



**mon amour**

(2008)



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Choreography, Scenic Design and Costumes : Christian Rizzo  
Dancers : Christine Bombal, Philippe Chosson, Pep Garrigues, Kerem Gelebek, Wouter Krokaert, I-Fang Lin, Tamar Shelef.  
Lighting : Caty Olive  
Original Score : Didier Ambact, Bruno Chevillon, Gerome Nox.  
Songs : Mark Tompkins

Songs performed by Mark Tompkins :  
*I know it's over* and *the boy with the thorn in his side* by Morrissey  
*Something more* by Mark Lewis Tompkins  
*Mystery of love* by Marianne Faithfull  
and excerpts from *Asphodel, that greeny flower* by William Carlos Williams  
and *Présages d'innocence / Mummer love* by Patti Smith.

Assistant Director : Sophie Laly  
Stage Manager : Jean-Michel Hugo  
Sound : Juliette Wion  
Lighting : Arnaud Lavis  
Spheres : Jérôme Dupraz and Luc Moreau (protototyp)  
Stage elements built by : Opéra de Lille workshop.  
Administration / Production : Catherine Meneret assisted by Marie Fourcin

**Producer** : l'association fragile

**Coproduced by** : Opéra de Lille, Théâtre de la Ville de Paris, deSingel in Antwerp, ARCADI (initiative for regional artistic creation and promotion in île de France), and Opéra de Dijon.

**Coproducers who donated time in their studios** : Centre Chorégraphique National de Franche Comté in Belfort, CNDC / Centre National de Danse Contemporaine d'Angers, Centre Chorégraphique National du Havre / Haute-Normandie.

**Support for this production has been provided by** the Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication DICRÉAM fund, the SACD Stage Music Fund, and Ars Numérica.

**With support from** la Chaufferie / Compagnie DCA Philippe Decouflé...

**And our thanks to** : Patti Smith, Thomas Delamarre and Marie Lannurien

As a registered dance company, l'association fragile is provided with support in the form of a grant from the Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication / DRAC d'île-de-France.

It also receives support from Culturesfrance for its tours abroad.

**Since 2007, l'association fragile / Christian Rizzo has been in residence at the Opéra de Lille.**

## waiting to be there...

“It has become increasingly clear to me that this project is a chance to rethink past creations. I need new tools now to redefine what I want to create. Confronting two distinct choreographic worlds (one organic, the other robotic) is first and foremost a chance to ask questions about movement generated by both bodies and space. Bodies move in order to make sense of and also to change the function of the space. If the surrounding space itself is moving, then how can the body register its own movement? Can we act or only react? What kind of imagination is activated by instability?”

**christian rizzo, november 2006.**

“A world without rituals is a raw world reduced to matter, weights and measures, whereas a ritualized world instils a sense of history in things, gives them meaning and enables us to live together. A world without rituals is a collapsing world in which isolated people crash into each other, come together or clash according to their impulses and needs, whereas a ritualized world connects and reconciles people to create a social structure.”

**Boris Cyrulnik in « *Les Nourritures affectives* »**

i feel you  
your sun it shines  
i feel you  
within my mind  
you take me there  
you take me where  
the kingdom comes  
you take me to  
and lead me through  
babylon

this is the morning of our love  
it's just the dawning of our love

i feel you  
your heart it sings  
i feel you  
the joy it brings  
where heaven waits  
those golden gates  
and back again  
you take me to  
and lead me through  
oblivion

this is the morning of our love  
it's just the dawning of our love

i feel you  
your precious soul  
and I am whole  
i feel you  
your rising sun  
my kingdom comes

i feel you  
each move you make  
i feel you  
each breath you take  
where angels sing  
and spread their wings  
my love's on high  
you take me home  
to glory's throne  
by and by

this is the morning of our love  
it's just the dawning of our love

**martin gore / david gahan (depeche mode)**

**About *mon amour*,  
an Interview with Christian Rizzo on 7 December 2007  
following a preliminary phase of rehearsals**

“Like a dreamer, Christian Rizzo has created his own world, beginning his explorations at the dawn of the 1980s. *Mon amour*, his new piece, goes back to his questions as an artist trained in the visual arts, as a dancer, shaper of bodies, objects and sounds, and as a choreographer. These many dimensions are cast over a new area of reflection, from a place of extreme solitude that imparts its strange moves to the seven dancers, the singer and the three musicians present onstage.

The performers move subtly, with a sense of geometry, fullness and suspense, composing a striking score that is a delicate plea for style, feelings, and the deepest nature of being.” - Irène Filiberti

(Christian Rizzo is analysing and talking about material that has just emerged here. Thus, the ideas, promises and issues discussed, as well as the images described, are subject to change.)

