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CONFLUENCES 3

"FROM CONCEPT TO CONCERT"

Proceedings of the Third
South African Dance Conference
Hosted by the UCT School of Dance

10 – 13 July 2001

University of Cape Town
South Africa

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10 July 2001

Dear Delegate

CONFLUENCES 3 is the third international conference combining the disciplines of dance and music to be held at the UCT School of Dance, and we welcome those of you who have travelled from abroad to attend this prestigious event. We extend our warmest greetings to you, as well as to those local delegates who are demonstrating their interest in and support of their art by making presentations, being part of the proceedings or working in the background.

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We trust that the three days of the conference will prove to be stimulating and educational, but above all, entertaining, and that you will leave in the knowledge that you have been among friends who share your love of dance, chorepgraphy and music.

Yours sincerely

Elizabeth Triegaardt

CONFLUENCES 3

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CONFERENCE PAPERS

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"MYSTICAL PARTICIPATION

INTO THE SACRED LANDSCAPE"

By Marléna Adendorff

Introduction:

As a contempary dancer, teacher and choreographer I must search for words that are capable of describing and sometimes even defining, the most profound and intimate experiences my body has given me over the past 40 years. Experiences that were primarily non-verbal, encountered while teaching, moving and creating.

Moving with the spirit has taught me all I know, and all I know is that ecstatic movement is empowering and healing and honest and soulful. For me there is no other way to dance, to be, and to create. I also had to find the ability to live with the vastness of what I do not know and that which I cannot control.

The physical sensation of dance is inseparable from the heart and soul that calls us to live fully, in this body, in this world.

Therefore as choreographers or creators of beauty we cannot separate spirit and matter. Our dances would lack the vitality and fire of the physical, and expressions of our creativity would be cut of from the depths of our hearts and meaning of our souls.

Since the beginning of mankind dance served as a connection between two worlds. The physical and non-physical. Dance was in ancient times more so than today, an "intensely activated expression of the soul." An integrated part of our ancestor's daily rituals.

Something has gone missing. Too much emphasis is being placed on the outcome or the final picture today. Somehow the process has become less important in today's choreography. Somehow soul and real passion no longer form a part of the final expression. We seem to loose some of the spontaneity of a dance in progress, in the final product.

It's almost as if our choreography today has been coded, patterned into an excepted, predictable and souless vocabulary.

For a moment, before rushing out to choreograph our next dance, we should pause and reflect on the real reasons why Martha Graham and Isadara Duncan, broke away from the restrictions of formalized dance during the end of the 19th early 20th century.

They returned to soulful, spirited dance – but what has happened in the meantime? A century since then choreographers seem to have fallen into the same mould from which Martha and Isadora freed themselves. The Mind and the Ego are fast taking over our Modern choreography – with no acknowledgment of the true nature of the dance – it's soul essence.

Isadora said:

"For me the dance is not only the art that gives expression to the human soul through movement, but also the foundation of a complex conception of life, more free, more harmonious, more natural."

Teaching and observing the Isadora Duncan company in New York recently, it struck me how they almost "under play" their movements. Almost with a sense of mystery, holding back so ever subtly that which transcends them taking them into another realm-in contrast to the often harsh, dances we sometimes see out there to "impress and woo the audiences" which ultimately become ego-centric boring, vulgar and empty.

We need to assess the situation seriously. We need to search ourselves before we attempt yet another repetition of the sameness. We need to decide what is important here.

Integrity, commitment and passion are a good start.

But being truthful to oneself as the creator of a beautiful work of Art is perhaps what the soul "demands" of us.

Unfortunately, there is of course always the element of fear. Fear of being judged, of being ridiculed, of being labeled as non-worthy. Anything done with love and conviction, against all odds, without holding back or restricting oneself, – is worthy, is true art-coming from within. We should trust ourselves, and the dancers we work with, not just their physical bodies, but the potential they have to bring their individuality and uniqueness to the dance. We should allow for that to take place and stop trying to be so clinically perfect. The real people, the non-dancing audience, cannot identify with something like that. They want to be included in the beauty that they are drawn into – they want to become part of it. It is our responsibility to find that balance – between technique (the mind) and freedom of expression (the soul).

The Art of the Dance

Dancing is a language that transcends ordinary communication, just as poetry is on a higher level than prose, and music is another realm from conversation. The art of the dance stems from the attempt to surpass the laws of gravity that binds us to the earth. The dancer is not one who treads the ground as everyone else does. The dancer moves in some special dimension, with one eye on the stars, for the stars suggests release into freer and more inspired realms.

The Art of Creativity

All (art is true art, and all art) has a spiritual basis or message. Spirituality comes from within and is brought out through creativity. Creativity is the essence of art. Everyone has the ability to be creative, and everyone has a soul or spirit. It is a person's ability to utilize their spirit that will enable them to be creative and therefore to create art.

True art is not in the eye of the beholder. It is in the soul of the creator, which is initiated by the spirit. It is the soul that takes over and creates.

Creativity is a process. A process of listening to your spirit and bringing the spirit's message into a piece of art or dance.

When I create a dance, there isn't a time when I don't use my spirit. I always go through a creative process to create a dance. I need to feel a rhythm inside myself and the let that rhythm go into my spirit and create. I then visualize my spirit dancing. I need to listen to messages brought into my spirit that enables me to create the dance; my personal spiritual meaning is being transcended through my body and into my dance. My dance always holds a spiritual message. Dancing should be a spiritual experience, for it is the soul and spirit that enables us to dance – not the mind.

Divine Energies

Dancers and Choreographers are vessels for very special "divine energies" – that is an essential part of us from the time we could probably remember. I cannot imagine what it must feel like to be without that.

Even when I am not in the studio – just moving in my garden, these energies are always present- because I am a dancer – there is no separation – one cannot be without the other. It is a partnership.

When we create we are divinely assisted by these energies – we should acknowledge them – know that they are there – respect them, and let it work for and with us. We should trust them more deeply and let them show us the way to create truthfully, deeply and honestly. And not be intimidated by another's work or creations.

The challenge lies in not letting our thought processes be "intimated" by the influences of others. We can begin to doubt the very core of ourselves once become. Afraid to expose who we really are, instead of trusting our divine energies and soulfulness.

Form without Formula

We are often reluctant to let the moments of our experience unfold in their own way to simply watch what life presents, without struggling to make it different – the same principle applies to creating a dance. We tend to shroud the living moment in motion with "activity". We focus on the end product, rather than the process of unfolding. "Perfection" is found in the still moments brought about by participation in the creative process. In other words – learn to let the "dance" take you there. It takes on a soul of its own after a while. Step aside. See what it is trying to tell you and trust the process. Creativity literally means "to form art from nothing". In my work, I always look for ways to approach that nothingness, the void from which all life and wisdom spring, - the still-point of the dance. Creative work is a doorway which leads into that source of mystery.

The Creative process teaches us how to live. It offers a glimpse of the life energy which sustains us, at our deepest core. Through dance we find a new kind of wholeness in being, in acceptance, in the acknowledgement of our own timeless perfection.

Soulful-Chorcography

To me soulful choreography is above all warm, full and grounded. Its richness can be grounded in earth, enabling great power in dancing and allowing more meaningful contact between dancers which brings an immediate compassionate quality on stage – a case of sharing and caring between the moving bodies. The emphasis need not be placed on pleasing or impressing an audience out there somewhere. You can't fool an audience and audiences respond to authentic, honest movement.

Soulful choreography need not necessarily be clever and inventive like so much of what we see in professional modern Dance in the late 20th Century the beginning of this century. Its source is not the individual intellect and its goal should not be awe others, but to magnetize and include them. Soulful choreography, like true spirit-filled dancing takes place somewhere large and timeless. There is always substance and connectedness to this kind of soulful creation and above all weight. There exists a mysterious and subtle connection between weight and substance and meaning. Therefore soulful choreography has "meaning" a lived reality rather than an intellectual idea.

The Mind and Creation

For me, the mind's organizing abilities are used to bring order to what is being performed or viewed, but this order is not it's significance. We call this technique – always the means but never the end to truly great work.

The end for me is always in a larger realm than the one in which we live and work and go about our daily lives. That realm can only be reached by tapping into soul or spirit, and when dance is truly glorious, both are present.
I have a very personal sense of the power that the relationship of the human body with these two powerful and subtle realities, soul and spirit can bring to dance.

Soul and Spirit Energy

Soulful Dances:

I feel that soul energy inhabits my lower body and spirit energy my upper body. Downward moving energy within the body is related to the feminine power within us and upward moving energy, the masculine. All these aspects comes into play within the creative process. A soulful dance has a more grounded, downward energy - a rootedness in the earth or in the ancient past (or in what is familiar or in another person or in a group of people.) Above all it offers the onlooker and the dancer a profound connection and a sense of both safety and belonging. Physically this kind of movement consciously celebrates the weight of the body and an interplay with gravity, rather than a denial of both of these. The body loves to fall and often slowly, when soul possesses it. Imagine all the possibilities of new movements that could be created in this way. Slow turns and spirals also have their source in soulfulness.

Spirited Dances:

On the other hand spirit motivates movement that is upward bound and desires a freedom and a discovery of new territory. This is always very exciting to explore and to discover. It celebrates the spontaneity and joyfulness of the dancer.

There is often a sense of weightlessness, clarity and speed to spirited movements. To soulfullness there is always a density and a sense of depth. To spirited motivated movement – a brilliance. Both have fullness, richness and an ease.

To sing our song fully – we need both. The danger here is that we often settle for an imitation or substitute of soul and of spirit, and not the real thing. Something to be aware of, when the mind and ego wants to dictate.

The Ego

The ego causes most of our pain. It is full of constant clatter, judgement, denial, hopelessness, excesses, fixed beliefs, the need to control things. Egos don't dance. They are unable to move, to breathe, or to explore. They are dull and predictable. They keep us from being who we are. They sap our creative power. It has unfortunately been many choreographers downfall, which resulted in boring, predictable, soulless, clinical work.

You have to "free" your body to experience the power of being. Your body is the ground metaphor of your life, the expression of your existence. Everything that happens to you is reflected in your body. Your body tells me everything when you move. Your body knows, it never lies. Dances should be created with that in mind. The body tells its owns story. We just don't listen long enough to hear.

So, the body is where the dancing path to wholeness must begin. Only when you truly inhabit your body can you begin the journey to the ultimate creation that goes for dancer and choreographer.

Adrenaline Or Spirit?

In today's world I feel there is an enormous hunger for spirit and freedom. Instead of arriving at these, I see a great deal of professional dance that has latched onto a very busy self-engrossing substitute. Unfortunately, I sense confusion between adrenaline and spirit.

The driving intensity I so often see today on our stages and in our studios has to it an unrelenting and addictive feeling. I seldom see real joy and freedom. To me the force behind the movement seems soulless and lacking in spirit.

It never seems to nourish either dancer (or viewer), certainly not on a deeper level. In this type of dance the human faculties of will, control, novelty and inventiveness are celebrated above all else. This is fine, but to me these qualities to the exclusion of others, actually block completeness and the lush fulfillment the body is capable of giving us.

There is so often a sense of the body in isolation, with the self-conscious individual kept constantly busy. Deep vulnerability seems to be consciously avoided.

The Final Destination:

The ability to isolate and see clearly what the intellect is so gifted at doing, is of course, part of training and creating. But the journey must be taken to some sort of destination. In the end everything must be put together in order that the sum become greater that the totality of its parts.

This is exactly where soul and spirit enter in – where mystery meets science, where detail meets wholeness – maybe, even where "particle meets wave".

If a dancer desires to be an artist and not simply a wonderful mover he or she must move into that powerful area where it is possible, that take us from the particular to the universal.

This is not in any way pretentious if the dancer is conscious of what power is really all about. Saying that there is something large, a force actually behind what we are doing, does not make us pretentious or superior, that is, better than anyone else. It simply allows for more deep trust.

When soul and spirit dance dancers become instruments, not slaves. To be driven is a force of slavery – the possession unhealthy and never satisfied. This in not true when soul and spirit are motivating the body.

These great forces are above all magnificent, both in their protection (soul), and in their creativity (spirit). This has always been so (soul) and I believe that we can look forward to this forever (spirit).

The Essential Balance

To me all true dance movement is both sensual and spiritual. There needs to be no separation or duality here. It is in fact dangerous to oppose the body to the mind to it's sexuality and spirituality. When this is done, the life force is actually being tampered with. There is bound to be trouble or disappointment when an essential balance and a certain wildness is denied. The only separation that I do recognize, and I emphasize enormously in my teaching, is the one that exists between the upper and the lower body. I feel there exists for us an opening in the waist where spirit and soul actually meet on a subtle level.

What is lacking today in professional dance for me personally is, "trust" and a "true inhabiting of the body". Modern dancers have historically followed the ballet where control, flexibility and facility reign supreme.

A somewhat limp and artificial or in some cases arrogant kind of weightlessness has coloured the whole style. Today modern man or woman in dance wants to feel more emotional strength and deep reality, as well as more personal relevance.

The Sacred Landscape

So many of us are not in our bodies. We live in our heads, in our memories, in our longings.

It is time to put the theatre and the human body back into the "Sacred Landscape" where they belong. The real issue is whether we as dancers are willing to give up a certain amount of control in order to move to a different realm where transformation can take place. There is an enormous intensity alive in the body when soul and spirit are working there. Most of us who have performed have experienced going beyond ourselves while on stage. We must recognize this for what it truly is – and enter into a realism of greatness that has nothing to do with personality or talent and everything to do with acknowledging the greatly invisible force – call it Love, God, Universal, Intelligence, Spirit – whatever you prefer. The moving body offers this mystical participation. A MYSTICAL PARTICIPATION INTO THE SACRED LANDSCAPE.

London Contemporary Dance School, BA Course
-Independent Project-

African Dance:
Presentation and Transformation
in the African Diaspora

Monja Boonzaier
May 2001

Acknowledgements

"Dance is beyond what people inherit, it is simply about everything in life."
(Nii-Yartey, 2001)

I have been very fortunate to have studied with Nii-Yartey. He is a man with an incredible passion for dance, and I am deeply appreciative of his input towards this project. My participant observation both with Noyam and the National Dance Company of Ghana allowed me to experience the meaning of movement as expressed in Ghanaian life. I would like to acknowledge The School of Performing Arts, University of Ghana as well as George Dzikunu and Zagbar Oyortey From Adzido Pan African Dance Ensemble for giving me an insight of their work. Thank you to my family and friends for their continuous support especially to my dad for his endless encouragement. Special thanks to Andree Grau and Claire Seymore for their helpful guidance. Furthermore I am grateful to Eloixa Katiyo, Amaya Wang and Gideon Fourie for their assistance and editing expertise.

To my best ability I tried to draw from the sources given by the artists. If I have misinterpreted any of them, the scope of my work has to be taken into consideration.

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Preface

During Dance Umbrella 99, I observed the South African dancer and Choreographer Vincent Sekwati Mantsoe's performance, which demonstrated a typical contemporary African dance approach. His choreography embodies practice of traditional African ritual and music combining them with qualities of Western contemporary dance forms. In his performance of Gula Matri The Bird, Mantsoe's birdlike movements and vocalizing response diffuse through his entire body.
Mantsoe believes that a dancer should be 'lucid' and his work is an example of this. Musically his material is at home with Ghana's Pan African Orchestra as it is at home with Pianist Keith Jarret ... (, w)hether he uses dancers to assimilate birds in flight for Gula Matri, or uses set and costume to contain yet bustling energy that permeates his work. (Mabanga, 2000)

Mantsoe was brought up in Diepkloof, Johannesburg where dance was part of social interaction, before coming professionally involved. As he lives in Johannesburg, a cosmopolitan city, his own style of dance is informed not only by social dance forms but also by the diversity of the cosmopolitan Johannesburg where more traditions co-exist side by side.

Mantsoe combines his own style of dances from different cultures all over the world to create new work. The innovation that has taken place in the representation of this particular piece showed that his choreography goes beyond pure movement. His work embodies a quality of African dance where movement seems to have its own significant meaning and means of artistic expression. There are many different approaches to this concept of theatrical development, as Francis Nii-Yartey the Artistic Director of the National Dance Company of Ghana aptly puts it:

> *Research in Ghana places performance in three phases: The first involved the collection and presentation of traditional dances both within and outside their place of origin; the second concentrated on the study of dances in the context of the festivals, rituals and rites of which they form part; during the third phase, that in which we now find ourselves, the observation and research is used to form the basis of work to inspire the present and the future. (Nii-Yartey, 2000)*

Although Nii-Yartey refers primarily to the Ghanaian situation the statement holds true for other settings. Mantsoe's choreography is an example of the third phase. His performance stimulated my interest in the representation of new dance forms for theatre and was an inspiration for this project. In this particular piece there is a juxtaposition of images, in a certain way his selected vocabulary and movement quality is deeply traditional in origin and in another way they are not. His bodily rhythm, pelvic release and 'grounded-ness', are common characteristics of many traditional African dance traditions and contain emotion, softness and responsiveness that gives meaning and significance to his work. Mantsoe inter-linked all of the above features with western contemporary choreographic elements.

The process that stands behind the creation of dances in modern Africa originates from the very nature of African culture and society: its political constitutions, creative arts and literature in multiple languages reflect both the African heritage and various aspects of the legacy of Europe. The modern world is linked to previous cultural borrowings and innumerable influences. Additionally through globalisation the socio-cultural identity of the individual has to be seen in the context of heterogeneous societies. It is of great importance to note that my background significantly influences the way I perceive and experience the dance in African context. This issue of identity is of great importance to the reader and myself. During an interview Peter Lennon had with South African songwriter and singer Hugh Masekela, the issue of cultural identity was discussed. Masekela said; "...one problem, white South Africans can't see themselves as African..." Although I have been brought up in South Africa I have experienced a western education as well as dance training in classical ballet and western contemporary dance. Mantsoe's work provoked interest in exploring the African heritage of dance. In the light of the above I now ask, to what extent can movement have multiple identities? Mantsoe's work exposed me to a different culture. We are both South Africans drawing from a different basis of dance practice. Although coming from dissimilar sources of dance practices, we are both interested in exploring the notion of movement. I chose to explore the notion of movement in relevance to contemporary development in Africa looking at African dance in two settings, one within an African setting, with reference to the National Dance Company of Ghana and the Ghana Dance Ensemble and the other within a Diaspora with particular reference to Adzido Pan African Dance Ensemble. On the basis of the above mentioned, my field study in Ghana will enhance the discussion.

I set up my methodology by accepting the three phases of performance development in Ghana. I acknowledge the anthropological and philosophical complexities of the subject and will therefore primarily focus my attention on the creative process of staging African dance forms, examining and discussing the problems related to the presentation and transformation of traditional dances in modern theatres. I will compare and contrast the companies by drawing parallels within the second phase. In order to do so I need to discuss the first phase to give a perspective of African dance in traditional context.

Introduction

Aims and Objectives

Semantic and Representation

My interest lies in the practice of representation and transformation in modern theatre. The concept of representation is associated with a complex issue dealing with both semantics and identity. As a Western trained contemporary dancer I am interested in the process by which meaning is produced in relation to movement, it has to be taken in consideration how movement gain significance for people participating in a culture. The participants have an understanding of the movement embedded in their culture, which I had to investigate in order to become more familiar with the movement vocabulary. For example, Mantsoe is not only coming from an African dance perspective; his work is very much influenced by the West by taking certain elements from his tradition and transforming them in an individual way.

Selected Examples:

Adzido Pan African Dance Ensemble & The National Dance Company of Ghana

In order to explore this interrelationship further I will look at Adzido Pan African Dance Ensemble and the National Dance Company of Ghana and the way in which they represent and transform their work for the stage, referring to two dance works of each company.

I choreographed a short work whilst in Ghana and will share certain concepts and ideas on the process and development of my own work, adding another dimension of 'African-ness'. Furthermore, before one can begin to explore the concept of transformation it is crucial to look at what is being represented and why? I will investigate the following questions.

- In what context are African dances created?
- What do traditional African dances represent and communicate?
- Who performs them and for whom?
- How are these dances then transformed for stage?
- If the classical form is transposed from its natural environment do these dances performed for stage assume different meanings?

Source of Data

In order to answer the following questions I am going to describe and examine the following traditional dance practice generally: modern practice in Ghana through my observations of traditional dance, my experience of learning traditional African dance, the way choreographers modify movement, describing the process. I will refer to what I learned from Nii-Yartey and use my choreography as another example. I will also analyse specific dances of each company to aid my study.

Field of Discussion

My research is linked with my own history and curiosity, and my participant observation at the School o Performing Arts and Nii-Yartey in Ghana, workshops with Adzido as well as devising a short choreographed work, were practical elements to look into the different kinds of conceptualisations. In order to note the significance of movement in African dance one has to have a certain understanding of the meaning attributed to the movement by their practitioners. In Western contemporary dance this concept is often very elusive. In this dissertation I will be dealing with different kinds of conceptualisation, examining the similarities and differences between Adzido Pan African Dance Ensemble, the National Dance Company of Ghana and my choreography.

