

# "UNEXPECTED"

DANCE SOLO IN DIALOG WITH A MUSICIAN AND FOR A CIRCLE OF SPECTATORS IN A PUBLIC SPACE

AS PART OF THE UNEXPECTED DANCE - MARIE HOUDIN

DURATION : 40 MINUTES



ENGRENAGE[S]

2019 CREATION

*"One falls in love with a dance, not knowing why, it is there that our heart decides to live. It is both a forgotten story and forgotten ancestors that appear." Babacar Top, collection trip to Senegal, 2019.*

The dancing body is the vehicle of those that came before us, and the reflection of an uncertain destiny. The memory of places and bodies, the mark of events - especially those that were devastating and heartbreaking - belong to each one's cellular memory. Therefore, postures and body movement that occur naturally, business-as-usual, are the involuntary testimony of those marks that go through them or live inside of them.

Dance is nourished by history and human stories. Therefore, it carries and leaves a legacy : the one of a shared sensation and a living memory which both constitute a collective and intangible heritage. You! The land that some have taken the right to conquer, it is from your clay that each one of us is made. All of us, coming from "world cities", are the reflection of reconciled lands and identity archipelagos which are interlinked.

All of us, placed as mirrors stretched out to others, we share a History that we have not chosen : the History of a world that shelters us and that invites us to choose sides. Dance circulates, it finds its way, it crosses and moves the boundaries that it represents. Being a dancer turns you into a relay dancer and means that you can connect to the visible, the sensitive: two worlds which are opposed to yield and profit.

Being a relay dancer means being aware that what you leave out only has value through its relation to others. The dancer doesn't only exist in his/her expression or creative action, but in what he/she conveys, shares and passes on: a link and an invitation to dance.

Dance is my resilience. I have adopted dance styles that were born on the other side of the Atlantic, at a time when a majority of the youth of France and elsewhere recognized itself in them. When I decided to adopt those dances, I was neither aware of what it would mean to me later on, nor of what it already represented in my inner self: an identity that became a rhizome.

By trying to better understand those dances, I became passionate about the legacy and the social, cultural and historical statement that dances convey and around which they are transmitted and evolve. Those dances brought me back to the traditions that nourish them and resonate through them. Traditions which are mostly African, but also Native American and the Carribeans - thus, already creolised.

Knowing more and more about West African and Caribbean traditions makes me face my own history and its uprootedness. I'm also confronted with the gradual oblivion of the european traditions and of some parts of history. It reveals the emptiness that grows within individuals, families and communities. The very emptiness that children grow up with and build themselves with.

As I dance, my body tells its own story. It tells what it has adopted and what it has rejected. It tells what goes through me. It tells my legacy. It tells my travel diary.

# NOTE OF INTENT



# THE CONCEPT

*Unexpected. Unforeseen.  
Unpredictable. Improvised.*

With “Unexpected”, a dance solo designed for public space, Marie Houdin shares a danced travel diary. By crossing it, one travels through something that could be described as the diary of a body, which carries what the body has been through and what it has encountered. A personal diary that feeds itself and develops itself through relationships. The memories of the world which are held and carried through each living cell, but also through the settings that carry us and observe us. These memories are expressed through the dancing body. Therefore, this latter becomes the relay between the memories and what crosses or resonates through the body. Marie Houdin has been able to live and experience this during her research, collection and danced exchanges trips in Senegal, Cuba and New Orleans. She experienced this especially during dance improvisations which occurred when she was immersed in places, events, encounters and wanderings.

In the middle of a circle of spectators, a dancer and a musician tell each other's story through each other. Within this circle, echoes from the world are invited to speak out. They answer to each other, they invoke, they question. Their stories bring us back to our own story. By dint of travelling, one knows more about where he/she comes from. These round trips make Marie Houdin face her own ancestral memory and her transmission. It also confronts her with the colonial history of her the country where she grew up and still lives in: France. A country with a vivid memory.

