

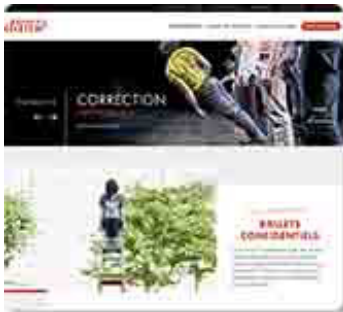


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Dominique Hervieu

Maison de la Danse

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La biennale de Lyon

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Peter Goss (1946 -)

Born in South Africa, Goss encountered the world of dance while studying cultural anthropology in London and later went on to study dance in the U.S. In 1969, he moved his base to France, and 1973 he established his own dance company. Goss' created dance in a style influenced by Jose Limon and Moshe Feldenkrais and he created his own methodology for teaching dance. In 1981 he established the dance school Ecole de danse de Peter Goss in Paris, which has since produced many dancers and choreographers. Since 1990, he has also taught at the Conservatoire de Paris.

José Montalvo (1954 -)

Born in France as the son of Spanish immigrants, Montalvo studied art history and the creative arts before encountering dance, after which he danced for the company of Françoise and Dominique Dupuy, and went on to study also under Merce Cunningham, Alwin Nikolais and Carolyn Carlson. After winning awards for choreography at the Swiss and Lyon international contests in 1986 he has gone on to win many other awards. In 1988 he formed the Compagnie Montalvo-Hervieu with dancer Dominique Hervieu. In recent years he creates choreographic works on his own. His most recent work is *Carmesn(s)* (2018).

Presenter Interview プレゼンター・インタビュー

A new director takes the reins in Lyon, France's mecca of contemporary dance

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Located in south-eastern France, Lyon has continued in its support of contemporary dance since the 1980s. The 1980 establishment of the Maison de la Danse as the first theater dedicated to dance in France and the beginning of the international "Lyon Dance Biennale" festival in 1984 have furthered the city's cultural identity as a supporter of contemporary dance. Former journalist Guy Darnet, who led both the establishment of the Maison de la Danse as well as the Biennale, went on to take the reins of both for 30 years until his retirement in 2011. Darnet has been succeeded by Dominique Hervieu: celebrated dancer and choreographer with the Compagnie Montalvo-Hervieu, moving on from her directorship at the Chaillot National Theater to direction of the Maison de la Danse and becoming Artistic Director of the Lyon Dance Biennale. She spoke to us about her visions of the future, including those of the Maison de la Danse and the Lyon Biennale. (Dominique Hervieu will also be directing "Dance Dance @ Yokohama 2018," to be held in Yokohama in Autumn 2018)

Interviewer: Sae Okami

From dancer to the company Montalvo-Hervieu

Can we begin by having you tell us about your personal history? Would you tell us how you first became involved dance and what was your career as a dancer like?

I am from Coutances, which is approximately one hour northwest of Paris in the department of Normandy. I began dancing there, at the age of six. I began by learning ballet and I also did gymnastics. I left Coutances to relocate to Caen and study dance, and ended my studies in Paris. I began to gain interest in contemporary dance and modern dance after arriving in Paris. In Paris, I learned from Peter Goss. He was an incredible teacher, a great influence on me, and other pupils of his such as Angelin Preljocaj and Phillipe Decoufle who have gone on to become world-famous choreographers of contemporary dance. It was also while I was studying with Goss that I encountered Jose Montalvo in 1981.

So Jose Montalvo is a choreographer that you worked with at company Montalvo-Hervieu, isn't he?

When I met Jose Montalvo, it was as a dancer. Jose asked me and another dancer to work with him on movement and dance experiments. The other dancer eventually left,

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but I continued to work with Jose. With myself as dancer, and Jose as choreographer, we worked for five years before finally producing a solo performance, choreographer by Jose. This piece won the Solo Performance prize and the Audience prize at the Nyon International Choreography Competition in Switzerland 1986. Guy Darmet was among the jurors of the competition at this time, taking an interest in our work and inviting us to perform in Nyon. It was because of this fact, it was in Lyon that I received my first paycheck for dancing ever.

Can you describe for us the style of this solo work?

