

CENTRE  
CHORÉGRAPHIQUE  
NATIONAL  
DU HAVRE NORMANDIE  
direction Fouad Boussof

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR AND  
CHOREOGRAPHER  
**Fouad BOUSSOUF**

# OÜM



Length 60'

**CREATION 2020**

**ALL AUDIENCE**  
above 7 years old

## CONTACTS

**PRODUCER – INTERNATIONAL TOUR BOOKER** - +33 (0)6 61 25 87 75  
Marie Chénard - [production@lephare-ccn.fr](mailto:production@lephare-ccn.fr)

**NATIONAL TOUR BOOKER (IN FRANCE)** - +33 (0)6 52 09 11 79  
Jean-Baptiste Bosson - [diffusion@lephare-ccn.fr](mailto:diffusion@lephare-ccn.fr)

**PRODUCTION MANAGER** - +33 (0)2 35 26 23 07  
Solène Petitjean - [solene.petitjean@lephare-ccn.fr](mailto:solene.petitjean@lephare-ccn.fr)

# OÛM

## About OÛM

*OÛm* is a tribute to Oum Kalthoum – an astoundingly modern diva who could improvise for hours and dressed as a man whenever she felt like it – and to Omar Khayyam – a XI-century Persian poet who celebrated rapture, trance and love.

The voice and power of the diva, and the scientific research of the poet-mathematician – he wrote on the concepts of weight, balance and time – are a precious foundation and inspiration for this dance performance.

*OÛm* is quintessentially bodies vibrating to the waves of live music, transgressing stylistic barriers and leading the way to improvisation and rapture whilst also exploring the singularity of each dancer. A poetic and musical performance, *OÛm* gives life to an eternal elation where song, poetry, dance and music unite to celebrate the present moment.

“Between the 1920s-1960s, from Beirut to Cairo great divas appeared on the radio and became icons of the Arab female song. Oum Kalthoum in particular was part of my childhood soundscape. Hers was an ever-present, low-intensity music I heard everywhere – day and night, on every street corner, in every car, and especially in that of my father.

She is one of my most vivid music memories growing up in Morocco. I could not understand her language or lyrics, but by hearing her voice so many times, she became close and familiar. Her songs – characteristic of the Tarab style she excels in – embody emotions full of music and poetry, evoking a broad spectrum of feelings, from the most private to the most violent. Later on, I took interest in her songs’ meanings and through her, discovered the Rubaiyat – Omar Khayyam’s XI- century quatrain poem.

The inspiration for my work *OÛm* originates in these feelings, mind and soul states, not only in dance but in music and voice. I am particularly interested in, and want to transmit, the connections between these vibrations and the performers. Conceived as a poetic encounter, this production gives the performers the space to become one. United through common energy, together they drive the quest for living in the present moment.”

**Fouad Boussouf**

**Choreographer** Fouad Boussouf

**Assistant of the choreographer** Sami Blond

**Dancers** Nadim Bahsoun, Sami Blond, Mathieu Bord, Loïc Elice, Filipa Correia Lescuyer, Mwendwa Marchand

**Music live** Mohanad Aljaramani (oud, percussion, voice) et Lucien Zerrad (guitar and oud)

**Sound design** Marion Castor et Lucien Zerrad

**Dramaturgy** Mona El Yafi

**Scenography** Raymond Sarti

**Costumes** Anaïs Heureaux

**Lighting Design** Fabrice Sarcy

**Tour manager** Mathieu Morelle

**Master electrician** (alternately)

Romain Perrillat-Collomb, Benoît Cherouvrier et Lucas Baccini

**Sound master** (alternately) Gianluca Rossiello, Capucine Catalan

**Courant production** Le Phare - Centre chorégraphique national du Havre Normandie / direction Fouad Boussouf

**Production** Massala Company

**Coproduction** La Briqueterie – CDCN du Val-de-Marne, Le POC d’Alfortville, Institut Français de Meknès au Maroc, CCN de Créteil et du Val-de-Marne / Cie Käfig, Pôle-Sud – CDCN de Strasbourg, Les Hivernales – CDCN d’Avignon, Fontenay-en-Scènes, Fontenay-sous-Bois, Hessisches Staatsballett – Tanzplattform Rhein Main en Allemagne, Théâtre Paul Eluard (TPE) à Bezons

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# OÛM



*"Oüm is a wonderful choreography, carried by an intoxicating tempo."*

**Amélie Blaustein Niddam,  
Exmovere, June 16<sup>th</sup> 2022**

## FROM THE DIVA TO THE POET

In the early 1900s, fascinated by Omar Khayyam's quatrains the Rubaiyat, the poet Ahmed Rami went from Cairo to the Sorbonne, to learn Persian and be able to translate his idol's work. In Paris, he received a phone call from a friend telling him: "A female singer, disguised as a man, is singing your poems. You must hear her!". Rami promptly returned to Cairo to discover no other than Oum Kalthoum who would become his second idol in life.

