

Power games

Press kit

Season
23 — 24

GTG.CH



The 23-24 season photos were taken by Marc Asekhome, a photographer who lives and works between Zurich and Paris. The collaborative dimension of his practice fuels his research on and experimentation with aesthetic codes, the language of advertising and fashion photography, and how they interact with other genres such as documentary photography. Through the use of hybrid and varied formats, his work creates a dialogue between fiction and reality; it questions the importance of images in public spaces and everyday life.

Power games

Some accuse the opera of being old-fashioned, out of touch, and created for an elite audience. Really? After its season of “Migrating worlds”, which sadly and almost prophetically followed the war in Europe, the Grand Théâtre's program remains firmly rooted in our society's major issues, from one season to the next. It does not fight against the tide, instead it plunges head first into the tumultuous current of our world, holding up a mirror to history. And although the issues are varied and play out at different levels, everything relentlessly converges around a single keyword: power. To have it, to want it, to lose it, to master it, to abuse it, to play with it... Power covers a broad spectrum of meanings, its level of action is diverse and varied, whether anchored in the present or tales of old that have inspired four centuries of opera. Its multifaceted nature forms the backbone of our 23-24 season.

Power is, of course, a key factor at the geopolitical level; the most blatant example of which is being played out in the current tug-of-war between major powers such as the USA, China, Russia and Europe. *Don Carlos*, the *Tudor Trilogy*, and, in a more contemporary setting, the original production *Justice*, which looks at the exploitation of developing countries by multinationals, are the performances that convey this theme.

But make no mistake. Power games are not exclusive to countries and the

powerful, they also feed the stories of individuals. They permeate societal issues, ideological struggles and the class struggles in which we see the performers of *María de Buenos Aires* and *Der Rosenkavalier* evolve. Sometimes even its duality pervades where we least expect it, between mankind and the divine, as in the case of *Idomeneo* and *St. Francis of Assisi*, because the point where man sees his power end, that of God begins.

Yes, we tackle the divine. Who better than Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, director of ballet at the Grand Théâtre and Damien Jalet, associate artist of the ballet, to invoke it, question its power and its graces, in their own aesthetic and contemplative style, which they infuse into their productions and present to audiences this season.

It is impossible to embody these variations of power games without the help of an original cast, first-class conductors and emotive artists such as Milo Rau, Christoph Waltz, Marina Abramović, Marc Minkowski, Jonathan Nott, and Adel Abdessemed, whom Aviel Cahn invites season after season in keeping with his artistic line in Geneva. At the Grand Théâtre, we give the power to them, the artists. According to Francis Bacon, “Knowledge is true power.” It's up to us to play.

Big names from the world of contemporary art to bring the power games to life

In opera and ballet alike, the Grand Théâtre will host the very best in visual arts and contemporary art for the 23-24 season to lend a unique touch to its productions and influence audiences far beyond its confines. Let's highlight some prestigious names among the expected artists.



Adel Abdessemed
Stage director, set designer,
costumes and video
Saint François d'Assise



Marina Abramović
Set designer and concept
Boléro



Kohei Nawa
Set designer
Planet [wanderer]



Chiharu Shiota
Set designer
Idomeneo



Antony Gormley
Set designer
Noetic

For the opera season

Since his first solo exhibition in 2001, the French-Algerian artist **Adel Abdessemed** (*St. Francis of Assisi* – stage director and visual designer) has had several other exhibitions dedicated to his work, most notably at the MoMA P.S.1 in New York; at the San Francisco Art Institute; at Mathaf: Arab museum of modern art, Doha, and many more besides. A major retrospective was devoted to the artist at the Centre Pompidou in Paris in 2012, and he is represented in numerous international collections, both public and private.

Chiharu Shiota (*Idomeneo* – set designer) explores human existence through various dimensions by creating an existence within a void in her large-scale wire installations that include a variety of commonplace objects and external memories, or through her drawings, sculptures, photographs, and videos. She has had solo exhibitions all over the world and contributed to numerous international festivals such as the Oku-Noto International Art Festival, the Biennale of Sydney, the Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennale and the Yokohama Triennale. Shiota was selected to represent Japan at the 56th Venice Biennale in 2015.

For the ballet season

Marina Abramović (*Boléro* – set designer and concept) is unquestionably one of the most important artists of our time, the first to use performance as a form of visual art. While exploring the physical and mental limits of her being, she has resisted pain, exhaustion and danger in her quest for emotional and spiritual transformation. As a key member of the generation of pioneering performance artists, Abramović created some of the most historic early

performance pieces and remains one of the few still producing important long-term work.

Kohei Nawa (*Planet [wanderer]* – set designer) is a multidisciplinary artist who explores the perception of virtual and physical space and examines the relationship between nature and artificiality and between the individual and the whole, illustrating how parts aggregate together to create complex and dynamic structures. His notable solo exhibitions include: *L_B_S* at Ginza Maison Hermès, Tokyo; *Synthesis* at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo; *SCULPTURE GARDEN* at the Kirishima Open-air Art Museum, Kagoshima and *Throne* on view as part of the *Japonisms 2018: les âmes en résonance* at the Louvre Museum in 2018. He has notably participated in the 14th Asian Art Biennale in Bangladesh in 2010 (Grand Prize winner) and the Aichi Triennale in Nagoya, Japan in 2013.

