

Migrating means going where you dream of settling

The choreographer Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui has become an emblematic figure in more ways than one, as a symbol of a plural culture at the intersection of north and south, as an artist of international stature, and as an emblem of a remarkable social ascent through hard work and talent. Through his creations, he has become the spokesman for a multi-faceted diversity that is resolutely asserting itself as a rich source of inspiration. This commitment has also earned him the recognition of his country, as he is now the first Belgian baron of Moroccan origin.

It is also reflected in his many shows, such as "Origine", "Foi", "Babel" and most recently "3S" (about solitude) and "Nomad", as well as his work with Madonna, Beyoncé and Alanis Morissette, and his reinterpretation of the musical Starmania.

Diversity is what drives Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, in his role as Director of the Geneva Ballet, in his ongoing collaborations around the world, and in his creations involving Shaolin martial artist monks, hip-hop, or dancers with mental disabilities.

"When I was a child, my mother used to take me to the cathedral to see the paintings. She would say, "It's beautiful," and of course, since she said it, I found it beautiful, too. Likewise, my father, an immigrant from Tangier, used to adorn the doors of the house with quotes from the Koran. Arabic calligraphy gave me the ability to read from left to right and from right to left. But **I live with much more than just a double culture.** I have my mother's Flemish culture, my father's Moroccan culture, and also this other "immigrant" identity. I suffered for it in my youth, as I did for my other "differences", and that's no doubt what fuels my shows. For me, they reflect the way society views us and how we view society. It's a dialogue to improve society together. We live in a world that's quick enough to tell people, especially women, what they should and shouldn't do. I don't want to live in a world like that. I'd rather we explored collectively how to find spaces and compromises so we can share the best of all worlds (*). Growing up, I spent so much time feeling like I needed to find my place that I want to offer a place to everyone now, and that's the meaning of migration, learning instinctively like birds do, how to know where to settle."

(*) Certain quotes are taken from Charline Cauchie's interview with Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui. In "L'Echo - 25 April 2023"