

HOTFOOT

ONLINE

Autumn 2017



Transmitting the Dance ***Principles, Aesthetic, Technique and Nuance***

FOREWORD

I am delighted to present this edition of *HOTFOOT Online* which highlights some key fundamentals that often govern and help identify dance genres.

We have compiled opinions and observations from movers and shakers who are influencing how we are learning, enjoying and shaping practice now and for our future generations. Through fascinating personal journeys, repertoires and lived dance experiences we unfold approaches to principles, technique, aesthetic and nuance.

Highlights include: Christopher Rodriguez, One Dance UK Deputy Chief Executive in conversation with Patron, Peter Badejo OBE as he turns 70 this year and reflects on a dance career spanning over 30 years; C. Kemal Nance discussing how his work is always underpinned by the principles of the Umfundalai technique; The Alleyne sisters Kristina and Sadé, revealing the influences for their success in teaching and performance; Latisha Cesar presenting a poetic verse to her practice rooted in Haitian traditions and Thea Barnes sharing her story on supervising Disney's *The Lion King* in the West End.

Included is a rare opportunity to hear Nii-Tete Yartey's experience of following in the footsteps of his father, the late Professor Nii Yartey; and in keeping with the theme of 'transmitting', Alesandra Seutin and Patrick Acogny talk about their roles and responsibilities of championing the technique and legacy of Germaine Acogny, famously renowned as the Mother of Contemporary African Dance.

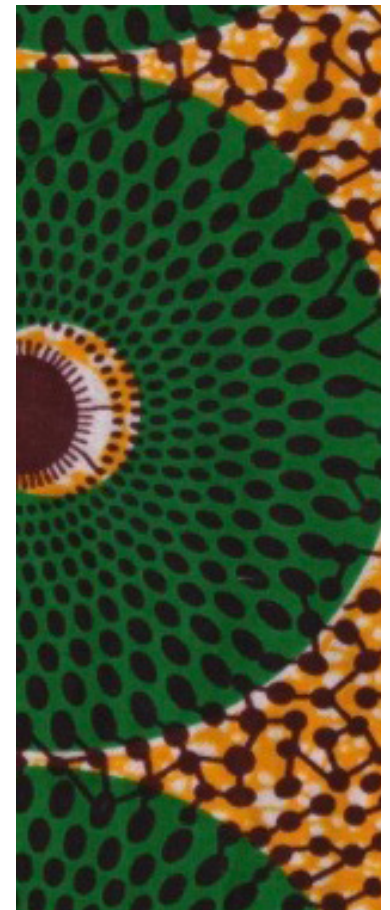
Also included is a review of the 2017 Bloom National Festival which saw One Dance UK celebrate Dance of the African Diaspora in partnership across the country.

We have barely scratched the surface of what is out there regarding 'transmitting the dance'. However, we hope that this edition inspires you to seek more understanding so that you play your part in passing on the traditions that make us who we are.



Mercy Nabirye

Head of Dance of the African Diaspora, One Dance UK



COVER IMAGE:

Alleyne Dance,
photo by Irven Lewis



Urban Carnival Roadshow at Pavilion Dance South West, Bournemouth
Part of One Dance UK's Bloom National Festival of Dance of the African Diaspora 2017
Photo by Katy Noakes

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For this issue we feature the African Wax print *Nsu Bra*, which is from the (Akan) Twi language in Ghana and means "waterwell". It resembles the ripple effect of water when a stone is thrown into it. Like this pattern, dance forms of the African diaspora are interconnected. Throughout the generations of transmission, these principles, aesthetics, techniques and nuances ripple within the dance forms and create the diverse sector that exists today.

Click on the interactive page number to jump straight to the article

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WELCOME

Over the past 18 months, I have been consistently inspired by the vibrancy and diversity and of the dance of the African Diaspora (DAD) work that happens in every corner of the UK. This was evident at the 2017 Bloom National Festival (page 66), where thousands of people nationwide watched or participated in DAD events. Our annual Trailblazers Fellowship continues to help further the careers of talented DAD artists and this year's cohort of Trailblazers Starters are no exception (page 64).

I am delighted to introduce One Dance UK's HOTFOOT Online Editorial Committee (page 8), formed of four leading exponents of DAD work, who will further the development and scope of this publication moving forward. 2018 will be another busy year for our DAD-focused work, so stay tuned for updates. I am immensely proud of the work the team at One Dance UK continue to do to promote the visibility and progression of African dance forms – just a snapshot of which is captured in the following pages.

I hope you enjoy reading.



Andrew Hurst

*Chief Executive,
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Stay connected and up to date by following One Dance UK's Dance of the African Diaspora (DAD) social media channels:



[@onedanceuk](https://www.instagram.com/onedanceuk)



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One Dance UK](#)

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NEWS

HOTFOOT Online Editorial Committee Announced

One Dance UK invited four key industry leaders in dance to form an editorial focus group to support the *HOTFOOT* publication and to spread the word.



Thea Nerissa Barnes performed with the Alvin Ailey American Dance Company, Martha Graham Dance Company with Broadway and her film credits that include *The Wiz* and BBC documentary, *Dance Rebels: A Story of Modern Dance*. As Artistic Director of Phoenix Dance Company, she secured funding for Phoenix's education outreach programmes and choreographed several dance works.

Ms. Barnes has taught, choreographed and directed dancers worldwide and has published web and text based articles in dance journals and anthologies. Ms. Barnes holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree in Dance from the Juilliard School, Master's Degree in Dance Education from Columbia Teachers College in New York and Master of Philosophy from City University, London.



'Funmi Adewole is a VC2020 lecturer in Dance at De Montfort University, Leicester. She worked in the media in Nigeria before moving to Britain in the 1990s where she began a performance career.

'Funmi's credits include performances with Horse and Bamboo Mask and Puppetry Company, Adzido Pan-African Dance Ensemble, and the Chomondeleys. She continues to perform as a storyteller, leads performance workshops and works as a dramaturg with dance artists. She holds a MA in Postcolonial Studies from Goldsmiths College, and has completed a PhD, which develops a historical context for the work of black dance artists in Britain and explores aspects of that history



Bob Ramdhanie is an arts activist. In the 1970s he established The Handsworth Cultural Centre and later, The CAVE Arts Centre in Birmingham and pioneered work in the arts establishing Kokuma Dance Company, Danse de L' Afrique and the internationally acclaimed a cappella quintet, Black Voices.

He has travelled throughout Europe, Africa and The Caribbean researching and promoting black artists. Graduating as an Electrical Engineer, he completed a MA in Social Work, a MBA and completed his PhD in African Dance at Warwick University.

Bob was awarded the 1st Entrepreneur Lifetime Achievement Award by the Drum Arts Centre, is a creative arts producer with mapz Arts Management and Director of the Rupununi Music & Arts Festival in Guyana. Bob has been commissioned by Serendipity to write the history of black dance in the UK (1950-2000), which will be published in May 2018.



Sarahleigh Castelyn is a performer, choreographer, and researcher (self-confessed "dance nerd"). She teaches at the University of East London on the BA (Hons) Dance: Urban Practice programme, and supervises research doctoral students.

She has completed an Arts and Humanities Research Council funded practice-based doctoral research project into South African Dance Theatre at Queen Mary, University of London. Her dance research focuses on race, gender, sexuality, and nation in apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa, and is very much interested in embodied politics of dance studies. Sarahleigh has both performed in and choreographed dance works in the United Kingdom and South Africa, including at Siobhan Davies Dance Studio (London), The Playhouse (Durban), and at Jomba Contemporary Dance Festival (Durban).

Sarahleigh has published and presented her work in a number of academic journals and dance magazines, such as *South African Theatre Journal*, *South African Dance Journal*, *Dance Theatre Journal* and *Animated*. She serves on a number of editorial and organisation boards, including The African Theatre Association and South African Dance Journal.

***Dissecting Principles* - Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for African Dance**



The first *Dissecting Principles* Lab Exchange took place on 19 June at Moonshot Centre, London as an associate event of One Dance UK's Bloom National Festival. It was a sharing from a research project by Judith Palmer, Director of African Heritage UK, and 'Funmi Adewole, (see previous page for biography). It was part of a wider research project funded by The Exchange, which supports short investigative collaborations between artists and academics.

The workshop was based on the Agbadza dance from Ghana, with the aim of looking at documenting ways of teaching African dance. This is a work in progress, and the first part culminated in an open workshop, panel discussion and Q&A session.

The event was a success on many levels. It brought together over 30 practitioners working in dance and academia from around the UK, including Leeds, Birmingham, Edinburgh and Wales. The session also attracted visiting artists from Grenada, USA and Japan. Be sure to look out for updates on our social media channels and future editions of *HOTFOOT*.



Further information:

www.africanheritageuk.com

[Read a review blog by Emily Labhart](#)

Mapping the Landscape of Dance of the African Diaspora

From August to October 2017, One Dance UK conducted a survey to help us understand some of the key issues affecting dance artists and dance professionals who are practicing and working within Dance of the African Diaspora (DAD). Our aim was to understand the changing landscape within the sector and continue to support those working within DAD by providing a national snapshot of the current trends, styles, resources and services available.

We want to thank every person who took the time to complete the survey, adding their voices to a national and global perspective of dance of the African Diaspora. We had over 150 responses from academics, artists, practitioners, teachers, producers, students, writers, and many more working across England, Wales, Scotland, Ireland and around the world.

It is evident that the sector continues to thrive through many diverse artforms, and the contributions from educators, researchers, administrative teams, writers, production teams and others help raise the profile of DAD. There is a clear desire to strengthen the interconnectedness of those working in the sector. We aim to support the development of the DAD community by brokering relationships, partnering with other organisations and individuals to provide quality services and addressing the gaps in resources and opportunities.

Our next steps are to meet with you, those working in the sector, face-to-face for more in-depth research on what's currently happening in DAD. Your contributions will directly inform our future programming and how One Dance UK will move forward working as a sector support organisation. After further evaluation, we will present our findings in Spring 2018 through the One Dance UK website and our biannual magazine *HOTFOOT Online*. Watch this space!

For further Information and to provide feedback:

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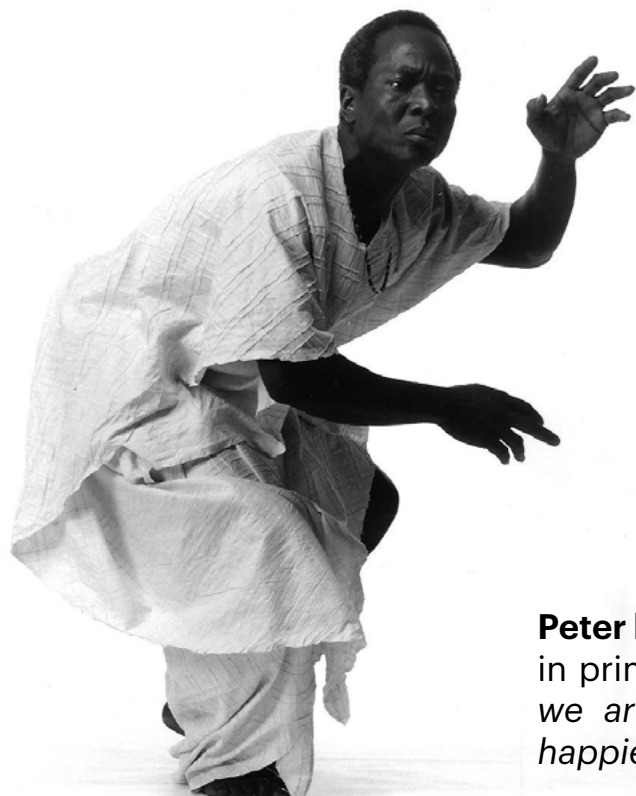
Pavilion Dance South West, Bournemouth	1	March
Northern School of Contemporary Dance, Leeds	3	March
mac, Birmingham	8	March
Stamford Arts Centre, Stamford	14	March
Dartington Hall Trust, Totnes	16-17	March
Bijlmer Park Theater, Amsterdam	22-25	March
Déda, Derby	12-13	April
The Courtyard, Hereford	25	April
Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton	26	April

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A word from

Peter Badejo OBE

Patron of One Dance UK



We are delighted that Peter made a stopover during his world travels. *Christopher Rodriguez, One Dance UK Deputy Chief Executive, has a conversation and gets some pearls of wisdom.*

Peter begins: We used to sing a very simple song in primary school that goes, (singing) *'The more we are together, together, together x2 ... The happier we shall be.'*

The moral is to succeed. I am just saying there's nothing wrong with dance itself. Dance is dance anywhere in the world, no matter where you work in dance worldwide. It is the people that drive the dance work and make a difference to dance. They are the ones that separate it using culture and tradition; they want to maintain and keep their own little styles.

