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At the same time we were pointing a finger at you...

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American Premiere!
Robyn Orlin & Compagnie Jant-Bi | Germaine Acogny
At the same time we were pointing a finger at you, we realized we were pointing three at ourselves...

A piece by Robyn Orlin

With the Dancers of Compagnie Jant-Bi
Artistic Director, Compagnie Jant-Bi Germaine Acogny
Dancers Mamadou Sèdè, Adimou Danyla, Hans Peter Dogbagho, Claude Marius Gomis, Mohamed Abdoulaye Kane, Aliou Ndoye, Tchébé Bertrand Saky, Khalifa Alhassan Top

Assistant Choreographer Shush Ténin
Lighting Luis Pesto
Video Alida Lee
Costumes Birgit Nüapel
Scenography Robyn Orlin in collaboration with Maciej Fiszer
Subtitle Translation Maurice Salem
Technical Director Thabo Pule
Lighting Manager Thomas Cottreau
Administration and Booking Damien Valette, jgdv.net
Coordination Johle Lucas

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Some thoughts on At the same time…

An invitation came my way from Germaine Acogny some years ago, but we just never seemed to be able to find the perfect date due to the tight schedule of the main company of Compagnie Jant-Bi. Finally, in 2014 it all came to fruition, and a piece was born. The point at which we started was the “body” and how we as Africans “talk” with and about the body—but do we necessarily acknowledge and understand our bodies? I had all kinds of ideas, coming from South Africa, about what kind of elements I wanted to work with, but very quickly realized that as experiences with a South African were completely different from those of the Senegalese dancers and there was a lot more to learn and understand about Senegalese culture. I felt I could not critique their culture in the same way I do mine, so through my usual problem-solving and storytelling process we began to make a piece that evolved into our version of the “faux-lion” ceremony. It became a celebration with an added twist: instead of asking the audience if they had paid for their tickets (which is the usual climax of the ceremony), we decided to push the whole thing to another direction—and this I leave up to you to experience during the piece.

Some thoughts on the “fau-lion” ceremony…

For me, this is a very multilayered ceremony. It is not religious; therefore, the whole community can access it, including and especially the children. It is a ceremony with a long history, and although it has evolved a lot, the basic structure has stayed the same. It is performed only by men—the group I was working with was only men. It involves two female characters, the lion’s wife and the back dancer, which allowed me to move with the group around the dance of homophobia—very prevalent on the whole continent. It also creates a platform on which children’s basic fears are brought to the surface and supported by the lion and his entourage and, in so doing, especially by the audience. By playing a huge celebratory function for the community, it encourages a humble sense of identity and acknowledgment of history. For me, it gave the time to rediscover and participate in a very new experience of the continent on which I was born.

About the Artists

Robyn Orlin

Born in 1955 in Johannesburg, South Africa, Robyn Orlin studied at the London School of Contemporary Dance, 1975–1980. With the help of a Fulbright Scholarship, she completed her master’s degree in Fine Art at the Art Institute of Chicago from 1990 to 1993. Since then, she has been working consistently on her own pieces in South Africa.

Nicknamed in South Africa “a permanent irritation,” Orlin is well known for reflecting the difficult and complex realities in her country. Integrating different media (text, video, plastic art, dance, and theatre), she investigates the theatrical reality that has enabled her to find her unique choreographic vocabulary. Her uniqueness is reflected in her entertaining titles: if you can’t change the world, change your curtains (1997), The Poika Box (2001) for the Soweto Dance Theatre; Naked on a goat (1998), Orpheus. . . I mean Eudoria. . . I mean the natural history of a chorus girl (1998), which obtained the FNB Vita Dance Umbrella award for choreography; Daddy. . . I’ve seen this piece six times before and I still don’t know why they’re putting it on again (1999), F. . . (2000).

We must eat our suckers with the wrapper on and The future may be bright, but it’s not necessarily orange (2001), Ski-Fi-Jenni, . . . and the track of the new, a piece loosely based on the myth of Iphigenia, at Montpellier Dance Festival in July, 2002, Although I live inside, my hair will always reach towards the sun…, in 2004, a solo for Sofiatou Kossoko; and When I take off my skin and touch the sky with my nose, only then can I see little voices amuse themselves in 2005 at MC2 in Grenoble. In 2005 she created a solo piece for Vera Manter in Aix-en-Provence, Hey Dude, I have talent, I am just waiting for God. . . in 2004, commissioned by iHa and Arte, Orlin directed a short movie, Hidden beautiful/dirty histories. She was in residence at Centre National de la Danse in Pantin/Paris from September 2005 through 2007. While there, she restaged Daddy. . . and We must eat…; she also created a piece in the neighborhood cafés and gave many workshops and lectures. Orlin directed Handel’s “Judas Maccabaeus” at the National Paris in April 2007. During the 2007–08 season, she created a piece for South Africa’s Vas Kelaie Hong Dance as part of Festival d’Automne in Créteil. In February 2008, she created Dressed to kill. . . Killed to dress… with the sweaskins in Liège, Belgium. She was invited by Opéra Comique in Paris to direct Porgy and Bess in May 2008.

