

MAYDAY

TRANSLATE INTO GESTURE THE STATE OF THINGS AND BEINGS...





ANIMAL TRISTE

60 min

Mankind likes to think it is the centre of the world. And yet it knows the world has seen glacial destruction, the extinction of the dinosaurs and fallen empires. On a lucid day, it sees itself as it really is: mediocre and perishable. The next day it sees itself as free, glorious and triumphant.

In the world's grand parade, humans are nothing more than sad animals. They find solace in beauty, in a desire for immortality. They therefore invented religions, philosophies, civilizations. They conquer, dominate, oppress. They observe, study each other. They write, recount, report. And above all, they reproduce. They know they will die, but think they are immortal. Prisoners of a hidden biology that guides their every step.

From the search for self to the conquests of an evening. From the most mundane trivialities to the highest levels of spirituality. From the crassest arrogance to the deepest daily humiliations. At heart, mankind is perhaps only a ragbag of insignificant beings, weak and inadequate, for whom life is a battle that will never be won.

In *Animal Triste*, four dancers grapple with this inner war that flares in the background. With the setbacks and vagaries of living together. Neither quite man nor woman, slaves to their desires and anxious to escape them, prisoners of the tribal instinct, they are terrestrial beings, wild animals, angels and demons. Side by side, these domesticated primates rush towards something: their ruin, most likely.

A freeze-frame in this relentless march, *Animal Triste* depicts this headlong dash, this need to forge on, to follow this path.

We humans draw from the vast history of the world to highlight our own little histories. Whether billions of people, flies or dandelions, we are but vehicles for something that is beyond our comprehension. From the evolution of species to the fall of civilizations, we push forward.

Mélanie Demers

*“There will be storms and oil slicks
There will be killer waves
There will be reefs, shoals,
sharks, scorbout and disease
There will be mutiny
Many will give up their lives*

*Then one day we will behold the promised land
Heave alongside with care
Many will hurl themselves into the water and drown*

*There will be marshes and quicksand
Patience the word as we seek out the river estuary
On arrival, soldiers may have to be killed
As all who believe in the king must die
And the vessel will have to be sunk
To never come back again”*

WHAT THE PRESS SAYS

“In this piece, the choreographer seems to be restraining herself, editing her material with a certain ruthlessness, yielding to neither her mannerisms nor strengths. [...] The result is a pivotal work.”

- C. Lalonde, *Le Devoir*, feb. 17

“For this Demers has devised a series of captivating gestures, threatening to explode, in which the primal/animal identity seems to be brought under control by an awareness that twists and contorts the body, placing it in a state of constant imbalance.”

- I. Gagnon-Paradis, *La Presse*, feb. 17

“With Animal triste, it is the transience of identities, the erosion of egos and of the humanity of past, present and future that is so strongly felt by the audience. A dance piece that you want to see again and again to better appreciate the sense of detail, the power of the performances, and the intelligence of the composition.”

- M. Mazo-Rothenbühler, *Danscussions*, feb. 17

“[...] There is a resonance in their bodies, but also between them. And, after the body comes the space, and the desire to explore beyond the limits. To step out or to enter the line. To play with space, levels and primitive senses. [The performers] provoke us, confront us, strong as animals ready to attack. They organize as a group and as individuals.”

- T. Bofa, *Dfdanse*, feb. 17



MÉLANIE DEMERS

After 10 years touring as a dancer with O Vertigo, Mélanie Demers founded in Montreal her own dance company, MAYDAY, in 2007. Her work has charmed by its originality, intensity and its complexity, exploring the darker zones of the human condition. Socially engaged as an artist, Mélanie Demers travelled to teach dance in Kenya, Niger, Brazil and Haiti, amongst other destinations. The harsh reality of the developing countries challenged her understanding of the role of art in society. Addressing political issues in a poetic form, *Les Angles Morts* (2006), *Sense of Self* (2008), *Junkyard/Paradis* (2010), *Goodbye* (2012) and *MAYDAY remix* (2014) have all been created from this perspective. And lately, *WOULD* (2015) won the *CALQ Prize for best choreography*, highlighting the artistic excellence of a work presented in Québec. In 2016, Mélanie Demers began a new creation cycle with *Animal Triste* and *Idône Pop*, both works are touring internationally. Last August, *Idône Pop* was awarded the *Buddies in Bad Times Vanguard Award for Risk and Innovation* by Toronto's SummerWorks Performance Festival. Recently, Mélanie Demers was invited to work as a guest choreographer at Skånes Dansteater in Malmö (Sweden) for the creation of *Something About Wilderness*.

To date, she choreographed twenty works and was presented in some thirty cities across Europe, America, Africa and Asia.

MAYDAY

Since its creation in 2007, MAYDAY has chosen to be a place of exchange and reflection, a sort of artistic think tank, for the artists working with Mélanie Demers. They come from various spheres, some from Montreal, home base of the company, others from around the world. Their personalities are both dazzling and eclectic. Here, the maturation of the work is a collective process. The physicality, rhythm and images used in the choreographies are characteristic elements of MAYDAY's works, which find their meaning when encountering with the public.

