

**La Bâtie**  
**Festival de Genève**  
**03-19.09.2021**

**William Forsythe**  
**"A Quiet Evening of Dance"**

**Dossier de presse**



# William Forsythe (US)

## " A Quiet Evening of Dance "

William Forsythe invente encore. Après quelques années de pause, il revient avec une douce soirée de danse. Hommage coloré au classique qui sait assimiler la virtuosité du contemporain, quand elle sert la perfection. A *Quiet Evening of Dance* est une pureté chorégraphique en deux temps. Une pour le silence, la musicalité des corps et de la couleur dans laquelle s'intègre l'élastique breakdance de Rauf Yasit dit RubberLegz, et se termine sur la reprise du merveilleux DUO2015. La seconde pour les contrepunts de *Seventeen/Twenty One*, une pièce de 35 minutes sur une musique de Jean-Philippe Rameau, une danse des origines que font rayonner les interprètes de toujours. Insolente inventivité, douceur, calme et hip-hop sont les promesses de cette soirée hors normes.

### Danse

#### Sadler's Wells

#### Chorégraphie

William Forsythe

#### Aide à la conception

Brigel Gjoka, Jill Johnson, Christopher Roman, Parvaneh Scharafali, Riley Watts, Rauf "RubberLegz" Yasit, Ander Zabala

#### Interprètes

Cyril Baldy, Roderick George, Brigel Gjoka, Jill Johnson, Brit Rodemund, Parvaneh Scharafali, Riley Watts, Rauf "RubberLegz" Yasit

#### Musique

Morton Feldman, Nature Pieces for Piano No.1. From, First Recordings (1950s) – The Turfan Ensemble, Philipp Vandr   Mode (for Epilogue), Jean-Philippe Rameau, Hippolyte et Aricie: Ritournelle, from Une Symphonie Imaginaire, Marc Minkowski & Les Musiciens du Louvre    2005 Deutsche Grammophon GmbH, Berlin (for Seventeen/Twenty One)

#### Cr  ation lumi  res

Tanja R  hl and William Forsythe

#### Cr  ation costumes

Dorothee Merg and William Forsythe

#### Cr  ation son

Niels Lanz

#### Directeur artistique et chef ex  cutif

Alistair Spalding CBE

#### Productrice ex  cutive

Suzanne Walker

#### Diffusion

Bia Oliveira

#### Production

Florent Trioux

#### Production technique

Adam Carr  e

#### Marketing Manager

Daniel King

#### Responsable costumes

Miwa Mitsuhashi

#### R  gie g  n  rale et lumi  res

Pete Maxey

#### R  gie de la compagnie

Helen Lainsbury

#### Son

Simon Lambert

#### Cr  dit photo

Bill Cooper

#### Production

Sadler's Wells London



**Coproduction**

Théâtre de la Ville – Paris, Théâtre du Châtelet, Festival d'Automne à Paris, Festival Montpellier Danse 2019, Les Théâtres de la Ville de Luxembourg, The Shed – New York, Onassis Stegi, Internationaal kunstcentrum deSingel  
Lauréat du FEDORA - VAN CLEEF & ARPELS Prize for Ballet 2018

**Notes**

Première à Sadler's Wells London le 4 octobre 2018,  
Lauréat du Best Modern Choreography Award au The Critics' Circle Awards 2020

## Informations pratiques

Ma 7 sept      21:00  
Me 8 sept      21:00

Théâtre du Léman  
Quai du Mont-Blanc 19 / 1201 Genève

Durée : 95'

PT CHF 58.- / TR CHF 38.- / TS CHF 29.- / TF CHF 7.-



# Présentation

## ” A quiet evening of dance ”

(English)

William Forsythe is undoubtedly one of the foremost choreographers of his generation. For this unusual configuration of new and existing work, Forsythe has imagined something akin to an evening of chamber music, designed to be listened to.

The works range from sparse analytic condensation to baroque inspired counterpoint. The intricate phrasing of the dancers' breath is the primary accompaniment for a distillation of the geometric origins of classical ballet.

The evening is performed by seven of Forsythe's most trusted collaborators, who promise to provide insight into the workings of ballet and the mind of the man who has dedicated his work to this task.

