

# Migrating worlds

Mondes en migration  
Press kit



Season  
22—23

GTG.CH

# Migrating worlds

Voluntary exile, forced exile, religious wars, migrants, displaced persons, deportees, refugees – all these ways of living in this/these migrating world/s form the common thread that runs through the Grand Théâtre de Genève's program for 2022-23. A world in constant motion – artistic as well – that the Grand Théâtre will follow this season with the arrival of Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, new Director of Ballet at the Grand Théâtre. A fresh wave of performances will push back the boundaries even more thanks to the artists who will delight audiences at the Grand Théâtre this season.

The path carved out these past three months by Aviel Cahn, general manager at the Grand Théâtre, continues forward. This Geneva institution has become a contemporary creative platform for opera and dance where all kinds of art and artists converge, coming together in a program with a cutting-edge repertoire divided into cycles from season to season, underscored by committed choices, rooted in current and pertinent social topics. Once again this season promises shows studded with artists of international renown – some taking their first steps into the world of opera or onto the stage at the Grand Théâtre de Genève. Opera, a total work of art, is for everyone, like an echo of these Migrating worlds.



# A season portrayed through photojournalism



People fleeing ISIS-controlled areas: farmers take their sheep.

Who better than **Paolo Pellegrin** to personify this season of *Migrating worlds*. Member of the famous agency Magnum Photo for almost twenty years, contract photographer for *Newsweek* for ten years and permanent contributor to the *New York Times*, Paolo Pellegrin is one of the most exemplary figures of modern-day photojournalism in Europe.

His photographs, present throughout our entire 22-23 program, were taken over recent decades from all corners of the world. They play moving and poignant witness to migrating individuals, groups and communities that make it easier for us to see and, maybe even, understand our world.

# Operas

The 22-23 season opens with a diptych dedicated to composer Fromental Halévy. We start with his masterpiece, **La Juive** (from 15 to 28 September 2022). It tackles religious intolerance and fanaticism, a serious and tragic portrayal of life for Jews in Europe that David Alden stages with a touch of black comedy already seen in this type of repertoire with *Les Huguenots* at the Deutsche Oper Berlin a few years ago. At his side, we note the return of manager Marc Minkowski, Ruzan Mantashyan in the lead role of Rachel, the unforgettable Natacha of War and Peace in 2022 and the illustrious tenor John Osborn who makes his debut in the major role of Eléazar.

The very rare opera **L'Éclair** also by Halévy (18 September 2022), composed at the same time as *La Juive* in the same year as the release of Tocqueville's treatise *Democracy in America*, rounds off this foray aided by French romantic music specialist Guillaume Tourniaire, who directs the Geneva Chamber Orchestra and four soloists during this unique concert evening.

We continue to explore the operas by the great Czech composer Leoš Janáček this season with his searing tragedy, **Katja Kabanova** (from 21 October to 1 November 2022) and his dreams of freedom, which give rise to a music of stupefying beauty and modernity that is further magnified by the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande directed by Tomáš Netopil, first guest conductor of the Czech Philharmonic. After *Jenůfa* this spring, it is once again stage director Tatjana Gürbaca who creates this tragic portrait of a woman, with the help of soprano Corinne Winters.

Since the start of their collaboration in Claudio Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo* in 2016, Rolando Villazón, Christina Pluhar and his famous ensemble L'Arpeggiata, the myth of Orpheus has never left them. Continuing the work started with *Lamenta*, they will explore **Il Combattimento — Les amours impossibles** by Claudio Monteverdi (6 and 7 November 2022) in the energy of the dance and music, media that are

both terrestrial and transcendent. A guest performance choreographed by the duo Rosalba Torres Guerrero and Koen Augustijnen.

