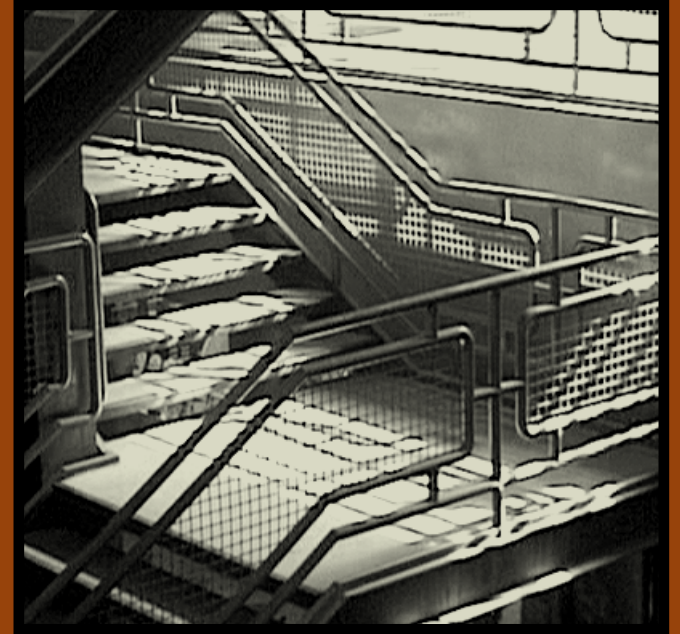


on interculturalism

# roads

crossroads



2

on interculturalism

# cross

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# roads

introduction



This second edition of *Crossroads* is meant as a continuation of *Crossroads 1* and as a working document for the discussion group on Contemporary Dance in Africa at the IETM Plenary Meeting in Birmingham (9 - 12 Oct 2003). As such, it contains three types of contributions: Portraits, Thematic Contributions and Reports.

In the series of "Portraits", *Crossroads 2* continues to present a number of interesting projects, festivals, art schools, companies, venues, etc. that stimulate North-South collaboration in their daily practice. After Shuttle 02 (Denmark/South-Africa), L'École des Sables (Senegal), Festival of the Dhow (Zanzibar) and Dançar o que é Nosso (Portugal/Cape Verde/Mozambique/Brazil), we present in this publication Studios Kabako (RD Congo), the Centre de Développement Chorégraphique de Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso), Afrique en Créations (France and many African countries) and the regional arts networks CACAO/CCAWA (West Africa) and Arts Network Asia (Asia). Although the latter is obviously not an African network, it is a fascinating example of how networking can help to create new dynamics in regional south-south exchange.

Next to the "Portraits", *Crossroads 2* contains the report of the IETM Satellite Meeting held in Brussels during the Africalia African Dance Platform last March.

Finally, *Crossroads 2* includes two texts written in preparation of the Birmingham Meeting. The aim of this meeting is to build upon the results of the meetings of Lisbon (Danças na Cidade, June 2002) and Brussels (Africalia, March 2003), where many problems have been discussed, people have met, points of view have been compared. In Birmingham it is our objective to do one more step

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# cross

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## introduction

and discuss concrete strategies to support the development of contemporary dance in Africa and create the basis for a more regular and balanced artistic exchange between the North and the South. A first text contains a number of crucial reflections about African dance by Ousmane Boundaoné, moderator of the meeting. The second one is a compilation of ideas and proposals taken from previous meetings and from replies to a request directed to the people invited by IETM to participate in the Birmingham meeting.

We thank all contributors to this publication for their valuable participation and hope that *Crossroads 2* may provide interesting lecture and food for thought for our meeting in Birmingham.

Mark Deputter | Editor

# roads

thematic contributions



free reflections on african dance

# roads

o u s m a n e b o u n d a o n é



"Contemporary African dance, traditionally inspired dance, dance of creativeness or creative dance or even trad-contemporary dance": these are a few of the terms used to designate what is known as new African dance. Its very visible development presents all kinds of problems with regard to what name it should be given.

However we should not lose sight of the real issue here. It is worth noting that this difficulty, or more precisely this modesty, reflects an uneasiness or a frame of mind that wants African creations to be given one connotation or another. It is not this debate that interests me, but it is important to understand this uneasiness and the motivations these 'new' creators have, above all how they see themselves, and finally what their aspirations might be.

I would like to limit my reflection in time (starting from "Yennenga" in 1992 by choreographer Irène Tassembédo from Burkina Faso) and in space, that of West Africa, with some references to southern and central Africa.

This contribution makes use of two lines of thought that to my mind illustrate the two tendencies in dance in Africa - two tendencies that seem irreconcilable to me. The first gains strength in this comment from Florent Eustache Hessou, director of the National Ballet of Benin and the Ori Dance Club company. In the magazine *Oriculture*, he says: "*With the Ori Dance Club, dance has become a valuable export product, a product able to generate immeasurable financial resources and so boost development*". The second tendency can be found in an interview with Seydou Boro in *Libération* and reprinted in the programme to the Salia ni Seydou company's latest creation entitled "Weeleni, l'appel". In essence it says: "*We are not breaking*

## free reflections on african dance

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*away from our African heritage. No-one watching our performances can say that we have lost our way or completely changed how we are. We are simply evolving in another way. We are Africans creating."*

We should not feel ashamed to say that dance is currently evolving with these two tendencies which are either expressed or latent, but visible when we attempt to analyse the contents, approaches and aesthetics of choreographic productions. The motivations behind them are just as perceptible when you read the sub-text of notes of intention and other synopses of African productions. Asserting or seeing the logic of dance productions as an 'export product' is to see things from a completely outward-looking 'market' dimension. It has led a distinguished African man of the theatre to say that "African dance is a fashion now", in reply to an assertion wanting to contrast the dynamism of dance with African theatre. The evolution or so-called dynamism of dance does indeed resemble a fashion phenomenon where dubious creators try to rush and benefit from international

grants for production. We are aware of the danger and it can be found in these questions: What place does the local audience have in contemporary African choreographic creation? What importance is attached to this audience when for once they can see a production of the performing arts (apart from music) without having had to attend the Sorbonne or Oxford first (language barrier), a production where for once they do not need to belong to or know about a particular caste or a particular ritual or tradition? What importance is attached to this audience when for once, at last, they could be relied on for being equipped with emotional, sensitive and sensual understanding, thirsting for images and dreams?

Answering these questions would make us hang our heads at the sight of the tour programmes of African choreographic companies whose schedules are filled with trips outside the continent (mainly Europe and the USA). An agonising situation? An inhibitive one? Definitely. However things are not desperate. Very fortunately, creators are showing

us that dance, the kind that has all eyes on it, is far from being a fashion. It is a real movement under construction, a dynamic that is really making itself heard. To justify this reality we want to refer to the determining factors here.

### **Dance: a community**

Today the world of dance in Africa is a community. Little by little, thanks to professional encounters (festivals, competitions and forums) and real aspirations, increasingly African dancers and choreographers are forming a community that wants to share, exchange, pass on, propose and express itself.

The example of Germaine Acogny, from Mudra-Afrique to Jant-Bi and l'Ecole des sables, is proof that dance is a catalyst of energy. Another proof is the example of the younger generation that does not break away from its heritage nor tries to simply return to it, but seeks to "weave the new cord onto the end of this old one", lifting things unto another level. Salia Sanou and Seydou Boro in Burkina Faso, Nganti Towo in Senegal, Opiyo Okach in Kenya, Faustin Linyekula in the DRC to name just a few who, beyond their activity as creators, are

leading the campaign by inventing spaces of expression and passing on their expertise to educate and strengthen the community.