It was a work that would come to define the style of the company Montalvo-Hervieu. It did not feature visual art, and it was based on a pursuit of movement with the concept of discovering physicality bordering on the abstract. The work is simultaneously abstract in nature but with a narrative aspect as well, having a protagonist, and there are influences of silent film, with theatrical and also humorous elements. The use of movement and physicality in itself gives order to the structure of the work. After this solo piece, a piece for three dancers was created that would take 2nd place in France's Dance à Paris international dance contest. It would also win the award for female dancers at the Théâtre des Champs Élysées contest in the same year. It was a time when the focus was on dance contests.

When did you begin to do choreography yourself?

After doing a lot of training and rehearsing and entering dance contests, it was only then that I started to become involved in choreographing. It was in 1994 I was the assistant of the choreographer José Montalvo who created *Hollaka Hollala*, it was a piece for young dancers. It was the first piece that we used video in, and it was eventually performed more than 300 times on our world tours. It was around this time that dance pieces were first being choreographed specifically for youth in France. Following the big success with *Hollaka Hollala*, the piece *Paradis* that I choreographed for performance at Maison de la Danse in 1997 also became a great success the world. From 1988 we began activities under the name company Montalvo-Hervieu, and from 2000, my name appeared in the credits as co-choreographer. In 1998, Montalvo-Hervieu was appointed director of the national center for choreography, Centre Chorégraphique National (CCN) in Créteil on the outskirts of Paris, and this became the next step in my career. Among my works of round this time were *Le Jardin io io ito ito* (1999), *Le rire de la lyre* that I choreographed for the Paris Opera Ballet company, and *Babelle heureuse* (2002) among others.

For Montalvo-Hervieu, did you do any other activities besides those as dancer and choreographer?

My role in the company gradually grew to include an increasing number of responsibilities. I performed as a dancer until I was 40, in 2002. At the same time, from the outset of our company I was involved in dance education. In addition to instructing the company's other dancers, I did a lot of teaching at public schools. After I stopped performing as a dancer, I was involved in creating works as co-choreographer, and that continued until 2010. During that period, I choreographed for the opera *Les paladins* (2004) performed at Théâtre du Châtelet and works for Opéra National de Lyon,

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video works and creative projects with amateurs, and a variety of other things. It was a very full and productive period for me.

Birth of a new hub for dance at Théâtre national de Chaillote

In 2000, you were also given a post at the Théâtre national de Chaillote in Paris. How did that come about?

The Minister of Culture from 2000 to 2002, Catherine Tasca, suggested that Montalvo-Hervieu become involved in direction at Théâtre national de Chaillote. In 2000, Ariel Goldenberg was appointed as the director of Théâtre national de Chaillote and the theater adopted a new policy of placing priority on dance performances, and Jose Montalvo was made director of the dance department. I was given response for youth dance and put in charge of education and programs for promoting the spread of dance. Later, in 2008, Christine Albanel, France's Minister for Culture and Communication (2007 – 2009), appointed me as the successor of Goldenberg as general director of Théâtre national de Chaillote. I served in that post until I came to Lyon in 2011.

In 2008, the policy of Théâtre national de Chaillote was changed to make it the first theater in France to devote most of its programming to dance and thus make it a new center for dance. Why do you think you were chosen then to be its artistic director?

Although dance had already won the support of French audiences and proven itself as an art successfully, the institutions of France had been slow to prepare for that success. Dance had always been performed in theaters that were mainly for theater productions, and seen from the standpoint of the development of dance as an art, it was clear that the time was right for there to be a theater dedicated primarily to dance. There was the Maison de la Danse in Lyon, but there was no such theater in Paris. London had its Sadler's Wells Theater but Paris had no such equivalent. There were six national theaters, with Paris having Chaillote, La Colline, Odeon-theatre of Europe, Opera Comique, Comedie-Francaise and Strasbourg having the National Theatre of Strasbourg, but none of them were dedicated primarily to dance.

I believe that I was probably chosen to be artistic director because of the combination I had of all the necessary experience for the job, from success in growing the audience for dance and achievement in creating dance works that won widespread acclaim, to a deep understanding of all aspects of Theater operation. During the period when I was in charge of youth dance programs, I worked at the task of building the audience base and succeeded in taking the existing dance audience and growing it dramatically in the space of a few years. I imagine the Minister of Culture and Communication had trust in this achievement. Also, a work that Jose and I co-choreographed once sold out the theater for three weeks in a row. What's more, since Chaillote is a giant theater, I feel there was a need to appoint a director who knew theaters well.

