

PRESS REVIEW

SPECTRAL EVIDENCE

ANGELIN PRELJOČAJ

CRÉATION 2013



PAVILLON NOIR

BALLET PRELJOČAJ - PAVILLON NOIR - Centre Chorégraphique National - 530 Avenue Mozart - CS 30824 - 13627 Aix-en-Provence Cedex 01 - France - Tél. +33 (0)4 42 93 48 00 - Fax +33 (0)4 42 93 48 01
ballet@preljočaj.org - www.preljočaj.org - Billetterie 0811 020 111 - Centre Chorégraphique National de la Région Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur, de la Communauté du Pays d'Aix, de la Ville d'Aix-en-Provence et du Département des
Bouches-du-Rhône - INSEE 33 307 189 00083 - Code APE 9001Z - Licences d'entrepreneur de spectacles 1-146861 / 2-112311 / 3-112312 - Association loi 1901

03 septembre 2013 (Etats-Unis, New York City) (1/3)



Photo © Paul Kolnik

Angelin Preljocaj in the studio at NYCB this past June.

DIVING IN Angelin Preljocaj Returns to NYCB

By Terry Trucco

Every ballet has a different starting point, but the inspiration is often music, a composition so compelling, haunting or unexpected that the choreographer can't get it out of his head—and doesn't want to try. So it was for French avant-garde choreographer Angelin Preljocaj, whose newest creation for New York City Ballet, set to music by John Cage, makes its debut at the NYCB Fall Gala on September 19 and will be performed throughout the Fall 2013 and Winter 2014 seasons.

As Preljocaj tells it, a friend recently gave him a CD of TK, a vocal composition by Cage that the choreographer had never heard before. "I always thought that I knew the works of Cage very well," says Preljocaj, who has set several ballets to music by the experimental composer. "But this piece surprised me. It was not in the same mood or style of the Cage I knew."

A passage in the composition filled with nothing but the sound of breathing fired Preljocaj's imagination. "I wanted to find in the movement what is heard in the breathing," he says. The emphatic respiratory sounds prompted him to picture images, movement and an atmosphere, but these were just glimmerings of a work yet to take shape. "For me, the creation of a ballet is an adventure. If I know at the start exactly where the work will go, why do it?" he says.

*Terry Trucco writes
frequently about the
arts and travel.*

03 septembre 2013 (Etats-Unis, New York City) (2/3)

For nearly three decades, Preljocaj's choreographic adventures—and adventurous choreography—have resulted in works bristling with daring intelligence and his singular movement vocabulary that marries the dynamic thrust and angularity of contemporary dance with classic ballet steps.

A native of Paris born to Albanian refugee parents, Preljocaj has forged a career rich in creative dichotomies. His training as a dancer was in classical ballet before he turned to contemporary dance, which he studied with Merce Cunningham and Zina Rommett, among others. His choreographic home base is Ballet Preljocaj, his 26-member contemporary dance troupe in Aix-en-Provence, yet large classical ballet companies have commissioned his work for years, including the Paris Opera Ballet, La Scala of Milan and NYCB, where he created *La Stravaganza* to the music of Vivaldi and electronica in 1997. And while Preljocaj devises the occasional story ballet, like his 2008 *Snow White* with the wicked queen updated as a dominatrix dressed by Jean Paul Gautier, most of his work is plotless and abstract. Such pieces he has described as "fundamental research" dealing with concepts such as weight, energy, dynamics and space.

The new work for NYCB falls firmly into the plotless category. Still, the ballet's ambience was influenced by a powerful historical incident—namely, the 1692 Salem witch trials where spectral evidence, gleaned in the dreams of the accusers, resulted in the death of innocent women. "When I heard the Cage music, my imagination went to that strange moment in time," Preljocaj says.



The Company in Preljocaj's 1997 work for NYCB, *La Stravaganza*.



Preljocaj in the studio at NYCB this past June.

In early June, the choreographer flew to New York for two weeks to begin work on the new ballet with the Company. After watching class for three days, he chose his dancers and set up shop with them and his assistant in the theater's main studio. Before he started choreographing he laid the groundwork, teaching the dancers Preljocaj-style sequences for a couple of days. "He wanted to see how we moved," says Principal Dancer Tiler Peck.

"Sometimes I create movement in the studio and then show it to the dancers, but I prefer to start the research in front of the dancers," Preljocaj says. "They stimulate me and give me inspiration. If I work in front of the dancers, I can also adapt or adjust the movement to what they can do."

