

LES FILMS PELLÉAS présente

**A DOCUMENTARY IMMERSION**  
**INTO THE ADVENTURE OF THE GALLANT INDIES**  
**AT THE OPÉRA BASTILLE**



# GALLANT INDIES

A FILM BY PHILIPPE BÉZIAT



## SYNOPSIS

This is a premiere for 30 dancers of hip-hop, krump, break, voguing... A first for the Director Clément Cogitore and for the choreographer Bintou Dembélé. And a first for the Paris' Opera Bastille. By bringing together urban dance and opera singing, they reinvent Jean-Philippe

Rameau's baroque masterpiece, *Les Indes Galantes*. From rehearsals to public performances, it is a human adventure and a meeting of political realities that we follow: can a new generation of artists storm the Bastille today?



# INTERVIEW WITH PHILIPPE BÉZIAT, DIRECTOR OF *GALLANT INDIES*

**This adventure started out three years ago, when Clément Cogitore agreed to stage *Les Indes Galantes* at the Opéra de Paris. The project of making a documentary about the directing of the opera ensued almost right away. Why were you so enthusiastic about this initiative?**

When Clément Cogitore and I spoke for the first time, I was amazed at the clarity of his statements and scenic device, which I think have more to do with a contemporary artist's proposal than with a stage director's, strictly speaking. Especially in a quite conservative place like the Opéra de Paris. Of course, I was enthralled right away. And I felt, almost instantly as well, that the group of dancers he invited on stage were to be at the heart of this enterprise. That the subject of the documentary was right there: in the way these dancers would look at this institution. In the way they would approach it, live it, experience it.

**Clément Cogitore wants to connect two worlds which are very much apart. You rather belong to the world of opera yourself - the one that is precisely shaken up by the project. Inevitably, your own habits as a filmmaker must have been shaken up as well.**

Indeed, the challenge was precisely to address that. I think it is the core of the film - to revisit the shock that the audience experienced during the three hours of the performance. And the shock I experienced myself. This new wave that was at once dreaded by a quite conservative world, yet eagerly awaited. Almost unhoped-for. I often told myself during the editing phase: no one realizes that such a thing has never happened at the Opéra de Paris in 350 years.

**You are dealing with an unprecedented collective experiment...**

All the characters in the film, whether they are dancers or not, come from radically different backgrounds. To me, staging an opera is always a metaphor about collaboration, about a collective project that gets people together for a given amount of time so that they can create an object that is bigger than all of them. This particular collective really hit it off. And I wanted to insist on this collective dimension.

**Singers, soloists and dancers melt into a single group, regardless of their different behaviors.**

Sometimes singers are self-conscious about their movements or about the image they give of themselves and their bodies, they might even seem off-center or dissociated from the stage. It is surprising, because their voices depend on their bodies, yet the relationship they have with their voices can be quite cerebral. Dancers in general, and urban dances performers in particular, give off the opposite vibe as soon as they get on stage: their bodies are centered, they relax, stretch and breathe; and they are very much aware of the people around them. Their ability to improvise is fascinating. Actually, it is the opposite of opera. Bintou Dembélé, the choreographer of the show, told us that doing the same thing twice is not an option for hip-hop dancers. Therefore, their performance is always about creativity, inspiration, reinvention. They need to be on the go all the time. Their minds must be constantly sharp and they must pay close attention to everything happening around them. It was a constant lesson for "classical" performers.

**Clément Cogitore's intention was to bring "the city" to the stage. "To show Paris youth storming the Bastille"...**

As a filmmaker, I had to answer the question that Clément was raising about Rameau. He is on stage, asking questions to the stage. As for me, I am making a filmic object that feeds on reality. This is what I find fascinating about great works of art - how they echo our lives today, individually. How can we still be moved by a piece of music that was composed in 1735? It is really the question raised by art. This is what I am interested in essentially - I want to show characters who are faced with a resonance between a work of art and the reality of their lives. If the audience can experience that resonance too, it is even better.

**Your film ends with the lukewarm response of the journalists, completely at odds with the unprecedented lengthy standing ovations given by the audience every night. Was it important to you to stress that discrepancy?**

The show was given an unheard-of reception in the recent history of the Opéra Bastille: a standing ovation every night, with dozens of minutes of applause. As Leonardo said, it looked more like a rock concert than an opera. Yet the French critics were really reserved, even though the foreign press was quite enthusiastic (The New York Times ranked the opera among the ten best shows of the year). Such an extraordinary gap between vox populi and the learned critics is perplexing, and it sends a message that needs to be heard, I think, about this lyric ritual that I love, that must be kept alive, but maybe not like in a museum. Which is probably what this show tried to do.

