INTRODANS

Welcome to LARBI

Each spring, Introdans presents the work of one choreographer in a dedicated focus programme. This time, the spotlight is on the leading Flemish-Moroccan choreographer Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui. *LARBI* is an exploration of Cherkaoui's signature as a maker and a tribute to resilience.

His versatile and often poetic way of working resonates worldwide. International icons such as Beyoncé and Madonna have collaborated with him.

The evening features the ballets *Fall*, *In Memoriam* and the world premiere of *Residence*. From his first choreography for a classical ballet company to his most recent creation, *LARBI* traces two decades of dance by Cherkaoui. Alongside resilience, it reveals adaptability and reciprocity.

For this programme, Cherkaoui created *Residence*, an intimate duet with and for dancers and makers Marc Brew and Nelson Parrish Earl. For Brew, Cherkaoui previously made the powerful solo *an Accident / a Life*, in which Brew – whose life changed drastically after a tragic accident – expressed his resilience. The new *Residence* centres on the relationship with another person. It explores how, together, you build a safe place, a home.

"Cherkaoui's virtuosic dance language, his musicality and his courage to embrace stillness suit Introdans well. We speak the same (dance) language. That is the core of the collaboration between Introdans and Larbi. With ten of his choreographies in our repertoire, we are one of the principal custodians of his oeuvre in the Netherlands. It is high time to place him in the spotlight," says artistic director Roel Voorintholt.

"As Introdans, we feel a responsibility to both honour and renew dance. In this comprehensive programme, monumental works and a new, inclusive choreography come together. As a whole, this programme around Cherkaoui touches you on many levels. Its beauty moves you, its diversity surprises. A deeply inspiring programme, featuring works by an equally inspiring maker," says managing director Marieke van 't Hoff.

We wish you an inspiring evening.

Roel Voorintholt and Marieke van 't Hoff
Directors, Introdans

About Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui

As a child, the Flemish Moroccan Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui (Antwerp, 1976) wanted to draw reality. When the two dimensions of pen and paper were no longer enough, he began to dance, inspired by pop stars such as Kate Bush, George Michael, Janet Jackson and Michael Jackson. Cherkaoui was briefly a dancer. In 1995, he won the “Prize for Best Belgian Dance Solo”. He then chose to study at P.A.R.T.S, the dance school founded by Flemish choreographer Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker in Brussels. There, he encountered both the work of grand masters such as William Forsythe, Pina Bausch and Trisha Brown and various urban dance styles.

In 1999, Cherkaoui made his debut as a choreographer. Since then, he has built an extensive body of work that, in a highly personal and distinctive way, explores and questions diverse cultures and their traditions. Few artists succeed as he does in shaping complex themes such as otherness, collectivity, the search for identity, faith and desire into compelling narratives, expressed through a poetic and often hypnotic dance language.

Cherkaoui has worked with numerous renowned dance companies and theatres, including Les Ballets de Monte-Carlo, the Swedish Cullberg Ballet, the Royal Danish Ballet, Dutch National Ballet and La Monnaie in Brussels, and he maintains an ongoing relationship with Sadler’s Wells in London. In 2009, Introdans became the first Dutch company to receive permission to perform one of his works: an excerpt from his acclaimed choreography *In Memoriam*. Cherkaoui is currently at the helm of the Ballet du Grand Théâtre de Genève and his own company Eastman, with which he enjoys worldwide success. From 2015 to 2022, Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui was Artistic Director of Ballet at Opera Ballet Vlaanderen.

He has also created choreography for several films, including *Anna Karenina* by Joe Wright, starring Keira Knightley and Jude Law, and the Belgian film *Girl* by Lukas Dhont. He choreographed for Beyoncé and Jay-Z (the music video *Apeshit*), Alanis Morissette (Jagged Little Pill 25th Anniversary Tour), Depeche Mode (Global Spirit Tour) and Madonna (The Celebration Tour), and has collaborated with Lady Gaga. Cherkaoui has received numerous major international dance awards for his creations. In 2024, he was granted the noble title of baron by King Philippe of Belgium.