For classically trained dancers, Preljocaj's movement vocabulary, with its proximity to the floor, low plies and flashes of unexpected elements, like tai chi and yoga, is a dramatic departure. "It's completely the opposite of what we do every day," says Peck. "We're rolling on the ground, and ballerinas never roll on the ground. We're on our knees, and we don't normally do that. We're in ballet slippers instead of pointe shoes."

"Angelin is very specific about the shapes he wants to see," she adds. "He'll show a head one way or he'll say 'I want this to be really circular or this arm to be very straight, no diagonal.'"

03 septembre 2013 (Etats-Unis, New York City) (3/3)



Photo © Paul Kolnik

Preljocaj in the studio at NYCB this past June.

Though the choreography was initially strange to them, the Company found it dancer-friendly, paced and structured in a way that allows them to embrace—and enjoy—its unconventional qualities. "It felt good for the body," says Principal Dancer Robert Fairchild. "Nothing was forced. Each step lent itself to the next. And when you have enough time, your body can find the best way to get there."

Preljocaj deliberately peppered the piece with isolated ballet moves, a *ronde de jambe* here, a *grand jeté* there. "He would giggle to himself and say, 'a City Ballet moment,' as he did them," Peck recalls.

"I wanted to give the dancers a taste of the familiar," Preljocaj says. "They're great movers. They've been fed by Balanchine and Robbins, the two giants of choreography, but they're also influenced by the atmosphere of the city, and it's very nice to see this."

Back in France, Preljocaj mused about the process the new piece had to undergo before it was ready for the stage. "It needs time to mature," he says.

For Preljocaj that means thinking hard about it and studying the rehearsal video as the ballet's outline, content and details become increasingly clear. "Two weeks before the premiere I'll go back to New York, work the dancers, and slowly, the shape will come together, I hope."

Is that scary? "In a certain way," he says. But it is also necessary. "When I think of the creative process, I think of swimming alone in a big ocean. You have to leave the beach, which is safe, but it's also the cliché. You dive into the ocean all alone to get away from the cliché."

15 septembre 2013

A Master Grafter, Conjuring Hybrids

Angelin Preljocaj's work, attuned to a company's DNA.

By ROSLYN SULCAS

"Let's divide into blonds and brunets," Angelin Preljocaj told the group of male dancers with whom he was working out the timing of a sequence. The dark-haired men — Robert Fairchild, Amar Ramasar and Sean Suozzi — stepped forward and began a long, complicated section of a new work by Mr. Preljocaj that is to have its premiere on Thursday at New York City Ballet's fall gala.

"Wash, shoulder, roll, roll," they chanted as they danced, calling upon mnemonic aids to reproduce the complicated gestural components of the choreography. At the end, Mr. Ramasar fell to the floor. "That's so hard, my brain has stopped," he said.

Mr. Preljocaj, 56, is one of France's foremost contemporary dance choreographers, known for intensely physical, formally complex pieces that often invoke narrative without making it explicit. Although he has his own company in Aix-en-Provence, Ballet Preljocaj, which is to perform at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in November, he has long been sought after by classical dance companies, which are drawn to the clean, clear lines and virtuosic speed and coordination demanded by his choreography.

"People think that the worlds of contemporary dance and ballet are very different," Mr. Preljocaj (pronounced prel-zho-KAHJ) said in an interview in French before the rehearsal. "But in the end, there is just as much difference between the Paris Opera Ballet and New York City Ballet. Each company has a DNA, its own characteristics, and it's more interesting for me to try to understand what that is, and capture it, than to force some sort of style of my own on the dancers. What happens between us, a hybridization, is what counts."

The new piece, so far untitled, is his second chance to work out City Ballet's DNA. In 1997, he created "La Stravaganza" for the company's Diamond Project, a festival of new ballets. For that work, he recounted, point shoes and the use of an orchestra were requested by Peter Martins, the company's ballet master in chief.

"I used neither," Mr. Preljocaj said with a laugh. "I have a great respect for Peter, because, in the end, he really gives you complete freedom to make your choices."

"La Stravaganza," which was revived in 1998, 2002 and 2009 and is to be performed during City Ballet's winter season, is set to a mix of Vivaldi and electronic music and depicts an encounter between dancers dressed in contemporary clothes and others who might have stepped out of a Vermeer painting.