Antony Gormley (*Noetic* – set designer) is widely acclaimed for his sculptures, installations and his public artworks, which examine the relationship of the human body to space. His work has developed the potential opened up by sculpture since the 1960s through a critical engagement with both his own body and those of others in a way that confronts fundamental questions of where human beings stand in relation to nature and the cosmos. His work has been recognised with prestigious awards: the Turner Prize in 1994, the South Bank Prize for Visual Art in 1999, the Bernhard Heiliger Award for Sculpture in 2007, the Obayashi Prize in 2012 and the Praemium Imperiale in 2013.

The operas

The season opens with the monumental **Don Carlos** (from 15 to 28 September 2023) by Giuseppe Verdi in the original French version, conducted by **Marc Minkowski**, which continues the exploration of the French Grand Opera after *Les Huguenots* (2020) and *La Juive* (2022). Spain under Philip II, dominated by the omnipresent Inquisition, acts as the backdrop for the characters of Schiller's aesthetic ideal. The stage director **Lydia Steier**, who brought us *Les Indes galantes* in 2019, is back armed with a fresco on absolutism and the culture of secrecy, inspired by films like *La Vie des autres*. A dark and claustrophobic universe where even King Philip II, brought to life by the great bass Dmitry Ulyanov, (who returns after *War and Peace*, *La Juive* and *Lady Macbeth by Mtsensk*) is certainly not the only one in power. At his side, the famous French baritone, Stéphane Degout in Marquis de Posa, the Swiss mezzo Ève-Maude Hubeaux, rising star of the operatic firmament, in the role of Princess Eboli and the Americans Charles Castronovo and Rachel Willis-Sørensen in the roles of Don Carlos and Elisabeth of Valois.

After *Einstein on the Beach* at the GTG in 2019, the Compagnia of **Daniele Finzi Pasca**, notably known for creating the impressive 2019 Fête des Vignerons, takes on the opera-tango of **María de Buenos Aires** (from 27 October to 5 November 2023), a surreal South American story set to music by Astor Piazzolla with a libretto by Horacio Ferrer. On a set designed by Argentinian Hugo Gargiulo, the Compagnia Finzi Pasca moves into an incessantly active Buenos Aires jostling with acrobats, dancers, tightrope walkers and storytellers who already wowed us with their new interpretation of *Einstein on the Beach*. All the solo roles are performed by women: the soprano Raquel Camarinha, with her piercing and moving vocal purity, takes the lead role, and at her side tango singer Inés Cuello, star of the tango scene in Argentina. The HEM Orchestra – with a few additions such as the bandoneonist Marcelo Nisinman – conducted by **Facundo Agudín**, will perform the mystical *milonga* of *María*.

Ariodante (on 5 October 2023), Georg Friedrich Händel's adaptation of Giacomo Antonio Perti's *Ginevra, Principessa di Scozia* of 1708, for which Antonio Salvi wrote the libretto, covers cantos IV, V and VI of *Ariosto's* tale about another knight in love besides Roland. The young and spellbinding mezzo-soprano Lea Desandre, will perform this desperate *Ariodante* for one evening under the guidance of one of the great masters in the

rediscovery of Baroque music, conductor **William Christie**, with his orchestra Les Arts Florissants. Nicolas Briançon will bring *Ariodante* to life with simplicity and resolution. A touring show, invited to perform at the GTG for one evening.

Christoph Waltz, actor and film star, best known for his Oscar-winning roles in Tarantino's *IngLOURIOUS BASTERDS* and *DjANGO UNCHAINED*, made his opera directorial debut, at Aviel Cahn's invitation, with Richard Strauss' *Der Rosenkavalier* at the De Vlaamse Opera in 2013, which the GTG is reviving with a *face-lift*. The rococo atmosphere of this play, which Stefan Zweig said belonged to the “world of yesterday”, is a signature element of **Der Rosenkavalier** (from 13 to 26 December 2023). On the other hand, it is the psychological precision of the piece that Waltz filters through his own refined and highly detailed interpretation, pinpointing the very serious contemporary resonance of the comic spirit of the past: Baron Ochs caught in a compromising position in a Viennese hotel also brings to mind a certain scandal which took place at a Sofitel in New York. Under **Jonathan Nott's** baton, the cast brings together some of the most beautiful Strauss voices of our time, with the radiant Maria Bengtsson taking up the role of the Marschallin again, which she previously played in Antwerp, Michèle Losier as Octavian and the bass Matthew Rose who will play the boorish Baron Ochs.

The world premiere of **Justice** (from 22 to 28 January 2024), 2nd inroad into opera by the most famous Swiss stage director, **Milo Rau** – after a streaming of *La clemenza di Tito* for the Grand Théâtre during the pandemic – who, for this project, could not escape his search for the documentary theatrical form as a political discourse on the current world. Democratic Republic of Congo (RDC) 2019: a tanker truck full of acid crashes into a bus causing more than twenty deaths. Choosing an event involving a Swiss multinational in the RDC, Milo Rau delivers a choral and elegiac work on the fate of a village and, beyond that, a reflection on the interests of various parties in this African country, brought to life by the libretto of the Congolese writer **Fiston Mwanza Mujila**. The power of the music, entrusted to the Catalan composer **Hèctor Parra**, will grip your soul while its evocative and expressive intensity is conveyed through a polished language and compact architecture. Performing alongside the tenor Peter Tantsits, who has already sung the role of Max Aue in *Les Bienveillantes* also by Parra, is legend Willard White and also the young



