

The Seasons

Malandain Ballet Biarritz

Apr 29 / Cobb Great Hall

The performance will run approximately 60 minutes, with no intermission.

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Director and Choreographer: **Thierry Malandain**
Music: **Antonio Vivaldi & Giovanni Antonio Guido**

Company Members:

Alejandro Sánchez Bretones

Allegra Vianello

Chelsey Van Belle

Claire Lonchamp

Elisabeth Callebaut

Giuditta Banchetti

Guillaume Lillo

Hugo Layer

Irma Hoffren

Julie Bruneau

Julen Rodriguez Flores

Laurine Viel

Léo Wanner

Loan Frantz

Mickaël Conte

Neil Ronsin

Noé Ballot

Patricia Velázquez

Raphaël Canet

Timothée Mahut

Yui Uwaha

PROGRAM

Antonio Vivaldi: Spring

Yui Uwaha and Mickaël Conte

Noé Ballot, Giuditta Banchetti, Julie Bruneau, Elisabeth Callebaut, Raphaël Canet, Loan Frantz, Irma Holren, Hugo Layer, Claire Lonchamp, Julen Rodríguez Flores, Neil Ronsin, Alejandro Sánchez Bretones, Patricia Velázquez, Allegra Vianello, Laurine Viel, Léo Wanner

Giovanni Guido: Spring

Time flies

Every season runs away

Julie Bruneau, Chelsey Van Belle, Guillaume Lillo, Timothée Mahut

Dance of the Shepherds

Mickaël Conte

Antonio Vivaldi: Summer

Laurine Viel and Loan Frantz

Noé Ballot, Julie Bruneau, Giuditta Banchetti, Elisabeth Callebaut, Raphaël Canet, Mickaël Conte, Irma Holren, Hugo Layer, Guillaume Lillo, Claire Lonchamp, Timothée Mahut, Julen Rodríguez Flores, Neil Ronsin, Alejandro Sánchez Bretones, Yui Uwaha, Chelsey Van Belle, Patricia Velázquez, Allegra Vianello, Léo Wanner

Giovanni Guido: Summer

The air is on fire

Zephyr disappears

Cuckoo song

Allegra Vianello and Noé Ballot

Fly to our aid, O! Adorable Ceres
Laurine Viel and Mickaël Conte

Antonio Vivaldi: Autumn

Julie Bruneau and Alejandro Sánchez Bretones
Noé Ballot, Giuditta Banchetti, Elisabeth Callebaut,
Mickaël Conte, Loan Frantz, Irma Holren, Hugo Layer,
Guillaume Lillo, Claire Lonchamp, Timothée Mahut, Neil
Ronsin, Julen Rodríguez Flores, Yui Uwaha, Patricia
Velazquez, Chelsey Van Belle, Allegra Vianello, Laurine
Viel, Léo Wanner

Giovanni Guido: Autumn

Celebrate the return of Autumn
Giuditta Banchetti, Elisabeth Callebaut, Guillaume Lillo,
Julen Rodríguez Flores

Allegro

Laurine Viel, Mickaël Conte, Alejandro Sánchez Bretones

Antonio Vivaldi: Winter

Allegra Vianello and Julen Rodríguez Flores
Noé Ballot, Julie Bruneau, Giuditta Banchetti, Elisabeth
Callebaut, Raphaël Canet, Mickaël Conte, Loan Frantz,
Irma Holren, Hugo Layer, Guillaume Lillo, Timothée
Mahut, Neil Ronsin, Alejandro Sánchez Bretones, Yui
Uwaha, Chelsey Van Belle, Patricia Velázquez, Laurine
Viel, Léo Wanner

Giovanni Guido: Winter

The season of frost

Elisabeth Callebaut, Irma Holren, Guillaume Lillo,
Timothée Mahut

The cruel North Wind declares war on us

Laurine Viel, Allegra Vianello, Mickaël Conte, Alejandro
Sánchez Bretones

Let the winds roar

All dancers

Premiere: November 25, 2023 at the Palais des Festivals
in Cannes - Cannes Dance Festival - Côte d'Azur France

PRODUCTION:

Set and Costume Designer: Jorge Gallardo

Lighting: François Menou

Costume Production: Véronique Murat, Charlotte
Margoux, assisted by Anaïs Abel

Set Production: Frédéric Vadé

Accessories Production: Annie Onchalo

Set and Props Assistants: Nicolas Rochais, Gorka
Arpajou, Félix Vermandé, Raphaël Jeanneret, Christof
t'Siolle, Txomin Laborde-Peyre, Maruschka Miramon,
Karine Prins, Sandrine Mestas Gleizes, Fanny Sudres et
Fantine Goulot

Ballet Masters Ballet: Richard Coudray, Giuseppe
Chiavaro, Frederik Deberdt for 22 dancers

Proposed by the Royal Opera of Versailles

Principal Co-Producer: Château de Versailles Spectacles
– Royal Opera of Versailles

Co-Producers: Festival de Danse de Cannes – Côte d’Azur France; Teatro Victoria Eugenia – Ballet T – Ville de Donostia San Sebastián; Opéra de Saint-Etienne; Theater Bonn – Allemagne, Teatro la Fenice – Venice, Italy; NCC Malandain Ballet Biarritz

Partners: Opéra de Reims; Espace Jéliote d’Oloron Sainte-Marie; Théâtre Olympia d’Arachon

Sponsorships: Fonds de dotation Malandain pour la Danse Suez; Association Amis du Malandain Ballet Biarritz; Carré des Mécènes du Malandain Ballet Biarritz

DIRECTOR’S NOTE

Based on an idea by Laurent Brunner, Director of Château de Versailles Spectacles, and Stefan Plewniak, violinist and First Conductor of the Royal Opera of Versailles, this ballet intertwines Antonio Vivaldi’s famous *Four Seasons* with several pages of *Le Quattro Stagioni dell’anno* (*The Four Seasons of the Year*), a little-known work by Giovanni Antonio Guido, contemporary and compatriot of the “Red Priest.”

As for its accomplishment, beginning with arithmetic, under the influence of the number four, closely linked to creation, balance, and harmony, we can first say that Guido’s *Seasons* awaken memories of *belle danse*

(baroque dance), which emerged in the seventeenth century from the ideal of governing one's body and mind, and moving with grace, accuracy, and lightness. The number four is also associated with the Earth and the wheel of life, which does not always turn round smoothly, if not completely askew, given the ugliness, stupidity, and inhumanity that proliferate. With Vivaldi's *Seasons*, we are moved by a more natural, more human form of dance.

Finally, we spice things up with some poetic fantasy, and with these two words, you've got the basics. Against a backdrop of black petals spread across the horizon, winged beings mourn the loss of spirit and clarity. Why? Because the *Seasons* is only a ballet and there is nothing more serious than unbelievable things.

—*Thierry Malandain*

STATEMENT OF INTENT

Having unfurled their passionate energy long before their publication in Amsterdam in 1725, the *Four Seasons* of Vivaldi form a cycle of four violin concertos naturally named *Spring*, *Summer*, *Autumn*, and *Winter*. Each title has three movements, whose main purpose is not virtuosity. New at the time, they were preceded by sonnets attributed to Vivaldi and provide a succession of pastoral scenes descriptively celebrating nature.

One of the most international opuses with more than a thousand recordings to date, not counting concerts,

catalogs of telephone on-hold music and adverts, this universal hymn to nature, rediscovered in the mid-20th century, has the ability to please. Hence its immense popularity, hence also the weariness, or even the rejection that the work can arouse. Thus, after Igor Stravinsky stated in 1959, "Vivaldi is greatly overrated—a boring fellow who could compose the same form so many times," people talked about easy music to the point of saying, such as the composer Luigi Dallapiccola, or Stravinsky again, that "the red-headed priest" composed "the same concerto five hundred times." This is not true, and completely unfair.

That being said, in all their grandeur and in terms of their promise, it is true that the Venetian musician's *Four Seasons* has been exploited so much to the point of misunderstanding, they became old, repetitive melodies that can be irritating, cause total indifference, or in our case, overwhelm us with gloomy thoughts. Even more so in today's disillusioned and corrupt climate, where nature's deterioration constitutes an existential threat. In contrast, since the word nature literally means *birth*, Giovanni Antonio Guido's *The Four Seasons of the Year* should, because of their unique nature, provide a breath of fresh air, renewal and a reason for hope.

