

AFRICA SIMPLY THE BEST

**The three best dance solos from Africa
selected by a jury led by Serge Aimé Coulibaly**



The origins of the project

ANKATA is a residence created by Serge Aimé Coulibaly in Bobo-Dioulasso (Burkina Faso), a place dedicated to performing arts creations. Young dancers, choreographers and storytellers perform there, alongside directors, musicians and singers. In its four years of existence, ANKATA has become the incubator for several performances by artists from Burkina Faso and other countries of the world.

In 2015 Serge Aimé COULIBALY, created the first edition of the Bobo- Dioulasso solo choreography competition entitled Simply The Best, in which young dancers and choreographers from different cities in Burkina Faso participated.



Award ceremony – Simply the best 2015

In 2016, the second edition of Simply The Best extended and opens to the whole of West Africa. Seven finalists from four countries in the Sub-Saharan region were initially selected, representing Burkina Faso, Mali, Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal in the competition.

Fatoumata BAGAYOGO from Mali became the second winner of Simply The Best thanks to her project "Fatou did everything for you," followed by Florent NIKIEMA and Adonis NEBIE, both from Burkina Faso. A special jury prize was awarded to Tidiani N'Diaye (Mali) for his solo.

On 23 March 2017, the Grande Halle de la Villette in Paris presented the 3 winning soloists as part of the Festival 100%. It became clear that this set, made up of the 3 solos, needed more work in dramaturgy. The Swiss festival Steps (co-producer of Simply The Best) welcomed Simply The Best in May 2018 for 5 dates, and the 3 solos were performed on 25, 29 and 30 April and 3 and 5 May 2018 in Bellinzona, Geneva, Lucerne and Zurich.

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Fatou t'a tout fait – Fatoumata Bagayoko- Simply The Best 2016

In two editions, "Simply the Best" has proven itself through the quality of the choreographies that have emerged, the visibility gained by the winners, and how their work resonated with a variety of audiences.

From now on, a more ambitious programme is being set up around the competition. A contemporary coaching project in dance and theatre will systematically constitute the second stage of the project, which will culminate in the presentation of the solos of the winners at an international level.

Africa Simply the Best, the three stages

The third edition of the competition in 2019 was open to the African continent without restriction, which explains the new title Africa Simply The Best. Opening the field of the competition to the whole of Africa offered a unique place of encounter and confrontation between young creators with artistic backgrounds as rich as they are divergent.

1. The competition

The competition took place from 7 to 11 May 2019 in Bobo-Dioulasso (Burkina Faso). The jury, led by Serge Aimé Coulibaly, chose the three best dance solos, among the 14 selected.

2. Coaching

The three laureates were then invited in December 2019 to Bamako for intensive coaching to perfect their solos.

3. The tour

From April 2020, Africa Simply the Best, Africa's three best dance solos, is available for touring until 2021.

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The winners of 2019



The winners of Africa Simply The Best 2019: Agathe Djokam, Zora Snake, Charlemagne K Kabore

Trailer: <https://vimeo.com/363934912>

ZORA SNAKE (Cameroon) - *Le Départ*

Le Départ is an act of decision: that of committing oneself to the world. It is the pivotal moment of action. It is the present moment, breaking with a past made up of constantly met difficulties and dreams, and opening towards an accessible future. "Departure" also means that changes are possible in my country, as well as in my continent. This departure is not a departure towards another place, carrying within it the dream of an escape, or desertion, it is an act of reconstruction to face hope. Starting from a proffered text and linked to the taut body, the words of commitment will be mixed with a choreographic language, reflecting what is happening nowadays in our societies corroded by an unjust system. It is a question of overcoming the frustrations that constantly surround us.

Creation: 2017
Duration: 35 min
Production: Production Campagne Zora Snake
Co-productions: Institut français de paris, La cité de la danse Le Triangle (France) Centre de développement chorégraphique La Briqueterie (France), Compagnie d'Acétés (France)
With the support of the French Institute of Yaoundé (Cameroon), CDC La termitière (Burkina Faso), CNAR Ateliers Frappaz (France), Festival Sens Interdits (France), Ecole des sables (Senegal), Ankata (Burkina Faso), Festival Mantsina sur scène (Congo Brazzaville).



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Biography:

Born in 1990, Snake, (AKA Tejeutsa Zobel Raoul), is a Cameroonian dancer and performer, founder of the Zora Snake company and the international festival MODAPERF in several cities in Cameroon. Winner of the Discovery Prize of the Goethe Institute in 2015 with his first solo *Je suis*, winner of the French Institute's "visa pour la création 2017" and 1st prize Acogny d'or at the choreographic competition Africa simply the best in 2019 for his second solo *Le Départ*, Snake made a remarkable entry on the international scene through his inventive creations and street performances in Africa and around the world.

