
INSIDE OUT

JBA NEWSLETTER
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APPEARS 3X EACH YEAR



JUNIOR
BALLET
ANTWERP

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PREFACE



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Metamorphosis - not only the title of a beautiful new ballet under preparation at JBA but also a description of the change of course JBA was forced to embark upon during the past months.

Reorganization, re-adjustment, and change are the key features brought about world-wide by the Corona pandemic and until now, cannot or will not easily disappear. Now that live performance has been made impossible we have chosen another path forward in order to remain in contact with you, our public. In this Spring edition, we zoom in on our various film projects (large and small) which have seen the light, as well as those still to come.

Furthermore it's up to the final group of dancers to share with you their experiences during their journey with JBA and we talk to a few experienced and expert ballet figures who were pushed - as was everyone else in the world of ballet - to re-invent themselves as it were, to undergo a metamorphosis.

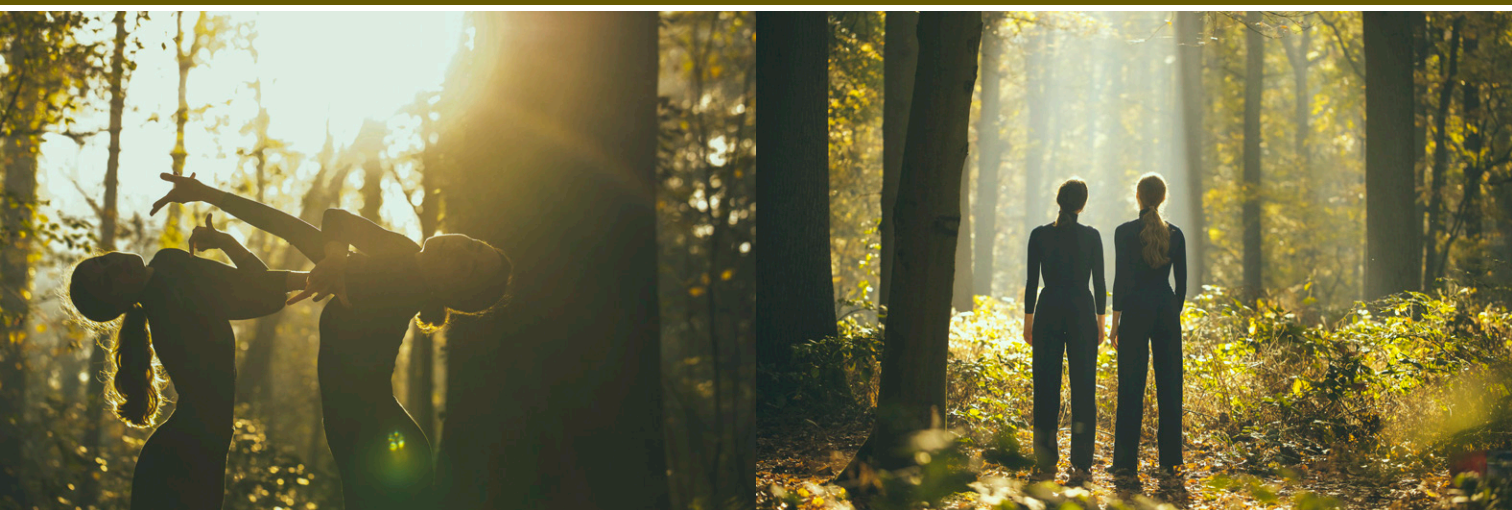
How much we wish, as a new Spring hesitantly puts out feelers, to dance again for all of you and to share our passion once more. To dance out of the dark and emerge into the shining light of hope!

I wish you much reading pleasure!

Alain Honorez

Courage & Creativity

Judith Delmé in conversation with Alain & Altea about Awakening & Yu²



Everyone in Belgium was beginning to breathe more easily; **the loosening of restrictions after the second lockdown in August meant, for JBA, a welcome return to the studio** for the dancers and for the whole team. There was much work to be done; auditions to prepare for as well as rehearsals for performances which had been delayed; all of which had, until that moment, been put on hold. Altea had begun preparing a contemporary solo for the young women (which was to be audition material) while master coach Christiane Marchant tackled the refining of each dancer's classical variation.

Only a short time before, during a late summer walk in a beautiful forest in Ranst, Alain had remarked to Altea on how **the forest could provide a magical setting for a film**, maybe as a setting for her solo? She marked out a couple of movements and this sparked a germ of an idea - little did the pair know how soon they would come to actually bring it to fruition..

As the weeks passed, October brought with it a gathering feeling of gloom; pandemic numbers were again on the increase and within a short time the worst was realised; lockdown three was announced. Result- the studio had to close again and training once more was confined to the smallest of restricted spaces. For the young dancers, as with so many others around the globe it was a bitter blow. There was so much to look forward to much in the planning for the troupe who since the start of their journey with JBA, had been going from strength to strength. It took all of the two leaders' own courage and positivity to rally the spirits of their young group. Suddenly the idea that had lain dormant in Alain's mind returned; **let's try to make that film!**

From then it was full speed ahead. The suggestion was put to **four of the young women** who all greeted the chance to take part in the experiment with absolute delight. There were difficulties of course putting it into practice- the dancers had barely learnt the choreography and because the studio was closed, work would have to take place in the open air. Fortunately the weather during the first few days of November was exceptionally good and although the mornings were very cold, the emerging sun filtering through the early mist provided some warmth and created **an enchanted environment**.

The women in plain blue trousers and tops, had to dance on the damp forest floor while wearing several pairs of socks and taking frequent pauses to get their body circulation back on par. Altea sketched out movements on which her dancers improvised, using the background music they had brought along. **Together they took the whole solo apart while Alain filmed everything from different angles**. Although he had studied photography, filming was a technique totally new to him.

