

“After 100 Springs”: Will Stravinsky help the sun return to Beirut?

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Inspired by Igor Stravinsky's "The Rite of Spring" modern ballet, "After 100 Springs" is a collective performance that will take place at Al Madina Theatre, in Beirut, on February 10 & 11. To the choreographer and director, Cornelia Krafft, this production shares a timeless topic: Humans of 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.

A hundred years ago, a production took place that completely redefined ballet. Igor Stravinsky debuted "The Rite of Spring" Ballet at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in Paris

on May 29, 1913, to an audience accustomed to the grace, elegance, and traditional music of "conventional" ballets. Punches were exchanged and tomatoes were thrown, as the theatre broke out in riot and Stravinsky's fans fought with his critics.

A hundred years later, Stravinsky's piece is still widely known and used as a backbone for similar works, such as "After 100 Springs", a collective performance choreographed by Cornelia Krafft, to be performed in Beirut at Al Madina Theatre on February 10-11. This original ballet is a model for total commitment towards the final and collective goal of sacrifice in order "to make the sun return." Krafft, the director and choreographer, has had been working in Lebanon for a period marked by the Arab Spring, with "wild flames spreading, volcanoes erupting, and primitive shelters for refugees growing." "After 100 Springs" in Beirut attempts to express the situation in collaboration with the youth searching for the spirit of hope. We asked Cornelia Kraft a few questions about this work.

Iloubnan.info: We have noticed that "After 100 Springs" is based on Igor Stravinsky's "The Rite of Spring." Do you feel this performance will receive the same uproar as the one staged a hundred years ago?

Cornelia Krafft: By now, 100 years later, the general audience has been exposed to so many different styles and the perception of the audience has changed drastically. Stravinsky's and Nijinsky's première was by far a revolution to music and dance which is reflected on and has given the path for musical and movement liberation on stage until this very day!

My focus is mainly to unravel and share again a timeless topic, which is humans of a troubled society sacrificing a chosen one in a ritual with the hope for "sun to return" or better yet, a more peaceful tomorrow.

How does this one differ from the original?

I have watched intensely the interpretations of other choreographers especially when I traveled last year through Europe when all anniversary staging took place. Since I live and work mainly in Lebanon I felt this is truly a topic for the region here! There are continuously terrible sacrifices happening, executed and watched yet "no sun" seems to be returning. This is mostly due to the lack of broad collective aim beyond the personal, social, economic and religious borders. So with my young ensemble of amateurs, from diverse backgrounds, I felt it a basic task to reflect on what it means to sacrifice for them today! So the finale of the piece is different but I can't tell you more as it would ruin the surprise.

What is the primary message being delivered through this performance?

It is first of all a mute movement performance – choreographed with amateurs that came together to weave their ideas into the topic reflected upon their opinion of today within my initial aesthetic and conceptual ideas that I have started about 3 months ago. We decided to strictly follow the musical structure and themes of Stravinsky so that we do not drift onto ice of political statements which this piece is not about! It's a most of all written as a powerful abstraction of human tribal behavior. So we worked on the positive engagement of humans facing difficult times and maybe realizing in the end that by sticking to only their small cycle, rebellion and needs, they risk losing the whole.

How will this performance encourage the youth to spread peace and search for the spirit of hope?

I can only hope that the visuals we use throughout the piece may trigger their thinking about sacrifice. In the program you will read the personal words of dancers regarding sacrifice. The whole design is portrayed like "gypsies" on a barren ground so it is not even a specific landscape. The circular pagan symbols used also reflect the elements and the circle represents the smaller and greater cosmos we live in. By witnessing it, you might see it in combination to your own private constellations where you can engage actively and consciously for peaceful support and hopeful grounds. It tries to bring more light into the dark corners in the end to enjoy the improvement with more and not to feel left alone by your society. That is why we all perform and produce this piece in contribution to the NGO UNITE LEBANONS YOUTH PROJECT that provides social empowerment by offering free recreational and educational programs annually to over 1000 young beneficiaries from underprivileged backgrounds living in Lebanon.