Another one of this season's cycles: Mariame Clément and Julia Hansen in **Maria Stuarda** by Gaetano Donizetti (from 17 to 29 December 2022) take us back to the phantasmagorical universe they started to weave together last season with *Anna Bolena*. In this second part of Donizetti's trilogy about the Tudor queens, Elsa Dreisig, this time as Elizabeth I, will perform alongside Stéphanie d'Oustrac, the perpetual rival, in the role of her younger cousin Marie Stuart. The Orchestre de la Suisse Romande will bend to the will of maestro Stefano Montanari who will deliver an eloquent expression of the bel canto.

In Richard Wagner's **Parsifal** (from 25 January to 5 February 2023), Stage Director Michael Thalheimer finds the precarious domain of the Grail neither hopeless, nor worthy of hope, even though it bears all the signs of decay. With his at once expressive and minimalist style, Thalheimer portrays this "sacred scenic festival" as a farewell to the world. Jonathan Nott, conducting the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, will bring this masterpiece to life with the help of the great Wagnerian soloists Tanja Ariane Baumgartner, Daniel Johansson and Christopher Maltman.

We then journey to Ithaca in Monteverdi's **Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria** (from 27 February to 7 March 2023) with FC Bergman, the famous theatre collective from Belgium, exhibiting enough of a bold anarchic edge to measure up to the Odyssey. After playing the reinterpretation of Mozart's *L'Enlèvement au Sérail*, the baroque conductor Fabio Biondi returns, this time with his Europa Galante ensemble. Mark Padmore, the charismatic English tenor takes lead role at the head of this big cast of specialists and the sensational Sara Mingardo plays Pénélope, unforgettable as Neris in *Medea* at the GTG in 2015.





Refugees from the Kurdish village of Bajurbuk, near Bashiqa. Iraq, 2016

***Voyage vers l'Espoir*** by German composer Christian Jost (from 28 March to 4 April 2023), world premiere initially scheduled for 2020, based on the film of the same name by the Swiss filmmaker Xavier Koller, tells the story of a Kurdish family who abandon their land and people in their search of paradise: Switzerland. Who better to stage this new opera than the Hungarian Kornél Mundruczó, film and theatre director, already known at the GTG with his productions of *L'Affaire Makropoulos* (2020) and *Sleepless* (2022). Christian Jost's music for this journey into a world of despair, bursting with powerful rhythms and heightened emotions, will be directed by Gabriel Feltz who heads a bespoke cast including Turkish baritone Kartal Karagedik and Canadian mezzo-soprano Rihab Chaieb, originally from Tunisia.

On the road to exile, in a Siberian camp with ***Lady Macbeth de Mtsensk*** by Dmitri Chostakovitch (from 30 April to 9 May 2023), a composer ruthlessly condemned by the Stalinist regime in 1938. An "apocalyptic thriller about love in a post-capitalist system" in which Calixto Bieito continues his cycle of Russian operas reminding his audience, in an almost shocking way, of the current situation in Russia. He is assisted by his collaborators from last season's epic *War and Peace*, Rebecca Ringst known for

her monumental set designs and the Argentinian Alejo Pérez conducting the OSR, while soprano Aušrinė Stundytė (the amazing Elektra in Salzburg in 2020) plays the lead role – as she already did in this production in 2014 in Antwerp and later in Paris in Warlikowski's stage direction.

Lack and identity, exile and power, displacement and decimation of populations, these forced migrations within a nation or even within a community are themes that Christiane Jatahy explores over and over, between fiction and reality, stage and video. The Brazilian stage director, filmmaker and author who was awarded the Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement in Theatre of La Biennale di Venezia in 2022, will organise the resistance of the Jewish people in Babylon in ***Nabucco*** by Giuseppe Verdi (from 11 to 29 June 2023). Maestro Antonino Fogliani will conduct the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande and a cast of extraordinary belcantists including the powerful trio of Nicola Alaimo, Saioa Hernandez and Riccardo Zanellato in the leading roles.





