

## *Une femme d'aujourd'hui: A Euro Pop Cleopatra*

*Cleopatre: La Derniere Reine d'Egypte* is a high energy, acrobatic musical spectacular version of the familiar story with some notable visual and narrative twists. First staged at the Palais de Sports de Paris in 2009, it toured France and Belgium before a return to Paris in 2010, where the DVD version was recorded. Mounted by Kemal Ouali, a French-Algerian director and choreographer known also for his musical versions of *Dracula* and *Gone with the Wind*, it offers a mix of the traditional story lines and cinematic staging with a fresh multicultural slant through its casting, lyrics and production numbers. The French-Moroccan star, Sofia Essaidi, is a young and modern Cleopatra with a multi-ethnic look and sound which brings a fresh African tone to the story. She had several single hits and videos from the show and carried it in a long run on Star Academy, the French reality music competition. For her, Cleopatra is a woman of today.

By means of visual images, video clips and handouts of lyrics, this paper will outline the production in order to demonstrate which aspects of the Cleopatra reception have been retained and/or modified. Special attention will be dedicated to those elements which have been derived from film, theater and art. For example Cleopatra's arrival in Rome cleverly incorporates elements and actions from the Elizabeth Taylor Cleopatra of 1963. The production shows great interest in issues of sexuality, race and gender, while still focusing on a story of love and political power. While many Americans will be put off by the wire swinging acrobats, the shameless over acting, the sappy lyrics and the eclectic dancing, it is worth noting what a French audience would be able to recognize in sentimental story. And even sappy lyrics sound good when sung in French.