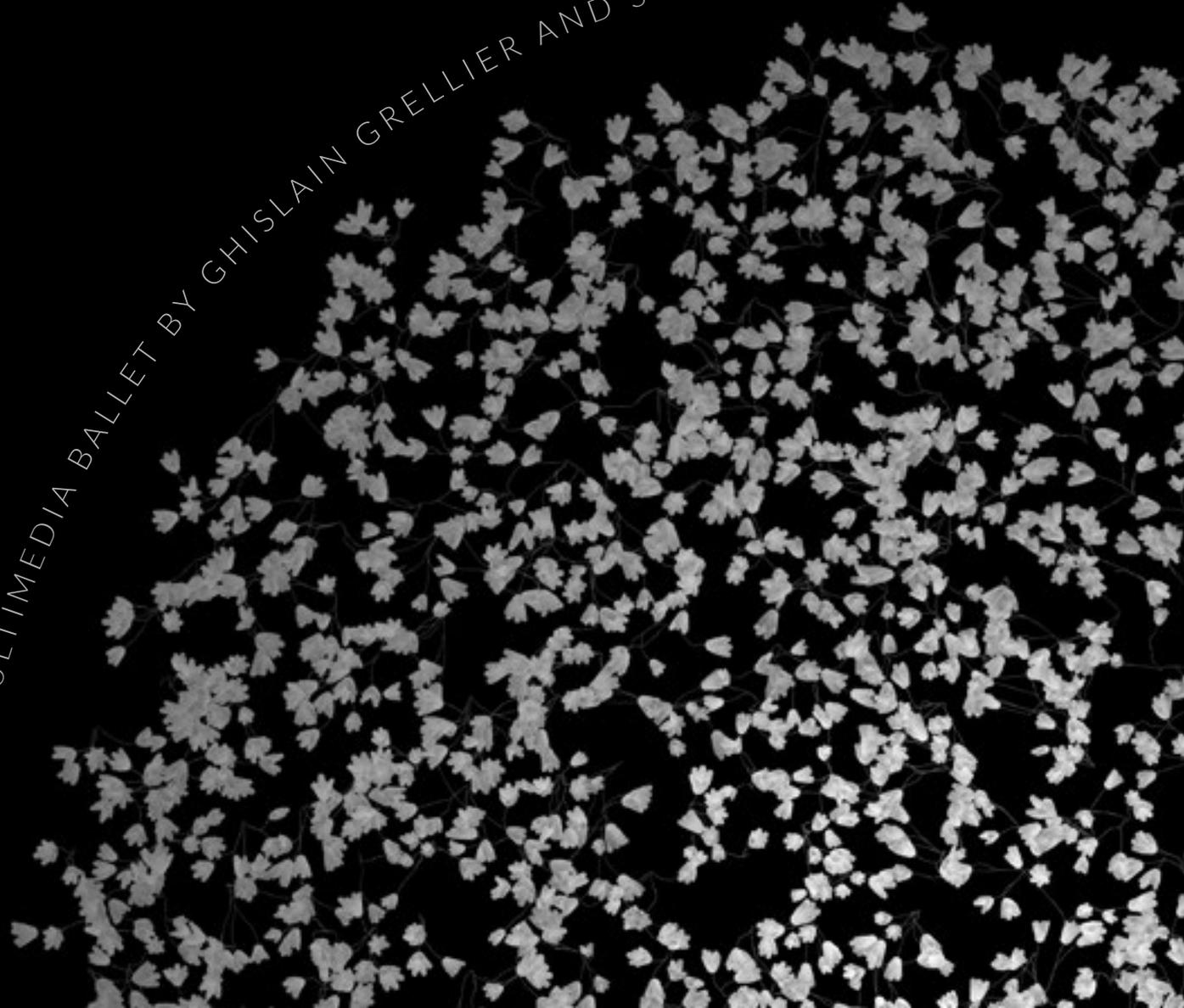


THE TWELVE BROTHERS

A MULTIMEDIA BALLET BY GHISLAIN GRELLIER AND STEPHAN XIE

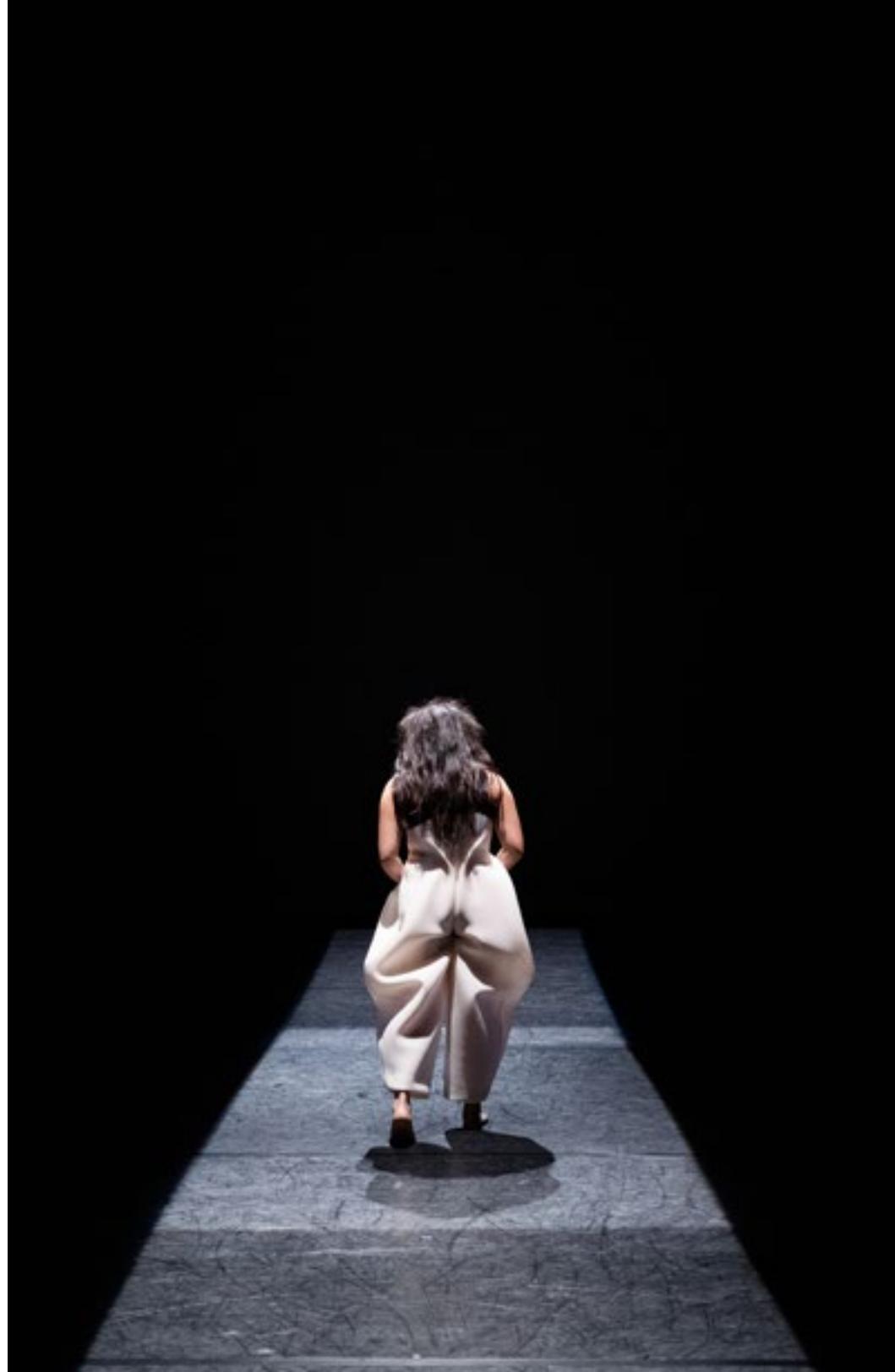


INTRODUCTION

The Twelve Brothers is a 44 minute multimedia ballet performance co-produced by director-choreographer Ghislain Grellier and 3D animator/motion designer Stephan Xie, a collaboration between dance and immersive projection. Two performances were held at UCLA's Glorya Kaufman Dance Theater since its opening on March 6, 2020.