Image for Messiaen's St. Francis of Assisi © Marc Asekhamé

Ballets

Congolese countertenor, Serge Kakudji. It was Zurich's **Titus Engel**, a great specialist in contemporary music who brilliantly conducted *Einstein on the Beach* with such flair in 2019, who will conduct the OSR with the addition of Congolese jazz guitarist Kojack.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *Idomeneo* is the only one of his operas to feature a real ballet. The French roots of a work inspired by André Campa's *Idomeneo* partly explain young Wolfgang's need to include dance elements in his score. But it is also credible that Mozart did not refrain from releasing his choreographic verve to support the drama of *Idomeneo* and his adventures on land and at sea with a ballet that would be every bit as good as in Paris. For his first operatic staging as director of ballet at the Grand Théâtre de Genève, **Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui**, whose *Pelléas et Mélisande* he created with Damien Jalet and Marina Abramović was streamed in 2021, is teaming up with another great visual artist, Chiharu Shiota. In ***Idomeneo*** (from 21 February to 2 March 2024), they bind and unbind bodies, cords and wounded hearts to make an unusual presentation of this story between man and the gods. Under the musical direction of **Leonardo García Alarcón** with his Cappella Mediterranea, this time with the addition of musicians from the Geneva Chamber Orchestra and the best Mozartian singers of our time, Stanislas de Barbeyrac.

The libretto of Messiaen's only opera **St. Francis of Assisi** (from 11 to 18 April 2024), depicts the life of this great seeker of God's truth and founder of the Franciscan Order. The staging as well as the entire visual design of this impressive play in terms of its ambitions and suggestions, will be orchestrated by **Adel Abdessemed**, world-renowned contemporary artist, for the first time at the helm of a stage composition. Abdessemed's work separates opposites: between peace and adoration, between hope and damnation, between heaven and hell, the latter seen as the only antidote against the barbaric phenomena of our time. This French-speaking premiere will be directed by **Jonathan Nott**. As Principle Conductor of the famous Ensemble Intercontemporain from 1995 to 2000, and with his close ties to the world of 20th century French music, he was the ideal candidate to head his Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, the power of the Chorus of the GTG, and the ensemble of soloists in Messiaen's magical creation. We welcome English baritone Robin Adams, noteworthy in the contemporary repertoire, who will play the role for the first time.

To complete the Tudor trilogy, **Roberto Devereux** (from 31 May to 30 June 2024) takes us back to Elisabeth I of England in the twilight of her life. Continuing their exploration of the fictional character referred to as the Virgin Queen, **Mariame Clément** and set designer Julia Hansen, highlight the characters' contemporary issues, taking them out of the romantic pit where the 19th century bourgeois had entrapped them. We will find the passionate conductor **Stefano Montanari** alongside a cast that has been entertaining us for three years now: Elsa Dreisig as the ageing queen, Stéphanie d'Oustracas her rival, Sara Nottingham, and the tenor Edgardo Rocha as eternal favourites. They will be joined by the impressive baritone Nicola Alaimo as the mighty Lord Nottingham.

A trilogy provides the platform for telling a story in several episodes. In the ***Tudor Trilogy*** (*Anna Bolena* 18 and 26 June 2024 - *Maria Stuarda* 20 and 28 June 2024 - *Roberto Devereux* 23 and 30 June 2024), it is also an opportunity to find commonalities between the characters and to really get to know them, to evolve and grow old with them. Approaching *Anna Bolena*, *Maria Stuarda* and *Roberto Devereux* as an integral work right from the start, Mariame Clément and Julia Hansen strove to make connections and variations, but above all, to create transitions between these plays. Now that we can explore this spectral landscape at will from one period to the next, will the mirrors be reversed? Whatever the case may be, being able to experience these three operas, like a Wagner's *Ring*, one after the other, for a week, is a unique opportunity. For the soloists, it will certainly be a labyrinth of virtuosity, memory and endurance. So, an operatic event not to be missed: Viva Donizetti and long live bel canto!

More than a choreographer, **Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui** is a master. The conservation and demonstration of dance styles, of music from here and elsewhere, now and the past, and his propensity for both speech and movement creates a moment charged with mathematical, mystical and metaphysical understanding. Three of them make up **Éléments** (from 18 to 22 November 2023), evoking the three elements of Taoist cosmology. Academic and introspective, *Noetic* presents nineteen dancers manipulating the flexible carbon fibre bands created by visual artist **Antony Gormley** in a geometric transformation. In *Faun*, ode to the carnal union, Cherkaoui revives the innocent and savage sensuality of Nijinski's *L'Après-midi d'un faune*, to the music of the famous *Prelude* by Debussy, with some contemporary additions from Nitin Sawhney. *Boléro*, created in 2014 for the Opéra de Paris, represented the first collaborative work of Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, **Damien Jalet** and renowned visual artist **Marina Abramović**, who worked on the set design and concept. As Ravel's monumental crescendo crashes over the stage, dancers swirl in a macabre dance of tantric dimensions, with a visceral power to which only Death can deliver the final blow.

