



CONSENT AND REALITIES OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Our dance spaces are located within society and within the power relations that structure it.

As it happens, we live in a society in which:

- In Europe, **1 in 3 women has experienced sexual violence in her adult life**. In average, one woman is raped every 7 minutes. (European Union statistics: general data by FRA survey concerning violence against women, 2012)
- In France, every year, **165 000 children are victims of sexual violence**, mostly perpetrated by close relatives: 130 000 girls and 35 000 boys. This makes an average of 18 children every hour. (Figures from IPSOS 2 survey – Childhood sexual abuse, 2019)
- **98% of abusers**, whether they abuse girls/women or boys/men, **are men**. In 86% of cases, they are known by their victims (friend, lover, concubine, acquaintance, family member, etc.). (Figures from French Ministry of Interior: “VIRAGE” survey, 2017)

In this context, the stories of our bodies and our bodies dancing together are either directly or indirectly shaped by this violence. If we translate these statistics to the realities of our balls, **in a Circassian Circle, one in three women has been subjected to sexual violence.**

It should be pointed out that certain gestures and behaviours (abrupt guiding, grabbing by the wrists, etc.) can reactivate traumas; that setting a limit is no easy task and that formulating a “no” can be extremely difficult (for societal as much as psychological reasons: see the work of Muriel Salmona on the phenomena of sideration and traumatic dissociation).

It is thus each and everyone’s responsibility to look out for one’s partner’s comfort and well-being. While recognizing that our dance spaces are permeable to gendered power relations, we can keep a watchful eye to the emotional comfort and integrity of all, so as to improve the situation together.

Let us acknowledge these women’s immense strength to continue dancing and dancing with men.

In order that our “yeses” be real “yeses”, that we feel free to share moments of joy and sometimes sensuality, it is crucial that consent be at the heart of our bodily and human experiences. Let us transform our spaces of festive conviviality into laboratories of care, equality, safety, and hence, joyful freedom.