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**ANNIVERSARY
EDITION**

ADAD

21st ANNIVERSARY EDITION | MARCH 2016





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Photo: Re:generations 2014 © Foteini Christofilopoulou

EDITORIAL

Then and Now and the Future

By 'Funmi Adewole, Guest Editor

Welcome to the ADAD 21st Anniversary edition of Hotfoot. The oral history of the sector is that at some event in 1994 a number of artists discussed with Marie McCluskey the idea of starting an organisation for Black dancers and at the end of the discussion they said something along the lines of 'Let's do it'. And here we are 21 years later....and at another time of great change in the Arts sector. Next month ADAD will enter into a consortium with three other organisations. The only thing permanent in this world is change. This edition therefore is about Then, Now and the Future for the Dance of the African Diaspora in the UK. That is a big theme even for a book let alone a magazine, so we do not set out to explore it through critical history or theorising. This edition aims to be a conversation starter. It brings together personal stories, views and insights. These touch on some of the happenings in the last twenty-one years, some of what is going on now and some future possibilities. In true storytelling tradition (I am an avid teller of folktales) we are leaving you the reader to make the links, draw out the lessons, locate the omissions, pin point successes and failures, and come to conclusions on the development of Dance of the African Diaspora and the role of ADAD in that.

As ADAD has been mainly concerned with developing the context for professional and theatrical practice most of our interviews and articles are about careers in dance and the development of dance infrastructure. The magazine is divided into sections, which explore a theme through interviews and articles. *Looking back to go forward* is a section on the history of ADAD as an organisation. In the *Journeys in Dance* section we have two interviews, with Patrick Acogny and Greta Mendez, about their long and evolving careers. *Creating the Context* is made up of interviews with three women– Thea Barnes, Pawlet Brookes and Deborah Baddoo – who have worked in various ways in dance and have also made a significant contribution to its infrastructure. In our *Now and Then* sections

we talk to experienced practitioners such as Norman 'Rubba' Stephenson, Robert Hylton and Sunanda, and the up and coming, such as Botis Seva, Lanre Malaolu and Kenzi Ireland, with the hope of providing an intergenerational perspective. *New Horizons* is about new developments in dance – on the youth front, in somatic practice and the field of dance and technology. We celebrate Beverley Glean who this year takes the ADAD Lifetime Achievement award. As her story in dance starts in the 1980s it provides some background to the 1990s and 2000s where most of the other stories begin. We also 'big up' our trailblazer starters who showcase their projects in May. Importantly, we take time to remember three significant practitioners who left us recently – Nadine Senior, Bode Lawal and Francis Nii-Yartey. May they rest in peace.

The Dance of the African Diaspora by its nature traverses social and professional boundaries, links the local to the international, provokes discussions around race and cosmopolitanism, inequality and social mobility, spirituality and fun. The material here skims the surface and may raise questions. We have not tried to present something neat and tidy. Our hope is this anniversary edition will be an inspiring read. It might inspire you to say something similar to what that group of dance artists said twenty-one years ago, which was along the lines of 'Let's do it'.

A word from our Patron: Derrick Anderson

"I have been a Patron for ADAD for a number of years now. I joined ADAD because it was and remains, a true reflection of the growth of a National perspective on dance over the last three or four decades. It was one that aimed to reflect more accurately what was going on in the real arts world and correct the inequalities and lack of diversity. It was a view of dance which impacted on the 'younger me' in search of encouragement, all those years ago, back in the 80s, working for my own company as dancer, choreographer, fundraiser, treasurer, sound and lighting engineer and general 'gofor'.

ADAD is on the limited list of organisations which I lend support because, it is mindful of the legacy of the past and it is conscious of its responsibility to build a better future for the profession and the art form. In this changing world with ever increasing contact between cultures and environments, ADAD creates that space for new ideas and new work to be produced. I want to salute ADAD and those who selflessly give of time and spirit to keep the work and profession on stage and in view. "

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My thanks to the editorial team for the hard work they put into this edition.
Much appreciated.

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One Dance UK*

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Photo: Linton Clarke | Bloom Festival 2013 © Toby Ross/Messrs

FULL STEAM AHEAD

For the Dance of the African diaspora

By Mercy Nabirye

Mercy Nabirye, Director, ADAD outlines how the Dance of the African Diaspora will be supported with in One Dance UK.

From 1st April 2016, The Association of Dance of the African Diaspora (ADAD) will officially combine with Dance UK, National Dance Teachers Association and Youth Dance England to form a new UK body for Dance, 'One Dance UK'. The new organisation represents a unified, stronger body for dance, combining key specialisms: supporting children and young people, industry professionals, artists and practitioners, teachers, academics, dance of the African Diaspora practice and a focus on the healthier dancer.

ADAD has been tirelessly working to position the artists and the art forms rooted in the Diaspora on the cultural landscape in Britain. This has been possible through partnerships and collaborations locally, nationally and internationally. We have reached a pivotal place now. We need to galvanise together to recognise how diverse we are and use this strength to successfully build on 21 years of our contribution to Dance through our programmes and partners across the UK and beyond, cultivating excellence and community cohesion for the dance sector.

We have engaged with over 300 artists, 20 venues, 52 workshops and 70,000 members of the public all with an investment of under £500,000.

We are confidently and boldly moving towards an exciting future providing a wider playing field and opportunities in partnership putting the artist at the centre of our work; advocating for and documenting the development of the art forms; We look ahead with firm appreciation of our rich heritage and our duty as custodians of our legacy. We thank all those that have contributed to the achievements to date are as follows:

- 36 'Trailblazers' Fellowships awarded for individual Professional Development and Mentoring
- 17 work in progress 'Open Stage' venue Platforms with 60 choreographers, 18 panellists and 500 participants
- 4 biennial 'Bloom' National Festivals showcasing 100 artists at 11 national venues with over 20,000 audience members
- 3 biennial International 'Re:generations' Conferences sharing current research and practice, delivered with 9 UK partner organisations, presenting 5 key note speakers, 30 panellists, 30 academic papers, 16 workshops, 94 performers attracting 730 participants
- A Heritage Photographic Exhibition 'Moments' with a complimentary publication 'Voicing Black Dance: 1930-1990' reaching a footfall of 60,000 individuals in 7 national public spaces
- 3 'Lifetime Achievement' awards for their contribution to raising the profile of the art forms in the UK
- International Choreographic Exchange and Showcasing programme for 5 artists between UK and Canada

For the next three years, the combined team plans to commit to initiatives with underlying core values which will:-

Keep the artist at the centre of the work

- Provide Trailblazers fellowships for professional development and mentoring to at least 6 emerging artists and 2 'New Shoots' showcase platforms
- Provide at least 6 'Open Stage' platforms for choreographic work in progress with industry partners, working effectively with the wider dance sector and cross art forms
- Produce a 'Bloom' national festival showcasing work from at least 15 artists at 4 regional venues including Hull and Bristol

Document research and perspectives of and the development of art forms rooted in the African Diaspora

- Produce 2 'Re:generations' international conferences in Birmingham and London attracting regional and international speakers, presenters,

performers, facilitators, academics, students and delegates

- Digitise the Black Dance Heritage Photographic Exhibition 'Moments' and incorporate it in the wider dance context and digital resource
- Work with partners and institutions to aim to transfer research into practice

Raise the profile and advocate for Dance of the African Diaspora in partnership

- Continue to develop regional, national and international networks and opportunities, for choreographic exchanges, showcases and co-commissions for experienced leading artists as well as sign-posting for early career artists working with the evolving art forms
- Work with institutions and partners to raise the standard of Dance in education

Trailblazers Professional Development Fellowship.

36 fellows – dance artists, practitioners, teachers and researchers now form an alumni who have been nurtured through the programme. The fellowship which comprises two strands each alternate year (i.e. Starters and Champions) support artists to develop their practice and reinvest in their professional career and they continue to become leaders for the next generation. Each participant receives a bursary, a tailored mentoring and coaching programme including skills development and a range of networking, sharing and performance opportunities.

'After being a Trailblazer and travelling to Africa I feel I am taken more seriously... and respected as an African dancer working in a contemporary setting' - **Alesandra Seutin, Artistic Director and Choreographer, Vocab Dance Company**

Re:Generations International Conference

This unique biennial academic and artistic international conference has brought together thousands of individuals under one roof, including dance artists, dance researchers, choreographers, teachers and students intending to shape future practice in dance that has roots in the African Diaspora. It

comprises of lecture demonstrations, presentation of academic papers, panel discussions, film screenings, dance workshops and performances by contributors from both national and international artists and academics. Re:generations is about the Art Forms and The Practice. It is Intergenerational and collaborative. It is a truly global affair for and with the entire dance sector, important for community cohesion, knowledge transfer, posterity and the understanding and appreciation of the evolving practices.

Taking the same format as the previous three conferences, the next gathering will take place in November 2016 in Birmingham and as always it will run in collaboration with external partners including, IRIE! Dance Theatre, DeMontfort University, Ace Dance and Music Birmingham, Impact Dance (Future4Youth project), Dance Immersion (Canada) among others. The theme will focus on Legacy and Heritage.

'..this is too small for how big it is..'

Hakeem Onibudo, Artistic Director Impact Dance & British Council Ambassador

Open Stage Platforms

These regular informal platforms for work in progress take place regionally up and down the country. Artists at any stage of their career and working with the various dance styles within the African Diaspora, are invited to present their work in a safe, supportive environment to test out new ideas and receive feedback in front of a panel of professionals and a small audience.

The combined body for dance, will expand Open stage to encompass all genres as a model to enable the development of young, emerging and established talent nationally and internationally.

One Dance UK will take projects developed under ADAD into a wider playing field where they will no doubt flourish.

mercy@adad.org.uk



Freddie Opuku © by Benedicte Johnson

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CONGRATULATIONS BEVERLEY GLEAN!

The recipient of The ADAD Lifetime Achievement Award for 2016

By 'Funmi Adewole and Judith Palmer

The recipient of this year's ADAD Lifetime Achievement Award is Beverley Glean. Beverley Glean is the founder and artistic director of IRIE! dance theatre which has just celebrated its 30th anniversary. Glean established her company after graduating from the Laban Centre for Dance and Movement at a time of racial riots and black unemployment. She saw dance not only as a source of recreation and entertainment but as a conduit for values, a means of creating and sustaining community, bridging intergenerational gaps, and overcoming racial tensions. She sought out dancers like herself, with an experience of Caribbean and African dance forms and formal training. Together they created a choreographic language, which was reflective of their experiences. It was important for Glean to establish a link between her experience of dance in Britain with that of the Caribbean which she did through research and by inviting Jackie Guy, a former principal dancer of the National Dance Theatre of Jamaica, to choreograph a piece for the company. The outcome was *Danse Caribbean* (1986), a panoply of Caribbean

dance styles such as Quadrille, Burru, Tambo, Juba, mento, presented with an emphasis on how these dances depict male-female relationships. This piece, Glean says represents the roots of the IRIE! movement language.

Artistically, IRIE! dance theatre was ground-breaking. Glean went on to explore Reggae dance and music as the basis of choreography. In the 1980s Reggae was the music of emancipation. The genre gave a voice to disfranchised black youth but also crossed racial divides inspiring multiracial bands such as ASWAD. A number of pieces in her repertoire explored relationships between men and women, and the realities of being a black man during a highly charged time of protest, in which she zoomed her choreographic lens in on the gestures, walks, and mannerisms of Caribbean people. Glean was also keen to collaborate across the black arts movement during the 1980s. She said the abundance of talent could not be ignored. She commissioned music, choreographed to the poetry of the renowned poet Louise Bennett and collaborated with dub poets such as Jean 'Binta' Breeze. Several pieces in Glean's choreochronicle such as *Reggae Ina ya Jeggae (90/91)* are suites of short pieces celebrating Reggae dance and music and exploring the link between this urban form and traditional Caribbean dances validating Reggae as a medium of artistic expression for a younger generation. Another passion of Glean's is the link between the Caribbean and Africa explored through pieces such as *Hints of Afrikah (87/88)* and *Agbara (92/93)*, a commissioned work choreographed for the company by Peter Badejo. Between 1985 and 2004 the company toured 17 productions nationally and internationally.

Glean sacrificed much of her ambition to gain accolades as a choreographer to develop the context for dance education and community provision. She is an ambassador of Caribbean and African dance as artistic expressions of multicultural Britain and a believer in artistic practice as a space in which young people can claim a stake in country. Consequently she has done more to develop a culturally inclusive legacy for dance in Britain than many institutions

with consistent government funding. In 1996, her company hosted the *Ancient Futures* conference, which brought dance companies from America and the Caribbean to perform in Britain alongside British dancers. In 2004, she founded with Rosie Lohan, a Foundation degree in Dance, collaborating with City and Islington College to deliver a course in African, Caribbean and urban dance forms and modern dance techniques. The foundation degree emerged after ten years of activity, research and a three-year pilot project in the 1990s. The cohort of students on the Foundation degree programme is interracial.

Being a resourceful community oriented leader she has through good relations with the Lewisham council been able to acquire a dance space in the heart of South London called Moonshoot. Besides running her company from this location she provides a range of activities aimed at promoting the well-being of the community – fitness classes, drumming, storytel-



www.iredancetheatre.org.uk

Congratulations Beverley Glean!

ling sessions, healthy eating programmes, intergenerational projects and opportunities for young people to gain work experience. Last year she returned to choreography. Judging from the audience's reaction to the premier of her 30th anniversary piece, RED, her choreography continues to inspire.

The ADAD Lifetime Achievement Award

The ADAD Lifetime Achievement Award is a biennial award, which was set up in 2012 to honour outstanding contributions made by individuals to the practice and appreciation of African Diaspora dance in the UK. The Award was instigated by the current chair, Judith Palmer. ADAD is the only organisation to honour contributions to dance of the African diaspora in the UK. Past recipients to date are Jackie Guy MBE and Peter Badejo OBE.

Additionally ADAD supports the celebration of excellence by being part of a committee, which makes applications to the Queen's Birthday Honours Awarding body to award key individuals who have contributed to Dance in the UK, in particular those of African and Caribbean Descent. Namron is one of the individuals whose application was successful and is a recipient of an OBE honour for his contribution to Dance in the UK.

Award selection criteria requires

- The nominee's body of work in dance should clearly have earned them national and/or international recognition.
- Nominees should clearly demonstrate how their work has impacted on the development of Dance of the African Diaspora in the United Kingdom

Recipients are selected with the support of a carefully chosen committee of key representatives in the sector. The committee this year included Judith Palmer, Ukachi Akalawu, Jackie Guy MBE, Peter Badejo, OBE and H Patten.



Aida Diopé | Bloom Festival 2015 © Foteini Christofilopoulou

Congratulations Beverley Glean!

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THE TRAILBLAZERS STARTERS 2015-16

Meet the four talented choreographers

The Trailblazers Starters showcase will take place on the 12th of May, 2016. Meet the four talented choreographers and their projects ahead of the event.

Nathan Geering

Nathan began his dance career in 2002, training in America, China and Korea, learning advanced techniques from world champion breakdance crews. He later worked in the UK in hip hop theatre with Jonzi D and performed at Breakin Convention at Sadler's Wells as a member of TAG. In 2012, Nathan became an Associate Artist at Yorkshire Dance where he co-choreographed a piece for their 30th Anniversary and toured regionally with two major productions: Bright in the Corner (created in collaboration with South African Dance Company Ushutu) and Marks Set Go (choreographed by Jules Laville with film work by Peter Anderson). Nathan has toured internationally with Sonia Sabri Company with the groundbreaking piece Kathakbox which was nominated for a London Dance Award.

Still firmly rooted in the community Nathan teaches for a variety of organisations and is a leading authority on Streetcheer for the UKCA. His education work spans over many schools, colleges and universities throughout South Yorkshire and Derbyshire. He not only teaches in mainstream schools but is passionate about taking the benefits of dance to Special Educational Needs Schools and Pupil Referral Units (PRUs).

Always insisting that he makes art for human beings and not just intellects, Geering is currently exploring how psychology can help enhance the audience's experience of hip hop theatre. He is very passionate about using his dance styles to tell stories and always strives to push the boundaries of theatre.

Nathan's project will research into visual impairment and dance of the African Diaspora.

As Artistic Director of Rationale Theatre Company, Nathan is currently exploring how psychology can help enhance visually impaired audience members' experience of hip hop theatre. Nathan will be conducting research with people with visual impairment to see which forms of dance they find most visible and which gives them the best overall experience. Previous research conducted by Gearing suggests that breakdance is more visible to people with visual impairment when compared to other dance forms such as ballet and contemporary dance. The aim of this research is to build upon these early findings.

Says Nathan, "It is great to have the mentoring and support of an organisation such as ADAD to help enable this kind of research to go ahead. The findings could very well shape the future of dance in terms of accessibility and choreography".

rationale.org.uk

Yami 'Rowdy' Löfvenberg

UK's First Lady of Funk has over 19 years' experience in Streetdance and Funkstyles as a dance artist, teacher and hip hop theatre creator. Yami is currently lecturing at the University of East London and has produced and performed for various shows including: the 2012 Olympics Opening Ceremony, Breakin Convention, Theatre IS, Dare 2 Dance, and Battle of the Year Germany. Yami is a seasoned teacher both in the UK and internationally; with her company 'Passion and Purpose' she curated Project Sonrisa, a community funded project in Colombia where she taught disadvantaged children and local dance teachers. Rowdy's love, dedication and passion for funk styles across the UK's hip hop community has earned her place as one of the UK's finest dancers and a positive role model for young women.

Rowdy's project will challenge perceptions of Hip Hop theatre.

Yami's goals are to express Hip Hop theatre using Funkstyles, educate in the History of African Ameri-

can Social dances and through performances and inspire conversation, thought or action.

Says Yami, "I want to develop a unique storytelling style that is not afraid to discuss sensitive issues, and challenges how the media and the government see Hip Hop culture. It is important to inspire young black females like myself to get into the theatre industry, using fresh ideas and new ways of collaborating and moving. Working with ADAD will help me put funk styles back on the map and help engage young and old people, reconnect with the first original street dance and the black heritage. Working with such an interesting and ground-breaking company will highlight not only the importance of this style but the need of support to females in the Hip hop industry".

breakinconvention.com/artists/rowdy-uk

Rachael Nanyonjo

Rachel graduated from Roehampton University with a BA Honours in Dance Studies and gained a Masters in choreography from Middlesex University 2012. She formed Kansaze Dance Theatre in 2011 to create innovative contemporary dance and physical theatre that responds to socio-cultural and political themes through collaborating with different art forms. Rachael has worked with the Young Vic, East London Dance, Wayne McGregor | Random Dance, Big Dance, BBC, Sky Arts, Londondance.com. She is also a visiting lecturer teaching choreography at Middlesex University. In 2015, Rachel was a recipient of the British Council and Arts Council England international development fund and as a result undertook a research, development and documentation project with Ugandan-based Tabu Flo Dance Company.

Rachael's project will produce a resource on traditional and contemporary dance in Uganda.

Rachael will use her Trailblazer award to create and publish a written and video visual resource on traditional and contemporary dance form and theatre making styles in Uganda drawing on her research from the British Council and Arts Council AIDF fun-

ded trip to Uganda where she worked with TabuFlo Dance, Ndere Centre and Mackerere University. Rachael hopes this will be a resource that all artists interested in dances from Uganda can use as a reference. Following on from this Rachael shall spend the year developing and delivering a series of creative / technical workshops regionally that combine her style with those she learnt during her trip and through this process she hopes to develop collaborative new work.

Rachael says, « I am excited and grateful to have been selected as an ADAD Trailblazer, I have been taught and inspired by many past trailblazers and hope that I can use this opportunity to do the same for other artists. ADAD is a great organisation and I look forward to working with them, learning, growing and contributing to the sector ».

kansaze.com

Mbulelo Ndabeni

London-based dancer, choreographer and teacher, Mbeulelo, trained at Dance For All School in Cape Town, Khayelitsha. Recipient of scholarships from the David Poole Trust to train at the London Studio Centre, from Kristine Elliott to study at the San Francisco Academy of Ballet Summer Intensive, and from Kaatsbaan in New York. Mbeulelo later joined Matthew Bourne's New Adventures, touring Swan Lake for two years. He dance with Rambert (2007-2014), performing works by Merce Cunningham, Doug Varone, Paul Taylor, Siobhan Davies, Mark Baldwin, and many others, as well as performing as a guest artist with Wayne McGregor|Random Dance, Phoenix Dance, and Company Chameleon. Mbulelo has created works for the Cape Town City Ballet, ADAD's Bloom Festival, English National Ballet School, Rambert's workshop seasons and Cloud Dance Festival. Mbulelo also worked with Phoenix Dance Theatre's Choreographers and Composers Lab as a choreographer. After having works presented at many prestigious venues, Mbulelo set up his own company N'da Dance Company, to continue the development of his own work and to collaborate with other

artists, fusing the spirit of his African Dance training with his life experiences.

Mbulelo's project is a project entitled NaY - Nam and You

The title Nam has a hidden 'and' before 'I' which translates to 'and I and You equals We'. The piece is centred around identity and the idea of coming home, both physically and emotionally. The piece looks at the emotional, physical and psychological scars when one decides or is forced to emigrate. Explores the effects of the 'masks' we put on in order to fit in, the tensions of the longing to connect with one's 'home' being culture and traditions which are part of one's being wherever 'home' is. 'Home' is wherever the heart is, 'Home' is 'and I'.

Says Mbulelo "It (the piece) celebrates my African heritage as the source that continues to give me strength, courage and comfort, with the mamas that have guided me, being my driving inspiration".

Dancer/Choreographer Mbulelo Ndabeni will perform with another dancer and 4 Female drummers. The lead composer is Roberto David Ruscon, the lightening designer is Yaron Abulafia, the Set design consultant is Sasha Tanvi Mani.

mbulelo.com

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**LOOKING
BACK
TO GO
FORWARD**

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ADAD, A SHORT HISTORY

By 'Funmi Adewole

I was invited by ADAD to write a short history of the organisation looking at how it changed over the years. It is a personal perspective based on my involvement in various capacities.

Pre-ADAD

The 1980s was a time of growth for the dance profession. Community dance as a sector for dancers to work in was gaining ground. The Black Dance Development Trust (BDDT) was established and for five years organised exciting summer schools for practitioners involved in traditional African and Caribbean dance. Union dance, Phoenix dance company, IRIE! dance theatre, Adzido Pan African Dance Ensemble, Kokuma dance company, the Jiving Lindy Hoppers were touring during this time. Bob Ramdhanie, Hilary Carty, Hermin McIntosh, Maureen Salmon and Pat Palmer were either spearheading initiatives or taking up posts where they could be of influence. Having said this 1980s was also a time of political change, which meant that many projects that were set up were soon closed down in the wake of policy changes. The GLC which was a major supporter of African, Caribbean and Asian work was axed and The Black Dance Development Trust (BDDT) was defunded. This effectively led to the demise of a number of small African and Caribbean dance companies. By the late 1980s the concept of Ethnic minority arts was on its way out in cultural policy and the idea of Cultural Diversity was being championed. The infrastructure for Dance in general was unable to support the number of dancers graduating from programmes. The solution to this was the establishment of National Dance Agencies in early 1990s. Independent black dancers faced specific challenges working in this evolving dance ecology. Jazz companies like Bullies Ballerinas which started in 1990 were being asked to be innovative by bookers at a time when many theatre goers

did not even know what jazz dance was. The way many black dancers wanted to create work did not fit in with what venues and funders considered to be 'art dance'. The critical context for the work by black dancers and companies needed developing, venues required advice and black dancers needed support. It was during this time of transition that ADAD was launched.

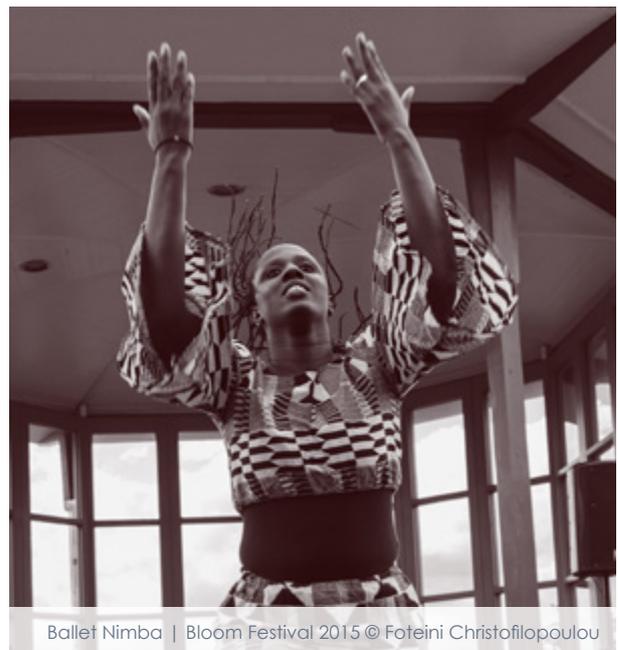
1995-2000: Raising the profile of black dancers

Marie McCluskey was one of the main drivers behind the establishment of ADAD. She was approached by some concerned practitioners to help set up a forum to support their work. ADAD was formed as a practitioner led organisation, driven by its steering committee of artists and co-ordinated by an administrator. The first was June Gamble, followed by Deborah Baddoo. When ADAD was first established it concentrated on raising the profile of Black dancers. In the mid nineties there was a rise in the number of independent and freelance dancers who were looking to explore new ways of working that did not fit in with the mainstream aesthetics and looking to establish their own companies. ADAD began to address this need. The ADAD newsletter was established. This contained mainly listings of classes and performances taking place in England and sometimes in other places in Europe, the Caribbean, Africa and America. It made the context for the performance of work that had an African, Caribbean or Black aesthetic tangible.

ADAD also offered dancers after an application process bursaries of £500 to create pieces for presentation at the yearly ADAD dance platform. The platform was also accompanied by a road show which took the performances to schools and colleges. These initiatives contributed to the performance careers of Kwesi Johnson, Robert Hylton, Benji Reid, and others. A number of dancers got commissions as a result of the choreographic platforms. For others it prepared them to start their own companies. The communication days were opportunities to discuss issues, identify barriers and develop a language to

start articulating what was important to their work in dance. One of the strengths of this period was that the leaders of ADAD, June Gamble and Deborah Baddoo had had long careers in dance in Britain and they had a good sense of the dance ecology. They were able to create a forum, which enabled and encouraged dancers to take advantage of opportunities available in established organisations and support organisations themselves. They also brought dance artists to the attention of mainstream organisations. They were provocative, offering ideas from dancers to think about – they put the idea of the 'new black dance aesthetic' forward. June Gamble asked me to think about this concept and write something on it for the ADAD newsletter, which I did.

However, the success of this model was probably one of the reasons the organisation began to falter. ADAD's steering committee was made up of mainly dance artists who suggested ideas to the co-ordinators and administrators, who then helped implement these ideas. ADAD relied on a strong volunteer base. However as the careers of the dance artists began to expand and they began to freelance more the practitioner-led model was no longer sustainable. Due to reliance on volunteers, lack of staff, Deborah



Ballet Nimba | Bloom Festival 2015 © Foteini Christofilopoulou

Baddoo resigning after her maternity leave, and the continued lack of funding, ADAD almost collapsed in 2000.

Sheron Wray however felt that ADAD as an organisation still had legs but that it required a new way of working. She approached Dance UK for support and engaged Debbie Thomas as a development manager. Sheron took up the role of Chair and then contacted several dance practitioners, I being one, who had benefited from ADAD and therefore had some loyalty to it, to join the steering committee and so ADAD continued.

2000-2002: Raising the level of discourse in the APD/Black dance sector

Debbie Thomas as Development Manager and her aim was to develop the infrastructure of the organisation. ADAD was at a point that it required a change in direction. Due to ADAD's efforts over the last five years, many more black artists were participating in mainstream dance platforms. Deborah Baddoo's company State of Emergency was now running a successful road show which was similar in format to the ADAD roadshow and did not need duplicating. The steering committee decided to change its focus to raising the level of discourse of APD/Black dance in Britain and to place its emphasis on issues to do with developing practices that drew on dance forms of Africa and the diaspora as opposed to creating opportunities for black dancers – though these two issues are intertwined at a level. Debbie Thomas poured her energy into developing the ADAD newsletter as a tool in this regard. She organised a competition to give the newsletter a name and it was renamed 'Hotfoot'. ADAD also ran a six-month dance writers project for which 12 people enrolled, most were dancers who had gone on to study postgraduate degrees called 'Critically Crucial'. I led the scheme under the mentorship of Colin Prescod with Donald Hutera as a guest lecturer for one session. The interviews and articles produced as part of the scheme were published one of the editions of 'Hotfoot.' During this time ADAD organised two other events – one was a general

networking meeting for practitioners and the other was an information day for teachers on the subject of Caribbean dance. However having one part-time member of staff meant the organisation was severely limited and Sheron Wray who was running a dance company had to leave the post of chair. Although Debbie Thomas had been successful in raising a funds to develop the capacity of the organisation the funders realising how weak the organisation was did not have the confidence to hand over the cash. After discussions with Jeanette Siddall who was then the director of Dance UK, ADAD decided to negotiate a strategic alliance with Dance UK. The outcome was that I took over the management of ADAD with Debbie Thomas taking the role of interim chair. Debbie at this time moved to Bristol. The strategic alliance with Dance UK gave funders the confidence that ADAD would be able to deliver its projects and it was able to receive the funds for organisational development.

