

# KALAKUTA REPUBLIK

A choreographic creation of Serge Aimé Coulibaly



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**Triennale de la danse in Ouagadougou (BF)**

**World Première on February 15th, 16th and 17th 2017**

**in Halles de Schaerbeek, Brussels (BE)**



# KALAKUTA REPUBLIK

## Faso Danse Théâtre & Halles de Schaerbeek / Serge Aimé Coulibaly

Inspired by Fela Kuti, the Nigerian composer, saxophonist, conductor, political activist and inventor of Afrobeat, the Belgian-Burkinan choreographer Serge Aimé Coulibaly has created a new performance in which politics is more than just a vague dramaturgical undertone.

There are six dancers on stage, and this soon becomes seven. From them burgeons an endless series of variations of figures and movements, which serve as metaphors for the compelling urgency to live... A political reflection that races through the body. A language of movement marked by the traditional repertoire, by grooving in nightclubs and by jazz, but which ultimately becomes an entirely new dance that dashes onward, unencumbered by its origins.

The stage setting alludes both to our current political and social world and to the Shrine, a hybrid and mythical place, both temple and nightclub, where Fela Kuti sang about hope and uprising after saying a prayer with his audience. Kalakuta Republic was the name of his residence, which was located on the outskirts of Lagos and which he regarded as an independent republic. The spirit of Fela, figurehead of the opposition in West Africa and a source of inspiration for many, is a central thread running through this performance.

Serge Aimé Coulibaly himself plays the role of the narrator. Does he identify with Fela Kuti? Or is he simply himself, a committed artist caught up in a troubled world and simultaneously impressed by the effect of today's young Burkinans' boundless longing for freedom, which has led to a major revolution?

As Slavoj Žižek has been warning the many anti-government movements for years: it is not particularly difficult to whip up a crowd and to shout that things have to change. The important thing is what happens on the day after the uprising.

*Kalakuta Republik* is neither a biography of Fela Kuti, nor a musical showcasing the musician's work. It is a thrilling study of artistic engagement and what this can set in motion. A performance with an infectious energy. A little piece of Africa without clichés. An Africa in a globalised world to which Serge Aimé Coulibaly and his generation of artists are committed and to which they want to draw attention.

## THE CREATION

The commitment of an artist to his world, his society, the world in general. The obligation to take a position and express himself, even when the message is not popular. This idea is at the basis of the entire oeuvre of Serge Aimé Coulibaly.

It is not surprising that this artistic journey crosses the path of Fela Kuti and his art several times. At the beginning of Coulibaly's work Kuti was mainly an inspiration, as his music entered the shows. Now his work and life are the basis of an entire production.

*Kalakuta Republik* is not a biography of Fela Kuti nor an animated concert of his music. Serge Aimé Coulibaly and his artistic team were inspired by this figure to research what artistic commitment might mean today – and more precisely what is the position of this artist once he becomes the leader of a movement.

*“Don't fall in love with yourselves. We have a nice time here. But remember, carnivals come cheap. What matters is the day after, when we will have to return to normal lives. Will there be any changes then” – Slavoj Zizek*

As Slavoj Zizek has been saying over the years to various anti-government movements: it is not so complicated to gather a mass and to shout that things must change, the important thing is what happens the day after the insurrection.

As in all Coulibaly's work, *Kalakuta Republik* does not offer answers but instead puts questions on the table. Which events in the world inspire people to come together and look for alternatives? What makes people seek out charismatic leaders? What is the power that these leaders really have and under which conditions? How much freedom is possible within a movement?

*Kalakuta Republik* has two parts. Part one is literally in black and white, using the perpetual movement of Fela's music as the basis of an exploration of this contemporary "leader". What inspired him? Who were his supporters? What keeps this movement together? The other part uses bright colours and a diverse soundscape to depict decadence as it takes power over the organization, while each individual lives out his or her own delirium.