Published in Versailles around 1726, but perhaps earlier than Vivaldi's, since they may have been written around 1716 for the opening exhibition of four oval paintings by Jean-Antoine Watteau representing *The Four Seasons* which adorned the Paris mansion of Pierre Cozat,

Treasurer of France, patron and collector. As for Guido, a first-rate Genoese violinist, he served Philippe d'Orléans, Regent of France, before entering the service of his son, Louis. Written in the French form of *Suite de danses*, like Vivaldi, the score sets four anonymous poems to music: *Les Caractères des saisons*. Guido attempted to describe seasonal changes by adding notes of green, blue, and very light pink. Rural deities, as in *Les Saisons* by Abbot Jean Pic, performed at the Royal Academy of Music from 1695 to 1722, with choreography by Louis Pécour. Accompanied by melodies composed by Pascal Collasse and Louis Lully, the ballet had four "entries," a sacred number associated with creation, balance, and harmony. Four doors that we will cross through to walk on the path of idealism.

How far will we go like this? I don't know ... Guido's bowing respectfully imitates the course of the seasons, but we are at theatre, where everything is false and gets lost in the atmosphere.

This is the nature of the choreographer's problem with the limits of his art. Whereas the solution, if we wish to continue gazing at nature when it opens its heart to spring, is to respect it without limits of pretense.

After the hymns to humanity and the living which comprised *Le Sang des étoiles* (2004), *Noé* (2017), *la Pastorale* (2019), *Sinfonia* (2020), ideally, *Les Quatre Saisons* should not become false in its attempts to be real.

—*Thierry Malandain, October 2022*

NCC MALANDAIN BALLET BIARRITZ

Created in 1998 in Biarritz on the initiative of the Ministry of Culture, and the Town of Biarritz with the support of Nouvelle-Aquitaine Region and the Atlantic Pyrenees Department, Malandain Ballet Biarritz is one of 19 National Choreographic Centres (NCC) in France today.

The particularity of Malandain Ballet Biarritz is that it is made up of 22 permanent dancers trained in classical technique and whose expression in Thierry Malandain's choreographies is contemporary.

Today, Malandain Ballet Biarritz is one of Europe's more widely seen companies with 100,000 spectators per season, and almost 100 performances per year, including a third abroad.

As an NCC, Malandain Ballet Biarritz also works intensely in terms of public awareness of dance, with an average of over 450 events per year, and support of artists and companies thanks to the "Accueil Studio" program.

To assist the development of young ballet choreographers, an International Competition is organized by the Biarritz NCC every two years, jointly with Bordeaux National Opera Ballet and the NCC Ballet of the Opera National du Rhin. Thierry Malandain and his

teams pay special attention to supporting ballet and choreographers.

Because of its specific geographic location, Malandain Ballet Biarritz has forged fruitful partnerships with many Euro-regional cultural participants.

This is how the “Ballet T” project came to be, which is now managed by the Pôle Chorégraphique Territorial (Regional Choreographic Centre) in conjunction with the Basque Country Community.

The NCC has been responsible for the Le Temps d’Aimer Dance Festival since 2021 which takes place every year in September. The 2023, edition attracted 34,000 spectators for 109 events throughout the Basque Country Community with an eclectic, international program.

COMPANY & CREATIVE

THIERRY MALANDAIN, Director and Choreographer, appointed at the Académie des beaux-arts in the Choreography Department and creator of more than 85 works, Thierry Malandain has developed a very personal vision of dance, closely linked to “Ballet,” where priority is given to the dancing body, its power, virtuosity, humanity, and sensuality.

The search for meaning and aesthetics guide a powerful and sober style, which can be both serious and insolent, based on the pursuit of harmony between history and today’s world. Thierry Malandain’s troupe is comprised of

dancers with classical dance training who express themselves in a contemporary way via Thierry Malandain's choreography.

"My culture is that of classical ballet and I confidently remain attached to it. Because while I readily admit that its artistic and social codes are from another time, I also think that this heritage from four centuries represents invaluable resources for dancers. A classical choreographer for some, a contemporary one for others, I play with it, simply trying to find a dance I like. A dance that will not only leave a lasting impression of joy, but that will also restore the essence of the sacred things and serve as a response to the difficulty of being."