Whereas, if we all dance together and allow the *intent* of dance to reach out, we may build a bigger, happier dance family. That is why One Dance UK may be very good to promote and serve as a greater development to dance in general.

[Click here to listen to the full interview](#)



We must simplify the meaning and benefits behind dance to the outside world. We don't want to mystify through dance, we want to demystify dance and engage more people to participate and enjoy dance. Show that dance can be accessible to all, because dance is a simple language that moves your mind and body. Our bodies and minds freely react to whatever dance if we unblock what separates our dances from one another. Necessary support for development has to be equal to develop the dance forms.

Your portfolio for African dance is internationally recognised in both traditional and contemporary contexts. How did you build your dance career? And what were your influences and experiences along the way?

Good question! I come from an artistic background. My father used to be a musician in his younger days and my mother was a bead-craft designer. I am Yoruba from Nigeria and the Yoruba people have strong tradition and cultural expression that includes dance. As I grew up I realised the power and importance of dance and movement to music in the Yoruba language of communication.

I remember when I was first taken to a peoples' (Ijebu Society) community gathering and we, the children, were made to participate in a dance competition for entertainment. I believe this was an opportunity for our parents to show off the dexterity, flexibility and understanding of the traditional music of their children. I won the competition and was awarded a prize of two shillings, which was a lot of money then! They also allowed me to sit among the elders; this was elevating.



*We can all communicate
through movement without even
saying a word.*

I realised that my movements, unconsciously to me, communicated some things to my elders, and I felt good that my dance could do that.

In the University of Ife, Ile-Ife, Nigeria I got attracted to the department for Performing Arts where I auditioned and was accepted to participate in their yearly celebrated production. That marked the beginning of my journey towards a career in theatre and dance.

My professional dance career however started when I represented The University of Ife Theatre and participated as the lead dancer in a Youth Arts Festival in France. I danced the character of 'ALATANGANA' (the God of Life) in the choreographed Australian myth show at Nancy in France. This was a festival where our presentation was awarded the first prize. After the performance in Nancy, we were invited to Paris, where I first met Robin Howard CBE, who later gave me a scholarship to come to The Place in London.

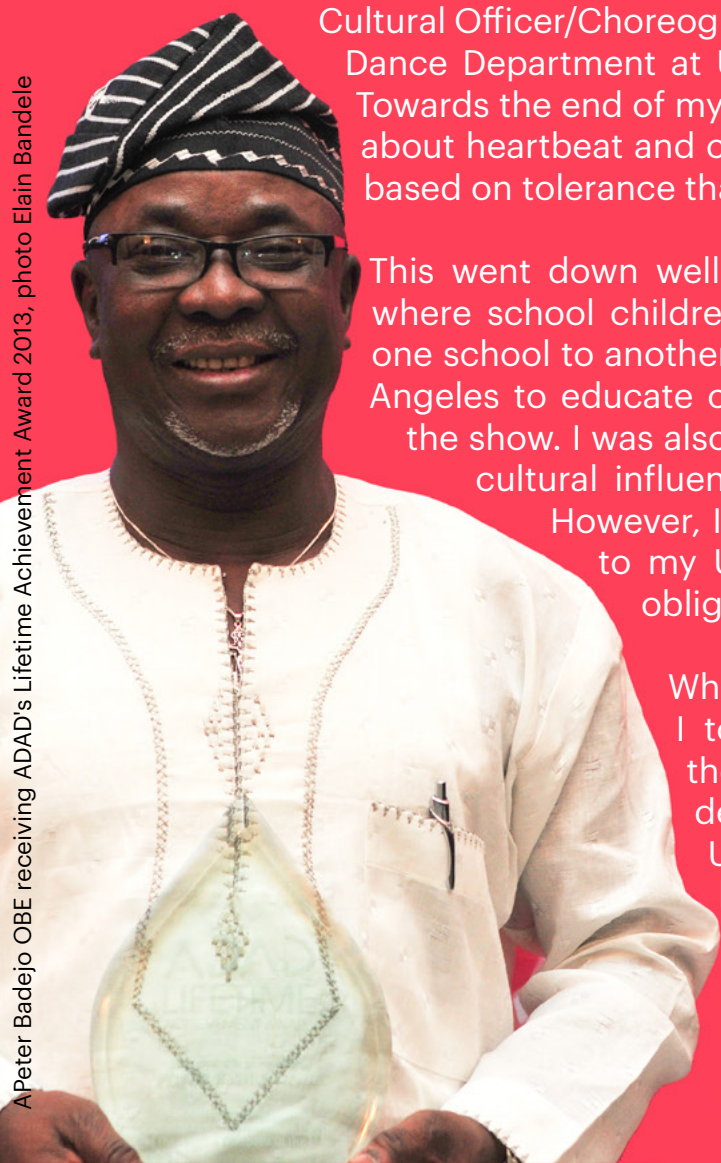
My experience at The Place was interesting though strange, because it was my first physical participation in western dance forms such as ballet. Taking ballet classes with Ninette De Valois was an honour but strange on my body. My body was already formulated for the African dance moves, so my early return to Nigeria was some relief.

From the Ahmadu Bello University in Nigeria where I worked as a Senior Cultural Officer/Choreographer, I received a scholarship to study in the Dance Department at UCLA (University of California, Los Angeles). Towards the end of my postgraduate studies, I created a production about heartbeat and characterisations of culture (*Asa Ibile Yoruba*), based on tolerance that exist in the Yoruba religion and culture.

This went down well within the political climate then in the US where school children were being force-mixed and bussed from one school to another. The production was used by the City of Los Angeles to educate over 3000 school children who came to see the show. I was also given the opportunity to work at developing cultural influences in performing arts from other cultures.

However, I could not stay in the US as I had to go back to my University in Nigeria to fulfil my scholarship obligation after graduation.

When I retired from the University in Nigeria, I toyed with going back to America but also thought about what was happening in the development of African arts expressions in the UK. I decided to come to London and it has been 26 years since then.



How did you make your mark on the dance landscape in the UK? What have you noticed about the African dance sector over the recent decades?

I decided to set up my own company, Badejo Arts, in 1990, so that my message would add more meaning to the different ideologies and practices of choreographers/directors in African People's Dance. I wanted to share with them in practice what I was talking about.

This was a period in this country as far as I am concerned when dance was like a flower - it grew and bloomed then, but suddenly died which is a shame. My own understanding of why the companies did not survive is, firstly, we have not been able to create an institution [for Contemporary African Dance] meaning there was nothing to inspire the dance practice for life. There was an element of survival and artists were struggling to find a seat in the arts world and a place in society.

Secondly, there were not enough training opportunities in the different forms. Yes, dance is dance generally, but the training of the dancers differs, which determines how they perceive and practise their arts. In my work in India for example, I noticed the training was a serious activity; both physical and spiritual. Similar to African People's Dance (APD), you cannot think of their art as 'art for art's sake'; both the training and presentations must be approached differently. It comes down to the type of training available here for the artists. It is difficult to expect certain development results when there is no foundation for a concrete development.

It has been an interesting journey and I have enjoyed the mercy of dance that has come with it all.

Artists have to be sincere.

Your purpose is the first law when being an artist.

How did you develop into dance? Being male in your culture, was it easier for you to become involved in dance?

In Africa everyone is entitled to dance and to freely learn aspects of their culture. Dance is a very important aspect of growing up, there is no gender discrimination. Where controversy may slightly occur, is when you aspire to be a professional dancer. Then family may frown and say, "come on, a professional dancer, stop the joke. Why not a Lawyer or a Doctor?". However, I was lucky I never had to deal with that, though I never thought I would become a professional dancer.

My career in dance was never discouraged by my family, so I did not have to talk about the transition. By the time questions were asked about me being a professional dancer, success and achievements were already obvious, so I didn't go through the painful situation of disagreeing with any of my family. It was not necessary to explain my love for dance, I was allowed to be myself and do my own thing, which makes it easy for me to encourage boys or men in the UK to dance. It was easy for me as a teacher to encourage the culture that make people enjoy dance. Male or female, dance is for all.

In my early days in America, I realised the difficulties boys had when holding hands or even touching one another in movement classes, due to certain social interpretations. I demystified this by playing down the ulterior views of society on physical contact between boys or men. We were able to get the men to enjoy the benefits of dancing, which created more interest in African dance.

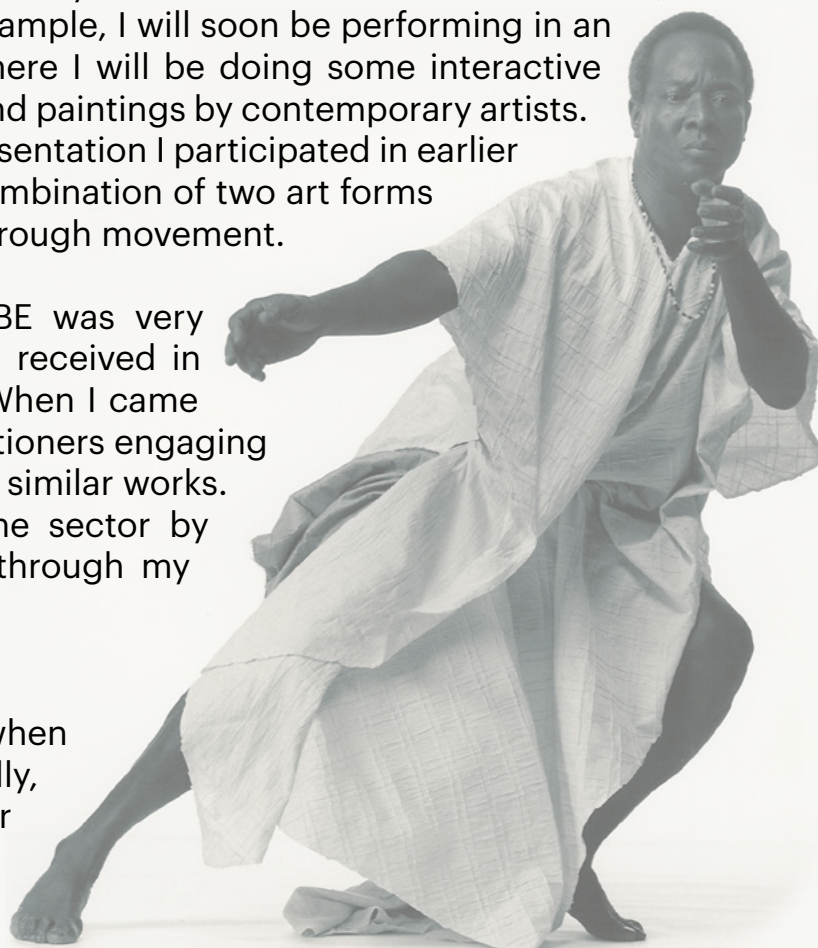
It is your 70th birthday this year, and you have received an OBE title from the Queen for your contributions in dance. Can you tell us what this means to you?

"70th" is a new beginning. I don't have a problem with numbers; I think it is good to be able to reflect. To sit back and think on why and how I did what I have done and how I got to where I am. All I can say is that I enjoyed and still love my dance. The art of dance is unique, expressive and expansive in that it incorporates other mediums of expression to communicate.

My art training is not just in dance, it is in music, theatre, drama, dance and visual arts. My training was and still is a total performance culture experience. I have been able to draw on these experiences for my work in theatre whether it is dance, storytelling, drama or music. For example, I will soon be performing in an exhibition at Harvard University where I will be doing some interactive movements to antiquity art works and paintings by contemporary artists. This is a follow-up from a similar presentation I participated in earlier in the year in Havana, Cuba. The combination of two art forms is what brings art on a wall to life through movement.

In terms of awards, I feel the OBE was very different to the awards that I have received in America, Cuba, Africa and so on. When I came to the UK, there were already practitioners engaging in my type of performing arts doing similar works. However, I brought a shift into the sector by intellectualising my contributions through my work.

In the sector, it was a time when practitioners, quietly or loudly, questioned whether their performances or participation were appreciated as arts. It was a



period when doubt was cast in the minds of APD artists. It was becoming a war to get a performance into recognized venues even if you had what you could term African contemporary dance, which is what was demanded. I did - Contemporary African dance work. There was no place to show your work, you had to go to what is called a "back alley" to perform! So, people were beginning to question what they were doing. Then the OBE award happened, which was seen as recognition for the sector. It was a bit of a spark that uplifted the sector and many royal awards have since followed.

Being awarded the OBE was a big shock to me. When I made my speech I said it's not for me, it's for the people who have made this happen, who have worked here for me; some of whom have passed on, some of whom are still working.

When it comes to One Dance UK I pray for its success. It is a good idea to have an organisation which focuses on uplifting and catering for the needed provision of the sector. The collective effort in One Dance UK will provide the strength needed to drive the dance sector, it is hard work but doable. Consciously or unconsciously this may be what the sector needs and has waited for to represent and advocate and take the sector to the next level. One Dance UK has to operate an open and transparent policy, to carry all in the sector along.