A choppy Aegean Sea at night, view from the beach near Skala. Lesvos, Greece, 2015

# Ballets

Season 22-23 is marked by the arrival of Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui as the Director of Ballet at the Grand Théâtre. The Belgian choreographer will most notably make his presence known through four shows in his first season. He will bring with him long-time colleague and friend, Damien Jalet, an artist already associated with the ballet at the Grand Théâtre; he will choreograph two iconic performances this season.

The Mondes flottants / Floating Worlds (from 19 to 24 November 2022), based on Skid by Damien Jalet and, the world premiere of Ukiyo-e by Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui will open the ballet season. Oscillating between the vertical and horizontal planes, Skid by Damien Jalet is performed on a sloped platform at a 34 degree incline where the physical relationship to others is often only a search for comfort against the pull of the void. Ukiyo-e, a new play by Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui is presented as a reflection on our abilities of resilience or united survival in a world in crisis. The production will be accompanied by musicians playing a composition by Szymon Brzóska and Alexandre Dai Castaing live on stage.

Meditation, zen, at the heart of China's history with Sutra by Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui (from 16 to 19 February 2023), who after having met with Shaolin monks in 2007, decided to work closely with the temple to create a joint project, which he choreographed and dances in together with the monks. He joins forces with sculptor, Antony Gormley, one of the biggest names in visual arts of our time who creates the sets. Sutra promises to deliver one of those rare moments where China and the West can, in the words of Boddhidharma, "directly touch the heart".

The pinnacle performance, TRACES by Damien Jalet and Fouad Boussouf (from 19 to 23 April 2023) is both a rite of remembrance and a celebration of the present, always on the go and always moving. Associate artist, Damien Jalet will stage THR(O)UGH, with visual artist Jim Hodges from New York who erects a huge cylindrical object that looks like a tunnel, inspired

by Damien Jalet's personal experience as a witness and survivor of the Paris attacks that took place on 13 November 2015. In VĪA, Fouad Boussouf imagines a luminous plateau of warm hues like asphalt under the sun, where the dance is brought back to its point of origin, the ground, the urban path that strikes, against which we bounce, not necessarily high, but hard. It is the Swiss-German artist Ugo Rondinone, another big name in visual arts, who creates the sets.

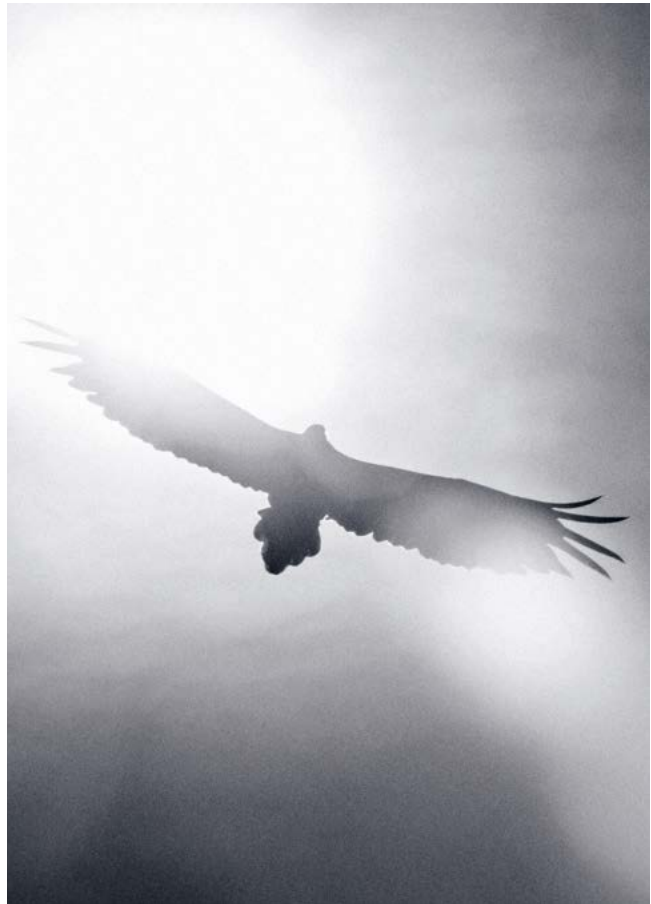
A further new feature: the ballet will extend beyond the walls of the Grand Théâtre and collaborate with local partners. At La Bâtie festival in Geneva (31 August 2022) with the revival of the two famous choreographies by Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui FAUN / NOETIC, at L'Usine (27 and 28 January 2023), which through Electrofaunes promises an interdisciplinary convergence of the ballet with Swiss drummer Arthur Hnatek and the Geneva Chamber Orchestra conducted by Marc Leroy-Calatayud. And finally an unprecedented exhibition of the Museum of Art and the History of Geneva with visual artist Ugo Rondinone who will take over the collection to create a tour in keeping with his own style (January 2023). Mention must also be made of Loin, the first show commissioned by the Grand Théâtre de Genève in 2005 from Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, revived by the Ballet Junior de Genève (June 2023).