From November 2018, Marie Houdin has been travelling between West Africa, the Caribbean and the USA so as to do research and gather information about dances and their stories. She has been working for several years on a dialog between social and folkloric dances that come from African and Native American diasporas, both born in the Americas and which are globally reaching. What's more, those dances reflect peoples' resilience and resistance when they had to face the traumatic episode of the Atlantic slave trade and its consequences. By reaching out to communities that carry this legacy of social and folkloric dances, the artist takes a close interest to the transmission and the survival of traditions through those dances. She is also taking a great interest to this filiation that exists between those dances and that enable us to go back in time. Marie Houdin draws a parallel between this filiation and the creation of cultural identities that are singular and creolised : they couldn't have been predicted and and remain unpredictable. Therefore, she shows the importance of social and folkloric dances in the individual and collective identity building.

The sound collections (soundscapes, live music, testimonies) gathered from these journeys constitute a sound bank which explores the notions of uprootedness, travel and creolisation. Windows open on these “someplaces” from which voices arise. By dint of travelling between lands, one ends up living between them. What identity is being recomposed then? Marie Houdin lived this during her research and travels and offers to share it with “Unexpected”. An unpredictable dimension arises from the concurrence of different sound, danced and contextual elements. This dimension is a major ingredient of creolisation and is at the core of the creation process and show composition.

“I picture humanity as a community of identities which are both singular and in rhizome. The creation of dances and world musics is the testimony of peoples' resilience and the stories that bind them together. Being a dancer enables me to be connected to several places in the world, from which one looks at difference with another approach, even if the history shared by humanity is the same. Creating a solo after 15 years of choreographic career means having things to question and things to share. It also represents the will to gather in a same place different viewpoints on the world, starting by my own, the musician's who plays with me, and the spectators'.

**Marie Houdin**

## GENESIS

“In 2014, discovering the New Orleans and Caribbean cultures was crucial for me. This creolised melting pot gave birth to jazz, funk and hip-hop. “It’s all about the people”. New Orleans would be nothing without its inhabitants and the strength that binds these people together. This strength unfolds in the streets with music and dance which are linked to the memory of what once existed and to the cheer of what they are. How come these dances be so communal and yet so universal? This social dimension defines cultures while at the same time binding them with one another. On another meridian than triangular trade, on the opposite direction, peoples’ resilience has given birth to creolised cultures, which are at the same time African, Caribbean, Amerindian, American and European. Therefore, these cultures are both identity-based and global. They evolve by observing themselves and meeting themselves, from one continent to another.”

### Marie Houdin

Dancers representative of a range of dances from the African diaspora and who dialogue from their fundamental grooves, explore their singularities and their links / a small inventory danced as a travel diary / a performance in the public space that plays with frontiers... Between 2015 and 2017, the CCNRB-Musée de la Danse (National Choreographic Centre of Rennes and Brittany) and two editions of the show “Le Funk prend les Rennes” (Engrenage[s]) gave me several opportunities to experiment and to offer performances about my artistic research, which led to the creation of Unexpected.

The construction of “Unexpected” is part of a larger project, nourished by exchange trips, research and choreographic collections carried out between 2018 and 2019 in Cuba, Senegal and New Orleans.

The research conducted by Marie Houdin led her to formalize an analysis and an approach of dances from the African diaspora which are shown in the videos that you can find below. It is also described in the file introducing the project “The Unexpected Dance”.

> *IMPROVISED DANCE PERFORMANCE* 

> *UNEXPECTED DANCE - ARCHIVES* 



# BIOGRAPHY

## MARIE HOUDIN

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Marie Houdin, based in Rennes (France), is a dancer and choreographer for the production office called Engrenage[s] since 2004. Originally, she was originally specialized in African-American club dances forms which are called “funkstyle”: locking and Electric Boogaloo, waacking and “footworking” dances such as House Dance and Top Rocking. She learned these dances with pioneer dancers or referents from the USA or Europe. (Greg Campbell Jr., the members of Electric Bungaloes, Brian Green, Ejoe, Storm, Wallid etc.) She has developed an artistic, choreographic and pedagogical approach based on research and travel. With Franco Guizonne, between 2004 and 2010, she co-created five shows, a danced conference, a funk ball - “I Feel Good” - about Funkstyle dances, their influences and their history. According to her, funk isn’t just some music. Either you were born funky (or you become it), things are made funky, things come alive in a funky way. In 2010, Marie Houdin signed her first independent creation: “Roots”.