I can speak from experience that artists, especially on the African continent, are yearning for international collaborations. Through One Dance UK, international contact and collaboration must be explored. Contemporary works are going on in these countries and artists here in the UK could benefit from cross-continental influences and thereby enhance new development of dance in the UK.



There is nothing wrong with the dance profession as long as we can access support, training, education and interaction within the practice and international collaboration for artists. I am sure that, together, we will build a very strong sector.

Transmitting the Dance: Principles, Technique, Aesthetic & Nuance is the theme of this issue of HOTFOOT. What comes first when creating: constructing, transmitting or preserving?

It's a double-edged question. If you look at dance itself it has all the elements that make the question you raise. Dance communicates through movement and other mediums it uses to embellish and transmit. Principles, technique, aesthetic and nuance may vary according to the dictation of the dance and its origin training base.

There ought to be a principle behind any production that will be transmitted. Dance forms must be based also on a particular technique, without which the message may be lost or confused. Aesthetic and value differ from place to place. Its application also differs. Nuance is subtle differences in meaning that could be found in the dance presentation; through the understanding and appreciation of the dance.

With the making of any creative work, construction is the framework. Training prepares the creator to have a good framework on which the body of the work will be placed for onward transmitting. Preservation can only occur when the work is made and aesthetic and meaning can be appreciated when work is perceived.

What do you see as the challenges for artists working in the sector? What do you advise them to do in order to continue to enjoy creating and performing work?

"Sincerity" is the key word! Artists have to be sincere to themselves by properly creating and evaluating their work before transmitting. Dance is a powerful medium that communicates to the receiver, compelling them to enjoy and absorb



Photo: Badejo Arts, photo: Eric Richmond

the messages. The unwritten law in artistic creation is clarity of purpose and aesthetic impression.

Building confidence is essential to be able to contribute to the development of the sector. No obstacle is too big to deter you from achieving your goal. Be part of the organization that supports the sector and contribute to the development of the sector.

One Dance UK is doing so much for artists. We have to build the sector two ways: one is finding a way to neutralise through one to one contact with the companies and individuals. Secondly, we have to build trust in the sector and not complain about the system.

The focus of the artist has to be on what you are creating; you have to be a constant and consistent learner. You have to build self and be confident in your expression.

What do you see as the future for Dance of the African Diaspora?

The future is bright, but we need to work on it as a group. The artists that are creating works now should know that they cannot just be creating without a solid organisation and support behind them. It will be impossible for them to be seen and heard. That is why both the artists and the organisations have to work together, so they can both develop and be heard. My generation was not fortunate to have the kind of support that is available now. We had to work hard and search in the dark to build our own plans.

Catering to artists working in diverse forms is difficult, but with the support of the individual artists, the organisation will succeed in developing the sector nationally and internationally.

What message to you have for the younger generation to keep dance thriving?

First, they have to dance for the sector to thrive. Other dances did not start today; people have been dancing here since the 1900s from all over the world. Artists have to recognise themselves and recognise what has been here before and those who have worked to get it there. They have to be able to learn, and be able to give. You learn, you dissect, you develop your own work, and then give it back to a new audience.

The development of African Dance technique is not enabled and promoted enough. We have the dance forms, but we need to develop the techniques. Western dance forms are easier to teach and disseminate because the techniques are developed, codified and written.

African dance is complex. The relationship of the movements to music and the understanding of the polyrhythmic nuances need simplification before teaching.

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TRAINING AND CPD



Training Update

Ingrid Mackinnon becomes Head of Dance at London's Wac Arts Diploma in Professional Musical Theatre course



Photo: Gabriel Mokake

Ingrid states:

I have been a dance tutor at Wac Arts since 2013 and when the opportunity presented itself to step into my current role I jumped at the chance.

The Diploma course has a unique and diverse curriculum, and I feel that the dance module is a real opportunity to expose the students to a variety of disciplines taught by a team of passionate practitioners. I am dedicated to ensuring that the foundation that had been laid by Martha Stylianou continues to strengthen by offering students an exposure to the world-class training that is available here in London.

To young dancers, I would suggest finding a good teacher who will make certain that your training is well rounded so that you have the required skills to tackle any dance style. That's what my first dance teacher did for me.

Further information:

www.ingridmackinnon.com
www.wacarts.co.uk

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Looking at the snapshot background training and performance experience of Kristina and Sadé Alleyne, it comes as no surprise that they are excelling across the global diaspora just as much, if not more, than they do right here in their home country.

As products of The BRIT School, Northern School of Contemporary Dance (NSCD), Akram Khan Company, Ultima Vez, Retina Dance Company, Tavaziva Dance, Henri Oguike Dance Company, and many more, the Alleyne sisters are making their mark in the fabric of contemporary dance in the UK and beyond. They are in conversation with London Programmer – International Development, *Heather Benson*.



Alleyne Dance

How has your training and performance experiences informed the way that you create work and pass on the knowledge in your education programmes?

Kristina Alleyne: Our first inspiration was from when we were training in athletics. Our coach always pushed us to work harder, which we transferred to our dance training. Alongside our tutors we became each other's coach, which helped us tap into the idea of working harder and getting our mindset ready for what's needed physically and mentally for this industry.

We've always had self-determination and motivation. Although we trained at The Brit School and NSCD, we still had to personally train ourselves. We needed time to absorb all the information given into our bodies and to make sense of it. A lot of the work happened outside the studio.

Our hero, Andile Sotiya from South Africa, helped us to focus our passion for movement. He helped build confidence, broadened our creative minds and open our awareness to be playful with our rhythms and dynamics. Andile was our mentor and contemporary teacher at NSCD.

Sadé: He defies the impossible. By watching and listening to him, we danced believing in no limitations, no barriers placed in front of us. He defies gravity and travels across the room in only two steps. This was an inspiration and we use it as a challenge to improve.

Kristina: We trained in Traditional African Dance with Nii Tagoe and his company Frititi Traditional African Drumming & Dance Ltd. He pushed us through enjoyment. It wasn't only focused on the technique of African dance, it was about the soul, the tribe, the community and enjoying the musicians as part of the journey.

Sadé: Our heritage is from Barbados; the content for contemporary training was alien to us. By working with Nii we went back to our passion for movement and music.

Kristina: We bring that sense of enjoyment to how we work in the studio along with the balance of commitment and hard work.

Alleyne Dance is a fusion of dance styles and practices we have experienced. Graham Technique from the inspiring Martha Graham was our first contemporary technique. Now in our own work we reference Graham Technique, connecting the use of the core and contractions to allow freedom in the upper body. It's this training that we got from NSCD we use as our foundation for movement.

Sadé Alleyne





Our training in Kathak with Akram Khan Company connected the rhythms from our African training and Caribbean heritage, which is a key part of our joy in choreographic work.

Kristina Alleyne

Sadé: "Passion and sweat" are the two words we use to describe our Alleyne Dance Workshops.

Can you tell us more about balancing your work as individual artists creating work, embodying other choreographers' work as performers/collaborators, and then teachers influencing the next generation?

Sadé: It is important that Alleyne Dance has its own identity rather than copies established companies and techniques. We aim to continue to be honest and produce work that is of our own expression. We have always had a desire to share our experiences. Throughout our training and professional career we have always found a way to express the information running through our body and minds via teaching. Over the years we have tried to create opportunities to teach and share what we have learned, and we have taken this and explored it further.

Kristina: Our initial start was not to identify our signature style of teaching. Our aim in the studio was to focus on improvisation and observing each other to create something that is honest to ourselves. Our style came naturally from working together and combining all the influences from our training. The more time we spent together, sharing our experiences the more our style developed and will continue to develop.

Sadé: Because we're connected as twins, we purposely separated for four to five years to find our own voice. We knew at one point we would come back together, but it was important for us to have that time apart. Even now we choose to do separate projects because we have different interests. When we come together again we workshop ideas, sharing the difficult movement and performance qualities that we've picked up from other experiences.

Kristina: We will continue to learn qualities from one another to blend our styles together, collaborate. Currently, Sadé's working with another company and is confronted with how much of herself she should give to the process.

It's tricky because your artistry during the creation will be labelled under another choreographer's name. So, there is the question of how much to give to the choreographer and how much to keep for our own work.

Sadé: It would be such a shame to create barriers for how to work with other choreographers; separating Alleyne Dance from other projects. I want to stay fully involved in a process to see what possibilities can come out of it, which will then help Alleyne Dance to grow as well.

In the past year, Alleyne Dance has spent a great deal of time performing and teaching outside of the UK. With Brexit and other political shifts on the horizon, what impact do you think this will have on your practice as well as the overall Diasporic sector?

Sadé: We want to keep our connections; working to ensure there is still an interest and demand for Alleyne Dance. We work hard to leave an impression with any collaborators or international festivals, creating a 'hunger for more'. Hopefully, Brexit won't affect us, especially if there is a need for us to be a part of something.

Kristina: With this art form, if there is a need, there is a way to make it happen. There is more determination to bring other artists into other countries and to share. We're still making new connections to work abroad, and we hope it will stay this way. We will still keep pushing to do our best and continue working in the Diaspora.

Contemporary dance is evolving, so we want to continue learning and gaining new influences but also hold on to our traditions and first inspirations; Graham, African and Kathak.

Sadé Alleyne



What responsibility and role do you see yourselves playing to raise the profile of dance particularly Dance of the African Diaspora, nationally and globally?

Sadé: We are black, female, up and coming artists and twin sisters. We are aware that we need to continue to inspire others and at the same time we have individuals that we look up to. This is needed in any aspect of work. It's important that we continue to share our passion for dance.

Kristina: Our story relates to a lot of people who start their training later in life and share the same enjoyment for dance. Coming from athletics and not having the natural abilities for dance, we knew we had to commit to training, do the research and work hard. Taking technique classes that were uncomfortable for our bodies at the time and enjoying those difficult situations. That journey is what we share with others: what seems impossible is possible. We want our work to speak volumes and not by our identity.

What words of encouragement do you offer to younger artists hoping to create their own movement aesthetic within the contemporary context?

Start simply and start with what you know. Don't work for the end product, but stay in 'the now' and slowly add layers. Kristina Alleyne

Sadé: Continue to explore and find ways for information to become your own. It's important to be an individual but also to have the ability to adapt. Know your instrument, your mind and body. Enjoy being an individual!

Kristina: Do your research, watch others, speak to people and educate yourselves.

Sadé: Train your body and understand where you need to improve; whether it's flexibility, technique or anything else. Find the teachers that inspire and help you to grow.

Further information:

For more information on Alleyne Dance's current performances, workshops and collaborative projects visit

www.alleynedance.com

Click here to listen
to the full interview



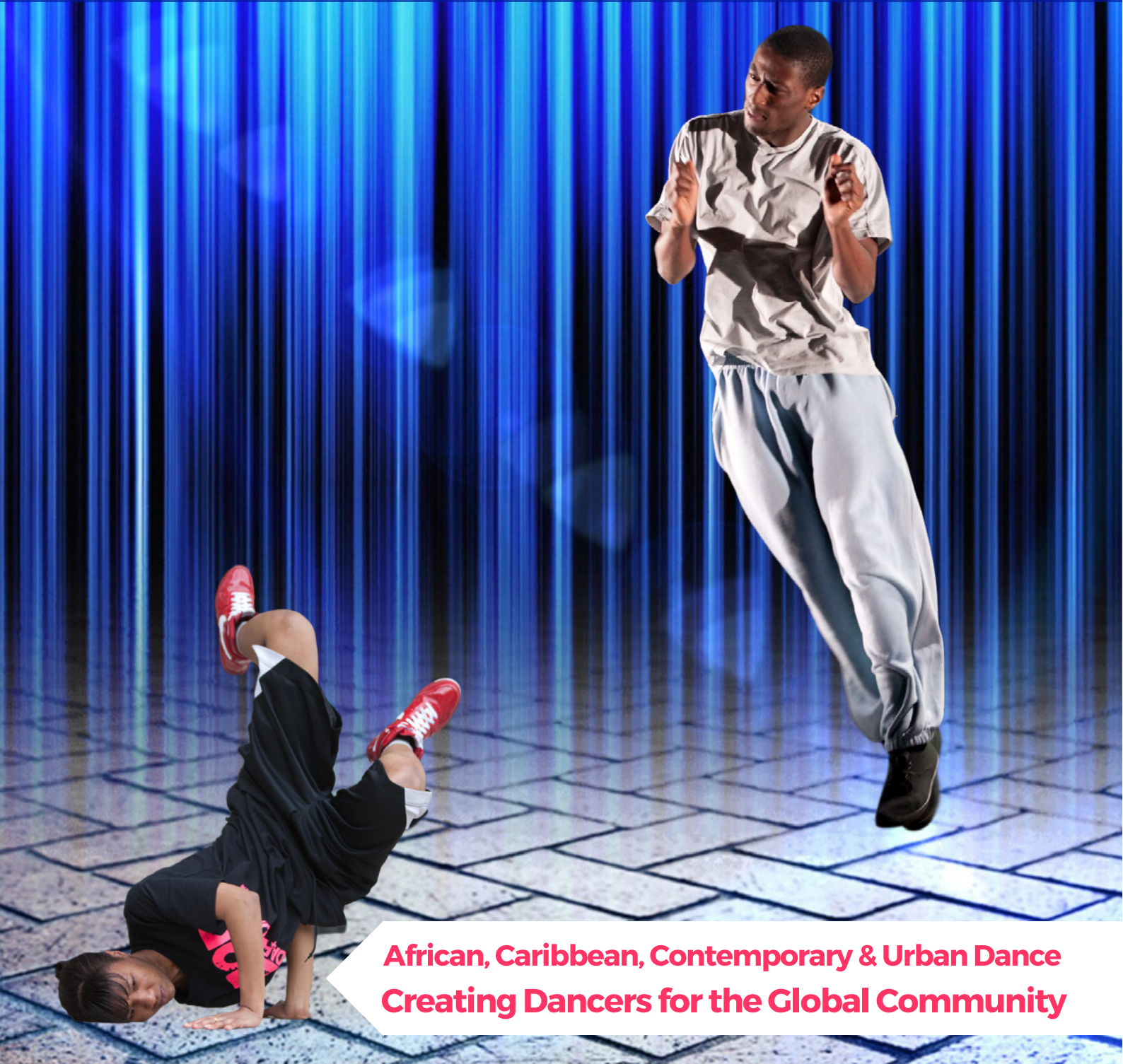
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What does your DANCE do?