A season portrayed through photojournalism Who better than Paolo Pellegrin to personify this season of Migrating worlds. Member of the famous agency Magnum Photo for almost twenty years, contract photographer for Newsweek for ten years and permanent contributor to the New York Times, Paolo Pellegrin is one of the most exemplary figures of modern-day photojournalism in Europe. His photographs, present throughout our entire 22-23 program, were taken over recent decades from all corners of the world. They play moving and poignant witness to migrating individuals, groups and communities that make it easier for us to see and, maybe even, understand our world.

# Program of La Plage

La Plage: how to discover opera and dance without looking like you are! This season includes numerous productions for the family and younger audiences: **Sparge La Morte** at La Bâtie festival (7 and 8 September 2022), **Rosa et Bianca** (from 14 to 21 December 2022) fifty minutes packed with emotions, piano-forte and bel canto, **La Souris Traviata**, an interactive workshop show (October 2022 to March 2023), **Electric Dreams**, a Swiss creation coproduced with the Ensemble Contre-champs, the story of a teenager lost between the virtual worlds, suitable for children from age 10 (from 2 to 5 March 2023), the highly prized **Journée portes ouvertes** for families to experience the GTG (11 September 2022) and as part of the Grand Théâtre Jeunesse, a whole host of activities for schools throughout the year to introduce children to the opera.

La Plage is also suitable for adult audiences. As a reminder of **The Sheep Song** fantasy by the Belgian collective FC Bergman in the preview showing of *The Return of Ulysses* as part of the La Bâtie festival de Genève (from 26 to 28 August 2022), **Pieces of a Woman** at the Comédie de Genève with Kornél Mundruczó's hyperrealistic aesthetics, (from 28 November to 2 December 2022), **Nabucco under the stars** shown on a big screen in the Parc des Eaux-Vives (23 June 2023), plus **Late Nights** for dancing through the night indoors to DJ-sphère's finest tunes (25 November 2022, 11 February 2023, 5 May 2023), **Duels** in partnership with **T**, the *Temps magazine*, stage transcriptions of a series of epistolary exchanges (3 November 2022, 9 March 2023, 11 May 2023). And don't forget that the GTG returns to Les Bains (des Pâquis) this season! The Grand Théâtre lays out its towels and bathing suits in the early hours of the morning to set off down its paths of seasonal migration, between modernist Russia and Jewish songs from Eastern Europe in **Les Aubes musicales** (15 August 2022) and in the autumn, the towels are folded away for the **Festival — Poésie en ville** (24 September 2022).



A sea eagle in the fjords of the Flatanger archipelago. Lauvsnes, Norway, 2019

La Plage is also a must for its **Cinéoperas** in collaboration with the Cinémas du Grütli who give carte blanche to leading figures from the world of opera and ballet of the season to create a film that reflects their artistic journey, **Intropéras**, to refresh your memory before each show, **backstage visits**, **Apéropéras**, urban afterwork to discover a composer or a work while relaxing with a Spritz cocktail, **public artistic workshops** on Saturday mornings, Insights to introduce upcoming productions in the form of conferences, **guided tours**, **big brunches** on Sundays for all food and music lovers. You are guaranteed never to have a dull moment at La Plage.