In your time working at Théâtre national de Chaillote, the audience draw grew by 20%. What did you do specifically to achieve this big rise in numbers?

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We started a program to grow our audience that we called Art d'être spectateur. This program is still conducted at Chaillote once every month. The concept is for the different choreographers to use their own approaches to attempt to build bonds with the audiences. Workshops and talks were conducted by the choreographers for participants from the general public, and they also went to places like the school of architecture and homes for the elderly. Through careful analysis of their approach when creating a work, a variety of different audience groups become apparent and they work to pioneer new segments of audience. And then, by developing tie-ups with different realms of art, they can circulate and build exchanges with new the potential audiences.

Besides this program, we also organized an event called "Chaillote Nomad." We took dance performances to places like the Louvre Museum, the Pompidou Centre contemporary art museum and circuses. And what happened? When people suddenly saw dance performances at unexpected places like these, they developed a new interest in dance. The concept was to take dance performances at places where dance is not normally seen, and when we did we encountered audiences with all kinds of different people, like people in difficult life situations and ones with emotional troubles. We went out of the theater to give performances at different places in order to tell people that dance is for everyone, so come and see it. It is one type of art education, and dance education. It took time, but these kinds of efforts gradually grew our audience in new directions.

Initiatives in Lyon

What made you decide to quit the position at Chaillote and take the new one at Lyon in 2011?

It is true that Chaillote is a wonderful theater, and it was very interesting working on the projects there. But, I was also having to spend a tremendous amount of time on the problems with the labor union and the maintenance department. Those kinds of things didn't suit my nature, and I wanted to spend that time working on artistic projects and for the benefit of the company, so I had already lost the motivation to stay at Chaillote much longer. It was just at that time that Lyon's Guy Darmet retired, so I thought this was the chance I was waiting for.

Did the proposal for you to succeed Guy Darmet come from Guy himself?

Ever since we did our first performance at Lyon, I had constantly been in contact with him as a good friend. The proposal at the time did come from Guy Darmet himself, and the mayor of Lyon had agreed to his suggestion. In that way, I got the offer from the mayor of Lyon and thus quit Chaillote and took the new post at Lyon.

At Lyon you took over two posts, that of general director of the dance-specific theater Maison de la Danse and the artistic director of its Dance Biennale.

At Lyon there were a lot of things going on, like an organizational restructuring and the project for new facilities that are set to open in 2021, so there has been a lot of

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activity and prospects going forward. And with a sound vision for dance, good communication and respect for each other in the group, and with lots of new experiments going on and an environment for experiencing the results, it was an ideal place for me. The team was smaller than at Chaillote, but they are creative and work toward the future with initiative. To be able to work in the dance field in Lyon is a very special opportunity you won't find in other places.

Would you tell us about the plans for the new Maison de la Danse facilities that will open in 2021?

It was a very ambitious plan started in the Darmet era to be executed with a very large budget for new facilities designed by a famous architect. But in 2011, France suffered a serious economic crisis, and we were told by the mayor of Lyon that it would be impossible for the project to go forward as planned. From there we searched for new possibilities, and as a result, in 2015 a new project was launched to renovate the former Guimet Museum of art in the city's 6th district to make a facility named the Atelier de la Danse where choreographers and dancers could do their creative work.

The present Maison de la Danse in the city's 8th district is a facility primarily for performances and doesn't have facilities for the artists to do their creative work. So the planned Atelier de la Danse has very great significance in terms of our activities going forward. Although it hasn't been in use for a while, the former museum is a beautiful 18th-century building that is designated as an important historical building, and we will innovate it to create three studios. Unlike the 6th district where the Maison is located, the 8th district has a different, rather bourgeois atmosphere, and there the new studio facilities will be places where both professionals and amateurs from France and abroad can work freely. Our plan is to make it a place where a diverse cross-section of people can meet and create new works.

Are there things you have changed at the Maison de la Danse after you succeeded Guy Darmet?

The core values adopted at the founding of the Maison de la Danse was that it be open to all forms of dance, be for all audiences and for families. I have adopted and value this tradition, while at the same time taking some new approaches. I am determined that dance shown at the Maison be of the highest quality, whichever style it may be in, and that we accept a truly diverse range of audiences and artists. These are my two concepts.

