## AND...

**FOCUS ON SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA**
*Kalakuta Republik* – Serge Aimé Coulibaly, July 19-25, Cloître des Célestins
*Dream Mandé - Djata* – Rokia Traoré, July 21-24, Cour du musée Calvet
*Black Woman* – Angélique Kidjo, Isaach De Bankolé and their guests Manu Dibango, Dominic James and MHD, July 25 and 26, Cour d'honneur du Palais des papes

THE WORKSHOPS OF THOUGHT
Dialogue artists-audience with Boyzie Cekwana, July 19 at 16:30
Site Louis Pasteur Supramuros de l'Univerité d'Avignon

ÇA VA, ÇA VA LE MONDE ! – RFI, July 15-20, Jardin de la rue de Mons

CINEMATIC TERRITORIES, July 10 to 23, Utopia-Manutention

## TOUR DATES AFTER THE FESTIVAL

– August 18-20 2017, Noorderzon Performing Arts Festival, Groningen (Netherlands)
– August 24-26, Zurcher Theater Spektakel, Zürich (Switzerland)
– October 30-31, Spielart Festival, Munich (Germany)

71st EDITION

In order to bring you this edition, over 1,750 people, artists, technicians, and organisational staff, have worked tireless and enthusiastically for months. More than half of them are state-subsidised freelance workers.

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#FDA17

## THE LAST KING OF KAKFONTEIN

At once a brutal fairy tale and a Shakespearean tragedy that uses dance, video, and live music, Boyzie Cekwana›s latest creation focuses on a democratic tyrant. The Last King wanders the petrified halls of his cardboard palace and sings his own praises "*like blood oozing from a wounded body*." Imagined during the American Presidential election, inspired by the situation in South Africa and Europe, *Kakfontein* analyses the behaviour of the demagogues who have risen to power and comments their repeated attacks on the democratic project. Is our time that different from the 1930s? How can we have given up on the hope created by the long marches for civil rights? In a way reminiscent of the songs and dances of protest that set the streets of Johannesburg on fire in the 1980s, the South African choreographer stages the downfall of those new cynical kings who trample the social contract and try to silence dissent. A piece that reminds us that Boyzie Cekwana, a major figure in the world of dance in South Africa, is much more than a maker of shows: he is a look-out who never tires of questioning society and denouncing its changes when they attack rights and freedom.

## BOYZIE CEKWANA

Boyzie Cekwana was born in 1970 in Soweto, South Africa, where he began his career as a dancer. At age 19, he joined Adel Blank's company. Four years later, he was spotted by the artistic director of the Playhouse Dance Company, who hired him as a dancer, but also as choreographer-in-residence. In 1995, he created Brother, Brother, which was awarded a prize at the Third International Ballet and Choreography Competition in Helsinki, Finland. Two years later, he created African Odyssée, produced with help from the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. That same year, he founded his own company, Floating Outfit Project, based in Durban. In 1999, he was awarded first prize at the third Biennale des rencontres chorégraphiques africaines et de l'Océan Indien in Antananarivo, in Madagascar. Over the past 20 years, this artist who has always seen art and political engagement as going hand in hand and is regularly invited throughout the world, has become a key actor in the creation of a regional artistic network in Southern Africa, and has created a body of work at once lucid, political, and critical. Many of his works are now part of the repertoire of prestigious companies like the Ballet de Lorraine, the Scottish Dance Theatre, or the Washington Ballet.

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

# INTERVIEW WITH BOYZIE CEKWANA

**Your latest creation stages the fall of a tyrant reigning on an imaginary country: Kakfontein. What does that name mean?**

**Boyzie Cekwana**: The play originally had a subtitle, *Make Africa dance again*, because I started thinking about this project during the Presidential campaign in the United States. Subverting this populist slogan was a way for me to say that African dance refuses to conform to those ideas. It was a sort of provocation. The subtitle slowly disappeared as we built the show. In South Africa, many villages and small towns bear names ending in *fontein*, fountain. Literally, *Kakfontein* means Fountain of shit. This trivial metaphor means that my country, although four times the size of France, is no more than a small town. At first, the South African project of democracy born in the years following the end of apartheid was glorious and carried huge hopes. But with the current administration, that project has been steadily eroding. And with it, the greatness of South Africa.

