

# *LE CABARET DE LA ROSE BLANCHE*

Songs and stories from across the Mediterranean sea



Radhouane El Meddeb

Creation 2024



# Le Cabaret de la Rose blanche

In these troubled times, it is more necessary than ever to tell the story of exile and migration, of departures and arrivals.

On stage, a piano, a double bass, a singer and three dancers give us a glimpse of the escapades, joys and sorrows of those we call foreigners.

Travelers by land and sea, in search of a return, or fresh newcomers.

Their journey is told to us by the voices of Fayrouz or Dalida, Saliha or Ismahan, these divas with gold and tears in their voice.

Song, dance and music come together at the cabaret for a fun and nostalgic tale of dreams and disenchantment... The poetry of words accompanies this journey of colors and commitment, for exile is contagious, but so is hope.

At the Cabaret de la Rose Blanche, the party has a bitter-sweet taste, but we're drawn in by human destiny, both stranger and host.



# Le Cabaret de la Rose Blanche

Creation 2024

**Concept, choregraphy** : Radhouane El Meddeb

**Musical composition and performance** : Selim Arjoun

**Performance, dance, music, and vocals** : Selim Arjoun, Radhouane El Meddeb, Philippe Lebhar, Guillaume Marie, Lobna Noomene, Sofiane Saadaoui

**Scriptwriting** : Marianne Catzaras

**Artistic collaboration** : Philippe Lebhar

**Costume design** : Sari Brunel

**Lights and technical direction** : Manuel Desfeux

**Sound**: Clément Baysse

**Production, distribution** : Nicolas Gilles

**Production** : La Compagnie de SOI

**Coproduction** : Le Manège Scène nationale de Reims / Pôle Sud, CDCN de Strasbourg / Pavillon Noir, CCN d'Aix-en-Provence, Ballet Prejlocaj / Théâtre Molière > Sète, Scène Nationale archipel de Thau / Atelier de Paris, CDCN

**Residencies** : Pôle Sud, CDCN de Strasbourg / Institut Français de Tunis / Pavillon Noir, CCN d'Aix-en-Provence, Ballet Prejlocaj / La Briqueterie, CDCN du Val-de-Marne / La Ménagerie de Verre, Paris / Atelier de Paris, CDCN / Le Manège Scène nationale de Reims

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## Intention note

A tale of real, current, fictional and fairy-tale events, *Le Cabaret de la Rose Blanche* tells the story of these artists and myself, young and old... It will be our dreams, our fantasies, our frustrations, our contradictions, our cracks, Tunis...

The Tunisian musical repertoire, Egyptian songs and cinema, iconic images that have affected a whole generation... We'll explore song, poetry, theater and dance to better express who we are today, with sincerity and emotion.

We'll explore the memory of a setting of freedom and modernity, of a fictional life, outside the everyday and yet foundational to our imaginations.

Festive, generous, sometimes tragic, but free of all constraints, a cabaret of joy and bitterness!

This project is also another step in a long and serious commitment to share, transmit and create with foreign artists, far from European tools, institutions and circuits... This is a mission that we have been carrying out with La Compagnie de SOI for several years, despite the difficulties, whether technical, health-related or financial.

In this post-health crisis period, with the gradual and alarming rise of fascist and xenophobic movements, it's more than necessary to go and dream of an elsewhere, of a better world...

In 2011, when I started working on the performance *Au temps où les arabes dansaient...* created in 2014, I imagined a form of cabaret... The events of the revolutions took me elsewhere, prevented me from exploring a form of celebration...

Today, I wish to invent and bring to life *le Cabaret de la Rose Blanche!*

*La Rose Blanche (The White Rose)* is the title of a major Egyptian film in the history of Arab musical cinema from 1933... It is also the name of a German movement that resisted Nazism in 1942.

*Le Cabaret de la Rose Blanche* is now necessary to enter a new period in my choreographic journey...

To invent another euphoric choreography, which would translate the hope of a world more than ever in search of peace and joy...  
It is a cabaret rich in colours, free and resolutely crazy.

We will use different dances to recreate an era, to rediscover aesthetics, to affirm this need for dreaming..

**Radhouane El Meddeb**



## Musical intention note

*Le Cabaret de la Rose Blanche*, towards an authentic and new Mediterranean Arabic music and song.

*Le Cabaret de la Rose Blanche* is an immersion into the depths of Tunisian and Egyptian music... As well as a new exploration and interpretation of today's poetic and sensitive Mediterranean, Egyptian, Lebanese and Italian songs...

Some popular songs, others belonging to a art music or a less accessible repertoire.

The sounds, melodies and rhythms will be blank canvases on which we paint our emotions, stories, and sensations.