The team had to create speedily to take advantage of the good weather conditions and so work was completed in two days; even then Alain and Altea had no notion as to whether their experiment would be successful. One thing they were determined to do however was to paint a filmic atmosphere of hope and rebirth; but by years of working together this creative pair understood instinctively how to cooperate, each feeding off their partner's talents in order to push any project to the next level.

Altea: 'We were creating in the moment because unconsciously, the images presented themselves to us'

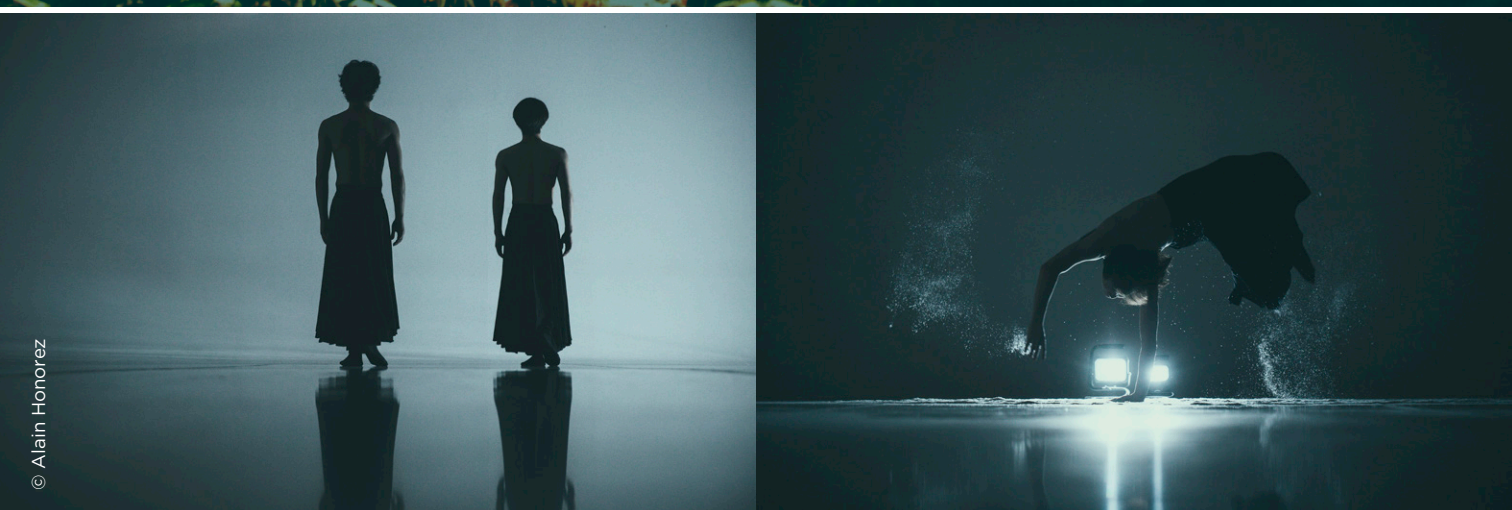
Alain: 'Everything seemed totally magical: the light, colors, even the mist and the forest background...it was perfect'

AWAKENING - for this was the chosen title - garnered applause and appreciation from many quarters and this prompted Alain and Altea to consider doing a follow-up. **YU² (Courage)** had been Altea's project for the boys' graduation class (Royal Ballet School Antwerp) in 2019. A choreography **for 13 dancers with a decided martial arts flavor**, it radiated virile strength and determination, the choreography bold and confrontational. The dancers were bare-torsoed, their wide black skirts followed the movements in huge sweeping arcs. Taking this choreography as her starting point Altea decided to create a condensed version for the JBA mens' (audition) solo. It also fitted perfectly with the theme which was emerging as the films developed; Hope (AWAKENING), Courage (YU) both of these essential qualities demanded of each and every person during many trying months.

YU² was **entirely filmed in the studio** (by this time there had been a relaxation of the Covid restrictions). Although all the young men danced the piece well, it was decided that, on camera, **Rin and Akihito (both from Japan)** typified the right look. Only a teaser has as yet been released but by the time this article appears, the short movie will be available in its totality. Suffice to say that it is spell-binding.

Both films have been set to music by Wolf Hoeyberghs (read the interview with him in this issue). This extremely talented dancer/ musician, currently on contract with Zürich Junior Ballett, was asked to compose the original music for YU². Alain and Altea turned again to Wolf for the AWAKENING soundscape. Even though they were communicating from a distance, the creative process between choreographer, director and composer developed seamlessly. **Alain chose his photographic images and sent them on to Wolf, the latter composed and returned material** which in turn had to be fitted to the movement - a three-way exchange. Using cut and paste Alain edited painstakingly, referring constantly to Altea to achieve the right dynamic. The initial bird sounds and gentle lilting flute - like melodies backing the tendril - like hands and pliant bodies of the dancers together conjure up a pastoral scene of rebirth and hope.

This new artistic process which arose so spontaneously after a period of practically no interaction with a live public has kept the creative juices of dancers, director and choreographer flowing. Aimed originally at JBA's audience, it has the possibility in the future to play an important part in the realization of the JBA vision. At the same time **it has provided the young dancers not only with priceless creative experiences but also a wealth of film and photo material** which they can always utilize to further their individual careers.



Spotlight on 7 talented dancers: Ayano, Yukino, Laura, Manuel, Rin, Marta & Amelia

The very first auditions for Junior Ballet Antwerp took place in February and April, 2019. Honorez and his team received more the 350 applications out of whom they selected 20; all of these talented young dancers were highly motivated and more than ready to give the best of themselves to the program. We take pleasure in presenting them here, in order that you might get to know them better.



