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RHAPSODIE

A choreographic event for 20 dancers


Sylvain Emard
DANSE



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RHAPSODIE

WORLD PREMIÈRE – FEBRUARY 2022, Danse Danse

A tribute to the liberating force of dance. Sylvain Émard has imagined a performance event inspired by the ritualistic aspect of dance, exploring the trance states it can at times unleash in its raw, primitive state. [Rhapsodie](#) celebrates the wild, volatile twists and turns of bodies outside the self, plunged into fervent, swirling movement, capturing the life force and the sometimes subversive abandon of bodies in movement.

An astute observer of his contemporaries, Sylvain Émard has always been fascinated by night clubs and dance halls and the people who frequent them, seeing them as a form of pagan ritual. His objective is to capture the essence conveyed by these manifestations and to create an original work that presents a snapshot of a society in constant upheaval.

[Rhapsodie](#) relies on the force of a large cast of twenty professional dancers and employs in the round staging. The performers are encircled by the audience in an open space, be it a black box, a church, an empty warehouse or even a nightclub, and the spectators thus receive the full force of the energy of the pulsating mass of dancers. In addition to this original format, a version with a frontal configuration is in development.



Clip - [Rhapsodie](#)



CHOREOGRAPHIC INTENT

“Since ancient times, dance has brought people together. It contributes to creating a sense of community, and even though it currently exists in a wide variety of forms, it is a human response to a need for communication and exchange that goes beyond the rational and the predictable; a need to access a more intuitive dimension that is much more open to sensory perception. Whether dancing at a party or anonymously in a nightclub, or even attending a dance performance, dance brings people together. That same need for transcendence through dance is as apparent now as it was for our prehistoric ancestors. Although the form and content might be different, the medium remains the same – the human body, bodies completely committed to the physical expression that is both primitive and contemporary. Is that behaviour born of a need to preserve a certain humanity? An attempt to access a form of mysticism and sensuality while still part and parcel of modernity? Personally, the ritual aspect underpinning to varying degrees these acts of communion helps me understand the world, and reassures me of our ability to preserve and protect our humanity.

The current social and political climate in both close and distant surroundings, and the resultant interactions and tensions, greatly contribute to the power of dances. Dance is perfectly attuned to the world we live in, and indeed, that has always been the case. The dancing body mirrors our era, this shifting present where pitch and tone are constantly changing. The holistic nature of dance is a transformative force, its impact extending far beyond aesthetic appreciation.

I have always been fascinated by dance halls and those who frequent them. I am trying to capture the essence of those get-togethers to better highlight the component elements of a form of pagan ritual whose significance is deeply rooted in the here and now.

Ultimately, and despite all these considerations, dance responds to a fundamental, irrational need. Nietzsche said that “Without music, life would be a mistake”. In my opinion, that same applies for dance.”

Sylvain Émard



REVIEWS

"In the intimacy of the Wilder Building venue, the dancers performing [Rhapsodie](#) by Sylvain Émard Danse almost invited us to take part in their rave. After two years of the pandemic, the sight of this group of dancing bodies, carried away by the original music of Poirier and Martin Tétreault, had something supernatural about it." Caroline Montpetit, *Le Devoir*, Montréal, Canada, March 2022

"With [Rhapsodie](#), the talented choreographer delivers a strong dose of invigorating energy into our pandemic languor, presenting a jubilant, transformative 60-minute dance whose pace never slackens." Luc Boulanger, *La Presse*, Montréal, Canada, February 2022

"[Rhapsodie](#): The Algebra of Sylvain Émard

The effect of this piece is lyrical and melodic, like a long chain of bodies exploring together the possibilities and joy of dancing. [...] The mathematics of Sylvain Émard is thus full of life. It is a society whose inner core pulses with dance, its logical syntax being movement and gesture [...]" Guylaine Massoutre, *Revue JEU*, Montréal, Canada, February 2022

"[Rhapsodie](#) is a series of timed tableaux where the flurry of skilfully executed movements offers the spectator the chance to observe in detail the emotions of each performer [...]" Thomas Bastien, *patwhite.com*, Montréal, Canada, February 2022

"An enchanting [Rhapsodie](#) by Sylvain Émard." Sophie Jama, *Pieuvre*, Montréal, Canada, February 2022

"It exudes the joy of dancing as a group, touching and interacting as a cohesive whole, a piece that also evinces energetic, gentle and benevolent harmony." Yves Tremblay, *Le Lien Multimédia*, Montréal, Canada, February 2022

"The stage is no longer simply a place to present a show like any other, but a sanctuary for a collective ritual in praise of an ancient power long lost in the mists of time. It is as though this gesture reveals to us hidden senses, meanings long concealed." Élie Castel, *KinoCulture Montréal*, Montréal, Canada, February 2022

"Enhancing the talents of the ensemble was the warm reception to the piece from spectators who, after months of isolation and darkness, were amazed by what they had just seen!" Marc-Yvan Coulombe, *Les ArtsZé*, Montréal, Canada, February 2022