Of the performances by approximately 50 companies held annually at Maison de la Danse, I have included ballet, which not shown here in Guy's time, in order to put today's great variety of dance forms in historical perspective. And of course, I also include historical works of contemporary dance from the 1980s in addition to newer contemporary works. I also started a small festival called Sens Dessus Dessous that is focused on contemporary experimental works, and it has become a popular one that the Lyon audience looks forward to.

In addition to dance, we also have performances of humorous works by the comedy actor Patrice Thibaud. He is not a dancer, so it may seem a bit strange that he is performing at a theater dedicated to dance, but it is a message from me to our audiences

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that laughter is necessary in life, so you don't need to refrain from laughing. I don't think there is any conflict involved in having audience laugh at Thibaud's performances and then having Maguy Marin on the same season's program. I want to create an atmosphere where people don't feel reluctant to laugh at a performance in our theater because of the idea that contemporary dance or contemporary art have to be serious.

There are many approaches employed in dance today, and there is no reason that people should have to see the same style of dance works all year long. People should be able to see a variety of different dance styles, the greater the difference, the richer their sense of perception toward dance will become. This is because different dance works demand of the viewers different interpretations and ways of relating to the work. So I want our audiences to be receptive to the full range of responses dance can induce, from surprise, laughter and tears to contemplation. I want the people who come to Maison de la Danse to experience a variety of different emotional responses. We always have to be fair in our relationship with our audience. The audience is paying to see the performances, and Maison de la Danse receives public funding. We also have the responsibility to offer artistic education for children and young people. So, my approach is a democratic one, and I am always thinking about who are activities are intended to reach.

What meaning or significance do you think there is today in people seeing dance?

I believe that about 60% of the audience that comes to see dance is people looking primarily for entertainment. It is a diversion that lets people escape from the everyday and enter a world that is more of the senses. In that case, seeing dance is not something based on a prior depth of learning or a delving into some deep abyss. But I don't look down on that desire for entertainment. Isn't it understandable that on Friday evening after a busy week of work you don't want to start reading Marx, do you?

The important thing is that this element of enjoyment remains connected to the art. It is also important for children, so I believe that their first experiences of art should involve such enjoyment. This enjoyment is not devoid of intelligence or knowledge, and it is something that intuitively becomes a source of motivation and the power to find value in the time they live. And the important thing is to implant the seeds of curiosity in this enjoyment or entertainment. For children, enjoyment connects automatically to getting to know something. The same thing can be true with adults. Even if we know what kind of ballet *Sleeping Beauty* is, we still go to see it.

I feel that it is my role to help lead people from the things they know to the things they don't yet know. I often say that my job is to learn to like things I don't know and then help others do the same. We can't learn to like something until we get to know it, can we? I want to go from the types of dance people here know and introduced them to new, more difficult to appreciate choreography, such as the work that will soon be appearing for the first time at Maison de la Danse, such as performances of the tap dance of New York's Michelle Dorrance, and the choreography of France's Tomas Lebrun with its formal aspect and the choreography of Israeli-born Emanuel Gat. I want our audience to encounter these at the theater and discover new things in them. And if this leads to them finding enjoyment in things they didn't know before, they will surely come to like it. Of course, the difficult thing is that things don't go 100% the way we think they will.

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What specific measures do you take to make these things possible?

At Maison de la Danse we have several types of programs, such as introducing extracts from performance videos and holding lectures for audiences, educators, corporations and philanthropists. The aim is to get people interested in dance so they want to come to the theater to see it. We have an order to the way we explain things; we first say, "This is something you have certainly never seen before." Then we continue, "But, for such-and-such a reason, we want you to see it so it will become a new addition to the things you have known until now." This creates a human relationship, which makes it easier for people to listen to what we say and understand it. We make this process of building bonds between the audience and the theater a very important part of our work. This way, our audience not only buys tickets to see performances but also listens to talks about them and looks forward to the performances more. And as the bond of trust grows, they are more willing to be adverts about the things they choose to see. They get the feeling that they would like to try watching the performances that look more difficult to understand at first.

