

Möbius

Compagnie XY

A collective artwork by Compagnie XY
In collaboration with Rachid Ouramdane



TOWARDS THE EXTREME UPSTREAM⁽¹⁾

Imagine a track covered over by the passage of time and rendered invisible. What if we could ultimately revisit the site and trace it back?
In flocks we face headlong into the winds, each gauging the weight of the other, day after day. What comes to light, as we raise each other up with acrobatic lifts, is that we are always anchored in this fertile territory which is acrobatics. Let us begin to scope out the lie of the land : A space with natural borders which is naturally porous where we locate our research zone. A playground laid bare to the four winds. That which elevates us - by force of acrobatic lifts - is where we have established our test site so let us proceed in empirical fashion to put this into a contemporary context.

Whilst interrogating these principles of collective working - the bedrock of our practice - Möbius leads us towards something greater than ourselves.
We are zooming out from ourselves as individuals (how we behave, how we react, how we express ourselves) to consider the bigger picture and ourselves as part of a larger whole.
We are convinced that this holds something invaluable on a universal level.
It seems that all our work has been leading up to this point, charting our course with meticulousness and sensitivity.

(1) Taken from Alain Damasio’s book La horde du contrevent. Ed. La Volte, 2004.



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MÖBIUS

For its fifth creative production, Compagnie XY explored the outer confines of acrobatics, through analogy, by seeking out concepts of natural phenomena such as murmurings. That form of communication that can be felt in the flight of starlings : a choreography of hundreds of birds, so well-timed and so dense that it sometimes eclipses the sun, even just for an instant..
The collective thus pursues its research on acrobatic language, this time by anchoring the circus act at the heart of continuous movement, a « continuum » that allows situations to reverse, upset and swing without having to oppose ones with others. The bare and immaculately white set presents like an infinite space that electrifyingly empties and fills, where the action is deployed like a chain reaction. A responsive and sensorial territory where neither nature, nor culture, nor body or spirit would be opposed.
It is through this approach and this resonance with his own work that a collaboration with choreographer Rachid Ouramdane was born. He was able to offer his words, gestures and vision to the collective.
Veritable ode to the living, Möbius thus returns us to the absolute necessity of «creating together» as the basis for all forms of subsistence, perpetuation and invention.



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MURMURATION

There is still so much to learn about this incredible phenomenon of synchronised flight, where each member of a group reacts almost simultaneously, as if they were one being.

Here, there is a disturbing similarity with our own practices and demands: the imperative of «creating together» and the necessary transmission of knowledge. This sharing of wisdom and information, these micro adjustments of the artistes' bodies in relation to each other, are the signs of an intuitive physical intelligence. From there, we have imagined a space that can be emptied and filled at lightning speed; zipping from 1 to 19 people on set in a fraction of a second, or even causing a chain reaction, creating a wave effect with our bodies.

This approach reflects our ability to generate speed, regulate it or maintain it to create a kind of kinetic magic. We want to astound the audience with surprise transformations and play with the effects of levitation or slow motion as observed in these amazing natural phenomena. The moving light plays its part in these tricks of illusion, sometimes highlighting bodies in a sort of twilight,

sometimes multiplying them in a shadow, theatre effect on the ground.

And finally, we share a common fascination for murmurations with Rachid Ouramdane, as he describes when outlining the nature of our collaboration:

“My meeting Cie XY has provided a tremendous terrain for exploring a choreography that functions through “detonations” and the expertise of a group who defy gravity. They push performing “together” to the limit.

The visual, vertiginous heights they propose stretch choreographic boundaries and lead to an enigmatic style rather like that which transports flocks of airborne starlings; those wonderful aerial choreographies that seem so harmonious and yet, the workings of which are beyond us.

This is where the heart of our encounter lies: deep within the mystery of these aerial ballets which offer a sort of perpetual motion that never repeats itself.”

CONTINUUM

The challenge with this piece is to imagine ourselves in a space-time continuum.

Taking our inspiration from the imagery in Patrick Tort's book *The Darwin Effect* (2), we use the Möbius band to represent our approach both visually and metaphorically. This « kinetic » approach constantly takes us back to the fundamental laws of living beings, perceived as movement in perpetual evolution. We thus inscribe our acrobatics in a flow, a theatre of transformations activated by swells and surges or temporal loops that echo one another.

This creative process involves all of the elements of the performance. We have introduced a system of modulation and transfer of light sources that has its own movement and shifts as if it were following a natural cycle. The costumes are vibrant and changing: the show opens with a ballet of silhouettes dressed in black, contrasting with the white floor, emphasising the collective movements and runs. As the performance progresses, the colour tones change by sequence, ebbing towards more natural hues of ochre and earth. The materials become lighter and fuller to highlight the lifts and flights.

