

MAL PELO  
HIGHLANDS



# MAL PELO

MARÍA MUÑOZ / PEP RAMIS

*Highlands takes us soaring over peaks, woods and snowy roads in the middle of nowhere to a harmonious refuge.  
With Highlands, Mal Pelo have constructed an ephemeral cathedral in the highlands that can heal souls.*

*Claudia Brufau. NÚVOL.*

HIGHLANDS





## HIGHLANDS

A choral piece for a performance space. Fourth part of the Bach Project.

After over a decade exploring the music of Johann Sebastian Bach, Mal Pelo presents Highlands, the last piece in their tetralogy inspired by his music. Highlands is the fruition of the work created and matured in the previous pieces (Bach, On Goldberg Variations/Variations and Inventions), in which we analysed, listened and visualised more deeply the structures, harmonies, voices and development of the music of J.S. Bach. This study, over many years, has inspired questions, curiosity and many hours of research into the dialogue between dance and baroque counterpoint music.

Highlands is a piece of work on the search for spirituality and the mundane, on unanswered questions, the temporal paradox of humanity faced with the deep time of history.

A journey in sound and images in which the spectator feels the strength of the group in the space, the presence of the individual, and where the mingling of different disciplines conjures a plural body, open to being inhabited and influenced.

Sacred, solemn, vital, sometimes worldly and with touches of the surreal, Highlands is a dance piece but also a spiritual refuge constructed from the music of Bach in dialogue with that of other composers: Henry Purcell, György Kurtág, Årvo Part, Benjamin Britten and Friedrich Handel. Words erupt in the midst of the dance and music with texts by John Berger, Erri de Luca and Nick Cave.

Mal Pelo creates a blend of elements woven together in a thoughtful, intense piece performed by an exceptional cast.

A project for 16 performers: 8 dancers, 4 singers and a string quartet.

A concert of space, bodies and music.

***My heart 's in the Highlands, my heart is not here;  
Robert Burns (1759–1796)***

## ARTISTIC CREDITS

Direction:	MARÍA MUÑOZ i PEP RAMIS
Creation & Dance:	FEDERICA PORELLO, ZOLTÀN VAKULYA, LEO CASTRO, MIQUEL FIOI, ENRIC FÀBREGAS, ONA FUSTER, MARÍA MUÑOZ, PEP RAMIS
Musical Directors:	JOEL BARDOLET, QUITERIA MUÑOZ
String Quartet:	JOEL BARDOLET, violin / JAUME GURI, violin / MASHA TITOVA, viola / DANIEL CLARET, cello
Voice Quartet:	QUITERIA MUÑOZ, soprano / DAVID SAGASTUME, countertenor / MARIO CORBERÁN, tenor / GIORGIO CELENZA, bass
Music:	J. S. BACH, HENRY PURCELL, GYÖRGY KURTÁG, ÅRVO PART, BENJAMIN BRITTEN i GEORG FRIEDRICH HÄNDEL
Texts:	JOHN BERGER, ERRI DE LUCA, NICK CAVE
Assistant Directors:	FEDERICA PORELLO, LEO CASTRO
Lighting:	AUGUST VILADOMAT / IRENE FERRER
Soundscape:	FANNY THOLLOT
Set Design:	KIKE BLANCO
Costumes:	CarmePuigdevallPlantés
Video Editing:	LEO CASTRO
Technical Director:	IRENE FERRER
Sound Technician:	ANDREU BRAMON
Set Technician:	GENÍS CORDOMÍ
Production:	GEMMA MASSÓ
Communication and Distribution:	RITA PERÉ
Photography:	TRISTÁN PÉREZ-MARTÍN
Acknowledgements:	EDUARD TEIXIDOR, YVES BERGER











## THE MUSIC

What is Highlands? Is it a metaphor, a dream world, a fantasy?

In the space where it is performed, the dramatic line separating the space of the here and now from that beyond, that of the imagination, is shown visibly. Musically, the challenges and limits of reading a text written in the eighteenth century from the viewpoint of the Europe of 2021, presents the same doubts: what is Bach's music for us? Is it a metaphor, a dream world, a fantasy?