The musical approach will be abstract, seeking to use melodies and rhythms to create an evocative and immersive atmosphere that embodies our stories, dreams and feelings.

Music and songs that evoke exile, travels...  
Themes of crossing....

The piano and the double bass will be the instruments that animate the harmonic frameworks, the deep resonances that will accompany the song.

A voice full of emotions and reminiscence, the voice of memory.

The sound and electronic elements will take us to unknown soundscapes and musical textures that reveal unsuspected horizons.

The energy and the universe of a new cabaret that will take its source and all its inspiration from an Arab and Mediterranean musical tradition and that will bring it under other contemporary, audacious and sensitive skies.

This work will be an invitation to a journey into a world of vibrant harmonies, evocative melodies and intoxicating rhythms that have marked different periods of our musical history.

These transformed sounds reflect our histories, crystallizing a real confrontation and dialogue of eras and styles...

What we were and what we have become..

**Selim Arjoun**



# Artistic approach

Radhouane El Meddeb was not born in dance. He (be)came there.

What is a body? The body is the whole person, beyond words. In dance, an abstraction makes it possible to touch further. The solo «*Pour en finir avec MOI / To finish with MYSELF*», founding act, in 2005, is the first of a series which sees Radhouane El Meddeb always return to this form of presence in name and in proper body. The form of the solo includes its part of «descent into hell», it «grazes the intimate, without violating it». La Compagnie de SOI is founded in the same movement. The company of the SELF ? This means that with oneself, one is already in company, in dialogue with one's double, and the invention of one's story.

Radhouane El Meddeb's body is atypical on choreographic stages. He was nourished by the diversity of his expressive experiences; not from a systematic and exclusive dance training. However, he spares nothing in the relentlessness of a vigorous seizure, sometimes insistent in the extreme.

Choreographer Radhouane El Meddeb also orchestrates group pieces, with large numbers. They are forged in times of very involved sharing, through a strong commitment to the creation process. It is an art of interpretative investment.

Solo or in a group, this link from the intimate to the collective, to the political, ignores nothing of human chaos. Often animates the reading, loving and sometimes worried, of an Arab-Muslim culture, perceived through the painful filter of exile. It is an exile that Radhouane El Meddeb fully assumed, when he chose to settle in France, in search of fulfillment in his artistic expression.

When he puts it into play on the set, this Tunisian legacy is steeped in ardent poetry, consumed in an exaltation of beauty, even imbued with frank sensuality, but also transported with spiritual elevation. Nourished by this magnificent past, very concerned by a future which is, decidedly, nothing obvious, the words of Radhouane El Meddeb resonate deeply with the present time.



Contemporary, his writing generously embraces the world, the better to capture some of the finest and most muted vibrations. From where a surprisingly limpid dance, to touch what there would be, at the bottom, of less simple.

Gérard Mayen  
For la Compagnie de SOI - May 2018



# Artistic team

## Radhouane El Meddeb Concept, choreography, performance

Trained at the Higher Institute of Dramatic Art of Tunis, he is recognized as “The young hopeful of the Tunisian theatre” in 1996 by the Tunisian Section of the International Theatre Institute. He is, then, recruited as an actor within the training and research workshop of the National Theatre of Toulouse under the direction of Jacques Rosner. In Tunisia, he works with Fadhel Jaibi, Taoufik Jebali and Mohamed Driss, highly influential artists in the Arab world. In France, he works with the directors Jacques Rosner, Lotfi Achour and Catherine Boskowitz, and he collaborates artistically with contemporary authors such as Natacha de Pontcharra, Adel Hakim and Camille de Toledo. As a movie actor, he appeared in two films by Férid Boughdir, *Un Été à la Goulette / A Summer at La Goulette* and *Halfaouine, l’Enfant des Terrasses / Halfaouine, The child of Terrace Roofs*.

Throughout those years devoted to the theatre, he worked in the same time with Tunisian choreographers, as an interpreter and an artistic collaborator. Being quite fond of dancing, he is equally nurtured by classes directed by Lisa Nelson and Jean Laurent Sasportès in Europe.

Because he felt the need for an artistic experience other than the theatre, he signed for his first creation in 2005, a solo dance entitled *Pour en finir avec MOI / To finish with MYSELF*, as an intimate introspection and a vital experience. A real revelation that will make him go into dancing and become a choreographer-interpreter. Once performed at the *Rencontres Chorégraphiques de Carthage*, this show was identified by professionals, a turning point in his career. Then, he signed several creations in France, beginning in the following year, with his solo dance *Huwa, ce lui / Huwa, that one* for Montpellier Danse 2006.