The confrontations between the real and the fantastical, the intellectual and the instinctive, are recurrent elements in Mr. Preljocaj's work. In his breakthrough 1989 piece, "Les Noces," he juxtaposed the virtuosic precision of five female dancers with five dummies in bridal gowns tossed brutally into the air and beaten by the women's prospective grooms.

Mr. Martins, who first saw the work in 1996 in a small theater outside Paris, remembers being overwhelmed by it. "It was completely different to anything I had ever seen, and he clearly had a voice of his own," he said. "I thought, 'Whoa, this needs to be seen.'"

Mr. Martins asked Mr. Preljocaj after the show if he would create a piece for City Ballet, and the choreographer posed just one question, "Do you have good dancers?" Mr. Martins didn't blink. "I think you'll find a few," he said.

Mr. Preljocaj did find a few. (Christopher Wheeldon and Benjamin Millepied were among the original dancers in "La Stravaganza.") In subsequent years, he and Mr. Martins occasionally discussed the possibility of his returning to City Ballet.

"It's even better this time, because now that 'La Stravaganza' has been danced by a few generations, the movement has entered their bodies," Mr. Preljocaj said. "I am struck all over again by how completely these dancers are willing to enter into a collaboration, to give of themselves. I like very precise, very sculpted movement, and they are amazing movers. They just explode into the space. That's very exciting to work with."

Mr. Preljocaj, the son of Albanian émigrés, grew up on the outskirts of Paris and was introduced to dance at the age of 11 when he saw a photograph of Rudolf Nureyev. "I was transfixed," he said. "I was like Billy Elliot. I used my judo lesson money to

CONTINUED ON PAGE D5

Collisions of the real and fantastical, the intellectual and instinctive.



ANDREA MURRAY/THE NEW YORK TIMES

The choreographer Angelin Preljocaj in rehearsal with New York City Ballet dancers. A new work that he created for them is to have its premiere on Thursday.

Dance

A Master Grafter, Conjuring Hybrids

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

pay for ballet classes without telling my parents, because I knew they would disapprove."

Later, Mr. Preljocaj studied with Karin Waehner, an exponent of the German expressionist style, and with the former Merce Cunningham dancer Viola Farber. At 17, to his parents' dismay, he left school to dance full time, finding his way to New York, where he took classes at the Cunningham school.

"That very Cunningham notion of space, in which you see movement from all angles, and in which you see the space change and reform between the dancers' bodies — that has been very important to me," he said. "My materials are just bodies and space."

While dancing with Dominique Bagouet's company in the early 1980s, Mr. Preljocaj created his first work with the choreographer Michel Kelemenis. Success followed quickly. In 1983, Mr. Preljocaj won the main prize at the Concours de Bagnolet, which was then a platform for new choreography, and in 1984, he formed his own company. By the early 1990s, ballet companies were looking his way. "Le Parc," a full-length work created in 1994 for the Paris Opera Ballet, was a smash hit (the company plans to revive it in December), and he has created pieces for the Bolshoi, La Scala and the Berlin Ballet, among other troupes, while continuing to produce about two new works a year for his own company.

For the new City Ballet piece, he has chosen a selection of vocal works by John Cage, whose music he has used previously.



PAUL KOLN/NEW YORK CITY BALLET
Christopher Wheeldon and Stacey Calvert of City Ballet in "La Stravaganza" in 1997.

"This surprised me, though," he said. "I thought I knew a wide range of his work, but the sensibility of these vocal pieces is really different. They are a sort of vocal theater, a kind of poetry."

Somehow, he said, the music led him to thoughts about the Salem witchcraft trials of 1692. "I can't explain it," he said. "But I

came across this idea of spectral evidence, the concept that a dream or a vision can be a proof, which fascinates me, and without being explicit, that has entered into my idea of the ballet."

Mr. Fairchild, a City Ballet principal, said that Mr. Preljocaj had not talked much with the dancers much about ideas or themes informing the movements.

"We know that there is the idea of the girls as witches casting spells, and that adds intensity," he said. "In Angelin's work, there has to be strict form, but you also have to know when to let it go. The

For City Ballet, a work inspired by the Salem witchcraft trials of 1692.

contrast is what makes the work so interesting to watch. It's exhausting, but I love the challenge, love the movement, and it's one of those times where you get to really dance flat out."

Mr. Preljocaj emphasized that the witchcraft trials were sources of inspiration rather than literal elements of the ballet, although the period is evoked by the costumes, by the Belgian designer Olivier Theyskens.

