

SILVIA GRIBAUDI

Silvia Gribaudi
during rehearsals
for "Mon jour!"
(© Andrea Macchia)



BY MARIA LUISA BUZZI

SHE'S REALLY NICE AND SHE MARCHES TO THE BEAT OF HER OWN DRUM. It takes just a few minutes spent in Silvia Gribaudi's company to see that the artist and the person are one and the same: both possess intelligence, depth, irony, naturalness and curiosity. Along with a large dose of female pragmatism with which she tackles her work commitments that have increased since finding success – in spite of herself, she says smiling – with *Graces*, a show that was also selected by Danza&Danza critics as "Best Italian Production 2019". Now, the artist from Turin – active on the Italian scene for a decade – is preparing to really take flight with new productions and international tours.



Left, the dancers of Gribaudo's work "Graces" (© Giovanni Chiarot), below the portrait of Silvia Gribaudo (© Laila Pozzo)



I'd like to start our chat with three words: body, standards, beauty. What do they elicit in you? I'm often asked about the subject of the body, given that it's often a central theme to my work. I realise that the viewer is still afraid of the body; it's something I'm aware of – especially among young people – every time I receive feedback after a show. In our society the body is still taboo but if you can manage to build a more informal form of dialogue (as is the case in *Graces*) then people start to feel more at ease.

Paradoxically, in "Graces" the body is very exposed... Yes but it's exposed in a way that is different from the standard (the second concept mentioned above). When your body, as it is, touches other bodies it produces a continuous revolution. This is something that interests me as much in everyday life as on stage. A body that is capable of virtuosity is fascinating because it's something out of the ordinary. Instead, when the body is 'normal' and isn't demonstrating anything it becomes harder to look at and accept. For me the 'invisible' body has its own beauty. Which leads us to the last concept. In art, beauty is the harmony of the forms but where can the harmony of forms be found in everyday life? In *Graces* I try to answer these questions and in the show we ask: "What are you watching?"; "What is beautiful to you?". Ultimately, for me beauty exists when art meets organic simplicity, deconstructing and reconstructing.

Does the new work that will premiere at Torinodanza 2020 revolve around this same theme? Yes but in *Mon jour!*, a piece for five performers in collaboration with director Matteo Maffesanti (I won't be performing this time), beauty is expressed in relation to the environment, specifically mountains, but also in relation to the tourist who lives there...

Nowadays many describe themselves as 'authors' rather than 'choreographers', as if they're afraid of the term. Do you feel like a choreographer? Yes, absolutely. I feel like a choreographer. The starting point for my work is the choreography, the bodies, even when I'm using words. It's the only language I know: how to manage the bodies within a space as well as the physical intuition of the performers standing before you, who have to align themselves with the choreographer's intentions.

Tell us about your work process. I have very clear images; also in terms of the dynamic I want to create. I enter the studio with these images; I experiment with them on the dancers and see how they react. I've learnt that there are two possible paths: staying anchored to your own ideas and insisting to the point of exhaustion or being brave enough to let the unexpected emerge. This is the only way to gain distance from yourself, as Pina Bausch maintained. I found great inspiration in her writing.

Your art is based on a comical/ironic element that stands out and, if you'll allow me to say, is fairly uncommon in generally serious contemporary dance... Let me start off by saying that all the things I do are extremely serious to me. I don't start off wanting to construct ironic scenes but during rehearsals someone I'm with might start laughing... then what? It's just me, that's how I am. Even back when I was a performer in Luciano Padovani's Naturalis Labor company this streak came out. I have to admit that back then I really didn't love this ability of mine when it came to a rigorous and serious vision of contemporary dance, I was almost offended by it. It was the actor and director Vasco Mirandola who made me appreciate my comical side and pushed me to make the most of it.

