

NAWAL AIT BENALLA-LAGRAA

Artistic assistant, director of instruction of the Franco-Algerian Mediterranean Cultural Bridge / Ballet Contemporain d'Alger

Born in Morocco of a Berber father and French mother, Nawal Aït Benalla-Lagraa moved to France with her family when she was eight. She began ballet very young and completed her classical training, during which she tackled the repertoire's great roles (*Swan Lake*, *La Bayadère*, *Le Corsaire*, *Paquita*, etc.). Before long, Nawal broadened her dancing and became

interested in contemporary and jazz styles. She took part in productions with the Armstrong Jazz Ballet, where she had the opportunity to work with choreographers as contrasting as Wayne Barbaste and Géraldine Armstrong, Georges Momboye and Matt Mattox...

An artist in the fullest sense, open to diverse forms of artistic expression, Nawal was soon approached by many other choreographers and directors.

As a result, she has performed in Jacques Weber's *Cyrano de Bergerac* at the Théâtre du Châtelet, in Yannis Kokkos' *The Trojans* and at Opéra Bastille with Blanca Li... She has also taken part in numerous audiovisual events.

Passionately committed to exchanges and teaching, in 2005 she obtained her State Diploma as a dance teacher at the Centre National de la Danse, Pantin (Paris).

She joined the La Baraka company in 2006 for Matri(k)is and became Abou Lagraa's assistant for the Ballet Memphis (USA) commission in 2007.

For the Lyon International Dance Biennial in 2008, Abou Lagraa devised the duet *D'Eux Sens* for Nawal and himself.

In 2009, she assisted Abou Lagraa for the Closing Ceremony of the Pan-African Festival in Algiers. This was a revelation for her, and she decided to dedicate herself more fully to training young Algerian dancers, offering them professional status through an introduction to contemporary dance.

In 2010, in addition to performing in *Un monde en soi*, a piece for seven dancers and the Debussy Quartet, she helped Abou Lagraa develop the Mediterranean Cultural Bridge project for which she took over the educational leadership.

In her own words "This intensive training is, in my opinion, the right way to convey to these young performers, committed in body and in soul, the appreciation for hard work and thought that you need to gain access to the state of dance, to freedom..."

She continues to teach while *NYA* is on tour, and shares her love of teaching in many workshops and masterclasses, particularly in France, the Netherlands, Spain, Poland, Russia, the USA...

She assisted Abou Lagraa for his 2012 creation, *Univers l'Afrique*, and helps the dancers of the Algiers Contemporary Ballet in their teaching mission to help a new generation of teacher/dancers bloom in Algeria.

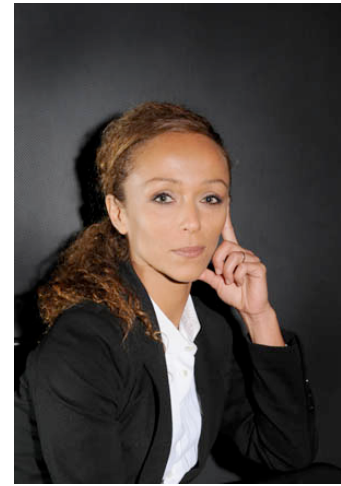


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