**Is it a film that mends fences? That tears down the image of opera as an elitist art, to make it suddenly more accessible and relatable?**

I certainly hope so. I resent labels, schools of thought, all this compartmentalization between classical music, rock, etc. I find all these categories really frustrating, because I feel that they are only social, "cultural" categories, in the bad sense of the word, and not really human categories. Clément Cogitore expresses it nicely in the film when he says: "A stereotype is a character we haven't spent enough time with, whose story we haven't been told properly". I try in my own humble way to knock down stereotypes on all sides, those in the opera world regarding urban cultures, as well as those in urban cultures about the opera. Anyone can appreciate Rameau. Anyone can appreciate krump. Yet, there are barriers in the way. And I like the idea that a film can strike down barriers. For twelve performances of *Les Indes galantes* at the Bastille Opéra, twelve "meetings" or "face-offs" between the stage and the audience, Clément Cogitore's show has allowed anyone willing to shuffle the cards. It was his duty as an artist. It is exactly what the film aspires to do.

*Interview by Sylvain Prudhomme*





# DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

## PHILIPPE BÉZIAT

Philippe Béziat directed the opera-documentaries *Becoming Traviata* (2012) with Natalie Dessay and Jean-François Sivadier, and *Pelleas and Melisande* (2008) with Olivier Py and Marc Minkowski. He also wrote and directed *Noces, Stravinsky/Ramuz* (2012) with Dominique Reymond and Mirella Giardelli.

For television, Philippe Béziat has directed several documentaries, including *Claudio Monteverdi aux sources de l'opéra* (2017) and *Jacques Prévert, paroles inattendues* (2017). He also regularly films operas, ballets, concerts and theatre plays.

In addition, he staged *Pelléas et Mélisande* by Claude Debussy (2018) with Florent Slaud under the direction of Marc Minkowski, and *La Grande Duchesse* by Offenbach (2013) with Les Brigands. He also collaborates in the staging of musical shows such as *200 Motels* by Frank Zappa (2018) with Antoine Gindt and Leo Warynski.

He has also directed for France Culture a series of artist portraits such as Jean Dubuffet, Giorgio Morandi, Jean Tinguely, Edgar Varèse or James Ensor.





**“ TO SHOW PARIS  
YOUTH STORMING THE BASTILLE ”**

# GALLANT INDIES

Production performed at the Opéra National de Paris  
from September 27<sup>th</sup> to October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019

## OPÉRA-BALLET (1735)

Music **Jean-Philippe Rameau**  
Libretto **Louis Fuzelier**  
Conductor **Leonardo García Alarcón**  
Director **Clément Cogitore**  
Choreography **Bintou Dembélé**

With

**Sabine Devieille, Jodie Devos, Julie Fuchs, Alexandre Duhamel, Florian Sempey  
Edwin Crossley-Mercer, Mathias Vidal, Stanislas de Barbeyrac**

The dancers from the Compagnie Rualité

**Thimothé Andriamantena, Marianna Benenge Lourenco Cardoso, Wilfried Ble  
Aston Bonaparte, Guillaume Chan Ton, Isabelle Clarençon, Lorenzo Dasse,  
Ablaye Diop, Magali Duclos, Ingrid Estarque, Nadia Gabrieli Kalati, Yanis Khelifa,  
Moïse Kitoko, Marion Gallet, Cintia Golitin, Adrien Goulinet, Cal Hunt, Guillaume Legras,  
Vincent Loboko, Léo Lorenzo, Martine Mbock, Alexandre Moreau,  
Salomon Mpondo-Dicka, Sacha Negrevergne, Michel Onomo, Giselle Palmer,  
Juliana Roubedakis, Edwin Saco, Feroz Sahoulamide, Jihéne Slimani**

Orchestre **Cappella Mediterranea**  
**Chamber Choir of Namur / Chorus Master  
Thibault Lenaerts**  
**Maîtrise des Hauts-de-Seine / Children's  
Choir of the Opéra national de Paris**  
Set Design **Alban Ho Van and Ariane Bromberger**  
Lighting design **Sylvain Verdet**  
Dramaturgy **Simon Hatab**  
Director Assistants **Yves Lenoir and Héloïse Sérazin**  
Costume Design **Wojciech Dziedzic**  
Musical dramaturgy **Katherina Lindekens**  
Music Assistant **Alphonse Cemin**



## FILM

Produced by **Philippe Martin and David Thion**  
Cinematography **Raphaël O'Byrne**

**Thomas Rabillon, Arthur Cemin  
Balthazar Lab, Julien Ravoux**

Sound recording **François Waledisch**  
Editing **Henry-Pierre Rosamond**

Direction Assistant **Julia Maraval**

Sound Edition **François Mereu**

Music Mixing **Thomas Dappelo**

Mixing **Mélissa Petitjean**

Production Manager **Juliette Mallon**

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