

COMPAGNIE
PAR TERRE
ANNE NGUYEN



KATA

Production 2017 | Duration 60 min
Show for all ages, from 6 years old



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≡ A word from the choreographer.....	2
≡ Additional information	2
≡ Choreographer: Anne Nguyen	3
≡ Cast	4
≡ Partners.....	5



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≡ A word from the choreographer

Anne Nguyen presents the eight breakdancers in *Kata* as the last remaining representatives of a warrior ideal, a code of honour that appears absurd in the present-day world. Bodies, engaged in martial arts type sequences, reach out towards fictitious opponents, who materialise only to give rise to fights played out in dance steps. Each breakdance movement takes on a new meaning, transforming the dancers into modern-day samurai warriors. As seen in the kata of martial arts, the shapes they create and repeat appear to conceal hidden concepts. Gestures metamorphose into genuine battle reflexes adaptable to many situations. Beyond the search for martial efficiency, the sheer determination firing the dancer's steps embody a kind of spirituality and moral attitude. By practicing their art, they hope to improve the self, develop their vital energy and reach a harmony with their environment. However, the world in which they move is suffused with a latent, mundane violence, building many barriers in the way of physical interaction between individuals and encouraging passivity. Although they step back from the paradox of their situation, the last remaining representatives of a bygone way disengage themselves from battles that are perceived as increasingly illusory.

** Breakdance: a hip-hop dance specialty mainly performed on the floor, based on centrifugal, acrobatic movements.*



Teaser of *Kata* – par Terre / Anne Nguyen Dance Company
Production 2017 | Teaser by Chaillot – Théâtre national de la Danse

[> Watch the teaser](#) (Duration: 1:50 min)

≡ Additional information

For her tenth production, Anne Nguyen continues her deconstruction of hip-hop body language, focusing on her preferred discipline of breakdance.

"I am long practiced in the martial arts, especially capoeira and Brazilian jiu jitsu, as well as Viet Vo Dao and Wing Chun. One of the features of these practices is the relationship to the partner, which is one that involves physical contact. However, while contact with the floor is one of the basic principles in breakdance, personal contact with others is very under-exploited by hip hop dancers in general, the latter creating an empty space around them in which to dance within their "vital circle". The contact with the floor, the relationship with the Earth, is one of the factors that prompted me to practice breakdance rather than any other dance style. Nevertheless, I greatly missed that contact with, and relationship to, a partner when I decided to stop martial arts to concentrate on dance. That's why I now make it one of my main research goals as a choreographer. I developed a series of technical exercises aimed at introducing contact into the dance moves, which are inspired by martial arts and mechanical principles. I try to bring together, confront arms, legs and bodies in a dynamic, circular fashion within a reduced space. It's by means of this process that I create combinations of moves for several dancers.

My capoeira teacher one day asked me to choose between capoeira and breakdance: I was improvising by adding weak or pointless moves to my fights. A strong urge to break the rules and seek beyond efficient, effective movement naturally propelled me towards dance. With *Kata*, I wanted to do the reverse: to start out with a dance form made of seemingly "useless" dance movements, i.e. breakdance, and discover the usefulness in every gesture, as if every breakdance sequence were merely a series of kata in training for combat. In *Kata*, I break down the centrifugal movements of breakdance into sequences of isolated gestures, and combine them with "useful" concepts within the meaning of the battle and the relationship to the other. The eight breakdancers, either individually or within perfectly ordered formations, execute sequences of dance gestures aimed at imaginary adversaries, or confront one another in the form of danced battles. Attaques, blocages, esquivas, intricate, complex battle scenarios are played out to the ebbing and flowing rhythm of the "fighters" on stage, channelling the warlike energy of breakdance.

I also attempt, in *Kata*, to sublimate the martial arts aspect of breakdance. For me, breakdance is a truly contemporary martial art, it was created by human beings in a bid to cope with a hostile urban environment that had broken all ties with the animal kingdom and the relationship to the Earth, and transformed the human body through the violence of its shapes and constraints. Without enemies to oppose, without physical accomplishments to achieve in the everyday living environment, the fighting spirit that gives shape to the living world seeks to express itself in breakdance, in response to the oppression we are under from our environment. It is a spontaneous movement of resistance on the part of the living, a form of discipline and ritual that allows the dancer to reconnect with his/her innermost instincts, such as the quest for physical power and territory."

Anne Nguyen

≡ Choreographer: Anne Nguyen

"Dance for the Earth"



Between 2005 and 2017, Anne Nguyen dedicated herself to sublimating hip-hop dance and its rebellious culture and injecting it with a certain amount of mystery, by combining a raw, virtuoso gestural vocabulary with a graphical, pure, destructured choreographic expression. Echoing the hip-hop dancer's explosive movements, the ten pieces devised during this period are revelatory of the human being and his/her passionate struggle with a hostile contemporary environment.

