CONVERSATIONS
ACROSS THE FIELD OF
DANCE STUDIES

Talking Black Dance: Inside Out / Outside In

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Cover photograph: Dancing For Justice, December 13, 2014, Philadelphia PA, courtesy of Aidan Un.

A Word from the Guest Editors

Dear Reader,

This special edition of Conversations Across the Field of Dance Studies grows from exchanges inspired by the Collegium for African Diaspora Dance (CADD) conference Dancing the African Diaspora: Theories of Black Performance held at Duke University February 7–9, 2014. That event grew from a meeting convened in April 2012, when the founding members of CADD— then called the African Dance Research Group—convened in Durham, sponsored by SLIPPAGE: Performance|Culture|Technology, to discuss current research projects and share ambitions for developing a group of scholars working in the areas of African diaspora dance. We envisioned a space where our work in corporeality studies, Black Dance, sexualities and dance, dance historiography, dance and healing, dance and pedagogy, the businesses of dance, and an array of other related topics could benefit from our collective engagement.

The Collegium for African Diaspora Dance began the next year, conceived as an egalitarian community of scholars and artists committed to exploring, promoting, and engaging African diaspora dance as a resource and method of aesthetic identity. Through conferences, roundtables, publications, and public events, we aim to facilitate interdisciplinary inquiry that captures the variety of topics, approaches, and methods that might constitute Black Dance Studies. A diverse gathering of dance scholars and community members, CADD produced a second conference February 19–21, 2016. The founding members of CADD are Thomas F. DeFrantz, Takiyah Nur Amin, Raquel Monroe, Andrea E. Woods Valdés, Makeda Thomas, C. Kemal Nance, Jasmine Johnson, John Perpener, Carl Paris, Ava LaVonne Vinesett, Shireen Dickson, and Will Rawls.

The 2014 conference has already produced a special issue of The Black Scholar titled Black Moves: New Research in Black Dance Studies (46.1, 2016) edited by DeFrantz and Tara Aisha Willis. The essays gathered here in this Conversations issue include adaptations of other presentations from the 2014 conference, augmented by contributions made in response to a call for participation issued on our behalf by SDHS. We note the rich diversity of materials included here: ethnography and interview; movement description and cultural analyses; poetry and phenomenological assessments of dance activism. The contributors come from a variety of relationships to dance scholarship. Some are artists first, some are researchers; some are senior faculty, while others are junior faculty, working as adjunct faculty, or in post-doc positions. We have allowed the wide variety of approaches and experience to lead the essays forward; they shimmer with unexpected heterogeneity and creative impulse.

As editors, we have separated the pieces into two parts: Black Dance: Inside Out and Black Dance: Outside In. We mean for these sections to suggest different sorts of primary relationship to Black dance as a field. In some ways, we've imagined poles of attraction around those of us "born into" modes of Black dance practice who continue to work as artists and researchers, and those of us who "discover" Black dance at some point to realize its prodigious capacities, and then go on to document and relate that information to others. Our separation along these axes is entirely speculative, and we intend to suggest a variety of approaches to curating literary work concerned with performance.

Our thanks to SDHS Editorial Board and especially Sarah Davies Cordova for her prodding and oversight. Sanja Andus L'Hotellier provided expert editorial guidance, aided by Rebecca Rossen, SDHS Editorial Board Chair. Dasha Chapman has worked with us on the details with vigor and care. Sally Kornbluth, Provost of Duke University, has supported this project, as has SLIPPAGE: Performance|Culture|Technology, directed by Thomas F. DeFrantz. Black Dance: AXE!

Thomas F. DeFrantz & Takiyah Nur Amin

Talking Black Dance: Inside Out

Talking Black Dance

Thomas F. DeFrantz & Takiyah Nur Amin

TD: Let's talk Black Dance. I was trained at a time when we said "African American dance" to be particular, polite, and progressive, so we thought. But now, in the 21st century, Black dance is back. Why do you think, and what sorts of language do you use to describe dances of the diaspora?

TA: This is a really important and provocative question. I think that "BLACK is BACK" because there is less of a concern to be polite or progressive. To whom do we owe such courtesies in the shaping and sharing of our work? I know I've seen scholars refuse to use BLACK in mixed company because they don't want to make white folks uncomfortable, but generally, the comfort of white people takes a back seat to the work needed to decolonize and push the field forward. Moreover, I think "BLACK is BACK" because we are increasingly making connections to aesthetic and philosophical ties across the diaspora—the specificity of African American dance is perhaps less important than this. I generally use BLACK when I am talking about people of African descent across the diaspora and then try as much as possible to be specific when talking about any specific movement vocabulary.

TD: That aligns with my sense of 21st century Black politics even as they work through our field of dance and dance studies. As we have more reliable information from different communities about dance and its circulations, we can understand those geographically-specific African American forms in relation to dancing in other places: the Caribbean, on the continent, in Scandinavia. BLACK asserts these affinities and simultaneously moves the US out of the center of the discussion. Even as we create sites of research within the United States, an elaborate and robust community of artists and researchers forms in other places where we also live.

We've both been involved in leadership for the field of dance as board members of CORD and SDHS. And yet, we have formed CADD. Why? What does CADD do that those organizations can't or don't?

TA: YES—I have enjoyed my experiences presenting at SDHS and CORD over the years and serving in leadership has been instructive and humbling for me. But the thing is, neither of those organizations center a commitment to the study of African Diasporic Dance. As a scholar who is committed to carving out this emerging subfield of Black Dance Studies, CADD gives me a space to have critical conversations over several days as opposed to jamming them into a few panels at one of the more mainstream conferences. Moreover it can't be overlooked that while white folks come to CADD and anyone of good will is welcome, CADD is a decidedly Black space. By that I mean,

CADD 2014. Photo by Alec Himwich.

we privilege our own sense of professionalism, community, aesthetics, performance and scholarship without explanation or apology. For so many in the field who may be the only one on their university campus doing this work, CADD is a safe, warm, rigorous, critical space to do our work.

TD: Well, this might be one wage—or cost—of the peculiar economies of social disavowal that leads to our need for these Black spaces. None of our lives as Black people comes without a high price that we pay daily; maybe CADD suggests a different economy of Black thought that needn't be circumscribed by the desires of others. You put it so well: CADD does work by, about, and for Black expression. I cringe when well-meaning dance researchers still say "non-Western" dance, thereby stabilizing white supremacy yet again. Black dance may be a subfield as you suggest, but it is a huge and diverse area of inquiry that surely deserves its own methodologies and points of entry. So "good on us," as my Australian best friend likes to say, for working to make space that operates differently with a purpose, and still (obviously) in relationship to those other spaces of dance research.

What do you see happening in the field that surprises you around Black dance? What's happening that keeps you animated and enlivened?

TA: I have been genuinely surprised by the sheer number of folks who are doing this work and who really care about it. All too often, I have felt really alone in my scholarly preoccupations; so to see all these other artists and scholars with similar interests and questions is a deep and beautiful surprise! This reality breathes life into me when I am navigating challenges in and to my work. I am animated and enlivened most by the possibility that the work we are doing in CADD and with our publication projects will ensure that the dance studies of the future will look and be very different than the white-dominated content I know many of us had to master to get to where we are professionally today.

TD: That makes sense: the world of dance studies can feel white-dominated—because it actually is—until we figure out how to flip that script, no matter how fleetingly. But when I turn to colleagues and artists in Black dance, I, too, am reminded of how broad and deep the work arrives, and how many diverse risks researchers are taking to enliven the field. Our creative practices won't be contained by a single chapter in a book; we won't be a footnote or an "alternative" rendering of dance history. It's as though we've started believing that our histories of achievement—the Mary Bruce Academy of Dance in Harlem, for example—actually matter to how we understand what we're doing now, today, in the halls of Juilliard or Fayetteville State or Spelman College. It isn't all about whatever performance at the 92nd Street Y or the New Dance Group in New York; it's also what's happening in Port au Prince, or Baltimore, or Oakland.

Our 2016 conference was concerned with the Afrofuture. What do you look forward to, or hope for, or think is inevitable in terms of Black dance futures?

TA: My hope—and I think the writing is on the wall with this—is that curriculums in dance across higher education will change. They have

CADD 2016. Photo by Michael Anthony Williams.

to, because scholars are pushing the boundary every day around how Black dance content is taught and engaged. And I'm not talking about diversity here—you can have a diverse curriculum that is still racist and that insulates whiteness as a curricular force and organizing principle. So for me, the Afrofuture will bring us a decentering of Europeanist aesthetics, practices, philosophies and priorities in favor of an egalitarian approach to what counts as proficiency in the field. This will have striking implications for our most basic practices including auditions, concerts and the like—but the future demands this change.

TA: At the first CADD conference we had about 100 people and at the second convening, the size of the registration list almost doubled. What do you think accounted for this? What has surprised you most about the response that folks have had to CADD?

TD: You already mentioned this, but the fact of so many people doing this urgent work and looking for a venue that "feels right" to present this work. It makes a huge difference to have kindred spirits around the material; to not have to explain Zora Neale Hurston or James Baldwin in relationship to the creative practices of dance; to not have to explain what an orisha might be for their devotees. Far too often, in other contexts, black expressive culture needs to be translated at the base level of its spectacular invention. CADD hopes to open a space that begins the conversation from black bodies in urgent motion: politicized, sexualized, aestheticized; learning and yearning, grooving and going deep. We've learned that yes, there are many researchers and artists already invested in these varied modes of discourse, and others curious to join into the explorations.

TA: Isn't that amazing? One thing that I think folks in dance studies who aren't Black don't often realize is the ways in which most of us have had to master the history and aesthetics of whiteness in order to get the level of credibility that even allows us into the spaces to do the kind of artistic and intellectual work around Black dance that we are doing now. There is no penalty in our society for not knowing the intimacies and intricacies of Black history or expressive culture in the way there are exacting penalties if you cannot satisfy white aesthetics and demonstrate proficiency in the narratives. I think folks assume that if you are doing the Black thing you don't know anything else or that it's less rigorous somehow if you are also a person of color doing the work. It's as if our knowledge somehow magically arrives at birth and we don't work at the contours of our art and scholarship. Nothing could be further from the truth which is why being in a space like CADD which doesn't require that we make ourselves legible to the mainstream or over explain terms, histories and contexts that are familiar to us is like entering a kind of artistic and intellectual utopia for a few days.

You've been at this work in the academy longer than I have and I wonder what do you say to emerging scholars endeavoring to write about Black Dance? How do we craft careers as dedicated public scholars and engaged artists in a way that centers this work?

TD: Such a terrific provocation. I answer exactly as you ask: begin by centering the work! Let Black dance enjoy its ontological status as a foundational mode of creative possibility. For too long our dance history has privileged white individuality with Asian, Latinx, Native, and African diaspora "add-ons." We are not alternative people, with alternative forms of movement; we are our own structures, devices, approaches, strategies. We also study Asian American inventiveness and Native American forms; these help us specify Black dance in its variety. But we believe in Black dance as an answer to Black life, rather than as some sort of detour for white histories of individual dance artistry. We work together to acknowledge what has already long been in motion.

TA: Centering the work, then, is not only foundational but ethical. This clarion call you laid out here requires an ethic of care and rigor and serious engagement with these histories and legacies we pull forward. This is not light work or something to be played with, and it is bringing together folks with deep and serious commitments around the full expression of Black life.

What's the role of community-based artists in the conversations and publishing projects we are working on?

TD: Recently, I've been involved in conversations about "professional" dance or "community" artistry, and these terms confuse me. I don't know what either of those are, or rather, how those sorts of designations might be useful. Black dance emerges to create and subvert/stabilize relationships. Whether money is exchanged (would that make it professional?) or someone's cousin is doing the dancing (would that make it community?), the relationship and its variations are what matter. Yes, a Black ballerina creates a different sort of relationship to her Black audience than a Black krumper might. But the relationship and the dance emerge whether they are termed professional, amateur, organic, or community. So I will continue to be vigilantly confused by the need for these classifications and hierarchies. Even as we want to categorize its genesis and possibility, the dance will not be denied.

TA: Hmmm. This is helpful. I ask because I think some folks wonder about who is welcome in the spaces we create to publish, teach, share and convene. I wonder if situating our work within the university makes people think it's only for certain people and how we navigate that.

TD: Right, well this issue of Conversations, for example, is a publication of SDHS and won't be automatically available to anyone who wants it; they will have to find a library or a person who is a member of the organization in order to access the publication. This is part of the neoliberal education complex, of course, that seeks to separate us by axes of access. But again, the dancing is the thing, I think, and how we work to share its possibilities allows relationships to form, fragment, and re-form thought and action.

TA: What is the single most important change to scholarly thinking about Black dance that you've seen in the last decade or so?

TD: Diversity of approach and contents. Hopefully, we reflect this in these pages. Thinking about beacons of creativity and event–Katherine Dunham and the Ailey tribute to her; Black dance and social justice; approaches to studying dance on the African continent, and the representational labor that Africans endure as dance artists; teaching across geographies; being a Black artist in Finland; creating queer hip hop in Haiti; and on and on. The change is in capacity and capaciousness. We are no longer a "maybe" or a "baby," to reference Hortense Spillers; we are emerging in shared consciousness across difference. And always DancingWhileBlack, thank you Paloma and Patricia McGregor!

TA: Ha! Amen to that! There is enough diversity in Black expressive culture to keep us busy and engaged thoughtfully for lifetimes. It is for this that I am most grateful for the generative realities of Black life and that I am among those called to engage it! Let's go—work to do!

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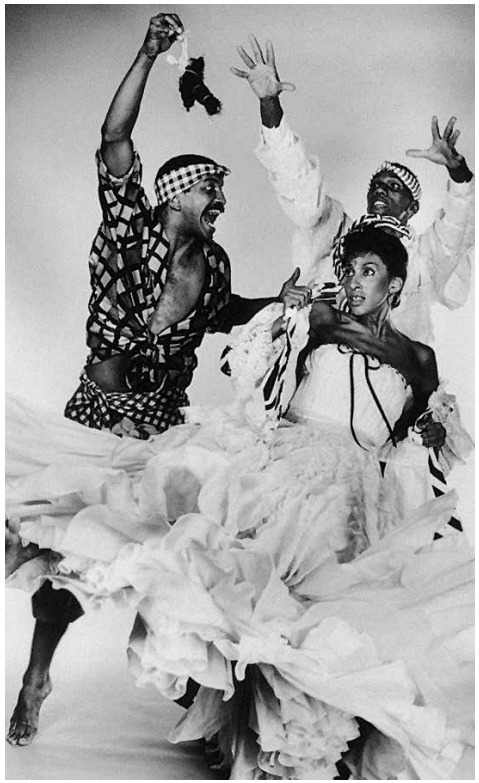
Legacy, Evolution, and Transcendence in "The Magic of Katherine Dunham"

Joshua Legg & April Berry

Alvin Ailey was fifteen when he first saw Katherine Dunham's company perform at L.A.'s Biltmore Theatre. He was instantly enthralled, and ended up seeing the company eight times in its three-week run. Later, he would write that, "I was thrilled by the magic of Katherine Dunham," and that seeing the company was "a transcendent experience" (Ailey and Bailey 1995, 40–1). Throughout his career, Ailey carried a deep respect for Dunham's pioneering work as an anthropologist-choreographer, and an appreciation for the doors she helped open specifically for African Americans who were drawn to dance. That appreciation became evident in Ailey's incorporation of her technique into his own choreography and into the training offered at his school. Dunham retired from the stage and disbanded her company by the late 1960s. Near the end of his life, Ailey set out to present an evening-length production of Dunham's work that would—at once—serve as homage to the icon that had so inspired his own work, as it also introduced Dunham's work to a new audience for the first time in a generation.

In 1987, the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater mounted "The Magic of Katherine Dunham"—a concert retrospective of Dunham's choreography. The production was among the most ambitious projects Ailey had ever undertaken. The premiere was preceded by six weeks of rehearsal. Dunham herself oversaw the reconstruction and staging of her work on the Ailey dancers. An outstanding group of her own former company members assisted in the reconstruction process, including Vanoye Aikens, Lucille Ellis, Tommy Gomez, Glory Van Scott and Julie Belafonte.



Ailey Company dancers April Berry, Gary DeLoatch (foreground), and Rodney Nugent (background) in L' Ag Ya, 1987. Photo by Jack Mitchell, used by permission of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater.

The production was also among the most costly that Ailey had ever envisioned. It ran in the Ailey company repertory for three years, and while Dunham's work presented challenges for the dancers, ultimately, the evening-length retrospective was well-received by dance critics. Following the production's final performance in 1989, Anna Kisselgoff said in *The New York Times*:

> One of Alvin Ailey's most inspired ideas was "The Magic of Katherine Dunham"…[The company] first presented this evening of revivals in 1987 with great success. Yet it was also true that the company's contemporary style was initially at odds with the uninhibited Dunham revue flavor of the 1930s and 1940s. The return of these reconstructed Dunham dances on Friday night showed how impressively the Ailey dancers have now settled into the Dunham aesthetic… (Kisselgoff 1989)

In the following interview, former Ailey principal dancer April Berry shares some of her experiences working on this production. As will become clear, Dunham, who was 78-years-old at the time, was not satisfied resting on her laurels. On the contrary, she took the opportunity to revitalize certain elements of her choreography and her technique during the rehearsal process. Additionally, Berry talks about the personal impact of working with Dunham, and the relationship that developed between them, lasting until Dunham's death in 2006.

JL: Let's begin with a bit of background on "The Magic of Katherine Dunham" as a production. How was it different from a typical Ailey production?

AB: It was a three-hour evening, and that's not traditionally the performance length of an Ailey company concert. It was set in three distinct acts. The show opened with a demonstration of Dunham Technique by the company. The first act, *Afrique*, was a blend of African, Cuban, and South American works introducing constructs of Africanist aesthetics. The second act focused on *L'Ag'Ya*, the Martiniquan ballet that Miss Dunham was very close to. It was one of her signature works. The last act of the evening was the *Americana Suite*. That was all the plantation dances, the cakewalk, and the blues. She wanted us, and the audience, to experience the different tentacles that her work had—and, how the creative work informed the technique

JL: Miss Dunham brought some of her former dancers to help restage her dances, and she made a point to be there herself. Tell us about that.

AB: Miss Dunham oversaw the entire process. She was at every technique class, every rehearsal, and each performance. There wasn't one day that I did not see her there. There were Ailey company dancers that didn't come every day, but she did. Alvin didn't even come every day. She was that protective of that company evening. Here, Miss Dunham began making changes in her technique. It's where she began to revise and recreate the technique. Before the late 1980s the technique was in a different place. When Miss Dunham came each day, she gave us classes in Dunham technique before rehearsal. She was recreating the technique as she was teaching us. She was working with dancers who were different from the dancers she'd worked with in the past; and, she wanted to see the dances that were being reconstructed done a particular way.

For instance, I danced Loulouse in *L'Ag Ya*. This role had only been danced before by Miss Dunham and Julie Belafonte. As we were working, she constructed steps on me that she and Julie hadn't done because I was a different dancer. Where she might have done a 45-degree arabesque, she wanted me to do a 90-degree arabesque and hold it on relevé because she wanted to extend the line. That's what I loved about her. She wasn't about, "This is what I did in 1937," but she would say, "Let me see this on you." Miss Dunham talked about the essence of the character, and said, "Let's see where we can take this now with your dance skills." Even the carriage of the hands has morphed over the years. In the 1980s, there wasn't a slightly cupped hand, as there is now.

