



## **Gwen Rakotovao**

is a French born award-winning dancer and choreographer. She was awarded the Gold medal at the 2012 Biarritz International Contemporary Dance Competition. Moreover, she is a 6th Korea International Modern Dance Competition and 12th Seoul International Dance Competition's finalist.

Gwen is the founder and Artistic Director of the Gwen Rakotovao Company. She was born in Normandy and her both parents are from Madagascar which made her grew up in a multicultural environment. As an educator, Gwen is invited to regularly teach Master Class and Workshops all over the world.

Gwen started her career in Normandy. Her performances had taken her in the major venues in the area such as the Viva Cité and the Transeuropéenne. In 2002, she was part of the cast of

*Classiquement dingue*, a multicultural production that mixed ballet with percussive music. The production toured in Togo in 2003. In 2004, she continued her studies in Paris on scholarship at the Institut de Formation Professionnel Rick Odums. She trained in contemporary and jazz techniques with Matt Mattox, Géraldine Armstrong, Pasqualina Noel, Bruce Taylor, Jeffrey Carter. In 2005 she became a prominent member of the Jeune ballet Jazz lead by Rick Odums and toured in many venues such as the Théâtre du Gymnase in Paris.

In 2007, Gwen Rakotovao joined the prestigious Alvin Ailey School in New York. She learned modern techniques with American legends such as Elizabeth Roxas, Ana Marie Forsythe, Milton Myers and Mary Hinkson. While training, Gwen became part of projects like the French musical *Au clair de la lune* directed by Antoine Espagne and Dominique Filhol. After graduation, she joined BodyStories/Teresa Fellion Dance in 2009 and become a soloist and Associate Artistic Director. She performed in prestigious theaters and festivals including the Fringe festival in Edimburgh and the Baryshnikov Arts Center. In New York Gwen worked with Regina Nejman, H.T.Chen, Whitney V. Hunter and Brian Carey Chung. Her performances history includes the Skirball Center For the Performing Arts, Dixon Place and the Chen Dance Center Theater.

Gwen Rakotovao founded the Gwen Rakotovao Company in 2011. She was commissioned the same year by the QAS Festival (Quarterly Arts Soiree) to create a dance piece on award-winning composer Yasuhiko Fukuoka's music, *Longing Hurlled Into The River Piedra*. The dance piece was a tribute to Japan following the devastating earthquake of March 2011. *Nippon* was premiered at Webster Hall in New York. Since then, the Gwen Rakotovao and her Company toured its repertory in New York at Dixon Place, John Ryan Theater, Triskellion Arts, Movement Research, the Secret Theater, the Green building. And around the world at the Théâtre Charles Dullin in Rouen, The Riley Theatre in Leeds, National Conservatory of Oujda, Alliance française in Bangkok, l'Institut Français in Agadir, Sala Galileo in Madrid, Afrik Urbanarts in Abidjan, International Chopin festival Urodzinowe in Warsaw, Festival Souar Souar in N'Djamena to name a few.

Gwen Rakotovao is also the founder of the dance program Masimihanta, an outreach dance program, sponsored by Eau Vive and in collaboration with the Centre Ketsa. The dance program aims to help them build self-confidence and to raise awareness about environmental issues.

As an educator, Gwen is regularly invited to teach Masterclass and dance workshops in prestigious institutions and cultural centers. She taught at the Conservatory of Rouen, the Northern School of Contemporary Dance in Leeds, the Juste Debout School in Paris, the Kréativ's Academy in Fort de France and in New York, Antananarivo, Bangkok, Kyoto, Agadir, Oujda, Abidjan, N'Djamena. Gwen teaches modern and others contemporary techniques to professional dancers and young children.

Gwen Rakotovao has received the esteemed Rick Odums Fellowship, The Region Haute Normandie French Government Grant, The Rosella Hightower Summer Fellowship and the LCU Foundation Grant in support of female artists.