The story—based on a German fairy tale of the same name, originally published by the Grimm Brothers (1812)—centers around a young girl whose birth condemned her brothers to exile and tragedy. Through queens and witches, promises and curses, destiny and tragedy, she journeys to find them.

“Naturesymphonie” (“Nature Symphony”) is the music’s title, a classical piece by German composer Siegmund von Hausegger (1911). The piece is divided into four movements, a dramatic, yet magical journey that parallels the ups and downs of the story.



MIXED REALITY

Whereas dance is excellent at expressing emotional subtleties through movement, it can be difficult to depict more literal narrative elements and symbolic imagery without dialogue or miming. Projecting digital imagery helps move the story along, giving both structure and context to the dancer's expressions. It is able to portray the environment of the dancer, changing the tone and atmosphere of the stage as a light source. It bathes the stage in virtual imagery, an ephemeral world that appears and disappears with the dancers and shadows.

Digital media and dance should never compete for the audience's attention. They take turns, shifting focus from one to the other (and sometimes both at the same time) to create the performance. Some scenes the digital imagery supports the dance; in other scenes, the dance completes the projected visuals. Both mediums must come together to realize the mixed reality performance. Without projection, there would just be dancing in the dark. Without dancers, the projection would lose their anchor in the physical world.

Through my work as a choreographer, I am deeply interested in understanding the place of the ballet repertoire in the dance field. Coming from a French dance background, I always have been, during my dance education, learning at the same time ballet and contemporary dance. Developing this new ballet is a way to connect both sides of my interest in dance. The ballet repertoire has an important place in the dance field. Indeed, it is usual to see many versions of Swan Lake in a year or, during Christmas time, of The Nutcracker. Creating a new ballet is for me the possibility to bring new narrative work that people don't already know and to connect the 21st century with the ballet world. Furthermore, we can see different ballet repertoire adapted in a movie such as Black Swan, The Nutcracker. Creating a new ballet is also questioning the evolution of the ballet and the possibilities offered to the new generations of audiences.

My work engages a relationship between live performance and images, under the form of video projections, applications, and digital devices. The use of this technology is making the link between different generations, between the "connected generation", used to viewing art on web platforms and the more traditional generation, used to the environment of theaters. Coming from traditional dance in France, I always have been interested in questioning my relationship with the dance world. I have always been interested in understanding the place of technology and image in live performances but also in understanding the evolution of dance creations and dance audiences. My work is created to connect people. I hope to create for a large and eclectic audience who can share a common experience, even if everyone will find their own references to their life in my work.

Ghislain Grellier, Choreographer's Note

THE WOMEN

We wanted to tell the women's story—the Mother (queen), the Sister (princess), and the Witch (evil)—in “The Twelve Brothers,” the characters not immediately obvious from the title. Rather than portraying the details of the royal family, or even differentiating the brothers, we chose to focus on the narrative arcs of each female character. The emotional nature of their personal journeys was the most important thing to capture on stage.

Following their perspectives, the piece is dreamlike and ominous, yet at times explosive and melodramatic.



Dancers (left to right): Anafe Ysabella Calderon (The Prince), Sabina Schaffer (The Witch), Miya Schaffer (The Sister), Mizuki Sako (The Mother)

THE ARCHES

The arched corridors appear thrice: introduced in the beginning with the Brothers, bathed in red at the Sisters birth, and finally eroded by time upon the (now grown) Sister's realization. The progression of the arched corridors is in some ways the prequel for the Sister's story, symbolizing the fate of the Brothers' doom.