Which part precedes, and which follows? Is the colour part the carnival of insurrection of which Zizek speaks? Or is it the decadence of the luxurious lives of some that preceded the organized movement of the first part? *Kalakuta Republik* offers no simple answer to this question but makes the exchange of ideas possible and necessary.

After the creation of *Nuit blanche à Ouagadougou*, about an insurrection in an African country, the première of which preceded the departure of ousted president Blaise Compaoré in Burkina Faso by a few days, Serge Aimé Coulibaly continues to explore his theme of the absolute need to change our contemporary world. Where *Nuit blanche à Ouagadougou* speaks clearly about an African society, *Kalakuta Republik* puts the entire globalised world on the table.



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## FELA KUTI – SOURCE OF INSPIRATION

*«I just want to do my part and leave... Not for what they're going to remember you for, but for what you believe in as a man.» - Fela Anikulapo Kuti*

Fela stood for a refusal of ignorance, imbecility, confinement, cynicism and abdication: his controversial choices in life; his music which, far from lulling us to sleep, on the contrary, awakens citizens' consciousness; his innovative thinking; and his festive and profound way of delivering his vision.

The spokesman for a whole generation, making the stage a platform, imprisoned many times for his satirical and sharp political positioning, Fela was truly a model of commitment to his country and to his art.

The music of Fela takes you on a trip. Compositions of up to thirty minutes duration, both simple and complex in structure, reflect both its roots in African soil, and the influences of the jazz clubs of London: this is afrobeat. Fela Kuti's music is not just a search for personal artistic expression, it's also the flagship of his conception of Africa, the emotional synthesis of his political thought. His music is his weapon. A great openness to the world, a vigorous commitment in the lyrics, this music is a rich and deep inspiration for Serge Aimé Coulibaly. Fela is a unique artist: an immense desire for freedom, a sulphurous life, a political consciousness engraved in his body and an absolutely original musicality born of the mix of Africa and the West.

The years spent in London and then in the United States gave him the necessary distance to an understanding of the African continent and the part it was really playing on the *global* political chessboard. A visionary, his ideas and his art are today of a radical modernity and come in total resonance with the actuality of 2017.

*«...when I was first put in jail, the name of my prison cell was 'Kalakuta', and Republic? I wanted to identify myself with someone who didn't agree with the Federal Republic of Nigeria...I was in non-agreement. » - Fela Anikulapo Kuti*

Fela Anikulapo Kuti was the starting point of this choreographic creation. The character fascinates and seduces, his music remains some of the most popular in the world. For Serge Aimé Coulibaly he is a source of inspiration, the summary of how an artist must be in the African context to address the role and place of the artist in society today, to speak of our humanity in a world that changes so quickly.

The personality of Fela, his political commitment to Nigeria – a country whose richly coveted subsoil contrasts with the galloping misery of its people – and the living modernity of his work are ideal starting points for a broader questioning.

What is the place of the artist today in society? What responsibility does the artist have who, through his creations, has inspired a committed following?

How, in a world that changes quickly and generates fear and withdrawal, will consciences open up to differences?



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## THE MUSIC

The musical work of Fela offered the choreographer and dancers a multitude of paths to explore. Its strength, combining beauty and commitment, allows for varied and very expressive developments, ranging from violence, extremities and emergencies, to harmony and fragility.

Musician and composer Yvan Talbot, a great connoisseur of this music, brings out all the singularities. Starting from the influences of Fela, he created a whole new musical universe in relation to the narration of Serge Aimé Coulibaly and the body language of the dancers.