Since coming to Maison de la Danse, you have succeeded in steadily growing the number of dance fans and increasing support from philanthropic organizations (mécénat). In times like this when public funding for the arts is decreasing, ticket sales and philanthropic support become increasingly important, what kind of approach do you take with private sector partners?

At Maison de la Danse, we are making great efforts in the areas of education and the digital media. In addition to artistic education at local elementary middle and high schools, we also offer seminars for the educators. In our program we call "Maison Nomads" (Maisons Nomades) we promote the spread of interest in dance by taking dance performances to places like art museums, shopping centers and libraries not only in Lyon but also the Auvergne-Rhone-Alpes region, and we also do social programs that send dancers to do workshops at places like prisons, psychiatric clinics and hospitals.

In the digital media, this spring we are launching an updated version of our Numeridance online archive that provides free access to some 2,700 dance videos, and to accompany this we have released a game designed to let players learn about dance. And we also produced an English version of it titled "My Dance Company." In this game, the players make their own dance company and the goal is then to create a dance piece. As you progress in the game, you look at various types of dance movements on our Numeridance dance archive website and then go on to choose your style, the contents of your piece and how you want to present it. Philanthropic organizations/corporations (mécénat) are very interested in digital and social media initiatives like this. Maison de la Danse is appreciated by them for our social programs. And of course, these corporations receive perquisites for their support in the form of tickets for their customers, employees and their families to come and see dance performances.

How are the programming decisions made at Maison de la Danse?

In the end, I make the final decisions but I have two staff members working with me.

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In selecting works, we do refer to videos, but we also split up to go see many performances both in France and abroad. Also our information network is important. In 2016, Maison de la Danse joined Pôle européen de creation (European Pole of Creation) and we will surely be working with theaters in France that are members of it as well as our partners in Porto (Portugal), Liege (Belgium) and Barcelona (Spain) on the development of new works. There are frequent visits between people in the network and a lot of exchange of information. Also, artists come to Maison de la Danse to suggest works for our program. There are many artists who want to perform their works in Lyon.

So what are your criteria for choosing from among these works?

My first priority is quality. And by that I mean a highly finished work, one that is consistent and coherent, and has a firm artistic identity. The Maison de la danse is dedicated to all dance, so this covers everything from ballet to performance art. As far as ballet is concerned we programmed in January a most classic work, *Sleeping Beauty*, performed by the Yacobson Ballet from Russia. In March we will present tap dance, which may well be referred to as a “concert in tap,” by Michelle Dorrance. And in our February festival program features radical contemporary artists like Maguy Marin, Nacera Belaza and Roby Orlin. My interests lean strongly toward those works that possess a strong individuality, and away from works that are moderate, or are recreations of or recycled productions of past works.

My approach to the standards of quality in dance is that a work gives a clear feeling of substantial thought regarding the basic elements of physicality, directing/staging and choreography. I am not interested in works that borrow heavily from or are clearly closely related to existing works, or works that don't have strong individuality or ones that don't express the stance of the choreographer. For example, the dancers of the Yacobson Ballet are all outstanding, perfection, and there is the quality of a dance classic. It is the same with contemporary performance. In outstanding works, the artists are thoroughly absorbed in their work, and they show, almost to excess, their approach, their world of imagination, their artistic stance or the story they want to tell. And their works also show a consistency of style. These standards of selection of works hold true for our Dance Biennale (Biennale de la danse) as well.

What kinds of differences are there in your work of bringing dance to the Lyon audiences at Maison de la Danse and the work you do for the Lyon Dance Biennale with its international outreach?

The fundamental principle of seeking to share a high-level understanding dance with people is the same for both, and our approach and philosophy regarding the work is the same as well. However, the position from which I am working is different. At Maison de la Danse, I am the general director, but for the Biennale I am artistic director. At Maison de la Danse, the overall responsibility lies with me, while in the case of the Lyon Biennale, it is a separate organization that runs both the Danse Biennale in even-numbered years and the Art Biennale in odd-numbered years. For example, the work on international programs is the responsibility of the Communications department of the Lyon Biennale organization. My position is as artistic director in the Dance department and my responsibilities are in the dance-related work, specifically

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speaking the artistic work, artistic education, the Parade (Défilé), creation and community involvement/development programs. The Danse Biennale is held primarily in the city of Lyon and we get support for it from the Metropolis of Lyon government, and it thus involves all 42 towns and 62 neighborhoods of metropolitan Lyon. This means we have the challenge of taking dance to towns where there has never been dance before and promote its spread there. Also, I must note that there is a tremendous amount of preparation that goes into the Parade (Défilé).