Carrying our shoes… intoxicated by strawberries and cream, we enter continents without knocking… created with the Phuthuma Love Minus singers, was presented as part of Bluebees Bleues Festival Shells Showin Its America premiere at Peak Performances in 2011. In January 2010, Orlin presented Call it. . . Kissed by the sun… better still the revenge of geography…. a solo for the French hip-hop dancer Ismael Gomis with live graphic illustration by Maxime Rebufle. In February 2010 she again presented Daddy. . . at Festival les Hivernales in Avignon.

In 1990 Orlin won the third prize at the African Rencontres Chorégraphiques and in 2000 was awarded the Jan Fabre Prize for the most subversive work at the International Dance Congress in Menards de Prado. In 2002 she won the Laurence Olivier Award for Outstanding Achievement in Dance for the creative originality of her show Daddy. . . Orlin was made a knight in the French National Order of Artists and performed in the French ambassador Denis Pliron, on February 28, 2009.

In 2011 have you hugged, kissed and respected your brown Venus today and hurrying each other, in 2011, a piece loosely based on the myth of Mars and Venus, in Rome, Monaco, and many other festivals. Orlin created Beauty remained for just a moment then returned gently to her starting position… at Biennale de Lyon in September 2012. It was performed as part of a traditional Chinese New Year opening of the South African season in France. In 2013 she created A world in full of butterflies, it takes balls to be a caterpillar… in Reunion Island at La Batistèl Theatre, part of Festival d’Automne a Paris. In 2014 she created At the same time we were pointing a finger at you, we were pointing it towards ourselves…. a new piece for Festival d’Avignon. Orlin also has contributed to the development of live graphic, videos clips. In 2010, he danced for George Michael’s concert, X-trail. Trained at l’École des Sables, he has had the opportunity to develop his technique, discover new and incorporating different dance styles, a fusion between these cultures and the essence of African dance is obtained.

Mamadou Balde, dancer, choreographer, and teacher, grew up in St. Louis, Senegal, where he was trained in traditional dances, including in Cine Beay’s company, Jalloré. Specializing in Sabar and other traditional dances, he also focuses on the theatrical stage. Trained at l’École des Sables, in 2008 he joined Compagnie Jant-Bi, with whom he regularly tours the world. He also choreographs, dance教师, and teaches courses in traditional dances for the company Dambala in Touba Diwal Saleng, Senegal.

Adelino Dasyya, a dancer and drummer known professionally as Khadim, was first trained in the traditional dances of Dakar. Originally from Guinean Bissau, he mastered the dances and percussion of both Senegal and Guinea Bissau. A member of Compagnie Jant-Bi since 2008, he has toured internationally and has been invited by companies to participate in creative projects, including in 2010 with Compagnie Toula Limnos, Berlin and choreographer Robyn Orlin. Khadim is also a professor, a graduate of l’École des Sables, he regularly teaches traditional dances, including to children and students at l’École des Sables in Touba Diwal, Senegal.

Hans Peter Diop Ibbagh first discovered hip-hop culture in his hometown of Libreville, Gabon, where he played in a dance troupe called No Fear. He then moved to Dakar, Senegal, where he first joined Company Nul Limin as a performer, then became choreographer of dance troupe X-Trail. Trained at l’École des Sables, he has had the opportunity to develop his technique, discover new styles of traditional African dance and contemporary dance, and develop his unique movement in hip-hop culture (new style, popping, break dance, house). He worked with choreographers including Amandu Nourmba, Mba Liem, Patrick Acogny, and Robyn Orlin. He is an artistic director of Company Articorps and dances in Compagnie Jant-Bi.

Claude Marius Gomia, born in Dakar, discovered hip-hop dance as an adolescent. Self-taught, as were most of his partners, he began street dancing (krump, popping, etc.). He formed the B-boy company Punisher Crew and performed orchestage (Kaba Ni La di Naay Senegal). A member of the Compagnie Jant-Bi since 2008 and has toured internationally with the group. In 2011, he joined the Centre National de la Danse de Paris (CND) to train for the state diploma of professor of dance, in an arrangement between l’École des Sables and the CND. He lives and works in Dakar and teaches regularly at l’École des Sables. He dances his solo in international festivals.

Aliou N’doye has been a dancer, percussionist, and singer since 1997, when he joined the company Cape Nau Popingeo. Very active in community and cultural life, his artistic activities are divided between shows with many companies, including as artistic director, and teaching traditional dances. He has attended several contemporary dance workshops and joined Compagnie Jant-Bi in 2009, with whom he tours regularly as a dancer. He recently joined the cast of choreographer Robyn Orlin’s latest creation, touring internationally in 2014–15.

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