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He is a dancer who mixes hip-hop with deconstructed ritual but also other artistic disciplines linked to his work of commitment of the body (theatre, performance...), reinventing an identical form of choreographic writing by appropriating the public space as a source of inspiration.

He carries out his different projects thanks to his multiple international collaborations (Germany, France, Slovenia, Switzerland, Burkina-Faso - Cameroon).

AGATHE DJOKAM (Cameroon) - *Who's next?*

Who's next? is a creative piece that questions the body and mind of each individual who must face the loss of a loved one, exploring the different stages of mourning. Between shock, anger, memories, depression, acceptance and rebirth, dancer Djokam Tamo Agathe opts for a lively setting where the audience's experiences make the dance.

Premiere: 2017

Duration: 30 min.

Credits: Project conceived within the framework of the training in traditional and contemporary dances of Africa under the direction of Patrick Acogny at the Ecole des sables (Toubab Dialaw - Senegal - 2016/17) and the program "Visa for creation 2017" of the French Institute. Residencies Choreographic Centre Pôle en scène / Pôle Pik (France - May 2018) - Donko seko (Mali - Oct-Nov 2017), the cities of Douala, Yaoundé, Baham and Foubam (Cameroon 2016/17).



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Biography:

Born in 1990, noticed in hip hop and anchored in her Djibi-Badjep technique, member of the New Generation Crew (Break Dance group), the Cameroonian Djokam Tamo Agathe graduated in traditional and contemporary African dance at the Ecole Des Sables in Senegal. She attended a number of workshops to reinforce her experience (National Dance Centre, the Ménagerie de Verre, l'Espace 1789, La Place, Micadanse, ...). She was in charge of the artistic direction dance at the Douala Hip Hop Festival 2018 (Cameroon), and presented her solo dance project *A qui le tour?* at the international festival JULIDANS 2018 in Amsterdam. With this solo, she won 2nd prize at the pan-African competition Africa Simply the best (Burkina Faso) in May 2019.

She was invited by many festivals in Africa and Europe (Les Invités de Villeurbanne in France, Duo Solo in Senegal, Fari Foni Waati in Mali, Kinani in Mozambique, Solo dance theater in Germany...).

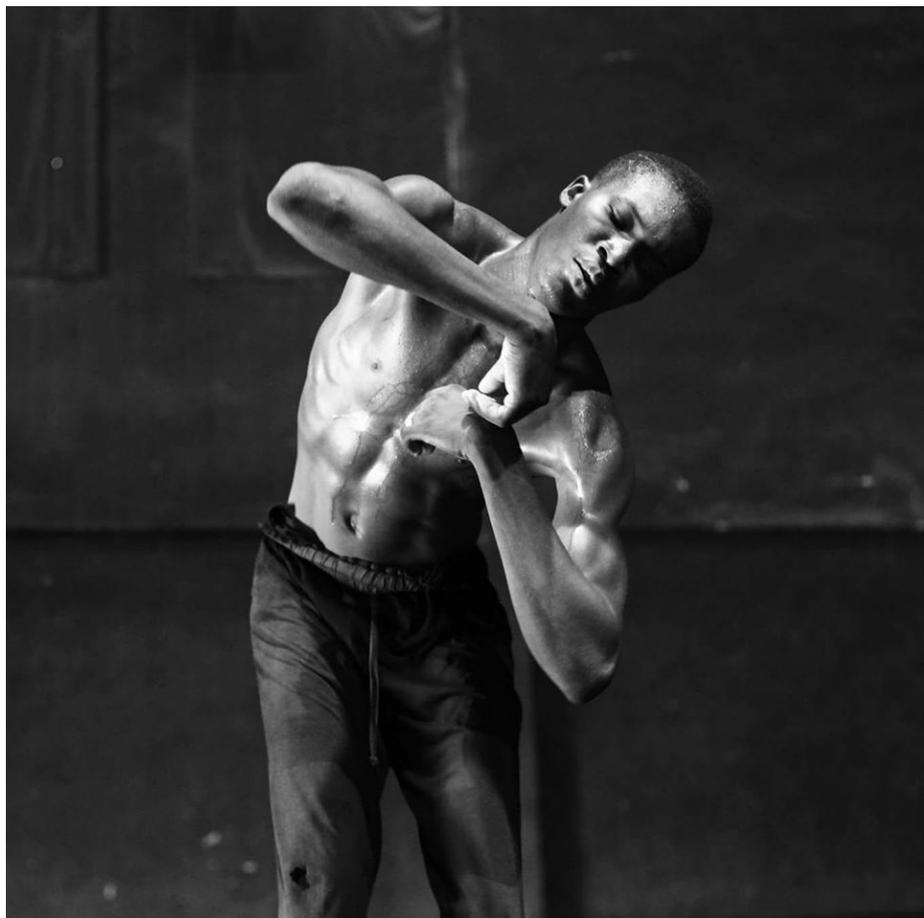
CHARLEMAGNE KEVIN KABORE (Burkina Faso) - *Corps en mutation*