A reflection on Haitian culture through dance
by *Latisha Cesar*

I have a history of being 'other.'

I am an immigrant who is the child of immigrants. By this I mean that my parents were born in the country known as Haiti. They were forced to leave their home and move to the United States during a difficult part of Haiti's history.

I was born and raised in the US but I immigrated to the United Kingdom five years ago. The sense of displacement that comes with this history of itinerancy has led me to crave connection to my roots. At first, this led me to identify strongly as an American (recent election notwithstanding) but I found that I needed to dig deeper to find the stability I craved.

I had to think back to the stories my mother told me as a child, and the proverbs my grandmother would use to teach me about life.

*I had to remember the smells and sounds of family gatherings.
I had to recall the way I moved.*

I have danced in different contexts throughout my life, but I have found a particular truth in my exploration of Haitian dance. I have trained in traditional styles and contemporary styles in settings as formal as University and as informal as being accosted by Ned Williams for an impromptu plié lesson on the way to the toilet between rehearsals (totally worth the discomfort).

I have danced to perform on the big stage and I have danced socially. However, I never feel more powerful as a dancer than when I am dancing Afro-Caribbean 'folk' dances, especially Haitian Dance. I am tempted to describe Haitian dance as magical but I am afraid this would diminish its significance.

The salutation of the Legba; the supplication of the Yanvalou; the liberation of the Ibo- every posture has meaning. Haitian dance is dynamic and varied from explosive jumps to intricate isolations. A reflection of her West African roots and the hardship of slavery, a Haitian dancer wears the history of a people on her body- sharp, soft, violent, tender, and real.

Haitian dance is a feat of coordination. Look closely. Shoulders, hips, backs, and knees, rotate, twist, undulate and bend as if each part is possessed by different beings. Take a step back and you will see bodies that tell a story of struggle, cooperation, discipline, and triumph.

As a Haitian dancer I am expected to be mover, musician, storyteller, historian, and priestess. It is not enough to spend hours in the dance studio. I must learn to play the rhythms that move me. I must be able to tell the stories that drive the rhythms. An experienced dancer can read the room and prescribe a dance to provide comfort, or healing, or justice.

Dance is not about the mover, it's about the community. This sense of responsibility has influenced my approach to dance and life. Naturally, I gravitated towards a career in dance education and I genuinely enjoy leading community dance projects. I have taught about Brazil through samba, and Cuba through salsa, but I never talked about my Haiti. I was not living up to my responsibility.

To understand how this occurred you must first understand that my relationship with my heritage was not always positive. It was often fraught and sometimes painful. As a child born in the 80's, being Haitian was dangerous. The world's view of Haiti and Haitians was often skewed by misrepresentation, misinformation, rumour, and the occasional sad but true fact.

Haitian Voodoo was wrongly characterized as a practice of dark magic set out to turn people into zombies. At the height of the HIV/AIDS epidemic there was a false but prevalent rumour that blamed Haiti and Haitians for the spread of HIV to the United States. Lastly, Haiti was said to be the poorest country of the Western Hemisphere. Unfortunately this was technically true.

To admit that I was Haitian or associated with Haiti would have subjected me to a great deal of bullying as a child. I quickly learned that it was safest both physically and emotionally to be American. The journey to reconcile the choices I made as a child is difficult, and occasionally brings me shame.

The last 18 months have been an attempt to course-correct. I made a decision to stop hiding. I needed to shout about my people.

With the support of Trinity Centre Bristol and the Arts Council, I have been working towards a new project *Baryè* (which translates to "barriers" in English).

As part of the residency at Trinity Centre I was able to invite my teacher, Peniel Guerrier, to the UK, and facilitate a three-day Haitian dance and drumming intensive with a sharing at Arnolfini. I was moved by how enthusiastic and welcoming the people of Bristol were.

This project has led me to explore the lives and movement of the women who shaped Haitian history like Cecile Fatiman and Sanité Belair. I draw a great deal of pride from the fact that the Haiti was the only successful slave revolt, but I am more proud of what happened after the revolution.

The government declared all Haitians black regardless of skin colour. The republic chose to honour the indigenous people of the island, by naming the island Ayiti. The government pledged to defend the liberty of any person that arrived in Ayiti, a pledge they honored often to their detriment. The practice of Voodoo is complex and vast because it represents the many different tribes and cultures that were present as a result of the violence of slavery. These examples speak to the values that Ayiti was built on. Ayiti was meant to be a safe space for all that needed it - a culture built on inclusion. I hope to honor this legacy in my work.

My work begins in the dance class. The underlying philosophy is that every body is a dancer's body. Every session includes training for strength, flexibility, and coordination. Dancers are empowered to keep safe through technique inspired by dance pioneer and educator Katherine Dunham.

Every class includes learning choreography but there is time set aside for improvisation and self-expression. Mine is the job of caretaker. I am tasked with creating a space where there is a demand for precision and virtuosity as well as the flexibility and grace to accept whatever one has to offer (even earnest stillness).

I would like to say that these objectives are simply a result of my ambition to make good dance. However, I cannot help but feel a pressure not only to represent my race to an establishment that has a long history of marginalizing the 'other' but I must also work to let people know that Ayiti has more to offer than poverty and tragedy.



Photo: Saskia Evans

My research let me see a different side of me. I have connected with my heritage in positive way.

*I am a black woman, a daughter, a sister, a wife. I am Haitian American.
I am a British resident living in the rural South West.
I am a teacher, a rebel, an activist. I come from a people who have fought
for the rights of others when no one else would.*



If education was fair, there would be a great deal of young people of colour that would know and understand that their history did not begin with slavery and their emancipation was not solely the result of benevolent masters. There is a story of struggle, cooperation, discipline, and triumph.

The revolution in St Domingue was fought by enslaved people of Ayiti, Jamaica, the United States, and more. There were soldiers from Poland and Germany. Women fought, children fought, assorted tribes and people united. Military geniuses, political strategists, the educated and uneducated alike all contributed towards making right a wrong many still have trouble facing.

I mention these things not to lay blame but out of concern that the current climate hints at a belief that identity can only be found through division. I am concerned that we now live in a time where some people feel that the way to set themselves apart is by putting down or criticizing those that are different.

Some tell themselves that competition is good and make things better. Although I agree that competition can move us forward I offer a caveat. I think competition that expends energy trying to destroy an adversary can only provide short term gain and have devastating consequences in the long term. It is dangerous to define oneself by what you are not. I think our time would be better spent figuring out and deciding who we are.

I have come from a line of people that learned the system, worked the system, only to destroy the system. I am a testament to the resilience of the human spirit. I am not supposed to be here but here I am.

I am a dancer. For me, dance is not just about performance and expression. Dance can edify and humble. It can provide validation or cause one to challenge their beliefs and perceptions. Dance can build relationships and create a space for introspection. Dance is rebellion. Haitian dance incited a revolution.

What can your dance do?

Further information:

Latisha offers classes in traditional Afro Caribbean/ Haitian Dance in Bristol on Saturdays at Hamilton House 11-12:30. She offers workshops and performances for schools, weddings, and more.

Contact: latishacesardance@gmail.com

LEGACY AND ADVANCE



In charge of the Pride

What does it take to be Resident Dance Supervisor for London's highest-grossing musical? *Thea Barnes* has been at the helm of Disney's *The Lion King* for 16 years, and shares her working practices and techniques.



The role of dance captain is also known as rehearsal director, ballet master/mistress, répétiteur, and resident choreographer. Essentially, it entails the delivery and maintenance of choreography. At first glance, a resident dance supervisor (RDS) has this same responsibility, but it is up to each company to define how this responsibility will affect other working practices. As RDS for Disney's London production of *The Lion King*, my delivery and maintenance of choreography is only one part of this complex relationship.

My journey over the years has become a quest to find creative solutions, with each challenge being an opportunity to refine or revise previous working practices.

Conversations with other resident dance supervisors, particularly Ruthlyn Solomons, RDS for Broadway's *The Lion King*, along with my reading material in sports training and dance pedagogy, have proved to be invaluable. They have been instrumental in supplying alternative solutions for a range of issues, from coaching individual performers to implementing associate directives for the refinement of dance sequences with stage production staff.

When I was hired as RDS for *The Lion King*, West End Production in 2001, I was given an opportunity to build a department in a company that would draw on my knowledge as dance teacher, choreographer, artistic director, and dance researcher in a challenging and innovative manner.

This department is devoted to maintaining Garth Fagan's choreography as conceived for the original Broadway version of *The Lion King*, directed by Julie Taymor.

As a facilitator between associates, production personnel and cast members, the resident dance department works in tandem with in-house creative team and LK choreographic associates, Marey Griffith and Celise Hicks. Both Griffith and Hicks visit



Legacy and Nuance

the London production from the United States several times a year to audition, rehearse and advise on maintaining Fagan's choreographic vision.

The 'long-running show' is a distinct entity in the musical theatre industry and has been evolving since the 1980s. Perhaps most famously, Cameron Mackintosh's West End productions *Cats*, *Phantom of the Opera* and *Les Miserables*, coupled with their global productions, have been playing for more than 25 years.

With a resident company at the Lyceum Theatre, London's *The Lion King* has its own challenges in creating a working environment in which all departments work in tandem for excellence, eight shows a week, all year round and doing it successfully for over 15 years.

As a long-running show it has developed its own, unique operations with regards to casting, rehearsals and maintenance. For the London production, a team of individuals with specialism in directing, music, and dance work as a consortium devoted to maintaining Julie Taymor's artistic vision for *The Lion King*.

The 1998 Tony Award-winning Broadway production of *The Lion King* is a successful template which all other productions aim to emulate. The elements that make this show distinctive are stored in embodied knowledge, video and text based formats.

As RDS, these forms of documentation are tapped to coach and encourage cast members to build and vivify their interpretation of this phenomenon. In periodic visits, Ms. Griffith and Ms. Hicks supply movement metaphors and spirit-building conversations to encourage cast members to enjoy their performances while maintaining technical and safety standards. Recorded notes remind cast members of information given by associates.

Associates and *The Lion King's* London resident creative team, which, besides the dance department, include director and music director, provide principal and ensemble members with varied training experiences to perform to their best. Associate visits always incorporate workshops to remind and enforce a variety of motivations embedded in the show. This is to bolster those inspirations that enliven performance.



The resident creative teams' challenge is to replicate success, despite variations in cast members' training and experience.

From developing movement qualities that portray the kind of degenerate behaviour needed to be a hyena, to ways of portraying the "Circle of Life" as a community gathering in celebration of the birth of Simba, the ensemble is taken through a series of movement improvisations and exercises to stimulate and motivate a manner of "storytelling" that keeps the show alive.

Recording all notes from these sessions, my dance captains and me will remind cast members through verbal discussions or postings on dressing room notice boards what can be brought from within to enliven individual and group performance.

To implement associates' directives, London's dance department monitors embodiment and intra- as well as inter-departmental working relationships. Interactions with cast and staff set the tone of the working environment.