In addition to *In Memoriam*, *Fall* and *Residence*, Introdans has the following works by Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui in its repertoire: *Orbo Novo* (2015), *Loin* (2018), *Pure* (2019), *Qutb* (2019), *Harbor Me* (2022), a revised version of *Corpus Bach* (2023), and an excerpt from *Fractus V* (2025).

Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui on LARBI

“Choreographing performances has always been my way of giving shape to the world as I experience it and to the feelings I carry. Dance gives me the opportunity to make the invisible visible, to hold up a mirror to the world and to draw everything within a fluid framework. In Memoriam is, for me, about coming to terms with the people you have lost in your life; movement becomes a language for mourning, as if dance were an incantation capable of bringing a loved one back to life. Fall, created ten years later, explores how we relate to the natural elements around us: how the body yields to water, air, fire and earth, and how we continually attempt to defy gravity in movement. Classical dance lines are bent into hybrid, almost animalistic contemporary steps. Residence, presented as a duet between the two existing group works, places the relationship with another at its centre: how do you stand by someone who has lost everything, how do you create new insights and perspective in a seemingly hopeless situation, how do you share space, how do you build a safe place together, a home? It is a wonderful gift to bring certain layers of my oeuvre to the forefront through this Introdans programme and to let them speak: resilience, adaptation and reciprocity.”

Fall

From feather light duets to powerful large scale group pieces. With dancers like discoloured, swirling leaves, *Fall* refers both to autumn, the season in which the work was created, and to the act of falling itself, a physical response that appears in many interpretations and variations within Cherkaoui's movement language. It reflects the body's ongoing struggle with gravity.

Fall unfolds in different chapters, each with its own energy. The choreography opens in a deep blue glow. Bodies move quickly and fluidly, as if underwater, like free dolphins carried by an invisible current. When the music settles, the landscape shifts to land. In desert like tones, trios move through the sand like scorpions, snakes and lizards. Then the air opens up: dancers are lifted, they hover like birds before descending again. Fire, ice, air and water; falling and rising return again and again in new forms, until the whole evolves into a meandering, river like flow.

All of this takes place to the meditative music of Arvo Pärt. When Cherkaoui first heard his music in 1995 at another dance performance, he was captivated. He knew he wanted one day to create a choreography to music by this renowned contemporary composer. The restrained, repetitive sound world of Arvo Pärt fits *Fall* perfectly.

Cherkaoui originally created *Fall* for a large cast on pointe shoes. As an experiment, he later placed the dancers without pointe shoes, literally bringing them closer to the floor. The sense of vulnerability became even more tangible. Freedom gave way to greater fragility and sensitivity.

What at first appears to be chaos gradually reveals structure and pattern. In duets, solos and group formations, the dancers support one another in a subtle play of forces. Each fall carries the promise of rising again. As in nature, one movement leads to another, in an endless cycle of letting go and beginning anew.

With *Fall*, Cherkaoui invites the audience into stillness, a moment of contemplation, like watching clouds or the sea. There is no story to follow, but an experience to surrender to.

***Residence* (world premiere)**

With *Residence*, created on commission for Introdans, Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui presents a compelling duet about closeness, loss and building a new home. The work, created for and with Australian dancers and choreographers Marc Brew and Nelson Parrish Earl, will have its world premiere during the tour of LARBI.

Following the international success of the powerful solo *an Accident / a Life*, in which Brew shaped his deeply personal story, Cherkaoui and Brew continue their artistic dialogue. That earlier solo centred on the turning point that radically changed Brew's life: a car accident that left the former ballet dancer permanently paralysed. The piece stood as a testament to resilience and transformation, an intensely autobiographical portrait of a body that had to reinvent itself.

In *Residence*, the focus shifts from the individual to an encounter. What does it mean to be there for someone who has lost everything? How do you share space when what once seemed self evident falls away? How do you build a safe place together, a home? In a subtle interplay of giving and receiving, Brew and Parrish Earl explore reciprocity, trust and adaptability. Their bodies search for balance, for support, for new perspectives in seemingly hopeless situations.

For Brew, this creation marks another artistic and personal challenge. His collaboration with Cherkaoui, grounded in mutual respect and a strong sense of connection, takes on a new

dimension in this duet. Together with Parrish Earl, a moving choreography emerges in which vulnerability and strength go hand in hand.

