



# HOTFOOT ONLINE



One  
Dance  
UK

**GLOBAL  
INFRASTRUCTURES**  
AUTUMN 2018

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# FOREWORD

We continue with this year's theme of leadership and infrastructure for Dance of the African Diaspora (DAD), highlighting key global infrastructures, albeit from a UK perspective. We are excited to feature interviews and articles with insights from movers and shakers in the diasporas of Canada, the USA, South Africa, France, Germany, Australia alongside initiatives taking shape in the UK. The range of work demonstrates the strength of the African Diaspora's diverseness, promising a thriving sector for the future.

In keeping with our mission to raise profiles of individuals and the art forms, we have highlighted achievements of Doctorates in Dance with a focus on African Diasporic aesthetics as well as recognition of BAME artists who have received The Queen's Birthday Honours for services to Dance.

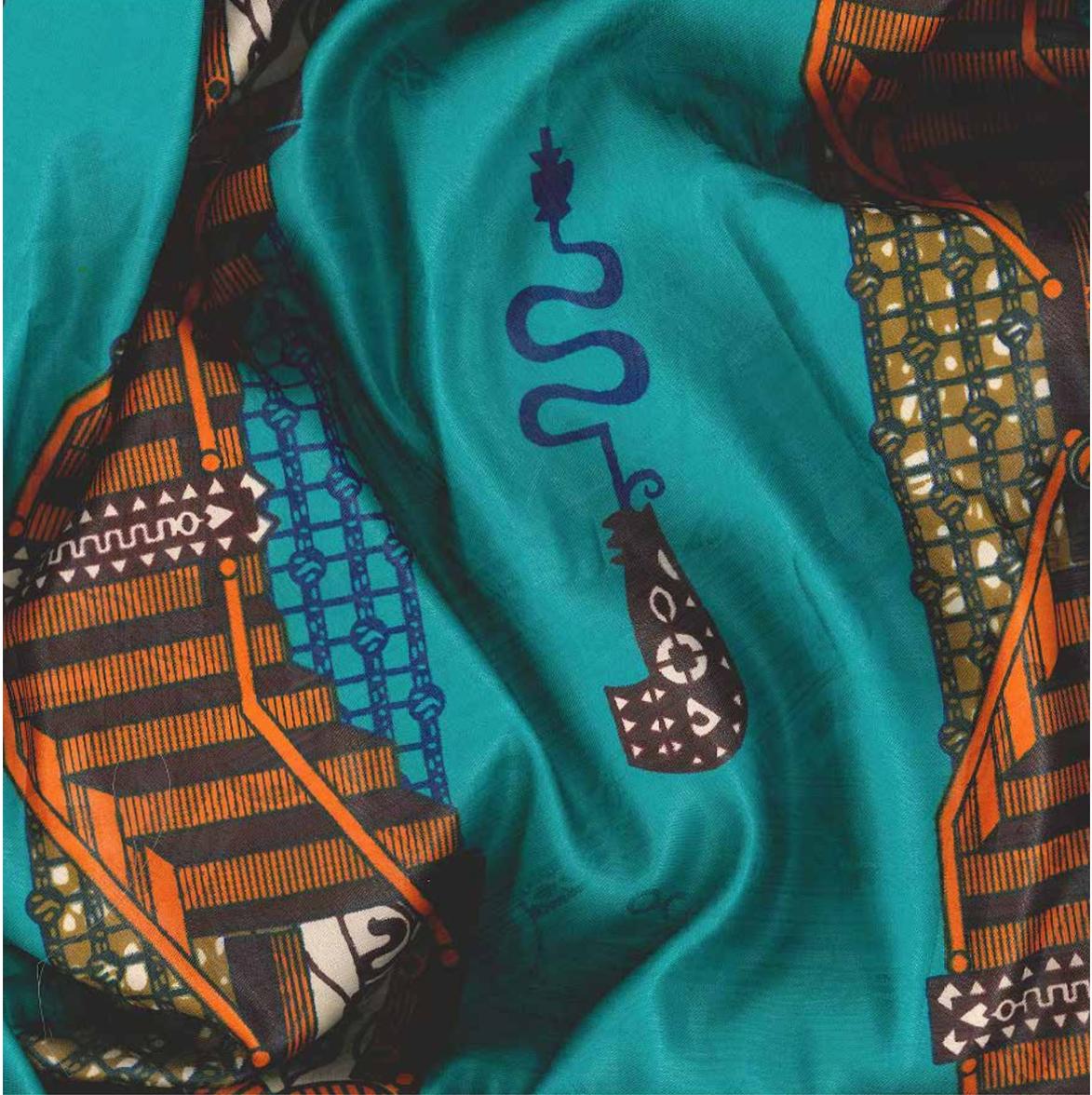
Additionally, we reveal a new set of statistics from our ongoing mapping of DAD in the UK, giving important insight on how we are engaging with others and how DAD is positioned within a wider landscape. Contributions from leading individuals and organisations across the nation inspire and challenge us to continue supporting the sector in becoming unified and highly valued.

Enjoy!

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**MERCY NABIRYE**

HEAD OF DANCE OF THE AFRICAN DIASPORA



# WAX PRINT MEANING.

This issue features the African wax print Akomfrah, which is a word from the (Akan) Twi language in Ghana. The pattern features a stool and knives of the king on the throne, symbols that reflect leadership and readiness to fight for his people. In keeping with the theme, there are many pioneers, leaders and forward-thinking organisations across the global African Diaspora pushing diasporic art forms and people to be at the forefront within dance. The many infrastructures around the world must come together with an understanding and awareness to reflect cultural aesthetics that connect us globally.

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One Dance UK supports the practice of dance of the African Diaspora, with the aim to make the form visible and valued as part of the British cultural experience

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# WELCOME

It is a privilege to write this Hello for *HOTFOOT Online* Autumn 2018 Edition! This month, *HOTFOOT* highlights legacies, leadership, mentorship, infrastructure accountability, artistic innovations and promotional strategies for continued advancement of Dance of the African Diaspora (DAD) initiatives worldwide!

Visibility leads to recognition and *HOTFOOT* is the conduit for DAD activities to move from marginalisation to the acknowledged, award winning status they deserve. DAD practitioners, upturn and reconfigure attributes and entitlement usually associated with alternative mainstream dance practices. As a strategic, transnational tributary, *HOTFOOT* illustrates and highlights this DAD resourcefulness and with visibility and recognition demonstrates unequivocally DAD artistic efficacy on the global stage!

Through *HOTFOOT*, One Dance UK ensures allegiance and efforts to recognise all dance practices. *HOTFOOT* encourages these shared interests across organisations and all national and international borders, then monitors, surveys and acts as a forum taping global movements led by DAD practitioners. A tributary for global exposure and exchange for UK and international activities, *HOTFOOT* seeks to connect performance with multiple resources supporting and uplifting the profile of movers and shakers connected to Dance of the African Diaspora.

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**THEA NERISSA BARNES**  
EDITORIAL FOCUS GROUP MEMBER

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## DOCTORATES IN DANCE OF THE AFRICAN DIASPORA BY RAMSAY BURT, DE MONTFORT UNIVERSITY



'Funmi Adewole © Foteini Christofilopoulou

There are a growing number of people in the UK who have completed PhDs on research into dance of the African Diaspora, with 13 doctorates awarded since 2005. These have been on a variety of topics, including dance history, dance ethnography, and representations and aesthetics. Theses on the history of Black dancers in Britain include Bob Ramdhanie's 2005 thesis *African dance in England: spirituality and continuity* supervised at the University of Warwick, and 'Funmi Adewole's thesis *British Dance and the African Diasporas, the Discourses of Theatrical Dance and the Art of Choreography: 1985 to 2005* awarded this year at De Montfort University. In 2017 Sandie Bourne completed her PhD at the University of Roehampton on *Black British ballet: race, representation and aesthetics*.

Ethnographic theses include H  l  ne Neveu Krin- gelbach's thesis *Encircling the dance: social mo-*

*bility through the transformation of performance in urban Senegal*, University of Oxford 2005, and Sylvanus Kwashie Kuwor's *Transmission of An-lo-Ewe dances in Ghana and in Britain* 2013 from University of Roehampton. Some have written theses informed by their own practice as dance artists: Adesola Akinleye's *Body, Dance & Environment: an exploration of embodiment and identity* awarded in 2011 from Canterbury Christ Church University; and Ama Sheron Wray in 2017 at University of Surrey completed *Towards embodiment: modelling relations between West African performance practices, contemporary dance improvisation and "seselelame"*.

Most recent UK theses, including these, are available for download from <http://ethos.bl.uk>

**ALT A REVIEW  
GET YOUR COPY NOW!**



Alt A Review

Founded in 2016 by Joy Coker, Alt A Review is the bespoke arts and culture newspaper covering global events pertaining to the African Diaspora, celebrating creative diversity. The newspaper mirrors Alt Africa online, bringing its London audience through a unique cultural lens; highlighting events and organisations that champion diversity and inclusion. They are keen to champion the talent of diasporic voices, their creativity and reach. The original idea for Alt Africa was born out of a film project with an aim to target African Diaspora audiences, a niche and novel idea which now has wings through an online and print magazine.

You can now **buy a copy of Alt A Review.**

The price includes UK postage only. If you would like to bulk buy copies for your event/goody bags or organisation, please contact [sales@alt-africa.com](mailto:sales@alt-africa.com). Cover price: Sterling £3 Dollar \$3.86 €3.30.

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**NEWS**

**WIN A FAMILY TICKET\* FOR UCHENNA DANCE'S HANSEL & GRETEL AT THE PLACE**



Hansel & Gretel

This Christmas, choreographer Vicki Igbokwe puts her unique Uchenna Dance twist on the classic fairy tale by weaving dance styles house, waacking and vogue, with African and contemporary dance performed to original music from Ghanaian composer Kweku Aacht.

This brand-new show sees our two heroes lost in a big city, overwhelmed by the sights, sounds and smells. Together they must outwit the adults to find their way back to their family in a show where kids are number one!

The Place is offering a family ticket to this festive treat, which is sure to delight kids of all ages alike and leave them grooving right up until Christmas Eve! Enter to win by emailing [hotfoot@onedanceuk.org](mailto:hotfoot@onedanceuk.org) the five dance styles featured in Hansel & Gretel. All entries must be received by 11:59pm on 30 November 2018. The winner will be announced on 1 December.

**Click here** for more information and to book tickets for the show.

*\*must include at least 1 adult and 1 child*

## RE:GENERATIONS CONFERENCE 2019



Re:generations 2016 © Foteini Christofilopoulou

### Save the Date for Re:generations Conference 2019 at The Lowry, Salford UK coming 7-9 November!

The 5th Re:generations International conference will take place 7-9 November 2019 at the Lowry in Salford, UK. The conference brings together academics, artists and practitioners to focus on international perspectives in dance of the African Diaspora (DAD), to shape future practice. The theme of the 2019 conference is 'The Digital Space'. Sub themes with a DAD focus will encompass current creative practice, theories and research in professional practice, children and young people, a healthier dancer workforce, dance in health and wellbeing among others. Conference events will include networking, panels, presentations of academic papers, live and recorded creative exchanges, workshops, performances and more.