Dance captains are encouraged to cultivate an open and transparent note system facilitating respectful interaction between all members. This includes access to information regarding what the choreography is and how it is to be performed. A nurturing and approachable work ethos accompanies the dissemination of information regarding all movement.

This kind of ethos allows for less stressful interactions, or at least interactions where directives and corrections lead to enlightened choices - not derogative chastisement.

Given the note or query, how movement is reviewed is invariably but not always inclusive of the following: 1) why a particular movement by offering assistance in finding individual imagery and metaphors to inspire performance; 2) appropriate technical skills required to operate puppets or perform a turn, jump or specific locomotion; 3) spatial relationship to set and characters and positions, given each moment on and backstage.

The arsenal of information built up over the years includes an iPad stocked with choreography and formation charts and video footage for study and reflection. Movements are practiced with physical instruction supported by text-based choreography notes and where available, video.



Legacy and Nuance

The video is a helpful strategy that works well for our cast members. For those cast members who request it, a video is available for them to “self-edit”. The video becomes an aide to reflect on past performance and how one can change or incorporate alternative ideas. For solving issues in performance, from duets to four or six member teams operating puppets or sets, a video is an extremely useful tool for examining and discussing what worked and what could be better.

Success in achieving desired performance levels relies on the manner in which movement is given and how much that method accommodates a performer’s way of learning and physical potential.

Time constraints can be another determining factor that minimises investigation of varied approaches to providing movement in a manner allowing performers to achieve and replicate performance standards expected of a West End production. It must, though, be inspired.

Cast members are encouraged to supply their own life experiences to supplement imagery and metaphors provided by associates and the resident creative team. For the performance of *One By One*, which occurs at the beginning of Act Two, our South African cast members bring a bounty of cultural knowledge shared throughout the company in language and movement sessions led by them and associate directors.

How does one inspire replication, eight shows a week, despite the distractions and obstacles living presents to each performer in a company? The artist can succeed at their own interpretation continuously with self-encouragement accompanied with



discriminating observations made by an astute and supportive creative staff. In this manner, inspired replication becomes the grist powering the artist and the show.

Success of this equation depends on an agreed performative approach achieved in the rehearsal process and reinforced throughout each cast member's time with *The Lion King*. In the rehearsal process, everyone observes errors, which are natural and a good thing in a nurturing environment.

This is a means to support honesty, self-esteem, confidence, and respect for each other and the work being done. This is also when technique, understood as an amalgamation of known and acquired movement skills suited for *The Lion King* choreography, and discipline enters to support performance.

Repetition in performance is a conversation a performer has with themselves and their artistry. The approach is as varied as the individual and is dictated by numerous stressors within and surrounding the working environment.

The Lion King cast members strive to progress and work at an optimum level, giving their best for every show. This can only be achieved in an environment of mutual respect that invites reflection and self-motivation, encourages risk-taking within defined boundaries, and sustains the vision of *The Lion King* achieved in 1998.

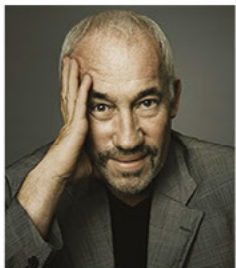
Elevating individual and collective spirits in an intuitive environment that seeks to assist cast members in bringing their best to *The Lion King* is the objective. This spirit is what the audience enjoys when they see the show. As RDS, it has been a journey to discover best practice to inspire replication as a compendium of strategies to invigorate this particular long-running show.





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Ignatius Sancho



**Slave; man of letters;
man of music and dance**

Exploring his influence and
creativity, by Early Dance
Circle committee member
Sally Petchey

“Gloomy beginnings are for the most part blessed with bright endings...” thus wrote Ignatius Sancho in 1778 to a friend.

In 1766 he had written to Laurence Sterne, author of *Tristram Shandy*, explaining that the first part of his life was “... rather unlucky, as I was placed in a family who judged ignorance the best and only security for obedience. A little reading and writing I got by unwearied application. The latter part of my life has been thro’ God’s blessing, truly fortunate, having spent it in the service of one of the best families in the kingdom. My chief pleasure has been books. Philanthropy I adore.”

Ignatius Sancho (1729 -1780), a black slave and servant of his time, but he was to achieve so much more - a grocer, composer, abolitionist, dancer, performer, writer of letters... the list goes on. He was a man of many talents; talents which were acknowledged and recognised when his obituary in *Gentleman’s Magazine* told about the demise of “the Extraordinary Negro Ignatius Sancho, Butler, and Grocer of Westminster”. This was the first known British obituary of a black individual.

Extraordinary? Certainly: an African-born slave who took the opportunities when they came, working hard as a butler and earning the respect of his employers, the Montagu family, to such an extent that he would be painted by Gainsborough in 1768 while living in Bath.

Furthermore, in 1751, he was a beneficiary in Duchess of Montagu’s will. She bequeathed a lump sum of £70 and an annuity of £30 to him - an unusually large amount for a servant in this employment for only two years but, again, underlining his status as a favoured member of staff.



Dressed in a fashionable waistcoat and with a pose common in eighteenth-century portraits of English gentlemen, Sancho can be regarded as a man of social standing.

In 1773, when his health prevented him from continuing as a butler, Sancho decided to purchase a shop, thus becoming a property owner and was hence eligible to vote. Writing in 1780 to his friend: "the glorious F[o]x was the father and school of oratory himself - the Friend! the Patron! the Example! There now - I attended the hustings from ten to half past two--gave my free vote to the Honourable C[harles] J[ames] F[o]x and to Sir G--R--y; hobbled home full of pain and hunger."

Sancho enjoyed this privilege, even before there was universal male suffrage in Britain, as this was not granted to all men aged over 21 until 1918. He had opinions on a range of current issues: abolition of slavery; how to raise money for war by melting down the silver plate the aristocracy no longer used; and how his idea would also allow work to be found for the daughters of seamen. In 1777 he sent an article to *The General Advertiser* for publication: "The outline of a plan for establishing a most respectable body of Seamen, to the number of 20,000, to be ever ready for the manning a fleet upon twelve days' notice."

However, it is his talent as a composer and choreographer of social dances which my colleague and I focused on in the book *Ignatius Sancho: Twelve English Country Dances written by an erstwhile slave*.

According to Josephine R.B. Wright in *Ignatius Sancho (1729-1780) An Early African Composer in England. The Collected Editions of His Music in Facsimile* (1981): "His compositions are of great historical significance in understanding the roots and origins of a classical tradition among black musicians in the Western hemisphere."

Wright does say, however, that although not on a par with the leading composers of his day, Sancho's "...musical compositions reveal the hand of a knowledgeable capable amateur who wrote in miniature forms in an early Classic style."

This opinion varies considerably with Sancho's own opinion of his music: "Mr. W called on me. Tell him, I think I have a right to trouble him with my musical nonsense. I wish it better for my own sake, bad as it is, I know he will not despise it, because he has more good-nature." Additionally, "...the little dance (which I like because I made it), I humbly beg you will make Jack play."

In some respects, the music and dances that he wrote in this book of twelve country dances give us a glimpse into his life. Written in 1779, the book was dedicated to the daughter of (then Prime Minister) Lord North and a dance written especially for her. It is called *Strawberrys and Cream*, said to be her favourite dessert.

Some of the dances are named after places that he must have visited many times as part of the Montagu household. Dillington House, in Somerset, was once the home of the eighteenth century Prime Minister, Lord North and there is a dance called "Trip to Dillington". He created a reel for his benefactor Lady Mary Montagu and the dance "Mungo's Delight" could be a teasing reference to his brief career as an actor, as Mungo was the name of the slave character in *The Padlock*, by Isaac Bickerstaffe c.1768.

Sancho's letters show a keen wit, seen here in this warning to young men of the wiles of the ladies: "...thou must watch and pray for Satan is artful, and knoweth all our weak parts and that dirty little blind feathered, shouldered scoundrel of a boy, master Cupid lurks couchant in the pupil of an eye, in the hollow of a dimple, in the cherry ripe plumpness of a pair of lips, in the artfully timid pressure of a fair hind, in the complimentary squeeze of a farewell in short, and in one word, watch, watch..."

I am sure the gentlemen in the Regency Ballroom would be very aware of this! The dance group I am involved in, Hampshire Regency Dancers, know the enjoyment of dancing Sancho's creations. To spend an evening dancing and in his company would have been great fun indeed!



Further Information:

Early Dance Circle

References

1. All quotes from Sancho's letters come from:
Two volumes of Ignatius Sancho's letters:

Identifier: CT788.S168 A32 v.1 & 2

Credit: RBC, The University of North Carolina.

Description: Book

Title: *Letters of the late Ignatius Sancho, an African: to which are prefixed, memoirs of his life.*

Author: Sancho, Ignatius, 1729-1780

Publisher: London : Printed by J. Nichols, and sold by J. Dodsley [and 4 others] 1782.

Found in the Rare Book Collection, Wilson Library, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

2. *Ignatius Sancho (1729-1780) An early African Composer in England. The collected Editions of his music in Facsimile* (1981). By Josephine R.B. Wright

3. *Ignatius Sancho. Twelve English Country dances written by an erstwhile slave* (2014). By Sally Petchey and Valerie Webster

Unearthing Gender Experiences with Umfundalai Technique

Head of Dance of the African Diaspora, *Mercy Nabirye*, interviews C. Kemal Nance, whose teaching and choreography is influenced by Umfundalai, a Pan-African contemporary technique which was created by Dr Kariamuwelsh Asante (MA.H., State University of New York at Buffalo. Doctor of Arts, New York University). This technique has been in existence for over 33 years.

PROFILE

C. Kemal Nance, PhD “Kibon,” is an Assistant Professor in the Dance and African American Studies Departments at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He is a master teacher of the Umfundalai African dance technique and the Executive Director of the National Association of American African Dance Teachers.

Nance’s academic and artistic work centralizes Black men’s gendered experiences in African Diasporic traditions. His own dance initiative, the Berry & Nance Dance Project, produces choreographies about Black manhood. His recent accomplishments include *Manifesto*, a new work he mounted on the Stella Maris Dance Ensemble and premiered at the Little Theater in Kingston, Jamaica, and book chapters in the forthcoming *Dance and the Quality of Life and African Dance in America Perpetual Motion and Hot Feet*. Nance holds a BA in Sociology/Anthropology with the concentration of Black Studies from Swarthmore College, and an M. Ed. and PhD in Dance from Temple University.

[Click here to listen to the full interview](#)



In our conversation, Nance describes unearthing gender experiences of African-American men as his drive to create work. He has, along with others, studied the Umfundalai Technique to see whether there is a relationship between their practice of African dance and their constructions of themselves as Black men.

His current work centralises the Black male dancing bodies specifically, and how it houses a lot of their social aspects that make sense to them. The intention is to bring Black dancing men from different communities together to create and express a unique singular experience. Umfundalai was his first formalised dance technique and still is the way he makes sense of the world in terms of his choreography.

He explains that the technique welcomes dancers of varying styles, shapes or colour to enjoy and work with it. Whilst there is a 'correct' way of doing it, the correctness is broadened to include the multiplicity of the human experience. Exactitude does not have the same focus as some styles in the western technique.



This is where the importance of understanding the Principles comes in: "Umfundalai has taught me the idea of essence...it has empowered me to explore how essence resides not only with people who are bound by ethnicity... but also people bound by gender. I am exploring the Black male essence."

Nance mentions that Dr Kariamuw Welsh Asante trusts him with her work and she is very clear with him that he is her legacy for Umfundalai. He checks in with her regularly. He says that there has to be a trust and also a correspondence.

This exchange is precious and those that are passed on legacies have to 'take care of it'. "As artists we need to seek counsel from our elders. I feel empowered and proud to be a contemporary artist, but I do believe in ancestry... at least the dialoguing."

Nance reflects on the UK dance scene, stating that "So far it's been fun. Probably it is such a novelty being around for just a weekend. But I haven't yet found a Black dancing community necessarily."

As a master teacher, I am still very much interested in passing on this technique to as many people to see what happens because I see it as a viable movement system for understanding African diaspora movement. Umfundalai doesn't cling to a specific region of Africa but rather a Pan-African approach that embraces all kinds of African peoples. It deals with the essence.

Some key thoughts from the conversation

The challenges Nance sees are:

- Misinformation about men and dance; the masculinity in dance. The male dancer is somehow less "male" if dancing instead of playing football. It becomes a level of priority. However, this is gradually changing with the advent of hip hop.
- Not investing in our own communities. We need to reclaim and redefine practices through our dancing body. Acknowledge the advances of those who are doing good things.
- We have got to write about and publicise our own work.

The classes he has attended are not populated by a Black dance community. "Don't get me wrong - I do think there is a space for diversity. What I love about London is that there is such a heterogeneous feel to it: on the train, in a barber shop... I love that, but I also love a space or place where Blackness dwells, and lives and breathes. I haven't found that yet."

