



International Dance Day, 29 April 2014
Message by Mourad Merzouki

Every artist takes pride in his art.

Every artist will always defend the art form whose encounter has changed his life. For that which he has sought and lost and for that which he has the burning desire to share: be it the echo of a voice, the discovered word, the interpretation of a text for humanity, the music without which the universe will stop speaking to us, or the movement which opens the doors to grace.

I have, for dance, not only the pride of a dancer and choreographer, but profound gratitude. Dance gave me my lucky break. It has become my ethics by virtue of its discipline and provided the means through which I discover the world daily.

Closer to me than anything else, it gives me strength each day through the energy and generosity as only dance can. Its poetry comforts me.

Could I say that I wouldn't exist without dance? Without the capacity for expression it has given me? Without the confidence I have found in it to overcome my fears, to avoid dead ends?

Thanks to dance, immersed in the beauty and complexity of the world, I have become a citizen. A peculiar citizen who reinvents the social codes in the course of his encounters, remaining true to the values of the hip-hop culture which transforms negative energy into a positive force.

I live and breathe dance daily as an honour. But I am living with this honour deeply concerned. I witness around me the loss of bearings and the inability of some of the youth from the working class, growing up in tension and frustration, to imagine their future. I am one of them; so are we all. I am driven, perhaps more than others, by setting an example, to help them fuel their lust for life.

For isn't society richer with the richness of each of us?

Culture, more than any discourse, unites. So have courage and take risks despite the obstacles and the hatred with which you will no doubt be confronted; the beauty of the world will always be by your side. Like dance has been for me. With its singular force to eliminate social and ethnic distinctions, leaving but the movement of bodies in their essence, of human beings returning to their pure expression, unique and shared.

I would like to end by quoting René Char whose words remind me daily to not let anyone confine us to scripted roles.

"Push your luck, hold on tight to your good fortune, and take your risk. Watching you, they will get used to it."

So try, fail, start all over again but above all, dance, never stop dancing!