A highlight for Re:generations 2019 will be the

unveiling of the final report for the DAD sector mapping research, which began in autumn 2017. We have been disseminating parts of the findings in phases through our magazines *One* and *HOTFOOT Online* and as a sector support organisation, we look forward to collaboratively determine priorities and where to focus.

Past conferences involved contributors from Canada, USA, Europe, Africa and the Caribbean and the 2019 conference will continue to welcome international partners, sponsors, delegates and presenters. The aim is to connect and build international communities, stimulating innovation, excellence and sustainability across the diasporas and the work that we do. Watch this space for a call for presentations from One Dance UK and our Re:generations Conference 2019 partners.

**To view footage from the Re:generations 2016 visit <http://bit.ly/ODUKRegen>.**

# NEWS

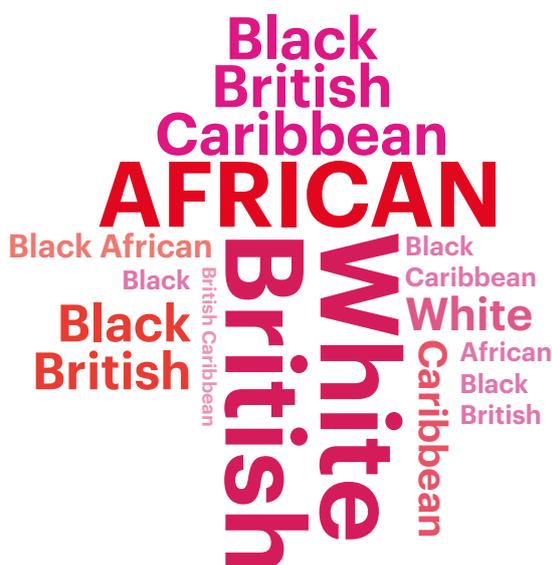
**"DANCE NEEDS TO BE LIFTED"**

JONZI D

# MAPPING THE SECTOR

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## DANCE OF THE AFRICAN DIASPORA



From Autumn 2017, the Dance of the African Diaspora (DAD) team\* have conducted extensive research to better understand the current sector practice and the key issues affecting professionals working within the DAD sector. Using the findings from the initial survey, the team hosted face-to-face research focus groups and one-to-one sessions, connecting on-the-ground with key independent artists, organisation leaders, venue producers and programmers. From April to July 2018, five focus groups were hosted across UK regions; in the South West by Trinity Arts Centre (Bristol), in the Midlands by People Dancing (Leicester), in Yorkshire by Yorkshire Dance (Leeds), and two in London by The Place and Rich Mix.

"Hopefully dance in Bristol will be more connected... & will include DAD, which will be seen as integral to the sector rather than separate."

**RUTH HECHT, BRISTOL DANCE FUTURES AT SOUTH WEST FOCUS GROUP**

\*Mercy Nabirye, Heather Benson, Katy Noakes and Oluwatoyin Odunsi

# “THERE APPEARS TO BE MORE INDIVIDUALS DOING THEIR OWN WORK, BUT NOT AS A WHOLE”

LONDON FOCUS GROUP

## WHO IS WORKING?

"Respect and value for the elders should be integral in the curriculum for DAD forms"

**JACKIE GUYMBE, CD**

Respondents were asked to openly describe their gender and ethnic identity\*\* and to provide their age and disability status. We know there are many 'hard to reach' practitioners and artists who have not engaged with our research, and therefore we continue to reach out for those hidden voices. For example, there are those working in the regions who are disconnected from the central hubs and networks, people who have left the sector and

practitioners who actively work with disability – in some cases not easily seen or undiagnosed.

Further investigation in the commercial dance sector would bring forth perspectives in the younger generations and male artists and practitioners. Lastly, we will interrogate the training institutions and pathways available across the nation, specifically what barriers might exist where young people of African Diasporic backgrounds or those wanting to engage with the art forms might not have the provision to do so. We will work with leading organisations and institutions to help bring those voices forward to contribute to the research.



**25%**

**MALE**



**70,3%**

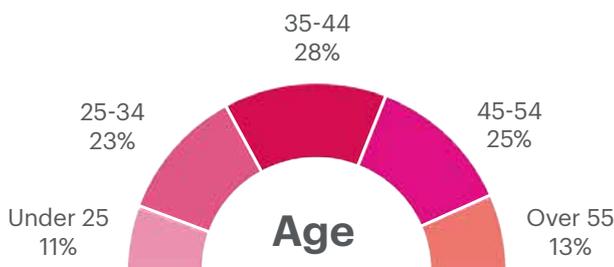
**FEMALE**



**3,4%**

**NON  
-BINARY**

6.1% are practising with a disability



"There is more visibility of successful artists for young people to aspire to work in the sector"

**IVAN BLACKSTOCK**

\*\*The respondents identified 12 categories of gender and 60 classifications of gender

HOW ARE THEY WORKING?

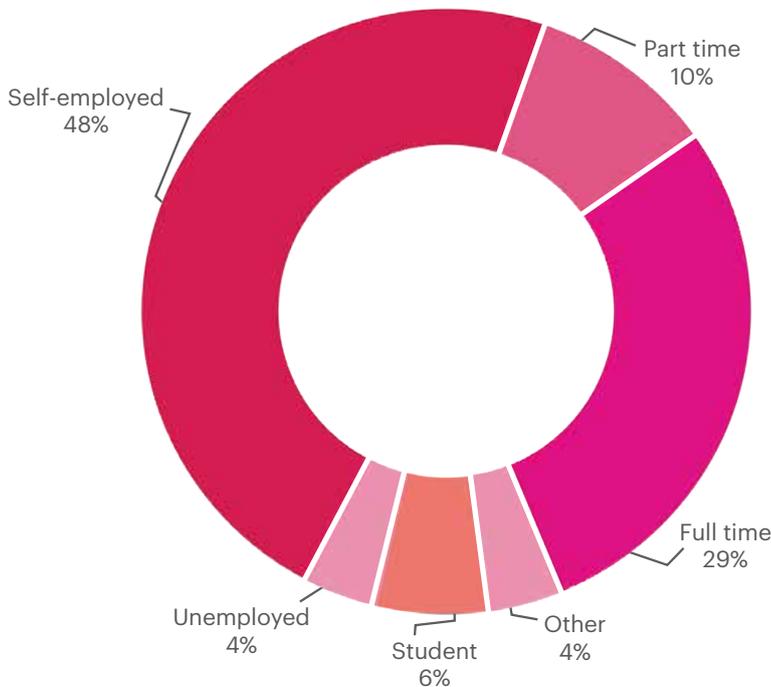
**“WE KNOW THE WORK IS HAPPENING AT THE GRASS ROOTS LEVEL, BUT IT’S NOT REACHING THE SUBSIDISED AREA OF THE SECTOR”**



On average, practitioners maintain a career in the sector for

**18 years**

CULTURE CENTRAL



**53,3%**

**SOLE TRADER**

**21,3%**

**COMPANY LTD. BY GUARANTEE**

**18%**

**REGISTERED CHARITY**

In addition to the initial digital questionnaire sent, responses from the five regional focus groups and ongoing small group consultations reveal commonalities in some aspects of the work. Majority agreed that we all have a shared responsibility to embrace a forward-thinking mindset to grow and to continue mapping the sector regularly. Key priorities include:

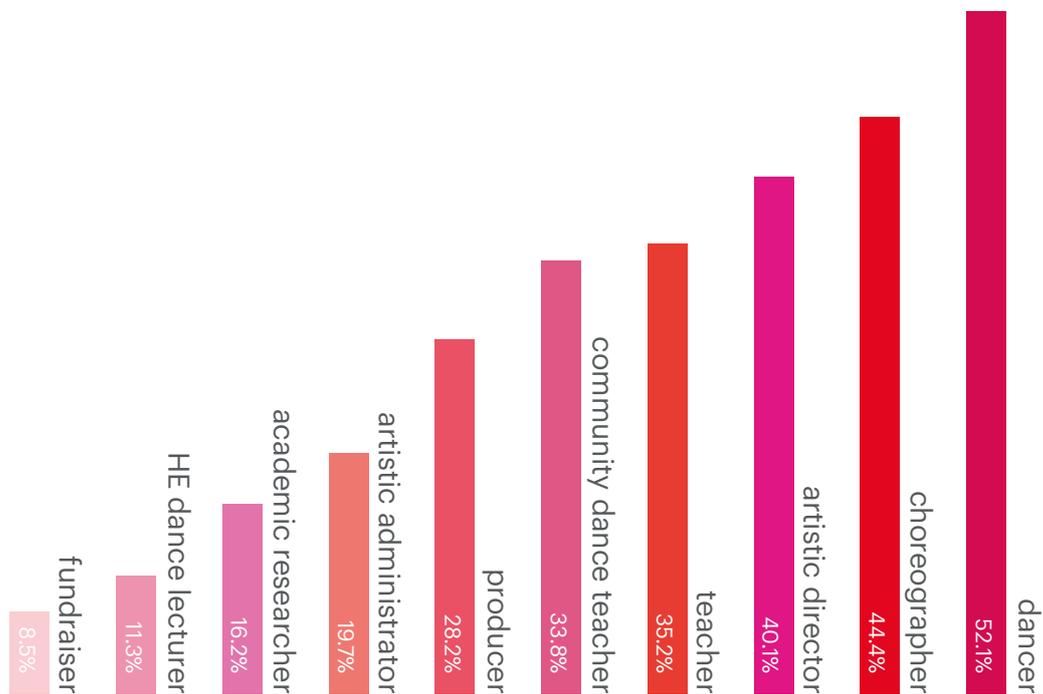
- Training in DAD forms to nurture artists who are ready to appropriately translate and present quality;
- Pathways and resources to increase and develop DAD producers supported by mentors to help profile work better;

- Continuous visible crediting of DAD styles in various contemporary work wherever presented;
- Presenting the work in unconventional spaces and finding audiences that value the forms;
- Bringing people together through networks at various levels;
- Archiving using various channels to enable longevity and sustainability.

## WHAT DO THEY DO?\*

## “THERE IS A COMMUNITY OF SUPPORT AROUND THE ARTISTS BEYOND THE ART FORM ITSELF.”

ALISTAIR SPALDING CBE,  
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF SADLER'S WELLS



## "Let the work speak"

### LONDON FOCUS GROUP

Continuing research through Autumn 2018, the team will engage further with universities, organisations and individuals working within dance and beyond.

The final report with full analysis of our research will be published in 2019.

## Watch this space!

\*Percentages represent instances where multiple options were selected  
Survey conducted from August to November 2017 by One Dance UK with our stakeholders and audiences.

Infographic by Hollie McGill



**CELEBRATING  
OUR LEGACY**



**NG  
IES**



# BRIXTON ICON: JACKIE GUY MBE, CD

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BY JUDITH PALMER



*As part of Brixton City Festival presented by Ovalhouse Theatre, Executive Director Stella Kanu invited Jackie Guy MBE, CD and Judith Palmer to join in conversations highlighting cultural icons who are part of the fabric of Brixton's diverse communities.*

With more than 40 years' experience, Jackie is one of the UK's leading experts in African-Caribbean dance forms. As a director, choreographer, educator, performer, mentor and pioneer he has impacted dance sectors across the UK and beyond. He has been recognised with a number of awards and citations including the ADAD Lifetime Achievement Award (2011), the Queen's Honours Award (2012), Jamaica's Order of Distinction, Commander Class (CD) in 2015, and a recent citation from the University of the West Indies.