2003-2007: Building leadership capacity

With Dance UK's support ADAD began to re-position its self in the dance ecology. ADAD carried out a consultation with the dance sector, organised six events to raise its profile and also test what kind of initiative the sector required for its development. The events included a meeting with academics at York St John University, An Afro-Peruvian event, an evening of performance at the Battersea arts centre featuring Irven Lewis and Francis Angol, an event at the Royal Festival Hall entitled 'Engaging the theatre dance of Black British based artists', as well as a research project developing infrastructure for training practitioners using African and Caribbean dance forms. In addition to this an ADAD edition of the Dance UK newsletter was published. As ADAD was now in alliance with Dance UK two magazines could not come out of the same organisation. Hotfoot became an e-magazine called Hotfoot online It was deemed by the ADAD steering committee that because the magazine was such a key output of the organisation it needed to continue. The outcome of this re-evaluation was that ADAD should

concentrate on the kind of initiatives that individuals and dance companies did not have the capacity to deliver and the mainstream support organisation were not aware of or lacked the expertise for. Whilst the early ADAD gave dancers the platform to develop their careers, ADAD in its present incarnation focused on creating events with other organisations to develop the sector.

Based on the issues arising from the projects it organised between 2000 and 2002 and the six consultancy events, I realised that a lack of documentation was a major hindrance to the growth of the sector. Information is needed for strategy. ADAD decided to focus on contributing to the documentation of practice of the dance of the African Diaspora in Britain. For this reason with funds raised through the Heritage Lottery and with Arts Council England, ADAD organised the 'Heritage project', which consisted of forums, educational and advocacy events and a photographic exhibition and book, which became 'Voicing Black dance'. It focused on the contribution of Black dance artists to British theatrical practice from the 1930s to 1990s. I conceived and directed the project. It deliberately focused on the work of choreographers and others that worked in theatrical and professional settings (professional defined as work related activity not a measure of quality). Without documentation to show how the 'non-western dance practice' was developing in a western context it would be difficult to create the right kind of infrastructure for it. Over the course of the project ADAD collaborated with the Theatre Museum (now closed) and the Southbank Centre.

Pamela Zigomo took over the management of ADAD in 2005 whilst I went back on tour. I however was asked by Pam to return as chair. Pam managed ADAD, and the 'Heritage project'. Her expertise at managing events made the 'Heritage project' a memorable experience. She also built up the leadership capacity in the sector managing 'The Trailblazers' professional development fellowship programme which Dance UK's director, Jeanette Siddall and ADAD development manager Debbie Thomas started; and the Dance Advocates programme. The

fellowship provided the mid career dancer with a financial and mentorship support, to carry out a project that would take his or her career to the next level. The Dance Advocates programme was set up to involve dancers who were already operating as advocates in the organisation of ADAD forums. The advocates were volunteers but they would be paid if they took over the project management of specific events. They included Ukachi Akalawu for African dance, Maria Ryan for contemporary dance, Sheba Montserrat for Caribbean dance, Carolene Hinds for African-American/Jazz dance and Natasha Bunbury for Street dance. They collaborated with ADAD to organise themed events. During this time the term Dance of the African diaspora (DAD) began to be used by dance artists in the sector to describe their practices.

2007-2016: Raising the profile of DAD nationally and internationally

Jeanette Bain-Burnett took over from Pamela Zigomo when she left in 2007. She was ADAD's first director and therefore took more responsibility for creating a strategic direction for the organisation. During her tenure the strategic alliance with Dance UK ended in 2011 and ADAD became a registered charity with the Charity Commission. She started building the profile of ADAD up nationally and internationally. The organisation started having officers in the regions, opening up ADAD North pilot hosted by Phoenix Dance in 2012 followed by ADAD South West shortly after. In 2012-2015 ADAD was successful in securing a key position with Arts Council England as a National Portfolio Organisation which meant secured funding for three years to deliver on its behalf the remit of 'Achieving Great Art and Culture for Everyone'.

Under Jeanette's watch the organisation started the ground breaking 'Re:generations conference in 2010. The conference is unique in that it brings together academics and practitioners/artists together to share practice, research and international perspectives of dance rooted in the African Diaspora.

This raised ADAD's profile internationally and has contributed to the work of the sector becoming a subject of academic interest. The partners for the first Re:generation conferences were IRIE! dance theatre, State of Emergency and London Metropolitan University. The key note speaker was Brenda Dixon-Gottschild. During her time Jeannette also instituted the Bloom showcase, which was a showcase of performance by different choreographers from the sector, the first taking place at the Southbank Centre. 'Open Stage' was another initiative which was developed collaborating with organisations with venue space. It is a regular platform for choreographers to show works in progress and test out new ideas and get professional feedback in a safe and supportive environment. Another programme piloted was the Agile leaders programme for dance and media practitioners which focused on strategic planning and collaboration skills. The Trailblazers programme was also given a comprehensive review with consultant Theresa Beattie and it took the format of two strands 'Trailblazers Starters' aimed at first time applicants who demonstrate creative spark, ambition and leadership potential; and 'Trailblazers Champions' aimed at past recipients of the fellowship and who have demonstrated strong leadership and entrepreneurial spirit.

Mercy Nabirye who was recruited to cover the interim periods in 2011/12 and in 2013 when Jeanette was on maternity leave, stayed on as director when she finally resigned in 2013. Mercy continued developing all the programmes and in particular the Re:generations conference establishing international links including Canada, USA, Germany and East Africa. As a result of the international connections ADAD is engaging UK artists with international choreographers for Choreographic exchange residencies and showcasing. This has attracted support by international funders and is opening up international interest from institutions, dance houses and presenters for UK Artists and the art forms they work with. Mercy developed Bloom Showcase into a national festival of dance, taking off a single location and placing it into other existing festivals and platforms nationally to give dance artists maximum

opportunities for developing new audiences and new spaces to enjoy and engage with the art forms. Mercy placed an emphasis on involving members of the sector in organising events or project managing or curating as a way of increasing the skill base and the opportunities for networking, collaboration and the development of infrastructure.

In 2014, ADAD received a special award by public vote. It was 'The Ebony Business Recognition Award' for promoting African and Caribbean cultural dances.

As ADAD reaches maturity at 21 the infrastructure for the Arts as a whole is changing. Ironically, mergers have become the method that many arts organisations, including large ones, are choosing as a way to survive and continue to supporting the area of practice they are passionate about. The board of ADAD Chaired by Judith Palmer has decided that entering a consortium with Dance UK, Youth Dance England and the National Dance Teachers Association is a good sustainable way to continue the work of ADAD and to build on the legacy. ADAD investment in leadership has paid off through struggling to survive and supporting the sector in various ways engaging in the strategic development for dance. Certain trailblazers are living up to their name. Examples include Uchenna dance which runs Cultural Explosion, a showcase for choreographers, whose work draws on social dance forms; and Vocab dance organises in collaboration with other choreographers high quality training. There is a shift in the sector and more practitioners are collaborating with each other Hakeem Onibudo of Impact Dance and ACE Dance and Music came together to produce Future4Youth a training programme for young people, which combined African dance styles and urban dance for example. The support of Dance of the African Diaspora (DAD) will continue within One Dance UK retaining key programmes like Trailblazers, Re:generations, Bloom and enhancing them by integrating new forms and initiatives from the merger of the partners, creating a wider playing field and networks for dance practitioners who are passionate about these forms.

21st ANNIVERSARY EDITION



DAD AS A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

A reflection by Jeanette Bain-Burnett

The development of a community of practice was of keen interest to Jeanette Bain-Burnett when she was director. It is an interest also pursued by Mercy Nabirye when she took over. Here, Jeanette reflects on what inspired her to introduce this concept and what has since evolved.

When I started working for ADAD I was struck by the range of ways in which artists and enthusiasts for DAD were engaging with the art-form. Some were fascinated by the cultural, social and political elements and approached the form like cultural activists; others were contemporary artists experimenting with form; others still were what I would call 'traditionalists' wanting to root themselves in an Afro-centric form of expression as an alternative to the prevalent Euro-centric forms. Others still were exploring the African influences on urban, jazz and a range of African American forms. Then there were the theorists and academics - concerned with so many ideas and approaches - historical perspectives, notation, etymology.

All of these approaches are valid and offer endless creative possibilities. But practitioners were sometimes prone to create 'camps' based on their different approaches. It dawned on me that if we were to feel confident as a creative community of DAD practitioners we would need to learn to celebrate and explore the diversity within our community. We would need to recognize the potential for learning from each other and enhancing one another's practice. We would have to acknowledge and share each others successes. So I set out to open a space in which this could happen. The Re:Generations conference was the main vehicle for making this happen. It was about bringing the community together to nurture and spur each other on. I also think that the Trailblazers alumni feel a strong sense of connection to each other and the wider DAD commu-



nity - they are only one phone call away from each other with support and help. Overall I tried to engender a spirit of community through all the events and programmes we produced.

Our community of practice has definitely grown in confidence in the last few years. Our artists now stand shoulder to shoulder with artists from all backgrounds and proudly name their influences. They have a sense of connection to those who have gone before them and a clear understanding that they have to chart their own creative paths.

Many artists are presenting in mainstream venues, artists like Vicki Igbokwe, Cindy Claes, Freddie Opoku-Addaie; Mbulelo Ndabeni, Rachael Nanyonjo. The connections also go beyond the shores of the UK. There is the growing relationship with the IABD community in USA, the Canadian dance community through the Dance Immersion connection. There is Alesandra Seutin's mentor-mentee relationship with Germaine Acogny in Senegal and Cindy Claes' creative exchanges in Jamaica and the U.S.

Overall there are fruitful connections between artists and greater collaborations within the sector and beyond.

The end.

21st ANNIVERSARY EDITION



Marelle Steblecki | Bloom Festival 2013 © Toby Ross/Messrs

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Photo: Sean Graham | Bloom Festival 2013 © Toby Ross/Messrs

MEMORIES OF MOTION

By Lisa Nkrumah-Mweu, Katy Noakes,
'Funmi Adewole and Richard Pitt

As we are looking back over the last 21 years, we carried out a survey amongst readers and practitioners asking people to name their most memorable shows, favorite events, the productions they created and of which they are most proud. Thanks to all that participated. This is what we got back. A resonant sprinkling of what's gone on in the last two decades.

Standout performances

- *Revelations* by Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre and their performance at Bradford Alhambra Theatre in 2005. It had a sense of theatre, dramatic presence and storytelling done to perfection. It took him on a journey spiritually that he had never experienced before. - **George Matheson (Executive Director, STAY)**
- *Chipmurenga* by Nora Chipaumire, a solo at MDI's Cultiv8 Festival in 2007, was a stand out work. The performer embodied a thought provoking, storytelling narrative through her movement vocabulary. Through her performance, Chipaumire spoke about the political nature of her work as a space to share the voices of many other individuals. - **Rachel Rogers (MDI)**
- Adzido Pan African Dance Ensemble performing at Salder's Wells was life changing as was Knot Annulled by Doug Elkin for Union Dance. It was a ground breaking piece of work. It is common now to see people on stage performing to Funk music and popping and locking to Mozart but it was not back then. The image of Hopel Romans, dreadlocks in the air, captured in a dynamic pose on the poster of *Motive the Era* (Union Dance) was powerful. - **Ukachi Akalawu (Founder/Dance teacher, AfroXplo)**

- *Thirst*, a dance theatre production that part of Afrovibes Festival (2012) written and directed by James Ngcobo, directed by Gregory Maqoma was truly unforgettable. A dance, physical theatre and African storytelling performance work, it tells the story of the adventures of three water carriers and their village where the well has run dry. Particularly inspiring were the transformative capabilities of the artists into animals. - **Maxine Brown (MDI)**

- *ADiaspora Collective's performance* (Vicki Igboke/ Uchenna Dance and Alesandra Seutin/ Vocab Dance) in 2010. - **Akosua Boakye (Director, Akomasa)**

- *Rite of Spring* by Pina Bausch and Alvin Ailey's Relations - **Alesandra Seutin (Choreographer, Vocab dance company)**

- *Phoenix Dance Company* as they were in the '80's and Ipi Tombi, the production that inspired me so much and changed the course of my life; I realize that these productions weren't staged/held in the last 21 years, yet regardless they impacted on me in such away that I'll never erase them from my memory. It's as if they searched me out, kissed me, ruffled me up a little then sent me packing down the road to confront all sorts of challenges. My life has never been the same again! - **Lati Saka (Dance teacher/ Performer)**

- *Solma* is one of the most memorable shows I have seen. It was performed by the Ghana Dance Ensemble in 1995 at the National Theatre in Ghana, with an audience that completely understood its context and appreciated the artistry of African dance, both the 'hot' dances and the subtle, more lyrical moments. 'Solma' was just as memorable when performed in London at Sadler's Wells Theatre, as part of africa'95, a six month season of performances and events that took place both in the UK and on the African continent. 'Solma' was performed to an audience who might not have known the Ghanaian traditions, but appreciated and showed respect to the form and from the standing ovations,

completely enjoyed their immersion within African dance and culture. - **H Patten (Artistic director, Korumanti Arts)**

- *Inna da wilderness* solo dance performance by H Patten with Peter Badejo and others on percussion - **Dr. Pat Noxolo (Geographer, Academic)**

- *After Tears* by choreographer/Performer Sello Pesa (Artistic Director of Ntsoana Dance Theatre. See <http://www.ntsoana.co.za/works/after-tears/> for more information on the company. I saw this work in 2011 at the Attakkalari Biennial in India. I've chosen this work not just because it promotes the use of dance and aesthetics from Africa and the diaspora but because of its craftsmanship and its dealing with the subject matter of loss which was very raw, really hit home on all its emotional terrains. - **Freddie Opoku-Addaie (Choreographer, Jagged Antics)**

- *Aeroplane man*, the tours of 1998 and 1999 - **Jonzi D (Artistic director, Breakin' Convention)**



Andrea Queens | Bloom Festival 2015 © Foteini Christofilopoulou

• *With A Little Bit of Luck* written by Sabrina Mahfouz, and directed by Stef O'Driscoll was most definitely, one of my most memorable shows over the last 21 years. In 2015, I was the movement director on the play, produced by Paines Plough and touring in 2016, it is promoted as "gig theatre", and although it is not featured as a dance show, it definitively gets a crowd moving. The narrative uses live music, in particular UK garage, to explore themes related to growing up in London during the late 90s and early 2000s. At its core it challenges theatre etiquette, by inviting the audience to get up out of their seats and dance. Dance, said to be the poorer baby sister of theatre, sits right at the helm of the work. Theatre-goers are asked to listen through the entire body, as if they were at a music gig, and to acknowledge that they are a part of the performance. This equal importance of art and inclusion theatre resonates throughout the play. Its three-character cast are staged as a music band, who compliment and support the delivery of the story, through their strengths in spoken word, song, music and love for dance. The piece debuted at Latitude festival, July 2015, and with it, a whole new way of experiencing theatre. I believe that dance of the African diaspora unapologetically made it's way, and will continuously make it's way through all mediums of everyday life, crossing the intersection of human experiences in the UK. This contemporary piece of very British theatre, finds news ways to promote dance of the African diaspora in Britain. - **Yassmin V Foster (Producer/Researcher)**

• *Correspondances* was my most memorable show. It is a duet by Nelisiwe Xaba (South Africa) and Kettly Noel (Mali). I saw it performed as part of Dance Umbrella's African Crossroads programme in 2009. I loved the autobiographical characteristics and gender contextualisation of the piece. For me it was a presentation of contemporary African dance as a social narrative that I had never experienced before. It was inspiring to see that capacity of talent and creativity on the stage. - **Lisa Nkurumah-Mweu (Dance artist, project manager)**

• *Bahok* by Akram Khan. Oh dear too many to choose from since 1994! I choose Bahok for a number of reasons it was the first major commission for MDI as part of Liverpool Capital of Culture's programme in 2008; the scale and breath of the work; the international collaboration with China, the strength and artistry of the performers; the story telling and themes of displacement resonated with me. The music of Nitin Sawhney created such an atmospheric backdrop and accompaniment, which was rich in orchestration and again married so well with the choreographic content. I found the work uplifting, challenging, provocative and beautiful.

- **Karen Gallagher MBE (Artistic director, MDI)**

• *Frank II Louise* at Breaking Convention; the first time that they came to the main stage I remember how I felt the energy and how it blew the minds of those that were creating Hip Hop theatre at the time. The Innovation. The conceptualisation. It was brilliant to be in the audience that was so raw and so responsive. There are people that go to environments like National Theatre or Royal Festival Hall and there find a quieter westernised mannerism of receiving art, but at Breakin' Convention the audience express how they feel and I think the relationship between the audience and the performers and because of the different cultures in the audience it raises the level, becomes part of the performance. There are other shows, but Frank II Louise is my first choice. - **Sean Graham (Choreographer/Dancer)**

• *The Pied Piper* by Boy Blue was one of my most memorable shows which I saw at the Barbican (2009) and so was *Into the Hoods* (Zonation) 2008. This one of those moments when I first saw hip hop dance used within theatre. At the time I was a dance student with a passion for theatre and this encouraged and made me see that both disciplines could be fused - Hip hop and contemporary dance.

- **Rachael Nanyongo (Choreographer, Kansaze dance theatre)**

• *Ballet Black dance*; their performances are memorable as people of colour are often stereotyped

in ballet as if it is only for Europeans. I have also enjoyed spectacular performances by the youth group of RJC and adults students at the Northern School of Dance – I enjoyed them for their varied styles of dance which represent Caribbean and African dance cultures. - **Irma Heyliger OBE- Funder and director of Leeds Reach, Leeds Black Achievers Award.**

- *Les Ballets Africaines* gave a memorable show, I think it was at Sadlers Wells or the Hackney Empire. I tried to mimic all of the steps the next day. I was dancing with LCDT at the time so it could have been in 1990. 14 years later I got to Guinea Conakry to experience the dance for myself. It was extraordinary. Beautiful people and stunning dancing.
- **Sheron Wray (choreographer – JazzExchange, dance academic)**

And for Katy Noakes' there are three unforgettable evenings of performance...

- *Rites of Spring* by La Compagnie Georges Momboye, The Big Mission, Wyvern Theatre Swindon 2008; It needs a certain audacity to take on Rites of Spring and this 16 strong cast bought a whole new re-imagining of the work. Layering African grounding, postures and contractions with the percussive drama of the score, this was fresh and exhilarating. It was an affirmation of the confidence and maturity of contemporary African dance and a master class in the potential of its extensive vocabulary. Adding to the drama of the work on the stage, outside a thunder storm was raging. It was only recently that Marie McCluskey reminded me that the power temporarily cut out in the theatre – all I had remembered was the percussive patterns of the feet, as if the power shortage was designed just to let them beat out their song.

- *13 Mics, The Pugilist, The Holiday* by Benji Reid at the QEH Theatre, 2004; From the large scale to the breathtakingly immaculate solo, unrestricted and re-velling in the sparseness of clever minimalist design, where every demi second and every gesture counts. This was bare, electrifying perfection. Full disclosure:

there are few solo works that appeal to me but there are certain artists (Namron, Jonzi, Gregory Maqoma and Benji amongst them) who really understand the power of gesture and storytelling to connect with audiences. When it's right it's like seeing the whole cosmos unfold in one body. Personal, universal and just dazzling. I'd taken a small group of young male dancers with me. Some 12 or so years on and four out of the five of them now dance professionally, due in no small part to the impact this triple bill had on them. I'll be forever grateful that we had the opportunity to take them to see the right work, by the right artist at just the right juncture in their lives to so strongly ignite their imaginations.

- *Hold Everything Dear* by Laila Diallo – Bristol Old Vic, 2014. Not strictly a DAD defined work, but the overarching sense of humanity that informs Laila's work leads her to reference and land upon so many stories and narrative driven ways of moving that there are traces of different techniques through the well trained, multi disciplined bodies. *Hold Everything Dear* was developed following Laila's work with refugees and asylum seekers through a Rayne Fellowship some five years earlier and explored transience, absence and memory. A cast of eight seamlessly switched between movement, music and text, each part equal to and enhancing the other. It painted images of half-lives lost in transit twilight worlds, reaching for an invisible anchor. And it showed how given the right amount of time to develop and refine an idea and to work with the right collaborators and generosity of approach, dance can be everything that opera seeks to be and more.

Major Milestones

- *Who's Report* by Baroness Young in 2006; It was part of the consultation process for Sustained Theatre. As an archivist, Baroness Young was commissioned to write the report and found 5 key points that has since resonated with me and my continuing work with BAME artists where I runs the Yorkshire hub



at the base in Leeds called Sustained Theatre Artists Yorkshire, known as STAY. The five key stands that remarked as fundamental for BAME artists were; the need for BAME artists to have space to make work, with linkages to the mainstream sector for future developments and networking, the need for International connections, linking the commonwealth of nations together through the arts, the ability of artists to tell stories and its development as a creative outlet for BAME artists to engage in critical debate (social, cultural, economic), the need for leadership and enabling of BAME artists to support and be supported more by the mainstream sector.

- **George Matheson (Executive Director, STAY)**

• *Voicing Black Dance* (published in 2007) has made an unforgettable contribution to the DANCE sector on the whole. In my opinion, it clearly defines and sets out the context for anyone to develop and understanding of who, what, when, how and why there is DAD in the British cultural system is where it is today. The book is important for all generations but more importantly the bridge between a generation (individuals like myself) and the next. Only back in September 2015, on the 25th to be precise, I suggested the book to a young dancer from the sector that was writing about DAD in Britain but did not know of the book. There is very little for students, lecturers and researchers in this area. The book presents very simply the UK DAD history: touching on the cultural, artistic, social and political aspects. It informs the DAD education module I have delivered with the support of H-Patten since 2015 at Canterbury Christ Church University in Kent. It allows you to tap into the past and share with students who may become future teachers and artists in the British cultural dance education system. Although there have been other articles written, this puts presents in one place. - **Akosua Boakye (Director, AkomAsa)**

Most Memorable events

• *Carnival Messiah*, Geraldine Connor's late 80's and 90's Magnus Opus, which used students, emerging artists from Yorkshire and inspired and transformed their artistry through the creative opportunities that were housed in Carnival Messiah- an example is the Leeds based artist, Christella Litras, who was a student at Bretton Hall with Geraldine Connor, and is now a respected composer and musician in her field, who also leads her own group known as the Caution Collective. An indication not only of the transformation of Art, not only of «the performance» but how the performance inspires the performers.

- **George Matheson (Executive Director, STAY)**

• *Re-generations* in 2010 was a stand out event because it had similar themes to MDI's Culitiv8 and because it was held in London. It was interesting, provided networking opportunities and was able to engage with the different perspectives of the sector from a wider range of artists, performers and academics. - **Rachel Rogers (MDI)**

• *The 1997 Bami jo summer school* organised by Badejo Arts at Kingsway College in Holborn. It had excellent teachers Flora Theine, Zab Moubougu, Demba Barry and Nii Tagoe. - **Ukachi Akalawa (Founder/Dance teacher, AfroXplo)**

• *Lyrical Fearfa* by Jonzi D at Circomedia in 2014; A completely selfish choice, but it's not that often that we get to see real quality Black arts productions in Bristol, so it was fantastic to be able to bring Jonzi and Ivan's work down through St Pauls Carnival. I had re-joined the Carnival board and was working on building partnerships and more opportunities for dance development. There is a section of the community who would never go to Colston Hall for Breakin' Convention because of the venue's history and connection with the slave trade, and this was just the bill to bring them out. Circomedia, based in St Pauls just around the corner from the Carnival office,

agreed to co-programme and it became one of those perfect moments in time where all parts came together to make something great happen. And when you're working voluntarily just for the belief in something, good will is everything! The fact that Jonzi is so generous with his time and his ideas really helped to market the night, and I managed to secure some partnership funds to work with two local emerging artists Winston Pyke and Jodelle Douglas, to make opening works. The response was fantastic and I just wish we'd been able to programme a second night. - **Katy Noakes (Producer, Writer)**.

- *Regenerations 2012* was unforgettable because it brought together 3 very important people of Dance of the African Diaspora (DAD): Germaine Acogny from Senegal, 'the mother of contemporary African dance' and founder of Ecole des Sables with her protégé Alesandra Seutin; Kariamu Welsh-Asante, Professor of Dance at Temple University, Philadelphia, USA; and Chris Walker, dancer and choreographer with the National Dance Theatre Company of Jamaica. They contributed to a day of dance to remember and inspired many including myself. The event brought forth an academic focus that is very much in need to support DAD education and training. - **Akosua Boakye (Director AkomAsa)**

- *Breakin' Convention*, the first one; the event gave a platform to the Hip hop theatre concept. - **Roni Cheeseman (Dance artist)**

- *The 'Bami Jo' summer schools programmes*, I thoroughly enjoyed all of them. And IRIE! dance theatre's Ancient Futures conference (1996) which brought L'Acadco from Jamaica and Forces of Nature from America to England. - **Lati Saka (Dance teacher/Performer)**

- *HIP: Black British dance festival*, produced by Artistic Director Brenda Edwards that was hosted at The Place. It had a true diverse representation in its genre and content. - **Freddie Opoku-Addaie (Choreographer, Jagged Antics)**

- *Apricot Jam live music event – Jonzi D (Artistic director, Breakin' Convention)*

- *Renegerations 2014* was one of the most memorable events I have attended. The event was life changing. I was able to connect with new artists working within the diaspora in the UK and abroad. I learnt about the diversity of African culture, forms and skills. The panel conversations challenged me to pursue my passion for working internationally further and that was the start of me developing a creative relationship with TabuFlo Dance (Uganda) who I then worked with the following year on a month research and development trip to Kampala. I was one of the most hopeful and creative events I had been to in a long time. - **Rachael Nanyongo (Choreographer, Kansaze dance theatre)**

- *The British Council's Diamond Jubilee - West African Dance Project (2003)*; one of my most memorable events was winning this commission. The project culminated in me choreographing 'The Calling' a cutting edge dance theatre production, performed as part of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Abuja, Nigeria. The creation of this international production enabled me to work with the national dance companies and top independent artists from Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone, delivering professional development training and choreographing a production in each country. I also gained the opportunity and privilege to collaborate and choreograph with the late Professor Nii-Yartey in Ghana, before going on to Nigeria to create *The Calling* incorporating music and dance artists from Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Senegal and Cameroon. The camaraderie, artistic energy and creative expression felt by all during this process has yet to be repeated. - **H Patten (Artistic director, Koromanti Arts and Dance academic)**

- *The Hip Festivals*, 2001 and 2002, were the most exciting events for me. Brenda Edwards created something that was such a diverse expression of our work - Brenda Edwards, Benji Reid, Noel Wallace, Melanie Teall, Paradigmz etc. My solo performances

at these festivals were my most memorable. It was marvelous to have been in amongst that crowd.

- **Diane Mitchell (Movement director)**

• *The Wynton Marsalis and JazzXchange collaboration* at the Barbican in 2003 was a favorite event. Funny thing was many audience members thought we were a US dance company! - **Sheron Wray (Choreographer - JazzXchange and dance academic)**

Landmark projects

• *The Heritage project* is marked in my memory since seeing it in the Theatre Museum, Covent Garden. It highlighted and gave an insight into how many felt about the Black British dance experience. It was promoting and providing opportunities to learn about "British Black Dance" and withstanding the challenges and constraints it faced, it is visible today. Hotfoot, news from ADAD helps to bring the success, achievements and current events in the sector of DAD to us all. To mention just two old articles, one is *A New Black Aesthetic?* By 'Funmi Adewole and African Dance Aesthetics- Ancient to the Future (Issue 3, 2002) by Wanjiru Gichigi. - **Akosua Boakye (Director AkomAsa)**

• *The Dancing at the crossroads conference* (2002) at the Southbank centre was memorable. A great moment was when Bob Ramdahanie and the late Terry Monaghan launched into a debate that brought the conference to a stand still. Ramdahanie insisted that Ghanaian dance companies had made the most impact on the development of black dance in Britain, whilst Monaghan cited Mama Lou Parks and African American jazz dancers. The debate transported me into a history that I had not heard of and that went beyond the mundane discussion over whether black dance was dance by black people or dance forms from black communities. It was assuring to see and hear at this conference that there were people in the room that had



Denise Rowe | Bloom Festival 2015 © Foteini Christofilopoulou

questions that were the same as mine about the history and the value of these art forms. The debate proved the importance of the topic at hand. It was great to witness the passion with these two scholars Ramdahanie and Monaghan discussed their research and defended their points of view. - **Ukachi Akalawu (Founder/Dance teacher, AfroXplo)**

- *The Laban Dance Teaching & Learning Module* has been instrumental in equipping so many dance practitioners and also The ADAD Trailblazers Initiative. - **Roni Cheeseman (Dance artist)**

- *Cultiv8 programme* was a key event that has occurred in the past 21 years for me. MDI's showcased work that was coming from Africa. It changed people's perception, like highlighting the multifaceted collaborations of contemporary technique and African dance. - **Maxine Brown (MDI)**

- *Dance Umbrella* has been a great event because it introduced a large number of international companies and artists to London in a short space of time. It has allowed for international exchange and relations. - **Alesandra Seutin (Choreographer, Vocab dance company)**

- *The ADAD Heritage Project* for me is THE landmark for the sector over the last 21 years (I should add that I first learned about ADAD in 2005). The photographic exhibition and book (*Voicing Black Dance*) were instrumental in my education and understanding of the African Diaspora sector. Both gave me a much needed 'missing history' that I knew existed but had no idea how to find. I was reading about people I knew in the sector as distant figures to those who were mentoring me (some great friends of mine today). I finally had an anchor point with what had come before me and how these people, companies and incidents had created a path for me to do what I do now.

