

[Share](#)

0

- [Search events](#)
- [Search places](#)
- [Show](#)
- [Arts](#)
- [TV & Radio](#)
- [Film](#)
- [Music](#)
- [Book](#)
- [Worldwide](#)
- [Online games](#)

[Arts & Culture](#) > Music

The spirit of the Goliards

Bangkok's 11th International Festival of Dance & Music presents 'Carmina Burana' by Spellbound Dance Company from Italy

- Published: [9/09/2009](#) at 12:00 AM
- Newspaper section: [Outlook](#)

[Share](#) [Share](#)

0

0

Carmina Burana's hold on the artistic community has been unshakeable. A modern, 20th-century work by Carl Orff, its driving and potent rhythms gets converts on a daily basis. Any wonder that this piece of music is featuring in Bangkok's 11th International Festival of Dance & Music. Presenting it in the form of a contemporary ballet on September 29 are the Spellbound Dance Company from Italy, one of Italy's leading contemporary ensembles.



Artistic director and choreographer Mario Astolfi wanted to reinterpret this significant work using the medium of dance. Carl Orff's music was set to the poems of the mediaeval goliards (defrocked monks and minstrels) whose verses exalt wine, love and nature on one hand and condemn the depravity of clergy of that time on the other. Some even encourage women to enjoy the pleasures of the flesh. Some labelled the "crusader chants" attack violently the corruption of the period and the greed for money. The lyrics imply spiritual anxiety and pessimism, which Carl Orff picked up in his music. And Mauro Astolfi's choreography is an expression and extension of this anxious spirit of the goliards. He explains, "Carmina Burana refers to a cultural movement of the 14th century, when a narrow and strict religious and cultural system caused young students to react spontaneously ... to fight the oppressive cultural system. The students were pushed to look for a new way of life. They didn't use any kind of violence, they gathered basically in inns and celebrated life without the invisible boundaries of the obscurantism of that age. I was fascinated by this passive and intelligent rebellion, which opposed to a strict vision of life."

However, Astolfi adds to the music of Carl Orff: Spellbound's Carmina Burana is set not just to the music of Carl Orff but also Antonio Vivaldi and V. Caracciolo. Astolfi explains his choice of music, "the important thing in the musical construction of a performance is not only the choice of a particular score, but the harmony made by encountering different composers - in my case, the Dixit Dominus by Vivaldi, which is in Latin, and the symphony by Caracciolo are the perfect continuation of the original theme by Orff". A daring act but one which works as the dancers mix narrative strength of dance with that of music, to join and complete the spirit of the Carminas in a contemporary showcase.

He believes that the message of the original work also reflects our contemporary cultural and religious systems.

"The difference is that nowadays it is more and more difficult, may be impossible, to oppose powerful mass conditioning. Communication in the 14th century was basically oral, today all the communication channels used by governments have an hypnotic effect, publicity promotes not only products but also a way of life and cultural models, and it becomes more and more complicated to grow independently. The "goliards" today couldn't exist or we would need a billion of them in the whole globe.

Every production is different from the other, because everything around us changes rapidly. The creation of a choreography depends on the everyday life and even if a choreography seems the production of the ideas of a single man (the choreographer), it still reflects ideas, thoughts, fears of a whole age and of a specific period."

Orff's principal aim of presenting "total musical theatre" has been preserved with "movement" added and

interpreted by Astolfi's dancers.

The effect is overwhelming. Mauro Astolfi founded the company in 1994 and ever since the company has been very active in the field of choreographic research. It has made a name for itself with its constantly evolving body of works reflecting a mix of genres. For Astolfi, each performance is about human emotions reflected in images, sounds and gestures. Underlying this, is his belief that emotions are in constant evolution and mutation.

To reflect this ever-changing reality Astolfi has done away with all kinds of style definitions. He does not restrict himself or his dancers, and believes in the power of experimentation and revision. Interestingly his techniques and approach reinforce the original communicative power of dance. He explains, "Once shorn off useless narrative frills, dance regains its artistic value as a mute language made of movements and fragments of images that are only suggested by the lines of the dancers' bodies, thus, leaving space for the sensitiveness and the creativity of the observers".

