

LE CCN DE LA ROCHELLE
CIE ACCRORAP
DIRECTION
KADER ATTOU

2013 CREATION
LA COURSIVE

THE ROOTS

KADER
ATTOU

CCN
AccrOrap

CENTRE
CHOREGRAPHIQUE
NATIONAL DE
LA ROCHELLE
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THE ROOTS

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2013 CREATION
choreographic work for 11 dancers
Duration: 1 hour 30 minutes

The Roots' created in January 2013 at
La Coursive - Scène Nationale de La Rochelle

artistic director and choreographer

Kader Attou

cast

Babacar "Bouba" Cissé, Bruce Chiefare, Virgile Dagneaux,
Erwan Godard, Mabrouk Gouicem, Adrien Goulinet, Kevin Mischel, Artem Orlov,
Mehdi Ouachek, Nabil Ouelhadj, Maxime Vicente

scenography

Olivier Borne

original sound creation

Régis Baillet - Diaphane, along with additional music

lights

Fabrice Couzet

costumes designer

Nadia Genez

production

CCN de La Rochelle / Poitou-Charentes, Kader Attou / cie Accrorap

co-producers

La Coursive - Scène Nationale de La Rochelle / MA Scène Nationale - Pays de Montbéliard
with the support of Châteauvallon, Scène Nationale during creation residencies

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A FOREWORD FROM THE CHOREOGRAPHER

Over twenty years, my dance approach has been sculpted from the grinding and blending of various aesthetics – hip hop, Indian kathak, contemporary dance. I believe the key in this process is to build bridges, create links and some sort of dialogue beyond / through difference. This search has led me to try and distinguish what transpires from body as opposed to emotion. How - from a specific technique, a mechanical gesture, a simple hint - with virtuosity such a feeling is born. This questioning is a founding feature of The Roots.

First and foremost, The Roots is a human adventure, a journey enacted by eleven exceptional hip-hop dancers. Chapter after chapter, the actual performance transforms, opens up new horizons and brings the spectator elsewhere. This universe

consists of ordinary settings, a table.. a crackling vinyl record on a turntable, childhood memories.. Music plays a crucial part, stirring and calling for the unity of dancers. Brahms, Glazounov, electro music... all these melodies open doors to a dancing mankind.

This creation digs into one's history, each dancer with their strengths and their own path. Starting from their unique style honed over the years, I initiate a journey from the roots towards bodies' memory. The Roots represent the rewards of this quest: drawing from the generosity of this dance in order to discover new paths.

Kader Attou



A PREAMBLE

Kader Attou is back. On stage and on familiar ground. But this is not a dance of nostalgia. This is no retrospective, but a re-working of the very substance he has made his own; a substance enriched by journeys, encounters, experience and exchange – the things that make up the story of Humanity; and a substance enriched by time – times past and time which draws us on.

With eleven dancers, each contributing their individual virtuosity to that of the group, Kader Attou makes his entrance, energised by his own history of urban sidewalks, big tops, boxing rings and theatre stages.

The Roots says what it is: a work deep-rooted, born of essence and sap. But although it references these origins, *The Roots* is no exercise in archaeology or a return to the past. A creation of light and air, it represents yet another step forward on the professional path of the Director of the Centre Chorégraphique National of La Rochelle, as he redefines the very boundaries of hip hop.

What route does he take to return to the origins of his dance? Or rather, what routes? It is a plurality of short forays, not a single road: a sequence of marks plotted on the ground in every dance by the dancers' footsteps, his own among them.

The starting point – the crystallisation –

was the interpretation of these marks: a web of interwoven lives, the anchor point of all these energies. From this charting of movements, in conjuring a choreographic score from chaos, Kader Attou has found his order, his living structure. His writing is the transcription of each mark. The visualisation of these marks had to become apparent for the choreographer to give free rein to his inspiration and return to the source.

The message of *The Roots* does not lie in roots of identity, but in a questioning of the identity of hip hop dance itself – this tireless appropriator of established codes, remodelling and revising them to generate new means of expression.

Kader Attou's response to such queries is not intellectual – even one thought-through and matured over time. With an apparent simplicity, like that of the best of our poets, his response is embodied in the work itself, and in his uniquely personal way: the joy of creating; fury and laughter; rhythm, release, tension; speed and restraint, power and pause; instant tai-chi, leg-work and hand movement; closure, opening, figure, break-away... these are what provide the sustenance for his 'poetry of the body'.