In 1950, Ahmed Rami's translation of the Rubaiyat was finally ready. Sung by Oum Kalthoum, the quatrains became an enormous success, making XI-century poetry accessible to entire generations. In the early 2000s, for the first time Fouad Boussouf takes keen interest in the lyrics of the diva who cradled his childhood. It is then when he discovers the Rubaiyat – Omar Khayyam's long poem which praises the fate of men and is a hymn to the present.

The Rubaiyat is a wake-up call, urging us to awake our minds and bodies, and open them to the present. It invites us to fully savour the present moment, conscious of the inevitability of death, yet rejoicing in burning, all-consuming life.

**"I heard a voice calling at dawn, calling from the unseen, for the unmindful of people to get up and fill in the cups of hope before fate fills their life cups."**

This stanza opens Oum Kalthoum's interpretation of the Rubaiyat. It is a call to life, to the ardour of the present and, in a certain way, a call to transcendence.

Oüm starts from this stanza and repeatedly comes back to it, through the singers' and dancers' voices, through their bodies and sounds, and through the voice of diva Oum Kalthoum, full of the rhythm and musicality inherent in Arabic.

**"Today, thanks to her, the illiterate peasants recite refined verses, the nationalists glorify the language, the mystics enter into a trance and the cloistered women dream of gallant love."**

*Naguib Mahfouz in Oum Kalthoum  
a documentary by Simone Bitton*

## Press

"A stack of dances, floor-based and with vertical shapes of great finesse, linked bodies and playing with changes of weight, explosions of radical, nearly violent movements ... We are invited to enter an illuminated sort of trance by the dancers and musicians. (...) Driven by the power of contemporary ritual, *Oüm* is on its way to becoming a cult piece."

**Danser Canal Historique – Thomas Hahn**

"The marvelous lighting shows us pink palaces in a country far far away, as Lagarce would say. What are all these people doing together? What are they saying to each other, all dressed up in suits like bankers, except wearing socks? Boussouf takes us into a real city, in the street where the sound of the dafs sets the tempo, abundant and powerful for the artists. *Oüm* is a generous work, sensitive and ultimately freeing."

**Toute la culture – Amélie Blaustein Niddam**

"This is what has been missing from our stages (...), finding its strengths in the fact we are invited to feel without having to look backward yet again: this is a new form of contemporary nostalgia."

**I/O Gazette – Jean-Christophe Brianchon**

"The promise of an Oriental trance."

**Tribune de Genève**

"The music and the writings of the medieval poet Omar Khayyam combine with the dance to create a giant mass of beauty."

**Amélie Blaustein Niddam, Exmovere, 16 juin 2022**

"With *Oüm*, Fouad Boussouf adds his own shaped building block to the edifice of contemporary works based on popular themes."

**Amélie Blaustein Niddam, Exmovere, 16 juin 2022**

"The dancers blow us away with their energy in this unique, harmonious and thrilling adventure."

**20h30, Lever de rideau**

## Trailer link

<https://vimeo.com/774781806>

# BIOGRAPHY

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## Fouad Boussof - Choreographer

For Fouad Boussof, dance is pure impulse, momentum, movement. These words also define his artistic journey, driven by **his innate curiosity and his desire to escape**. His early years in Morocco, living in an isolated village in the region of Moulay Idriss, were filled with festive family events and a natural environment of clean, monastic simplicity. When Fouad was seven, his family moved to France, to Romilly-sur-Seine, near Troyes, and he stepped into a new universe, in which he had to learn quickly about culture and societal codes. As a teenager he began doing hip hop to cassettes by Prince and Michael Jackson; the form was initially considered a socially acceptable physical exercise, but for him hip hop became **the building blocks for his personal style of movement**, in which the body's will to exceed, to go farther – brought him recognition from his peers.