She reconstructed her technique then so that it would inform the way we performed the works for that evening. I really think that was the beginning of the formation of where the technique is today. The 2004 video that she approved shows Ailey School students and some certified Dunham master teachers demonstrating the technique. (See Carter video, 2004). This again illustrates that she enjoyed bringing together some segments of other generations of Dunham-trained dancers and Ailey-trained dancers. She started that with my generation because we learned the dances from former Dunham company members. So, she arranged for each generation to inform one another. We always had conversations on various topics before we moved.

Miss Dunham was very savvy. She didn't just bring in one former Dunham dancer to work with us; she invited several former Dunham dancers/teachers into rehearsals just as she did on the technique video. She did this in a very methodical way so that information was transferred back and forth across generations. **[Legg:** In addition to Dunham's former company members, she asked Michael Green to assist in rehearsals; he worked with her in East St. Louis through the Performing Arts Training Center.**]** To the older teachers, she said, "Here, look at where my technique is going, and look at what these dancing bodies can do." She wanted the technique to remain relevant so that it could be taught around the world in many different venues—in concert dance studios, academic settings, and community centers. Many of the movements have changed over the years in different ways.

JL: So, we're talking about this concept that there are four generations of the Dunham technique.

AB: Yes, and we may be working on a fifth generation. Certified Dunham teachers draw from their background and training to keep the technique fluid, which Miss Dunham wanted. My perception is that Miss Dunham didn't want the technique to be static—this wasn't her philosophy for moving forward. Students raise questions like, "Is it a world dance technique or is it a modern dance technique? Is it a Caribbean or an American technique?"

JL: Is it a world dance technique?

AB: Well, from my experience I believe that Miss Dunham might say that it is a world dance technique. However, some people view it as an American dance technique. But again, this depends on who you study with and what they bring from their background and training. I teach it as an important American modern dance technique, rooted in Black culture. And, I've talked to people in Senegal who refer to Dunham technique as "our African ballet." When I was in Cuba, they called it a "contemporary" dance technique. Everybody has a different perspective—it just depends on where you are in the world. Miss Dunham worked with us at Ailey as modern dancers with strong ballet backgrounds.

JL: You've mentioned in other conversations we've had how important this experience of working with Miss Dunham was for you personally. Why was it important and how was it perhaps different than what other Ailey dancers may have experienced with her?

Katherine Dunham in L' Ag Ya, c. 1938, Library of Congress Collection.
Photo used by permission of Marie-Christine Dunham Pratt.

AB: I had a unique experience that most of my colleagues did not have before, during, and after that production. I am of Caribbean heritage—my mother's from Jamaica, W.I.—and Miss Dunham tapped right into that and urged me to explore my Caribbean heritage. That opened up another side of me in terms of learning more about my Caribbean family. And she opened me up to life lessons. When my mother passed away right before rehearsals began, Dunham talked about the cycle of life, death, and rebirth. There were so many conversations held, in and out of the studio, and she opened my eyes to another way of life quite honestly. She became my "artistic mother." So, when they call it [Dunham technique] "a way of life", it truly is. I am the only Ailey dancer to continue working with Miss Dunham after the production and to be certified in the technique. **[Legg:** Dunham personally certified Berry as a master teacher via The Katherine Dunham School of Arts and Research, and she is one of five master teachers in the world**]**. My later experiences with Dunham were as rich as when I was working with her on the production. Dunham resonated with me. It was the spiritual and intellectual conversation, the womanist and the global conversation—it intrigued me at every level. It helped shaped me personally and professionally.

JL: That transcendent part of Dunham's nature, which Ailey saw and Berry experienced first-hand, remains active in the philosophy of her technique, and is part of what keeps the technique relevant in today's dance world. While this article provides a brief look at an historical production, it is a cursory examination at best. Further scholarly examination of the impact of Dunham on American modern dance and the Ailey Company is warranted, as is a deeper look at the complexity of Dunham's technique and its evolution. "The Magic of Katherine Dunham" also provides other avenues for scholarly inquiry such as age and creativity, and racial and cultural bias in artistic criticism, among others.

Further, it is also important that scholars examine Dunham's pioneering contributions to American dance theater. Dunham spoke directly about her motivations for developing her technique, saying that, "…to capture the meaning in the culture and life of the people, I felt I had to take something directly from the people and develop that" (Carter and Risner 2002). In doing so, she created the genre of performance ethnography, which informed works like *L'Ag Ya* and *Shango*, adaptations of traditional stories and rituals that she encountered in the Caribbean. Those processes and ethnographic/artistic practices, in turn, were a direct influence on the creation of her works dealing with the African American landscape. Dances like *Southland* were dramatic adaptations of all-too-real experiences in the daily lives of the people here in Dunham's own country. Both sets of dance theater (ethnographic and American) privileged the voices of marginalized people and carved a space for diasporic narratives on concert dance stages around the world. In the process, Dunham expanded the holistic nature of dance theater, and left a legacy in the art form to which companies like Ailey's are the artistic heirs.

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Embodied Scholarship: Katherine Dunham Modeling the Retrieval and Transformation of African Ritual Dance

Neith S. Sankofa

Katherine Dunham is possibly best known for her impact on modern dance through the creation of the Dunham Technique. What may be less known is that Ms. Dunham created the technique as a direct result of her anthropological work in Haiti in the 1930s and her initiation into the Rada-Dahomey Vodun tradition.[1] Dunham's goal was to study African-derived dance forms, and to also gain an understanding of a part of ancestral culture through dance. The impact of her embodied study resulted in a ritually-centered dance form, the Dunham Technique, which merged African ritual with modern dance. Throughout her career, Dunham carried out the intention to embed rituals in her technique to affect the conditions of dance. This essay will outline the ritual elements Dunham used in the creation of the technique, and the relationship between African dance and ritual in theatrical performance. It will also highlight Dunham's use of *ritual intent* and the impact of importing ritual for communities, thereby pointing out the ways in which her work may be a useful model to view potential relationships between similarly derived dance forms, ritual, and communal transformation.

Dunham's published scholarship offers several key theories about how dance relates to the religious and secular lives of people. She defined dance as a "rhythmic motion singly or in a group" for any of the following reasons; 1) play, 2) release and building of emotional and physical tension, 3) establishment of social cohesion or solidarity and/or 4) exhibition of skill (Dunham 2005, 510). Dunham believed that the ritual dances of the Vodun arrived in reasons 2 and/or 3 for their societies. She went on to develop a classification system for Haitian Vodun dances that helped her to determine how they would be used in her future technique and choreography. Dunham identified five categories for Haitian ritual dances (2005, 513):

1. Their social significance in the community
2. Their material aspects (drums, clothing symbols, etc)
3. Their form, both in choreographic development and in body emphasis
4. Their function, sociological and psychological
5. Their organization, from loose-knit carnival band to the highly organized Vodun ceremony

Dunham's categorization of Haitian dances offers information about how she viewed their function, and foreshadows the ways in which she would later use them. Dunham primarily drew upon the form, function, and community structure (categories 1, 3 and 5) as a baseline for her choreography. Though Dunham's primary intent was to create a theatrical dance form, her incorporation of African-derived dances with ritual and religious associations created a ritually-centered technique.

Specifically, the Vodun and religious dances that influenced and were included in Dunham's technique were the Yanvalou, a religious dance of humility and assurance that honors Damballa the serpent spirit of the Vodun; Zepaules—a dance of the Vodun done primarily for the gatekeeper god Legba; and Mayi—a complex rhythmic dance of the feet (Rose 2005, 493). With the totality of what she had been taught and observed, she created the Dunham Technique using African-based movement as an essential element to inform both form and function.

The Dunham Technique was, in itself, an effort to embrace dances of her ancestry and provide a form that could cater to the needs of an emergent Black dance community that gathered around her in the United States. Her desire to transform traditions may stem from her early experiences with classical Western dance forms, and what was then referred to as the "Negro body."[2] Dunham wanted to address how African Americans and Africans in diaspora could express themselves fully in their own dance forms, as seen in productions like the 1952 film of her seminal work *L'Ag'Ya* (1938). Here, the performers incorporate cultural dances and ritual movements in the theatrical choreography.[3]

Having established a desire to bridge cultural gaps in African American communities, Dunham used movement forms that translated the functions she wanted to convey both to her communities and to a larger American society. The primary location for her work in this vein was in the theater and in films. She stated that "as in the indigenous [Vodun] community, [where] certain specific movement patterns could be related to certain functions, so in the modern theater there would be a correlation between a dance movement and the function of that dance within the theater framework" (2005, 513). Dunham used the relationship between the functions of the dance and the potential impact to the community, and specifically its "ritual" power, as a baseline for her choreographic messages. Her attention to connecting her understanding of rituals born of African dance cultures and her theater productions provides some evidence that she intended this relationship to be maintained.

According to the work of ritual theorist Ronald Grimes, a concrete marker of ritual intention, as a key element in the transformation of ritual communities, is the recognition and use of a ritual symbol (2014, 320). Of the markers that Grimes identifies, the most relevant to my identification of African dance and ritual symbols are 1) its roots in African ritual, 2) the intention to create a change using the function (action) of the ritual, and 3) the invocation of cultural identifiers/markers though the use of the ritual symbol. Modes of African dance are consistent with what Grimes describes as ritual symbol not solely because of their use, but also based on the intent informing their use.

Dunham's work, though not identical to the varied African-derived ritual dances that it stems from, retains connections to its African-based roots. For performances that are rooted in African ritual dance, the ritual themes are played out, and the "ritual actors" (dancers) transfer moral and religious standards to their "ritual community audience" (the African American communities attendant to the performances).[4] Performers become the ritual actors, the audience the ritual community, and their communal connection, the necessary spider's web of affiliation. The transformation of roles through ritual intent creates the ritual space. Persons of African descent who subscribe to a diasporic familial worldview have already established a real or perceived connection with either the African traditions displayed, the African American choreographer, or the African American community attendant to the performance, whether live or on film. In this way, these performances go beyond the drama of the theater and into the primarily African understanding of a ritual performance where members of the community have a place in ritual.[5] In some part, and on various levels, the audience understands their connectedness; this shared identity is the connecting fiber by which a web of ritual performance already exists before its generative spiders arrive.

Theorist Yvonne Daniel,[6] whose work focuses on Haitian Vodou, Cuban Yoruba and Bahian (Brazilian) Candomblé, outlines how dance ritual's ultimate purpose is to bring transformation to the believing community (2005, 12). In her evaluation, the believing community encompasses all those who participate in ritual. Their presence facilitates some level of healing. Not only is there a relationship between African dance and African ritual as they are deployed across time and space in the context of the Caribbean, but this connection is also tied to the presence and needs of the community.

Audience members participate emotionally in ritual action at differing levels, however all participate through their presence. During ritually-centered theatrical performances, Grimes writes, "an act of deep receptivity…happens when spectatorship is transformed into visual and emotional participation."[7] Perhaps such an energizing effect

correlates to the intended function of the ritual, or perhaps there are negative or indifferent effects. But even if the performance only ends in conversation, the effect of ritual is that it always does something; it therefore "works."[8] Essentially, the invoked symbol of African ritual dance functions to facilitate change in the communities that participate in or witness it. Approaching Dunham's choreography from the perspective of ritual import and transformation provides an interesting new model for engaging her body of work; potentially inviting interdisciplinary dialog in the intersections of religion, dance, embodied scholarship and African American culture.

Notes

1. The Rada-Dahomey is a Haitian sect of the Vodun religion.
2. While teaching classical ballet, she began to get discouraged about the Negro body in classically structured styles. As a result, she started to think about the Negro body (and all bodies) in terms of patterns of rhythms, which she felt were "more differentiated on the basis of their rhythmic cycles than on the basis of their race or color." She did believe however that "one of the survival mechanisms in black people has been a [specific] rhythmic pattern." See Clark 2005, 470.
3. Dunham "Negro Ballet" (1952). Includes a narration of the ritual story being conveyed. British Pathé, "*Katherine Dunham* (1952)," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iSTuO5E9_1g. Accessed 1 March 2015.
4. Bruce Feiler, "Osun-Osogbo." *Sacred Journeys with Bruce Feiler*, WGBH Educational Foundation, PBS.org, http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/sacredjourneys/content/osun-osogbo/. Accessed 12 December 2014.
5. In their writing, Nicole Monteiro and Diana Wall theorize that "the African worldview" is based on spiritual and communal paradigms that are useful in understanding indigenous and Diasporic healing approaches. Monteiro and Wall's research is focused on how women participating in Zar, Ndeup, and Guinea ritual dance, as well as women of African descent in the United States, are using ritual dance for physical and emotional healing. Monteiro and Wall 2011 235, 243.
6. Daniel explains the way in which dance is encoded through movement but also ways to talk about and interpret movement. Her book looks specifically at Haitian and other Caribbean forms of dance and outlines thirty years of anthropological and religious studies research. She is also a former student of Katherine Dunham.
7. *Theoria*, derived from the Greek word *Theorein*, means "to look at it" and relates to the contemplation of dramatic action. See Grimes 2014, 166.
8. In evaluating the effect of ritual, the dynamics must always suggest that they always work. The definition of "working" takes on two specific connotations for Grimes: "one is about fit [categorically]; the other, about achievement," 297.

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Junkanoo and Carnival as Theoretical Frameworks: A Pedagogical Narrative

A'Keitha Carey

My research is centered on re-imagining Caribbean cultural performance (Bahamian Junkanoo, Trinidadian Carnival, and Jamaican Dancehall) as praxis in dance curriculum while also exploring how these celebrations serve as a narrative for citizenship and identity. For the purpose of this essay, I will discuss Junkanoo and Carnival as theoretical frameworks and their pedagogical influence on CaribFunk, the dance technique and curriculum that I developed. I will also discuss how I draw from these two festivals creating the student assignment titled "The Junkanoo Project." CaribFunk, a fusion dance technique, is a 21st century mutation of foundational dance and fitness elements rooted in Africanist and Euro-American aesthetics and expressions, one which employs Caribbean popular culture as a methodological and pedagogical practice.[1]

Her-story

I grew up in the Bahamas and Miami, Florida listening to reggae and soca and performing movement that exhibited what dance scholars Brenda Dixon Gottschild (1996) and Kariamu Asante (2001) discuss as "The First Premises of an Africanist Aesthetic"[2] (Gottschild) and "Commonalities in African Dance: An Aesthetic Foundation"[3] (Asante). Without a formal introduction to these fundamentals, this consciousness emerged within my choreography and pedagogy. As a graduate student, I recognized the need to investigate dances of the African Diaspora, their pollination in U.S. spheres, how techniques are constructed from Diasporic transference, and how one develops pedagogies that are based within Diasporic sensibilities and are taught in higher education.

I have always been interested in dances of the African Diaspora, particularly the hip wine (circular rotation of the hip), investigating how Diasporic cultures view the hip as a technology of resistance, and how hip movement is pervasive within Junkanoo and Carnival. My experience with shaming, due to my "too sexy moves" encouraged me to research and explore the sensuality and politics associated with the hip wine, which also serves as the central theme of the technique that I developed, CaribFunk. I am particularly interested in how this movement is offered as a strategy to circumvent and transgress the negative stereotypes associated with (female) bodies of color, and demands a discussion about the crossing and pathways of race, gender, and the body. This consciousness aids in the (de)construction of identity and citizenship.

I introduce the neologism hip-mancipation, offering a modern discussion on methods that support "embodied freedom and erotic agency in wider contemporary contexts of the neocolonial restructuring of citizenship, sovereignty, and power across both national and transnational terrains" (Sheller 2012, 24–25). The term hip-mancipation is based on redemption from the negative stereotypes associated with ways

A'Keitha Carey in "Corporeal Discourse," choreographed by Carlos Jones and A'Keitha Carey. Photo by Erin Perry.

of moving the pelvis—particularly the rotation of the pelvis termed 'the hip wine' in Afro Diasporic societies. Caribbean performance, specifically the hip wine, speaks to the embodied citizenship that sociologist Mimi Sheller theorizes about, introducing the lower region and movements associated with this zone as emancipatory in the face of marginalization.

Introspection 1

As a young girl growing up in the Bahamas, though soca and calypso were elements of the culture, reggae music dominated the scene. I remember hearing reggae music as teenager and having a physical response to it—there was an embodied knowledge, an innate consciousness sheltered in the depth of my core and soul. As the music played, I dipped low, arched my back, got grounded in my plié (deeply bending my knees) and contracted my torso—my chest thumped on the release. I snaked up and wined—rolling it island gal style. The pulsations of my hips quickened to match the cadence of the wicked beat.

I recall being ridiculed for my too sexy moves. On several occasions I was shamed by adults (men and women). This disparagement created confusion and self blame. I oftentimes wondered what about my body or the way that I moved was inappropriate, vulgar, or immoral. In those moments of humiliation, I wish I was able to articulate some element of embodied politics and performances of resistance illustrated in dances of the African Diaspora, dances that "suggest myths and retell cultural stories, but most importantly… charter and encourage social behavior in present everyday lives," (Daniel 2005, 1); I could have offered much more of a defense for my pelvic discourse and erotic power. (Carey 2015)

Hip-mancipation is concerned with the restrictive practices and institutionalized concerns with embodied freedom and acts and expressions that articulate erotic power (Sheller 2012). Those who performed with this agency were rebelling against colonial infractions of policing, reserved primarily for bodies of color and the stipulation of respectability and Puritanism that was expected of women of a particular social status. Women who performed erotic power without shame, not succumbing to bodily censorship, were expressing erotic agency, they were standing "tall and proud."

Audre Lorde defines this expression of embodied knowledge, consciousness, and agency as the 'erotic as power' in terms that are counter to the Western masculine (chauvinist) definition which solely references the sexual and is absorbed in the pornographic (Lorde 1984); "Lorde's understanding of the erotic moves beyond the sexual as a purely physical relationship to encompass a wider realm of feeling and the sensual" (Sheller 2012, 244–45). Sheller theorizes the erotic, affirming that erotic agency functions as the converse of slavery and oppression. It focuses on the empowered and liberated self through efforts that include the spiritual and sensual. This embodied freedom is pleasurable, natural, and inviting—drawing those in who are seeking the same type of liberation. This liberation is found in the street festivals of Junkanoo and Carnival and also invoked in my CaribFunk course.

Introspection 2

"Kalik, Kalik, Kaliking Kalik Kalik Kalik Kalik (Hey)." Kalik is the sound that the cowbell makes and is also a primary instrument in the Junkanoo parade. I have many fond memories of this festival. I recall waking up in the middle of the night as a young child on Boxing Day to watch the beautiful vibrant images of elaborate costumes jumpin' and dancin' in the Junkanoo parade on the television depicting the theme of each group and hearing this very distinctive sound. I also remember the first time my grandparents took my cousins and I to the parade. We were live and in color on Bay Street (the central location of the festival in Nassau, Bahamas) about to view the celebration. As we walked closer to extravaganza, I could see pieces of costumes in the street made out of cardboard, feather, glitter, and crepe paper. The beat of the drums, whistles, bells, horns, and the brass band intensified as we got closer the procession. I shivered with excitement waiting to see and feel what I saw on the television.

