

Dance

Don't miss!

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Embraceable you

Boris Charmatz and Dimitri Chamblas tackle their friendship in a seminal duet. By **Gia Kourlas**

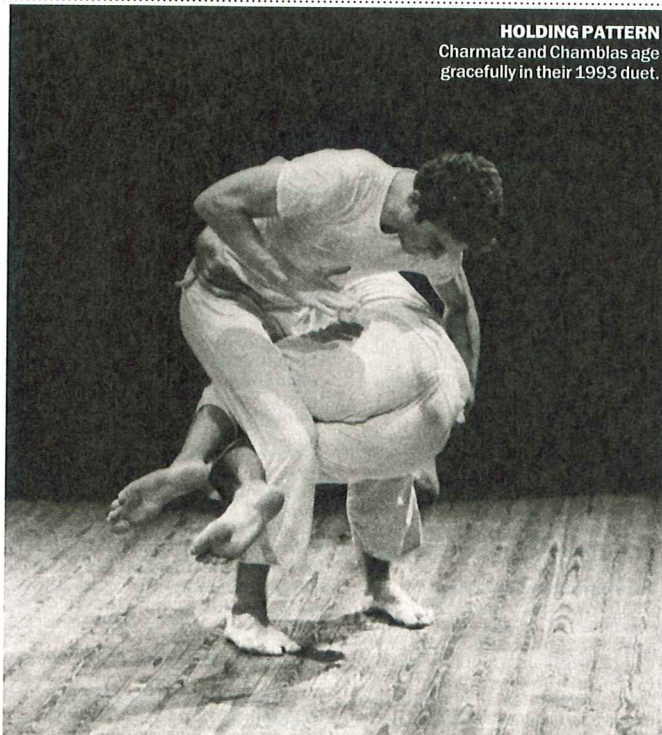
Dimitri Chamblas and Boris Charmatz met when they were 10 and 12, respectively, as students at the Paris Opera Ballet school, but they didn't really become close friends until they reconnected as teenagers at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique et de Danse de Lyon. In 1993, in what could be described as an act of artistic rebellion, they created *À bras le corps* ("Total Embrace").

"At the time, everybody thought that when you started you were first a student and you'd become a dancer and then a choreographer or a teacher—and in France, you would then work for the Ministry of Culture," Charmatz says, laughing, in a telephone interview from Paris. "We thought, Why should we do this step-by-step? Why should we be a student before being a dancer and then a choreographer even later? It was not our idea to create a company. It was really to do this specific project."

In the intervening years, Charmatz has become a respected experimental choreographer in Europe, where he also continues to dance (frustratingly, however, he hasn't appeared in New York since 2001), while Chamblas stopped dancing and works as an associate producer for an advertising film company. He's coming out of retirement (and using some vacation time) to perform *À bras le corps* at Danspace Project this weekend. Still, the piece was created to last, even as their bodies and technique alter with time.

"It's very physical and, in a way, dangerous," Charmatz, now 33, says. "It could break both of us. But we decided to get old in the piece, that it would be interesting to see how we change in it. We always thought that the best performance of *À bras le corps* will be when we won't be able to perform those movements at all. But also, we never know—if we really break ourselves, this could be the last one. Though we dream to perform this when we are 60."

In the duet, the audience closely surrounds the dancers on four sides; such intimate proximity, says Charmatz, hides nothing (not even, be-



HOLDING PATTERN
Charmatz and Chamblas age gracefully in their 1993 duet.

"This could be the last performance. Though we dream to do it when we are 60."

warned, the occasional spray of sweat). "It was not the idea to do something nobody else did," he says. "It's not because you do a piece with the audience in a square and you perform in front of them that makes an interesting piece. At the time, because we were students we read Merce Cunningham's *The Dancer and the Dance*, and he said that if you take a dance and turn it 45 degrees, then it's a new dance. In a way, this square says something like that."