Ayano Yoshino

Japan - Saitam. At the age of 11 Ayano Yoshino started her dance education at the Acri Horimoto Ballet Academy in Japan and from 2017 she completed her training at the Royal Ballet School Antwerp. In September 2019 she became a member of the JBA team. It was **quite a culture shock** for Ayano when she arrived in Antwerp - the multitude of historic buildings caught her attention. Everything was different, the language, the money, the social interaction ...This made her quite homesick, but along the way she got to know her fellow students better and the other Japanese dancers in the group made sure she quickly felt at home. Meanwhile she has made many friends, she lives alone in an apartment and feels great here. Before Corona her mother visited her on the occasion of a performance. Ayano finds relaxation in watching films (mainly drama and animated films), fashion and cosmetics but also working out and running. JBA's varied program, more specifically the wide variety of guest teachers and coaches, made her decide to audition. Although she was mainly trained in classical dance, she has also increasingly mastered contemporary dance. She would prefer to dance for **a European dance company with both a classical and a neo-classical repertoire**. Just before Corona struck, she returned to Japan for medical care due to an injury. Luckily she was able to continue training after the injury was healed as her physical condition is a priority for her..

Yukino Tamai

Japan - Hokkaido. Like Ayano, Yukino Tamai grew up in Japan and later on, after she started her training at the age of 3, she mainly received her dance education at the Royal Ballet School of Antwerp. Before coming to Antwerp, Yukino had never been outside Japan. Everything was different and she was **equally overwhelmed by the historic buildings**, Onze-Lieve-Vrouw cathedral and the delicious Belgian waffles and chocolate! She remembers how lonely she felt during her first Christmas holiday in Antwerp: she spoke little English at the time and all her Japanese fellow students had returned home. Fortunately, there were some local school friends who kept her company, which she really appreciated. When she graduated, both her Japanese ballet master and her family came to Antwerp and she has fond memories of that. She usually spends her free time with friends: watching TV, cooking, video chatting and singing together. The JBA program with a varied range of well-known choreographers and different dance styles attracted her. Since her start at JBA's she learned a lot and she feels her expression and style of dance have improved considerably. She hopes to find a place in **a dance company somewhere in Europe** and she prefers classical ballet. She has not returned to her home country since Corona. “That way I can keep focusing more on dance and on myself and get to know myself better,” she says. And in this she is well guided by Alain and Altea: “That way I become stronger and my stamina improves”, Yukino concludes.

Laura Orsi

Italië - Piacenza. As a 4-year-old girl, Laura Orsi took her first dance steps in a dance school in Piacenza. Later, after a number of internships and competitions, she was noticed by the director of the Academy Teatro alla Scala in Milan. She was admitted and could finish her training in 2019. During her performance at the 24th World Energy Congress, **she won a scholarship for a 3-month training at a dance company in the United States**, after which in January 2020, just before the Corona outbreak, she joined JBA. Antwerp was a discovery for her: a lively city with a historic past, everything easily accessible and environmentally friendly. As a young girl who wants to make her dream come true, she was used to missing her family, but the outbreak of Covid-19 and the uncertainty about the future made her feel more homesick in the past year. The restrictions imposed made it difficult to build a life in a new city as well as to establish relationships with other young people. But she decorated her place at the student-home near the studio as cozy as possible to make her feel “at home”. Entrepreneurial and curious as she is, Laura has many interests. Listening to music, reading, writing, drawing, Pilates, cooking and studying everything that has to do with dance are her preferences. JBA gives her the opportunity to grow in all areas, partly thanks to the range of good dance masters and choreographers and different dance styles. She would love to go back to Italy to develop a professional career there, but according to her other countries offer more opportunities for employment. Auditioning at **the Bayerisches Staatsballet, SemperOper Ballet Dresden, Czech National Ballet, Staatsballet Berlin** and others is on her to-do-list, preferably there where a classical repertoire is mainly followed. She experiences the lockdown as something surreal. “The world seems frozen,” she says. But it's thanks to JBA's online classes that she was able to maintain her workout routine and when traveling became possible again, she visited her family in Italy and enjoyed the ample time she could spend with them!

Manuel Cirbian

Spanje - Riaza. Smooth, southern Manuel has a hard time with the Belgian weather: born and raised in the mountain village of Riaza, where he took his first dance steps, **the southern sun that's what he misses the most!** He is not really homesick because Antwerp is a city after his heart, he is a lover of architecture, painting (with Rubens as one of his favorites) and the open spirit of the city. His 3 fellow dancers, with whom he shares an apartment, are like family to him. Yet now and then he craves to visit his family in warm Spain, but his life with his friends in Antwerp helps him to deal with that. He uses this spare time to recover from the intensive daily training. Art, history and painting interest him a lot, as well as discovering new musical trends. He considered himself too young and inexperienced to join a professional dance company immediately after school, which is why JBA was the perfect bridge for him. The past 2 years have brought him more confidence and insight and he discovered a range of sensations and feelings he was not aware having them. What the future holds for him: according to him a career at **the London National Ballet** or with **Les Ballets de Monte Carlo** might be an option. In the long run he may also consider a return to his native country ...During the first lockdown, Manuel spent a lot of time with his family in Riaza and this was of course fun but in the end, not being able to perform in front of an audience makes it difficult for him. Fortunately in the meantime, the daily training lessons in the dance studio could be resumed, as well as the general ballet exercises, because it is not always easy to practise at home with the whole family present.

Rin Isomura

Japan - Nagoya. Rin, a powerful 20-year-old Japanese, grew up in Nagoya, Japan's 4th largest city. After his first training years, **Rin left for Canada at the age of 17, where he was apprenticed to Yukichi Hattori**, choreographer and former star dancer with the Alberta Ballet Company in Canada. His arrival in Antwerp was also for Rin the first time in Europe and this was an adjustment. He really likes the historic buildings and the different cultures here. Although he spent Christmas and New Years abroad for the past 3 years, this year he felt somewhat homesick probably due to Corona. But living with 3 other dancers in a flat close to the dance studio made it a lot easier for him. Gaming and watching TV are his favorite leisure activities. When he discovered JBA's website he was convinced that this was the right thing to do for him in order to develop his artistic skills. At JBA he learned to express himself better and to control himself and increasingly he found his own style of dancing. Building a career as a dancer in Europe seems more obvious to him than in Japan and his preference is to audition at **SemperOper in Dresden** because of their repertoire that appeals to him.