Salia and Seydou have been directing the *Dialogues de corps* encounters in Ouaga since 2000 for training and presenting dance productions. Their centre of choreographic development in Ouagadougou "La Termitière" will be opening its doors in a year to choreographers from West Africa and the whole world. In Dakar, Nganti Towo and her team are expanding the *Kaay fecc* festival admirably. Through the *Godown* research centre, Opiyo is offering a fantastic work space to creators from southern Africa. Elise Mballa is working hard to make Yaoundé the centre for the development of choreographic art in central Africa. Ketly Noël, who has now settled in Bamako after a productive stay in Cotonou, is in the middle of setting up the first dance festival there, Donko Seko, the first edition of which is planned for December 2003. In Tunisia, the Rencontres chorégraphiques de Carthage (RCC) just held their second festival in April.

## free reflections on african dance

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And so it goes on. Spaces dedicated to dance are being created with the common denominator being about opening up in geographical but also aesthetic terms. We are no longer "idealising" national cultures in cultural biennial events, but rather a real *transafrica-ness*, real spaces of artistic movement and encounters.

### Educating the audience

The second dimension to these initiatives can be found in their geographical location. They are taking place on the continent and are targeting development at the grassroots. Here dance is stealing a lead over African theatre, which saw its first real international space created in Limoges in France, where the African theatre community (French-speaking particularly) had assembled.

New African dance has been created in Africa since the choreographic encounters in Luanda in 1995. We think this is an important point for educating local audiences and sensitising decision-makers, both political and economic. It is truly remarkable that from Dakar to Nairobi the concern creators have is to

meet and commune with their audiences.

### Conclusion

When all is said and done, despite all the possible pitfalls, dance in Africa is evolving well. The creation of training structures, the quality of choreographic productions, their extensive touring and the presence of the creators themselves on the continent, through events that are popping up everywhere, allow us to think that for once something concrete is in the process of being achieved, that a dream is in the process of becoming reality.

All these initiatives also seem to be preceded by reflections, self-criticism and above all fed by past experience (leaning on the shoulders of our elders to see further). However things could be going better and tightened up a bit, because it is true that what has been achieved in this field is fragile and that, despite these words of hope, the chain is far from being completed.

Africa has to get hold of the missing links found in the huge lack of supporting expertise essential to creation (technicians, stage managers,

lighting engineers, administrators, producers, critics, specialist journalists). Africans' views on this profusion of activity going on around them are still long awaited - what has been done is tentative and almost non-existent. The work of recording this in written and visual form has still to be done and, no doubt, existing or future spaces are going to integrate this dimension in their activities.

We have to hope that dance in Africa will play a role in educating civil society through its great freedom for bringing down barriers between different artistic disciplines (visual arts, photography, multimedia, video, literature, theatre), so as to establish a real interdisciplinarity and a new language to the world. In short, democracy.

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thoughts for action

# roads

mark de putter



The following ideas, proposals, thoughts for action were compiled from a number of meetings that I have had the privilege to attend in the past years, from many talks with friends and colleagues and from e-mails sent to me by Nganti Towo, Georgina Thomson and Nolitha Peters.

It is not the objective of this text to repeat or synthesise the existing problems - they have been thoroughly discussed before - but to bring together a number of practical ideas that have been launched along the way, often in the middle of gloomy reports of shortage and isolation. Although concrete proposals often seem limited or inadequate to solve the deep-rooted and immense problems that we are confronted with, I share a feeling with many artists and arts professionals that our own actions and attitudes will make a real difference. Most proposals listed underneath touch on more than one issue or problem, but I have tried to organise them into clusters around a limited number of themes, so as to create some structure in the many issues at hand. Finally, I want to remind that not all ideas mentioned are necessarily subscribed by the writer of this article and also that they are not a conclusion, but only a start.

## Infrastructure

Many see the creation of working spaces and theatres as the basis for any structural advance in the working conditions of choreographers and dancers. Obviously, building theatres and dance studios is a serious matter that can only be undertaken in joint ventures between national and local authorities, international cooperations, private sponsors, cultural foundations, etc.

## t h o u g h t s   f o r   a c t i o n

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Each project has to be studied and developed within its own context.

What can WE do?

1. Publicise examples of existing artistic initiatives in low cost infrastructures. There are many examples all over the world that could be used to convince authorities.

2. Create an international help desk for issues related to infrastructure, with experienced architects, engineers and arts producers and a small budget to enable them to visit possible future infrastructures for the arts and make basic projects.

3. Create a system in which second hand theatre material can be offered for use in poorer countries.

### **Mobility, communication and networking**

Mobility and communication are probably the most important issues to be developed and also the ones in which the efforts of all of us - artists, critics, organisers, programmers, producers, culture officers, etc - can make a tremendous difference. Some things we could try to realise:

1. Create cross-cultural networks

2. Lobby with the European community to open the Culture 2000 programme to non-European co-organisers. It is true that Culture 2000 is a programme designed to foster European cultural integration, but this idea would only be strengthened - not threatened - if it would allow for a (minority) participation of non-European partners. It is necessary to give form to European cultural integration in a global environment, opening up instead of closing within fortress Europe.

3. If that is not possible, lobby for cross-cultural programmes in the context of the European Cooperation with ACP countries.

4. Create a North-South mobility programme, for instance based on the example of the Roberto Cimetta Fund

5. Create stronger structural links between African and European networks. E.g., IETM representatives could be invited to meetings of African networks and vice versa.

6. Facilitate visits of programmers to our festivals. For sure, many festivals from the North have the possibility to put some money aside to invite two or three programmers from the South. Festivals from the South could facilitate visits

from colleagues from the North by offering lodging, for instance. With a bit of organisation it should also be possible to book group tickets for 10 European programmers to visit a festival in Africa. To see and be seen is important.

7. Maintain a continuous effort to inform each other through newsletters, web pages, e-mails, etc. Create habits of sharing information and publicising openly the existence of aid programmes and opportunities.

8. Create a CD ROM or DVD to present the companies of the African continent.

### **Training, capacity building**

Another extremely important issue, where small-scale, continuous action will make a vital difference.

1. The training of technicians, arts administrators, marketing people, etc. could easily be furthered by a system of placements. Not only in the North, but also in the South, a number of organisations and initiatives have lots of experience to share. It should be possible to find funding for this kind of activities from national governments, foundations and supra-national bodies.

2. Create long-lasting support partnerships, to help develop knowledge and experience in the above mentioned areas. These needn't be full-blown official programs, but can be very simple cooperation agreements between two theatres, a small group of festivals, two dance companies,...

3. Continue and intensify the organisation of workshops, dance courses and exchange programmes for dancers and choreographers, investing as much as possible in long-term projects and partnerships.

4. Offer end-production residencies, in which dance companies have the opportunity to finish their creations in good technical conditions and with the necessary equipment. Festivals and theatres could include this kind of residencies in their invitations to a number of African companies that need it.

### **Reflection, art criticism, theoretical research**

1. The production of a basic video library on the history and variety of contemporary dance. This library should fit in a suitcase, could be created in hundreds of exemplars and be

## t h o u g h t s   f o r   a c t i o n

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distributed at a very low cost.

2. Invite journalists and art critics to festivals. Maybe put a number of them to work on a concrete project to describe and analyse the new African contemporary dance movement. It is time to start to write the history of this young, but rich movement.
3. Organise theoretical seminars, promote workshops, and create exchange programmes.

### **Political action, strengthening civil society, create a place for art on the political agenda**

1. It is important to invest more in technical support and training initiatives in order to raise the level of professionalism also on the side of the state agencies.
2. It seems also necessary to find ways to further the creation of associations that can defend the rights of the artists and demand transparency and good policies.
3. Always include the national authorities in collaborative North-South projects, even if it is known that there is no money to be expected from that side. It is important to keep the pressure and

let authorities know that they do have an important role to play in the cultural development of the country.