I read the book in a day and then read it again twice more, I use it in my work in HE and recommend it to colleagues, students, friends and enthusiasts

who want to strengthen their knowledge of the sector. The past is the back drop for the present and a blueprint for the future; the Heritage Project inspired and empowered me to continue the work I do as a Creative Director and Choreographer, enabling me to Empower, Entertain and Educate those I work with on a daily basis. Thank you ADAD! - **Vicki Igbokwe (Creative director, Uchenna Dance)**

- *Cultiv8 and Cultural Awakening Festival* was set up in 2005 as a pilot event by Dance Northwest to celebrate the culmination of a three-year strategic project for the development of African Peoples Dance. As a pilot it offered the opportunity to research this field of work and explore gaps and issues. The project was developed for 2007 by MDI in partnership with the Liverpool Culture Company to mark the City's year of Heritage; celebrating 800 years since its charter in 1207 and 200 years since the Bill for the Abolition of the British Slave Trade. The events enabled us to introduce to the city the works of: L'Acadco from Jamaica; Nora Chipaumire from Zimbabwe/USA; and Urban Bush Women. The works, Nora's in particular, demonstrate how provocation and policy charged content and context can shape contemporary dance practice. - **Karen Gallagher MBE (Artistic director, MDI)**

- *Breaking Convention*, once again I have to mention it because it changed perception and gave dancers the opportunity to perform on a bigger platform. Also Vicki Igbokwe's *Blue Print* which considered artists' needs rather than just a providing a platform. It looked at what support artists needed. It filled a gap for emerging artists and provided more vital opportunities. - **Sean Graham (Choreographer/dancer)**

The End.

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Photo: Jaguydance | Bloom Festival 2013 © Clive Clunis

ARCHIVING ADAD

By Mercy Nabirye

ADAD's material documenting the past 21 years will be placed with the Black Cultural Archives (BCA) in Brixton, when it joins its partners Dance UK, National Dance Teachers Association and Youth Dance England to form 'One Dance UK'.

The new organisation will work with BCA to develop a programme and events around its archive. Following is a list of people who worked with ADAD over the years and a list of its projects. Whilst every care was taken to include everyone who has worked with the organisation it is still likely people have been omitted. We apologize for any oversights.

If you have any information related to ADAD, which you think should be added to the archive please email, it to info@adad.org.uk or info@onedanceuk.org with the subject line 'Information for ADAD's archive'.

The information you provide will be placed in a file along with other archived documents. www.onedanceuk.org will be the new integrated website where you will find information related to Dance of the African Diaspora.

ADAD People and Projects

1994 to 2000

• People

Co-ordinator: 1994 to 1997 - June Gamble
Assistant Co-ordinator: 1994 - Jacqui Robinson

Co-ordinator: 1997 to 2000 - Deborah Badoo
Jeanette Brooks project manager (maternity leave)

Steering Committee members (serving at different times during this period): Sheryl Aitcheson, Pearl Jordon, Anne-Marie Logan, Trevor Mbatha, Marie McCluskey, H Patten, Sheron Wray, Sabita Bergh, Corrine Bougaard, Carl Campbell, Jeanefer Jean-Charles, Jean Johnson-Jones, Carolene Hinds, Ruth Grosvenor, Judith Palmer.

Volunteers: Wanjiru Gichigi, 'Funmi Adewole, Talita Moffatt, Diana Omo Evans

• Projects

ADAD Creative Communication Days
ADAD Black dance focus days
ADAD Choreographic Platform
ADAD Choreographic Platform tour 1999
Black Dance in the UK: Articles and Interviews compiled by Deborah Badoo and edited by Helen Roberts
ADAD Black Dance Education Roadshow 2000
ADAD Newsletter

2000 TO 2007

• People

Chair: Sheron Wray
Development manager: Debbie Thomas
- 2000 to 2002
Project co-ordinator: Alicia Howard-Ciciani
2001-2002
Chair: Debbie Thomas

Development manager: 'Funmi Adewole – 2002
ADAD programme manager: 'Funmi Adewole – 2003 to 2004

Chair: 'Funmi Adewole
ADAD programme manager: Pamela Zigomo – 2004 to 2007

ADAD advocates: Ukachi Akalawu (African dance forms), Sheba Monteserrat (Caribbean dance forms), Caroline Hinds (Jazz), Natasha Bunbury (Hip Hop), Maria Ryan (Contemporary dance), Jeanette Brooks (Guest editor)

Steering Committee Members (serving at various times during this period): Judith Palmer, Kwesi Johnson, Alicia Howard-Ciciani, Patrick Acogny, Caroline Hinds, Robert Hylton, Paul Gladstone Reid, Colin Prescod, Naomi Latham, Dick Matchett.

Heritage project Steering committee: 'Funmi Adewole, Colin Prescod and Dick Matchett

• Projects

Trailblazers – started 2003
Hotfoot magazine 2002 to 2004
Hotfoot online –started 2005

ADAD development programme: 2003-2004
Facts and Friction chat show (Hip Hop artists talk) at Southbank
- Afro-Peruvian Performance at Battersea Arts Centre
- AD:Lab (choreographic exploration and dance workshop day)
- ADAD educational research project
- ADAD Forum with academics at York St John University

Critically Crucial dance writers project -2001

ADAD Heritage project - A photographic exhibition 'Moments', workshops and oral history events, and a complimentary reader - *Voicing Black Dance*:

1930s-1990s' edited by 'Funmi Adewole, Dick Matchett and Colin Prescod - started 2006

2007 to March 2016

• People

Chair: Carolene Hinds 2007-2010

ADAD director: Jeanette Bain-Burnett 2007-2013

Administrator then Programme Manager – Paula Allen 2008-2013

Finance Officer – Louisa Charles 2008-2012

Finance Officer – Sydney Rae 2012 – 2016

Communications – Dora Jeegay 2007 -2008

Work Placement/Interns (working at various times during this period): Ralph Fuller, Daniel Corfield, David Ntantu, Sayful Islam, Francine Sheffield, Oyinda Ibraheem, Heather Benson, Michelle Lin, Yu Tamura, Bisola Belo, Amanda Royes, Britta Saks, Shevon Edwards, Ida Brandt, Cameron Ball,

Volunteers: Jordana Jordao, Ianthe Mellows, Birungi Kawooya, Jessica Walker, Karla McKenzie, Lucy Glover, Natalia Kotowska, Oayomi Rosenoir Patten, Sophie Ogbonna, Sophie Youles, Victoria Ekundayo, Doyen Marie, Teleika Kirkland, Justine Fry, Rachel de Garang, Rachael Nanyongo.

Chair: Judith Palmer 2010-2016

ADAD Interim director: Mercy Nabirye 2011/12 and 2013

ADAD Director: Mercy Nabirye 2013-2016

ACE Catalyst Consortium staff (Shared with Dance UK, Youth Dance England and ADAD)

Head of /Director of Development: Fern Potter 2013-2016)

Development Assistant/Manager: Sarah Ruff 2013-2014

Development Manager: Jessica Choi 2015-2016

Shared Consortium Staff team for – Finance, Administration, Communications 2014 -16



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ADAD Regional Coordinators (working at various times during this period)

North Program Coordinator: Lisa Thomas 2010-2012

North Program Coordinator/Programmer Lisa Nkrumah-Mweu 2012- 2016

South West Program Coordinator/Programmer: Meriel Sparkes Camara 2011-2013

South West Programmer: Katy Noakes 2014-2016

London Programmer: Richard Pitt 2015 - 2016

Casual Staff/Freelance (working at various times during this period)

Creative Producer – Trailblazers Showcase: Grace Okereke 2014

Trailblazers Alumni Coordinator: Akosua Boakye 2014

Project Coordinator: Iris De Brito 2014

Communications and Marketing: Diane Bodel 2013-2014

Hotfoot, Guest Editor and Dramaturge, Choreographic Exchange: 'Funmi Adewole 2015

Social Media support: Kemi Durosinmi 2015-2016

Interim London Programmer and Development Manager: Heather Benson 2015-2016

Re:generations

Committee: (working at different times) Jeanette Bain-Burnett, Beverley Glean, Deborah Baddoo, Ramsay Burt, Christy Adair, Jane Carr, Mercy Nabirye, Judith Palmer, Gail & Ian Parmel, Ian Abbott 2010-2016

Marketing – Re:generations: Michelle Wright 2014

Creative Producer – Re:generations: Yassmin Foster 2012

Researcher/ADAD publication - Adesola Akinleye

Trailblazers: ADAD has 36 trailblazers to date. Their biographies can be found at www.adad.org.uk or www.onedanceuk.org

Patron: Derrick Anderson 2011 – 2016

Board (various board members during this period)

Francis Angol, Naomi Latham, Carolene Hinds, Robyn Durie, Fern Potter, Dick Matchett, Monique

Deletant, Lance Moir, Fatimah Kelleher, Catia Di-Giambattista, Ian Abbott, Judith Palmer.

• Projects

Trailblazers Professional Development Fellowship - Starters / Champions (contd)

Trailblazers showcase started 2014

Agile Leaders: programme for dance and media practitioners: 2011

Bloom showcase /Dance encounters – started 2009

Bloom National Festival started 2011

Re:generations International Conference – started 2010

Dance Under construction

Developing Momentum – Master Classes 2010/11

Open Stage - Choreographic Work in progress platforms started 2008

Heritage Exhibition 'Moments' regional tour and education outreach programme

Podcasts 2012

Regional Hubs – North and South West regions started 2010

International Showcasing and Presentation started 2014

International Choreographic Exchange and residencies started 2015

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JOUR- NEYS IN DANCE

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INTERVIEW WITH GRETA MENDEZ

Choreographing across art forms

By 'Funmi Adewole

'Funmi Adewole interviews Greta Mendez who has been performing and working in dance since the 1970s. She was pioneer in the development of independent dance in England involved in running three companies in the 1970s and 1980s. Greta teaches drama, choreography and carnival and works as a choreographer and movement director in all three contexts. She is also an award-winning film-maker, creating visual, artistic films.

You are well-known as a co-artistic director of the first funded black-led dance company, the MAAS Movers, why did this company end and what did you do after its closure?

Why did MAAS Movers dance company fold? This is a question I cannot answer. Due to the ongoing absence of or because of their heavy work commitments abroad, I was appointed Director following Mass Movers launch in 1977. I directed the Movers and we achieved much of our initial objectives: Black choreographers & dancers could create contemporary works with a unique voice which can move and stimulate audiences. We also proved that we could pack out venues such as, Arnolfini, The Crucible, Riverside Studios, etc. There was also an increase of Black Dancers being accepted into Dance Schools. In 1978 we had successfully fulfilled the two years requirements for revenue funding from The Arts Council. At this time the Movers stated that they did not have the confidence that I would be able to take them into this new period. I resigned and left the Movers at this time. The revenue funding was not awarded and the Company folded several months later.

I co-directed Nin Dance Company with Michael Quaintance, which opened with a sell-out performance @ Jackson's Lane on 18 May 1980, despite heavy snow fall. Quaintance's work explored domestic and psychological violence as works such as 'Shattered Eye,' 'Negatives 1.' My work explored Identity/Loss, 'Only a Memory,' and physicality without sexuality in 'Different Spot Along the Same Line,' which used text and poems of T.S. Elliot. Nin Dance Co. also performed and did workshops in Prisons, Mental Hospital and Homes for children with disabilities.

Following this I formed my own company; Battimamzel Dance Co. I choreographed 'From Coffee Beans to Disinfectant' which is about journey and identity, this was the first time I used mixed media in my work. I also produced Carnival Band, Awards & Fashion Show and a play entitled 'The Man who Lit Up the World,' all based on Black Inventors and Scientists. Ongoing illness and pure exhaustion forced me to stop.

Mass Movers performed at the first and second Dance Umbrella Festival, Nin Dance Company performed at the third and Battimamzel at the fourth.

You once told me that in the late 1970s most dancers were fighting for recognition as independent dance artists and that it was a common interest across racial lines and that the labelling 'black dance' upset that. Can you tell us more about this period and the politics of it?

Dance like all Art forms is continually evolving. In the 1970's -80's there were many choreographers/dancers who were experimenting with form, pushing at the boundaries of 'established forms' and content/subject matter; these artists later called 'Independent' were outside the established Art Council and GLA [Greater London Arts Authority] funding structure; The Arts Council funded major companies such as 'Royal Ballet,' London Contemporary Dance Co, Ballet Rambert, etc., There wasn't even a Dance Department. Most of us of all hues and

race, choreographed and danced for the love of the Art for the love of Dance and sometimes for a small performance fee. In the late 70's & 80's we [independent choreographers, dancers, producers, journalists, etc.] made a concerted effort to change this by lobbying the Council, Government, holding meetings in venues up and down England. Dance Umbrella, headed by Val Bourne emerged as a direct response to all the advocacy and the growing need for a platform for the work created by Independent Choreographers and Dancers and its new and growing audience.

This led to the formation of the 'Dance Department' and the funding of Independent artists to date. I cannot remember the timing of when the definition changed from 'Black choreographers and dancers,' to 'Black Dance.' When we started MAAS Movers our ethos was to create a main stream platform for 'Black choreographers & Dancers' as there was, and still is dire lack of a black dancers and choreographers in the existing main stream companies. Several choreographers emerged during the MAAS Movers period: Patricia Banton, Cathy Lewis, Mikloth Bond, Stewart Arnold. I know Stewart Arnold went on to have a fruitful period with Paul Henry. I do not know if the others pursued a career in Dance.

The Funders did, maybe still do, have a perception in their heads about the type of subjects we should be addressing, therefore they and the critics did not like the work of NIN Dance Company, as much of the choreography dealt with domestic and sexual violence but this also applied to Lloyd Newson [DV8] and dare I say some of the works of Kenneth McMillan. However, in time this changed which led to the rise of DV8 and others.

In theatre, TV., etc., despite being trained in Contemporary Dance, Ballet, Caribbean & Latin American and therefore knowledgeable in these forms, the word 'Black' is a limiting factor. A black choreographer would only be considered to be a choreographer or movement Director on a 'Black' play. The same does not apply for a white choreographer. Their skills are seen as all encompassing.

You are also a carnivalist. How did you come into carnival? Can you tell us about your work in this area?

Transformation, Subversion, Anarchy and their Dance is what drew me into MAS, a form within Carnival which was created by the freed from enslavement to express all they had endured during enslavement and a mirror to those who had exploited and capitalised on the back of their [the enslaved] labour.

I produced the artistic concept of two prize-winning Mas Band @ Notting Hill Carnival, '**Tears of the City**' and '**Black Inventors,**' both designed by Keith Khan. I had been a Judge and Adjudicator for Notting Hill Carnival and Splash for several years. I teach/lecture on 'the Dance of the Mas.' I was one of the presenters on BBC 1 for the Carnival section on the Queen's Jubilee Parade, 4 June 2002

Can you tell us about your work in drama? How and when did you come into this area?

Alby James asked me to choreograph 'Glory' by Felix Cross, this was my entry into Theatre, and I then went on to choreograph 'Label With Love' by John Turner and music by Squeeze for the Albany. Following this I worked for Talawa Theatre Co., both as a Movement & Associate Director working on plays from Wole Soyinka to Shakespeare. I directed two plays, 'Rum-Shop Opera' by Alexander D Great and 'Coups and Calypsos' by M Nourbese Philip.

Can you tell us about your award winning short films? How and when did you get into film-making?

'Kashmir's Ophelia' my award winning film has been shown in New York, Jakarta, London, Delhi, Srinagar, Trinidad & Tobago, Berlin. My inspiration for making film came as I travelled through the Himalayas on a journey from Jammu to Srinagar Kashmir. The Sir John Everett Millais painting of 'Ophelia' came to me on this journey and when I arrived in Srinagar I knew why the image came; the depression and suicide rates

had increased dramatically due to the ongoing occupation by India.

You have been working on a multi-disciplinary project called 'Ah Hard rain'. Can you tell us about this project?

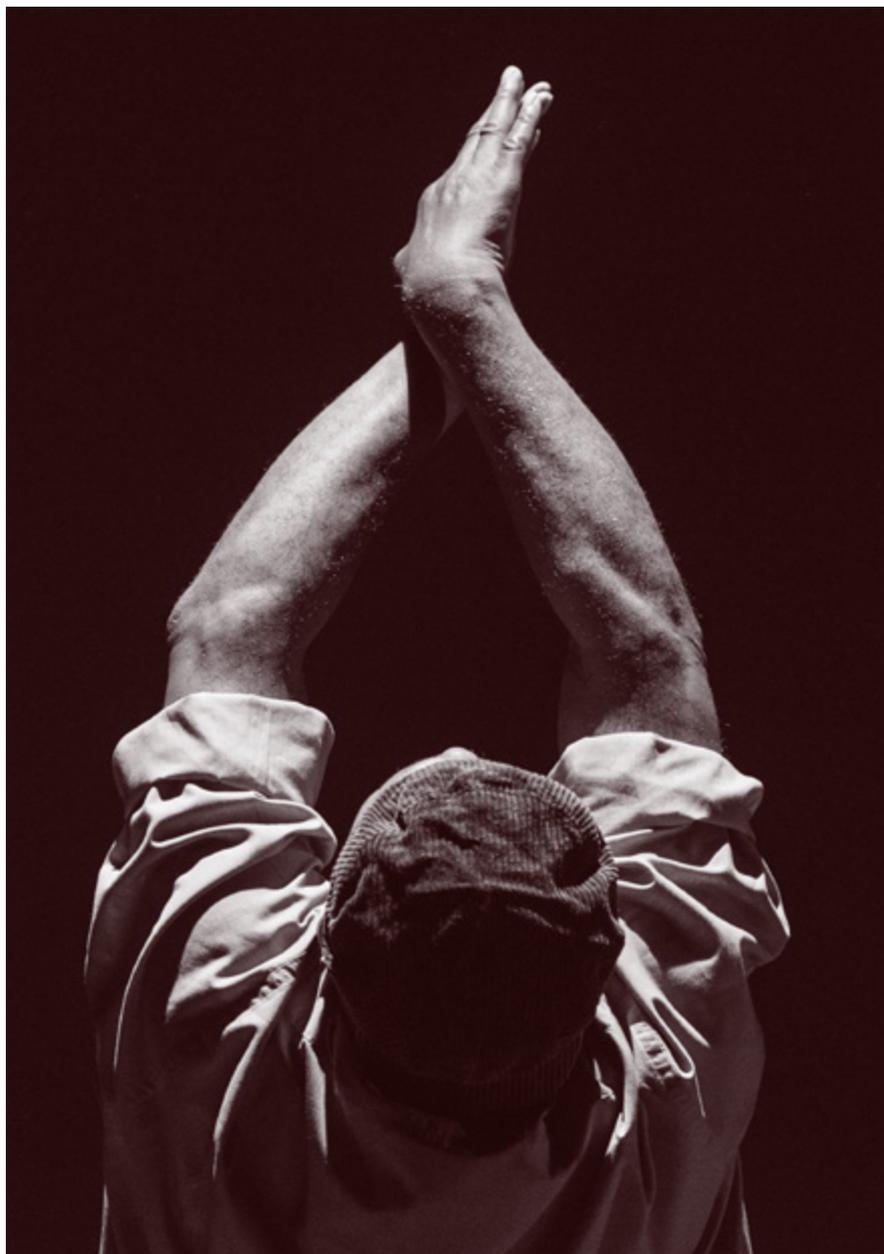
'Ah! Hard Rain' is an art film which explores some of the reasons why people leave their country and make the perilous journey on the Ocean in the hope of a future. *'If I stay in my country I will die, therefore I journey the Ocean, yes, I might die but I might find Life.'* – A refugee.

And how are you able to work in such a variety of roles?

My unstable childhood and my Dance, I see dance as central to everything, 'Without motion there is no Emotion,' which is the stuff of theatre, music, film, etc.

Thank you.

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INTERVIEW WITH PATRICK ACOGNY

Across nations and across generations

By 'Funmi Adewole

'Funmi Adewole interviews Patrick Acogny (PhD). Acogny is a dance scholar, choreographer, and teacher. He is the son of the celebrated dance pioneer, Germaine Acogny. Patrick has worked in a variety of capacities in dance in different parts of Europe, Asia and Africa. He worked in France and was artistic director of Kokuma Dance Company in Britain in from 1995 to 2000. He is also the founder and artistic director of the all female dance company based at Ecole des sables. Considering his background, Acogny (the younger) has developed sensitivity to issues of communication and reception of dance across time and space. He tells us more.

In the 1990s you worked in France. Can you provide an overview of your career there? What were the highlights or what did you enjoy most?

After my training in Mali and Senegal in 1989, I felt I had to go back to France and start learning and dancing with contemporary dance companies. I went to Toulouse in France where my mother and her husband were living and started giving African dance classes. I also join Pat O'Bine a choreographer for a contemporary dance company while doing my own creative work. After a couple of years, I was contacted by Irène Tassebedo choreographer from Burkina Faso and at the time based in Paris, a former student of my mother in Mudra Afrique and invited to join her dance company Ebene. I went to Paris and dance with her for a couple of years. It was thrilling to be with Irène, because of the virtuosity of her dance technique and the African, ballet and contemporary fusion of her work. And the fact that we were touring a lot was a bonus.

In the late 1990s you came over to England to work as the artistic director of Kokuma Dance Company? How did you find the British landscape at the time considering your background?

I didn't know much about British dance and even less about Black British dance. Helmut Vogt, my mother's husband had suggested that I applied as a dancer for Kokuma Dance Theatre. I sent my CV but had no real desire to go there since I knew that the Avant-garde of Contemporary African Dance was in Paris. I wanted to be part of it. But, one year after I sent that CV, the invitation came to direct Kokuma, to be the Artistic Director. It was an offer I could not refuse. I had the opportunity to do my own work without worrying about how to get dancers and pay them. It was a totally new discovery: a new scene, mentality and even the dance techniques as practiced by the dancers from Kokuma. I was also confronted for the first time in my life with Jamaican dance forms and dance forms from Ghana and Nigeria...

After you took over, as artistic director of Kokuma Dance Company in Birmingham the feedback from some of the audience was that your aesthetic was very different from the aesthetic the company was known for, which historically had strong Caribbean influences. What was your reaction to this feedback at the time? What are your thoughts now?

I remember the first critic from a local Newspaper from Birmingham. The journalist was expressing his regret that he did not have the excitement and thrill from the Caribbean influences they were so used to, yet he felt I probably had the talent to do some great work. I brought a totally new perspective and different aesthetics and influences to Kokuma. I just wanted to do my work and do great work. I was not so concerned about politics and expectations. I just thought that if the dance was smart, witty, exciting it would be fine and the audience would appreciate it. I didn't realise at the time how important for the community it was to feel a connection with the company through something they felt belonged to them; the Caribbean dance styles, experiences, etc. Yet, I don't have the feeling that I was neglect-

ting these aspects. I did work a lot with what the musicians (mostly Jamaican) and the dancers were bringing!

It's also true I brought dancers from Paris who could give me what I needed. Training the dancers took time and results were expected. So it did change the spirit and the aesthetics of Kokuma. Yet the Art Council, Birmingham City council and my Board of Directors supported me and the changes I was bringing. I felt comfortable with my work. Thinking about it today, I feel I could have acted differently. I do regret maybe my lack of interest in the politics that prevented me from understanding where the UK based dancers were coming from and also the fact that I didn't try harder to really connect with the Caribbean community.

Were you aware the company was going to close?

I never saw the closure of the company coming. We had money and the Board and the various councils seemed quite happy with the artistic work. Their "official" issue was the fact we could not keep an administrator for long time. I spent almost 6 years at the head of Kokuma and I had not less than 5 administrators. We were notified in the last year of our existence that that if we could not keep our last administrator the company would close down. The administrator decided to leave for a reason I still don't understand today. I still wonder why we could not keep our administrators then I have been told that the closure of Kokuma was scheduled for a long time and my presence only delayed the process. I don't know whether that is true or not. But one thing is sure, Kokuma gave me a chance that I could not have had in France and I am grateful for that. I wish I could have done more for the company! I loved it!

You have written and spoken passionately about audience reception to work by black choreographers. This changes from place to place considering the 'black experience' in that location. What advice would you give to choreographers who wish to work across different geographical contexts?

I do believe that if the work is really good it will transcend the cultural perspectives and people will understand the work. After all it's not about verbal language but body language, non-verbal communication. My work with the Ecole des Sables, which has taken me to different continents, is evidence of it. No matter where people are coming from or live, if they appreciate dance, they will appreciate your work if it's good dancing. For example, *Afrodites*, the last dance piece I create at the Ecole des sables with female dancers is primarily oriented to a Senegalese audience. The dancers speak the local language on stage, so Europeans did not understand it when we toured abroad. Many codes of Senegalese cultures are used. We decided to write an explanation text to explain those codes and to give some background information on the different scenes for various audiences. After that we were only concerned with being true to our experience and poetic perspective of our lives! So choreographers need to be true to their work and their inspiration. They should not try to satisfy whatever thoughts they about have about an audience in whatever country. Of course, once needs to respect the law wherever you perform. If nudity is not accepted and your dance piece contains it, well you should adjust or decide not to perform if your integrity requires it.

Waxtaan was a very successful production you worked on with your mother. Was that the first time you have worked together on a major production? What was the experience like working with Germaine? Did issues arise from being from two different generations?

With *Waxtaan*, it was the first time I was working with my mother on a dance piece! It's funny how people (and journalists) assume that my mother did most of

work since she is the one who's well known. Well if people knew her that well they would see that the work in *Waxtaan* or *Afrodites* are very different from her usual work. Working with her on both pieces was smooth. I wrote the dance piece, created the scenes with the dancers and she was the "outside eye", the "master" who would advise, suggest directions or ideas or if I was stuck and she would help me see through. I enjoyed it because I never felt the weight or the pressure of my mother and above all I felt an immense trust and confidence from in my ability to deliver. It was absolutely rewarding and smart thing for my mother to do and that gave me more confidence in myself. We had no issues of generations. Even when I had to choreograph some stuff for her, we never had a problem. My mother is quite easy to work with contrary to what people may think here again!

Can you tell us about your role at Ecole des Sables and the all female dance company that you lead?

I am the new artistic director of the Ecole des sables, so basically I replace my mother at the head of the Ecole, decide for the vision and policy of the Ecole and take all the artistic decisions! I am also the director of the Ecole since beginning of this new year! Where before Helmut Vogt and my mother were both directing the Ecole, Helmut as the administrator and my mother as the Artistic Director, I have a double the role, though I am not the administrator, somebody else is, I am sole at the head of the school. I direct therefore not only the female dance company but also the male dance company! It means I decide who I will invite to choreograph for the companies, how to train them the dancers and so on.

Best wishes and thank you.

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**CREAT-
ING
THE
CONTEXT**

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Photo: Tabanka Crew | Bloom Festival 2013 © Clive Clunis

CREATING THE CONTEXT

For the freelance dancer, independent artist or choreographer-led dance company working on a project-by-project basis, infrastructure is crucial. Some careers never take off due to a lack of it. For the Arts I would include the 'critical context' as part of its infrastructure. We caught up with three women – Thea Barnes, Pawlet Brookes and Deborah Baddoo – who have contributed to developing the context of performance for Black choreographers, those working with the dance of the African Diasporas, or working from a culturally diverse perspective, and asked them to tell us about their journeys. - 'Funmi Adewole

Dance writing: Thea Barnes

What motivated you to start writing about the dance artists and reviewing performances?

As a young dancer in New York in order to obtain media coverage you simply sent a press release to The New York Times or The Village Voice or any dance, periodical given their prescription for being given such a notice in a timely fashion. I have reviews of my young endeavors in New York and Chicago because I did my own publicity. Reviewers like Jack Anderson and Deborah Jowitt showed up at all kinds of what would be perceived as

small scale and mid-scale dance companies here in Britain. I found no such system of media review in Britain when I arrived in London for the young, up and coming dance practitioner outside mainstream designated performance spaces. Furthermore, some dance reviewers demonstrated an ignorance and prejudice for contemporary dance makers and especially "Black British dance" makers and in my opinion were more racist and not critically constructive. Some reviews I read in Britain would never have been published in American newspapers without reparations sought by the African American public. I mentioned this to Valerie Preston-Dunlop and she asked why I don't write about my performances myself; I had an epiphany moment that I remember to this day. Since that moment I have been writing about dance on several fronts and particularly those subjects that have significance to me in this British circumstance of practice. I felt the British circumstance could use an intimate intelligentsia committed to writing about the profundity of Africanist, Caribbean or any subaltern diasporic dance practice specifically.

Sometime after the epiphany moment with Ms Dunlop, I was introduced to Stuart Sweeney, CriticalDance Ambassador and Founding Director by Jeanette Siddall. Both encouraged me to become a writer for what was then *criticaldance.com* but is now *criticaldance.org* which has its own online magazine, *ballet-dance.com*. In exchange for tickets to see dance performances I was to critique and post my writing online. It was an opportunity that posed a willing audience for my perspective and way of writing. From writing online I then approached *Dance Theatre Journal* with a proposal to write articles on practitioners who were perceived as or representative of "Black British dance" either because of their dance making or what became in my opinion because of the colour of their skin.

I also wrote of dance makers that were of interest to me. I also sent a few articles to various dance magazines to achieve some level of recognition. The fee payment for all of it was never the reason because it never amounted to much financially speaking anyway.

How would you describe the community of practice during the 1990s? i.e. the network of practitioner using Africanist dance practices.

I found a group of dance practitioners ranging from mature to inexperienced. Sharon Wray, Benji Reid, Beverley Glean, Judith Palmer, Peter Badejo, H Patten and several others were among the most admirable practitioners who were specialists in their particular areas of dance practice. Younger members of this sector seemed less aware of their root lineage/movement experience and seemed to need to get educated/research to find root knowledge to build an individual aesthetic voice. There was also much confusion regarding what was considered "Africanist" or "black dance" by institutions, critics and practitioners. There seemed to be a great deal of rivalry between practitioners.

Were you aware of the debates around technique of Africa, Caribbean dance forms during this time? Were you involved in these discussions?

