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# Sider

A work by William Forsythe and  
The Forsythe Company  
Music by Thom Willems

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BAM Howard Gilman Opera House

Oct 9—12 at 7:30pm

Approximate running time: 70 minutes; no intermission

Light object by **Spencer Finch**  
Lighting by **Ulf Naumann, Tanja Rühl**  
Costumes by **Dorothee Merg**  
Sound design **Dietrich Krüger**

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*Leadership support for Sider provided by The  
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*Major support for dance at BAM provided by:  
The Harkness Foundation for Dance  
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## PERFORMERS

**Yoko Ando**  
**Cyril Baldy**  
**Esther Balfe\***  
**Dana Caspersen**  
**Katja Cheraneva**  
**Frances Chiaverini**  
**Brigel Gjoka**  
**Amancio Gonzalez**  
**Josh Johnson**

**David Kern**  
**Fabrice Mazliah**  
**Tilman O'Donnell\***  
**Natalia Rodina**  
**Jone San Martin**  
**Yasutake Shimaji**  
**Ildikó Tóth**  
**Riley Watts**  
**Ander Zabala**

\* Guest

The rhythmic inflections of Elizabethan theater, like those of classical dance, have been sustained by a tradition of transmission from performer to performer for over 400 years. In *Sider*, these intricate patterns of speech are communicated to the performers via the soundtrack of a filmed version of a late-16th-century tragedy. The adherence of the performers' actions to this vocal score instigates disquieting configurations of incongruous musicality that underscore the drama's themes of analogy and obscurity.

#### ADDITIONAL PRODUCTION CREDITS

Media assistance **David Morrow**

Dramaturgical and production assistance **Billy Bultheel, Dr. Freya Vass-Rhee, Elizabeth Waterhouse**

The Forsythe Company is supported by the city of Dresden and the state of Saxony as well as the city of Frankfurt am Main and the state of Hesse. The Forsythe Company is Company-in-Residence of both HELLERAU – European Center for the Arts in Dresden and the Bockenheimer Depot in Frankfurt am Main. With special thanks to the ALTANA Kulturstiftung for supporting The Forsythe Company.

# THE FORSYTHE COMPANY



William Forsythe



Thom Willems



Yoko Ando



Cyril Baldy



Esther Balfe



Dana Caspersen



Katja Cheraneva



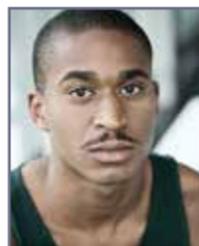
Frances Chiaverini



Brigel Gjoka



Amancio Gonzalez



Josh Johnson



David Kern



Fabrice Mazliah



Tilman O'Donnell



Natalia Rodina



Jone San Martin



Yasutake Shimaji



Ildikó Tóth



Riley Watts



Ander Zabala

**WILLIAM FORSYTHE** was raised in New York and initially trained in Florida with Nolan Dingman and Christa Long. Forsythe danced with the Joffrey Ballet and later the Stuttgart Ballet, where he was appointed resident choreographer in 1976. Over the next seven years, he created new works for the Stuttgart ensemble and ballet companies in Munich, The Hague, London, Basel, Berlin, Frankfurt am Main, Paris, New York, and San Francisco. In 1984, he began a 20-year tenure as director of Ballett Frankfurt, where he created works such as *Artifact* (1984), *Impressing the Czar* (1988), *Limb's Theorem* (1990), *The Loss of Small Detail* (1991, in collaboration with composer Thom Willems and designer Issey Miyake), *A L I E / N A C(T) I O N* (1992), *EIDOS : TELOS* (1995), *Endless House* (1999), *Kammer/Kammer* (2000), and *Decreation* (2003). After the closure of the Ballett Frankfurt in 2004, Forsythe established a new, more independent ensemble. The Forsythe Company (founded with the support of the states of Saxony and Hesse, the cities of Dresden and Frankfurt am Main, and private sponsors) is based in Dresden and Frankfurt am Main and maintains an extensive international touring schedule. Works produced by the new ensemble include *Three Atmospheric Studies* (2005), *You made me a monster* (2005), *Human Writes* (2005), *Heterotopia* (2006), *The Defenders* (2007), *Yes we can't* (2008/2010), *I don't believe in outer space* (2008), *The Returns* (2009), and *Sider* (2011). Forsythe's most recent works are developed and performed exclusively by The Forsythe Company, while his earlier pieces are prominently featured in the repertoire of virtually every major ballet company in the world, including The Kirov Ballet, New York City Ballet, San Francisco Ballet, National Ballet of Canada, England's Royal Ballet, and Paris Opera Ballet. Awards received by Forsythe and his ensembles include the Bessie Award (1988, 1998, 2004, 2007) and Olivier Award (1992, 1999, 2009). Forsythe has been conveyed the title of Commandeur des Arts et Lettres (1999) by the government of France and has received the German Distinguished Service Cross (1997), the Wexner Prize (2002), the Golden Lion of the Venice Biennale (2010), and the Samuel H Scripps / American Dance Festival Award for Lifetime Achievement (2012).