4. A plea has to be made for more continuous support through pluri-annual subventions, long lasting support programmes, etc.
5. Start up a dialogue with local and northern development agencies and discuss with them the idea to invest in culture and artistic projects to create sustained development.

### **Artistic creation, co-production, touring**

In the long run, it is absolutely necessary to develop the African 'market': create local systems of funding, a network of African festivals and venues,

1. Co-commissioning and co-producing are happening all the time within the European market. Isn't it about time to start doing this on a global level? Extra advantage: in the weak-currency countries of the South, northern Euros and Dollars often go a long way.
2. For companies from the North: make active efforts to show your work in the South. We need to break the habit of

embassies and cultural representations to dictate programmes of festivals and venues in the South. We can do this by creating direct contacts between the companies from the North and the programmers from the South.

3. For companies from the South: create long-term partnerships between festivals, arts organisations and dance companies, to assure, in the first place, an ongoing interest. From this interest can grow international tours.
4. Develop South-South co-production, residencies, tours, etc.
5. Create a Euro-African co-production fund with partners from both sides with the aim to support the creation of new work and emerging artists from the African continent. Festivals, theatres, cultural institutions, corporate sponsors and governments could finance this fund. The support package could also include things like administrative back up, technical help, residencies for creation, etc.

# cross

portraits



studios kabako

# cross

virginie dupray



"I am Kabako,  
Kabako is who I am,  
still Kabako, always Kabako,  
and it's when there is Kabako  
that Kabako becomes Kabako".

This is how Kabako introduces himself, the strangely present servant in the play "Mhoi Ceul" by the Ivory Coast writer Bernard Belin Dadié. So well was the character incarnated by a young actor from Kisangani that he gave up his name for good to become simply Kabako. Kabako, Faustin Linyekula's brother on stage and in his heart, disappeared far too soon at the

Ugandan border, on the road that was taking him to Nairobi. In 2001, after several years of roads and places of exile between Kenya - where he formed the Gàara company with Opiyo Okach and Afrah Tenambergen - Rwanda and Europe, Kabako returned to impose himself on Faustin when he decided to go back to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, formerly Zaire, formerly the Belgian Congo, formerly the Independent State of the Congo as he amuses himself remembering it - a country bruised by seven years of trouble and armed conflict. So in June 2001 he created the Studios Kabako, taking along in the adventure

four dancers, with whom he would present "Spectacularly Empty" in Cameroon and in Kinshasa in November that same year.

## Studios

Because it is really about a place: an imaginary, imagined place, a nomadic place situated for the time being today in the Halle de la Gombé, the French Cultural Centre in Kinshasa. It is a place where people work, where they search for an identity and where, occasionally, they find it. A place where there is plenty of doubt but where some evenings certainties impose themselves.

## studios kabako

In short - and it is an ambitious project - it is a place of training, of research, of creation and of exchange open to anyone interested in dance and visual theatre. A place for Congolese artists, but also open to welcoming artists in residence from other places.

### A place of training

When Faustin came to Kinshasa, not one dance company was working in the capital. There was theatre of course, but it was confined to academic, often stereotyped productions.

It was obvious therefore that training would be the prerequisite for all creation work.

The objective was not to pass on a personal approach to dance, but to develop performers capable of questioning what choreographers were proposing in order to nurture and extend their propositions, and to encourage independent thought, creation and expression. Faustin began with the four dancers who would be performing in "Spectacularly Empty". Foreign artists have been invited to give workshops in which around ten other dancers participate too. As well as

technical work on the body, it is about sharing with the dancers some theoretical tools on dance and contemporary creation in general, through discussions, videos and reading.

The following have been involved:

- in September/October 2001, French dancer Céline Bacqué;
- in August 2002, the Toufik Ol Company with choreographer Toufik Oudrhiri Idrissi and two dancers, Olivier Stora and Gilles Imbert;
- in August 2002, Hanna Hedman.

It has therefore been a matter of laying the foundations for a professional choreographic undertaking - first in Kinshasa, later in the rest of the RD Congo (a training programme began in Lubumbashi in 2002). Two three-week training sessions are planned in 2004 focusing on choreographic writing.

### A place of creation

Under Faustin Linyekula's artistic direction, the Studios Kabako are a place of creation and production with four creations to their name today: "Spectacularly Empty" (2001, Faustin Linyekula), "Triptyque sans titre" (2002,

Faustin Linyekula), "Le Sentier" (2003, Madrice Imbujo) and "Spectacularly Empty II" (2003, Faustin Linyekula). The Studios also support the creative work of dancers in the company (particularly in staging projects) or that of any other artist who makes the request and can present a work of quality.

### A place of research

Far from restricting research to contemporary dance, the Studios Kabako are investing in a wide range of different artistic fields: electronic music - reflected by a long and loyal collaboration with the French sound artist Joachim Montessus, theatre - Studios Kabako have worked with French directors Philippe Boulay and Jean-Paul Delore and welcomed the Egyptian director Hassan El-Gerety in September 2003 as part of an exchange programme between the Arab world and sub-Saharan Africa initiated by the Ford Foundation - and video.

In this huge capital of between 9 and 10 million inhabitants isolated by almost ten years of conflict, it is about opening windows onto the world more than

anything: furthering movement (north/south, south/south) while making real contributions in specific socio-economic and political contexts.

### An open place

After taking quite a voluntarist approach during the Studios' first two years, we would now like to encourage an active approach by the artists, so with each project we are keen that the different actors involved reaffirm their commitment. The Studios Kabako continue to be a place open to initiatives, to comings and goings, to discussions, to being there one minute and gone the next.

Faustin Linyekula is also developing a number of projects outside the Studios (training programmes, commissions, creations), comings and goings that we consider necessary for the vitality of the project.

### The structure

The company is organised in two associations: one based in Kinshasa and the other in Seine-Saint-Denis (France).

## studios kabako

### Future projects

Our projects involve these many places of thought, training and the dream of finding a home under one roof in Kinshasa. Ideally, two workspaces with the possibility of welcoming an audience for small events and work-in-process showings, a place well integrated in its neighbourhood where the Studios could develop projects with the different communities living there. We want to enhance the environment and attempt to open windows on our dream for its inhabitants, doing so not by wearing material wealth like a mask, nor by conjuring up mythical names from elsewhere, as do the shop signs in the poorer districts (Station La Firenze, Ville Bercy, etc.). It is simply about attempting to invent a moment of dream, like story-tellers, by displaying the poverty of its resources: dancers' bodies in a familiar space.

Another project is an encounter between Kinshasa and Addis Ababa in May/June 2004 that has come about from another wonderful encounter: the one between Sylvain Prunenec, a French dancer-choreographer who has been

working for three years on training and creation with the Ethiopian company Adugna, and Faustin Linyekula in a solo for the Vif du sujet-Festival d'Avignon 2003. It will comprise three to four weeks of encounters, workshops, training sessions, discussions and creations in Kinshasa and Addis Ababa between the Studios Kabako and the Adugna company, and will be bringing together two quite different "souths".

And then in 2005, maybe a festival of dance, theatre, puppets, performances, music and other arts well and truly alive in Kinshasa. Of course it's a dream...

### Financing

Since 2001 the company has been supported by the French Cultural Centre and Halle de la Gombé which have been involved in co-producing four pieces while providing the Studios with work spaces and, since 2003, an office. In 2003/2004, the Studios Kabako have been supported, within the context of co-productions or presentations, by the Cultural Forum of Blanc-Mesnil (Seine-Saint-Denis, near Paris) as part of a residence programme, the Centre

National de la Danse (Paris) and the Council of Seine-Saint-Denis. Tours have also been supported by the AFAA / Programme Afrique en créations, the Ford Foundation and the Prince Claus Fund. Studios Kabako have also staged their work in other theatres and festivals: recently the Africalia platform in Brussels in March 2003, the Shams festival in Beirut in April 2003 and the festival Tanz im August 2003.