# Interview de William Forsythe

## Extraits (english)

[...] At 69, Forsythe has been finding ballet delightful since he first went to a class at 17. But he took an almost 20-year hiatus from what he describes as “working within the academy”.

Widely considered one of the most important choreographers working today, Forsythe is a New Yorker who made his career in Europe. First in Stuttgart, Germany, then for two decades as director of Frankfurt Ballet, he took the genre in new directions by both ignoring and exploring its conventions – taking positions out of classical alignment; testing limits of balance, extension and strength; inventing strategies to generate movement; adding text, film and innovative lighting.

Even before Frankfurt Ballet closed in 2004, Forsythe had headed into more theatrical and improvisational terrain, which he would continue to investigate with the Forsythe Company, a smaller ensemble founded in 2005. Two works created for the Paris Opera Ballet in 1999 were more or less his farewell to the extensions of balletic form that had put him on the map. Audiences craving more of the unblinking modernity that Forsythe had brought to classical dance had to content themselves with older works. But Forsythe has come back to making ballet. Since leaving the Forsythe Company in 2015 he has created two pieces (Blake Works 1, Playlist [Track 1, 2]) for ballet companies and one (A Quiet Evening) for a small group of his own longtime dancers – joyous, detailed riffs on ballet technique and tradition, danced to pop music, Rameau and in silence. (Quiet Evening will come to The Shed in New York in October.)

His new work for Boston Ballet, Playlist (EP), will be his first for a North American ballet company in almost 30 years. It shares a program with Blake Works 1 and Pas/Parts 2018, a revised version of one of the 1999 Paris pieces. (His last US commis-

sion, Herman Schmerman, created for New York City Ballet’s 1992 Diamond Project, was revived there this season and is currently being performed.)

Without the responsibilities of running a company, free to choose where he would like to work, and with time “to practise a lot” at his home in Vermont, Forsythe – who also has a growing presence in the art world – seems newly invigorated by the joy of working with ballet dancers.

“I knew I wanted to move back to strict ballet after the Forsythe Company ended,” he says in an interview after a long day of rehearsal here. “When you look at the great works of Bournonville, Petipa, Balanchine, you realise that the possibilities are endless. It is up to you to find the recombinations that turn the academy into a form of vital communication.”

In the early part of his career, as resident choreographer with the Stuttgart Ballet and then as director of the Frankfurt Ballet, Forsythe created ballets that established him as a groundbreaking and often divisive experimental artist in a field that is by definition a historical genre.

Forsythe’s pre-1999 work – like George Balanchine’s – asked why ballet couldn’t be as representative of our time as any work of contemporary art. He pushed Balanchine’s expansion of ballet vocabulary – the elongated extensions, the tensions of weight and balance, the stripped-down aesthetic – into even more extreme terrain. He played with conventions, abandoned ballet’s traditional gender roles, used electronic music (frequently by Dutch composer Thom Willems), designed his own innovative lighting and brought text and film into his work, often inspired by philosophical or theoretical writings and ideas.

# Interview de William Forsythe suite

Broadly speaking, European audiences adored it; American critics – with some exceptions – hated it. As a result, until 1998, when the Frankfurt Ballet first began to occasionally perform at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, dance audiences in the United States saw little of his work apart from a few early pieces that began to percolate into ballet companies. But Mikko Nissinen, the artistic director of Boston Ballet, says he was not daunted by that history. “For me, he is the person who has moved the art form forward after Balanchine,” he says. “Our art form is in need of genius and here we have a profound, strong American voice. It baffles me that some people are blind to this.”

Fulfilling a long-held desire for his company, Nissinen entered into a five-year partnership with Forsythe in 2016; Boston Ballet will acquire at least one of his works each year.

In Gogol’s great phantasmagoric farce, an impecunious clerk newly arrived from St Petersburg is mistakenly assumed to be the eponymous inspector by the corrupt mayor and officials of this provincial town. Panic drives these paranoid locals to project a false identity onto this stranger. That would have been a good enough joke. Gogol, though, gives it an inspired, twist. His penniless nonentity turns out to be driven by an equivalent dread of being recognised as one of life’s losers. So when he twigs to their exploitable mistake, he treats their absurd respect (not to mention their bribes) as long-overdue recognition of his true worth and becomes airborne with grandiosity. It’s the interlocking lunacies that generate the comic delirium in this Russian masterpiece.