"We rushin', we rushin', we rushin' through the crowd—we rushing, we rushing, we rushing through the crowd." These are the simple yet profound lyrics from the song "Rushing Through the Crowd" by Bahamian artist Exuma which stuck with me throughout my adulthood informing my teaching praxis, the "Junkanoo Project" and "The Junkanoo Junction," courses that I developed and teach.. (Carey 2016)

History of Junkanoo in the Bahamas

Exuma's song "Rushing Through the Crowd" is a fusion of folk and calypso and expresses the strength of Black Bahamians and the power that they have when they unify and stand "tall and proud" against oppressors. The Junkanoo festival "represents poverty, wealth, discipline and rebellion, competition and co-operation, creative genius and physical prowess" (Bethel 2003). These very distinctive elements provide a sense of citizenship and identity for colonized folk. Exuma sings that "ain't no body can take it from you," I surmise that he is speaking to one's nationalism, identity, and self-expression. This song and these childhood memories conjure up many memories speaking to my artistry and pedagogy.

John Canoe, Junkanoo or jankunu is a celebration rooted in Protestant religion, and introduced "across the British Americas … are not syncretic festivals, as [with] Carnival" (Bethel 2015). The British separated from the Catholic church; in this collapsed relationship they decided to establish their own traditions and celebrations. "The British were beginning to focus their attention on Christmas as the main holiday [instead of Easter as with Catholicism and its influence on Carnival] in their Christian calendar . . . the settlers' great feast took place at Christmas" (Bethel 2015). Enslaved Africans were granted three days off during Christmas. In this celebration, the slaves performed their own masquerades (separate from their masters), performing their indigenous movements and wearing costumes that were associated with the "West African *kono* (harvest) festival across the Americas … [wearing] figures of animals, cowbells, and the like" (Bethel 2015).

The History of Carnival in Trinidad

Carnival, a syncretized festival, combined the traditions of both Europeans and Africans. This festival is associated with the Lent season and derived from the Catholic religion in Italy. "The word 'carnival' comes from the Latin *carne* (meat) and *vale* (farewell) (Bethel 2015). In the preparation for this festival, many fasted leading up to the Easter celebration. When colonizers infiltrated countries in the Americas, they unpacked their religious practices and celebrations. Africans merged their own customs and conventions with their master's festivals, establishing their unique articulations of carnival. "The Africans were given the same holidays as the masters took" (Bethel 2015) and participated in role reversals, which became principle in the celebration. The enslaved people celebrated with their masters at *fetes* (party), "Carnival as we know it today grew out of these cross-participations" (Bethel 2015).

Theorizing CaribFunk

CaribFunk illustrates both *lieu de mémoire* (site of memory) and *milieux de mémoire* (environments of memory), transposing the cultural performances of Junkanoo and Carnival to the studio, classroom, and concert stage. CaribFunk builds on Katherine Dunham's methods of "performing memory," exhibited through "intercultural communication on the concert stage," "Form and Function," and "Socialization Through the Arts." Dunham's research-to-performance method "awakened a cultural memory through dance" (Osumare 2010, 2–3). Within CaribFunk technique, students are able to "comprehend movement of Africa, Afro America and the Caribbean …" (Clark 2009, 11). They develop a proficiency in movement from the Caribbean achieving diasporic literacy, a term coined by Caribbeanist scholar Vévé Clark. Clark states, "Diaspora literacy has implied an ease and intimacy with more than one language, with interdisciplinary relations among history, ethnology, and folklore or regional expression" (Clark 2009, 11). CaribFunk evidences a Caribbeanist 'interest' by its recognition and inclusion of the Anglophone (Trinidad, Bahamas, and Jamaica) and elements of the Francophone (Haiti), and Hispanophone (Cuba) Caribbean and Brazil in the technique and pedagogy (Clark 2009, 10).

Junkanoo and Carnival as Praxis

Junkanoo and Carnival as with Gottschild's "First Premises of an Africanist Aesthetic" and Asante's "Commonalities in African Dance: An Aesthetic Foundation" intersect, sharing ideas but they also present distinct variances. I am in no way suggesting that the two festivals are the same; they both derive from diverse fundamental developments and are celebrated at different times of the year, eliciting other contrasting elements that I will not discuss in this essay. I will discuss their shared interdisciplinary aspects (dance, music, theater, and visual arts) and the sense of community that is established within both festivals—this is essentially what the Junkanoo curriculum is based on.

From a pedagogical perspective, I have creolized both festivals to construct an educational experience that is a "marker of identity [and citizenship]" (Bethel 2003). Within this experience, I am careful in acknowledging the distinct differences and similarities of both festivals encouraging the students to employ elements of each festival that speaks to who they are as artists and performers. The aim of the experience is to acknowledge the connections to slavery and African ancestry while building community and maintaining a commitment to "accommodating individual self-expression" (Bethel 2003). Though I am fusing elements of both festivals, I title the program "Junkanoo" as a form of acknowledgment and tribute to my country of birth.

The Junkanoo Project is an interdisciplinary class project that I developed which works in conjunction with the music, dance, art, theatre, and anthropology departments and African/Caribbean student affiliations. Students organize themselves as a Junkanoo group showcasing their investigation and creativity in a performance similar to rushing in the Junkanoo parades in the Bahamas and playing mas in Carnival in Trinidad.

The second part of the project (Junkanoo Junction) involves a study abroad opportunity that entails the students visiting the Bahamas/Trinidad engaging in ethnographic fieldwork exploring the historical, cultural, and social facets of each country, reinforcing the information learned in the Junkanoo Project course work. My goals include educating students about the history and the creative process of Junkanoo and Carnival—the thematic conceptualization, the construction of costuming, choreography of dance routines, thematic development, and music composition.

Benefits of the Program

1. Students gain knowledge of Caribbean culture through text, practical methods and concepts. Students become immersed in the culture through a tangible activity—The Junkanoo Project and The Junkanoo Junction.
2. The Junkanoo Project serves to bring a sense of advocacy, unity and community to the University campus at large.
3. This project promotes acceptance and pluralism.
4. Students develop and/or maintain cultural competence (Ladson-Billings 1995, 160).
5. Students develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order (Ladson-Billings 1995, 160).

Research Methodology

CaribFunk reflects a contemporary praxis, offering a theoretical framework emphasizing Caribbean cultural performance to discuss African Diasporic principles in dance curriculum. This framework allows for a (re)imagining of an undergraduate curriculum, one that applies critical pedagogy and African Diasporic principles to "actively resist and transform the pervasiveness of white cultural hegemony within dance in the academy" (Amin 2015). This praxis incorporates a practice-based approach that illuminates African Diasporic practices, histories, and theories in purposeful and relevant ways, serving to enhance the students dance studies: kinesthetically, culturally, critically, historically, and philosophically.

CaribFunk is focused on inclusion, community, freedom, and equality; elements exhibited in Junkanoo and Carnival. CaribFunk also serves as a recovery project, a tool of survival and an opportunity to heal, love, and accept one's body/hip(s). I affirm that if the technique is introduced in curriculum early on in one's training, then elements that are rooted in the technique such as the hip wine, sensuality, and erotic autonomy will be easier to locate and perform. The level of comfort increases and the body is able to relax. My research revealed that students had difficulty attaining a level of comfort—this was their biggest challenge. This included rigor, movements of the pelvis, and sensuality. I ask you to imagine taking these concepts that are premised on freedom and inclusion—a construct that privileges the marginalized body, and introduce them into an environment that opposes some/most of these notions. The joy and pain of this theory is that I have taken this philosophical construct and placed it into academic spaces that have historically excluded bodies of color (Gottschild 2003).

Junkanoo and Carnival are rooted in notions of solidarity, forgetting one's social, economic issues, and concerns. An example of this is how the affluent and impecunious enthusiastically dance in the streets at these festivals. Junkanoo and Carnival represent a time that people are able to forget their inhibitions and perform a certain freedom that may be considered unacceptable by some. This is why masking was so important, it allowed people to "get on bad" without having to worry about being identified by the police or whoever was policing people and/or bodies. "Traditions of masking one's identity, and the satirization of the powerful and political elites through song lyrics and costumery, allow celebrants to imagine different social and political

realities, if only temporarily" (Lamothe 2012, 363). "[Junkanoo and] Carnival … in that brief space and time … offers all the paradoxical elements I am craving: anonymity, jubilant community and belonging" (Lamothe 2012, 369–70).

This is the axiom that I aspire to bestow on my students. It is my endeavor that participants in my courses are not only able to shift the center, placing the contributions of Africans and African Diasporic peoples in concert with European Americans but they are also able to reflect on who they are as global citizens analyzing the experience of others from a social and critical lens and challenging existing cultural, social, and historical policies addressing race, class, and gender. I encourage them to examine their role in social transformation, community building, and solidarity while asking—how am I participating in the (de)constructing of identity and citizenship in a "race-, class-, and gender-divided society…"? (Duncan-Anrade and Morell 2008, 23).

Notes

1. The fusion technique developed and trademarked by the author. I define it as a 21st century mutation of foundational dance and fitness paradigms. I fused elements of Afro-Caribbean (traditional and social), ballet, modern (Martha Graham, Lester Horton, and José Limon), and fitness techniques to create a new system, language, and movement vocabulary—a patois. CaribFunk™ explores the *hip wine* (circular rotation of the hip), female strength, liberation, sensuality, virtuosic ability and "the erotic as power" as posited by Black, feminist writer Audre Lorde.
2. Gottschild identifies five elements: "embracing conflict"; "polycentrism/polyrhythm"; "high-affect juxtaposition"; "ephebism"; and "the aesthetic of the cool." Gottschild 1996, 11–19.
3. See Asante, "Commonalities in African Dance."

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Decolonizing Alliances: The Terms of World Dance in David Roussève/REALITY's Saudade

Alessandra Williams

The 2009 dance production *Saudade* by choreographer David Roussève and his REALITY dance company expresses a set of narratives associated with personal memories as well as broader experiences of sexual violence, trauma, and social and political neglect endured by persons of African descent. Appearing onstage as a narrator, Roussève animates each interlocking story he tells with a unique voice and speaking pattern as well as distinct gestures and bodily composure. Additionally, he speaks while taking carefully placed steps at a diagonal across the stage, calculating his walk so precisely that only by the very end of the 105 minutes of performance does he accomplish moving from the upstage left corner to the downstage right portion of the stage. Meanwhile, seven REALITY cast members interpret and enhance the spoken texts through choreographies based in West African movement, the classical Indian dance form known as Bharatanatyam, contact improvisation, Indonesian dance, and Euro-American modern dance.

Since 1989, David Roussève has choreographed works for his company REALITY that explore the contemporary lives of persons of African descent through Euro-American modern dance, contact improvisation, and performance forms of the African diaspora such as jazz, Hip-Hop, and West African-based movement. His works often discuss sexuality, gender, race, and systemic violence. For example, the 1989 dance *Pull Your Head to the Moon…Tales of Creole Women* explored narratives about sexuality through a focus on African American women's experiences of womanhood and physical and sexual assault. In several works, Roussève also grapples with the global circulation of stereotypes about black bodies as supposedly hypersexual and uncontrollable in their sexual desire. Indeed, *Saudade* also deploys dance and narrative to explore how sexuality becomes an underlying experience of the lives of persons of African descent. And yet, Roussève's emphasis on a series of global dance forms in this work creates a platform from which to envision African American dance as central to understanding alliances within and across differences in global histories of colonial oppression.

This essay explores possibilities for radical intersections across sexuality, gender, race, and nation in the work *Saudade* that trouble the category of "World Dance." Dance theorist Marta E. Savigliano defines world dance according to how artistic practitioners defy problems of category to actualize a potential for decolonizing alliances. Choreographies of world dance deal with a constructed archive where the practices of non-Western forms get collected to capture "that dancing that occurs out there in the world" (2011, 174). Savigliano posits that world dance functions as a process through which bodies get disciplined into erasing both the values of particular forms and the experiences of particular bodies performing. World

REALITY dance company members Olivier Tarpaga and Taisha Paggett in a work-in-progress showing of Saudade, May 2008. Photo by Jorge Vismara.

dance also responds to dynamics of legitimization, as "otherness" becomes acknowledged within specific dance disciplines presumed to be outside of Euro-American expression. To undo the presumptions of otherness that the world dance classification bears, Savigliano recommends focusing on the possibilities for developing "decolonizing or postcolonial critical factions" that allow for "a resistance to globalism." Following this framework, my consideration of *Saudade* challenges easy dynamics of otherness and reveals underlying tensions of globalization by examining the principles associated with multiple dance forms deployed in the piece and highlighting the particularities of its dancing bodies.

Written and directed by Roussève in collaboration with the performers, *Saudade* features four diverse characters: a slave girl named "Sally" who learns to write but is violently raped at the age of fifteen by her slaveowner; a sullen man who cares for a stray cat until he eventually finds the pet dead; a person nearly dying in a hospital whose partner becomes a reason to continue living; and a mother who lost her partner and barely saved herself and her children during Hurricane Katrina. Appearing onstage as a narrator, Roussève tells the story of each narrative during the performance. Collaborating dance artists Esther M. Baker-Tarpaga, Nehara Kalev, Marianne M. Kim, Taisha Paggett, Sri Susilowati, Olivier Tarpaga, and Anjali Tata bring expertise

REALITY dance company members Esther M. Baker Tarpaga, Anjali Tata, Marianne M. Kim, Olivier Tarpaga, Taisha Paggett, Nehara Kalev, and Sri Susilowati in a work-in-progress showing of Saudade, May 2008. Photo by Jorge Vismara.

in diverse movement idioms to the work, including Indonesian dance and Bharatanatyam. Roussève further layers *Saudade* with video by Ashley Hunt and sound design in the genre of Portuguese Fado music created by David Karagianis. Overall, Saudade connects dance forms that differ, even as it positions Black people's experience of sexuality and structural oppression at the center of its narrative concerns.

In one sequence, *Saudade* connects the ravages of black American slavery to the conditions surrounding Hurricane Katrina as processes based in histories of global systemic oppression. Roussève speaks in the voice of a slave named "Sally." In this sequence, Sally describes how her sister's tears dropped into the palm of her hand as she was being raped by her slaveowner. She remembers forcing herself to breathe to prevent the master from stealing her "soul" and she recalls the tears that fell into her palm as her sister held her hand through a hole in the wall. Sally then proclaims her newfound awareness about taking part in "a life that I would never understand" and she utters "The End" in proclamation that her life will no longer be confined to a slavery that forbids literacy and allows rape.

The sequence shifts to explore the experience of a mother during the Hurricane Katrina catastrophe of 2005. Cultural critic Henry A. Giroux describes Katrina as a wage of global systemic racialized oppression. Katrina was a natural disaster that rapidly shifted to a socioeconomic crisis as African Americans were stranded on rooftops, packed in the Superdome, or left alone on dry highway patches without food; the poorly-constructed humanitarian response forced the U.S. to confront the problem underlying New Orleans's appearance as a "Third World" country with too many dead bodies visible, floating on sheets (Giroux 2006, 7–11). In this sequence of the dance, Taisha Paggett and Olivier Tarpaga support each other in an image of death, with Tarpaga's floating on Paggett's shoulder. Here, Roussève tells the tale of a mother's particular survival of Katrina. The mother relates how "letting go of the person I loved most in life" defines her will to carry on, even as she masks an underlying state of grieving and vulnerability. As the mother, Roussève speaks of: her children who only needed a "glass of water" to survive; having no "memory of begging the Lord to take my life;" and having saved her children from "a world that just tried to kill them." Paggett and Tarpaga dance the layers of emotion that underlie her story. Their bodies move asymmetrically by turning on the floor with the side of one hip touching the earth. Lifting off the ground, they use the palm of one hand to balance on the floor while extending the legs in the opposite direction of that steady hand. When they transition to sitting on knees, they shake the head side-to-side. Quickly, they bring the crown of the head to the floor, and as they balance the head there, they stretch their legs wide and open to the side, switch to rolling the body on the floor, and repeat this phrase. Setting up contradictory movements, Paggett rises slowly off the floor while Tarpaga speedily taps his palms to thighs and then immediately opens them out toward the audience. Simultaneously, he lifts and lowers the head and he repeatedly taps the feet up and off the floor. He then squats his hips low to the earth and quickly lifts his entire body off the floor with legs spread open wide. Continuing the practice of opposing movement, Paggett reaches toward him but the connection fails as Tarpaga frantically circles arms and then comes down to the floor so that he can hover off the earth in a plank position. While holding this stance with the body taut and legs extended behind him, he moves the arms in two different positions: from resting on the elbows to balancing on his palms. Once again, Paggett reaches hands toward Tarpaga, but this time, the center of his body shakes and vibrates rapidly. When Paggett touches his shoulder, he stops and they gaze at each other. Paggett steps away for a moment and goes further upstage as if to gather strength from others. He lifts his hands and tilts his head back in laughter until Paggett returns to lift his arm, place him on her shoulder, and carry him off with his head leaning back and legs circling.

In this sequence, the dancing clearly shifts between African-based movement and contact improvisation. Tarpaga and Paggett engage movement repetition, physical contradictions, variations in speed, and complex rhythmic gestures, all of which are central to Brenda Dixon Gottschild's description of Africanisms (1996, 3). In this way, *Saudade* actively prioritizes an Africanist presence to articulate the unspeakable, bodily effects of Katrina. Additionally, *Saudade* demonstrates what Gottschild describes as postmodern African American choreography that recreates, deconstructs, and maintains Euro-American culture while also preserving its own styles on the concert dance stage.

Although *Saudade* highlights African-based dancing, it does so by focusing on the specificity of dancers' bodies and by developing solidarity across difference. Tarpaga's dancing with Paggett is connected to other sections of the choreography in which his body reworks an Africanist premise of irony that Gottschild defines as playing with power dynamics among dancer and spectator (1996, 13). In one sequence, Tarpaga suddenly kicks his legs and hips away from the center of his body and then forces Roussève to applaud him for his dancing. This moment of *Saudade* comments on how West African dance practitioners might perform certain standards of tradition to appease spectators eager to appreciate dance in the blank mode of world dance. In another scene, Tarpaga asks fellow performer Esther Baker-Tarpaga to join him in "the dance of pure joy," revealing how certain representations of African dance can restrict artists to expressing a particular aesthetic. To disrupt this scene, and to dispel the facade of "pure joy," performer Nehara Kalev crosses the stage clad in a scanty two-piece bathing suit while displaying the signs "I Think They're Faking it Because in Real Life They're Married."

Saudade also destabilizes the singular conventional structures of world dance forms through group dancing in ensemble sequences. As Roussève articulates Sally's story of being violated by the slaveowner, the entire ensemble stands in the background, their arms down by their sides with palms open toward the audience. They lift hands up to chest and slowly lower them. Ripples and sudden waves of the chest move through their torsos. From rubbing their hands across the chest, they open palms out again, lower them down, and then fold their bodies over halfway by bringing the torso parallel to the floor and then down toward the legs. Short hiccups of breath can be heard from dancers as Sally says, "This is a life I would never understand." An ensemble also forms behind Paggett and Tarpaga during their duet. When Tarpaga's body begins to shake from the height of the shoulders and down to the hips, Anjali Tata, Esther Baker-Tarpaga, and Nehara Kalev shake with their torsos folded over so that their chests touch the legs. Their hands are held tightly together. When Tarpaga lifts his hands and begins to laugh, Esther Baker-Tarpaga smiles as if she takes part in experiencing his plight. By positioning ensemble movement alongside this particular narrative of subjugation, *Saudade* suggests cross-cultural solidarity.