In this vibrant conversation with fellow icon Judith Palmer, 'Uncle Jackie' reflects on his legacy in dance and hopes to create more cohesion between his fellow elders and the younger generations. For him, success is sharing the cultures, traditions and rituals of his heritage, particularly through his technique, and that becoming an inspiration for younger artists to create their unique voice through dance. All of his accomplishments, being Artistic Director of Kokuma and working on West End shows like Disney's *The Lion King* and *Harder They Come*, have been humbling and motivational. However, Jackie does not lock away the knowledge gained throughout his career. Instead, he seeks to share the pillars of success; hard work, dedication and sacrifice.



Jackie Guy teaching at Re-generations 2014

# RECKONINGS TRIPLE BILL: JULIE CUNNINGHAM, ALESANDRA SEUTIN, BOTIS SEVA PERFORMANCE REVIEWS

Presented 11-13 October as part of the 20th Anniversary celebrations for the main building, Sadler's Wells commissioned three works from a new generation of UK-based dance-makers. In a showcase unlike any other presented on this platform, *Reckonings* brought forth artistic voices that connected to a diverse audience, more reflective of Britain's contemporary context. We've collated excerpts of a handful of the sector's responses to this dynamic programme of work.

"...As a researcher I have been following Alesandra and I love where she has arrived creatively. Performing on the main stage is not a marker of whether an artist has emerged or not, but it is culturally significant. It is great Ales has been recognised. At the reception she thanked all the artistes that have gone before her – a lovely moment. Well done to Alistair Spalding and the Sadler's Wells team for looking to the future... Here's to the next 20 years."

#### **'FUNMI ADEWOLE ON FACEBOOK**

"Reminds me of the day many years ago when Adzido packed out Sadler's Wells, which helped to kill the perceived notion – at the time – that African/Black dance could not play main stage to a sell out audience. The journey has been long & ongoing. Massive Congratulations!!!"

#### **GRETA MENDEZ ON FACEBOOK**

"Blown away by Botis Seva's on another level hip hop theatre piece and the joyful Alesandra Seutin's



huge production of brilliant musicians and beautiful dancers. If you get a chance to see their new shows *BLKDOG* and *Boy Breaking Glass*. Such a treat."

#### **NATASHA PLAYER ON FACEBOOK**

"...I found the work to indeed be bold. It rejects all notions of nation or tribalism and draws us into an empowered community, in which everything becomes an opportunity to transcend into light, into art, into joy, to a hymn, a snare, and an exceeding sun."

Tia-Monique Uzor on Seutin's *Boy Breaking Glass*  
Excerpt from her blog, read more [here](#)

If you have seen the programme, we invite you to send in your review to [hotfoot@onedanceuk.org](mailto:hotfoot@onedanceuk.org)

# INCREASING BAME UK HONOURS AWARDS FOR DANCE

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BY ABBY OSHODI  
[WWW.GOV.UK/HONOURS](http://WWW.GOV.UK/HONOURS)

## A Brief Introduction to the UK Honours System

The objective of the UK Honours system is to encourage nominations that broadly reflect the overall diversity of British society. Our honours system is steeped in history and is very widely admired, but we need to ensure that it is truly inclusive, and that successes and achievements are widely celebrated by the system in each and every community.

Historically, people from a Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic background have been underrepresented in the UK honours system. Recently, we have made some real progress in this area and The Queen's Birthday Honours List in June 2017 was the most diverse honours list that there has ever been since the current system began in 1917. We achieved a 10% BAME representation, which was again replicated in the Birthday 2018 list. However, we cannot be complacent. We recognise that there is much more work to do to ensure that the honours system truly reflects the diverse UK population.

The honours lists are published twice a year: at New Year and on the Sovereign's Official Birthday. Nominations are assessed by selection committees who then produce a list, independently of government. Awards are given by The Queen on the advice of the Prime Minister. Honours are intended to recognise exceptional achievement and/or service.

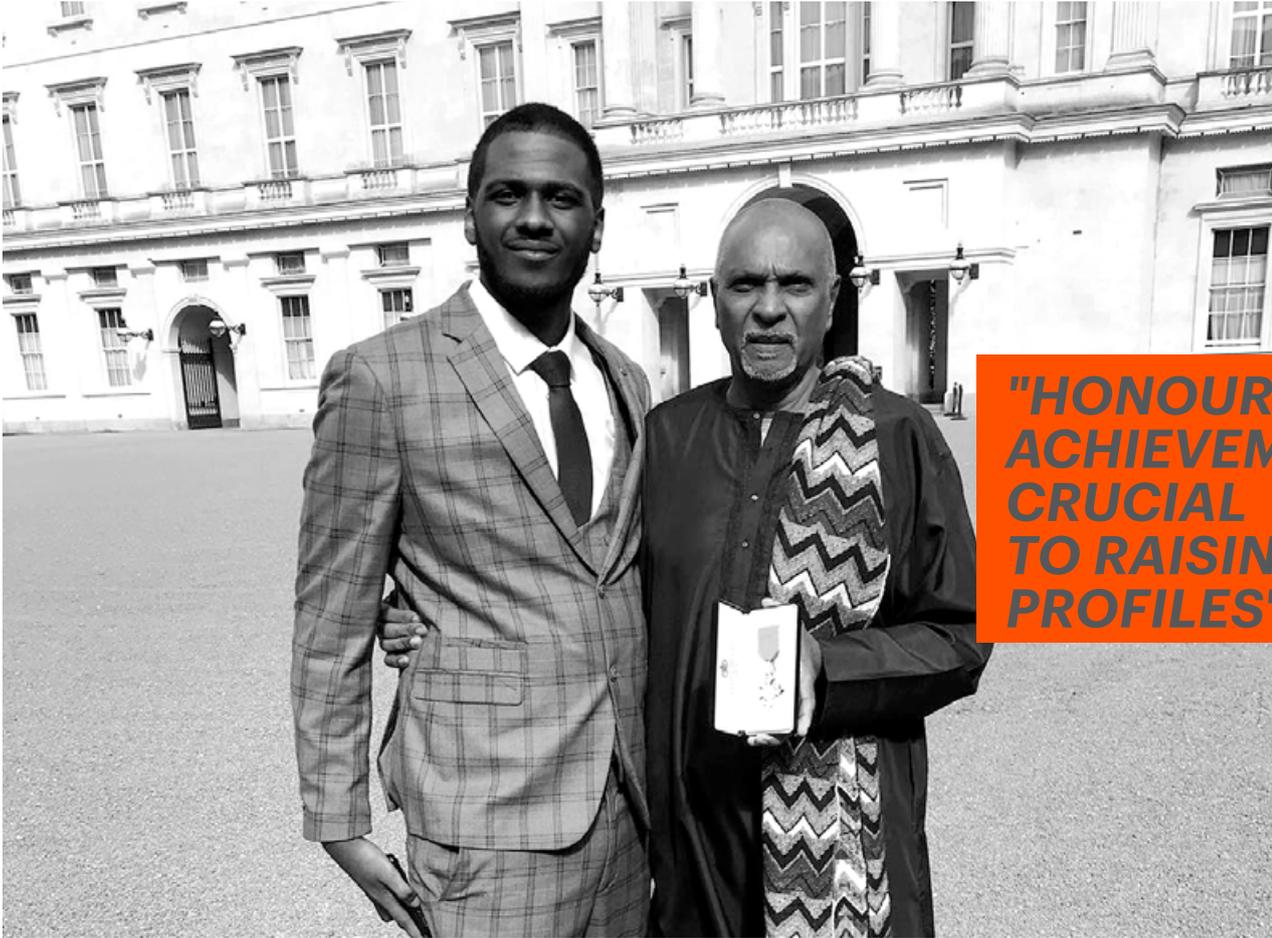
In order to increase the diversity of the honours lists,



© Award



Akosua Boakye BEM © Eliass Arfal



Bob Ramdhanie MBE with his award

the Cabinet Office are doing the following

- establishing a Diversity and Inclusion Group to drive the agenda forward;
- encouraging nominations from under-represented groups through work with the national and local media;
- making formal presentations to various groups and organisations;
- targeting publicity material to specific audiences eg. honours leaflets for BAME communities and women; and
- increasing presence on social media - sharing videos of recipients on YouTube, photographs of recipients after their investiture ceremony on the **Cabinet Office Flickr site** to publicise the honours system and the diverse range of recipients.

#### Who can I nominate?

Anyone can be nominated by anybody, and everybody will know somebody worthy of recognition. We are looking for people who have

made a real difference in their community or field of work and nominations should be made while the nominee is still active.

#### How do I nominate?

Detailed guidance and a nomination form can be found on the **Honours website**. Alternatively, contact the honours team at the Cabinet Office on 020 7276 2777 to receive support and documentation needed to complete the nomination process. Each application requires two or more letters of support to accompany the nomination, written by people who have first-hand knowledge of the nominee and can endorse their contribution. There is also a step-by-step video on YouTube focused on **completing an Honours nomination form**.

#### What makes a good nomination?

The application needs to describe what is special about the candidate's achievements and indicate how they have made a difference. The best

nominations are those which demonstrate the impact the individual has made in their area of expertise, showing how they have overcome obstacles or gone the extra mile. To strengthen the application, provide clear examples of how they are head and shoulders above their peers or a role model to others; often serving their industry for several years.

#### Who decides?

It is an independent selection system. Once a nomination is submitted, it will be handled in the first instance by a team in the Cabinet Office who check that all the required information has been included. They will seek comments and feedback from those who are likely to know the nominee or their area of activity. When everything is in order, a citation is prepared for one of several specialist honours committees to consider and make their selections. Further details and membership of the committees can be found **online**.

#### Notable Dance Recipients working in DAD

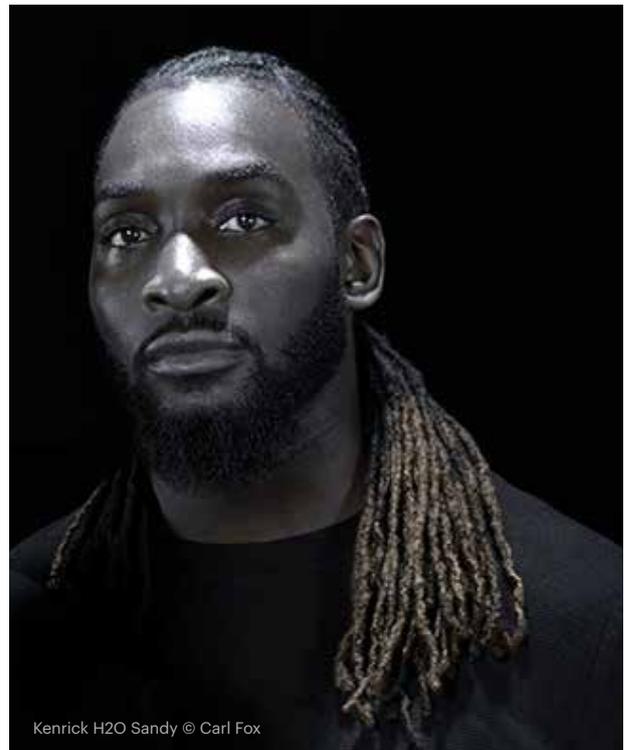
Ms Deborah Baddoo MBE — For services to British Dance // Mr Peter Badejo OBE — For services to Dance // Ms Akosua Boakye-Nimo BEM — For services to Dance // Ms Brenda Edwards MBE — For services to dance // Ms Karen Gallagher MBE — For services to dance // Ms Beverley Glean MBE — For services to the Promotion of African and Caribbean Dance // Mr Carlton 'Jackie' Guy MBE — For services to African Diaspora Dance // Dr Robert Ramdhanie MBE — For services to Dance // Mr Kenrick Sandy MBE — For services to *Dance* and the *Community* // Mr

## "A DIVERSE UK DANCE ECOLOGY"

Kenneth Tharp CBE (2017) & OBE (2003) — For services to Dance // Mr Namron Yarrum OBE — For services to Dance

#### Who do you know who deserves an honour?

"The MBE award not only recognises the focus and passion of our movement, but also empowers the voice behind the movement" – Kenrick H2O Sandy MBE, Boy Blue.