Some of them yes and as Resident Dance Supervisor for *The Lion King* (LK) London production I spoke often of the lack of training in Caribbean dance for most of our prospective LK dancers who were trained in British dance courses. I also observed a very revealing process within Adzido's African dance practices affording my conclusions regarding the implementation of the techniques of African or Caribbean dance forms needing more clarity of goals to be achieved, be it in a dance company or an institution of higher or elemental learning. African and Caribbean dance programs seem to have limited availability/access to "codified" systems or the recognition to implement a course of study in the curriculum of a British institution. In dance companies, education programs were for building community worth and raising funds and most times reluctantly implemented with less than knowledgeable means with less than admirable results. I also found that some programs existing in institutions of higher or elemental learning lacked rigorous foundations. These institutions seemed

to lack or foster institutional encouragement for on-going research to substantiate and fortify Africanist dance practices in all its manifestations.

Were the debates / discussions important to your work?

LK dancers from Brazil or the Caribbean had enough training in traditional forms to be able to manipulate them in a modern dance/musical theatre frame. My conversations though were feeble with regard the on-going teaching and implementation of African or Caribbean techniques and had no impact on the design of any dance curriculum in any British dance course. I currently hire Jackie Guy to teach Caribbean dance practice to my LK dancers. I can only hope my writing will cause a rethink of British dance history, dance practice and dance students and those dance practitioners with a mind to investigate their practice before they support or condemn any practice by another practitioner.

What perspective were you attempting to introduce to the dance profession through your writings? Why did you think this was important?

Clarification and political astute-ness seemed to be a need in this British circumstance. Through what means could I effect this British predicament had to be delineated. There was so much confusion I believed due to lack of knowledge about contemporary dance practices in general and the profundity of ways of making dance by practitioners with genealogies reaching into Africa and the Caribbean in particular. My first strategy was to write about British dance practitioners with Caribbean and African heritage by specifying their heritage/genealogy of dance making and not referring to them as a group of people or the dances they made as "Black dance". For me, "Black dance" was a borrowed term from America but its use in Britain lacked the contextual clarification to be effectively used for and by its supposed designates—British dance makers of Caribbean and African heritage and their allegiances. The term had been usurped by funders and hegemonic

establishments for their own purposes who homogenised the term and even in some instances told "Black" people what was and what was not "black" or "Black dance". The term had been used by "black" practitioners in the British context politically but not effectively for they lacked the ability or desire to rally as one group united in their multiplicity as a force to be reckoned with. There was no effective revolution targeting perpetrators of the disenfranchisement suffered by the practitioners in this sector.

In the past, Black British practitioners seemed to choose division even being divisive to serve personal gain; most choosing essentialist prescriptions to designate who and what was doing Black dance and privileging sects of the sector while strategically ignoring the profusion and diversity of dance making in Britain that was being shared and usurped by all dance makers, "black" and "white". The Arts Council running between these warring factions became by 2005 a grim reaper with a scythe of restructuring and budget cuts ending the practices of most and redefining the policies and practices of those left still standing.

As stated above "African peoples' dance" seemed to me to be a hegemonic strategy to sequester these subaltern dance practices in a funding ghetto, acknowledging their presence in Britain only. In hindsight it seemed a way to fill a funding stream with monies from other governmental pots without cutting the Art's council portfolio for its chosen dance organisations. When these pots dried up the companies, funded to quiet diversity mandates, were simply dropped or supported for another 3-5 years given the political climate. Also "African peoples' dance" seemed to privilege "African" practices without acknowledging the profundity of Caribbean and other forms of dance making in Britain that may have roots in Africa but have well established and delineated practices distinct from Africa. This posited idea of "African peoples' dance" also excluded dance makers whose skin colour was the only evidence of an "Africanist" presence in their dance artefact.

I believe “African peoples’ dance” as well as “black dance” invisibilises intra-ethnic and racial dance practices found in Britain. It seems to me a dated essentialist belief thinking all “black” expressions come from Africa. I believe we have moved away from “needing” to use these terms; they do not represent the present but instead reclaim a past that may be a root of the present but has a lesser relevance currently. “African peoples’ dance” and the other similar misnomer “black dance” lacked clarity in 1992-2005 for it didn’t adequately propose an effective manifesto for the people it supposedly represented. I believe in 2014 these terms in Britain continue to confuse temporal and spatial effects of circumstance, embodiment, lived and movement experience that impact the person who makes dance. Globalisation, commodification of dance especially subaltern secular and sacred dances, dissolving nationalistic allegiances and other post modern and post colonial discourses in art practice make these labels obsolete or provocative and not always in a positive way. If there is a desire to use them they need a warning label—DANGER!! PRONE TO CONFUSION!!! Use only if needed or at the very least make reference in the enquiry of the time, place and why the use. They are definitely corrupt and perhaps like a dysfunctional program rarely if ever used.

My strategy is to demonstrate their ineffectualness by not using them; by illustrating, articulating, characterising dance practice not categorising dance practice. The artefact is what I choose to describe and in so doing delineate the practice of individuals not groups of people. In describing the individual as an individual you discover the intricacies of dance making in the place and time of its occurrence. This will provide an honest and deferential accounting of how the dance is lived and performed.

Biography

Ms. Barnes is currently Resident Dance Supervisor for *The Lion King* in the West End, London, United Kingdom. She joined *The Lion King* in April 2001. Ms. Barnes’s performing career began with the Alvin

Ailey Dance Company and then Martha Graham Dance Company. She also has film credits with these companies. Ms. Barnes has Broadway/film productions credits with *The Wiz* and Broadway production of *Treemonisha*. Ms. Barnes was Artistic Director of Leeds-based Phoenix Dance Company from 1997 – 2000 choreographing, commissioning new dance works, reconstruction of works within the repertory, and education projects. Ms. Barnes has taught and choreographed in community settings, elementary and high schools, universities, and professional schools in USA, Britain, and Europe and coordinated small-scale productions in Britain. Ms. Barnes has also published articles for web based www.critical-dance.com and in various magazines including *Dance Theatre Journal*, *Ballet Tanz*, *Dancing Times* and *Hotfoot Online*, the journal of the Association of Dance of the African Diaspora (ADAD). Ms. Barnes researched and was the presenter for BBC Radio 3 broadcast *You Dance Because You Have To* aired September 2003 and October 2004; worked with Bedford Interactive Video to develop teaching CD’s and the British Arts Council to develop an educational documentary entitled *Not Just a Somersault* both projects illustrating and applying varied perspectives of the Martha Graham dance technique. Ms. Barnes also appears in the BBC4 special, *Dance Rebels: a story of modern dance* aired December 2015. Ms. Barnes holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree in Dance from the Juilliard School, New York, Master’s Degree in Dance Education from Columbia Teachers College in New York and Master of Philosophy from City University, London.

Organizational and Audience Development: Pawlet Brookes

What ignited your passion for dance?

When I was about eight years old I was sent to dance school by my parents to try and make sure I didn’t become too much of a tomboy.



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Then I was privileged to see a performance of Swan-Lake at the Manchester Palace Theatre with Galina Samsova was the Principal Ballerina. I was enchanted. There was no turning back.

You have had senior roles in various buildings and organisations that have had a particular focus on the work of black and Asian people such as the Nia Centre, the Peepul Centre and Rich Mix. What took you into this area of work?

I wanted to dance when I was younger but the opportunities didn't exist as they do now, so my focus became how could I create work or be involved in the arts, keeping my passion for dance but also enabling others and shaping change. Both the Nia Centre and the Peepul Centre offered this opportunity, as the first allowed me to be culturally specific and the second the chance to work with other cultural organisations at a professional level. This interest in the arts was coupled with my interest in cultural politics, which in the late 70s, early 80s was a hotbed of discussion. I grew up in the era of Rock Against Racism and the introduction of the Race Relations Act, key cultural markers that had an impact on my career and outlook.

There were very few Black or Asian people in the public eye in the arts or mainstream TV at that time. When they did appear it was in bit parts or derogatory roles, never showcasing the talent I grew up listening to or seeing, the talent of the Nicolas Brothers, the music of Ella Fitzgerald, through to Bob Marley. Dance companies like Dance Theatre of Harlem or Alvin Ailey were not that accessible. I grew up going to the Royal Exchange in Manchester where I was privileged to see people like Peter Postlewaithe, Leo McKern, Helen Mirren, etc. and I wanted to see the same calibre of work from the Black and Asian community. I believe that at the Nia Centre, the Peepul Centre, and then Rich Mix, I was able to create programmes that reflected the talent and richness in the Black and Asian communities, hosting artists and organisations like Aswad, Nina Simone, Salif Keita, Gill Scott Heron, Adzido and Kokuma.

What are the challenges of working in organisational and audience development when it comes to the work of people of non-western heritage?

Too often diversity organisations are set up to fail. People assume that they have weak management, when often they are just not given the same support as other organisations, and then white administrators are brought in to run them at senior executive level. And the work that they create and showcase is assumed by others to be only relevant to a specific community of interest, rather than all communities. Marketing may need to be tailored depending on the community that is being targeted but the product has to be made to be of interest to everyone.

What were the issues and challenges in the arts when you began your career?

We used to talk about the glass ceiling, issues of race, leadership and gender and credibility and that everything diverse should not just be categorised as community arts but was often of international importance. One of the biggest stumbling blocks was language and it remains so. What do you call arts when delivered by a person of colour: Black Arts, BAME, Cultural Diversity, the list goes on. And how many people of colour were in senior leadership roles?

How have they changed now?

The history of Arts Council policies and initiatives is relevant. Forty years after the publication of Naseem Khan's, 'The Arts that Britain Ignores', we can see that the picture has changed to a degree and more bright colours have been filled in, so it is not all white. But the question of image over substance still remains, the question of language/terminology is still around and continually evolving. The questions around policy and practice, about the host still being the parent, still have not really been challenged and are just underneath the veneer of the image that is promoted. The case for the arts is that it is a great champion for change. New diversity funding offers opportunities, but still in the margins are artists and

companies that have been thrown away, discarded when no longer flavour of the month, given little time to fail and regroup and try again, being expected to get it right first time. We still have very few companies that truly reflect the demographic profile of the UK. Leadership has not changed significantly and as funding becomes harder to achieve fewer organisations have the opportunity to stabilise and work full-time at their practice. Diversity still remains in the margins or as part of an education programme NOT the main stage.

Can you share some of the highlights of your career or some of your achievements at organisations you have worked for or with?

I will select three: all had significant challenges within a diversity context.

I will always be proud of what I contributed to the design of the 330 seat theatre at the Peepul Centre



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and the companies and artists that I programmed there and then in subsequent jobs at other venues, such as Henri Oguike, Ballet Black, Trebangi, Scottish National Ballet, Tavaziva, Daksha Sheth and coming this year, Urban Bush Women. Also, very proud of the way audiences were built for each across all communities.

I was the Chief Executive of Rich Mix from 2007-2010 and succeeded in turning around the fortunes of a failing organisation through a major strategy review, shortly after it opened in 2006 as a newly converted building, implementing new staffing structures and transformational changes to the way the building operated and establishing partnerships with organisations such as the BBC, Erdem and Tiger Lily.

And now I have great pride in having established Serendipity, an arts organisation that has survived and now grown to its sixth year, delivering the Let's Dance International Frontiers festival and Black History Month and other projects such as Ballare: To Dance and Follow the Light.

What inspired Serendipity and the Let's Dance festival? Can you let us into some of your future plans?

Leicester used to host a dance festival but every time I wanted to take my daughter to see dance it meant I had to go to another city. Yet Leicester has one of the best university dance courses, some of the best independent dance schools like Dupont and has produced dancers, producers and administrators that are now key players in the national dance ecology for the UK.

LDIF offers the opportunity to celebrate work created and talent developed, both at a local and international level. Serendipity allows me to place diversity centre stage through maintaining the quality threshold I grew up watching at the Royal Exchange. Serendipity has learning at its heart and gives opportunities to young people from very diverse backgrounds to engage in the arts and develop their careers as artists, producers or administrators.

This year we will be publishing our third book, *Blurring Boundaries* focusing on hip hop and urban street dance and its relationships to contemporary dance and performances in theatrical spaces. Then LDIF 16 (May 2016) will be focusing on Black Women in Dance, with a conference and programme reflecting upon the challenges that have faced Black women in the world of dance and showcasing Urban Bush Women, the first time they have performed in the UK for over a decade.

In 2014 you organised the 'Creolising Dance' conference with Modern Moves, King's College London. It brought a fresh perspective to the work of dance artists from the Caribbean. What inspired this conference? What do you think was achieved?

I think little recognition is given to the work produced and created by those with a heritage that lies in the Caribbean. It's complex and in many ways is very progressive, as it reflects the changing face of dance: marrying, combining and merging cultures and forms. The publication is important as it places a marker that celebrates and gives recognition to ground breaking work by artists such as Josephine Baker, Katherine Dunham and to more contemporary dance practitioners like L'Antionette Stines, Catherine Denecy and Patrick Parson.

Anything else?

No, simply, *lutta continua!* We must always be optimistic of having an impact on the world around us and always remember that dance and the arts can be truly transformational.

Biography

Pawlet Brookes is an accomplished and experienced senior manager and producer who has been at the heart of the development of Black arts centres, from Marketing Manager at the Nia Centre (Manchester) in the 90s to the Artistic Director of Peepul Centre (Leicester) and Chief Executive of Rich Mix (London). She has been the Arts Council assessor for a number

of Black arts capital projects, such as Bernie Grant Arts Centre (London) and National Centre for Carnival Arts (Luton). Currently Pawlet is the Artistic Director of Serendipity, a diversity led organisation that initiated and produces Let's Dance International Frontiers (formally Let's Dance International Festival) in Leicester, an annual event since 2010.

Her work includes leadership training, partnership building, artistic assessment, business planning, fund-raising (private and public sectors and charitable trusts), marketing, audience development and cultural diversity, events management and international programming. Clients include: Leicester City Council, Arts Council England, East Midlands Caribbean Carnival Arts Network, Philip Herbert and Cultivate.

She edited and published "Serious About Dance – Let's Talk" in 2005, "Hidden Movement: Contemporary Voices of Black British Dance" in 2013 and "Creolizing Dance in a Global Age" in 2015. She was a finalist for the 2009 National Regeneration and Renewals Award for Cultural Leadership and has been a speaker at a number of international conferences including being the UK representative at a UNESCO event in Stockholm.

www.serendipity-uk.com

Producing and Touring: Deborah Baddoo

What ignited your passion for equal opportunities for black dancers and choreographers?

My own experience as a black artist in the 1980s trying to develop my work, get gigs and funding. It became clear to me that there were a lot of pre-conceptions about work created by Black artists in terms of style and quality. All dance was measured in terms of a European contemporary dance aesthetic. Also all through training the black body was not perceived as 'right' for contemporary dance and I was constantly being told to 'point my

feet', or 'tuck under', because of my body shape. This experience was common to many black artists.

What gave you the idea for the road shows that you used to take into schools?

DB: Having developed a massive national tour with Mission 2001 showcase, I wanted to engage with audiences, bring audiences to the shows and educate a wide audience about the diversity of styles and approaches that constituted 'Black Dance'. I wanted to challenge pre-conceptions about work made. I also wanted to bring more black role models into education and community settings.

How did you get into the promoting and touring of work by choreographers?

On a need to do basis, building up from promoting and touring my own work with State of Emergency.

What were the issues or challenges facing practitioners who went into producing and touring at the time you started?

Really difficult to get work as an unknown. It was hard to breakdown barriers to pre-conceived notions. In the very early days emails had not been invented or computers were not widespread and so all negotiation was by phone and letter! So booking a tour was even more of a time commitment than it is now.

Marketing was also problematic on very tight budgets, without computers and there was more reliance on venues to market (or not market) the work.

Regional touring was problematic as there were different expectations at that time than in the major cities. Ethnicity in small towns and rural communities tended to be seen as exoticism.

How did you develop your skills and the context for your work?

I developed skills 'on the job' and worked with an experienced project manager at the start to help me organise the nuts and bolts. Putting together a programme and selling it to venues was simply a case of trial and error. I think the energy that I had at the time and the enthusiasm and belief in what I did was infectious and I built up a lot of very positive relationships with venue programmers and other individuals, some which have lasted right up to the present day.

Can you provide a list of the national and international tours you have organised or been part of?

1987: Atomic Blues
1991: Dance For Life
2001: The Mission Showcase Tour and Roadshow
2002: Tavaziva Dance
2003: The Mission Showcase Tour and Roadshow
2004: Tavaziva Dance 'Soul Inspired'
2005: Tavaziva Dance in Toronto at the International Association of Blacks in Dance
2005: Big Mission 3 day Festival
2006: Mission Re-Position
2006: Inter-Mission
2007: Inter-Mission
2008: Big Mission 3 day Festival
2009: Mission Possible
2011: The Jingle Dress
2012: Desert Crossings UK, South Africa and Germany
2014: Love & Sex
2015: Black Dance Archive Exhibition and Outreach Tour
2015: Co-Mission

What vision or philosophy has guided you in this area of work?

The vision that diverse arts are supported and acknowledged as part of the dance mainstream instead of as an 'add-on' or special focus. Where

there is no more need to campaign for Black dance artists to become part of the mainstream.

Philosophy: Keep pushing and never give up! Don't take no for an answer! Always be ready to address any situation – basically be in a constant 'State of Emergency'!

How have issues changed in this field of work since you started? What are practitioners focussed on at present?

I don't think that most of the current cohort of Black dance artists are particularly aware of what has gone before them and that a lot of struggle has taken place in the past so that diverse dance is accepted on a more level playing field, although in my experience there is still a long way to go in some areas.

I think that practitioners are more focused on the blurring of boundaries in terms of approaches to performance styles and dance genres. There is a cross-over of dance into theatre, into performance art, into circus etc.

I also feel that the issue of ethnicity and opportunities in dance are more 'on the surface' and not so important for artists today and the attention is more on the focus of the work. However statistically, there is still a long way to go to create equal opportunities for all and the Arts Council have acknowledged and recognised this with the Creative Case for Diversity funding.

There are still no black choreographers of the equivalent status to the choreographers who are currently 'at the top of the game' in terms of accolades and funding and development support.

There are still extremely few diverse artists in the ACE funding portfolio and historically many Black regularly funded companies had their funding cut over the last ten years.

In response to the results of our wide consultation with the Black Dance Sector in the UK and the resulting

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Altered States Report, in 2010 State of Emergency began discussing the idea of a strategic alliance of black-led dance companies, choreographers and artists. To keep abreast of key developments and issues, and also to provide a forum for debate, discussion, peer review, partnership working, networking training opportunities and artistic sharing and development, we have established a National Strategic Alliance for Black dance which meets quarterly.

The SABD has been established to create a forum for dialogue and to support the development of the Black dance sector.

Quarterly meetings still take place and are always well attended, which suggests that Black artists still feel that being part of a particular network that they feel comfortable in and share a commonality of experience is important to them. Therefore, there is clearly still a need for a separate focus at times.

What would you like your legacy to be in this area?

A contributor to making change, helping to smash the glass ceiling for Black artists and go some way to our ambitious original aim of The Mission programme to 'change the cultural landscape of dance in the UK'.

Biography

Deborah trained at the University of Surrey and went on to gain an MA in Performance Arts at Middlesex University. In 2006 she was awarded a Fellowship of the Royal Society of Arts, and in 2010 received an MBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours List for services to dance.

In addition Deborah also holds a Certificate in Training and Development, a Diploma in Arts Management and is a qualified coach.

Following on from her early career as a Senior Lecturer in Dance at Hackney Community College, London, where she established the first nationally accredited full-time Dance Foundation Course, she went on to work at the Cockpit Theatre as a Youth Arts Development Manager and then continued

this development work in Hackney, becoming a dance development worker and co-founder of a pioneering Arts Centre, Pyramid Arts Development, which housed music and dance activities and was a catalyst and springboard for the careers of literally hundreds of artists, some of whom became nationally and internationally recognised.

Deborah has also choreographed and performed in her own right as a solo artist and improviser working with live music, performing with some of the jazz greats. In 2012 she co-choreographed part of the opening ceremony for the Sailing Olympics in Weymouth.

From 1997 -2000 Deborah also joined ADAD (Association of Dance of the African Diaspora) as a part-time Co-ordinator and developed the organisation through producing dance platforms and conferences and writing and editing the quarterly newsletter.

Deborah set up her own company, State of Emergency in 1986. State of Emergency is a performance and production company, committed to the creation of high quality work, and to creativity and innovation in the fields of dance and music. As a producer in its own right, and also as an advocate for artists and performers, State of Emergency has established a national and international reputation. State of Emergency is a National Portfolio Organisation of Arts Council England and delivers a national and international programme of activity which includes commissioning and producing tours and events, delivering talent development programmes for young people and delivering an annual leadership training programme for Artistic Directors and Emerging Artistic Directors. State of Emergency also leads the National Strategic Alliance for Black dance and offers consultancy for organisations wishing to develop a more diverse dance programme. Deborah is also an experienced mentor and black dance advocate. Most recently State of Emergency has been working on a pioneering project working with multiple partners to set up the first Black Dance Archive in the UK, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

www.stateofemergencyltd.com

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THEN & NOW

INTERVIEWS
WITH HIP HOP ARTISTS

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LONG TERM INVESTORS

Sunanda Biswas, Robert Hylton & Kwesi Johnson

Richard Pitt talks to three artists who started their careers in the 1990s about dance then and dance now - SUNANDA BISWAS AKA 'Bgirl Sunsun', Kwesi Johnson and Robert Hylton.

SUNANDA BISWAS AKA 'Bgirl Sunsun'

How did you get in to dance?

I started ballet and tap when I was 3 but soon got into gymnastics at school, I continued the ballet up to 11 and then being deep into my gymnastics started at a club where I went on to compete in national and international computing until the age of 19. During this time, growing up with Hip Hop, I used to copy stuff I saw in films, videos and TV. I also took dance at school which was more contemporary, and then by the age of 16 my mum and dad said I should try to go to a dance college as that was all I seemed to want to do!

I trained at Lewisham College for 2 years and then 3 years at London studio Centre.

How would you describe the field for black artists or those using African or diaspora form at the time you started?

When I started following dance when I was a teenager in the 80's, it was mainly black artists I was following such as Michael Jackson, Geoffrey Daniels, Shabadoo, etc.

Then going to dance college in Lewisham there was a great mix of us there from a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds. Most people were into contemporary and African dance at the time, as breaking had faded out in the media and

there was not really a market for Hip Hop, Commercial and Street dance.

How would you compare developing a career in Hip Hop then and now?

There was really no career for us within Hip Hop dance in those days as you could either be a rapper (late 80's) or maybe a backing dancer for a group or singers, but it wasn't necessarily a career move. In the establishments we were pushed to do contemporary commercial street dance which was an amalgamation of some of the past Hip Hop styles such as New Jack Swing etc., and maybe a mix of African dance. Those of us that were into Hip Hop just did it more as an outside of college thing.

I think now it is so much easier to be a Hip Hop artist as the previous two generations have paved the way to give the new generations the knowledge of the dance but also an insight into how to teach the styles of dance.

When I first got asked to teach dance in the early nineties I was still experimenting to see what was working.

Even the word 'Street Dance' is different today to how it was used back then. 'Street Dance' meant more commercial dance that you would do with an artist or in a musical. Today there are also many more opportunities for Hip Hop dancers as there are many more platforms that people have created such as UK B-boy Champs, Just De Bout and Breaking Convention which is taking us into Hip Hop theatre.

What vision or philosophy has kept you going or have you formed on your professional journey?

I always wanted to learn Breaking as a form but didn't get the chance the first time round, so when I met breakers in mid 90's I tried to learn from them, having grown up around Hip Hop I knew a lot of the party dances of my time which now are being taught as a particular style around the world.

When I found Breaking properly in 1998 I had already tried to use it within my genre but never knew it well enough. Being around Breakers and original dan-

cers of that style enabled me to learn a language which I have used in my teachings and continue to develop.

My philosophy is to know your foundations and work up from there. So many so-called Hip Hop or Street dancers have no clue or knowledge of where these dances came from and I feel the history of these styles is very important, however I do like the fact that these dances are always evolving as the new generations find their love for the different styles, and that in itself is just as important.

I have to admit, being in the game for a long time, sometimes I feel like stopping or giving up, but when I teach and inspire these young people it definitely keeps me going and inspires me to continue my long journey.

How easy it is to develop intergenerational relationships with younger dancers?

I find it relatively easy as when you all have one thing in common, for example 'Breaking', and you all want to improve your skills, age doesn't really matter. I have students aged 5 plus and have a few teenaged boys in my crew, when we train or go to jams it's as if we are all the same age!! Hip Hop definitely keeps you young!

I also think that the young people do look up to us 'old school' dancers as they realise they gain knowledge by being around us, which is great. We also learn from them too.

What are your artistic concerns right now?

Wow I have a few! I do feel that some times the art form of Hip Hop and some of these dances are forgotten, and it just becomes about technique or what moves you can do, so I would like to make sure that the young people are schooled in the sense that it's not always who is on top of the game but that they recognise that there are people underneath that are very important as well, and if they aren't given opportunities the essence of the styles will get lost.

I like to think that artists are all given a chance and are considered properly regardless of whether that

have a big name or not, also regardless of their gender or race. I am mixed race and don't fit into any type of category, but often find myself missing out on certain opportunities etc.

**Robert Hylton:
Choreographer, performer,
teacher, researcher**

How did you get in to dance?

I have always danced; at first it was either at home or youth club kind of stuff, more likely than not just jumping around, although I do remember doing the Robot pre Hip Hop. In 1982 when Jeffrey Daniel from Shalamar appeared on 'Top of the Pops' doing the Backslide (Moonwalk) and Popping, that's when I really began to practice and the obsession with dance kicked in. Soon after 'The Rock Steady Crew' were featured in Malcolm McLaren's 'Buffalo Gals' video and Hip Hop truly landed on our shores and that was it.

When I was 16 -17 I started going to clubs regularly and that's when I first really saw UK Jazz dance I got fully involved and practiced religiously eventually joining Bamboozle, a street jazz crew based in Newcastle. It was through Bamboozle who had connected with Dance City in Newcastle that I first began performing. Notably our biggest gig at the time was at The Theatre Royal Newcastle as part of Dance Umbrella Festival in 1991. Dance City also told me about Northern in Leeds and helped me with preparations for the audition. I auditioned and was fortunate to be offered a place at Northern in 1991.

How would you describe the field for black artists or those using African or diaspora form at the time you started out in dance?

I guess my time in the industry started in '91 when attending Northern in Leeds. Phoenix were then a majority Leeds born black company; there was also a strong influx of local to Leeds black dancers attending Northern. Nationally there was a multitude of

African diaspora led companies, practitioners etc., such as Union, Adzido, Bullies Ballerinas and many more. Prior to Northern my experience of dance was in clubs and social dance where Black music has driven Street dance from Hip Hop, Soul, Funk to Jazz and where I would see many different forms of self-expression through dance, which shifted and developed depending on and through the particular genre of music played. Many of those club dancers I saw from the mid to late eighties were also professional practitioners.

My point being African diaspora dance forms whether from a formal or social context has always been, as my grandma would say 'full of busy'. As are today's generation of African diaspora dance practitioners full of busy (why wouldn't they be?) That's what humans do - question, dream and create.

The thing is their maybe cause to think the African diaspora sector has not been full of busy as it seems the contribution of African diaspora practitioners, choreographers and dancers don't seem to obtain the same amount of legacy as other cultural dance practices. Through written, oral, academic or artistic achievement such as awards. Whereupon let's call it the non African diaspora dance forms seem to get the lion's share of content regarding contribution to dance. Meaning educational space, creative, academic references, repertory works, library books and buildings. All content and information which could be afforded to African diaspora artists (basically everyone regardless of colour) from generation to generation as a way of informing those new to dance what went before. Food for thought; America has Ailey and Revelations where's ours?

Is it that legacy is the privilege of the dominant society? Slightly veering off here although what I am getting at through ADAD, Black Dance Archives, and State of Emergency etc. this is the change. A change, which records, protects, champions and hopefully secures, nails down, constructs and shapes the foundations of the African diaspora contribution to dance. To work as a beacon that reflects the ca-

non of achievements within the UK's African diaspora contribution to dance.

Leading me to the word emerging and the emerging artist who feeds the industry through their input and contribution of challenge and risk to build and change the way we think about dance. My point being the contribution of African diaspora dance has seen much growth since my time in Leeds. My observation is that although the cycle of contribution from the African diaspora dance practitioners emerging and established has been consistent. There seems to be more than a whiff in the air of the contribution of African diaspora dance artists as being temporary objects. Hence the call for legacy as I fear if history is not told institutionally and within education through an informed timeline etc. to the level that reflects the true contribution of dance of the African diaspora artists in the UK (the world), the cycle of being temporary objects within dance will continue to be our fate.

How would you compare developing a career in Hip Hop theatre dance then with now?

In the late 90s when I first began performing with Hip Hop based vocabulary there was no visible career in Hip Hop theatre. It was about freedom of self expression and making the work that was inside your body and mind.

We made the work we wanted to make (Jonzi D, Benji Reid etc.) we created, we took risks, we got noticed, we got organised, we got support, we got gigs and then more and more gigs. It wasn't an easy shift it was hard work (but that's the nature of the business - it's the same today) what we did though was help build and cement the space to what is now known as Hip Hop theatre.

In 2016 unlike the 90s there is a clear thread to having a career within Hip Hop theatre. Such as specific festivals like 'Breakin Convention' and an ever present blossoming generational lineage of practitioners from the above to Boy Blue, Birdgang, Botis Seva etc. along with the ever increasing visibility and rise of the next ones...

There is an audience who are knowledgeable about Hip Hop theatre, many companies have been funded and may they continue to. Theatres and programmers recognise the genre and it's a worldwide business and that's the difference.

What vision or philosophy has kept you going or have you formed on your professional journey?

What more can I learn about dance, the world and myself and how can I make that into performance, art or education.

How easy it is to develop intergenerational relationships with younger dancers?