Associate artist of the ballet at the Grand Théâtre, Franco-Belgian choreographer **Damien Jalet** and Japanese visual artist Kohei Nawa came together for the first time in the production of *Vessel* in order to merge, challenge and transcend their respective modalities for expression. Between its mobile sculptures and sculptural performance, ***Planet[wanderer]*** (from 8 to 10 March 2024) echoes *Vessel* like the second panel of a diptych. Jalet and Nawa immerse a group of eight dancers into a choreographic reflection that resembles an initiatory stroll, with a contemporary reinterpretation of the Zen rock gardens of Kyoto as the setting for their exploration. *Planet [wanderer]* abstractly explores different phases of connection and disconnection, harmonious and fragile, violent and devastating through physical confrontation with the human body and various experimental materials, elements and degrees of solemnity. A raw and dreamlike tale of love between humans and the planet to which they are bound.

Accustomed to working on projects at the intersection of disciplines, **Rachid Ouramdane**, director of Chaillot – National Dance theatre, uses ballet dancers for ***Outsider*** (from 3 to 5 May 2024), an unprecedented collaboration between the GTG's ballet and our La Plage program. A balancing act, looking not for perfection but for the



Image for Planet [wanderer] © Marc Asekhome

right mastery of gestures, Ouramdane mixes extreme athletes with the fugues of the choreographed group, opening up the power of both by cross-pollinating their traits. Ouramdane is fascinated by the moment when everything falls or this line breaks, or almost breaks. These intertwined lines also weave their way through the set design and, intangibly, the music. It will be the piano compositions by American composer Julius Eastman that will sound to mark this encounter with oblivion. An influencer in New York's minimalist scene, Eastman was politically active, a figure in the gay culture, and a solitary poet whose melancholy fed his genius as well as his tragic fate.

The 'double bill' of **Forces** (from 12 to 16 June 2024) brings together *BUSK* and *STRONG*, two powerful works by two women at the forefront of choreography in our time, who were invited to recreate these iconic programs from their respective repertoires with the ballet at GTG. In *BUSK*, created by Canadian **Aszure Barton** in 2010, the dancers have to rely on the collective – the hive mind – to perform Barton's stratified and complex choreographic structures, which then give way to the nuance of each individual. In *STRONG*, created with the Staatsballett Berlin in 2019, **Sharon Eyal** a former dancer of the Batsheva Dance Company, combines trepidation, solitude, strength and resilience in an ecstatic experience for seventeen mesmerised dancers. Sharon Eyal's work is based on the shared pleasure that sometimes stems from pain, as dancers know only too well, or from the pleasure of fighting with the same strength for the same goals.

The ballet from the Grand Théâtre on tour

Ukiyo-e choreography Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui

- Festival RomeEuropa, Auditorium Parco della Musica Rome, Italy (6 and 7 September 2023)
- La Biennale de Lyon, Maison de la Danse Lyon, France (from 11 to 19 September 2023)
- Torino Danza Festival, Fonderie Limone Turin, Italy (29 and 30 September 2023)
- Théâtre des Salins, scène nationale Martiges, France (3 and 4 October 2023)
- Baluarte Pamplune, Spain (8 October 2023)

Faun choreography Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui

Ukiyo-e choreography Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui

- Teatro Real Madrid, Spain (from 11 to 14 October 2023)

Skid choreography Damien Jalet

Via choreography Fouad Boussouf

- Festival de Danse Cannes, France (7 December 2023)
- Festspielhaus St Pölten, Austria (15 December 2023)

Faun choreography Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui

Via chorégraphie Fouad Boussouf

- Graf Zeppelin Haus Friedrichshafen, Germany (9 January 2024)

Via choreography Fouad Boussouf

Ukiyo-e chorégraphie Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui

- Forum am Schlosspark Ludwigsburg, Germany (12 and 13 January 2024)

Skid choreography Damien Jalet

Thr(o)ugh choreography Damien Jalet

- De Singel Anvers, Belgium (from 19 to 21 January 2024)

Faun choreography Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui

Noetic choreography Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui

- Théâtre de Caen Caen, France (27 and 28 January 2024)
- La Maison Nevers, France (31 January 2024)
- Liceu Barcelone, Spain (from 27 February to 1 March 2024)

Outsider choreography Rachid Ouramdane

- Théâtre La Villette Paris, France (from 21 to 24 June 2024)

Program of La Plage

La Plage, the playground of the Grand Théâtre, is made not of sand but of golden hours, setting suns, twilight and conviviality, a little bit everywhere, depending on the mood, sometimes inside the Grand Théâtre, sometimes extra-muros. La Plage, it's the echo of the city. A way of diving stripped bare into the reverberances of urban life.

La Plages intra-muros

Regulars will recognise these unmissable events:

Late Nights (25 November 2023, 2 February 2024 and 10 May 2024) or the art of returning to the opera and never going back home; **Sleepover** (13 April 2024) or the art of sleeping at the opera; some **Apéropéras** and their slice of life for each operatic production presented with humour or in a totally offhand manner; **Grand Brunches** to debrief guests on the week in a sparkling, golden setting; **Coulisses**, **Éclairages** and **Intropéras** for the more curious visitors **Guided tours** and the newly created **Apérovistes**, which combine private visits with those of the workshops, **Public workshops** one Saturday morning or the traditional **Open house day** (10 September 2023).

