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# Puz / zle

An EASTMAN creation choreographed by Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui with live music composed by Jean-Claude Acquaviva, Kazunari Abe and Olga Wojciechowska

Premiered at the Carrière de Boulbon during the Festival d'Avignon on the 10<sup>th</sup> of July 2012.

Winner of the 2014 Olivier Award for "Best New Dance Production".

## PUZ/ZLE

In *Puz/zle*, Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui returns in a more abstract fashion to the notion of the multiple and of multiplicity rooted in our thought processes and the added question of how things fit together to create a new and distinct identity (like a jigsaw puzzle).

Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui is intrigued by why certain connections succeed in coming together as an organic whole while others fail. And whether they actually fail or if the failure lies in our perception of order and disorder. He aims then to question the seeming importance of order and linearity and to explore if there can be more than one way of solving a puzzle, of telling a tale, of living time.

Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui questions and highlights the puzzles that lie behind human relations (emotional, intellectual, sexual), the morphology of the body, and intangibles like musical traditions inspired by and woven together from separate and multiple strands and traditions (so a liturgical composition sung in Spain might have Arabic roots, buried in the sands of time).

With A Filetta, the Corsican polyphonic group (his companions in *In Memoriam* and *Apocryfu*), the Lebanese singer Fadia Tomb El-Hage (also seen in *Origine*) and the Japanese percussionist and flautist Kazunari Abe by his side to dissect how a song, a composition can have various sources all at once, religious and secular, Christian and Muslim, and how traditions that we so easily name European or Oriental are never that definable and monolithic, Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui salutes the delightful impurity that constitutes our lives and our planet.



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## PRESS REVIEWS

“This is the work of an architect – no, of a master craftsman. Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui really is in the big league.”

***Violeta Assier, *Vaucluse Matin*, 12.07.2012***

“In *Puz/ɜle*, dance prevails over text and the stories that often puncture the fabric of Cherkaoui's works. Although scraps of narratives – about difference, self-love and its opposite, tolerance and so on – still find their way in, here they do so via the search for totally new and unexpected physical pathways.

Always verging on contortionism, with its off-kilter acrobatics, Cherkaoui's folded, broken, twisted style says much about his tireless urge to crash into boundaries and shatter them to smithereens. In duets and group sequences, the movement segues into a flexible human chain that is *Puz/ɜle*'s choreographic trademark – and gives the work its cosmic flavour.”

***Rosita Boisseau, *Le Monde*, 13.07.2012***

“Stone, like a piece of the *Puz/ze* he invents in space, is ever-present, constantly being handled by the dancers, be it in the form of large rectangular prop stones or small blocks of real stone that they tap like percussion instruments and line up in shifting constellations. As is often the case with Cherkaoui, who works everything out down to the smallest detail, everything leads into something else.”

***Emmanuelle Bouchez, Télérama, 12.07.2012***

“The choreographer and his performers create a glaze in which, between breaks and restored connections, a blended substance reveals a unique harmony.”

***Alexandre Demidoff, Le Temps, 14.07.2012***

“Invigorating to say the least, *Puz/ze* is the kind of mixture the choreographer enjoys, as someone who is constantly searching for his own multiculturalism outside himself. Less hippified than many of his previous pieces, this truly spectacular work blends instrumental music, vocals, dance and graffiti.”

***Marie-Christine Vernay, Libération, 12.07.2012***

“With choreographic references from Buddha to Rodin, and musical lines that float from Arabic song through to Christian mass, the mix is almost too rich to bear. But for Cherkaoui, the dark side of order and synthesis is always chaos. Over and over again, the buildings are demolished, and the patterned elegance of the choreography decays into dysfunctional, disruptive ugliness. Human contact turns brutal as groups single out their scapegoats, couples fight, and even a dancer's body turns viciously against itself.”

***Judith Mackrell, The Guardian, 25.04.2013***

“Cherkaoui is brilliant at creating striking images, and his dancers never look less than beautiful or perform with anything other than staggering, fluid skill.”