# Recitals and concerts

As with every season, the Grand Théâtre brings some of the best voices of our time to its stage. The recitals will be performed by **Diana Damrau** (24 September 2022), **Bryn Terfel** (26 November 2022), **Nina Stemme** (4 February 2023), **Simon Keenlyside** (4 March 2023), **Anne Sofie von Otter** (16 June 2023). In addition to these recitals, there are three concerts: the opera **L'Eclair**, a singular marvelous experience, by Fromental Halévy (18 September 2022), the **New Year Concert — Gala Offenbach** with Stanislas de Barbeyrac, Marina Viotti and the Geneva Chamber Orchestra conducted by Marc Leroy-Calatayud (31 December 2022) and a **Grand Théâtre Choir Concert at St. Pierre Cathedral** (18 March 2023).

New York, USA, 2007



# Some of the leading artists who will mark the season

## THE STAGE DIRECTORS

The collective **FC Bergman** (*The Return of Ulysses*) has developed a unique theatrical idiom, which apart from being anarchistic, is essentially visual and poetic. Their productions often give centre stage to the floundering, ever-striving human. Bergman's most recent production, *The Sheep Song*, met with success in 2020 at the Festival d'Avignon and Holland Festival d'Amsterdam. It will show again this season at the Comédie de Genève. Geneva will be the springboard for the young Belgian creators will make their second appearance into the world of opera.

Author, stage director and filmmaker, **Christiane Jatahy** believes in juxtaposing various artistic genres. In deepening the ties between the theatre and cinema, she created *Julia*, an adaptation of *Mademoiselle Julie* by Strindberg, presented and awarded at prestigious international festivals and European theatres. In 2021, she was awarded the Golden Lion at La Biennale di Venezia. After *Entre Chien et Loup* at the Festival d'Avignon, a study of the mechanisms of fascism, based on the film *Dogville* by Lars von Trier, then a study on toxic male chauvinism *Before the Sky Falls* in October and a production for the Wiener Festwochen about slavery and its impact on structural racism in *Depois do silêncio*, will show at the Grand Théâtre de Genève, organiser of the long-awaited Nabucco, marking her first operatic work in Europe, after her stage direction of *Fidelio* in Brazil several years ago.

**Michael Thalheimer**, whose refined and expressive opera stage directions have been acclaimed at the Berlin State Opera (*Der Freischütz*), Hamburg State Opera (*Les Troyens*) and the Opera Ballet Vlaanderen in Antwerp (*Otello*, *Macbeth*), will be the mastermind behind *Parsifal*. Thalheimer is now one of the most important and influential stage directors on the German theatre scene where his work is presented at the major theatre festivals. He also directs regularly abroad, especially at the Théâtre de la Colline in Paris or the Dramaten in Stockholm.

**David Alden**, one of the world's most influential and prolific stage directors in opera, has received numerous prestigious awards, like the South Bank Show Award for his production of Britten's *Peter Grimes*, three Olivier Awards, the most recent in 2018 for his production of Rossini's *Semiramide* in Covent Garden, London. He will finally be making his first appearance in Geneva with *La Juive*.

## THE CONDUCTORS

**Marc Minkowski** (*La Juive*), an exceptional conductor always to be found in front of the most prestigious stages, especially with his orchestra Les Musiciens du Louvre, continues his work on the French Grand Opéra in Geneva, which started at the Grand Théâtre's with *Les Huguenots* in 2020. We welcomed him again in the same year with Handel's *Le Messie* and then in 2021 for the New Year's Eve concert. General Director of Opéra de Bordeaux for several years, his repertoire spans from baroque to classical, as well as a few flings with Wagner and Verdi. He is now one of the great specialists of 19th century French opera.

