

# NAWAL LAGRAA AÏT BENALLA



Choreographer  
Dancer  
Co-artistic director, The Baraka Company

Nawal Lagraa Aït Benalla was born in Morocco, and has a Berber father and a French mother. At 11, she moved to France and began classical dance, very quickly deciding to make it her profession. At 16, she began intensive training in classical dance, covering repertoire, jazz, and contemporary dance and history of music.

**Nawal's career took off in Paris where she participated in the Armstrong Jazz Ballet's new creations, and had the opportunity of working with an incredibly diverse array of choreographers, such as Wayne Barbaste, Geraldine Armstrong, Georges Momboye and Matt Mattox.**

In 2000, she was chosen by DJ Laurent Garnier to perform on the greatest electronic music stages in the world during his international tour for the album *Unreasonable Behaviour*.

As an artist open to diverse forms of expression, Nawal was greatly sought-after by a great number of directors and choreographers from 2001 on, and she performed in pieces such as *Cyrano de Bergerac* by Jacques Weber, *Les Troyens* (The Trojans) by Yannis Kokkos at the Théâtre du Châtelet, and Blanca Li's *Guillaume Tell* (William Tell) at the Bastille Opera in Paris.

In 2003, she met Peter Goss and followed his yoga and contemporary dance classes intensively. Passionate about exchanging and passing on ideas and knowledge, she became a dance teacher and took the French State-registered diploma at the Centre National de la Danse (National Dance Centre), in Pantin.

**In 2006, she joined La Baraka for MATRI(K)S and became Abou Lagraa's assistant for the creation NAWAL (the offering) at the Tunis Mediterranean Center of Contemporary Dance and for a commission for the Memphis Ballet (USA) in 2007.**

In 2008, Abou Lagraa worked with Nawal to create the duo *D'EUX SENS* for the Lyon International Dance Biennial. Together, they both journeyed to Algiers for the Closing Ceremony of the Panafrican Festival in 2009.

**The trip was a revelation for Nawal, and she committed herself to giving young Algerian dancers professional training.**

Between 2010 and 2015, in addition to her work as a dancer in *UN MONDE EN SOI*, a piece for seven dancers and the Debussy quartet, she worked with Abou Lagraa to head up a "Mediterranean Cultural Bridge" project, taking responsibility for all pedagogical aspects. She continued her pedagogical work during the Algiers Contemporary Ballet's tours, while also sharing her passion for passing on her art in master class & workshops in France, in the Netherlands, in Asia, Spain, Poland, Russia and the US etc... She also continued to perform on stage in *EL DJOUDOUR*, by Abou Lagraa, a piece for fourteen dancers and the singer Houria Aichi.

**In 2014, her conviction that art and social engagement are perpetually linked led her to create her own specific project within La Baraka, entitled, *Les Femmes sur le devant de la scène* (Women at the forefront of the stage) : a training and creation project supported by the Auvergne Rhône-Alpes Region in France, and directed by young female talents from Lyon and the surrounding urban area.**

**In September 2015, she created her first piece *DO YOU BE* at the Maison de la Danse in Lyon for the *quinzaine de l'égalité Femmes-Hommes* (Fortnight for the equality of Women-Men), followed by a tour taking in the Suresnes Cité-Danse Festival, the Karavel Festival, Kalypso, Gémeaux-Scène Nationale de Sceaux (Sceaux National Stage).**

In 2018, together with Abou Lagraa, she wrote and led a project celebrating La Baraka's move to the Chapel St Marie in Annonay and took responsibility for the aspects concerning cultural projects and creation. At the Chapel, as part of her continued commitment to building bridges with vulnerable groups, she created and led a project called *Mon corps, Mon histoire* (My body, My story) for students with disabilities who attend the Institut Médical Educative d'Annonay (Annonay educational medical institute), and another called *Danse avec Elles* (Dance with Them) for a group of women from the Mayotte community in Annonay. She was assistant choreographer to Abou Lagraa for his piece *WAHADA*, performed to Mozart's Great Mass in C Minor, a commission for twenty-two dancers by the Ballet du Grand Théâtre de Genève.