***Sarah Crompton, The Telegraph, 25.04.2013***

“Cherkaoui shows man urging to reproduction and as usual easily combines a variety of choreographic styles from modern and urban dance, Butoh and oriental martial arts. With an eye for the quality of each individual dancer he creates a timeless monumental world being constantly transformed by movement and becoming emotionally charged by the music.”

***Moos van den Broek, Theaterkant.nl, 04.08.2012***



## PROGRAMME NOTES BY GUY COOLS



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The location of its Avignon premiere, *La Carrière de Boulbon*, inspired Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui to continue his choreographic research into the ‘building stones’ of our existence: to dive into the archaeology of our history and to bring the stones alive in a process of continuous transformation. An ambitious project that he is only able to realize because he always builds himself on previous experiences and collaborative exchanges.

With sculptor Antony Gormley he explored the manipulation of objects in *Zero Degrees*, *Sutra* and *Babel*. In a similar way that Gormley tries to find a concrete form for the energetic body in stone, wood or with wires, Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui has been choreographing in some of his recent productions not only the body of his dancers, but also the inanimate objects with which the set is created, like ink and paper in *TeZukA* or rope in *Bound*. For *Puz/ꝛle* he chose the element stone. To choreograph the space around the bodies in a filmic way is also an essential part of *Puz/ꝛle*. The animate and inanimate are just different forms of energetic concentration and condensation. They vibrate together. Eventually the body fossilizes to its skeleton and stones are brought alive by the artist carving them.

From the very beginning, the choreographic and musical universe of Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui has tried to be all-inclusive: to bring together in a non-hierarchical way different traditions; juxtaposing them in a respectful way knowing that they might eventually influence each other and change their ‘genetic’ code. In *Puz/ꝛle* he brings together the musical traditions from Corsica with A Filetta; Japan with ex-Kodo drummer Kazunari Abe and the Middle East with Fadia Tomb El-Hage. All of whom he has worked with before.

And last but not least there is the physical and rhythmical drawing of images with the bodies of his dancers (who also often accompany him in several productions). In *Puz/ꝛle* there is a shift from the individual body to the collective body. As for instance James Surowiecki describes in *Wisdom of the Crowds*, the group is more intelligent than the individual and it is through collective collaboration that we are able to literally rise above ourselves.

The structure of *Puz/ze* is deliberately cyclic. It tries to underline that time is not linear, but cyclic in a spiralling way. If we tune in for a moment to the rhythms of nature or our own body, it shouldn't be so difficult to capture this essence. From a negative point of view, it means that we always tend to repeat the same patterns. From a positive point of view, it means there is always the possibility of a second beginning.

All ancient knowledge systems subscribe the same belief: the microcosmos of the human body resembles the macrocosmos of the universe and the way we organize our society functions. The double helix of our DNA is repeated in the structure of our spinal column, which in its turn is mirrored in the monuments we erect to celebrate this vertical connection between earth and sky: the menhirs, the monoliths, the temples and churches, the statues.

In *Puz/ze* we are at the same time inside the body, looking at the movements at the level of the DNA and the cells. For instance when DNA replicates itself, the telomere separate at both ends of the DNA which causes as such a loss of information. This is the essence of our aging process. We travel through the history of human civilization which is a continuous process of growth and decay of destruction and rebuilding with the monuments we erect as the silent witnesses of the past. And we listen to the cosmic dance of the stones that are the planets: the music of the spheres. The latter is probably also the origin of the stone labyrinths that we find in all cultures and which are supposed to be a choreographic pattern for a spiral dance, celebrating the connection between man and the universe.

*Puz/ze* doesn't hide the violence of this ongoing cycle of death and rebirth, but also wants to celebrate how transformation always happens through an act of imagination and the will power accompanying it. How human curiosity might accidentally trigger change.