In what way are the companies comparable? Both companies are urban and recently formed, they transform material by creating theatre works for entertainment and transform dances from one context to another. Both companies claim to have their 'roots' in traditional African dance and explore the diverse heritage of African dance. Adzido performs dances from all over Africa and the National Dance Company and the Ghana Dance Ensemble performs Ghanaian dances from various regions of the continent. The dancers in Adzido are drawn from a dozen different countries throughout the African continent whereas the dancers in The National Dance Company and the Ghana Dance are all Ghanaian born. The Artistic Directors of the companies are also Ghanaian. George Dzikunu (Artistic director of Adzido) is from the Anlo Ewe tribe in the Volta Region and Nii-Yartey (Artistic Director, The National Dance Company) is a Ga from the Greater Accra region. The Ghanaian Company is closer to the traditional context, both physically and conceptually. Even though they live in an urban situation they are not as removed as the dancers from Adzido. In an interview Zagbar Oyortey, the Executive Artistic Director of Adzido, talked about how the audience's response to traditional dance in Ghana is different from abroad. The audience in Ghana is much more knowledgeable of the dance vocabulary performed whereas in Europe the audience's knowledge is more superficial.

> *When performing in home country people can participate and they know what it is about, it is different from an audience sitting in theatre waiting to clap (sic). (Oyortey, 2000)*

My own participant observation in London was very different from that in Ghana. In London I attended a number of African dance and drumming workshops, performances and interviews with Adzido where I experienced no personal interaction with the dancers and musicians. In Ghana I registered as a student at the University of Ghana, where I participated in a range of courses. I was very fortunate to have Nii-Yartey as my personal tutor. I spent a lot of time at the National Theatre studying his work and watching company rehearsals. I trained and lived with eleven of Nii-Yartey's students, which allowed me to experience community life. My experience in Ghana was all about 'exchange', I taught technique classes, the students taught me traditional dances, they learnt from me, and I learnt from them. In this dissertation I am discussing the companies in terms of my research material. It is very clear that my participant observation in Ghana out weighs my involvement with Adzido and my representation could perhaps be slightly unbalanced. I can therefore only represent Adzido with the information I have.

Chapter 1: Socio-Cultural Relevance of African Dance

African Diaspora: Relevance of Movement Origin; Specific Dances; Nii-Yartey's Concept of 'Movements of Customary Behaviour'

> *Africa is endowed with great many assets: human as well as material. Among the greatest assets are the rich traditions of values, beliefs and customs, which over centuries have formed the basis on the endurance of her people. The years of the slave trade and colonialization and the many tribulations associated with those times, have not deterred Africans from holding on to some of their cultural values. In contemporary Africa festivals and rituals are still observed which embody traditions and indicate aspects of political, economic and artistic life. These perpetuate the ideals and identity of Africans. (Nii-Yartey, 2000)*

The African Diaspora is a complex global phenomenon. For centuries new forms of dance have been developing within the Euro-American context and within the African context. In recent centuries these histories, originally separated by theatrical tradition were brought together by colonialization and the slave trade within a sphere of theatre dance. Today there are many societies operating within a theatrical tradition, all embodying their own meaning of the concept of dance as art. Adzido Pan African Dance Ensemble and the National Dance Company of Ghana are only two groups among many others, promoting the diverse heritage of dance with their roots within the African tradition

All dance systems are products of their traditions and offer representation of the source of the cultural values of the people who produce them. Dance practitioners in the African continent generally seem to be aware of this to a greater extent, whilst their counterparts within the European theatre generally tend to draw from a wider range of cultural expression. As a result of this, the semantic value of dance as a cultural expression is much more clearly recognised in African context than in European ones where theatre dance is diverse and multi-referential. One can therefore argue that we are dealing with different conceptual frameworks; not only do African and European dancers conceptualise the body, space and movement according to different worldviews they also conceptualise the links to their dance heritage differently. European dancers, belonging to a political system that dominated and still dominates the world for centuries, often see themselves as taking part in an "objective" culture-free exploration of movement in contrast to most African dancers who consciously work and play with their cultural dance heritage, recognising the input of both individuals and societies.

> *For us life, with its rhythms and cycles is Dance. The dance is life expressed in dramatic terms. The most important events in the community have special dances to enhance their meaning and significance. To us the dance is a language, a mode of expression, which addresses itself to the mind, through the heart, using related, relevant and significant movements, which have their basic counterparts in our everyday activities. (Opoku, 1965)*

Nii-Yartey, Adinku and Dzikunu agree that traditional dance is about communication. It is the community involvement that creates a dance and therefore projects a cultural image that is deeply rooted, which forms an integral part of every day life. I decided to examine African dance movements in more depth and in order to do so, I started participating in African dance and drumming workshops with Adzido. I learnt several dances where the concentration was more on the kinaesthetic, meaning the spatial organization of a dance rather than the semantic. After observing Adzido's production of Chesa Chesa I questioned how the movements changed when performed in a western theatre setting. For its audience who is unfamiliar with the African life, the dance may be part of an exotic entertainment rather than a means of communicating cultural values.

In order to comprehend the complexity of the movement, I needed to be more involved. I chose to go to Ghana. The country is one of the leading English speaking African countries in West Africa, and has had a program of dance at University level since October 1964. I registered as a visiting student to broaden my perspective on dance as cultural expression. I studied a variety of dances such as, 'Sikyi'[1] , 'Adowa'[2], 'Kpanlogo'[3] , 'Agbadza'[4], 'Kundum'[5] and 'Asandua'[6]. These were all Ghanaian dances from various regions of the country, all with their own historical background. Learning these dances enabled me to understand the uses of movement in a dance context and I had to take this into consideration when choreographing my own work. I choreographed a short work for the students of Noyam, (meaning 'moving on') which is a contemporary African dance research project directed by Nii-Yartey, with the aim and objective to combine research, teaching and contemporary African dance performance.

My choreographic process involved taking elements of the African tradition to manipulate and interpret in my own way. On a conceptual level I used a more narrative approach, which is evident in the activities of daily life. I used common phase gestures, which the dancers were already familiar with and I de-familiarised the gestures by putting them in a more abstract composition. Although highly representational the work is not literal. Nii-Yartey calls this concept 'movements of customary behaviour'; it is an important aspect in his choreography. He is similar in this respect to some western postmodern choreographers for example, Steve Paxton, Judson Church and Trisha Brown who uses pedestrian movements. In this way, there are some similarities between traditional dance, post-modern practice and my work.

[1] A dance performed by the Akan people. It is a flirtatious dance depicting acceptance between men and woman.
[2] A social dance performed at funerals, also during joyful occassions. Performed by Akan people.
[3] Performed by Ga people o Greater Accra. A social dance , taking the form of teasing.
[4] From Volta region. A warrior dance performed by both sexes.
[5] Harvest dance, common to all regions of Ghana. A celebration dance.
[6] Performed by Akan people of Ghana. Danced purely for entertainment

Dance Education Programme in Ghana

As part of a national dance education program, two dance companies, the National Dance Company of Ghana, based at the National Theatre and the Ghana Dance Ensemble, who occupy a very unique place at the university were established. According to Professor W. Ofutso Adinku who was one of the first members of the Ghana Dance Ensemble and who is currently Head of Department at the School of Performing Arts at the University:

> *The Formation of a national Dance Company in 1962 was in Line with Kwame Nkruhma's nation building policy and his program for the cultural emancipation of Ghana and Africa. He wanted to convince Africans that they had a past civilisation worthy of emulation, and thought that dance had a role to play in achieving racial reassessment. (Adinku 2000)*

Background of the Ghanaian Companies: The National Dance Company of Ghana & The Ghana Dance Ensemble

According to Adinku Nkruhma's decision to create a place in Ghana for the creative development of art and culture was linked to his view on the development of education. Professor A.M Opoku and Professor J.H Nketia founded the Ensemble that was to become the National Dance Company. In addition being a group 'representing' the country, the Ensemble was linked to research activities at the University. In 1992 on the recommendation of the National Commission of Culture, the government passed a law that the company should move to the National Theatre. The University refused, they argued that the company should service the university. Nii-Yartey, who was Opoku's assistant at the time, took over as Artistic Director when Opoku went on sabbatical in 1976. Nii-Yartey's interest in new choreographic forms led him to change the artistic direction of the company. In 1993 he felt that there were too many restrictions at the university preventing him achieving his aims and decided to move to the National Theatre.

> *We need to look beyond an academic situation, something more than academic is going on in the world, we have to face the challenges and develop. It is very positive to fight the way we fight for dance in this country. (Nii-Yartey 2001)*

According to Nii-Yartey the existence of both companies is important in order to create visibility and attention for dance. Today the companies are known as, The National Dance Company of Ghana (The Ghana Dance Ensemble) and the Ghana Dance Ensemble (the National Dance Company). The aims and objectives of the National Dance Company of Ghana, according to Nii-Yartey, are to perform traditional Ghanaian dances as well as contemporary work. "...Addressing the need to preserve the positive and desirable elements of our dance traditions, we are at the same time developing contemporary dance forms which express our unique history and socio-economic situation today..." (Nii-Yartey, 1998)

Nii-Yartey observes that, within the global economy, social and economic values are unavoidably changing. What happened in the past and what is currently happening in the present combine to create new cultural norms, which has an effect on the immediate social situation.

Company members are all Ghanaian born, from various regions such as Kumasi, Volta region, Togo and Accra. The company has been focusing on community and educational programs. Nii-Yartey is very passionate to the growth and development of modern African dance firmly established within the world of dance generally, he is also concerned that it should not lose its strong and powerful context. For many artists, including myself, Africa seems to provide a number of alternatives. Although it remains a choreographer's deliberate choice to perform for stage, the challenge is both to remain within the tradition and to move forward.

The tradition is there but it is what we do with it that is important. (Nii-Yartey, 2001)

Background of Adzido Pan African Dance Ensemble

I shall consider the Adzido Pan African Dance Ensemble. It defines itself as Europe's largest funded traditional African dance company. Adzido would be an example of phase two within the area of performance development mentioned earlier. It is known for performing traditional African dances from various parts of the continent in western stage settings. Artistic Director George Dzikunu founded the company in 1984. Dzikunu defines his company as follow:

Pan Africanism means we don't do dances from only one country for example, you might have a national group from Ghana or Nigeria or from Senegal who only performs dances from that country. When you come to see us in a production you see dances from different parts of Africa which is a unique way of saying this is Africa, rather than saying this is Africa but only South Africa or this is Africa but only Senegal. (Dzikunu, 2001)

Adzido means 'oak tree' in the Ewe language of Ghana. The trunk of the tree is so big that it takes a number of people to grasp around; one can almost say it is a deliberate image that represents the company's diverse heritage of traditional dance. (Adzido, 2001) (When I first saw the emblem of the Oak tree I read it in exactly the same way.)

Adzido Pan African Dance Ensemble exists to promote the appreciation, understanding and practice of African peoples dance, its music and its cultural heritage, in Britain and abroad seeks to promote the richly diverse heritage of all cultural groups of Black Africa by presenting dance, together with music, in forms which both respect and illuminate traditional values and have relevance in a contemporary, multi -cultural context. (Dzikunu, 2001)

In the next chapter I will discuss the presentation and the re-contextualisation of elements from the 'Atsiabekor', which is one of the traditional dances performed in Adzido's production of Chesa Chesa and is one of the dances that features in Solma, a work by the National Dance Company of Ghana.

Chapter 2: Presentation and Transformation of Traditional African Dances

Political and Artistic Development from the 1950s

In the 1950's when agitation for self-rule was a common occurrence, local politicians supported the people's identification of traditional dances as a cultural form, to be defended against what was seen as the excessive assimilation of foreign cultural influences. Traditional dances were therefore, at the centre of cultural emancipation: they were performed during political rallies and at major social events. In Accra, the capital of Ghana, mainly amateur groups performed traditional dances in small theatres. In the 1990s, the love for dance as pure theatre has brought about new approaches in terms of increased professionalism and the nature of the presentation of traditional dances. (Adinku, C. 1995)

Modes of Re-Contextualization

Although Adinku is referring to the situation in Ghana, this statement probably holds true for theatrical development of traditional African dance throughout the continent during this period. The creation of new traditional dance forms for stage does not only create problems for the Ghanaian choreographer, but also concerns artists interested in the continued support of cultural heritage all over the world. Adinku, Nii-Yartey and Dzikunu explain that traditional dance events are normally performed as part of a social or ritual setting and therefore, when these dances are represented on stage, they need to be adapted:

If such events must participate for theatre, then they would need to be adapted because the theatre operates in a make- believe situation. (Adinku, C. 1995)

Additional to the performing context of staged dances there is another example of adaptation which can be found in class. I learnt a dance called 'Sikyi.' Its cultural background lies in the mode of a flirtatious interaction between the genders, assigning specific movement vocabulary to men and woman. Class context required to learn both and not to differentiate between the genders, therefore learning each other's movements can be considered as an adaptation of the traditional context. When changing movement for the theatre, a knowledge of the cultural background of dances is crucial when re-creating on the basis of the original material. For Adinku the consciousness of expression and emotional value attached to movement lies in how the dance is transformed from one context to the other, how it is carried out and which of the original elements are kept and which are discarded.

Discussion of the Examples

I will open my discussion by looking at the two phases of performance development discussed above, and how the work of the two chosen companies fits into these specific areas. I will discuss these dances in light of the questions raised earlier in terms of context, representation and communication. I will refer to Solma (1994), a collaboration by Nii-Yartey and French choreographer Jean François Durour, and the 'Atsiabekor' one of the dances featuring in Adzido's production of Chesa Chesa (2001) directed by Dzikunu.

Solma

According to Nii-Yartey his company performs both traditional dances and contemporary works. Solma, ('to tell a story') is a recent work derived from the traditional dance of the same name from the Upper East Frafra region in Northern Ghana. It toured the West Coast of Africa and then Europe in 1995. It is a multi-layered work reflecting social, political and emotional changes and transformations of Ghanaian society. Although other traditional Ghanaian dances feature in this production, for example the 'Atsiabekor' and 'Kpanlogo' the dances are performed in a more abstract version.

Solma takes place at a market, one of the largest gatherings during African Festivals. There are no side curtains, only a three dimensional wall with coloured light illuminating from the back of cyclorama and a rig that comes down at the end of the piece, symbolising for Nii-Yartey the burden carried by the people. The costumes are adaptations of traditional wear: the colours and patterns are of traditional source but the cuts are more contemporary (see appendix for illustration). The piece start with a woman entering down stage left humming a song. While sweeping the floor, she is followed by two women entering with baskets and setting themselves up for selling their fruits and vegetables. After a while a group of men enter, with beer bottles, stumbling around doing a lot of cartwheels, handstands and somersaults, movements common to daily life, when young men are fooling about. During these actions they get in the way of the woman and cause confrontation. Gender relations, the oppression of women, the position of the lower classes in society, all these aspects are expressed through the disorderly behaviour of the young men. Nii-Yartey based his material on traditional dances but transformed them. For example, he freezes a movement, preserving the body position of the basic concept of the form, and then allows his dancers to improvise around it, yet maintaining the roundness and keeping the undulation of the movement. He charges the movement with emotion derived from the original but transforms the meaning to tell a story. In this case, rather than using the 'Atsiabekor' war dance in its original form, he used the movement to express aggressive behaviour. The source of the story can be identified anywhere in the world. In this particular piece the story is Ghanaian but the movement material borrowed, were from traditional dances. In the original, the men fought with real weapons and were part of a ritualistic ceremony. This aspect disappears in contemporary works.

Solma is based on traditional dance and traditional music. The music is a combination of flute and drums, yet this is combined with recorded music from Bolivia, juxtaposed with 'Agbadza' rhythm[7] and songs. Songs about death and struggle are sung. "...It is only in my house that I can find turmoil..." These songs are all Ghanaian songs in Twi derived from traditional material. Nii-Yartey explains that he uses improvisation in musical as well as movement material.

> *I try to take my people along with me. I set the tone of what I want and then they have to give it to me. Sometimes I stop them and give them what I want. (Nii-Yartey 2001)*

Furthermore the dance seems to be open for different perspectives and interpretations. I watched an excerpt of Solma, performed with out set, costume and lights during a company rehearsal in the dance hall at the National Theatre. Two other performances made me experience the work in another way. On a broad level I could relate to elements concerned with human existence, for example, the relationship between male and female, fighting between them; the abuse of women and the overlooking of such violence, struggle between rich and poor were all easily understood. I had gained access to context and content of the specific traditional dances, and could understand what certain gestures signify and mean. I recognised certain movements of various dances, for example, movements of 'Kpanlogo' a social dance from the Greater Accra region, and the 'Agbekor' a war dance from the Anlo Ewes in Ghana.

To conclude Nii-Yartey argues that he sees dance as something more global which communicates certain human relationships worldwide. Therefore allows him to transforms traditional dances the way he does.

> *Dance is beyond what people inherit, it is simply about everything in life. Human existence uses the same things. In every house anywhere in the world, we find a family situation, a man woman relationship, in-laws creating problems, when people die they have funerals. I see an idea in Yugoslavia and see how I can find equivalences in my tradition. (Nii-Yartey, 2001)*

'Atsiabekor'

Adzido's treatment of the 'Atsiabekor' should be seen in the context of a larger production of Chesa Chesa which employs a western drama structure set in the form of a prologue, Act I, Act II, Act III and Epilogue and combines dances from various parts of Africa, (for example from Mozambique, Southern Botswana, Nigeria, South Africa, Burkina Faso, Guinea and Ivory Coast) performed by dancers of different African nationalities. Chesa Chesa is a collaboration between Dzikunu and Geraldine Connor (Musicologist and dramatist). It is presented as a theatrical dance drama that tells the story of a typical traditional village. The program notes tell the audience that:

> *Using the metaphor of life and love, Chesa Chesa charts what happens when the stability of this family unit is disturbed by the inevitable arrival of outside influence and change, the conflict that ensues and how this conflict is resolved and in order restored through the wise teachings of the ancestors. (Adzido, 2001)*

[7] Southern Ewe musical type

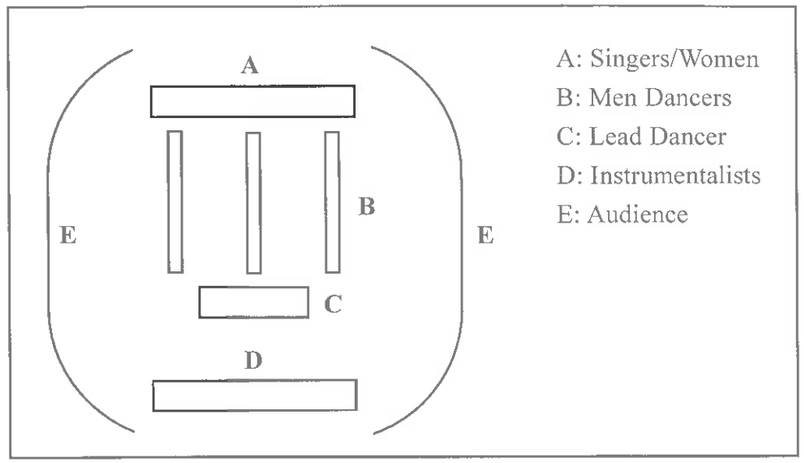
According to Dzikunu the old artistic direction of Adzido was more dance theatre, where dancers were also actors. He decided to change the direction of his work after the production of Sankofa (2000) because he felt his dancers were trained to dance, not to act.

I will discuss the traditional version of the 'Atsiabekor' before turning to the staged version within Chesa Chesa. Then I will be looking at the transformation of these in a theatrical setting as well as considering my own work and the way in which both companies present African dances and the way my choreographic practice can be placed within a similar conceptual approach.

The traditional context of the 'Agbekor' was considered a war dance called 'Atamuga', (the great oath) during which the people asked the gods to be on their side. The 'Agbekor' contained the 'Atsiawo' rhythm and dance composition, which was the music, which played in the past when the men returned from the battlefield Together with the movements of the 'Agbekor' and the musical composition referred to as 'Atsia', the dance became 'Atsiabekor'. In Chesa Chesa this dance is performed in the second act, 'Change and Conflict where the young chief and the Pretender, the 'maker of conflict' declare to fight against each other, this remains true to the dance's original context. The movement responses relate to fighting, forward and backward movements from trying to confuse the enemy. Nowadays the 'horsetail'/ 'Soshi' is replaced by the sword, some groups make use of wooden weapons.

In traditional context the 'Atsiabekor' is performed by the Southern Ewe people of West Africa. As part of the preparation of the dance, there is a procession to remind the younger generation of the suffering of their forefathers. It takes quite a long time for the actual dance to be performed, the dancers come from the field towards the performing space, which form part of a ritual where the people ask the blessing of the gods. The group normally arranges itself where the drummers, singers and dancers have their organised positions, the guests or spectators place themselves either at the back of the drummers or on the sides. The master drummer is in command of the dance actions executed by the men and woman, and drummers and dancers are of great importance. It is considered an insult if the dancers turn away from the drummers. They also face the drummers because as each rhythmic pattern demands a specific movement, the dancers have to acutely be conscious of each rhythmic pattern as the drummer can change the rhythm at any time. The dance takes place in a circular formation, where everybody participates.