Ensemble dancing not only reveals how the choreography forges an alliance with stories of persons of African descent but also how it intersects with the experiences of REALITY artists in ways that provide different inquiries into world dance, such as Anjali Tata's duet with Nehara Kalev and its experimentation with classical Indian dance. Kalev brings out a chair and a boom box onstage, and plays Portuguese Fado music. Entering the stage rhythmically, Tata presses her left foot flat onto the ground, steps her right leg out to the side and plants it down firmly. She crosses the left leg behind the right foot and then lifts up to balance briefly onto the balls of both feet. Her arms lift and lower with the palms revealed and fingers extended outward. Kalev comes over to her angrily, shaking her and insisting that she "stop!" With the music now shut completely off, Kalev binds Tata's feet, but when Kalev returns to the boom box to hit play, Tata smiles, reaches her head upward, lifts arms open wide, presses her palms together, and stretches arms out to the side and then brings them into her chest. Kalev then binds her arms, but Tata continues to shift her head from side-to-side. Kalev finally places a black bag over Tata's head. Having by now restricted both Tata's legs and hands, Kalev strikes her body so that she lies on the floor with her back and hands facing the audience. Still Tata dances: she begins to shift her legs; to move arms back and down toward her hips. She shakes her body slightly to the sides, reaching toward the boom box. Constrained in every way, she rolls her body and wiggles her fingers.

This section brings new context to the ensemble's binding of arms that took place during Paggett and Tarpaga's duet and more broadly extends *Saudade's* investigation of oppressive dynamics. In Roussève's own words about this sequence, he sought to explore the following when working with Tata: "It's this denying of her power. When she seems to have the ultimate defeat, the tips of her fingers are still dancing." Moreover, Roussève knew he wanted to explore what might occur if you "keep binding the Bharatanatyam dancer" as part of his larger interest in how "World dancers, dancers from many world forms, are not asked to do crazy, experimental ideas" (Roussève 2015). Roussève's comments seem to reflect theoretical frameworks for classical Indian dance proffered by historian Janet O'Shea's that compel Bharatanatyam practitioners to define classical dance as an experimental practice in order to provoke questions about globalization (2007, xi–xii). Roussève encourages artists toward this effort by supporting them as "they were inspired to push the boundaries of their form." He finds ways to intersect artists' own aims to reshape guidelines of the forms that they dance within by, for instance, integrating the action of binding in different sections.

Dance reviews recognize how *Saudade* prioritizes an inquiry into artists' individual dance forms, even as these reviews reiterate some of the inherent problems in the world dance category. Charles McNulty of the *Los Angeles Times* acknowledges the terms of world dance in *Saudade* by describing REALITY as a "transnational" and "multiethnic" company that expresses narratives in a "kaleidoscope of video projections," "eclectic world dance selections," and "surges of dance theatre that appear to be constructed from improvisational processes" (2009). Robert Johnson of The *Star-Ledger* describes how REALITY "cast members, an international community have brought their own dances form far-flung homes in Asia and Africa" (2009). Deborah Jowitt of *The Village Voice* offers clarification on some of the backgrounds of artists in stating that *Saudade* includes "African Americans, an Indonesian, a native of Burkina Faso, and a dancer who studied India's Bharata Natyam for 22 years" (2009). Reviewers also acknowledge the specificity of dancers' bodies in their descriptions. McNulty notices how artists "press upon us an awareness of their corporeal life" whereas Johnson and Jowitt examine the struggles linked to artists' own articulation of dance technique and personal experience. Johnson posits that REALITY members "add their own themes as dancers fight or try to prevent individuals from expressing themselves." Jowitt recalls, "People fall and roll on. Some crawl along roped together, and others free them. They dance slowly, awkwardly together as if drugged by pain." Furthermore, dance critics pay detailed attention to the dance's focus on experiences of persons of African descent and the particular role of Roussève's narratives. McNulty notes that the past seems to be a burden of present conditions as challenges in African American life depicted here, such as social and economic inequality, HIV/AIDS, and abuse "register in the body" of Roussève whose "imagination" is overwhelmed by death and attached to the paradox of slavery and freedom. Other critics place emphasis on how the different "images" or dance "vocabularies" of artists enhance the context of Roussève's stories. "Transplanted to the American South," says Johnson, "these movement vocabularies point to the universality of human experience as a bittersweet, Roussevian party-mix of tears and joy." In her concluding thoughts, Jowitt provides the following reflections: "When I ponder what I've seen, images that seemed isolated during the performance coalesce in my mind and link more securely to Roussève's themes."

Dance reviewers sufficiently acknowledge REALITY as a group of dancers whose cultural and ethnic identities encompass the borders of multiple nationalities and they also recognize the work's firm grounding in Roussève's memories, African American communities, and dancer's own histories. However, more remains to be explored about how *Saudade*, as a form of world dance, can resist the politics of globalization. For instance, McNulty does not seem to entirely grasp the production's alliances when he wonders whether some of the visuals may "seem overwrought" or "jejune" in their "wearying" presentation. In order to comprehend how the layers of world dance in *Saudade* push the expectations of dance forms, viewers can focus on dancer's capacity to articulate movement within histories of systemic violence, the ensemble's ability to create solidarity, and the particular gestures that intersect artists' shared practice of dancing outside rigid guidelines. Additionally, naming racial diversity or calling attention to a desire to grapple with cultural differences can only achieve so much in a larger review of how Roussève utilizes REALITY artists' dance techniques in *Saudade*. Here, I refer to Jowitt's introductory concerns about the relationship between self and other that choreographers frequently confront in the postmodern dance domain. "In the crosscultural kitchen of postmodern dance drama," she explains, "it's sometimes hard to tell whether the chef has embarked on a particular creative process to discover more about himself and his roots or more about the Other. Most often, it's a bit of both." Even a statement this useful and informative about the position of choreographer and diverse communities can become subject to the problem of world dance when such an assertion does not lead to analysis of how artists perpetuate and/or destabilize the limitations and rigid guidelines of particular dance forms. The gaps in critics' descriptions provide an opportunity to reflect on the significance of thoroughly examining the dilemma posited by Marta E. Savigliano. Through *Saudade*, the world dance problem—that is, how artists' dance forms get positioned under very conflicted conditions of globalization—can be overturned if we critically assess how artists mold the boundaries of the category and actualize decolonizing potential when articulating narrative and movement to forge alliances with others.

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“Passing Out”

Mark Broomfield

I’ve been thinking about what it means to be gay and out
After all everyone says that if you come out
It gets better
So I think I should let you know that I’m out
Because if I don’t tell you
I’m not sure if you’ll know that I’m out or not
But then I’m wondering how out I need to be to be out
How do you do out
Does my being out read as out
I mean can you tell by looking at me that I’m out
But what if my out is too out for you
Watch out
What if I don’t want to let you know that I’m out
Does that mean I’m hiding out
Am I out
Then
Or does my out
Pass for straight
I’m not sure if being out actually means you’re out
Are you waiting for something to come out

Do I do out right
Some think I do
Some don’t
Sometimes my out is loud
Sometimes not
Sometimes it’s way out
And then others say I have to reel my out back in

People do out in many ways
Some by choice
Other times forced out, picked out, or plain talked about
I feared and yet craved to be out
Without words or confidence to speak out
Which left me feeling out
Crying out
Often worried that I might be found out
I backed out
Secretly looking out
Hoping to find out
Eyeing out
Whenever/wherever I walked out

See out
Can you
I searched and tried
Working it out/feeling it out/trying it out/to drag it out
Screaming out/queening out

Why you freaking out
Only to be called out
And bashed about
Haven woken up
After blanking out
Made staying out
Feel like I’d struck out
Has me worn out
From the terrifying prospect
Of being caught out
For doing out
Yet
Always called on
To
Come out

I simply prefer
on
passing
out

Getting Down with Social Uplift: The Meaning of the Waltz to African-American Southern Debutantes

Avis HatcherPuzzo

When one of my colleagues asked me to teach the waltz to a handful of debutantes for their cotillion, I was a bit surprised. I thought our society was past that. I thought these occasions, where debutantes are presented to the public by their family to be decorated and accepted by society, were strictly for the White upper class, particularly in the South. Cotillions drew criticism and scorn from feminists decades ago who claimed that they were sexist and highly exclusive. And moreover, I thought, "why the waltz?" Of all the social dances, I didn't see how the waltz would work for these young African-American women; it seemed too old, too stilted, and too European for this millennial generation. I was skeptical, but my colleague, an esteemed member of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority's Zeta Pi Omega Chapter, was insistent and determined: the debutantes, their fathers, and their male escorts were to dance the waltz.

Today, Southern communities with historically Black colleges are known for holding several debutante balls during the spring season. Local cultural organizations often team up with the alumni chapter of a Black sorority and organize the event months in advance of the actual ball. Promoted as educational and social preparatory programs, area middle- and high-school girls are eagerly signed up by their parents or grandparents to participate in the balls. As part of the grooming experience, debutantes attend numerous cultural events including dance concerts, theater performances, and museum exhibits. There are workshops in leadership, fundraising, women's issues and community service activities. To prepare for the ball itself, these young ladies take elocution lessons in table setting, fashion and social etiquette.

The Good, the Bad, and the Lovely

Critics of debutantes and cotillions argue that demonstration of a woman's value based on her appearance leads to her subjugation and objectification. Beauty historian Malia McAndrew posits that balls and pageants operate as parades and competitions for the wealthy, who categorize beauty while celebrating their own elitism. But I wondered, when was possessing poise and grace a bad thing? Dorothy Dandridge, Helen Williams, and Diahann Carroll, for example, exuded poise, grace, beauty, and etiquette. McAndrew notes that beauty pageants held special currency for Black women:

> Through their "social uplift" campaigns and mottos such as "lifting as we climb," middle-class Black women [have] a long history of "teaching"…about social graces, personal initiatives and communal responsibility. (2010, 30)

McAndrew points out that the 1965 issue of *FLARE, the Alumni Chic Magazine of the Ophelia DeVore School Alumni Association*, included reports on commencement exercises held by members of the Les Filles Charmantes Club of Brooklyn. This society club took its name from

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the French ("the charming girls") and offered free membership to low-income black teenagers living in the Bedford Stuyvesant neighborhood of Brooklyn. After twelve weeks of charm classes at the Bedford YMCA, club members took part in a joint graduation ceremony and fashion show: an event to which they wore white debutante-style gowns (McAndrew 2010).

Ophelia DeVore created an industry of Black women's beauty, including a modeling agency and charm school. She often commented that one of the barriers that constrained Black women was that many had internalized the racist characterizations of African Americans promoted by the larger society. Stressing the need for charm classes for an ordinary Black woman, DeVore explained that "Prejudice has damaged her so much that she often behaves like the low comedy stereotype of her[self]" (McAndrew 2010, 30). The notion of social uplift intended to repair the damage and objectification Black women suffered through prejudice and discrimination.

To look and behave uplifted was to be uplifted. In the book *Pageants, Parlors and Pretty Women: Race and Beauty in the Twentieth-Century South*, historian Blain Roberts outlines:

> Body rules and rituals for black women show how race leaders, self-consciously utilized black women's bodies to prove not just their individual capabilities but the capabilities of the race itself the effort to help black women embody a respectable femininity made good sense, given the lack of respect. . . . Body and beauty rituals also supported the economic uplift of the race just as black beauty culture did. Using [this concept] to raise money southern blacks combined two political activities . . . disseminating flattering images of the race while strengthening the financial stability of the local organizations in the black community. (2014, 152)

Today's young people and their parents are much the same as those that Roberts describes. In particular, the parents want their children to become responsible, poised, and giving members of society. Now that I had an understanding of the history and the motivation for the waltz lessons, I agreed to teach the course.

I soon realized an interesting truth in my colleague's insistence on the waltz. As many cultural anthropologists have pointed out, dancing is a key ingredient of the social lives of fashionable society (Cresswell 2006). The waltz, being the classical music of social dance, requires both partners to physically lift up their torsos. By forcing the body to lift up, perhaps the students would feel uplifted as well.

While it is clear that body movements carry meaning that is crucial to the production of cultural and social norms, it is also clear that bodies express already-existing normative ideals. This history of socially structured movement points towards the political and theoretical necessity of seeing mobility as operating within fields of power and meaning and, crucially, larger contexts of changing senses of movement.

It is clear that upwardly mobile young African Americans have always long engaged in social dance and cotillions, while reaching out to help the entire community achieve social uplift. Social dances (i.e., ballroom dances like the waltz) require, in addition to a lifted torso, close physical contact, and a leader and a follower moving through the space as a unit. This is a far cry from the movements young people typically engage in today. With hip-hop and African dance influences permeating HBCU's, like the one where I teach, dance in this community is driven by rhythm and attitude. Step teams encourage bravado and female band dancers are expected to perform quick pelvic thrusts, "hair flips" and high stepping on the football field. I remained intrigued, however skeptical, personally and professionally. The waltz still seemed too out of place in a predominantly African American high school. They were raised in the African-American tradition of marching band majorettes, acrobatic cheerleaders, and spiritually-motivated praise dancers. Their parents grew up with dances like the bus stop, the bump, and the running man. Rhythmic isolations and techno-driven beats informed and shaped this generation's movement preferences. I could not see how the contained posturing and affected demeanor of this antiquated ballroom dance was going to go over well; I imagined that they'd rather be twerking.

I forged ahead. I put my skepticism, which had now become full-blown curiosity, into action and scheduled rehearsals with the six debutantes, their fathers, and their escorts. I was determined to be a part of this elegant southern tradition.

In the first few rehearsals, the soft-spoken debutantes learned to walk without shoes in relevé. Gently rising, releasing their shoulders, not leaning back, lifting from the torso, and breathing were a bit challenging for them at first; they soon understood the weight shifts and began to glide from their centers. The debutantes quickly learned how to dance

with their fathers, who already understood and displayed the upright posture and took the lead in social dance.

Dancing with their escorts, however, was another matter. The notions of standing upright and forward became visibly uncomfortable and challenging for these young men. As much as we preach and instill the notion of being upstanding and believing in oneself, to physically apply this idea through posture, gaze, and physical contact is a completely different story.

Get Up, Get Down, Get Funky, Get Loose

I understood the efforts at social uplift, but how would I connect to their generation's physical understanding of this idea? In the 1980s, journalist George Heymont wrote on this topic:

> In the '60's and '70's, while performing the frug, jerk, twist, hustle, and boogaloo, many people became absorbed in such isolated forms of self-expression that they never even bothered to touch their [dance] partners. Today, the under-40 crowd, who once laughed and their parents for touch dancing "the old fashioned way" . . . are now attracted to the beauty of its movements and the ways in which ballroom dancing—which is based upon a solid combination of physical intimacy tenderness, and unquestionable dependency—can make them look glamourous. (Heymont 1987, 38).

Throughout the six-week process, something began to take shape. Debutantes, their escorts, and their fathers began to relax, enjoy, and become more fluid in their movements and interactions with each other. As the mission of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority's Zeta Pi Omega Chapter was to instill in the debutantes a social esteem and a sense of service, this began to manifest itself physically through ballroom dancing. As Pierre Dulaine told *Time* magazine, "when you touch someone, something happens. And when you touch someone with respect and compassion you get that respect and compassion back." (Rothman 2014). This became true in our dancing lessons.

In rehearsals relying on rhythm, the debutantes, their fathers, and their escorts were taught triplets as well as the waltz. The swing aspects of the waltz allowed them to travel through the space while complying to a definitive rhythmic pattern, which they enjoyed. The song for the father/daughter dance was "What A Wonderful World" by Louis Armstrong.

The issue of touch was still present with the debutantes and their escorts, as was the issue of the boys being the lead. The girls often grew impatient and intimidated or challenged the boys. The irony of this endeavor to make these females softer and more delicate was not lost. I was pleased that this young generation of black women was unafraid and assertive but it was not helping them learn how to waltz!

Their song was "Kiss from a Rose" by Seal, for which I used contra dance patterns to establish the partnering for the waltz. The escorts, as the leads, needed to be in sync and work as a team. Although the cotillion was about the females, the escorts were an important part of the presentation as well. So, as we came to the end of the dance, the escorts were given an assignment: to come up with independent movements to show their dexterity as a unit.

I would adjust their movements as needed, but I wanted them to showcase as couples. As postures drooped into insecurity, the escorts were sent out of the room to discuss and figure out what to do.

The parents were a bit distressed that I sent all the males away; however, I reassured them that it would be fine. Having the debutantes practice in their heels, the boys returned like a basketball team, high-fiving each other like they had just figured out a clever play.

> "Gentlemen, do you have something?"
>
> "Yes, ma'am! Would you like to see it?"
>
> "No," I said, "Let's go ladies and run this dance one more time."
>
> The boys, confused and disappointed, said, "Really? Don't you want to check it?"
>
> As if I had challenged them to that basketball game, I said, "I trust you."
>
> The escorts whispered their plan to the debutantes, who giggled and became animated. "Miss, really? You trust us?" said one debutante.
>
> "Absolutely." Parents started peeking in the door, wondering what the commotion was about.

As I started the music, they began their dance, and when we got near the ending, the waltz partners broke from each other, forming two distinct lines facing each other. Never had I seen such focus as debutante-escort entered the space and moved smoothly together without touching. Recognizing the energy of the formation, I burst into a big smile. It was a soul train line! Fingers snapped, shoulders popped,

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ribs rolled, poses were struck, "face" was given. The waltz triplets were gone; they were on their own 4/4 time, dancing their moves elegantly, determined, and together. The parents were already in the room with their phones, filming and beaming, and in that moment, these millennials connected the movements to both their parents' generation and their own.

A Sense of Identity, a Sense of Community

Cotillions are now a rite of passage for young African American women, giving them a sense of empowerment and identity in their community. The night of the cotillion, the dance was a total success. The grace of the debutantes dancing with their fathers was magical. Tinged with a bit of melancholy the men proudly glided across the floor with their daughters. The father-daughter dance ended, with Louis Armstrong's "oooooh yeah" still lingering, the older generation stepped away from the debutantes and the nervous escorts lined up. The mood changed to playful youth when the escorts took the space as the introduction of "Kiss from a Rose" began. Dressed in white tuxedos these young men complimented their respective debutante and the determination on their faces was apparent, this was their night. The waltz with their escorts was stately and elegant but it was the soul train line that showcased the dancers' individuality. I have not seen a more graceful display of the Dougie and the Nay-Nay done in a white gown or a tuxedo, and the young ladies danced in their heels to rival any Beyoncé back-up dancer. Their interpretation of the social dance was neither inappropriate nor embarrassing; rather, they were a statement of who they are. The presentation received a standing ovation when as the music ended, the escorts returned to their line-up bowed to the fathers, received a pink rose from them, and returned to the debutantes, to then kneel and offer the chivalrous gift.

The evening continued with speeches, honorees and the crowning of Miss Cotillionette, but the waltz, with a soul train line, was truly the crowning moment. These debutantes were truly "introduced" to society, as independent, hip, and uplifted.

Acknowledgments

All Photos Courtesy of Reggie Ennett, taken during the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated Zeta Pi Omega Chapter Debutante Cotillion rehearsals, March –May 2014.