La Plage for the family

Given the success it enjoyed last season, La Plage will once more present **Rosa et Bianca** (from 11 to 21 October 2023) a musical performed to the tunes of Donizetti, directed by Sybille Wilson, as well as **La Souris Traviata** by Julia Deit-Ferrand, which delighted the little ones, the story of a mouse who dreams of becoming a singer (1 and 4 November 2023). An experience that should make them want to come and see **Colorama** (from 15 November 2023 to 18 May 2024) workshop-show written by Julia Deit-Ferrand. As for **Hush** (Salle du Lignon 27 and 28 January 2024), voted best opera for young audiences at the Young Audience Music Awards 2021, we're convinced it will motivate young audiences to visit the theatre. Also worth noting the unprecedented collaboration between La Plage and the ballet from GTG for **Outsider** (from 3 to 5 May 2024).

La Plage extra-muros

The theme for this season as well as that of some of our productions, will be at the heart of joint and individual projects and events. Working of course, with our partners from the Orchestre de Suisse Romande and the Geneva Chamber Orchestra, but also with Antigél (**Extra Life**



Image for *Rosa et Bianca* © Joëlle Flume

by Gisèle Vienne at La Comédie from 21 to 24 February 2024), les Bains des Pâquis (**Les Aubes Musicales** 9 August 2023), La Bâtie–Festival de Genève (**Kali Malone** 3 September 2023), Les Cinémas du Grütli (four **Cinéopéras**), Les Créatives, La Comédie (**Sur les ossements de la mort** an adaptation by Simon McBurney (from 11 to 21 October 2023), the Geneva Camerata, the Electron Festival, the Théâtre de Vidy (**Le Jardin des délices** from 26 September to 4 October 2023), **Le Ciel de Nantes** (from 31 January to 8 February 2024) and **Antigone en Amazonie** (from 19 to 22 June 2024) and Vernier-Culture. Not to mention the traditional summer evening **María de Buenos Aires sous les étoiles** at the Parc des Eaux-Vives (in June). The more, the merrier!

La Plage also revolves around mutual aid and partnerships, school and community programs, and tailor-made projects for anyone who tries to dock and allows us to come on board.

Recitals and concerts



Roberto Alagna's debut at the Grand Théâtre de Genève

Our season's program will be interspersed with five recitals and concerts. **Lawrence Brownlee** (20 September 2023), one of the exceptional Rossini tenors of our time, leads the way and for his long-awaited return to the Neuve stage, he is accompanied by his young colleague **Levy Sekgapane** for a double bill of pure bel canto pleasure. **Matthias Goerne** (15 October 2023) one of the all-time great interpreters of the German Lieder will sing Franz Schubert's *Die schöne Müllerin* in his deep and sombre voice, accompanied on the piano by his orchestrator Alexander Schmalcz. To celebrate the new year, after Offenbach last season, we give way to Broadway! Baritone **Simon Keenlyside** and the **Geneva Camerata** conducted by David Greilsammer will see in the twelve strokes of midnight with American melodies

and tunes by George Gershwin, Cole Porter, Rogers & Hammerstein (31 December 2023). We then leave this excitement behind us to go on a "Voyage in time" where **Sandrine Piau** (1 March 2024) one of the most elegant and radiant French soprano voices, certainly one of the most loved, leads the way. Finally, the debut of tenor **Roberto Alagna** at the Grand Théâtre (26 May 2024), a major opera star who won the hearts of a very large audience with his recordings of popular songs, marks the grand finale of the concert season. Together with his wife, soprano **Aleksandra Kurzak**, they will harmonise their two voices with finesse and precision in a packed vocal program.

Spotlight on some of the leading artists who will mark the season

In addition to the prestigious names in contemporary art who will light up the Neuve stage in 2023–2024, let's reveal some of the renowned artists who are also expected there:

Stage Directors

Daniele Finzi Pasca (*María de Buenos Aires*), co-founder of la Compagnia Finzi Pasca for which he creates and directs several shows, including such operatic works as the Requiem and *Aida* by Verdi for the Mariinsky Theatre in St Petersburg or *I Pagliacci* and *Carmen* for the Teatro di San Carlo in Naples. He is responsible for the unforgettable *Einstein on the Beach* at the GTG and such large-scale events as the 2006 Turin Olympics, Sochi 2014 and the 2019 Fête des Vignerons.

Milo Rau (*Justice*), artistic director of NTGent since the 2018/19 season, founder of the IIPM International Institute of Political Murder, has published over 50 plays, books, films and actions. His theatre productions have been shown at all the major international festivals, including the Berlin Theatertreffen, the Festival d'Avignon, the Venice Biennale, the Vienna Festival Weekends, and the Brussels Kunstenfestivaldesarts, and have been touring in over 30 countries. Rau has received many awards, including the Peter Weiss Prize 2017, the 3sat Prize 2017 and the Saarbrücken Poetics Lectureship for Drama 2017.

Christoph Waltz (*Der Rosenkavalier*) is an internationally acclaimed and Oscar-winning film and theatre star. Since the beginning of his career, he has been known for his numerous television productions and gained international recognition in the Quentin Tarantino films: *Inglourious Basterds* and *Django Unchained*. He will stage his fourth operatic work in Geneva after Beethoven's *Fidelio* in Vienna, R. Strauss' *Der Rosenkavalier* in 2013 and Verdi's *Falstaff* in 2017 at the De Vlaamse Opera.