The following diagram by Pascal Young illustrates the organisation of the 'Atsiabekor'



Modes of Transformation

Having studied the social organisation of this particular dance, I learnt that it would not be suitable for a proscenium stage without making certain adaptations. Taking the traditional context into consideration, it depends on the choreographer's choice which traditional dances or elements are performed on stage. The challenge is how to remain within the tradition and move forward.

The staged version of the 'Atsiabekor' for example is adapted from a ritualistic performance with audience participation and extended preparation time before the actual dance is performed. In Chesa Chesa it has to be re-created to suit the time and space of the theatrical frame, although the narrative place the dance in a war context, which maintains the tradition. Movements are introduced in different stages by cutting out repetitions for example, the movement excerpts are arranged with consideration of dynamics and qualities providing the audience with a heightened variety to prevent them from loosing interest. By changing these elements the dance becomes a choreographed work. To summarise the main movement features of a story line, can be one way to transform a ritualistic source in a choreographic process. Another example of transformation is Opoku's treatment of 'The Lamentation of Freedom Fighters'[8].

> *Opoku was able to transform a ritual dance in such a way that the authenticity has been validated. He built a fifteen-minute dance of something that could take a whole day, by looking at what the trance dance does. (Nketia, 2001)*

Associated meaning that derives from traditional movement can therefore blend with ideas of modern choreography. This is an element that features both in Nii-Yartey's and my own choreographic exploration. By observing elements of mundane African life I drew my inspiration to choreograph a short work titled Wosoo Wowoo, "We are always sleeping," focusing on different ways of sleeping. Living with the students of Noyam I noticed their sleeping manner which was the starting point of the tasks I gave them. I played around with where they sleep, how they sleep and how often they sleep.

I started off by simply looking body position, for example, lying on ones back with hands covering the face, or sitting up and every so often nodding off. Using improvisation as my main tool, rather than movements of traditional dances. Nevertheless my own knowledge of traditional dance was very limited, the dancers personal experience as well as the way in which African dance training shaped their bodies made them interpret the movement in a very unique way. In a similar way to Nii-Yartey I let the dancers improvise with live music, which was not as successful, I found recorded music (Lambarena, Bach to Africa) which I preferred and used. Nketia further argues that the African tradition challenges all areas of communication and artistic expression not only dance. To follow what has been evolved in the tradition one has to comprehend the history of the tradition. The creative option takes many shapes, both Nii-Yartey and Dzikunu select their material based on their personal taste, but the former quotes movement phrases whilst the latter takes whole dances.

Dzikunu explains that he chooses dances he likes when he goes to Africa and at the same time "imports" dancers to transfer the knowledge by teaching the company. They teach the dances and bring the authentic costumes and drums as important indigenous elements. (See appendix for illustration) Further more he recognises the fact that in a traditional setting the audience contribute towards what is happening at that specific moment in time. When the dance is transformed for the stage the dancers and audience is separated and not any more participating in the performance activity as in the ritualistic setting. In Chesa Chesa the dancers enter and exit through the auditorium which to a certain extend makes the audience part of the performance. In traditional context the dancers always faces the drummers, in a staged performance they have to turn to the audience.

After all these adaptations are made, how can one recognise whether it is still a traditional dance? Dzikunu argues that an adapted traditional dance can be recognised on the basis of specific characteristics and features such as, the way the dancers position themselves when executing specific movement: the way they put their foot down or execute a particular stretch for example. In the 'Atsiabekor', circling arm movements, slow backward movement or the extensions of the body carrying the 'soshi' (horsetail) are characteristics recognised when performed.

On stage you can not have the freedom of doing what you like to do in a village. You can only give people a taste of it. (Dzikunu, 2001)

[8] The work drew on religious dance movements from the Anlo Ewe tribe and on mourning gestures of Ashanti dances (Nii-Yartey, 2000).

Conclusion

To conclude, traditional African dance can be considered as an embodied legacy of cultural heritage which is constantly redefined by choreographers and dance practitioners. It could be said that it is crucial to study the cultural background when staging or changing movements for theatre contexts. It can be noted that different cultures in Africa have certain movement vocabulary in common although they might stylistically be modified. A somersault from a Northern Ghanaian dance might look different from that of a Southern Ghanaian dance because of movement dynamics but it technically stays the same although executed differently. In that way war dances from South Africa, Nigeria or Ghana can feature similar concepts and ideas but the accompanying body dynamics and musical system may vary.

When creating new dance works for the theatre it only becomes problematic when trying to re-enact the traditional dances in taking an anthropological stance. Furthermore when looking at Contemporary African dance it seems problematic that the re-contextualization of the African dance practices in artistic approaches is often partially imitative when trying to link western contemporary modes of dance style or concept. Therefore the following question can be raised whether contemporary African dance is a fusion between two forms: African dance that has been westernised or choreographers finding an idiosyncratic way of exploring the African heritage?

Germaine Acogny (1988) criticises the staging of "ballets" which are merely a simple transplantation of the "bush". Her understanding is that traditional African dance is meaningful only within a given socio-cultural context.

It can be asked if practitioners like Nii-Yartey are moving towards a new understanding of contemporary African dance or whether they are still drawing from the legacy of western dance forms. Nii-Yartey challenges the tradition and finds his own way of interpretation within the tradition in contrast to those who are having a choreographic approach of "collaging" the traditions. In regard of Adzido, Dzikunu's interest is less on challenging the tradition as he is adapting the original ritualistic context to please audiences.

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Appendices

Photo Data:

-The National Dance Company: Solma

Photo Data:

- Adzido Pan African Dance Ensemble: 'Atsiabekor' in Chesa Chesa

Video Recording:

- 'Agbadza';
- 'Kpanlogo'; and
- 'Wosoo Wowoo'

All performed by students of Noyam Contemporary African Dance Project.

PHYSICAL IMAGININGS: THE TRANSLATION OF MEMORY IN THE DANCEPLAYS OF FIRST PHYSICAL

By Juanita Finestone

"The dancing body in the relentlessness of its motion and the inevitability of its evanescence leaves in its wake so little from which to reconstruct its presence, either in the imagination or in history. Whereas choreographers have accustomed themselves to this disappearance act, historians have typically focused on projects informed by more permanent kinds of records. They have privileged information that moves within the textual field from historical document to historian's text and tended to ignore events and actions outside the textual that are unavailable or resistant to the process of translation.". (Susan Leigh Foster: 1996)

Reconstructing the appearances and disappearances of bodily memory through time and space is the choreographer's proposition and undertaking. Belgian choreographer, Wim Vanderkeybus has created a work entitled, *What the body does not remember* (1987). I have found myself repeatedly mesmerised by the idea of memory as it is presented in this title. Given the work's context within a physical theatre, it seems to express an irony in relation to the body's inevitable nostalgia and reflection within a context of formally choreographed movement. Moreover, it attempts to confound the logic which regards bodily memory as 'truth'. The incongruous juxtaposition of intimacy and estrangement that we experience and express through our bodies daily seems to embrace the incongruous, and in Vanderkeybus' title, it becomes uncanny. The uncanny can be conceptualised as a return of an experience of familiarity within an unfamiliar context which makes the familiar, as Freud suggests, "unheimlich" or unhomely. Vanderkeybus' reference to a disappearing, amnesiac body or body of memory seems somehow "unhomely" - the known body returning to a now disguised, or consciously unknown body. His title hints at this duplicity of bodily memory, commenting on the way the body disguises its responses in order to re-invent its history. This "forgetting to remember" is partly how the body re-constructs its own gestural history of habit and defense against its more rational narratives of autonomy and control.

The plight of poor Bottom as he emerges from his dream with Titania in Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream* is recalled. With an asses' head superimposed on his own, he stumbles back to his companions, who are utterly aghast at his transformation, at how he been "translated". The metaphor of translation assumes a comic reference here to the uncanny - the familiar Bottom now, unfamiliar Bottom - as the curious relation of Bottom's double visage questions the relationship of the known to the unknown. In a sense, the act of translation here becomes uncanny in its presentation of an "unheimliches" moment of transference. Bottom's unhomely appearance signals his disappearance.

This diffuse and somewhat ghostly disappearance of bodily memory suggested by Vanderkeybus' title and the disappearing choreographic text referred to by Foster, seemed to me to have something of this uncanny recall in common.

This relation of presence and absence through the body seems to be one of the defining moments of the choreographic process. Here, it has become a departure point for translating the idea of 'concept to concert'. The notion of ***translation*** also provides a centralising conceptual context for the discussion of creative interpretations and choreographic transformations through processes of writing the body in the work of First Physical Theatre Company. With close reference to particular works within the repertory of First Physical, some of the creative choices, working processes, inspirations, crafting principles, training methodologies, and intuitions from source to final product will be reflected upon, assessed and analysed.

Within this research process, the role of researcher becomes one of *translation* - to change in form, to transform, to decipher and unravel the choreographed text. The researcher begins to translate, witness, document, remember and interpret the evanescent memories of these choreographic moments. This question of translation is a vital one for dance given its lack of easy documentation and sad history of illiteracy. Experiential knowledge via participation in the processes described is based on personal investment in many of the works, via alternating roles as choreographer, performer, teacher, fund raiser or researcher. Reference to both researched and experiential modes of enquiry may coax these seemingly resistant choreographic texts into appearing, helping to make the absent processes more present.

Somatic expressions of memory, history, and narrative

Postmodern and postcolonial discourses have elucidated the multiple voices and subjectivities of history, revealing that history is not about facts or truths but selective interpretations and translations of events and people. As Jenkins suggests, the past is gone, it has disappeared and histiography is what historians make of this past : *"the past and history float free of each other"* (Jenkins: 1991 5). Histiography is an intertextual, linguistic construct. If we agree that history is about interpretation and storytelling, then similarly, we must concur that memory consists of constructed acts of selective recall. Memory is not personal truth, or authentic revelation. Adam Phillips in his text entitled, On Flirtation ... *the telling of selves* ... discusses how one of the greatest obstacles to memory is in fact, memory itself. As he suggests, by imaginative acts of substitution, we repress and replace whatever has been unacceptable in our experience and hence our memory is often a defence of memory. He cites Freud's suggestion that memory is akin to dream in the sense that it is neither logical, rational nor chronological. Freud noted that "the falsified memory is the first that we become aware of". Until this memory is interpreted, it remains a "screen-memory", a waking dream of the past (Phillips: 1994: 65). While Phillips compares and contrasts acts of writing the self through autobiography and psychoanalysis, it is useful to examine this conundrum in relation to writing the self/body through dance performance.

One of the most useful processes of unearthing potential responses to source material is via ***improvisation***. The use of improvisation is one method that can be used effectively by the choreographer as a source for developing fresh, innovative movements and responses from performers. It provides individual physical statements and images with which the choreographer can then interact.

> *"Improvisation as a source generates material which, in its complexity and unexpectedness, could never be planned or arrived at by logical means".*
> *(Tufnell and Crickmay: 1990: 194)*

Improvised responses to a given source can provide the catalyst for unleashing unconscious responses to material that emerge through a dreamlike logic. Briefly returning to Phillips, he states that like dream, free association is one way of tapping into or behind defensive memory:

> *"free-association is memory in its most incoherent and therefore fluent form; because of repression, the past can only return as disarray in de-narrativised fragments" (Phillips: 1994: 67).*

Choreography via an improvised process can become a rich site for the meeting of collective and personal histories. Graphs or fragments of memory are released that can be shaped and played with by the choreographer to create compelling images of the body and its relation to narrative, identity and history. As Sandor Ferenczi notes, *"the patient is not cured by free-associating, he is cured when he can free associate"* (quoted in Phillips: 1994: 67). Phillips concurs that the aim of analysis is not to recover the past, but to make recovery of the past possible. For the choreographer, this journey to source an authentic response from the performers, involves , via the body, such a return of the repressed. It becomes an attempt to allow the body to remember what it has forgotten to remember. The process of writing the body becomes an intertextual process of translating in order to re-invent. This is much like postcolonial discourse which seeks a re-invention of the past for the purposes of the present. This intriguing relationship of collective versus personal memory raises valuable questions for a contemporary understanding of identity, history, and memory as it is explored and presented through South African performance and dance. The complex and playful relation of memory to choreographic impulse and process will be examined and presented here as a series of vignettes, each examining different aspects of the choreographic ethos and imagination within a physical theatre.

Public Vignettes - biographies and/as collective memory

Two of Gary Gordon's danceplays provide a valuable source for elaborating this dialogue between creativity, history, transformation and interpretation. In *The Unspeakable Story* (1995) and *Bessie's Head* (2000), Gordon becomes histiographer - he calls both works ***documentary*** danceplays. In both, Gordon translates the lives of two historical figures, re-inventing narratives from their lives for a contemporary context. His working processes include an attention to source, artistic collaboration, an integrated and intertextual approach to devising texts (aural/physical/visual/sensual) and the mobilisation of the body's presence.

In his inaugural speech at Rhodes University, Gordon identifies the struggle of physical theatre as having a commitment to ***transformation*** - the transformation of ideology, and to the notions of theatre/drama and dance (Gordon: 1996: 17). This idea of transformation retains a provocative questioning of mainstream aesthetic and political views.

It re-reads and re-invents contents, forms and performance modes in its attempt to find inventive approaches to devising theatre. While not denying the mysterious alchemy that is transmuted through and by the creative process, the company ethos strongly affirms processes of research. Embodied in this vision is a challenge to assumptions that creative impulses are innate talents that one either possesses or not - the idea that works are inspired by a benevolent Terpsichorean muse and that creative acts are feeling things rather than thinking things. In a paper entitled, *The Muse and Archaeologist* (1997: and which can be read on the company CD Rom), I have discussed at length the play involved in this research where the artist becomes the archaeologist who must discover, dig and sift through sourcing and delicate working processes to eventually exhume his/her artifact, or parts thereof. This process brings together many of the concerns of a physical theatre - the idea of an integrated, holistic approach as well as the notion of artistic ***collaboration***. In physical theatre, each artistic medium/collaboration (music/text/design/physicality) becomes an integrated yet *independent* aspect of the work. Each medium adding a layer of meaning to the work through its own interpretation of the images and concepts being explored. As a result, the range of creative sources that go into the work ensure that all the artists involved in the collaboration have contributed fundamentally to the final product. And this , I believe, is what makes the work an original collaboration - the creative input of a range of individuals permeates the work providing it with a rich, multi-dimensional and multi-media texture. The work becomes a collaborative remembering.

In ***Bessie's Head*** (2000) , Gordon becomes cartographer as he begins to map out a site for the excavation of the imagination. This historical evocation of creativity is figured in South African writer, Bessie Head. A public and intimate landscape is re-constructed using Bessie Head's past as a source to assemble images and design responses to questions of power and identity. Head's novel, A Question of Power, deals with the psychic disintegration of a woman and her struggle to free herself from the controlling, tormented voices she hears in her head. Resonances between Head and this female protagonist bear resemblance. Head's own history appears to have been a battle with mental instability and a deep longing and nostalgia for her origins (represented in Gordon's danceplay by the focus on her mother). These repressed emotions form the spark from which creativity is birthed. The programme note sets this up:

"A documentary danceplay that dissects the events surrounding the birth of the writer born in South Africa: Bessie Head. Facts and stories .....dance and drama..... words and songs..... music, design and imagination collude in this interior viewing of an artist's private domain. A theatrical vision that reveals sights of passion, tenderness and power" (Gary Gordon, March 2000)

Head's memories and multiple voices emerge through Gordon's interpretation in the form of an illogical and fragmented narrative. Phelan points out that this western myth of narrative order is not something shared by the body, or in fact, even the mind. She declares:

"The body, in short, does not share consciousness's faith in narrative order. The uneven join between the body and consciousness is packed with the expansive ooze of the unconscious ... the body's movements are the roaming rooms in which psychic 'truths' are lodged". (Peggy Phelan: 1996)

In Bessie's Head, both the choreography and the text share this lack of chronology. The work evolves through a number of disjointed and episodic fragments. Gordon interprets Head's dream of the mother she longed for, but never knew. The work pursues this narrative deconstruction of Head's history - how Bessie Head herself had reconstructed a narrative via stories about her mother and her own wish-fulfillment in order to make sense of her abandonment as a child. Head's physical and imagined exiles from her own history - first as a child and later as a political refugee living in Botswana - became poignant stories from which to translate her presence in the work. The working process included a range of strategies for interpreting Head's obsession with origins as we too performed our reading of what her body did and did not remember.

The opening image is of a group of bandaged people wandering lost onto the stage - they enter from the audience and then stare out at them and into a blinding spotlight. The audience see only their chest and faces. They present a *Prologue* which becomes a succinct and economic chronicle of the work - through gestures and voice, the unconscious emotional residues of the danceplay are conjured up. The echoes inside Bessie's head, her imaginary compositions of her mother are juxtaposed with and reconstructed in relation to the voices of reason and power - the somber voices of male authority and rational discourse. This is elicited through de Wet's text which performs itself in a voice-over.

Woman's Voice: *In the dark. Quietly and brokenly.*

My mother is my private goddess. I alone adore her.
Slowly lights up on head

Man's Voice: *Deep and resounding*

My purpose is to clarify - to verify. Since I am the senior member still living, being of reasonably sound health of mind, and with my knowledge, it is my duty to compile an official record of the white antecedents of Bessie Head. In particular, I wish to give true information about Toby, my sister - mother of Bessie.

Woman's Voice: *Broken.*

"Minds crack, they say, sometimes shatter."

Man's Voice: *Now sounding quite normal and rather "proper".*

Who the father was, is completely unknown, and speculation is a waste of time. A brief encounter? A misuse of her mental state? Was she enticed somewhere?

Short silence.

Was she ... waylaid ?

Woman's Voice: *Quiet and tearful.*

I never knew my mother. Never. To me she remained ...
an utter ... utter ... mystery.
Whispers. Almost fearful.
Who is she?

Chorus of wailing voices:

Who ... who ... whoooo ... is ... she?

AND/OR

Sound of retreating, resounding footsteps. Many heavy metal doors being slammed. Cries - close and far off. Cries of women, of birds, of animals.

The work provides very different and subjective accounts of events surrounding Head's conception and birth, dispelling any notion of a fixed or official historical "truth". We are drawn into Bessie's head through the set which is a large perspex re-construction of a head - big enough to move in. In moments throughout the work, it becomes a metaphorical locale for the performers - they literally become Bessie's thoughts. At the back of the stage hang three shrouded heads which are grotesque, mask-like visions. At the end of the work, these collapse and crack open, an image that is echoed throughout the work:

Woman's Voice: "Minds crack, they say, sometimes shatter."

The costume design is dynamic in the way it transforms from a clean, virginal white at the start of the work to a sweeping tide of blood (red). The rising red stains on bottom of the performer's dresses and pants gradually spreads upwards to consume them. This accumulation of colour throughout the work evokes the violence and emotional flood that is wrought by the anguished memories of the female characters.

The final dance is Gordon's celebration of Bessie's fantasy of her mother. A tall, elegant female performer enters the empty stage, clad in deep red velvet . As she walks on, clearly looking for someone, the famous Albinoni adagio for Strings in G minor sounds out its exquisite sadness. Anticipating nostalgia, the composer has cheekily adapted the score, transforming its themes into a sumptuous tango. The woman relinquishes her yearning and acquiesces to an ecstatic remembrance. The chorus from the opening provide a brief epilogue in their reactions to her . An exhilarated dance becomes the resounding expression of the creative impulse. The final image returns to a mother and child, embraced in each other as the faint sound of heartbeats return.

With the premiere of a film adaptation at the First National Bank Festival of the Arts 2000, Bessie's Head is now featured as "the country's first dance-in-camera production".

"As it grows and is documented, so too is it documenting itself ... Bessie's Head, as an artistic, theatrical expression combines fact with imagination and takes us into a realm where past and present collude - a realm of the beyond, an 'in-between space' where negotiation on cultural meaning and interpretation, as well as signs of identity and innovative collaboration, can take place". (Rob Murray: 2000)

It was always interesting for me to hear responses from the audience - especially those who believed the work to be an inaccurate and jumbled account of Head's history. The need for a legitimate and chronological history confounded, the mystery of Head's birth remains. The programme presents a quotation from a letter sent to Dottie Ewan, a mutual friend of Head and ours:

"The world has to change perhaps subtly, and the times of change are fascinating. The eyes that capture the new and unusual open many doors for others." (Bessie Head in a letter to Dottie Ewan, 30 September 1972)

This letter, discovered in the New English Literary Museum during our research makes it possible to say that perhaps, the point of reclaiming or re-inventing histories makes it possible to allow the repressed and silenced voices in our own heads to bear witness to themselves. In the resultant fractures , perhaps a new space is cracked open.

Utilising similar strategies of narrative fragmentation and deconstruction, Gordon's **The Unspeakable Story** (1996), sets out to imaginatively re-interpret an event in the life of surrealist painter, Rene Magritte. Using his paintings and various biographies on Magritte as source, Gordon isolates one event in his life - his mother's death by suicide - and re-presents this woman's story. South African dance critic, Adrienne Sichel has called this work a "choreographic splicing of fact and magic" (Sichel: The Star: March 7 1996). Gordon provokes a questioning of the creative , of social and of personal memory in this documentary danceplay. The borders between the personal and the public are blurred with each episode providing a different perspective into this woman's suicide. The story migrates in a nomadic way between the past and the present - her story is re-constructed and re-presented as stories about dance, art, life and death.