Marta Dias

Portugal - Lissabon. 19-year-old Marta Dias grew up in Lisbon and took her first dance steps when she was 8 years old - first contemporary dance, hip hop and then, at age 11, classical ballet. She graduated from the Conservatory of Dance Annarella Sanchez in Leiria. Antwerp was a real surprise to her: the buildings, the culture and also the environment. Everything within walking distance, and the friends she made in the meantime make her happy. At first it took some time to get acquainted, but Marta has little trouble with homesickness: **from a young age on she has been used to being away from home** and soon she adapted to her new environment. Meanwhile also her parents visited her and that helps! Marta lives with Julia, also a JBA dancer who she gets along with. She considers JBA as her 2nd family: there is always someone around to ask for advice and they usually spend their free time together. Watching TV, reading, listening to music and sometimes writing are her favorite pastimes. She sees her enrollment at **JBA as the bridge between school and a professional career**. Alain and Altea have played a major role in her personal development over the last 2 years, both to get to know her body better and to grow technically and artistically. What she hoped to find at this point in her life has been fully fulfilled at JBA and for that she is forever grateful. Marta has no specific dream for the future; she would love to be part of something bigger than herself. Versatile as she is, she has **no preference for a particular dance style** - she wants to keep all doors open. Her immediate future is not exactly in Portugal; according to Marta there are not many opportunities in terms of culture and dance. But now that she likes Antwerp so much, she sees herself living in other cities as well. During the lockdown it was difficult to maintain motivation and inspiration working from home without planned rehearsals and performances. It went on endlessly, and each day seemed like a repeat of the previous one. Marta is very happy that training in the studio in smaller groups has been made possible again.

Amelia Coleman

USA - NY City. Eight-year-old Amelia was faced with the choice of ballet or horseback riding and eventually opted for horseback riding. **Five years later, the ballet bug got a hold of her and she went for it!** So in the end she was admitted to the Central Pennsylvania Youth Ballet at the age of 16, where she graduated at the age of 18. As a Junior she was then picked up by the Boston Ballet. By chance Amelia discovered JBA on an audition website and because something in her told her to take that leap, she decided to go for it. Her father supported her financially and she flew from New York to Antwerp... “Being admitted after the audition is one of the best experiences in my life,” she says later. One of her dreams is to be able **to audition somewhere in a European dance company** and that's how dancing at JBA means the start of that dream for Amelia. “At JBA we train in a versatile way, different dance styles are discussed and both a classical and contemporary repertoire is practiced”.... a unique experience according to Amelia! The duo Alain and Altea have found the recipe how to become a successful professional dancer and they provide their dancers with everything needed to build a great career. To work with David Dawson was yet another dream of hers coming true after she saw at 17 years old Dawson's choreo “A Million Kisses to my Skin” for the first time. “I experienced the lockdown somewhat differently than my colleagues because I was already in a similar situation due to an ankle surgery... It only became more difficult : I could not go back to my parents in the US as I was being treated by an Antwerp doctor and the treatment had great results,” she continues. Amelia needed the help of physiotherapists to recover and get back in shape, but when the physiotherapists were also no longer allowed to practice their profession due to Covid-19, her dance career was endangered. She herself had to find the necessary motivation to work on her full recovery every day. When most of the dancers returned home she felt very lonely, but luckily Amelia was able to visit her family in Denmark. Now she can only be happy that she got through this difficult period and that she can dance again with great pleasure **being part of the very first JBA group of dancers ever!**

Workshop Christiane Marchant



© Alain Honorez

Retrospective

To succeed today dancers need to command many diverse styles, which is what JBA takes pride in offering.

One week saw **Christiane Marchant** hone and redefine the dancers' classical technique during one of her excellent workshops, while during the second **Claudia Philips** instructed them in the fluid contemporary language of **Jacopo Godani**, present director of the Forsythe Company in Frankfurt. Diverse styles indeed!

Workshop Claudia Philips



Preview

There is still some time to wait for the expected premiere of **Metamorphosis**, David Dawson's 5-part ballet, due in the near future.

However the second section, the '**Adagio**', will be filmed in May by Sam Asaert.

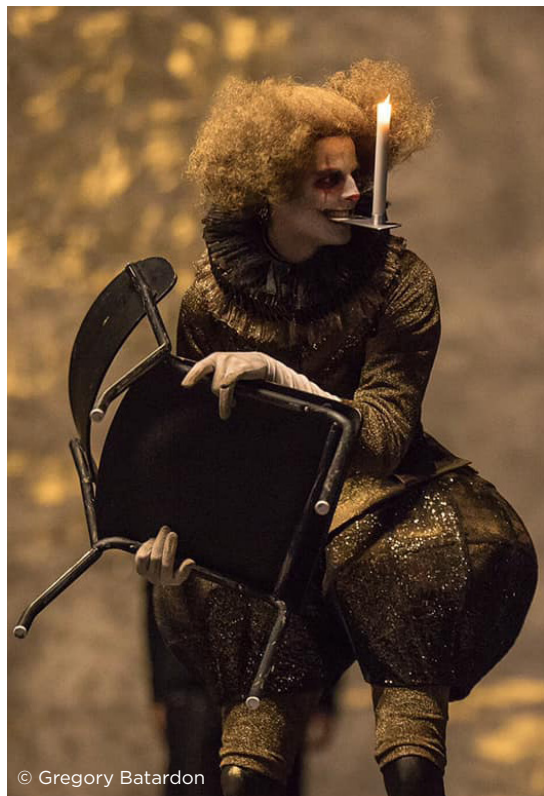
It promises to be an artistic jewel in which our dancers interpret David Dawson's subtly beautiful choreography set to the equally sensitive music of **Philip Glass**.