Residence is an intimate and hopeful encounter: a choreographic conversation about caring for one another and about the courage to create, amid change, a place where you can remain.

About Marc Brew Company

Residence was created in collaboration with Marc Brew Company, the company founded in 2008 by internationally acclaimed choreographer Marc Brew (1977) to realise his choreographic work.

Marc Brew Company is a pioneering inclusive dance company that creates powerful performances. The company collaborates with artists with and without disabilities to make dynamic and emotionally resonant contemporary dance that challenges perceptions. Brew combines different art forms to create ambitious and compelling work, with collaboration at its core.

Brew trained as a professional dancer at the Victorian College of the Arts and The Australian Ballet School. When he was 20 years old, a tragic car accident completely changed his life. He became paralysed and believed he would never dance again. Eventually, he rediscovered his relationship with dance. For more than 25 years, he has worked internationally as a director, choreographer, dancer, teacher and speaker. He has been Associate Director of Scottish Dance Theatre, Associate Artist at Tramway in Scotland, Artistic Director of AXIS Dance Company, and is Associate Artist at Ballet Cymru in Wales.

In 2024, he was selected as one of seven Arts and Film Big Lottery “Game Changers”, recognised for making a transformative impact on both grassroots and major arts and film projects. He was included in the Shaw Trust Disability Power 100 as a winner in the category Performing Arts, Television and Radio, and in The List’s Hot 100, celebrating one hundred of the most influential cultural contributors in Scotland. He was also nominated for two UK National Dance Awards: Outstanding Male Modern Performance and Best Modern Choreography for *an Accident / a Life*. Brew received a Centenary Medal for his outstanding contribution as a dancer and choreographer and was nominated in 2014 for Outstanding Achievement in Performance (Individual) at the prestigious Isadora Duncan Awards for his solo *Remember When*. His solo *For Now, I am…* was included in The Guardian’s Top 10 Dance Shows of 2016, and *an Accident / a Life* was listed among the Top 5 Dance Shows of 2024.

Marc Brew on Residence

“After the international success of our critically acclaimed production *an Accident / a Life*, it was wonderful to return to the studio with Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui. Larbi and I always knew we wanted to continue working together, because during the creation process we built a strong connection not only as choreographers, but also as people. Creating this new work has been an exciting experience. It challenged me artistically, not only as a performer, but also physically and emotionally. Larbi is a true visionary. It is a great honour to collaborate with him again and, for the first time, to bring this work to life together with dancer Nelson Parrish Earl. I am deeply grateful to Introdans and Eastman for making this possible and I look forward to sharing *Residence* with Introdans’ audiences.”

In Memoriam

In Memoriam (2004) is an intense contemporary masterpiece about loss and remembrance. A meditative tribute to the choreographer's ancestors, the work reflects on coming to terms with the people you have lost in your life. Movement becomes a language for mourning, as if dance were an incantation capable of bringing a loved one back to life or helping to process grief.

At the heart of *In Memoriam* lies the relationship between reality and memory. What remains when someone is no longer there? How does a body continue to exist in memory? The dancers seem to awaken one another through invisible, magnetic forces. Attraction and repulsion, magnetism and anti magnetism are the physical principles Cherkaoui employs to explore the meaning of harmony.

In an intimate interplay, the dancers circle around each other. They climb, jump and fall; they whirl like dervishes in a constant search for balance. Their bodies draw so close they are almost touching, yet never quite meet, as if contact would break the spell. Only when, at last, a couple kiss does the tension release into human warmth.

In *In Memoriam*, movement becomes a language of grief. Dance becomes an attempt to call loved ones back, to build a bridge through the body between here and there, between now and then. The rustling skirts and swiftly moving video images intensify the sense of time slipping by and memories fading or suddenly coming sharply into focus.

For this creation, Cherkaoui entered into a special collaboration with the Corsican vocal ensemble A Filetta, led by Jean Claude Acquaviva, and video artist Gilles Delmas. The polyphonic singing, evoking ancient sounds, and the layered video projections lend the work a ritual, almost sacred dimension.

In Memoriam is a quiet yet powerful reflection on farewell, on what shapes us, and on the invisible bonds that continue to connect us, even across generations.