Forsythe has been commissioned to produce architectural and performance installations by architect-artist Daniel Libeskind, ARTANGEL (London), Creative Time (New York), and the City of Paris. His installation and film works have been presented in numerous museums and exhibitions, including the Whitney Biennial, the Venice Biennale, the Louvre Museum, and 21\_21 Design Sight in Tokyo. His performance, film, and installation works have been featured at the Pinakothek der Moderne in Munich, the Wexner Center for the Arts, the Venice Biennale, and the Hayward Gallery in London. In collaboration with media specialists and educators, Forsythe has developed new approaches to dance documentation, research, and education. His 1994 computer application, *Improvisation Technologies: A Tool for the Analytical Dance Eye*, developed with the Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie Karlsruhe, is used as a teaching tool by professional companies, dance conservatories, universities, postgraduate architecture programs, and secondary schools worldwide. In 2009, *Synchronous Objects for One Flat Thing, reproduced* was launched, a digital online score developed with the Ohio State University that reveals the organizational principles of the choreography and demonstrates their possible application within other disciplines. *Synchronous Objects* is the pilot project for Forsythe's Motion Bank, a research platform focused on the creation and research of online digital scores in collaboration with guest choreographers. As an educator, Forsythe is regularly invited to lecture and give workshops at universities and cultural institutions. In 2002, Forsythe was chosen as the founding dance mentor for the Rolex Mentor and Protégé Arts Initiative. Forsythe is an honorary fellow at the Laban Centre for Movement and Dance in London and holds an honorary doctorate from The Juilliard School in New York. Forsythe is also a current A.D. White Professor-at-Large at Cornell University (2009—2015).

**THOM WILLEMS** (composer) is a Dutch composer who primarily creates music for ballet. Willems studied composition at the Conservatory of The Hague after having begun composing at the age of 12. He has created over 80 works in collaboration with William Forsythe during his

tenure with Ballet Frankfurt (1985–2004) and The Forsythe Company (2005–present). Credits include: *Impressing the Czar* (1988), *Limb's Theorem* (1990), *The Loss of Small Detail* (1991), *A L I E / N A(C)TION* (1992), *EIDOS : TELOS* (1995), *One Flat Thing, reproduced* (2000), and *Heterotopia* (2006). In 2007 he was involved with Issey Miyake's research center for design, 21\_21 Design Sight in Tokyo, and in 2008 with Matthew Ritchie's installation *The Morning Line* for Thyssen Bornemisza Art Contemporary.

### PERFORMERS

**YOKO ANDO** was born in Yokohama, Japan. She studied theater at the Bunka Gakuin College and danced with Kuniko Kisanki. She has worked with Japanese choreographer Kota Yamazaki and theater directors such as Hideki Noda, Robert Lepage, Masahiko Shimada, and Antony Rizzi. Ando joined Ballett Frankfurt in 2001 and started with The Forsythe Company in 2005.

