

Portraits in red

A contemporary dance solo

WKcollective Production



The investigative lens through which this piece was developed is the definition of beauty putting in question the image/politics of the body.

Created in 2017 by choreographer Wanjiru Kamuyu
with artistic direction and dramaturgy by Robyn Orlin

Duration of 35-40 minutes

www.wkcollective.com

WKcollective

CONTACT INFORMATION

Choreographer

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Bookings

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“... Kenyan Wanjiru Kamuyu, with an already forged international career, including the USA, attracted a small public triumph, in a “Spiral” of a solo, stirring a gigantic piece of fabric at times like a prosthetic attached to her own hair, to the straps of her dress, to her partial nudity, in a grand sequence of metamorphic tenacity, sacral and very well inhabited. This power of soloist conviction well echoes the festival’s opening by Germaine Acogny in “Mon Elue Noire” choreographed by Olivier Dubois.”

Gérard Mayen, Danse Canal Historique. April 2017



Portraits in red

Creative Team

Choreographer and Performer Wanjiru Kamuyu
Dramaturge Robyn Orlin
Music (original composition) Nate May
Music (original and arrangement) lacrymoboy
Costume Robyn Orlin
Lights Cyril Mulon
Visual Image Wangechi Mutu
Video Projection Design Cyril Mulon

Description and Inspiration



Portraits in red was inspired by my 2013 solo *Spiral*, which too was developed through the investigative lens of the definition of beauty and the image of the body. The contemporary movement vocabulary is grounded in the rich and diverse movement techniques of Butoh, release and the aesthetic found in dances from the African continent. The idea of embodying states of being is fundamental to the choreographic language. Subtle and at times exaggerated theatrical gestures and facial expressions are weaved into the piece. *Portraits in red* is structured to meditatively unfold and gradually engulfs the stage.

The costume is integral to the work and is used as a type of second skin or mask, which transforms and provokes different images and social paradigms / constructs associated with the human body, particularly that of the female.

Wanjiru Kamuyu

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Synopsis

Portraits in red investigates and explores the idea of the dominant standard of beauty and puts in question the image of the body. The dominance of the European and US beauty and fashion industries' capitalization and globalization of a homogenized standard of beauty is the springboard for the work's research.

Being born into a bi-cultural home (Kenyan American) and having lived on three continents (Africa, North America and Europe), I continue to be intrigued by each society's general relationship to the notion of beauty and the provocation that arise around the image of the body. Based on the 2013 reconstruction of a 2005 solo, *Spiral*, I decided to revisit the idea in collaboration with the artistic expertise of choreographer / dramaturge Robyn Orlin.

My intrigue with the notion and definition of beauty coupled with the historical and current pervasive objectification and exotification of the human body, particularly female, serve as the points of inquiry into the work.

Portraits in red examines conflicting ideas, issues and challenges identified with the politics of the body such as dominance, oppression, assimilation, objectification and exotification. This is propelled by an engrained need to adapt and assimilate into a Western culturally, racially and socially biased mold of what connotes beauty.

Portraits in red is a universal narrative that is bold, brave and uncompromising in its mission.

Wanjiru Kamuyu





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THE CREATIVE TEAM

Nate May



(Composer)

Jean-Philippe Barrios



(Arranger)

Cyril Mulon

(Lighting Designer & Technical Director)



Wanjiru Kamuyu



(Choreographer & Dancer)

(Dramaturge & Costume)



Robyn Orlin

CHOREOGRAPHER'S BIOGRAPHY

WANJIRU KAMUYU

Spanning over a decade Wanjiru Kamuyu's career began in New York City. Her work with various renowned choreographers has granted her a rich and diverse career. These experiences have influenced her choreographic voice, provided her a platform to showcase her work and to learn about the production and administrative aspects of running a dance company.

Kamuyu has worked with renowned international choreographers such as (and amongst others) Urban Bush Women / **Jawole Willa Jo Zollar**, Molissa Fenley and Company / **Molissa Fenley** and esteemed New York choreographers **Nathan Trice**, **Dean Moss**, **Tania Isaac** (Philadelphia) amongst others.