THE BROTHERS

We did our motion capture with Noitom Motion Capture Suits on the dancers. The suits had various constraints when it came to dance movements, such as spinning, sliding, and others sharp or wide-ranging movements .

The brothers' narrative is one of loss and transformation. They are exiled out of the kingdom into the unknown forest. In a sense their misfortune is predetermined by fate: they are stuck. As digital characters, the brothers are forever trapped behind the screen. They are flat and at the same time fleeting. They reach out to the physical characters, but have no way of closing the dimensional distance between them. All they can do is watch.





As digital characters, they have lost almost all individuality. They are indistinguishable from one another, acting more as a collective rather than twelve different characters.

THE FOREST

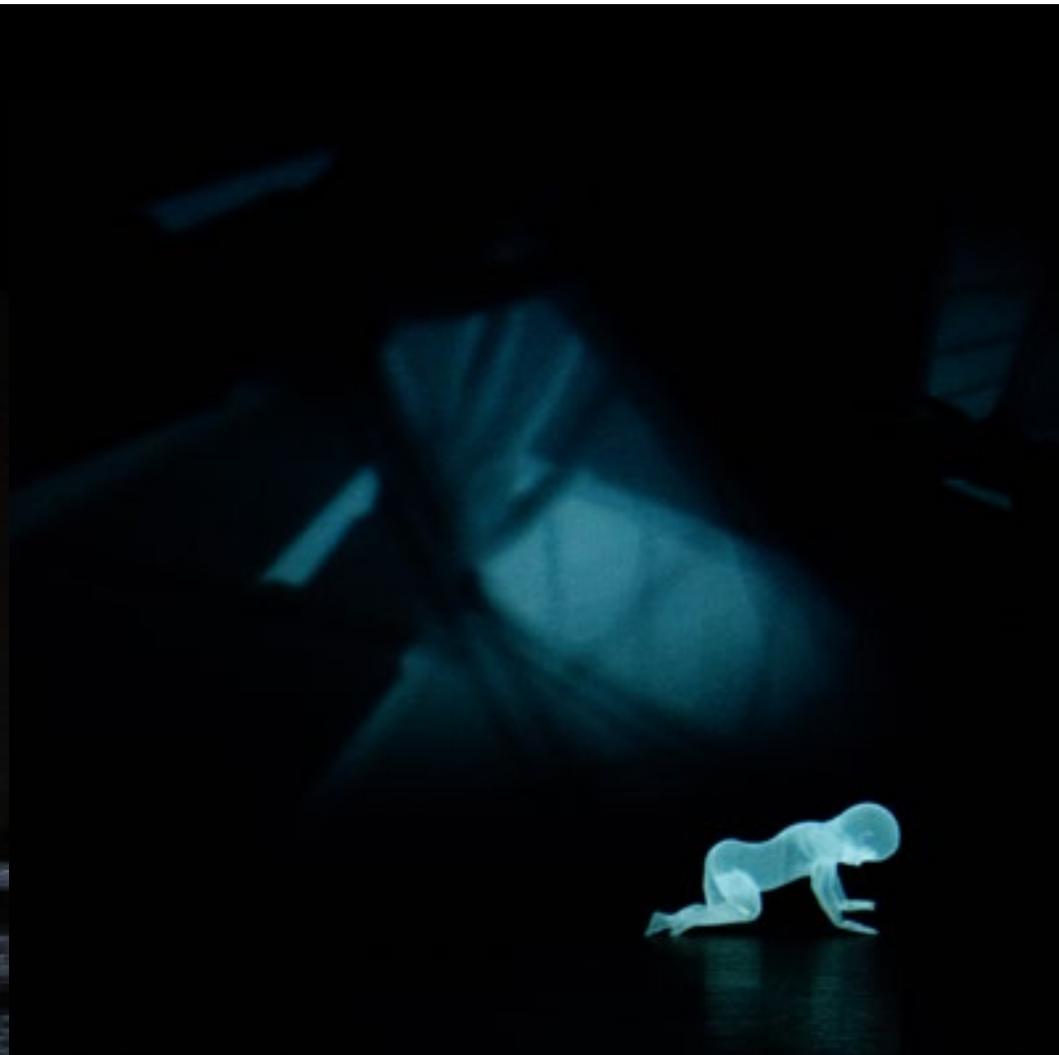
The forest is a place of the unknown, where the brothers are exiled to and where their sister must travel through to find them. It is the realm of loss and being lost. It is wild and chaotic. But it is also where one must go to confront their fears and reclaim what is theirs.