However, presenting at the Southbank Centre during the Bloom National Festival with Afro Dance Xplosion was one of the transformative experiences of his career and a high point! He had never taught a class that large and with that many onlookers too! For Kemal Nance, international connections are essential, especially with him coming from a very small town in Pennsylvania. It is uncommon for people to move away from small towns like Chester, let alone out of the country.

How he made sense of other people in the world was through dance. Visiting Ghana, Egypt, Senegal, Brazil, Jamaica transcended economical class, all the stereotypes of being a Black American man became insignificant.

Dance has made it clear to me that I belong to something a little bit greater than the black people in Chester, Pennsylvania. Historically we have romanticised our relationship with Africa... but the reality of that kindred connection is best carried in the dancing body.

He explains: "I have always contended that these American studies departments in the US and abroad should start to centralise dance as a part of their curriculum. It should not be an add on. Every African American, Africana, African Diaspora studies department across the world should centralise dance. Why? Because dance houses religion, it houses philosophy, it houses culture."

He closes with a message for the younger generation: "Dance with your mother! That was my first dance lesson."

FOLLOWING THE FOOTSTEPS



Following the Tradition

Head of Dance of the African Diaspora, *Mercy Nabirye*, caught up with Nii-Tete Yartey while on his travels across the UK, at the busy Southbank Centre. She gets his views on what it is like following in the footsteps of his father, the late Professor F. Nii-Yartey, who was instrumental in making Ghanaian arts and culture significant and impactful nationally and internationally. Many dance styles today derive from this movement.

What follows is a snippet of his thoughts...

PROFILE

Nii-Tete Yartey is the current Artistic Director of the National Dance Company of Ghana (Ghana Dance Ensemble). He is a dance educator, choreographer and performer who envisions his work in this field as a re-contextualization of traditions, with a particular focus on dance theatre and contemporary African dance.

Coming from a family of artists, he had the opportunity to observe and participate in dance performances with various dancers and theatre professionals. Nii-Tete holds a Diploma, BFA and MFA degrees in Dance and Theatre Arts from the University of Ghana, specializing in choreography and acting. He has managed the Performing Arts Workshop (PAWS) based at University of Ghana, and is also the current director of the Noyam African Dance Institute (where he worked closely with his father and mentor, the late Prof. F. Nii-Yartey).

Nii-Tete has travelled widely performing, teaching, choreographing and conducting workshops worldwide. Nii-Tete has also scripted and acted in many films, television series, radio and television commercials in Ghana.



Nii-Tete explains about the legacy of his father: "I always joke around and say it is making my life difficult. See what he [my father] has achieved! To beat him I would have to do a performance on the moon!" he says.

On a more serious note, Nii-tete starts to talk about how he is capturing his father's legacy for the next generation. "What I have been doing at the National Theatre is to revive my dad's classics, to rework all of them so that the students coming out of university who have not seen them have a way of tracking the practice.

"The easiest way to analyse my father's dance history is to look at the works chronologically to bring the narrative out and to see where he got the influences. He found a way of speaking other languages in the dance, but keeping the African aesthetic. I thank him for indirectly exposing me to this way of working, because it made it easy for me to conceptualize things a little bit more than my peers can do."

One of the things the late Prof. F. Nii-Yartey researched was the extension of traditional artforms and how they find relevance in today's world. Nii-Tete explains he wants to continue this work:

"I have been handed these tools; an African idea of aesthetics, symbolism, posture, gender roles, defining shapes and space, all these things. At the time that my ancestors were creating them, the stimuli around them was not the same. Equipped with this knowledge of philosophies and governance, what would the creations look and feel like today? By moving the original traditional dance style from its context, a lot changes. But what would help me identify whether this was an African dance style or not, is looking at the past - the identity.

"Our ancestors created from intangible concepts. For instance, the idea of fertility. They found a way of bringing it in the dance and physically connect to it. The end product is where the stimulus affects the creation and it's what we need to work on together to be able to create a new dance which is nurtured and authentic to its true identity. And if you use an African name to describe your work, know the meaning and philosophy behind it."



Some key thoughts from the conversation

- We have to continue to combine practice with research. African dance is complex.
- Connections are very important. We have lost connections over the years and it has stunted our growth. We have to find a way of connecting our artists in the diaspora and the African continent, because whenever artists meet magic happens.
- Connecting with each other legitimises the importance of what we have and what we do. We need each other. Nii-Tete's mandate of preservation of traditional dance aesthetics at the National Theatre, supports us in the diaspora with a strong backbone for what we do.
- The diaspora is helping to reinforce the arts tradition and the continent is learning what it means to be an artist outside of the community. An African artist is never supposed to be linear. You are considered to be a lazy artist if you are linear. You are trained to be more than just a dancer, similar to being multi lingual as many are – you do the drumming, the singing, the costume etc.
- Every generation has to develop what came before so our ancestors must have seen what we call traditional now as contemporary then... so we have to move that agenda in order to survive.
- There is nothing wrong with expressing yourself in a contemporary language and still being eloquent in the traditional dance, but you should still be able to explore new ideas.
- You need to see a progression to be able to have proper development and transmission of the dance. One has to be able to identify compatible elements and identify your principles, ideals, philosophy, aesthetics.
- We should create works that the next generation can take from.



We should expose children to the arts at an early stage as they are going to run the world very soon and decide what happens to the culture!

Nii-Tete is interested in creative exchanges providing platforms for each other linking with festivals, sharing conversations and writing in print and digital platforms. He is also interested in educational development for artists as this is one of the problems identified on the continent.

"Our development on the continent is also heavily reliant on what our brothers and sisters in the diaspora are doing, therefore we need to link our vision globally. Imagine if we all start looking to ourselves for solutions. Imagine the potential! Imagine how that will shift the dynamics of art, politics etc. We are influencing the global trends so we shouldn't pigeon hole ourselves but keep developing for the next generation.

"We have very talented people but with no formal training to survive in the current industry. The places we need to defend dance are not in dance. The people who have the keys to the doors are not dancers. We have to meet them somewhere."

Nii-Tete closes with a reflection on dance of the African Diaspora: "We are still scratching the surface of what our potential and contribution is to this world. We should stop marking time and actually start achieving and we do not need anybody to do it for us."

Further information:

[National Dance Company of Ghana](#)

[Click here to listen to the full interview](#)



Every dancer should at least experience a traditional dance style. If you don't know the traditional dance, then you can't properly teach the contemporary African dance styles. Learn the traditional dance styles as a basis and as a springboard to develop contemporary dance. That is where your identity comes from. This also helps you to identify the gaps in the world and where you fit in.



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The Legacy of Acogny

Germaine Acogny's African Modern Dance technique is a synthesis of traditional West African dances and contemporary Western dance. Two of the technique's leading exponents, Patrick Acogny and Alesandra Seutin, talk to Head of Dance of the African Diaspora *Mercy Nabirye* about its importance and influence.



Patrick Acogny



Alesandra Seutin

Acogny Technique is internationally recognised and is highly esteemed as a key contributor to contemporary African dance vocabulary. How has this been achieved artistically and on the business side?

Patrick: I think it has definitely been achieved through Germaine touring her work and I think that is what holds it in an artistic way in terms of international recognition. This contribution you talk about is arguable in the sense that, yes, Germaine is touring and making her real work known, but I am not sure many people intentionally or consciously use the technique in their vocabulary for artist purposes in their own choreographic work. Most African dancers want to learn the Acogny Technique as it is recognised as the only one that's been codified this way. It is mainly used for teaching.

Alesandra: I agree with Patrick, though I know of others who are using it in a choreographic way including myself especially in group workshop material. It is just not mentioned enough. We did a big project involving nine dancers from five different countries within Africa, Europe and America, and we managed to export it as one of our transmissions, but we have not been able to tour it on a larger scale due to all the logistics that come with it. It takes a lot of support for this to be achieved.

A section of my solo *C'est ci N'est pas Noir* is dedicated to this technique. In all my performances, Acogny Technique is mentioned and the dancers who have trained with her so that people are aware that we are part of the image and the technique work that she has done. It is mentioned in a way that suggests we carry this technique even though we are not Germaine herself.

Let's talk more on your roles and responsibilities as individuals who are transmitting and preserving the legacy of the technique as well as the business.

Alesandra: My role is to teach and pass on the technique with the highest quality possible. I have a responsibility to keep the legacy alive from the work of Germaine Acogny. In terms of the technique for African dance in general: to preserve the quality, the focus, the engagement, the appreciation of it to the best quality possible. There is an interest in Ecole des Sables, the school in Senegal.

People want to go to train there and to know more so that they can train others. The role I have there as a tutor is very important to the technique to be transmitted properly while promoting the school and its development.

Patrick: Being the director of The Acogny Foundation, the responsibility is not only to train but to provide the best dance education to African dancers and non-African dancers who want to come. In whatever workshop that we do, we teach the technique first because we think that it is vital for dancers to know about it, it is a unique job, so it is my responsibility for maintaining that and finding ways to develop it and support those who train in it.

The technique is something that is known to be very codified and precise, but it can have the flexibility in there to be used like a tool that helps create your own practice.

Alesandra Seutin

This *HOTFOOT* edition is entitled *Transmitting the Dance: Principles, Technique, Aesthetic & Nuance*. What comes first when constructing, transmitting or preserving the dance and how important are these in Acogny Technique?

Patrick: I think the one thing you need to understand about the technique is that it is not just a codified technique, you learn the form. There is a vision behind it, an understanding of a dancing body which is very linked to spirituality and to nature. Behind these very colourful names that she gives to movement there is the belief that there is a synthetic that creates a synchronism of different influences that come from the North of Senegal and parts of Africa that comes into the technique.



I think that it is not just pure technique, it is beyond the technique. What you have to grasp is that you can learn it and also learn how to be in the spirit of it. (E.g. To understand the swaying of your spine as not just swaying your spine, but swaying the world). I think that understanding is important, so we take the dancers to nature, to see something that is beyond the technique that is linked to the world around us.

Alesandra: I think that the principle is on the body and what is around it. It is not just about the movement, it is about the life moving around you. There are different principles that I notice when working with dancers, that they shift in a different way depending on who you have in front of you and how you are working with them.

The movement can lead to a very expressive dance because of the use of the torso, but it can be abstract and can help in terms of moving in the space. There are elements of the technique that help within the context of working socially with people, but also working in and with the space around you as well as in a classroom when delivering a workshop.

The technique has many uses. The aesthetic of the technique comes with who is transmitting it, so it is codified and structured but the spirit of the technique shifts depending on the different people that deliver it. We all have our own influences, our own energy and spirits so the technique is shifting with this.

The principles in terms of the use of the spine, the use of the feet, the position of the body, different rhythms, different qualities, difference of space. There are these principles in the technique but the way we carry it and the way we perform with it, all gets transmitted to students with a shift. Yes, depending on where you are teaching it gives me a very different sensation, when I am sharing the technique in different places I can feel and see the shift, so it is vast and wide in that sense.



As you are both global players in the field of dance, what challenges and opportunities do you see facing the artists, the art form development & the sector globally?

Patrick: I think as a director of the foundation our main challenge is money. The money I need to develop the vision, to develop the teaching, to develop the people that are here.

I think the second challenge would be having time to think more about the technique, having meetings with the dancers and discuss the parts of the technique with writers and scholars and talk more about African dance. It's a practice but you also have all the thinking that goes with it.

I think there is so much that can be done with the Acogny Technique, especially as a choreographic tool. We need to show people that it is possible.

Patrick Acogny

I work on the technique from an academic perspective, so my approach is very different to Alesandra's. We need both perspectives in order to grow but we cannot do this alone. We need to get together and discuss possibilities for collaboration.

Alesandra: One of the challenges that I have noticed in terms of expanding the technique even more, is trying to reach the educational places such as higher education in universities in terms of the curriculum.

Also missing globally is the technique being taught in schools. I think every leader or representative of the African Diaspora should include this technique in their curriculum. It's a codified African technique. We need to challenge this because there is not enough recognition of its importance on the body. There needs to be more institutionalised appreciation for it to get noticed and recognised for what it is and how important it is to the sector globally.

If I came into a school and started talking about Cunningham or Graham technique students will all know what it is whereas with this technique, you still have to explain what it is about and of course it is an African contemporary word which comes as a confusion to people.

I think another challenge is how to translate it and how to treat it in more organisations for it to expand even more. In terms of artform development, there is also a big problem in mixing and not respecting the African form in the way that it is traditionally known whereas there is a loose way of seeing it. When I teach in places they are surprised at how precise it is.

