

# Bruzz, February 2020

## Gilles Bechet

### INTERVIEW

#### **Michèle Noiret makes the ruins dance**

***Showing beauty is also a form of resistance. Fluently merging the languages of theatre, dance and cinema, the Brussels choreographer Michèle Noiret holds up a mirror to our world in dislocation. The result is *Le Chant des Ruines*, a manual for survival through dance.***

After various solo and duo shows, Michèle Noiret returns to a group creation in which her five incredible dancers ponder over how to survive in a world of ruins. The threats of cataclysms in gestation announce the end of certainty and intimacy. Dance, which works like individual and collective breathing, is then seen as a salvation. The minimalist set, cardboard sheets combined in sophisticated perspectives, creates landscapes in constant metamorphosis.

In this show the Brussels choreographer continues her singular career, which comprises thirty or so creations. Her choreographic language, highly physical and poetic at the same time, started incorporating interactive sound and vision technologies at a very early stage to blur the space of the stage and the reference points of the spectator. After being associate artist of the Théâtre des Tanneurs from 2000 to 2006, then the Théâtre National from 2006 to 2017, the creator has developed *Le Chant des Ruines* with clearly reduced means. In this relative destitution, she has found the resources and creativity to reinvent herself without losing her visual and emotional stage presence.

**As an epigraph for the show you quote the philosopher Zygmunt Bauman, who talks about the liquidity of society today. Could liquidity also be a metaphor for dance?**

**Michèle Noiret:** He alludes to a society that is no longer able to understand things because everything happens very fast and one has the impression that everything slips through one's fingers. It is indeed a metaphor that's very close to dance. The whole choreographic part of it can be seen as an exodus in which the dancers help each other, discover things that they bring into existence on the stage. I did not want body language that is overly pronounced, overly designed, which is a little bit my trademark to a certain degree. So we worked a lot on removing things. It's a real challenge, because one very quickly tends to fall back into habits and systems.

**What can one say with dance?**

**Noiret:** I think that dance can address lots of topics, but perhaps not truly political topics. I try to talk about things and today's world, things that concern me, that worry me, make me angry or delight me, from time to time. I don't just see myself as a choreographer, rather I try to bring together theatre, dance and cinema to turn it all into a single language. I don't do dance for the sake of dance but to say something.

**When you work on the show with the dancers, what do you expect from them?**

**Noiret:** I give a lot of attention to presence. What the dancers bring out when they are on stage. It's the expression of an inner richness, which one must not show but which must be there. You must be aware of what you want to say even if you do not move. We worked on that a lot. Generally, the dancers don't give much attention to that. They concentrate on the movement. We took clips from various films and asked them to choose sequences, looking at the attitudes of the actors in different situations.

### **Among the references one notices some allusions to the film 2001: A Space Odyssey...**

**Noiret:** The first images I had of this show were highly cinematographic. It was someone running in the mist. To start with one could believe it's a jogger and then one realises it's someone fleeing something and while running, all of a sudden, he crosses the path of someone else who is caught up in his wake. That's how I imagined the beginning of the show with these five characters who find themselves in a race without knowing each other or how each of them got there. I tried to translate this scene, but it only works in films. When I watched 2001, I was seized by the scene where one of the two astronauts goes out to repair the station and Kubrick dared to have a long period of silence in which we only hear the breathing through the mask, which is the only thing keeping him alive. I kept this idea in the show.

### **What kind of emotions do you want the spectator to feel when leaving?**

**Noiret:** When I see a film or a show I like to be able to engross myself in it, be drawn into the screen and be captured by the characters and the emotions. Nowadays, it's very trendy to be immersive. For thirty years, I feel I've always wanted to be immersive. It's always been important for me to take the spectator into a universe in which he does not totally understand where he is, with the space that transforms itself, and with sound that contributes to disrupt the perception of the spectator. Ultimately, my goal is this: to ask questions, to share thoughts I have no answer to and then to give pleasure and show beauty at times, because it is also a form of resistance. Creating beautiful things when there are so many dreadful, ugly things.