He finished his education in Chalons-en-Champagne, where he also took workshops led by the circus students from the CNAC (the National Center for Circus Arts). He moved to Paris in 2000 and began studying social sciences at the University of Paris XII in Créteil, where he also taught classes in street dance, first informally, then as an accredited teacher. He continued studying at the Academy of the Cité Véron, participated in the Suresnes Cités Danse Festival and performed with Farid Berki and Pierre Doussaint. After having presented his DESS degree on hip hop, he took a seven month road trip in Australia, beginning **a long cycle of activities layering pedagogical, creative and travel plans**, which also took him to Egypt and to Russia. When he finally returned to France he decided to focus on dance, and at the age of 27 he founded the Compagnie Massala. In 2008- 2009 he created solos and a trio, and in 2010 he created his first group work, **Déviations (Detours)**.

Since then he has been **creating non-stop, embodying the momentum that has characterized his approach to his art and his life**. His work is hybrid, deliberately without labels, profoundly present and in the moment, always incorporating the hip hop movement vocabulary. Over the years he has built **a dance language channeling movement spontaneity and the idea of nonstop movement**, which has no beginning, no ending. His dancers are inspired by this dynamic which sets them outside their normal movement patterns, generating an extraordinary, cyclical energy onstage, notably in his recent works **Näss (People)** in 2018, and in **Oüm** (2020), an homage to Oum Kalthoum – which affirmed his place in the international dance scene.

For Boussof, the principal artistic instrument is the body, of course, but he also incorporates other forms, including video and the plastic arts, both contemporary or linked to Mediterranean history. Among these works are the documentary film, **Le Ballet Urbain (The Urban Ballet)** (2019), and his collaborations with the sculptor **Ugo Rondinone**, on the video installation **Burn to shine** (2022) at the Petit Palais in Paris and in **Via** (2023), which he created for the Ballet du Grand Théâtre in Geneva, commissioned by the choreographer **Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui**. This "world citizen" follows **a rhythm of creation driven by emotion, the concept of risk, and the constant will to move forward**.

From 2020- 2022, Boussof was an Associated Artist at the prestigious Maison de la danse in Lyon, at Équinoxe - Scène nationale de Châteauroux and at the Maison de la musique in Nanterre. On January 1, 2022, He was unanimously appointed as director of Le Phare - Centre chorégraphique national du Havre Normandie and during that year was also honored by the French government with the distinction of **Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres**.

- Isabelle Calabre

### Creations / Le Phare

CN of Le Havre Normandie since 2022

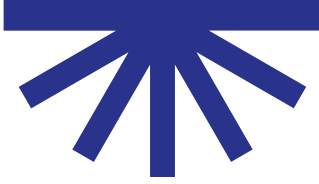
- 2023 : *Fêu*, creation for 11 dancers
- 2022 : *Cordes*, creation for a dancer and a musician
- 2022 : *Âmes*, creation for 2 performers

### Creations / Massala Company from 2011 to 2021

- 2021 : *Yès*, creation for 2 dancers
- 2020 : *Oüm*, creation for 6 dancers and 2 musicians
- 2018 : *Näss (People)*, creation for 7 dancers
- 2015 : *Le Moulin du Diable*, creation for 5 contemporary & hip-hop dancers
- 2014 : *Esperluette*, creation for a circus dancer and a guitarist
- 2013 : *Transe*, ccreation for 7 danseurs contemporary & hip hop dancers
- Concept Lavoir*, creation pour 5 hip-hop dancers & an opera singer
- 2012 : *Afflux*, creation for 5 hip-hop dancers, a saxophonist and an electro-acoustic DJ
- 2011 : *A Condition*, creation for 4 contempory & hip-hop dancers

### Commissions & performances

- 2023 : Creation of *Via*, commande for the Ballet of the Grand Theater of Geneva
- 2023 : Creation of *Corps (Im)mobiles* with the dancers of the Grand Theater of Geneva at the Art Museum and History of Geneva
- 2022 : Exhibition of *Burn to shine* in collaboration with Ugo Rondinone for the Petit Palais in Paris
- 2020 : Dance performance at the Museum of Modren Art of Paris (Salle Raoul Dufy) with the Arte en scène project, Arte.TV
- 2019 : Creation of *Escape*, France-Hong-Kong collaboration with 2 French dancers and 2 Hong Kong dancers as part of the Honk Kong Arts Festival (Hong Kong)
- 2018 : Creation of *On n'emprisonne pas les idées*, at the heart of exhibition « Les racines poussent aussi dans le béton ». Piece for 6 performers. MAC/Val Vitry-sur-Seine
- 2012 : Dance performance around the work of Roy Atsak, l'homme anthropométrique, Vitry-sur seine
- 2010 : Dance performance for the inauguration of Dan Graham's sculpture in La Rochelle



