

MITLANGANA

GWEN RAKOTOVAO



SoaZara



Arts & Partage

THE CHOREOGRAPHER

Malagasy and French, **Gwen Rakotovao** is a dancer and choreographer now based in France after working a decade in the United States. Her dance creations are inspired by her multicultural background and her African heritage. Gwen won the 2012 Biarritz International Dance Competition. She graduated from the Alvin Ailey School, the university of Paris 8 where she received her Bachelor's degree in dance studies, and NYU TISCH where she received her Master's degree in Performance Studies. Her artistic and academic work and research focus on topics such as rituals and movements of resistance.



2

LE REGARD EXTERIEUR

A malagasy novelist, essayist and poet, **Raharimanana** is also the author of plays, musical tales and director. He uses the words, kneads the meaning until the musicality of the words penetrates deep into the reader. Writing is his main activity, anchoring memory in the body, and performing an act of beauty in speaking and writing. As a director, he created the shows, among others: *Par la nuit* (2009), *Obscena* (2013), *Rano, rano* (2014), *Empreinte(s)* duo co-written with dancer and choreographer **Miguel Nosibor** (2015), *Parfois le vide* (Sometimes the void) (2018), *Paroles pour Chants* (Words for Song) (2018), *Soonoo* (2021) and *La Voix, le Loin* (2021)



ABOUT THE SOLO

Mitsangana (“get up!” or “to stand up in Malagasy”), is a dance creation that explores the gesture of standing up and the social and cultural meanings that it carries.

It addresses the questions of how to keep getting up and moving on when power structures are made to reduce gestures and sometimes immobilize bodies.

With Mitsangana, **Gwen Rakotovao** aims to highlight the importance of the daily gesture of standing up. A movement that represents a movement towards more life, to stand up is also to grow. It is a first step to move forward.



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4 ARTIST STATEMENT

The dance piece MITSANGANA was born out of the research project I developed during my Master's degree at New York University. At the time, I worked on the gesture of standing in an oppressive context. I studied the examples of **Rodney King*** in the United States and **Théo Luaka**** in France who, during a police intervention, experienced an oppressive force that obliged them to stay on the ground. Their demonstration of a willingness to repeat the gesture of standing up while everything was made to constrained them to stay close to the ground was a crucial starting point for this research.

In July 2019, after finishing my Masters and studying this movement of resistance, I laid the first stone for the choreographic creation MITSANGANA. With eight dancers, we explored and set in motion what the gesture of “standing up” means on a daily basis. At the beginning, my choreographic approach consisted of bringing the dancers to rediscover the learning of this gesture. We focused on the relationship to gravity, then on the postures and finally on the gestures related to the different connotations that standing up has: to stand up to resist, to stand up to walk/move forward, to stand up to be together, standing to dominate, standing to stay alive, to stand up/standing to explore... Starting from the dancers' bodies, the main idea was to make the public feel what a familiar gesture represents as a daily movement of resistance.

A few months later, the Covid-19 pandemic disrupted the development of this dance piece. I returned to Paris, and carried the project on. The group piece turned into a solo and I continued to develop the choreographic research with a creation residency at the Maison Rouge in Martinique then in Paris at the Victor Gelez center in partnership with the Paris 11 conservatory. This is how Mitsangana solo started to take shape.

*Rodney King, (April 2, 1965 – June 17, 2012) was an African-American who was a victim of police brutality on March 3, 1991 by Los Angeles police officers during his arrest, after a high-speed chase.

** The Théo case is a French court case related to the arrest of a 22-year-old french man, Théodore Luhaka on February 2, 2017 in Aulnay -sous-Bois, in Seine-Saint-Denis who during his arrest was brutally beaten by police officers resulting in a permanent disability.

MITLANGANA - solo is an invitation to rethink and rediscover a simple gesture that seems well acquired to most of us. Moreover, the lockdown's experiences we lived during the pandemic, gave me more insight on this gesture while our daily movements were drastically reduced with a stay home "lifestyle". To show and make feel how freedom live through our bodies in movement is another reason why it is important for me to take up the piece and give it a second life. In order to do so, residencies to develop the artistic creation as well as a scenographic work with an external look will be necessary alongside a lighting creation with a technician. This additional creation work will help highlighting the essence of the creation Mitsangana which is the idea of standing up to stay alive and keep exploring the world.

Gwen

The team

Gwen Rakotovao

Choreographer and dancer

Raharimanana

External look

Laetitia Leduc

Light design

Elodie Pelette

Production manager



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6

OUTREACH PROGRAM

Meditative dance

Entrez dans la Ronde...

A Ronde is a meditative dance session designed to help you create a new connection with yourself.

Les Rondes allow you to change your habits and limiting thought patterns for your personal development. They are an invitation to learn to love your body and let your personality shine.

In synergy with your body and your mind, taking part in les Rondes is an opportunity to express yourself, to let go, to release the stress and to gain self-confidence.



MEDITATIVE DANCE :

What is a Ronde?!

IN THIS ARTICLE, I AM BREAKING DOWN HOW I PICK THE NAME "LES RONDES" FOR THE CONCEPT OF THE MEDITATIVE DANCE' SESSION I CREATED, AS WELL AS ITS PRINCIPLES.



