

Amauros

Cie Nicole Seiler
2011 creation



Photo : N. Seiler

Credits

Concept, choreography	Nicole Seiler
Performance, choreography	YoungSoon Cho Jaquet, Dominique Godderis-Chouzenoux, Christophe Jaquet, Mike Winter
Audio-description	Séverine Skierski
Foley artist (consultant)	Pascal Mazière
Light design	Stéphane Gattoni
Music	Stéphane Vecchione
Sound design	Philippe de Rham
Costumes design	Cécile Delanoë
Scenography	Vincent Deblue
Dramatist	Christophe Jaquet
Cultural promotion trainee	Sophie Martin-Achard
Administration	Cristina Martinoni
Distribution	mm – Michaël Monney
Duration	65 min.
Co-producers	Théâtre Arsenic Lausanne, Cie Nicole Seiler, CAET - Centre d'arts escéniques de Terrassa
Supports	Ville de Lausanne, Etat de Vaud, Pro Helvetia, Loterie Romande, Ernst Göhner Stiftung, Pour-cent culturel Migros et Sixt - Rent a car.

Press releases

[...] But for me, because I love words, the real jubilation is in the second part: when an audio describer – that's her profession – details, in voice-over, dance sequences that are monuments in history. Well-known choreographies – Swan lake, Café Muller, The Corsair – are born again to suggested movement, while sound makers continue playing the audio material of these episodes in complete darkness. Space opens up and you create your own moving picture. And when the sequence so brought in front of you is *Café Muller*, this self-suggested cinema has piercing accents.

Marie-Pierre Genecand, Le Temps, Saturday 15 October 2011

Amauros

I read in a research work that describing dance was a grave deed.

I agree.

Because dancing means removing yourself from articulated language.

Because looking at dance means you remove yourself from articulated language.

Well do we know that dance is reduced by words. That even precise vocabulary isn't enough to portray the uniqueness of gesture.

But at the same time, a dance that couldn't be spoken would lack a human face.

Describing dance. If it isn't a grave deed, it's at the least a serious one.

Séverine Skierski in *Amauros*

The title, *Amauros*, means *blind* or *dark* in ancient Greek. This show's originality is using sound to suggest dance played on stage.

During the making of *Playback*, Nicole Seiler's previous piece, the crew went to cinema shows "for the ears" and to conferences on the relationships between sound and image in the cinema. They watched films being audio-described and met blind dancers and visually impaired dance spectators, to understand the relationships between sound and image. Within a short time it was obvious that here was material for more than one show. In fact, far from being a mutilation, replacing sound or images with text makes the enjoyment of works richer, because you open the door to the spectator's own imagination; the gaps give rise to new meanings. In *Playback*, the absence of music stimulated spectators' imagination. In *Amauros*, the absence of images plays this role.

Foley artists recreate artificially sounds for radio and cinema. For a week, Pascal Mazière, Foley artist, taught the company's dancers the tools of the trade. These involve using varied accessories that often have nothing to do with the source of the sounds imitated; for example, using plastic funnels for horses trotting, a packet of cornmeal for steps in the snow and crinkling magnetic tape to evoke fire.

Audio Description is a procedure that makes films, shows and exhibitions accessible to blind or visually impaired audiences, thanks to a voice off-stage that describes the visual elements of the work. For *Amauros*, Séverine Skierski, an audio-describer specialising in cinema and theatre, recorded several descriptions of choreographies.

At the beginning of the show, after a short musical opening heard in darkness, we discover two microphones on stands in the midst of a jumble of objects painted black and disposed on the ground. Extracts of famous choreographies are projected on a hanging screen, the back of which is towards the spectators; the four performers are the only ones to see the images. With the objects at their disposal, they give a sound effect rendering of these images. They simulate fabric by bunching up covers, pirouettes by whirling ropes, footsteps by striking the ground...

The dancers concentrate on the screen with a rare intensity. Possessed by a common energy, they share the same rhythms, leaping or making fabric crack at the same time. They form an atypical *corps de ballet* that is also a music group; they sometimes sketch the movements that they evoke through sound, and sometimes let themselves be carried away by dance; but their aim remains the production of sound. There's something fascinating in observing these persons, so disparate, using an unheard-of choreographed language, committed to and striving for one aim.

Thrown off guard by the device and perhaps frustrated at first not to see the films, spectators come to understand that the interest of the performance isn't in the video projections themselves or in a possible relationship to be found between the sounds produced and the actions filmed – which they couldn't evaluate any way, not seeing the actions – but in the presence, intensity and movements peculiar to the Foley artists.