Kenrick H2O Sandy © Carl Fox



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# BRITISH DANCE: BLACK ROUTES BOOK REVIEW

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**EDITED BY CHRISTY ADAIR & RAMSAY BURT**  
**REVIEWED BY DR SARAHLEIGH CASTELYN**  
[WWW.DORA.DMU.AC.UK/HANDLE/2086/13026](http://WWW.DORA.DMU.AC.UK/HANDLE/2086/13026)

This is a timely text and a much needed one too! Edited by Christy Adair and Ramsay Burt, *British Dance: Black Routes* (2017) focuses on British Dance and the African Diaspora and is a result of their two-year research project funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council. The research project involved study days, roadshows and other innovative ways of sharing knowledge across the dance community, be they dancers, choreographers, students, academics, and audience members.

In 'The Introduction', Adair and Burt state that their aim is "to celebrate the contributions that Black British dancers have made to the British dance scene" (p.1), and this text certainly does that by "writ[ing] Black British dance artists and their legacies back into history" (p.1). A strength of this collection is that it "exemplifies the diversity of routes through which diasporic African dance and music forms have come to Britain" (p.3). This is further illustrated by the range of contributors and their chapters and therefore it is difficult to single out one or two chapters to expand on for the review. Instead, it is perhaps better to summarise the areas covered.

Following 'The Introduction' by Adair and Burt, Thea Barnes skilfully "pieces together, from primary and secondary source material" (p.15) Berto Pasuka's artistic development prior to his establishment of Les Ballets Negres in 1946. Jane Carr's chapter on UK Jazz dancing "highlights the importance of Britain's colonial past to developments within British dance culture" (p.52). In the following





**"CELEBRATING  
DIVERSE  
ROUTES  
IN BLACK  
BRITISH DANCE"**

Phoenix Dance Company © Steve Hanson @Emma Rothera

chapter, Sheron Wray's (Ama S Wray) research into "improvisation-as-performance" (p.55) offers a "rubric for understanding and defining" (p. 55) West African practices.

In 'African Dance in England: Spirituality and Choreography', Bob Ramdhanie MBE suggests that perhaps it might be more proper if dance artists, such as Peter Badejo OBE, were referred to as "spiritographers" (p.83) as their "articulation of body movements and floor patterns are governed by sources from both the visible and invisible worlds" (p.83). This theme of spirituality and dance is further explored in 'H' Patten's contribution in which he advocates dancehall as "embodying Jamaican spiritual cosmology and religious coding" (p.100). 'Funmi Adewole's chapter provides a strong "critical history of dance practices associated with the Black dance/ African Peoples dance sector" (p.125) and is well-placed by the editors to frame the chapter that "addresses the place of Black British dance artists during the 1970s and 1980s in relation to the

history of contemporary dance in Britain during this period" (p.150).

In the final chapter, Anita Gonzales "respond[s] to this new collection of dance history" (p.167) highlighting the "Hybrid dance forms" (p.168) that make up this area. A last mention must be made about the Appendix, specifically the 'Timeline' as this is a valuable resource. This is an edited collection that does "celebrate the achievements of British-based dancers who are Black" (p.3) and calls for more of these histories to be shared.



**CHAMPIONING  
DIVERSITY**

IG  
TY



# HIDDEN HISTORIES AND MARGINALISED VOICES

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BY JESSICA WALKER  
[WWW.SERENDIPITY-UK.COM](http://WWW.SERENDIPITY-UK.COM)

In a recent *Vogue* article that features an upcoming Sadler's Wells performance, the theatre is congratulated for bringing "new faces" to the British dance arena. However, this term always gets me thinking as I feel that it is not descriptive of emerging artists, but instead hints towards new "types" of faces. Non-White faces have been present within the UK dance scene and are not new, just under-represented and thus seem invisible. As a dance artist of Jamaican-German descent I have found myself confronted with this societal concern within our dance sector. From a young age I was trained by White women, and then into my further education I was inspired by the works of White men.

As a result, I had felt the societal dislocation that came with the lack of access to teachers, creators and academics that I related to. It was not until I met my mentor, Pawlet Brookes, that I found my true schooling on our dance industry. Serendipity's founder taught me that yes, it is all very well and good having a master's degree in contemporary dance, but it means nothing if you do not know how to navigate its landscape as a marginalised artist. For this reason, I am a regular attendee of Serendipity's Let's Dance International Frontiers (LDIF) conference, as it provides an opportunity for artists and academics to share information on how to access this quandary of an industry.

Serendipity uses its yearly LDIF and Black History Month events to put marginalised and hidden





**"GREATER  
VISIBILITY  
FOR EMOTIONAL  
LANDSCAPES  
OF RACIALISED  
DANCERS"**

Germaine Acogny © Stuart Hollis

histories and their artists at the forefront. This devotion to under-represented bodies within the arts is what drives its work, through which they encourage action in a way that unites communities. As an annual delegate since 2014, I have witnessed local, national and international dance communities come together to celebrate and discuss shared concerns or ideas. Across the years the communities have confronted intersectional marginalisation, the position of the Black female dancer and inter-generational trauma and its effects on our place within dance. These forums revealed the ways in which historical imperatives shaped contemporary assumptions about Black bodies and how these mistruths effectively maintain our «outsider» status.

At LDIF, we collectively discussed dance histories and created future strategies; interrogating how the industry may develop a semantic palette that accurately communicates and respects the under-represented as to not dismiss minority artists in dance settings.

Black contributors to the industry are not “new faces”, they are present within the British dance arena and have more to offer than the essentialist qualities that audiences want to see. Those who attend the LDIF conferences are from a wide range of demographics and attend not only to learn, but to support, to listen and to understand, rather than just respond. These conversations facilitated by Serendipity have gained attention from the UK’s capital, getting industry professionals to look north and outside of the London-centricity that seems to blur the lens of our dance society. Only four years ago the work being done in Leicester went unrecognised, and now I overhear conversations in spaces like Danceworks London or Sadler’s Wells about the events happening only an hour by train outside of London. Serendipity has successfully initiated an exchange at an international level. Each conference serves as evidence that we need more documentation and writings from non-White dance critics and practitioners to create greater visibility for the emotional landscapes of racialised dancers and to support the future generations of artists.

## **"SPACE TO SUPPORT, LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND"**

As a charity organisation, the work achieved by Serendipity has revealed that there is in fact a bigger requirement before that of simply sharing dances. There is a need for more educators and facilitators to support and protect those within the dance industry who are under-represented, exposed to the marginalising and alienating norms of institution, and must continually validate their existence in a climate where they are «other». The conferences have taught me to understand how contemporary audiences and critics will see, perceive and receive me in the dance industry, and equipped me with ways to make more sophisticated choices to navigate the stereotypes used to decode the Black body for the sake of its normalisation. However, there are many young dancers who are leaving education and starting their careers within the dance sector who did not have access to this vital information.

Now that the organisation is an Arts Council NPO, I believe Serendipity will continue to be a trailblazer and strategically use its position to help shift the dance industry's paradigm of assumptions based on skin colour. Through future festivals and programmes, Serendipity can encourage even more practitioners, critics and educators to connect and consider new contemporary practices to develop innovative social policies within the dance sector that will illicit change.

**About LDIF 2019**  
**Save the date: 29 April – 11 May 2019**

Let's Dance International Frontiers 2019 will celebrate nine years of bringing innovative dance from around the world to Leicester. LDIF19 celebrates the theme of Black Dance: A Contemporary Voice with a festival filled with discussion, performances, workshops and film. The line-up will feature artists from Haiti, Japan, Italy, USA, and Zimbabwe, exploring contemporary dance that has grown out of African and African Caribbean dance aesthetics.

**"PEOPLE CAN BE UNCOMFORTABLE WITH CHANGE"**

# CHANGE CAN HAPPEN

BY CHRISTOPHER RODRIGUEZ  
WWW.IMPACTDANCE.CO.UK



Since 1995, Hakeem Onibudo has been an influential force within the international dance community. An accomplished artistic director and founder of IMPACT DANCE, Hakeem is a choreographer, performer, mentor and British Council ambassador. His recent appointment as an Arts Council-funded 'Change Maker' at The Place was aimed at increasing the number of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) people who engage with the organisation, whether as audience members, staff, artists or students.

As his time on the programme draws to a close, Hakeem sat down with One Dance UK Deputy Chief Executive, Christopher Rodriguez to discuss his recent work at The Place, the Creative Case for Diversity, and his views on leadership and inspiring change. Hakeem's path to being selected for the Change Maker programme has been a long one, yet he felt he needed a new challenge.

In his role at The Place, he offers alternative, unconventional ways of engaging with dance to increase the visibility of BAME artists, audiences and students. Hakeem has introduced new events to The Place, such as LIVEVIBE, TUNE-D IN and Startin' Point, assisted by his highly regarded Trainee Producer, Paige Jarrett. To drive this change, he had to push to be heard. However, early successes with his events helped open doors, allowing him to have a greater impact on the organisation.

**Click the audio link to hear more on Hakeem's experience** as a leader in the sector through his company IMPACT DANCE and his latest venture as a Change Maker.



Hakeem Onibudo © George Watson

Impact Dance © Natasha Tiltman



# YOUTH DANCE OF THE AFRICAN DIASPORA IN THE UK

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**BY TORI DREW**  
**CLICK ON EACH COMPANY NAME**  
**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

After investigation there seems to be few youth companies of the African Diaspora in the UK. ACE Youth, Artistry Youth Dance, Impact Youth and RJC Dance are all making their mark on the youth dance scene. Additionally, IRIE! dance theatre offers training and performance opportunities for young people, particularly through their new BA(Hons) Degree. This article provides a brief on each company. For more information, click the name of the organisation to visit their respective website.



**"SKILLED  
BAME  
DANCERS  
CAN  
AND DO  
EXIST"**

ACE Youth © Brian Slater

### **ACE Youth**

ACE dance and music was formed in 1997 by co-founders Ian and Gail Parmel. Based in Birmingham, ACE is a national touring company and is an internationally recognised leader in the field of contemporary dance of the African Diaspora. ACE runs a thriving class programme for children and young people aged 2-19 years and imaginative education and outreach programmes in the community. ACE Youth participants are aged between 13- 19 years, their work is designed to increase personal confidence and build appreciation of African and Caribbean culture, dance and music.