MAYDAY uses the stage as a platform to examine the role of the artist and uses the theatre as a space to meditate on the fate of the world and individuals. Her works, unquestionably committed, are simultaneous distress signals and an invitation to change. This is why she called her company MAYDAY, a name in which she perceives at once hope and despair.

PERFORMERS

MARC BOIVIN

Performer since 1982 at Le Groupe de la Place Royale, Marc Boivin is an improviser and a choreographer. Since 1991 he has worked as an independent dancer, performing mainly for Louise Bédard, Sylvain Émard, Jean-Pierre Perreault, Catherine Tardif and Tedd Robinson and since 2007, in some of his own creations. He has been affiliated with the École de danse contemporaine de Montréal since 1987 and regularly guest teaches and choreographs in schools and companies across Canada. For his performance in *WOULD*, choreographed by Mélanie Demers, Marc Boivin received the *Dora Mavor Moore Award* during the summer of 2014.



JAMES GNAM

James Gnam trained at the National Ballet School of Canada and from 1998, has worked with Les Grands Ballets Canadiens de Montreal, Ballet BC, EDAM dance, Grand Poney and MAYDAY. He has had the pleasure of creating, collaborating and performing in the works of Crystal Pite, Twyla Tharp, Mark Morris, Jiri Kylian, Peter Bingham, Thomas Lehman, Lee Su-Feh, Jacques Poulin-Denis, Barak Marshall and Mélanie Demers. James is the artistic director of plastic orchid factory and a founding member of Vancouver's only artist run dance centre at the West of the Main. With plastic orchid factory, he collaboratively devises interdisciplinary work that focuses the body as a site of social commentary.

BRIANNA LOMBARDO

Brianna Lombardo, a native of Toronto, completed her professional training at the School of Toronto Dance Theatre, and then worked with various international artists in Europe on a Chalmers Arts Fellowship. As an independent dancer, she worked in Toronto with Michael Trent and Matjash Mrozewski, and in Montreal with Isabelle Van Grimde and Jean-Pierre Perreault, before joining the O Vertigo company in 2004. After six years with the company, she rejoined the dance community as a freelancer and worked closely with Mélanie Demers (MAYDAY), Jacques Poulin-Denis (Grand Poney), Frédéric Gravel (GAG), Caroline Laurin-Beaucage, Martin Messier and Sasha Ivanochko.



RILEY SIMS

Riley Sims is a graduate of The School of Toronto Dance Theatre's Professional Training Program in Contemporary Dance and the Wexford School for the Arts Musical Theatre program. Since then, he has gone on to dance in works by numerous choreographers including: Tedd Robinson, Noam Gagnon, Mélanie Demers, Michael Trent, Darryl Tracy, Andrew Turner and Yvonne Coutts. Sims' own contemporary dance company, Social Growl Dance, was founded in 2012 and has presented works at the SummerWorks Performance Festival, Dance Matters, Gallery 1313, and Fresh Blood. The company has created, amongst others, *For Morgan* (2013), *Are You Still Coming Tonight?* (2014) and recently *Drunk On Fiction* (2017).

CREDITS

DIRECTION and CHOREOGRAPHY: MÉLANIE DEMERS ON STAGE: MARC BOIVIN, JAMES GNAM, BRIANNA LOMBARDO and RILEY SIMS LIGHTS: ALEXANDRE PILON-GUAY MUSIC: JACQUES POULIN-DENIS and ANTOINE BERTHIAUME TECHNICAL DIRECTION: OLIVIER CHOPINET REHEARSAL DIRECTION: ANNE-MARIE JOURDENNAIS DRAMATURGY: ANGÉLIQUE WILLKIE CREATION: 2016 CO-PRODUCTION: CANADA DANCE FESTIVAL

Animal Triste is a co-production with Canada Dance Festival. The project is supported by the Canada Council for the Arts, the Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec and the Conseil des arts de Montréal.

CONTACT

MÉLANIE DEMERS

Artistic and General Director
melaniedemers@maydaydanse.ca
+1 514 299-3888

GILLES DORÉ - ART CIRCULATION

Development Manager
direction@artcirculation.org
+1 514 476-5400

MAYDAYDANSE.CA
2022 Sherbrooke East St.
Montreal, Qc, H2K 1B9
Canada

MAYDAY is supported by the Canada Council for the Arts, the Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec and the Conseil des arts de Montréal. MAYDAY is a member of Circuit-Est centre chorégraphique and of Art Circulation.

Photos:

Cover - *Animal Triste* (Brianna Lombardo, Riley Sims) © Mathieu Doyon
Page 1 - *Animal Triste* (Brianna Lombardo, Riley Sims, James Gnam, Marc Boivin) © Mathieu Doyon
Page 3 - *La Nobody* (Mélanie Demers) © David Cannon
Page 4 - Marc Boivin, James Gnam, Brianna Lombardo, Riley Sims © Mathieu Doyon

Text on page 2 : *Paradis perdu* (La Vallée des réputations, 2002), Jean Leloup