The technique is there to help with posture, because people have this idea of African dance as being free in the body and releasing. So I think it is a role for all of us to think of presenting it for festival, performance purposes as well as including it in courses outside of the continent so that it can develop and gain the respect it needs as a dance form, like ballet and contemporary.

What do you see as the future of the dance of the African Diaspora?

Patrick: I have not been to the UK, so I cannot understand fully the status or future of the field in the diaspora there but what I can say to the dancers of the African diaspora, is we have a place for them to have an experience of dance in Africa where they can dance, a place where they can come and do only dance. I feel that way you have that experience just once where you have a better understanding of where you come from and where you can situate yourself, whether the technique works for you or not.

Alesandra: I feel the future for dance for the African diaspora will remain if people come back to Africa to exchange and bring something here but also take something back constantly. This is very important for the future and I feel the future is about how we carry this; how people with the knowledge expand and export it because this is very important, this is the only way it will have a future because it is present now.

What message and advice do you have for the younger generation and the older dancer to keep dance thriving and being meaningful?

Alesandra: I am talking from my own experience. People who are older than me have to keep transmitting and keep sharing. We find that we are reproducing some of the same mistakes from the past because of the lack of sharing journeys and knowledge. My generation in England are more open to sharing our knowledge with the younger generation, giving them tips and talking about our work, our journeys.

We have to be generous. Generosity in the development of ourselves and generosity in sharing what we know is vital.

Patrick Acogny

Photo: Participants in International Black Dances 2 at Ecole des Sables, photo: Elise Fitte-Duval



Following in the Footsteps

When I was in the UK, I felt my elders were so bitter about the system that they were not sharing this idea of transmitting knowledge. This is something I feel I want to change through mentoring, supporting younger artists, sharing what we know so that they can also develop and speak for themselves in terms of researching and knowledge.

Patrick: I believe that dancers need to learn everything they can learn, positivity is important to learn. Sometimes I feel they are afraid to share everything they know because they are afraid of someone better than them or use what they know to do more than what they are doing with their knowledge. The more you share and give, the more you learn, even in various ways which will surprise you. I will say to all of the dancers - do share everything, do not retain anything because you are still learning from what you are sharing with. It is important to be grateful to elder dancers that you are learning from.

It's easy for younger dancers to think that there was no past and that there will be nothing after their dance. Choreographers especially learn from people who have knowledge and they don't say this enough. For the younger dancers, even the little knowledge that you do know, share it still.

As a relatively newly-merged organisation and a sector support organisation within the Arts Council England National Portfolio, what do you think One Dance UK's key role is?

Alesandra: It has become more difficult to focus on certain elements and I feel the support has shifted and become more general which is a shame. African Diaspora events should be targeted and the DAD sector within One Dance UK should promote DAD aspects more and broaden, within the organisational marketing, what is happening within the African Diaspora nationally and internationally. If it is there I have to search for it. Workshops, events like teaching internationally should be mentioned in the marketing and promotion.

Patrick: I would say talk about us, talk about Acogny. There is information we can send you to send out through social media networks. Your readers need to know that there is a place that can really nurture and develop them as individuals to benefit others and get a mutual experience and spirituality.

Further information:

[International Dance Workshop at Ecole Des Sables](#)

[International Dance Workshop booking information](#)



IN FOCUS



VISIONARY



London Programmer – International Development, *Heather Benson* is in conversation with choreographer Bawren Tavaziva

Profile

Bawren Tavaziva was one of the original Trailblazers Starters Fellows during 2003-04. In an interview with Debbie Thomas for our *HOTFOOT* Summer 2002 issue, he said that it was his dream to choreograph four works and showcase a night of his own choreography.

Now, 15 years and 11 works later, Tavaziva Dance is touring Bawren's 12th body of work, *Izindava*, across the UK. As a Zimbabwean-born dancer, choreographer and musician, he has created a unique voice in Contemporary African dance whilst provoking and challenging the minds of his audiences.

How has the Trailblazers Fellowship contributed to your development as an artist working in the UK and beyond?

I can't believe the company has survived for the past 11 years. With all the cuts to funding, the company is still standing strong. I always had the ambition to have my own company and a night of my own work. Since Trailblazers, I've been creating through and through, and it's been growing. The fellowship really helped me at the beginning of my career when I wanted equipment to create an archive, which I still have with me. If it wasn't for the help that I got with Trailblazers my work would have been lost.

Can you tell us more about your journey as a musician alongside your development as a choreographer?

I started off my career as a musician when I was 11 years old, and later in life dance took over. I always wanted to keep my talent of music alongside a fast-growing career in dance. Now I work with my music and dance together. I don't have to struggle to find the right music because it's all the same idea from the same person. After working in the studio, I take that idea home to the recording studio where the music and dance feed into and bounce off one another.

Is it the dance first and then the music, or have there been times where the inspiration happens in reverse?

Sometimes when I'm improvising with music I record all of the material. I'll go through my archive music and find something I've forgotten about and will use it for a section in a piece. It saves me time from having to create a track from scratch. Those lucky moments do happen!



I'm lucky that music feeds the exact situation I want to create in the choreography and what I want to speak about.

Since the inception of Tavaziva Dance in 2004, how have you see your creative process evolve with each new work?

I can be honest, in the beginning I was tough on those I worked with, so dancers found it difficult and thought I was a 'slave driver'. I wanted discipline like the training I experienced at home, and here in England it was different. I was brutal with the dancers; I knew what I wanted. I've always said, "I want to create a company I would love to audition for or that another dancer would wish to be in." To do that I had to advertise myself as a 'doing' person rather than talking about it.

Today when people come to audition they know about TAVAZIVA Dance; that they will be dancing and it will be fun as well. Also, they know the nature of the work and how much it demands physically. I've already established a standard. Now, I don't have to say much because it's understood what's required.

What do you hope people take away from their experience with *Izindava*?

I want people to realise that we are born on our own and will die on our own. Whatever we do in the middle with our journey in life, you have the option to love. What's the point of wars or giving names to others like 'terrorists'? If one does the same thing as a 'terrorist' but is called a 'colonialist' or another name, why is there a difference?

Within your work as an artist, you have also given back to the sector by creating opportunities for young artists, particularly young male dancers. How have you seen your initiative, *Tavaziva Male*, impact the way you work as an artist and impact the development of the company?

Every time my company or I are working with young people, we give them tasks to create their own section of choreography. There is an innocence and lack of fear to play around for the young dancers which becomes a different kind of work.



[Click here to listen to the full interview](#)



From them, I learned to be naïve and to not be fearful. **Izindava** is created out of a child's mind in that sense. The audience will see parts of my childhood and hear some of the naïve statements that I make in the music. The naivety will be expressed in what I wish for, like not having wars in the world. There is an innocent, human feeling that the audience will connect with visually by experiencing parts of my life.

What challenges do you think artists face in today's sector? And what are your words of encouragement to the future generations?

The challenges today are the cuts to funding and there being less opportunity to go into a studio to practice the art. I would encourage young choreographers and artists to practice in their sitting room. Take stuff out and make some space to practice choreographing, and get out ideas beyond writing them down. Doing the steps tell a different story. If you can't afford studio space, go to the park and create a space there.

What are your dreams for the next 15 years for Tavaziva Dance and your artistic voice in the sector?

For the past ten years, I was learning about my organisation and now have a better understanding on how to run a company and more experience with my choreography. This was my college training. Now I have a good starting place as a fierce African Contemporary dance company. I want to push more of where I come from, my African roots and share with everybody.

I've dumped all the fear in a bin, and that bin is **Izindava**. No more fear, and I'm moving forward!

I want to touch on subjects that are crucial to life today, like I speak about myself, without fear.

Further information:

www.tavazivadance.com

**TAVA
ZIVA**



Trailblazers

Last May, One Dance UK's Dance of the African Diaspora (DAD) team, with industry partners, selected the 2017-18 Trailblazers Starters from a highly competitive group of applicants. Four individuals were awarded the Trailblazers Fellowship, which is part of One Dance UK's commitment to the continuing professional development of artists and the promotion of DAD. Each Fellow is awarded a bursary of £2,000 and a bespoke professional development programme. The latter includes artistic and professional mentoring by a leader of their choosing in the dance sector, life-coaching and training in subjects important to running a business such as marketing, fundraising and finance management.

Dickson Mbi



Dickson is a world-renowned dancer in the Hip Hop community. He has a background in jazz, ballet and contemporary dance having trained at Lewisham College, London Contemporary Dance School and been mentored by Stuart Thomas.

Currently, he is completing his MA in choreography at The Place.

The Trailblazers Fellowship will support Dickson in his research and development for a new work which he will premiere at The Barbican as part of The Pit Theatre Open Lab Programme.

Additionally, Dickson has performed with Boy Blue at the 2017 Edinburgh Fringe Festival, will collaborate in creating a new work for Zonation, and tour Asia.

Zinzi Minott



Zinzi's solo and collaborative pursuits focus on the relationships between dance and politics. She is interested in how dance is perceived through the prisms of race, queer culture, gender and class.

Her practice is driven through dance, and her outcomes range from dance and performance, to live art, sound, and film. Zinzi is interested in the space between dance and art and is creating a habitat between the two worlds.

The Trailblazers bursary will support Zinzi's investigation into the structures, rhythms and steps that appear in Grime dance; working towards a better articulation of the movement developed around Grime.

Further Information:

bit.ly/Trailblazers17-18

Starters 2017-18



In 2018, there will be a final presentation from the artists at The Place, London, showcasing their research and development throughout the entire year. Please stay connected through our social media networks and website for latest news on our Trailblazers Starters 2017-18.

Iris De Brito



Originally from Angola, Iris trained at Lisbon's conservatoire of music & dance, completed her dance studies at London Studio Centre, and trained intensively with the late

William Louther Dance Theatre. A dance practitioner since 1995, she is currently working and researching Afro-Luso dance styles.

During the Fellowship, Iris will create a dance documentary that will serve as a 'guide to Kizomba & Semba' for the dance sector in the UK and abroad. Furthermore, she will create a non-narrative dance theatre piece, portraying the evolution, influences and significance of Afro-Luso dance forms in a contemporary context. This new work will premiere during the annual Batuke! Festival at Rich Mix.

Jamaal Burkmar



Originally from Leicester, Jamaal trained at the Northern School of Contemporary Dance (NSCD) and has been commissioned by VERVE, ACE Dance and Music's youth company, and others. Most recently, Jamaal is the recipient of

the Marie McCluskey DanceMakers Fund, the New Adventures Choreographer Award and will present his work in a Wild Card showcase at Lilian Baylis Studio – Sadler's Wells.

Jamaal on his focus for the Trailblazers Fellowship 2017-18: "The Bursary will support the development and creation of two new quartets. *Volume 1* is a work about my home and my family. It's about taking the feeling of listening to D'angelo in the car on long journeys or trying to teach my dad to dance to rap music when we were kids on holiday in Italy. The whole work takes these memories and squashes them into a soundtrack that inspires the restoration of these images into an abstract piece. *Volume 2* is inspired by a score being created with my musician Otis Jones."

One Dance UK's *Bloom National Festival 2017* has been pollinating the country with dance throughout the year. *Bloom* explores and celebrates dance from Africa and its diaspora through performances, workshops and discussions across the UK.

The festival gives a glimpse of the dance talent that is growing in our communities and raises awareness of the art forms to new audiences and new spaces. From Bournemouth to Glasgow, thousands of people have experienced the diversity and vibrancy of African dance.

Here is a small selection of images from the events with quotes from attendees.

Bloom

national festival of dance
of the African Diaspora

[Click here to view the full gallery](#)



Above: Afro Dance Xplosion workshop, London
Left: An Evening of Jazz - Dance and Music, London
Below: Funk The Trinity, Bristol



Funk the Trinity Bristol September

"Such a brilliant event! BIG well done to all of the organisers and dancers. You're a very talented and truly inspiring bunch"

Zowie Hackwood,
Audience member

Evening of Jazz – Dance and Music London August

"The Evening of Jazz was a highly enjoyable and informative event. Each artist brought such a wealth of knowledge and insight to the discussion, and it was wonderful to hear the breadth of ideas presented. I look forward to the next event!"

12 Events
11 Cities
6 Associate Events

100 000+
Audience Members and Participants
25 Supported Artists

Project X - Let's Move to More Visibility
Glasgow
September

It's been amazing to be part of One Dance UK Bloom festival, to bring Scotland to the platform of national celebration of dances of the African diaspora (DAD). We're thrilled that more artists who work in DAD can connect with their peers across the nations.