**CYRIL BALDY** was born in Woippy, France. He studied in Paris at the Conservatoire National Supérieur, and worked with the Jeune Ballet de France, Nederlands Dans Theater (NDT) II, and NDT I before joining Ballett Frankfurt in 2002. He has been a member of The Forsythe Company since 2005. [cyrilbaldy.com](http://cyrilbaldy.com)

**ESTHER BALFE\*** was born in England and trained at Ballet Rambert, London. She danced with the Saarbrücken State Theater, Heidelberg Stadt Theater, Tanztheater Wien in 1996, and later Volksoper Wien. In 2004 Balfe was a guest artist with Ballett Frankfurt, and in 2005, a guest artist in residence at the University of New Mexico. In 2006, she became a member of Fabulous Beast Dance Theater, and in March 2007 joined The Forsythe Company. She has been a guest member of The Forsythe Company since September 2012.

**DANA CASPERSEN** was born in Minneapolis, MN, and trained with Maggie Black and Erick Hawkins, among others. She danced for three years with the North Carolina Dance Theater, and worked with Ballett Frankfurt from 1988 to 2004 before joining The Forsythe Company in 2005.

**KATJA CHERANEVA** was born in Moscow, Russia, and studied at the Nikolai Ogryzskov Contemporary Dance School in Moscow and at the Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst in Frankfurt am Main, Germany. She has been a member of The Forsythe Company since 2010.

**FRANCES CHIAVERINI** was born in Pittsburgh, PA, and studied at Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre School and the Juilliard School. After working with Nederlands Dans Theater II, she collaborated and performed with Adam Barruch, Luca Veggetti, Martha Clarke, Shannon Gillen, the Metropolitan Opera, Bodytraffic, and LA Dance Project. Chiverini has created original works for the Children's Museum of Amman in Jordan and received a prize from the National Society of Arts and Letters. She joined The Forsythe Company in 2013.

**BRIGEL GJOKA** was born in Albania. Following dance studies at the Tirana Ballet School, he was a member of the Cannes Jeune Ballet for two years, during which he also worked with Mattia Gandini at Legestrukture. From 2006 to 2009, he was a member of the Ballet du Rhin, Strasbourg. During 2008, he created pieces for the Ballet du Rhin and Leggestrukture. In 2009, while a dancer with balletmainz, he choreographed for the Cannes Jeune Ballet, and in 2010 he joined the Nederlands Dance Theater. Gjoka has been a member of The Forsythe Company since 2011.

**AMANCIO GONZALEZ** is from Spain and trained at the Estudio de danza, and with Ion Beitia and the Centre International de danse and Rosella Hightower. He danced with the Scottish Ballet, NAPAC Dance Company, De Rotterdamse Dansgroep, Reflex Dance Company, and Scapino Ballet Rotterdam. Gonzalez joined Ballett Frankfurt in 1999 and has been a member of The Forsythe Company since 2005.

**JOSH JOHNSON** was born in Mission Hills, CA. He trained with Eartha Robinson and Otis Sallid, attended Hollywood High School and studied with Keny Long, and was a student at the Marat Daukayev School of Ballet in Los Angeles while studying with Karen McDonald. Johnson danced with Ailey II, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, and the Francesca Harper Project. He has been a member of the Forsythe Company since 2010.

**DAVID KERN** was born in New Orleans and joined San Francisco Ballet in 1981, where he danced many works by Balanchine and Michael Smuin. He joined Ballett Frankfurt in 1987, and from 1994 to 2004 was a freelance dancer and choreographer in Paris. He has been a member of The Forsythe Company since 2005.  
nutbitsresearch.com

**FABRICE MAZLIAH** studied dance in his hometown of Geneva, Switzerland at the National School of Athens and the Rudra Béjart Atelier in Lausanne. He was part of the Mandafounis Cie., Nederlands Dans Theater, Ballett Frankfurt, and since 2005 has been with the Forsythe Company. Mazliah has also produced several of his own works.