ACE Youth aims to bridge the gap between traditional African dance and contemporary forms, creating work that is artistically rigorous. Young people train in contemporary, African and ballet styles and work with choreographers that make thought-provoking work whilst staying true to ACE's style; choreographers including Douglas Thorpe, Sadé Alleyne, Luyanda Sidiya, and Jamaal Burkmar.

They regularly perform and tour work nationally and internationally demonstrating a growing reputation for exciting, physical and challenging work. ACE Youth are at the forefront of excellence in European Youth Dance and are part of a fledgling European Youth Dance Network: Dance=Desir; creating opportunities for regular exchanges with young dancers from across Europe.

Many ACE Youth members have gone on to study as professional dancers at leading conservatoires including The Place, Northern School of Contemporary Dance, London Contemporary Dance School, Trinity Laban and Urdang Academy. Some have also gone on to perform in ACE's professional company as well as developing careers in music, education and the arts.

### **Artistry Youth Dance**

London-based Artistry Youth Dance (AYD) established 2013, is a non-profit community organisation promoting diversity and achievement

## "CREATING MORE VERSATILE DANCE ARTISTS"

through dance. AYD celebrates dancers of African and Caribbean descent, ages 14-25, and works with a range of dance artists, choreographers and companies to create innovative performances. AYD aims to contribute to a more culturally diverse representation of performers in the UK dance sector. Empowering young dancers with the ability to achieve success, there is constant reinforcement of their talent, importance, and value to society. The young people have opportunities to further advance their skills and improve their chances of gaining further education and a career in the arts.

Training through AYD comprises of weekly classes/rehearsals in jazz, ballet, Horton technique, contemporary dance and African Diasporic styles led by Artistic Director Kamara Gray and resident artists Heather Benson and Mbulelo Ndabeni. Guest choreographers for the annual showcases have included Alleyne Dance, Miguel Altunaga, Shelley Maxwell, Alesandra Seutin, and many more. Leading choreographers, dance artists, and companies have delivered masterclasses for the company; eg. Jeroboam Bozeman of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Namron OBE (AYD Patron), Savion Glover, Brandon Lawrence of Birmingham Royal Ballet and others. In addition to regular showcases across London and the UK, the company has been invited to perform at Jamaican High Commission events on several occasions.

### Impact Youth

Created in 1995 by Founder and Artistic Director Hakeem Onibudo, Impact Youth exists to ensure young people have a safe space to realise their goals and become fully functioning individuals. Classes are heavily subsidised, making them more accessible and providing a space for dancers to grow and feel supported. The students are of mixed ability, ages 11-17 and feed into the programme from St. Ursula's Convent School (Greenwich) and Chelsea Academy.

Based in London at Urdang, the company trains on a weekly basis and perform nationally and internationally. Impact uses hip hop techniques and narratives or concept to create the choreography. For example, *Voices* (2017) which was based on the voices that young people have in their head. The

dancers cryptically wrote down the "voices" and these thoughts were translated into movement to create the piece. Hakeem aims to write a resource for other teachers to use this creative

methodology.

Part of Hakeem's youth dance work of the African Diaspora includes the programme Future4Youth. In 2015, Hakeem collaborated with ACE Dance and Music directors Ian and Gail Parmel to demonstrate the connection between hip hop and its African dance roots. The project was funded by Arts Council England and brought together 19 youth companies from across the country to take part in workshops, freestyle circles and classes with live drummers all leading to performances to empower and enrich the young people's journeys.

### RJC Dance Youth Provision

Founded in 1993, RJC Dance (RJCD) is an award-winning Black British led contemporary dance organisation based in Chapeltown, Leeds. Original members Edward Lynch, Donald Edwards and David (Leo) Hamilton originally co-founded Phoenix Dance Company, and later went on to develop their own distinctive styles along with founders Kathy Williams, De Napoli Clarke, Martin Robinson and Joe Williams. RJCD is committed to developing and promoting a Black British choreographic language as seen in its title: R for reggae, J for jazz and C for contemporary and carnival.

RJCD offers classes for young people 4-19 years. Since 1993, over 20,000 diverse young people have engaged with the organisations work, and currently over 200 diverse young people attend weekly sessions at the Mandela Centre. Additionally, RJCD offer performance opportunities within large scale cultural events and residential opportunities for personal development, which can lead to accredited pieces of work via Arts Awards and Dance Leaders award.

In 2018, RJC Dance celebrates its 25th anniversary and remain committed to vitality, active participation, creativity and renewal. They inspire, nurture and develop the next generation of young black artists and practitioners. Above all, they proudly declare their commitment to enabling the young people of Leeds and the county of Yorkshire and beyond



Impact Youth © Brian Slater



Artistry Youth Dance © Carole Edrich



RJC © Kathy Williams

to experience the sheer joy of Black British Dance language.

**IRIE! dance theatre**

IRIE! dance theatre is a company working in the field of African & Caribbean dance forms. Founded in 1985 by Beverley Glean, the principal aim is to raise the profile of Black dance in Britain. In September 2018, IRIE! began delivering the company’s BA (Hons) degree in Diverse Dance Styles. Set up to address the inequality in formal accredited training in diverse dance styles, the course presents African, Caribbean, contemporary and urban dance forms equally within the curriculum.

Validated by the University of Roehampton and based at IRIE!’s home, the Moonshot Centre, students study dance technique, choreography, and performance supported by the cultural context of each style. The students are part of a creative community, including the performance company, independent artists developing their professional practice and the community engagement programme. Industry links adds another dimension

to the course, through placements and the development of career pathways. The first year provides a solid foundation in technique, whilst the second year will introduce a repertoire module and a site-specific performance event. The third year will focus on employment options through the performance company, *connectingvibes*, and will be divided into three pathways to include performance, arts management or education.

Currently, IRIE! runs a weekly dance class for young people ages 11-16. As well, they deliver taster sessions, one-day workshop and residencies in the traditional, contemporary and fusion dance forms along with delivering music and percussion workshops. IRIE! engages with schools, colleges, youth and community groups across the nation with the aim to increase awareness, appreciation and understanding of movement and dance derived from African and Caribbean traditions.

# HOT BROWN HONEY: PERFORMANCE REVIEW

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BY HEATHER BENSON  
[WWW.HOTBROWNHONEY.COM](http://WWW.HOTBROWNHONEY.COM)

When I was invited to attend *Hot Brown Honey* (HBH) at The Southbank Centre during Africa Utopia 2018, I did not know what to expect especially considering the booking site described the show as “an audacious mash-up of music, dance and burlesque”. To my pleasant surprise, the night ignited an unprecedented level of confidence and self-love within me. More than a rebellion from the typical theatre show of any genre, it is a celebration, liberation, and education for the audience. Even more profoundly, it is a statement; empowering women, particularly those of minority ethnic backgrounds, to stand fiercely in their beauty, uniqueness and strength.

*HBH* “hides the medicine in the candy” by bringing current social issues around misappropriation, cultural exploitation, fetishism and many more to light, within a party atmosphere full of pop culture, hip hop music and dance, traditional dance styles of Australia’s Aboriginal people, aerial work, spoken word and comedic theatre. Using catchy chants like “decolonise and moisturise” or “stand up, wake up, rise up” encouraged the audience to join in the revolution to change the mindsets of people around the globe. In a flashy and bold spectacle, so many visuals and themes of liberation are rapidly thrown at the audience; a handful standing out amongst the rest.

Soon after introductions to the characters, or “Honeys in the hive”, we meet an unruly and offensive tourist/colonialist visiting Australia to “experience the culture”. The show depicts this character from a comedic point of view, yet



© Kate Pardey



© Dylan Evans



**"HOT BROWN  
HONEY, WHERE  
REBELLION  
BREWS"**

© Dylan Evans

eloquently highlights how they make a mockery of the traditions whilst acting like vultures in a guise of humility. Later, one of the Honeys performs a mix of contemporary dance styles stifled by the post-colonial flag of the country; illustrating the oppression felt by the native people through weighted movement. The audience cheers her on as she breaks free from the coloniser's symbol and proudly drapes her body with the Australian aboriginal flag.

Calling out the fetishising of the ethereal island girl fantasy, *HBH* provides shock and awe with a hint of unexpected comedy. We see the contrast of the perceived daintiness within the women who make goods out of leaves and sticks versus the real work and crafts(wo)manship it takes to create the beautiful artefacts treasured by tourists. The "fantasy island" Honey dismantles the fantasy with strength and beauty when she clothes her partially naked body, and morphs into a fierce woman sharing her sexuality on her own terms.

*HBH* tackles sexual assault, illustrated with an aerial solo that is simultaneously heart-wrenching and daringly beautiful. After the soloist triumphantly "escapes" and regains control of her body, the MC Honey bellows, "We are taught to respect fear more than making our voices heard. So, we will make noise!" Other empowering chants like "Black women just told you to shush. You should get used to that!" and a hard rock song repeatedly screaming "don't touch my hair" in a manner most "hair-petting" offenders might identify with, may have left some audience members confused or questioning how to accept such direct responses towards some of the microaggressions experience by women of colour. However, as a Black woman navigating a colonial world – no matter where I am in the diasporas, it was empowering to be in a space where "my voice" was heard loud and clear, with a theatre full of sistas chanting along in celebration!

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# GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS & INFRASTRUCTURES

## *THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BLACKS IN DANCE*

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**DENISE SAUNDERS, PRESIDENT AND  
CEO OF IABD IN CONVERSATION  
WITH HEATHER BENSON  
[WWW.IABDASSOCIATION.ORG](http://WWW.IABDASSOCIATION.ORG)**

**In the context of the US dance sector, what is  
dance of the African Diaspora?**

It is dance of the continent... from Africa: all the fusions, derivatives, and beautiful creations of movement for and by the people. It is dance in its fullest "FUBU" (for us, by us) effect. For The International Association of Blacks in Dance, Inc. (IABD), we call it Black Dance, Blacks in Dance, Dance of the African Diaspora (DAD). IABD exists

nerations  
onal Conference



**"A GLOBAL  
VOICE MAKING  
CHANGE"**

IABD Delegation at Re:generations 2016 © Foteini Christofilopoulou

today because it stands on the shoulders of many Black men and women who stood in harm's way and fought for their right to create and just be Black. To quote Eleo Pomare, "... a major point I think is around communication. That we're able to talk with our bodies, and tell things, and feel things." IABD embodies all that is Black Dance.

**One Dance UK has been conducting mapping research of the UK DAD sector, identifying what's happening, the people working in it and the current needs. From your perspective, what are the similarities and differences between the UK and US DAD sectors?**

The research is extremely similar because the same oppressive and systemic barriers exist throughout the world for Black and Brown people. As long as discriminatory practices are in play, the challenges will always exist. The mapping research is of no surprise as I've had the privilege to travel and speak with so many about what "keeps them awake at night." The mapping research of the UK

DAD sector confirms what we intuitively know and recognise about the field – there is still a long way to go before the value and contributions of Black and Brown people are respected, revered and preserved in the consciousness and cultural institutions of all people. What needs to happen now is the coming together of a collaborative and global voice to make the change that we all so desire and deserve.