"People always want to know about what inspired you," Mr. Preljocaj said. "But in the end, these are such delicate, sensitive pathways. Creating a piece is, for me, so linked to intuition. My style becomes altered by these dancers, their style is altered by me. Together we create something that can't really be explained."

September 23, 2013 5:57 pm

Preljocaj premiere, Lincoln Center, New York – review

By Apollinaire Scherr

The French choreographer's new work brings a light touch to a ghoulish subject



©Paul Kolnik

Angelin Preljocaj's 'Spectral Evidence'

The Frenchman Angelin Preljocaj may be popular at home and abroad, but he is also refreshingly odd – as his contribution to New York City Ballet's autumn season makes clear.

The choreographer possesses a French predilection for propulsive dramas with heavy themes and an American postmodern tendency to let a dance unfold in leisurely, often analogical fashion – but not usually both at once and in the same dance. With *Spectral Evidence*, however, he brings a light American touch to bear on a ghoulish subject: witchcraft. The result is feathery, like a dream upon waking.

For his ideas about the demonic, Preljocaj took his cue from John Cage's breathy vocal music – a droned ballad, an aria for clotted lungs, the smack of a kiss and so forth. It brought to mind the Salem witches. *Spectral Evidence* is no balletisation of *The Crucible*, though, even with Olivier Theyskens of fashion house Theory plastering gory red patches on the women's flouncy white nightgowns. (Why must fashion designers always dress ballet dancers as if it were Halloween?) The dance features no hysterical atmospherics. It arouses no terror or pity. Rather, it envisions the spectral as an evanescent, whispering sort of sensuality within and around us like air.

The chamber ballet began with its four women rising into view from behind heavy blocks on which four men sat staring out at us. The women wreathed themselves around the men's black silhouettes like smoke. The men carved rectilinear figures in the air with sword-straight arms and leapt in circles, charting direction like a compass. But the women were not all spirit nor the men always hard-edged. Lifted overhead, the women resembled a creature's striving upper half, like the centaur's human torso sprouting from its animal bottom. I have rarely seen lifts so vibrant on both dancers' part.

Still, the men, particularly soloist Robert Fairchild, ended up looser than they started. As if at the bacchanal from which Cage always seems one step away, Fairchild mouthed the e.e. cummings lyrics to a Cage song while weaving and wobbling with unkeeled joy.

Spectral Evidence gave off a similar unforced, off-kilter vibe – so rare at New York City Ballet as to amount to a visitation from another world.



www.nycballet.com

Avril 2014 (1/3)

APRIL 2014

Season of the witch

by Laura Jacobs

An review of Angelin Preljocaj's *Spectral Evidence*

Spectral Evidence, Angelin Preljocaj's new dance for the New York City Ballet, is as strange and beautiful as its title. It's the kind of title Martha Graham often put on her work—a title like a hardwood floor in Emily Dickinson's house. And it's the kind of subject Graham was attracted to—a legend or event knotted with violence and desire. *Spectral Evidence* is about the seventeenth-century Salem witch trials, a shameful yet fascinating piece of America's past. Preljocaj sees the story through a prism, a Swarovski crystal. Working a refined synthesis of ballet history, modern dance, and postmodern tropes, he slides content into dazzling form. Though the women don't wear pointe shoes this is a classical dance, mercurial in its articulation, its flicks of eros, its licks of flame. That we know what's going on without receiving a hint of a program note makes the work all the more thrilling.



Andrea Mohin | The New York Times

The term “spectral evidence” is defined as “a form of evidence based upon dreams and visions.” The concept is dubious to be sure, but the Devil was very much present in Puritan life, and it was believed that his disciples could take animal form, could infiltrate dreams, and could also be in two places at once. This belief rendered the most airtight alibi moot. Religious magistrates—in a perfect storm of hysteria, accusation, and patriarchal power—brought increasing numbers of innocent women to trial and found them guilty based on such evidence, executing many.