In the second part of the show, light fades, giving way to darkness. An audio description of filmed dance scenes is transmitted while the dancers physically present continue making sounds in the darkness. Choreography takes shape in each spectator's mind, dreamed up by each one with Séverine Skierski's text as guide – just as a helper may hold a blind person's hand without ever forcing him or her to follow a given path.

In spite of many attempts to write it down, dance, especially contemporary dance, is considered the most autographic¹ of the performing arts. It's true that dance has an immediacy of showing and receiving that transcends scribing. But would that be a reason to abandon all attempts to do so? Dance is, after all, transmitted – in yesteryears through word and example; today, thanks to video. Transposing, in its essence, involves a dose of transformation, evolution and rebirth. Music – another instantaneous art – wouldn't have become what it is today if it hadn't been written down, at some point in its history.

Nicole Seiler decided to transpose dance in *Amauros*, not to tie it down but as part of an alchemistic operation – transfiguring basic choreographed material to make another choreography. She uses two different, successive methods. In the first part, the dances filmed are transformed through the instructions given to the performers: to represent dance films through sound effects. To make sound effects you must move, living intensely through the scenes; therefore you must dance. In the second part, the spectators themselves must re-create the scenes described in darkness; they must choreograph and interpret them in their own way. So they dance once more.

The loss of sight, first experienced by spectators as a mutilation or privation (“What *are* those images that they're allowed to see, and I'm not?”), gives way to a new experience – the fascinating and burlesque universe of sound effects... and the freedom and infinite possibilities that only darkness could give them.

Christophe Jaquet, dramatist

1 American philosopher Nelson Goodman distinguishes between allographic and autographic works. According to him, classical music is a perfect example of allographic art, in that it's a two-timed art with a score which gives rise to the giving of the music or its scenic representation. He considers painting and literature, on the other hand, privileged spheres of autographic works, because they escape from being played and can be linked with authenticity and uniqueness. There is a whole range of nuances within these categories, used as regulating concepts. Goodman adds that autographic work is unique in its first appearance, which doesn't prevent it from being reproduced however, as in the case of books. (As presented by Isabelle Barbéris, *Théâtres contemporains: myths et ideologies*)

Nicole Seiler Biography

Born in Zurich in 1970, Nicole Seiler trained in dance and theatre at the Scuola Teatro Dimitri in Verscio (CH), the Vlaamse Dansacademie in Bruges (B) and at Rudra Béjart in Lausanne (CH).

As a dancer and player, she was engaged in numerous works with the Compagnie Buissonnière, Teatro Malandro, Alias Compagnie, Compagnie Philippe Saire and Massimo Furlan.

Nicole Seiler founded her own company in 2002. On her artistic pathway, images and video have been of great significance. Her multimedia research, allying dance and video, has opened the way for multimedia dance shows, videos and choreographed installations.

Over the last few years, she has been engaged in a cycle of works on the relationship between image and sound.

The Nicole Seiler Company has been enjoying international renown since 2004. In 2009, Nicole Seiler received the *Fondation Vaudoise pour la Culture* prize for dance. Since 2010, the company has been receiving much-valued aid thanks to a joint support contract with the City of Lausanne, the State of Vaud and Pro Helvetia.

Projects by Cie Nicole Seiler:

Amauros (spectacle de danse pour 4 interprètes, 2011, 65 min.)

Tinizong (spectacle de danse/multimédia pour 2 interprètes, 2010, 35 min.)

Playback (spectacle de danse/multimédia pour 6 interprètes, 2010, 65 min.)

Living-room dancers (spectacle/performances hors-les-murs et film, 2008, durée variable)

Ningyo (spectacle de danse/multimédia, 2008, 60 min.)

K Two (performance d'après le personnage de *Madame K*, 2007, 15 min.)

Je m'appelle... (spectacle de danse/multimédia, 2007, 11 min.)

Pixel Babes (spectacle de danse/multimédia, 2006, 64 min.)

4 clips pour aufnahmen (clips vidéo, 2006, 10 min.)

Dolls / Dolls live (installation et performances, 2005, durée variable)

Lui (spectacle de danse/multimédia, 2005, 35 min.)

One in a million (vidéo chorégraphique, 2004, 10 min.)

Madame K (spectacle de danse/multimédia, 2004, 45 min.)

Quoi? (spectacle de danse/multimédia, 2002, 30 min.)

Contact

Cie Nicole Seiler

Rue du Valentin 34 et demi
CH - 1004 Lausanne

Nicole Seiler +41 76 562 78 94
info@nicoleseiler.com

Diffusion :

mm – Michaël Monney
touring@nicoleseiler.com
+41 21 566 70 32

www.nicoleseiler.com