SO, WHAT DOES "LES RONDES" MEAN?

First of all, *une ronde* is a french term for dances that children do in a circle while holding hands. Then, because a round has a circular aspect, it gives the idea of a cycle that repeats itself. It is a loop that closes to make way for another. Dancing in a circle also refers to the idea of living a joyful and warm moment. At last, in order to dance in a circle, you need to be, at least, two people. It is therefore a name full of meaning. Each of them represents values that are close to what I wish to give as an experience with my meditative dance sessions.

What is "une ronde"?

As explained in my very [first article](#) *, I created this new concept while we lived in a lockdown's era in which we were isolated. The session were designed to support and encourage anyone who wished to keep moving, and to evolve physically and mentally. It was also an opportunity to come together, even if online.

These dance sessions have become a space of freedom to take a break from a heavy daily life. They offered participants a time to reconnect with their inner child. Indeed, taken by the idea that an adult must act seriously, we often forget to take care of our "little self" which also needs to express itself, and sometimes to heal. Despite the challenges that the lockdown period brought us, it was the perfect opportunity to take the time to do, or start, this work while dancing.

Dance has the potential to give us the tool to live a much more serene and joyful life. By creating Les Rondes, I took the time to materialize this potential into dance sessions and dance programs.

*Blog post on Gwen Rakotovao's website

8

My teaching approach is close to the free form dances while also being different. Indeed, my dance sessions still respects a regular structure of a dance lesson with a warm-up, dances, a stretching part and a particular intention on breathing...

Gestures and breathing work are put together to make choreographies accessible to everyone. In a meditative dance session, the most important thing is to make the gesture starting from your imagination and not to copy the gesture. In short, to experience the benefits of a round, you simply have to be open to the idea that dance is within you and that it has a lot to offer you.

Why should you take part in a Ronde?

With Les Rondes, each participant uses their creativity and body expression to push their limits. It is a wonderful challenge to take up. It allows personal development in motion for physical and mental well-being. With a Ronde, we improve ourselves effortlessly.

At last, since society is constantly changing, Les Rondes are also constantly evolving and remain in line with what we experience on a daily basis.

So that's why "Les Rondes" are called "Les Rondes" and what they are. They were born from the dream of co-creating together a world where everyone could enjoy the magic of dance...



CALENDAR

Group

June 2019 Residency Tisch M·U·S·E, Danspace, New York

15.05.2019 International Human Rights Arts Festival, TADA Theatre, New York

Solo

September 2020 Residency La Maison Rouge, Martinique

23.04.22 Work in progress - MeYaBe Festival, Kinshasa, Republique démocratique du Congo

04.06.22 Work in progress - MPT Villejuif, France

15.05.22 Work in progress - Semaine de la danse, Conservatoire de Paris Charles Munch, Paris, France

Creation work & Partners - Starting January 2023

18 days of residencies as follow:

- 5 days of residency: creation in studio (with an external look)

37 -ème parallèle TOURS 37 from 03.13.22 to 03.17.22

- 5 days of residency: creation in studio (with an external look)

CCN Ballet du Nord from 09.18.22 to 09.22.22

- 4 days for light designing with the light designer on stage.

- 3 days before the premiere

Premiere during the festival Plumes d'Afrique in November 2023

Mitsangana - Work in progress

December, 11 2022 Musée Würth / Musée d'art in Erstein

Tour

Festival Plumes d'Afrique (37) - November 2023

(Approached)

CCNT Tours

Le Plessis

Micadanses - Paris

CCN Roubaix

International :

(Approached)

- Festival Vivadança - Bahia

- Solo duo festival + Friends internationales Tanzfestival - Cologne

- Ballhaus Ost - Berlin

- Biennale de la danse en Afrique - Mozambique

- Festival On marche - Marrakech

- Downtown Contemporary Arts Festival (D-CAF) - Caire

COMPAGNIE SoaZara Arts et partage Presentation

SoaZara is a non profit organization and an artistic company from Tours created by the Malagasy writer and director Raharimanana. SoaZara brings together artists from various disciplines, theater, music, dance, video.

SoaZara brings together the notion of sharing, aesthetics and ethics at the heart of its actions. It strives to create pieces highlighting the human richness, and to question the question of difference and sharing. Through sharing knowledge, sharing memory, sharing the future, taking care of the present, be poetic .

SoaZara creates shows and cultural actions (artistic workshops), in order to create spaces for sharing and acceptance of difference. *Rano, rano* explores memory and living together.

Parfois le vide (Sometimes the void), makes a poetic act by taking the voice and the stage and brings back other accomplices to tell this scandalous world; *Soonoo* offers another way of approaching autism and questions the notion of "normality"

La Voix, le Loin explores Kabar, public speaking in Madagascar. Moreover, father of an autistic daughter (Landisoa), Raharimanana knows how much patience and welcoming others without barriers is essential.

SoaZara accompanies young artists in their creative process with the eyes of Raharimanana. But also in the production of their creation, with support adapted to their project. Always attentive, SoaZara strives to respect their artistic universe while encouraging the notion of transmission.



CONTACTS

CIE SOAZARA ARTS ET PARTAGE

Administration, production and touring

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SoaZara, arts et partage

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