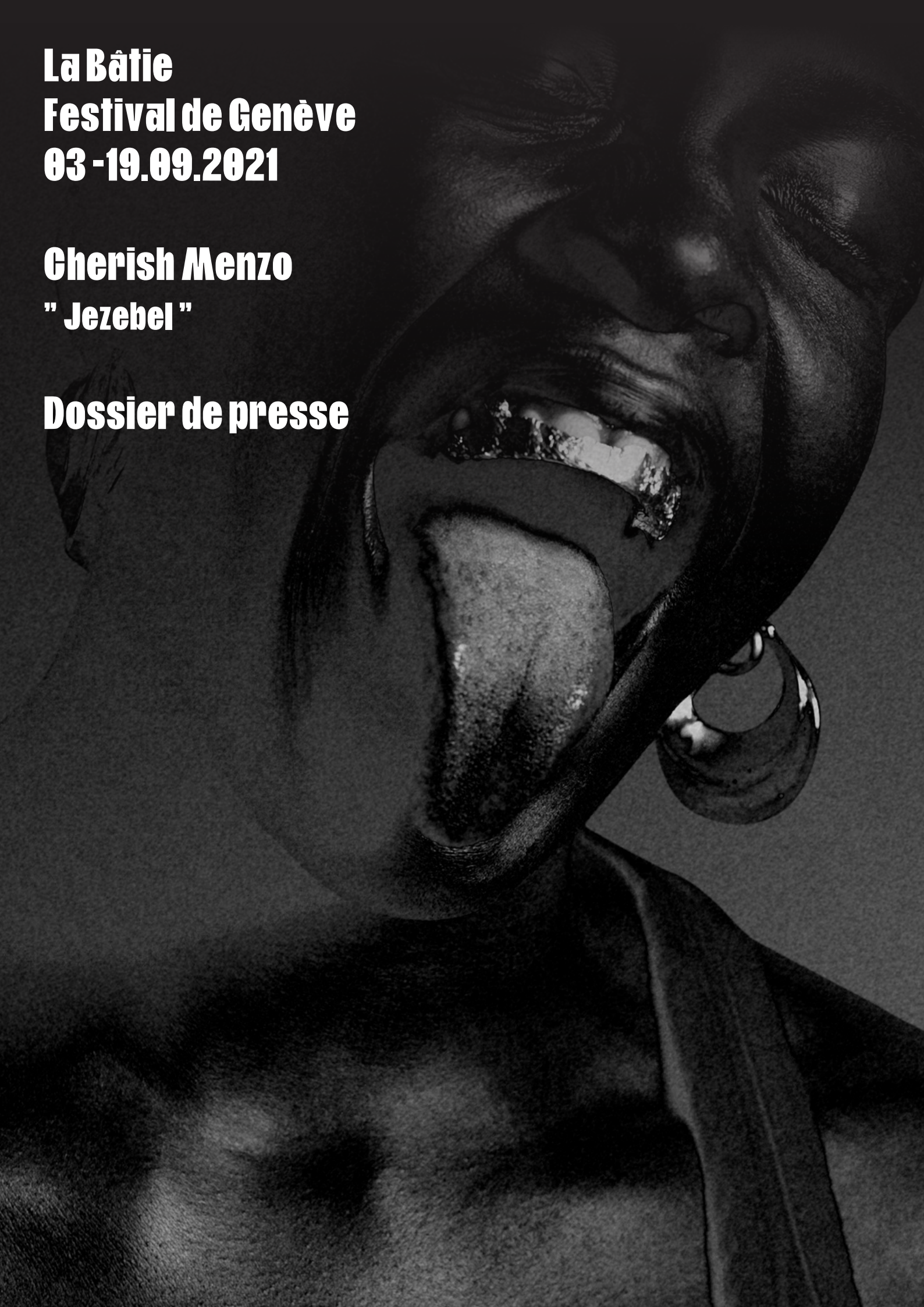
La Bâtie
Festival de Genève
03 -19.09.2021

Cherish Menzo
” Jezebel ”

Dossier de presse



Cherish Menzo (NL)

" Jezebel "

Premier spectacle de la danseuse néerlandaise Cherish Menzo, *Jezebel* a remporté dès sa création en 2019 un prix ainsi qu'une bourse au Fringe Festival d'Amsterdam. On l'attendait. Interprète de chorégraphes tel·le·s que Eszter Salamon, Akram Khan, Olivier Dubois et Jan Martens, soliste de *Sorry but I Feel Slightly Disidentified* de Benjamin Kahn, elle trace par ses choix un chemin déterminé à travers le démantèlement des stéréotypes. Jezebel en est un concentré. Sortie de la Bible, cette Jezebel-là a été une invitée à la table du *Dinner Party* de Judy Chicago (1974) qui conviait les figures féministes de tous les temps, avant de donner son nom aux video vixen, littéralement *les renardes des vidéos,* ces femmes noires hypersexualisées, imitées et conspuées apparues dans les clips hip-hop des années 90 à 2000. Les variations de noms (*Hip hop honeys*, *video girls*) confortaient leur image de femmes-objets. Avec ce lent vidéo-clip dansé qui va s'accélérant dans l'intensité du paysage sonore de Michael Nunes, Cherish Menzo performe une Jezebel courageuse et puissante. Et renvoie les stéréotypes en miroir dans un lumineux renversement.