Gordon notes that during his research for the working process, he recalls reading about Magritte's obsession with cheap detective novels and he interacts with this thrilling idea by incorporating it into the work as mystery. The danceplay becomes a thriller - a mystery that is being unraveled. The programme note reflects on Magritte's own words:

" the mysteries in those books can be unlocked with a key ... I mean, if there is a mystery in my work, it's a matter of the unknowable".
(Magritte: 1898 - 1967)

There are six episodes in the work and each archetypal episode represents a different view of *the unspeakable fact* of this woman's tragic death. *The Mirror* is a nostalgic journey of reflection - the young boy's memory of his home and of his parents.

Utilising the music of the popular 1940's band, The Inkspots, Gordon here recalls Magritte's obsession with cheap detective novels. To place this information in period, he uses the popular music to take the audience back. *The River* explores a more expressionist vocabulary and narrative. It becomes the "emotional heartland of the dance - into which the woman plunges her deepest oblivion" (Finestone: 1995: 65). *The Funeral* is a grotesque and macabre funereal ritual - here we are witness to a vaudeville act and singer's floorshow, a macabre fashion parade and a duet that questions the speed and power play of Latin American dance styles like the tango. In this scene, the memory of the dead is shown up to be what it sometimes socially is, frivolous and pretentious. *The Dream* is more surreal and takes the audience into the boy's unconscious - into his dream of his mother. The distortion of film images aids this surreal dream-like experience. Finally, in *The Cycle*, the dancers all become representations of Magritte's mother. The woman is never represented by one character, but each performer becomes one of her myriad representations.

The different artistic styles and conventions also make the work a postmodern dialogue with art itself - with questioning the choreographic creation and with representation. For example, the set becomes such an intertextual play with Magritte's own creative strategies. The box-like structure of the set (The House) is painted with Magritte's famous clouds and at the bottom of the set, the following words are painted: *"Ceci n'est pas un Magritte"*. This is a playful interaction with Magritte's painting, This is not a Pipe which serves to question the authorship, authenticity and origins of acts of representation . For a full analysis of this work, see Finestone's unpublished thesis, *The Politics and Poetics of Choreography: The Dancing Body In South African Dance:* 1995.

In the above works, we see how the choreographer has translated histories, how memories can be constructed and retrieved via narrative through the choreographic process. The idea that memories become cauterised. sanitised and obliquely forgotten or lost in the body allows for **the body** to become a prime site for remembering. The body becomes a place to unearth these dusty memories. The landscapes of the mind, emotions and spirit are traversed and felt through skin, muscle and bone. It is to this physical aspect of the creative process that I now wish to turn.

In 1996 I created a work called **The Passion of Judas** for the Standard Bank National Festival of the Arts as part of a First Physical programme called *Abundance*. In this work, the idea of storytelling via collective history and private memory became source for the exploration of the biblical story of Judas - his betrayal, guilt and absolution. At the time of creating the work, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in the Eastern Cape had just begun. It became a place of reflection and acute questioning for most South Africans as we struggled to recall the most vile excesses of Apartheid. The work attempted to respond and reflect on some of these processes of remembering. David Alcock, in a paper for the *South African Theatre As/And Intervention conference* held in London in August 1996, has written the following about the work:

> *"During the performance, one male performer is in a bent kneeling position while two other male performers, one carrying the other, proceed to stand on the kneeling man's back. The tension of the moment caused by our sense of the endurance of the kneeling performer is felt in kinaesthetic sympathy by the audience to the point of being unbearable... it explores the impact of human beings 'telling their story and collapsing under the weight of it' (programme note), as well as other related issues, such as the tension between public and private experience; the process whereby inner motivations become public information; and how individuals in the present desperately seek absolution from their personal stories of crime in the past". (Alcock: 1999: 56)*

Ann Cooper Albright in her prolific account of the body and identity in contemporary dance cites the use of a term by Audre Lorde - ***"biomythography"*** - to describe a process where narratives "weave the historical facts of people's existence elaborating visionary sagas of social and personal survival" (Cooper Albright: 1997: 151). Albright suggests that in order to be effectively and potently embodied in performance, history has to be recast:

> *"situated in a different light and taken up by different bodies. The importance of history here is not the importance of historical fact or artifact; such documents, authorized in the service of white dominance are rightfully suspect. Rather, history for so many African-Americans is located in the story - in the telling again and again ... It is this creative element in retelling the story that makes this history - the history of peoples and their stories rather than the history of facts - inherently performative ". (Cooper Albright: 1997: 151 - 153).*

While Cooper Albright's text obviously refers to the Afro- American experience, the South African experience echoes similar strategies of story-telling as survival. Mjabulo Ndebele, in an article entitled, *memory, symbol, and the triumph of narrative* notes how at a certain point during the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 'testimonies' transformed to become 'story':

> *"and so it is that the stories of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission seem poised to result in one major spin-off, among others: the restoration of narrative. In few countries in the contemporary world do we have a living example of people re-inventing themselves through narrative". (Ndebele: in Kellner: 2000: 24)*

Cooper Albright highlights the idea that re-interpreting history needs to be creative rather than static. This notion of creativity embraces the idea of translation as transformation. In *The Passion of Judas*, the working processes and training of the performers' bodies became vital to the remembering - our own "biomythographies" were created by exploring the performer's personal responses to ideas of betrayal, both intimate and public. We read texts from the bible, newspaper articles from the TRC, wrote stories about personal betrayals and played with the meanings of where these evocations collided. Via improvisation and the choreographic manipulation of the emerging material through crafting, a language for the content emerged.

This way of working has become part of the ethos for a physical theatre. With regard to choreographic process, it provides a vital role for the performer to collaborate with and to translate the choreographer's vision.

Ana Sanchez-Colberg, in her ground-breaking article, *Altered States and Subliminal Spaces: charting the road towards a physical theatre*, begins to conceptualise the eclectic production displayed in physical theatre. She argues that the term itself

denotes a hybrid character and suggests that this is testimony to its double legacy in both avant-garde theatre and dance. She further states:

"The locating of physical theatre within the avant garde must be given to issues of anti-establishment within the context of alienation and transgression common to both forms" (Sanchez-Colberg: 1996:40)

Re-examining the role of avant garde dance within a physical theatre, Sanchez-Colberg has noted the process of language devaluation that occurred within avant garde theatre and highlights a *"parallel mistrust of codified 'languages of the body'... present in the history of contemporary dance from Duncan to Bausch"* (Sanchez-Colberg: 1996:44). She examines, for example, the impact that German expressionism and the innovative choreographer and dance theorist, Rudolf Laban's approach has had for contemporary dance and physical theatre. She examines the influence of Laban's study of choreology on a questioning of the accepted role of movement within the dance medium which supports the development of most dance vocabularies and techniques. She argues that Laban's guiding principle, that of the 'body in space' before movement, appears a simple concept to grasp, but that carefully re-examined, it provides a new context for understanding the move away from codified techniques utilised historically by various avant garde artists (for example, Wigman and Bausch) and many physical theatre practitioners today. Succinctly re-reading her proposal, Sanchez-Colberg argues that to accept that dance is about the 'body in space' through movement is a shift from the assumed notion of reading dance as the 'body- in- movement' through space. In this way, movement becomes effect and not cause. Laban's claim that "empty space does not exist" has provided a critical interrogation of dance languages. He theorises that we move in order to fulfill a need and that when the dancer moves, the movement becomes the mediator between two areas of experience - internal space ("land of silence") and the external world ("land of action"). Movement always has intention.

Extending this discussion in relation to Ausdruckstanz and Tanzteater, Sanchez-Colberg suggests that this viewing provides a new context for understanding the way that

"these artists proposed a devaluation of the 'language' of technical virtuosity in which the body is bound to ideal forms which exist outside it and which leads to the body's objectification and reification (exacerbated by its links to music) and eliminates the a-priori relationship between the body and space". (Sanchez-Colberg: 1996: 45)

As Sanchez-Colberg suggests, movement becomes relevant only in as much as it may express aspects of the body-space nexus and hence the boundaries of what can constitute dance movement are opened and hence also the boundaries of what constitutes the dance medium (Sanchez-Colberg: 1996: 45).

The above conceptualisation explains why the choreographer for a physical theatre would need to translate very differently from mainstream dance, the needs for training, skills, body type, performer, crafting strategies and theatricalities. Within a process of improvisation and experimentation, the physical vocabularies found, are often created from and by the *performer's own bodies* thus providing a space for

creative collaboration and contributing to an enriching experience for the performers. They are not "docile bodies" (Foucault's term) passively learning steps but *actively* participating in the creative process of translating ideas into the physical or the physical into the visual. They are participants in these physical imaginings. Through creatively interpreting movements and ideas, the participants learn to trust their judgements and to make choices. The context of exploration sets up a creative continuum that is not **formulaic**. It's fundamental ethos lies in the way it provides an imaginative context for a very individual and personalised creativity which can assume a wide range of stylistic and media choices. Performers are given the opportunity to explore what it is that their own bodies have to say without the censorship of specific technical or choreographic structures. Without being prescriptive, a Physical Theatre training allows creativity and originality to be fostered within a context of collaboration and empowerment. In this sense it is possible to call the performers, interpreters or translators within the choreographic process. As Carol Brown argues,

"reductive definitions simplify the role of the dancer into the image of the Dancer as Body ... Dancing bodies are beginning to leak, to betray the illusion of a chaste, hygienic and contained body... I would suggest that the acquisition of a stereotypical dancer's body is to some degree an inevitable aspect of the physical demands of training ... but this body is only a stereotype if it continues to reproduce the tired gestures of a classical inheritance which assumes the harmony of form over matter. What matters now is the matter of bodies, their instabilities, imperfections, pleasures and deceits. We need to see beyond the surface imagery of the body to the play of forces and intensities at work within and through it, and to how these movements invent new understandings of the body, as well as varieties of the body which exceed the existing typologies" . (Brown: 1999: 14 - 16)

A work like Gordon's **Lilith** (1998) exemplifies such an attempt at new understandings of identity and the body. In this bruising work, Gordon returns to an expressionism reminiscent of earlier works like *Shattered Windows* (1993). Here, the identity of Lilith is refracted and reflected as her historical tale is re-interpreted. An archaic and archetypal underworld is evoked through the text which describes the mythic betrayal of Lilith by Adam. The text also contemporises the narrative tracing clear historical and cultural threads to contemporary life, and pointing to the marginalisation of Lilith's story in religious discourse. The text of a contemporary court case depicting a divorce settlement re-iterates the age old battle between the sexes for autonomy and identity.

The work is a primitive rite which approximates an Artaudian theatre of cruelty. It was Artaud who called for a theatre to be "cruel" in the sense of being demanding for the performers and the spectators alike. He wanted metaphysics to enter the mind through the body (Artaud in Schumacher: 1989: 105), for the body to perform its subjectivities.

Artaud's focus on reclaiming the body has made his writing accessible to dance practitioners and it is interesting to note how often he is referred to within contemporary dance discourse (Steinman; Gordon). His image of theatre as plague is called to mind in *Lilith* as Gordon takes this primitivism into the realm of myth and the collective unconscious. It scratches beneath the veneer of social morality and body etiquette. This work calls on the universal - the characters are mythic, immense and god-like.

Their costumes are earthy, sensual in a pagan way and scant, exposing flesh and isolated body parts. The set design by Cupsa, colludes with the physical and verbal texts to add another layer of visual meaning to the volatility of Lilith's instability. Inspired by Daliesque sculptures, the set consists of a labyrinth of metal crutches about a metre high.

The opening image is of Lilith walking over these crutches carrying what appears to be a baby. The dangerous and difficult task of balancing on these crutches for a prolonged period of time is another example of the raw, uncompromising physicality that the choreography demands from the performers - a certain volatile presence and risk. Tim Echells, in his examination of trends within contemporary performance, speaks of a shifting relation between the spectator and performer relationship within contemporary work. He perceives , in certain instances, the audience to be present in an act of witnessing, which he argues, occurs when a particular kind of investment or risk is being taken by the performers:

"Investment is what happens when the performers before us seem bound up unspeakably with what they're doing ... we are watching people before us, not representing something but going through something. They lay their bodies on the line and we are transformed - not as audience to spectacle but witnesses to an event". (Etchells: 1999: 49)

Cooper Albright, in her reading of contemporary performance, particularly dance, argues that shifting the dynamics of the traditional gaze is one of its hallmarks. Her insights into the idea of witnessing refers to a responsiveness, the response/ability of viewer to performer, which she argues, is unlike the "consuming" gaze of the spectator. Witnessing is more interactive dynamic, a "mutual dialogue". (Cooper Albright: 1997: xxii).

In *Lilith*, the physicality comes from this investment and presence of the performers to the movement material. At one point in the dance, the body of a nearly naked man is seen crawling over and along the obstructive maze of crutches. Beneath the ladder, Lilith awaits him:

"Love has lit a flame in my heart;
It burns like a candle that no-one can put out.
Though I carry it in the wind, against the fury of the east and the north,
I can find no peace or rest, it cannot be blown out" . (de Wet: 1998)

The language of the text reveals Lilith's power and status - she can command the spheres. The duet that follows is a tempestuous and passionate dream - it is her memory of Adam and the enormity of their passion. The duet is a bruising and violent outburst bordering on the edge of pleasure and pain. The two performers collide, sweat, contort as their epic battle is waged. The duet's concluding energy residing in exhaustion - and the onset of their separation. It is also at this point that Lilith commits to and calls up her curse on Adam:

"May you be filled with an ever-lasting unfathomable longing for me. Not only you - but all of your progeny. Even when they have forgotten the name of Lilith ... may you burn in the profane and in the sacred fire". (De Wet: 1998)

Then her world explodes and the set transforms into an anarchic, volcanic surge with the rise of the operatic Schnittke score. Flesh collides, bodies hurtle through space, falling and impacting against other bodies. Primal moans resound through the clutter of bitterness that is wrought through the bruising clashes with floor and metal. A ritual of catharsis and deliverance ensues. Lilith's vengeful wrath is finally combusted and, exhausted, she gives birth to the moon.

Personal Vignettes - profiles in translation: the auto-biographical imagination

French psychoanalyst, J.B.Pontalis claims one shouldn't have one autobiography but "ten of them, or a hundred because, while we have only one life we have innumerable ways of recounting that life to ourselves". (cited in Phillips: 1994: 73) These multiple identities that we embody are all the stories that we tell ourselves about who we think we are. Our self narratives are constructed a little like our dreams, with a circular and inscrutable logic. As Phillips suggests:

"Dreaming may be our only truly solitary form of autobiography".
(Phillips: 1994: 73)

Pontalis' suggestion debunks assumptions about autobiography as it is conventionally presented - as essential personal truth. His comment highlights this elusive, embellished nature of memory and reveals autobiography as the re-invention of what we imagine our most intimate memories to be.

In a work like **Can Baby John Fit Into Big Daddy's Shoes?** (1994), Gordon questions this idea of memory and truth. In the programme note we read that the work is:

A past modern dance charade in the manner of the grotesque - the story of Baby John with Big Daddy, Mother Mary, the Nutcracker, Little Jimmy and of course a Dancing Master and two very big Men About Town.

In the opening scene of the work, we encounter the narrator, a contemporary Merlin figure (or Salieri at times). He is sitting in a wheelchair in his boudoir, staring at his aged and myriad reflections in three mirrors. He begins to laugh with an uncontrolled and raucous abandon . It is only when he becomes aware of having an audience that he turns to address them, first having to breathe into a bag to catch his breath. Using the rhyming couplets and rhythms of pantomimic verse, he proceeds to narrate his story. He uses flashbacks to the past in an attempt to recall his memories from history and to recreate his narrative fiction. He commands all the "facts" and action throughout the danceplay through his control and manipulation of the text and the music. He is, as Gordon suggests, the 'deux ex machinae" - it is he who informs the actor/dancers of the roles they ought to adopt in his story. Through his conscious and visible manipulations on stage, the audience witness how the little "fictions" of his story are pieced together from recollection. Is he telling the truth? Are we to believe his charade? The exposure of his auto/biography as fiction, not fact, is left open to interpretation - just as the title itself suggests an open-ended questioning.

The narrator invites the audience to enter his charade, which is at once ironic and macabre, and in which no single or "legitimate" narrative essence prevails. His play with fantasy and magic, as he conjures up his tales, refer endlessly to the world of the imagination and art. Allusions to fairytales (Cinderella's shoes), and to mythic realms

(dragons and damsels-in-distress) all serve to distort linear time structures. A circular narrative tells a number of stories simultaneously . The story of bourgeois morality embodied in the nuclear family with its patriarchal hierarchy of power - Big Daddy and his chorus , the Men about Town, "meek" Mother Mary and Baby John - are the caricatured, cartoonesque family. He tells the story of the corrupt and sterile social "manners" of this bourgeois world - through the grotesque "bird-like masks" that society wears. The pretensions, arrogance and vanity of their behavior and psyches are exhibited and exposed in their preening and fashions. The story is told of the "sexually deviant" Baby John who is forced to live with these expectations - social pressure causes him to deny his true homosexual feelings and needs.

Gordon states that there is no presiding choreographic style in the work. Like the design and music, the choreography "jumps cheekily form one style to another (Gordon: 1994). There is no purist or "pristine" language. There are numerous allusions to other dance styles throughout the work - the gavotte, the gumboot, ballet, contemporary . Both the family and Big Daddy' chorus use pedestrian and gestural vocabularies, while mime is the mode of performance for Baby John. The Men about Town use a more athletic physical theatre - their movements are bold and strong, using fists while also obliquely alluding to sports like fencing and duels. Though more lyrical, the love duet between Baby John and Little Jimmy explores an athleticism fragmented by short gestural phrases which echo the traditional "positions" of romantic love - lying head in lap, for instance. Theatrical allusions abound - "I am not Hamlet" or "lend me your hand if your eyes be not wet", both Shakespearian sources juxtaposed out of context and hence they become comic elements. The text has a prologue and an epilogue in the tradition of many theatrical texts.

This is the dancing-masters story - a tale of treason, decadence and intrigue. It is also Gordon's personal questioning of the constructions of sexual identity in a South African society - lessons in cruelty and conformity. It questions the binary strictures set up by phallogocentric discourse that places dancing, the body, the feminine, and the homosexual within a derivative and submissive status. The fragmented narrative in the work displaces and disrupts the construction of a legitimate, coherent truth of identity for the dancing master.

Cooper Albright points to the way that traditional theories of autobiography struggle to dislodge the binary which constructs the white male body as universal and the black female body as other:

> *"the universal self transcends all racial/sexual and class differences to assume that every subjectivity is made in his image - that his readers share the privilege of not having to account for their difference ... If, as so many theorists are quick to point out, white male identity has traditionally been predicated on a psychic disembodiment, the body might just be the right place to begin to dismantle that privileged 'I'". (Albright: 1997: 135)*

Or that disenfranchised "other". For if one destabilises the binary structure, the hierarchical ordering of a prime/derivative relationship between self/other also collapses. Annette Kolodny proposes the following view on the status of the female voice in autobiography:

> *" Women internalised a picture of themselves that itself precluded the kind of self-attention that might generate autobiography". (Eakin: 1992 80)*

Perhaps this is what makes attempts at auto-biography so provocative - it is where two areas of public and private experience either collude or collide. It questions the known relation between bodily experience and cultural representation, tracing relations between body and identity. It is this resonance , this meeting of the socially inscripted body (culture) with the individually inscribed body (experience), that may question the constructions of gender and identity within dance.

At the 1998 Standard Bank National Festival of the Arts, Jeanette Ginslov presented a work called **Hinterland** (1998) for First Physical Theatre Company in the programme called Icons - Portraits. An interview with Ginslov after the work was created and performed, established my conviction that the work was in many ways an attempt to present an auto-biography. I shall briefly discuss the work as an example of a solo auto-biographical voice in South Africa.

Hinterland is a dense and powerful work that sets up a confrontational dialogue with discourses on dance, language and gender. It is at once both intensely cerebral and expressive. An examination of the programme notes indicates the range of sources that have inspired the work. These include a passionate response to J.M.Coetzee's novel, *In The Heart of the Country* and most specifically to the heroine's struggle to unearth a voice through language that is her own. Coetzee has captured the idea of this search for a true language and it is this aspect that appears to have fascinated and inspired Ginslov in her own search for a language both personal and artistic.

> *"The idea of searching for a language, a South African language that is neither White languages or ancient languages or African languages but something from the interior, a personal language and it's got to do with that landscape where that woman is ... she is in an ego-less state... a pre-verbal state ... so she's stripped down ... all she's got left is this wildness, this chaotic temperament that is passionate and it's anguished and its looking for a means to communicate truthfully". (Ginslov: 1998)*

Ginslov's vision becomes a parallel battle to communicate a personalised struggle for recognition and for a vital choreographic voice and in this sense the work becomes an autobiographical account of her experiences as a female artist working in the current South African context. A discussion of the title, Hinterland, illuminates these explorations into the personal. Hinterland is a remote area removed and isolated from mainstream activities, organisation, sophistication - it echoes a murky, out-on-the-edge terrain, an unnamed, wild, untamable place. As Ginslov argues, it also links to Coetzee's own title, In The Heart of the Country. As she suggests:

> *"It's remote places ... and with my work I sense that I've pushed myself into this Hinterland ... up against mainstream forms of dance which are still Afro-fusion, or very Graham-inspired, Limon, and not much dance theatre or issue-based theatre ... the superstructures and institutions that govern and more or less control us are not well versed in these new forms of dance that are happening ... we stand with this knowledge but we are in the Hinterland ... this sense of injustice is something that drives me always forward". (Ginslov: 1998)*

Ginslov has created a sparse yet effective theatricality for the work which coincides with 7 short chapters. The different performance modes and known dance vocabularies explored are jumbled about, deconstructed, resurrected, splintered in the attempt to find a "true language of the heart" (Coetzee: programme note).