***For some choreographers it all starts with the space. You seem to belong to that group. Mental images and stage design dictate their own laws. It's almost like a spatial concept that structures the poetic questions, the soul or underlying necessity of each production. Going back to the source or preliminary ideas, where did the choice of this stage design come from, in particular the idea of working with spheres?***

**CR:** I was putting some of my things away a while ago and came across something I had written back in 2002 about “a piece with moving black spheres”. Actually, it was only a note, and I’m just as likely to hang onto other ideas – “a piece with a trampoline” for instance. At that stage they are just vague unresolved images that remain dormant in your memory and may stimulate the imagination later in the form of a specific desire. But you could also see *Mon amour* as the follow-up to my previous pieces, *Soit le puits était profond, soit ils tombaient très lentement, car ils eurent le temps de regarder tout autour*, a phrase borrowed from Lewis Carroll (“Either the well was very deep, or she fell very slowly, for she had plenty of time, as she went down, to look about her”). The stage design for this production consisted of white right-angle blocks which made it seem like the walls were moving when in fact they were being moved by the dancers. So then I felt like using the opposite – round objects that moved without any apparent manipulation on a moving floor. In this new piece I’m trying to get closer to my desire or dream, a fundamental aspiration to create a live stage design. I like this relationship – between autonomous, mechanical movement and bodies that have to cope with their own mechanics and physicality.

***Are there any other special objects in the stage design for this piece?***

**CR :** Fog is another important element. I felt like testing that idea too. Luckily the experiments were immediately conclusive. The movement consists in gradually covering the stage in mist until the space is completely annihilated. The performers then disappear in all the fog. This has brought up other questions to be resolved: “how do you change the way you see things, how does vision function in everyday life, and how do you create another way of seeing?” Black and white might be the way to resolve that issue in this piece.

***What was the reason for removing colour and going back to black and white? Was it to evoke the origins of photography and cinema, to reassess an aesthetic that has at times been criticised for its facile beauty and elegance?***

**CR:** In fact, another line emerged – with all colour fading away. There isn't a lot of colour in the piece. It moves in the direction of grey tones, starting from this diffuse state of fading colour. The intention was to cross the expanse created by this dilution, to become so absorbed by it that you're totally immersed in it. It's done by composing multiple tones, going from light to dark, and playing with real appearances by the performers on stage. When they get to the middle of the stage they turn into grey silhouettes absorbed into the background of the same colour. You can't tell how far away they are from each other, if they're only a few steps apart, or more. You can't see the floor and sometimes everything disappears and there's nothing left. These are deep and highly resonant mental images for me, as are monochrome and the idea of emptiness in Chinese painting.

***How does the stage design function vis-à-vis the group within this kind of framework?***

**CR:** The strangest part is that these elements together create a place of absolute solitude – probably the farthest I've ever gone in any piece to date. A body seen in such a setting seems to have no limits. It seems to be both caught up in and rejected by its own intellect. It made me want to work in ways I hadn't thought of at first. I'm not sure how I'll deal with the group aspect, or even if I'll use one as such. It may turn into a multifaceted solo involving several people, maybe three performers and shadows, maybe a chorus. At this point everything can still change because I didn't know what the space would generate before this first phase of work. The space is what has led me to ask these questions because it's shifting and intangible. There are the seven spheres, and in particular their movement, but the fog is also a volatile aspect in the stage design.

***How do the performers come into play with respect to that?***

**CR :** Our first experiments together were more about constraints from the shifting scenic elements and how the body could adapt to them. It was a really interesting approach – occupying the space, the physical concentration required, connecting all the elements, in particular by learning to use them and handle certain controls. Everyone was totally focused on moving his own sphere and alert to the fact that the spheres could meet up. The dancers, absorbed by what they had to do, would approach each other and move apart. They could also be side by side as if by accident. That kind of attention triggers a way of staging bodies that can only exist or emerge according to a motivation that is external to the movement itself.

***Does the loss of intentional movement free up another way of moving or choreographing?***

**CR:** Absolutely. Sometimes they do nothing and are just busy with the action to be accomplished. That action triggers a movement. Then certain connections arise. But that's also my way of operating. I observe and feel moved. I don't think this piece will be enough for me to really understand what it is that I find so moving. While working in Korea recently, something essential stuck with me – people carrying plants as they were walking. That image alone stayed with me, and it's the one I remembered after spending a whole week there.