So a large part of our financing "classically" comes from the north. However, we are convinced that it is possible to create with very little resources, as people surviving in Kinshasa do: DIY and arte povera Kinshasa-style, with the creed to always make do with what you have. Above all we are keen to guarantee the project's autonomy, particularly by developing partnerships locally (local businesses) or perhaps eventually securing other sources of financing (investment in local micro-societies). This is what is also driving us to look for an independent location. Finally we think that going abroad with fifteen to twenty dates per season could constitute a solid base for self-financing the project. It is in this

great adaptability - the void is potentially as rich as the fullness - that the project's strength lies.

And the risks? As we seem to have both conviction and energy, I would say that the risks are hidden in what eludes us: a still fragile political situation, for example, or sometimes the 'African prejudices' (from tradition to modernity, what is Africa's place in all this?) that some programme directors and audiences in Europe still have. It's up to us to change how people see us!

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CDC - ouagadougou, burkina faso

# cross

s a l i a s a n o u



## Centre of Choreographic development (CDC) – Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso

### From dream to reality

In 1993 Seydou Boro and I embarked on a project of creation entitled "Pour Antigone" with the French choreographer Mathilde Monnier. It was a creation that brought together dancers from several countries (Hungary, Spain, Germany, USA, Mali, France and Burkina Faso). The encounter was a clash of cultures and different choreographic visions: the African dancers came with their thoughts on dance (traditional dance, African repertory, dance as an act from social life where gesture and movement are not freely given, a dance always full of meaning and symbols and bearing energy) and in western dancers discovered abstract ideas, technical skill where the gesture is refined, beautiful and fluid, the use of silence, space and light and consideration given to stage design. From this rich contact in human terms, the African dancers and western dancers fed off each other artistically. Out of this adventure emerged a willingness on our part for movement between Africa and Europe, on the one hand to go back to our roots and on the other to share European experience with African dancers.

Through dance workshops organised on every trip to Africa, and particularly to Burkina Faso, we noticed that the young dancers had a strong desire to meet others, a thirst for learning, an aspiration towards new approaches to choreography or quite simply the desire to dance differently in Africa. We were able to witness a dynamic, an infatuation and the young dancers' growing interest in creative dance: an African dance rid of the folkloric image always attributed to it and freed from the burden of



## CDC - ouagadougou, burkina faso

tradition in order to gain a foothold in the present and the future. Guided by continuous thought and daily challenges, Seydou and I saw ourselves as pioneers of this new dance.

The creation of the Salia nï Seydou company started with work on the choreographic piece "Le siècle des fous" in 1995, a piece that aroused very different reactions in audiences in Africa. "See, they went to spend a few months in France and look at how they dance now!" Some of the audience felt we had lost our way, wanting to deny our own African dance traditions to dance like Europeans and for Europeans. The rest of the audience were really enthusiastic to see a new approach, an innovative vision, a dance out of the ordinary and different from what had gone on before.

From these critiques and the audience's reactions, we understood that we had taken a step in a particular direction and that we would have to persevere. The company's second creation about wasted relationships between people, "Figninto ou l'œil trouer" in 1997, enabled us to convince observers more. The piece also provoked astonishment

and an even greater curiosity on the part of the audience. The third piece "Taagala, le voyageur", created in 2000 on the notion of journey in the broad sense of the word (spiritual journey and physical journey - he who travels discovers, gives and receives), was well received. Even the most reluctant ended up admitting that we had something to say and to defend and that we had not got to that point purely by chance.

The fourth creation "Wéléni, l'appel" created in 2002 was received by the audience as a continuation of a line that had already been drawn and the persistence of an approach.

The need to have something constructive to help us made itself felt. The necessity to create a context for exchange, research and sharing experience inhabited us. Very quickly the desire to create a centre for developing the choreographic art asserted itself. We started thinking about it in 1997, asking ourselves questions about the kind of work space we needed, the size it should be, the way it should be structured and how it should function. So many questions led us to talk about the

project and share our thoughts with friends from the artistic and professional worlds. January 2000. From the moment we defined our project, it was imperative to sensitise politicians, artistic institutions and development cooperations. The Ministry of Culture and Tourism in Burkina Faso, the city of Ouagadougou, the Coopération Française (French Aid Agency) in Burkina Faso, the French AFAA, the Centre Chorégraphique National in Montpellier, the European Commission and many more partners were responsive to our appeal. The Burkina Faso Ministry of Culture and Tourism agreed to provide the project with a site that contained an old open-air theatre. The city of Ouagadougou was prepared to clean up and service the site. The Coopération Française included the project in the Aid and Cooperation Fund (ACF) programme of the French embassy to Burkina Faso to renovate, build and provide technical equipment to the spaces. The European Commission helped the project by financing the rest of the technical equipment and supporting artistic activities.

In March 2002 the AFAA financed a

feasibility study. The study's conclusions enabled the ministry responsible for culture in Burkina Faso to establish a committee for considering and evaluating the project with the task of:

- proposing a statute for the CDC. This statute defines the different relationships with the authorities, the management association and development partners,
- establishing a terms of reference,
- establishing an architectural plan for developing the site provided for the project.

Today the project for the CDC has entered the final stage of its realisation. According to the refurbishment timetable, the Centre of Choreographic Development should be ready in December 2004.

Of course, we haven't waited for the CDC to have four walls and a roof to get going with our activities. Prior to taking over the premises, we are running residence, creation, training and exchange projects, such as the "Dialogue de corps" festival, to welcome the establishment of the CDC.

## CDC - ouagadougou, burkina faso

### What will the Centre of Choreographic Development be?

For us, the Centre of Choreographic Development is part of a global framework developing dance in its difference strands: creation, training, exchanges and research. Based in Burkina Faso and open to the West African sub-region, this centre seeks to:

- provide an opportunity for the hope placed in our work as choreographers, but also for new companies making a significant contribution to the development of dance in Africa,
- create high quality choreographic works,
- offer a space for work, exchanges and research on the African continent for choreographic projects by artists from Burkina Faso, the sub-region and the rest of the world.

### A space for choreographic creation

On top of our usual work of creation in the Salia ni Seydou company, the Centre of Choreographic Development will be a permanent place for choreographic creation committed to an innovative approach. The "Creation" programme should enable:

- lasting relationships to be formed, both at a technical and human level, between artists and artistic teams (welcoming companies in residence)
- the Salia ni Seydou company to have a home there (creations by the company)

This investment in artistic creation should enable the CDC to be recognised as a place of contemporary creation. This presupposes the acceptance of artistic risk and the diffusion of productions at a national, even international level.

### A place for ongoing training and sensitisation

Training will be a key part of the CDC's activities. The "Training Programme" will have three elements to it: ongoing training, lessons in dance techniques and sensitisation.

### A place for exchange

The "Exchange Programme" combines three elements:

- the CDC will be a crossroads of exchanges where projects of artistic collaboration between international companies and those in Burkina Faso will find a space and constructive tools,

- cross-country and interdisciplinary projects will find a laboratory there for experimenting,
- this programme will culminate in annual choreographic encounters: Dialogues de corps.

The aim of this programme will be to stimulate collaborations and encounters between artists working with different practices or in complementary fields. The objective is to create synergies between different artistic fields and different creators. Even if the dominant characteristic of this work rests on live performance, projects can originate from video, visual arts etc.

### Research

There are two phases to the "Research Programme":

- The first phase is addressed to researchers and students engaged in a process of reflection on the choreographic art in Africa. They will find surroundings to work in at the CDC's multimedia library and discussion space.
- The second phase is centred on theme-based research projects on the choreographic heritage of Burkina, run

by specialists using all available means to disseminate (demonstrations, brochures, books, videos, CD-ROM, websites, conferences), record and archive their work at the CDC.