The work begins in darkness. From this silence, the desperate, murderous whisperings and hoarse moans of a woman can be heard, punctuating the stillness. This chapter is called words. Chapters, three (*words in the paint*), four (*letters in the body*) and five (*body as medium*) form a conceptual context dealing with the themes of "communication, the medium and the message of the medium "(Programme Note).
The sixth chapter, *dance as metaphor*, begins with the woman putting on a dress, shoes, and placing onions into the dress. With deliberate confidence, the laden dress is proudly hoisted up and tantalisingly transformed through the Shostakovich score which becomes a reverie for her seductions as she tempts the audience with her bitter fruit. The sexual persona is placed on display and we are thrown into her chaos. At one point the onions are let loose onto the stage and she pursues the waltz alone. There is an elated, erotic state of transformation. Ginslov describes this:

"...when I perform it, it is the chaos inside me and all the contradictions ... this woman in the novel, in this egoless state, is marching toward with total abandon and it's so liberating and to perform it is so liberating ... breaking down preconceptions...why can't a woman roar onstage, why can't a woman break down the dictates of language which have set up by these bloody patriarchal systems and get down into this murky sludgy place that is there and its to find the vehicle". (Ginslov: 1998)

The final chapter, *action with and without reflection*. returns to a more pedestrian performance mode where the woman begins to chop the onion with a carving knife, weeping as she performs this task. Ginslov remarks on the note:

"an outside force is motivating the tears, totally without reflection and yet done with reflection when I conceived of it". (Ginslov: 1998)

The chapter returns to a poignant arena of isolation and unconsummated passion. The light fades on her frantic, desperate chopping and a voice-over echoing the initial whispering is her last resonant attempt to communicate. We are left in the murky residues of her Hinterland.

Referring to American choreographers like Bill. T. Jones and Johanna Boyce, Cooper Albright examines the audience/performer dialogue that utilises a more intimate "I".

"Claiming a voice within an art form that traditionally glorifies the mute body, these choreographers used autobiography in performance to change the dynamic of an objectifying gaze. Almost overnight, dance audiences and critics had to contend not only with verbal text in dance, but also with personal narratives that insisted, sometimes in very confrontational ways, on the political relevance of the body's experience ...". (Albright: 1997: 121 - 122)

Albright notes the way that their work expands notions of autobiography and re-organises the boundaries of the self/other dichotomy. Ginslov's work is such a provocation. It insists upon self-attention and the complex subjectivities of her experience - both of her body and of the representation of her body-as-woman.

In our most recent work, **lake ... beneath the surface** (2001), a collaboration in which Gordon and Finestone have co-choreographed , the complex subjectivity and multiple identities of the female protagonist, Arkadina, is created through the use of a double character. The work abounds with intertextual references as it is a response to Reza de Wet's play, On The Lake, itself a response to Chekov's Seagull. *Lake ... beneath the surface* is a response to both, with the character of Arkadina simultaneously played by two female performers, similar in appearance. In the scene, entitled *Arkadina's Monologues*, Arkadina appears, disheveled and tired. She looks ravaged, not the picture of a youthful, famous and beautiful actress from Moscow. The double solo attempts to depict the transformations of Arkadina from young girl to the now aging woman. In order to capture this terrifying duplicity and changeability of the body as her memories collide, the two performers evoke different aspects of her psyche - one talks and the other dances - though they do keep bleeding into and through each other's movements. Later, when her identity disintegrates and fragments even further, all five performers re-enact her nightmares in an anarchic and grotesque ritual called *Arkadina's Shadows*. All five performers re-invent Arkadina in an erotic and surreal dance of death, desire, neurosis, and dream. In this work, a complex image of subjectivity is created while any sense of a fixed and immutable truth of memory is obliterated.

Concluding Image

"Memory is the song which we sing to ourselves, a path of hieroglyphs and perfumes with which we draw nearer to ourselves" . (Barba: 1995: Chapter 6)

The choreographer transforms relationships of collective and personal history as bodily memory is translated, re-read and interpreted through processes of rehearsed transformation and the transference of sources and signs. In these creative imaginings, bodily memory is given a primary focus and attention. The translations of source - the transference of material from source to choreographer , performer to choreographer, texts to meaning - become the intriguing visage of the choreographic process. In my discussion on *Bessie's Head* (2000), *The Unspeakable Story* (1996), *The Passion of Judas* (1996) and *Lilith* (1998), I have argued that the choreographers have utilised historical source to re-interpret public narratives. The choreographic imagination has engaged with collective memory and biography to re-invest these histories with a contemporary presence. In works like *Can baby John Fit Into Big Daddy's Shoes* (1994) *Hinterland* (1998) and *Lake ... under the surface* (2001), auto-biographical memory is re-invented as the choreographers question identity and the absence of a fixed, authentic subjectivity. The delicate interface between notions of bio-graphy (the public) and auto-biography (the intimate) as an evocation of memory - the wild water of the choreographic unconscious - are part of the choreographer's collective and personal recall.

Barba's poetic image evokes the ephemeral traces memory leaves behind - like a scent, it is always disappearing. Similarly, the choreographic process, in its evolving path from concept to concert, echoes the mysterious alchemy of the dream, performing its presence in a series of disappearances.

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"FROM INSPIRATION TO CONCEPT OR CONCEPT TO INSPIRATION?"

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Prefatory Note:

The first Confluences 3 announcement stated that this conference was "a conference about the process of choreography"; this is my favorite topic! 'Process' is a word we use a lot in our field. It is straight-forward in so many endeavors, but not so in the arts. Process is elusive, it's ever-changing and intricately complex. I will leave the majority of our time for discussion because all of us will have something to contribute and I personally have far more questions to ask than answers to give. It takes me eight pages to contextualize and ask my question.

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Last year I assigned a paper to my high school seniors. I asked them to think about how dance and the other arts affect them everyday; about when they encounter art; and about the forms these encounters take. I was expecting the students to point out that music is played in hotel lobbies, elevators, and on your telephone when you are on hold. I thought they would mention the dancing on the GAP and Pepsi television commercials. It would have been perceptive for them to have listed dancing in the movies, on stage, and on television variety shows. Students could have mentioned that the clothes they wear were designed by an artist. An artist even designs the shape of the bottle that holds their favorite perfume.

Instead, I got a different paper. They were influenced, so it seems, by an experience in my dance class. I had recently assigned them a choreography assignment that I term "13 Ways of Moving". In this assignment they had to first observe the world around them -- finding non-human movement that demonstrated 13 basic (human) movements (fall, glide, twist, turn, bend, contract, extend, etc.). They were then to compose movement based on the list of movements they had observed by non-humans represented by inanimate things, machines, animals, and so forth. This was a beginning group of dance students starting to observe and experiment with some of our basic modern dance concepts.

Having this assignment still in the back of their minds, their approach to the above "Art in Your Life" paper took on a "post-modern" feel. The students wrote about the way certain people walk, and the way people stand, as being "art in their lives". Papers addressed the "artful" way leaves moved and birds flew. There was mention of the artistry behind buildings, machines, and the way a pet jumped. At first I was disappointed; I felt I had led them down the wrong path. As I thought about this further, however, I became pleased. These teenagers are seeing almost everything as "art". How can this be wrong? If they continue to look at things -- both animate and inanimate -- in this way, perhaps they will see beauty in things otherwise missed.

Helping to teach what is beautiful can also lead to understanding what is not. Furthermore, becoming more highly perceptive about what one sees, I believe, can lead to action to make change. In addition, perhaps, they will look at things, see beyond the surface, and find ways to improve the conditions of their lives and the communities in which they live. In this argument, a natural journey takes one to mending wrongs -- whatever they may be.

Am I making a jump here? Yes, of course. The above notion is a bit on the ideological edge, but I think it is worth pursuing, particularly in a community where there is unrest and dissention. I think that people -- not just professional dancers -- might engage in the creative process to find peaceful and constructive ways to mend their worlds. Modern dancers have been thinking along these lines for decades.

Two years ago I joined with a humanities teacher at the Performing Arts High School where I taught. Our classes read about, discussed, and then choreographed a dance called Flight to Freedom. We were exploring how artists from all disciplines have worked through their art form in "the cause of freedom". We wanted not only to say something, but also to make positive social change. A world devoid of creative people would be a society that stays the same from century to century. What inspires our sense of injustice when we read about a horrific murder, or see a picture of a starving child? That is easy to answer. The real question is what inspires us to make our art form speak to social issues such as injustice.

The previously mentioned assignment led me to ask my students to complete the statement "Art is . . . .". The responses were thought-provoking and ultimately led us in a direction towards understanding the 'why' of making dance. Some of their statement are strong:

- "Art is what we do with the excess of emotion".
- "Art is controversial, complicated, complex, annoying, ambiguous, and vague".
- "Art is a dramatic reflection of reality".
- "Art is an innovative piece of work inspired by someone's imagination or thoughts".
- "Art is a form of expression through various means; it depicts characteristics of life. People make art in order to express their individual views and ideas about specific situations and themes".

Understanding what art is leads to understanding why people make dance. Answering why, of course, further leads us to the topic of 'inspiration'. At this juncture, I would like to return to what amazes me the most in the choreographic process. Where are ideas born?

How do artists decide what they will write about, dance about, paint about, and compose about? When hired to choreograph something specific, I have the ability to make a fine piece. But the execution of the idea is the easy part. Giving birth to the idea is far more difficult. Sometimes the idea only emerges during the crafting of the dance itself.

There are, of course, as many ways to birth an idea as there are artists. People are inspired by nature, literature, music, paintings, current events, other people, photographs, society, religion, family, friends, other artists, history, and thoughts of the future. Even beyond deriving inspiration from the above, the artist

needs to envision a total picture in portraying the desired effect. It is this moment in the creative process that intrigues me. It goes beyond the creation of movement, in the case of choreography -- or rendering a drawing – very task-driven. Conceptualizing a mood or thought with color, props, text, movement and other accruements that help to get a thought conveyed is the epitome of creativeness for me.

The process of developing a work, or the 'creative process', as it is termed, usually encompasses finding ideas or concepts. Again, a student of mine understands the creative process and writes: "The creative process is a series of steps used to bring into existence an idea -- to make it tangible. There are multiple steps -- brainstorming, creating a "rough draft", and then fixing the flaws in the rough draft to produce a good draft -- the product of your imagination". Brainstorming starts the flow of the creative process. To paraphrase another student, the process is about taking an image only you can picture and trying to paint it so the rest of the world can see it. This is difficult because sometimes the image is intangible and very hard to represent visually – yet possible. We are still talking, however, about the creative process. It is something teachable, like writing a paper. In fact, understanding and applying the creative process to many endeavors helps to divide the tasks at hand into small steps and, therefore, make the task manageable. The creative process has great use for everyone.

Not all dance teachers teach the creative process intentionally, however. Besides my full-time teaching position, I teach at a private dance studio; I helped to form its philosophic foundation. It is not the typical United States ballet school where technique prevails as the center of focus. At this school, the creative process is taught and, when there isn't enough technique at the child's disposal to express what she wants, the student takes additional dance classes to help give her the tools she needs to meet her creative ideas. Technique, then, has a purpose beyond itself. The students' thinking, at all ages, is profound. Their ideas about movement are powerful and genuinely expressive, honest, and powerful. What we create here is a pure and open environment for expression.

Creativity is so engrained in all their beings that the 'working environment' is just that – a place to develop ideas for dance. This environment works for the students. They learn about dance composition through the use of the dance elements and through improvisational structures. The beauty of improvisation, of course, is its non-censoring aspect. Constant analysis can stifle creativity.

Artists, of course, find an internal motivation that is usually sparked by an inspiration of some sort. Clearly artists find inspiration, but an important question continues to be a barometer of success for us -- does the work made by artists inspire others? I think this question belongs in this discussion because, to get to the place whereby the artist inspires, one had to have been inspired in the first place.

However, this question regarding whether artistic work inspires others also relates to how well crafted the piece is. This rendering -- or crafting of the dance -- is influenced by the idea or concept, but is not in and of itself the conceptual idea for the dance. While the idea creates a mood or feeling that we try to convey in a medium, be it words, sound, or motion, much of our work as choreographers is to "make the dance" based on this mood or feeling. What lies between the inception and the crafting is having the notion of what feeling one wants to convey! While in the business world, one or more persons develop the ideas while another team of experts carries out the plans, in our field it is different. Remembering that the "idea person" is also the

choreographer for the most part fuses idea–finding (or inspiration) and the choreographing. It continues to be difficult to separate the 'moment-of-inspiration' (it is that mysterious place in our imagination – the inner vision – that is so elusive…..) from the entire creative process.

In the arts, we have a unique opportunity; our collaborations with the dancers, and our ideas elicit in us, during the creative process, an emerging landscape. In other words, the 'idea' evolves. What I am trying to do here is get at something beyond choreographic principles of design and reach toward that place that SEES something deeper/beyond the crafting of a good dance. What fuels the fire that ignites "the new", the unique perception that makes that choreographer's work inspire, move, and delight our sensibilities?

Artists give meaning to the simplest things. Inspiration is directly connected to a person's ability to perceive things wholly and completely; to see things beyond the surface and tread unfamiliar territories in their explorations are at the core. In the words of one of my students, "Sometimes you just need to shut the critical side of your brain off and let the not so critical side take full control."

As choreographers we start with a few things; at minimum, we have our bodies, our thoughts , and our perceptions of the world. While the choreographic process can be seen as a "craft" and, therefore, teachable, it has an inherently mysterious power as well. Some say that one can't actually teach a person to be a choreographer. I disagree with part of this because one can teach how to craft a good piece. Just as important, however, is that no one can instill the need to choreograph dances. It is this more psychological aspect of the choreographic process that is harder to define -- the mysterious part that I'd like to attempt to understand more fully (because I think this is where my answer to where ideas come from lies).

From one perspective, one might say my attempt to uncover how people conceive ideas is fruitless, but another side knows that we are always "becoming". If we can pinpoint these moments and share them together today, we may be able to shed light on this quest. I'd like to think that we can educate ourselves and others to reach more insightful places.

Before we go further, we need to differentiate between talent and skill. We talk about people being talented when they can do something very well. For most, this ability has been acquired from hard work. There are attributes that some people are born with that make a skill easier to attain, but generally the potential to be "talented" must be unearthed and skills learned. Many people believe, however, that in the arts, this is not so. The commonplace comment is, in referring to the performer, "oh, they are so talented". Yet, when one reflects about those who persevere despite their lack of given attributes, one realizes that learning is crucial. When one considers the child out of poverty who rises to be the star, one recognizes the importance of learning. In essence, learning is crtical for both skill acquisition and for discovering or refining one's innate talent.

DOCUMENT IDEAS FOR CONSIDERATION

As we all know, choreographers can be toying with an idea or movement phrase for years but it does not develop into a dance until some connection is made between one's lived experience and a current thought -- it is a moment when one sees, hears, tastes, touches or smells something that does it! How do we create an environment conducive to choreography -- including from concept to inspiration. How do we heighten the emerging artists responses to life and ultimately, art making?

One way that many artists work is through documentation. It is important to document one's ideas and little inspirations or thoughts. Documentation of this material keeps it fresh and at one's disposal. It is important for emerging artists to realize that everything is potential material. The key is learning to tune in to the "everyday". I ask students to listen and observe their world. My suggestions include talking to people, listening to people, hearing others' conversations, watching television, and reading. I also encourage the emerging artists to write down their dreams, a flippant comment, their feelings and reactions and memories. All of these notations can be kept in a journal of some kind. Write down the stray thoughts, I tell them, the meaningful moments, and the compelling movements you see. If the ideas are all kept together, ideas can then be combined. Rereading and pondering ideas can help to refine one's ideas about concepts/thoughts/images to dance about.

SPIRITUALITY – A PERSONAL THING

Artists obtain ideas from their personal experiences, both positive and negative. Inspirations are almost always random and unexpected. These inspirations can take the form of an image envisioned in the mind's eye. Inspirations vary as much as the people who have them. It is in the response that I still ponder the 'how'. It is intriguing to consider that what stimulates the creative images in one may not inspire another person at all. How the creative artist responds to an idea --their ability to bring life to a personal image--is magic! Magic is a clear metaphor. All of us can image the unreal, but few can let these images materialize.

Motivation appears to be a critical factor in the success stories – the poor child rising to the top, the persevering "untalented" person meeting with success, and the person who is blessed with innovative ideas about art making. A part of this, I believe, is about inspiration. There is a spirituality associated with inspiration. Some say that our inspirations come from our need to repair our broken world. In the beginning of time, as the story goes, the world exploded. We spend our entire lives trying to put the world back together again and trying to understand the complex puzzle of life. How do we bring into our consciousness what we should see and what we must do?

Is not this where the artist comes in? Aren't we trying to help others see what we see, what we understand to be true, beautiful, awful? Don't we see beyond reality? How do artists get to this place? Ah, we are back full circle now, to training the emerging artist to see. To be inspired, one needs to observe and see what needs further explaining or expressing. In so doing, the artist attempts to put another puzzle piece into the complex thing we call life. Though we have different perceptions and experiences in our lives and express these differently from one another, we do manage to communicate.

In fact, we learn to communicate. Can we teach students to see and perceive the world more profoundly? Can we impose inspiration or is inspiration an innate gift? The Greeks certainly thought so. According to ancient Greek mythology, beings called muses were sent to inspire people affiliated with the arts. As a result, people today often refer to any inspiration as "their muse".

The creative process begins with the need to merge our senses to fill an empty space with something we perceive as worthy of existence. "Out of that space inspiration can take form and build to a completed work of art with energy of its own. It is the process of going from formlessness to form and then communicating its uniqueness" (www.dharmaart.com). In essence, art tests the boundaries of reality by putting things that don't exist yet into the world.

It is hoped that artists will continue to get inspired and in turn, inspire others through their work. I leave this place, however, with a debatable statement: We can learn how to be inspired. After all, what does art do? Art inspires.

Questions for Discussion:

1. Can we learn to be inspired?
2. Where do you garner inspiration?
3. Do you think we can give students the ability to find ideas?

TUMBUKA IN TAFARA: MAKING DANCE FOR THE TOWNSHIPS

By Christopher Hurst

Ndati Uri Chii? (Who Are You?), was a dance piece I created for the Tumbuka Dance Company in January 1999. The work drew primarily on Shona dance and cultural vocabulary and involved a sort of dance fusion. I suggest that the binary opposition between western and traditional African dance arises from the different kinds of dance literacy within each audience and that this affects dance forms involving fusion. These new dance works can remain inaccessible to the different audiences because the highly contextualised associations with the dance material, its symbols and images, are not accessible to different audiences. This highlights debates involving dominant cultures, how the culture of the center inter-acts with the culture of the margins, and acknowledges the ethnic, cultural and socioeconomic divisions that characterize our region. I would suggest that a useful mechanism for raising challenges for the discipline of dance would be to focus more prominently on questions about for whom do we make our work and how do these audiences understand dance, rather than analyzing the nature of the product.

When Neville Campbell, then the artistic director of the company, made the invitation to me he requested that I focus my project on developing the dancers' ability to make stronger emotionally and creative connections with their work and to develop their ability to offer choreographic input to the process of making dances. Campbell's brief required me to draw on my experiences of working with township theatre groups in Zimbabwe since the mid 1980s and I realized that I would need to facilitate a process that would challenge the company in the areas that formed the basis of its current success and strength.

Tumbuka's strength lies in the technical skill and the command of a contemporary dance vocabulary acquired by the company. At the time the company comprised eight men all from township backgrounds, Gilbert Douglas, Mathias Julius, Donald Kuduma, Alois Magwenya, Shyne Phiri, Jonas Sande, Gibson Murwira, and Samson Felo. The company attracts an audience that is literate in terms of a western contemporary dance vocabulary. This audience comprises middle-class Zimbabweans and expatriates, and the company plays in venues such as the Seven Arts Theatre in Harare and outside the capital its touring venues are the small amateur theatre club's situated in the middle-class areas of provincial towns. The company's work requires the technical equipment and assets found at these kinds of venues. Discussions and interviews with the dancers revealed that the company has only once performed in at a township venue, in Mufakose. The general feeling of the company seems to be that the performance was unsatisfactory because the audience could not respond appropriately to the dance. They either did not understand the dance form or found the physical action comic or embarrassing.

Tumbuka's work has also achieved recognition in South Africa at various dance festivals and in Europe (Buckland 1994, Parade Reporter. 1996, Andrew Whaley 1998,

Hains, Susan. 1998, Sunday Standard Reporter. 1998). The company's success, measured in terms of critical appraisal and access to funding, arises from its work being validated by an audience and critics literate in western contemporary dance and recognizes the access to, and command of a dance form, achieved by a group of black dancers. Black dancers from the township, until Zimbabwe's Independence in the 1980, were excluded from participating in ballet and contemporary dance.