We wanted to portray nature as individual characters performing on stage, rather than as a background for the dancers.

THE SISTER



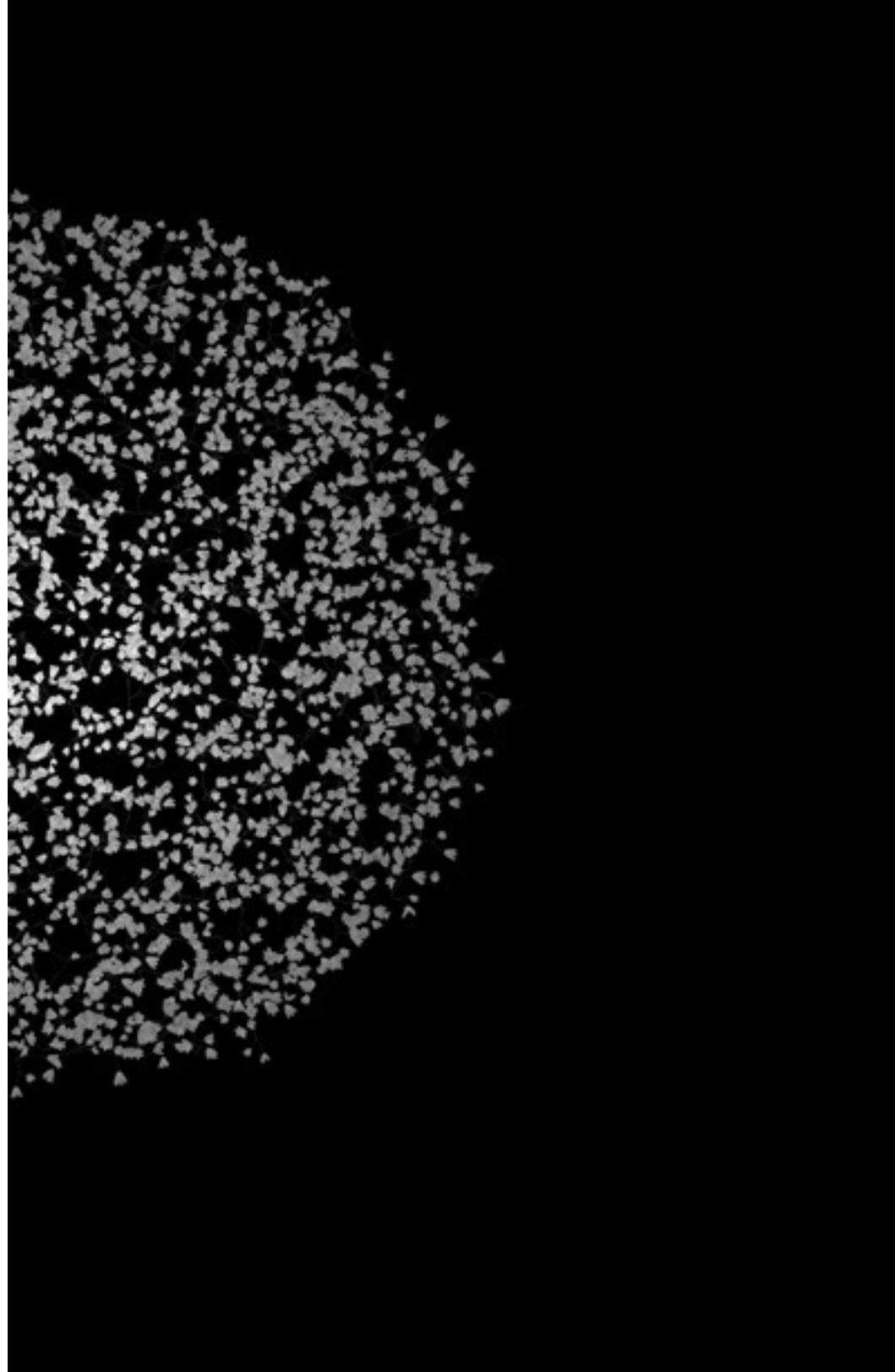




We want negative space to feel vast and immersive, like being lost in dreams. We want it at times to be oppressive, like the feeling of loss. We want the visual texture to be cold, distant and unreachable, like objects frozen in time.

THE FLOWERS

White flowers have always been a symbol of innocence. As the Sister encounters them and treads on them, they are responsive to her movements like a duet with her in the lead. They carefully mirror her mood, one that is delicate and graceful. As the Sister loses her innocence and condemns her brothers to doom, the flowers reflect her destructive nature, swirling turbulently around her. She loses her control and becomes ravaged by the storm of dead flowers.