Especially for this occasion, the music will be played by the Italian master pianist **Irene Russo**. In the past Russo performed the music for David Dawson's 'A Sweet Spell of Oblivion' and 'Faun(e)' live for Ballet Flanders.

Wolf Hoeyberghs: a multi-faced talent

Life choices can sometimes fit people like the proverbial glove, which has certainly proved to be true in the case of 21yr old Wolf Hoeyberghs who has with astonishing ease and versatility, combined his two great passions; music and ballet. Certainly enough reason to get to know Wolf better and to understand what drives him along his path.

Wolf composed the music for both of JBA's fim projects; the first being **Awakening** and the more recent **YU² (courage)** and thus it seemed an ideal moment to ask him a few questions.



JBA: Can you tell us a little about your your early dance training?

WH: My first dance lessons were at the age of 3 yrs in **Dance Center Aike Raes** in my home city of Leuven, where I was confronted with various styles. Starting with children's dance and moving on to streetdance, ballet, jazz, hip hop, modern etc. I later joined the **Royal Ballet School of Antwerp's lower school** (Prins Dries) followed by the full six-year Humaniora high school program. After graduating at age 17, my next stop was the **European School of Ballet in Amsterdam**. Half way through the second year I was invited by Ballett Zürich to dance in several productions. At the moment I live in Zürich where **I have a contract with Junior Ballett Zürich**.

JBA: During this time, who or what has played an influential role in your career?

WH: My parents have always supported me and given me the chance to do what I love. Later on **Olivier Wecxteen**, my teacher in Amsterdam, helped me make great strides both artistically and technically. I am so grateful to **Jean-Yves Esquerre**, director of the European School for creating an artistic environment which supports the artistic requirements of each dancer. One of the first dancers who made an unforgettable impression on me was when I saw **a live performance of Alain Honorez dancing Carabosse** in Marcia Haydée's 'Sleeping Beauty'. He has always remained a **huge source of inspiration**.

JBA: How did you come to arrive at Junior Ballett Zürich?

WH: The style and varied repertoire of Junior Ballett Zürich under the leadership of director/choreographer Christian Spuck aligns absolutely with my way of thinking. There is a very strong cooperation between the juniors and the main company. Christian Spuck works with **lesser-known as well as major choreographers** and it is the **theatrical aspect of Spuck's own work** which really appeals to me. This is why his company was my main choice when I began auditioning during my training in Amsterdam. I was up in the clouds when I was offered a contract for the following season of JBZ.

At the same time I was offered a guest contract for the remainder of the ongoing season and had the good fortune to dance in several productions. This was an excellent testing period and I felt immediately at home.

Of course since the start of the pandemic there have been changes; in September we were still dancing live performances of Christian Spuck's version of The Sleeping Beauty but this is not possible anywhere right now.

However we are working hard at the moment on **a new production for the juniors consisting of three creations by Juliano Nunes, Bryan Arias and Craig Davidson**. At the same time we are working with the main company on rehearsing Anna Karenina, an existing choreography by Christian Spuck. Ballett Zürich and Junior Ballett Zürich are both anticipating the moment when they can perform live again; We are ready!



JBA: Next to dance , music plays an important role in your life: how do you combine the two?

WH: Music and dance are inseperable for me; the piano music for the ballet lessons in Antwerp always inspired me. As a child in Leuven **I followed piano lessons** which regretfully I had to give up when I started training in Antwerp. However when I was 11, I recorded **my first CD with my own compositions** for which I myself played. Then when I turned 12 I started to choreograph; first I wrote the story and then wrote the music for a 90 min performance. It took me five years but **in this way I could combine my two passions**. By the time I was 16, I had written the complete orchestral partitions. Together with my classmates we worked out the choreography and arranged the production. The music was performed by the Symphony Orchestra of Flanders under the leadership of Dirk Brossé, and so **'La Mascarade' was born**. The project was an enormous learning process for me.

One of the advantages of the Corona pandemic is that **I have been able to return to my professional musical studies**. At the moment I follow zoom lessons with Maria Seletskaya who was herself soloist with Ballet of Flanders and has made a career as a top conductor.

JBA: Regarding your collaboration with Alain and Altea, you composed the music for AWAKENING & YU² (courage) - how did this come about?

WH: During my studies in Antwerp, I regularly had a chance to work with Alain and Altea, and they constantly inspired me. **During the creation of La Mascarade they became aware of my passion for music**.

When they asked me to compose for them, I never hesitated a minute. Alain sent me those beautiful images he had taken and I immediately visualised how the music should sound - the rest is history!

JBA: How has the Covid pandemic affected your career and how do you see the future of dance performance in this regard?

WH: Luckily I can go on dancing, it's true of course it's always in small groups and the constant wearing of a mask. However **the experience of performing live in a complete new production was a real boost**. We could only perform a couple of times but we enjoyed it enormously. To be able to train, create and rehearse is to my mind the most important thing just as being creative with music and staying in contact with everyone.

JBA: Thank you so much Wolf, and very best wishes for a successful future, one which will consist of an abundance of dance and music!



Nomad

In September 2020 Maryse Daniels, the charming and very efficient PR in charge of events in Antwerp's Handelsbeurs, contacted JBA about a special project of possible interest to them. Previous to this, the pair had been in negotiation concerning the troupe's participation in a couple of events due to take place on this lovely location; Belgium's Corona lockdown effectively put all planning on hold.