Musical Directors

Named Conductor of the Year by Opernwelt magazine in 2020, **Titus Engel** (*Justice*) is respected for his expertise in the field of historical performance practice as well as

for his conducting of complex contemporary projects. Since his operatic debut in Dresden, he has been regularly invited to perform at the opera houses in Frankfurt, Stuttgart, Hamburg, Berlin, Munich, Lyon, Basel and Geneva, where he has conducted, among others, Wagner's *Lohengrin*, Berg's *Wozzeck*, Strauss' *Salome*, Nielsen's *Maskarade*, and Haas' *Bluthaus*. Together with Lydia Steier, he brought Stockhausen's *Donnerstag* to the stage at the Theater Basel in 2016. He will be the Principal Conductor of the Basel Sinfonietta during the 2023/24 season.

An exceptional conductor always to be found in front of the most prestigious stages, especially with his orchestra Les Musiciens from Louvre, **Marc Minkowski** (*Don Carlos*) continues his work on the French Grand Opéra in Geneva, which started with *Les Huguenots* in 2020. We welcomed him again in the same year with Handel's Messie, then again in 2022 with Fromental Halévy's *La Juive*. General Director of Opéra de Bordeaux for several years, the work in his repertoire spans from the Baroque to the classical, as well as a few flings with Wagner and Verdi. He is now one of the great specialists of 19th century French opera.

Under the guidance of Gabriel Garrido, **Leonardo García Alarcón** (*Idomeneo*) embarked on a Baroque adventure and in just a few years he became the predestined conductor of the Baroque scene. He created his own ensemble, Cappella Mediterranea, that he founded to accompany the Namur Chamber Choir, which he took over in 2010. A new chapter began in his career in 2022, with the creation of his oratorio *La Passione di Gesù*, his first major contemporary composition. His extensive discography is unanimously praised by critics.

Choreographers

Sharon Eyal (*FORCES*) danced with the Batsheva Dance Company and started choreographing within the framework of the troupe's Batsheva Dancers Create project. Artistic director and the troupe's official choreographer, she began creating pieces for other dance companies around the world in 2009. In 2013, she launched L-E-V with Gai Behar and at the same time received commissions to create for external companies:

the Netherland Dans Theater, the Staatsballett Berlin, the Opéra de Paris ballet, the Kungliga Baletten and the GöteborgsOperans Danskompani. She collaborates with such great names as Christian Dior Couture and Maria Grazia Chiuri for various fashion shows.

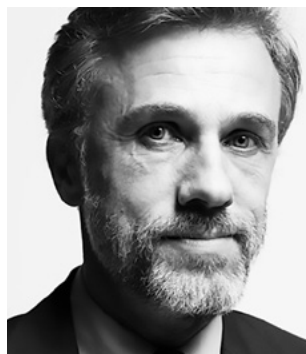
Rachid Ouramdane (*Outsider*) cultivates an art of encounter, whose sensitive and entire experience requires the questioning of all prejudices. Today, he directs his research towards a choreographic writing based on principles of accumulation for large ensembles, as in *Tout autour* for the 24 dancers of the Lyon Opera House Ballet or in the play *Tenir le temps* for 16 dancers which debuted at the Festival Montpellier Danse in July 2015. He is regularly invited by companies in France and abroad.

Performers

María Bengtsson (*Der Rosenkavalier*) has performed at the greatest international venues, such as the London Royal Opera House, La Scala in Milan, the Wiener Staatsoper and the Opéra de Paris. In recent seasons, she sang the Countess (*Le Nozze di Figaro*), Marschallin (*Der Rosenkavalier*) and the Countess (*Capriccio*) at the Wiener Staatsoper, Blanche (*Dialogues des carmélites*) at the Frankfurt Opera, Pamina (*Die Zauberflöte*) in Berlin and the soprano part of Verdi's Requiem staged by Calixto Bieito at the Hamburg Staatsoper.

Inés Cuello (*María de Buenos Aires*) is an Argentinian music performer whose versatility and talent allow her to slide in and out of different music genres with perceptive purpose and care. In 2022, she released her latest album *Gardel*, which presents a musical journey through the most outstanding works of the classic Gardelian repertoire with a fresh and modern take that respects and honours the understated, elegant and charming spirit of the pinnacle of Argentine tango in the world: Carlos Gardel.

Stéphane Degout (*Don Carlos*) made his debut in the role of Papageno (*Die Zauberflöte*) at the Festival d'Aix-en-Provence, which launched his international career. Since then he has performed at the greatest operatic venues: Opéra de Paris, Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, and Opéra Comique, as well as at the Berlin Staatsoper, La Monnaie, Theater an der Wien, the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden, Lyric Opera Chicago, the Metropolitan Opera in New York, the Teatro alla Scala, the Bavarian State Opera, the Nationale Opera in



Christoph Waltz
Stage director
Der Rosenkavalier



Elsa Dreisig
Soprano
Tudor Trilogy



Lea Desandre
Mezzo-soprano
Idomeneo and Ariodante



Milo Rau
Stage director
Justice

Amsterdam and the Opernhaus Zürich. Stéphane Degout was nominated the “Operatic Artist of the Year” in 2012 and in 2019 at the Victoires de la Musique Classique.

Lea Desandre (*Idomeneo et Ariodante*), vocal discovery at the Victoires de la Musique Classique in 2017 and nominated in the “Lyrical Artist” category in 2021, experienced huge success the same year in the role of Cherubino (*Le Nozze di Figaro*) at the Festival d'Aix-en-Provence. A role she took up again at the Opéra de Paris, Zurich Opera House, Liceu Barcelona, and Opéra de Lausanne. More recent roles include singing Cherubino (*Le Nozze di Figaro*) at the Salzburg Festspiele, Stéphano (*Roméo and Juliette*) at the Opéra de Paris, Dido (*Dido & Æneas*) at the Teatros del Canal, and Annio (*La Clemenza di Tito*) on a European tour.

