

## AND...

### FOCUS ON SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

*The Last King of Kakfontein*, Boyzie Cekwana, July 17-23,  
La Chartreuse de Villeneuve lez Avignon

*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 Serge Aimé Coulibaly, July 23 at 16:30  
Site Louis Pasteur Supramuros de l'Université d'Avignon

### CINEMATIC TERRITORIES

*Finding Fela!* by Alex Gibney, encounter with Serge Aimé Coulibaly,  
July 22 at 14:00, Utopia-Manutention

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

## TOUR DATES AFTER THE FESTIVAL

- August 8-9, 2017, Theaterfestival  
Boulevard, 's-Hertogenbosch  
(Netherlands)
- August 11-12, Tanz im August, Berlin  
(Germany)
- August 17-19, Internationales  
Sommerfestival Kampnagel, Hamburg  
(Germany)
- September 27, Les Francophonies en  
Limousin, Limoges
- October 3-4, Vooruit Arts Centre, Gand  
(Belgium)
- October 6-7, Torinodanza Festival, Turin
- October 10, Tandem Douai Arras  
Scène nationale, Douai
- October 15, One dance week Festival,  
Plovdiv (Bulgaria)
- October 18, Cultuurcentrum Brugge,  
Bruges (Belgium)
- October 21, Stadsschouwburg - Utrecht  
(Netherlands)
- October 25-27, Onassis Cultural Center,  
Athens (Greece)
- January 13, 2018, La Filature Scène  
nationale, Mulhouse
- January 16-19, Le Tarmac, Paris
- January 20, La Ferme du Buisson Scène  
nationale de Marne-la-Vallée, Noisiel
- February 3, Théâtre de Cornouaille,  
Scène nationale de Quimper
- February 6-8, La Coursive Scène  
nationale, La Rochelle
- February 10, Le Volcan Scène nationale,  
Le Havre
- February 15, Le Manège Scène  
nationale, Maubeuge
- February 24, Stadsschouwburg,  
Groningen (Netherlands)
- February 28, Zuiderstrand Theater,  
The Hague (Netherlands)
- March 7-8, Théâtre de Namur (Belgium)
- March 10, Rotterdamse Schouwburg,  
Rotterdam
- March 13-15, La Rose des Vents,  
Scène nationale, Villeneuve-d'Ascq
- March 16, Stuk Kunstencentrum, Leuven  
(Belgium)
- March 20, L'Apostrophe Scène nationale  
Cergy-Pontoise et du Val d'Oise
- March 23, Théâtre Jean Vilar de Vitry-  
sur-Seine
- April 6-7, Teatro Central, Seville (Spain)
- April 11, Teatro Alhambra, Grenada
- April 17-18, Pôle Sud CDCN, Strasbourg
- June 12-13, Les Théâtres de la ville  
de Luxembourg

## KALAKUTA REPUBLIK

Immobility as an introduction, with six dancers on the stage. Soon they are joined by a seventh. And from that number, which could define an order and impose absolutes, explode frenetic races and endless marches that are like so many angry metaphors for an urgent desire to live... The stage then starts to look a lot like the Shrine, that mythical, hybrid place, at once temple and night club, where Fela Kuti used to sing his hope and his revolt after praying with the audience. For Kalakuta Republik, Serge Aimé Coulibaly, the Burkinabé choreographer, draws inspiration from the music and the scandalous life of the Nigerian singer and musician, a politically-active artist who, from a stage-soapbox, angrily denounced the corruption of power, sexism, inequalities, and multinational corporations. Kalakuta Republik is the name he'd given to his residence, in the suburb of Lagos, a place he saw as an independent republic. A herald of counterculture in West Africa, Fela Kuti and his personality, his engagement, his revolts, and his revolutionary afrobeat, are at the heart of what inspired this show, which focuses on the unquenchable thirst for freedom of today's youth in Burkina Faso. *Kalakuta Republik* isn't a biography of Fela Kuti, nor is it a musical show based on his work. It is an exploration of artistic engagement and of the position adopted by politically-minded artists in today's society. For Serge Aimé Coulibaly, dance is a march, and marching is a transformation: "*marchers who come to a country will contribute to the building of that country for a long time to come. That is the reality of humanity, its hope.*"

## SERGE AIMÉ COULIBALY

Serge Aimé Coulibaly was born in 1972 in Bobo-Dioulasso, the economic capital of Burkina Faso. In 1993, with no prior training, he joined the company Feeren, directed by Amadou Bourou, who gave him a part in a show only two months after his arrival. A gifted dancer, he performed in many shows before starting to work on his own choreographies. In 1998, he designed the choreography for the opening ceremony of the Africa Cup of Nations. He moved to Europe in 2001, where his path crossed Nathalie Cornille's in Lille and Claude Brumachon's in Nantes, before he joined les ballets C. de la B. in Belgium, giving remarkable performances in Alain Platel's *Wolf* and Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui's *Tempus Fugit*. In 2002, he founded the company Faso Danse Théâtre, and created his first solo, *Minimini*. Since then, he has created nine other shows, including *A Benguer* (2006), *Solitude d'un Homme Intègre* (*Loneliness of an Honest Man*, 2007), and *Nuit blanche à Ouagadougou* (*Sleepless Night in Ouagadougou*, 2014). With their critical look at modern Africa, the West, and their shared history, Serge Aimé Coulibaly's undoubtedly political shows have sometimes been called visionary; they question in real time the hopes of an African youth he accompanies in all its endeavours, including its revolutions.