ALEJANDRO SÁNCHEZ BRETONES, born in Elche, Spain. Trained in his hometown at the Escuela de Danza Pilar Sánchez, then with Sofía Sancho in Alicante. In 2011, he was accepted at the Escuela de Danza Víctor Ullate in Madrid and began his career in 2014 with the Víctor Ullate Ballet. Hired in Lisbon, Portugal in 2019 by the Companhia Nacional de Bailado (CNB), he then joined the Malandain Ballet Biarritz in December 2020.

ALLEGRA VIANELLO, born in Venice, Italy. She trained at the Castelfranco Veneto School of Ballet from 2007 to 2011 and was then accepted at the English National Ballet School. She began her career in 2013 at the English National Ballet then joined the Ballet Cymru (UK) in 2014. She was hired by the Malandain Ballet Biarritz in October 2016.

CHELSEY VAN BELLE, born in Ostende, Belgium. Trained at the Royal Ballet School of Antwerp under the direction of Curtis Foley from 2018 to 2022. She has participated in numerous summer workshops and classes with the Royal Ballet of Flanders and Malandain Ballet Biarritz. In 2017, she was ranked in the top 12 at the Youth America Grand Prix. She began her career with Malandain Ballet Biarritz in September 2023.

CLAIRE LONCHAMPT, born in Sèvres. She trained in the Dance School of the Paris National Opera from 1998 to 2001. She continued her training at the European Dance Center, then was admitted in 2002 to the CNSMD in Paris where she joined the Junior Ballet in 2005. She began her career at the Zurich Ballet and then joined the Ballet of the National Opera of Finland in Helsinki in 2007. Later she was in Het National Ballet during 2010. She joined us in 2011.

ELISABETH CALLEBAUT, born in Courtrai, Belgium. She trained at the Antwerp Royal Ballet School l'École royale de Ballet d'Anvers directed by Kevin Durwael from 2019 to 2023. She also participated in several workshops and courses with the Nederlands Dans Theater, the European School of Ballet in Amsterdam, and the English National Ballet School. She danced with the Opera Ballet Vlaanderen before joining Malandain Ballet Biarritz in September 2024.

GIUDITTA BANCHETTI, born in Florence, Italy. She studied at the Scuola Accademica Danza Sad in Florence, Italy and is a graduate of the Marika Besobrasova method. She then joined the New English Ballet Theatre in London in 2017. She was awarded the 2018 Grand Prix in the first edition of Dance Project Charles Jude Association's international classical dance exams in Florence sponsored by the Serge Lifar Foundation. She joined Malandain Ballet Biarritz in October 2018.

GUILLAUME LILLO, born in Joinville-le-Pont. He studied at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Danse de Paris (Paris National Conservatory of Music and Dance), then joined the Ballet Junior troupe in 2011. In 2012, He danced with the Scottish Ballet (UK) for one season before joining the Israel Ballet company in 2013. He joined Malandain Ballet Biarritz in 2015.

HUGO LAYER, born in Sens. He studied at the Conservatoire de Sens until 2007, and then at the National Superior Conservatory of Paris for Music and Dance. Meanwhile, he took part in the creation of Rhapsody in blue with Cathy Bisson, played a role in the French television film Fais danser la poussière (Make the dust dance) by Christian Faure and Marie Dô and was chosen to be the soloist in Clowns by Pietragalla/Derouault company. He joined Malandain Ballet Biarritz in 2013.

IRMA HOFFREN, born in San Sebastián (Spain). She studied at the Thalia Dance School in San Sebastian, and

then furthered her training with Maria de Avila and Carmen Roche. She joined Ballet Biarritz Junior from 2005 to 2008, then NCC-Ballet de Lorraine, under the direction of Didier Deschamps. She entered Malandain Ballet Biarritz in 2012.

JULIE BRUNEAU, born in Bayonne. Trained at the Maurice Ravel Basque Country Conservatory in Biarritz, and she joined the Toulouse VM Ballet in 2014. She gained professional experience with the VM Ballet, the Bordeaux National Opera Ballet, the Toulouse Capitole Ballet, the Magdeburg Ballet in Germany and participated in the production Mon Premier Lac des cygnes (My First Swan Lake) directed by Karl Paquette. She joined Malandain Ballet Biarritz in July 2021.

