

Robyn Orlin

CRÉATION 1994

REPRISE 2022 POUR NADIA BEUGRE

REPRISE 2024 POUR MARTA
IZQUIERDO MUNOZ

' in a corner the sky
surrenders - unplugging
archival journeys ... # 2
(for Marta ♡)...'



Note d'intention

Retour arrière ... le Lower East Side, Manhattan ... 1994 ...

À New York pour travailler, je suis frappée par l'instinct de survie des sans-abri. Les rues du Lower East Side sont un lieu de trafic de boîtes en carton, surtout celles qui sont suffisamment grandes pour former des abris de fortune, et dont la possession fait parfois l'objet de violentes bagarres. Comme je ne trouvais pas de lieu pour travailler, j'ai moi aussi utilisé des grandes boîtes en carton... c'est comme cela que j'ai créé mon solo, in a corner..., que j'ai ensuite joué à New York, à Chicago, en Afrique du Sud et en Australie. [Extrait](#)

Avance rapide ... Berlin 2001 ...

Je marche au milieu des blocs de béton du Mémorial juif de Berlin et commence à me sentir perdue, paniquée. Je regarde le ciel et retrouve lentement mon chemin. En sortant du mémorial je me souviens du solo dans la boîte en carton et me demande s'il aurait du sens en Europe. Pensée furtive qui va se loger dans un coin de mon cerveau.

Nouvelle avance rapide ... Berlin 2020 ...

Le coronavirus est à notre porte. J'observe comment les gens l'affrontent ou font avec. Je regarde toujours le ciel en quête de clarté. J'utilise Zoom pour me connecter au monde extérieur. Les images qui apparaissent sur mon écran d'ordinateur ressemblent parfois aux boîtes en carton des rues de Manhattan ou aux blocs de ciment du mémorial juif de Berlin. La situation est un peu nouvelle (on doit rester dans nos boîtes) mais les mécanismes de survie sont les mêmes.

Après avoir recréé ce solo avec Nadia Beugré en 2022 au Festival Montpellier Danse. Robyn Orlin le passera à Marta Izquierdo Munoz pour une création à La Place de la Danse en 2024.

"Dans son carton, devenu boîte magique, la danseuse invente un monde de haut tempérament. Elle y est souveraine, sagace, occupée à ses actions, parfois merveilleusement énigmatique, mais alors questionnante, à dérouler les objets qu'elle transporte, comme performeuse d'un destin libre, critique, inventif, auquel on a ardemment envie de s'ouvrir, plutôt que se fermer. On connaît bien dans nos rues, dans nos vies, de pareilles personnalités, allégories de toutes celles que la société de contrôle et de domination refoule à ses marges, sous nos yeux détournés" Gerard Mayen - Toute la culture - 27 juin 2022

Contact diffusion

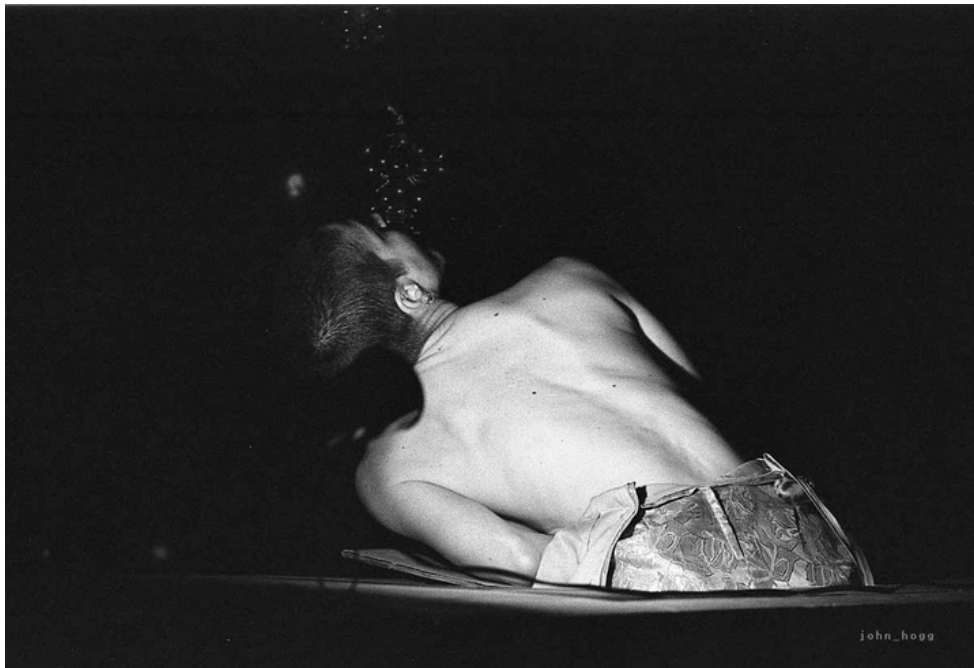
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Robyn Orlin



Née en 1955 à Johannesburg, Robyn Orlin est danseuse, chorégraphe et fondatrice du City Theatre & Dance Group (1988).