In 2007, he joined the casting of *1000 Départs de Muscles / 1000 Starting Muscles*, a creation of Héra Fattoumi and Eric Lamoureux.

In 2008, he presented his creation *Quelqu’un va danser... / Someone’s going to dance...* at the International Choreography Festival of Seine-Saint-Denis. In the same year, he created *Je danse et je vous en donne à bouffer / I dance and give you food* at the Centre National de la Danse in Pantin (CND / The National Dance Center).

In 2008 and 2009, Radhouane El Meddeb participated to *Corps produit, corps productif / Produced body, producing body*, held by the International Choreography Festival of Seine Saint-Denis and to *Mon corps, mon lieu / My body, my place*, supported by the Fondation Culture et Diversité. These workshops attempt to raise awareness of contemporary dancing and to transmit choreographic composition to a large audience, bringing together young people coming from Zones d'Education Prioritaire (Areas of Priority Education), women members of neighborhood associations and also elderly people.

In 2010, he created his first group show, at the CND, *Ce que nous sommes / What we are*, with five dancers, which has been on tour in France for two years. In December 2010, he collaborated with Stéphane Gombert in *Chant d'amour / Love Song*, a creation about a novel and a film by Jean Genet, which they performed at the Collectif 12, Mantes la Jolie. The creation process begun as early as 2009, at the Babel Theatre in Beirut, with the support of the French Cultural Center.

Starting from January 2011, Radhouane El Meddeb became an associate artist at the CENTQUATRE-PARIS. *A l'Étroit / In a narrow situation* is created there in March 2011, a creation initiated by the festival concordan(s)e and in collaboration with Philip Adam.

In the same year, he directed the performance *Tunis, January 14 2001* at the Beirut Art Center in Lebanon on the occasion of the Meeting Point 6.

In July 2012, at the Montpellier Danse Festival, he created and danced the solo dance *Sous leurs pieds, le paradis / Under their feets, the heaven*, whose choreographic composition is shared with Thomas Lebrun. In 2012, he is invited by Matias Pilet and Alexandre Fournier to choreograph the nouveau cirque duo *Nos limites / Our limits*, created in 2013 at the CENTQUATRE-PARIS.

In parallel with his creations, Radhouane El Meddeb is designated as a reporter for scenography, direction and choreography for the jury in charge of the selection of pensioners of the French Academy in Rome for the years 2012 and 2013.

In 2014, he created a new group show *Au temps où les Arabes dansaient... / In the days when the Arabs were dancing...* a performance for 4 dancers, within the International Festival CDC Toulouse and région Midi-Pyrénées and at the CENTQUATRE- PARIS.

In 2015, with the support of the National Monuments Centre and in the frame of the first edition of the event *Monuments en Mouvements / Monuments in Movements*, Radhouane El Meddeb presented the premiere of *Heroes, prelude*, performance for 10 urban dancers, at Pantheon in Paris, which hosted contemporary dance for the first time. In June 2015, he's invited by the College of Dance Biennale in Venice, he choreographed *Nous sommes tous étrangers / We are all Foreigners* at Campo San Trovaso, with Italian interpreters.

In 2016, Radhouane El Meddeb continues the work with interpreters of *Heroes prelude*. The premiere of this new creation called *Heroes* is presented at the Festival of Marseille – Dance and

Arts Multiples 2016. He also creates the solo *A mon père, une dernière danse et un premier baiser / To my father, one last dance and a first kiss* that is presented at Montpellier Danse 2016. In November-December 2016 he creates a group piece in Los Angeles, USA, with local performers, *O Solitude, My Sweetest Choice*, for LACE (Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions), commissioned by curator Shoghig Halajian.

In 2017, out of his wish to transmit and share his experience, he give a series of master classes in Havana, Cuba, as part of the project *Investigación y escritura coreográficas Danze en Construcción*.

Since 2017, Radhouane El Meddeb has been a member of the « dance committee » for the Beaumarchais – SACD grant.

In July 2017 he creates at the Cloître des Carmes, for the 71st edition of the Festival d'Avignon, a group piece for 7 dancers, 1 actor and 2 musicians, *Face à la mer, pour que les larmes deviennent des éclats de rire (Facing the Sea, for Tears to Turn into Laughter)*.

For the 2018/2019 season, the choreographer created one *Lac des Cygnes / Swan Lake* with the ballet of the Opéra national du Rhin (32 dancers), the Premiere took place on January 10th, 2019 at Opéra de Strasbourg, and then performed, among other venues, at Chaillot – Théâtre national de la danse – Paris in March 2019. Also, he created *AMOUR-S / LOVE-S*, a trio inspired by the poem « *When love beckons you, follow it* » by the Lebanese artist Gibran Khalil Gibran.