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The Mis-Education of the Global Hip-Hop Community: In Conversation With Duane Lee Holland

Tanya Calamoneri

Cultural theft may be an unavoidable outcome of the post-modern condition, in which cultural practices and markers circulate freely. The amount of people who "learn" dances through online sources astonishes me. I teach undergraduates who almost always list hip-hop among their dance idioms, but as I have found, they have very little knowledge about the origins and embedded cultural signifiers in hip-hop movement. I invited Duane Lee Holland, an incredible dancer and educator I worked with through the DanceMotion USA cultural diplomacy program, to come teach a workshop at Colgate University. This event was a seed that grew into an integrated program with Theater/Dance and the Core Challenges of Modernity curriculum, interfacing with W.E.B. DuBois readings and films, and integrating a student-lead hip-hop dance group into the lecture/demonstration. In this essay, we start off the conversation with Holland's experience with DMUSA in the Ukraine (the company was in Donetsk a month before the 2014 protests broke out), but inevitably end up talking about the need for cultural outreach experiences in the United States, as there is so much misunderstanding here at home.

Holland is no stranger to feeling the outsider. At only six years old, he began his career as a gymnast, and it was clear to him even at a young age that he was different from the other gymnasts. He credits his coach, John Edward Pancott, (aka "Chief," a white British man) with teaching him how to handle the scrutiny and prejudice like a world-class athlete. He toured the country with Pancott as an official demonstrator for the United States of America Independent Gymnastic Centers (USAIGC) clinics and for the United States President's Council of Physical Fitness. At the age of 12 he became a member of the Jr. National Olympic US Team, one of two black gymnasts competing at his level in the country. Being a gymnast of color competing at any level was rare at the time. He competed for twelve years, from 1984-1996, including in the 1991 Junior Pan-American Games, 1993 and 1994 Portugal Invitational, USA vs. Mexico dual and 1991 McDonald's International Mixed Pairs. Says Holland, "I developed my understanding of being a cultural ambassador while representing the United States as a gymnast."

Dance was always present at the same time. Holland grew up in home that was filled with music, dancing, and singing, and it drew his attention at an early age. He remembers recording *Soul Train*, *American Music Awards*, and the latest video on *Yo MTV Raps*. One of his prized possessions was an eight-hour VHS tape of choreography from dance documentaries, musicals, award shows, and videos, which he learned and practiced constantly. It was through the arts that he "was able to find the beauty, power, and sophistication of being African-American." When he was fourteen, legendary Philadelphia-based educator LaDeva Davis invited Holland to attend classes at the Creative and

Duane Holland teaching at Colgate University, February 2016. Photo by Andy Daddio.

Performing Arts (CAPA), also known as the "Fame" school. Says Holland, "It was the first time I saw young African-American people dancing live with the passion and precision of seasoned professionals. It was life changing!"

Holland began dancing professionally at seventeen, as a founding member of Rennie Harris' Puremovement, credited with bringing hip-hop to the concert stage. While performing with RHPM, he also taught at a number of major dance studios, festivals, and university programs, including Broadway Dance Center, MIT, Stanford University, Jacobs Pillow, University of Utah, UCLA, Monte Carlo Ballet Company, Pennsylvania Ballet Company, Philadanco, and Alvin Ailey Dance Theater. A true multi-linguist, Holland also danced with contemporary dance companies Ronald K. Brown/Evidence, Peter DiMuro's Public Displays of Motion and Kun-Yang Lin Dancers, and was an original Broadway cast member of *The Lion King* and assistant choreographer and Dance Captain for the Broadway hit, *Hot Feet*. Additionally, he performed in videos with Will Smith and Jill Scott. Holland holds an MFA from the University of Iowa, where he was also on faculty teaching hip-hop. He is currently an Assistant Professor at Boston Conservatory.

In his travels both in the US and abroad, Holland has encountered numerous reflections and iterations of hip-hop, and his response is mixed. We discuss the hip-hop community in Japan, where we have both traveled and performed. It is worth noting that there is a subset of Japanese youth culture called Ganguro style in which youth tan excessively and cornrow or 'fro their hair, in what they deem to be an homage to black culture. Japanese cultural critic Ian Condry argues that:

> The projects of Japanese hip-hoppers can be usefully viewed in terms of what Cornel West calls a 'new cultural politics of difference,' which among other things rejects racial or ethnic essentialism in favor of a more complex understanding of how identity is constructed and enacted in diverse ways (2007, 639).

Ganguro style is a fashion culture distinct from Japanese rappers and hip-hop dancers, many of whom are actually quite knowledgeable about hip-hop history. The Ganguro perversion of black culture highlights the complexity of cultural signifiers traveling between communities and locations. For Condry, "This tension between looking backward (respecting the pioneers) and acting in the present (keeping it real) animates the debates about hip-hop's significance" (2007, 642). While I agree that the boundaries of any art form are determined by practice—what and who is considered hip-hop is difficult to police and often designated by media and marketing agents—at the same time, I feel strongly that aligning oneself with any given genre bears responsibility for knowing what one is referencing.

Says Holland, "every young person that you see around you is trying to dress like you or someone that you know from back home…just like jazz, people take on the form and most of the time the background or history or foundation of a culture is not really discussed." He views it as his responsibility to remind younger generations of dancers of their lineage:

> As far as movement is concerned, Buddha Stretch [Emilio Austin Jr.] and Elite Force were all responsible for creating the hip-hop movement aspect in Asia. Most of the Asian dancers you see coming to the States have all trained with Buddha himself, Caleaf Sellers, Terry Wright, Moncell Durden, Brian Footwork Green, the amazing and wonderful Marjorie Smarth who is the queen of house movement, they all were in this crew, and they would constantly go to Japan and teach . . . You see that it's a small tribe of people but you get the ripples that go on for thousands of miles as far as people they've affected.

The issue, however, is that the global meteor of hip-hop travels at the speed of consumerism, and what sells is what sticks. The Don Campbells and the Boogaloo Sams of the world are not what gets remembered as ever-new generations of youth around the world learn English through hip-hop lyrics. Says Holland, "It's still a fad to a certain level…now it's to a point where it's like hip-hop is "Disneyfied."

Indeed. How else can we explain the boom in hip-hop *as* the global dance form, encountered by the DanceMotion USA participants in the Palestinian territories, Algeria, Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, Nepal, Sri Lanka, to name just a few? Holland's concern, one that I share, is that something vital is being lost in the process of translation. He says:

> If hip-hop is used for people who are growing up in oppressed situations, if hip-hop is a voice for them, I think that is exactly why it's been created . . . That is the life of hip-hop, it's supposed to evolve because it's about enlightenment and consciousness . . . It's movement; it's art; it's supposed to grow, with the accents of different generations the interpretation is going to be to another level. All I ask is that the foundation is strong enough to support all these new innovations so that we can be able to reflect and actually see the clear evolution of what it is.

That evolution, for Holland, has direct links to African diasporic movement. Though there are scholars like Imani Perry *(Prophets of the Hood, 2004)* who understandably situate hip-hop squarely in the African-American experience, as Tricia Rose assesses in her seminal 1994 *Black Noise*, "hip-hop has styles and themes that share striking similarities with many past and contiguous Afro-diasporic musical and cultural traditions" (27). Rose notes the humor, competitiveness, and "one-up-man-ship," in Afro-diasporic cultural forms, particularly oral traditions. She identifies the principles of "flow, layering, and ruptures in line" (38) as concepts that run throughout all elements of hip-hop that have direct connections to Afro-diasporic artistic expression. Holland notes that even though Buddha Stretch, the first hip-hop teacher, called the movements he taught "organized urban social dances," which aligns them with their African-*American* origins (specifically in the context of the 1970s Bronx), Holland himself is quick to draw the association to West African dance, particularly from Senegal. The essence of hip-hop, says Holland, is groove: "that's what I know of it being when it started, and then when you look at it you see the direct connection to West African movement. You see Dum Dum Ba, you see Sabar movement, it's right from it . . ." He says, "my sister Khaleah London got me into Sabar class and I immediately saw the association. In Senegal and in Africa as a whole, the way that they are doing hip-hop is ridiculous, and, of course, because they're in the nucleus, they're in the foundation of where it all comes from." Drawing that connection, as an Afro-diasporic expression filtered through the American context, roots hip-hop in a lineage as a contemporary iteration of a cultural expression with a deep past.

Holland credits his fellow dancer and hip-hop scholar Moncel Durden with delineating hip-hop movement into four different types of bounce:

> It starts with the bent knee bounce, which is a deep plié and understanding of giving in to gravity and creating a long spine, and buoyancy. Then there's the boxer bounce, which is like a double beating or like a boxer in a ring bouncing around, which is what you see in about 80% of hip-hop movement, which is from West African movement. Then there's a walking version, which is like the East Coast stomp, and then the march. So he broke down the bounce in four different ways and was able to articulate it through the syncopation of the release into the floor.

The syncopation to which he refers is in relation to the beat, the rhythm of the music, specifically the drum, which is the influence of African dance. Holland criticizes dancers who do not recognize that foundation: "You can do an isolation until the day comes to an end, but if you're a real hip-hop dancer you're a jazz baby...It's a part of the movement continuum of the diaspora. I do see that *that* is what is being denied. The lineage." To further drive the point home, he makes this analogy: "If you're doing ballet, if you don't really understand how to close that fifth, why are you even moving on to do an adagio?" Holland stresses that it is incumbent on hip-hop consumers to educate themselves.

> You're only able to contextualize if you take the time to understand the fundamentals and train in them, and have some experience in applying them, then be able to go about decontextualizing something, or re-contextualizing something. That's the difference between appropriation and contextualism. It reveals your due diligence.

When he comes to teach or give a lecture/demonstration at a new location, Holland inevitably feels the expectation that he will do headspins and other tricks. He smiles politely and gently informs his audience that he is an "edu-tainer" and that the meaning and the context of the dances are just as important as the flashy, crowd-pleasing moves. He says:

> Nobody can groove anymore, they're taking away from the actual essence of what the culture is. . . . [When I am asked to teach] choreography, I think that's great but we have to be able to meet in the middle, we need to create a foundation of history, theory, and technique, and *then* discuss the evolution of it. That's the issue. People are taking on the responsibility for movements that have been here for centuries before them. . . . But the fact is that there is no documentation.

The lack of an archive makes embodied transmission all the more critical. To simply learn shape, movement dynamics, and rhythm from a YouTube video denies the personal stories of hip-hop dancers, be they Rennie Harris or Crazy-A, who heads the Rock Steady Crew Japan.

Holland notes that even the name hip-hop, indicates the value that should be placed on self-awareness: "the term *hippy* from the Wolof language means to be knowledgeable or conscious, and *hop* is the same as dance, so therefore you are a conscious mover of a knowledgeable dance form, or movement." Embedded in a dance "battle" or cipher is very real communication. Says Holland, "it's a conversation that happens, when you see two people getting off in a circle, it's not about showing off, it's about having a certain type of conversation with the body, and how you're able to annunciate or articulate certain words *with your body*." And that is the sophistication of hip-hop that gets lost when it becomes dance-team-esque choreography. Instead, Holland identifies Thomas DeFrantz's concept of corporeal orature as the lens through which hip-hop movement should be analyzed as a movement practice. "Corporeal Orature," writes DeFrantz, "aligns movement with speech to describe the ability of black social dance to incite action" (2004, 4). Movement has meaning when read by a knowledgeable audience. Writes Jeff Chang, b-boying movement in particular, described physical actions of what one dancer or crew would do to the other. "Sometimes a dance was enough to settle the beef, sometimes a dance set off more beef. This was style as aggression, a competitive bid for dominance" (2004, 116). At their inception, these dances had real implications. As DeFrantz notes, "Black social dance thrives within a structure of corporeal orature that presumes the possibility of efficacious performative gesture" (2004, 4).

As I remind my students, nothing occurs in a vacuum. If this is the so-called "post hip-hop generation" in which every young studio-trained dancer claims hip-hop as part of their pedigree, then our education about dance history needs to catch up. I do not mean to imply that hip-hop should not be adopted by youth around the world, only that there needs to be much more information about the nuance and context of the actual dances, and the voices and experiences of dancers like Holland need to be much more prominent in our texts and communal knowledge.

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Mackenson Israel Blanchard on Hip Hop Dance in Haiti

Mario LaMothe

Haitian dancer-choreographer Mackenson Israel Blanchard's passion is hip hop.[1] A decade-long soloist of Jeanguy Saintus' Ayikodans, Blanchard leads the local hip hop dance movement with a style that borrows from Saintus' brand of Haitian contemporary dance. This fuses Vodou dances, aesthetics with elongated legs and pointed feet that evolve into multiple pirouettes, and Guadeloupian Léna Blou's *Techni'Ka*. Blou's technique draws from the French West Indian indigenous dance and music arts *Gwo Ka*, which privileges a body in disequilibrium, prone to bending, shifting, stumbling yet quickly recovering and never falling. The lower body is percussive; thighs, knees and feet rotate inward; the spine is flexible.

These accents are thought to lavish too much femininity on Blanchard's dancing body and on his hip-hop choreographies with a dozen male and female dancers whom he trains three times a week for twelve hours free of charge, without funding or sponsorship. To dancers and spectators, his practice is perceived as *dwòl*/queer because it disrupts images of masculinity promoted by Haiti's revision of American hip hop known as *Rap Kreyól*. The male-dominated genre riles against political instability and poverty, and often romanticizes slum and gang life and warfare. Bedding women, "getting out and striking rich" (Katz 2013, 202) thread the genre's arts.[2] In terms of dance, barely-clothed women who "*shake dada*" (shake their ass) on command serve as accessories to men who flip, spin, jab, pounce and swagger. Rap and hip hop Kreyól men participate in what cultural historian Katherine Smith formulates as the hyper-masculine Haitian *vagabon*. They are "celebrated for flaunting authority in a country saddled with a long history of authoritarianism, yet the same disregard for social norms makes the *vagabon* an object of fear" (Smith 2012, 131). Hip hop women who perform the *vagabon* are met with derision and disapproval.

I hope that this interview introduces readers to the intertwined complexities of dancing in Haiti, moving through what it is be Haitian, and channeling Black American cultural productions. Ultimately, Blanchard's account of dance in Haiti "illuminate[s] multiple identities—racial, sexual, gender, class— within a country where identity nonconformity has historically positioned one on the margins of society" (Johnson 2012, 3).

ML: You have a special relationship with spectators. When you appear onstage, they see a lithe dancer with very long dreadlocks, and long limbs. You're always spinning, you are quite expressive, so immediately, they scream: "This is a *masisi* (faggot) thing!" Yet, after a while, they are somewhat intrigued. Can you tell me about that relationship when *you* do contemporary dance?

MIB: This [my androgynous body] is not something I intentionally chose. When you know that you have certain qualities that people might appreciate or dislike, you also know that you don't go unnoticed.

Mackenson Isreal Blanchard. Photo courtesy of Blanchard.

They saw you. If [spectators] like it: Good.[3] If they don't like: Too bad. But I know that they saw me. "Ah, this man I saw, he did such a thing." That is my first objective. *The moment I step onstage, I am somebody else. I am no longer Blanchard. Do you understand?*[4]

ML: Yes.

MIB: … I'm happy the way I am because as an interpreter, I'm supposed to be like water. Any dancer and any choreographer should be able to work with you. If s/he says: "I want to see a woman." If whipping my hair allows me to give you a woman, if it's about turning my head [a certain way] to make you say: "this is a woman." Then I know I have that ability. If I need to stick out my chest and bulge my [biceps] to make you say: "This is a man!" Then I know that I can give it. I know I have these assets. And, when I'm onstage, God allows me to do those things without overreaching.

ML: How did you learn hip hop?

MIB: I began learning hip hop by watching television. As you age and mature, you understand what hip hop is and what you're supposed to do with it, contrary to [what] a lot of dancers do in Haiti who are unable to achieve that level yet. As I'm talking to you, I am reaching for [that level] and I'm still growing.

ML: What are you trying to do with hip hop?

MIB: My biggest task is to share [my knowledge] with my fellow dancers. When you go to dance schools in the U.S, when you're looking at an Asian person doing hip hop, frankly Mario, it's extraordinary. Even if it's commercial hip hop abroad—and I'm trying to let my dancers not practice the commercial only—it's not only a smiling commercial [dancer] who is having a good time. You see a dancer who goes with the music's flow. You feel his or her very soul speaking [to you]. It's still my biggest dream to see a Haitian dancer who doesn't just come onstage with a pretty costume, does one step after another, or does a couple of steps and then says he just *kraze* (crushed) it.

What we call hip hop these days is an asset for [Haitian] dancers living in streets, dancers who don't have the means to live, dancers without mothers, whose fathers refuse to pay their [academic] tuition. And these cases are familiar to me. I have dancers who've approached me and said: "Mr. Blanchard, I can't continue because my father refuses to pay my tuition because I'm dancing, I'm dancing hip hop. And they're precise: because they're dancing hip hop. Personally, Mario, when I was leaving medical school, folks at home didn't like it. But, if I'm dancing and saying: "Mom, this is what I've done, it's what I've chosen," you can believe me that I'll come straight at you with [my dance], with hip hop. My dream is to share what I feel with all of these dancers, and to tell them: "Don't come and do a couple of steps, kids!" Because if something happens here [at Saintus' dance studios], and there are fifty dancers, ballet dancers, this or that dancer, the first bad thing that happens, what will the [other dancers] say? "Oh, it's those hip hop boys!"

ML: What hip hop style do you do or prefer?

MIB: I do all styles. It could happen that I don't do breakdance because of ankle and knee problems, but if I'm doing a choreography, I have to know what to tell the dancer to do. I'm not focused on one style. If I stay with one style, I'll look monotonous, and I won't be creative enough to transmit [knowledge] to the dancers. If I need to add another touch to hip hop, like some *folklore*, modern or contemporary, then I'll be stuck.

ML: You've taken classes at New York's Broadway Dance Center. How do you envision the future of hip hop in Haiti after your New York experience?

MIB: I think that the future…is grim. Well, I won't say that it's because the dancers are inexperienced or don't see [hip hop]. There is YouTube. They are on YouTube everyday, they are on Facebook, they are online and they see how things are. At Broadway Dance Center, when an Asian is casting, s/he won't leave another Asian behind. S/he will take all the Asian dancers, and then will choose among the Americans, Brazilians, and dancers from other nations. They're unified. It's a real pleasure to watch those [Asian] dancers dance, which makes me more aware of many things. You're not supposed to be afraid when you're dancing hip hop. I learned that over there. If you're dancing hip hop and you're afraid at the outset, what you're supposed to project won't emerge. As much as you struggle, you won't be able to show it.

ML: One hip hop discourse in Haiti is that if you do hip hop you're a man, if you dance the other techniques, you're not one. How do you dance between the two worlds?

MIB: Here, once again, we go back to education among Haitian people…But you hear that speech all over the world. Nowadays, [negative perceptions of hip hop] is lower elsewhere than it is here. In Haiti, they have one idea in mind: Hip hop is about street life and Rap Kreyól. They don't make a difference between hip hop dance, hip hop music and Rap Kreyól. I've been fighting hard against [these perceptions]. I found this problem among my dancers. They won't do certain dances. Like voguing, which is pure hip hop. It requires strength, and it requires precision. You see messages, feelings, and interpretation. It's a battle. It's done face-to-face. I'm dueling with you. And to return to the hip hop logic we're discussing, I say to the dancers this is what hip hop is. In Haiti, they won't vogue.