Pioneer of the baroque movement in Italy, **Fabio Biondi** (*The Return of Ulysses*), proves his love for this repertoire through this extensive discography, which has won numerous awards, notably for Vivaldi's Four Seasons with Europa Galante. He was director of the very controversial production of *L'Enlèvement au sérail* at the Grand Théâtre in January 2020. In the pit, this time he will be at the helm of his orchestra Europa Galante. He presides increasingly in a more romantic repertoire, as evidenced by his recordings of operas by Bellini (*Norma*) and Verdi (*Il Corsaro*).

**Christina Pluhar** (*Combattimento – Les Amours impossibles*) is one of the most innovative musicians in the baroque scene. The critics are in raptures about the liberated, spontaneous and highly virtuoso style in which the musicians and singers, under Pluhar's





**CHRISTIANE JATAHY**

*Nabucco*



**FC BERGMAN**

*Le Retour d'Ulysse*

direction, bring the works to life and manage to draw out their colourful sounds, as never heard before.

He was last here in October 2020 conducting an orchestra-less performance of *L'Affaire Makropoulos* in the midst of the pandemic. Now **Tomáš Netopil** returns to the Grand Théâtre for the production of (*Katia Kabanova*), but this time, we hope, the pit will be filled with the real musicians from the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande. The first guest conductor of the Czech Philharmonic and Musical Director of the Aalto Theater d'Essen, he performs on all the major opera stages throughout Europe and more specifically at the Vienna State Opera. He will head the production of *Katia Kabanova* at the Festival Janáček de Brno, birthplace of Janáček, accompanied by the OSR.

## THE PERFORMERS

The young soprano **Ruzan Mantashyan** is one of the most promising singers of her generation. In Geneva, she will certainly be remembered for her brilliant performance as Mimì (*La Bohème*), Marguerite (*Faust*) and, last season, in the role of Natacha (*War and Peace*). She returns to Geneva to take up the challenging lead role of Rachel in *La Juive*.

In *Combattimento – Les Amours impossibles*, the tenor **Rolando Villazón** heralded as “the most charming of today's divos” (The Times), with “a wonderfully virile voice... grandezza, elegance and power” (Süddeutsche Zeitung) is sure to captivate audiences once again with his unique performances.

**Christopher Maltman**, a world-renowned Don Giovanni, a favourite at London's Royal Opera House and a regular guest at the Bayerische Staatsoper in Munich performed last season in the role of Œdipus in Paris, Rigoletto in Barcelona and Berlin, Don Giovanni at La Scala and Iago (*Othello*) at the Royal Opera House. In Geneva, he will don the attire of Amfortas in Parsifal.



**Mark Padmore's** appearances in Bach passions have gained particular notice, especially his performances as the Evangelist in the St Matthew and St John Passions with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra and Sir Simon Rattle, staged by Peter Sellars. He will play Ulysses in *The Return of Ulysses*.

The performance of soprano **Aušrinė Stundytė** in the lead role of *Elektra* directed by Franz Welser-Möst at the Salzburg Festival in 2020 was highly acclaimed. She will play the heroine in *Lady Macbeth de Mtsensk*, a fetish role recently performed at the Opéra national de Paris and available on DVD, as is her performance of *Elektra* in Salzburg. She established a close working relationship with stage director Calixto Bieito over several years. Memorable highlights of their partnership include *L'Ange de feu* by Prokofiev as well as this *Lady Macbeth de Mtsensk*, performed in 2014 in Antwerp—without doubt one of the most charming fruits of this artistic collaboration.

This list of course includes many other exceptional performers such as: Elsa Dreisig, John Osborn, Nicola Alaimo, Dmitry Ulyanov... – who will make the season at GTG an exciting vocal experience!