As someone who lives through the values, which Hip Hop teaches such as each one, teach whereupon you actively take on the roles of both mentor and mentee intergenerational relationships become very much part of your daily practice. My experience as a young dancer within contemporary dance was very different as it seems the hierarchal practices of some formal dance forms (regardless of colour) on occasion deterred or separated the level of conversation or access between generations, which I always found a bit weird even silly.

I always try to keep my self accessible to young artist especially the ones who I have spent time with through educational projects and so on. I may seem unapproachable at times usually this means I am day dreaming, working out the meaning of life or maybe just hungry and tired.

What are your artistic concerns at this right now?

I am going to finish were I started and re look at the theme of legacy. Their are/ is so much African diaspora led dance out there at the moment from hip hop, African, Ballet, Contemporary to other... it's hard to keep up. My main concern is that if we don't pursue, demand or are privileged the same level of legacy as the non-African diaspora dance forms, the new, emerging, current or other may again fol-

low within the canon of African diaspora artists as temporary objects of dance.

When I see the new energies and ideas of young artists tearing into the world I always hope and wish, their space is granted a full time position in this thing called dance. Yes, this means money and so on because that's how the business of dance works. Hollywood and the recent Oscar nominations which for the second year we see no black faces. Black faces whose contribution to film seems to be ignored or possibly deemed as having no value or place for public accolade from what I understand is a mostly male, old and white academy who voted for what Spike Lee calls a lily white Oscars. Here in the UK there are also similar issues at hand with this years BRIT Awards evoking the hashtag #BRITsSoWhite.

Currently in dance there is the big gender argument about lack of female choreographers in the industry, which is getting a lot of press. I get it and see the point of debate, however I don't remember the inequality experienced by African diaspora dance practitioners (male or female) getting the same attention regarding opportunity's, access, high level positions, commissions etc. or lack of getting as many headlines?

This years National Dance Awards have recently been announced, it does though seem a little light on diversity? Do the NDAs mirror an Oscar or BRIT Awards led approach to decision making regarding the black body and visibility? I hope not. If anything the academies decisions made by this years BRIT's and Oscars seem more like 20th, 19th... Century decisions on the black body and seeing as it's the 21st Century we should know better. On that, where does hip hop fit into the general narrative of dance awards and how is the shift of work from hip hop practitioners recognised from an awards point of view and who would be considered the experts the 21st Century advisors (the informed)? I don't see awards being the be all and end all of legacy. It's more about the process of decision making and the whom and how which I suggest is a potentially divisive mechanism to the black presence in the crea-

tive sector and the difference between temporary and permanent for African diaspora practice.

There is of course light at the end of the tunnel with ACE and broadcast media through the Act for Change and the push to advance diversity and the visibility of black talent in the media and theatre. Action and changes I hope which are extended past a particular rhetoric of time and space to break through the narrative of any past temporariness to enable African diaspora artists, producers and leaders etc. to become full time and permanent visible contributors to our cultural landscape. The idea and success of being permanent of course needs strategy and commitment to reflect and maintain the vast amount of African diaspora contribution in dance past and present. We are not in the business of the Oscars or the BRIT's this is dance so let's lead in the cause for change and keep pushing to make living in the 21st Century about everyone not just the few.

For Nadine Senior (founder of Northern School of Contemporary Dance) thank you and may your legacy and the many others who have championed the African diaspora sector live on.

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Kwesi Johnson: Artistic director

How did you get in to dance?

I got into dance at a very young age because my sisters used to dance. I had 4 sisters and they all went to ballet school and I used to go and watch their shows. When they were making up their own dances they would rope me in as I was the youngest, and I was always made to be a stand-in.

I also had 2 brothers that used to listen to a lot of Funk and Micheal Jackson and the Jackson 5 and so I used to sing and dance and entertain the family

and I remember being at Junior school and winning the 'Disco King' title. This is not a title I put on my CV by the way. That was my introduction to dance. I was never afraid of it; it was always there.

I started getting into Hip Hop about the time when my sister bought 'Rapper's Delight' for me and I saw 'Tick and Tock' perform 'Summer in the City on TV. I recorded, watched and studied them and practice until I got it locked down. Then me and my friend Carl took the record to the school disco with our white gloves and we performed the Robot. It must have looked terrible!

Then Malcolm McClaren and Buffalo Gals was the real epicentre of the explosion that got me into dance and watching videos of the Rock Steady Crew. I would practice at local youth clubs and in the freshly buffed corridors at school.

I started with Breakin' and later got into UK Jazz Fusion and House. However House dance was not as developed in the UK in the 80's and 90's as it was in the US.

When I was 18 years old my friend, Kuldip Singh-Barmi, said that he was going to take a dance course in my hometown of Leicester we both decided to go together. At the same time we met a DJ called Tony Minvielle who was a collector of Jazz music and played Jazz in the clubs in Leicester and he really introduced me to the polyrhythms and off beats of Jazz. Hip Hop made me feel a certain way, but when Jazz was played it took me to a completely different space and still does.

From there, we decided to audition at Northern School of Contemporary Dance. Closer to home Sheron Wray, Leon Hazelwood, Melanie Joseph and Lorraine LeBlanc where my early inspirations as they had already gone to London to dance school and when they came back to Leicester to go clubbing with us they would completely take over the floor. It was amazing to see what they could do, not just be-

cause of their formal training but also Club dance. We got into Northern and went for it.

How would you describe the field for black artists or those using African or diaspora form at the time you started out in dance?

I feel that when I started out it was simpler for Black artists. Labels didn't get in the way, and there was no money spent on discussing what we call this or how do we put it into a box. It was people of the diaspora, making work that was from them, and they became the channel for the things that influenced them. It was what we did, the quality of the work was more important than the box it fit into.

Social Media and YouTube gives us access but not a complete understanding of cultures that aren't part of our everyday lives. One interesting thing that happened was when 'Black culture' became 'Urban culture' which made the 'black' experience more assessable to everyone. It was mainly through Hip Hop culture. This was a good and not so good thing. On one hand it disregarded a cultural legacy and watered it down so that most people understood Hip Hop to be black culture rather than part of its evolution which obviously made it very one dimensional with no historic reference.

There continued to be traditional African and Caribbean dance groups but they faded away. The very reason myself and other Hip Hop theatre practitioners where funded as RFO's was because Adzido had it's funding removed and the remaining funds where available for project funded companies that where in the black dance arena to apply for to become an RFO. I'm digressing but it's important to know how and why Hip Hop theatre grew in the UK it wasn't just the talent of the artists. I do question why there isn't an NPO that is a traditional African dance company one that isn't fused with contemporary dance?

On the other hand when black became urban it gave a window into elements of black culture that so many people did not have access to. Some

practitioners really submerged themselves into the culture because it had its political tag taken away which was 'black'. Everyone had access to it now or felt more comfortable doing it. This was alongside the upsurge of Hip Hop theatre, which for me is the number one aesthetic that breaks down cultural, age, and gender barriers and has been the saviour of many theatres in reconnecting with a new audience.

How would you compare developing a career in Hip Hop theatre dance then with now?

I think that there are so many avenues in Hip Hop dance today. It can be online, live, site specific, music videos, or battling. It's fantastic!

I remember that when I left college there were three companies that I really wanted to work with when I left. One was Phoenix, one was Black Mime Theatre and the other was with Lloyd Newson. Within five years of leaving college I had done all of those things and each company gave me unique and amazing experiences.

Hip Hop theatre has been defined as if you are using at least one of the pillars of Hip Hop within your performance then you are creating Hip Hop theatre. I don't necessarily agree with that because we are in danger of putting things into that box that don't necessarily need to be in that box. If one has a pop song and they have a 16 bar rap in it does it become Hip Hop music? It's using a pillar of Hip Hop!

Just the same if someone uses one of the pillars of Hip Hop in their work for me it doesn't define it as Hip Hop theatre. I include their approach, the intention and the context of how it's created most importantly how does the artist define it. We will begin to have a 16 bar rap equivalent in dance pieces because the genre is exciting with critics not knowing what they are watching and call it Hip Hop theatre. Hip Hop culture has saved many a venue and allowed them to reconnect with an audience they had no way of reaching.

To develop a career in Hip Hop today you have to be multi-faceted. You can't just do one thing. Dancers need to be versatile as so much more is accessible to us and we see more and we want more. Being tech savvy is an essential part of ones self-promotion. I think it's an amazing time because the cultural elite and gatekeepers can be sidestepped so much so that younger artists have no concept of cultural gatekeepers and funding as I and many others were aware of when we were starting out.

Take it back to the people, your followers, fans, friends and let them decide what they want to see. They should support the artists by funding the work through Crowdfunding and ticket sales for events and performances. The artists need to look for alternative venues that aren't theatres take it back to the people.

The success of a career doesn't have to be defined by the level of funding you receive or the theatres you perform at. I'm more interested in an entrepreneurial approach to getting work seen and working with partners where they are not focussed solely on ticking their diversity box. This is informing my mission to help artists and venues to genuinely reach more diverse audiences. Socialise the process.

Information is available. A lot of artists now think that they are inventing something new, some are, however if they look back they will see that so much has already be done in other genres so it is important that people use those references. It's important for Hip Hop practitioners to be aware of other artforms that are not connected to Hip Hop so they can put their take on.

When I first began to make work I didn't know I was creating Hip Hop theatre because at that time it didn't have a name. Being based in Leicester I wasn't aware that anyone else was doing similar things only Phoenix and Black Mime Theatre (BMT). One of my main inspirations for creating dance from my experience was as a performer with BMT and it's amazing director, Denise Wong. I'd been a performer with the

company and the work was ground breaking as it dealt with everyday stories and issues from a black perspective and blurred the lines of dance, theatre and spoken word. Would it be classed as Hip Hop Theatre if it was happening today because we used rap and street dance in the work.

People all over the world were creating work from their cultural understanding and experience and being brought up in the UK meant that it was a UK experience which was influenced by the US, which was influenced by the Caribbean, which was influenced by Africa. I was standing at the front of the line of my ancestors with all their culture and my own merged into one as well as the influences around me. The output was the work I created which put me in a box of being a black dancer/choreographer rather than a dancer/choreographer.

What vision or philosophy has kept you going or have you formed on your professional journey?

For me there are a lot of passions born out of philosophies. Passion is an emotion and emotions change, so I am passionate about different things at different times.

What has kept me going has been the philosophy of trying again, the get up and try again philosophy. Learn from the experience. You might feel like you have lost out, but don't lose the lesson. That has also been the philosophy for me and when a piece of work or a class or performance hasn't turned out quite the way I wanted or quite how I thought it would be I have found something valuable in the reasons why and learned from it. Try, try again; never give up.

There are a number of quotes that have inspired me, and they are:

'Do the best you can do until you know better. Then when you know better, do better.' **Maya Angelou.**
'Share your knowledge. It is a way to achieve immortality' **Dalai Lama XIV.**

'To avoid criticism say nothing, do nothing, be nothing'. **Aristotle.**

I believe if you want to achieve something new you have to be prepared to fail, but failure is a great teacher and is part of the learning process. We have such a negative approach to failure particularly as artists because our work is a reflection of our soul for people to view and if it's criticised some people take it as a personal attack and become unmotivated and depressed. Think of the work as a product after all it is a product-ion.

I'd say to younger artists, listen to what people say and use it to inform the work. See your work like developing an app. you have to listen to your users so you can develop the right product-ion whilst you deliver something you are passionate about. If you are side stepping the gatekeepers the there hear what they say but don't be swayed by it as they aren't buying into YOU. They want you to fit into what they have. Go forward without fear they will come to you when you have 10,000 YouTube followers and have the power to bring your audience with you. Something they will find it hard to achieve as they have to please a huge demographic. Help them reach new audiences, they need you.

How easy it is to develop intergenerational relationships with younger dancers?

I think that as with most things, the younger ones think that they have all the answers, they do have answers but not all.

I remember on a trip to Cuba I saw a band perform and in the band there were teenagers performing next to the adults of 60, and they all played together. The younger ones brought so much energy and the elders brought their knowledge and experience. They all learned from each other and brought something valuable to the table and it made their music incredible.

We get that a little bit in dance when younger people learn from the elders and are hungry for the knowledge, but the majority of younger dancers want to do it themselves and don't feel that the elders understand what is happening in their world today. Particularly in Street or Urban dance, there is so much history, and the pioneers of the different dance styles are still alive. Yes, we know that a lot of the styles have come out of America but there are teachers and artists in the UK that are incredible and we don't have to look to the US for the answers.

You see it all the time; they are great dancers aesthetically, but there is no soul, there is no grounding to what they are doing, no connection; they are just making shapes, they aren't really feeling it.

It isn't always easy to develop those relationships that would give these dancers the grounding that they need, for some this isn't important and to get work if you can make the shape and you look 'good' you're hired.

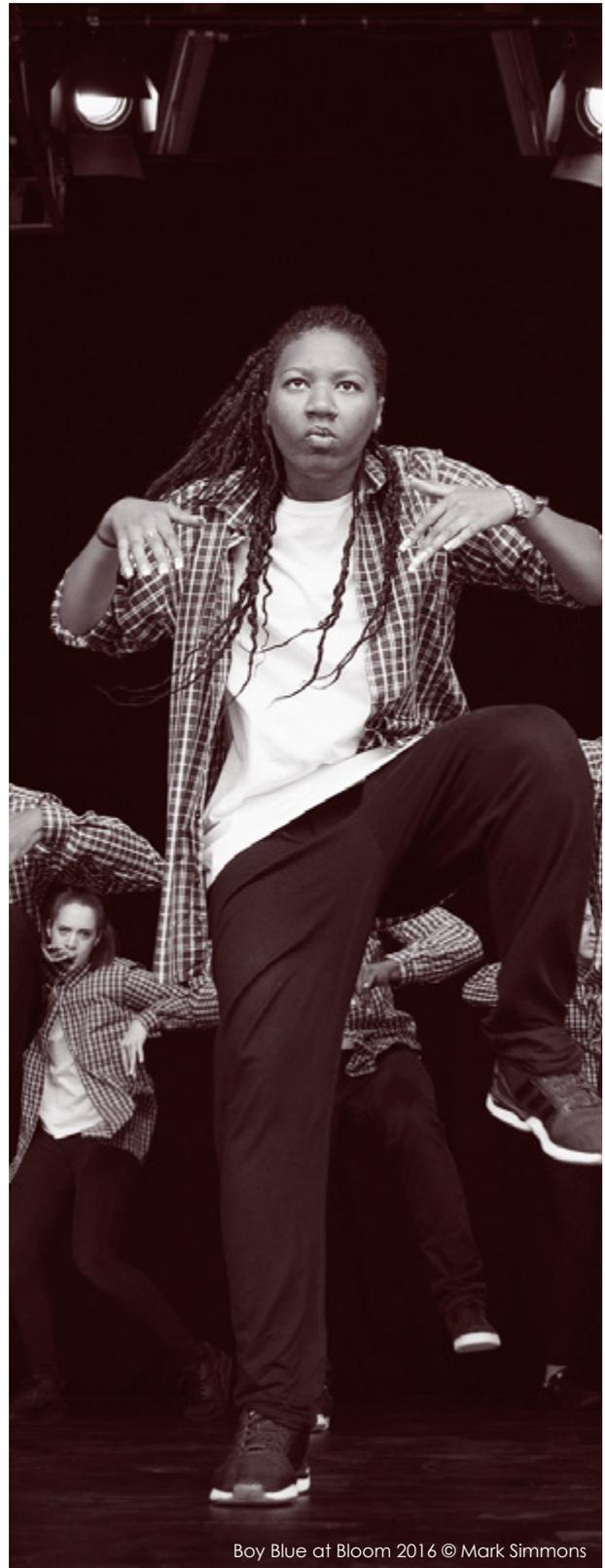
Some young dancers acknowledge the importance of intergenerational relationships so with them it's easy. We have to put our stake in the ground and stand for something and attract the people that want to form that relationship rather than chase and complain about those that don't. We have to focus on the relationships that are working and attract those to the beacon when they see the benefits.

On the other side if it is just about the elders they can become bitter of what once was rather than injecting their passion into what is so creating forums, workshops where those generations can meet is really important so that the elders can hand down that knowledge.

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Boy Blue at Bloom 2016 © Mark Simmons

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Photo: Jaguydance | Bloom Festival 2013 © Clive Clunis

ON GOING UP A LEVEL...

Nathan Geering, Lanre Malaolu & Botis Seva

Carole Edrich (CE) interviews three choreographers with a background in Hip Hop and moving to the next level in their careers. With Nathan Geering she discusses how he is using dance to help those with anxiety, relationship issues, depression and cognitive behavioral disorders. Lanre Malaolu talks to her about communication and development while Botis Seva explains what has changed over the last 8 years.

Breaking Out of Cycles with Nathan Geering

While studying psychology at Sheffield, Nathan Geering discovered a passion for choreography and hip hop. Through working with Jonzi D (who first introduced him to hip hop theatre), learning advanced techniques from Breakdance crews such as Last For One, TIP and Gambler in Korea, as well as learning in America, China and Korea, he has developed an insight into how artists from different

In Nathan's 2012 piece 'In My Shoes', his company mixed b-boy moves with theatre to tell the story of a troubled relationship between father and son. Playing on the idea of respect – one of the pillars of hip hop culture – Geering has the two people attend an extreme therapy session. This which makes them re-evaluate their relationship by considering how it might feel to be in someone else's shoes.

In a recent conversation, Nathan told me about the rationale behind his dance; "hip hop is an ideal vehicle for exploring relationships, and a great way to get boys into dance. The philosophy of hip hop 'each one, teach one' is an important part of this. In any scenario dancers share their knowledge and their movements and this helps get people into other dance. In Rationale we

don't just do hip hop. Its good practice to familiarise yourself with a variety of styles to inform your decision of what's best for you."

Nathan doesn't just apply this to his own crew. His work with visually impaired people has established new ways for partially sighted to engage with dance. He is also combining his psychology background with dance to work with young people who have anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress in Sheffield. He explained; "Not everyone can or wants to verbalise what they have going on in their lives, or painful historical associations. We have developed, and are constantly improving, a method where people can communicate through dance. It might be difficult to talk about trauma, but communicating it can be made easier when it's all encoded in action."

He explains that they don't ask or expect the people to talk, but that they are taught how to dance and incorporate mindfulness into their movements. By encouraging each person to live in the present moment they can through a series of visualisations, help them come to terms with what has brought them to their current state. Nathan continues; "Our approach is that we can't get rid of your issue, but we can help make sure it doesn't stop you developing. So we use the [dance language and] motif and elements to help you accept and utilise what has happened. Then it can be turned into your strength."

Nathan continues; "Many young people in youth services don't want to go into therapy. It already has negative associations. By providing therapy through dance we're making it fun and relevant. You can tell your friends 'I'm not going to therapy; I'm going to dance'. We hope to combat the stigma of therapy in this way. We are also hoping to manage a lot of the red tape people have to go through. In our sessions, trained observers watch to see if deeper one-to-one work is needed."

Nathan continues; "Just as hip hop is considered acceptable by young men who would reject other

forms of movement and dance, Hip Hop may help combat veterans in a similar way. A lot of people sit on their feelings and avoid processing the trauma. There are techniques to help them master this. Dance helps them understand what happens and helps control - and even bypass - less healthy emotional responses."

It is important to use dance to break out of the cycle, he concludes; "We get the dancers to think about sensory issues. They give them shape, colour and texture. Working on this sensory level helps the brain to process it. Otherwise your brain contains a library of trauma. Just a mess with unresolved issues and experiences. Hip Hop can turn impressions into movement which enables people to unblock, to break out of the cycle."

rationale.org.uk

Communications Protocol with Lanre Malaolu

The fact that this dance has many layers is clear from the minute that Protocol starts performing. While the patterning is great, the musicality fits and every move fits seamlessly into a greater whole, what grabs you from the outset is the stories told by each dancer's face and the tension of their moving bodies.

Backstage and in rehearsal the reasons for this are clear. Lanre Malaolu, as much actor as dancer and all the way professional, manages the troupe clearly, directs and gives last minute choreographic reminders in a more professional way than I've seen established artists behave. Lanre is just half of the team that started Protocol, and that he feels Jared Garfield's absence was clear in our interview. While Jared was at Rich Mix for dress rehearsal of Utopia to give feedback and support, I don't believe that his absence through a commitment to act in Hollyoaks damaged the performance I saw.

On how to develop his own dance skills

"For me, battling and cyphering are a form of energy and sharing. It has a fear factor attached because people judge you on what you do. You do learn, and you get better. It's not just the fear but because you're cyphering in different circles. Showing your style like that pushes your boundaries. I think that is how you grow.

When I was younger I couldn't do a front roll in Taekwondo. I was a bit chubby and scared. Drama stripped that out of me and I became bolder. I left drama school for the RSC and things just clicked.

Just being able to break some movement rules is great in acting. You get these actors who don't have the awareness of the body to fuse their character. They have a perfect speaking voice which can carry miles but for me there is something missing. Lack of connection between voice and body is ugly to me. In 2013 I did A Midsummer Night's Dream at the Almeida. Ray McCann the director said she wanted it physical and with a dance element. So I thought, not exactly dance, but what if during the monologue 'The Hungry Lion Roars' I did a fusion of snappy actions connected to the words. It all started making sense to me. I took more dance classes and Boy Blue and Avant Gard were great experiences on the way.

It was hard work. Really hard work doing acting and dancing. Sometimes I would go straight from the RSC to Protocol. But it's worth it."

On the source of his ideas

"Ideas come from everywhere. It's kind of weird, because Utopia grew from something like [dance] tracks or jogging or the gym. The idea of perfection, how we're always striving towards perfection and yearning towards more wholesome feelings. How this matches what we do to try to better ourselves. How technology has gone mad to help us. What you can do with your android is mad. You explore

it, you research it. You find so much of interest and then somehow it fuses together. It's how you find that sense of completeness in the struggle, and how doing it with friends and family is so much better. How to achieve that sense of perfection?"

On developing a choreography

"By definition it is hip hop theatre that is the foundation of our work. I work with the boys once I have an idea. If I have a track, I play it. I give them one or two sentences to work with and we all explore the idea. I hate rules. There are no roles. You can scream or whatever. I get so many ideas when the eight of us move. I explore the idea with individual movement expressions. Then go away and watch it and see what happens. Before that I have some ideas but the main work is after that point. Once we have all freestyled and I then take it back. If I shout 'glue' they know we're keeping that bit, that it's special."

On what makes Protocol's movement vocabulary so communicative

"We do movement psychology in drama. In it you learn to think about how the audience feel regarding the movement each and every time you move. That physical theatre means our dancing is always connected with intention. We feel the character from movement to movement.

Our dancers are not actors, and their work and trust has been phenomenal. We have a great feeling of togetherness and honesty. They know I'm raw and I'm crazy walking round the room making noises. Noises are external parts of the process. I need to be up and in it and see the energy to get into the energy."

On Acting

"Acting helps the dance. I've always danced. I'd be the kid in the centre at parties. Talk about Tasmanian Devil! But I was trained as an actor first.

Liana Nyquist gave movement classes and took me to a different world. I felt 'this is hot stuff' and 'this is it' so dance arose from this, from a love of images and a conviction and intention that could only be reconciled with dance."

On style.

"I think companies are more open to more possibilities now. [Embodying characters] is the future of dance. If you have a good grasp and can make your language correspond to the [dance] styles and also break rules.

On how they started

"I went to Breakin' Convention 2008 with Jared and we saw Diversity. On the way home we were inspired and started Protocol that day. So Protocol was there but we had to find our colours. We've done Open Art Surgery and Jonzi made a suggestion and let us get on with it. The audience loved it. From the idea to actually performing in Breakin' Convention. We were there! To start from 'I want to do that' and get there in 5 years. I was in tears.

Dance started as a hobby. After Antibody, Jonzi said 'You've got something'. Now I'm bouncing between the 2 constraints [acting and dancing]. It's hard. Ultimately, when they have all fed into each other. I know it works, and it's beautiful."

protocoldance.co.uk

The Better Take Out with Botis Seva

Carole Edrich talks to Botis Seva about how things have changed over the last 8 years

What do you see as different now, as opposed to when you left college?

"Seven years ago when I came out of college, well now I see a lot of young makers which is good. I feel like everyone is creating, it's a great place to be."

What about your own work, as a choreographer and dancer?

"I feel that my work as a choreographer has become more mature, I have been exposed to many different things. Before I didn't really know what research and development was. Now I do quite a lot of research, speaking to people, interviewing them.. Sometimes I don't use it straight away but I am always thinking about what I have found. It's because I am trying to create something a bit more deep.

Last year I had a little mentoring from Hofesh Shechter. He flipped my mind a bit. He came to a rehearsal and was really quiet. After he said 'do it, just do it, let it happen'. He told me 'it is what it is. Only you understand what you are doing with movement. Get it natural instead of giving artificial meanings. Then because it comes from you as a person it feels organic'. That helped a lot with the way I think about creation.

As a performer, I'm performing less, taking myself out. Now I am thinking a lot more about the creation. In the past sometimes the performance has felt a bit odd and I've decided it was because I was there. I don't see myself as a performer. I'm not really needed, and when I want to put myself in I ask myself if I'm needed. If you're not needed, you're not needed.

I'm constructing things differently, the company has changed a little too. I now have 6-7 core people who I work with all the time. Before I worked with a

lot of different people. Working with this number of people now is good because you know who you can push and how to do it."

You seem to be getting more political..

"Yes, my ideas come from the street, the newspapers, and my work expresses the frustration. I get frustrated that I can't change anything and I can only express it through my art."

So as you are becoming more political, you must be wanting to get your message out to a bigger audience, how are you working on that?

"How am I trying to get different people in? [laughs] It's a bit weird, I'm still trying to find out who comes to see my work and why. We are always debating it. There are the people we know and who have known us for years, and they follow us, but trying to find a new audience is hard. Every show is different and different people come."

Tell me about how your creative process works. How do the ideas come and how they turn into a performance?

"Ideas come from anything, something small maybe, a theme or a concept or an image. It [the idea] gets bigger and bigger until the end when it's ready. Sometimes it starts with me writing about the idea. I'm brainstorming. Some of what I write doesn't make sense which is good. Sometimes I think about the ideas and not about the performance at all, then I brainstorm with the dancers. We talk about ideas, about what they think, personal experiences that are relevant. From there it just leads us to something. Then whatever happens, happens."

Last time we talked, you were all about pushing boundaries. Are you still about that?

"I don't like that pushing boundaries [thing] now. I think 'Why am I trying to push boundaries?' Just the words 'pushing boundaries' are limiting. I don't want

that limit. Now I'm trying to push every single thing I do."

Tell me the best and the worst experiences of doing Wild Card

"I can't say there was a worst. I felt pressure before I even started I was panicky-nervous. I felt that if I messed it up I should give up. Robin and Eva were great. There is a lot of support and people encouraging you to do well. I learned a lot, things and people I can't really forget. I won't forget."

And now that Orator is done?

"Now I am working on the duet we did last year at Wild Card and there will be BDE in March. We'll be doing the Football Hooligan piece again."

Ah yes, the Football Hooligan has changed a little over the years

"Yes, it has changed a bit and it should [keep changing]"

What would you do if money was no object?

[long silence as he thinks].

"I'd just be in it, working. I'd not have the dancers working, they're doing other jobs and it's hard sometimes for them to focus on one thing when they have so much going on. I'd do more collaborating. Have a fun time in a studio for a while, something I feel I never have."

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LIFE, LEARNING AND THE MBE

Carole Edrich interviews Jonzi D.

What are your biggest influences?

"Mortality is a big deal and an influence on me. Half of my family including Mum, Dad and two of my 8 brothers passed away. For me it's a reality. I'm almost expectant of it. It's an influence that guides a lot of my decisions with respect to Breakin' Convention."

"Living influences, first Victoria Marks. She is deep. She was my choreography teacher at London Contemporary Dance School. I spoke to her about my plans, saying I want to do hip hop [and asking] why can't I do hip hop in this space. She didn't tell us how to move, but told us to explore how we move and our intentions. All of those angles and focus and hip hop and we argued and I developed. I still see her when I can. KR-One encouraged me to express myself in hip hop, having become almost a custodian of the culture".

What direction can you give aspiring emerging dancers?

"Right now there are a lot more opportunities for hip hop dancers to do what they do without being judged with the superficialities. That superficiality has gone. Now [adays] contemporary dance is being shaped by hip hop. Think of Akram Khan's iTmoi where the most powerful part was that guy doing hip hop. Sidhi Larbi uses hip hop techniques. Even if you watch the National Youth Dance Company perform. There's guys who clearly had breaking technique that lifted his solo. You saw it in his use of momentum and agility. Even Richard Alston is bringing hip hop into his work."

"[It's important to have] honesty in connecting with who you are, present that on stage. Sometimes dancers try to connect with something else, something that isn't necessarily them. That shows. What I look for is originality. We are all

already different, and hip hop encourages you to find your own truth within the techniques.

Sweat is important. I expect you to work hard. I want to see the work you put in to it. If, in a series of gestures you can see the work, that is good. Maybe if you look deep inside yourself you'll find scars. If you're honest you'll acknowledge them. It is honesty and hard work that lead to that".

How did you get to where you are today?

"I've been in dance since 1985 I passed my O levels and did a youth dance project at The Place. Around that time I stopped breaking. My dance was focussed on the fusion of Jazz and hip hop from night clubs, like Babylon, the straight night at Heaven. There I found my social dance from old funk breaks, floor work and I brought in contemporary dance such to [MCs] Flowers and Constantine who were 2 very creative movers. We wore 70s revival clothing it was all a joke in a way and not meant to be serious, but to be an homage."