ML: Why not?

MIB: They won't do it because it's too effeminate. If they catch a hip hop dancer doing it, they'll say: These guys are not doing hip hop, they're doing a woman's thing." As the slogan goes: "if it's not hip hop, it's a woman's thing." There's a dancer who saw me dancing and said: "Ah, Blanchard is into women's things: *folklore*." And I was just done choreographing a contemporary piece. During that show, I also did a hip hop choreography. And I said to him: "Young man, I won't categorize you as a dancer because if you come here, you'll only do breakdance. Me, I'll come here and I'll do what you say is a woman's thing, and [whatever] you thought you did it well, I'll do it better than you." I always use that example with my dancers whenever they talk about what is for women and not for women [in dance]. If you do hip hop, you're not a woman. As a matter of fact, many of them are not dancing. They're just doing movement.

ML: So, in Haiti hip hop dance is about disorder and it's a criminal activity. It's about more than being a man, it's excessive?

MIB: Exactly.

ML: What about women who dance hip hop? What are they considered?

MIB: Right. It's the opposite. Male dancers say that women who perform b-boy style are lesbians. Ones who are not seen as masculine or lesbians in Haiti are women who shake their booty. If they shake *dada* (booty), guys have no problem that they're part of hip hop because they are being women. If they dance hard, they are lesbians.

ML: In your opinion, is there a relationship between hip hop and Haiti?

MIB: I've been asked that question before. Or it was a comment similar to yours. I answered to the effect that there are certain things we didn't invent, like ballet. We became acquainted with ballet. Haitian people do all dances in order to express ourselves, to illustrate what we feel, what we'd like or dislike [for ourselves]. My relationship with hip hop, or my dancers' relationship to hip hop is a relationship about feelings and to being *angaje* (socially and politically committed). Hip hop can be used for activism too, contrary to [what] commercial hip hop [does]. If you choose to be *angaje*, you have to know the technique and you have to learn hip hop. Also, you need money to dance ballet or modern, whereas you don't to dance hip hop.

ML: Isn't there a risk that a Haitian hip hop dancer might valorize an imported genre over what's locally grown?

MIB: Yes, there is. And people have made that remark before. Certain people don't like that. You do a performance and a person says: "Why didn't you dance a *folklore*?" Personally, I don't dwell on that because, as a people, you have to be open to all existing cultures. Otherwise, you will always stay in *folklore* and never go anywhere. At the same time, if you're doing hip hop, you have to do it well so that you don't open a door for a person to say: "Don't even do this, because what you're doing is silly."

ML: What does "doing well" mean for you?

MIB: Doing well means: being disciplined, meticulous, and *original*[5]. It's not as if you saw a Chris Brown choreography and you reproduced it exactly, and what's worse, Chris Brown's dancers do it better than you. And spectators see that you're mimicking [Chris Brown's dancers]. Oftentimes, we mimic. That is why we provide viewers the mean to say that what you're doing is not good. But if you show up with a hip hop choreography, you bring something with it that viewers are not accustomed to seeing then, believe me, the person won't say that you're valorizing another culture. On the contrary, s/he will say: "Ah, a Haitian who's doing something from another country's culture? That should be appreciated!"

ML: What Haitian themes do you explore with hip hop?

MIB: I have this idea about doing a hip hop *yanvalou*.[6] But automatically that you begin to give the movement to the dancer, he makes a face. When he makes a face, believe me he'll never be able to approach your movement the way he should because he's not mentally ready to do so. It demands a lot of work, time, maturity, and patience. It also demands experience. When I look at those [Asian] dancers, frankly I feel pity for our own dancers.

ML: Why do you feel pity?

MIB: They're not ready to learn. They show you that they're willing but in terms of learning and having an open mind, they find that it takes too much time, or that in the time it would take to learn what you are teaching them here, they would go elsewhere and get a dance contract, and then get paid. Or you have a rehearsal and the dancer won't show up but s/he's doing a show for [the dance school] Dance For Life.[7] Because the dancer will get paid there. S/he won't be open to the fact that I've just learned something abroad, when s/he has not yet gotten the chance to travel there, to learn what I've just learned and what I want to transmit.

ML: If I understand you correctly, you work with a group of dancers who don't pay tuition. You don't pay them and they don't pay you. There's remuneration if the group does a show...

MIB: They don't want to learn and would rather follow the money. And there are certain things you can't say to the dancers when they tell you that they don't have bus fare, don't have this or that, or their parents are unable to do this or that. You can't block the dancer. So you have to say: "Okay, fine. It's a service to the community." What hurts you is that you're willing and you're determined to give [what you have] but there are the society's and the country's problems. I'll say it's the country's problems and not the dancers' fault that they're in a situation wherein they can't choose the work and they're compelled to choose the easy money.

ML: Okay.

MIB: Simply, I want to hope that once I can say to the dancers: "Don't wander around, come take class here because I can help [you] find something. Or tomorrow, don't be afraid. Stay and learn. Trust me that after you learn, we'll do more than we hoped."

ML: The last word is yours. Is there a message you'd like to relay to American audiences about hip hop in Haiti?

MIB: To readers, I want to say that, in Haiti, it's true that we're open to other cultures. First, we have an education problem and we have a mindset problem that get in our way. Secondly, we have a lot of talent and a lot of potential. But talent and potential only cannot help you become somebody tomorrow. Living with those talent and potential without honing them, without embellishing them and without doing something serious with them will get you nowhere. You will remain a dancer who had talent, and at a certain age, there's little you can do and you cannot transmit anything. You'll be able to take and stand in the back, but you'll never be able to, one day, be responsible and transmit what you know. If there are people abroad encouraging young dancers in Haiti, I'd encourage them to guide local dancers down the right path. Not the wrong path. It's not about getting a visa and leaving. Oftentimes, they don't tell [Haitian] dancers about the reality in the U.S. When [our] dancers get there, they'll face it and they'll fail. Readers should advise Haitian dancers well.

Notes

1. Interview with Blanchard by author, Petion-Ville, Haiti, July 2 and 6, 2015. Edited and excerpted with Blanchard's permission.
2. According to Jonathan Katz, the local population and Rap Kreyól artists idolizes Haitian-American hip hop artist Wyclef Jean because he symbolizes "two big dreams: getting rich and getting out" (202).
3. Spoken in English.
4. Spoken in French.
5. Emphasis Blanchard's.
6. The Vodou dance yanvalou favors bodily undulations to represent snakes and water's devastating power.
7. The hip hop dance school, Dance For Life Studio, directed by former Haitian First Lady Sophia Saint Rémy Martelly's niece, Savina Saint Rémy, engages street dancers to teach young women of Haiti's middle and upper class.

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“Recipe For Elevation”

Dionne C. Griffiths

Take one limber brown body
drenched in an emerald leotard
and glazed in almond brown tights.
Sprinkle throbbing feet
With boxes of band-aides.
Place perfect port de bras
To the side.
Throw in a dash of hip isolations
And pulsating precision.
Drizzle in fluid torso undulations.
Shake in frizzy hair pulled back in a bun
With a tiara made of sweat.
Bake on high for 5, 6, 7, 8 counts.
Remove from the oven of a studio or stage
When the dancer’s spirit is elevated and
her skin is a glowing shade of brown.

When Dance Voices Protest

Gregory King & Ellen Chenoweth

On December 13, 2014, Philadelphia dancers organized a march in coordination with the national group Dancing for Justice in response to police violence in Ferguson and across the country. In this dialogic essay, authors Gregory King—a Jamaican-born Black man, and Ellen Chenoweth—a US-born White woman, investigate the intersectionality of embodied practice in the realm of street protests. This essay includes photos and quotes from community participants, chosen to reflect the sensibility of the day’s events.

On Saturday December 13th, I danced next to a white person dancing next to a black person in protest of the grand jury’s decision not to indict Officer Daniel Pantaleo in the killing of Eric Garner. I saw no discomfort, only dialogue. Dressed in black, red, and white, we moved together demanding justice for Eric Garner, Michael Brown, Akai Gurley, Tamir Rice, Trayvon Martin, and so many others. As a sole participant I claimed my own space. As a group, we danced our collective pain.

Professor of Dance at Temple University, Merian Soto, embodies the phrase “hands up, don’t shoot” as she marches in solidarity with fellow dancers.

Musicians led Philadelphia's cohort of "Dancing for Justice" up Broad Street. "Black Lives Matter!" was chanted often as we marched during the protest. (The hashtag #blacklivesmatter was also voted word of the year by The American Dialect Society.)

It was a cold and clear December afternoon, but not too cold. We marched up to City Hall, traveling north on the thoroughfare of Broad Street. One hundred and fifty people of various races gathered at Headlong Dance Studio in Philadelphia; many were dancers or affiliated with the dance community.

It's been three weeks since the announcement not to indict Officer Pantaleo, and in an attempt to join thousands of protesters worldwide, the dance community of Philadelphia descended upon City Hall to acknowledge the humanness that unites us without dismissing the injustices that divide. Our bodies were vehicles from many lands, having driven down many roads, just to get to one destination. My black body embodying sadness as I inhabited the space of other bodies that will never lose children with bodies like mine. With a reality choreographed to embrace equality, I participated knowing that my part in the dance may be cut short with the impact of bullet or simply with the silence of my neighbor.

To say we marched is not accurate. We traveled as much as possible in a sequence of steps: 8 counts with our hands up, 8 counts holding

Before taking to the streets, protestors gathered at Headlong Studios where we made signs denouncing police brutality.

During the protest, marchers formed lines on opposite sides of Broad Street. This action allowed traffic to gain access to the street and was also strategic in making the signs visible.

parts of the body as if wounded, 8 counts hunched over with our hands behind our backs, the final 8 counts bringing our hands to our chests.

The deaths of unarmed black men and women have sparked days of racial tension and unrest in Ferguson, New York, Chicago, Miami, Washington D.C., Los Angeles, Philadelphia and other U.S. cities. Signs reading "Stop Killing Us," "I Can't Breathe," and " Our History Does Not Have To Be Our Future," were among those held by the crowd.

At Headlong Studios in South Philly, before we began, event organizer Lela Aisha Jones led the group in a brief but powerful exercise involving breathing together. We took a moment to remember what our purpose was, why we had assembled together. We were there to mourn.

Jones went over the route, landmarks for moments of stillness, gestures we would perform, and words we would sing. Police liaisons provided some comfort when they went over worst-case scenarios in the event of an arrest. Co-organizer, Jumatatu Poe and assistant professor of dance at Swarthmore College, demonstrated the dirge step that would accompany our song as we made our way through the streets of Philadelphia towards City Hall.

A dirge is a song of grief intended to accompany a funeral, and as we mourned the lives of people of color who have been gunned down senselessly, we stepped from side to side with hands raised above our heads. The music guided us as our hands made contact with our bodies until they were behind our backs. This unison action physicalized the despair of seeing innocent lives disregarded. On the downbeat of the drums that accompanied us the entire length of the march, we moved our hands from our chests defiantly, sending the energy towards the heavens. These 32 counts were repeated on and off from Federal Street to City Hall.

I reveled in the energy of executing Juma's score surrounded by others doing the same movements. We love unison on-stage, and it works on the street.

– March participant, Germaine Ingram

In the middle of the route, an older white couple suddenly appeared at the back of the march. They had seen us passing by. "More people

Dancing For Justice brought together Philadelphia's diverse dance community in support of equality and justice.

"Our History does not have to be Our Future."

should be doing this!" the woman said. We passed an older black woman dancing joyously on the sidewalk, cheering us on, shaking her cane. Led by Poe, the marchers sang—

I still hear my brother crying, "I can't breathe"
Now I'm in the struggle saying, "I can't leave"
Calling out the violence of these racist police
We ain't gonna stop till our people are free
We ain't gonna stop till our people are free

I felt a gnawing feeling in my stomach knowing another reality: that the morbid past of African American history will never be erased with the bumping of fists, shaking of hands, or holding of signs.

…I did need a space to let out some of the anger and despair that I have inside.

– March participant, Saroya Corbett

The fact is that it will take more than protests to affect perceptions of racial inequality, identity, and inclusion. But this—our bodies moving together in mourning and in protest—this is a start.

The organizers of color decided to have the whole group embody the same movements. I'm a white woman, and as I lay down in front of the steps at University of the Arts, I let myself sink into the ground, and felt the deaths of murdered black citizens with my whole body in a visceral, powerful way. I understand other decisions, but was glad I was able to participate in this expression at this particular action. Sensitive to critiques like this one (Katwiwa, 2016), I never put my hands up during a previous march. I appreciated that it was clear here that everyone was expected to take part in the set choreography—including this gesture—and that this was a decision made by leaders of color.

Upon arriving at City Hall, we made three concentric circles (an Adinkra symbol for leadership organized by Jeannine Osayande) on the lawn at City Hall, and Jones called out the names of seventy victims whose lives have been taken by those who were meant to protect us. After she called each name we responded, "Your life matters, rest in peace!"

I saw my own tears reflected on many other faces in the circle. My own voice kept faltering, unable to speak through the emotion, and yet collectively we were able to keep going—and then there was a "shedding," a time for free movement, individuals entering the center

Upon arriving at City Hall, we made three concentric circles—an Adinkra symbol for greatness, charisma and leadership organized by Jeannine Osayande.

of the circle to dance, or to simply breathe. Finally we all laid down in the grass, silent and still for seven minutes, representing the seven minutes during which Eric Garner was choked to death.

As we dispersed, I reflected on the promise that we are vessels of triumph, choosing to embrace each other's struggles, knowing the country has come a long way but we still have further to go. Protesters everywhere are signals of hope, humming the hymn of redemption, singing alongside multitudes of ethnic groups in harmony.

Reflecting on this collective embodiment, I think about bodily transformation... how change at the level of the body might lead to social change.

– March participant, Julie Johnson

Dancers are natural leaders for any kind of social movement. We know about healing and ritual. We know how to move together. We know how to work with very little, how to create something out of nothing. As we continue to respond to the ongoing national tragedy of institutional racism and state-sanctioned killing—dance can make a powerful contribution.

Dance entertains but dance also mirrors the imbalances in society.

Politics danced as we organized our bodies to encircle freedom.

Freedom danced as we worked to change the landscape of hate.

Moving within a movement, our choreographed bodies broke

through the restrictions of tyranny as we boldly cried out for justice.

The power of the moving body can serve as a vehicle for social change.

Change that uses difference to highlight commonality.

We danced for justice. We danced for equality.

Alone and together,

We danced for our ancestors. We danced for our children.

The sound of the drums ricocheted off the walls as we tunneled through the archways of City Hall.

The musicians led the protest to the lawns of City Hall where, after the protest ended, participants dispersed in silence.

Police onlookers watched in encouragement, in seeming awe. Several remarked on how well organized the march was.

While protest organizer Lela Aisha Jones shouted out the names of 70 unarmed individuals killed at the hands of police, participants responded, "Your life matters, rest in peace!"

Protesters enacted a die-in symbolizing the seven minutes Eric Garner was left on the sidewalk after being choked by Officer Daniel Pantaleo.

In some cultures, funerals aren't a place to mourn but to celebrate the life of the deceased. So as we mourned the lives of those we've lost, we came together in solidarity to celebrate their lives through dance.

The day ended with Capoeira, an Afro-Brazilian art form blending martial arts, dance, acrobatics and music used to prepare slaves for fighting their masters in a time of uprising.

I saw friends embracing before and after the event. There were plenty I didn't know in the group, but I knew that there was no more than one degree of separation between us.

What happens in moments like the one created in Philadelphia on December 13th, 2014 may not immediately achieve the eradication of inequality, but by dancing—moving—to raise awareness, maybe, just maybe, we can start a new conversation.

Let it not end here.

Special thanks to thINKingDANCE.

All photographs courtesy of Aidan Un.

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Talking Black Dance: Outside In

“Inside/Outside/In”

Takiyah Nur Amin & Thomas F. DeFrantz

We run, jump, turn, leap
We pop, dip, spin, and drop

Over under around and through
Making form, making do.

Time. **Space.**
Expectations. **Assumptions.**

What do you see when
you try to see me?

Conjuring future
Am I your brother?
Your daughter?

Out of things past
Was I servant?
Were you master?

Discarding nothing.
Movement occasions repose

I remember...
Cool pose
and I forget.

New possibilities beyond the
aesthetic and the **athletic.**

What do you see in my dance?
What remains?

We remain.
In motion.

Pivot, Pivot, Run, and Jump: The Choreography of Basketball as Art and Sport

Maura Keefe, PhD

In this essay, I begin to consider the ways in which African American expressive culture has threaded through the performance of basketball. I look at instances of basketball in the arena of choreographed entertainment to propose the ways that the physical action has led to metaphoric movement. This has led to a shifting from an identification of African American basketball players as a collective body to individual bodies and back again to the collective with an alternate identification. Using an understanding of choreography, theatricality, and improvisational practices from a dance theorist’s perspective, I want to argue that basketball has shifted along a continuum of entertainment and performance to sport in ways that are driven by racial politics and spectator desire. To demonstrate this, I analyze at the basketball playing of the Harlem Globetrotters prior to the desegregation of the National Basketball Association (NBA). I conclude by positing a connection to a wildly popular Nike ad performed by basketball players and choreographed by hoofer Savior Glover.

This is not a new idea. Ralph Ellison wrote:

> Without the presence of Negro American style our jokes, our tall tales, even our sports would be lacking in the sudden turns, the shocks, the swift changes (all jazz-shaped) that serve to remind us that the world is ever unexplored and that while a complete mastery of life is mere illusion and the real secret of the game is to make life swing. (Porter 2001, 11)

The world that Ellison describes is not the world that I live in. Neither is the world of African American basketball: I am a dance historian. I have long been intrigued by the many connections between sports and dance, both on the concert stage and in athletic venues. As an observer of sports—a spectator rather than a participant—I have expertise about moving bodies, but am also an outsider. Unlike for the players, both those historically excluded and even those included, there is little personal risk for me, a white woman, to be an outsider. As a consummate consumer of action, I seek meaning in the moves, in addition to understanding the moves themselves.

When I first started thinking about the Harlem Globetrotters, I used the word “blurring” to describe the Globetrotters’ crossing of the divide between sports and theatrical entertainment. But I came to realize the blurring is too hazy, potentially perpetuating the notion that the success of the Globetrotters was happenstance. To recognize the deliberate act and the agency of the players themselves, I have rejected the blurry for sharp relief. Black and white, if you will. So let me offer an example of a physical action that leads to a movement metaphor. Passing.

Bounce pass. Chest pass. Overhead pass. Touch pass. Baseball pass. Lance pass. Jump pass. Elbow pass. Behind-the-back pass. Blind pass.

Passing is, however, so much more than precision ball handling for which basketball players in general and the Globetrotters specifically are known. Passing is also a risky move toward power. Passing, historically, has meant people who are legally defined as black adopting white identities and occupying white spaces and places. Geographer David Delaney points out that passing is about "the specialization of race and the radicalization of space" (Pile 2011, 1). Passing, he argues, involves "an invisible, yet successful, trespassing." Delaney states three conditions that contribute to successful passing:

> First, space has to be segregated and bounded, with a homogeneity of the population within the boundaries.
> Second, these boundaries have to be porous.
> Third, there have to be ways to fool the border guards (whatever the form that this 'fooling' or 'guarding' takes.)[1]

The segregated space? Basketball at the college and professional level prior to the 1950s. The porous boundaries? The basketball court. The fooling of the border guards (in this case, the other teams and the audience)? Redefining of the sport of basketball as an entertaining performance.