Truthfully, Charmatz is not enamored with the actual movement in the duet; as he explains, he and Chamblas were young when they choreographed *À bras le corps*. After three months, what seemed innovative suddenly felt old-fashioned. "We thought, What do we do?" he recalls. "Do we change the piece completely or do we keep it the way it's written? We

decided that our bodies and our minds are evolving and what will change is not the writing of the piece—the moves are the same—but the way we do it. It became a real game about how you involve yourself in the gesture: Do you do it with humor? With tension or without? With all of your power or half?"

The decision not to change the material, which includes strenuous tumbling and lifts, afforded the choreographers another opportunity: to put more energy into making more experimental work. "Because we keep *À bras le corps*, we are able to think of new pieces that are really different," Charmatz says. "We love to have the pleasure of friendship and this very rough style of dance, but since we have it in *À bras*, it makes me totally free to go into completely other directions in my other work. In my latest piece, *Régi*, we use machines to move our bodies. It's so different from *À bras le corps*, but in a way it's because the duet exists that I can invent something that is drastically different."

À bras le corps is at Danspace Project Thursday 26 through Saturday 28.

Listings

If you want to be listed

Submit information by mail, e-mail (dance@timeoutny.com) or fax (646-432-3160) to **Gia Kourlas**. Include details, dates, times, address of venue with cross streets, nearest subways, contact information and admission price, if any. **Deadline is 10am Monday, ten days before publication date.** Incomplete submissions will not be included, and information will not be accepted over the phone.

Student tickets: Junior-high and high-school students: Certain performance companies offer special rates (Mon–Thu \$5 for two tickets, Fri–Sun \$5 for one). Ask about "High 5" tickets at the box office, or call Ticketmaster. (For more information, see Theater, "Seats for a song.")

* Recommended or notable
VIDEO TONY ON DEMAND: For video clips, reviews and much more, tune in to Channel 1112 on Time Warner Cable, or timeoutnewyork.tv on the Web.

Thursday 26

* **American Ballet Theatre** City Center, 131 W 55th St between Sixth and Seventh Aves (212-581-1212). Subway: F, N, Q, R, W to 57th St. 7:30pm, \$26–\$130. ABT presents its fall season, which includes a new ballet by Jorma Elo and revivals of Twyla Tharp's *Sinatra Suite*, George Balanchine's *Symphonic Concertante*, Lar Lubovitch's *Meadow* and Mark Morris's *Drink to Me Only With Thine Eyes*. Program: *Clear, Afternoon of a Faun, Sinatra Suite* and *Fancy Free*.

Anemone Dance Theater CRS Studio Theatre, 123 Fourth Ave between 11th and 12th Sts, second floor (212-352-3101). Subway: L, N, Q, R, W, 4, 5, 6 to 14th St–Union Sq. 8pm, \$18. Choreographers Sara Baird and Erin Dudley present their Butoh-inspired dance in *Mikros Kosmos*.

Dalia Carella Dance Collective Lafayette Bar & Grill, 54–56 Franklin St between Broadway and Lafayette St (212-714-4600). Subway: J, M, Z, N, Q, R, W, 6 to Canal St; 1 to Franklin St. 7pm, \$40. Dalia Carella presents her collective—structured after French and German cabarets of the '20s and '30s—in *Cirque du Macabre*, *In the Shadows of the Realms*, *Madame Lavoie's Enchanted House of Dolls*, *Irrenhaus* and *Homme*.

FREE Cedar Lake Contemporary Ballet Cedar Lake, 547 W 26th St between Tenth and Eleventh Aves (cedarlakedance.com). Subway: C, E to 23rd St. 6pm. For this installment of Cedar Lake's Free Thursdays series, company members are invited to choreograph new dances to soundscapes by resident composer Stefano Zazzera.

* **Boris Charmatz and Dimitri Chamblas** Danspace Project at St. Mark's Church-in-the-Bowery, Second Ave at 10th St (212-674-8194). Subway: L, N, Q, R, W, 4, 5, 6 to 14th St–Union Sq. 8:30pm, \$15. French choreographers Boris Charmatz and Dimitri Chamblas present the U.S. premiere of their duet *À bras le corps*, which originally premiered in 1993. See "Embraceable you," left.