Audiovisual methods and multimedia are fantastic tools for the performing arts today. Capturing rehearsals, workshops and performances on tape enables archives to be established, a record created over the seasons that should be accessible to the public through the following:

- establishing a video library equipped with an advice point,
- setting up educational dossiers,
- montages of excerpts from productions for sample films, particularly for promoting the companies.

### The statute

The CDC is a not-for-profit association, governed by law 10/92/ADP of 15/12/92. The organisation is made up of three electorates:

1. the electorate of legitimate members is made up of legal entities: the Ministry of the Arts, Culture and Tourism, the

## CDC - ouagadougou, burkina faso

Ministry of Finance and the commune of Ouagadougou,

2. the electorate of associate members is composed of natural and legal entities. Associate membership is conferred by the Board on natural and legal entities who through their various means of assistance (grants, sponsorship, technical abilities) support the Centre of Choreographic Development.

3. The electorate of ordinary members is composed of natural entities: the cultural and artistic associations involved in the area of dance and choreographic development with their number fixed at five (5). Each application has to be approved by the board. Each year they pay a subscription which is set annually by the general meeting.

The bodies of the Centre of Choreographic Development are the General Meeting, the Board of Directors and the Executive Committee. The Board of Directors examines the artistic and cultural project and appoints the Director on the basis of the project and estimated budget.

### **Opportunities and risks**

We want to give this project a national, sub-regional and international dimension and create a focal point for choreographic research. We will doubtless encounter difficulties in setting it up, because it is a new adventure where everything has to be established in accordance with the regulations. Although there will be moments when artistic and political agendas point in opposite directions, we sincerely hope that the political will to realise this project to the full will, at all times, remain intact.

afrique en créations - dance under creation

# cross

valérie thfoin



Afrique en créations has been working to promote contemporary African creation in the area of the performing and visual arts since 1990. Its professional organisation has also been supporting this creation and getting it known on the international scene so that it is able to flourish on its own continent.

The *Rencontres chorégraphiques de l'Afrique et de l'Océan Indien [African and Indian Ocean Choreographic Platforms]*, which began in 1995, are the biennial culmination of a programme that favours training and exchanges between creators. Since Afrique en créations merged with the AFAA in 2000, these *Rencontres* have benefited from a professional international network allowing a wider diffusion of companies. They combine an inter-African choreographic competition, training programmes and professional encounters. There is no denying that in close to ten years they have stimulated choreographic development and contributed to its influence well beyond the continent itself:

- the number of companies is increasing and the number of entries being examined for the competition continually rising;
- twenty-five participating companies have toured in Africa and abroad;
- choreographers have received international recognition, including Salia Sanou, who came second at the *Rencontres* in 1998 and has been its artistic director since 2001;
- new aesthetics have been introduced to audiences, artists, cultural professionals, the press and institutions just as easily in African countries as in northern countries;

## afrique en créations - dance under creation

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- it has been possible to establish effective partnerships, with European programme directors opening up their stages increasingly to African creators.

"Contemporary" terminology associated with "African dance" does however pose some questions that are symptomatic of the confrontation between the African vision and the western vision. For Afrique en créations, above all the undertaking has been to develop an "evolutional" dance, as opposed to "traditional" dance (at the time limited to a more ethnological or folkloric status than an artistic one), favouring research to make it evolve within a more actual context. Even if the need to give a name entails the risk of choosing standardised terms to describe many kinds of situations, this debate has the virtue of challenging actions realised as part of cultural cooperation and stimulating reflection on the notions of aesthetics and identity.

The perverse effects of exchanges, and the inevitable influences they have, are even more acute when there is an imbalance in the economic relationship. Stimulation has not been able to avoid

contamination. To pursue and improve this intercultural dialogue, it is also up to African choreographers to agree on a more appropriate definition that could be proposed (or imposed) on the institutions financing the development of their art.

The questions being asked around contemporary dance could therefore also benefit the so-called "dances of heritage". These dances - indigenous sources of body movement and knowledge, sometimes neglected to the benefit of exogenous forms - should reencounter their credibility within the practice of choreographic creation.

In around ten years, Afrique en créations has prepared the complex ground for "contemporary African dance" and the actions taken have had tangible results. With strength and occasionally weaknesses, they have enabled African choreographic creation to find its own place on the international scene and in its own lands as well. The new representation of choreographic Africa that has been proposed and appraised has created challenges and adjustments necessary

for a real appropriation of the identity to be asserted, and has benefited the evolution of a fundamental artistic domain of the African cultural landscape.

With more and more African initiatives investing in its promotion (festivals, places of creation and training, cultural officers and networks), the outline of a professional organisation is being drawn on the continent today for an art that has not finished writing the Africa of tomorrow.

[www.afaa.asso.fr](http://www.afaa.asso.fr)

CACAO/CAWA

cross

i s a b e l l e b o s m a n



### **CACAO/CAWA – a stage in the organisation of cultural civil society in Africa**

CACAO/CAWA is an organisation that has been set up by independent cultural actors from West Africa with the aim of developing professional exchanges and thus contributing to enhancing capabilities in their sector. The acronym stands for Concertation des Acteurs Culturels d'Afrique de l'Ouest / Congress of Cultural Actors in West Africa.

There are two features to CACAO/CAWA that make it an innovative project for Africa. The first is that it has given itself a regional vocation, as the region, coincidentally that of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)<sup>1</sup>, has specific stakes and opportunities. The second is that it brings together professionals from all areas of the arts and cultural activity - visual arts, performing arts, literature, film, heritage, cultural activities - because they face similar difficulties and because multidisciplinary brings with it new approaches.

CACAO/CAWA defines itself as a network. This means that it will function first and foremost as a web of relationships intended for creating new projects, new associations and new networks between its members.

<sup>1</sup> ECOWAS comprises 15 countries : Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Ivory Coast, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo. Eight of these countries are also in the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) : Benin, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Togo.

## CACAO/CAWA

The term also emphasises the importance given to its members' initiative on defining and realising the organisation's activities. CACAO/CAWA likes to think it is a place where the initiatives people want to pursue can come together and ideas incubate. Its programme will evolve over the years in accordance with the priorities of the actors involved.

### Origins of the project

CACAO/CAWA is the fruit of an extensive consultation process with West African non-governmental cultural actors. The aim of the consultations was to reflect on the stakes involved in strengthening their position, analysing the difficulties they encounter in their own countries and that limit regional and international exchanges, and debating ways of improving the situation. Consultations were conducted in several countries as part of regional workshops. European professionals were also called on to give their point of view on international exchanges, notably as part of a survey undertaken by the IETM. At the end of this process, a working group comprising independent cultural

actors from ten countries in West Africa summed up the problems and debated the solutions. The idea of a network took shape at its very first meeting in December 2002. The outline for the project was the subject of a fresh and very extensive consultation process by electronic mail. Confident in the interest shown by the actors, the working group met again in March 2003 to create a network and specify its project.

### The stakes

#### Peace

The fundamental stake in strengthening the position of cultural actors in the present context is safeguarding a free space for artistic expression and cultural activities independent from any political or religious pressure group, which could help promote dialogue, recognition and respect of others. This space is getting smaller all the time. Evangelist sects developing at an alarming rate have taken over cinemas and theatres and are working their way up to leading producers of music, videos and shows. Islamic movements are beginning to react by using the same weapons for their communication - or manipulation.

Generally these fundamentalist sects and movements have two points in common: the way in which they reduce the interpretation of the world to a fight between good and evil, and their influence on social and political life. This is how religion's hold on West African cultural life is directly involved in conflicts.