**Congratulations on your partnership and funding from The Andrew Mellon Foundation. What does this mean for the growing infrastructure of the IABD?**

The Mellon Foundation grant has placed IABD in a position to actualise its mission like never before. The association has been promoting and preserving Dance of African ancestry and origin for 30+ years through its annual international conference and festival. Now we can begin addressing the rest of our mission to "assist and increase opportunities for artists in advocacy,

audience development, education, funding, networking, performance, philosophical dialogue, and touring”.

**How do you think the growing infrastructure will impact the global diasporas, specifically the UK?**

It is my vision that The IABD will take its rightful place and become the world leader and voice of Black and Brown dancers. Many European focused techniques and genres hold this type of stature; it is only fitting that we are embraced with the same importance. For the UK, IABD aims to strengthen the visibility, connection and reach of dance by those who practice, create, and have the intellectual thirst to support it. We should be collaborating and gathering together to contribute to the advancement of the work that we do in the field.

**Tell us about your current Comprehensive Organisational Health Initiative (COHI) research.**

The COHI research for Phase I of the Initiative led to The Black Report: What You Think You Know About Black Dance. It was not commissioned but rather birthed by the stories of those we encountered on a day-to-day basis, striving to keep their organisations alive. The data we collected from 30 Black-led dance companies, confirms the disparity that we know exists in dance between Black/Brown arts organisations and the White mainstream counterparts with large budgets.

Between April 2017– February 2018, the 30 Black-led dance organisations invited to participate in the COHI were interviewed, with the aim to assess their experiences and needs. The interview findings provided a glimpse of the unique nature and context within the Black dance community and complemented the research from Nonprofit Finance Fund’s (NFF) Phase I COHI financial analysis efforts.

The Black Report documents the unique context of Black dance companies in the United States, highlighting a subset of IABD’s membership. It was difficult to identify the total number of Black dance companies in the United States. Varied definitions exist on what it means to be a Black dance company, so the final numbers were unclear and difficult to report. As such, the results of this effort are meant to be generalised but should note that not all Black dance disciplines were captured

**"WE MUST CONNECT, EXPAND AND LEARN FROM ONE ANOTHER"**

in this study. The highlights of a study with an expanded scope might look drastically different. After the data analysis, it was apparent that many of the interviewees interpreted the interview questions quite differently, which informed the responses.

Qualitative and quantitative research work together to tell the story of an organisation. The

qualitative work executed in the report provides a strong foundation for understanding the role of Black dance in America. However, a more in-depth survey that compares these companies to other dance companies similar in scope, and other Black arts organisations might provide a point of comparison to determine what Black Dance is doing well, and what can be learned from peer organisations with similar resources.

For more details on the 30 organisations and overview of the findings in COHI research, [click here](#).

**What are the aims of the COHI research project? How do you see this impacting the future of Black dance infrastructures in America?**

The COHI is a grant program of The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, designed to strengthen the organisational health of small and midsize arts institutions through comprehensive financial analysis and capacity building financial support. The project began in 2017 through a phased initiative that began with in-depth pilot planning to strengthen IABD’s infrastructure and its member organisations capacity-building over an extended time frame.

The grant program has provided the IABD community the ability to speak with one another on a much deeper level about organisational health and financial sustainability without feeling shamed about an organisation’s current state of existence. The importance of peer-to-peer dialogue has been one of the greatest takeaways of this process, ensuring these companies and individuals no longer feel alone. There is a support system and mechanism that is available to them when the need arises. It is too early to tell the impact of this grant on these companies and their infrastructures. Certainly, we know that right away the money they’ve received from IABD might address immediate debt or enhance their staffing and programming structure. It will be the



Philadanco! © Julianne Harris



DBDT — Hymnal Deconstructed © Sharen Bradford



Re:generations 2016 © Fotelni Christoffopoulos

implementation and direct change in process that will determine this programme's success. The people within each organisation must take action to garner positive results.

**Since 2010 we have been building an international partnership with IABD through your annual conference and One Dance UK's Re:generations International Conference; engaging with artists and organisations like ACE Dance and Music, Serendipity, Brenda Dixon-Gottschild, Vivine Scarlett and dance Immersion, the IABD Founders and many more. What has been the impact of our growing partnership and what do you hope to achieve in the future?**

The impact of this connection has brought American and European practitioners of dance together through continued dialogue about themes and trends in the field, collaborations and partnerships, conferences, presenting and touring opportunities, scholarly and research activities, and through the understanding of lived experiences and practice. It is important that we continue to connect, expand and learn from one another and discuss how we impact and

contribute to the current state of dance in both of our countries and beyond.

**What do you envision for the IABD in the next five years? How do you hope to continue strengthening connections with organisations and artists in the UK?**

In the next five years, I envision IABD will be a much larger institution with a firm and stabilised budget to support its current and future programming. We are currently focused on identifying and confirming funding support for this association beyond this initial large and unprecedented grant from The Mellon Foundation for the Black dance sector in the US. IABD must identify and put into practice the methods for how it will continue to support its operations. As IABD has witnessed ADAD evolve and merge to become One Dance UK, it is imperative that we do not lose the strength of our connection to artists of the African Diaspora in the UK. Our voices working in tandem to support one another not only individually, but also collectively have more power and authority than those who work and practice alone.

# SPOTLIGHT ON VIVINE SCARLETT & DANCE IMMERSION

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BY MERCY NABIRYE  
[WWW.DANCEIMMERSION.CA](http://WWW.DANCEIMMERSION.CA)



Recorded in November 2017, this audio captures Vivine Scarlett, founder of Toronto based dance Immersion in conversation with Mercy Nabirye, Head of Dance of the African Diaspora (DAD) at One Dance UK, on the current trends for dance in Canada. Vivine's role of presenting, supporting dances and dancers of African descent goes back many years. With over 34 years of giving and serving the community, she is a strong addition to the backbone and fabric for dance in many diasporas today. Vivine is a connector and her passion drives her to nurture and shine a light on talent of all ages.

dance Immersion is the first ever organisation to partner and facilitate a delegation of 22 Canadians participating and presenting at the 2016 UK Re:generations International Conference for dance of the African Diaspora. This was a significant milestone in strengthening Canadian and UK artistic ties. Built over years, this partnership is a key infrastructure for administrative and artistic global exchange between UK, Canada, USA, the Caribbean and the African Continent.

Vivine's message as Canadian Dance Ambassador for International Dance Day April 2018:

"The universal movement of dance releases the very essence of what is all around us. It connects and weaves so deep that one can feel the wisdom, patience and graciousness of its flow. With each move made there is a giving and receiving communication in that universal experience. Dance is a vehicle that lends itself to learning about oneself. It helps us move through life's experiences by expressing our stories and our history, by commenting on our present and nurturing our future. Dance for you. Dance for us. Just dance and let the rhythm of our spirits soar in the movement of DANCE."



© Fotini Christofilopoulou



# SPOTLIGHT ON ZAB MABOUNGOU & DANSE NYATA NYATA

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BY MERCY NABIRYE  
[WWW.NYATA-NYATA.ORG](http://WWW.NYATA-NYATA.ORG)



Montreal based Zab Maboungou, discusses with Mercy Nabirye, Head of Dance of the African Diaspora, how she pioneered and developed an infrastructure for contemporary African dance in Canada, using her technique LOKETO, rooted in Congolese culture.

Zab is highly sought after as an international speaker, philosopher, author, instructor, choreographer and dancer. The cultural industry has benefited significantly from her performances, training and lectures. Her influence is global. This audio recording taken in November 2017, is a snapshot of Zab's beliefs, principles and important legacy as a leader, advocate and an infrastructure for dance theory and practice. Her decision to set up internationally touring Compagnie Danse Nyata Nyata, directly links to her passion for dance, which she says was thrown at her "in the middle of the circle of dance in Africa".

Zab is recognised in Canada as a talented African artist who went there to find a new life and made a significant contribution to the world renowned Canadian rich culture. She describes herself as a child of colonialism and shares that her decision to be a dancer was a deeply personal and intimate decision and not incongruous with the life she knew.



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# **GLOBAL PLATFORMS**

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# ACE DANCE & MUSIC: ECHOES OF THE PAST & RHYTHMS FOR THE FUTURE

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BY BOB RAMDHANIE MBE  
[WWW.ACEDANCEANDMUSIC.COM](http://WWW.ACEDANCEANDMUSIC.COM)

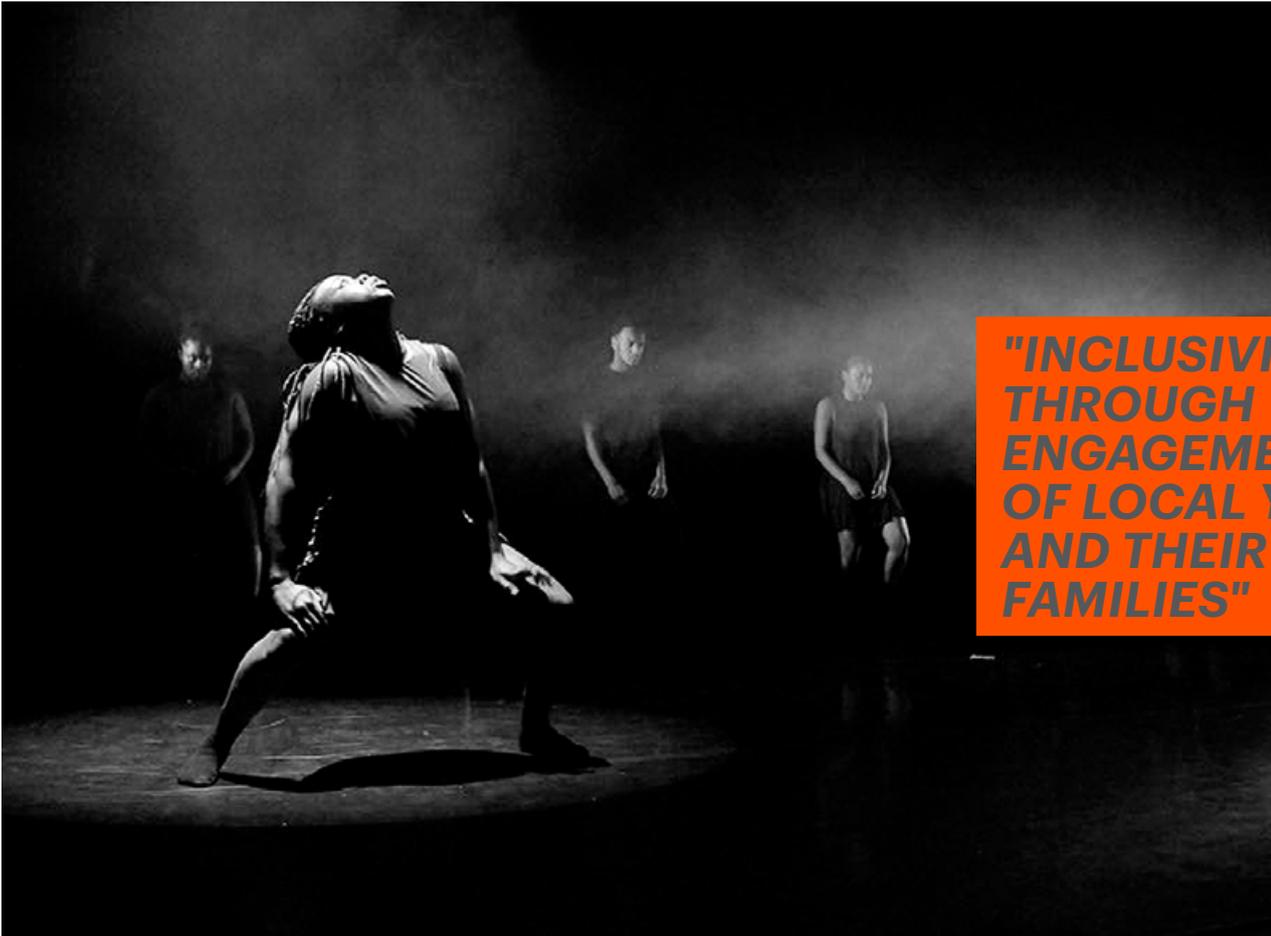
The FOUNDATION...ACE Dance and Music (ACE) was established by Gail Parmel and Ian Parmel in November 1997. A trained dancer and musician respectively, each brought a particular skill to this new company, but more importantly, it was their passion, their vision and their singularity of purpose which has kept ACE developing and growing over the last two decades.