From his very first creation *Rien de Rien*, the wall is a recurrent theme in the work of Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui. The wall as a symbol for the separations we install between ourselves and the other: in Berlin, in Israel, on the borders of Fort Europa or between Mexico and the USA,... The wall as border between people was the subject of *End*, the choreography that Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui made for the Cullberg Ballet. But we also build walls around our own gardens and even our own minds. And our skin has evolved from a porous contact zone to a hygienic wall of its own. As a result we often literally 'hit the wall' of our own ego and our own limits, both as individuals and as society. For real transformation to happen we have to bring down these walls, even if this process implies the chance of (self-)destruction. That is the positive message of *Puz/ze* with a wink to Pina Bausch's iconic opening of *Palermo/Palermo*.

# CREDITS PUZ/ZLE

## **Choreography**

Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui

## **Music composition**

Jean-Claude Acquaviva, Kazunari Abe, Olga Wojciechowska

## **Additional music**

Bruno Coulais, Tavagna, traditionals from Corsica, Japan and the Middle-East

## **Set design**

Filip Peeters, Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui

## **Light**

Adam Carrée

## **Video design**

Paul Van Caudenberg

## **Costume design**

Miharu Toriyama

## **Artistic advisor**

Damien Jalet

## **Artistic advice**

Guy Cools, An-Marie Lambrechts, Gabriele Miracle

## **Musical advice**

Olga Wojciechowska

## **Costume advice and wardrobe**

Elisabeth Kinn Svensson

## **Sound A Filetta**

Jacques Fach

## **Assistant choreography and rehearsal director (original)**

Nienke Reehorst

## **Rehearsal director (current)**

Navala 'Niku' Chaudhari

**Assistants choreography**

Jon Filip Fahlstrøm, Helder Seabra

**Dance (original)**

Navala 'Niku' Chaudhari, Leif Firnhaber, Damien Fournier, Benfury, Louise Michel Jackson, Kazutomi 'Tsuki' Kozuki, Sang-Hun Lee, Elie Tass, Valgerdur Rúnarsdóttir, Helder Seabra, Michael Watts

**Live music**

A Filetta, Kazunari Abe, Fadia Tomb El-Hage

**Technical Director**

Patrick 'Sharp' Vanderhaegen

**Technicians**

Mathias Batsleer, Janneke Hertoghs, Willy Cessa, Johan Vandeborn, Bart Vanhoydonck

**Tour Manager**

Arnout André de la Porte

**Manager A Filetta**

Valerie Salducci

**Production**

Eastman (Antwerp)

**Coproduction**

Festival d'Avignon, deSingel International Arts Campus (Antwerp), Sadler's Wells (London), Opéra de Lille, Theaterfestival Boulevard ('s Hertogenbosch), Les Théâtres de la Ville de Luxembourg, La Filature Scène nationale (Mullhouse), Festspielhaus (Sankt-Pölten), Fondazione Musica per Roma, Düsseldorf festival!

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Eastman is supported by the Flemish Government and the BNP Paribas Foundation and is resident at deSingel International Arts Campus (Antwerp)



## ABOUT EASTMAN

Founded in January 2010, Eastman was set up to produce and promote the work of artistic director/choreographer Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui. Cherkaoui's work provides the audience with a vast array of projects and collaborations; ranging from contemporary dance, theatre, ballet, opera, musical and other forms of performance. His non-hierarchical thinking on movement, body language and culture is the basis of his artistic approach. Set in his native harbor city of Antwerp (Belgium), Eastman forms the central point for all of Cherkaoui's work. Eastman is resident at deSingel International Art Campus (Antwerp). Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui is associate artist at Sadler's Wells (London, UK). As of September 2015 the choreographer is artistic director of Royal Ballet Flanders.

Since the foundation in 2010, Cherkaoui created amongst others *Babel(words)*, *Play*, *Rein*, *TeZukA*, *Puz/zle*, *4D* and *Fractus V* under the wings of Eastman. Eastman also coordinates all the work of Cherkaoui for other organizations.

International partners of Eastman include La Monnaie Brussels, Les Théâtres de la Ville de Luxembourg, Grande Halle de La Villette Paris, deSingel International Arts Campus Antwerp and Sadler's Wells London.

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