"At that time I didn't know what I was, as I was studying government and politics, sociology and economics. I dropped out around the time my Mum died. In a way I think I was doing that [studying] for my Mum. I wanted to prove I had a brain. Someone [in the family] had to go to Uni and I had a go, hoping to do law. Around then I realised it was a choice between doing something in my life or falling victim to trade in the street. A friend said sell this or be a victim. I saw that he [would eventually] become a drug addict and I realised I had a choice. It was a matrix moment where I had to choose the red pill or the blue pill. I chose the blue pill, decided to go to Lewisham College and do what I wanted to do. Drugs didn't feel like my deal. Like law had felt [not my deal]. I loved and love dancing, performing and rapping. Since then [my work] has been a constant affirmation."

"While studying at London Contemporary Dance. I lead a double life. I was a hard core MC but kept things very separate. I didn't want the community to know I was wearing fights and talking with the puniest of vocabularies. Everyone told me it was

important that I learned ballet. I loved the club scene but made a decision to absorb everything that they [the teachers] were telling me. At the Place I started in the group for the worst dancers. By the end of the course I was in the top group for ballet and contemporary. Crazy."

"That's when I got deeply into release work. I felt its attitude to sequential moves, and learned to feel connections between left shoulder and right hip, and to see the body as amorphous. That's why release work made sense. Cunningham, I felt, separated the limbs from the heart."

"As a result of hip hop and rap I got into the spoken word. Losing the beats encouraged me to rap in a more dramatic way. Beats are real predictable, when there is no beat I am able to turn like a violin cable. That's stable."

"I always enjoyed character work. Bill T Jones's performance was an epiphany, exploring text and movement in a way I had never seen before. I was invited to Jacobs Pillar by Victoria Marks to participate in the Jacobs Pillow Inside/Out series. For this I was really encouraged by Victoria who gave us all the time to experience passion and pull together our disparate ideas. We combined rap, hip hop and contemporary."

"My solo Aeroplane Man (which talked about police brutality, race, exploitation and everyday oppression) became part of Lyrical Fearata. I felt gangsta rap was one dimensional and wanted to show the harshness and give it a deeper less hyped portrayal.. John Ashford said he would like to know what happens to the characters of Aeroplane Man. He's like 'what more is happening when you meet them?' It became a musical piece with live band and cast of nine and showed a literal journey between London, Grenada (and calypso) Jamaica (a dancehall queen), US (for pure hip hop). It toured all over the UK. The first performance was at The Place and the tour finished at Queen Elizabeth Hall to standing ovations."

"Then in a film directed by Alison Murry there was a 12 minute solo squeezed into a 6 minute film. [A deliberately] shaky camera, low quality film, lots of

attention to character and internal mental space made it what it was. It doesn't want to die. We performed at Rich Mix and Harlem Apollo and so got to perform it again."

"I'm still annoyed at lack of arts from black men in relation to what happens to black men politically." Since *Lyrikal Fearfa* I channel my anger from a deeper place. I feel more sensitive to other opinions in the pursuit of mine. I did worry that it meant I had become a softer artist, but hope it just makes more people understand my anger. "

Tell me about your creative process

"Others may not have pushed the hip hop side of their work. I have. My creative process has changed since I started and it is still changing. It's almost like every new project is a new process. It changes every single time."

"One of the things about *The Letter* was I didn't want to speak until the end of the piece. I managed this by speaking with my body. I wanted people to notice that I didn't speak from the beginning for the piece. It changes expectations and that was a little scary. I worked with Dawn Walton the director. She held my hand and squeezed it. I told her I wanted my story to be female as well as other characters. We spent a lot of time on [developing the] characters. It was clearly defined writing that formed the performance."

Tell me what goes on at the Open Art Surgery.

"I really just monitor most of the time, although I sometimes direct. Every artist comes through differently and presents a different set of problems which we find answers for. It's bespoke."

Tell me about The Letter and the MBE

"I was awarded the MBE for Services to Dance. I read some of the letters of recommendation. They warmed my heart and filled me with so much love and care for the industry. I wanted to thank all the people who put forward letters of recommendation.

They helped me come to an acceptance that I've been struggling [towards] for many years. The only problem was what it [the MBE] was. I guess it was one of those things you want to support. But it was like when you've been given a birthday present you really don't want, by people who love you and you love. So I wanted to say thank you for the presents but I kind of wish we don't get to shop together.

The Letter is something for all the people who by writing these recommendations inspired me to dance. For me it's all truth. I rejected it [the MBE] because of its name. Master of the British Empire. The idea that one state can assure dominion over other states that they have taken with aggression. That it can take the culture of these other states, put millions in shackles, build an empire and now after all that I am meant to take it and put it on my hat as a symbol of achievement. [All this] in spite of it being a product [of aggression and dominion], in spite of the racism I'm experiencing.

It is an African perspective to acknowledge your ancestors. How can I acknowledge my ancestors like that? Sorry man. Don't disrespect me."

Thank you.

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THEN & NOW

BEYOND LONDON

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Photo: Bloom 2016 © Mark Simmons

ADAD IN THE REGIONS

The move by ADAD to establish an on-going presence in the regions started in the 2010 under the leadership of Jeanette Bain-Burnett, the organization's first official director. ADAD established two programmes outside London, ADAD North and ADAD South West. Jeanette with the support of Paula Allen, programme manager were responsible for the programming of London events. In 2013 after her resignation a series of casual project managers supported the programmes until Richard Pitts was made London programmer in 2015. The regional programmes furthered the reach of ADAD's Bloom Festival and Open Stage and amongst other things facilitated the development of a strong national community of practice for dance artists working with dance of the African Diaspora.

With the support and advice of Pam Johnson, dance officer for Arts Council, Yorkshire, ADAD carried out in 2009, a consultation process into the viability of setting up a programme in the North of England. The response to the idea has been overwhelmingly positive. The needs revealed by the consultation process included more opportunities to network and bring the sector together – not just to talk, but to engage in practical activity that will support development, the need for a more diverse dance training programmes, robust critical debate, and management and business development. ADAD North was initiated through an 18-month pilot programme in 2010-2012, funded by an Arts Council England 'Grants for the Arts' commission of £73k. The executive team for the initiative included Jeanette Bain-Burnett the ADAD director at the time and Mercy Nabirye to cover interim periods as director. Lisa Thomas coordinated the pilot till 2012 and Lisa Nkrumah-Mweu came on board as the part-time programmer.

During the pilot phase Phoenix Dance Theatre in Leeds hosted and acted as mentor to the ADAD programmer. The support of Phoenix Dance Theatre enabled ADAD to roll out an introductory programme of work which consist of a 3 month tour of ADAD's Heritage exhibition at the Shine Centre in Harehills; a series of

professional classes and schools workshops in Leeds, Manchester and Liverpool; and the first Bloom Festival North, held at the Stanley and Aubrey Burton Theatre in Leeds. The Bloom festival complemented events at Circomedia, Bristol and Southbank Centre, London. The pilot also provided opportunities for two administrative apprenticeships and catalyzed the development of a network of artists and organisations in support of ADAD's aims in the region.

After the pilot programme, Lisa Nkrumah-Mweu focused on building on existing connections and partnerships with dance and cultural organizations in the North, in particular Leeds and surrounding Yorkshire region. She produced Open Stage events in Leeds and Liverpool engaging Namron, Leonora Stapleton, Nathan Geering, BLU, Omari Carter, Felix Ologbosere, and Ignite to share their practice. Namron, Nathan Geering, Felix Ologbosere also participated in The Bloom festivals that staged in 2013 and 2015 in Gateshead, Liverpool and Leeds along with Claudio Kron, Keisha Grant, Afro Roots, Move-ma, Nilanthie Morton, Martin Hylton, Maxine Brown, Lucie Lee, Angelina Abel, Hannabiell Saunders and Ella Mesma. Other artists that worked with ADAD North are Pauline Mayers, Daliah Toure and Imani Jendai. Through these events partnerships were fostered with MDI, RJC, Yorkshire Dance, Sustained Theatre, Merseyside Dance Initiative, PANDA, Z-Arts, York St. John's University and De Montfort University. The ADAD North Advisory panel consists of Carole-ne Hinds, Sharon Watson, Ramsay Burt and Maxine Brown.

ADAD South West started in 2011 with Meriel Camara as programmer. The first Bloom festival took place that year and the second in 2013. Meriel also programmed an Open Stage event. The advisory committee at the time was Ian Abbott, Marie McCluskey, Rachel Degarang, Katy Noakes. Katy Noakes took over the role in September 2014 after Meriel resigned. Working at two days a week, Katy worked to build new partnerships for ADAD in the region, and support artists in the region with project development and funding bids. In October, just ahead of

the Re:generations conference, which was hosted by Pavilion Dance in Bournemouth, Katy rolled out her first ADAD events; a Trailblazer Surgery and an Open Stage in collaboration with Swindon Dance featuring Sam Amos, Junior Jones, Justine Fry and Natasha Melbourne-Tefler. The ADAD SW Advisory committee at this point consisted of Marie McCluskey, Rachel Degarang, Zannah Doan.

Between 2014 and 2016, Katy featured a number of upcoming and established artists in the region. The 2015 Open Stage at Pavillion Dance South West featured Company Noir, Ieva Djalo, Iris de Brito, Melvin Le Blanc. With Strike A Light festival, Gloucester, ADAD North produced 'A Conversation: Making work as a Black Artist' which featured Kenrick 'H2O' Sandy and Michael 'Mikey J' Asante: Artistic Directors Boy Blue Entertainment, Tanuja Amarasuriya, Director/Producer with Sleepdogs and choreographer Freddie Opoku-Addaie. The 2015, Bloom festival took place at Dance Village featuring Boy Blue, IRIE! Dance Theatre, ACE Dance & Music Youth Company, Jade & Shango, Laila Diallo, Upswing, Ballet Nimba, Company Noir, Afidance, Impact Dance and Hakeem Onibudo. Additionally, with the support of Trinity Arts and Theatre Bristol, ADAD SW hosted Adesola Akinleye's Light Steps, a participatory performance for early years settings.

This year ADAD supported Youth Dance England's U Dance regional platform, hosted workshops with Yami 'Rowdy' Lovenberg and Judith Palmer, and produced an Open stage at Bristol university to coincide with the 'Framing the Critical Decade: After the Black Arts Movement' conference. The artists featured here were Laura Kreifer with Annette Walker, Latisha Cesar Dance, Yassmin Foster with Robert Hylton and Cleo Lake. Coming up in November 2016 is a performance of 'Our Mighty Groove' by Uchenna dance, which will include workshops at Trinity Arts. It has been a busy five to six years activity in both these regions. The programmes have succeeded in raising the profile of the Dance of the African diaspora with in the dance ecology nationally, a prerequisite for further developments.

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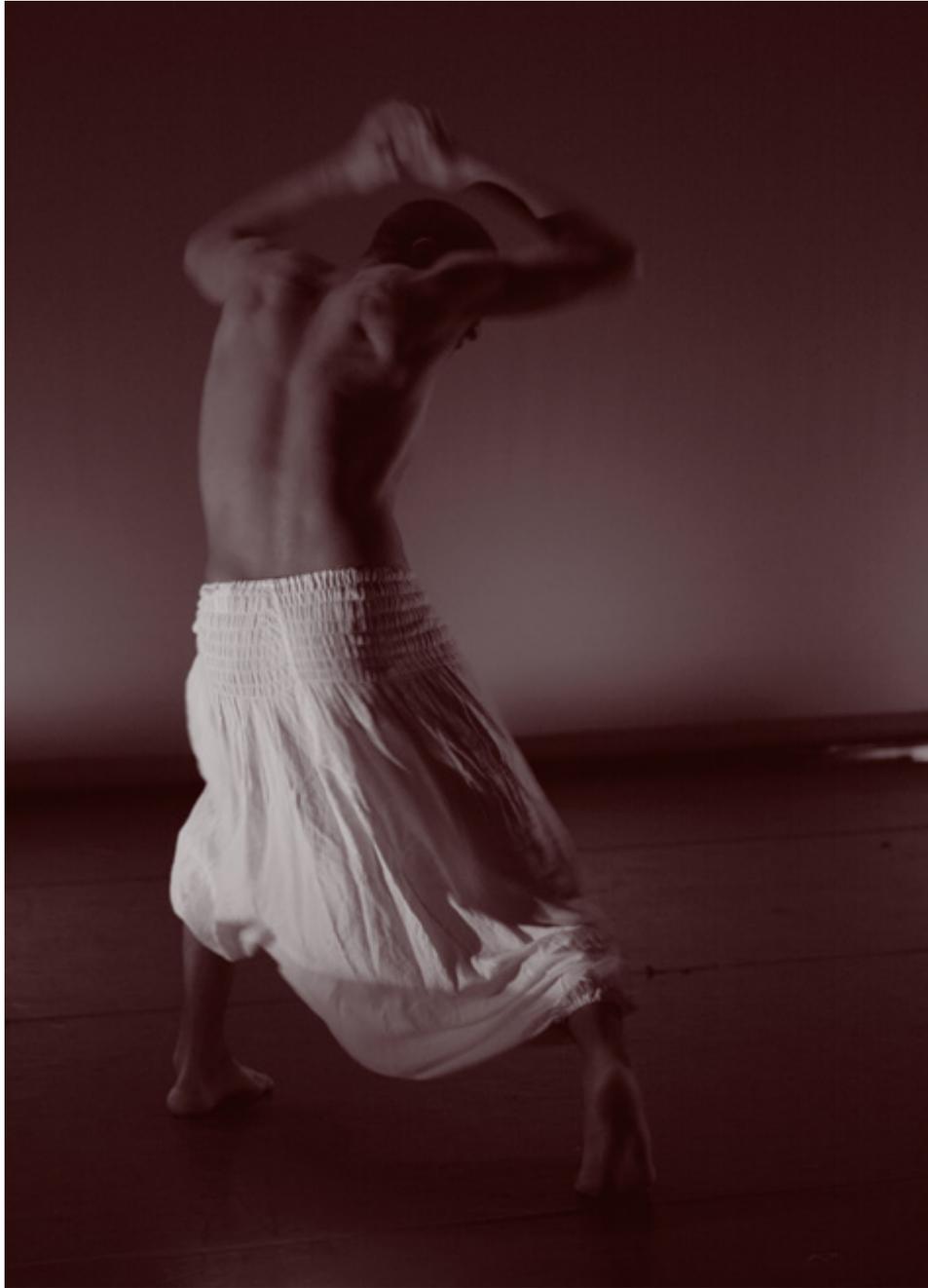


Photo: Tabanka Crew | Bloom Festival 2013 © Clive Clunis

AFRICAN DANCE TRANS GENERATIONALLY

Interview with “Rubba” & Kenzi Ireland

Katy Noakes interviews Norman “Rubba” Stephenson and a former member of Adzido Pan African dance ensemble. He has been a mentor to Kenzi Ireland who performed with him for many years. Subsequently she applied and received a trailblazer starter fellowship and has since travelled to study at L'ecole des sables in Senegal.

Interview with Rubba

Please tell us how the Mama Africa project came about, and what it aims to do?

I had been teaching in school for many years and found that most were studying the same role models or subjects during Black History Month. I noticed that there was a lack of awareness of the vast role Africa has played in all our lives and felt compelled to do something. When I was in primary and secondary education I was not taught anything about Africa

except that it was a land of primitive beings and some were taken away as slaves and that is how I became known as a West Indian from Jamaica.

I devised the Mama Africa Project so children could be in a position to research as much as they could about this continent that is not commonly known or taught then present it to an audience through Dance, Poetry and Spoken word.

It was also important to address the lack of fitness amongst our children and that each school had to learn a dance from various parts of Africa. The project was also aimed to give teachers more confidence to approach this subject when teaching black History.

Finally the project included training African dance practitioners in Bristol so they could eventually help in workshops, performances and delivering The Mama Africa project to schools regionally and nationally thus creating more opportunities for those working in this field.

You have a long history of education work. How would you say that working in schools has changed over the time you've been teaching?

It is not good. Finances have been cut and the fact that Dance, Music, and P.T are not compulsory anymore has made it more difficult. A lot of schools are not financially secure as before so now the main focus is on other parts of the curriculum. This has affected the amount of interest and bookings for APD practitioners who are now finding it tough to continue working in this field. Funding is the only way one can work more effectively in schools, as they cannot afford us as before.

What do you think are the major challenges that education of African People's Dance faces? Have the challenges changed over the decades?

Creating centers of learning, as always been the main challenge from I started African dance. This will solve many problems for APD will be on par with other dance forms. Centers of learning will have a positive affect on an all levels of education and the

arts and create more opportunities for practitioners. Of course, this seems impossible within the current environment as I feel it has not improved over the years.

You have acted as a mentor to Kenzi Ireland. Can you describe how the relationship came about and tell us what your mentoring style is?

Kenzi came to my attention immediately when she attended my dance classes at the kuumba Centre in Bristol. I thought she was an excellent dancer who was in love with dance but where could she go and what could she do to fulfill her dreams. I knew I had to be there for her as much as possible. My mentoring of her was to make sure she and others were involved in everything I do, which is setting up projects, courses and create performances opportunities as a way of sharing the skills and methods I have developed over many years.

My aim is to give APD practitioners more scope and confidence in their approach to performing and teaching, using the dance and music from Africa. I feel this has been successful in that Kenzi is now doing all that I had hoped for her. We have just finished working together on choreography for a school and it was so good to see her use her skills as a Contemporary and African trained dancer. I am so proud of her.

Does mentoring have a particular role to play in African People's Dance compared to say contemporary dance?

I am not sure of how other forms approach mentoring, as I never thought of it in a mentoring sense. What I do know it that for Africans Peoples dance it would have to be a different, similar to how I have approached it with the same aims as the other dance forms which is to guide and develop talents to their full potential.



Re:generations 2012 © Toby Ross/Messrs

Is there anything you'd like to say about the development of APD over the past 21 years?

Looking across the range of APD I feel There has been growth in areas like African Contemporary or Hip Hop as this appeal to the public more but generally artists are still struggling even with organizations like ADAD and Dance UK are trying to give support but it is difficult. There are so many individual practitioners surviving from day to day, all for the love of music and dance. As for traditional African dance, for me it has not developed over this period, sadly I feel it has declined.

Interview with Kenzi

Can you tell us a little about your background and your current practice?

I studied all types of dance from a young age and when I was 10 I attended the London Lower Royal Ballet School. Ballet wasn't for me, my passion for dance diminished and at age 12, I decided to leave with no desire to dance again. I didn't until I was 26, when I discovered my first African dance class with Bristol based artist Penny Avery. I am now a freelance dance artist and a performer and teacher of African dance styles. I have trained with a variety of professional artists in the UK, Gambia, Ghana and Senegal. I studied Contemporary dance techniques at Middlesex University and in 2013 I was awarded the ADAD Trailblazers Starter Fellowship to travel to Ecoles des Sables in Senegal.

I am currently teaching African dance within schools as an individual and as part of performance projects. I am collaborating with Bristol based artists to create, re-visit and develop material and I am teaching a weekly Afro-fusion community class with Penny Avery. I work with South West based artists as performer and choreographer in a variety of dance and music projects and I am a member of West African dance theatre company Ballet Nimba. My particular interests lie within the journeys of the

past, present and future of African People's Dance. I aim to provide people with a grounding, appreciation and understanding of African dance, the freedom to explore these rich and diverse dance forms and to discover our own expressions.

How do you manage your day-to-day dance training? How easy is it to find regular places to train/people to train with in the South West?

It is very difficult to find professional dance training in the South West. Some of the main training opportunities that I have are through rehearsal and performance with Ballet Nimba. I have a great network in Bristol and work with other artists whenever possible. However, there is a significant lack of resources available in the South West in terms of regular, high quality training. So it's more about creating opportunities for ourselves, by organizing regular studio spaces, attending one off events or courses, travelling outside of Bristol and when possible travelling outside of the UK. These things are possible, however not always accessible due to many factors involved in the life of a freelance artist.

Can you tell us how you met Rubba and how your relationship has developed?

I first met Rubba at the Kuumba Centre when I started African dance 9 years ago. I took part in a teachers dance course that Rubba organised and facilitated and I have been learning from and dancing with Rubba ever since. For many years I performed with Rubba's community group AfiDance and we have worked together with the dance company Tolo Ko Tolo and other various projects. We work in schools together and I have been part of the Mama Africa dance and research project for the last 2 years.

Please describe how the mentoring from Rubba has helped you – the types of things that you have learned from him

This is impossible for me to try and explain! Rubba dances pure from the heart and his passion



Jaguydance | Bloom Festival 2013 © Clive Clunis

and integrity to African dance has laid a foundation for me to walk on. I have learnt many things from Rubba and the beauty of this relationship for me, is the love and the commitment that we share for African dance. Rubba has believed in me and supported me through my journey every step of the way and I will always be gaining knowledge from him. Working with Rubba in schools and with all of the amazing artists that we work with, has been an integral part of my learning, as I have had the opportunities to observe their teaching styles, utilize their experiences, share and reflect on my own practice and develop as an artist.

What would you say are the main differences between the mentoring you have received and the training you received in formal education?

Formal education was a valuable experience in a completely different way. I was studying contemporary dance so therefore being a different practice, the mentoring and relationships were different. To gain knowledge and understanding of contemporary dance techniques, their histories, current and past practitioners; literature, documentation and video sources are available. There is a lack of archiving and documentation of African dance companies and artists in the UK. The sources that are available are very limited and are not easily accessible. Elders are our living archives and through people passing on their knowledge and supporting and mentoring the next generation of dancers; the histories, identities and values of these dances can be shared.

What are your artistic plans?

I am really enjoying teaching, creating and collaborating with other artists and developing my own Afro fusion choreography. Our new Afro fusion class has started really well and we plan to develop this and extend it to other venues and locations across Bristol. I plan to develop my musical skills and understanding of African music to enhance my practice, so I am looking to start regular drumming classes to learn specific traditional rhythms. I love performing and

working with other artists so I will continue to work with Ballet Nimba and with other performance projects. I have a lifetime of learning ahead of me and will continue to explore and share what I learn.

I aim to continue to develop the presence of quality African dance within communities and the educational system and to empower individuals to express their voices, share and learn about their histories and discover and be proud of their identity.

The end.

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DANCE PAST & PRESENT IN MERSEYSIDE & BRISTOL

Historically Merseyside and Bristol have been two important places outside of London for Dance of the African Diaspora. Karen Gallagher MBE, Rachel Rogers, Maxine Brown and Katy Noakes reflect on dance past and the present in the regions.

Merseyside

Karen Gallagher MBE, Rachel Rogers and Maxine Brown of Merseyside Dance Initiative (MDI) reflect on African Peoples' Dance practice in Merseyside.

Edited by Lisa Nkrumah-Mweu

"We have no answers only lots of questions....."

"There is a difference when using dance as a means of communication in the UK compared to Jamaica. On stage in the UK, you are dancing to a non-dancing audience, and dance becomes a visual language. In Jamaica, or other places where dance is an integral part of the culture and a part of everyday life, it is more of a collective bodily language"- Sydney Bartley, Jamaican Cultural Ambassador, speaking in Liverpool at MDI's Cultiv8 Festival in 2005.

MDI has been committed to supporting African and Caribbean Dance in traditional and contemporary forms since the organisation began in 1993 so when we were asked to contribute to ADAD's 21st Hotfoot Anniversary magazine we absolutely wanted to be included. But it has put us in a very reflective mood. We know that the social and historical significance of African music and dance

brings communities together to celebrate their rich and vibrant cultures. The voice and the drum set the rhythm and instruction for dancers. Over many years African dance has influenced the dance of cultures around the world.

Due to its history as a major port and trading city both during and after the slave trade, Liverpool has strong links with Africa and the Caribbean and has large communities of immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers and migrant workers from these areas. MDI has a history of working with communities from the African Diaspora both directly and indirectly. The vast majority of work with target communities and individuals since 1999 has taken place under the banner of our African Peoples' Dance (APD) programme.

Many communities in Merseyside still have very little contact with people of the African Diaspora or knowledge of their cultures. Taking APD work into areas where it would not normally be seen gives communities the opportunity to develop cultural awareness, engagement and understanding. It can also help share and celebrate culture and heritage between individuals and groups who may feel isolated from their own cultures. Having worked with a variety of artists and communities, this ethos and attitude to our work has been ever present in all we do since the organisation began, from 1994 when MDI held its first African dance workshops in Liverpool; including a summer school and performance project with Badejo Arts, to date.

Five years later MDI began to rethink the vision for our APD work. What was happening then in 1999?

Back then we were asking questions, consulting with artists and peers and considering how best to move forward our vision for APD

Back then we were having conversations about how one should define black dance. We were asking where are the artists and what were they doing in this particular practice and asking what was the legacy

of Delado African Dance and Drumming, and why were there no funded APD artists/companies in the North West.

We came up with responses that included:

- Our need to enhance the profile of local activity,
- Our need to nurture an understanding of African and jazz dance through responding to community needs,
- Our need to develop a workable and achievable strategy,
- Our need to ensure all work is documented and evaluated
- Our need to support our fellow artists
- Our need to create opportunities to see and participate in work, by local, national and international artists

Most importantly we decided: We need to be seen, we need to be heard!

In 2001 MDI set up a project with Dance Northwest to develop a strategy for APD in the region resulting in two new practitioner posts, one in Merseyside and one in Manchester for 3 years. MDI has sustained this post, appointing Maxine Brown in 2002 and producing:

- An annual youth summer school of African dance and drumming,
- Bespoke projects such as A Boys' Project led by Francis Angol as part of the MDI Artist in Residence Scheme (2006) and Step in Fresh youth dance workshops (2012-2014),
- Cultiv8 African and Caribbean Dance Festival and Seminar (2005/2007),
- Professional and Community dance classes led by national and international APD artists.

With the post providing a focus MDI has been able to develop:

- Regular facilitation and provision of dance projects and opportunities,
- A Youth Dance Group (a successful model 2003-2008 although it no longer exists),
- Limited CPD over the years including residencies

with Bawren Tavaziva, Jonzi D, Francis Angol and Max Diakok,

- Performance opportunities in community and professional platforms independently and in association with ADAD and State of Emergency,

But, now, 16 years later in 2015 we have to review what is happening.

The environment we work in politically, educationally and socially has moved on. However little has changed for APD, the questions remain the same and there is even more of a sense of being sidelined as the number of artists making work is reduced, lacking profile, support and investment.

Arts Council England suggests we make artwork more reflective of the communities we serve, but with a reduction in funded APD artists and companies, a lack of diverse leaders; a lack of acknowledgement; or of our need for capacity and resources, how blatant must we be to be recognized for what we do?

Why are we still struggling to be seen? Why are we still struggling to be heard?

We know what needs to happen, the following must be achieved:

- A collective understanding of history that makes black history and heritage visible and relevant,
- A change in priorities for and from those able to affect change,
- An academic approach that supports the study and practice of APD styles nationally,
- Stronger advocacy from us all
- Increased recognition of black role-models across from all walks of life, not only sports,
- A refusal to be sidelined.

We are left with questions about how to ensure these things happen. How much more courageous must we be? Who do we challenge to change their priorities and become a champion and advocate?

"I have been in post at MDI for thirteen years and over that time have developed my holistic approach in delivering and have noted how my practice has evolved and how, like African and Caribbean dance it responds to the environment we are in"

- Maxine Brown, Community Dance Artist, MDI

We felt that it was important to devote part of this article to Maxine, so that she could reflect on what MDI has achieved over the last 13 years (with limited capacity as she is a part time employee and resources because of funding). In the early days, when the post was shared with Dance Northwest (DNW) the post was 20 hours per week and came with a small budget to make things happen. After that first three years MDI managed to sustain the post at a reduction of 17.5 hours with no development budget. Additional finances were successfully sourced from Children in Need; Awards for All and Culture Company over the years. This enabled MDI to host companies, present work and develop CPD with Ndere Troupe (Uganda) Urban Bush Women (USA) and L'Acadco (Jamaica) inter alia.

Maxine joined MDI in 2002 and by 2010 MDI began to focus on Health and Wellbeing. Although APD remained a focus it began to be delivered as an integrated resource as Maxine developed her somatic practice. For a number of years 2005-09 MDI had a vibrant African Youth Dance Group and some of those young people, having completed our training, graduated with dance degrees. These include Jamillah Moore, Zoe Osu and Keisha Estwick. We have been able to support numerous freelancers as they worked alongside Maxine. These include Lamin Dumbuya; Felix Ologbosere, Francis Angol and Laurence Mbombo as well as Lamin and Felix based in Merseyside who are regular contributors to our traditional African dance offer.

"Working in the North West is great as there is much less competition however, it can feel really isolating as there is no one to bounce off. Because there isn't a big APD community it can be hard to find artists who really understand the whole picture which

includes issues around the art form, culture and society".

- Maxine Brown

In the past few years we have noticed an educational and social decline the demand for African dance across Merseyside. Most education establishments do not see traditional forms as valuable or important, yet when their students get the opportunity to take part in the odd master class or workshop they value the learning experience and constantly ask why its not included on their curriculum. Reaching the wider local black communities has become even more difficult as a lot of community's venues and social meeting places have been closed down over the last 10 years.

In 2014 MDI set up an intergenerational community performance group in Liverpool called Riddim and Roots. The group has performed in Carnival and were commissioned by Liverpool City Council as part of the summer programme celebrating the 175th Anniversary of the Cunard Line in 2015. We have been working with the African Elders Group in Toxteth Town Hall since 2014 and continue to promote APD dance by looking for new opportunities through community and health partners including the newly established Liverpool Community Development Service (set up to support positive mental health in the BAME communities in the city). Maxine Brown wants a future that recognises APD more, especially at primary education level and HE/FE. In this way world dance becomes an integrated offer and not an add-on. In this way technique is embedded in practice and more repertoire is performed in local community spaces.

The future

MDI's new strategy for APD; RISE, must be ambitious and focused to continue to develop APD practice across the Merseyside region and beyond. The strategy outlines key aims and objectives under the headings of Artist Support, Community and Education and Business Development. Unsurprisingly



Jaguydance | Bloom Festival 2013 © Clive Clunis

these are similar to what we had set out back in 1999.

