and a writing forged out of tension and synchronicity, borrowing as much from classical vocabulary as from post-modern dance.

The strange theatricality impregnating the pieces and the high quality of the repetitive or exuberant dance of Emio Greco and his dancers are strictly framed by the choreographic score to construct enigmatic fictions of the flesh in each piece. The body, this stranger with its wealth of sensitive worlds, therefore appears reflected in it, as if it were the very author of these stories, absorbed, immersed in unexpected and mysterious spaces that the luminous set design, playing with colour or monochrome, helps reveal, in dialogue with the chosen music.

Their most recent creations include *La Commedia* (2011), *Rocco* (2011), *Passione in Due* (2012), *Double Points: Extremalism* (2012), *Addio alla fine* (2012), *Double Points: Verdi* (2013), *A Man without a Cause* (2013), *De Soprano's* (2014), *Le Corps du Ballet National de Marseille* and *Extremalism* (2015).

Emio Greco and Pieter C. Scholten have won numerous international awards for many of these shows, which are often co-produced by major festivals and performance venues and tour all over the world.

In 2009, they created ICKamsterdam, a multidisciplinary international platform for both up-and-coming and established artists. Appointed directors of the Ballet National de Marseille in 2014, their work focuses on the theme of the body from two perspectives: «the body in revolt» or the place of the artist in society and «the corps du ballet» or the search for a new form of contemporary ballet.

## READ IN THE PRESS

*The piece for 21 dancers sweeps us along (...) in moments of grace (...)*

**Marie-Eve Barbier, La Provence – March 2015**

*In silence or to the sounds and chimes around us combined with famous pieces of romantic ballet music, the BNM's corps de ballet delivers a very original performance that bodes well for interesting future prospects. (...) The dancers, who wholeheartedly throw themselves into the struggle to exist collectively or individually, received enthusiastic applause at the end.*

**Philippe Oualid, La revue marseillaise du théâtre – March 2015**

*Le Corps du Ballet National de Marseille is a strong, convincing and intense work (...) The demanding, precisely written choreography says a lot without spreading the very genuine virtuosity too thinly however. Taken in isolation, the dancers are as expressive and intense as the unique corps they make up, incorporating their personalities without blending them.*

**Antoine Pateffoz, La Marseillaise – March 2015**

*Le Corps du Ballet is a lavish and original work with complex gestures, magnificently performed by its dancers at a hellish pace and with dazzling visual beauty.*

**Jean Barak, Envrak – March 2015**

*The Ballet National de Marseille's new directors are offering the ballet a major piece containing echoes of a manifesto. (...) Better still, they have succeeded in touching on our time and stirring up a few basic questions in the art of choreography with a resonance that goes far beyond the quays of the Old Port. (...) Twenty-one dancers perform the work in a defence and illustration of the potential of their training. The length and breadth of it is exposed freely and without hesitation, featuring a voluptuous range of lines, figures, motifs and tableaux to the point of dizziness. Demi-pointes and arms are offered. Unisons and bravura pieces. It is constructed, definite, technically demanding. (...) and all performed to huge cheers. Thoroughly deserved too.*

**Gérard Mayen, Danser Canal Historique – March 2015**

## LE CORPS DU BALLET NATIONAL DE MARSEILLE

### ON TOUR

**10, 11 & 12 December 2015**

Le Maillon - Strasbourg (FR)  
en collaboration avec Pôle Sud

**17, 18 & 19 December 2015**

Ballet National de Marseille, Marseille (FR)

**18 March 2016**

Théâtres en Dracénie - Draguignan (FR)

**12 April 2016**

Forum am Schlosspark - Ludwigsburg (DE)

**19, 20, 21 & 22 May 2016**

Teatros del canal - Madrid (ES)

## CONTACT

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