Perhaps the music and its context are two symbiotic elements. All music is good if it has a function. In our case, we have not selected the music on aesthetic or decorative grounds, but rather immersed ourselves deeply in listening to it for months on end, until we found the heart of each piece that was used for Highlands as a whole and at the same time transformed it.

Bach's music combines an extraordinary range of qualities : rhetoric, craft, inspiration, dramatic force and beauty - I'm not afraid to talk of beauty.

Gyorgy Kurtag says that "in the music of Bach, there is plagiarism at every turn..." ... "In a Bach fugue, where there is a crucifixion you hear the nails."

It is this poetic force that we want to highlight and harness for the choral piece Highlands. Seeing the music resonate through the bodies of the dancers has taught us as much about the meaning of this music as analysis of listening to it.

Through the music of Bach, we visit different moments in his life: the Weimar days in his Cantata 150; the death of his wife Barbara in Chaconne Tombeau, which is dedicated to her; his own twilight in Fugue XIV of the Art of the Fugue, unfinished and with a note in the score by his son Carl Philipp: "Über dieser Fuge, wo der Name B A C H im Contrasubject angebracht worden, ist der Verfasser gestorben."/ "In this fugue, at the moment where the name BACH appears as a countersubject, the composer died."

In the central section of Highlands, the development, Kurtag, Purcell and other composers visit the German genius.

The symmetrical structure by Arvo Part appears twice as a geometric element, in the same way as we tried to explore it in the dialogue between voices in Bach's Inventions or in the construction of the fugues.

Different motifs accompany us, whether subtly or more clearly, such as the Chorale 85 "ist got mein schutz un treuer Hirt", which appears at various moments of the journey and in different treatments as a result of respectful experimentation with the music and its possibilities.

The musical piece Highlands is a choral work in which we have played with an incredible quality and vast quantity of material, and the team of dancers and musicians have made this our own, our sound track.

**Joel Bardolet**





**The bright horses have broken free from the fields  
They are horses of love, their manes full of fire  
They are parting the cities, those bright burning horses  
And everyone is hiding, and no one makes a sound  
And I'm by your side and I'm holding your hand  
Bright horses of wonder springing from your burning hand**



There's a devil waiting outside your door  
And he's bucking and braying and pawing at the floor  
And he's howling with pain and crawling up the walls.  
There's a devil waiting outside your door  
He's weak with evil and broken by the world  
He's shouting your name and he's asking for more,  
give him more, give him more  
There's a devil waiting outside your door.

*Nick Cave*

**I have a blue bird. A blue bird on my shoulder.**









## THE SPACE

A space in different tones of black, surrounded by four cycloramas in the air that act as membranes, four stones like pendulums, one in each corner, all creating a place in suspense, poised on the alert. The central space is surrounded by a shiny black periphery, like a mirror of water.

This is the space for Highlands, deep and wide, where time expands, an imaginary and spiritual space that calls to us and asks about our state and our nature. The space holds what we see and what we don't, what's there in the foreground and what's on the edge, in the dark even.

We work with the idea of an active space, built through the presence of the people who inhabit it and the dynamics of sound and light.

All artistic forms create specific ways of thinking; they represent ways of thinking sensually and physically that are characteristic of each artistic medium. A way of practising philosophy and metaphysics through space, structure, materials, gravity and light. Singular spaces express our own experience.

**Juhani Pallasmaa**  
**Architect**



















## PRODUCTION



## CO-PRODUCTION



39º Festival  
de Otoño



Comunidad  
de Madrid

temporada  
alta →

## WITH THE COLLABORATION



## MAL PELO IS A COMPANY SUPPORTED BY





**MAL PELO**

LG MAS ESPOLLA 17460 CELRÀ / GIRONA

+34 658828290

+34 972494127

**info@malpelo.org**

**www.malpelo.org**

 malpelo\_dance

 Mal Pelo

**Communication & Management:** Rita Peré

**Production:** Gemma Massó



MALPELO