At the heart of the strategy, we have listed a set of values...

- Nurture an appreciation of dance of the African Diaspora by promoting and celebrating a positive, engaging and exciting image of regular practice, performances, projects and training ensuring excellence thrives in this region.
- Use our unique capabilities, perspectives, contacts and experiences to develop opportunities for high quality and effective international cultural exchange projects. Develop links between diverse artists from different communities at all levels of experience and offer support and advice through training, mentoring, practice and examples of clear progression routes.
- Provide CPD at an appropriate level for artists to ensure that the high quality of APD teaching in the region is sustained
- Work towards breaking the cycle of stereotyped thinking by offering opportunities to watch and take part in performances, projects and events that promote a positive image of African and Caribbean culture
- Encourage people of all ages and abilities learning about other cultures aiming to develop well-rounded individuals, who are open to new ideas
- Enable people to become better equipped to participate in a global arts economy and society by highlighting local and global issues in our education and participation strands included in APD projects.
- Develop our International Dance Day programme to enable increased promotion of professional and community engagement in APD encouraging participation and cultural diversity.
- Enrich APD education in our schools by providing access to different forms of dance from across the African Diaspora through major RISE projects and events that enables people of the Diaspora to respect understand and identify with their own cultural history
- Take advice from national & international

stakeholders regarding established and up-coming artists and work towards producing and commissioning new dance works through the MDI artistic programme

- Build strong community and commercial partnerships, which will widen the reach of the RISE programme and move us towards a sustainable annual programme.

Wish us luck!

Karen Gallagher, Maxine Brown and Rachel Rogers:
www.mdi.org.uk

Bristol

Independent producer, project manager and writer, Katy Noakes shares her thoughts on dance of the African diaspora in Bristol. Interviewer: 'Funmi Adewole

What led you to work with artists working in the Dance of the African diaspora and how would you describe that journey?

During the eighties and nineties I lived and worked in St Pauls. It was a time of real vibrancy and progress in the community. The riots had paved the way for change, and although things generally were very polarised there was a real sense of pride and new possibilities. I had been working at Kuumba Afrikan Caribbean Arts and community resource (formerly Inkworks), originally in marketing but also on the Carnival education programme and then taking on development of a dance programme. This was the era of a thriving black arts touring circuit; artists were empowered, ambitious and constantly pushing the boundaries of the form. It was impossible not to be inspired by that sense of movement and purpose.

The ways that I work with artists has changed as the sector has changed. Whereas the 80s and 90s saw strong allegiances between arts and community empowerment and much more practice at access

levels, the focus of recent times is more on individual professional, artistic development. The Participatory arts practice now favoured doesn't necessarily have the same agendas and outcomes as community arts.

After Kuumba, I moved to Dance Bristol and then the City Council and see it as a period when the arts really professionalised; more accreditation came online and specialisms around arts, health and regeneration began to develop.

That provided some great opportunities but with less subsidised access to training and increasing pressure on artists to invest in their own development, the pool of artists began to decline. For some, those kind of 'social function' arts opportunities became a glass ceiling, providing satisfying and challenging work but also defining them as artists whose ability to deliver work around health and equalities agendas was valued over their own artistry.

What's interesting now is that a lot of artists who had focused on making work for touring are now re-visiting some of those original values around engagement; the project and performance models may be framed differently but essentially it's about the recognition that we need to keep reaching out to make new audiences.

In your article entitled 'Bristol's African dance tradition' (Dance UK news Issue 58, Autumn 2005) you spoke about a number of dance companies and artists who worked in schools, dance at corporate events and in the community who were relatively unknown to the arts funding system. You mentioned - Issa Sawane, Rosemon Asare, Ripton. Can you give us an update on this area of practice?

Some of those artists are no longer active in dance. Many of the opportunities that used to exist in community and education settings have dried up. Those pathways used to provide a testing ground for many emerging and fledgling practitioners and it fed a constant flow of new artists. It's a meaner,

tighter system now and without support to navigate procurement and accreditation schemes and less formal opportunities to take risks and explore, artists are expected to clearly articulate their vision and strategy much earlier in their careers.

There are positives in this schism though. Although there is less independent, neighbourhood level practice than there used to be, the practice that does exist has sustained itself without regular funding. For example, DMAC studios was built around ten years ago by two artists, Rubba and Remi Tawose, and still offers regular class and masterclass programmes and a physical home for DAD dance. They have achieved that on their own terms and that's something to celebrate.

Bristol also has a thriving afro-latin dance scene with classes and clubnights that operate independently of 'the sector' in the social dance world. Artists like Helen Wilson of Rise YDC and Penny Caffrey of Movema are active in connecting these genres to the wider dance world and have independently programmed some hugely popular mash up days of masterclasses from visiting artists.

In the same article you spoke about street dancers who straddled both the commercial world and subsidized professional scene such The Floor Technicians and Funk it up, Hype crew and Fresh dance. Can you also tell us how things have developed with these artists or artists who work in this way?

Hype celebrated their tenth anniversary last year and are still going from strength to strength, Funk It Up still work in schools, Fresh's AD Charleen Downer took time out to become a mum but has recently begun working with a new influx of younger members, and Floor Technicians officially retired from performance last year after Oscar Anderson suffered a serious injury. We've been blessed by a young generation of talented and committed hip hop artists from Bristol; Jodelle Douglas, Frankie Johnson, Kieran Warner and Deepraj Singh.

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I first met Frankie and Deepraj age 11 when they joined Kuumba's boys' dance project and can still remember the impact on them when they saw Benji Reid performing. It's great that young dancers can still access those kind of opportunities through Swindon Dance's C.A.T programme and through Rise YDC's regular 'go sees'.

Frankie is dancing with Plague, toured with Boy Blue and is wiping the worldwide battle floors in house dance, Jodelle reached the finals of BBC Young Dancer Hip Hop category and is working with Jukebox in Cardiff whilst popping up on billboards as the face of Topshop, Kieran is currently in his final year at Circus Space whilst still regularly teaching, competing and hosting Battle Royale events and Deepraj has just graduated from The Place. I'm excited to see how they all develop; today's dancers have to be a lot more agile career wise and they each have such a strong portfolio of skills that there are myriad ways they could go.

Bristol has had a legacy of community organisations and projects that have now gone – Salongo, Afrikan Caribbean Arts Forum, Black Pyramid Film Project, Kuumba, St Paul Carnival. What do you think can fill the gap? What kind of structures could be useful?

Everything has its time. The loss of Black led arts organisations here has been conflated by cuts in the black voluntary sector so those that survived, such as St Pauls Carnival, became a conduit for many community needs and frustrations that it just didn't have the remit or capacity to take on. Funders have ring-fenced Carnival funds though, so individuals and organisations are talking about what carnival may be going forward.

Members of Black Pyramid are happily still active. Founders Ian Sergeant and Femi Kolade are busy doing great things in Birmingham and London while Rob Mitchell and Shawn Sobers run Frist Born Creatives film company.

The politics of community leadership have sometimes played out detrimentally in the city's Black arts scene. There has been a false dichotomy between artistic excellence and community development that has muddied progress and looked to the past too often for solutions to new problems and new demographics. Changing demographics and the loss of locality working in arts has also impacted. The geographical focus will symbolically always be St Pauls but practice is much more peripatetic.

Many artists identify differently now than they did in the era of ACE 'Decibel' initiatives; there's greater fluidity not just between cultural identities but also techniques, genres and forms and beyond shaping strategy, labels are increasingly redundant to artists. There's still a risk to events that promote as Black arts that they are perceived as a cultural rather than artistic activity and miss out on wider attention.

The challenge today is when artists operate in separate silos, not seeing the predominantly contemporary identified arts sector as having a place for them. Although we're in the era of the individual artist, partnership working is virtually mandatory, and artists have to seek support from a number of organisations to get work off the ground. That's an area that still needs more open dialogue and support. Some of the city centre venues actively reach out and have built genuine relationships, but there's still some distance to go for dancers who practice traditional forms to find the right models to connect them to contemporary arts venues.

Without a cash and resource injection in the city, the future in Bristol is likely to be a jigsaw of consortia allegiances, temporary interventions and shared initiatives. As well as Circomedia, Trinity Arts are also proving a great venue for dance; partnering ADAD to host Adesola Akinleye's Light Steps performance for local early years settings last year and bringing the full performance back for this spring, while also agreeing to book Uchenna Dance's 'Our Mighty Groove' in Autumn. That's a show I've been trying to

bring to Bristol for a while now and I'm pretty damn excited

We do have some great, receptive venues, good audiences for dance and a thriving, diverse annual Dance Village programme at Bristol Harbour Festival. Many of us feel we need an organisation with a dedicated dance development remit to really make long term impact and fundamentally, we share the same national need to be represented on curriculums to ensure D.A.D. dance is part of everyone's vocabulary and not seen as another, separate world. Bristol dance artists have necessarily become experts at self sufficiency and finding ways of getting things done despite the lack of infrastructure here. That's to their credit and is completely understandable, but when artists become so used to working alone it can become hard to pull people together on a longer, shared journey.

You have recently been working with ADAD can you describe the role and what insights it has given you into this sector and what is unique about dance of the African Diaspora in Bristol?

One of the noticeable differences is the direction of ambitions between the region and London. In Bristol we have a lively African dance scene at practitioner and class level, but few artists devising for performance.

Last year ADAD held a discussion event with Strike A Light Festival in Gloucester to explore the different ambitions between London and the South West.

What came through really clearly from SW artists was their commitment to working with their local communities.

In a lot of ways, the hip hop scene and its ethos now serve the same functions here as African dance did at it's peak. The sense of family; honouring of history and authentic tradition, and commitment to legacy through 'each one teach one', all reflect similar values and help to connect people on a deeper level.

What do you think the future holds?

Without sustained support and safety nets it can hard for artists to think big and plan ambitious work, but Bristol does have the skills base for some far reaching work – for example, with more artists trained as Arts Awards Advisors the city could lead on regional DAD schools' programmes; we could work with our veteran artists to develop culturally specific reminiscence work with elders, or collaborate with other art forms to produce unique immersive performance experiences.

Considering where Bristol is based in the heartland of summer festivals, it would be great to see more site adaptive work made specifically for outdoors. Circus and street theatre are both strong here and offer great scope for collaboration, as does the city's digital arts scene. We have some incredible writers, film-makers and musicians, so there's fantastic potential for more collaborative work.

Dance in general, not just D.A.D. dance, is continually on a quest for new audiences and new ways of framing work and there are so many avenues still to be explored. We can reach outwards and make new connections without sacrificing integrity and commitment to community.

Thank you.

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Photo: Tabanka Crew | Bloom Festival 2013 © Clive Clunis

THE MILD WILD WEST

New developments in Gloucester and Bristol

Katy Noakes interviews two young men who are making developing dance scenes outside of London – Tyler Attwood in Gloucester and Kieran Warner in Bristol.

Tyler Attwood

Gloucester based Tyler Attwood founded Team MSB (Multi Style Battles), a now regular fixture on Gloucester's calendar.

Tyler began dancing with Gloucester Dance's youth company before going onto Swindon Dance's C.A.T. scheme. He is now studying at Northern Contemporary. Mentored by Robert Hylton, he has taught in numerous Primary, Secondary schools, community centres and youth clubs in the Gloucestershire area.

How did you get into dance?

Both my uncles are dancers. When I was almost 14, they thought that I needed to get out of the house more and took me to a local training spot for Street dancers in Gloucester - it took my five weeks but I've been dancing ever since. I trained because I enjoyed dance and wanted to improve in it as much as possible.

Are there any artists who influenced you positively or inspired you?

It wasn't until after a few years that I knew of any artists so some of my inspiration came from music videos with artists like; Missy Elliot, Usher, Omarion and Michael Jackson. I also got some inspiration from dance movies e.g You got served and Stomp the Yard.

What motivates you to create work and/or put up events?

Creating work - I want to explore the ways in which street dance styles, contemporary dance and various forms of martial arts can be fused to create new works the challenge the boundaries of modern dance today. It is something which is being explored a lot more commonly in today's dance world but I feel that most of what is being put out is of a low level or uses diluted street dance

I put on events because I want to improve the dance scene in Gloucester than branch out and improve the dance scene in the south west. I started my own company, M.S.B, with these two aims of some of the things I wanted to achieve.

What interests you more – making experimental, theatrical work, or making dancing that displays moves which the crowd recognize or creating a great event that features dance?

I prefer to freestyle and explore that side which can excite a crowd and to create a great dance event as opposed to creating works, but I do still like to create works.

Which audience are you targeting?

For free styling there is no audience I target, for the events I plan to target anyone that has an interest in dance or wants to try something new. If I had to choose an audience it would be children and young people as a big part of what we do is to give opportunities is to children and young people that would otherwise not be there.

How do you develop an audience or find collaborators?

For the events I plan, i develop an audience through promotion and marketing which is done via; social media, our website, local newspapers and their websites, advertising websites and promoting at

relevant events i.e other battles, performances or dance festivals.

Do you use technology and social media? If yes how?

I use social media as a means of promotion, documentation and research for the business I run.

How do you view the funding system?

I view the funding system as difficult, there are too many people competing for the same number of small pots of funding. I feel that although they are made public, relevant sources can be hard to find and require hours of research. I also feel that to obtain funding it is about who you know rather than what you know and the work you have done.

What is your ambition in relation to dance?

I have a number of ambitions in relation to dance:

- To battle at high level competitions across the world
- To perform in various works with large scale companies and companies which explore the fusions between street dance, contemporary and martial arts
- To choreograph my own works that explore the same fusion as stated above
- To continue to grow my organization as large as possible
- To make M.S.B the largest battle in the South West initially, then the largest battle in the UK

Do you notice much difference between dance in the SW and dance in London and other regions?

In comparison to London, there are a lot less dancers and a lot less opportunities. As we know, London is the center of opportunities for dance but at the same time has a large number of dancers competing for a small amount of jobs. It is more proportionate in other regions yet I feel that the South West is lacking still in terms of both opportunities and dancers. A

lot of the high level dancers are moving out of the South West rather than staying which damages the dance scene here.

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Team-Multi-Styles-Battle-198678243613147>

Kieran Warner

A founding member of the Jam collective, a family of hip hop dancers meeting to lab and share skills across Bristol and London, Kieran curates the Battle Royale series of workshops and battles and regularly guest judges and takes part in battles across Europe whilst also studying for his final year at the National Centre for Circus Arts. Aged 23, Kieran is part of the new wave of second generation hip hop dancers and represented ADAD as guest tutor at Pavilion Dance South West's Regional Youth Dance Roadshow in the lead up to UDance.

How did you get into dance? Why did you train or how did you learn?

I met a bunch of guys dancing at a party back in 2008 and they invited me to train with them. From there I met Frankie (Johnson) and Ramelle Williams and began dancing with the Angels in South Bristol. I was just going with the flow and having fun, I hadn't decided then that I wanted to dance seriously. I'd studied drama and musical theatre at school but boys weren't allowed to choose dance as an option at GCSE.

At 18 I was accepted onto Swindon Dance's Youth Dance Academy, training on the Urban programme. It was at this time that I decided dance was what I wanted to do, because of the fun I was having, the friends I was making and how inspiring it was seeing everyone around me develop their skill levels. I began assisting the YDA Satellite sessions in Bristol and taught a few sessions for the Council in hospital settings, and we also began to run classes at Motion in Bristol, alongside Soul Mavericks and Frankie Johnson.

In 2012 I moved to London, originally I'd wanted to study at London Contemporary but a visit to Circus Space changed my mind. I fell in love with the building and loved seeing the amazing things people were doing. I got interested in bringing dance and circus skills together.

Are there any artists who influenced you positively or inspired you?

Robert Hylton taught us at YDA. He was incredibly dedicated and generous, sharing information and putting opportunities our way. It was a bit like being taught by a mad scientist, he knows his body inside out and he can break dance down like no one else.

Brooke Milliner from Plague has also been inspirational. I was a fan of what Plague are doing and Brooke also taught at YDA. Brooke has a really dedicated training method. He'll focus on one thing until he gets it and keeps pushing himself. I'm also a fan of Sebastien and Honji. I love how they use elements of creative work that the contemporary performance world also enjoys.

What motivates you to create work and/or put up events?

In terms of making work I'm interested to see how I can bring hip hop and the Cyr wheel together. I don't know of anyone else doing it so I'm interested to see what I can develop and how people from the two different audiences will respond to it. It's an experiment with the two forms.

Event wise, it's about pleasing the people! I'm still young and see myself as someone who would also be an audience/ participant at other events. I spend most weekends at events, taking part but also doing research - looking at what works and how I can keep the events fresh.

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Laila Diallo, Dance Village/Bloom © Mark Simmons

What interests you more – making experimental, theatrical work, or making dancing that display moves which the crowd recognize or creating a great event that features dance?

For me at the moment it's about experimenting with hip hop and the Cyr.

Which audience are you targeting?

There are groups of different audiences for different types of events.

I'd love to be able to show my work at Breakin Convention next year. They have great audiences who know what to expect already and Breakin Convention provides a way in for new types of work as well as new audiences. Although right now, I'm pretty much happy to do anything and take opportunities as they come!

How do you develop an audience or find collaborators?

The audience at Battle Royale is mainly other dancers who are either taking part or watching. It's mainly other people that I know from the scene, or people who 'know someone who knows someone.' In terms of finding other judges and workshop tutors, there are so many of us that travel around to events and we all try to support each other. In the street dance scene our credentials are very much proven on the dancefloor and everyone knows everyone so it's easy enough to get in contact with judges, teachers and battlers.

I have a long standing relationship with the venue who support Battle Royale as part of their youth arts programme.

Do you use technology and social media? If yes how?

Yes, but really I'm only on Twitter because I had to be as a Breakin Convention advocate! I use Facebook a lot to keep up with international dance friends and it's been a great platform for building strong relationships. We have the Jam page on Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/thejammovement> that we use to share events and footage and I also use Facebook for the Battle Royale events. I'm on Instagram too, but more for personal use.

How do you view the funding system?

I haven't worked much with funding so I'm not really in a position to comment but everything I hear in lectures and from different artists seems to be about how funding is always being cut! I can see how you should have to put work in to get funding but it sounds systems could be made a lot easier so that artists can out as much focus on the actual dance work as on the funding management.

What is your ambition in relation to dance?

I hope to be able to keep enjoying it and having fun. I love training and dancing and seeing progression in everyone around me. It's so good to see other Jam members achieving and developing. I want to experiment with dance and circus and see what I can make and I still enjoy battling and travelling. It's amazing to be invited to different places to do what you love doing.

What would you say are the differences and similarities between how the circus and hip hop worlds operate?

Well everyone knows everyone in both worlds so that's a big similarity, making and keeping contacts isn't too difficult since someone will know someone that can help you. One of the biggest differences I find is that some circus artists are happy to train hard and just stick with what's expected where as in the underground dance scene especially, it's much more about finding your unique style within the dance style you're dancing and building creatively as an artist. However this is just one of my opinions which will surely differ with some peoples opinions.

<https://www.facebook.com/simplecypher>

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NEW HORIZONS

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Photo: Alesandra Seutin | Bloom Festival 2015 © Foteini Christofilopoulou

NEW HORIZONS

New developments in the sector

The three pieces in the section look at what's new on the horizon. We take a peep at some industry areas where dance of the African diaspora is growing. One area is Somatic dance. Though many people find African and diaspora forms therapeutic, most recognised somatic dance practices draw on Eastern and Western knowledge systems.

Now however some practitioners are bridging this gap. It is no news that Dance and technology is a growing field but what relevance does it have for DAD? The inquisitive Katy Noakes shares her thoughts after finding out what it is like to dance with motion capture.

Lastly, we have an interview with Akosua Boakye, the founder of AkomAsa Performing Arts Academy (APPA). Youth Dance in the sector has progressed in leaps and bounds. Other youth dance companies making waves are Artistry dance, a company of young people led by Kamara Gray and Birmingham based ACE dance and music which runs an incredible youth dance programme and company. The sky is the limit.

Snapshots of practice: Practitioners working with African and Caribbean dance forms from a somatic perspective

By 'Funmi Adewole

The development of somatic practices based on African and Caribbean dance forms is on the rise. Growth in this area is more consistent going beyond the occasional advertisement of Afro-yoga. Francis Angol, Maxine Brown and Sandra Golding were teachers and performers for many years before taking the M.A in Dance and Somatic Well-being at the University of Central Lancashire. They attended the university at different times but were drawn to the course for the same reason. From personal experience they had benefited from the therapeutic nature of African and Caribbean dances and they were looking for a way of articulating what they had experienced and of making this experience available to others.

The course provided them with the language to do this. Since leaving the course all three of them have devised their own methods of facilitating and teaching from a somatic perspective.

Sandra Golding at the moment is working with women and has lead workshops as part of women empowerment days. Her sessions, which are called 'Moving Tu Balance', are therapeutic, using gentle movement, meditation and dance. They provide a safe, non-judgemental space where women can support each other. Sandra also introduces exercises such as The Colour dance, which she has devised as way of engaging the participants' imagination using colourful fabric as a medium of expression. She says that for some people who find talking therapy difficult, dancing enables them to locate, express and release their emotions. After a number of dancing sessions, they usually find they are more able to talk. Sandra is developing work for other contexts as well.

The relationship between verbal and non-verbal expression is something that Maxine Brown has recognised in her practice. Maxine has been an African people's dance practitioner at Merseyside in Liverpool since the early 2000s and she works mainly in this part of the country. Rachel Rogers' article in *Animated magazine* (spring 2011) *Our dancing days are (not) done* describes a project where Maxine, in collaboration with Shelia Kennedy, worked with the older Caribbean community in the area. The sessions they delivered included meditation and reminiscence, stretching and mirroring as well as partner work which drew on elements of the Caribbean Quadrille. The participants were familiar with the Quadrille and returning to the style of dance sparked off discussions about childhood and life in the Caribbean before migration to the UK. Maxine works with other groups in the area and continues to teach African and Caribbean dance.

London based Francis Angol has developed Bodyrhythms. He describes it as a somatic based therapeutic movement practice that uses simple, gentle and uncomplicated dance exercises and routines. He seeks to take his participants on a journey of physical exploration that he initiates through a dialogue of rhythm, movement, dance and imagery. The aim is to enrich the imagination, energise the body and relax the mind. Francis works with a wide range of groups – young people, people with special needs and the elderly. He also works with carers, providing them with a space to attend to their own needs. Additionally, Francis runs open classes, where the average member of the general public can find an enjoyable way to unwind.

Though it has been recognised for years that African, Caribbean and other diaspora dance forms have healing properties, it has taken a long time for this aspect of the Dance of the African diaspora to be explored for use in contemporary settings. With a growing number of practitioners exploring these forms from a somatic perspective the situation is set to change.

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Visible Exposure: Dancing with motion capture

By Katy Noakes

I'm late to the table when it comes to trusting that technology has a role in live performance. I can be slow on the uptake. As a producer of a certain age, working specifically with dance and bodies I'll freely admit to a knee jerk protectionism about what makes the art form distinct. When I read the other year about a Swedish choreographer digitally pioneering new ways of 'making dance without bodies' I was pretty damn terrified. If we're not making works for dancers, why do they bother training? How do we make technology our friend and not become it's servant?

With these insecurities in mind, I was reassured to find that the Reactor for Awareness in Motion (RAM) Dance Toolkit developed by the Yamaguchi Center for Arts and Media (YCAM) team resident at Watershed's Pervasive Media Studios, is built around the dancer. Low weight motion sensors are attached to the dancers' limbs and a library of scenes, or visual tools, allow the dancer to choose the translation medium. The menu of 'scenes' or 'environment' visually represent the movement on screen, allowing the dancer to make visible the movement rules and impetus that are usually visible only within their mind's eye.

The invitation from the YCAM and PM Studio teams was for dancers to "stretch it, break it and change it" and the range of artists present at the workshop allowed just that. Perhaps amongst the biggest revelations for me was the empathy and relate-ability of the software; the distinct qualities of each 'scene' instigating a different type of connection or



Jaguydance | Bloom Festival 2013 © Clive Clunis

response. Some scenes have architectural qualities that chart the planes of travel, others manifest intent more poetically and manage to convey a sense of gravity, the dancer's permanent 'frenemy'. As one artist said: "It felt like partner dancing. I was in a relationship with something other."

From ADAD's perspective, RAM's ability to analyse and capture technique provides creative possibilities for new ways of codifying and sharing Diasporic dance. It's ability to visually represent the intricacies and impetus of movement has huge potential for the notation of our sector's work. RAM can also facilitate international working, providing real time sharing and feedback for co-devising, and the artists found it also served to refine their movements, as Laila Diallo described: "there is potential for this technology to support a re-patterning of movements, perhaps a breaking of habits and an extension of palette."

Each artist present found their own way of relating to RAM; Lisa May Thomas's recent work around touch enabled her to respond to the technology as a different type of touch; dancer and puppeteer David McGoran found analogies with digital puppeteering, dancer and architect Chrissa Varna made clear connections with the architect's approach to designing around negative space and Jess Thom, a writer and artist with Tourette's Syndrome had a very visceral reaction to the technology, finding that seeing familiar movements represented in new ways triggered an auto-response.

A large part of the YCAM Team's research has been around the rehabilitative potential of RAM; work with differently abled artists has thrown up numerous possibilities, creative and therapeutic – Chisato Minamimura found the visual stimuli helped provide the impetus that hearing artists have from sound. Their work in Japan with an artist with cerebral palsy found, like Jess, that his response to the visual stimuli could trigger specific movements.

The coaching value of RAM seems clear, but beyond

this there are also manifold creative possibilities – choreographers could cut, paste and manipulate the data stored from RAM Sessions to create new movement and choreography; international collaboration can take on a new aspect with precise, real time feedback. And perhaps we'll see Urban Planners and Architects employing RAM and movement artists to help design liveable, navigable environments.

Thank you PM Studios, YCAM and artists for making the hidden visible!

Watershed's PM Studios hope to continue collaborating with YCAM and artists. For more information please visit:

www.pmstudio.co.uk

www.watershed.co.uk

<http://www.ycam.jp/en/>

AkomAsa Performing Arts Academy: Training from the Heart

By 'Funmi Adewole

When did you establish AkomAsa Performing Arts Academy and what drew you to this area of work?

AkomAsa means "Heart of Dance" in Twi, the language of the Asante people of Ghana. I established AkomAsa back in the summer 2012 when I collaborated with the founders of the L'Overture Trust in a community arts project for children and young people. To achieve my goals I brought together a group of like minded performing arts specialists that included; you, Ukachi Akalawu - African Diasporic artists and researchers, Bobby Demers - composer and drummer, Marie South composer and vocal teacher and Makiko Fukuka-

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Tabanka Crew | Bloom Festival 2013 © Clive Clunis

Teacher and ex-performer-Ballet and West End musicals; to contribute to the launch that combined a Western and African performing arts training and performance program.

Since then teachers have include Kwesi Johnson of Kompany Malakhi, Sello Malefi - South African Vocal specialist and Kella Paney – musical theatre specialist, both teachers and performers from the Disney Musical The Lion King.

We have also had Mohamed Gueye–Senegalese Musician and drummer, Nicky Elis - Contemporary Dance Artist from The Place CAT scheme, Kirsty Cherrett -teacher and performer of Musical Theatre, Edith Lachapelle, Jazz and Afro-caribbean dance teacher, and Marcos Santana Brazil - musician and drummer.

Founding an academy has been my vision since 1991 when I begun my dance training at Laban. Then I had to face the reality that there was not in existence a centre in the UK that offered training in African Diasporic dance under the same roof as Ballet and Contemporary Dance, with equal emphasis on both academic training and performance.

I have always believed that there is much to be gained from the amalgamation of African Diasporic arts and Western dance, music and drama. My years of work in teaching Contemporary Dance, African Diasporic dance, Disney Lion King Cub Schools performance training programmes and my deep interest for nurturing the skills of children and young people, made this area of work inevitable. I want children and young people to have the opportunity to get involved in structured arts training and performance; gain the experience and build self confidence in themselves and their capabilities, socially and academically. I want them to develop awareness of their culture and heritage and share the benefits of cross-cultural performing arts.

What do you think attracts young people to your academy?

Like no other, AkomaAsa offers cross-cultural training

and performance skills and does so in a unique way. Its programmes gives children and young people the opportunity to participate in a combination of new experiences; where the fusion of dancing, drumming, acting, singing and storytelling are a compulsory factor for all. This gives them a broader understanding that is highly significant to the nature of performing arts practice. It also provides fantastic progression opportunities into other dance and performing arts theatre avenues of professional work.

AkomaAsa's expectations of strict discipline, commitment, focus, respect, professionalism and fun play a part in why parents and children alike are attracted to the academy. Children are taught to be open and embrace the fact that they are not perfect and must work to develop and turn their weaknesses into strengths. They are nurtured to progress based on facts and not what will make them feel good at any given present time.

I also believe the emphasis that is placed on **autonomy**, where children and young people are given a high degree of **responsibility** in how they learn and **develop** emotionally, spiritually, creatively and physically keeps them coming back. Team work creates a peer to peer learning environment amongst children and young people of all abilities. The guaranteed opportunity to perform and share work with family, friends and invited guests following a short intensive period of training, is a great appeal. Parents have also expressed their amazement in their feedback.

For some parents with children of African, Caribbean or mixed decent, another factor that attracts them to AkomaAsa is the fact that it is professionally run by a black African woman whom they can relate to on all levels and who is an excellent role model for all participants.

Can you share some highlights or achievements of the group?

The children achieved their goals with surprising outcomes, demonstrating enhancement of Theatre Skills including confidence in self, voice and body language on stage. Also getting together a group of passionate professionals who share the same principles and philosophy and who give their continuous support, hard work and commitment to the job is an achievement.