The first team to comprise the Harlem Globetrotters came from an all black high school on the south side of Chicago, where they had all played basketball.[2] There was little possibility of any of them going on to play college basketball in the Midwest in the 1920s. Historian Charles H. Martin writes about the exclusion of African Americans from basketball in his essay, "The Color Line in Midwestern Sports, 1890-1960," declaring that basketball was the predominant sport that excluded players of color (2002, 85). He says:

> Although information is sketchy for the period before 1920, it is also safe to assume that at least a few aspiring black athletes were turned away from their college teams and quietly accepted their fate without protest, leaving no public record of their personal humiliation. Although such exclusion undoubtedly happened in football, it eventually became primarily identified with basketball and even continued in the latter sport for a while after World War II. (2002, 87)

Martin's point, that the exclusion of African American athletes from basketball in particular, suggests an imperative for the creation of an alternative vehicle for their athletic ability. Martin goes on to point out that not only did universities want to maintain their own all-white status, they "attempted to draw the color line when competing against other universities within the region." As Martin says, "Officials at these schools considered African Americans to be a socially inferior race and hence viewed competition against black players as 'lowering' the status normally associated with whiteness" (2002, 87).

It's in this context that the Globetrotters were formed. The first iteration of the team was called the Savoy Big Five, taking their name from the famed Chicago ballroom, the Savoy. "The Savoy ballroom was primarily a jazz music venue, but it also served as a community center and a sporting venue from its opening in 1927 until 1954. Named after a similar venue that opened a year earlier in New York, it was the first major dance hall to which African-Americans were admitted."[3]

In his expansive history of *The Regal Theater and Black Culture*, black studies scholar Clovis E. Semmes writes:

> Very early, management used basketball to drum up business at the Savoy. Abe Saperstein was coaching an all-Black basketball team owned by Walter Ball, a star pitcher with the Negro League's Chicago American Giants… These games attracted large crowds, and Savoy management planned to hold dances after the games. The team was billed as the Savoy Big Five… (2006, 24)

At the time, *The Chicago Defender*, a newspaper geared toward an African American readership reported: "The Savoy ballroom, Chicago, has taken to basketball games. This may cause a big draw as the Chicago folks are wild about basketball and incidentally will endear themselves to the palace dance hall" (Semmes 2006, 24). (An aside here. The goal was to use basketball to get the audience to attend dances.)

Abe Saperstein, a white Jewish man from the north side of Chicago, dropped out of college when he didn't make the basketball team. He became the coach of the Savoy Big Five. In choosing to rename the team the Harlem Globetrotters, Saperstein was not only capitalizing on the popularity of "Harlem" at the height of the Harlem Renaissance, he also trusted that the "Harlem" as a signifier would notify opposing teams and audiences that the Globetrotters were black.

The Globetrotters started barnstorming, traveling around the Midwest playing games against any team that would play them. They weren't always "the Clown Princes of basketball" as they get called in their publicity materials. They were serious athletes with outstanding athletic ability, and virtually unbeatable on the court. Two factors led them to start the antics for which they became so well known. First, the practical or better said, the physical reality: there were only five of them in the early years. Playing around allowed them to rest their legs and catch their breath. The second factor is also a physical reality; white teams did not want to be beat by a black team. As the narrator says in the A&E documentary *Harlem Globetrotters*, "Funny is the way black men could beat white men in a game, and get away with it."[4]

In the same documentary, white sportswriter Frank Deford argues, "It was harder for the Globetrotters to get games, being a black team, and particularly a good black team. It was one thing to play a black team sort of out of the goodness of your heart and to sell a few seats, it's another thing to get your tail whipped."[5] Deford continues, "If the Globetrotters could amuse people, then that got a foot in the door."[6] The players got creative, inventing new strategies for entertaining the audiences that simultaneously led to innovations in the sport of basketball. They executed plays that no one had seen before. Some of their innovations, "From the alley-oop to the slam dunk to the behind-the-back pass" are now fundamental to any game.[7]

> Players performed dribbling acts, threw behind-the-back passes, dunked with a ferocity unseen at the time, twirled the ball on their fingers and copied a football technique by drop-kicking balls into the basket. They bewildered opponents with fancy passing involving all five players. One player hurled the ball across the court with so much reverse spin that it came back to him like a yo-yo.[8]

They were as Todd Boyd, historian and scholar of race and popular culture says, "playing a whole new style of ball. As white opponents hurled two handed shots toward the basket, Inman Jackson was dunking the ball."[9]

Boyd compares the difference in the movement styles—what I would describe as not only the ball handling, but also the quickness, mobility, acceleration and deceleration – between white and black players at that time as the difference between classical music and jazz. He says: "Black basketball was very free. The rules and the structure were suggested for you to improvise."[10] Like the best movement improvisers, the Globetrotters had a skill set and choreographic structure they tirelessly rehearsed, developed, and enhanced. And, like the best improvisers, playing and moving in and around the structure allowed for individual expressivity. As a group, the players executed the five-man ball passing set to "Sweet Georgia Brown."

From their early games in 1926/27 to 1948, the Globetrotters built their reputation as funny and talented, building a fan base for themselves as well as the sport of basketball.[11] The relatively new NBA (National Basketball Association) had the Globetrotters play prior to their games to get fans into arenas. The use of the Globetrotters to build an audience hearkens back to the basketball games played in Chicago's Savoy Theater to bring in an audience for dance. 1948 because of a noteworthy event as reported in a news item in *Time* magazine.

> The Harlem Globetrotters, pro basketballers, are so good that they spend most of their time playing for laughs. Up to last week they had won 101 games this season and lost none. Usually, they so far outclassed their opposition that spectators seldom glanced at the Scoreboard. They paid to see the famed Negro team do their tricks (rolling the ball down their arms, through the enemy's legs, or lining up in formation like a football team).[12]

While the act of segregation created a collective black body to discriminate against, individual players were noted for their individual strengths, even in the mainstream press. For example, that same piece in *Time* magazine described: "The team's star: Reece ('Goose') Tatum, whose huge hands dangle gorilla-fashion almost to his knees, and who handles a basketball the way most people handle an orange."[13] The analogy, in the likening of Tatum to a gorilla, is jarring.

The event that made this newsworthy was the game between the NBA championship team, the Minnesota Lakers, and the Harlem Globetrotters. The Globetrotters played and won a serious game of basketball. While the win against the NBA championship made news, it took two more years before an African American player was offered an NBA contract. That player? Harlem Globetrotter Nat "Sweetwater" Clifton. Clifton, whose ball handling skills honed in the entertainment arena of the Globetrotters served him well in the NBA, more than crossed the porous border that was necessary to pass. The collective body of the black team now became about the individual black bodies of the extraordinary few who were selected to play for the previously whites only teams.

By the 1960s, as African American players became an increasing presence in the formerly all-white basketball court, the Globetrotters' physical ingenuity and artistry became subsumed into the regulated structure of the NBA. There is further research to be done about the disdain for the Globetrotters in the Civil Rights era, with critics charging that the precision ball handling, clowning, and entertaining was akin to "Uncle Tom-ing." And further to consider how the Globetrotters function in the 21st century.

But for now I want to conclude by proposing is a 21st century iteration of the blurring of lines between athletics and entertainment. By the last decades of the 20th century, mainstream United States has not only recognized and embraced African American basketball players, it had begun to capitalize on the selling potential of virtuosic African American basketball body. The phenomenal athletic and marketing success as Michael Jordan of Chicago Bulls led to an increase in popularity of both the NBA and Nike, who produced the eponymous Air Jordan basketball sneakers. In 2001, the advertising firm of Wieden+Kennedy created a television ad for Nike called "Freestyle" that was an instant hit. The commercial paired basketball players—some professional, some streetball players—with the dance phenomenon Savion Glover. Glover, the African American hoofer, came into international fame for the Broadway hit *Bring in Da Noise, Bring in Da Funk*. It was the players' rhythms that Glover dare I say "tapped into." The goal of the ad was to create a quote unquote "street vibe" by synchronizing flashy court moves to music. Synchronizing flashy court moves to music—that phrase could also describe ball passing to the sounds of "Sweet Georgia Brown." While the function of the ad was to sell Nike products, it did more than that. The commercial became such a hit that an extended version of it was released as a music video and played on MTV. It also became the fodder for a musical called *Ball*. *Playbill*, the New York theatre magazine, announced a reading of the musical that centered around an inner city neighborhood and the basketball court.[14]

While the Globetrotters during the era of segregation were about the team and the collective body, in this ad, the individual players are highlighted. It is an inversion rather than a reiteration of the Globetrotters. The athletic virtuosity concealed by the early Globetrotters, displayed as entertainment, is in this instance revealed to be artistic. The aesthetic value of the playing, the freestyling, the improvising, is the point of the ad.

In the 21st century, basketball is known as an African American man's sport. And we have learned over the past seventy some odd years that the choreography of the game calls for innovation, creativity, and thanks to the Harlem Globetrotters, passing.

Notes

1. David Delaney, as summarized by Steve Pile (2011, 1–2).
2. Wendell Phillips High School, an all-black high school.
3. http://www.domu.com/chicago/history-map/savoy-ballroom, retrieved 24 October 2013.
4. *Biography – The Harlem Globetrotters: America's Court Jesters*. A&E Home Video, 2005.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. http://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20101202005254/en/Harlem-Globetrotters-Introduce-Basketball%E2%80%99s-First-Ever-4-Point-Shot retrieved 23 October 2013.
8. http://news.investors.com/management-leaders-in-success/100400-350265-basketball-promoter-abe-saperstein-innovations-let-his-globetrotters-glitter.htm#ixzz2iaKoUjpO retrieved 23 October 2013.
9. Todd Boyd, A&E.
10. I have written elsewhere about the role of improvisation in sports. See especially "The Ickey Shuffle and the Dirty Bird: African American Improvisational Dance in the Endzone" *Movement Research Journal* Improvisation is Dead; Long Live Improvisation (Issue#29, Spring 2005).
11. There is some debate about the year of the first Globetrotters game.
12. *Time* 51, 9 (March 1948): 53.
13. Unknown author. Time 51, 9 (March 1948): 53.
14. Playbill.com April 2, 2001.

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Sonya's character dealing with her problematic hair. Noir? Photographer: Uupi Tirronen. Image courtesy of Zodiak - Center for New Dance.

Noir? Choreographies of Blackness by Sonya Lindfors

Hanna Järvinen

Most people in Finland would not associate contemporary art dance with Africanness or vice versa. Yet, currently, the face of contemporary dance is changing with an ever-increasing young generation of Finns whose corporealities or dance interests do not fit the assumed folk-dancing blond-and-blue-eyed stereotype that had Finns so easily assimilate the German National Socialist rhetoric of Aryan alliance during the Second World War. Not only is hip hop only the latest in a century of interest in African American music and dance, but internationalization of the society has brought even the most insular people from the agrarian hinterland in contact with people visibly hailing from other cultures.

Since the 1990s, refugees from Somalia have become emblematic both of Africa and of refugees in Finnish political discourse,[1] revealing just how endemic racism is in Finland and Finnish institutions.[2] The recent influx of refugees from Syria has acted as a catalyst for an unprecedented wave of intolerance and hatred, condoned and propagated in media seeking to create "two extremes": violent racists on one hand, and those believing in human rights on the other. Instead of condemning the development, leading politicians have asked for a "dialogue" with racists throwing Molotov cocktails at refugee center aid workers and sending death threats to anyone deemed "tolerant", including the Finnish Lutheran Church and the Red Cross.[3] With 24% of the police force voting for the party refusing to discipline even the worst racists, The True Finns, the second largest party in the 2015 parliamentary elections, very little is being done to curb terrorist organizations and vigilante groups targeting minorities.

But Africanness in Finland is as varied as the continent whose name so often takes the place of geographical and cultural specificity awarded to the so-called "developed nations," a generalization that, as Richard Dyer amongst others has argued, serves the hegemony of whiteness as complex and plural vis à vis the colored "Others," represented as homogenous and reducible to characteristics predetermined by skin color (Dyer 1997). In the four performers of *Noir?*, choreographer Sonya Lindfors has gathered four very different connections to Africa: those whose parents came from two continents, those adopted at a young age, those whose parents came as refugees, and immigrants with African diasporic backgrounds. All four performers identify themselves as Black and as Finns, but the brilliance of Lindfors's choreography lies in emphasizing their heterogenic relationships to both African diaspora and Finnish national identity. By emphasizing the individuality of the performers, none of whose stories correspond with the slave narrative of American popular culture also evoked in the work, Lindfors counteracts the racist notions about the Other as homogenous and already-known.

The daughter of two doctors, one from Finland and one from Cameroon, Lindfors has been drawn into the public discourse on multiculturalism and racism already before her break-through choreography *Noir?*, which premiered at ZODIAK, Helsinki 29 November 2013, to great acclaim (the performances sold out in record time). Coming to dance through her Finnish mother's passionate interest but thrown out of ballet class for misbehaving, Lindfors belongs to the generation of Finnish dance makers emerging from the upper secondary schools of performing arts, where she encountered art dance as a potential profession.[5] Since *Noir?*, Lindfors has drawn attention to, for example, the racist imagery in Finnish performing arts and to the limited range of roles given to racialized artists in the context of Finnish art.[6]

In interviews, Lindfors has discussed her feelings of rootlessness. In Finland, she has usually been the only black kid in the classroom; in her travels to different parts of Africa, she states, she has felt thoroughly European: an educated, independent single woman. Her parents, she says, cannot understand this being-in-between, because they have their roots in their home cultures. For *Noir?*, Lindfors therefore sought out young Finnish artists who shared her experience—actor and rapper Deogracias 'Gracias' Masomi and three dancers, Ima Iduozee, Esete Sutinen and herself. Lindfors has expressed concern for the young generation of people of mixed backgrounds and second-generation immigrants in Finland and sees her work as giving voice to these minorities.[7]

In *Noir?*, the performers share stories and performance practices onstage in order to explicitly question the overwhelming, hegemonic whiteness of "Finnishness" in the media and in everyday encounters. This is an explicitly political piece that subverts racist stereotypes and narratives, but its humor is not facile, its appropriations of "Africanness" and "Finnishness" are filled with anxiety, nervousness and shame. Indeed, Sutinen noted in the Finnish National Broadcasting Company YLE's news story about the work that for her, sharing negative feelings about her diasporic experience—she was adopted from an Ethiopian orphanage—was particularly important in the rehearsal process of this work.[8]

Noir? is a diasporic work that also problematizes the association of African diaspora with the African American slavery discourse, exemplified with particular poignancy in a section (c. 15 minutes into the performance) where Masomi first sings *Strange Fruit* dressed as a cowboy and then, as the music changes to Ennio Morricone's *L'Arena*, repeatedly "shoots" the dancers. This merges into Masomi's solo, where he tells of how he came to Finland from the Republic of Congo as a four-year-old refugee fleeing a civil war and has not been to Africa since. Elsewhere, he has stressed he does not want to be the "mascot" for any group of people and that he feels he has been identified too much with this refugee story.[9] His breakthrough hit *HKI* explicitly expresses his twenty-year love for his home town of Helsinki, but his connection to rap and hip hop derives from the general Finnish youth culture and American music culture rather than any personal connection to "Africanness" in this music. In his solo in *Noir?* he stresses that he has never before danced on stage, but chose to do a Kongolese dance, ndombolo, which he also states he has never done before. In a series of performances, this insistence on "never before" creates a similar disjunction to the stories that we are told as true: with every claim presented, we choose to believe the performer's truth that this, once again, is the very first time.

Noir? plays with assumptions of "African" dance and black bodies by mixing all kinds of dance together. Following Sutinen's impersonation of Josephine Baker to *Sing, Sing, Sing*, a number in which she stumbles, blinded by her oversized afro wig, Iduozee, wearing a fake moustache, continues the cabaret act by taking "requests" from the audience. These include capoeira, breakdancing, and "voodoo dancing with tricks" that he proceeds to merge into "a traditional West African rite of passage". "It's an African dance because, as we all know, everything originates from Africa, especially dances and . . . things," he proclaims, claiming to "call to my ancestors" with a mixture of moves from ballet to contemporary dance I for one immediately associated with Jeremy Wade's Deleuzean articulations of disorientation. This ethnic dance is followed by "maybe something a little less ethnic", meaning (halting, limping) freestyle rapping, after which Iduozee apologizes for forgetting the lyrics and suggests maybe he should just take off his shirt. First drawing attention to the ethnic specificity of presumably "universal" Western dance techniques (Kealiinohomoku 2010), Iduozee, a three-time Finnish breakdance champion and a finalist in a 2011 national television dance competition,[10] reifies the presumably white audience's erotic gaze on his semi-naked body, proclaiming, "I think this is more comfortable for you guys." (See Hall 1997 and 1992 on representations of black masculinity.)

In other words, whereas the humor in some contemporary dance works undermines the ostensibly political statements made in the narrative,[11] the humor in *Noir?* exposes expectations as prejudices and works a change in an audience that predominantly *does not* share the experiences discussed. The audiences of the work are made uncomfortable, their laughter strained, hiding embarrassment and incomprehension. It is almost as if any moment of sympathy and understanding is deliberately overturned in the next instant, when the performers refuse to act for the audience's benefit, undermine the privileged white spectator's position of power. After Iduozee ends his solo by singing *Say you, say me,* Lindfors performs "my solo about my roots" in a blond wig and long, black tulle skirt. Like Iduozee's solo, her movements mix "African dance" movements,[12] ballet, contemporary dance, and hip hop's sexualized display (including twerking) with loud calls to "work it!" and "let it go!" as well as outright swearing (in Finnish, of course). Her dress inverts the Romantic ballet's white tulle skirts and the long, straight blond hair of the wig recalls her three 2009-2011 choreographies about Aino, the tragic maid in the Finnish national epos, *Kalevala*.[13] Following Iduozee's solo, the "Africanist" movement quotations appear as just quotations, the rapid changes from one dance aesthetic to another adding a fleeting quality to the "identity" that Lindfors's statement about this dance exemplifying her "roots" seems to imply.