Meanwhile on the other side of Belgium, a creative family team specialized in all genre's of film were starting to piece together **an exclusive promotional film for ARTE**. The new collection of this luxury interior design brand featured both jungle and Saharan motifs. The BOB'IN team: mother Gerda van Nieuwenhove (creative producer), son Tibaut Coppens (film director) and his sister Julie Coppens (art director and scenic designer) had planned to shoot in Morocco, a country which could offer them the perfect backdrops for both themes - but once again the world-wide pandemic flashed the red light. By pure chance Tibaut had found a back-up in **the stunning architecture of the Handelsbeurs with its many Moorish influences**. The building's directors gave the go-ahead and thus planning could begin.

Tibaut had been playing with a concept for some time, one which could be summed up in a few simple sentences; Two opposite worlds, united harmoniously by one single element. This would become (for the ARTE concept) Jungle and Sahara, bound together by the medium of water, this latter element preferably portrayed in the film by dancer(s.) It was not a simple undertaking - as Tibaut himself said, **'We couldn't go to the desert so we brought the desert to Antwerp!'**



Truckloads of sand, a huge water pool, and many types of plants including palms and other jungle varieties. Then of course the lighting equipment and the tall gantry for mounting the cameras. It took hours of planning, following the strict lockdown regulations, just to organize which truck came to which entrance and at what time to offload!

To discuss how this stunning project was eventually realized, a convivial get-together took place one evening after the shoot, one which included Alain Honorez, his life partner & choreographer Altea Nuñez, dancer/protagoniste Maria Mazzotti, Tibaut Coppens and Judith Delmé.

AH: We hadn't known Maryse (Daniels) for very long therefore it was wonderful that she was so quick to introduce JBA to BOB'IN. My first contact with them was a phone call with Gerda. She was very emphatic from the start that although she wanted to use dancers, they definitely had to be mature ones.

TC: Yes, for sure. We wanted dancers or A dancer because with their fluidity of movement they fitted best into my/our concept. However we have learnt from experience that we can lose hours of valuable shooting time if young dancers, performing in front of the camera for the first time, are unable to project naturally both expressively and movement-wise.. Maryse was so enthusiastic about JBA, about the high professional and artistic level of the company which is why we contacted you.

AH: What we try to instill in our all dancers is to search for and to find their own individual personality. We don't want to produce clones for a balletic corps de ballet, each of our dancers has to bring forth something unique. On top of which we are a fairly small group which makes us flexible in undertaking these kinds of projects.
AN: Not all of them (our dancers) have found their own unique persona yet, some are still searching and learning (laughs) but Maria here, she was born to be in front of a camera.

AH: Altea and I discussed about who at JBA we could see doing this. Gerda had said they wished to organise a casting session so we chose four men and four women. The original idea was for a pair, a man and a woman.
TC: I couldn't be there because of other commitments but a colleague, Jonathan Demont whom I really trust, did the filming of the casting session.
AH: And here we had to follow Corona regulations very strictly. Although we were in lockdown, because this was a film project, the casting took place individually in the studio.

AN: We told the dancers to improvise - although of course there was always an idea behind it.
MM: Alain had shown us pictures of the ARTE collection and explained the idea.
AN: So I just put on some music.....
Laughter from the whole group
TC: Altea will be remembered forever because of her great music choices!

MM: I really enjoyed it! I always love impro. But it was like a breath of fresh air - here we were at home during our third lockdown and beginning to lose hope. Just being back in the studio for a short time.....



AN: Yes it seemed so short... he (Jonathan) said 'okay, thanks we've seen enough' and then Maria said 'Already!!' She was so enjoying herself!

TC: Yes he was mad with himself afterwards in that he hadn't filmed enough of her (Maria). She was so photogenic! But then every dancer we saw was top, and we were looking at each one for personality, use of the eyes, body language. We decided very quickly it had to be Maria, with a backup (Julia Pages) just in case.

AH: Although Gerda had a favorite in Rin (Japanese dancer Rin Isomura)
TC: We had decided to get away from the cliché of man/woman and went for just one person representing water, one who bound the two worlds.
JD: Speaking of that, the costumes were marvellous - who designed them?
TC: After Julie had decided on the decors, the colors and the shades, we contacted Nathalie L Hermitte. She is a well-known stylist for films and we have worked with her in the past. She herself doesn't design but picks out clothes which she thinks might be possible.

AH: We had a tryout at Nathalie's house in the center of Antwerp. The funny thing was that everything looked good on Maria, it was so difficult to choose!
TC: Yes here Altea put her stamp on the choice of costume as well. She went for the less conventional.

AH: Another coincidence was that we came into contact again with Sabrina Hamels, the makeup artist who did my makeup for Drosselmeyer (when he danced the role for Ballet of Flanders production of the Nutcracker) and for our short movie Before Your Eyes (One of Alain and Altea's very first film projects realized with two of Ballet of Flanders dancers).

JD: What about the choice of music?
TC: This came from Altea as well!
(again laughter from the group)
AN: I had **Al-Andaluse** on my playlist, it's one of my favorites and I always wanted to create something on it.
TC: This piece!! We could immediately see images of the Sahara in it, and feel the emotion. I really wanted to use it and asked my mother to contact the creator and publisher. However all our efforts then came to nothing.

AH: So we brought the team into contact with Wolf Hoeyberghs (a very talented Flemish dancer/ composer attached to Zürich Junior Ballett)

TC: It was a very enjoyable and profitable meeting with Wolf and we liked a piece he composed, done in a very short matter of time! Meantime however we had tracked down Altea's original music and it was what we preferred above anything else. We would like to work with Wolf in the future though.

AN: I also had other tracks on my playlist. I thought to myself ' If we have two different worlds, why not two different pieces of music? The first was Al-Andaluse, and the other was by Byron Metcalfe 'Opening to Freedom'. When I played the music during rehearsal in order to give atmosphere and as inspiration for Maria, the whole crew went wild - everybody loved it!
TC: Yes it was so rich, it conjured up so many images.



