

Opening Address Confluences 11.

Dr Gerard M Samuel. CTDPS Dance. 8 September 2025

When planning for Confluences 11 began in late 2024 we were a 'world at war' or certainly at high levels of violence: Ukraine and Russia, Israel, Palestine, Gaza, in the Congo, Sudan, Haiti...

I wondered not whether a gathering as Dance and performance scholars and makers was necessary, but what such an occasion could hope to achieve. I felt determined to forge ahead, stubbornly act, in spite of the many challenges that might lie ahead, as the time for Peace making and education was now. It felt so urgent then. And yet here we are at least 9 months later, giving birth to the confluences of thoughts and feelings on this topic amidst divergent, intersectional and complex relationships.

What can it mean to 'take care' in such a brutal world where on the surface it may seem no one cares (or dare I say it) 'gives a damn!'? Images of starving and emaciated children gloss over our screens and devices ... Mothers and daughters are violated ... Can the vulnerable cry out any louder? Have we become immune to their pain and suffering of others?

You are evidence that we have not!

Welcome dear delegates of Confluences 11: Dancing Care, Community and Peace Education. We are testament and the embodiment of concerned global citizens even at a time when belonging to a group can mean being attacked for one's belief and action.

Over the next 2 days , we have the privilege to pause, and reflect on our praxis in and through the arts which opens and cauterises the social wounds that puncture lives, human, animal and climate.

This conference attempts a redemption of the archival object Andres explores treasure of the Kirby and Bleeker Collection, and invites us to rethink sociohistoric roles, lost and sometimes forgotten like instruments. This hauntology instantiates a reframing of present realities. Tributes have poured in over some of South Africa's pioneers like David April which might illicit a response - is our remembering of their lives enough or should we pick up the mantle to continue their legacies as acts of further resistance? Our research work in Dance is unbundling opaque features of fields we thought we already knew? For example what role have Jewish women played in the formation and scope that is Contemporary Dance in SA and why is it important to critique?

Moreover, our Brazilian colleagues begin to ask us what is the conscious and unspoken roles we all play in the shaping of fragile lives of toddlers, babies and young children? And what is its proximity to notions of Nature, implications and forces of climate? How does these questions find pathways and practices into our classrooms is a perennial 'pop up' for many gathered here (especially stalwarts like Friedman?)

We will hear from our students, in posters and social media interactions with us. Follow their insta and other accounts as these float virtually around us in the next few days. From the lived experiences of institutions across the country – from spaces like community based organisation such as Dance for All, Jazzart's Training programme, from schools and academies in Kimberley, Bloemfontein, Johannesburg Durban and Cape Town. And representatives of the Western Cape Education Department.

From further afield, we welcome our French and Portuguese speaking colleagues. We trust you will have an enriching experience as we learn from your wisdom of peace building. I invite you in the words of poet Sabhir Bhanoobhai 'to drink deeply the blood of roses' to courageously express your journeys of peace education with us, your community of 'choreo-activists'.

This conference gives us a smorgasbord and opportunity to indulge in questions of humanity, of bruised and emerging identities. We are grateful to all the performing companies: SboNdaba and her dancers, Nateshwar Dance Academy, to Desire Davids and her company, Pascal (Beroujon) and Benoit and to her sponsors who have made it possible for you (Desire) to present your gift, finally, at your alma mater. Bienvenue!

To Sara Matchett and Nina Callaghan, we welcome you both and your artistic team. The sombre title of your work *An apprenticeship of Sorrow*, I am sure belies the pathos and tremor of a fine artistic, and personal offering. Thank you for being here.

As we begin this conference, I respectfully acknowledge the University of Cape Town, colleagues from other Departments, staff and students of the CTDPS, you are warmly welcome to our familiar space.

In conclusion, what we do now will, in the words of Hannah Kosstrin be the "kinaesthetic trail"(of our not so quiet revolution), a "residue that informs contemporary contexts" (2017, 233) I extend gratitude to all may you dance with care, in community and sow multiple seeds of peace, not peas, though we need those too.