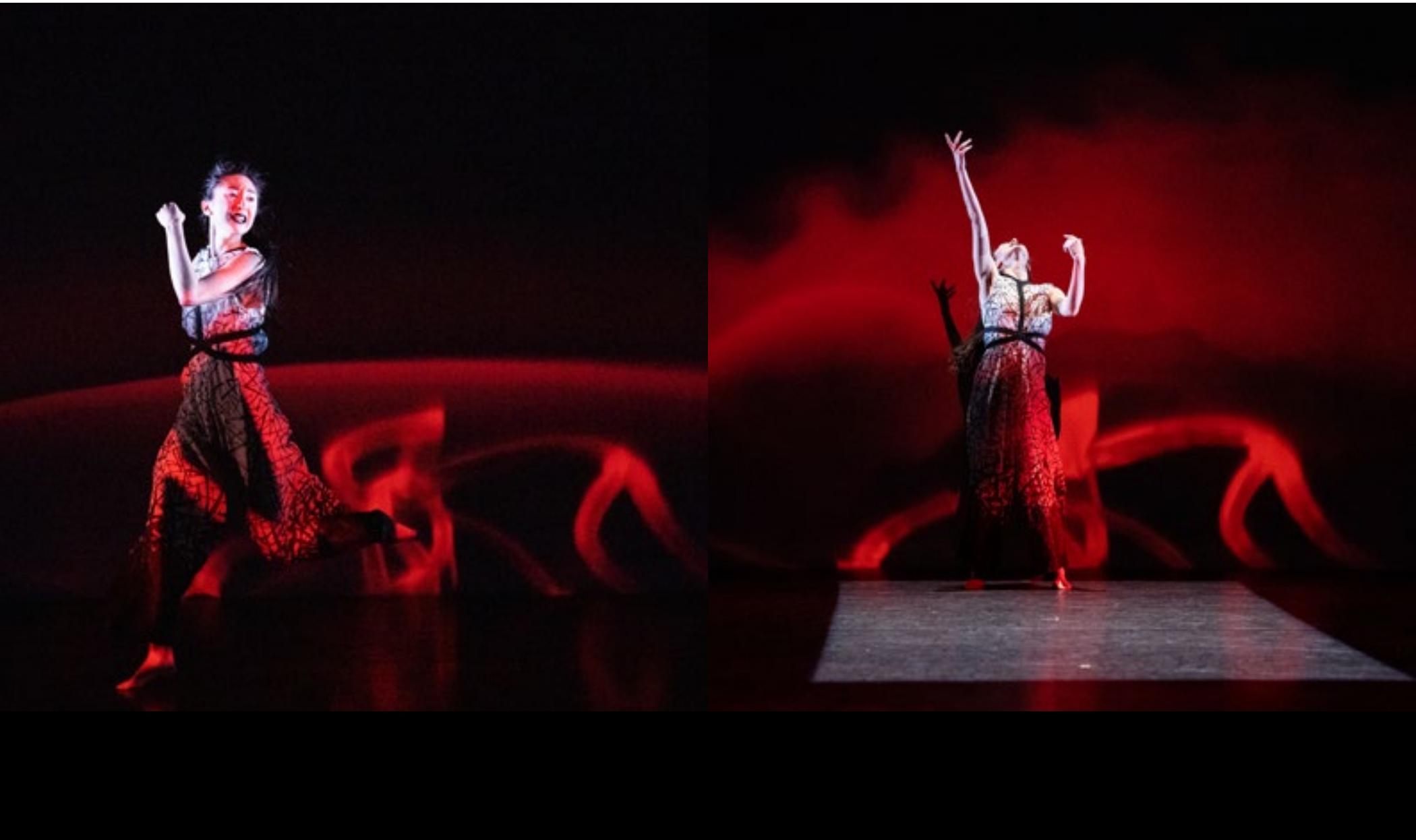


THE WEDDING

This style of architecture reappears in much more dramatic fashion at the beginning of the third movement, upon the entrance of our female prince, mechanically changing through the excitement of the wedding. The white light splits the darkness urgently as the story approaches its climax.



THE FINALE







ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES



GHISLAIN GRELLIER CHOREOGRAPHER

Ghislain Grellier started dancing at the age of ten at the Conservatoire de Danse et de Musique de Nice. Five years later, in 2008, Ghislain was admitted to the renowned Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique et de Danse de Paris (Cnsmdp). He graduated in 2012 receiving the Conservatoire diploma and the equivalence of a Bachelor degree in Contemporary Dance. In 2013, Ghislain danced with the Cnsmdp Junior Ballet and toured in France, England, and Eastern Europe. While pursuing his degree, Ghislain created a dance company called Le Rapt Invisible, with the opera singer Romain Dayez in 2012. For the past five years, his company has produced five large production shows and has worked with over 40 different types of artists. Ghislain is constantly expanding his dance movement through performing, choreographing and teaching. In 2015, Ghislain obtained