It was a highlight to reach our targets for 2015. AkomaAsa has a high number of returning participants each year as well as new faces. We had successful enrolment for its programmes in 2014 and 2015.

Channel 4's visit to film Jack Courage's (a young boy with autism) personal journey with AkomaAsa was a highlight. Additionally, three AkomaAsa children progressed into The Place CAT scheme, two landed roles in West End Musicals and another a role in a Roman film as the young Hannibal.

Last but not least, it was a highlight to gain the support of ADAD and Dance UK directors for the summer school in 2015

What are you hoping to change, achieve or introduce through your company?

I want this to be a dance and arts training and performance programme that helps children and young people access quality and excellence in Western and African Diasporic performing arts training and performance. My aim is to provide supportive and realistic experiences for black children and young people to get the opportunities they deserve to enjoy. Lastly, I want to support and invest in African Diasporic artists and teachers by providing opportunities for them to share their expertise.

Plans for the future?

I am working on a number of things. I need a permanent home for AkomaAsa Performing Arts Academy to operate from as I have a range of projects in mind. I would like an After School Training and Performance programme and I want to create two performance companies, one for 7-11 year olds and another for 12-16 year olds.

I also want to engage artists to create choreographic work, drawing on African diasporic forms, for young people to perform and tour. I hope these companies will engage and give black children and young people opportunities and experiences such as performing and seeing dance that otherwise would not be available or accessible to them. I will also give young artists the opportunity to work with experienced professionals through AkomaAsa. Likewise I plan to support the professional development of teachers working with African and diasporic forms and develop resources for this work.

I am working on building links and partnerships with primary schools and education and community organisations to help broaden the scope of the work of AkomaAsa and increase participation. All this requires funding. I am open to working with fundraisers to build and sustain the work.

Anything else?

I'll make sure I have fun doing it.

Thank you.

Akosua Boakye: akosnyarko6489@gmail.com

21st ANNIVERSARY EDITION

IN MEMO- RIAL

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21st ANNIVERSARY EDITION



Photo: Ivan Blackstock/Bird Gang | Bloom Festival 2013 © Clive Clunis

IN MEMORIAL

In recent months the dance world have lost three important personalities: Nadine Senior and Francis Nii Yartey and Bode Lawal, With gratitude we remember what they gave us. May they rest in peace.

Farewell

Nadine Senior MBE by Lisa Nkrumah-Mweu

Founder of Northern School of Contemporary Dance (NSCD) and pioneer of the contemporary dance in the North particularly in Leeds, Nadine Senior passed away on the 28th of January 2016.

The impact of her teaching and passion for dance has left a lasting legacy through the graduates of NSCD the dance institution she founded in 1985, and the celebrated company, now known as Phoenix Dance formed in 1981, whose beginnings owed much to the inspirations of Nadine Senior. Her teaching at Harehills Middle School of many inspired many young people to take up dance including the founder members; David Hamilton, Donald Edwards and Vilmore Jones.

A champion of the arts and grassroots communities, Nadine Senior instigated and advocated opportunities for young people from diverse backgrounds, to train and showcase their talents. She challenged the dance ecology of the region and transformed perceptions of Leeds towards the vibrant cultural city it has become today. Her legacy will live and dance on...in the hearts of many.

Professor Francis Nii Yartey

Professor F. Nii Yartey as he preferred to be called, died in India where he had led a group of dancers for the Africa-India Summit held there recently. He was hospitalized for a while but finally left us on Saturday 21st November, 2015 at the age of 69.

In 1968, he obtained a certificate in dance and then a diploma in 1971 at the University of Ghana and a Master of Arts degree at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, USA in 1975. From 1976 to 1993 he became the Artistic Director/Choreographer of the Ghana Dance Ensemble, University of Ghana. When the group moved to the National Theatre, to become the National Dance Company of Ghana, he became the first Artistic Director until 2006 when he retired. He became an Associate Professor of the Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana the same year and proceeded to Swarthmore College, Pennsylvania, USA, where he was a Cornell Distinguished Professor for a year returning in 2007 to work with Ashesi University College, as an Adjunct Professor. In 2008 Nii went back to the School of Performing Arts (SPA) of the University of Ghana to teach dance and became the Head, Department of Dance Studies, SPA in 2012 taking temporary responsibility of the university's dance group a couple of months ago this year, when his tenure as Head ended and the substantive head of the Ghana Dance Ensemble travelled on a fellowship.

Prof. Nii Yartey's research interests for the past several years have been the creation and development of Contemporary African Dance in Ghana; and the continuation of the development of Dance-Drama initiated by the late Emeritus Professor Albert Mawere-Opoku.

"These life-long projects have been largely facilitated by my work with international collaborators, including academic institutions, the Ghana Dance Ensemble, the National Dance Company of Ghana; and most recently, the Noyam African Dance Institute."

"My other research area is looking into the historical development of Dance-Theatre in Ghana; as well

as the development of movement vocabulary and performance techniques for the emerging Contemporary African Dance genre in Ghana," he said in one of the many lectures he gave on African Dance, a subject he was very passionate about. He formed the Noyam African Dance Institute, the first of its kind in the country to explore his new ideas in dance movement and to train young dancers who otherwise would not have the kind of education required of a dancer, to break into the world's mainstream professional dance community, because they do not have the requisite educational qualification.

Nii was elated and said he had realised part of his dream when at least two of his students managed to continue their training overseas and are currently undertaking their master's programmes there.

He will be remembered for his numerous choreographic pieces, which he affectionately called dance-dramas. They number over 30 and include world class pieces, (call them classics of you wish) such as The King's Dilemma, Bukom, Solma, The Legend of Okoryoo, Musu-Saga of the slaves, Atamga, which brought joy to thousands of people both in Ghana and around the world.

Among the many events he was involved in that brought joy to people worldwide were Asipim a Dance-Theatre commissioned by the East Bay Centre for the Performing Arts, San Francisco – USA, which he co-choreographed with Prof. C.K. Ladzekpo, Choreographed: "The Journey", a contemporary African dance, created for Adzido Pan African Dance Ensemble, in London – UK.

In 2008, he directed and choreographed the dance and cultural aspects for Ghana CAN 2008, (26th Africa Cup of Nations Soccer Tournament) Opening and Closing Ceremonies in Accra, Ghana. In 2009, he was the Choreographer/Director: "Opening and Closing Ceremonies" of AfHF Hockey Africa Cup of Nations, held in Accra- Ghana. Also in 2010, he choreographed and directed: the Cultural segment of the Commissioning of the Oil tanker, FPSO Kwame Nkrumah in Singapore - organised by Tullow Ghana Ltd. and the Government of Ghana,

Among his many publications are; "Dance Symbolism in Africa", African in Contemporary perspective: A textbook for undergraduate Students, edited by Takyiwaa Manu and Esi Sutherland. Forthcoming publication: the Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, Legon, "Globalization and African Culture: the Role of the Arts", Special Edition 2006: Legon Journal of the Humanities, Faculty of Arts, University of Ghana, "The Development of African Dance-Theatre in Ghana: a Personal Profile", Composition and Transmission of Musical forms in Africa, edited by Professors Kofi Agawu and Kofi Anyidoho, under imprint of the council for the Development of social science research in Africa, CODESRIA Dakar.

Prof. Nii Yartey has toured extensively in the course of his work and had organised numerous workshops, seminars, and dance training sessions and lectures across the globe. He has also won several awards including the ECRAAG and ACRAAG awards and in 2000, the Head of States award of a Grand Medal (Civil Division) for his contribution to Choreography and Dance Development in Ghana. He received a posthumous award from His Excellency President John Mahama for his exploits in dance development in Ghana and across the globe. He was accorded a state burial.

Nii Yaa Wo Odzobann (from forevermissed.com courtesy)

Bode Lawal MA (emca)
by Jahman Oladejo Anikulapo
 (www.africanvoiceonline.co.uk)

The Dancer, Choreographer and Founder of Sakoba Dance Company, UK, was reported dead on August 13, 2015 in Manchester, where he had been running a Dance workshop. Bode Lawal MA (emca), is hailed as one of the finest exponents of creative African dance working in Britain. He studied dance, choreography and drama before being invited to join the Nigerian national dance troupe with which he toured internationally, winning the Ministry of Culture's Dancer of the Year award in

1985. After this success, he moved to Britain to form Sakoba (meaning new dawn), to celebrate the rich traditions of African dance and music and to spread the profound messages encapsulated in his choreography across Europe. In 1990 he was asked to choreograph Macbeth for the English Shakespeare Company, directed by Michael Bogdanov, which also formed part of an exchange programme with the Santa Monica Playhouse.

In 2003 Bode was invited by the Dean of Faculty of Arts and Architecture to UCLA as a visiting dance professor, teaching intercultural choreography in the World Art and Cultures department Los Angeles, California. Due to the great interest in his visionary work, Bode was encouraged to establish Sakoba's sister company in Los Angeles in order to promote the understanding and appreciation of his unique choreography and technique. This company has received sponsorship from some renowned personalities including Jamie Lee Curtis, Christopher Guest, Sharon Stone, James Cameron and the Oprah Winfrey Foundation, allowing the Company to perform at the prestigious Jacobs Pillow Dance Festival in Massachusetts. Bode Lawal, upon completing his sabbatical, returned to the UK where he arrived with a fresh and compelling new dance language. He is also in great demand as a teacher and residency tutor and has won numerous National and European awards for his choreography and performances alike. In 2002 Bode Lawal was awarded The Dance Artist Fellowship "Men of Merit" Award for Outstanding Contribution to Dance. His recent choreography "Clockwork" won the 'Performance of the Year 2006' in The Journal Culture Awards.

**ASEJU: Bode Lawal's
Post Modern African Dance
by Thea Nerissa Barnes © 2005 & 2016**

Many thanks to Thea Barnes for writing a new version of her article for this edition.

Bode Lawal is an exponent of traditional¹ African dance but is currently devising alternative, syncretic² dance making strategies for his company, SAKOBA. Lawal moved to Britain and formed SAKOBA in 1987 and has recently returned from sabbatical in the United States. Lawal's revived artistic vision presents what he calls "post modern" African dance which proposes innovative choreography while remaining true to African cultural traditions. Lawal's proclamation is provocative in this British dance culture³, a context that still sets classical ballet at the top while teeming with traditional, hybrid, and syncretic forms. One wonders though when African dance was ever a modern dance form to warrant Lawal's post modern stance. Also one might ask when was the Africanist presence acknowledged as a viable dance aesthetic choice in this British context?

I've gone beyond calling SAKOBA African contemporary which to most everybody means "fusion"; we don't do that any more. What I'm trying to do now is A) create my own dance language and make it more assessable to what's happening today, B) not focusing mainly on stories. ASEJU! There's a theme about it but the next piece I'm creating which is called SANGO/IYANU (MIRACLE) is abstract. I will not forget my tradition, which is African Nigerian technique; but what I'm doing with African Nigerian technique is taking it with me and trying to make it look more clean and polished for what is happening today without losing the source or root of what is happening. African dance today is not just about jumping around like a monkey; its believing in yourself, dealing with what is happening around you but using the aesthetic of African traditional dance.

In 2005 the dancing body that privileges recognisable traditional Africanist expressions in its use of bent knees, flexed feet, broken lines, poly centre and poly rhythmical movement vocabularies, earth bond affinities, buxom women and men with robust muscularity remains an awe inspiring and mystifying spectacle. It has also been denigrated and dismissed, alternately admired and invisibilised in British dance culture—at least since its emergence with Berto Pasuka's Les Ballets Nègres in 1946. *The Sunday Times*, 5 May 1946 stated Les Ballets Nègres impressed the audience with its vitality and sincerity, introducing English theatre to a new kind of dance drama while the *East Anglian Daily Times* printed 22 December 1948: *Pasuka, displays to even greater advantage his virtuosity as a dancer and actor; his mime compares with that of any dancer known to us.* ⁴ Les Ballets Nègres however was excluded from the 1951 Festival of Britain because it was believed to have represented colonial not British culture.⁵ As exotica, Les Ballet Nègres Caribbean expressions were marginalised, credited for their innovations but excluded because of their Other ness.

Les Ballet Nègres is considered a highly successful British repertory company performing in a Caribbean dance idiom though not considered a member of Britain's early modern dance canon because of its supposed lack of European modern dance elements.⁶ This recognition, but simultaneous exclusion from the canon, relegated African and Caribbean forms and idioms to the margins, illegitimate and not credible as modern 'British' dance. Pasuka's, and fellow founder member Richie Riley's, motives for making dance were no different than any other early modern dance exponents working in Britain at the time. The movement language they used though was not recognised as viable modern dance material.

Early twentieth century British dance culture consolidated traditions of classical ballet but also included the emergence of forms which referenced European and American modern dance-making⁷. From early British dance-maker and teacher,

Margaret Morris, developing her work in 1910 to the arrival of European dance makers Kurt Jooss, Sigurd Leeder, and Rudolf Laban at Dartington Hall in Devon in the 1930s and 1940s, dance-makers drew from their surroundings to cultivate distinctive aesthetics that chose alternatives or revitalised movement vocabularies distinct from classical ballet's tenets. The strands of dance expression included in Britain's early twentieth century genealogies stretches between musical theatre and modernist, expressionistic dance forms from Germany and America. Within this wide palette there was also an Africanist presence.

During the 1940s and 1950s ad hoc Caribbean and African groups presenting cabaret performances in Britain held a presence but not a substantial profile⁸. With British audiences having no previous experience in seeing barefoot dance and against a context that regarded traditional Africanist dance expressions wild, lascivious, uninhibited, and exotic, Pasuka⁹ and Katherine Dunham presented innovative applications of Caribbean forms to modern dance. Dunham's anthropological research in the Caribbean provided the foundation for her choreographic works performed in London and Paris in 1948. Dunham's *Caribbean Rhapsody* presented at Prince of Wales Theatre impressed British critics of *The Times* and *Observer* with the *Dancing Times* complimenting Dunham and her dancers' particular use of traditional Africanist dance expressions¹⁰.

Pasuka's choreographies along with Dunham and other dance-makers utilising Africanist expressions ruptured not only classical ballet tenets but also altered approaches to European modern dance practices with their Africanist movements and revitalised compositional devices. They presented dance spectacles as well as emotional dramas that countered the popular plantation, minstrel, and revue presentations of the 1940s and cabaret of the 1950s. These dance makers weren't just vivifying the Africanist presence in Britain's dance culture. Their particular kind of expression was radical, an indication of new possibilities; the presentation of

alternative choices that countered the norm. Kurt Jooss' *Green Table* was a movement metaphor commenting on the political machinations leading into World War II. Pasuka's *They Came* commented on the tribulations of racial tension aside the equalising effects of a World War that affected all races. What was the difference that excluded Pasuka but included Jooss in the British dance canon? The liberalness upon which critics and dance supporters appreciated early modern dance practitioners and at present British New Dance and contemporary dance-making exponents seemed then, and now, unable to apprehend the alternative expressions posed by dance makers who choose Africanist idioms. This context values innovation and professes tolerance but in actuality is limited in its capability to apprehend overt Africanist expressions.

Most traditional African dance is considered cultural tourism, wearing grass skirts or just does something very simplistic. We're not just doing the same thing which the dance lobbyists call cultural tourism. In post modern African dance theatre we do not have to wear African costumes to show that we're Africans. The body, the movement will depict the traditional aspect of what we're trying to do.

Lawal's post modern stance is a further development of the use of Africanist expressions to express world views practiced in the 1940s and 1950s and related genealogies seen in the 1970s and 1980s. A fair number of African, African Caribbean and British dance-makers of the 80's face the same ambivalence as *Les Ballets Nègres*, with economic, political and social ramifications restricting their ability to secure a credible place in Britain's dance culture. MAAS Movers, a group of traditional and contemporary trained dancers that developed with support from the governmental arts agency, *Minority Arts Advisory Service* is an example. Artistic Director, American trained dancer, Ray Collins and Associate Directors Evrol Puckerin and Greta Mendez both from Trinidad & Tobago chose themes inspired by dance practices that drew on Africanist idioms. These practitioners presented

cross cultural, syncretic works that were a mixture of contemporary and traditional forms using music and dance from India, Africa and the Caribbean.¹¹ George Dzikunu¹² heralded a new era in traditional African Dance practice in Britain with the founding of Adzido Pan-African Dance Ensemble in 1984. Dzikunu's mission statement for Adzido was to promote the appreciation, understanding and practice of original¹³ African peoples' dance in Britain and abroad. Adzido and MAAS Movers began in a time when professionals, teachers, probation officers, and social workers joined forces with professional performing artists in community initiatives to reclaim cultural heritages of Africa and the Caribbean. The largest building-based African dance company of its time, Adzido's noteworthy accomplishments were the positioning of an Artistic Director from the African continent with a vision to produce the best possible "large scale"¹⁴ African dance and music that focused on original material.

The proliferation of Africanist practices appeared in the 1980s during a time of social and political revival and reclamation within African and Caribbean communities in Britain. The post war immigration of the 1940s that fostered Britain's polycultural society of the 1980s also fostered a need for ethnically disparate communities to enliven cultural identities. Kokuma in Birmingham, Ekome in Bristol, Delado in Liverpool, Lanzel in Wolverhampton, Steel and Skin and Iriel in London with MAAS Movers and Adzido used Africanist expressions in numerous ways from representing tradition to syncretic expressions that brought traditional African dance forms to the forefront with their varied idiosyncratic expressions. The disappearance of these companies was as much to do with infrastructural disputes and mismanagement as lack of value in a context ambivalent in its appreciation of Africanist expressions.

In Britain African dance seems to have its own variety of hurdles to jump. Adzido was made to cease trading by the Arts Council of England (ACE) who cut revue funding in 2005. Irreconcilable

differences regarding proposed business plans and ambivalence concerning aesthetic credibility were two major contributing factors. From its beginnings, Adzido was positioned to resist the homogenizing and denigrating effects of England's culture canon but ultimately its African-ness mitigated its ability to operate beyond its position of Otherness. Lawal believes his post modern stance will resist these kinds of repercussions and is not only a way of making dance but also a counter strategy for the kinds of conflicting, often duplicitous efforts by critics and stakeholders to support the form but in actuality deprive it of its value and its place.

I'm sure you've seen my work in the past, when you watch this new show you will see the journey. This is what it's saying now because I'm following myself now, I'm not listening to what the Arts Council wants me to do. This is what I encountered at UCLA, believing in yourself as an artist, being honest with your work. This is my own dance language, what we discovered in dance lab but in this lab we are processing African dance, making it more accessible, making it more original, making it more unique without losing the essence of the African ness of what we are trying to do.

Lawal's 'post modern' African dance is as much about his awareness of the politics involved in making dance in Britain as it is how he chooses to jump, turn, and indicate significance with a particular head or arm gesture. Overwhelmingly though, dance-makers that use Africanist expressions seem to be burdened with cultural obligation. Bourn out of social benevolence and initiatives to provide British communities with diverse, alternative art presentations, Africanist expressions were used for social reforms, educational strategies and fortification of identity. These initiatives though were not enough to sustain these practices. African dance as public art was vested in charity; its art practice not validated nor considered serious art. The problems are manifold and this history with its tragic consequences is destined to repeat itself. Victimised instead of validated, the cycle of

marginalisation or annihilation seems inevitable. With the current influx of cross-cultural dance-making and new additions of small and middle scale BME15 dance organisations to ACE's 2006-2008 portfolio, it is vital to articulate what are the continuing faults in the genealogies of Africanist dance expressions in Britain and why Lawal's post modern African dance has such resonance.

Aseju, Lawal's latest production fractures and disintegrates traditional African idioms to tell a traditional metaphorical story in an altered manner. Lawal essentially deconstructs form with ASEJU by using recognisable Africanist expressions explored for alternative movement possibilities and significances. Portraying a reflection of current social/political and personal circumstances, the gestures with their overt traditional African lineage speak of an urban crisis. Lawal presents unsettling commentaries and images of contemporary life with virtuosity facilitating a contemporaneous variation on traditional African movement vocabularies. The drummers' polyrhythms counter the rhythms to the dancers' movements and layered one on the other support manipulation of both movement and music. Overt facial expressions camouflage the true nature of that being portrayed. An outrageous laugh, grimace, curt smiles and manner of walk present other rhetorical significances offering contradiction and parody. All these characteristics are recognisable traits within Africanist dance expressions. These strategies are also used in contemporary dance but with Lawal there is a difference. Lawal seeks to revitalise these traits, reviving what is known while retaining the dignity traditional African dance forms receive in America and African continent but is still sought after here in Britain.

I'm moulding myself like Alvin Ailey; this man is gone now but he's got his legacy behind him, look at Martha Graham or Merce Cunningham; people still talking about Martha Graham up to today. In African Peoples Dance we don't have that. This is what I'm trying to do for African traditional dance. African Peoples' dance is not dead. Not dead at all. If you watch ASEJU there's ritual dance there, there's

social dance. You will see traditional African dance but it's been cleaned, it's been polished.

Current cross cultural dance making in Britain invariably chooses compositional and inspirational strategies that favour more Europeanist or politically acceptable expressions. Lawal's alludes to an implication that traditional African dance needs to be more 'clean' and 'polished' to achieve appreciable British acceptance. These reflections are evidence of the ambivalence surrounding African dance expressions here in Britain.

When you talk about African dance class, the notion is that they're going to be jumping around; there's no motivation behind it and if they really study this technique they will find there is motivation behind African dance technique and again people might think its being practiced by people from Africa which is a problem with APD in London today...

Africanist expressions in Britain are multifarious. There is no one way of moving or no one type of dancing body. Bawren Tavaziva is a new recipient of substantial ACE funding. Tavaziva "combines traditional dance forms of Africa within a contemporary Western base"¹⁵. Although having experience in traditional Zimbabwean dance practices Tavaziva amalgamates this embodied knowledge to devise contemporaneous dance works that have an urban post colonial edge. Traditional in this aesthetic is syncretic; a previously distinct tradition dissolved into a single new expression. Tavaziva syncretic expression though is distinct from Lawal's post modern African dance. Tavaziva may be inspired by traditional forms of Zimbabwe but his dance making is not the representation of these forms. Nii Tagoe of Frititi does specialise in the re-presentation of original African dance forms. Tagoe does not receive support from ACE but has managed to sustain his company and his dance practices that find their origin in several African countries, Gambia, Ghana, Benin Tagoe, Tanzania, South Africa to name a few. Tagoe has a good profile having recently presented his company for the Enthronement of the 104th Archbishop of

Canterbury on 27 February 2003 at the Canterbury Cathedral and the Nelson Mandela Make Poverty History Campaign held on 2 February 2005 at Trafalgar Square, London. Tagoe believes *African dance is bigger than us and can be bigger than what it is now*¹⁶. Tagoe having worked with Adzido between 1990-1996 believed *Adzido was in the right place* but did not succeed because of intra and inter understandings of Adzido's place and value of "original" African dance forms here in Britain.

Often considered stereotypical, African indigenous, traditional forms that are geographically specific face ghettoization when reconstructed and practised in Britain. Despite this, Africanist expressions do not necessarily represent some form of cultural nationalism but do amass specific ethnic allegiance and identity. Pasuka's 1940's vision and Lawal's current post modern stance reflect this dilemma of credibility and need to legitimise Africanist dance expressions here in Britain. Printed in the Manchester City News, 22 July 1949 Pasuka's states: *The world has seen us comedians and dancers in musical comedy and revue, and in comic roles on the screen, but we are trying to interpret the Negro language seriously in dance form. Negro ballet must take its place with Javanese, Indian and Western ballet.* Lawal's statement also a proposal for recognition: *"ASEJU will show that African dance does not have to be limited by its own stereotypes and I hope to make post-modern African dance more accessible to a wider audience"*.

With the closure of Adzido, £1,011,000 became available for investment by ACE. An invitation only process was initiated by ACE intending the investment be spent to meet cultural diversity targets. The selection process was intended to insure the revenue would go back into the African Peoples' Dance (APD) sector. This would serve ACE's desired profile of cultural diversity. Currently though, the discourse within British dance culture indicates APD is more a bureaucratic term having little relation to the character of the sector it was designed to represent. The recipients afforded opportunities to

establish themselves may face the same tribulations their predecessors have faced in Britain for at least the last fifty-nine years. Despite these disadvantages Lawal is determined to cultivate his own post modern African dance aesthetic. He chooses to infuse the dancing body with palpable Africanist idioms; with discreet culturally specific African movement languages.

When I teach my technique, I say my name is Bode Lawal from SAKOBA. I'm going to teach you dances from Nigeria, which is the west of Africa. Of course I know Ghanaian dance, I know Senegalese. My technique is rooted in Nigeria which is the west of Nigeria, the Yoruba, from the east the Igbo, and from the north the Housa. My dance is what I learned, what I've seen in Yoruba land; social dance, ritual dance and then cultural dance. The Igbo, I learned the courtship dance and I learned Atilogun dance; they dance on their toes a lot with a long cow bell. I learned War Dance from Yoruba which is the Shango; it's a ritualistic dance with Shango and Ogun; Ogun is the god of iron, Shango is the god of thunder; I know about Oshun, the river goddess, I learnt specific movements from that as well. It's my roots, I'm not going to throw my roots away. My ancestors will not forgive me; they coming with me for the rest of my life. But what I'm doing, I'm creating my own language with it.

Endnotes

1
"Traditional" is used here to designate dance that represents ancient and past practices that "may not be operative, applicable or viable today" but serve as the foundation of contemporaneous dance making. The movement vocabulary though is particularly Africanist in its use of space, articulation of spine, weight distribution and propensity for rhythmical complexity. Welsh, K. (2004). "World of Dance African Dance", p.18. Chelsea House Publishers, Philadelphia.

2
Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G., Tiffin, H. (1989). *The Empire Writes Back*, pp. 14. London: Routledge. "Syncretism is the process by which previously distinct linguistic categories, and, by extension, cultural formations, merge into a singer new form." These authors are

referring to post colonial writing but I have applied these concepts to dance and believe post colonial experience refutes the privileging of conventional, canonical movement vocabularies or techniques and thrives on cross cultural dance making to express cross cultural living experiences.

3

Currently the impression is Arts Council England sets the circumstance in which the industry of dance practice (what kind of dance practiced and monetary support for it) occurs in Britain. ACE portfolio reveals a hierarchy that places classical ballet receiving amounts in the millions; £26 million plus for Royal Ballet and Royal Opera, Birmingham Royal Ballet, £7 million in relation to as low as Urban Voice receiving £33,000. Everything else is spread between these poles of ACE funding. Classical ballet seems to hold a high position of privilege with Contemporary dance second and everything else following. Organisations and independent artists not receiving funding face extreme monetary difficulty in the practice of their craft because of limited support possibilities from private and commercial sources. This hierarchy with all its multiple aesthetic sensibilities is the community of British dance that I refer to and it includes all support organisations to this industry: schools, dance agencies, theatres, performance and rehearsal spaces, etc.

4

Collection of press clippings and quotes given to me by Bill Harpe, 24 March 2004. This information taken from a page of press comments regarding seasons in London, Paris, Brussels, Amsterdam, Stockholm, Copenhagen, Zurich, Berne, and Geneva.

5

Harpe, B. (1997). "Steps into black history". *The Guardian*, 15 April, p. 20.

6

Nicholas, L. (2004). *Dancing in the Margins*. In Alexander Carter (Ed.) *Rethinking Dance History A reader*. (p.130) London: Routledge. (p. 130)

7

According to Ramsay Burt (2004) and Lorraine Nicholas (2004) 1940's British dance-makers were apprehensive of the political and social ramifications of being associated with Nazi Germany and preferred the label Central European dance or European modern dance; contemporary dance being used from the mid 1940's.

8

Unpublished PhD thesis, Bod Ramdhanie, B. University of Warwick, October 2003.

9

Robinson, L. (1999). A celebration of Les Ballets Negres: 1946-1953. *Dance Theatre Journal*, 15:3, p. 26-29.

10

Burt, R. (2004). Katherine Dunham's Floating Island of Neritide: the Katherine Dunham Dance Company in London and Paris in the

Late 1940's and Early 1950's. In Alexander Carter (Ed.) *Rethinking Dance History A reader*. (p. 94-106) London: Routledge.

11

Crucible Theatre Sheffield, 'Khathakali and Calypso', *Programme Notes*, 26-28 January 1978. In Ramdhanie, B., unpublished PhD thesis, University of Warwick, October 2003.

12

All information regarding George Dzikunu was referenced from Robert Ramdhanie's unpublished PhD thesis, University of Warwick, October 2003.

13

"Original" African dance will refer to the living museum of dance performed outside of the African continent that strives to present culturally specific dances with ancient histories and practices as intact as is possible when removed from context of practice.

14

An understanding from the British Council of a hierarchical grouping for dance companies indicating the following: less than 10 members on the road: small scale, Benji Reid, Robert Hylton Urban Classicism, 10-19 members on the road: middle scale, Phoenix Dance Theatre, Union Dance, with 20 or more members on the road, large scale, Rambert, The Royal Ballet. This grouping also privileges art practice with ballet based, Europeanist practice receiving regular extensive government financing and private backing for productions while soloist, contemporary, "Black" cultural dance practices and street forms populating mid and small scale tiers. Adzido had been the only "Black" dance practice to hold a large scale ranking.

15

Arts Council England budget plan 2006/07 and 2007/08 London M-Z portfolio p. 36

16

Personal interview, Nii Tagoe, 21 March 2005, London

THANK YOU

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regional advisory committees, consultants and partner organisations
and enthusiasts including

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Thank you

ADAD

21 YEARS



On 1st April 2016, ADAD will merge with Dance UK, National Dance Teachers Association and Youth Dance England to become One Dance UK, a single industry body for the dance industry. Please continue to engage with us on our current ADAD social media platforms on facebook, twitter and on our new website:

www.onedanceuk.org

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