If the choreographer is sincere, if the dancer is exactly right and if the dance offers us that indescribable mutual

delight - that by convention we call emotion and that we can share - then the body is poetical. And here we have just that. All the elements are present, Kader Attou has brought them together.

No auditions, just encounters with dancers seen elsewhere in other shows: the creative alchemy of the choreographer generated by each dancer's individual movement, by their self-awareness and the vibration of each body.

Eleven on stage, forming one multiple body. For *The Roots*, Kader Attou works solid mass, like a sculptor. Eleven on stage, each one a single unique body. Kader Attou focuses on the One within Many, as a composer would orchestrate his music.

All of it has meaning, and evokes what could be a biography of *The Roots*: the route covered by a little kid from Lyon humming Idir's¹ lullaby from the reaches of his memory, an old EP crackling its way round the grooves on an ancient pink record player. Another memory, that of coming out of school one day, and his mother taking him along a path that wasn't the direct route home.

Where are we going Mum ?

Just there; to the boxing gym.

In the playground, you didn't just use

a neat turn of phrase to respond to an insult or kick. And on this detour, what he found was an American boxing gym. A fight: a dance. Kader's first contact with this art was with his fists. As luck would have it, the instructor had a strong penchant for the circus. So the ring went theatrical, and that Saturday TV show - 2 p.m. on the dot – added some vitamins: H.I.P. H.O.P. (pronounce the letters), a cult programme. 'Sidney' took kids from the housing estates and put them in the limelight. When the final credits had rolled, Kader Attou threw a piece of cardboard down on the sidewalk of his suburban neighbourhood and started to practice those moves he needed to master.

At one point, it became a life project: to form a troupe and give it a name – cie Accrorap: a group of friends coming from the same gym, from the rank and file and the same circus training, hooked on the same "Leçon de Sidney", experiencing the same thrill from dancing.

They just worked out their choreographies on that sheet of cardboard, there on the tarmac.

An abundance of marks plotted out on that simple square of board. A tangle of tracks, leading near and far: to Zagreb, in India, Mexico, or La Villette [Paris]. Up until now.

Now, Hip hop has matured, and Attou has been chosen.

And our only sustenance is this universal language, this common vocabulary – something communal to us all. Kader Attou & co. have danced for young people in ex-Yugoslavian refugee camps, in the favelas of Rio, in the fringes of Algiers. For foreigners who, when it comes to it, are not so foreign. And the proof is that all the bodies involved in Kader Attou's hip hop speak of the human condition, of the knowledge, or acknowledgement of the Other, and of encountering...

The Roots gives us a sketch of the vast and vital root system of all this. And so here we shall see how the sap nourishes the dance; and how, without losing any of his urban culture, Kader Attou creates a unique "art house" dance. And we will see how, without ever giving in to the temptation of simply pleasing or performing, he embodies and drives this message on: a witness of his times, raised in the crucible of difference. All of this is known as intelligence in movement ε one, let us say, of the possible etymologies of the word. Hip Hop.

Élian Monteiro

¹ Algerian singer of Berber music

KADER ATTOU



Director of the CCN of La Rochelle, artistic director, dancer and choreographer of the Accrorap dance company.

Today's hip hop creative works, independent and new dance scene creations, convey an image of French culture throughout the world. Kader Attou can claim to be an integral part of this new dance scene. He is one of the major representatives of French hip hop, and Accrorap is an iconic company.

Contemporariness, blending of cultures, humanistic commitment, Kader Attou signs a dance of his times, where encounters, dialogue and sharing are the driving forces and creative sources.

With the excitement of the discovery of break-dance in 1989, and the first shows of Accrorap, a desire was born to examine in depth the question of meaning and develop an artistic approach. In 1994 *Athina* marks the debuts of Accrorap on stage at the Dance biennale in Lyon. Created in 1996 *Kelkema*, a homage to Bosnian and Croatian child refugees is the fruit of a powerful experience in the Zagreb camps in 1994 and 1995. *Prière pour un fou* (1999), a pivotal piece in the choreographic universe of Kader Attou, attempts

to re-establish the dialogue that the Algerian drama was making increasingly and painfully less probable. Then Accrorap broadened their scope inventing a dance that is rich and full of humanity with *Anokha* (2000), at the cross-roads between hip hop and Indian dance; East and West. Composed of sketches where performance, emotion and musicality intermingle, *Pourquoi pas* (2002), enters a universe of poetry and lightness. *Douar* (2004), created within the scope of the year of Algeria in France queries the issues of exile and boredom, echoing the concerns of young people in neighborhoods and housing estates in France and Algeria. *Les corps étrangers* (2006), an international project - France, India, Brazil, Algeria and the Côte d'Ivoire – evokes the human condition and searches for possible meeting points between cultures and aesthetic styles to construct, via dance, a space for communication to query the future. *Petites histoires.com* (2008), acclaimed by the critics and public alike, tells of Everyman's France through burlesque sketches while maintaining a sensitive and committed approach.