After independence access to the western classical and contemporary dance forms was opened up because dance training was provided to people from the townships. Zimbabwe's community theatre movement also grew rapidly in the 1980s. Martin Rohmer (1999:44), in his study of Zimbabwean theatre describes commercialism, social development and ideology as comprising three closely intertwined key-elements in Zimbabwean theatre. The community theatre in Zimbabwe drew its vitality from many sources such as: the Pungwe (all night song-and -dance political rallies) which became the medium for the dramatization of the liberation struggle (Chifunyise: 1994:55); political theatre in South Africa; and influences from the Kenyan Kamiriithu community project because the three cultural workers all fled to Zimbabwe after the center was crushed by the Kenyan government (Rohmer1999:41).

These influences have lead theatre practitioners to experiment with participation and collaboration as well as to embraced notions of hybridization. Jane Plastow (1996), in her comparative study of theatre in Ethiopia, Tanzania and Zimbabwe makes this observation:

> *[L]eading Zimbabwean playwrights have been succeeding in uniting experimental Western theatre-styles and the influences of a westernized upbringing with local traditional and revolutionary forms of art in a manner I have not seen paralleled in either of the other countries I have studied... It is, however, notable that some at least of Zimbabwe's playwrights, both black and white, are embracing their mixed cultural heritage in a positive manner rather than following the Tanzanian path and seeking what may be an elusive African purity for their art. The results of this inclusive philosophy have had considerable success, both in the printed form and on stage. (1996:251)*

The experimentation with hybridization is extended to spoken languages and Plastow notes the mixing of languages used by Amakhosi:

> *Amakhosi produces all its plays in "Ndenglish," Cont Mhalnga's term for a mixture of Ndebele and English which he says is representative of the Bulawayo "povo" - the people - and the method he was using to reach a range of audiences...(1996:176)*

These influences from the theatre supplied the working process I used to make the dance piece, with the Tumbuka company, for a high-density township audience. The process involved a collaboration using the company members' wider knowledge of performance and extended the dance-making process to include debate with and input from a high a high-density township audience.

The day before the township performances, a faction within the company attempted to stop the process because they feared performing political material about the liberation

war in the townships. As a result the performance at Mufakose was cancelled but the performance at Tafara did occur. At the Tafara performance some of the dancers brought a small group of white expatriate friends and attempted to conduct the discussion with the audience after the performance in English. The discussion was conducted in chiShona. Interviews conducted with the dancers after the project reveal that they were all very surprised and delighted by the collaboration with the audience who they felt had not only understood the dance but had offered valuable improvements and a powerful direction in which to further develop the piece.

The notion of collaborating with a township audience to create a dance work obviously held great fear for the group and has many implications. The collaboration amongst the dancers, however, proved very easy. A lot of improvisation was used with skills being shared and dance sequences being created by people with particular skills, even if they did not finally perform in those sequences. The company members had a wide range of skills Kuduma was a good traditional musician and dancer as were three other members, Felo had a strong acting background, while others had only access to the ballet and contemporary forms they had learnt in the company. I decided to use chiShona as the language medium for the performance and to embrace the notion that the dancers were total performers who would provide all the physical action, sound and music for the dance. We would create work that was not reliant on the assets and technology found in the conventional theatre spaces.

I also chose to build the dance form giving prominence to rhythmic sounds in preference to line and body shape. I further chose to search for formulaic constructions similar to Harold Scheub's (Scheub 1975:47) notion of core-images which can occur verbally, in physical actions, as objects and costumes, and as musical symbols. These symbols needed to have high levels of contextual significance for the township audiences. Scheub describes core-images as occurring in Xhosa and Zulu folk tales and constituting " a remembered image which is not in itself complete, a distillate of the full performance, expanded and fleshed out during the process of externalization." (Scheub 1975:47). I have argued elsewhere that use of core-images occurs in Zimbabwean AmaNdebele oral historical narratives (Hurst 2000: 132 - 133) and for the significance of highly contextualised symbols not only being contained in words but extending to gesture, props and costume during contemporary performances of AmaNdebele praise poetry (Hurst 1999:5 - 8).

The dance *Ndati Uri Chii*? took as its theme the following extract from a speech delivered by John Makumbi, a leading Zimbabwean political analyst.

> *So you have violence to colonize the nation, you have violence to maintain the colonial authority, you have violence to liberate Zimbabwe and you have violence to maintain the ruling ZANU PF in office (Makumbi in Spicer:1995)*

Although his remarks referred to the general election of 1995, Zimbabwe was building up to the violence that characterized the recent 2000 general elections. Makumbi's request that Zimbabweans consider the current violence in terms of the liberation history seemed powerful. The country had recently been rocked by violent demonstrations expressing frustration with the ruling ZANU PF (Zimbabwe African National Union) government (Matingo 1999:6-7). There had been food riots and stay-a-ways.

Troops had been deployed in the townships and there were expressions of dissatisfaction with Zimbabwe's involvement in the Congo war. Attempts were being made in Bulawayo to protest against the 1987 Unity accord by reviving ZAPU (Zimbabwe African Peoples Union) as ZAPU 2000. (ZAPU was the other large political organization involved in the Zimbabwe liberation war.) There were also meetings held in Bulawayo in an attempt to publicly discuss the *Gukurahundi* (the rain which washes away the chaff before the spring rains). The human rights violations that occurred during the 1980s, conducted by the Fifth Brigade, against civilians living in the Midlands and Matebeleland provinces, traditional areas of ZAPU support.

The actual choreography and working process will be more clearly demonstrated by the following video sequence. Here you will see how Shona musical rhythms informed the structure of the dance. The song *Chinungu, Rovamusoro rigoziza* (translated bellow) was used to form the rhythmic base for the whole dance. The song is a well-known song performed while suspected sellouts were publicly beaten at the *pungwes*. Here are the lyrics:

Chinungu
Porcupine (it can injure you and moves around at night - the sellout)
Rovamusoro rigoziza
Hit the head until it understands
Dzamamara dzamara taitoro Zimbabwe
Until until we take Zimbabwe back

Using improvisation the dancers remembered and recreated the slogans and the *tefa* (a dance style) used at the *pungwes*. Further improvisation using *magagada* (large leg rattles) used for a Shona traditional dance called *mande* provided further rhythmic patterns to use in relation to the song and to further emphasize the rhythm of the *tefa* dance steps. These rhythmic patterns played against the constant beat of the *duri* and *mutsvi* (large pestle and mortar used to break down grains) these utensils were used as percussion instruments for songs at the *pungwes* and are a symbol for power and destruction. Once the musical interplay of rhythms was achieved further rhythmic and visual nuance were provided by playing with language and physical displays of virtuosity created by the dancers.

This dance representation of the celebration of the *pungwe* was accompanied by the performance of slogans that marked the various stages of Zimbabwe's history from the liberation war through to the *Gukurahundi*, the current civil unrest and war in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The use of slogans was, for the company, the most controversial issue in the project and they remained very nervous about how the slogans would be received by the township audience. The use of the slogans led to an interesting debate after the performance in Tafara about whether slogans belonged to the people or ZANU PF. This discussion of authoritarian power arose because some audience members felt they did not support slogans promoting the war in the DRC or the military invasion of the townships to end the stay-a-way action.

The second video sequence demonstrates a different choreographic approach. Using Shona *mbira* singing (spiritual music) we introduced into the dance the characters of a man and a woman rising from their graves, covered in earth and carrying the broken

pots, followed by a re-enactment of their beatings. This image was drawn from the *Chewa* secret society and dance rituals called *chinyau*. It originates in Zambia and Malawi and is perpetuated by the descendants of migrant laborers living in Zimbabwe. In this particular moment from the ritual a person is portrayed returning from the grave to the village, carrying fragments of pots and covered with red earth (Yoshida 1993:45). The two dancers also wore *amahlwayi* (leg rattles worn in AmaNdebele traditional dance). The use of these images suggests that the returning spirits are 'other' to the Shona ethnic hegemony and their return from the grave also opens up the possibility of interpreting these figures as *ngozi*. In both Shona and AmaNdebele customs there is a belief in the spirit of a murdered person that seeks revenge on the guilty family by killing successive members of the family, until reparation is made (Gelfand et al 1985:31). The Tafara audience conducted a detailed discussion of these images and interpreted them as meaning *ngozi* from the liberation war and the *Gukurahundi*. The 'othering' continued into the creation of these characters dance steps. The dance steps were developed by subjecting a contemporary dance sequence to the demands of the rhythms created by the dancers' footsteps until the dancers released their concerns with line and body shape. Once the rhythmic pattern had emerged the dancers wearing *magagada* could add in the element of a rhythmic dialogue. The dance sequence enacting the beating was inspired by photographs of the public displays of corpses at rural villages by the Rhodesian Defense Force as part of its propaganda campaign during the war. This sequence was also strongly influenced by Goya's etchings of the Spanish Civil War.

The third video sequence shows how the dancers set about extending the range of movements possible in the *mande* dance form. They did this by using improvisations to establish movement patterns and then worked on ways of maintaining the rhythmic beats. They also drew on a traditional dance form called *shangara* (this dance is often likened to tap dancing).

The Tafara audiences' behaviour during the performance and in the discussion afterwards clearly revealed that they could respond to the elements used to create the dance. They described the dance as a new form but grouped the whole experience as theatre or performance rejecting the western impulse to separate performance disciplines. They offered specific suggestions to improve the performance. These included changing the costumes of the men who sang and hammered out the rhythms on the *duri* and *mutsvi* to traditional black cloth. We had costumed them in black suits and sun-glasses to represent Central Intelligence Officers as a symbol of authoritarian control. The audience felt that if their dress represented sprits, then the idea that a supernatural power drives the history forward would be introduced into the dance and the first *chimurenga* war of the 1890s could be linked with the second *chimurenga* war of the 1970s. They also suggested we include guns because they were important as weapons and symbols during the war.

The discussion with the audience generated suggestions on how we could extend or develop the dance. The audience requested that we introduce brief sequences of dialogue to provide moments of clear narrative rather than just work with symbols. A group in the audience performed a song entitled Kamunda kacho (The little field) and suggested that the dance be developed further to cover the complexities of the liber-

ation war and its effects more full. The song complains about the shortage of land. They commented that different songs were used for different situations for example there were songs for beatings and for praising. They felt that "the dance should go deeply into the events of the war because this must be remembered" and "that most people must be able to agree with what is said" (translation Owen Mashona). Their discussion ended with the audience stating that they welcomed the possibility of building and understanding dance collaboratively with the Tumbuka dancers.

The Tafara audiences' concerns about notions of truth and reaching common agreement about the dances meaning suggest that such a consensus is possible within their community. An expatriate dancer studying with the company, however, felt that the piece was very Zimbabwean and the cultural reference inaccessible to a foreign audience. The strong cultural references may well draw different responses from different ethnic and class groupings within Zimbabwe, let alone remaining merely exotic or impenetrable to a foreign audience.

The project finished with the performance in Tafara. Since the performance of *Ndati Uri Chii*?, the dancers have proceeded to choreograph new work for the company but, as a company, they have not engaged with township audience on any collaborative choreographic project. In their current form Tumbuka would require special funding for such a project and they would need a dance training that included political and social education as well as technical dance training. I cannot help but speculate about the kind of performance that might have emerged if the experiment with the Tafara audience had continued.

Richard Shechner (1991), while focussing on the cultural product, provides useful categories such as, multi-culturalism, fusion and interculturalism, to describe the interaction of cultures in performance. Rustom Bharucha (1990) discussing Eastern and Western cultural hybridization criticizes Schechner for his faith in 'universals' stating that "[Schechner's] general approach is to isolate a ritual structure of process from its particular social context and then apply it to another disparate context" (Bharucha 1990:32). He further accuses Shechner of neutralizing or changing the context or meaning of particular rituals by concentrating on the physical action. Bharucha is concerned with audiences and with the directions in which the cultural elements are moving and he suggests that they are usually flowing from East to West or from the margins to the center. Both Bharucha and the Tafara audience are concerned with the integrity of content and the meaning of the performance. These concerns have lead me to suggest that in our southern African context new solutions to practicing and making dance will emerge from working with an increased sensitivity to:

- the directions that the cultural elements are flowing in, within our own complex social structures;
- the subsequent effects this might have on meaning, cultural content and context;
- and to work with solutions that acknowledge and respond to the economic power of the different audiences.

The Tafara audience cannot support a western model of a dance company and it is therefore not surprising that, before this event, they had never had the opportunity to

collaborate with the company. This experience suggests that even dance practitioners whose work acknowledges its appeal to special audience groups might find it useful to extend their work by taking time to experimenting with notions of audience collaboration and explore how their audience understands dance, in preference to exploring issues of individualism and self-expression.

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CULTURAL IDENTITY, DIVERSITY AND MODERNITY IN EDUCATION

History as a Springboard

By Gregory Maqoma

I was born in the year 1973 at Orlando, Soweto. Soweto is undoubtedly the microcosm or the soul of South Africa. To those from the western society Soweto is simply a symbol of the black struggle for freedom in South Africa. However, to South Africans like myself, it signifies the country's main black metropolis and the centrepiece of black urban culture – a world on its own. Not far yonder stands erect the wonderful golden city, Johannesburg. I describe Johannesburg as a playground of shared energies, of hope and despair, of trials and tribulations, of joy and pain manifested by the cultures this city embodies.

My history, which is also reflective in my dance works, is very much the tale of these two unique districts.

My parents however were neither born in Soweto nor in Johannesburg. My father comes from Port Alfred in the Eastern Cape and my mother from the mountain kingdom of Lesotho. The life style in both these places is informed by a clear social ethos founded on African cultural roots where among other things racial differences was not an issue of particular concern.

Here in Johannesburg they found themselves meeting in a new environment with peculiar culture, values and norms to which they willy-nilly had to adapt. Indeed they became part of the community of Soweto where they adopted the culture, the style, the language, the music and the dance. As for dance and music they obviously could not shun.

Though it was meant to run down all cultural African values, the apartheid policy was seen by the undaunted as a challenge as well as a springboard for new and creative artistic ideas.

From most of my reading and understanding, I have realised that for generations the history of the black people in South Africa was littered with all negative nuances and innuendos that depicted a (black) society in cultural disarray. I have also realised that many other South African dance forms were created to protest against the government of the day while vividly pronouncing integration in the form of cultural diversity.

Dance Form: Marabi, which was created in the 1920's and destined to greatly influence the cultural world of black Sowetans, gave an exuberant meaning to this new urban culture. This dance form that was created by slum dwellers became more than just music and dance; it created hope and showed possibilities for racial mix. Marabi brought people together. Against this background, it must be noted that the erection of townships (Soweto) 15 to 25km southwest of Johannesburg was the segregationist government ploy to prevent further integration and racial mix.

Nonetheless, the African nationalities housed in Orlando rose against the odds and pressures to induce new social organizations (stokvels, book clubs, civil groups etc), artistic disciplines such as dance, visual arts, theatre etc. I was brought up within this cocktail. I am actually reflective of this cocktail and in fact I find my identity within this cocktail.

Politics, Culture and Modernity

There are still places in the world where political pressure prevails to define cultural identity in ethnic terms and cultural diversity in political terms. Cultural identity, however, cannot be defined in terms of race and ethnicity alone. It is a complex subject and it is complicated more by demographic factors, e.g., gender, class, age, and religious orientation, thereby creating tension between tradition and modernity.

We are currently faced with a particularly interesting and exciting world of arts. This, irrespective of problems faced by practitioners in the area of funding. Most ridiculous is the amounts to support the work of those who are lucky to be funded – if at all. Prospective arts donors must realised that arts are not just an empty entertainment vessel; arts are a domain of reality in which social and emotional conflicts can be brought out into the open and made available for public discussion. Perhaps I am beginning to sound controversial and discomforting. To ease the strain, let me admit though that I am one of the privileged few that enjoy beneficiary status at the moment. Having said so let me stress that I am aware that I am a South African male and a dancer that on its own is a phenomenon. In other words I mean it is advantageous to be black whilst on the other hand it can be awfully inconvenient.

The range of issues already spoken about constantly inspire me for it is from these tensions, confrontations, mixing of ideas and artistic forms that we create new and innovative art works.

We have freed ourselves from demanding traditional values and cultural identities, it is in this regard that traditional hierarchies are being challenged and confrontations become visible. I am the posterity of a monolithic tribe/tradition with certain norms, value systems and traditions. I do acknowledge that connection and have great respect for it. I am quite aware that I cannot be the sole representative of that indigenous tradition since it is different from what I regard as my current identity. In so saying I am trying to admit that other cultural forms and traditions have in fact affected my outlook. They have affected my outlook as much that I consistently explore the aesthetic forms and ethical values in a personal and stylistic manner or approach. I also still refer to certain aesthetical traditions, community norms and societal issues. These complex explorations continue to develop my tradition just like everybody else.

The question is, does it make me or the work that I present any less 'traditional' if I wear pointed shoes and dance to the music of Bach? If this is the case, then the word 'traditional' certainly needs to be clarified. "Culture is not only a set of symbols, values or beliefs of people, but also a response to circumstances" (Glasser S, 1990)

Our institutions need transformation in this matter. They need to change the perceptions they instil in their learners of how an artist should be or should do. Regardless of my cultural identity, it is for the same reason that you cannot just expect me or any other artist for that matter to represent a whole culture of one clearly defined community in our diverse human landscape.

Education and Arts Integration

I see arts education and participation in arts and culture as the best way of improving the welfare of the people in this country and perhaps we appropriately involve every country in the continent when we speak of African Renaissance.

If, especially young people are taught what arts are and how close arts are in tying our past to the present and how big the role they play in preparing us for the future we would all be assured of a veritable and perpetual human coexistence in our lovely South Africa. Proper knowledge and understanding of arts is therefore crucial for the sake of the disciplines, their qualities and their freedom.

It is then our duty as educators to develop a vision of the ethical and moral aspects of arts participation in its modernity and of arts education as democratic right for every school child. We will therefore embody a crucial element entailing artistic competence. Of course, we know that out there, an arts market awaits an opportunity to be attracted back to the auditoriums with authentic products. South African arts education desperately needs restructuring (if it has any given structure). Therein lies a challenge to develop an inspiring arts education programme to appeal to children from widely differing cultures. The world of art is not only guided by history but also by time, space, cross culturalism, circumstances and even technology. It is necessary that teachers are aware of developments in contemporary arts and post modernism. That means a sense of awareness in the field of arts teaching must be derived from the mentorship of a proactive national arts and culture and education ministries. With such mentorship, operators on the ground assure to produce stimulating and artistically innovative high quality work. Also at international level, talk of western, eastern, northern or southern cultures is less emphasized. These worlds continually influence each other. The four corners of the world have established a trend of cross-cultural influence where in dance education for example we have modern dance texts citing the likes of Martha Graham and Isadora Duncan (if mentioned). Unfortunately there is yet no dance literature citing renowned teaching practitioners such as Sylvia Glasser, Jackie Semela (South Africans) and Germain Acogny (the Senegalese) etc.

Today we don't only talk of modern dance, ballet, jazz, tap and African dance but we speak of neo-classism, fusion, post modernism, minimalism, contemporary African, multimedia art forms, dance theatre etc. I would say, rather than stuff young people with old outdated prescribed methods that do not even address their present circumstances, we should be preparing them for the understanding of art forms, which are explored these days.

I do not have a problem with teaching history of dance for the sake of information but I do have a problem if history is used as a tool or the only commodity to teach young

artists in an attempt to nurture their abilities. Art is imagination; it is vision and not a prescription. Such a policy demands not only patience but also a great in depth of knowledge.

When imparting artistic skills to our charges we must bear in mind that we are dealing with difference audiences whose preferences and knowledge of the arts are varied. These audiences come from different cultural backgrounds therefore we cannot generalise and just speak of 'African dance' and believe we have covered the entire spectrum. In order to reduce the myths surrounding non-western cultures and dances, we must speak of African dances with some sense of respect for other dance forms.

In my opinion new art curriculum need to be in place and must have a strong educational commitment and training that should subsequently result in the creation of job opportunities. Cultural deprivation must be eradicated and a satiable cultural environment created.

Overriding the African Formula and Stereotype

It is never an easy way out of the stereotype when it comes to African arts in general. I have learnt to say no and to be able to override the African formula.

I was given an opportunity to collaborate with the young Congolese dancer choreographer, Faustin Linyekula Ngoy. We first met in 1996 in Kenya, Nairobi while I was on tour with Moving Into Dance as a dancer. When I first met Faustin, I had a strong sense of something big coming out of our encounter; I did not know exactly what. We talked a great deal about Africa and its problems. We discussed our work in the arts in Africa and acknowledged our differences and similarities. We kept in contact by e-mail. We knew that we wanted to meet again and this time to go further than our first encounter. Well, we still did not know what exactly the conversation would be about - whether was just to get together and sit and crack a joke or two over a nice cold beer or to indulge in our successes as individuals. All we knew clearly was that we were to meet.