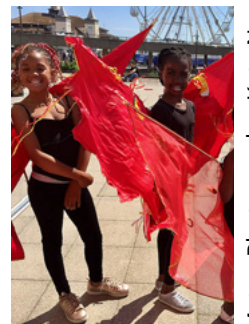
Rhea Lewis
Project X Creative Producer



Alleyne Dance Workshop, London, September
"Great workshop-inspiring to see how the leaders work and move." Sally Hacking, workshop participant



Clockwise from top:
Alleyne Dance workshop, London
Afro Dance Xplosion performance, London
Urban Carnival Roadshow, Bournemouth
Ila performance and workshop, Bristol
I.D. Now! performance, Liverpool
Baptism in three songs performance by Adesola Akinleye, London
Project X - Let's Move to More Visibility Symposium, Glasgow



***Ila* performance**
Bristol
July

Many thanks for such a magical dance performance at Bristol Museum on Thursday. It was such a lovely idea to connect Museums, Dance and Schools together

Karen Garvey
Audience member



Photos (clockwise from top): Heather Benson, Matea Photography, Katy Noakes, Mark Simmons, Brian Slater, Foteini Christofilopoulou, Oluwatoyin Odunsi

Book Reviews



Title: *Hidden Movement: Contemporary Voices of Black British Dance*

Author: Pawlet Brookes (ed.) With contributions by Dr Patrick Acogny, David Bryan, Hilary S Carty, Jackie Guy MBE, Henri Oguike, Dr Bob Ramdhanie, Kenneth Olumuyiwa Tharp OBE, and Sharon Watson

Pages: 103

ISBN: 978-0-9926319-2-5

Publisher: Serendipity Artists Movement

Date: 2013

Reviewer: Dr Sarahleigh Castelyn

In the 'Introduction', Pawlet Brookes makes the reader aware of how this "publication has arisen from the presentations given at an Inaugural Hidden Movement conference in May 2013, as part of the Let's Dance International Festival" (p. 5). This text is a valuable resource for those with an interest in the history of Black British Dance, and it is especially useful for dance students, dancers, choreographers, researchers, cultural policy makers, dance administrators, producers... the list is endless.

This is a worthwhile book that covers the major issues such as terminology – the debate surrounding the term 'Black British Dance' – or funding – the political influence on supporting and sustaining diversity in the British Dance industry where dance companies and choreographers are largely dependent on income streams which are often in a state of flux.

Hidden Movement: Contemporary Voices of Black British Dance is a necessary and welcome addition to British Dance Studies as it uncovers the stories of those involved in significant moments from the late 1940s onwards of Black British Dance. It does this by providing a space for those involved in this history to share their journeys and experiences by speaking directly to the reader. This serves as an educational introduction to this particular area and prompts further research, and likewise, a stronger commitment to document current themes in this sphere.

The Timeline (pp. 89-93) is an excellent map of key agencies and dance companies with the 'Notes' section providing important information such as the background to the formation of dance companies.

What does resonate throughout this book is the dedicated personal commitment to dance by all those involved, often at times of turmoil in British history.

By extension, the efforts by those involved, be they dancers, choreographers, or producers, in the British dance industry, had greater impact in British society than just on the theatre stage. Another mention must be made of the beautiful images included in this text.

Sharon Watson captures this well: "It is important not to forget how pioneering Phoenix's [Phoenix Dance Theatre/Phoenix Dance Company] early beginnings were and how it carried the responsibility for more than just dance" (p. 65).

Lastly, this review must make reference to the routes (and roots) of these contemporary voices of Black British Dance as across a number of the sections, the migratory character of these hidden histories becomes apparent. Black British Dance and its link to (and acknowledgement of) African Caribbean cultural practices and African dance cultures underlines the diversity and complexity of this area of British Dance Studies and this is to be celebrated.

The strength of this book is perhaps that many contemporary voices (and movements) are offered thereby opening up and supporting multiple viewpoints and indirectly recognising how Black British Dance might be a contested term theoretically, but perhaps in practice is open and often inclusive.

It is necessary to note that the following book reviews cover four publications by the arts organisation Serendipity, and although these texts stand separately, there is a definite narrative building across the four that does reflect the developing acknowledgment and rightful positioning of Black, African, and African Caribbean dance cultures in British Dance Studies.



This is a necessary book that seeks to address the marginalisation of Black women from dance history. What makes this text a very valuable resource, is that it includes the voices predominantly from the perspective of Black British female dancers, choreographers, managers, and activists. This is often a neglected viewpoint in dance studies and it is very much needed.

Pawlet Brookes aptly captures this when she refers to the book as 'a missing link in an international story which is not often told from a UK perspective' (p. 4). As material, this is an asset to students and those in dance education, but also, it is of use to those already working in the dance industry as it uncovers these hidden histories and the issues around being a Black woman in dance.

Pawlet Brookes again offers a sensitive reading of this, when she refers to Catherine Dénécý's statement on the Black female dancer's body: before we begin to talk about technique, this is the untold story of the sector that is brushed aside and this is where the strength has come to reposition the role and place of Black women as they take centre stage from their own perspective (p. 5). This is the strength of this book.

What becomes clear throughout is that this ability to dance, to move, to be at times literally dancing over the barriers, must be documented. This book is not only a necessary first step, but a much needed one that must be continued.

Title: *Black Women in Dance: Stepping Out of the Barriers*

Author: Pawlet Brookes (ed.) With contributions by Adesola Akinleye, Deborah Baddoo, Hilary S. Carty, Catherine Dénécý, Pam Johnson, Mercy Nabirye, Maureen Salmon, Jessica Walker, Sharon Watson, Jawole Willa Jo Zollar. Additional Research by Funmi Adewole and Amy Grain.

Pages: 107 ISBN: 978-0-9926319-3-2

Publisher: Serendipity Artists Movement

Date: 2016

Reviewer: Dr Sarahleigh Castelyn

In her section entitled, 'The Dance of Leadership', Maureen Salmon writes that "*Black Women in Dance: Stepping out of the Barriers* was a stage to perform our stories, create new histories and futures" (p. 52) and this highlights how there is further need for more staging of the stories of Black women and also Mixed-Race women in the dance sector.

In closing, Hilary S. Carty's own conclusion to her contribution sums this up well when referring to artists and agencies: "So we need more. Plain and simple. If we look back at these core requirements, yes, we have the ambition; and the talent. And yes we do indeed have the challenge. But we need more of the elements with our direct control; more exposure, more training, more opportunity and more active sponsors. We have made gains in the past, and can do so for the future, but it needs proactive engagement. We each need to be playing our part" (p. 43).

And that means all races and all genders if we are to break down the barriers in the dance sector.

To purchase any of the books featured, go to:

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**CREOLIZING
DANCE IN A
GLOBAL AGE**

Marie-Laure Soukaina Edom
Gladys M. Francis
Roshini Kempadoo
Patrick Parson
L'Antoinette Stines
Verene A. Shepherd



Title: *Creolizing Dance in a Global Age*. Leicester: Serendipity Artists Movement

Author: Pawlet Brookes (ed.) With contributions by Marie-Laure Soukaina Edom, Gladys M. Francis, Roshini Kempadoo, Patrick Parson, L'Antoinette Stines, and Verene A. Shepherd

Pages: 67

ISBN: 978-0-9926319-1-8

Publisher: Serendipity Artists Movement

Date: 2014/2015

Reviewer: Dr Sarahleigh Castelyn

Roshini Kempadoo writes:

In evoking the term 'creole' to describe my artwork and that of others, the term more appropriately reflects a mix or convergence of thought and creativity that moves incontrovertibly away from forms of essentialism. It is a conjuncture or expression that moves precisely away from conceiving some kind of 'purity' around African, Asian, European, or Arabic traditions, rituals or bodies.

The term can no longer be associated with a racially mixed Caribbean figure – embodies and resulting from colonial master and slave sexual relations and miscegenation. Nor may it simply refer to the metaphorical symbolism associated with binary mix between European and African races. Neither can it be limited to a singular form of expression, which has historically been associated with aural and written creativity in literature, performance, prose and spoken word rather than visual art, architecture or place.

The Caribbean is a more complex cultural experience of creolization as a practice, not restricted to embodiment or subjectivities, but rather being based on a process, a series of relations, evident symbolically, physically and polyphonically through cultural forms, performance, location, subjects and expression (p. 27).

This is a long direct quote for a book review, but it is necessary as Kempadoo encapsulates the definition of the term creole with care, sensitivity, and rigor. Furthermore, this extract captures the theme and content of this publication and the range of contributors and their work.

This is the second text published by the arts organisation Serendipity and arises from the conference held in 2014 where, as Pawlet Brookes notes, the 'aim of each conference and publication is to make the invisible, visible' (p. 11).

She then asserts: "Although Black dance and Caribbean dance styles and forms are very present on the surface, especially in urban commercial environments/cultures, the acknowledgement of the important role of Caribbean dance and choreographers in the culturally [sic] industries hidden in the UK" (p. 11).

This book does enable a much-needed discussion on both Caribbean cultural practices and creolisation; as a theoretical position, a methodology, and/or choreographic strategy. It covers not only the effect on British Dance but also in places such as Zimbabwe. This is demonstrated by Marie-Laurie Soukaina Edom's work with Essence of Women Dance Ensemble, a dance company she co-founded in 1999 (p. 41).

This text reflects the debate around the term "creolisation" and contains a wide range of contributions from academics to dance makers who offer their understanding of this concept and how it operates in practice.

This opens up the discussion and the inclusion of a glossary underlines how there is not only a commitment to make the "invisible, visible" (p. 11) but furthermore, to try and be more inclusive by helping the reader understand the complexities at play. This is another valuable resource for anyone directly involved in or with an interest in how creolisation occurs in dance.



Title: *Blurring Boundaries: Urban Street Meets Contemporary Dance*

Author: Pawlet Brookes (ed.) With contributions by Kyle Abraham, Funmi Adewole, Ivan Blackstock, Jreena Green, Robert Hylton, Jo Read, Nefeli Tsiouti, Tia-Monique Uzor, Orson Nava, and Danilo DJ Walde

Pages: 92

ISBN: 978-0-9926319-2-5

Publisher: Serendipity Artists Movement

Date: 2015/16

Reviewer: Dr Sarahleigh Castelyn

Another timely and worthwhile publication from the arts organisation Serendipity. This book seeks to address the limited availability of written material on popular and social dance styles, and especially from a British perspective.

Two themes emerge across the book: the relationship between music and dance,; and dance training in contemporary and hip hop and other African Diasporic dance styles.

These two lines often resonate in discussions concerning choreographic practices that comprise of social and popular dance cultures and contemporary dance practices. This relationship between the two dance areas is neither recent nor exclusive as some of the contributions make clear in this book.

There has been a complex exchange for much longer than generally thought, and this is very much reflected when Robert Hylton in his section entitled 'Reacting, Shifting and Momentum of a Developing 21st Century Dance'. He confirms: "Although I must add history at present tells us the core Hip hop dances are forty plus years old. However, if we look at a broader timeline of the Black dance experience and the African Diaspora we can find traces of Hip hop dance no doubt reaching from Congo Square the middle passage and beyond" (p. 26).

Returning to the two emergent themes, Jo Read's section on the relationship between music and dance (pp. 64 – 71) provides the reader with an excellent overview and personal focus on how there is often a blind sight by those involved in contemporary dance when they overlook the braid-like connection between music and dance in many social and popular dance practices that have an Africanist route/root.

Focusing on her own dance practice of Popping, Read explores 'Mickey-Mousing' (sometimes also

referred to as music visualisation); 'a term used in film and dance studies to describe dance and music closely mirroring each other' (p. 66).

She rigorously stresses throughout her section that "interrogating how, how often, in what ways, and why this device [Mickey-Mousing] is used, new and innovative analyses of music/dance relationships are possible' and 'argue[s] for the privileging of Mickey-Mousing as a sophisticated choreomusical device" (p. 71).

In relation to the second topic, the dance training systems in contemporary and Hip hop and other popular and social dance styles, Ivan Blackstock points to the indifference perpetuated by those in contemporary dance towards those who are involved in Hip hop: "At the time people were like 'you're those Hip-Hop Guys' and we weren't always taken seriously by other students and members of staff. We didn't want to be stereotyped we just wanted to dance, create art and be whatever we wanted to be. We later got the same label at other formal dance training courses" (p. 29).

Blackstock warrants that he 'received' his "education through the medium of hip hop not through formal education" (p. 32). This highlights how hip hop - and by extension other social and popular dance practices such as Krumping - offer not only physical dance training stressing 'time, dedication, repetition and practice" (p. 30), areas of concern shared by all dance training systems, but also emphasises the study of social and cultural contexts of these forms and how they relate to identity.

This is sensitively captured by Kyle Abraham when he states: "As a dance maker and educator in the workshops, it is about finding tools to dig deeper into who I am and what I want to be, and I hope for those participating being able [to] dig deeper into who they are" (p. 16).

This is what *Blurring Boundaries: Urban Street Meets Contemporary Dance* offers.

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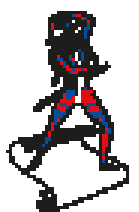
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