

Once upon a time in Abidjan, there was a community called Village Ki-Yi and all those who lived there were artists. They created and performed their own theatre, music, dance and paintings right there, on the spot. Covered with mango, palm, banana and other leaves from the forest trees, the village, from its high platform, overlooked the university campus of Abidjan's Riviera 2 neighbourhood.

One Thursday evening, lying in his armchair, the founder of this so-called village, was modestly savouring his return home after a long tour to Quebec. The chaos of his homecoming, which covered the Gnahoré's living room, was suddenly interrupted by the pubescent voice of his eldest daughter who was then 12 years old. This high-pitched voice with its plaintive colours, had a clear timbre and a tone that was both seductive, pleading and authoritarian. She was playing mischievous game supported by a firm determination to get exactly what she wanted. "Papa, I don't want to go to school any more, I want to remain in the Village, like you."

And her father replied "It's okay, don't upset yourself, calm down. There's no need to shout as if you were in an argument". The local primary school teacher was not to see Mr Gnahoré's daughter again. She had chosen the Village Ki-Yi as her school.

This is not a bush legend. It's the true story of Dobet Gnahoré, the daughter of Boni Gnahoré, a master drummer, actor, singer and founding member of this artistic village a self-managed artistic micro-society - with pan-African values affirmed and asserted by its director Wéré Wéré Liking.

Dobet Gnahoré **Na Afriki**

Dobet grows up here, learning the performing arts with her friends alongside village inhabitants : theatre, dance, percussion and song.

One morning in 1996, a young Frenchman, Colin Laroche de Féline, arrived with a backpack on his back and a guitar slung over his shoulder. He had planned to stay for three months but remained for three years., fascinated by this micro-community's particular choice of lifestyle.

Dobet and Colin came together via both their art and their hearts, for better and for much worse. On moonlit evenings, in the family's leafy courtyard, Dobet composed her melodies full of tenderness and her inquisitorial and accusatory songs to the sounds of Colin's acoustic guitar. The compositions accumulated and the results aroused the interest of all the artists in Village Ki-Yi and also of "Big brothers" like Ray Lema & Lokua Kanza who were present in Abidjan regularly.

From this musical union, the duet "Ano Neko" is born ("Create Together" in Dida) and, upon returning to France, performs there a hundred times.

In 2003, Contre-Jour Belgium joins the adventure, uniting the artistic project under the name of Dobet Gnahoré and in the same breath, produces a first album entitled "Ano Neko", making a link to their recent past (CJ014).

Dobet & Colin are joined by the choir-singer/bassist Nabil Mehrezi & by percussionist Laurent Rigaud. Together they make a world tour that sees them performing this opus in over 220 concerts from March 2004 to Nov 2006.

Three years after "Ano Neko", we have now "Na Afriki", dedicated to Dobet Gnahoré's own vision of Africa.

The singer speaks freely of love, death and the place itself - and of exploitation - of women and children in African society today, with as her central lamentation, her credo: the resources Africa must find for itself, within itself.

With "Na Afriki", Dobet presents an album of varied sounds and pan-African rhythms, delivered in many different languages... A beautiful work !

Because Dobet has spirit and passion, a powerful vital energy that is both vibrant and impatient but that is also full of charm and introspection. And you quickly wonder how to resist the force and diversity of her intonation, which can be both serious and deep as well as sharp and strident.

(Yann Quéfélec – World – March 2004)





In 2008, Dobét Gnahoré will perform with :

- Colin Laroche de Féline (France) guitars,
- Nabil Mehrezi (Tunisie) bass & backing vocals,
- Boris Tchango (Togo) drums & percussions,

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