# THE PRESS ABOUT KALAKUTA REPUBLIK

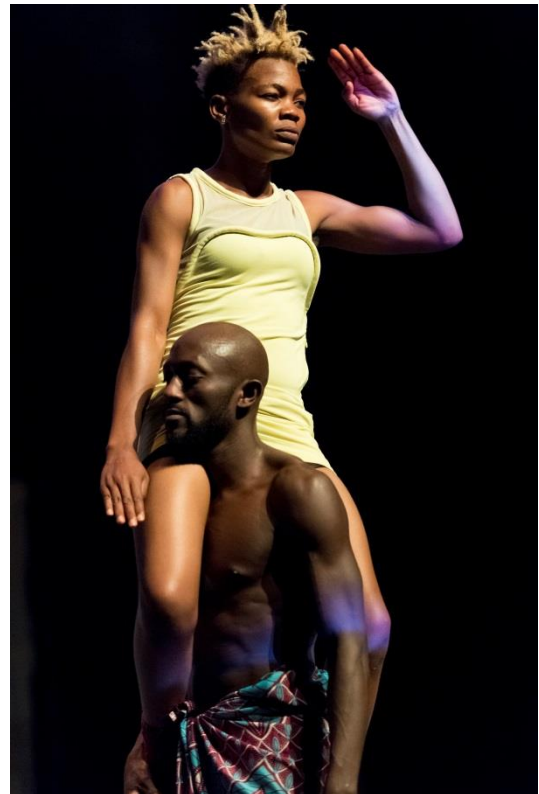
"In *Kalakuta Republik*, Serge Aimé Coulibaly magically combines music, dance and the African revolution." – **Guy Duplat, La Libre Belgique (17/02/2017)**

"A wonderful ramble that exudes both rebelliousness and love."

"*Kalakuta Republik* dances on a volcano, one of lost revolutions and of peoples who will ultimately rebel. The political and poetic performance becomes even more exuberant in the second half, when it celebrates taking the reins in an atmosphere that is reminiscent of a discotheque – or of the end of the world. Some of the scenes are positively magical..." – **Philippe Noisette, Sceneweb.fr (11/03/2017)**

"Dance has triumphed by borrowing elements from all repertoires, just as Fela did (jazz, Yoruba rhythms, funk, etc.) and it lays bare the personality of every member of the company. ... And what is so fascinating here is the 'broken' dance that re-asserts itself time and time again against a backdrop of profound longing."

"This will not be an overtly African performance, but one in which politics is reflected through bodies. One is influenced by the traditional repertoire, another by discotheque-style hip-swinging, yet another by jazz, not to mention the dance that is dreamt up along the way with no awareness of its provenance." – **Marie-Christine Vernay, Délibéré (12/03/2017)**



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## THE ARTISTS

### Serge Aimé Coulibaly

Serge Aimé Coulibaly is a dancer and choreographer from Burkina Faso. He was born in Bobo Dioulasso, 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, rooted in emotion but always 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 Danse Théâtre** company in 2002, Serge Aimé has been exploring complex themes, with the desire to offer young people a genuine positive dynamism. His productions have been presented in many theatres in Europe and Africa and have also been invited to several festivals.

- 2016 **Kalakuta Republik**
- 2014 **Nuit Blanche à Ouagadougou**
- 2013 **Fadjiri**
- 2011 **Khokuma 7° Sud**
- 2008 **Babemba**
- 2007 **Solitude d'un Homme Intègre**
- 2006 **A Benguer**
- 2002 **Minimini**

This 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.

- 2015 **La Maladie de la Mort** (M. Duras). Director: **Moïse Touré** (France)
- 2014 **Cut the Sky**. Marrukegu Company (Australia). Director: **Rachael Swain**
- 2013 **Double Jeu**. Creation for two dancers with **Farid Berki** (France)
- 2012 **Cross and Share**. **Julie Dossavi** (France)
- 2012 **C(h)oeurs**. Les Ballets C de la B. **Alain Platel** (Belgium)
- 2009 **Burning Daylight**. Marrukegu Company (Australia)
- 2008 **I Lost My English**. **Kalpana Raghuraman** (India)
- 2004 **Tempus Fugit**. **Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui** (Belgium)
- 2003 **Wolf**. Les Ballets C de la B. **Alain Platel** (Belgium)

Serge Aimé'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 pieces for amateur dancers.