Hysteria is no stranger to ballet and specters are everywhere in the repertory. One need only look back to *Giselle*, premiered in 1841, to see vapors rising. The librettists Théophile Gautier and Jules Vernoy de Saint-Georges drew the ballet's supernatural aspect—the Wilis—from lines in Heinrich Heine's book *De l'Allemagne*; Heine in turn drew from Eastern European lore regarding both the Vilas and the Rusalki. Water nymphs, she-devils, the undead, call them what you will, whether mischievous or malevolent, these apparitions—described by Gautier as “sprites in white gowns with hems that are perpetually damp”—meant trouble. In *Giselle*, Wilis are the vengeful souls of women romantically (and no doubt sexually) betrayed; they emerge from their graves at night and kill any man who enters their deep-forest domain. Danced by a corps tightly grouped and swathed in white tulle, the Wilis of *Giselle* are an ectoplasmic phenomenon, a psychic force—hysteria, one might say, rendered in mist. *Giselle*'s induction into the Wilis doesn't begin with her death, but with derangement in her famous Mad Scene—she's feeling the moonrise magnetism of Myrtha, queen of the Wilis.

Swan Lake, premiered thirty-six years later, in 1877, is another ballet that came together from bits and pieces, almost as if the art of ballet were an imperious Myrtha-like vortex calling in airborne symbols and sensations, which then coalesce into theater. But where *Giselle* has a gaslit ineffability about it, *Swan Lake* was stitched together like Frankenstein's monster, the libretto shaped by many hands, including those of the composer Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky. This weird tale of a spellbound swan-princess, Odette, and her sinister doppelganger, Odile, contains scraps of lore, a chord of myth, the swan from Wagner's *Lohengrin*, a musical motif from Tchaikovsky's failed opera *Undina*, and, underpinning it all, Tchaikovsky's own double life: In public he was a beloved national treasure, in private a homosexual terrified of discovery and thus as spellbound as Odette. Like the moon on the lake, anxiety is a gleaming reflection on the surface of the ballet, present but silent. The 2010 film *Black Swan* made a splashy Grand Guignol of *Swan Lake*'s dualities: white-black, pure-impure, perfect-damaged, sane-insane.

Avril 2014 (2/3)

By the mid-twentieth century, choreographers were treating hysteria clinically. Antony Tudor's *Pillar of Fire* and *Undertow*, Agnes de Mille's *Fall River Legend*, as well as her dream ballet in *Oklahoma!*, are full of perilous psychological plunges. At NYCB, however, the subject remained spectral. Jerome Robbins's *Dybbuk* of 1974, based on S. Ansky's famous play about Satanic possession in a Jewish village, is as out-there as Preljocaj's ballet. And George Balanchine clearly preferred ghost stories to case studies. Both *La Sonnambula* (1946) and *La Valse* (1951) are carried on currents of madness and doom, but glamorously so. In 1974, three months before *Dybbuk* premiered at NYCB, Balanchine unveiled *Variations for a Door and a Sigh*, a German Expressionist take on "The Twilight Zone." To Pierre Henry's taped score, an electronic manipulation of amplified creaks and heavy breathing—things going bump in the psyche—a woman devours a man. *Spectral Evidence* looks right at home at NYCB.

In fact, the score of *Spectral Evidence*, which consists of five taped pieces by John Cage, recalls the chill vault of *Door and Sigh*. Preljocaj has arranged the Cage brilliantly, so that a sense of place and time is built in sound. Two of the pieces—the first and the last—are art songs of simplicity and puritan restraint. The first song, "The Wonderful Widow of Eighteen Springs," fits text from James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* ("night by silentsailing night . . .") into a melody of only three pitches, an incantation surrounded by otherworldly knocks upon a piano's wooden fall board. The final song is a setting of the E. E. Cummings poem "It Is at Moments After I Have Dreamed." In between these two songs are Cage pieces of mysterious quiet and elemental disquiet, in which human panting, driving rain, and climbing fire paint the space aurally. It's a floating landscape of dark ground and fevered brains.

The ballet begins in silence, with four men in black sitting atop a long bench upstage, like magistrates in a row. From behind each man a female face appears, out of nowhere it seems, to rest her chin on his shoulder, her arms coming round to frame and hold him. All four couples move in unison. They are four windows on one story, four facets of a diamond that cuts glass. Preljocaj is not going to deploy the expected compositional stratagem of classical dance—counterpoint, canon, long diagonals, tiers of activity. He hones tight to synchronization throughout the ballet. Except for when he doesn't.

The costumes by the Belgian designer Olivier Theyskens, a star of the couture who's always had a taste for goth, speak to historical Salem. The men are dressed like ministers, their jackets and pants sternly fitted, a clerical collar showing at the neck. The women wear ghostly white shifts—the whispering white of sylphs, wilis, and shades—but on the back of each, in a different place, a biomorphic blotch of red attaches like a scarlet letter or stigmata. As the eye finds these flesh wounds, the ballet's plane of existence opens up: The women are innocent, but sexually dangerous because of their relationship with death.