In 2016, **Elsa Dreisig** (*Tudor Trilogy*) was awarded First Prize as best female singer at the Operalia-Plácido Domingo competition and was named “Young Artist of the Year” by Opernwelt magazine and “Vocal Discovery” at the Victoires de la musique classique. She was a member of the Opéra Studio at the Staatsoper de Berlin from 2015 to 2017, where she was given the opportunity to take on such roles as Pamina (*Die Zauberflöte*) and Eurydice (*Orphée et Eurydice*). She also made debut appearances at the Opéra national de Paris (Pamina), at the Zurich Opera House (Musetta, *La Bohème*) and at the Festival d'Aix-en-Provence (Micaëla, *Carmen*) as well as with the Berlin Philharmonic. Last season she lit up the stage at the Grand Théâtre in the lead role of *Anna Bolena*.

Peter Tantsits (*Justice*) most notably embodied the role of Georges Méliès in *To the Moon and Back* by Andrew Norman, conducted by Simon Rattle, and has performed concerts with major orchestras such as the Berlin Philharmonic, NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchestra, London Symphony Orchestra, Radio Filharmonisch Orkest, the Munich Philharmonic, the New York Philharmonic, Orchestre de Radio France, Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra of Finland, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the RTÉ Symphony Orchestra, Britten Sinfonia and the WDR Symphony Orchestra.

Set designers and costume designers

After having worked as an assistant to Vivienne Westwood, **Cédric Mpaka** (*Justice*) began working as

a freelance costume designer after the 2015/16 season. His most important works include the premiere of *Böhm* at the Graz theatre, *Volksvernichtung* at the Burgtheater in Vienna, and the Austrian premiere of *Am Königsweg* by Elfriede Jelinek at the Landestheater Niederösterreich, for which he designed the costumes in collaboration with the Nobel-prize winner. He also collaborated with Landestheater Niederösterreich for *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan* and *Hamlet*, the Theater an der Wien for *Salome*, and the Semperoper de Dresde for *L'Orfeo*.

Annette Murschetz (*Der Rosenkavalier*) designed her first set in 1992 for the Graz theatre (Die Zofen and the production of Marc Günther by *Herzog Theodor von Gothland*). She then went on to work with such stage directors as Alfred Kirchner, Jürgen Flimm, and Andrea Breth, as well as conductors including Simon Rattle and Nikolaus Harnoncourt. Since 2006, she has worked regularly with stage director Martin Kušej, with whom she has collaborated on numerous productions at the Residenztheater in Munich and at the Marstall, as well as on various operatic productions, e.g. for the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden and the Festival d'Aix-en-Provence.

Writers

Fiston Mwanza Mujila (*Justice*) is a poet and writer born in the RDC. For his stage directions, or rather his performances, he likes to collaborate with musicians, turning them into a literary-musical experience. His long poem *Le Fleuve dans le ventre* (The River in the Belly, 2014) refers to the Cong River, which strongly inspires Fiston Mwanza Mujila's work. His literary breakthrough came with his first novel *Tram 83* (2014), which has been translated several times and for which he has received numerous awards. These include the Grand Prix du Premier Roman of the Société des Gens des Lettres and the International Literature Prize of the House of World Cultures, as well as a nomination for the Man Booker International Prize.

Let the games begin!

A conversation with Aviel Cahn, Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui and Clara Pons



From left to right: Clara Pons, Aviel Cahn and Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui

When viewed under the banner of “Power games”, it is easy to weave the thread of this new season through *Don Carlos* or the “Tudor Trilogy” of Donizetti’s operas culminating with *Roberto Devereux*, and performed in its full glory at the end of the season to Handel’s *Ariodante*. The connection that ties the pieces together is without doubt of a more spiritual nature at times, as is the case with Messiaen’s *St. Francis of Assisi*. What’s the story behind the creation of *Justice* by the Catalan composer Hèctor Parra and stage director Milo Rau?

Aviel Cahn: *Justice*, is certainly the pivotal production of our season. Inspired by Milo Rau’s work with his staged courtroom format (*The Congo Tribunal*, *The Moscow Trials*), the play’s main dramatic elements revolves around an accident in the Katanga mining region involving a multinational company headquartered in Switzerland. The play gives a voice to all the stakeholders involved: the victims, their families, local populations, politicians, multinational officials, NGOs and Christian communities.

Clara Pons: It’s about an accident that could happen any time. The opera seeks to surpass the anecdotal dimension in order to touch on a more universal narrative, while remaining rooted in the real world. It’s a type of courtroom where everyone tells their version of the facts. There’s no judgement, instead it examines the complexity of such a situation. The Congolese poet Fiston Mwanza Mujila, who wrote the libretto with Milo Rau, enriches it with a very strong affinity to the myths and legends tied to the land, to the precious stones, and to the rituals for living and dying in this region.

Another rare pearl, *María de Buenos Aires*, the opera-tango by Astor Piazzolla to be staged by Daniele Finzi Pasca, who already directed the production of *Einstein on the Beach* at the start of your first season.