Born and schooled in Leeds, Gail Parmel “played pan” with New World Steel Orchestra and entered Northern School of Dance in 1987. She attended a performance by Kokuma dance company whilst at Northern and inspired by their work, she auditioned and was accepted into the company in 1991, working with choreographers Jackie Guy and later, Patrick Acogny. It was through her steel band sessions that she met and later married, Ian Parmel from Trinidad.

Ian Parmel, sponsored by the government of Trinidad & Tobago to teach steel pan in Huddersfield, was a member of the highly accomplished North Stars Steel Band and spent a total of nine months, between 1988 – 1991, successfully tutoring steel band players at all levels in the region. Also, a highly skilled traditional African drummer, it was this skill that led him to also join Kokuma Dance Company in 1992, creating the platform for the Parmels to move to Birmingham.

Ian left Kokuma in 1994 to freelance with Badejo Arts, becoming the company’s musical director and travelling extensively in Africa, India and the





**"INCLUSIVITY,  
THROUGH  
ENGAGEMENT  
OF LOCAL YOUTH  
AND THEIR  
FAMILIES"**

ACE Youth Company © Anita Toure

UK during this three-year period. Since then, music and movement reflecting cultural traditions from Africa, the Caribbean and the UK, has dominated the Parmels' professional careers, with their creative skills nourished by new ideas and concepts from around the world.

Throughout their artistic growth in Leeds, Ian and Gail were also totally immersed in community arts – music, dance and carnival – and that connection between the arts and the community has remained a vital source of inspiration. This brings us to...

The PRESENT...Rays of bright sunshine pierce the glass roof of ACE's dance studios; creating interesting floor patterns and complimenting the dancers and their movement. The dancers remain focused whilst a diminutive but dynamic choreographer strides in and around them. A gentle touch here, a slight adjustment to an arm or leg there seems to satisfy him, and the process continues. "Coba" is heard repeatedly as Vincent, ably assisted by Gail in this creative collaboration, create a piece.

Vincent Mantsoe is at work with ACE dance and music in Birmingham. South African by origin, he is collaborating with Gail and Ian Parmel on a duet for the company. Mantsoe has become an integral partner in ACE's work, and together with the Parmels, aims to deliver a future and infrastructure for "dance.... black practice". His specific dance style, Afro-fusion, has been nurtured and fine-tuned in South Africa at Moving into Dance (MID).

Mantsoe was trained in Johannesburg and both his solo career and choreographic presentations have won numerous international awards. His personal vision and ACE's desire to be a leader in the field of Contemporary African and Caribbean dance, with a distinctive vocabulary and flair have gelled. Vincent and Gail are on a journey to create a new voice in movement by developing a dance style combining contemporary, jazz, African, Caribbean and ballet.

In 2007, Mantsoe was invited to choreograph a piece for ACE. He created *Letlalo* and this work toured as part of a double bill with Blind Trip choreographed

by the Japanese choreographer Akiko Kitamura. *Skin* was the outcome of that international collaboration and it cemented the relationship between Mantsoe and the company. Today, this collaborative partnership is mushrooming, and Gail and Ian believe that their experience and vision coupled with Vincent's tenacity and dance language is a true reflection of their aspirations for a contemporary dance company for the 21st century.

Exchange of ideas and joint choreographic projects has continued and Mantsoe co-created *MANA* with Gail Parmel, in 2013. He is back with the company currently working on *Echoes of The Past*, with ACE's company of professional dancers. Concurrently, ACE is visualising and developing with Mantsoe, Afro-fusion hybrid dance techniques for the company which both consolidate the work of the last 21 years and enables the company as a formidable force for the future.

The FUTURE...The Parmels speak passionately about the future and for creating a national centre for promoting, producing and presenting outstanding contemporary dance. This involves engaging young dancers to express their Britishness, whatever their heritage and cultural DNA. ACE supports, trains and encourages young people, their parents and their families, and this work is at the heart of all they do. For ACE, "it is through working in the community, that we can contribute to 'dance...black practice'".

Mantsoe's work also grew out of the community, the streets and his formal training. There are many parallels with the Parmels' own artistic journeys in terms of the physicality and depth of their collective

## **"A FORMIDABLE FORCE FOR THE FUTURE"**

dance vocabulary. They share a dynamic sense of spirituality which becomes alive through the body.

ACE's aim to create and record a new language of movement is a determining factor in why the company has been creating and producing outstanding work, which they see as necessary for the longevity of quality Black dance. The company's core values remain focused and combine two significant strands: Inclusivity, through the engagement of local youth and their families and professionalism, by embracing them within a professional and social environment involving music, dance, carnival and associated arts activities. In short, ACE supports young dancers and arts practitioners to always do their best in whatever they do.

Mantsoe's training and dance techniques resonate with and compliment the vision of the company as they seek to create a pathway for young dancers to express their Britishness. As ACE plans its celebration for its 21st anniversary in 2018-19, the future of the company, framed by its artistic directors, their collaborations and partnerships and ACE's Youth Dance Company, seems certain to ensure legacy, longevity and creativity!



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# THE JAZZ INCUBATOR: A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO MENTORING YOUNG DANCE TALENT IN A TIME OF AUSTERITY

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BY JREENA GREEN  
[WWW.THEATREPECKHAM.CO.UK](http://WWW.THEATREPECKHAM.CO.UK)

Theatre Peckham was set up in 1986 by Teresa Early as part of a performing arts development project intended to deliver creative opportunities to the local community. In the thirty years since then, it has produced dozens of shows and many hundreds of children have had the opportunity to experience the thrills - and sometimes terror - of performing live in front of a paying audience. I have been working there as Head of Dance for the last eleven years, and it is an experience that helped shape me into the kind of person and performer I have become.

My background performing in musicals like Disney's *The Lion King* gave me a taste of the glamour and energy of the West End but working at Theatre Peckham made me truly understand the power of performance to transform the lives of young people who are often living in challenging conditions. Theatre Peckham operates as an incubator for new talent. Some of its ex-students, like alumnus John Boyega, have gone on to conquer Hollywood. However, even those who have not gone on to work in the industry as professionals have still benefited from the confidence, friendships and feeling of family that Theatre Peckham provides.

In recent years, my focus has been on bringing professional companies into Theatre Peckham to work with the young people. I have had the privilege of providing residencies for the companies and dancers who inspired me when I was coming up through the business. Ben Love of Ballet Soul, Jerry



Jreena Green photo © AB Photography



Jreena Green photo © AB Photography



**"WE MUST  
PASS OUR  
SKILLS ONTO  
THE NEXT  
GENERATION"**

Jreena Green photo © AB Photography

Barry (AKA Jerry IDJ) of IDJ, Warren Haynes of Jiving Lindy Hoppers and Martin Robinson of Martial Dance have all taught, trained and performed at Theatre Peckham. They have given our young people the benefit of their vast experience and talent, and in doing so, accelerated the creative development of the students. A new generation of talented performers are now emerging through Theatre Peckham to join the ranks of my dance company Jazz Dance Elite. Dancer Chisara Agor, for example, who I have been teaching since she was a small child, is now working with my company professionally and is also playing the lead in the musical theatre production of *Bring It On* at Southwark Playhouse.

My passion as a dancer is for authentic jazz, and I have taken great pleasure in communicating that enthusiasm to young performers like Kemi Durosinmi, Theo Alade, Shangomola Edunjobi, Alex Walker, Milli Jarlett, and Julien Marc Roussel. All these dancers had different backgrounds; some came from hip hop, some from contemporary, some from ballet, but all knew about the struggles of maintaining

a career in an often physically and emotionally demanding business. My intention was to give them a conducive, supportive environment where they could not only acquire technical skills, but also feel connected with each other and to a diasporic dance tradition that stretches back to the 1800s, such as the cake walk.

Inspiration and solidarity, while crucially important, are not always enough however, and beyond that, my goal was also to provide actual employment and a revenue stream for these talented young dancers. While working as a choreographer on advertising campaigns for Guinness, Levi's, YouTube, and Bodyform, I have been able to cast my company dancers in leading roles and employ them as assistants. The dancers also regularly tour with *Swinging at the Cotton Club*, a revue show where they perform with the Harry Strutters jazz band. In addition, they are getting paid to lead workshops in authentic jazz themselves. They are not, however, bound solely to me; I have always encouraged them to seek professional experience in other areas and

## "CONNECTED TO DIASPORIC DANCE TRADITION"

develop their individual talents and abilities, to travel their own paths.

Broadly speaking, I think we, as Black dancers, cannot wait to be offered opportunities by an industry which has too often failed to see our value. We must make the most of our own dance traditions, networks and experience to create shows, develop talent, celebrate our history and pass on our skills to the next generation. To that end, I am currently producing a musical show inspired by the story of pioneering freeform jazz saxophonist Joe Harriott (played by dancer/saxophonists Tyrone Isaac Stuart), who came to Britain from the Caribbean as part of the Windrush generation and built a life and career here. He was inspired by the American Jazz greats but fused their influence with a distinctly Caribbean and British sensibility. The show entitled *Windrush Swing* was performed at Theatre Peckham as part of Black History month in October 2018. As well as starring the brilliantly talented young performer Tyrone Isaac Stuart, the show featured Jazz Elite stalwarts Kemi Durosinmi, Theo Alade and Alex Walker.

I have been lucky to be supported in my career by Teresa Early and Theatre Peckham. My aim is to provide a similar kind of support for a new generation of young black dancers, and to sustain and celebrate diaspora dance traditions whose profound influence is too often ignored, and early pioneers under-acknowledged. That, for me, is my creative mission as much as dance itself.