**What was the starting point for this new creation?**

My discontent. I live in a country where over the past ten years, under the initiative of the government, the democratic project has been abandoned, the social contract torn up. And I see the same situation occurring everywhere in the world, in France, in the Netherlands, and not only in the United States. This situation has been made possible by the rise of populists whose strategy is to muzzle any dissidence. I think it's no different from what happened in Germany in the 1930s. The similarity I see is the way the democratic project is being subverted today by those new cults of personality which, in my opinion, lead to dictatorship, substitute tyranny for democracy. I needed to respond to that situation with art.

**You share the stage with musicians and a video artist. It's not the first time several disciplines have come together in one of your shows. The last few ones seem to have been evolving more and more towards a form open to dance, but also to theatre and performance…**

I dance, I write my texts, I work on the music, I even play music sometimes: what I'm looking for is to use all my skills in service of a project. I wouldn't be able to say if my work is evolving in one direction or another. It doesn't concern me, or it's out of my control. When I work, I always pay attention to my body and to the space around it, even if it is important to put that in perspective with other artistic dimensions. I don't see myself only as a dancer or performer. What I'm interested in is to work on something that breaks down the borders between disciplines. That's why I've been working for a long time now with artists from widely different horizons.

**Music plays an important part in the show. You've described it as a "sound lanscape." What was working on it like?**

The sound landscape of the show was imagined based on musical styles that were once popular in South Africa and have since faded into obscurity. Marabi music debuted in the 1920s and was primarily played in *shebeens*, township clandestine bars. It became more popular in the 1930s and '40s, when jazz bands started playing it. Right from the start, that music was deemed dangerous by the authorities. Today, it is seen as the matrix for all South African black music. Mbaganga (literally, the poor man's stew) was originally dubbed *township jive*. Appearing in the 1950s and '60s, this musical style brought together sounds from traditional Zulu, Xhosa, and Sotho music, but used electric instruments. It was supplanted by pop music in the 1970s, before coming back in the 1980s after incorporating rock influences. As a child, I heard a lot of mbaganga, a music that's very specific to South Africa and not as popular today. As for marabi music, it has completely disappeared, except for the musicians of *Kakfontein*, whose work is still very connected to that style. Originally, both marabi and mbaganga songs were about intimate and personal things, but also about society. Here, I kept the music and added my own texts, wrote my own songs. In a way, through the disappearance of those musical styles from the South African cultural landscape, I tried to establish a parallel with democracy, which is also disappearing from our modern societies throughout the world. In the show, the music takes up the whole space, acting a little like an electric charge.

**A charge. We could say the same of your entire civic-minded body of work, begun over 20 years ago now, which deals as much with the ravages of AIDS and the disaster that are health policies in South Africa as with globalisation, child abuse, rape, or modern slavery. Can you tell us more about your life and career?**

I grew up in Soweto during the apartheid regime in a single parent household; we didn't have enough money for me to go to university, but I was granted a scholarship to study dance. I'd like to recall the context in which I experienced my first few years as a dancer. Society was divided into four racial groups: Whites, Indians, Coloured, and African Blacks. Even if blacks were represented in South African contemporary dance, we weren't the majority, and above all we couldn't decide the subjects we'd tackle or even the direction of artistic projects. We were like children, reduced to silence. From 1992 to 1995, I was part of the *Playhouse Dance Company*, then located in Durban, which was very different from the structures I'd known since then. I'd just created two shows, *Recollections* and *Cast your fate to the wind*. In the first one, I took stock of my childhood, while in the second, I tried to understand what my future would be like. It's at that time I realised I wanted to speak for myself. I knew that I was no longer just a dancer, I was also a choreographer, and I wanted to be independent. Everything was changing in my country at that time, too. And when the first democratic elections took place, we knew that society was about to change, even if we didn't know how or what it was going to turn into. My work over the past few years has always been motivated by the history in which I exist, that of South Africa today, but also of colonialism, slavery, etc. Within that society, I haven't always had the freedom to express myself, to turn my ideas into reality. It's something I see happening more and more in the world today: the people are more and more reduced to silence. I think my professional history is inseparable from the society in which I live and which I watch change all the time.

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Interview conducted by Francis Cossu and translated by Gaël Schmidt-Cléach.