On February 2nd, 2020, the MAC VAL – Museum of Contemporary Arts of Val-de-Marne invited Radhouane El Meddeb to create, in situ, a choreographic performance for six dancers, *Les danses de TRANS / HUMANCE*, in resonance with « TRANS / HUMANCE », Temporary exhibition dedicated to the work of the Turkish and feminist artist Nil Yalter.

In 2021, he created *REQUIEM (Sià Karà)* with the Italian composer Matteo Franceschini, a piece which was performed by Cuban dancers from MiCompañia, directed by the choreographer Susana Pous Anadon. To mark the centenary of the death of Camille Saint-Saëns, Bolzano Danza also commissioned Radhouane El Meddeb to create *Les Cygnes sont morts! (Swans are dead)*.

On 26 and 27 August 2021, at the Festival de Marseille, Radhouane El Meddeb created with Malek Sebäi *Nous serons tous dévorés par le feu*, a duet for a dancer and a pianist, with the participation of the Tunisian visual artist Héla Ammar.

In September and October 2021, the choreographer took over the Picasso-Rodin exhibition at the Musée national Picasso - Paris and proposed a piece for 4 dancers and 1 pianist, *Fragments d'AMOUR-S*, based on his own vision of the two visual artists and echoing his piece *AMOUR-S, lorsque l'amour vous fait signe, suivez-le...*





Selim Arjoun  
Musical composition and performance

Selim Arjoun is a Tunisian pianist, composer and music producer.

He was introduced to the piano at the age of 9 and took classical music lessons until the age of 15, when he began to explore new musical genres: the starting point of his journey as a music composer.

This discovery opened new doors for him to collaborate with national and international musicians, orchestras and other artists. He has performed more than 700 times over the past 5 years in Tunisia and many other countries including France, Egypt, Morocco, Germany, Switzerland, Saudi Arabia and Italy.

Selim works a lot on the social impact of music on young people, which led him to contribute, through the Tunisie 88 project, to the creation of 578 music clubs in Tunisia.

Currently, Selim produces and composes his own music.

Co-founder of the AYTMA collective, Selim also works on many artistic and multidisciplinary projects.

In addition to this, Selim is dedicated to the film industry. He works as a film music composer with various directors. In fact, he received the award for best film music composer in 2022 for the Tunisian TV series Harga 2.

## Marianne Catzaras

### Scriptwriting

Photographer and poet Marianne Catzaras was born in Jerba, Tunisia, of Greek parents. After studying literature at the Sorbonne, she turned to photography. Her early work was marked by portraits of minorities, blacks from the island of Jerba, gypsies from Greece... an eye focused on diversity and wandering. Using her writing and her eyes, she transfigures reality between languages and countries in search of lost traces. She has exhibited in Tunisia, France, Italy, Germany, the United States, Egypt and Greece.

Director of the Mediterranean Art Biennial in Tunis (2010), she has curated exhibitions in Italy (2017), Saudi Arabia (2019, 2022), Tunisia and Greece.

She publishes Cahiers d'artiste and poetic narratives.

Her latest exhibition, Carthage or the Memory of Stones, at the Coliseum in Rome, was chosen as one of the top 12 exhibitions to visit in Italy.

She is also a poet.

Her texts have been published by Actes sud France, Simfact Tunisie, Electa Italy, Editions Pigi, Greece in international reviews and anthologies, and have been read by renowned actresses such as Jalila Baccar and Anne Alvaro in theatres.

She has been a member of the international coordination committee of the Sète festival since its inception.

The Mediterranean, the road, exile, departure and insularity remain the major preoccupations of her work. Her poems have been translated into Greek, Italian, Arabic and English.

She has been invited to take part in a number of poetry festivals, including voix vives in the Mediterranean, Sète, La Ciotat, Sidi-bou-Said, Rome, Patras and Marseille.

She runs writing workshops in schools, hospitals, suburbs from the south of Tunisia to the French suburbs, and gives voice to these testimonies.

She has been invited to take up writing residencies in the Ardèche, Crete and at the Fondation Saint-John Perse in 2023, and is preparing her new collection of poems.

She is regularly invited to read at festivals, schools and theatres...

She was awarded the Grand Prix de la ville de Tunis (2010) and named Chevalier des arts et des lettres de la république française in 2011.

She lives in Tunis.



## Philippe Lebhar

### Artistic collaboration and performance

Philippe Lebhar spent three years at Madame Favre's public school in Lyon before entering the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique et de Danse de Lyon in 1995, from which he graduated in 1998.