JD: How large was your crew, and why did you film only at night ?
TC: Around twenty people including a lighting director Bram Lens who together with Yvan Coene and 3-4 lighting assistants were incredible and such hard workers. They delivered fantastic work. We started at 20.00 p.m...
AH: At times continuing until 3.30 a.m!
TC: Yes because over the three days of filming we needed consistent light (coming from the huge windows above). Daylight, particularly during the winter can be so variable and this would show up on film.

JD: I was so impressed by the efficient 'regie assistant'!
TC: Yes indeed, Joke Pevenage, another free-lancer and one of the best in Belgium. She kept everything to a strict time schedule, timing every shot and doing it so well all I had to do was concentrate on my camera work.
MM: (smiling) I was nervous of her in the beginning, scared that I would make a mistake.

JD: (To Altea and Maria) How much rehearsal did you put in beforehand?
AN and MM: Not a great deal. Maria was in Italy and I (Altea) worked with Julia in the studio and with Maria on Zoom. Then when I (Maria) came back I had to quarantine for 7, actually 10 days.
AN: Even on the set I would suggest movements to Maria and she would improvise.

Time was nearly up and we our gathering would have to disperse but Tibaut had words of praise for all his team.

TC: Here I have to applaud my whole family including my father Willy Coppens - our creative genes come from him, a creative 'duizendpoot'. This family business has been going for more than 20 years and is the place where we could/can release all our creative talents.

I must emphasize what an enormous input Alain, Altea and Maria of course gave to the project. When creative minds come together, that's when one can make magic. It's the way I and my family have always worked and we are so thrilled that Alain and Altea fitted in so well. They are not only great professionals, they offer ideas and inspiration.

I have a feeling that we will be doing more projects together - it could be the start of a fine co-operation!

The film NOMAD can be seen from the middle of March on the JBA website. It's exquisite and well worth a look.



Ballet's way forward after Corona:

a choreographer, a coach, a teacher and a dancer share the difficulties they face and how they see the future



© Lucie Macezkova

JUANJO ARQUÉS - choreographer

'The corona measures had an important impact on my work. My last ballet for Dutch National Ballet, 'Manoeuvre', was canceled just before its premiere. During the creative process the theatre was forced to close. I soon realized that it was not time to sit still. To continue working on the project, the scenes had to be adjusted. I had to **reinvent this ballet and the whole way of working in the studio**.

For a long time it was uncertain whether or not the dancers were allowed to touch each other, and that has caused a lot in the way I choreograph. Partner work has always been the smoothest way of creating for me. It feels very natural to me to work with **bodies who react to each other by touch**. Perhaps partner work was so self-evident to my way of working that I did not think much about what the moment of touch itself can actually mean in a choreography.

Touch and distance have a new connotation in my work. Physical contact is something many people miss these days. And as **our body language changes worldwide**, closeness takes on a new kind of sensuality. There is more meaning in the moment when bodies touch each other. This current range of emotions is a rich source of inspiration for creating choreography.

The corona measures changed that. Because even now in the Netherlands it is again allowed for dancers to touch each other, the reason for choosing this is more important than before. It feels like I have to answer for every physical contact, that makes me very aware of my choices and their meaning. Further on I decided to explore deeper the motivation of movement, also when it comes to a more abstract form. For example, in my ballets the directions of the dancers are described; where do the dancers come from, who or what do they avoid, where do they go, do they get close? **The play of distance and proximity** tells part of the drama that takes shape in the choreography.

Corona does not only mean a gaping hole for the performing arts. There is a lot going on in this seemingly empty period. We do not yet know how or when the big ballets can be danced again. The future is uncertain. Yet this blind search in the dark also provides us with meaningful and new artistic discoveries'.

CHRISTIANE MARCHANT - freelance coach & assistant David Dawson

It has been almost one year now. Life has changed tremendously, radically. But I believe that the human being is also a survivor and finds way to keep going.

On March 13th, 2020, (I was still a permanent teacher at the European School of Ballet) it was decided that due to the Covid situation we would go into a lock down. I came back to Belgium and like everyone else I started very soon to keep **teaching my students via zoom**. Who would have thought it would last so long...

The students were home in small spaces, so what to do? I love placement, I am obsessed with coordination, sensation, images and feeling the dancing from inside. So, I had to find a way to make them "move" from inside even if they could not move in the space. I gave **very long barres**, lots of corrections and made them look at one or another student so they could get a "vision" of what they were supposed to achieve.

I took the time to make sure they had embodied the corrections. I sent them films, gave them dance history classes, spoke about art and with the school we organized "conversations" with dance celebrities (dancers, choreographers, teachers, staggers).

I also gave pointe work, not being able to "move" through the space, I worked on 'coming down' and 'going up, so important for a ballerina. **We did lots of things we would not have done in a "normal" time because we had time**. I also had to study myself to be able to share the information.

These classes were a privilege: not only teaching my students ballet but helping them **discover "their" dance and "their" artistry**. We were sharing and helping each other to stay motivated.

When I could go back to the studio and work again with the students, **many of them had improved and had grown**: more maturity and awareness of their body, more awareness of detail, better concentration from inside and understanding they had to take the responsibility not only of themselves but of the others too. Then there was the **joy to be back "together" in the studio**, to breath (also behind a mask) and sweat (in the distance) again together. Some had really gained in self confidence, others had lost it. Some gave up because it was too hard, but not many. Most told me that they understood that one always can learn even if it is a difficult moment in life. I think that being alone with themselves and **the information coming from a screen without a mirror**, many found something inside themselves.

