

Rhapsodie Rhapsodie Rhapsodie Rhapsodie

**A choreographic
event for
20 dancers**

**Stage
work**

**Co-production
with
Danse Danse**

**SYLVAIN ÉMARD DAN
SE**



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 was 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 also available.

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



Review excerpts

“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

“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

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 recreation 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.

LENGTH	DANCERS ON STAGE	TEAM ON TOUR	STAGE SIZE	SET UP
SIXTY (60) MINUTES	TWENTY (20)	TWENTY- FOUR (24)	32 FT. X 42 FT. (10 M X 13 M) CONFIGURATION OF 360° ADAPTABLE	EIGHT (8) HOURS + PRE-HANG THE PREVIOUS DAY

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'Institut National 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.

Calendar

2024	APR	Théâtre de la Ville, Longueuil, Canada Centre des arts, Baie-Comeau, Canada Maison des arts de Laval, Canada Centre Culturel de l'Université de Sherbrooke, Canada
	MAR	Théâtre Hector-Charland, L'Assomption, Canada Théâtre des Deux Rives, Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, Canada Le Carré 150, Victoriaville, Canada Salle J. Antonio-Thompson, Culture Trois-Rivières, Canada
2022	JUNE	Benefit Performance <i>Rhapsodie</i> , Circuit-Est centre chorégraphique, Montréal, Canada
	FEV	WORLD PREMIERE: Studio-Théâtre at Wilder Building, presented by Danse Danse, Montréal, Canada



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● Watch the clip

● Watch the full-length



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 Piconne, Raphaëlle Renucci, François Richard, Cara Roy, Marie-Philippe Santerre, Lila-Mae Talbot, Camille Trudel-Vigeant

REHEARSAL COACH Daniel Villeneuve

ORIGINAL SCORE Martin Tétreault & Poirier

LIGHTING DESIGNER André Rioux

COSTUMES Marilène Bastien

Sylvain Émard Danse

A major figure in Québec contemporary dance, Sylvain Émard founded his company, Sylvain Émard Danse, in 1990. From small forms to monumental pieces, from immersive installations to films, he explores the territory of human nature through the power of the body, creating some thirty works, presented on four continents.

A sensitive, rigorous, and inventive creator, he navigates with ease between different artistic spheres, as seen notably in his collaboration with Robert Lepage. Recipient of several prestigious distinctions, including the Jean A. Chalmers Award (1996) for his body of work and the Governor General's Performing Arts Award (2026), Sylvain Émard is also a co-founder of Circuit-Est centre chorégraphique.



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

**S.É
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