Since 2012, she has been one of the directors of the show “Le Funk prend les Rennes” supported by the production office “Engrenage[s]”. During this festival, the city is flooded with concerts, performances, shows, conferences, workshops and block parties. This festival is dedicated to Funk, what influenced it and what it influences.

From 2013, she has been interested in links that circulate between dances coming from the African diaspora and in the singularities which define them. It also deals with the heritage of creolised dances which were born in the Caribbean and in the Americas. African-American dances are apart of these cultures and are nowadays gathered in France under the name of “hip-hop”. Nowadays they have become universal dances. This approach of dances leads Marie Houdin to place the social dimension of dance at the core of her creative act and to develop projects and a singular choreographic writing which reflect her approach. She is also interested in the fact that social dances might keep or not their traditional history. Therefore, what the communities that created them decide (knowingly or not) to pass on or to reinvent through them.

Her self-taught career path was punctuated with significant encounters with choreographers and/or dance techniques. Some of them have a direct influence on her current job: the Acogny technique created and developed by Germaine Acogny (Ecole des sables - Toubab Dialaw in Senegal), and the Dunham technique, created and developed by Katherine Dunham (Katherine Dunham Centers For Arts and Humanities - St Louis - USA).



## CHOREOGRAPHER-DANCER-RELAY DANCER

Between 2004 and 2014, she choreographed a dozen shows, both for stage performances and street performances, and she danced in almost fifteen shows. From 2014, she dedicated herself to bringing back dance within the public space. She does so with “Red Line Crossers”, co-produced with the Tombées de la Nuit festival. This creation marks a turning point in her career and with her life-changing encounter with the Second Lines cultures from New Orleans. Since then, she reshaped her approach and named it “The Unexpected Dance”.

In 2015, by responding to Boris Charmatz’s invitation (who was at the time president of the CCNRB - Dance Museum), the choreographers from the Engrenage[s] production office imagined the high point of the “Soul Train” show: they created an XXL concept in which they invite everyone to dance. It was the birth of the “Soul Train Géant” (Giant Soul Train) which brought Marie Houdin to travel from 2015 to 2018 in Berlin, Paris, Rennes and Brest (on the occasion of the “Fous de danse”). In connection with this concept the parisian edition, she performed several times CND - Pantin (National Dance Centre) on the occasion of “Danses Partagées” (shared dances).

The relation with the “Tombées de la Nuit” festival and with New Orleans cultures brought him to co-imagine and co-develop a giant invitation to dance, on another form, a Second Line form (or several), which took place in 2016 and 2017 in the streets of Rennes, under the name of “Parade”.

2019 marks a turning point in Marie Houdin’s career :

- She took a professional and international intensive course to learn the Acogny technique in the École des sables in Senegal.
- For the 2018 festival “Accroches-Coeurs”, she created the Ball du “Tout-Monde” (literally the whole world ball), which title is a reference to the Martinican poet Edouard Glissant. During this show, 4 dancers and 1 DJ invite the audience in the public space to have fun and travel through a range of social and traditional dances from Western Africa, the Caribbean and the USA. This dance show was co-produced by the Très Tôt Théâtre, a theatre for young people (Quimper), Les Renc’Arts Hip Hop (Brest), the Tombées de la Nuit (Rennes) the Musée de la Danse / CCNRB (Rennes) the cultural centre l’Hermine (Sarzeau), the Pacé MJC, the Ocus dancing (St-Germain-sur-Ille), the Tour d’Auvergne (Rennes).
- She began the creation of “Unexpected”
- Between 2018 and 2019 she made three collection and choreographic exchange trips. These trips were supported by the French Institute. These first journeys enabled her to initiate a bigger project of collection of social and traditional dances, along with creations made in dialog with continents, and documentaries.

These components nourish each other and complete each other and are the reflection of Marie Houdin’s artistic approach. An approach which she calls “The Unexpected Dance”.

# KRIS NOLLY

Kris began his career within different projects as a rapper, slammer poet, beatboxer, and more recently as a beatmaker.

He has performed over a hundred shows, from café-concerts to the Transmusicales- Rennes, the Vieilles Charrues or even the Francfolies (music festivals in France). He has worked in most of the French SMACs (Current Music Scenes), building himself a solid experience of stage. Far from restricting himself to one music style, he likes to think of himself as an instrument serving a project. He also pictures music as a free and open creation space. Therefore, the projects in which he has participated go from hip-hop to French song, or even blues and electro music! One watchword: “groove”.