If Forsythe’s earlier ballets were explorations of the outer limits of the genre, his post-2014 work seems to be digging ever deeper into its core, looking hard at ballet’s history to bring it into the future. In Blake

Works 1, set to seven songs by James Blake, he mined the rich technical heritage of the Paris Opera Ballet dancers, incorporating combinations that have been passed down by generations of teachers, and emphasising the beaten footwork and refined arms that are French stylistic hallmarks. He has done something analogous in Playlist (EP), which begins with two sections created for English National Ballet and adds another four songs.

“I’m looking at all the interesting cross disseminations you get when you have a company made up of dancers from all over the world,” Forsythe says, noting that the Boston dancers come from Russia, South Korea, North America and Europe, all with different training. Playlist, he adds, quotes classroom combinations he remembered from teachers and from ballet classes seen while working in Paris, London and Boston.

The new work is also sprinkled with ballet history. “Paquita!” calls out a dancer, when Forsythe asks the group if they recognise a sequence he gave them. “It’s the ‘Paquita’ cha-cha now,” Forsythe laughs, referring to the 19th century ballet choreographed (in part) by Marius Petipa. “I keep watching the ballet on YouTube,” he says later. “The combinations, the complexities of the choreography, are just genius.”

But no matter how inspired by the past, or dedicated to ballet history, Forsythe’s physical style is distinctively and idiosyncratically personal: classical shapes, subtly transformed by angled hips and shoulders; academic form permeated by disco bounce; constantly shifting dynamics.

# Interview de William Forsythe suite

He is also not choreographing to music by Ludwig Minkus (Paquita, Don Quixote) or Tchaikovsky. With Blake Works 1 and Playlist (EP), he has turned to pop music, just as he did early in his career in works like Love Songs (1979) and Say Bye Bye (1980).

Playlist (EP) is an honest title. The work is set to six irresistible songs that were on the ever-expanding playlist on Forsythe's phone: Peven Everett's "Surely Shorty", Lion Babe and Jax Jones's "Impossible", Abra's "Vegas", Khalid's "Location", Barry White's "Sha La La Means I Love You" and Natalie Cole's "This Will Be (An Everlasting Love)."

"This was the root of dancing for me," Forsythe says. "My first dancing was in clubs and in musicals; I only engaged with ballet later." Pop music, he adds, "has very clear structure, just like classical music; the nature of the syncopations and the underlying contrapuntal motors of the music allow the same kind of drive that Tchaikovsky, Prokofiev and Stravinsky brought to ballet music. It has a deep connection to dance that is entirely supportive to ballet."

Nissinen says he was initially a little surprised by Forsythe's musical choices. "Then I thought, why not?" he says. "I think it's his reaction to being back in America. He wants to connect with people, bridge to broader audiences."

Working to music "you would listen to on a train", says Chyrstyn Fentroy, a corps de ballet member (non-soloists), has allowed the dancers to loosen up and find "a swing" to their technique. "It forces you to rethink how you do a tendu or use your épaulement," she says, referring to the complex relationships between head, shoulder and hips that are vital to ballet.

"I love the challenge of ballet," Forsythe says one day as he constructs a complicated, overlapping ensemble sequence. "It's like inventing a knot. You have the rope or cord, and you have to find the right relationships. It's much harder than people think!"

Now and again, that is evident in the studio. Stymied one afternoon by a difficult passage in a pas de deux, Forsythe gets out his phone: "Siri, what's the next step?" he asks. "You don't appear to be heading anywhere," she answers. Laughter all around.

Mostly, though, he seems to know exactly what he wants, reeling off strings of ballet steps as he demonstrates, the dancers picking up the movements with uncanny speed. (Once he went to consult photographs of M&M sweets, lined up in colour-coded formations that represented different stages of a section.)

Forsythe maintains he wasn't aiming for anything groundbreaking or revolutionary. "I like being part of the big ballet conversation," he says. "This is a celebration of everything ballet has brought to me in life. It's just another way to love ballet – and there are so many ways."

