

CLAIRE CROIZÉ

EVOL



Claire, throughout your parcours as a choreographer, you have worked on the relationship between music and the body. Is that interest also present in *EVOL*? In what sense?

For ten years, my work indeed had taken me further along this path. Then, in my previous performance, *Primitive* –and for the first time in my career – I started working with dancers with silence during the creation process. I wanted to explore questions like: What makes us move? What is the source of dance? We did breathing and pulsation exercises and created movement from there on. An important source of inspiration was the video *Primitive* by artist Apichatpong Weerasethakul. It shows a group of youngsters wearing headphones who are running and dancing. As a spectator, I had a very physical reaction to this video. This was realised not only by how it was filmed but also by the use of basic actions and gestures like running and jumping. I recognised the power of these movements, and also used them for the performance. I wanted to create a similar physical experience for our audience as I had had with the work of Weerasethakul. Rhythm was very present in *Primitive*: I wanted the audience to

be able to hear the rhythm through seeing the body and be able to internalise it. With *EVOL*, I'm taking things one step further. Instead of rhythm, I now focus more on musicality and instead of basic actions, I work with more complex movement, taking the personal- movement language of the individual dancers as starting point.

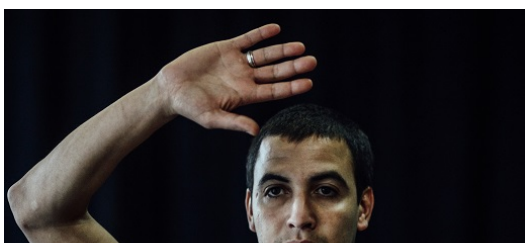
How does that desire translate itself in the working process? How do you work with your dancers on evoking their own personal movement-language?

As we did for *Primitive*, we started working and composing in complete silence. It is something that I often do myself when improvising alone. It is challenging to keep attentive and produce material. It requires an inner focus and a certain concentration. I challenge the dancers to combine their own freedom within my limitations and in response to the silence to focus on the music of their bodies. At first, it is about finding out about their musicality. I ask them to pay attention to the duration, timing and tone of their movements. Next, they have to figure out how to compose with their bodies in, for instance, developing phrases. I ask them to compose as they're doing. We also do specific exercises. I ask them, for example, to create a crescendo while walking. Then, I 'super compose': I slightly adapt their movements by asking the dancers to make them longer, slower, faster... Four dancers can stand for four very different senses of musicality.



Of course, I already had that in the back of my mind when selecting the dancers I'm working with. They're each very different.

Claire, with whom I have worked since 2005, is strong, sharp and determined. She has a strong imagination and always surprises me. It presents me with something that I can't control and that fascinates and challenges me. On the other hand, Youness, who I already worked with for *Primitive*, is very down to earth. He also approaches things differently than the others. I once asked the dancers as exercise to translate the first elegy of Rilke through their bodies,. While the other dancers evoked the words and Claire also evoked every sign, Youness had a broader approach: he evoked the sentence as a whole. He's also very good rhythmically. Jason, I met in the studio. We worked together for one morning. I immediately knew that I wanted to work with him. He has a very airy quality and is very precise. Emmi comes from Finland. She has a very natural quality and is totally open towards others. Unlike the other performers, who all graduated from



P.A.R.T.S., she studied at SEAD. She has had a different parcours and therefore has a different story. That also interested me.

How do you then bring these very different personalities and 'musicalities' together in a composition?



We work both individually and in dialogue, in settings where the dancers respond to the musicality of the others in duets, trios or group pieces. When improvising together, I want to make sure that I don't lock them up in one role. For example, I don't want it to always be Youness, who's inclined towards rhythm, who gives the pulse. What's also important to me is that I understand what's going on and who's

doing what. I don't want to lose the dancers: it needs to be 'readable' what they're doing. I also want it to be readable for the audience. I want the dancers to dance as they are saying something and the audience to understand what they are saying through their movements only.

Why this concern with 'readability'? Why is it so important to you?

As dance artists, we first and foremost communicate through movement: the body is our first medium. In order to communicate clearly, you have to understand what you're working with. Even if it's blurriness that you want to communicate, you still need to master the blurriness. Also, on a more personal account, I find a lot of joy in digging out movements: in working on articulation and writing and mastering them. Equally, it pleases me when I can read the body: understand what's going on.



How will this concern with readability translate in the performance? If you want the audience to understand what the dancers are saying through their movements only, does that mean that the performance will be in silence?

In rehearsals, we don't only work in silence. As a second step in the working process, I also use external sources that the performers can respond to, like poems from Rilke. I made this choice upon their request. They told me that

they needed to know what they were saying, if they were to communicate something. This opened up a lot of interesting questions for me, questions that I'm still investigating. Why, for instance, is it easier for spectators to read movements when they're based on a text (even when the text is not given away) than when they come from a personal inner impulse?

Holding the silence in a performance might be too heavy. At first, I was thinking of using the music of David Bowie. His song 'Five Years' spoke to me especially. When I prepared for *EVOL*, we were simultaneously working on our structural subsidy, which would cover a five-year period, and wondering where we might be in five years from now. There was therefore this connection with Bowie's song. I like the idea of perhaps using Bowie's music in the performance. I have never worked with Western pop music before. At the same time, I'm also still questioning the idea. Bowie's music is very popular- everybody has a memory about his songs. This might pose a challenge. It might also create the wrong expectations. On the other hand: why not go with my first intuition. A process is about trying things out. Nothing is final, all can still evolve.



You mentioned that you also work with Poems from Rilke. Why Rilke?



From the first time that I read Rilke's elegies in 2009, they took me. Rilke's writing is very romantic and lyrical. In that sense, the texts have the same spirit as the music of Mahler, which I've worked with a lot. I was curious to find out what type of musicality his poems would provoke.

Different elements from Rilke's texts are interesting for what we're doing. The notions of urgency, impulse and love that we're working on, definitely make sense with Rilke. His texts speak about an angel-figure, moving between earth and sky. That somehow relates to the qualities of some of the dancers: Jason has an airy quality, while Amy somehow likes to be upside-down. Rilke's work presents itself as a 'chant parlé' or spoken music. I was also very pleased with this link. That the text is constructed as an inner speech helps the dancers: it makes

it more concrete for them. We did different exercises, where they danced while saying the text and also where they would first dance (in silence) and then afterwards say the text out loud. Again, I get four different responses.

Are Rilke's elegies to you a tool you use in rehearsals or will they also be integrated in the performance?

That is still a question mark. For sure, Rilke could make my life easier: it could give a dramaturgy to the performance. I could for instance follow the structure of the book, which is full of modulations. It is a hymn to life, beauty and love but there's also a sense of desperation. Another option might be to follow the different characters evoked in the poems and translate them on stage. What is sure however is that Rilke will inspire the costumes. The dancers will have another 'skin' under their costume: to represent that they are looking for their inner speech.

Rilke and Bowie seem worlds apart. How do you see that? How do you tie together your different sources of inspiration?

I always first follow my intuition and then look for sense. To me, it is very meaningful that the first elegy of Rilke starts with a scream. I wanted the dancers to feel a certain kind of urgency or necessity in what they were doing. Screaming gets you in that mood. In the songs of David Bowie, I felt that scream again. Rilke's poems have an esoteric, oneiric quality to them. They surpass reality. That also counts for the lyrics of David Bowie: his texts always have a sort of surreal quality.

Julie RODEYNS