## THE SCENOGRAPHERS

The ballet at the Grand Théâtre features two big names from the world of contemporary art this season. Enigmatic and fascinating, defying all classification, **Ugo Rondinone** from Zurich has been one of the big names in international visual arts since the start of the 1990s. His projects have been showcased at several biennials and recently, numerous solo exhibitions have been dedicated to his work in the most prestigious museums, such as the Palais de Tokyo, the Centre Pompidou in Paris, the MoMa in New York and the Kunsthalle Wien in Vienna. It is to him that choreographer Fouad Boussouf has entrusted *TRACES / VĪA*. English sculptor **Antony Gormley**, Turner Prize winner in 1994,

knighted in 2014 is simply one of the biggest visual artists of our time, he is perhaps best known for his monumental *Angel of the North* (1998) or his iron installation of “bodyforms” *Sight* on the island of Delos in 2019. Gormley, who shares Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui's interest in Buddhist philosophy, was asked to design the set for *Sutra* as well as that of *Noetic*, presented at the La Bâtie festival.

They began collaborating 16 years ago. After *War and Peace* last season, it was only natural that Calixto Bieito entrusted **Rebecca Ringst** with designing the set for *Lady Macbeth de Mtsensk*. She is now one of the leading set designers and has received numerous international awards for her sets, which are as monumental as they are impressive.

As for **Henrik Ahr**, after having conceived the set for *Jenůfa* in the spring of 2002 at the Grand Théâtre for Tatiana Gürbaca, he will make a double appearance this season, creating in turn that of *Katia Kabanova* also with Gürbaca and of *Parsifal* for Michael Thalheimer, with whom he had already created a Verdi Cycle at the Opera Ballet Vlaanderen. His streamline, architectural style creates open space for free expression on stage and in the audience's imagination

# A Three-Part Conversation

**Migrating worlds, a three-way conversation between Aviel Cahn, general manager at the Grand Théâtre, Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, its new director of ballet and Clara Pons, theatre playwright and manager of La Plage.**



Left to right:  
Clara Pons, Aviel Cahn,  
Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui

## **Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, what made you want to come to Geneva?**

**SIDI LARBI CHERKAOUI** We worked together with Aviel Cahn when he was directing the Opera Vlaanderen and I was artistic director at the Royal Ballet of Flanders. But I also share a history with the ballet at the Grand Théâtre who danced two of my creations, *Loin* in 2005 and, more recently, *Fall*. And even though I have worked a lot all around the world, I have always lived in Belgium. At 45, I wanted to take the leap and move somewhere else. It was as though the stars were aligned.

## **Aviel Cahn, what were you expecting from Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui?**

**AVIEL CAHN** I thought it would be interesting to have an artist lead the company. It is normal elsewhere, but it had never been done in this company's history. We share very similar visions with Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui regarding what art is and what it should say about the times we live in, about society. We also have the common desire to build bridges between dance and

opera, which we want to create through osmosis. Obviously I am thrilled that an artist of his calibre decided to come and work in Geneva.

## **Which projects in particular are going to embody this marriage between ballet and opera?**

**AVIEL CAHN** The principle of such a notion was already present in productions from previous seasons, such as *Les Indes galantes* or *Atys*. Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui will first focus on the work with the company before designing these kinds of projects for the following seasons.

## **After three seasons, is it finally time to fulfil your ambition of opening the Grand Théâtre up to new audiences, or have the disturbances caused by Covid put a stop to this?**

**AVIEL CAHN** A lot of what we do is aimed at making the Grand Théâtre a place accessible to everyone. For obvious reasons, this program has been seriously impeded by recent health and safety concerns. From an artistic point of view, it is essential to be able to

attend the shows, to feel them and appreciate them in their entirety where they were enacted. But despite the challenges of the pandemic, we have received a lot of positive feedback regarding our ways of staying open. A new audience is making its way to the Grand Théâtre.

**CLARA PONS** The Grand Théâtre tries to grow symbiotically with the city. Our partnerships with other institutions, both cultural and non, share our drive to support each other, to jointly identify new forms of dialogue. It is like a nervous system: it grows slowly and when the time is right, it comes together, the feeling is born, it never stops moving, or simply because it is born from constant friction.