**TILMAN O'DONNELL\*** is American-German. He trained at the National Ballet School in Toronto, and has worked with the Goteborg Ballet, Staatstheater Saarbrücken, and Cullberg Ballet. O'Donnell joined The Forsythe Company in 2007 and has been a guest member of The Forsythe Company since September 2011.

**NICOLE PEISL** was born in Austria and graduated from the Rotterdamse Dansacademie in 1994. She worked as a freelance dancer, choreographer, and teacher until 1997 and joined Ballett Frankfurt in 2000. From 2004 to 2006 she created several works, taught at different universities and academies, and was a guest dancer with The Forsythe Company, the Daghdha Dance Company, and the Episode Collective. Peisl has been a member of The Forsythe Company since 2006.

**NATALIA RODINA** studied modern dance at the Ogrzyzkov School of Contemporary Dance in Moscow. She continued her dance education at the Rotterdam Dance Academy where she graduated in 2005. Rodina has performed with Djazzex Productions, Korzo Productions, and André Gingras, and was a member of NND/Galili Dance in Groningen from 2004 until it closed in 2008. She performed with Dansgroep Amsterdam from 2009 to 2012 and guested periodically with The Forsythe Company. She joined The Forsythe Company in September 2013.



**JONE SAN MARTIN** was born in San Sebastian, Spain, and studied with Mentxu Medel. She was a member of Ballet Nacional de España, the Ulmer Theater, and the Ballet Royal de Wallonie in Belgium before joining Ballett Frankfurt in 1992. She has danced with The Forsythe Company since 2005.

**YASUTAKE SHIMAJI** was born in Japan. He studied modern dance with Miyako Kato, and was a member of Noism from 2004 to 2006. Shimaji has been a member of The Forsythe Company since 2006.

**ILDIKÓ TÓTH** was born in Leipzig, Germany. She studied dance in education at Rotterdam Dance Academy in the Netherlands. A dance scholarship led her to New York in 2005 where she subsequently worked with Bill Young/ Colleen Thomas & Company, Susan Marshall & Company, and Kota Yamazaki's Fluid Hug-Hug, among others. She joined The Forsythe Company in November 2012.

**RILEY WATTS** was born in Bangor, ME and studied at the Walnut Hill School for the Arts and the Juilliard School. Watts danced with Cedar Lake Contemporary Ballet, Bern:Ballett, and Netherlands Dans Theater II. He received a Princess Grace Award for modern dance in 2006 and has been a member of The Forsythe Company since 2010.

**ANDER ZABALA** was born in Bilbao, Spain and started dancing with Ion Beitia in 1983. He studied at Béjart's Mudra school, and the Hamburg Ballet school with John Neumeier, and with Rosella Hightower's Centre de Dance International in Cannes. Zabala danced with the Centre Chorégraphique National de Tours under Jean Christophe Maillot, Ballett Frankfurt in 1992, and the Birmingham Royal Ballet under David Bintley from 1997 to 1999. He rejoined Ballett Frankfurt in 2000, and has been a member of The Forsythe Company since 2005.



Esther Balfe, Dana Caspersen, Roberta Mosca. Photo by Dominik Mentzos

With the founding of The Forsythe Company in 2005, William Forsythe created a new, agile structure within which to further pursue the multi-faceted creative work begun with Ballet Frankfurt. Together with an ensemble of 17 dancers, he carries forward the intensive collaborative processes developed in 30 years, producing works in the areas of performance, installation, film, and educational media.

#### DANCERS

**Yoko Ando, Cyril Baldy, Esther Balfe\*, Dana Caspersen, Katja Cheraneva, Frances Chiverini, Brigel Gjoka, Amancio Gonzalez, Josh Johnson, David Kern, Fabrice Mazliah, Tilman O'Donnell\*, Nicole Peisl, Natalia Rodina, Jone San Martin, Yasutake Shimaji, Ildikó Tóth, Riley Watts, Ander Zabala**