His taste for an opening on what the world has to offer and its musics enabled him to work with artists from different musical backgrounds: Ka jazz (Groove song - France), Benoît Morel (La tordue - France), Sandi-Thom (Pop - Scotland), Didier Laloy and Bruno Le Tron (Folk-ball - Belgium), X Makeena (Drum and bass - France), Sannie Fox (Songwriting - South African), Beat Bouet Trio (Festnoz hip hop).

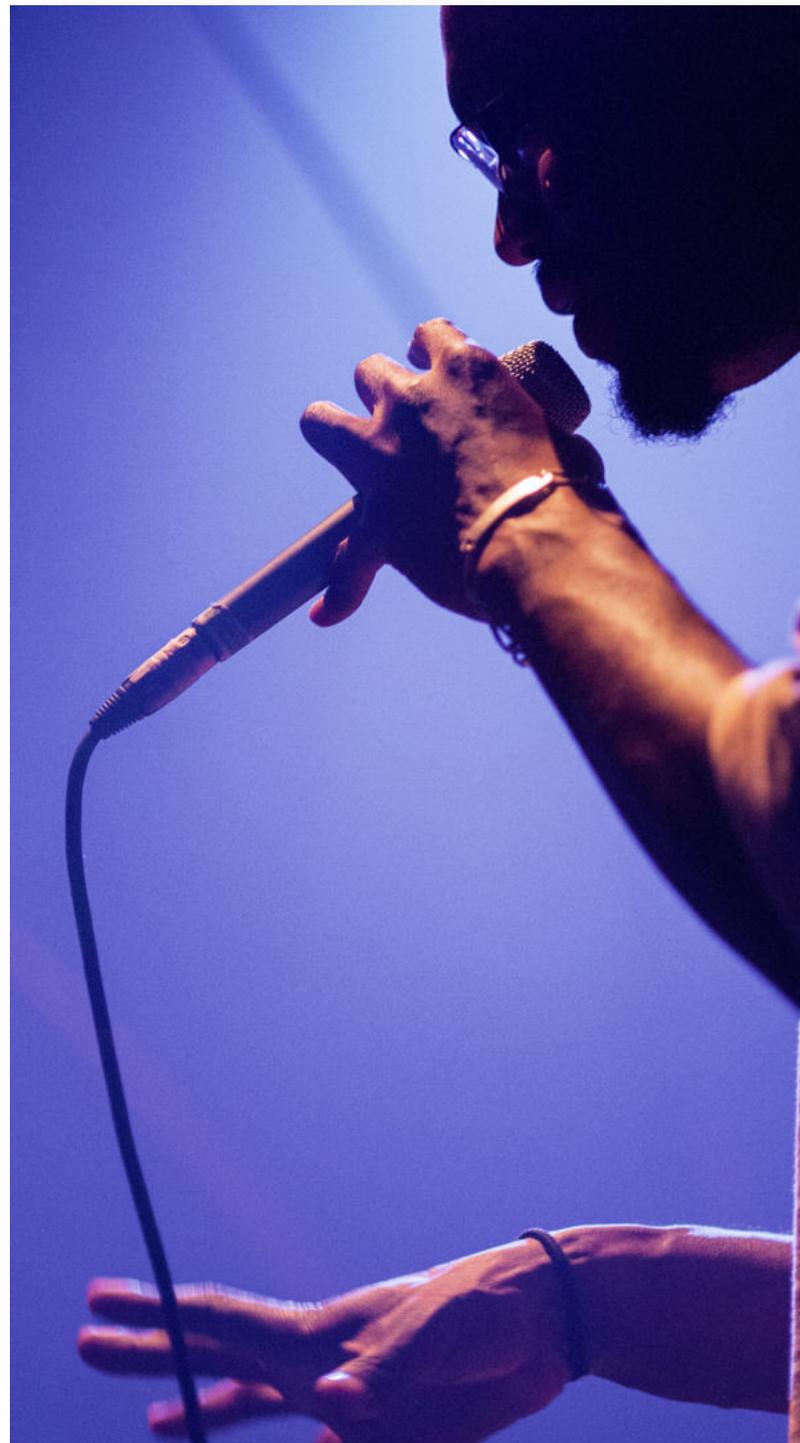
These days he can be found working with rhythms (beatbox/live machine) and at the choirs in different teams: Léa Bulle (electro acoustic songs, young audience) Yoann Minkoff (blues), La Bleue (voodoo, vocal looping), Tinah Drevet (gospel), Sikateyo (South African world music). He’s been working in parallel on the creation of a show called “ciné-concert jeune public” (cinema-concert young audience) about video games.