Is it easy to employ this comical side? Not at all. Every time I create a show I really challenge myself. There's always the fear that if you also make the audience laugh then you're not



Silvia Gribaudo during an urban performance (© Samanta Cinquini). Below Gribaudo with Matteo Maffesanti, co-author of "Graces" and the new "Mon jour!" (© Andrea Macchia)

cultured enough... For example with *R.Osa* all the analysis of the piece concentrated on the female; no one ever considered the performance from a comedic perspective, despite it being the aspect that I'm most passionate about: comedy in dance is what can make it a really interesting choreographed score that is centred on the timing. I'm disappointed when the comedic effect is mistaken for trickery. What I'm interested in is building rhythms between actions-reactions in the bodies of the performers and actions-reactions with the audience.

Comedy rather than parody... Rita Pelusio, my clownerie teacher who I also involved in *Mon jour!*, always said to me: clowns don't make you laugh by telling gags, they make you laugh without anything, nothing but gestures. Clowns are in the emptiness. In that emptiness they create extremely human scores. This fragility is empathetic and that's what I'm interested in, although I do have some reservations about using the word clown in relation to my art ...

What role does the audience play? They help to build the rhythm of the scene. You have to be very careful: it's important to learn how to 'tame' them by first taming yourself. I have a great respect for the audience and usually after a few days of rehearsing I ask members of the public to come and see the work. Then I ask for professional opinions to help me to cleanse the emotional excesses that inevitably creep in.

You'll be spending the next twenty days in Paris. What awaits you there? A 'workshop' period with Lebanese choreographer Bassam Aboud Diab, whom I first met a long time ago. We're developing a study together on what 'being famous' means today, it might turn into a performance for 2021. Then in March I'll be in Marseille for a teaching project and in April the entire *Graces* team will be at Tip Teatro in Lamezia Terme (Italy) to teach dancers and non-dancers under 35 the choreography of the show.

Any longer term projects? I'm thinking of creating a classical nineteenth century "ballet" with a contemporary company. I need one with a lot of dancers, like a corps de ballet. I'm thinking about it but the more I think about it the more the idea ter-

SILVIA GRIBAUDI
WHERE AND WHEN

GRACES

- 15 March Teatro Ponchielli, Cremona, Italy
- 25,26 March Festival Dansa Metropolitana, Barcelona, Spain
- 28 March KLAP Maison pour la Danse, Marseille, France
- 2 April Teatro Camploy, Verona, Italy
- 9 April Belgrade Dance Festival, Belgrade, Serbia
- 24 April Festival Prospettiva Danza, Padua, Italy
- 26 April Spring Forward, Rijeka, Croatia
- 30 April DAB Festival, Bari, Italy
- 8 May Festival Danza Estate, Bergamo, Italy
- 18,19 May Théâtre de la Ville, Paris, France
- 20 May Festival Interplay, Turin, Italy
- 24 May Teatro Morlacchi, Perugia, Italy
- 27 May Teatro Sanzio, Urbino, Italy
- 29 May Tanec 2020, Brno, Czech Republic
- 1,2,3 June Tanec 2020, Prague, Czech Republic

- 5 June Tanec 2020, Tabor, Czech Republic
- 19,20 June Birmingham International Dance Festival, UK
- 21 July Florence Dance Festival, Florence, Italy
- 23-28 July Shenzhen, China
- 29 July-2 August Shanghai, China
- 15,16 September CDCN Strasbourg, France
- 20 September One Dance Week festival, Plovdiv, Bulgaria
- 3 October Find Festival, Cagliari, Italy
- 31 October Gender Bender Festival, Bologna, Italy
- 27, 29 November Trafo House, Budapest, Hungary

R.OSA

18 May, Théâtre de la Ville, Paris, France

A CORPO LIBERO

9 May, Théâtre de la Ville, Paris, France

MON JOUR!

28,29,30,31 October, Torinodanza Festival, Turin, Italy
2 November, Danae Festival, Milan, Italy



rifies me. I'd also like to construct a choreographed monologue based on myself – with another choreographer of course. We'll see. The next three years will be about the classics and classical ways to be on stage.

You received the Danza&Danza Prize for "Graces". Did you expect it? It was a huge surprise. An honour. I hope to be able to attend the awards ceremony at the Gala Evening. It's really important to me. It's already brought me luck... I was contacted straight afterwards to do a piece for the RAI 5 National Television channel. •