*New York Times*, Roslyn Sulcas, 10 mars 2029

# Biographie

## William Forsythe

(EN)

William Forsythe has been active in the field of choreography for over 45 years. His work is acknowledged for reorienting the practice of ballet from its identification with classical repertoire to a dynamic 21st century art form. Forsythe's deep interest in the fundamental principles of organization has led him to produce a wide range of projects including Installations, Films, and Web based knowledge creation.

Raised in New York and initially trained in Florida with Nolan Dingman and Christa Long, Forsythe danced with the Joffrey Ballet and later the Stuttgart Ballet, where he was appointed Resident Choreographer in 1976. Over the next seven years, he created new works for the Stuttgart ensemble and ballet companies in Munich, The Hague, London, Basel, Berlin, Frankfurt am Main, Paris, New York, and San Francisco. In 1984, he began a 20-year tenure as director of the Ballet Frankfurt, where he created works such as *Artifact* (1984), *Impressing the Czar* (1988), *Limb's Theorem* (1990), *The Loss of Small Detail* (1991), *A L I E / N A(C) T I O N* (1992), *Eidos:Telos* (1995), *Endless House* (1999), *Kammer/Kammer* (2000), and *Decreation* (2003).

After the closure of the Ballet Frankfurt in 2004, Forsythe established a new ensemble, The Forsythe Company, which he directed from 2005 to 2015. Works produced with this ensemble include *Three Atmospheric Studies* (2005), *You made me a monster* (2005), *Human Writes* (2005), *Heterotopia* (2006), *The Defenders* (2007), *Yes we can't* (2008/2010), *I don't believe in outer space* (2008), *The Returns* (2009) and *Sider* (2011). Forsythe's works developed during this time were performed exclusively by The Forsythe Company, while his earlier pieces are prominently featured in the repertoire of virtually every major ballet company in the world, including the Mariinsky Ballet, New York City Ballet, San Francisco Ballet, National Ballet of Canada, Semperoper Ballet Dresden, England's Royal Ballet and the Paris Opera Ballet.

More recently Forsythe has created original works for the Paris Opera Ballet (*Blake Works I*), English National Ballet (*Playlist (Track 1,2)*), as well as Boston Ballet (*Playlist (EP)*).

Awards received by Forsythe and his ensembles include the New York Dance and Performance "Bessie" Award (1988, 1998, 2004, 2007) and London's Laurence Olivier Award (1992, 1999, 2009). Forsythe has been conveyed the title of *Commandeur des Arts et Lettres* (1999) by the government of France and has received the *Hessischer Kulturpreis/ Hessian Culture Award* (1995), the *German Distinguished Service Cross* (1997), the *Wexner Prize* (2002) the *Golden Lion of the Venice Biennale* (2010), the *Samuel H Scripps / American Dance Festival Award for Lifetime Achievement* (2012) and the *Grand Prix de la SACD* (2016).

Forsythe has been commissioned to produce architectural and performance installations by architect-artist Daniel Libeskind (Groningen, 1989), *ARTANGEL* (London, 1997), *Creative Time* (New York, 2005), and the *SKD – Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden* (2013, 2014). These "Choreographic Objects", as Forsythe calls his installations, include among others *White Bouncy Castle* (1997), *City of Abstracts* (2000), *The Fact of Matter* (2009), *Nowhere and Everywhere at the Same Time No. 2* (2013), *Black Flags* (2014), *Underall* (2017) and *Unsustainables* (2019). His installation and film works have been presented in numerous museums and exhibitions, including the *Whitney Biennial* (New York, 1997), *Festival d'Avignon* (2005, 2011), *Louvre Museum* (2006), *Pinakothek der Moderne* in Munich (2006), *21\_21 Design Sight* in Tokyo (2007), *Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus* (2009), *Tate Modern* (London, 2009), *Hayward Gallery*,



# Biographie

## William Forsythe, suite

(London 2010), MoMA (New York 2010), Venice Biennale (2005, 2009, 2012, 2014), MMK – Museum für Moderne Kunst (Frankfurt, 2015), 20th Biennale of Sydney (2016), ICA Boston (2011, 2018), Sesc Pompeia – Sao Paulo (2019) and Museum Folkwang (2019).