#### ADMINISTRATION

**William Forsythe** Artistic Director  
**Dr. Vera Battis-Reese** Managing Director

**Mara Brinker** Technical Production / Sound and Video

**Dorsey Bushnell** Personal Assistant to the Artistic Director

**Thierry Guiderdoni** Artistic Assistant and Agenda Manager to William Forsythe

**Dietrich Krüger** Sound and Video Designer

**Roserita Kuster\*** Makeup

**Patrick Lauckner** Technical Production / Stage Supervisor

**Dorothee Merg** Head of Costume Department

**David Morrow** Composer / Pianist / Accompanist

**Ulf Naumann** Technical Production / Lighting Supervisor

**Sangram Singh Pabla** Assistant Press / PR / Marketing

**Julian Gabriel Richter** Producer

**Mechthild Rühl** Press / PR / Marketing Manager

**Tanja Rühl** Technical Production / Lighting Supervisor

**Patrick Rump\*** Sports Science

**Max Schubert** Technical Director

**Dr. Freya Vass-Rhee** Dramaturg / Production Assistant

**Paul Viebeg** Planning / Stage / Tour Manager

**Jennifer Weeger** Sound and Video Designer

**Thom Willems\*** Composer

**Martina Zimmer** Assistant to the Managing Director

\*Guest

Choreographed by William Forsythe, *Sider* is something of a complex puzzle, a riddle you just cannot solve. And yet the stage setting is extremely simple: it has been reduced to four small trusses fitted with neon lights flickering on and off at irregular intervals and with changing light intensity. Created by Spencer Finch, this light object is reminiscent of *Three Atmospheric Studies* (2005), although it conjures a very different atmosphere. "The variations in color and intensity are based on English and Danish skies," says Forsythe. Besides that, only a few sheets of simple corrugated cardboard make up the set. These sheets are slightly above life-size, so that someone can hide behind them or be buried beneath them. There are only three at first, laid out randomly on stage. At the show's end, however, there are close to 20 scattered across the stage, while the dancers disappear one at a time.

The riddle, in any case, is not contained in the cardboard sheets, even though two of them bear an inscription. A sheet shown at the start reads "In disarray," while another appears at the end with the inscription "Is and isn't." Clear enough: one starts out from a state of disarray. The performance will make these sheets mean something or represent something, but in the end they revert to what they were in the first place, nothing more than a heap of cardboard sheets. They are, and they are not. The sheets thus clearly indicate that we are watching an imaginary performance in which anything can stand for anything, merely through the intentionality of the actions performed by the dancers.

It is in these actions, however, that the show's delightful riddle rests. The dancers introduce an overwhelming amount of information. Even though there are only three dancers on stage at the start, a lot of attention is required to take in everything that is happening, and therein lies a major paradox. Fabrice Mazliah, Roberta Mosca, and David Kern, the pivotal figures around which the play is built, all move with such precision and detail that one immediately supposes that there is a specific purpose to their performance. Mosca juggles with two sheets, which she assembles in all possible configurations or lets lie on the floor while she staggers unsteadily back and forth and up and down. Mazliah stands close to her, and at times slips between Mosca's fast changing constructions.



Fabrice Mazliah. Photo by Dominik Mentzos

At other times he keeps more of a distance. His twisting and wriggling make him look like an explorer in a narrow cave. What do these two have in common, besides their proximity? Since no answer is immediately apparent, one keeps searching for new details that can lift a corner of the veil. Is there a story behind this, or is it an abstract composition? What principle governs the timing, the distances, the use of sheets? The only constant seems to be Thom Willems's score: a heavy humming tone that swells up and fades away, before growing later into a deafening roar, creating a true Doppler effect or else outlining the bare bones of a melody.

These details proliferate further when more and more dancers in extravagant costumes created by Dorothee Merg make their appearance. Many of them wear hoods, while their pants and tops feature all sorts of strange prints. Here and there one notices a historical detail, such as a lace collar typical of the 16th century. It is as if all sorts of elements had been assembled to create a historic scene in a fanciful manner—without striving for accuracy, however. In this, too, the performance remains a play with signs.