- 2015 **Gloed.** De Grote Post (Ostend. Belgium). Production for 50 amateur dancers over 50
- 2011 **Opening ceremony for the Championnats d'Athlétisme Juniors.** (Lille. France)
- 2010 **En Attendant l'Indépendance.** Centre for Fine Arts (Brussels)
- 2010 **Fitry.** La Nuit des Musées. Musée de la Piscine (Roubaix. France)
- 2009 **Mappemonde.** CCN Nord-Pas de Calais (**Carolyn Carlson**). Production for 45 amateur dancers. (Roubaix. France)
- 2007 **Sugar.** Liverpool 2008 – European Capital of Culture. (Liverpool. United Kingdom)
- 1999 **Opening ceremony for FESPACO.** (Ouagadougou. Burkina Faso)
- 1998 **Opening ceremony for the African Football Cup.** (Burkina Faso)

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 master-classes in questioning their responsibility as performing artists and the power of the vocabulary that has a significance in their role as citizens.

- 2016 **Lecturer.** Conservatoire Royal de Mons (Belgium)
- 2016 **Lecturer.** National Dance Academy of Rome (Italy)
- 2013 Creation of the 'Lecture-Dance' **Quand Je Danse Je Parle Aussi et Quand Je ne Parle Pas, Je Danse Peut-Être.** This workshop has in the meantime been given on every continent: in Africa (Cameroon, Nigeria, Democratic Republic of Congo, Senegal, Guinea etc.), in Europe (France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy), in Asia (Hong Kong, Bangalore) and America (New York, Philadelphia).
- 2013 **Teacher.** Ecole des Sables. **Germaine Acogny** (Senegal)

To provide a place for experiment and concrete reflection for his creations and his concept of artistic commitment, Serge Aimé set up **ANKATA** in Bobo Dioulasso (Burkina Faso): an International Laboratory for Research and Production in the Performing Arts. It is open to everyone and is a crossroads for exchanges between different continents, disciplines and communities with the common aim of inventing the future.



## **Alain Platel on Serge-Aimé**

*The first time I saw Serge Aimé Coulibaly was at an audition in 2002. I remember thinking at the time that this encounter might be very significant for the future. This was confirmed not long afterwards thanks to our collaboration in two productions by Les Ballets C de la B: Wolf (2003) and C(H)OEURS (2012). Serge always occupied a unique position in his role as a performer. But in the course of the creative process it turned out that he was also a stimulating colleague with ideas, empathy and inspiration.*

*Serge Aimé had other ambitions: to make his own productions, but above all to find out how he could share his European experiences with the population of his native country, Burkina Faso. This cost him a lot of time and money, and also blood, sweat and tears, but ultimately he did set up his own Faso Danse Théâtre.*

*Serge Aimé is one of a generation of fascinating artists who want to build artistic bridges between Europe and the African continent. Not an easy task. It is not a question of materials, logistics or geography, but more a matter of content. How do you find the right balance between reference to a shared history (with all its horrors), the integration of cultural and authentic traditions and establishing foundations in a contemporary discourse? This is an extremely difficult balancing act, but Serge Aimé succeeds in accomplishing it, which can arouse nothing but admiration.*

Alain Platel

## **SAYOUBA SIGUE**

After a childhood spent in Abidjan (Ivory Coast), Sayouba Sigué came back to Burkina for high school and entered the cultural and artistic scene in Ouagadougou. He is trained in traditional and contemporary dances.

Discovered in 2001 by a young Burkinabe choreographer Souleymane Porgo, he joined his company (Téguérer) and was initiated into contemporary dance and afro-contemporary dance. He also benefited from training by several other choreographers with different styles and from different origins. That is how dance went from being an extra-curricular activity to progressively becoming a passion that he chooses today to make his work.

He has performed in many productions with big names in the African dance world such as Irène Tassembédo (in *Souf es*, *Carmen Falinga Awa* and *Le sacre du tempo*), Serge Aimé Coulibaly (in *A Benguer*, *Babemba*, *Nuit Blanche à Ouagadougou* and *Kalakuta Republik*) and Kathrin Wehlisch (*Schiff der Traüme*). Today he lives in Lyon (France) and is creating his own company.