"My style and methods combine different expressive forms of the contemporary movement, using all the elements that every kind of dance has to offer. My main interest is choreography as a progressive evolution of movement interacting with the strict technique. It is pure expressiveness brought together with energy, strength and virtuosity. These aspects or beliefs form the foundation of my company," says Astolfi. It is no surprise that today Spellbound is a point of reference for many young and emerging choreographers. Astolfi is often invited abroad to conduct workshops and master classes in Zurich, London, Amsterdam, Tokyo, New York, Los Angeles, Paris and Stockholm.

Explaining his creative process he says, "ballet is my problem in life and its solution. I explore the human body and its movements, and the poetry that these two elements can create when they encounter the space ... I imagine the body as a perfect masterpiece of bio-engineering. To be able to see what it can do, what it can express, exalts me and pushes me to create choreographies. I don't have a structure, a method. Sometimes I think to have the right keys for a new creation and then I realise that it is not what I need. Sometimes I feel unproductive and suddenly the most interesting ideas come out with strength".

Astolfi brings to his creations many influences that he picked while studying dance in Italy, London and the US. In the US he worked both as dancer (Paul Taylor Dance Company) and as choreographer (Jeff Roberge Dance Company). As a choreographer he has worked for Italian television and with many national and international dance companies: Kitonb Extreme Theatre Company and Amsterdam De Theaterschool.

Astolfi's productions have been very well received outside of Italy, too, in France, Germany, Spain and Croatia. Last year he created two important projects: Don Giovanni - Il gioco di Narciso for the Venice Biennale and For Her for the Picasso Foundation of Malaga. The company has also performed on many national and international dance platforms and has collaborated with renowned Italian artists. Libertango, for example, was created together with the musicians of Quintetto Estravagario. The company has also collaborated with Italian film director Enzo Aronica and composer Marco Schiavoni, creating performances where music, dance and multimedia technologies have been combined in an innovative way. Among the company's most successful productions are Quattro, Duende, Nafas and Carmina Burana. This year he has also choreographed for Balletto di Roma.

This is the first time Spellbound Dance Company will be performing in Bangkok.

Dance critics in Europe have called the performance "brilliant" and have remarked on "the plasticity of the contemporary body language". The choreography is truly daring and the startling dynamics of the tension between figures and the scenic-space context leave you breathless. It's perhaps one of the most beautiful and intense adaptations of Carmina Burana ever.

Bangkok's 11th International Festival of Dance & Music is sponsored by Bangkok Bank, B. Grimm, 'Bangkok Post', Dusit Thani Hotel, King Power Group, SCG, Thai Airways International, Tourism Authority of Thailand and Toyota Motor Thailand Co, Ltd.

'Carmina Burana', at the Thailand Cultural Centre, on September 29, 7:30pm. Tickets are 400, 800, 1,000, 1,200, 1,500 baht. Call 02-262-3456, or visit <http://www.thaiticketmajor.com>.

Relate Search: [Bangkok's 11th International Festival of Dance & Music](#), [Carmina Burana](#), [Spellbound Dance Company](#), [Mario Astolfi](#), [Thailand Cultural Centre](#)

Did you know?

You can subscribe to free e-newsletters and receive e-mail alerts when other people leave comments in articles after you did. [Click here](#) to take full advantage of the alerts!

About the author

Writer: JENNIFER PARKS

Keep this article in your social bookmark:

- [Delicious](#)
- [Digg](#)
- [Reddit](#)
- [Stumbleupon](#)
- [Technorati](#)
- [Twitter](#)
- [Republishing permission](#)
- [Print this](#)
- [E-mail this](#)

Latest stories in this category:

- [Voices from the South](#)
- [Singular and Scrubb join Brother on stage](#)
- [Guitar extravaganza](#)
- [Dum dum girls wake up with dreams](#)
- [Boys, Toys, Noise](#)
- [Recreating the big apple in the big mango](#)
- [In fine fettle](#)
- [Music that can light the way in the dark](#)

Most Viewed