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Giotto Solo Carolyn Carlson, © Thibaut Chapotot.

Critiques Danse (</critiques/critiques>)

Pantheonized

Carolyn Carlson

After having danced at the Paris Opera, the Théâtre de Ville, the Fenice, the Helsinki City Theater, the Bourdelle Museum, and the Grand Palais among others, Carolyn Carlson was invited to repeat her 2002 solo, *Giotto*, at the Pantheon as part of the Monuments en mouvement (Monuments in Motion) event.

By Nicolas Villodre published September 20, 2016

Why Giotto? Why not? A piece needs a title even if it's a vague "Untitled" or, quite simply, a number. The Italian painter Giotto marks the passage of the religious to the profane which is also symbolized by Soufflot's somewhat swollen Pantheon, a non-religious, civil, secular salvaging of a royal church dedicated to the patron saint of the City of Paris, that of Nanterre and of the national gendarmerie: Saint Genevieve. The allegories of vices and virtues that saturate walls, corners, and recesses of the Scrovegni Chapel in Padua immortalized by the humanist and art revolutionary Giotto, are not only religious but of a moral and psychological order: Hope, Despair, Charity, Envy, Faith, Infidelity, Justice, Injustice, Temperance, Wrath, Fortitude, Inconstancy, Prudence, and Foolishness.

Carolyn Carlson, in virginal dress, draws her inspiration from the painter without seeking to reproduce exactly this or that subject – each of them able to serve as the argument for a different ballet. More than the immovable monument, she puts the painting in motion, turning her back to the mausoleum which honors the WWI dead and titled by Henri Bouchard *Aux héros inconnus, aux martyrs ignorés morts pour la France* – For the unknown heroes, ignored martyrs who died for France, and facing a more tangible sign of the mysteries of terrestrial rotation: Léon Foucault's pendulum. To a lyrical, fascinating and mind-blowing music for organ and voice, *The Black River*, by Gavin Bryars, the dancer delivers her science of gesture.



Photo : Thibaut Chapotot.

Carolyn Carlson adopts naturally to the solemn environment. She has obviously found the best location allowing her to communicate her variation of twenty minutes to a large standing audience. Standing in one spot, she limits her expression to her upper body. After a long passage to a slow tempo, she bares her shoulders as if she wanted to step out of confinement, and unties her romantic ballerina chignon, using her hair as a mask. A simple cord serves as an accessory. She begins play with the string and in so doing alludes to *Tensile Involvement* (1955) by her master Nikolai's. She makes a bandage (bondage) that engages her face. She pushes a silent cry evoking another famous one.

Using an efficiency of movement that corresponds perfectly to the minimalism of Bryars's oratorio, Carlson suggests more than she says or dwells on, summarizes the gesticulate syntagma rather than the spoken, and never falls into the anecdotal that her other choreographer colleagues find so reassuring, stylizing everything she touches with her touch.

> Giotto solo by Carolyn Carlson was presented September 19, at the Pantheon as part of *Monument en mouvement*.