#### Diversity

The richness and diversity of artistic and cultural expression in West Africa is diminishing rapidly owing to the invasion of foreign cultural productions, the hold they have on audience tastes and the outward-looking approach several artists have who are more concerned with international than local recognition. The religious phenomenon is making things worse. Many churches are busy destroying expressions of culture, succeeding in banning traditional festivities here, musical instruments there...

#### Cultural actors' living conditions

The daily challenge for the majority of West African cultural actors is to manage to live on their chosen career, without having to turn to other

employment. Their precariousness is such that it threatens the very existence of independent cultural actors.

### The role of cultural actors in civil society

The development of civil society is one of the most remarkable features of the contemporary world. Cultural civil society has a particularly important role to play in protecting freedom of expression, respect for diversity and intercultural dialogue. In Africa it is practically non-existent. When African journalists are imprisoned, at least their associations denounce it. When artists are reduced to silence very few voices speak up.

### The success of regional integration

Cultural exchanges play an important role in the success of processes of regional integration that are themselves a major stake for economic development and peace. This is why West African regional institutions are gradually developing policies aimed at encouraging them.

### A different globalisation

Cultural exchanges between Africa and

## CACAO/CCAWA

rich countries have for a long time been marked by serious tendencies to absorb and dominate. African cultural actors focused their attention on the north to find opportunities there, while the very few professionals from the north who were interested in Africa looked for new products to disseminate. Today, professionals want to intensify international relationships and turn them into genuine exchanges. What is at stake is a globalisation that will make way for diversity and will know how to link the local with the international.

### **Weaknesses**

#### **National situations**

Working conditions in West Africa are such that the majority of cultural actors are confined to semi-professionalism, even amateurism, obliged to do other things to earn a living. They are increasing efforts to take the development of their sector in hand, compensate for major structural problems (such as the lack of theatres), invent new modes of dissemination and broaden their opportunities. But their initiatives run into too many obstacles. Actors are fundamentally encountering

the same difficulties in all countries:

- insufficient information,
- access to knowledge, research in their sector and critical analysis of its position,
- the acquisition of new competences,
- financing,
- the inadequacies of policies and programmes concerning them, due to a lack of dialogue between the decision-makers and the actors.

#### **The regional scene**

Culture in regional terms is far from being organised. Independent operators are increasing their efforts to create regional projects of common interest, networks and diverse partnerships, but they have difficulty succeeding. The many small festivals that have come into being in recent years are often not very good, professional networks are not really up and running and collaborations on creations and tours are rare. Their development runs into several obstacles:

- financing, particularly lack of regional support funds,
- regional regulations on free circulation are not being enforced,
- the lack of dialogue between the

actors and the institutions of regional cooperation,

- the circulation of information necessary for encouraging exchanges,
- communication between professionals,
- the acquisition of competences necessary for developing activities or organisations with a regional dimension,
- insufficient research on the state of exchanges, their stakes and factors conditioning their quality.

#### **International exchanges**

African and European professionals have made the same analysis of the obstacles:

- financing: the lack of sources of finance directly accessible to African professionals maintains them in a position of weakness,
- the weight of institutions financing cultural cooperation and dictating what they focus on; renewing exchanges necessitates the development of true horizontal cooperation, directed by the professionals themselves,
- information and communication.

#### **The organisation's challenge**

The fundamental challenge West African

cultural actors face is organising themselves to resolve these difficulties and thus improve their working conditions.

Organising the cultural sector is a complex process. At a national level, professional associations are increasing but often function poorly. The development of associations and the very notion of civil society arouse the suspicion of many actors who fear manipulation. At a regional level, there is practically no organisation; at most we know of only two or three professional heritage associations. Most organisations that have been set up have a pan-African vocation or meet a linguistic criterion. However the region represents a key level of organisation.

#### **Objectives and activities**

The main objectives to which CACAO/CCAWA wants to contribute are:

- the promotion of culture as the mainstay of development, a medium of integration and a factor in peace,
- the development of a cultural civil society committed to cultural diversity, freedom of expression and intercultural



## CACAO/CCA WA

dialogue that in turn will contribute to the activities of a culturally informed and motivated civil society, increasing cultural exchanges within the region,

- developing exchanges between professionals from West Africa and the rest of the world,
- a better consideration of culture in development strategies and the development of policies and cultural programmes in line with the preoccupations of actors on the ground,
- making public opinion and the opinion of private partners more sensitive to the cultural dimension in development and the preoccupations of professionals in this sector.

CACAO/CCA WA likes to see itself as **an observation post, a space for reflection and dialogue between professionals, an instrument of action at their service and a representative of the institutions**. The association has set itself the target of attaining the following results:

1. rallying West African professionals and making itself known to professional organisations in other regions;

2. setting up an easily accessible centre of information and documentation. CACAO/CCA WA will specialise in information on:
  - sources of financing,
  - regulations concerning the movement of actors and cultural goods,
  - the practical terms and conditions and professional code of ethics for cultural exchanges,
  - actors who play a key role in developing exchanges (actors in information, festivals, workshops and networks).

3. undertaking research on subjects of common interest. The first projects will be on:
  - national and regional cultural policies, their evolution and application,
  - programmes of cultural cooperation,
  - the state and evolution of cultural exchanges,
  - relationships between culture and conflict,
  - cultural and artistic practices of West African audiences.

4. stimulating professional encounters. In the image of the IETM, CACAO/CCA WA will organise:
  - subject-based encounters connected to the network's projects or organised

on the initiative of groups of members,

- annual plenary encounters, organised each time in a different country of the sub-region, that will serve as a framework for the association's general meeting. They will also form the framework for subject-based meetings and sessions dedicated to presenting members' activities and projects and will provide an opportunity to get to know the cultural scene in participants' countries.

5. ensuring respect and contributing to the development of policies and regulations that help to improve the conditions of actors and encourage exchanges. CACAO/CCA WA's accreditation with ECOWAS will allow it to play an active role alongside this institution. The association will also develop a relationship with the WAEMU, national ministries of culture and international cooperation organisations.
6. sensitising opinion and promoting sponsorship. The network likes to see itself as a tool of cultural education and sensitising opinion on matters of heritage, popular culture and the culture of peace.

7. promoting West African expertise. CACAO/CCA WA will provide some of the

answers to its members' training needs by organising subject-based encounters, the production of methodological tools etc. It will develop lists of experts in different areas of the arts and cultural action and will itself be able to obtain support and advice on developing projects and programmes of cultural cooperation.

### Organisation

CACAO/CCA WA is a not-for-profit association. Its office is in Porto Novo, Benin. It brings together independent professionals and non-governmental cultural organisations. The statutes distinguish between ordinary members who are established or work permanently or principally in West Africa and associate members who do not work principally in West Africa but are interested in CACAO/CCA WA's objectives and willing to participate in its activities. The association is managed by the general meeting of members, which elects the board. Its day-to-day management will be given to an executive secretariat comprising high-level staff (four people) to be recruited by the board.

## CACAO/CAWA

### Financing

CACAO/CAWA will only be able to rely on a small financial contribution from its members. As a result of their precariousness, its activities will be expensive as it will have to cover a large part of the costs that members of networks in rich countries themselves pay on top of their subscriptions, such as costs of attending meetings. The provisional annual budget is somewhere between three hundred and four hundred thousand euros.

The network is looking for partners who will be able to give a big enough subsidy to get things going, demonstrate its effectiveness and develop strategies for mobilising partners. In the medium term its activities will naturally be about encouraging interest from a large number of varied partners.

### First results and success factors

CACAO/CAWA is already operational. The most notable achievement so far is to have sensitised ECOWAS to the idea of creating a regional support fund for mobility. Other results are exchange projects developed by participants at the

first two meetings in December 2002 and March 2003, exchanges of information between members, active participation at key moments when cultural policies are being developed, such as the ACP meeting of artists and the first meeting of ACP Ministers of Culture in June 2003.