**“Migrating worlds” is the common thread running throughout the season. Do you build a season around a theme as a form of storytelling or a lever for artistic choices?**

**AVIEL CAHN** Some of the works have a strong connection to the season's theme. For example, Verdi's *Nabucco*. The stage direction has been entrusted to stage director Christiane Jatahy who is politically committed to the issue of migration. There is also the world premiere *Voyage vers l'Espoir* by Christian Jost, which initially previewed in 2020 and was postponed due to the pandemic. It follows a Kurdish family trying to reach Switzerland. Other productions have more of a symbolic tie to the theme, as is the case with *Parsifal* or *Katia Kabanova*. But even here we witness a metamorphosis or the characters' quest to attain perfection or a better world. It's the same with *Lady Macbeth de Mtsensk* and *La Juive* who transport us into a vision of social responsibility for the subject. Having said that, we have chosen this overarching theme to show that we are not making art for art's sake, rather to prove that our productions are pertinent to today's audiences, so it is almost a way of justifying why they are made as well as the considerable resources we receive to stage them.

**CLARA PONS** Having a theme for the season really motivates you to search for meaning: We could talk to you about all kinds of things, but we chose to present these works from this specific point of view. The title remains relatively broad as a way of opening the dialogue between past and present, showing that an institution like the Grand Théâtre is not a museum but somewhere that puts the works into context, that reads the past under the light of the present, but without wanting to obliterate it.

**So is it a migration to opera or in opera?**

**CLARA PONS** Our world is perpetually changing, so it is always shifting. Our mission is to play with these shifts, to remodel them in our different ways of behaving and doing, to open ourselves to others and, in return, to recontextualise the different times and visions that emerge, mount up and ultimately enrich our world.

**This topic is particularly close to your heart, Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, as your father is a migrant originally from Morocco and migration was often the inspiring force behind your choreography.**

**SIDI LARBI CHERKAOUI** It plays a role in everyone's life, that's what makes it so beautiful. Every child wants to carve out their own space and fly the nest one day. This is a type of migration as well. Leaving sometimes means wanting to escape an unbearable situation, but it also plays a part in personal development. Life only exists because it is constantly moving. Are we not experiencing a form of migration when we watch a show and it takes us elsewhere? Is this not what is happening within us?





# Editorial by Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui

**Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui is a figure of international renown like few others in today's world of dance. A brilliant author-choreographer with a hundred shows to his name touring the world, and former artistic director at the Royal Ballet of Flanders (2015-22). Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui shares some of his thoughts on his vision as the new artistic director of ballet at the Grand Théâtre de Genève.**



The ballet here is already part of my family, its performers have already danced my works: *Loin*, *Fall* and they rehearsed *Exhibition* right up until the second lockdown. As the new director, I want to give these dancers the opportunity to appear on stage as fully fledged human beings, not just as people who know how to move really well.

I believe in artists who understand the deep connections between all forms of art. Inviting choreographers like Fouad Boussouf and especially Damien Jalet to join us, is proof that I want to reveal artists' similarities, to honour the interconnection between music, visual arts and choreography. Collaborating with visual artists like Ugo Rondinone and Antony Gormley this season, will lend a new visual voice to the choreography. I often work with live music specially written for my shows: the arts merge and propel one another. These spirited artists are a part of my extended family, which opens up limitless possibilities.

My intention with the company is to create new shows and share my current repertoire of major works in which a large group of dancers can perform as a coherent whole. We have been so isolated in recent times that to see people come together and form a community may be of comfort to us and remind us that we are part of a much bigger whole. Shows like *Noetic* that we present at La Bâtie at the start of the season, or *Sutra*, the guest program for the ballet season, are a reflection of these interconnections.

I am always on the lookout for elements that can show us that what we have in common as humans, what our differences are. Are these really differences or more like choices? Sometimes we become

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