En 1981, lors d'un solo qu'elle donnait sur la scène du Breytenbach Theatre à Pretoria, Adrienne C Sichel la décrivait comme "une jeune danseuse très en colère". Elle comprit plus tard avec la notoriété grandissante de Robyn, qu'elle avait en fait assisté à la première tentative de la chorégraphe de déconstruire, critiquer et s'attaquer à la tradition coloniale du ballet classique blanc.

Une critique omniprésente dans son travail, qui lui a valu une renommée mondiale en 2003 lorsqu'elle remportait le Laurence Olivier Award pour "Daddy, I have seen this piece six times before and I still don't know why they are hurt each other" (1999) : un portrait satirique des relations raciales, des affrontements et de la menace que représente la démocratie pour les formes de danse "élitistes" occidentales. L'apogée de sa critique socio-politique tient peut-être dans la commande de l'Opéra de Paris qui lui a été faite pour "L'Allegro, il pensiero ed il moderato" (2007). Une pièce dans laquelle Robyn met en scène les danseurs étoiles et danseurs de ballet pour démolir la suprématie du tutu.

Surnommée en Afrique du Sud "l'irritation permanente", elle révèle, à travers son travail, la difficile et complexe réalité de son pays. Elle intègre diverses expressions artistiques (texte, vidéo, arts plastiques...), afin d'explorer une certaine théâtralité qui se reflète dans son vocabulaire chorégraphique.

En coproduction avec l'INA et ARTE, elle réalise son premier film "Hidden beauties, dirty histories" en octobre 2004.

Robyn Orlin a été nommée Chevalier de l'Ordre National du Mérite en 2009 et Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres en 2015.

Marta Izquierdo Munoz



Venue à la danse sur le tard après des études de psychologie à Madrid et après avoir été interprète, notamment au CCNRB de Catherine Diverrès et chez François Verret, Marta Izquierdo Munoz signe ses premiers projets personnels à partir de 2007 avec sa compagnie, [Iodudo] producción. Il s'agit alors des formes resserrées (du solo accompagné au trio), voyageuses (France, Espagne, Allemagne, Autriche, Japon, Maroc) et qui prennent le temps nécessaire aux rencontres. Après une petite forme contemporaine foraine (Jaleo, Le Triangle, Rennes, 2007), elle crée She's mine dans le cadre du sujet à Vif (festival d'Avignon 2008) suivi d'une tournée internationale ; puis Walking on thin ice (festival Mettre en Scène 2008) ; Rojo (festival Antipodes 2009, Le Quartz, Brest - . l'issue d'une résidence Culturesfrance Hors-les-Murs au Japon), Sirène (festival Antipodes 2010), He matado al principe (mon coeur est un océan) - festival Ardanth. 2012, Vanves ; My name is Britney Spears (festival CDC International, Toulouse 2014). Lauréate du programme de résidence de l'Institut Français du Maroc, elle y amorce un dyptique : Admirando la cheikha (2014 - festival Temporada Alta, Girona, Espagne) et Bt'n'bt ! una Carnecineria (2016 - festival CDC International, Toulouse). Les deux pièces suivantes ont en commun le travail autour d'un objet rudimentaire et archaïque, le b.ton : Practice Makes Perfect (2017) autour des danses traditionnelles catalanes et provençales et IMAGO-GO (2018), sur la figure de la majorette. IMAGO-GO constitue également le premier volet d'un triptyque autour de communautés féminines à la fois marginales et populaires dont GUERILLERES (projet lauréat de l'A-CDCN 2021) constitue le second volet. Elle prépare pour l'année 2023 Dioscures, un duo autour des figures mythologiques titanesques et gémellaires, ainsi que ROLL (2024/25) troisième partie du triptyque sur les communautés féminines. Elle développe par ailleurs des projets destinés à des publics spécifiques en lien avec un territoire. Ainsi, YOLO (2019) a été créé avec un groupe d'adolescents de la région rémoise, puis est repris ou recréé avec d'autres adolescents dans un dispositif concert. avec les lieux d'accueil (MJC Rodez 2019, projet interrégional Catalogne-Occitanie pour la Biennale de Toulouse 2022). Le Laboratoire Super Wonder All Style rassemble sur plusieurs week-ends une quinzaine de personnes aux styles chorégraphiques très variés lors de laboratoires de recherche fondés sur l'échange, la curiosité et l'émulation. Le projet se conclue par une restitution performative suivie d'un Grand Battle All Style (Toulouse 2019-2022). Elle est actuellement artiste complice du CDCN La Place de la Danse Toulouse/Occitanie, . L'IsdaT (Toulouse) et artiste associé au centre de création L'animal . l'esquena (Gérone, Espagne) et à la SN de Albi.