In 2018, Anne Nguyen turned the page of a new cycle of works in which she establishes the role of the artist as the mirror and guardian of society's soul. In this cycle, she depicts dance as a universal and salutary art, incarnated by virtuoso dancers with magnetic personalities. She engages charismatic dancers who employ brutal, explosive dance moves, not only from the hip-hop scene, but also from other horizons. In her very own timeless, highly graphical and contemporary brand of choreography, she takes the audience on a journey into worlds shaped by contrasts, dismantling the symbolism in

order to free the gaze. Frenzied and impetuous, the dance moves embody the resistance of living things and beauty in the face of ever-evolving values.

"It could be described as a sort of b-boying performance in the style of Anne Teresa de Keersmaeker. Or rather a kind of breakdance integrating the concepts of William Forsythe. Choreographer Anne Nguyen is used to these kinds of comments about her work. She understands the comparison as she is keen to deconstruct hip-hop vocabulary in order to reconstruct it, like a puzzle, to build her complex choreographies to increasing acclaim."

Libération – Eve Beauvallet (5 May 2015)

"No-one in hip-hop has reinvented the art of the dance move in the way that she has. Anne Nguyen is to breakdance or popping what the research of Merce Cunningham or Lucinda Childs is to contemporary dance: an extremely lucid look at choreographic composition and movement, the overall effect resulting in an abstraction that overflows with musicality, dynamism and joy."

Artistik Rezo – Thomas Hahn (5 May 2015)

"Since 2005, Anne Nguyen follows her pared down yet imperious artistic line, carving straight and sharp without deviating from her aspirations, even less from the fundamentals of her discipline. With a scientific background, she puts hip-hop movement through the mill to extract spectacular equations, uncluttered yet always surprising. A love of constraints and a passion to sublimate them: typical Nguyen."

Le Monde Magazine – Rosita Boisseau (13 April 2012)

Square Root, Yonder Woman, PROMENADE OBLIGATOIRE, bal.exe, Autarcie (...), Kata... The titles Anne Nguyen gives to her pieces reveal her many influences: from mathematics to the martial arts, as well as myths and utopia. At a very young age, Anne practiced competitive gymnastics, then started learning a number of martial arts, including Viet Vo Dao, Capoeira and Brazilian jiu-jitsu. Fascinated by science, she studied in the field of physics, but abandoned that path when she discovered the world of breakdance, its values reflecting her desire to break free.

"Having a style is knowing how to adopt a stance."

She first revealed a desire to express freedom through the body in written form with her *Manual of the City Warrior*, published in the magazine *Graffiti*, for which she was chief editor of dance. Choreographer Faustin Linyekula, for whom she danced at the time, urged her to choreograph a solo structured around these poems: *Square Root* thus came into being in 2005. It was an instant hit within the profession, and she performed the solo around the world for many years, while continuing to nurture her passion for breakdancing in battles and cyphers, at a time when hip-hop dance was booming in France. She danced with legendary crews, such as RedMask in Montréal and Phase T, Def Dogz and Créteil Style in France. She took part in hundreds of battles, both with and without the latter, winning the IBE 2004, BOTY 2005, and was on the jury for BOTY in 2006 and Red

Bull BC One in 2007. The documentary, *Planet B-Boy* (2007) reflects a period when Anne was busy with numerous battles while developing her own dance company and building her career as a performer for contemporary and hip-hop dance companies, such as the famous Black Blanc Beur.

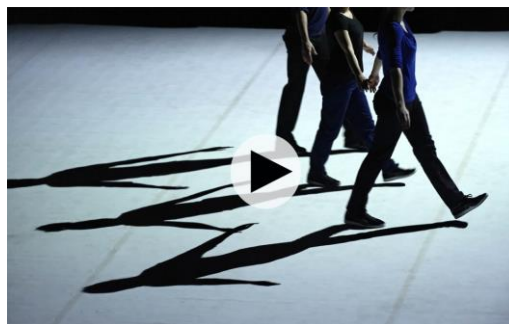
In 2007, a locker crew invited her to create *Keep it Funky!*, which marked the beginning of a cycle of works in which Anne set out to distil the essence of the different hip-hop dance forms. With *PROMENADE OBLIGATOIRE* and *bal.exe*, she sculpted the popping gesture into precise, elegant, minimalist structures, and invented the looping pop dance form for pairs of robotic dancers. In 2013, she scooped the Prix Nouveau Talent Chorégraphie SACD. Anne has continued to perform in her own works: after *Square Root*, she choreographed the duet *Yonder Woman* then the quartet *Autarcie (....)*, in both of which she depicts herself alongside decisive figures in female hip-hop. Her choreographic pieces combine constraint and freedom, poetry and mathematics, technicality and improvisation, sensuality and explosiveness. In 2017, Anne paid tribute to her preferred discipline with *Kata*, which enhances the martial aspect of breakdance. Anne Nguyen is regularly called upon for her expertise in hip-hop dance. Since 2012, she has been giving an artistic workshop on hip-hop dance at Sciences Po Paris. Convinced of the positive merits of dance in society, she created *Dance of the city warriors*, a path of digital installations offering the audience a chance to become immersed in the world of hip-hop dance.