In the same vein, the music is on a single, continuous track. The atmosphere created with vast range of electronic lutheries contributes to this uninterrupted flow that takes the spectator on an inner journey; an emotional landscape as subtle and striking as the changing scenery observed from the window of a moving train.

(2) Patrick Tort, *The Darwin Effect: Natural Selection and the Birth of Civilisation*. Ed. Seuil, Collection « Science ouverte », 2008.



INHABITING OUR ACROBATICS

This subject has been driving our collective for a long time and is something we want to concentrate on, firstly by setting ourselves the challenge of pinpointing the principles of the acrobatic act. The focus is on the physical attributes of the body, on the paths that lead us to the acrobatic gesture and on the sensorial states that can emerge from it. To rise, to catch, to clasp, to release, to abandon oneself to the other, to rise again, to rise again... These are all physical actions that are perpetuated before our eyes and lend themselves to metaphor.

Working with Rachid Ouramdane, we have somehow granted ourselves a “right to horizontality.” We have explored our relationship to the ground, the intermingling of bodies and the tensions between individuals while preserving the fluidity that we

master in our «circus verticality».

In the same way, he allows us to explore the relationship of bodies in relation to speed and gyration. These are patterns dear to him and that we have been able to incorporate into our acrobatic practices:

“Immersing bodies in an urgency that reveals the artistes’ capacity to react on a stage where everything is accelerating...we see the emergence of a collective intelligence on the part of the protagonists on stage, who provide solutions to extreme situations.”

(3) Erik Sablé, The Wisdom of Birds. Ed. Zulma, 2002.

© Cholette-Lefebvre



ABOUT CIE XY

Philosophy

For 17 years, Cie XY has been investigating and exploring the language of acrobatics through the practice of lifts. While relying on the fundamentals of this circus technique, this collective of artistes keep playing with the codes, rhythms and forms of acrobatics to put them back at the very heart of the artistic gesture.

Since then, the company has chosen to work in large numbers in order to multiply possibilities and to enlarge its field of research. This choice also reflects an artistic approach that aims to question the concepts of mass, of the “audience” and their interactions in the same space-time. Beyond that, it remains a matter of questioning the relationship of an individual to a group or within a given social setting.

Through this approach, Cie XY has also chosen to be a true collective, sharing the expertise and ideas of each individual and by adopting a collegial creative process. This constant desire to be part of a process of transmission and sharing in a non-hierarchical framework, has a strong impact on daily work and becomes a direct component of the artistic forms that are produced. In this spirit, the team has chosen to turn towards the public through the collective creation of large-scale forms for the theatre, public spaces or any places that allow frontal or circular performances.



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OUR STORY SO FAR

In 2019, **Möbius** was the fifth creation of Cie XY, questioning humanity as part of a larger whole of the living world by analogy to murmuration, that incredible phenomenon of synchronised flight where each member of a group reacts almost simultaneously, as if they were one being. >>> [The teaser here](#)

Prior to that, in 2005, with **Laissez-porter** we wanted to rally together around our discipline, our expertise. It was an opportunity to test our foundations.

With **Le Grand C**, in 2009, we began to feel our way, with a feeling of the unknown as we worked with many artistes. The show was thus tinged with solemnity and sobriety.

It's not midnight yet... in 2014, finally allowed us to expand our performance space and to joyfully include dance, play and musicality...

Les Voyages in 2018, we embark on a creative approach in situ with the ambition to invest a territory and its landscapes using our bodies as the only material, with, as our standard the word «carry» , allowing us to reinvent a universal gesture through our actions. >>> [view the multimedia creations here](#)

All these creations together weave the fabric of a collective of artistes united around their common passion for performing acrobatics and composing singular forms.

The success of our previous shows - more than 1000 performances around the world – has created opportunities for unique research

on physical language and the universes we are likely to compose for the public.

In 2016, for the first time in its history, Cie XY received the support of the Ministry of Culture (Cerni).

Since then, the collective has continued to grow and become a platform for cooperation in which artistes develop new acrobatic experiences within the various creations.

They have also been able to extend their work on transmission within the framework of master classes at the Cirque-Theatre d'Elbeuf (2017) or by investing in a long-term cooperation programme with Palestinian circus schools (2016-2018).

The collective is now nearly 40 acrobats- strong, 19 of whom perform in Möbius, the creation that remains at the heart of the company's work and philosophy.

Since 2017, Cie XY is associated, for all its projects, with the Phénix-Scène nationale of Valenciennes as part of the Pôle européen de création and with the Cirque-Théâtre d'Elbeuf - Pôle National Cirque in Normandie.