Performance

Un accueil en collaboration avec le Théâtre du Loup

Compagnie L'A.

Conception
She She Pop

Création et interprétation
Sebastian and Joachim Bark, Fanni and Peter Halmburger, Mieke and Manfred Matzke, Lisa Lucassen, Ilia and Theo Papatheodorou

Décor
Sandra Fox

Costumes
Lea Søvsø

Lumières
Sven Nichterlein

Son
Florian Fischer

Musique
Christopher Uhe

Collaboration dramaturgique
Kaja Jakstat

Production et relations publiques
Veronika Steininger

Admin
Elke Weber

Production
She She Pop

Coproduction
Hebbel am Ufer Berlin, Kampnagel Hamburg, FFT Düsseldorf

Soutiens
Ville de Berlin, ville de Hambourg, Fonds Darstellende Künste

ccng.fr

Informations pratiques

Ve 03 sept **23:00**
Sa 04 sept **19:00**

Théâtre du Loup
Chemin de la Gravière 10 / 1227 Acacias

Durée : 60’

PT CHF 30.- / TR CHF 20.- / TS CHF 15.- / TF CHF 7.-



Présentation
" Jezebel "

[ENGLISH]
Jezebel is a dance performance inspired by the 'Video Vixen': female models who appeared in hip hop video clips in the late '90s and early 2000s. Images in the mass media – and in music videos particularly – often projected the female in a hyper-sensualized way. The repetitive images in hip hop videos reinforce stereotypes associated in particular with black/dark/coloured women. Video Vixens – also referred to as 'hip hop honeys' or 'video girls' – were the subject of severe criticism and often typified as the 'Jezebels' of the late 1990s and early 2000s. In the pre-Youtube era – when MTV still meant Music Television – the Video Vixen model played a central role in video clips. In spite of the explicit lyrics (usually written by men) and the sensual, seductive and scantily clad appearance of the vixen, her performance had a great influence on the aesthetics of these clips. As well as on the popularity of the (male) artist. During the past twenty years, the Video Vixen has both suffered and benefitted from this. Today, she stands for much more than the objectified 'ride or die' model within a male-dominated culture. Jezebel refuses to be defined by others. She navigates the landscape of hip hop culture, looking for ways to reclaim her own image. Can Jezebel deconstruct the controversial stereotype associated with the black hip hop honey? How did this video girl redefine herself today?

Interview de Cherish Menzo
Extraits

[ENGLISH]
Two months of (artistic) lockdown have brought choreographers and dancers to a precarious position. In a dynamic field that is usually centered on live action, urgent questions have arisen around working for the stage. Movement Exposed talked to Cherish Menzo, multifaceted dancer and choreographer.

How have you experienced the lockdown?
It made me feel so stuck, I couldn't move as freely as I wanted, I couldn't be near my family, which in times like these becomes super important. It made me think about the notion of home, and where home is for me. It was confronting. I was supposed to start the tour of JEZEBEL in March, but all the shows were cancelled or postponed. And all my rehearsals for Jan Martens' new production, too. At first, I didn't mind slowing down, and I felt no need to create work based on this situation. I'm in a very privileged position, my performances were rescheduled to this autumn. I still have work waiting for me, it's not as if I have no perspective – if all goes well, that is.

Then, unequal opportunities is one issue that has come more to the fore. Would you say social values are becoming more pronounced?
As excruciating as it is, being a person of colour, I exist within a system where I've almost become comfortable with not fully being a part of it. Or with always having to fight or making up excuses. For instance, I was asked to replace someone in a show. The choreographer was looking for me and the lights went off, and when they came back on, he jokingly said "Ah Cherish, I didn't see you there". All my colleagues looked at him disapprovingly and made it clear they didn't think this was OK. But still I reverted to a deeply ingrained mechanism: I tried to make the situation less hard for him by joking back. By doing so, I implicitly help maintain a system that is ignorant, oppressive and harmful.
I haven't always felt so strongly about it, I think because a lot of us are taught that the more you have to fight for your place, the stronger you come out of it. There is this general attitude reinforced, in school for instance, but also growing up as a person of colour, where it's almost expected of you to fight hard. It's normalised.
Before, I didn't see injustice, I just saw ignorance and didn't want to deal with it. The corona crisis with its lockdown has helped me and many others find our voices. It's a bigger dialogue now. We don't have to fall into the trap of positive discrimination. It's not necessary and it only creates more victims. Everyone working in this field needs to join this conversation to understand. Do we feel a need for diversity and inclusion, or is it an obligation?
After the Black Lives Matters protest, I was wary of the way the production houses and platforms for whom I work would react. What does it truly mean when they say something on social media? Taking a stance by signing a petition or posting on social media, is easy. The anti-racism movement is not just about one issue, there are many issues and they're layered. And they should all be addressed.