UPCOMING DATES

March 15, 2024 – [Rhapsodie](#), Culture Trois-Rivières, Canada

March 20, 2024 – [Rhapsodie](#), Le Carré 150, Victoriaville, Canada

March 22, 2024 – [Rhapsodie](#), Théâtre des Deux Rives, Saint-Jean-sur-le-Richelieu, Canada

March 28, 2024 – [Rhapsodie](#), Théâtre Hector-Charland, L'Assomption, Canada

April 2, 2024 – [Rhapsodie](#), Centre Culturel, Sherbrooke, Canada

April 4, 2024 – [Rhapsodie](#), Maison des arts de Laval, Canada

April 16, 2024 – [Rhapsodie](#), Centre des arts, Baie-Comeau, Canada

April 25, 2024 – [Rhapsodie](#), Théâtre de la Ville, Longueuil, Canada

CALENDAR

June 2022 – Benefit Performance [Rhapsodie](#), Circuit-Est centre chorégraphique, Montréal, Canada

February 2022 – [Rhapsodie](#), WORLD PREMIERE : Studio-Théâtre at Wilder Building, presented by Danse Danse, Montréal, Canada

February 2022 – [Rhapsodie](#), Live streaming, presented by Danse Danse, Montréal, Canada



CREATIVE TEAM

Choreographer Sylvain Émard

Dancers Lou Amsellem, Sophie Breton, Charles Cardin-Bourbeau, Matéo Chauchat, Félix Cossette, Marilyne Cyr, Marie-Michelle Darveau, Janelle Hacault, Mathieu Hérard, Kyra Jean Green, Christopher LaPlante, Alexandre Morin, Erin O'Loughlin, Mateo Picone, Raphaëlle Renucci, François Richard, Cara Roy, Marie-Philippe Santerre, Lila-Mae Talbot, Camille Trudel-Vigeant

Rehearsal coach Daniel Villeneuve

Music composers Martin Tétreault & Poirier

Lighting designer André Rioux

Costume designer Marilène Bastien

ON TOUR

The show puts forward different possibilities of presentation, the most obvious format suggested is the version with the original Montréal cast of 20 dancers.

But greater flexibility and impact on the community are offered to presenters by proposing to integrate local artists and/or to innovate in terms of the performance space. In this case, a rehearsal and residency period for the re-creation of the piece will then take place prior the local performances, directed by Sylvain Émard. Note that the company now has more than 13 years' experience in organizing this type of project in other countries with **Le Grand Continental**[®] and its hundreds of local amateur dancers.

PARTNERS

In 2015, FringeArts in Philadelphia, which programmed **Le Grand Continental**[®] in 2012 and 2018, invited the choreographer to a dance exploration residency to begin research on this large ensemble piece.

In July 2018, Sylvain Émard worked with 22 Mexican dancers during a 2-week dance exploration residency at the Centro de Producción de Danza Contemporánea in Mexico City.

Rhapsodie is a coproduction by Sylvain Émard Danse and Danse Danse, developed with the support of The Canada National Arts Centre's National Creation Fund. This creation is also possible thanks to the Secretaría de Cultura, à l'Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes y Literatura, Fondo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes (FONCA), Centro de Producción de Danza Contemporánea (CEPRODAC) Mexico City and Ministère des Relations internationales et de la Francophonie.



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SYLVAIN ÉMARD DANSE

A prolific and internationally respected artist, Sylvain Émard created his own dance company [Sylvain Émard Danse](#) in 1990, quickly establishing a reputation for a very original style. Highly theatrical at first, his work soon evolved into a more formal approach to dance. Ever since [Ozone, Ozone](#) (1987), his first solo, up to [Rhapsodie](#) (2022), he has been exploring the territory of human nature through the force and strength of the body. His repertoire now includes over thirty original pieces that have had a resounding impact all over the world.

Renowned for his refined style and precise movement, his presentation in 2009 of [Le Grand Continental](#)® at the Festival TransAmériques must have come to some as a surprise. Inspired by line dancing and contemporary dance, this unique piece has featured over 3,000 non-dancers in several performances across Canada, the United States, Mexico, South Korea, New Zealand, Chile, Germany and Austria, attracting some 125,000 spectators. In September 2017, [Le Super Méga Continental](#) boasted 375 dancers in Montréal to celebrate the city's 375th anniversary in a monumental fashion.

Sylvain Émard's unique style has led to invitations to work as a guest choreographer in theatre, opera and cinema. These collaborations include his joining forces with Robert Lepage in 2005 to work on the opera [1984](#) by Lorin Maazel, presented in Royal Opera House in London and La Scala in Milan.

Sylvain Émard has received numerous prestigious awards, such as the Jean A. Chalmers Choreographic Award (1996). He is also co-founder of the Circuit-Est centre chorégraphique.

The dancing body does not lie, and truth is too rare to be ignored.

Sylvain Émard

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