Critically acclaimed, Robyn Orlin remains marginalised by the dance world. She spoke to HAZEL FRIEDMAN

THERE'S an ancient Greek saying that the soul of a nation is ultimately judged by the way it treats its artists. If so, South Africa has much to answer for in its treatment of Robyn Orlin. Think of contemporary dance in this country and her name might appear alongside those of other luminaries such as Sonya Mayo, Sylvia Glasser, Esther Nasser and Adele Blank. Think of local contemporary dance being pushed and pummelled into bursting its boundaries, and Robyn Orlin stands

She, more than any other exponent of her discipline, has succeeded in transforming a pristine performing art into a kinetic installation. It was Orlin who twisted seamless sequences inside out, turning them into visceral rites of passage. It was she who deconstructed the classical pas de deux, exposing it as a battle of sexual wills. And it was Orlin who used refuse bags, shopping carts, empty refrigerator boxes and wind-up toys, not merely as props, but as dance partners and artforms in their own right.

Often arrogant and intolerant, she could make her dancers soar — or crush them underfoot. She was particularly adept at hitting her audience in the place where a laugh and a gasp are indistinguishable, where humour and horror merge in a disconcerting embrace.

And for that she is both adored and reviled. She has spawned a generation of "Orlin off-cuts" who slavishly emulate her imagery. But her work is fundamentally different to that of today's creative operators who regard art as a series of slick sound-bites. She has been critically acclaimed and given awards, yet she remains marginalised by the conservative dance world.

But Orlin has returned, a little bruised, but still unbowed. Forced to leave America, where she studied for five years on a Fullbright scholarship, she has a Master's degree in fine art, under the interdisciplinary rubric of kinetic installation. South Africa is a place she no longer understands. As for dance, she knows it too well.

"It is so difficult to access things here," she says. "Despite the changes, the rifts are as large as ever, the alienation deeper than I imagined. It's almost as though the wells of creativity have dried up." She adds: "Before, we were in this battle together, fighting a common enemy. But now, artists are just battered and that sense of community has disappeared."

Yet in her alienation, there's a newfound serenity. "If there's one thing I learnt in America, it's that I'm no longer an artist rooted to a specific place. Being there helped me to get in touch with my own dislocation. It has been a liberating experience that has developed my aesthetic." She adds ruefully, "Except

Freed from the imperatives that previously informed her work, she is now accessing subjects ranging from Brecht to Dada, surrealism, and even Hollywood icons. Her fascination with the latter is the focus of one of two pieces comprising her retrospective show at the Market Theatre. Called Upsy-Daisy, its dialectic revolves around the public and private personae of a screen goddess who tries unsuccessfully to kill herself. In many ways, it is vintage Orlin: the caustic observations on media distortion, the mechanistic rituals of modern life and the tragi-comic gap between desire and reality. It is about Orlin against the world and the loneliness of the long-distance dancer.

The second piece is more serene. Called In a Corner the Sky Surrenders, its title has been taken from writings by Andre Breton on the work of fellow surrealist Max Ernst. In a sense it represents the flip-side of Upsy- Daisy. It's about redefinition and self-empowerment. Here Orlin, the outsider, is in control. There is no resolution, merely acceptance of its absence.

"I know the moves but I'm no longer interested in dance," she insists. "I'm far more obsessed with challenging theories through performance and posing uncomfortable questions. But without funds and a corps of dancers, it's becoming harder to ask them." And when she does manage to get both, her brutal tools of deconstruction too often serve as self-detonators.

For example, a piece called Rumble in the Jungle practically caused a riot when it was performed at the Johannesburg Art Foundation earlier this year. Another piece for Napac, The Explosion of Stars, had its premiere and finale practically in one performance.

Yet Orlin still has an insatiable energy for shlock and shock. "I'm interested in all kinds of performance. I'd love to do opera, to really deconstruct it. But you can't do that here. Everything is still so categorised, so black and white."

She adds: "If there's one contribution I can still make, it's in teaching students how to think for themselves. Beyond that, I don't know how I'm going to pay the rent. Maybe I'll make muffins."

Now that's stretching it a little too far, even for

Robyn Orlin's Whoops! A Retrospective runs Upstairs at the Market until September

Woman Without a Country

By Carmela Rago

IN A CORNER THE SKY SURRENDERS . . .

Robyn Orlin

at Mussetter-Struble Theatre of Northwestern University, September 23

South African expatriate choreographer/performance artist Robyn Orlin is seemingly incapable of a false move. Every piece she's done since her arrival in Chicago three years ago has featured a fearless emotional honesty, spare yet clear execution, and deft manipulation of sets, lighting, and costume. She manages to pull her audiences into her bizarre, abstracted, yet absolutely consuming world.