My experience with JBA was very different. I met the JBA dancers in person in the studio in September. We had **3 wonderful weeks together**, working hard and with so much joy. I could link the class to the repertoire of David Dawson since Raphael Coumes Marquet was there to work on Metamorphosis. We were all hungry and passionate also because we did not know how long we could work and how the situation would develop. During the following lockdown: I taught them on zoom. It was not a problem, we knew each other and we trusted each other. I admire their constancy and discipline. All of them.

Now I am staging David Dawson's ballet A Million Kisses to My Skin in Essen. What a privilege to be able to work in a studio with dancers in "real". **The dancers are not in their best shape because of the lock down** and because of a few weeks of holidays without performing. They did not learn new choreographies for a while and so it took a lot of efforts to put the "machine back on track". Step by step we are moving forward. But all is in the unknown. Nobody knows when we will be able to perform again in front of a real public and do our job the way it should be done.

Important is to **be patient, to help each other, to support each other to keep our art form alive**. The whole ballet community is sharing information and communicating. Dancers all over the world can see companies they never saw before thanks to the streaming performances. There is an incredible choice of classes, films & documentaries to watch and so much to discover. Each director (schools or company) has to make the choice to how to feed their dancers.

Not easy to find the right way. But were there is a will there is a way. We know that. **It will pass and so many new possibilities will be there**. Some will be for the better and some for the worst, that is inevitable. This crisis is unknown to the human species. Time will tell.



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© Stephen A'Court

MATZ SKOOG - coach

Over the past several months, during the Covid 19 crisis with lockdown and social distancing, I have worked with dancers via Zoom, both as ballet teacher and as personal development coach. It's been remarkable to see **the resilience and determination** by which so many of them have managed to maintain motivation, uphold a sensible training routine and sustain themselves mentally despite such difficult odds. Reflecting back on my own career I am not sure I would have had the discipline, or even the knowledge, to manage myself as successfully had I been faced with similar circumstances.

Regardless of the Corona crisis **the challenge of sustaining a dancing career today is much harder than it once was**. A couple of generations ago competition for jobs was less pressured and the possibility for a long and satisfying dancing career was more likely. Today it is tougher. Dancers nowadays need to manage their work and lives very carefully if they want to have a professional career at all.

Even though many of the major **dance schools could do more to prepare their graduates** for the realities of the profession, what we have seen during this time of crisis is a better trained, better educated and **more self-aware generation of young professionals, with greater capacity for self-management**. And thank goodness for this, as otherwise the impact of Covid-19 might have been considerably worse.

Whilst I have been happy to see resilience and determination from many there have been casualties too. Covid-19 has **enforced reassessment and personal reinvention** for numerous dance professionals. This is when coaching can be particularly valuable, and when being a coach is especially rewarding, helping an artist to creatively explore new ideas and different options.

To finish on a positive note: I have been encouraged by my recent experiences of working with dancers. The current generation is more socially aware and capable of self-determination, with a greater understanding of mental health issues and the importance of personal stability. A couple of years ago [life] coaching was not even on the radar of most dancers. Now they are starting to look for **personal development solutions** in the same way as they view Pilates and other complimentary training techniques as essential for maintaining professional standards and personal satisfaction.

Matz Skoog has worked many years in the changeable world of performing arts, as a principal dancer, artistic director, teacher and consultant. As a coach he now draws from that experience to enable clients to manage the multiple demands of a successful career in a complex job market. For more information visit www.matzskoog.com

NANCY OSBALDESTON - principal dancer & choreographer

In this bizarre year I have been able to adapt to a life without dance... momentarily I am finding new hobbies like sewing. But I have also realized how much I need my artform... It became clear that we can actually dance anywhere and at any time we need.

This special situation of performing live on stage, **connecting with an audience** is one I will cherish and will always look forward to when it comes.

But artists are not alone in being deprived of connection and I believe Corona has forced us all to learn to connect in other ways - mostly online but perhaps also with our inner self. Until the theaters open again - I only hope the weather becomes warmer quickly so we can enjoy outside performances and use our creativity to **share dance, music and movement**.



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JBA Program until june 2021

10/3	JBA films a third short film at the DIVA museum , Antwerp.
13/3	JBA auditions for the students van de Royal Ballet School Antwerp .
20/3	First round of online auditions in search of a new generation JBA dancers.
23 & 24/3	Director / Choreographer Stephen Delattre (Delattre Dance Company Mainz) conducts an intensive two-day workshop .
12-16/4	Legendary ballerina and ex-étoile of the Paris Opera, Monique Loudières shares her expertise and experience with our dancers.
17 & 18/4	JBA auditions season 2021/2022.
19-23/4	Our dancers are submerged into the choreographic language of Mauro Bigonzetti during a workshop conducted by Véronique Jean .
24/4	DAY OF THE DANCE. JBA's premiere performance SEASONS 4.0 finds its way to the living room during the TV broadcast on PODIUM-19 .
mei	Recording of METAMORPHOSIS part 2. A choreography by JBA's artistic patron David Dawson in a short film by Sam Asaert .
4/6	SEASONS 4.0 in ZAAL LUX , Kapellen. Tickets: webshopkapellen.recreatex.be/Tickets/Detail (Keep your ID at hand to create a login)
10, 11 & 12/6	JBA performs during a gastronomical dinner event in restaurant JEROM, organized by Inge Heylen.
23/6	SEASONS 4.0 in CC De Herbakker , Eeklo. Tickets: https://www.eeklo.be/cultuurcentrum/
<p>For information: www.juniorballetantwerp.be or info@juniorballetantwerp.be Due to any unforeseen developments regarding the Covid-19 virus, all of the above data is subject to change.</p>	

Do you wish to know more about supporting JBA financially? Visit juniorballetantwerp.be/support

Or send us an email at vrienden@juniorballetantwerp.be
 We would be happy to answer your questions or make an appointment.

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