In Paris, Kamuyu was an original cast member in the Julie Taymor Broadway musical ***The Lion King*** (2007-2010) at the Théâtre Mogador. During her tenure she had the opportunity to present her work, *when paradise shatters at its seams then what ?* (2009) (10 dancers / 10 singers) on the Mogador stage. Alongside Kamuyu has worked on projects with famed French artists such as visual artist **Jean-Paul Goude**, equestrian choreographer **Bartabas**, film director **Christian Faure** and esteemed choreographers **Stefanie Batten Bland**, **Nathalie Pubellier** and **Irene Tassembledo**. In 2010-2012 Kamuyu also served as Resident Choreographer and Dance Captain to choreographer **Bill T. Jones** in his Tony award winning Broadway show, ***FELA!*** (Royal National Theater and Sadlers Wells, London, Holland Festival, First US Tour and The Al Hirschfeld Theater, Broadway New York).

As a choreographer Kamuyu's works such as *At the moment of encounter* (2015), *Spiral* (2005/20013) and *when paradise gets shattered at its seams then what?* (2009) have toured in the USA, Europe and Africa. She receives commissions from dance companies (Inkboat, USA), US universities (Mills College, Stephens College, Wayne State University and the University of Michigan), theater projects (New WORLD Theater, USA 2006; director **Hassane Kassi Kouyate**, *Maître Harold*, Lavoisier Moderne Parisien, Paris, 2007 and musical theater (director **Jérôme Savary**, *À la recherche de Joséphine* Théâtre National de l'Opéra-Comique, Paris and international tours, 2006). Her choreography has received stellar reviews from the French newspaper **LE FIGARO**, **New York Times** and **Broadway Dance World**, awarded a 2012 **Copperfoot Award** by Wayne State University Detroit, USA for her group work, *when paradise shatters at its seams then what?*.

Education : Masters of Fine Arts (performance, choreography and pedagogy), Temple University (Philadelphia, USA).

W&Kcollective

A contemporary dance company



Joséphine Baker revient à Paris

“At her sides, the troupe takes on the African ballet where explodes the invention of choreographer Wanjiru Kamuyu.”

by Marion THEBAUD, LE FIGARO (2006)

THE COMPANY

WKcollective creates immersive, visceral experiences through the medium of contemporary dance. Project-based works weave stories and express universal experiences. Collaboration across artistic disciplines opens discourse and intrigue through the power of poetic expression in vocal and physical movement.

Founded by choreographer Wanjiru Kamuyu in 2009, WKcollective attracts multidisciplinary artists of diverse cultural backgrounds to the creative canvas. Drawing upon these art forms to stimulate fresh, innovative, vulnerable, raw, graphic art to generate personal and social reflection through a transformative celebration with dance.



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ARTISTIC STATEMENT

I am committed to my artistry exhibiting the powers and possibilities of dance. Dance is an avenue for healing, a platform of self-transformation and expression, moving beyond words to penetrate the depths of the heart and soul. Dance gives birth to our limitless potential, providing a window of investigation into the fears, questions, desires that hide in our thoughts and spirit.

Wanjiru Kamuyu

CALENDAR

2018

FRANCE

March 8th

Women's Day

Fondation des Etats Unis

Performance *Portraits in red*

March 25th

Grand Festival

Musée de l'histoire de l'immigration

Performance *Portraits in red*

2017

March 31st

Festival Génération A

Théâtre Paris Villette

Performance *Portraits in red* (under former title, *Spiral*)

July 1st - 2nd

Festival Clignancourt Danse sur les Rails

Jardin du Ruisseau, 18eme, Paris

Performance *Portraits in red*

August 10th

Festival Vallée Verte de Saint Nectaire

L'église de Saint-Victor-la-Rivière

Performance *Portraits in red*

MOZAMBIQUE

November 23rd - 25th

Kinani International Contemporary Dance Festival

Performance *Portraits in red*

RWANDA

November 25th - December 3rd

Festival East African Nights of Tolerance

Performance *Portraits in red*

Workshops

FRANCE

December 9th

WEEKEND FOCUS #4

Pointe Ephémère

Performance *Portraits in red*



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