Finally, the meeting happened but not in my country nor Faustin's. A neutral place, Vienna in Austria was chosen for us by the Tanzwochen Wien Festival Committee. It happened when Faustin and me were asked to submit a project to be named DanceNext to mark the fifth year of DanceWeb scholarship programme. I participated in this programme in 1997 as Boyzie Cekwana's guest - Faustin went the following year. The submitted project was the only one chosen and accepted by the Committee.

Remember, August 2000 was the year when Vienna was dealing with its controversial right-wing government. In essence our participation was a political statement.

In our quest to express our true identities, we collaborated to create 'Tales Off the Mud Wall' which premiered at 2001 FNB Dance Umbrella Festival. The work focuses on silence, tolerance and honesty. It is the work that overrides the African formula that fuses mud huts, internet and globalisation. This work goes beyond expectations; it question values as artists, Africans, dancers and creators. Linyekula puts it this way,

"Why can't we be true to who we are, coming as we do from a mixture of village mud huts and the internet? Why should we remain true only to a stereotype? Being true to who we are also acknowledges the many centuries of evolving historically, culturally and political. We can't just erase that".

The world sees Africa as a war zone, ravaged by the Aids pandemic, poverty and on the other hand is seen as exotic, colourful and primitive. And I refuse to add to these other series of words that only fit the stereotype.

Just like Faustin, I can only remain true to what I am with, that is, my cellphone on my hand, a computer at my desk and put on a ballgown and still remain African. I take my role as an artist seriously even though. I am carrying a burden of trying to find a balance between my own identity and the confrontations I face in everyday life as South African. I however do find great pleasure and relief knowing that I have presented myself as I am with sincere honesty and great bravery.

'Tales Off the Mud Wall' certainly has given me satisfaction, bravery and artistic quality. It gave me identity and a truly representative of my culture and my country.

Conclusion

It is my belief that people of different backgrounds can transcend cultural barriers and create a new and dynamic culture for all South Africans. It is, in fact already happening. Young choreographers like Boyzie Cekwana, Vincent Mantsoe, Gladys Agulhas and myself are but a few artistic who are thriving on the kaleidoscopic terrain of cultural advancement – that is, in terms of dance. These are the names that you would use to express the understanding of cultural diversity and modernity.

If we can perhaps take the time and revisit marabi, place our energies and research other kinds of dance histories, we can make the invisible visible. Above all, we can create new connections, produce culturally diverse artistic talents and develop new loyal audiences.

I therefore conclude by saying that South Africa has a diverse culture and its diversity we cannot afford to remain in our little squares; it just doesn't work. We are a world as we are, so we do present the world after all.

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DESIGNIN' THE DANCE – AND DANCIN' THE DESIGN.

By Sarah Roberts

This little whirl of verbal play is more than a frivolous gesture or elegant pirouette of words. Rather, this expresses my sense of an ideal : the synthesis of indissoluble choreographic and design elements, the fusion of the dancer as a kinetic and expressive image performing with, and in, the shared visual field of a theatrical performance. In this case the design is neither a decorative illustration of the core themes of the work, nor an independent partner to the dance performing in its own designated space and confined to its own discrete functions. I intend to expand on this subject, and in doing so identify the potential dialectical dynamics in the relationship between choreography and design dancing their unseen delicate minuet from concept to concert. My perspective is informed both by my experience as a designer and by my study of visual culture as an academic.

Within the frame of the theatrical context the performer is undoubtedly the key dynamic expressive element, the choreographer's tool, but nonetheless the performer and the role performed remains only one field of activity within a medium that invites multiple artistic considerations. In semiotic terms the performance text is a dense field of signs employing several discrete codes and subcodes simultaneously – each moment is an instant of complex intermeshed languages generating meanings. An infinite number of possible statements can be made through spatial configuration and treatment, lighting, body adornment and select use of objects. As in the genre of installation art, these highly articulate expressive tools constitute an image text bringing pleasure to the eye and communicating with the viewer.

Dance theatre is primarily a visual medium – a spectacle in the true, and non-pejorative use of the word. Even in the simplest work, a design sensibility and a style can be inferred: the concern with appearance is evident, if only at the level of an empty space filled with light and the costumed performer. Removed from the architectural frame of the purpose built theatre, cross culturally, traditional dance and rituals have a clearly evolved set of specialized costume. This is without any one individual being the arbiter of the image making process. The community is the custodian of the visual tradition. Clearly in this context there is no consciously contrived design element, and neither is there a trace of an individual choreographic mark. The performance of the dance fulfils a cultural need: the celebration of social identity both in terms of observing and continuing traditions and evolving changes.

Within the parameters of purpose built performance sites, designated theatre spaces, the function of the performance, its potential range in expression, its formal capacity is arguably altogether different. As a cultural phenomenon the performance of a conceptualized new work acquires a different frame and corresponding expectations from its audience, for whom the work is perceived as new and singular, an independent textual construction, attributable to a specific writer.

I would like to suggest that the custom built stage is a "privileged space" – the term does not mean that it is inaccessible, or reserved for a select few, but it does suggest that a theatre building is a dedicated space with particular custom built resources and facilities that are best activated when they are best understood. The more sophisticated the architectural structure and its engineering, the greater the degree of specialization required to mobilize all its resources. Further, to have access to both the building and its resources (both its expertise, and engineering) is, I would assert, a privilege to be respected – because above all the theatre is a communal space, designed to serve multiple needs at any given moment. Within this frame, both literal and metaphorical, the relationship between the dance and its visual component is radically repositioned in terms of its potential, in both its function and aesthetic.

I have asserted that the theatre is a "privileged space" but this is not intended as the grounds for building a case to preserve a distinction between high art and popular culture. Nor is it my purpose to endorse any particular tradition or style of theatrical usage. I am, however, asserting that the stage is a specialized space, much the same as an operating theatre or the cockpit of a 747, where the facilities, even in the most rudimentary houses invite, if not demand (at the level of the most complex engineered spaces) informed use. Safety regulations and well entrenched routines of set up, rehearsal and run of show routines demand to be adhered to for the simple reason that they serve the best interests of both the individual production and the theatre team. Co-ordination, communication and the sense of teamwork within a system are crucial to this collaborative project.

Conventionally, no matter how many idealists might argue to the contrary, and even in the most democratic of collectives, in my experience, the theatre team remains hierarchical. Producers excepted, the director/choreographer is at the apex of that hierarchy. It is they who are the authors of the performance text – they are the individuals who define the vision of the new work, who initiate the concept, and who will inform and guide the performers in the rehearsal room.

But, in the privileged space of the theatre who creates the visual narrative? Is this ideally the ground for a virtuoso solo by the choreographer to define a singular vision in all its manifestations? or should the ethos of collective decision making, ensemble commitment entrenched at every level of policy and practice prescribe a team dedication to a coherent visual statement? Or is this the terrain of the designer, as a specialist? I have no absolute or categorical answer. All these are viable existing models and means towards realizing the concept as concert.

I have, ostensibly, a vested interest perhaps, in arguing the case for the designer, in terms of protecting an area of engagement and pleasure - but feel no compulsion to do so. Increasingly my position is that it all rather depends on the definition of the design as process and as product, and the "job description". If design is understood to be a an external corollary to the emerging work, if design is defined as the task of glorified "gofer", if design is marginal to the concerns of the production, then I do not endorse the claim that a designer is needed. A designer is as a visual artist whose exhibition space is a theatre, permanent or temporary as in the stadium or outdoor event. A designer is a conceptual thinker, not an illustrator, or interior decorator.

A designer is fundamentally a team player at the cusp of the creative developments in the rehearsal room and the logistical realities of the production facilities.

Regardless of which model is adopted, the choreographer as designer, the ensemble ethos, or the integration of a dedicated designer, it is commonplace to regard theatre as a collaborative process with all the respective parties working towards a common goal. Objectives and goals are relatively easy to define and articulate in terms of a strategy for collaboration. The implementation of this collaborative synthesis, engaging in an intimate, respectful working relationship as a necessary method is harder than it sounds. Articulating the specific vision of a new dancetext is significantly difficult whilst the work remains in the realm of the imagined, the "concept". Ironically the most sensitive phase of the work, the cautious proliferation and refinement of initial crucial ideas, coincides with the reality of forging new working relationships. I would suggest that even in the case of established partnerships between choreographer and designer, each new project brings the same hesitant start as a new concept is brought into focus. Familiarity, however, generates a situation where, nuances and half finished sentences are reasonably understood. The vital understanding of each others vision, methodology and idiosyncrasies allows for a short hand, even telepathy, based on past experiences and responses. It is potentially disastrous to rely on this alone. Verbal utterances, thought and semantics do not in themselves encapsulate the sensory experience and understanding. And even the most minutely detailed verbal description is subject to the bias of the recipient, so the synaptic gap between utterance given and the message received is a minefield of potential misunderstanding.

Communication needs to be both verbal and visual. Provisional sketches provide a more solid basis for discussion. These include a perspective drawing of the stage, a rudimentary ground plan, or a storyboard narrative of key sequences. I consider myself largely self taught in this respect: project based learning exercises at the most rudimentary level of the requirements of a model and costume designs hardly equip one for the real demands of the professional world. I learnt through scrutinizing the presentations of established designers. Models enchant and fascinate as much as they inform and describe, but it is the crucial plans, sections and technical drawings that are the real blue print of the project. These provide an objective visual articulation, a visual description of the treatment intended.

For my own part, I usually need a few days after an initial discussion before I am in any position to generate even crude working sketches. I appreciate the time to scratch down rough ideas, invariably to pursue some theme or symbol through reading, and then some time to allow these thoughts to merge. Time to reflect, to revise, to revisit my original responses. Frequently this also means time to mature a rather literal and pragmatic set of responses into a more saturated metaphoric resolution.

Even the combination of these drawings, notes and references (imagistic and verbal) can be deceptive, rendering as they must inevitably do, the three-dimensional space on a flat surface, mobile elements as suspended in time – at best the performance is reduced to a graphic comic novel. Movement pathways, areas of light and shade, the impact of particular entrances and exits are at best imagined.

Personally I depend on a great deal of interaction with the choreographer at this point, by telephone if necessary, but preferably face to face. In direct communication with a choreographer less can be monitored or censored, or carefully composed as a response. Immediate, spontaneous reactions in facial expression in physical attitude are very real clues as to which direction to follow, and which suggestions should be quietly shelved, or introduced more subliminally.

The most powerful tool, for choreographer and dancers on the one hand and for the theatre staff on the other is undoubtedly a full colour scale model, accompanied by a detailed ground plan, and full colour costume sketches with attendant line drawing details. Significantly this was a contractual obligation made of the designer by the Performing Arts Councils. In my own experience this has been replaced by the rather perfunctory letter of appointment – less satisfactory to both parties – since the expectations, rights and duties of both parties, have become distinctly obscure and confused.

(In practice, where the set and costumes are being made by a team, I ensure that the model and detailed working drawings are in place. If, however, I am going to be responsible for making the designs myself, in some instances, I take advantage of the liberation from the commitment to particular material and construction specifications and allow myself flexibility to experiment with new materials. This is a "creative space" claimed by the choreographer and director in the organic development of the work, and applies very often in equal measure to the designer. This working method is undoubtedly more viable to apply in a tightly controlled situation where the designer personally realizes the design and much harder to implement with teams of technicians responsible for delivery the goods. If I am realizing the designs myself, and effecting substitutions in materials, or discovering fresh and more exciting solutions, I will always ensure that the choreographer has detailed revised line drawings of the images we are agreed on – and try to get into the rehearsal room as often as possible.)

It may be useful at this point to outline the profile of diverse skills that accrue to a designer. These all come into play at the time of resolving the tension between the ideal visual image and the realities of the space to play in, both literally and economically. The repertoire of skills includes: a knowledge of the real costs of conventional materials, and their substitutes; a vocabulary of new, unlikely low cost materials to experiment with; a network of specialist colleagues to consult, speculate and strategize with since their insights may guide design propositions; familiarity with the yellow-pages and the industrial neighborhoods of the city; visual referencing, reading and absorbing related images, ideas and mythologies, styling identities and significant spaces; listening to the music, identifying the rhythm of the narrative. "Internal research", identification and analysis of the internal components of the proposed work complements the more ambiguous initial "external research".

This in itself all takes an enormous amount of time consciously dedicated to the specific task, and all the time, the unconscious mind is probing the same field of interests whilst the conscious self is engaged in an altogether different activity. Koestler's notion of the "bisociation" can be briefly described as the quantum leap in innovation that results from the unexpected collision of two matrices, two fields of action in a single moment: between conscious absorption and unconscious engagement with a task.

In addition to dedicated time devoted to the task of visual conceptualization, what the designer can bring to the project is a set of skills from another perspective, with a particular set of considerations as a result of either specialist training or interest. I speculate and problematize over what conceptual, referential and technical skills that a young designer needs to acquire on an annual basis. Crudely the field of study divides up into two areas: the performer, and the potential transformation of identity as a single focus, and the performers space and the particulars of the place to play in as a corresponding context.

The phenomenon of the space in which the dancer performs more often than not is the primary concern. It receives accreditation prior to the costumes on the poster and in the programme. It is customarily first on the agenda at production meetings, in terms of the set up it is prioritized… and yet it should arguably be a secondary consideration, at least secondary to the actual appearance of the performer. In *The Seven Ages of The Theatre* Richard Southern divides the performers resources into those that are primary (body, face, make-up, costume and personal props) and those that are secondary (the stage, set, lighting, sound) Alison Chitty, on a visit by artists from the National Theatre (London) pointed to the same phenomenon in a series of workshops and suggested that good set design should begin with the costumed performer in an empty model box. It is not my purpose to waste time speculating on this anomaly – the production workshops are predominantly male. The set is arguably the site of greater teamwork collaboration and specialist skill, whereas conceivably the costumes can be regarded as the concern of a more domestic skill with a sewing machine, or a propensity to shop skillfully with due regard for the apportioned sartorial budget. The question of the performer's appearance and clothing is closer to the commonsense understanding and generative abilities of any urban being of the 21st Century. Identity and appearance, the twin passions, are deeply personal, and take longer to evolve.

Despite conscious efforts to reverse the customary order of priorities, I confess that I deal with the space first. I propose that the first task is to consider the relationship between the playing space and the spectatorial point of view in the interests of interrogating whether it is appropriate to preserve the divide or not. My own thinking is so fundamentally grounded in the tenets proposed by Dr Southern in attempting to reach a define of theatrical space that encompasses diverse cultural and historical models. They underpin my approach so thoroughly that it seems essential to outline these briefly. The primary node of transition from ritual to theatrical site is the division of role and corresponding space. The theatre is distinguished by its bifurcated nature: it contains in one shared architectural volume a place for performance and a place for watching. The different configurations in different theatre models attest to a range of geometrical solutions to this single imperative.

Jean Guy Lecat, space designer to Peter Brooke at the Theatre Bouffes du Nord (Paris) has this to say in his article *A Visit to the Venice Arsenal.*

"A theatre is a complex place: the auditorium and the audience, the stage and the performance (sic) confront each other, with the prospect of sharing their energies. At the same time each of the two spaces needs to accommodate the performance on the one side and the audience on the other. Space therefore has a twofold function, to accommodate and to relate. A far too accommodating stage space risks

cramping the performance instead of projecting it towards the audience....." I suspect that the error cited here is the result of translation, but it does point to another layer of engagement and confrontation, of the proposed production and the particular venue, its dimensions and potential suitability for the staging of the particular work. Lecat's inimical subtlety is in evidence, in endorsing this fortuitous slip. As always, centrally preoccupied with the significance of the choice of the performance site itself, the specific preoccupation with the relationship between the production and the spectator.
is the locus of concern and chief criterion of selection. He outlines the need for a centre of gravity which is located in the "relationship" between the performance and its viewers. Too accomodating a space, a stage too large, effectively isolates and distances the performance within its own boundaries, diminishing its power to affect its audience. The size and geometry of the stage both contribute to the impact of performance reception.

Southern's study extends to the analysis of the relationship between architecture, production style, performance convention and audience reception. I have fun, where a work allows for this, playing with customary configurations and discovering the appropriate point of intervention and departure from customary usage, particularly in the interests of implicating the spectator in the performance. A *South African Siddhartha* with Jay Pather began with this notion. The metaphor of the road was visually suggested in the slatted blind that cut across the divide and bound the central aisle and centre line of the stage in one, continuing to travel in the vertical plane, up the cyclorama, turning back on itself as a canopy. An elusive shared pathway towards infinity was my starting point.

Integral to the definition of the parameters of the space are points of entrance and exit, even in the most rudimentary conditions these act as markers, framing devices, signaling the boundaries of the presentation. My personal preference is to try to grapple with the convention of multiple entrance/exits points created by legs or wingflats and delineate more precise thresholds. The theme of the surrounding frame and the threshold as a significant moment in a mapping of space and time is a personal preoccupation and motif.

The background to act against is too often an unconsidered support for the action, it contains and delimits the focus of the viewer, centring the attention on the performer. It serves to locate the performer in time and space, whether it is ostensibly neutral like the photographers infinity cloth, or a symbolic abstraction of light on the cyclorama, or a specifically textured two or three dimensional backdrop. Figurative, literal or metaphoric, or abstract and minimalist, the backdrop initiates a transformation from space to place. Lecat's definition of place is useful to consider: "A place is a set of concrete elements bounded by the space where life takes place and by its original purpose." Edward Casey in *Retrieving the difference between Place and Space* interrogates the significant philosophical distinction – identifying the role of the frame as a significant contextualizing and marking device. The frame provides a sense of place - it marks a distinction between the generic and unbounded potential with the essence of the specific and particular.

Considerations of style emerge more obviously here – interpretative considerations, aesthetic sensibility, and resources impact heavily on decisions made with regard to the "backdrop". The backdrop is quite literally a background against which we read the foreground of dancing subjects. An open cyclorama, washed with light is a very powerful visual statement. Gerry Coughlan, lighting designer of the Dance Umbrella for many years, describes his experience with choreographers who arrive with their dancers and settle in to a lighting session, with every intention of using lighting as their primary visual tool. Having set up one lighting state, a blue cyclorama with similar top and side lighting on the dancers centre stage, he is then required to effect a significant change. He is asked to change the state to a gold wash, which he duly does, and is greeted with murmurs of outrage that no change is visible at all, because the background is still blue. The change is there all right. The dancers are bathed in a gold wash, but the choreographer sees only the unchanged colour of the cyclorama. I think this worth recounting precisely because it demonstrates how commanding and complex the resources of the stage really are, and how the focus of the audience can travel right past the performer to features that are either extraneous or integral to the moment.

I am ambivalent about the use of video and slide projections currently in vogue – the deployment of technology is altogether less innovative than it purports to be. Too often the way in which multi media productions deploy their resources seems to suggest that appropriating the indices of popular culture and technological innovation are the only grounds for this form.

The concealed backstage areas, the wings, storage and the dressing rooms (I am still methodically following the key characteristics and features of Southern's theatrical model) are critical design considerations. At the simplest level the choice of side masking, the materials and dimensions, the angle of hanging legs, or positioning of masking flats constructs entrances and exits, and more crucially affects side lighting possibilities so loved of the lighting designer and of dance in particular. From experience I am learning to design from an empty space, deal with a sense of place and then address the side masking before even thinking of what structures might occupy the space enclosed.

From the outskirts I proceed towards centre, the floor surface – that vast empty expanse. The obvious flat user friendly dance mat surface need not remain unconsidered. In theatres where the auditorium is steeply raked, the floor itself is the surface against which we read the figure, it becomes a kind of second backrop, a tabula rasa. I have enjoyed experimenting with treated dance floors in a variety of cost effective ways. I have used old second hand ballet mats, painting in a partially buried "sacred circle" with a combination of PVA paints and self adhesive tapes in cryptic patterns (*Canto Hondo* with PJ Sabbagha) and more recently, creating a delicate light coloured desert floor out of vinyl wallpaper (*A South African Siddhartha* with Jay Pather) Securely taped down, the paper dance floor withstood the rigours of the performance far better than I dared hope. Most recently I have been through a series of experiments locating this floor treatment within an explicitly defined horizontal frame on the outer edge of the dance area. The most extreme use of this was in *Romeo and Juliet* with the Fantastic Flying Fish Dance Company.

In this case we invested in the more costly, but daring and effective option of a level of rostra parallel to the cyclorama,(in addition to a silver insulation material frame containing the side and downstage edges of the white dance mat floor) The upstage rostra incorporated a double centre unit that could truck out of position. This became, with simple additions, Juliet's bed, the sarcophagus in the crypt, the altar in Friar Lawrence's cell and walls or seating levels in the town square. On a far smaller scale in *Womantide* with Sylvia Glasser (Dance Umbrella 2000) eight small square individual boxes, with different surface treatments became building blocks to redefine the space for each movement. They became multi-purpose small scenic elements. The less specific structural elements start out as, and the more they are integrated into the dance the more rigorous attention needs to be paid to their precise appearance and structural specifications. These very often require more consultation and experimentation than the big spectacular elements that can so easily be hung on a fly bar, and barely affect the dancers at all. I try to ensure that the real structures are in the rehearsal room to "play" with through the development of the choreography to ensure maximum exploration of the objects, and their integration in the choreography.