71<sup>st</sup>  
EDITION

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



# INTERVIEW WITH SERGE AIMÉ COULIBALY

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**Your creations are often praised for their direct connection to life in Burkina Faso. Was there a specific event that led to the creation of this show?**

**Serge Aimé Coulibaly** : In 2014, a new revolution broke out in Burkina Faso. The Burkinabé people refused yet another change to the constitution, which would have allowed Blaise Compaoré, then President of Burkina Faso, to stand for a fifth term. He had already spent 27 years in power. The youth and artists of Burkina Faso played a key part in that revolt. But we wanted much more than a simple change, we demanded hope. Corruption was such that it was impossible to undertake any kind of project without having close ties to power. Today, even if those in power haven't changed, things aren't quite as stagnant, and people are vigilant, ready to defend their rights. In this context, I believe that it is important for artists to be socially and politically active.

**Did those beliefs give you the idea to create a show revolving around the music of Fela Kuti, the herald of Nigerian counterculture and resistance?**

Two years ago, when I started my research, I only knew the myth of Fela. I left to follow in his footsteps in Nigeria in order to experience his reality, to see the world in which he lived by visiting the key places of his life, by meeting part of his family. That journey also allowed me to free myself, to put some distance between me and that mythical figure. I tried to understand the mechanisms that turned that man into a rebellious, politically-engaged artist. Fela Kuti made no concession. He was a brave man who never gave up. That aspect of his character inspired this creation, which experiments with a form of direct and violent dance which never stops. What I want to see here is a dancer who catches my attention, who gives me the impression that he's speaking with his body, never stopping, for it is from this endless movement that the story and the choreographic engagement of the show are born.

**Are those questions echoed in your treatment of Fela Kuti's music, which is completely reinterpreted in the second part of the show?**

I spent over a year listening to Fela Kuti's discography, before choosing a few songs I then used during rehearsals. Things started to become clearer then. I wanted to create different atmospheres. That's when I started working with Yvan Talbot, the composer, asking him to modernise Fela, so to speak. Yvan's music is festive, popular, it makes you want to dance, but it's also violent, the same way hard rock can be. There's a little madness to it as well.

**How did you work with your dancers?**

For this show, I started by bringing together part of the team that worked on my previous show, *Nuit Blanche (Sleepless Night)*, because I'd already started exploring with them a form of direct communication with which I wanted to experiment further. The other performers quickly joined us.

We rehearsed partly in Brussels, Lyon, and Ouagadougou, but also in Bobo-Dioulasso, my home town, where I've funded with what I've earned as an artist a community centre called Ankata, which literally means Let's go! I asked them to surprise me. I always want to be surprised, maybe that's why a lot of my work with the dancers is based on improvisation, on things that come up when I ask them questions. For instance, I asked them for what, or for whom, they would be ready to sacrifice themselves, or not. But when I'm creating, I also have very specific ideas in mind, like the idea of urgency here, which was one of the main engines of the show. What does the physical urgency of a dancer look like? What does it mean? As a human being today, what is urgent to say? How should we act, react? Within all that, I tried to build a story.

**How did you imagine the physical space of the show?**

For six months, I worked with my scenographer and my video designer to create different atmospheres. But the set evolved, because we tried different things during rehearsals. We tried to create a place that might look futuristic, a no man's land, completely undefined. A place in which could appear images of the world, but also of our future. The first part, in black and white, is the world of today, the fear, violence, and indifference that always seem to catch up to us. It reminds us that everything is connected, that what's happening far away from us can also have a real impact on our own lives. The second part, in colour, is a little about the ugliness of the world, as we are in a place of decadence. It serves to reveal the ugliness of the world, its absurdity, its madness. It's a private place where the brutality of the world catches up to you. Moving from black and white to colour is also an artistic and aesthetic marker. It's one of the steps in the evolution of history, that of cinema and television, for instance. It's also a metaphor to say that situations of war can also contain hope. For the scenography, we mostly drew our inspiration from the Shrine. It was a temple where Fela prayed with the audience, but also a night club in which he performed shows. It was a place in which echoed at once hope and the ugliness of the world, a place conducive to political awakening. The walls of the Shrine were covered in sentences, words, and images. The text projected onto the stage will be a combination of sentences that could have been said by Fela, or by Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek. They aren't truths, but disturbing ideas. The goal of those sentences isn't to calm you down but to provoke you, to make you think. They trigger a reaction, just like the stock footage we also use: images from NASA that show American drones in action, scenes of destruction, crowds of refugees marching, trying to escape war. There's always, somewhere, people marching towards what they hope will be a better future. To me, it's the march of the world, the nature of humanity. What's great about marching is that it has the capability to change the world. The march itself is transformation: the marchers who come to a country will contribute to the building of that country for a long time to come. That is the reality of humanity, its hope. It's also the topic of this show, which is a sort of endless march or trance.

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Interview conducted by Francis Cossu and translated by Gaél Schmidt-Cléach