But then there is the language. After the first scene one catches a man talking in the dark, uttering incomprehensible gibberish. In color, sound variation, and intonation, it unmistakably recalls the artificial, self-conscious expressivity of English theater we are familiar with from representations of Shakespeare, say. Even though one doesn't understand a word of what's being said, one suddenly realizes that somehow or other, a play is here being performed. Or, more accurately, that the action one is watching is analogous to a play. All the ingredients are there: a set, dialogue, costumes, movement, sound, and light. And these elements fit into one another so precisely that it is only possible that a primary meaning underlies them. Yet that primary meaning resists being named.

That is because that primary meaning is not so much a story as a formal pattern, namely that of Elizabethan theater. Forsythe was indeed fascinated by the structure and musicality of Elizabethan language. "It was an amazing historical era. There emerged during that time a very complex and florid language which ties in with equally complex conceptions of the use of space and time. The structure of the language forces you to speak a certain way, with specific



Ander Zabala. Photo by Dominik Mentzos

inflections, and at a specific rhythm. The art of using the language in such a way was passed on from one generation to the next, in roughly the same way as the manner in which ballet techniques have been passed on to us." For the dancers at least, this form of theater is also very much present, since the text of a piece from that era is continuously fed to them through a small earphone while they dance. This colors what they do, without fully determining the action. As a spectator one doesn't really know this, however, and one can only guess so.

The dancers' movements also follow another logic, however, as Forsythe explains: "I had started out from the idea that something is inevitable. The French have a beautiful name for it, the 'futur antérieur:' 'it will have happened,' the inevitable course things will take. You can also apply that idea to a play that will be created in the future. So we interviewed the dancers about that show that thus didn't yet exist. During those interviews, like a kind of 'language byproduct,' non-existent words emerged such as 'flabim-punist.' We arrived at a list of about 80 words in a non-existent language, although it is related to English."

"Another strategy consisted of asking the dancers to draw a map on a transparency, which was then projected onto the space as a 3D model. Just as in *A L I E / N A(C)TION* we connected words with specific points in space. The dancers thus often follow their own private map to find their way. Their interpretation of it does not necessarily coincide with that of the others, and sometimes not at all. For instance, Roberta Mosca moves at the start through an imaginary Sumerian village. She conjures it with two cardboard sheets, as if she were building a cardboard castle. Fabrice Mazliah moves between the sheets, but in his view they don't represent a Sumerian village at all. And so that's how tension is added to the set. It is very difficult to choreograph. That's why I often intervene through the earphone they wear during the performance."

One immediately understands why the performance is so complex and so enigmatic. At least three rhythms cross one another: the ostinato sounds created by Thom Willems, the lighting variations, and the rhythm of the text that also defines the rhythm of the movements. Besides that there are the dancers' various "cards," which sometimes coincide with the text they hear. That

is precisely what defines the work's appeal. Forsythe: "We work here with very powerful formal systems, but I continually shatter their logic by inserting exceptions. But before they notice that, I also shatter that logic by inserting exceptions to that exception. It all has to do with how the human brain works: it's always looking for patterns and connections so as to be able to predict the unfolding of an event. Once that becomes clear, however, a spectator's attention weakens. That's why I keep pricking it over and over again."

The spectator is indeed an important player and contributes to the completion of the performance. The performance underlines this aspect by means of short text messages that light up now and then: "She is to them as they are to us," or "They are to us as we are to them," phrases that underline the extent to which performers and spectators depend on one another.

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The French have a beautiful name for it, the 'futur antérieur:' 'it will have happened...'

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These explanations can help one understand how the play functions in principle. That it also works in practice, however, is a miracle of performance skills and pleasure. One watches as the performers continuously throw themselves into situations in the craziest possible manner before getting themselves out of it, build things up and develop them before letting them deteriorate, or beat out complex rhythms on the cardboard sheets before letting them die out. And one observes how, in the end, after all the commotion, things fall back into place when the opening scene returns in a slightly altered form. A tour de force.

And by the way: the title of the play derives from "side," as in "the side of a sheet of corrugated cardboard," the raw material with which the performers go to work.

*Translated by Patrick Lennon & David Camacho.*