



# *An Immigrant's Story*

Wanjiru Kamuyu



*Recreation (2021) –  
hearing and visually impaired accessible.*

## Performance

**Dance, spoken word, song**

### Options:

> **A sign language\* dancer for the hearing impaired**

> **An audio-description\*\* for the visually impaired**

Both versions can be programmed at the same time rendering the performance accessible to both the hearing and visually impaired communities or programmed separately. Please note, for the visually impaired, the performance ideally is preceded by an immersive workshop to acclimate the attendees to the work's sensorial environment.

*\*French Sign Language*

*\*\*Audio-description in French*

Original creation October 2020

**Sign language premiere November 2021**

**Sign language & audio-description premiere**

**January 2022**

Duration: 55 minutes

*The original work was part of the season Africa2020 (France).*

Wanjiru Kamuyu is engaged in questioning the notions of place, belonging and otherness. A cosmopolitan on three continents - Africa, North America and Europe - wherever she decides to set up home is she considered an immigrant?

Her dance, a migratory map of encounters, starts with ballet, studied during her childhood in Kenya, to contemporary dance, discovered after her parents move family to the USA; and enfolded into her career journey's delights in dances from the African continent and diaspora as well as butô.

Her body is a constantly shifting map.

*An Immigrant's Story* interrogates the gaze upon the "foreigner" in a new space, new society. The work, through satire, offers a critical eye on the notions of place and placement that are prevalent in today's political discourse.

## Note of intention

After the creation of solo *An Immigrant's Story* with its premiere at La Manufacture / CDCN Nouvelle-Aquitaine Bordeaux-La Rochelle (France), Wanjiru Kamuyu wished to revisit the work. Her desire was to render it accessible to the hearing and visually impaired communities. This desire stems from and is inspired by her mother's work with the blind and special education communities in East Africa and the US.

Most recently, as choreographer, in collaboration with writer Laetitia Ajanohun for director Jean-Francois Auguste's theater work, *Love is in the Hair*, Kamuyu worked with Djenebou Bathily (actress, poet, slam artist). As an actress and sign language interpreter, the creative team wholly integrated her into the work. This resulted in a very rewarding experience for all.

Summer 2020, in Toulouse (France), during a creative residency for *An Immigrant's Story* at Place de la Dance (Natl. Choreographic Devel. Ctr), Wanjiru Kamuyu met Valérie Castan.

She is a former dancer of esteemed Europe based choreographers Philippe Découflé, Eszter Salomon, Daniel Larrieu amongst others. Since 2012, Castan has worked with multiple artists rendering their work accessible to the visually impaired communities. Additionally she leads teacher-training workshops for aspiring audio-descriptors. Alongside she develops artistic projects based on audio-description methodologies and practices. There are very few specialties in this field of work hence making the encounter a first for Kamuyu, which immediately convinced her of its vital necessity in her current and future works.

Valérie Castan's work is multi-pronged. She develops audio-descriptions through immersive rehearsals and discussions with choreographers, dramaturges and theater directors, which she verbalizes, live during a performance. She also facilitates workshops for the visually impaired the day of the performance. In the performance space she leads the group through an immersive journey into the work's sensorial environment through touch, sound and smell. This enticed Kamuyu and evoked her idea around also exploring the sense of taste. This encounter reinforced the desire to expand upon the accessibility of *An Immigrant's Story*.

Dirk Korell, who serves as dramaturge and producer of the *An Immigrant's Story*, also brings with him years of experience, as an organizer of dance workshops for the hearing and cognitively impaired communities. For many years he also worked in collaboration with theater directors to subtitle their works.

*An Immigrant's Story*, a dance theater work, which includes song, dance and text, is constructed around the collection of 20 stories. Poetically transformed by writer Laetitia Ajanohun, Kamuyu then brings them to life onstage. These rarely told, untold, ignored, marginalized stories are further rendered accessible through sign language.

"Having lived on three different continents – Africa, North America and Europe - has provided me the privileged space and time to absorb diverse cultures and worldviews.

The current critically sensitive (im)migration issue consistently at the forefront of worldwide political debates has inspired me to re-examine my personal (im)migration stories and consequentially cultivated a desire to examine the notion of and politics surrounding the privileged vs. unprivileged (im)migrant.

Summer 2017, in France, I worked on a community engagement project with 65 young aspiring artists from Eastern Europe and 11 Middle Eastern and African refugees. The refugees' audacious stories remained with me. Further exploration of the core underpinnings causing the current flux in (im)migration serve as points of inquiry for my *An Immigrant's Story*.

Wanjiru Kamuyu

"Who are these men

who reveal

History?

Huh!?

Because it is

important

to understand

who affirms what?

Who is this "WE"?"

Extract from text written by Laetita Ajanohoun, translated by Wanjiru Kamuyu & Sarah Cardova





"I have just left a colorful country,  
A flavorful country, against my will  
*Nililazimishwa* « I was forced to »

My parents decided to up and change their  
lives while destroying mine.

Don't worry, I am not here to whine or  
complain, it's not my style.

I just want you to understand that....

I may never again eat Mama Wawira's *ugali*  
*na sukuma wiki*,

And I may never again hear spoken Giriama,  
Gusii, Kisi, Kamba, Kuria, Luyia, Bukusu,  
Maragoli, Nvole, Wanga, Kimeru, Kikuyu,  
Kiambu, Kiswahili, Luo, Maasai, Samburu,  
Pokot, Turkana, Borana, Gujarâtî, Hindi, Nubi,  
Sheng...

And that's tragic."