Nolly is a quarter Guadeloupean, a quarter Martiniquan, half Guyanese - from Saint Lucie. He spent his childhood in French Guiana and his adolescence in metropolitan France. Once arrived from Saint Lucie in French Guiana to France, his family tried to perpetuate the folklore and traditions from their hometown, creating thereby several events and associations.

All of this along with his conception of music inseparable from dance, it was natural for Kris to be directly inspired and enthusiast about the proposal to work on music and dances from the African diaspora.

A few years back, Kris was already intrigued by some artists’ approach of their art, such as A Tribe Called Red’s, which focused on the revival of Breton music. Both Kris Nolly and A Tribe Called Ride, while working on diametrically opposed territories, find new basis of creation in the compilation of song and traditional dances. Kris Nolly also wanted to nourish his creativity with his own past and roots.

Marie Houdin and these other artists’ approach couldn’t have come at a better time in Kris Nolly’s artistic journey. Indeed, they find inspiration with theme songs and traditional dances which they later on mingle with more modern sounds. Thanks to this approach, they pay a tribute to these forms of art and bring them back to life.



# THE UNEXPECTED DANCE

## - A CHOREOGRAPHIC APPROACH

The title of this project was inspired by the work of the Martiniquan poet Édouard Glissant (1928-2011) who invented the concept of “creolisation”. He defined it as the “interbreeding that produces the unpredictable” and it is to him the “perpetual movement of cultural and linguistic interpenetrability” which comes along with the cultural globalization.

The term “Unexpected” itself designates three aspects which are complementary and fundamental to Marie Houdin: unpredicted dances, unforeseen and unplanned. To her, these aspects seem assured by the social dimension in which these dances are expressed and developed, even nowadays.

Such a reflection is at the core of her project and gives birth to multiple artistic interventions (sound, image, dance) from countries that had participated in triangular trade.

> ARTISTIC FILE

*“Creolisation is the mixing of several cultures, or at least several elements from distinct cultures in any place of the world which results in a new data, totally unpredictable in relation to the sum or the bare synthesis of those elements. [...] Why creolisation and not interbreeding? Because creolisation is unpredictable while the results of interbreeding can be calculated. The effects of crossbreeding plants by cuttings or animals by crossbreeding can be calculated. But creolisation is interbreeding with an added value which is unpredictability. [...] Creolisation rules the unpredictable with respect to interbreeding. It creates cultural and linguistic microclimates in the Americas which are totally unexpected; places where the impact of languages on each other or cultures on each other is abrupt.*

**Édouard Glissant**



Duration: 40 minutes

Public space

Scenic writing, research, choreography, interpretation: **Marie Houdin**

Upstream research, dance, images, local sounds and video collection: **Marie Houdin & Julien Durand**

Musical writing, live music (polyphony, polyrhythm, beat box, vocals, samples): **Kris Nolly**

Stage management: **Ronan Gicquel**

Costume design: **Alice Bouloin**

Support & outside view: **Patrick Acogny "coaching", Jant-B Company / Ecole des sables(Toubab Dialaw-Senegal) & Sofian Jouini**

**Coproduction:** CCNRB/Musée de la Danse (Rennes), Le Triangle / conventioned dance scene (Rennes), CN D-un centre pour la danse (Pantin)

**Supporters, residency:** L'Hermine, dance scene for the region in Sarzeau, Golf of Morbihan, Vannes Agglomération, L'Ecole des Sables (Toubab Dialaw - Sénégal)

**Institutional supports:** Ministère de la Culture-Drac Bretagne, Institut Français as part of its convention with the Région Bretagne, Ville de Rennes, French embassy in Cuba, the Alliance française in Santiago de Cuba

**Production:** Engrenage[s]

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