JULEN RODRIGUEZ FLORES, born in Ibarra, Spain. He started with Basque dance before moving to Madrid at the age of 17 to learn classical and contemporary dance at the Conservatorio Mariemma. He began his career with the Metamorphosis dance company then joined the Dantzaz company in San Sebastián, Spain in 2019. He joined Malandain Ballet Biarritz in July 2021.

LAURINE VIEL, born in Paris. She began dancing with Virginia Cosnier at the Villejuif Municipal Conservatory. Then, in 2005, she attended the National Superior Conservatory of Music and Dance in Paris, before joining its Junior Ballet Classic in 2009. She joined Malandain Ballet Biarritz in 2011.

LÉO WANNER, born in Marseille. After training in Italy for six years at the Accademia Teatro Alla Scala de Milan, he graduated in 2021 before joining the Cannes Jeune Ballet Rosella Hightower. He joined the Malandain Ballet Biarritz in September 2022.

LOAN FRANTZ, born in Tinago Camalig Albay (Philippines). Trained at the Conservatoire à rayonnement régional of Toulouse, then at the Ecole de danse de l'Opéra National of Paris, he began his career in 2012 at the Ballet Nice Méditerranée directed by Eric Vu-An. He joined the Ballet de l'Opéra National de Bordeaux directed by Charles Jude in 2013, then the Ballet de l'Opéra Théâtre de Metz under the direction of Laurence Bolsigner in 2016. He finally joined the Malandain Ballet Biarritz in 2017.

MICKAËL CONTE, born in Libourne. He trained at the National Conservatory de Bordeaux in 2001. He joined the Ballet Biarritz Junior in 2006 and then joined the NCC-Ballet de Lorraine directed by Didier Deschamps. He joined Malandain Ballet Biarritz in 2011.

NEIL RONSIN, born in Toulon, France. He trained at the Pôle National Supérieur de Danse (PNSD) Rosella Hightower in Cannes starting in 2016 and earned a National Postgraduate Occupational Diploma. His career began in 2023 with the Cannes Junior Ballet Rosella Hightower and he then joined the Malandain Ballet Biarritz in September 2024.

NOÉ BALLOT, born in Amilly. Trained at the Montargis Conservatory, then at the Orleans Departmental Conservatory; he studied at the Paris National Opera School of Dance from 2013 to 2016, then at the Lipszyc Ballet School in Biarritz until 2018. He then enrolled at the Paris Conservatory College of School and Dance as a student to obtain a national postgraduate vocational dance degree (DNSPD). He joined Malandain Ballet Biarritz in July 2021.

PATRICIA VELÁZQUEZ, born in Guadalajara (Mexico). She studied at the Royal Academy of Dance of London, from 1994 to 2003. She was then admitted to the Royal Winnipeg Ballet School in Canada from 2003 to 2005, before joining the Royal Ballet Academy of Guadalajara. She started her career in Mexico in the Compañía de Danza Clásica y Neoclásica de Jalisco in Guadalajara in 2009. She was then engaged in the Compañía Nacional de Danza in 2010, and in the Monterrey Ballet in 2011. She joined Malandain Ballet Biarritz in 2012.

RAPHAËL CANET, born in Avignon. He studied at the Regional Conservatory in Avignon, before joining the Ballet of the National Opera of Bordeaux. Hired in 2009 in Dantzaz Konpainia, he joined Malandain Ballet Biarritz in 2011.

TIMOTHÉE MAHUT, born in Nancy, France. Trained at the Conservatoire of Nancy and at the Basel Theatre Ballet School in Switzerland from 2017 to 2020, then at the Northern Ballet in England in 2020. He joined the

Europa Danse Company in Brussels in August 2021, then the Junior Ballet of Zürich in August 2022 where he danced choreographies of Crystal Pite, Hans Van Manen et Christian Spuck. He was hired by Malandain Ballet Biarritz in September 2023.

YUI UWAHA, born in Nagoya, Japan. She studied at the National Ballet School of Canada from 2007 to 2011 then at the Dutch National Ballet Academy in Amsterdam from 2011 to 2013. In 2012, she began an internship at the Dutch National Ballet directed by Ted Brandsen, then she was hired by the Opéra de Nice Ballet directed by Eric Vu-An in March 2013, where she played demi-soloist roles in ballets by Maurice Béjart, Jiri Kylian, Roland Petit and Nacho Duato just to name a few. She joined the Malandain Ballet Biarritz in 2019.