Recently, while visiting an exhibition featuring François Pinault's collection at the Lille postal sorting office, I stumbled on a video by Steve McQueen, an artist whose work I really love. The video, filmed in London, showed people carrying plants. The connection is brilliant – an impression of strolling around with a bit of unearthed nature without knowing its finality. It's an action that's so close to us. You could see plant-men in it too. The connotations are extremely powerful and palpable. I don't know why, but I could watch it for hours, and with three spheres moving around it's even better.

***Live music is an important element in most of your pieces. Is that true for this one too?***

**CR:** It's the same process. At first I thought about where on stage to place the musicians, a trio including drums, bass and electronic music. In the beginning I wanted one single line, like a floor that's levitating, but it wasn't possible. In the end, they're going to be suspended, appearing and disappearing at will on stages of different heights. In other words, the music will be hanging in the air.

Didier Ambact, Gerome Nox and Bruno Chevillon are also the composers of the piece. Each one will be on a separate platform whose barely visible structure seems integrated into the surface of the backdrop. So

they'll have to invent a way of listening that takes into account the stage design and find ways of communicating that may come more from the ear than the eye.

In addition, the performer and choreographer Mark Tompkins will be present on stage in another capacity, as a singer. I gave him lyrics of songs to read – ones I like to listen to, most of them love songs. He also has the possibility of writing his own texts if he wants to.

***Are the songs, poems and other texts used as a source of inspiration linked to the same themes in the piece?***

**CR:** We discussed it with the other performers, and tried to figure out what lyricism and romanticism mean today, in particular in dance. I don't see why subjects like this should be considered laughable nowadays. Could it be the fear of committing to someone – like in love? What kind of freedom are we talking about here? Saying either yes or no is itself a form of commitment, so what have you got to lose in trying? Why protect yourself from other people? My work is full of romanticism – and this piece in particular with its short title. I like its simplicity, which puts me in a vulnerable position.

**Interview conducted by Irène Filiberti**

### **Spheres of Love**

(...) Christian Rizzo expresses his love of the baroque in this imitation planetarium where planets and dancers are sent into orbit. The faces of the seven performers are covered with veils (...) attached to the hoods of their tracksuits – a striking effect of a faceless world blindly moving forward. Later in the piece, they all carry potted plants around. In short, could they be the guardians of a bit of nature that needs to be moved to another sphere? A bassist, a drummer and an electro-acoustic musician (Didier Ambact, Bruno Chevillon, G r me Nox) seem to be levitating up on a platform. Choreographer/performer Mark Tompkins is like a little satellite on stage, whispering love songs into a mike. Along with the duets, they remind us that love is what the piece is all about – lifts from the partner's back to the floor, bodies reshuffled by the group, one dancer posed on the other's buttocks, couples divorcing due to the others. The black spheres don't interfere directly with their fragile moving bodies, but are triggered by each new configuration, coming closer, like huge cannonballs shot into a crowd at slow motion."

**L'Humanit  – Muriel Steinmetz – Monday 10 March 2008**

### **Christian Rizzo's mon amour: choreography   la Gus Van Sant...**

The intense, solid and highly stimulating opening images in Christian Rizzo's piece create a strong impression.

(...) The choreography oscillates between pure movement, contact improvisation and dance. The performers lift and drop each other, seemingly unconnected. Green plants are possibly a first pointer – elements of nature in a pot, yet quite vibrant and luxurious, which they move around ceaselessly. (...)

*May I touch you?*

The second and most important reference is the Other, the one you try to kiss but who escapes, whom you carry, support or sweep off, but never force. These contacts seem to express the fragility of the one being carried, and the strength demanded of the one carrying.

Poems by William Carlos Williams and songs by Morrissey, Marianne Faithfull and Patti Smith performed by Mark Tompkins add another layer to the trip-hop rock 'n' roll melodies in the background. The lyrics speak of love, wandering, forgiveness, rebirth, childhood, the other, escapes and open doors. The words create a layer of surround-sound that you can't really hear at times but that rocks and caresses you. (...)

"*May I touch yoooouuu*" is like a desperate love song daring to express itself. Pas de deux and solitary explorations, simple gestures and frenzied explosions echo these potential encounters – with no trace of rigid grace or academic poses, but harmoniously in sync with the bodies. The dancers' faces and patches of skin gradually appear. Later there is an invasion of black spheres and Tompkins alone in this absurd, smoke-filled desert, echo of a mild apocalypse.

One is reminded of Gus Van Sant, of faded innocence, a sensitivity that is sometimes abrupt, the sensuality of jeans, rock 'n' roll, and ever-so-green plants.

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