In performance classes I have evolved a series of games and exercises titled "revelation of space/body/object" linked to "transformation of space/body/object". The objective is to encourage fresh discoveries in the way of using, perceiving and playing with what we have become overly familiar. With objects, for example, one by one performers are asked to interact with a series of everyday objects, a newspaper, a wine bottle for example. They are asked to observe each other, and not repeat the uses already demonstrated. Through this defamiliarisation task, the wine bottle (which kept four students occupied for close to two hours) variously became, on its side, a spinning top, a baby to be crooned over; a fragile indicator of balance in various ways, and obviously a storage vessel, the last few drops became ink to write with, and the bottle itself an ashtray. These exercises in transformation have developed as a result of reflecting on a maxim much quoted by the late Barney Simon, about the nature and purpose of art. The idea originates with Georges Braque who observed how, during the First World War, a bucket, a container to carry water, with holes punched in its sides becomes a brazier to carry fire. This sums up the power of art to provide a means of seeing things in a new and altered light, so that one's perceptions are forever changed. Matthew Bourne's *Swan Lake* even only on video, has changed my perception of Tschaikovsky, ballet, princes and swans forever.

But as Dr Southern so rightly points out, scenery as it is commonly understood, is a fairly recent development in the history of world theatre, emerging in Europe along with the Renaissance delight in perspective painting and trompe l'oeil illusion. This initiated the tradition of design that is rooted in the painterly spectacle to be marveled at as an ingredient physically separate from the performance which occupied a narrow shelflike portion of the downstage area. In the earliest Renaissance theatres, Sabbionetta, Farnese and Olympica, at least two thirds of the stage space was devoted to housing the elaborate mechanisms that facilitated the changing spectacle from one gloriously painted illusion to the next, while the performer was comparatively static in the foregound. This complete separation of design and the performance was conventionally understood and appreciated. Inigo Jones as masque maker and story teller has passed his heritage to Steven Spielberg.

In this century the cinematic tradition with its facility of the close up camera shot has quite literally shifted our focus to the performer, and the more difficult task of determining the appearance of the performer on the stage. It is I think a complicated and tricky set of considerations. Frequently there are may different identities to imagine, define and image. The stage design itself is rather like one single performer, with or without a whole lot of costume changes. And it has the added advantage (for the designer) of being incapable of voicing its own opinion, and seldom objects vociferously to what you do to it. It is utterly without ego, temperament and personal anxieties regarding its own appearance.

Performers are a very different proposition for both choreographer and designer. They have mobile bodies, anxieties about their limitations, an ego and a professional and personal image to maintain and sometimes protect – they are all too human. Some performers may be content to be the instruments of an overall vision and concept, as delightfully animated variations on the theme of Edward Gordon Craig's ideal ubermarionette. But this is not the norm. Increasingly the performer claims a significant role as independent creative artist, integral to developing the text and, by extension, its appearance. Experienced performers who really key into the overall concept are a joy to work with. It is usually young performers who see only themselves, and the image that they wish to project, and they cling to this with vaguely alarming tenacity. They forget the somewhat distanced point of view of the spectator. If they don't like what they see in the dressing room mirror, or if they don't personally like the cut, the colour…if too much or too little flesh is revealed, or personal taboos transgressed… the trouble begins.

First fittings are notoriously difficult. The costume usually won't fit perfectly without requiring a single adjustment, which means it neither feels comfortable, nor looks great. The garment is untrimmed, unfinished. This is unquestionably the most awkward moment for me in the whole journey from concept to concert. I too am trying to assess the appropriateness of choices made, money and time spent, and see through to the finished costume. To complicate this, the performer is understanding the costume for the first time, understanding it with the body, not seeing it as a sketch, seeing the reflected image in the mirror. The gap between swatched sketch and the garment on the body opens up. Invariably the extent to which the costume inhibits movement will be tested, while the trouser leg is too loose and the crutch still needs adjustment, and the garment pronounced unwearable and unsuitable. None of this helps the designer and wardrobe staff – who are just as anxious in this moment. I have learnt to stay firm and relatively unemotional and insist on waiting for a real assessment of what we are looking at – which can only be at the next fitting, once the alterations have been made. Until then I try to hold on to the style and cut I am aiming for. And at the second viewing I ensure that the choreographer is there to endorse the decisions or request modifications, even a total change. On rare occasions an entire costume has been scrapped, but I have only ever done this at the specific request of the choreographer, rather than ever at the individual request of the performer.

On the trajectory from concept to concert, the process devoted to the particular consideration of costumes is time consuming beyond all conceivable proportion to the garment that it produces. Research and referencing the cut, the fabric the local

emphasis and trimming details, accessories, hair and make-up. I usually work in pencil, pen and ink and present line drawings for discussion and approval. Where possible I prefer to do the sample swatching next. The combination of line drawing, detailed notes and swatching I believe provides a coherent and clear outline for a cutter and seamstress, and if I am making the costumes myself I prefer to get on with their realization rather than returning to the drawing board to colour the designs. Fabric selection and buying is an art, or at least an acquired skill in itself. I consider myself fortunate to have begun my career in a climate where I could learn from the many varied specialists, craftsmen and women in the areas of fabric buying, pattern cutting, fitting, detailing and finishing of costumes. The tricks of the trade are too numerous to detail, from antique pleating to dipping solutions of potassium pomangenate and water to age garments in varying degrees. The crucial lessons in reality, ways of allocating resources, time manpower and the budget are learnt in the company of the production wardrobe.

It is a lonely process to tackle the task alone and ill equipped. I miss the collaboration in problem solving and strategizing when I work without the support of a more experienced manufacturing team, where each meeting, each conversation means learning more about the means for realizing and improving the design. I have learnt as much about design and art, and craft, from technicians and workshop staff as I have from acknowledged artistic experts.

I acquired experience, skill and a questionable kind of confidence in a very different theatre from today. All the then well subsidized Performing Arts Council Theatres had extensive Production Service departments, and working through a number of these at the lowliest junior level was not unlike an apprenticeship in design that counterbalanced the years of academic study. The Market Theatre, although unsubsidized, stood proudly as a beacon of innovation and commitment to developing new South African works. Very quickly, from that platform, several teams of people were proudly operating in the international arena, in different languages, and having to meet local expectations both artistically and technically at a bewildering number of International avant-garde festivals and in major world theatres. Designers and technicians, handling technical riders, forming the advance party had a pivotal and recognized role to play. This scenario has changed – young students who have a talent for design that should be nurtured and developed, who should be afforded, both literally and metaphorically a space to play and learn in, are struggling to find a context in which to hone their skills.

As a young designer I worked largely with directors who had greater experience in theatre than I had, so I learnt from them. I learnt about dreams and visions. I learnt a theatrical vocabulary. I learnt about space and style in the slipstream of great men and women of the theatre. I suffered no confusion with hierarchy. I was the apprentice and learning my craft from the multiple perspectives of the different "greats" for which it was my privilege to design. And they were patient, guided me through my mistakes, explained changes and developments, so I learnt to respect the nature of organic changes. Above all I learnt about theatre, and how it moves an audience. I see performances now where the design and the performance remain two separate texts, two independent entities in a shared space, like transparent films overlaid on each other. I can only speculate as to the cause, inexperience, a lack of real understanding of the

vocabulary of the theatre, and a lack of real collaborative communication. What is necessary is the need to learn these things, they cannot be imposed, they can only be shared if the desire to learn is in place.

Over lunch one day, Jean Guy made a wry observation:

"Have you noticed how people arrive at a theatre, but they leave a play?"

The significance of this is deeply profound. An audience arrives at the theatre, it is familiar, known and identifiable, but it holds a surprise within its inner precincts. The known phenomenon of the building contains within it a "condition of possibility", an expectation of experience, of a specific performance. The playing out of that performance has the potential to mark them more deeply and profoundly than the experience of the building or the event itself, which is why the production has the potential to make the dominant imprint on their memory of the evening. It is my contention that this happens where there is a fusion of production elements in process and in product. Yeats ends his poem *Among Schoolchildren* with the lines:

O chestnut tree, great rooted blossomer,
Are you the leaf, the blossom, or the bole?
O body swayed to music, O brightening glance,
How can we know the dancer from the dance?

It may well be a human need to divide out, identify in order to know and recognize separate elements. It may be that specialized teams are dedicated to particular concerns of a production as part of the process of realizing a concept. Ultimately, however, the essential compelling force of a new work - its essence as a theatrical equivalent of Yeats' chestnut tree - is the true synthesis of its collaborative forces.

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WHERE ARE THE CONCERTS?

By Andile Sotiya

Intro:

- a short intro about myself and background into dance...

[I hope you all have read my short biography and what else is there to really say than I am home here, so be careful of what you say or you will be in trouble, I'm really from Guguletu, if you flew into Cape Town, you would have passed it on the way into town and if not there are tours there and back...So get in touch...]

- I must say I am very scared but equally honoured being here and...

[...when I was asked to take part in this conference, I said "Yes" without realising what I was putting myself into, just a way to get out of work. It won't be until I finish here today that I can maybe relax and wish I was never here. If I collapse anytime during this presentation, just simply roll me off stage and move on...I will be fine.
If you get bored, just imagine it was you standing here and now you might realise how daunting this is and if I do stumble over my words just imagine I went into a "RELEASE" mode. So just keep your thought to yourself and wish me luck and pretend all is going GREAT!]

- acknowledgement of the speeches before me and a short reflection on them

[a short improvisation on points I got from the other speakers and this is if I dare to even go there]

- Introducing my format, that...

[trying to work on a format for my presentation I opted to a one which is... to have a discussion sort of a format than me standing in front and being a preacher sort of a person as I believe what will keep us moving forward will be open discussions in which we can give views and challenge views on why things are what they are at this point and what is a way forward, not a process that I know that everyone will agree with but at least things will be out in the open and people take what they want from it. And it is great for me...]

If taking from my working title you might see that I've diverged a bit from the working title of the conference but I feel that I need to know how stable our industry here and what can we do to make it a prosperous one and the vision for it's future. As I feel that soon we will be loosing the concert halls/ theatres and in will be casinos showing live Tits and Ass on Pointe, etc, etc, etc...I do not want to be treading on something everyone knows already for just the sake of saying something and along the way making a fool of myself. I need to ask some questions to help me understand and so when someone asks me when am I coming back home, I can simply say "TO WHAT?" I've

been scared off from coming back home a couple of times, people saying coming back to what here, look State Theatre has closed, etc. I tell you it is frightening and frustrating. We have good dancers and dancers makers here...I ought to know a bit because I trained here, I've worked a bit here I have friends in the industry. I have an interest in the development of this country and we've got everything we need "almost" to make a great industry. But what is going awesomely wrong here. I now work and leave in the UK, there's not a day that passes without me wondering what we need for our industry to be as prosperous as there, I cannot look at the two places as a reflection of each other as both places are so different but similar in every way one looks at it. There are problems there too, companies are closing left, right and almost centre but there are so many more but still not enough for the number of dancers around. Here, there's almost zilch and we are losing artist as they do see the reason to stick around and now it has already started in the dance schools as students don't have much choice either. There is definitely a problem here and everyone knows it and we are just holding at what we've got which is not much either. For me it's easy to just say "I don't give sh.t as I am working overseas and so this doesn't affect me, to be honest it does and I want to see change, we've got great artists working here and a others overseas who want to come back home and do their bit too, but to what? I've been 5 years in the UK and if for once I didn't believe that there was nothing that this country can offer, and then I wouldn't be back here. If one was to do a study on the number of South African dancers/ artists gracing stages somewhere else other than here at home, one would be very surprised if it would be a surprise...

a quick reflection into the performance of Greg, Boyzie, Portia and Timothy

[I took a couple of friends to a performance at the Pucell room, which is a small theatre at the South Bank in London. I really didn't know what to expect as I didn't know much about the performance until the day. To get to the point, to start with both my friends have a dance back ground and are very critical. I was very happy when they came out of the first half both smiling and both said they were quite impressed, 'please don't ask me to go into details', I must say I was very impressed myself and I was buzzing with the audience response. I spoke to some afterwards who where surprised at the standard of dancing and the variety in styles, Yeah! Off course some where there more for traditional dancing, which is sometimes difficult to explain to people that there's quite a diverse dance scene in South Africa. My point here is that we've got a lot to offer but we have to realise it first where we come from. We've got a lot to learn and expand but we are not that far off, and yes some things will have to change too... It's time to get out of the adagio section and at least move on to petit allegro...]

what is the vision for the arts in this country..?

[looking beyond this day and the next and look more into the future building a path now. I don't really know how it works here, but this is my experience from Phoenix Dance Company... I joined Phoenix Dance in 1998; the company has been around since 1981. It has quite a colourful history and March this year we where told that the company will be closing down temporarily until sometime early next year. The closure was due to restructuring of the company, the board messed up the company and so we where paying for it, they fired the then Artistic Director without consulting the company funders or having a second plan, etc. What happened after that it's just everything when down spiral, in the midst of all this the principal funders which in this case was

Yorkshire Arts asked the company board for a company vision statement, which was to lay out where the company was going, the ideas for the future, etc. Well that was refused as one no one though it was workable, and what was disheartening was that they did not even once come to the company to see what we thought or a feed back on the statement. This is a vision the company see itself going, a way of identifying yourself in the vast market. These statements help when you are looking for funding or you are looking at partnerships as most company might have a similar goal to what you've got as a company.

They can be in a form of a:

1. **Vision and Action Plan**
2. **Core Values and Working Principles**
3. **Business Plan**

I think those companies if they haven't got one of these; they should maybe start thinking of getting one, mostly young companies. I believe we need, as an industry to start mapping what we think the future should be. There's a problem with the government not doing much, maybe this can be a way forward a business plan as a an industry, we need to lobby harder, talk louder and act harder... What is the future?]

- Off course we cannot look at things one sided as the most difficult part is looking at what our contribution to this problem is, where were we three to five years ago to be where we are today... Looking harder and taking stock. The package we had then maybe doesn't work now and we might need to repackage it. In the UK there is a lot of incorporating dance and sport and these does help with the profile of dance as most of the people who participate in the programmes are the one that would have nothing to do with dance.

- **Audience development:** this is one of the areas we really need to look at very closely and ask questions. Companies need to devise programmes for audience development. Yes, crime in our country doesn't help as people are quite reluctant in leaving their lounges and getting hijacked after an evening out in the theatre if it happens their car is still there when they come back after the show. we need to look at schemes like, hiring a bus that picks up door to door and delivers after shows, shows starting earlier,theatre schemes of maybe once or twice a week people can come to the theatre and pay what they can. For example a theatre will realise a of seats for the visiting company to distribute themselves and this is up to the company to make money out of these, the company might then advertise for people to apply a week or a couple of days in advance for the Pay What You Can Scheme/ Special which it may mean you put your name down and one can buy only one or two tickets for any one performance run, they might be a minimum of between R5-R10,etc, the possibilities are endless, anything else anyone? These are schemes that would need to be researched into, tried and tested. Other than that, marketing, which off course cost money...

- **Education Program:** this is a program that in the UK almost every company if not all, has an education program. They are as diverse and cater for different things, this is where the money is at the moment in the UK.

Everyone is in for a bit of education. There are technical advisers who design education programmes tailor made for companies and help set up these. They are link to normal school activities. For example lets say JazzArt will work with maybe a few students or pupils from Guguletu Comprehensive School and Cape Town High School and this program might take anything between 3 days and sometimes up to 6 months depending, this will be working towards a piece of up to maybe 20 minutes. So what companies do would have a show sharing with the project. The first work would be of the students and then followed by the company. What the company would have gained from this would be an audience made up of mothers, fathers, sisters, aunts and uncles, friends,etc, who came to watch their darlings perform and off course would have paid for the show. The school from where these kids are from might want to be there to cheer their chosen ones, the rest depends on how good the company's marketing machine is and the company itself. These are sometimes called residencies... What you can do with education depends on what you are offering for the future you have to be wise and with your ears on the ground, and be able to spot new trends as things do change quite fast and there's someone else who can do the same thing for less and with a bonus of maybe something better, a bit like fashion, in today and out later today... We have to change the packaging so it appeals to a lot of people and yes you will lose some but hopefully you will gain some.

Yes, I am lucky to be where I am today and believe me I know it is hard, things aren't the same but hey! but are they supposed to be, aren't we suppose to be moving forward? But have we moved anywhere? Dancers here are getting disillusioned as they feel there's nothing for them, is there someone who can tell there is? Politics have a lot to do with where this industry is at the moment, we need to set up a partnership with the government, we need to help them understand the need and the recognition of what we do. This is a new country and it needs us to nurture it. We are part of everything that made this country what it is today as we've been long an example that people can work together. We where never freak shows or side shows but that we stand on our own...

[I hope I have shared a bit of myself with you, I hope I have triggered something in you minds, I want to see this industry prosper and a lot of other things too but hopefully I will be invited to the next year's one, but we can't wait until next year we need to act now, next year should maybe be a reporting back Confluences on so far this is what was achieved, this is start of a long journey in mapping our future. I want to come back home because I believe there is a lot to be invested here, there's no place like home...]

Enough said, as I can see I'm starting to bore even the hard liners...

Thank you for listening and at least I hope I was worth your ears and attention...

Where are the Concerts?

Andile Sotiya
May 31, 2001

PHYSICAL INTELLIGENCE: THE CD-ROM - A MULTI-MEDIA VIEW OF PROCESS IN THE CHOREOGRAPHY OF THE FIRST PHYSICAL THEATRE COMPANY

BACKGROUND TO THE LECTURE DEMONSTRATION

By Calum Stevenson

"Choreography for a contemporary theatre [is] the creative confluence between ideas and action. In this context choreography does not rely exclusively on inspiration, intuition, spontaneity, luck, chance and observation of the master. It requires detailed and extensive research that draws on discursive, creative, experiential and informed modes of inquiry." (Gary Gordon, Lessons and Mirrors: steps to consider in the education of the dance maker, July 1997.)

A CONTEXT

The First Physical Theatre Company last year undertook an intensive strategic review. This review gave rise to a long-term strategy which addressed the internal needs of the company as well as the demands of the various targeted beneficiaries and markets of the company's programmes. The company's T.E.A.M. Strategy outlines the four programmes:

T echnology, Merchandise & Marketing
E ducation and Development
A rtistic Innovation
M anagement and Support

Part of the company's Technology, Merchandise & Marketing programme gave rise to a twelve month process which culminated in the launch of the CD Physical Intelligence: Part I at the Standard Bank National Arts Festival on 5 July 2001.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: FIRST PHYSICAL THEATRE COMPANY

The First Physical Theatre Company has over eight years of highly successful experience in numerous projects with national and international recognition in its various programmes under the artistic directorship of Professor Gary Gordon - leading award winning theatre artist and educator, and head of Drama, Rhodes University. Last year alone, Gary Gordon was the recipient of three prestigious awards: the Rhodes University Vice-Chancellor's Award for Distinguished Teaching, the Eastern Cape Premiere's Award for Choreographic Excellence, and an FNB Vita Special Award for his work Bessie's Head.

First Physical aims to provide a platform for collaboration between experienced and aspiring artists while developing original and novel approaches to the creating and performing of theatre. The company is known for bringing together the dynamic elements of theatre ... dance, music, mime, design, voice, song and movement ...

in an atmosphere that is provocative, exhilarating and illuminating. First Physical tours extensively throughout the country and has performed in Botswana and France.

First Physical's mission to create collaborative opportunities for young, aspiring and experienced artists has meant that in eight years the company has produced over sixty original works with six resident and visiting choreographers, and fifteen new voice choreographers - many of whom are now successfully working with their own companies. More than twenty composers, playwrights and designers have collaborated with the company and around eighty other artists. Forty invitations to festivals have added to various other engagements.

The company's focus on innovation and originality is now increasingly documented and promises to add to First Physical's growing education and development programme. Aside from a number of educational productions, the company also frequently presents work from the repertory at schools' festivals in conjunction with First Physical's workshops programmes. Adult education, creative movement and community dance classes, residencies, internships, apprenticeships, development programmes and educational publications (in print and digital formats) also form part of this important aspect of the company's work.

MULTI-MEDIA MIRRORS AND PROCESS IN THE CHOREOGRAPHY OF THE FIRST PHYSICAL THEATRE COMPANY: A DEMONSTRATION

The demonstration will take the viewer into an insightful journey through the repertory of the First Physical Theatre Company, and in particular, into the unique choreographic processes of the company in the context of themes or archetypal manifestations of the works created by the company between 1992 and 2000:

- **The Traveller**
- **The Archaeologist**
- **The Initiate**
- **The Shadow**
- **The Juggler**
- **The Lover**

Intended for use by scholars, researchers, artists, educators, and the general public, the research, development and design of the CD posed unique challenges to the team of specialists working on the project. The demonstration also offers a glimpse of the graphic, video-graphic, animated, audio and text-based resources available to the various users.

PHYSICAL INTELLIGENCE PART II: AN ANATOMICAL SKETCH

The second in a series of CDs is well into production with most of the Apre-technical and -design work completed. A glimpse of what is yet to come .....

USEFUL INFORMATION

Recommended System:

Pentium 500 PC, 64 Mb Ram, Sound Card, 8 Mb Video Ram,
Microsoft Windows 95 or higher

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