He began his career with Andy Degroat, thanks to whom he refined his sensitivity to stage work.

At the same time, he met Lena Josefsson, with whom he worked at Skånes Dansteater in Sweden for almost five years. He then worked with different choreographers: Vicente Saez, Filip Van Huffel, Cie Linga - in Spain, Belgium and Switzerland. On his return to France, he joined the CCN of Grenoble where he was a dancer for J-C. Gallotta, then the one in Aix en Provence with A. Preljocaj.

He then collaborated with Philippe Jamet, Radhouane El Meddeb, Béatrice Massin, Mié Coquempot, Aurélien Richard, Johanna Levy, Joanne Leighton, Gaëlle Bourges...

He also collaborates on more performative forms based on instantaneous composition for in situ and stage projects, with Thierry Thieû Niang, Caroline Grojean, Katell Hartereau & Léonard Rainis, among others.

In recent years, he has worked as an assistant to Radhouane El Meddeb and more recently with Béatrice Massin and Mickaël Phelippeau.



## Guillaume Marie

### Performance

Guillaume Marie was born in 1980 and lives in Paris. He studied dance at the Ecole de Danse de l'Opéra de Paris and at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique et de Danse de Paris. He then danced for Maryse Delente/Les Ballets du Nord, Itzik Galili, Susy Blok, Martin Butler, Thierry Smits, Guilherme Botelho and Jan Fabre. He met Gisèle Vienne in 2006 with whom he collaborated on Kindertotenlieder and Showroom dummies #2 (co-written with Etienne Bideau-Rey). He regularly participates in projects by Jonathan Capdevielle, Marlène Saldana and Jonathan Drilllet/UPSBD, Gaëlle Bourges, David Wampach, Romeo Castellucci and Cindy Van Acker. In 2005, Guillaume committed himself to a choreographic approach and founded the association Tazcorp/. Since then, he has created We Are Accidents Waiting To Happen (2006) in collaboration with Jonathan Capdevielle, 26th of October, Barcelona 2007 (2007), Trigger (2008) in collaboration with Maria Stamenkovic-Herranz, Nancy (2010), AsfixiA (2011), Spektrum in collaboration with Vidal Bini (2012), Edging (2013), Ruin Porn (2016), Roger (2019) and Snow Cloud (2023). He has also directed two short films: Private Earthquakes (2007) and Spinnen (2009).



## Lobna Noomene

### Performance

Lobna Noomene has more than one string to her bow, she is a singer and actress, a graduate of the ISAD in Tunis. During her career as a singer, she has collaborated with the great figure of Tunisian song, namely Ridha Chmak.

When she met the composer Mahdi Chakroun, they founded the group "Hess", the result of their artistic and human union. After a series of successful shows, highlighted by the Bronze Tanit award at the "JMC" in 2015, they both recently celebrated the release of their first album "Ken Ya Ma Ken".

Her triumph in Ezzeddine Ganoun's "Hostage" gave her a big boost in 2006, and her role in Néjib Belkadhi's film Bastardo won her the Best Actress award at the Mediterranean Film Festival in Alexandria in 2013. Currently, the actress is making her first television appearance in the series "Flash back" by Mourad Bechikh.

Activist and committed, Lobna has always put her thoughts and voice at the service of humanitarian values by a free decision. Possessing a genuine passion for communicating life, love and hope, Lobna is embarking on a new multidisciplinary project entitled "Elwalleda" with a team of exceptional artists.



## Sofiane Saadaoui

### Performance

Born in 1983 in Tunis, Sofiane Saadaoui is a Tunisian bassist and double bass player. He joined the conservatory at a very young age and obtained his diploma in Arabic music at the age of 15. He then discovered the electric bass and decided to make it his favourite instrument, while broadening his musical horizons, between rock, funk, electro, reggae, in an assumed eclecticism. Over the years, he has built up a solid experience as a stage musician, performing for years in the biggest clubs in Tunis, Hammamet and Sousse, while taking part in countless national festivals (Carthage, Hammamet, Sousse, Sfax, Bizerte, Djerba and many others) as well as international concerts (at the "el Sawy Culture wheel" in Cairo and the "Al Balad Music Festival" at the Roman Theatre in Amman). He also

collaborates on many occasions with the Tunisian Symphony and National orchestras. Although he also had a career as an advertising executive, he decided to devote himself fully to music and resumed his musical studies at the Institut Supérieur de Musique de Tunis. He then discovered the double bass and decided to seriously invest himself in learning it and to embark on a new musical adventure which led him to join the Tunisian symphony orchestra as a titular double bassist, while continuing in parallel to assume his role as a multi-faceted bassist







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