In 2008, Kader Attou was named Director of the CCN (National Centre for Choreography) in La Rochelle and the du Poitou-Charentes region, thus becoming the first hip hop choreographer to lead such an institution.

Trio (?) (2010) takes us back to the world of the circus. *Symfonia pie ni łośnych* (2010) is a performance of the entire *Symphony No.3* also known as the *Symphony of Sorrowful Songs* by the Polish composer Henryk Mikołaj Górecki. This creation explores all compositional aspects, is carried away by soaring vocals, penetrated by melodic forces to join the message of hope.

In 2013, Kader Attou returns to the source of hip hop, to his very first sensations: *The Roots* is a human adventure, a journey, a dive into his poetical universe. Eleven of the most skillful hip hop dancers perform the piece; they form a group that is in complete symbiosis.

Created in August 2014 for the 10th edition of the Nuits Romanes in Poitou-Charentes, *Un break à Mozart*, born of the encounter between the CCN of La Rochelle and the Champs-Élysées orchestra, presents a genuine dialogue

between dance of today and music of the Enlightenment with the major musical work: Mozart's Requiem.

In September 2014 for the Dance biennale of Lyon, Kader Attou created *OPUS 14* for sixteen dancers, men and women, combining power, otherness, commitment and corporeal poetry in a fundamentally hip hop piece.

With *Un break à Mozart* as a base, the premiere of *Un break à Mozart 1.1* – a new creation by Kader Attou for 11 dancers and 10 musiciens from the Champs Élysées Orchestra was performed in November 2016 at La Coursive in La Rochelle as part of the event "*Shake La Rochelle !*" the first edition of CCN's Hip Hop festival.

In January 2013 Kader Attou was made Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres (Knight of the Order of Arts and Letters) and in the New Year's honors list of 2015 was appointed Chevalier de l'Ordre National de la Légion d'Honneur (Knight of the French Legion of Honour)

LA CIE ACCRORAP

In 1989 at Saint-Priest, Kader Attou, Eric Mezino, Chaouki Saïd, Mourad Merzouki and Lionel Frédoc created the company Accrorap.

From the collective of artists at the beginning, to the emergence of unique choreographic works, Accrorap is characterized by its profound openness: openness to the world through journeys conceived as instants of sharing, openness to other artistic forms, to other trends.

Kader Attou has enriched and fine-tuned his dance through the alchemy of hip hop, circus arts, contemporary dance and visual arts. From the local to the international scene, his works have travelled round the world.

Among others: *Prière pour un fou* (1999), *Anokha* (2000), *Pourquoi pas* (2002), *Douar* (2004), *Les corps étrangers* (2006), *Petites histoires.com* (2008), *Trio (?)* (2010), *SymfoniaPiésniZałosnych* (2010), *The Roots* (2013) *Un break à Mozart* (2014), *OPUS 14* (2014) and *Un break à Mozart 1.1* (2016).

Since 1989, the dance of the company Accrorap and of Kader Attou is generous and strives to break-down barriers and cross frontiers.

The work of Accrorap is the tale of an international collective adventure, where the concept of encounters is at the centre of the company's approach and where journeys enrich reflection.



3 QUESTIONS FOR.... KADER ATTOU

Remarks made to Rosita Boisseau, M le magazine du Monde - January 2013

With *The Roots*, the hip hop choreographer and director of the Centre Chorégraphique National of La Rochelle, dives back into his past, to the rhythm of primal beats, soaring arpeggios on an accordion and Algerian refrains. Hip hop makes an entry into the Centre Chorégraphique National [CCN].

What does that mean for this type of dance?

Kader Attou: Hip hop is a dance of appropriation. When it first came to France in the eighties, it adopted the conventions of mime, contemporary dancing, burlesque ...