Corps en mutation is above all a reflection on the human being in its diversity, similarities, fears, challenges, convictions, fragility, beauty and cruelty.

This human being, if he were not constrained by his contradictions, perhaps he would not have hatred, intolerance and conflict, and without conflict there would be no mutated and bruised body...

On stage Charlemagne uses ash and laterite clay. The ash limits his space, but it is also a symbol of purification and protection in his culture and in some cultures in Africa. The trace of ash or ash dust represents an existence and a continuity of life, the bridge between the world of the living and the world of the dead.

Creation: 2017
Duration: 30 min.



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Biography:

Born in 1993, Charlemagne Kevin Kaboré flirts with theatre, traditional dance and hip hop at a very early age, without knowing exactly how and where to become professional. He started his own solo in 2012. As he met new people, he started training at the CDC La termitière in Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso) with Salia Sanou and Seydou Boro from 2014. He perfected his art and continued to feed his curiosity by following courses and workshops in contemporary dance (Bienvenue Bazié, Andreyu Ouamba, Kettly Noël, Marcel Gbefe...) and in hip hop dance (Cie Extra fashion, Jeanne Galoua, Marion Alzieu). He started a collaboration with Ladji Koné and danced in several of his choreographies.

Since 2017, he is regularly invited to creations and festivals on the continent and he won the 3rd prize of the panafrikan competition Africa Simply the best (Burkina Faso) in May 2019 with his solo.

ESTHER ESSIEN (Nigeria) - *Just me*

Special prize "Yongonlon" best hope

Just me talks about loneliness, how we face challenges, pain, struggles, domination, success...

From childhood we try to understand how to go through the stages of life and growth, despite the limits imposed by society. How do we build encouragement and inner strength?

As children, we have aspirations and desires for greatness that can make us geniuses, but as we grow up, it is our parents, society and school that build us up to be safe, not to be in danger, to be afraid of the unknown. Yet we know that our greatness lies in taking risks, but all the lessons we learn as we grow up keep us away from our childhood desires and aspirations.

"Just Me is the struggle I am going through to awaken my childhood. Esther Essien is accompanied by Oyebisi Tosin Akinboye, bassist and sound designer.

Premiere: 2017
Duration: 15 min.



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Biography:

Dancer, choreographer, actress, percussionist, singer, researcher, Esther Essien has many different artistic feathers in her cap and travels the African continent and farther with an unquenchable curiosity and thirst for exchanges. Since 2010, she has continued to multiply her training experiences and professional collaborations. She evolved alongside Qudus Onikeku, became an entrepreneur and co-artistic director of "Tantolun productions", and also one of the organizers of "As'tele Hangout" ...

Esther Essien is a prolific artist who likes to travel unconventional paths.

A l'origine du projet, Serge Aimé Coulibaly



Serge Aimé Coulibaly is a dancer and choreographer from Burkina Faso. He was born in Bobo Diou-lasso, and has worked in Europe and the rest of the world since 2002. His inspiration is rooted in African culture and his art is committed to the necessity of powerful contemporary dance. A dance rooted in emotion but also the bearer of reflection and hope. His vigorous expressiveness makes his work universal and finds a response on several continents. Since he set up his *Faso Dance Théâtre* company in 2002, Serge Aimé Coulibaly has been exploring complex themes, with the desire to offer young people a genuine positive dynamism. His productions have been presented in many theatres all over Europe and Africa and also been invited to several festivals. These include *Kalakuta Republik* (2016), *Nuit Blanche à Ouagadougou* (2014), *Fadjiri* (2013), *Khokuma 7° Sud* (2011), *Babemba* (2008), *Solitude d'un Homme Intègre* (2007), *A Benguer* (2006), *Minimini* (2002).