Though Orlin is largely unknown in this country, she was a well known presence in South Africa, where she taught, performed, and choreographed for over 20 years. Because of apartheid, she--and many other visual and performing artists--were unable to bring their work out of the country. (This performance was offered in conjunction with Northwestern's exhibit of visual art, "Displacements: South African Works on Paper, 1984-1994.") The political climate there seems to have created a claustrophobic sense of loneliness, isolation, and fear, represented in much of Orlin's work.

In a Corner the Sky Surrenders . . . is her fourth solo here. This piece is a departure for Orlin (who moved to New York a scant three weeks ago), with a leaner feel, less excruciatingly perfect lighting (which in the past has reminded me of Hitchcock), and a meager set: a continually evolving folded and flattened cardboard box, sort of a collapsible house, illuminated by clamp lights she herself attaches and rearranges to accommodate various stages of her performance. She's accompanied by a wonderfully imaginative sound track edited and orchestrated by Eric Leonardson, a compilation of ambient sounds as well as Miriam Makeba singing and breathing percussively.

More than ever before, Orlin seems to be pursuing Jerzy Grotowski's "poor theater." Even her props--windup toys and assorted gold shoes--are humble. The piece is as lean and evocative as a haiku, a brilliant example of what can be done with very little. It should inspire others weary of the expense and worry of overproduction to investigate what can be accomplished with slender means.

In a Corner the Sky Surrenders . . . addresses the sense of being countryless, companionless, exiled and homeless. It reveals the frailty of dignity and pride, their impotence and uselessness in an indifferent landscape. A small mechanical toy train appears at the beginning and the end, acting as a signal of the beginning and end of her journey. Orlin, an athletic, svelte vision in a gold brocade dress with dangling chestnut-size faux-leopard-fur balls dancing across her bodice, begins the piece by limping across the stage wearing one gold high-heeled shoe. Has she just returned home from a dicey all-night date? Is she a lost, displaced princess? She clutches her opera-gloved arms across her chest and seems to perch on one leg against a glowing shack. One can't clearly see at first that this is a cardboard box--in the light it looks a bit like a pagoda. Painted blue within and illuminated from within, it provides a faint blue glow.

We hear a crackling record--a skip repeats and repeats itself. (Interestingly, both Mathew Wilson and Lynn Book have also used scratchy records and the image of the train in recent pieces.) The little train makes its way across the bare stage, a sort of homage to De Chirico; its smokestack shoots out little puffs. And as in a De Chirico, the tableau is spare and severe. Orlin pulls out a round, hard valise, the ultrafeminine sort popular among women of the 50s and 60s, and drags it along by a looped handle. Is she embarking on a journey? Is she returning from a journey? Nothing is clear, everything is ambiguous.

A small mechanical plush elephant seems to appear out of nowhere center stage making a strange sound less like trumpeting than like the noise of battery-operated gears grinding. Not unlike the little mechanical train puffing its way across the stage, the elephant paws the stage and its trunk rises up and down. Orlin has opened a window in the cardboard box and crawled inside, and she reclines inside this glowing house clutching the stuffed elephant in both hands. Its trunk rises and falls, and she lets the tip of it touch her face, then lowers it to her chest and continues to gaze at it. The elephant's trunk suggests a tiny yet willful penis--there's a sense of impotence and futility in her relationship with it, perhaps a metaphor for her position as one of South Africa's "privileged" yet disenfranchised artists, or for the endangerment of the elephant in Africa, or for the difficulty of life whenever one's home is a cardboard box.

Throughout the performance Orlin is poker-faced. She stretches the box out on the floor, directs the lights toward her, and tries to sleep. She might just as well be on an airport runway. We hear an invisible fly, and she swats at it with her hand and shakes her head. Then she pulls out a gold fly swatter. We hear The Blue Danube, and she begins an Isadora Duncan-inspired fly-swatting dance. The audience laughs, but we know that the woman in her box has not slept, nor has she made love, nor has she really rested. This dance is a swan song.

By the time the piece ends, Orlin has created at least five different configurations of her domicile, she's painted her feet red, and she's danced, shuddered, and glided gracefully throughout her set, an iron-willed presence. It's almost as if she's daring herself to dance or move or defy gravity at times, almost as if she's more comfortable rooted, earthbound, plodding. The little De Chirico train signifies that the journey has ended-- but that it continues. By the end we've seen one more trumpeting elephant, and Orlin, the girl's shadow in a De Chirico, quietly disappearing from view. This cinematic fade-out leaves Orlin's character still relentlessly searching for rest and a sense of place, ultimately allowing the bleak countryside to prevail.

Art accompanying story in printed newspaper (not available in this archive): photo/Nan Melville.