# OÜM

2022/2023

05/09/22 Rovereto, Italie  
 01/12/2022 Théâtre des Bergeries, Noisy-le-Sec  
 03/12/2022 Bruxelles (Halles Schaerbeek), Belgique  
 05-07/01/2023 Le Quartz, Brest  
 10/01/2023 Théâtre Edwige Feuillère, Vesoul  
 14/01/2023 Louvre-Lens  
 25/01/2023 Théâtre de Villefranche, Villefranche sur Saône  
 27/01/2023 Centre Culturel Houdremont, La Courneuve  
 31/01/2023 Scènes de Territoire, Bressuire  
 02/02/2023 La Rampe, Echirolles  
 21/03/23 Quai des arts, Rumilly  
 28-29/03/23 CCAM Vandoeuvre-lès-Nancy  
 08/04/23 Centre Culturel Aragon Triolet, Orly  
 12/05/23 Théâtre de Champigny-sur-Marne  
 23/05/23 Centre Culturel de Limoges  
 03/06/23 Sarreguemines, Festival Perspectives  
 14-15/06/23 Le Manège de Reims – 2 représentations

2020/2021

15/09/20 Festival le Temps d'Aimer la Danse, Biarritz  
 29/06/21 Théâtre Paul Eluard (TPE), Bezons

2019/2020

22/02/20 Théâtre Benoît XII, Festival Les Hivernales CDCN d'Avignon (première)  
 27-28/02/20 POC Alfortville  
 03-04/03/20 Pôle Sud – CDCN Strasbourg  
 06/03/20 Fontenay-en-Scènes, Fontenay-sous-bois

2021/2022

07-08-09/09/21 Oslo, Norvège  
 14/09/21 Luleå, Suède  
 19/09/21 Örebro, Suède  
 21/09/21 Malmö, Suède  
 23/09/21 Vara, Suède  
 25/09/21 Kungsbacka, Suède  
 30/09/21 La Mouche, Saint-Génis-Laval  
 02/10/21 Théâtre du Parc, Andrézieux-Bouthéon  
 05-06/10/21 Hessisches Staatstheater Wiesbaden, Allemagne  
 10/10/21 Théâtre Jean Vilar, Vitry-sur-Seine  
 21-22/10/21 Musée de l'Immigration, Palais de la Porte Dorée, Paris  
 09/11/21 Théâtre de l'Olivier, Istres  
 13/11/21 Théâtre Molière, Sète  
 07/12/21 ECAM, Kremlin-Bicêtre  
 09/12/21 Bruges, Belgique  
 11/12/21 Hérault Culture – Scène de Bayssan, Béziers  
 14-15/12/21 L'Azimut, Châtenay-Malabry  
 25/02/22 Espace Culturel de la Hague  
 10/03/22 Chambly  
 15/03/22 Espace Boris Vian, Les Ulis  
 25/03/22 Espace Marcel Carné à St-Michel-sur-Orge  
 02-05/04/22 Théâtre des Quartiers d'Ivry  
 08/04/22 Equinoxe, Châteauroux  
 22/04/22 Théâtre Jean Arp, Clamart  
 30/04/22 STEPS - Salle des fêtes du Lignon, Vernier, Suisse  
 01/05/22 STEPS/ Salle des fêtes du Lignon, Vernier, Suisse  
 03/05/22 STEPS/ Théâtre du Passage, Neuchâtel, Suisse  
 06/05/22 STEPS/ CCDP Salle de l'Inter, Porentruy, Suisse  
 10/05/22 STEPS/ Théâtre de Beausobre, Morges, Suisse  
 12/05/22 STEPS/ Stadttheater, Schaffhausen, Suisse  
 14/05/22 STEPS/ Le Reflet, Vevey, Suisse  
 19/05/22 STEPS/ Virdmar, Bern, Suisse  
 21/05/22 STEPS/ Nebia, Biel, Suisse  
 29/06-01/07/22 Théâtre Le Monfort, Paris



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**Le Phare - Centre chorégraphique national  
 du Havre Normandie / direction Fouad Boussouf**

30 rue des Briquetiers - 76600 Le Havre FRANCE  
 02 35 26 23 00

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