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## AUB fine arts professor revisits Stravinsky's seminal 'The Rite of Spring'

2/7/2014

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The work explores themes such as the interplay between generations, personal sacrifice for the greater good, the search for a common humanity and the need for a spark of hope amid the challenges arising in the wake of the Arab Spring.

Cornelia Krafft, assistant professor of fine arts and art history at the American University of Beirut, is commemorating the centennial of Igor Stravinsky's "The Rite of Spring" by staging her own interpretation of the original through a collaborative performance titled "After 100 Springs," on show at Hamra's Al Madina Theater on February 10 and 11, 2014.

The original piece was staged in Paris in 1913 and the combination of Stravinsky's experimental music and avant-garde choreography of fellow exile Vaslav Nijinsky had an uproar among the audience. Classical conventions were stripped away by the dancers' intuitive movements in the interpretation of a pagan tale where rituals celebrate the arrival of spring and culminate in the sacrifice of a young girl who dances herself to death.

"My focus is mainly to unravel and share again a timeless topic, that of humans from a troubled society sacrificing a chosen one in a ritual with the hope for the 'sun to return' or better yet, a more peaceful tomorrow," said Krafft. "I am using a lot of ancient themes in my work, like love or fear, which have remained the same throughout the ages."

The piece is a mute movement performance, choreographed with amateurs that come together as a collective to weave their ideas into the topic, which is still relevant today. The musical structure and scene themes of Stravinsky are strictly followed, avoiding any and all forms of political statements. It is written as a powerful abstraction of human tribal behavior. The work uses pagan symbols to explore themes such as the interplay between generations, personal sacrifice for the greater good, the search for a common humanity and the need for a spark of hope amid the challenges arising in the wake of the Arab Spring.

"I watched intensely the interpretations of other choreographers in Europe last year, when all the anniversary staging events took place, and I felt that this is truly a topic for the region here as there are continuously terrible sacrifices happening, and yet 'no sun' seems to be returning," Krafft explained.

"So with my young ensemble of amateurs, coming from much diverse backgrounds, I felt it a basic task to question and reflect on what sacrifice means for them today."

The performance is divided into 15 movements, ranging between 20 seconds and five minutes apiece, 34 minutes in all. There is heavy use of pagan symbolism, mostly the use of the unifying circle as it represents, in different configurations, the elements of fire, air, water and earth. The performers' movements are also highly symbolic, and one has to pay attention to understand the underlying meaning and message. The movement titles, like "Adoration of the Earth," "Dances of the Young Girls," "Ritual of the Rival Tribes" and "Glorification of the Chosen One" correspond to Stravinsky's own. The whole piece is very tightly condensed.

Krafft's ensemble is composed of 26 people: 14 amateur artists who perform the piece and 12 design and backstage assistants. "A process like this changes your life," said Christopher Rizkallah, a fine arts senior at AUB and one of the performers. "It allows us to go inside ourselves and make changes."

The piece is performed and produced, with the support of the AUB Fine Arts and History of Arts (FAAH) Department, and in contribution to Unite Lebanon Youth Project (ULYP) NGO that provides social empowerment by offering free recreational and educational annual programs to over 1000 young beneficiaries from underprivileged backgrounds living in Lebanon.

"We chose to support ULYP as their programs not only help those they educate directly, but encourage young people to remain rooted in their own communities as well," Krafft noted. "We hope the spectators will donate generously as entry is free of charge."

For all those interested in attending this event, reservations can be made by sending an email to: [after100springs@gmail.com](mailto:after100springs@gmail.com)



<http://www.aub.edu.lb/news/2014/Pages/faah-100-springs.aspx>

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