

Qudos Onikeku presents
MY EXILE IS IN MY HEAD

Choreography : Qudos Onikeku

Music : Charles Amblard

Video : Isaak Lartey

Light engineer : Guillaume Fesneau

Script by Wole Soyinka

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Inspired by Wole Soyinka's prison notes - "THE MAN DIED", Nigerian dancer and acrobat Qudos Onikeku explores the theme of cultural identity and forms of exile and the contradiction between the cerebral notion of home and the physical reality of the place one returns to.



http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xcxzg4_qudos-onikeku-my-exile-is-in-my-hea_creation

... More than a word, exile is a condition. It is a place, a knowledge, a narrative, but most importantly, it is a psychic space which is obvious to those who inhabit it, those who must engage and wrestle with it because only by so doing can they come to terms with it. Exile is poignant because it is bracketed by loss, it is not so much about movement, relocation or departure as it is about loss: of territory, of the familiar and the familial, of certainty, but most frighteningly, by the grave probability of the loss of memory. Exile is a rupture...

Qudus Onikeku was born in Lagos in 1984. He is a graduate of The National Higher School of Circus Arts in France. His work combines traces of traditional Nigerian dances, hip hop, Tai Chi, Capoeira, acrobatics and contemporary vocabularies, while he draws on his Yoruba culture and several other influences, to weave a certain understanding of the tragedy of the human condition. He is part of the new generation of dance creators springing up from Africa. He is known in Europe, the USA, Latin America and the Caribbean for his solo pieces, writings and research projects. He was named the Dancer of the Year in The FUTURE AWARDS 2009, and recently awarded the Laureate for solo performance at Danse l'Afrique 2010 in Bamako for his remarkable solo piece "My Exile is in my Head".

My Exile is in my Head was performed at Dance Umbrella in Johannesburg in 2011, and was one of the most critically acclaimed works of the festival.

Review by Moira de Swardt, Freelance Journalist, Artslink.co.za:

"The only international piece in the Dance Umbrella is superb.

Nigerian choreographer/dancer Qudus Onikeku who is now living in France, effectively in "exile" from the country of his birth, brought a beautiful work to Africa's largest and most important dance festival. Entitled "My Exile is in my Head" this work is sophisticated, slick and wonderfully enjoyable. The choreographer's intention was to deal with personal questions of home, belonging, non-belonging and exile. In a country where we have both a big expatriate community and xenophobia runs riot, literally and figuratively, through our society it is interesting psychologically to go on this journey with him. While the use of video projections of shadow work and "words" is not new to Dance Umbrella audiences, this one is particularly well done. The lighting can only be described in superlatives and it combined to work with the video projections so well that I was somewhat surprised, on checking my programme, to discover that they were done by different people. Video conception was by Isaak Lartey and lighting by Guillaume Fesneau. The opening scene particularly, was eerie and mystic and it was the lighting which gave the work its neon-appeal.

The use of the dance space was fascinating. The front left of the stage (to the right of the audience) was reserved for the musician (Charles Amblard) who performed original music on a Hawaiian lap steel guitar. The musician and dancer worked in dialogue style, the way Spanish dance accompanists do with their dancers, and Amblard never took his eyes off Onikeku. It was beautiful to watch.

The dance was filled with angst, beauty, resignation, acrobatic moves, deeply controlled moves, high energy and a spirituality that was summed up in the voice over "When I dance I am closer to God". I know this was true because when Onikeku danced I, too, was closer to God".

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