There are lots of opportunities for CACAO/CAWA to be successful in the years to come:

- the enthusiasm and willingness of the nucleus of actors who have laid the foundations for the association,
- the search for complementarity with existing initiatives and the network's function to develop and not compete with them,
- extensive dialogues on creating this association,
- the democratic way the association operates, guaranteed by regular general meetings and the rotation of locations where they are held that will encourage the direct participation of a large number of professionals,
- the management capabilities that a professional executive secretariat will offer,
- the support of institutions, particularly ECOWAS which intends to develop

relationships with organisations representing non-governmental actors, in all areas of competence, with a view to linking them with developing policies and regulations and monitoring their application,

- the support of European cultural networks. CACAO/CAWA can rely on the growing interest of European networks in international cultural relations. In particular it is relying on its relationship with IETM, whose experience was much taken into account when the project was being set up.

arts network asia

# cross

ong keng sen



Arts Network Asia, set up in September 1999, is a group of independent artists and arts activists primarily from Southeast Asia that encourages and supports regional artistic collaboration and develops managerial and administrative skills in the creative arts of Asia. Arts Network Asia is motivated by the philosophy of meaningful collaboration, based on mutual respect and initiated in Asia with strong Asian engagement. More precisely, the network aims to promote artistic exchanges that are primarily process-oriented, with a focus on Southeast Asia including its relationship with East and South Asia.

Arts Network Asia (ANA) is interested in providing the means to promote these exchanges. The main work of ANA is threefold:

1. Redistribution of small amounts of monies to help initiate cross-cultural dialogues.
2. Organisation of a biennial exchange laboratory focussing on the dialogue between contemporary and traditional arts or on 'inter-genre' collaboration. This major exchange laboratory has been developed from the model of The Flying Circus Project by Theatreworks.
3. Organisation of a biennial workshop created by artists and concentrating on information exchange between different cities in one country or region. This has taken place in Shanghai in 2000 and in Hanoi in 2002. Plans are underway for the development of a third workshop in South Asia focussing on exchange between India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka and linking them to the rest of Asia.

In order to further the exchange of information, a website has been created and plans are underway to create a web-board for active postings and discussions.

[www.artsnetworkasia.org](http://www.artsnetworkasia.org)

## arts network asia

Before the mid nineties of the last century, most exchange programs with Asian artists were initiated notably by the United States, Europe, Japan and Australia. No major Asian alternative was in place. Also, in the last decade, massive change has occurred in Asia, towards which regional cultural policy and arts funding have not been responding. Many Asian artists have a desire to collaborate with other Asian artists but resources for such collaborations are scarce. This is a gap that Arts Network Asia hopes to fill. An inter-Asian fund will foster dialogue between Asian artists, who are often so near and yet so far away from each other.

Arts Network Asia has its beginnings in October 1998 in discussions between Ong Keng Sen (Singapore) and Jennifer Lindsay, program officer at the Jakarta office of the Ford Foundation, about the importance for inter-Asian collaboration, exchange and networking, based on the process model of TheatreWorks' The Flying Circus Project. Subsequently a think-tank was convened in Singapore to develop some preliminary ideas for a proposal. Keng

Sen's belief was that even the proposal had to be the result of a collaborative discussion between artists of Asia. The meeting was attended by Southeast Asian artists/arts activists Krishen Jit (Malaysia), Amna Kusumo (Indonesia), Marion D'Cruz (Malaysia), Ong Keng Sen and Jennifer Lindsay. Based on these discussions, a proposal was written for a project to be funded collaboratively by Ford Foundation offices in the region (Indonesia, India, Philippines, China and Vietnam). This proposal set out an autonomous Peer Panel of Asian artists and art activists who serve as a policy making network and a trustee for a fund for regional collaborations.

### Regrants from the Arts Network Asia Fund

As a matter of principle, TheatreWorks and the individuals of the Arts Network Asia, their spouses and partners, as well as their companies will not be allowed to apply to the inter-Asian fund. The network is presently hosted and managed by TheatreWorks (Singapore) with initial funding from the Ford Foundation. This network is made up of: Anuradha Kapur (India), Amna Kusumo

(Indonesia), Marion D'Cruz (Malaysia), Krishen Jit (Malaysia), Teresa Rances (Philippines), Ong Keng Sen (Singapore) and Santi Chitrachinda (Thailand). The network will consider issues of dialogue, empowerment and autonomy among the different cultures of Asia through the diverse individual artists' approaches.

Arts Network Asia often invites for proposals through an open call sent to as many artists as possible. The peer panel members have a responsibility to ensure dissemination within their home countries as well as their individual networks. The first proposal is often very simple - a one page statement of intention. This may be in any Asian language or in English. The invitations for proposals are sent out in 7 different languages: Thai, Bahasa Indonesia, Korean, Japanese, Mandarin, Vietnamese and English.

From this, the ANA peer panel selects artists who have projects that share or extend our philosophy, intent and aspirations. Sometimes, these proposals may express an intention that is not easy to realise due to a lack of

knowledge. For instance, a contemporary theatre artist may be interested in exploring South Indian traditional performing arts with parallel traditional sources in Korea or China, but lack the necessary contacts. ANA can select this application and provide contacts, opening doors for research possibilities in unknown cultures or artforms. In other words, the ANA sometimes functions as a matchmaker between different artists, if they are willing to meet to discuss. Ultimately the ANA panel members have the responsibility to nurture projects and provide guidance, bringing the project to fruition with the artists concerned. Sometimes, detailed questions may be asked of specific applicants. In this way, there is already a process of dialogue going on between Asian artists even as applications are considered. From these initial one-page proposals, Arts Network Asia will shortlist around 30%. The shortlisted applicants have then to send in a full proposal, including detailed budgets, from which the ANA will select the final applicants for the year.

By doing so, we hope to discover a new dialogue in the areas of dance, theatre,

## arts network asia

music, video, film, multi-media and visual arts. At the same time, ANA will consider applications for research and study grants, and exchange projects (not limited to collaborations) that foster inter-cultural interaction, exchange and understanding. Some examples of inter-Asian initiatives and collaborations that the Network will consider - the list is not limitative.

- The development of inter-cultural and cross-national collaborations and exchanges in the form of dialogues, workshops, seminars, residencies and productions.
- The development of artistic networks that create links between Southeast Asia and South and East Asia by way of exchange and sharing of information.
- The development of an arena for challenging and provocative collaborations that face the questions of difference and the tensions between global and local identities.
- The development of administrative and management skills through exposure and internship schemes.

Arts Network Asia will provide approximately 8 to 10 awards each year. For detailed descriptions of award

grantees, please see our website. 2003 Awards Grantees include:

**Cambodia: *In the Middle yet on the Edge - An art exchange between Cambodia, Myanmar and Thailand***

This exchange and research forum aims to bring together artists, curators and critics/writers from Cambodia, Myanmar and Thailand for artistic and intellectual exchange. The artists will participate in short-term residencies; workshops, talks and seminars will be organised, as well as more informal interactions with both artists and students. Upon return to their respective countries, artists will be asked to hold public sessions with local artists and the community in order to share their experiences gained from the workshops.

**India: *Investigation of Techniques of Breath in Performance***

A month-long dialogue between artists of different performance genres, like Koodiyattam (India) and Noh (Japan), about the varying methods in which breath is used. Following this month, a dissemination program will then take place. The project wants to develop new and hybrid practices in performance

forms through knowledge sharing sessions.

**Indonesia: *Dance Video/Film: An Introduction of a New Genre***

This project will bring together an Indonesian choreographer with a filmmaker from an Asian country to produce a dance video/film in Indonesia. The aim of this collaboration is to introduce a new genre to the contemporary dance scene in Indonesia as well as create a new link across the art forms in Asia.