In collaboration with media specialists and educators, Forsythe has developed new approaches to dance documentation, research, and education. His 1994 computer application Improvisation Technologies: A Tool for the Analytical Dance Eye, developed with the ZKM / Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie Karlsruhe, is used as a teaching tool by professional companies, dance conservatories, universities, postgraduate architecture programs, and secondary schools worldwide. 2009 marked the launch of Synchronous Objects for One Flat Thing, reproduced, a digital online score developed with The Ohio State University that reveals the organizational principles of the choreography and demonstrates their possible application within other disciplines. Synchronous Objects was the pilot project for Forsythe's Motion Bank, a research platform focused on the creation and research of online digital scores in collaboration with guest choreographers.

As an educator, Forsythe is regularly invited to lecture and give workshops at universities and cultural institutions. In 2002, Forsythe was chosen as one of the founding Dance Mentor for The Rolex Mentor and Protégé Arts Initiative. Forsythe is an Honorary Fellow at the Laban Centre for Movement and Dance in London and holds an Honorary Doctorate from The Juilliard School in New York. Forsythe is a current Professor of Dance and Artistic Advisor for the Choreographic Institute at the University of Southern California Gloria Kaufman School of Dance.

« William Forsythe's *A Quiet Evening of Dance* is literally quiet: soundtrack from silence to bird-song, to baroque dances by Rameau. It's also a very intimate performance, one of the world's most influential choreographers creating for dancers he knows well. It makes a cerebral, sometimes funny evening: Forsythe tenderly taking ballet to bits, so he can expose and play with its mechanisms.

Produced by Sadler's Wells, *A Quiet Evening* is Forsythe's first full-length programme since he closed The Forsythe Company in 2015. It's an expansive moment in his career: he's recently returned to making works for other companies, including the unexpected delight of *Playlist* (Track 1, 2) his club banger for English National Ballet.

In *A Quiet Evening*, he's back with six long-term collaborators from The Forsythe Company, with the addition of hip hop dancer Rauf "RubberLegz" Yasit. They're immensely skilled and fluent in Forsythe, alive to every nuance of his choreography.

And there's a lot of nuance. It's an evening of duets, solos and occasional group dances, with common threads running through both the new works and a revival of "*DUO2015*", now named "*Dialogue*". Often wearing brightly coloured long gloves and socks, dancers echo and respond to each other; themes and infinite variations.

In "Prologue", danced to birdsong, Parvaneh Scharafali and Ander Zabala perform gentle, intricate twists and turns, with airy beaten steps. In "Catalogue", Jill Johnson and Christopher Roman stay mostly on the spot, bending and tilting within a single space. In silence, they'll make neat gestures from one shoulder to the opposite hip, then bend – as if folding along the dotted line. There's a fascination with the range of movement in hip and shoulder, how it flows through the torso or out through the limbs. It's a brainy, questioning dance – but then they'll pause in a curving line that is more like sculpture than mathematics, finding lyricism in logic.

For "Epilogue", the whole company layer and overlap their themes, before Brigel Gjoka and Riley Watts dance and dip through "Dialogue", now to birdsong rather than Thom Willems' electronic score. It's a responsive dance, the dancers' breathing including grunts of effort or gasps that have the rhythm of laughter.

"Seventeen/Twenty One" puts similar material to delicate baroque music by Rameau. This time, Forsythe layers ballet and hip hop moves, looking at the different and similar ways they twist through the body, the three-dimensional use of space. Yasit props himself on his arms and folds his legs through whirling angles; Roman swings his arms from the elbow, comedy in the circles. *A Quiet Evening of Dance* is both introspective and playful.»

*Independent*, 5 octobre 2018

# Billetterie

> En ligne sur [www.batie.ch](http://www.batie.ch)  
> Dès le 30 août à la billetterie centrale  
Théâtre Saint-Gervais  
Rue du Temple 5 / 1201 Genève  
[billetterie@batie.ch](mailto:billetterie@batie.ch)  
+41 22 738 19 19

## Contact presse

Pascal Knoerr  
[presse@batie.ch](mailto:presse@batie.ch)  
+41 22 908 69 52  
+41 78 790 41 50

Matériel presse sur [www.batie.ch/presse](http://www.batie.ch/presse) :  
Dossiers de presse et photos libres de droit  
pour publication médias