Extract from text written by Laetita Ajanohoun,  
translated by Wanjiru Kamuyu & Sarah Cardova

*"Cameroon - Niger - Nigeria - Algeria - Morocco - Spain - France*

*14 <sup>1/2</sup> years old. Solitude this I know.*

*Follow the man that holds out his hand. A boat. The sea.*

*A dream that keeps me going? One day I will paint airplanes and boats."*

*Testimony Yvan-Loïc*

*"Dallas - Los Angeles - Washington DC - Abidjan -  
Bogota - Juba - Ankara - Paris.*

*Did you know that in Turkey, they believe if you touch  
black skin it brings you good luck?*

*Did you know that outside of the United States, being  
African American, is actually mega chic? Did you know  
that in Paris making friends is really quite difficult?"*

*Testimony Marie*

*"Normandy - Paris.*

*A journey towards freedom.*

*Freedom to be all of me."*

*Testimony Clément*

## Creative Team

Choreographer | Wanjiru Kamuyu

Performers | Wanjiru Kamuyu & Nelly Celerine

Dramaturge & producer | Dirk Korell

Writer | Laetitia Ajanohun

Original music composition | LACRYMOBOY

With the voices of | Sherwood Chen, David Gaulein-Stef,  
Naïs Haidar, Karine Hanselmann, Wanjiru Kamuyu, Dirk Korell,  
Crystal Petit, Monika Schwarzl, Sean Seago  
& testimonies of | "Tout-Monde"

Sign language coach | Carlos Carreras

Outside eye & coach | David Gaulein-Stef

Costume design | Birgit Neppl

Lightning design | Cyril Mulon

Set design | Wanjiru Kamuyu & Dirk Korell

Production intern | Yvan-Loïc Kamdem Djoko

Special thanks to | Robyn Orlin & Jean Gaudin



Executive producer | camin aktion

Co-production

Espace 1789 de Saint-Ouen, scène conventionnée de Saint-Ouen | POLE-SUD, CDCN Strasbourg | La Manufacture CDCN Nouvelle-Aquitaine Bordeaux • La Rochelle | L'échangeur – CDCN Hauts-de-France | Musée National de l'Histoire de l'Immigration | Théâtre de la Ville – Paris | L'Onde Théâtre Centre d'Art, Scène Conventionnée d'Intérêt National – Art et Création pour la Danse | micadanses, Paris

Funding | Direction régionale des affaires culturelles d'Île-de-France | Additional funding for the recreation by ONDA (Office of national touring)

Residencies | micadanses, Paris Paris (category of specific support) | Montpellier Danse Residency program at the Agora, cité internationale de la danse, with the support of the BNP Paribas Foundation.

Studio space | Pôle Sud – CDCN Strasbourg | CN D Centre national de la danse, Pantin

**Booking conditions:**  
Accessible by French Sign Language



#### Performance

Duo | dance | spoken word | song | sign language

#### Duration

55 minutes

#### Tour crew

- Wanjiru Kamuyu (performer, choreographer)
- Nelly Celerine (performer)
- Cyril Mulon (light design and light manager)
- Jean-Philippe Barrios (composer, sound manager)
- Dirk Korell (producer, dramaturge, tour manager)

#### Logistic costs

- 2 return trips Paris
- 1 return trip Aix-en-Provence
- 2 return trips Montpellier
- Transfer costs for the costume suitcase (travels with performer)
- Hôtel\*\*\* with breakfast for 5 persons (1 double, 2 single rooms)
- Per diems for 5 persons (French Union fee)
- Royalties (music and choreography - SACD, France)

#### Set up

Set up starts the day prior to the performance.

#### Set

The set elements are 35 chairs, to be provided by the presenter according to the tech rider.



**Booking conditions:**  
Accessible by audio-description

#### Performance

Solo | dance | spoken word | song

#### Duration

55 minutes

#### Tour crew

- Wanjiru Kamuyu (performer, choreographer)
- Cyril Mulon (light manager, technical director)
- Jean-Philippe Barrios (sound technician/live music)
- Julie Compans (manager audio-description)
- Dirk Korell (tour manager, producer, dramaturge)

#### Logistic costs

- 3 return travels Paris
- 1 return travel Aix-en-Provence
- 1 return travel Montpellier
- Transfer costs for the costume suitcase (travels with performer)
- Hôtel\*\*\* with breakfast for 5 persons (1 double, 3 single rooms)
- Per diems for 5 persons
- Royalties (choreography and music)

#### Set up

Set up starts the day before the performance.

#### Set

The set elements are 35 chairs, to be provided by the presenter according to the tech rider.

## Contact

Wanjiru Kamuyu

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## Production & bookings

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Dirk Korell

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<https://caminaktion.eu/en/>

## Information

Trailer, dossier, technical rider, press review/critics:  
<https://caminaktion.eu/en/immigrants-accessible/>

Collection of migration/travel stories:

<https://caminaktion.eu/stories>

Photos © Anne Volery - Palais de la Porte Dorée



"The surprising traveler." Philippe Noisette | Les Inrocks | Dance Review

"An Immigrant's Story', a story of humanity, vibrant and disturbing...

If there was a reason to stand up and say how a singular form deeply moves, one would find themselves evoking performer and conceptual designer, Wanjiru Kamuyu, and the embodiment of her project.

(...)

Rendering present the propensity to despise the migrant, a subclass of humankind, she escapes the stage, a circumscribed performance space, to rush into the stands thus including the audience in her caustic interrogation.

Who is this 'We' who speaks with sufficiency, offering a presumed universal 'History'?

(...)

How can one not be won over by the intelligent foresight projected with so much conviction and sincerity?"

Yves Kafka | La Revue du Spectacle