Where, when, and how do you think the whole issue accomodating to discrimination starts?
When I think about my time at school I realise a massive change is needed there. We navigate the information we are given there to enter the work field. And I felt systemic discrimination and oppression during this process. I didn't receive my propaedeuse certificate after my first year, not because of my grades but because I was too polite. I had it then and still feel it now, it's a cultural thing, it's how I have been brought up by my parents. I was always taught to be polite and modest and not to be too loud, to make sure I could blend into the crowd. I felt that my teachers expected me to be an angry black woman. That is a cliché that stereotypes me and whether applied consciously or not, creates false expectations. It has to change.

Propos recueillis par Lucia Fernandez Santoro,
Movement, le 22 juillet 2020

Biographie
Cherish Menzo

[ENGLISH]
Dance-maker Cherish Menzo (°1988, The Netherlands) is striking for her powerful, controlled, inescapable physical presence.
In 2016, she created *EFES* with Nicole Geertuida: a punishing duet in which perfection and fallibility evoked intriguing questions about how we prefer to see human beings.

Since 2018, Menzo performs the solo *Sorry But I Feel Slightly Disidentified...* by Benjamin Kahn. A cartographical examination of how we experience the other on the basis of a series of physical and performative 'meetings'. This close collaboration between Kahn and Menzo has been initiated in 2017 within the frame of Fraslab (Frascati Productions). She then went on to make LIVE (Het Veem, 2018): a mix of dance performance and pop/rock concert, in cooperation with musician Müsfik Can Müftüoslu.

In 2019, Menzo continued to work with Frascati Producties: *Jezebel* became a dance production inspired by the Video Vixen phenomenon from hip hop video clips of the '90s. But today's hip hop honey refuses to be defined by others and shakes her image up by deconstructing and redefining it. *Jezebel* won an Amsterdam Fringe Award and an International Bursary Award (2019), and is currently in the running for a BNG Bank Theatre Prize (2020) as well as for a Dutch Dance Days Award (2020). The production got selected for Het TheaterFestival (in both Belgium and The Netherlands). *Jezebel* had its premiere on November 5th (2019) at Frascati (Amsterdam, NL).

Cherish Menzo graduated in 2013 from Amsterdam University of the Arts (Urban Contemporary Dance) and has since appeared in work by the likes of Eszter Salamon, Akram Khan, Leo Lerus, Hanzel Nezza, Olivier Dubois, Benjamin Kahn, Lisbeth Gruwez, Jan Martens and Nicole Beutler.

Presse
Extraits

[ENGLISH]
« Cherish Menzo is a rock-solid, captivating performer. In her solo Jezebel, premiered during the To Voice Festival at Frascati on 5 November, she revisits the video vixen, an ideal avatar to touch on very current and polemic debates such as new forms of feminism and misogyny in hip hop culture. A shorter version of the piece already earned her the Fringe Award 2019, and this polished premiere confirms: Menzo is a force to be reckoned with, not only as a dancer, but also as a brave maker of her own work.

Props, costumes, make-up. Twerky moves, grimaces, gestures of coolness. Lyrics. Menzo's choreographic and movement-based research was fed by all sorts of elements that are informed by the vixen – female models of colour appearing in hip-hop videos, very popular in the late 90's, sexual objects symbolizing wealth and succes or empowered women within the musical industry (depending on who you ask). As the avatar Jezebel gains in depth, the appearance and progressive discovery of these elements provide the piece with structure . Menzo herself, all the while, is on fire on stage. Slightly aloof and committed, really in it, her presence is all-encompassing and sweeping as she flows from one scene to the next. One cannot look away from her, nor stop wondering what she – or he, or it – is about. [...] »

Jordi Ribot Thunnissen, *Movement*, 10 novembre 2019

Billetterie

> En ligne sur www.batie.ch
> Dès le 30 août à la billetterie centrale
Théâtre Saint-Gervais
Rue du Temple 5 / 1201 Genève
billetterie@batie.ch
+41 22 738 19 19

Contact presse

Pascal Knoerr
presse@batie.ch
+41 22 908 69 52
+41 78 790 41 50

Matériel presse sur www.batie.ch/presse :
Dossiers de presse et photos libres de droit pour publication médias