Dossier
Creation 2025
Première 24 January 2025

O amor natural

Andrew Graham | laGeste



photo © Kurt Van der Elst

Crip is sexy.
Orgasm is a spasm.
Sex is between the thighs or the ears?

Six damaged goods, struggling with their bodies, possibilities and desires are searching for intimacy, touch, and each other.
'O amor natural' is playful, tender and naughty - seeking for pleasure by choreographer Andrew Graham.

CONTEXT

In 2019 Andrew Graham appeared on the radar of Hildegard De Vuyst, artistic director of laGeste. At that time, she was a dramaturge at the Festival de Marseille and programmed a revival of Alain Platel's *le Sacre* as an urban project. This version of Stravinsky's dance music was populated with local dance groups that share a physical practice for very different reasons: from salsa and samba to krump and hip-hop, over Eastern European folk dance, to more contemporary practices, with groups of schoolchildren or elderly people, from institutions or neighbourhood-based.

One motley crew of dancers stood out in Marseille: a group that consisted of the blending of possibilities and limitations, of generations and genders. That group embodied Graham's desire for 'mixability'. After years of experience at the pre-eminent inclusive dance company in the UK, Candoco, a return to the south of France marked the starting point for developing his own practice based on a unique vision that embraces all bodies: with visible or invisible disabilities, formally trained or self-taught.

Since 2019, a few things have happened. Andrew Graham founded l'Autre Maison in Marseille, dedicated to the practice of mixability, and made the creation *Parade* (2021 and 2022) at the invitation of Festival de Marseille. Hildegard De Vuyst became artistic director of laGeste, a dance organisation that continues the legacy of les ballets C de la B and Alain Platel's inclusive approach.




Parade © Sofie De Backere

After Marseille, between 2019 and 2022, Graham, at the invitation of L'Art Rue, also thoroughly immersed himself in Tunis where he set up the project *Lines* for Dream City 2023. Over a two-year period in Tunis, he brought together a group of children with disabilities and their mothers, nieces, brothers, participants from migrants and LGTBQIA+ communities and everything in between. The strong local work of *Parade* and *Lines*, with large groups, made touring hardly an option, with little international visibility as a result. *O amor natural*, a medium-sized theatre performance made to travel, could change this.

O amor natural developed in different stages.
In autumn 2023, Andrew came to Ghent to build a large-scale participatory project based on a protocol that can be implemented in any city. It has since been successfully tested at la Raffinerie in Molenbeek as part of MolenFest (24), in Clermont-Ferrand at Boom'Structure (25) and finalized for the opening of Kanal Centre Pompidou in Brussels (26) under the name of *Bal Brut*.





Ballrooms © Sofie De Backere

It was back in the early days of *Bal Brut* that Andrew Graham met the cast for *O amor natural*. During the first ball, Tijen Lawton was his companion de route; Wim Auwerx signed up through the inclusive workshops; Maarten Degezelle came to take a look out of curiosity as part of his job as an outreach worker at NTGent; Isnelle da Silveira occasionally popped in on a walk with Kito, Platel's dog; Amir Sabra who injected the energy of a dabke workshop led us to Hamza Damra, a friend from the same refugee camp near Nablus and the same hiphop crew Stereo48, etc... After an initial research week in May 2024, six performers began rehearsals in November 2024.




photos © Kurt Van der Elst

O amor natural premiered initially in January 2025 at VierNulVier, Ghent. In the week before opening night, Maarten Degezelle got injured. We decided to proceed with the two shows as they were sold out, adapting the work. The limited number of performances was a blessing in these conditions. But again, it didn't allow for professionals to get acquainted to Andrew Graham's work. Being convinced that the work didn't reach its full potential back then, we decided to re-stage it in October 2026 @ KVS. This rework was very well received and is now ready for touring.

CHOREOGRAPHIC POEMS

The title of *O amor natural* is based on the work of Heddy Honingmann, a beautiful documentary about poems and erotic stories by elderly Brazilians. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W8LzRtiVKE0
It situates sensuality and eroticism where we do not immediately expect it.

Andrew Graham sums it up this way: "Care, romance, fluid identity and fantasy all come together in this choreographic creation, conceived as a series of non-verbal haikus. Poems choreographed around touch and the possible relationships of trust between bodies such as the tension between two bodies, two hearts in a tango, for example." The keywords in this physical creation are desire, love, pleasure, consent and limitation.

O amor natural goes beyond the binary codes of yes and no and explores consent in all its non-verbal richness: whispers, body temperature, breathing, gaze and speed of movement weave a web of intimacy. The concept of consent raises many questions about care practices, but also about sexual and artistic practices. How do we know and how do we communicate what we do and do not want? On what basis can we consent to a practice that is still foreign to us?

