



Ressort: Kunst, Kultur und Musik

Programme of Artistic Vision and Diversity

Opera Garnier, 11.12.2025 [ENA]

“Contrastes” stands out as a daring and richly varied evening — unbound by a single choreographic voice — assembling works from three distinct choreographers whose styles span post-modern, neoclassical, and contemporary-experimental dance. This structure — from post-modern roots, through neoclassical re-interpretation, to contemporary creation — makes “Contrastes” less a fixed repertoire than a living conversation.

It is a living conversation among styles, epochs, aesthetics and generations. The evening opens with two pieces by Trisha Brown: O zlozony / O composite and the newly added to the repertoire If you couldn’t see me. This move underscores the Company’s commitment to the heritage and continuing relevance of post-modern dance. Then comes Anima Animus by David Dawson — a choreographic work that merges classical vocabulary with a fresh exploration of masculine and feminine energies, technical precision and poetic subtlety. Finally, the programme concludes with Drift Wood, a brand-new creation by Dutch choreographers Imre and Marne van Opstal — their first work for the Paris Opera, promising a youthful, contemporary sensibility.

The juxtaposition of Brown’s post-modern works with Dawson’s neoclassical refinement and the van Opstal siblings’ contemporary sensitivity creates a multilayered theatrical experience. The audience is invited to traverse the history of modern dance, to observe how vocabulary, bodily articulation, and choreographic intent evolve — often in surprising harmony. This breadth transforms “Contrastes” into more than a programme: it is a statement about dance as an evolving art form, capable of preserving tradition while embracing innovation.

In If you couldn’t see me, danced with the performer’s back to the audience, the emphasis lies not on grand gestures or classical virtuosity but on interiority, vulnerability, and deconstruction of classical presence. By contrast, in Anima Animus, Dawson returns to a refined, almost classical discipline — but one imbued with a modern sensibility: subtle contrasts of gendered energy, a balance of strength and lyricism, and a clean aesthetic, unadorned yet emotionally resonant.

Then, Drift Wood promises something entirely different: an exploration of movement as metaphor, of bodies drifting, adapting, reshaping — like wood shaped by water and time. The metaphor of driftwood evokes resilience, transience and growth.

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Such a programme demands versatility from the dancers — the ability to shift from release technique and fluid post-modern idiom to classical lines, then to contemporary physicality. The casting includes many of the institution’s Étoiles, Premiers danseurs, First Soloists and the Corps de Ballet — which means the full expressive capacity of the Company will be mobilized.

Moreover, the fact that “Contrastes” includes repertory works and new commissions shows the Company is not only honoring its history but also investing in its future, cultivating new creative voices (like van Opstal) and renewing its repertoire (with Dawson’s “entry to repertoire,” and Brown’s revival).

“Contrastes” is more than a show — it is a cultural manifesto. In a time where many ballet seasons tend to focus on either “classics” or “full-length narrative ballets,” this mixed bill proposes a different path: one rooted in experimental boldness, stylistic diversity, and artistic risk-taking. As one recent commentary put it, the evening “celebrates post-modern American dance, neoclassical English-style discipline, and contemporary youthful experimentation.”

For the Company, it reaffirms the ambition to be a living, breathing institution — one that respects its past but welcomes the present and the future, that does not treat dance as a museum but as a dynamic art form in dialogue with time, society and aesthetics.

For the Paris audience — and beyond, considering the future streaming via the Company’s online platform — “Contrastes” offers a chance to experience dance in its multiplicity: the meditative minimalism, the structured beauty, the raw emerging power. It asks the spectator to witness dance not as a monolith, but as a spectrum. As a ballet expert, I find “Contrastes” profoundly inspiring for several reasons. It brings together choreographers whose aesthetic languages are very different — thereby challenging both dancers and audience, and enriching the vocabulary of contemporary dance in a classical institution.

It balances risk and tradition: including pieces by Brown and Dawson (already tested, part of dance heritage), alongside a brand-new work by van Opstal — giving space to innovation while grounding the programme in excellence. It respects the physical and emotional intelligence of dancers — demanding versatility, sensitivity, technical mastery, and expressive depth. It engages with the present: “Drift Wood,” for instance, seems to respond to contemporary existential themes — adaptability, identity, temporality — giving dance a voice in human reflection, not just aesthetic display.

Finally, it democratizes ballet: by offering variety, abstraction, contemporary language — it can appeal not only to the traditional ballet public, but to spectators of modern and contemporary dance, bridging gaps between communities. “Contrastes” emerges as one of the most compelling and artistically ambitious offerings. It is a programme that refuses complacency, that strives to renew the vocabulary of ballet, to expand its emotional and aesthetic range. Whether you are a devotee of post-modern minimalism, a lover of neoclassical lines, or open to bold contemporary experimentation — “Contrastes” promises a rich, layered,

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unforgettable evening. It is a testament to dance's power to evolve, adapt, and speak to our time.

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