"Mankind will always need to feel a connection to beauty."

In 2018, Anne Nguyen decided to rid herself of all constraints of form in order to focus her work on the values that led her into dance. A passionate aficionado of mythology and literature, she concentrates on gesture as a symbol, the body as the object of ownership, movement as a primary need, the stage as a priority platform for sharing. She shows us the tremendous responsibility the artist has in a world submerged by the entertainment industry and questions the limits of our freedom, our image of freedom, our desire for freedom.

"Why does one dance, choreograph, write? Faustin Linyekula once quoted Jorge Luis Borges in *The Book of Sand* (1978): 'I do not write for a select minority, which means nothing to me, nor for that adulated platonic entity known as 'The Masses'. Both abstractions, so dear to the demagogue, I disbelieve in. I write for myself, for my friends, and I write to ease the passing of time.'" In quoting the author, Faustin chose to replace 'write' with 'dance', and 'ease' with 'slow'."

Can art and beauty slow the course of time? Is beauty mankind's last refuge? In her new cycle of works, Anne Nguyen builds symbolic spaces where powerful, liberating, frenzied dance becomes a magical ritual designed to make us take a renewed interest in the present. The emblematic *A mon bel amour*, , premiered in autumn 2019, questions our perception of the individual, the couple and the collective by exploring different conceits about identity and beauty.



Teaser « 4 choreographies by Anne Nguyen »

≡ Cast

Choreography: Anne Nguyen

Dancers: Yanis Bouregba, Santiago Codon Gras, Fabrice Mahicka, Jean-Baptiste Matondo, Antonio Mvuani Gaston, Valentine Nagata-Ramos, Hugo de Vathaire, Konh-Ming Xiong

Original soundtrack (Composer and Percussionist): Sébastien Lété

Lighting design: Ydir Acef

► Ydir Acef – Lighting design

Ydir Acef has worked as a lighting and sound technician since 1991. He collaborated with le Théâtre du Lucernaire, le Théâtre du Tourtour and le Forum du Blanc-Mesnil. Since 1997, he has designed lighting for several Theater and Dance Companies (*Groupe Le Chiendent, Cie ACTA / Agnès Desfosses, Théâtre Carpe Diem, 6TD Company...*). Ydir Acef has worked as a lighting technician for the par Terre Dance Company since 2008. He created the lighting designs for the pieces *Yonder Woman* in 2010, *PROMENADE OBLIGATOIRE* in 2012, *Autarcie (...)* in 2013 and *bal.exe* in 2014. In 2017 he will create the lighting design of the production *Kata*.

► Sébastien Lété – Original soundtrack



Born in Paris in 1974, Sébastien Lété, a drummer and percussionist, decided after completing his studies in sociology to devote himself entirely to music. In 1995, he founded the Latin Jazz group “Daahoud” with whom he performed for 6 years, playing his first concerts and undertaking his first projects. In 1997, he graduated from the Conservatoire du Montreuil with Guy-Joel Cipriani, as well as the improvised music classes given by Jean-Louis Méchali at Bagnolet ENM. In 2003, he leaves France to study for one year at the Berklee College of Music (Boston, USA). On his return, he starts enthusiastically working the concert halls and festivals in France and around the world together with artists such as Aloe Blacc, Melissa Laveaux, YOM, & the Wonder Rabbis and Chassol. His varied projects bring him into contact with Louis Sclavis, Claude Barthelemy, Cheick Tidiane Seck and Rachel des Bois, with whom he swaps experiences. Sébastien has also taught Drumming and Modern Music at Pantin CRD (93) since 2005. He has just opened his own music and recording studio “H2S” in the centre of Paris. He loves variety both in his career choices and in his music and strives to set an acoustic or electronic intention in his music, be it organic, urban or contemporary.

≡ Partners

With the support of l’ADAMI.

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Anne Nguyen was awarded the 2013 SACD Nouveau Talent Choréographie prize and appointed Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres in 2015. She has been an associated artist to Chaillot - Théâtre national de la Danse from 2015 to 2018.

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