AC: This work gives us the premise to attract audiences to the Grand Théâtre who wouldn’t normally come. New life is being breathed into the operatic world now as it opens up to other repertoires. Nowadays, big opera house in the United States sometimes find they have

more success with original productions than with works from their repertoires. Piazzolla’s opera was not performed very often after its premiere in the late 60s. But it has been making a gradual comeback everywhere for some time now and features in the artistic programs of opera houses.

Are there any composers or genres of works that you exclude from your program because you don’t like them?

AC: No, but there are some operas or genres that are more difficult to stage than others. Take, for example, the genre of operetta. I asked several directors to stage a work by Offenbach. They all refused. It is a very difficult genre, and, as you can imagine, if on top of this you have to devise something interesting, it becomes even more complicated!

Another magnet for drawing in new audiences is the casting of well-known personalities. Like Christoph Waltz, the actor who directed *Der Rosenkavalier* by Richard Strauss...

AC: Yes, the production dates back to 2013, at the De Vlaamse Opera, and it will be remade with a new cast and new costumes. It will be conducted by the musical director of the Orchestre de la Suisse romande, Jonathan Nott. He will also conduct Olivier Messiaen’s *St. Francis of Assisi*, which has never been performed in Geneva. The size of the orchestra is so big, we have to put it on the stage. The artist Adel Abdessemed who designed the production had to accommodate this dimension into his work. This is one of the projects we could not show due to Covid, as with Deussy’s *Pelléas et Mélisande*, which we could only stream, and so we will include it again in a future season.

And here is the ideal opportunity to transition over to you, Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, because you directed this show with Damien Jalet and visual artist Marina Abramović. Here you are at the end of your first season as artistic director of ballet at the Grand Théâtre. What is your initial overall impression?

Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui: It is a bit early to draw any conclusions, but I can say that the work is very enjoyable. Something very peaceful reigns here, a natural benevolence that precludes any desire to topple people or things. When a problem presents itself,

we resolve it, it is as simple as that. And the Grand Théâtre has ambitious goals. We were able to make certain dreams come true, like the *Sutra* ballet despite having to face the almost superhuman odds of arranging authorisations to allow the Chinese monks to travel. I also like the way it forges ties with the artistic community in Geneva. It is fascinating to see how everything eventually comes together.

In this new season, you are not creating any new choreography for the ballet, instead you are staging an opera, Mozart’s *Idomeneo*.

SLC: In my mind, creating, staging and choreographing are all intertwined. My stage directions are a bit like choreographies and my choreographies are stage directions. As it turns out, the ballet will be touring a lot this season as it has a new repertoire we’d like to show.

AC: I wanted to develop the relationship between ballet and opera from the first season. Several shows reflect this desire: Rameau’s *Les Indes galantes*, *Pelléas et Mélisande* of course, *Didon and Enée* choreographed, danced and staged by the Peeping Tom company, and then last season Lully’s *Atys* by Angelin Preljocaj. *Idomeneo* pursues this desire. This will be a challenge for you Larbi, won’t it, because you haven’t worked with opera *seria* yet, have you?

SLC: When staging Gluck’s *Alceste*, I touched on the question of the power of the gods over people, which plays such a central role in *Idomeneo* as well. How we negotiate our fate and how we try to influence it. We all do this, every day. In the end, what interests me, whether it’s in ballet or opera, are human beings, their psychology.

How do you manage to work with singers? Do you try and get them to move like dancers?

SLC: Whether it’s a singer, dancer or musician, it doesn’t matter. I am more interested in the human being that this body reveals than in the discipline of the body. I try to make the subliminal nature of the character express itself through movement. I have worked a lot with singers in this way. I try to go a bit further each time. And many young singers are accomplished artists who know that embracing multiple disciplines gives them the means to deepen their art.

Press contacts

Let's talk about this season's ballets

SLC: Damien Jalet, associate artist at the ballet with whom I have been working for more than twenty years, presents *Planet [wanderer]*, a show created in Paris last year, inspired by images of the Fukushima disaster. It's as if the characters evolve on a different planet, like aliens. We also revisited, *Boléro*, with Damien Jalet, which was created for the Opéra de Paris in 2013. Here we broke down the hierarchical relationships between the dancers to give everyone the chance to shine by creating entities that never stay the same – it was on this show that we first collaborated with Marina Abramović. We round off the evening with the reproduction of *Noetic* and *Faun* (NDR performed one evening at Annemasse in 2022 as part of La Bâtie), but this time the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande will be in the pit. Finally, we have an evening dedicated to female choreographers, most notably Sharon Eyal, whose style is very rhythmic, almost trancelike. She will guide dancers to a new form of expression, because it is this multilingual approach that I am trying to develop with and for the ballet at the Grand Théâtre.

AC: I believe that the arrival of Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, the success of how own shows, the collaborations with Château Rouge, in Annemasse, with L'Usine centre and the Museum of Art and Hisotry in Geneva, have given the ballet of the Grand Théâtre a new status in the region. It was our goal. The enthusiasm shown by audiences is very encouraging and fills us with confidence for the future.

CP: At La Plage, we are also taking the opportunity of shining the spotlight on ballet. We have invited choreographer Rachid Ouramdane, who will integrate non-dancers in his production. Then, always in the same spirit, we will continue to collaborate with other (cultural) institutions in Geneva, to spread our expertise elsewhere. And so, we will return to Vernier for the third time with a guest production. And we will also invite all audiences to grace our building to discover our events, which are sometimes unexpected and often far from preconceived!

Interview by Jean-Jacques Roth.

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