His open view of the world and of differences, which he always questions, plus his constructive energy and will to persevere, has led to collaboration with several other artists since the beginning of his career. He regularly works on international productions, both as a performer and choreographer. He worked with Moïse Touré (*La Maladie de la Mort*, 2015), with Marrukegu Company in Australia (*Cut the Sky*, 2014 and *Burning Daylight*, 2009), with Farid Berki (*Double Jeu*, 2013), with Julie Dossavi (*Cross and Share*, 2012), with Alain Platel (*(C)OEURS*, 2012 and *Wolf*, 2003), with Kalpana Raghuraman (*I lost my English*, 2008) and with Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui (*Tempus Fugit*, 2004).

Serge Aimé Coulibaly's work, always in motion and fuelled by curiosity and generosity, has aroused the interest and confidence of a great many organisations. In addition, his desire and will to share his knowledge has led him to make dance

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pieces for amateur dancers. During his artistic training with the *FEEREN* company in Burkina Faso, headed by Amadou Bourou, and afterwards in his time at Le Centre National Chorégraphique de Nantes, under Claude Brumachon, Serge Aimé Coulibaly was able to develop his talent and personal tastes and then transfer them into art. He aims to develop an original creativity and involves the dancers and choreographers who attend his masterclasses in questioning their responsibility as performing artists and the power of the vocabulary that has a significance in their role as citizens.

To provide a place for experimentation and concrete reflection for his creations and his concept of artistic commitment, Serge Aimé Coulibaly set up *Ankata* in Bobo Dioulasso, Burkina Faso: an international laboratory for research and production in the performing arts. It's open to everyone and is a cross-roads for exchanges between different continents, disciplines and communities with the common aim of inventing the future.

The workplace



ANKATA means "forward" in Dioula, and this space, designed and built as a laboratory, a place of work and life, of experimentation with all possibilities, is exactly that: an exhortation to move forward, to reinvent one's environment, a fertile desire to make demands.

It is part of a global project: if artistic practices are the vibrating heart of it, they do not overshadow the very concrete problems and are also a pretext to make this place a crossroads where social and citizen links are built, as well as responsible economic development, and concern and respect for a singular local ecology.

Beyond the emotional bond that unites Serge Aimé and Bobo Dioulasso, the choice of this city for the establishment of ANKATA takes its meaning from the very history of the region. Long regarded as the economic and cultural engine of Burkina Faso, the capital of the Hauts Bassins is today suffering from a form of creative slumber, apart from a few bursts of excitement for events that have been in place for a long time, due to a lack of audacity and effective investment by the political powers.

ANKATA was born out of the desire to restore the city to its full potential by offering it a space where life and creativity circulate and are nourished.

Several lines of development are already in place:

- A place for artistic production and creation, with a strong desire to be multidisciplinary and open to dance, theatre, music, plastic arts and digital arts, in order to encourage artistic encounters and creative abundance. Its mission is to welcome artists in residence from Burkina Faso, Africa or the whole world and offer them the opportunity to benefit from a technical and human environment conducive to work.

- As a place of research and training, it opens a necessary space and time to think about this demanding and complex profession, by confronting experiences and opinions, in order to better take into account the contemporary artistic reality and to open the possibilities of collaborations, both local and international. Among the many threads of reflection, the link with the public and the need to initiate it to these artistic practices from which it too often feels excluded is a questioning that is always reworked.

- A place for dialogue and education, ANKATA seeks to develop the public's desire and taste for contemporary creation, through collaborations with schools, teachers and students of all ages, but also by opening its doors to everyone, from the enlightened amateur to the curious neophyte; artist residencies can then become a moment of free discussion restitution, which not only shows a creative work in progress, in research and doubt, but also encourages dialogue with the artist. From this time of exchange is born a sharing and a closeness capable of making contemporary creation penetrate more deeply into the daily life of citizens.

Serge Aimé Coulibaly deeply anchors his project in Burkina Faso, with the will to enhance its artistic and human richness and to give it back its cultural nobility and dynamism.

However, thanks to his international experience and the wealth of the encounters he has made, he is currently working to include the laboratory in a dense network of collaborations, at a global level; thanks to this opening to diversity, the laboratory will be able to offer artists and the African public access to other knowledge, for a beneficial and invigorating creative renewal.

The organization of the Solo Choreographic Competition of Bobo Dioulasso Africa Simply The Best is a high point in the life of ANKATA: it is an opportunity to make its philosophy more widely known, to affirm its will to bring real changes to contemporary creation and to show the ambition and the requirement that it nourishes for the development of arts in Africa.



Coproduction

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