**Malaysia: *Community and Youth Engaged Arts Research***

The project involves the overseas placement of six Malaysian youth theatre facilitators to established community and youth arts organisations in the Philippines and Thailand. During the placement, the Malaysian facilitators will research and learn the philosophies and methodologies of these arts organisations. This will provide them with more experience and a new resource of knowledge and expertise that will contribute in building the community outreach art models in

Kuala Lumpur.

**Singapore: *Performance Studies Asian Research Group***

This project will allow selected individuals from various Asian countries to participate in a series of dialogues and presentations at the Performance Studies Asian Research Group to be held in Penang. The project aims to begin the process of assessing the state of the field of performance studies in Asia today by addressing some of the diverse interests and perspectives from within Asia. It aims to build a base for the production of future theoretical inquiries. This dialogue will be carried into the Performance Studies International conference to be held in Singapore in 2004.

**Sri Lanka: *Theertha International Artists' Workshop 2003***

The two-week workshop is envisaged as a non-didactic experimental forum to facilitate an interdisciplinary collaboration of art forms between Asian visual artists. The workshops will bring Sri Lankan traditional artists to interface with the participating contemporary artists through

## arts network asia

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performances and discussions. The project aims to break ethnic and cultural divide between artists.

### Vietnam: *Space of Traditional and Contemporary Music*

A research grant is for the study and exploration of Chinese musicians and instruments in China. This is an integral part of the process towards the creation of a performance program, entitled "Space of the Traditional and Contemporary Music". The artist hopes to strike a balance between traditional and contemporary music and research the use of diverse musical instruments such as the piano, bamboo flute, dan tranth and Vietnamese and Chinese percussion instruments.

9 Sep 2003

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# roads

reports



IETM / Africalia Meetings

# roads

report: amélie clément



## IETM Satellite Meeting / Africalia Professional Meetings (12 -13 March 2003, Brussels)

### 0. Context

Several years ago the IETM network started to consider ways of enabling performing arts professionals of the North and South to collaborate. It is currently undertaking new projects together with African partners. To this end, IETM participated in a meeting in Lisbon in June 2002 organised by the contemporary dance festival Danças na Cidade. Following this, Mark Deputter (the festival's Director) compiled the various viewpoints and projects related to the issue in the first "Crossroads" publication. With the aim of continuing this initiative, IETM organised a professional symposium about contemporary dance in Africa, together with the African contemporary dance platform of Africalia.

2 round tables:

1. The development of infrastructures for contemporary dance within African
2. Improving the comprehension of contemporary dance from Africa, in Europe.



## I E T M / A f r i c a l i a M e e t i n g s

### 1. Developing infrastructures for contemporary dance within Africa

How can we accompany the rapid growth of contemporary dance in Africa? By developing local infrastructures that are adapted to the needs of contemporary dance as it is practised in the field, working on the basis of long-term collaborations. Opening remark: this question cannot be considered without thinking about the overall context of African countries. Among the many issues raised were the following:

- The lack of structures,
- Existing structures are often not suitable for contemporary dance,
- The dependence of African cultural operators and organisations on foreign financing,
- The lack of freedom of expression in many states,
- The conditions for economic survival,
- The difficulties of touring in Africa and elsewhere

#### Ideas put forward

Start by creating an inventory of structures that already exist in African countries, through the circulation and

sharing of information gathered at similar meetings, by co-operation networks (AFAA, British Council, Ford Foundation), African regional networks (West and Central Africa), professional European networks (IETM, Artfactories)

Adapt the existing spaces to the needs of contemporary dance, ensure their survival and development and create new structures suitable for dance

1. Bearing in mind the human, geographic and climatic environment of the various countries and regions of Africa, the finances available for managing these structures in the long term (running costs) and the country's overall cultural landscape
2. By building lightweight structures (moveable technical equipment), spread across the country, developed by or in collaboration with the African users and managed by Africans
3. By considering the final use of these spaces (training the trainers and the artists, creation, artistic research, residences, performances and tours, increasing awareness of the audience, professionalisation of the dancers, etc.)
4. By training cultural operators to develop and manage the venues.

#### African resources

African states invest very little, in the cultural sector. To get around this, a few ideas:

- Rely on one-self, get by with limited means and - why not - turn the lack of means into an aesthetic choice,
- Share the work spaces between artists (artists' collectives) and work with networks of African structures starting at the level of sub-regions,
- Engage various partners so as not to depend on the goodwill of just one
- Lobby the various African states e.g., organise professional meetings in Africa involving African politicians.

#### Foreign resources

Financing from the Northern Hemisphere is usually granted for creation, international tours and one-off events (festivals), but very little for long term development. However, politicians and institutions from the north have a better understanding of:

- the importance of culture,
- the need to work in the long term by supporting local initiatives (e.g. PSIC programme)
- the importance of involving the

African states in the framework of agreements involving culture

But (Isabelle Bosman, Pierre Garland) the various parties must communicate more, so as to:

- share information,
- draw up a report on the state of contemporary dance in their countries,
- define priorities and consider joint cultural projects,
- have a stronger influence on the existing or future finance programmes (e.g. creation of sub-regional funds).

What support can structures from the North bring?

- logistical (equipment: AFAA project),
- sharing of knowledge and expertise

#### Conclusion – a few reflections:

- Think of exchange more in terms of sharing than in terms of needs,
- Think of exchange as the logical follow-up of a meeting, of a genuine desire to work together,
- "Create space in one's head" (Faustin Linyekula) and get active politically (dangerous in many African states).

## I E T M / A f r i c a l i a M e e t i n g s

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### 2. Improving comprehension of contemporary dance from Africa, in Europe

How do European audiences and programmers perceive African performances?

How can we improve the understanding and reception African dance receives?

What are the European touring circuits and networks for contemporary dance from Africa?

#### "Contemporary African dance", a label

- So that programmers can justify their artistic choices towards funding bodies and the audience,
- So that the audience can discover the work of today's African choreographers,
- So that contemporary African dance can get more visibility (e.g. African week),

It is necessary:

- to choose how to talk about contemporary dance from Africa,
- and therefore to think theoretically about contemporary dance from Africa and build an approach through the current work of African choreographers.

Unlike contemporary dance in Europe, debate about contemporary dance in Africa is poor and static. The "contemporary African dance" label that was created is at the same time useful (by increasing visibility, bringing people together around a shared interest) and reductive.

Some thoughts for fine-tuning the approach:

1. Highlight the difference between social African dancing and dance as presented in theatre E.g. theatrical dance can be based on highly traditional gestures whereas African dance as practised in a traditional context can incorporate elements of daily life. In this case, which is the more contemporary?
2. Treat African choreographers as artists developing a personal artistic universe and not as representatives of an imaginary Africinity: "have the courage to talk about the works themselves".
3. Contextualise the artistic research of African choreographers with respect to multiple traditions, European influences, personal research, etc.
4. Invite programmers from the North to visit Africa more often, so as to see what is happening in the field of

choreographic creation and to meet the creators in the context of their work.

5. Make audiences - both European and African - aware of the range of creation of African choreographers: this involves long term work of the promoters with the artists and audiences.

6. Africans (artists, journalists and critics) must recover possession of the debate about African dance, both traditional and contemporary.

#### Giving time more time

This leads to the question of the time needed for an emerging artistic movement to define itself with respect to its roots and outside influences and to free itself of economic constraints (meeting the aesthetic demands of the funding institutions and western audiences) to offer and defend personal artistic approaches.

#### Conclusion

How is this fruitful search possible?

While workspaces are lacking in Africa?

While artists cannot assure their economic survival?

While money from the North and the conditions tied to its attribution impose an imbalance in the exchange?

o n i n t e r c u l t u r a l i s m

# roads

## crossroads

# 2

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