The bench upstage actually consists of four wedge-shaped triangles, and these, pulled apart, are positioned to make a series of slides. The "witches" play lightly upon them as if out in bright moonlight—"like some lost happy leaf," goes the Joyce text—and we feel their freedom from life. These triangles—not unlike the table in Balanchine's *Prodigal Son*—will be fluently repositioned to create new refractions: Lined up sideways they make a long table, turned vertically they become four standing cells, arranged radially they are four ramps rising like small cliffs. The triangles work with Preljocaj's choreographic symmetries, his kaleidoscopic four-as-one floor patterns, to give an icy, locked-in quality to the story.

Avril 2014 (3/3)

And what does Preljocaj lock in? An homage to Paul Taylor's *Cloven Kingdom*, a dance of chthonic bloodlust throbbing under a veneer of civilization (this to the sound of drumming, music by 79D). And the postmodern patterning of Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker, whose contemporary women can feel like witches of OCD, making poetry of private tics and corporeal postures. As in De Keersmaeker's work, odd phrases begin to have power through repetition. For instance, Preljocaj's women thrust their elbows forward (hands at their necks) and beat their elbows upward, like pointe shoes doing *entrechat six*, as if speaking a secret language. What's marvelous is the ethereal texture Preljocaj brings to his terrible subject. These women spend a great deal of time in the air, their long hair dancing as they are lofted luminously upward by men who both condemn and desire them. They answer the men with erotic intensity.

Breath on glass, condensation in the cold, night dew, fog's pallor, and phantoms—Cage's "No. 22" from *Song Books* is the second piece of music in *Spectral* and it's a haunted house of sound, dread webbing the common. All eight dancers are onstage, their partnering crystalline in design but clear in meaning: Palms that flatten together in prayer are then swung like an ax. The drumming section follows, a boiling dance for the men, and from this a *pas de deux* emerges. The music is Cage's piano reverie, *Dream*, and it is danced by Tiler Peck and Robert Fairchild—first among equals in this excellent cast—delicate, ardent, she trusting, he troubled. They could be Hester Prynne and Dimmesdale.

Cage's No. 52 "Aria No. 2" begins with cracks of thunder and the sound of a long kiss, which is enacted by Fairchild and Peck. He pulls back from her, pushing away this kiss of the succubus, but it's too late, he is infected, possessed. Cage's sinuous medley of fluids and fire, woven through with a stream of consciousness spoken in French, suggests a demon within, or dementia. Fairchild morphs and mimes in quicksilver derangement—or rather, alignment—his classical *plastique* housing a garrulous wit of the *ancien régime*. It's a stunning tour de force, and Fairchild has never looked more articulate or artistically committed.

Spectral Evidence is allegorical, a story of fear and desire combusting into the question of who possesses whom. For even after the alleged witches writhe within their standing coffins, burning alive to the crackle of fire, they have not died. The upright wedges are laid down in slabs—low in front, rising toward the back—and arranged so that they echo the four radiating paths of the Salem Common. So begins the last selection of Cage, the setting of E. E. Cummings. Sung and hummed by a lone female voice, shorn of finish or vibrato, it is a wood-cut plainsong strung over wells of silence. The poem tells of "glassy darkness" and the "apparition of your smile," of "such strangeness as was mine a little while." The women lie on the slabs as if this were a lullaby and they'd been geographically put to bed, but they cannot sleep. They rise again, to play in the dark like forgotten children. Cage has left off the last two lines of Cummings's poem so that he can end with an existential flash—"one pierced moment whiter than the rest." Preljocaj's women turn their backs to the audience and walk up their ramps, pausing on the brink of blackness. Then all four drop from sight, into eternity.

The pierced moment of self-obliterating and transcendent "whiteness" turns up in every art form, but never more so than in the art of classical dance. The moon and the moth, the lightning strike and the stars, Giselle's lilies and the Sylphide's pearls. Herman Melville, in his revered meditation on the color white—Chapter 42 of *Moby-Dick*—writes, "Though in many of its aspects this visible world seems formed in love, the invisible spheres were formed in fright." It is the visible and invisible, both love and fright, that are married in the arcs, angles, spirals, rays, and chambers of ballet, over and over again. The same words that end Melville's chapter can be applied to *Spectral Evidence* and its unnerving sirens in white: "Wonder ye then at the fiery hunt?"