Since 2021, Cie XY is associated with the National Dance Theatre, Chaillot and the Espace des Arts, Scène nationale of Chalon-sur-Saône. They also receive the support of the BNP-Paribas Foundation, since 2016.



© Mia Wolf & Renaud Chevillier

INFOS ET CRÉDITS

Duration : 1h05 with no interval / **From the age of 8**

Collective artwork

Abdeliazide Senhadji, Aïrelle Caen, Alejo Bianchi, Arnau Povedano, Andres Somoza, Antoine Thirion, Belar San Vincente, Florian Sontowski, Gwendal Beylier, Hamza Benlabied, Lörïc Fouchereau, Maélie Palomo, Mikis Matsakis, Oded Avinathan, Paula Wittib, Peter Freeman, Seppe Van Looveren, Tuk Frederiksen, Yamil Falvella

Artistic collaborations

Rachid Ouramdane, Jonathan Fitoussi, Clemens Hourrière

Light designer

Vincent Millet

Costumes designer

Nadia Léon

Acrobatic collaboration

Nordine Allal

Production and tour managers

Peggy Donck, Johanna Autran et Antoine Billaud

Technical manager and sound

Claire Thiebault-Besombes

Thanks to

Mayalen Otodon, Agalie Vandamme, Catherine Germain et Roser Lopez-Espinosa

Production

Compagnie XY

Coproductions

Cirque théâtre d'Elbeuf et La Brèche Cherbourg, Pôle National Cirque en Normandie / Le Phénix Scène nationale - Pôle européen de création à Valenciennes / Maison de la Danse - Lyon / MC2 Grenoble / Tandem - Scène nationale / La Villette, Paris / Maison de la Culture de Bourges / TEAT Champ Fleuri (La Réunion) / Agora - Pôle National Cirque Boulazac Aquitaine / Les Gêmeaux Scène nationale de Sceaux / Bonlieu - Scène nationale d'Annecy / Carré Magique, Pôle National Cirque Bretagne, Lannion Trégor / Espace des arts - Scène nationale de Chalon-sur-Saône / Le Bateau Feu - Scène nationale de Dunkerque / Espace Jean Legendre, Théâtre de Compiègne / Festival Perspectives / festival franco-allemand des arts de la scène, Saarbrücken - Allemagne / La Coursive, Scène nationale de La Rochelle

Residences

Le Sirque - Pôle National Cirque Nexon Limousin / Furies - Pôle National Cirque, Châlons-en Champagne Région Grand Est avec le soutien du Centre National des Arts du Cirque / Cirque Jules Verne - Pôle National Cirque et Arts de la Rue, Amiens / CCN - Grenoble / MC2 - Grenoble / Maison de la danse - Lyon / La Brèche - Pôle National Cirque en Normandie, Cherbourg / CIRCa Pôle National Cirque Auch / Tandem - Scène nationale (Douai) / Cirque Théâtre d'Elbeuf - Pôle National Cirque en Normandie / Le Phénix Scène nationale - Pôle européen de création à Valenciennes

Möbius has been supported in its creation process by Region Haut-de-France and French departement of Culture (DGCA).

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MÖBIUS — PRESS EXTRACTS

ACROBATIC REVERIES WITH AN EXISTENTIAL TWIST

For 17 years, Cie XY has been investigating and exploring the language of acrobatics through the practice of lifts. While relying on the fundamentals of this circus technique, this « Combining sheer might with grace, Möbius.....is a living abstract painting..... where 19 acrobats, in black on a white canvas, shoot out like jets of ink, transforming into lines and curves...

Acceleration, sudden slow down, motionless suspension and renewed bursts of energy follow on, one after another... unfolding a story of compelling beauty in its fragility. “

Le Monde 11-12 November 2021

ACROBATICS.....A POETIC DECONSTRUCTION

« Möbius.....this is the artistry of XY Company who explode and stun with their mastery of acrobatic lifts and aerial flight with their collective elan.... We are carried along in their wake, lulled by the images of a humanity in constant flux. »

la terrasse October 2021

CIE XY....THE ART OF DRAWING SHAPES IN THE AIR

« Masters of innovation, XY Company transform their lifters and tumblers into veritable juggling balls and it’s spellbinding. »

LE FIGARO 15 November 2021

A COLLECTIVE EFFORT THROUGH AND THROUGH

« XY Company has always prioritized the notion of the pack. It’s a matter of mindset. Or even ethics. Möbius thus returns us to the absolute necessity of « creating together » as the basis for all forms of subsistence, perpetuation and invention. »

Libération 23 November 2021

CONTACT



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