## AHMED SOURA

Born in Banfora, Burkina Faso, a dancer (Break-dance and Pop) and self-taught acrobat even before he was 20, Ahmed trained at the National Institute of Artistic and Cultural Training in Burkina Faso and at the Centre Choreographique National of Montpellier from 2003 to 2007. Then Ahmed joined the Burkinabe company of Irène Tassembédo for five years, touring in Africa and Europe.

In 2010, Ahmed Soura danced and performed in the opera "*Via Intollérenza II*" by Christoph Schlingensief (1st prize for the staging of the Theater Treffen in Berlin in 2011). From 2012, he joined the Opera Ballet Deutsche Oper Berlin with "*Verdi Requiem*", "*Die Liebe zu den drei Orangen*" and "*Das Mädchen mit den Schwefelhölzern*". In August 2013 Ahmed joined the company Christoph Winkler for "*Das wahre Gesicht - ein Stück über den Kapitalismus*" and won the FAUST 2014 award. In the course of 2014, he collaborated with the Swiss company (Berne) Pink Mama Theater with a 2015 tour Poland.

At the same time, he founded KORO / Compagnie Ahmed Soura in Burkina Faso to develop his own choreographic writing and he created solos such as "*A to*", "*Rien ne m'appartient*", "*Ecrazement 100Sens*", "*En opposition avec moi* " (3rd dance prize at Internationalen Tanz-Theater Festival - Stuttgart 2011), "*166*" (second prize at Need to Dance 2013). He regularly teaches contemporary dance courses and traditional dance from Burkina Faso in Germany, France, Switzerland, and Brazil.

## MARION ALZIEU

Born in France in 1987, a very young Marion became passionate about dance in all its forms. She began with hip-hop and ballet, then studied modern dance at the Centre James Carlès in Toulouse. Later, she discovered contemporary dance thanks to workshops with Peter Mika, Olga Cobos and Luc Jacobs.

From 2008 to 2010, she undertook the Coline professional qualification in Istres, where she met several guest choreographers and danced the repertoires of Emanuel Gat, Lisi Esteras, Shlomi Tuizer and Salia Sanou. Having achieved this qualification, she worked as trainee in Emanuel Gat's company. Then she joined Jasmin Vardimon Company in London, and worked with at the Royal Opera House, until 2011.

Forever curious and craving new experiences, in 2011, she completed the professional qualification at the Centre of Choreographic Development (CDC) la Termitière in Ouagadougou for 3 months where she met several African choreographers.

Back in France, Marion joined the Mouvements Perpétuels Company, under the direction of Salia Sanou. Besides being an interpreter in several of her dance pieces, she assisted Salia in creations for children and amateur

dancers. From 2012, she also spent time working in the troupes of Hervé Chaussard (Cie The Will Corporation), Amala Dianor (Kaplan) and Serge Aimé Coulibaly (Cie Faso Danse Theatre).

Alongside her status as interpreter, she developed her own style as a choreographer.

In 2013, she created the duet "*En terre d'attente*" for the Festival OïDF (Burkina) under the direction of Irène Tassembédo. She performed this duet in France in November 2013 in Paris, then, in July 2014 at the Festival Off in Avignon (France).

In 2014, she created the solo "*Ceci n'est pas une femme blanche*". At the same time, she set up her own company: Compagnie Ma'.

### **ANTONIA NAOUELE**

Antonia Naouele, a young Cameroonian dancer and interpreter, was first trained in traditional dances, then subsequently specialized in urban and Afro-urban dances.

Since 2011, Antonia has been trained in contemporary dance with the company Abbé Simon, the choreographers Salia Sanou, Michel Ndjongui, Merlin Nyankam, Serge Aimé Coulibaly, Aida C.Diaz and Farid Berki. She also researched the Stepping technique with the troupe SOUL STEP.