### About the author

Jreena Green is a professional choreographer, dancer, dance teacher and 'practical dance historian'. She studied at The London Contemporary Dance School and did a degree in Dance Studies at Middlesex University. Jreena was previously a lead dancer with the Jiving Lindy Hoppers dance company and now has her own Lindy Hop company Jazz Dance Elite. Recent choreographic credits include commercials for Guinness, YouTube, Levi's and KFC (working with established director such as Jake Nava, who directed Beyoncé's *Crazy In Love* and *Put A Ring on It* music videos, and Dawn Shadforth who directed Kyle Minogue's *Can't Get You Out Of My Head*). Credits as a lead performer include *Falling* for Green Candle Dance Company, *Mrs. Wobble* for Theatre Peckham and her own show *The Josephine Baker Revue* which toured the South of England. She was an assistant dance captain on the Lindy Hop/NHS section of the 2012 Olympics opening ceremony and has a background performing in West End musicals (she was part of the original cast of the Tony award winning show Disney's *The Lion King*), choreographing music videos and feature films and touring internationally with established musical acts. She also featured in the Len Goodman documentary series *Cheek to Cheek* demonstrating historical African American dance forms. Jreena is currently Head of Dance at Theatre Peckham where she has developed a module entitled 'Charleston To Hip Hop' which explores the links between current urban dance styles and African American dance styles from the 1920s.

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# DANCE INFRASTRUCTURE IN SOUTH AFRICA: AN INTRODUCTION TO DANCE FORUM AND GEORGINA THOMSON

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BY DR SARAHLEIGH CASTELYN  
[WWW.DANCEFORUMSOUTHAFRICA.CO.ZA](http://WWW.DANCEFORUMSOUTHAFRICA.CO.ZA)

It is 1997 and I'm with fellow dancers backstage in the green room of The Natal Playhouse, Durban. We are waiting to perform in *Should accidentally fall...* choreographed by Gerard Samuels that is to close tonight's Dance Shongololo. 'Shongololo', the South African term for a millipede, is the main contemporary dance festival in the province of KwaZulu-Natal at this time and is produced by Vita Promotions.

Inspired by the theme of this edition of *HOTFOOT* – 'global infrastructures' - it seems a fitting time to cast a gaze over the South African contemporary dance scene, and to reflect on its past and present organisational structures. This includes Dance Forum, created by the dynamic Georgina Thomson in 2003, when her former employer [Vita Productions], "the original producer of Dance Umbrella, closed down" (Thomson, 2018a). Dance Forum not only produces the South African Dance Umbrella "with their [Vita Productions] blessing" (Thomson, 2018a), but also runs Dance Xchange, which centres on the training and development of dance artists in both urban and rural settings.

Moreover, Dance Forum is the main driving force behind arts management training in South Africa. This has become increasingly vital and of a primary necessity due to the reduction of funding of contemporary dance in South Africa, and of course, the urgency in addressing apartheid's injustices. Therefore, this article is concerned with two issues:



Vincent Mantsoe © John Hogg



Musa Hlatshwayo © John Hogg



**"A CALL  
FOR MORE  
RESEARCH  
ON DANCE  
INFRA-  
STRUCTURES"**

Photo credits © John Hogg

1. The impact of societal politics on the infrastructure of theatre dance productions in South Africa;
2. The development and training of dance managers and producers.

In preparation for this article, I Skyped Thomson, and she remarked on the necessity of research into the infrastructure of contemporary dance in South Africa. This article adds to this - without studying the infrastructure of contemporary dance in South Africa, success and sustainability is at risk, and subsequently the eco-system in which choreographers, dancers, designers, technicians, producers, managers, educators and many more depend on their livelihoods.

### **Impact of societal politics on the infrastructure of theatre dance in South Africa**

To try and capture South Africa and its societal politics in a concise manner is not an easy task, especially as it is a place of juxtaposition and

exceptions to the rule. Explaining apartheid and its effects on the infrastructure of contemporary dance does not fit into the binary system that the regime tried to construct, and thankfully failed to instil. As renowned Arts Journalist Adrienne Sichel (2012) notes:

“Yet, ironically, South Africa’s first festival dedicated to a spectrum of dance forms (imported and indigenous, theatrical and traditional) was born in a state-funded provincial arts council during the second State of Emergency, implemented in June 1986, the month commemorating the 10th anniversary of the 1976 Soweto student uprising. Dance Forum was hosted by the Natal Performing Arts Council (NAPAC) Dance Company at the Natal Playhouse, in Durban, from October 8 – November 15, 1986 directed by artistic director Ashley Killar” (Sichel, 2012: 109).

This complicated history cannot, of course, be captured in this brief article. However, it is important

## "CONTEMPORARY DANCE WITH AN ACTIVIST ORIGIN"

to note the presence of an activist core of contemporary dance makers and producers who strategically undermined the apartheid regime's state-funded Arts Council structures by using the resources offered to stage dance events that called into question the segregationist nature of South African society.

With the onset of the first democratic national government, there was the drive to "ensure that everyone had access" (Thomson: 2018) to government arts funding, which then disbanded the previous apartheid infrastructures. During this time of dance funding, is when I found myself backstage at Dance Shongololo, anticipating the performance of *Should accidentally fall....* However, twenty years on, the present state of funding means that many of these platforms such as Dance Umbrella and Jombal Contemporary Dance Experience operate in risky environments. There is little recognition of the necessity of legacy funding to ensure a sustainability of dance companies, production teams, and venues. Sadly, many of the state theatres only have funding to ensure the management of the buildings, but not to produce and house dance companies; often leaving the stages "empty" (Thomson: 2018).

### Development and training of dance managers and producers in South Africa

Thomson and Dance Forum are the driving force behind arts management training, providing internships and sharing the tools required in the dance industry, and thereby enabling this next generation to sustain themselves. Many of the interns have gone on to be successful, such as Charmaine Morareng, the Arts Development Officer (Dance and Choreography) at the National Arts Council

(South Africa). Thomson (2018) notes how many educational establishments do not offer detailed training for future dance managers and producers.

All parts of the industry are dependent on each other to maintain a thriving sector. It is as important for tertiary institutions to train those working behind the scenes, as it is vital to train those who will work on the stage. Training is not only a concern in South Africa, but also is a global issue.

Both the sustainability and progression of contemporary dance in South Africa is contingent on the training and development of dance managers and producers. A failure to not recognise this, puts the legacy of contemporary dance in South Africa at risk. An underdeveloped dance industry jeopardises the platforms for a contemporary art form with an activist origin; a community of voices much needed in the current onslaught of geo-neo-liberal politics. I echo Georgina Thomson's call for more research into the infrastructure of dance, and for a combined force of choreographers, producers and academics, to access this activism and work to ensure the contemporary dance eco-system thrives.

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# SPOTLIGHT ON NIKE JONAH, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF PACE

BY **FUNMI ADEWOLE**  
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This podcast is an interview with the Executive Director of the Pan-African Creative Exchange (PACE), Nike Jonah. The first edition of the event took place in July 2018 at the University of the Free State, South Africa. The theme for 2018 was 'Lagos - Johannesburg'. Some might remember Nike as the director of Decibel, the diversity showcase which the Arts Council ran for several years. PACE is a multi-layered affair with an industry focus. Foreign producers benefit from seeing African performance and discussing with the theatre makers. Artists pitch ideas to investors and potential collaborators whilst tour ready work and works-in-progress are showcased. Artists from different African countries can network and explore artistic, administrative and political issues through panels and group discussions.

Noteworthy presentations from PACE 2018 include the outstanding multi-lingual theatre discussion, which highlighted the politics of language in Africa and a dance production, *Cion* by Greg Maqoma. Directly following this year's PACE, the Nigerian artist Segun Adefila was invited to perform at Vrystaat Arts Festival, which extended the venture for a few more days. Listen to the interview for more about PACE 2018 and look out for the open call for PACE 2020. The theme will be 'Addis Ababa - Dakar'. The directors of PACE are Nike Jonah, Ricardo Peach and Erwin Maas.

*'Funmi Adewole's participation in PACE and the Vrystaat Arts Festival was supported by De Montfort University, Leicester.'*



© Ricardo Peach



© Ricardo Peach

# AFRO DANCE XPLOSION LES FEMMES AFRICAINES: PERFORMANCE REVIEW

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BY SVANTJE BUCHHOLZ

*Review based on showcase curated by Feel the Rhythm Productions and presented at Morley College London on the 28 September 2018.*

The lights dim down steadily, and the entire room goes dark. Whispers by the audience fill the venue. The tension increases... Slowly two spotlights illuminate two big white traditional African masks that are on each side of the stage... Silence. Afro Dance Xplosion (ADX) - *Les Femmes Africaines* began with a strong introduction to the feature-length dance event - with dancers moving in synchronicity, and then breaking into duets at times in David Blake's *reBirth* (BlakeArts Ensemble). Later in *Daughters of Eve* (Bop Jazz Theatre Company), a voice starts to sing peacefully and dancers, all dressed in black and red costumes, enter the stage whilst musicians join the invisible singer with their African rhythms. Reaching towards the sky with their arms and shaking their hands, the dancers give the impression of searching for something, of being driven to grow into something new, something bigger.

Presented at Morley College 28-30 September 2018, ADX is in its eighth year. Throughout the evening nine choreographers and ensembles presented their dance works; including BlakeArts Ensemble, Noire Dance, BOP Jazz Theatre Company, Home Family of HomeBros, Gruppo Afro Company, Les Femmes Africaines: Aissata Kouyaté, Sellou Blagone and drummers, A Nance Dance Collective (USA), Soukous Koumbele Congolese band, and Ajani Johnson-Goffe. From group-choreographies and solos, with physical





**"DEEPLY  
ROOTED  
IN THE AFRICAN  
DIASPORA"**

Afro Dance Xplosion © Matea Photography

theatre influenced pieces, as well as a live-music act, ADX – 2018 featured a variety of works inspired by or deeply rooted in the African Diaspora.

Two pieces stood out: Ajani Johnson-Gaffe's *Step by Step* and C. Kemal Nance's *Wrists! (Porkshop's Song)* danced by Callum Sterling. When comparing Ajani Johnson-Gaffe's *Step By Step* to *Wrists! (Porkshop's Song)* the spectator finds themselves being confronted with two entirely oppositional yet similar performance pieces. Johnson-Gaffe starts and remains down on the floor for quite some time, integrating breaking and capoeira-inspired movements into his strong contemporary technique. Sterling on the other hand, starts in an upright, mainly standing position with a movement journey primarily driven by arm and hand motions to the sound of a baby's laughter.

*Step by Step* gives the audience the feeling of something heavy, involving a sort of struggle that the dancer is fighting against and needs to overcome. Johnson-Gaffe creates a strong

contrast to the smooth floorwork in the beginning of the work by later using house and krump dance styles. *Step by Step* to *Wrists! (Porkshop's Song)* uses contemporary, waacking and many undulations specific to African dances, whilst playing with the audiences' attention through physical theatre and gender fluid performativity. What links the two different, yet compelling pieces is the struggle which both dancers appear to encounter and manage.

The highlight of the evening was a musical interlude performed by the Koko Kanyinda Band, celebrating the life of the Congolese dancer/choreographer Lolita Babindamana; including a dance film of his company Ballet Theatre Lokole Danse. The band performed and inspired the audience to stand up and dance with each other. This gave the evening a completely different touch beyond a regular dance showcase and left the spectators with a feeling of freedom and togetherness. A brilliant way to start the weekend!

THANK YOU

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