The Parade, which is the highlight of the Biennale each time, local amateur dance groups from around the city dance as they parade through the city center, and it is a big event that gathers about 300,000 spectators. How do you prepare for such an event?

Participating in the Parade (Défilé) are 12 amateur dance groups from Lyon, and we also have participants from Lyon's sister cities in other regions. For example, in 2014 we had participants from Torino, Italy. Preparations begin a year before the event. A theme for each year's Parade is decided and then we hold open-call competition for choreography projects, and the 12 choreographers selected are sent to work with the dance groups around the city. From there, the groups work with these choreographers for eight months to learn the choreography and practice for the final event. In this way, the Parade serves as a source of support for the local choreographers as well as being a program that promotes the spread of dance.

On the day of the Parade, about 4,800 amateurs participate, taking half a day to parade around the city center. At the end of the Parade, everyone gathers in the city's main square along with tens of thousands of spectators to watch a dance spectacle by professional dancers. There is also a project where everyone practices a piece I have choreographed and then all dance it together. In the excitement of the Parade the dancers and spectators get into the dancing.

Are there any things you have changed since the days of Guy Darnet?

With the Biennale, Guy did wonderful work, so we haven't made any revolutionary changes in it. We have continued its basic form and just continued to build on it, expanding it and adding more complexities as we go forward. Over its 21 days, about 50 works are programmed for performances in the theater, including performances by about 20 overseas companies to make it a program with a rich variety of dance from different countries and regions. Many new works premiere to make it a program that introduces the state of dance today.

At the same time, we feel the importance of offering programs from a social perspective for people like the unemployed and people being assimilated into the society, as well as people with health problems. I believe it is very important to help give these people the opportunity to encounter dance, so we have begun programs to invite them to see performances. Also, we believe that the dance spectacle in the main square at the end of the Parade is a form of gift from us to these people. This year we plan to present a performance of a work by circus-oriented dancer and choreographer Yoann Bourgeois, using amateur dancers.

The theme of our 2018 Parade is "Peace." Being the 100th anniversary of the end of

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World War I, and the 300th anniversary of the Reformation and the 50th memorial of the death of Martin Luther King, we think this is a very fitting theme.

Would you tell us about some of the other features of this year's Biennale?

We plan for it to have a very European focus, and it will surely reflect our new involvement in Pôle européen de création (European Pole of Creation) that I mentioned earlier. There will be participation from Portugal, Belgium and Spain as well as from Eastern European countries. In France, the French Ministry of Culture and Communication takes the leading role in Pôle européen de création, and it is a network spreading in Europe today with participation by Institut français, ONDA, and various theaters and festivals. It has associate artists and to support research on companies, new works and productions and international opportunities for performances, European theaters and festivals cooperate on joint productions and host performances in various cities.

In the Lyon Danse Biennale, each time we have our Focus Danse program for introducing emerging artists to arts professionals such as theater people, and this year we will be introducing artists associated with Pôle européen de création. This means that whereas until now we have introduced 10 companies from France, this time we will be introducing 17 in all. This expanded Focus Danse program will surely become a new dance platform for Europe as well.

For the Dance Dance Dance @ YOKOHAMA 2018 festival to be held this summer, you will be serving as director for the first time, won't you?

I am very happy about this opportunity. There is always much to learn from international collaborations. I have visited companies here and I like Japan very much, and I have a lot of respect for the people I have met in my work. There is wonderful culture, and with the great politeness and discipline, people don't have conflicts with each other. People maintain a polite distance, but I get a sense of tolerance and friendship.

Unlike in a giant festival like the Lyon Danse Biennale, I felt that with this festival in Yokohama I could perhaps contribute some new ideas and add something to its history. I suggested some French companies for the program. There will also be Japan-France co-productions. Two French choreographers will collaborate with Japanese dancers to create new works and three works, including a new work by a Japanese company, will also tour in France. And since there is not as much experience in Japan of this kind of international collaboration, we will be assisting in that realm. I am hoping that it will be a wonderful exchange.