For people with disabilities, touch is often associated with a medical act, as if their bodies are objects to be manipulated and moved without regard to their physical and emotional needs, in a relationship that is necessarily devoid of any sensuality. *O amor natural* is about giving ourselves the chance to express the complexity of touch in our relationships, where we often only allow ourselves to conceive of touch in a medical or sexualised relationship.

ABOUT ANDREW GRAHAM

> "I realized that the presence, the proximity, the openness of another body can be an answer to a relational need, a motivation to dance. Dance then becomes an emancipated environment that can respond to our needs and intentions." Andrew Graham

Andrew Graham is a Marseille-based choreographer and performer whose work is rooted in the belief that dance flourishes through differences and mixed abilities. After graduating from Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance in London, he danced with the internationally renowned inclusive company Candoco Dance Company (2012-2016), performing works by choreographers including Trisha Brown, Jérôme Bel, Emanuel Gat and Rachid Ouramdane. His years at Candoco helped shape his artistic vision, placing inclusivity at the heart of his choreographic practice.

In 2019, Graham founded L'Autre Maison in Marseille, a company dedicated to developing the practice of mixability. The idea of mixability embraces the creative potential that emerges when people with different physical, sensory and social experiences come together. Diversity is not a challenge to overcome, but the very engine of collaboration and artistic invention. Andrew creates performances in which professionally trained dancers perform alongside non-professionals, people with visible and invisible disabilities, and participants from different generations and backgrounds, opening up new ways of moving, creating and being together.

Since 2023, Andrew Graham is one of the artistic compagnons de route of laGeste, where he continues to explore his inclusive choreographic practice. His creation *O amor natural* will be on tour in 27-28. His newest creation, *IN/OUT - for Alain* will premiere in the fall of 2028.

Andrew Graham's work:

- The recording of *O amor natural* (October 2026): https://vimeo.com/1235106567/2c1c45dce8





photos © Kurt Van der Elst

ABOUT THE CAST

Six performers are at the heart of the production. Each person carries and brings a world with them. *O amor natural* is an encounter between people with very different sexual, physical, cultural and professional experiences. The cast brings together different worlds in terms of age, (in)visible disability, ethnicity, libertine or conservative minds, experience with dance and inclusive practices.

The dancers developed their own material, in consultation with Andrew Graham and Hildegard De Vuyst who, as dramaturge, guided the creation process. Composer Steven Prengels was also closely involved in the creation process. After long and intense collaboration with Platel (for *Gardenia*, *En avant, marche!*, *nicht schlafen*, *Mein Gent*) that culminated in the composition assignment for *Ombra* at OperaBalletVlaanderen, this was an opportunity to connect with a younger generation of creators. Prengels brought Beethoven in (piano sonata nr21 opus 53 parts 2 + 3), adapted LA LOM and Nina Simone for Isnelle da Silveira; he stretched 'Jungle Fever' by Chakachas and composed for the laGeste choir 'I like your' , which at the end breaks open the intimacy.

The scenography was in the hands of Karolien De Schepper; she created a number of ambiguous objects that refer to intimate parts. Pink, red, and flesh tones dominate the visual, continued in the costumes by Dotje Demuynck. While the objects initially create intimate and fluid spaces, they are later, without hesitation, molded into erotic landscapes.

CREDITS & BIOGRAPHY

concept Andrew Graham & Hildegard De Vuyst
directed by Andrew Graham
created with & performed by Hamza Damra, Isnelle Da Silveira, Maarten Degezelle, Tijen Lawton, Vladimir Perrin, Wim Auwerx

composition & soundscape Steven Prengels
scenography Karolien De Schepper
light Helmut Van den Meersschaut / Kato Ooms
costumes Dotje Demuynck
sound Arthur De Vuyst / Jens Clerbout
stagehand Robin de Valckenaere
dramaturgy Hildegard De Vuyst
touring Morgan Van Kerrebrouck | laGeste

production laGeste
co-production Kunstencentrum Viernulvier
thanks to laGeste choir, Flup Beys, Valerie Boone
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PRAKTICAL INFO

tournée 11 people on tour: 6 dancers et 5 crew.
set-up and take-down on the same day.
stage size needed minimum 10m/10m.
audience capacity +- 700.

AGENDA

Premiere 24.01.2025 &
25 January 2025 in De Vooruit, programmed by Art Centre Viernulvier, Ghent.
8 & 9 October 2026 in KVS, Brussels




photos © Kurt Van der Elst

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT *O AMOR NATURAL*

Updates and additions to the presentation text, credits, biographies, recent photos, trailer, interviews and press will be available here.

You can download new high-resolution photos and the trailer here.

WRITTEN BY THE BODY laGeste

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