

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

T.I.A. (THIS is Africa)-réal

Sarah Elgart · Wednesday, February 26th, 2014

As I have said and written many times previously, I love when we are given a window into how dance lives and is integrated into everyday life, and when the line between walking and dancing is very thin. In fact, I have always thought that one of the greatest dance films ever made was *West Side Story* because the transition between actors speaking into song and dance was so seamlessly and believably achieved by two small actions combined: walking, with fingers snapping. So when a piece of screen dance can be a window into the every day life of another country and culture entirely, it takes on additional meaning and value.



This is Dance in Africa

This is the case with **T.I.A. (THIS is Africa) –réal**. Conceived and recorded over just 48 hours in Brazzaville, Republic of Congo in 2013, choreographer and dancer Aïpeur Foundou mixes elements of improvised contemporary and traditional Congolese dance, and places himself in the middle of busy intersections and thoroughfares by day and by night. The result is a slice of life from a part of the planet that is known to be fraught with horrible political corruption and civil and guerrilla warfare. The simple choice just to dance in the face of all this is inherently moving. While it is both lyrical and a bit long, I find it fascinating that this small film, which I happened upon on Youtube, has only just under 500 hits. Although I usually don't like voice over with screen dance, this time it works for me (perhaps because its in French!), with an original poem written for the film by Ronan Cheneau. All this mixed with the fact that most of the media within the Republic of Congo is government owned and controlled, makes this piece of dance on film not only precious, but telling, important, and perhaps a small miracle. Directed by Matthew Maunier-Rossi, with assistance by Cléo Konongo, and music by Jon Hopkins, **T.I.A. (THIS is Africa) –réal** gives us a window into a people and place that few of us have ever been, or will ever go. *Enjoy.*

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