Born of a social movement, thanks to its ingenuity it has integrated the theatre network, without losing any of its essence. The CCN is simply another step in its evolution. It is the perfect tool to initiate the preservation of the movement's history, a reflection on its repertoire and its transmission.

What intimate need does your new piece *The Roots* satisfy?

After twenty years of hip hop enriched by close encounters with cultures as different as those of India or Brazil, where the movement is well established, I felt the need to get back to my very first sensations. I was 10 when I discovered Sidney's TV show H.I.P. H.O.P. It was thanks to that show that I became a dancer, and then a choreographer. I've been delving into those physical memories with eleven hip hoppers.

How did French hip hop become an international ambassador on the contemporary scene?

France has seen the birth of an art-house dance that leaves no one indifferent. Hip hop is a worldwide phenomenon that brings together dancers from every culture. This dance remains a formidable means for creating a social bond.

THE ROOTS: THE HIP HOP SHOW WHERE ATTOU GETS BACK TO BASICS

Marie-Christine Vernay, Libération – septembre 2013

“Kader Attou is a tough nut. However, it’s not the punches he took when he was a young boxer, that forged his character, nor the acrobatics he performed during his time at the circus school in Saint-Priest, in the suburbs of Lyons where he grew up like many others in his family of Algerian immigrants. His desire for social success has always been associated with his need for a poetical universe that could contain a bit of his own life and a lot of the lives of the others that he met along his way as an artist: from Mexico to India via Algeria, keeping always to the housing estates of major cities. Going on 40, he steps out of the ring, and out of the ranks, backed by a professional career that started with other dancers, including Mourad Merzouki and cie Accrorap. For any of those who thought that hip hop would be just a passing fashion, that would disappear from the choreographic landscape as soon as the kids from the suburbs had picked up their sheets of cardboard, *The Roots*, the new show by Kader Attou, director of the Centre chorégraphique national [CCN] in La Rochelle since 2008, offers us a lesson in tenacity, and sums it all up. Even in his early more fragile productions, it was clear that this choreographer had a sense of composition and especially a certain way of establishing connections between his dancers in a space where bonding and togetherness prevail. The eleven dancers that are the bearers of *The Roots*, plus Kader Attou, form a sort of chorus from which individuals emerge, each one as interesting as the next, as each has his own style, his own physique, and his own technical specificities. Each one puts his signature to their own hip hop and the performance, full of surprises, could wind up with an even freer free style. Pure delight! The tableaux, so cleverly crafted – like *The Raft of the Medusa* sometimes supported by a single leg or hand - are so elegant that they instantly remind us that hip hop is not a question of muscle, but above all, of balance. Everything is refined, touches of a nostalgic opening solo in an unsteady armchair, or an aerial tap-dance on a table with quivering scorpions... The basic figures, that Kader Attou has not eliminated from his vocabulary, and that he links up in a perfect syntax, regain all of their initial vigour. *The Roots*, is not a nostalgic production, it is a dance for tomorrow, where relationships between men (the show is all masculine) find a new way of being, of being together without harming each other and, if possible with enjoyment. The choreographer also makes fun of himself, quoting himself with a lot of humor. *The Roots* is a true show, but in no way showy. The audience is on its feet. It’s no surprise that the show in question has 90 dates for the coming tour.”

WITH THE ROOTS, KADER ATTOU OFFERS US AN OUTSTANDING ODE TO HIP HOP

Coralie Febvre, Agence France Presse - Septembre 2013

“Spectacular and poetical, both innovative and nostalgic, hip hop appears to us in all its splendour in Kader Attou’s *The Roots*, which celebrates the inventiveness of a dance that has moved out of the New York streets onto the world’s stages.

[...] By choosing to have ‘eleven dancers that are pure hip hop’ in his show, after having confronted this dance style with so many other types of gestural expression, Kader Attou restores the astounding variety of motion,

alternating speed and slow motion, acrobatics that are so nearly stunts, and subtle shifts.

Pilferer from the outset, hip hop has always ‘borrowed from skating, burlesque movies, mime, contemporary dancing or tap dancing’, the choreographer points out, enriching each style in the streets of the Bronx or Los Angeles.

And the first dancers, in a climate of emulation recreated by *The Roots*, invented break dance - danced at ground level and whose

success has never been denied - ‘locking’, and those movements inspired by funk, or ‘popping’ with its apparently double-jointed performers.