In parallel, she is a dancer and interpreter with the hip-hop dance group FLOOR ART CREW, with the company SOLDIERS X and in the play "*AWINE*" of Hyacinthe TOBIO. These shows took her on tour all over Africa.

### **ADONIS NEBIE**

Born in 1981 in Côte d'Ivoire, Adonis Nébié was trained at the École des Sables of Germaine Acogny in Senegal. He is a dancer and choreographer of the Teguerer Company. He dances in Burkina Faso and contributes to the workshops of the Eolo association.

He has collaborated with numerous choreographers such as Irène Tassembédo, Vera Sander and Serge Aimé Coulibaly on an international level. He created and performed two solos in residence in Dakar and Aix-en-Provence at the Pavillon Noir (Ballet Prejlacaj) in 2013 and 2015.

### **IDA FAHO**

Ida was born in 1990 and began training in the performing arts at only 13 in 2003. She studied theatre and then dance and entered the EDITA dance school in 2009.

She regularly dances in the company of Irène Tassembédo while developing her own projects and training with other choreographers, in Africa, at the Ecole des Sables, but also in Europe, in the Black Pavilion of Angelin Preljocaj.

Her dance has been nourished by all these encounters, and Ida succeeds in harmoniously marrying a powerful gesture, an electrical presence with a lot of gentleness, grace and sensuality.

## **IVAN TALBOT**

For more than 20 years, this musician and percussionist has been possessed by a passion for the traditional music of West Africa. He was intrigued by rare and unusual instruments such as the bolon (three-stringed harp), the Baala drum of Guinée forestière or the n'goni Bissa of Burkina-Faso, and was thus introduced to the practice of these and other traditional instruments.

This strong African footprint enabled Ivan Talbot to connect different worlds through music, collaborating with various musicians and choreographers. Thus, he met the Compagnie Julie Dossavi, of which he became the musical director in 2002. With this artistic team, he signed and co-authored the music of several plays. In 2010, he collaborated on Bouba and realized the original music of the choreographic duo murmures.

In addition to these creative activities, he regularly conducts various training programs, both with young audiences and music students aiming for professional careers.

## **EVE MARTIN**

Since 2006 Eve Martin has worked in various fields of video, film and television. Primarily she is the author of her own works. Her short films include *The Book of Lila* (2008), *Terra Sola* (2012), and *Black Forest* (2014); she also developed the video installation *Invisibles for Mons* (2015). Working with others, she has created video installations for stage performances by Serge Aimé Coulibaly (*Fadjiri*, 2013 and *Kalakuta Republik*), Armel Roussel (*Ondine*), Thierry Debroux (*The titanic doll*, *Les Misérables*, *L'Odysee*, *Les 3 mousquetaires*) and Sybille Wilson (*the master of illusions*).

She has also created and directed numerous music videos and live video installations for Two Star Hotel, Piano club, My little cheap dictaphone, Hollywood Porn stars, Deltron 3030, Yannick Frank, Maax and The summer rebellion. Apart from the development of her own artistic work, she works in the audio-visual world as assistant to the director and director of casting.

Since 2011, she has worked as a designer and set designer for various advertising videos, short and feature films and television series, working for Micha Wald, Bouli Lanners, Delphine Noels, Patrice Toye, Virginie Gourmel, Joachim Lafosse, Fien Troch, Eric Lavaine, Stéphan Kazadjian, Remi Bezançon, Michel Gondry, Brice Cauvin, François Xavier, Benoit Mariage, Tom Darmstaedter, Mathieu Donck and Eric Valette.

# CREDITS

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Serge Aimé Coulibaly

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## **COPRODUCTION**

Maison de la Danse (Lyon), Torinodanza (Turin), Le Manège –Scène nationale de Maubeuge, Le Tarmac - La scène internationale francophone (Paris), Les Théâtres de la ville de Luxembourg, Ankata (Bobo Dioulasso), Les Récréâtrales (Ouagadougou), Festival Africologne (Cologne), De Grote Post (Ostend).

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