his teaching credential at the Centre National de la Danse de Paris and started teaching dance classes in Paris and other parts of France. In April 2017, Ghislain received a full scholarship to attend the University of California, Los Angeles to expand his knowledge in dance choreography in the World Arts and Cultures/Dance department at UCLA.



STEPHAN XIE 3D ANIMATOR/PROJECTION DESIGNER

Stephan Xie places his work at the intersection of digital arts and performance, merging the real and virtual through motion. He often collaborates with dance, where the body is presented as a canvas for movement, a morphing of the human form. Through his work with various choreographers, he finds a harmony between dance and the digital realm, interweaving finite physical space with the pixel landscape to present mixed-reality narratives. As a 3rd year undergraduate student in Design Media Arts, he works mostly with motion capture, 3D modeling and animation, and multi-surface projection.

LIGHTING DESIGNER
COSTUME DESIGNER
ASSISTANT COSTUME DESIGNER
PRODUCTION MANAGER
TECHNICAL DIRECTOR
SOUND ENGINEER
STAGE MANAGER & PROD. ASSISTANT
PRODUCTION CREW

Ben Conran
Devon Horn
Eva Zappata
Ginger Holguin
Arsenio Apillanes
Mark Goebel
Clara Auguste
Kenny Valera
Sarah Borton
Cheyenne Dixon
Alexandra Wood
Alexis Iritani
Kyra Sakamoto