Over and above the effervescence of origins, the strength of the piece lies also in its impressing the watcher with the singularity of French hip hop, that made its way into theatres and opera houses in the nineties, becoming an ‘art-house dance’ now universally exported - as the choreographer reminds us.

With Kader Attou, for whom ‘dance is equivalent to poetry’, bodies are rarely triumphant. Often they waver, wander or are flung against each other with a grace emphasized by a score that intermingles Brahms, Glazunov, the ‘Melocoton’ by Colette Magny and electronic music by Régis Baillet. Unlike Merzouki, a solar personality associating wit and virtuosity, Kader Attou can be seen as a choreographer of the chiaroscuro, giving priority to emotions and portraying melancholic men.”

KADER ATTOU GETS THE SHADOWS AND GHOSTS OF HIP HOP BUBBLING ON STAGE

Rosita Boisseau, Le Monde-janvier 2014

The Roots, a breathtaking show, evoking the origins of the movement, is on tour in France.

“It’s a blast! Pure hip hop! The vitality of *The Roots*, choreographed for eleven men by Kader Attou, explodes in your face like a shaken can of soda. Here it comes - a sparkling stream, a bubbling flow, in constant motion transforming the stage into a landscape of geysers in ceaseless activity.

On tour in France since September 2013, *The Roots*, was presented at the festival Suresnes Cités Danse on the 17th January and is already the season’s greatest hit. Some ninety dates for performances and 2015 looks as though it’s going to be fully booked too. When it was first presented in January

2013, there were fifty two programmers present in La Rochelle, where Kader Attou has been director of the Centre Chorégraphique National since 2008: every one of them bought the piece, making *The Roots* the hip hop ‘must’. By deciding to take a look in the rear-view mirror to take stock of his route so far, and only selecting men he knew he could direct perfectly to accompany him, Kader Attou narrows the scope around a dazzling hip hop creation. He focuses on the origins of the movement, an upsurging of an oppressed body that finds the exact gestural expression for its stress and confinement.

Disarticulation, tremors, spasms, explosive acrobatics like guns-

hots, hip hop represents a contained shout, a virtuoso self-control in response to a damaging day-to-day existence.

With his eleven dancers, all possessing a staggering degree of invention and tension, Kader Attou takes a group photo, bounded by shadows and ghosts.

It makes one think of that anonymous crowd of dancers of the hip hop movement that came into being in the eighties in France, who got left behind, who were left to rust in front of their high-rise blocks, the ones that didn’t get away.

Hip hop history is full of tragic scenarios and destroyed destinies that this band of brothers moving side-by-side seem to im-

plicitly carry within themselves. Even more, this contrasting image highlights something which Kader Attou is one of the rare people to render palpable on stage, partly through his choice of music – rap beats, oriental melodies and French songs: a positive image of a multi-coloured, popular culture for France, with no discrimination. The dazzling quality of the choreographics of Kader Attou, 40 years old, and born in Saint-Priest (Rhône), in the suburbs of Lyon, draws on his many youthful apprenticeships to create something unique (a circus training from 1984 to 1989) and his unflagging curiosity. Since he first started out at the end of the nineties, he has travelled far and

wide, worked in refugee camps in ex-Yugoslavia, learned traditional dances in India and recruited young dancers in Algeria, his parents’ homeland. His successive immersion in these powerful waters has toughened up his hip hop while retaining all of its voracious fury.

Carried along in the fast lane of his memories and his past creations, Kader Attou had some difficulty in coming to a stop – a risk sometimes of overflowing and crossing the choreographic line. Maybe he just couldn’t bear to stop surfing that breaking wave?

The Roots - dance till you drop. It has all the flavour of a homage to twenty years of hip hop.”





THE ROOTS

KADER
ATTOU

for any enquiries : **Olivia Kuhn**
diffusion@ccnlarochelle.com
direct line +33 (0)5 46 41 88 16
mobile +33 (0)6 42 47 60 13

Centre Chorégraphique National de La Rochelle, Cie Accrorap, direction Kader Attou
Chapelle Fromentin - 14 rue du collège 17025 La Rochelle cedex 1
T +33 (0)5 46 41 17 75 – F +33 (0)5 46 41 07 28
www.ccnlarochelle.com – contact@ccnlarochelle.com

association loi 1901 - siret 324 512 631 00049 - code ape 9001 z - numéro d'identification intracommunautaire fr 24324512631
licences d'entrepreneur de spectacles n° 1-1048312 / 2-1048313 / 3-1048314
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