Noir? is political art by its very theme, but it is political art that does not compromise aesthetically or preach to the converted. It is a piece extremely current in a country where intolerance, hate-speech and racism have been on the rise for years, as exemplified by the constant tolerance of the racist faction in the True Finns party, whose Member of the European Parliament Jussi Halla-aho rose to that position in May 2014 with nearly 90,000 votes *despite* being one of the very few public figures actually found guilty of hate-speech by a court of law. *Noir?* not only illustrates a Finland that has not been a culturally homogenous country for centuries, it reveals the ways in which the country is still very much a *white* society conditioned by a complex history of colonialism. The widespread Finnish belief in Finland as the nation of Finns (nationalism) is what lends credence to the hate-mongering racists' claim that they are merely being patriotic; and the inability of the hegemonic majority to question how the nationalist assumption privileges them at the expense of, for example, the indigenous Sami people, adds insult to injury. *Noir?* thus counteracts racist statements but it also points to the prejudices less often contested in public discourse, such as the intertwining of nationality, ethnicity, and language in this former colony, Finland.[14]

The postcolonialism of *Noir?* is concrete in a manner that the nature of Finland as a former colony is not—it is in the bodies, in the dances, in the music, and in the stories told on stage, encompassing a wide variety of African-Finnish identity from issues with "confused" hair[15] to popular assumptions that darker skin color indicates lack of education or inability to speak Finnish.[16] The work thus counteracts the racist assumption that those who look other—regardless of whether they have darker skin, epicanthic folds, or an accent in their language—automatically belong "elsewhere" whereas those who "pass" as Finns despite their ethnicity (Swedish, Sami, Russian, Tatar, etc.) become invisible and silenced, assimilated into the presumably homogenous majority.[17]

This contestation of homogenous ethnicity as a prerequisite of nationality is particularly evident when the lighting designer, Erno Aaltonen, joins the performers in two, contrasting scenes. In the first of these, c. twenty-three minutes into the piece, the people on stage

Four stories of Africa. *Noir?* Photographer: Uupi Tirronen. Image courtesy of Zodiak - Center for New Dance.

are characterized by their skin color: “a black man,” “a white man,” “a black female,” and so on. In the second, which takes place c. sixty-eight minutes in, and which includes most of the movement sequences of the first scene, everyone is characterized first by profession, then by various alternative identities such as education, home town, car ownership, and finally, nationality.

The second section includes additional elements that emphasize just how normative the first scene has been. In the first scene, for example, “a black female performs an exotic dance” (Sutinen crawls backwards at the back of the stage) but in the second “a theatre school graduate performs an exotic dance” (Sutinen repeats her action) after which “another theatre school graduate performs an exotic dance” and the sound designer Hannu Hauta-Aho crosses the stage with jenkka (a Finnish folk/social dance based on Schottische) steps. The second scene then underlines the shared physicality of national identity in this simple dance that every child in a Finnish school has been forced to learn when the instructions state “four Finns cross the stage doing small, repetitive steps” and Aaltonen, Lindfors, Masomi, and Iduozee cross the stage with jenkka steps. Regardless of one’s physical familiarity with jenkka, the notion of this dance as both “exotic” for foreigners and “local” for Finns, points attention to how “exotic” is a relative concept dependent on the “imagined community,” to use Benedict Anderson’s term (2006), of one’s national identity, and hence, how national identity is performative, not innate. The work ends with a final instruction: “six young Finnish artists are looking at the audience.”

Although *Noir?* does not expect the (majority of the) audience to share the experiences discussed, its references to popular and local culture draw on shared discourse that makes it easier for the local, Finnish audiences to comprehend and sympathize with than, say, Trajal Harrel’s *Antigone Jr.* (shown at the Side Step festival in Helsinki in February 2013) or Dana Michel’s *Yellow Towel* (Moving in November festival in Helsinki November 2014), which seemed to evoke a degree of incomprehension.[18] The specific significance of Finnish language in the piece is similarly tied to locality, particularly because the Finnish spoken is not the official correct Finnish, but colloquial, dialectical, and slang versions. However, its significance is also to draw attention to the language politics of ethnicity, language having been a major factor in the fight for the independent Finnish nation state[19] in the nineteenth century.

Although it is difficult to gauge the importance of a single work of art—even a successful work re-performed the following season in the City of Helsinki’s cultural centers, STOA and Kanneltalo, as well as at Zodiak again in 2016—it is my sincere hope that the message of *Noir?* and the voices of its young performers would be heard by my fellow citizens. Despite its humor, *Noir?* is not an easy piece for either the performers or the audience, dealing with intolerance, prejudice, and questions of identity in a country currently threatened by home-grown terrorism in the name of the nation state. Few art works can claim to address their time with this degree of insight and acumen.

Notes

1. According to the official Statistics Finland (http://pxnet2.stat.fi/PXWeb/pxweb/en/StatFin/StatFin__vrm__vaerak/?tablelist=true&rxid=cc252644-6a58-4a1d-8513-4f2bbd90a771), the Finnish Somali population (7,261 individuals) is the fifth largest group of foreigners in Finland after Estonians, Russians, Swedes and the Chinese. This figure does not, of course, include those who have changed their nationality nor any of the second-generation diaspora—in the same statistic, 17,871 individuals give Somali as their first language. The Finnish census does not categorize people according to ’race’ or ethnicity.
2. When I went to primary school in the 1980s, my classroom wall held alphabet images in which N was denoted by a running “Negro”. My former colleague Marjo Kaartinen wanted to use this image as a cover for her book on racism and Finns as colonizers (Kaartinen 2005), but the publisher refused the permission.
3. On 24 September 2015, the Prime Minister Juha Sipilä stated, “We should be able to discuss factually and calmly about how we stamp as ‘racists’ these [regular] people who just speak of what worries them.” (Verkkouutiset 24 September 2015). Between 25 September and 10 December 2015, there were ten separate cases of attempted arson of refugee centers in a country of six million people, as well as a number of other attacks. See e.g. The Washington Post 25 September 2015 https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/ wp/2015/09/25/in-finland-a-man-dressed-up-like-the-kkk-to- protest-refugees/ and Reuters 13 January 2016 http://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants-finland-idUSKCN0UR20G20160113.
4. *Aamulehti* 6 March 2016 http://www.aamulehti.fi/kotimaa/poliisien-puoluekannat-selvisivat-suurkyselyssa-kaksi-puoluetta-virkavallan-suosiossa/.
5. Lindfors in *Ylioppilaslehti* 3/2012 http://ylioppilaslehti.fi/2012/03/taiteen-taivuttaja/; and in *Maailman kuvalehti* 12/2013 http://www.maailmankuvalehti.fi/kulttuuri/13780.
6. Sonya Lindfors & Maryan Abdulkarim in *IssueX* http://www.issuex.fi/blackface-ei-ole-ok/.
7. Lindfors in *Ylioppilaslehti* 3/2012 http://ylioppilas lehti.fi/2012/03/taiteen-taivuttaja/; and in *Maailman kuvalehti* 12/2013 http://www.maailmankuvalehti.fi/kulttuuri/13780.
8. Sutinen in YLE news 29 November 2013. http://yle.fi/uutiset/afrosuomalaisten_tanssiteos_myi_loppuun_ennatysajassa/6960685.
9. Masomi’s interview in *Helsingin Uutiset* 7 August 2012 http://www.helsinginuutiset.fi/artikkeli/120371-helsinkilaisrappari-gracias-ei-halua-olla-maahanmuuttomaskotti.
10. Iduozee interviewed by Minna Tawast in *Teatteri & Tanssi + Sirkus* 7/2014.
11. I am thinking of Christopher Winkler’s The True Face (2013) in particular, a piece that got me thinking of *Noir?*’s political strategies. See Järvinen 2016.
12. On ‘Africanist’ aesthetics, see DeFrantz (2005, 93, 102).
13. In *Kalevala*, Aino drowns herself rather than marry Väinämöinen. It seems the character is the nineteenth-century invention of the collector of *Kalevala*, Elias Lönnrot. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aino_(mythology) for iconic illustrations.
14. Finland has a history both as a colonizer and as a colony. Finland was part of Sweden between 1155-1809 after which it became an autonomous Grand Duchy of Russia until 1917. Although under the Russian rule Finns acquired a senate (1809), a post office (1856), and even its own currency (1860), the Russification measures of 1899-1905 and 1908-1917 left behind lasting prejudices against Russian ‘oppression’ only strengthened by the two wars against the Soviet Union 1939-1944. Finns have also long discriminated against indigenous Sami people (see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sami_people) and Finland still has not ratified the rights of the Sami under the ILO 169 agreement: http://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/news/finland_shelves_indigenous_rights_agreement_ratification/7868419.
15. In her first solo, Lindfors states: “my hair grew and grew and grew and became this big ball of confusion and this confusion had a name: Afro”.
16. This is part of Masomi’s narrative where he talks of buying a beer and placing a bet on a local football team at a kiosk: “[The lady behind the counter said] ‘You speak surprisingly good Finnish.’ Guess what I told her? ‘Thanks, so do you.’”
17. See Gottschild 2003, especially 78–79.
18. Hannele Jyrkkä’s review of the latter piece in the national newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat* included what can only be termed racist imagery: http://www.hs.fi/arviot/tanssi/a1415338763893.
19. On 10 September 2016, one of the leaders of the Finnish National Socialist group Suomen Vastarintaliike, attacked a 28-year old man, resulting in the latter’s death. This was the first death due to political protest in Finland in 67 years and led to a mass demonstration against racism. See e.g. Reuters 24 September 2016 http://www.reuters.com/article/us-finland-farright-idUSKCN11U0NU.

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Congregating on Denzel: niv Acosta's Deconstruction of Black Masculinity

Doran George

At New York Live Arts (NYLA), Manhattan's modest midtown launch pad for choreographers' since the 1970s, niv Acosta runs repeatedly against a freestanding, purpose-built, white wall. At Greenwich Village's Judson Church -canonized as the center of 1960s experimentation- he similarly collides with a pillar. "It hurt more than the wall" Acosta later tells me. Swinging doors feel his force at Abron's Art Center, a Lower East Side space, key in (post)modern dance since the progressive era; but at the Brooklyn Center for Performance Research, Acosta breaks though the drywall against which he throws himself. "I break spaces," he laughs, informing me that slamming himself against the buildings in which he performs is a ritualistic search for release from black masculinity.[1] (All performed in I shot denzel 2014)

Attention to niv Acosta's transgendered-ness obscures his interrogation of black masculinity. Despite progressive overtures, the experimental scenes in which Acosta works call upon artists like him to represent "trans experience," foreclosing Acosta's access to the racialized-gender against which he hurls himself. To the degree that black masculinity and transgender appear to be mutually exclusive, we find the limits from which Acosta desires release. The artist thus invites us to imagine black masculinity as a site of unlimited potential rather than specified content.

I write here from a different experience of cultural limitation. A maid and factory worker, my grandmother taught me I'm a "fairy," and that just because someone is "la-de-da" (of higher socio-economic status) doesn't mean that they are better. Putting Nana's insights together, I learned to mistrust restrictions that came with my gender difference. I then broadened my critical perspective to include race after leaving my white, working class childhood village to participate in political and sexual resistance against Margaret Thatcher's attacks on minorities, women and workers in 1980s Britain. It is thus from a deep allegiance that I write against the walling-in of Acosta's potential.

Limitations that result when, as Acosta says, people "project an identity" onto him, are rooted as much in dominant strategies for contesting oppression as they are in the sources of oppression. Celebrating emancipation, *Time Magazine* proposed a "transgender tipping point," with Laverne Cox—the African American transgender star of Netflix' hit series *Orange is The New Black* (creator Jenji Kohan)—on its front cover. Yet while detailing myriad experiences of transphobia, the publication occluded the racial identity of its many interviewees, apart from Cox's own quoted reference (Gray 2014). Identity politics has tended to define itself across single axes, displacing complex intersections of oppression (Crenshaw 1989). Focus on Acosta as transgendered erases his black masculinity, so he mistrusts "structured ways of thinking about identity."

Niv Acosta. Photo courtesy of Karla Xeno.

As much as trans-visibility often erases racial difference, it also invariably means that a person's stated gender is dismissed. For example, Anouk Kruitof sees no contradiction writing about Acosta's work for an "all-female all-art review." She characterizes the dancers in *Discotropic* (2015) as "three men and Acosta, who is transgender," describing the work as a "beautiful allegory in which the (trans)gendered body finds itself within an intensive state-of-display." (Kruithof 2015) Kruitof brings Acosta's gender under unwanted scrutiny, exercising what trans-feminist Julia Serrano calls cissexual privilege (Serano 2007).[2] Kruitof participates in the modern equivalent of displaying transgender bodies as monstrous in circus side shows (Jones 2008). Liberal (including queer) perspectives aim to embrace rather than objectify transgender, but much like Kruitof, they emphasize the transgression of cissexuality, robbing trans-folk of their stated gender (Serano 2007, 174). By denying Acosta his maleness, Kruitof implies his trans-male body is not up to deconstructing (black) masculinity, and she thus squanders critical symbolic resources offered by gender non-conforming bodies.

Acosta's denzel series:

denzel (2010. Studio 34, Philadelphia)

denzel prelude (2010, Philadelphia)

denzel Superstructure (2011, Philadelphia)

denzel Again (2011, NYLA freshtracks)

denzel Minipetite Bathtub Happy Meal (2011, NYLA upstarts)

I shot denzel (2014, NYLA and other spaces as above)

In the first *Transgender Studies Quarterly (TSQ)*, I argued that, by denying his audience full access to his body/narrative, Acosta resists his reduction to a transgender spectacle. The "denzel" series leaves questions about Acosta's black, Dominican, trans-masculinity because each dance, by referring to the others, leaves the audience wondering what information they lack (George 2014). Here, I build on this argument, suggesting that Acosta perplexes scrutiny by insisting upon his audience's role in (de)constructing black masculinity. Christian and conservative, Denzel Washington symbolizes for Acosta a mainstream vision of post-colonial acceptable black masculinity in contrast with the unchained, if ghettoized, legacy of slavery, manifest in gangsta-rapper-threat. The *denzel* series meditates on and perverts such polarities, claiming unanticipated potential for black-trans-masculinity from behind a wall of recycled race-gender constructions. Referencing the Othering of blackness, and trans-masculinity, Acosta asserts subjectivity in a culture where black trans-masculinity all but disappears.

Staging his subject with opacity and multiplicity, Acosta builds on oblique political referencing that I have elsewhere associated with an "East Village" experimental tradition, rooted in Manhattan's Lower East Side (Gilbert 2014, 44–6). Although gentrification has pushed artists out of the East Village, Acosta and others connect with a lineage of black artists, three decades under development before the *denzel* series premiered. Beginning in the 1980s, African Americans developed experimental choreography to negotiate their simultaneous invisibility and conspicuousness within a lower Manhattan contemporary dance scene.

1981: "Contact at 2nd and 10th," New York celebrates 10 years since the inauguration of contact improvisation (CI). Ishmael Houston-Jones and Fred Holland perform Wrong contact dance, drawing attention to tacit conventions in a white dominated dance culture (Novack 1990, 10). Their manifesto reads:[3]

1. We are Black.
2. We will wear our "street" clothes, as opposed to sweats.
3. We will wear heavy shoes, Fred, construction boots; Ishmael, Army.
4. We will talk to one another while dancing.
5. We will fuck with flow and intentionally interrupt ourselves.
6. We will use a recorded sound score – loud looping of sounds from Kung Fu movies by Mark Allen Larson.
7. We will stay out of physical contact much of the time.

Along with colleagues of other racial identities, black dancers built upon a (post)modern downtown lineage that Brenda Dixon Gottschild defines as white (Gottschild 2003, 20). Indeed with its majority Caucasian artists and audiences, the scene burdened African Americans with representing "their" culture, portending the transgender representational burden attending Acosta. Yet downtown historically claimed universality for its subjects (Gilbert 2014), which, along with the post-racial conceit of Regan-era American culture (Dunagan and Fenton 2014, 136), meant that artists such as Houston-Jones and Holland also needed to resist the glossing over of their racial difference. Rather than stage African American identity or culture, they thus revealed looking-relations between them and their largely white audiences (Albright 1997, 120; Gilbert 2014, 293), insisting upon the audience's responsibility in making a dance's meaning. This contrasted with 1990s testimonial performance that claimed personal truths as the indisputable foundation of resistant political identities (Hughes and Román 1998, 4).

By inaugurating strategies for black bodies to engage in the experimental scene, Houston-Jones and Holland expanded upon in-roads to modern dance made by Alvin Ailey two decades earlier (Croft 2015). But they also resisted the institutionalization of African American identity that attended Ailey's achievements (Houston-Jones 2012). In very different ways, on contemporary dance's experimental fringe, artists like Bill T Jones, Bebe Miller, Blondell Cummings, Ralph Lemon, Jawole Willa Jo Zollar, and David Roussève asserted racial difference, staged self-possession, reflected on African American experience, and refused to deliver a transparent visions of the black body, identity or culture (Albright 1997, Foster 2002, Gilbert 2014). Yet despite a 30-year East Village history of experimenting with the staging of black subjects, artists like Acosta still perform to majority white audiences. Moreover, African diaspora bodies are under comparable if distinct punishing and fatal scrutiny to that experienced by transgender bodies, as the Black Lives Matter movement evidences (http://blacklivesmatter.com/). As a result, Acosta understands his position in dance as necessarily political. Describing his work as "artivism" (Disser 2014), he models pushing against the projection of identities onto particular bodies, which has been integral to how such bodies are subject to violence (Kruszelnicki 2015, 96). ('pushing against' could be replaced with 'resisting' if the addition of a word is problematic for space).

> *I'm a rude bitch nigger what are you made up of?" Acosta and Cason Bolton sit next to each other on wooden chairs, shuttling backwards and forwards this quote from Azaelia Banks' track 212. They increase the pace of delivery and repetition, distancing the words from their original reference or inherent meaning. And yet the cultural origins of the lexicon's vernacular refuse to disappear. Much as they pervert Banks' lyrics, the performers manipulate phrases from Paris is Burning (1991, director: Jennie Livingston), a documentary on Harlem's black and latino/a drag-ball culture, along with expressions clearly drawn from other sites of African American culture. Acosta and Bolton lower and raise the pitch, increase and decrease emotional affect and tempo, as well as change the dialect from general American, to black-ghetto, to queeny black attitude. (From denzel mini-petite bathtub happy meal)*

Cultural references for American African-diaspora bodies circulate in Acosta's work in ways that question how black masculinity is represented. Playing what he calls 'dress-up' for example, Acosta and his various co-performers in the *denzel* series, lip-synch to pop-songs, recreate music videos, and quote other familiar images of African American culture. While using *denzel* as a framing metaphor, Acosta exceeds masculinity's limited cultural territory, thus symbolically 'shooting' Denzel Washington's conservatism. However, he resists a heterosexual logic underpinning much queer aesthetics in which a performed gender must contrast with a cissexual body. Acosta thus avoids the way queer aesthetics often deny transgender people their stated gender by emphasizing the transgression of heterosexual genders. I have argued elsewhere that some queer dance recapitulates heterosexuality's primacy by emphasizing gender-crossing and undermining transgender claims to identity (George forthcoming). By contrast, Acosta experiments with, and thus intervenes into, recognizable codes for black masculinity using his trans-body and the variously sexed and gendered bodies of his performers. He defers identity, insisting upon its contingency, opening relationships between the ideas in and between distinct *denzel* works, and investigating meaning's fluidity versus stability. (Kruszelnicki 2015).

> *In the middle of an empty stage, elegantly dressed in loose-fitting, smoke-gray trousers, and a short-sleeved top, Acosta makes the hieroglyphic-like gestures of Vogueing (a dance initially associated with Harlem's drag-balls). Facing his audience, long pauses, uncharacteristic of the form, punctuate Acosta's moves, and he is accompanied by violin tones rather than the bass's thump of a sound-system. With his post-modern manipulation of Vogueing's temporality, he emphasizes the dance form's monumental quality. (from I shot denzel)*

Acosta draws attention to what risks getting lost in the glare of cissexual-white privilege: his self-evident embodiment of black masculinity and ability to deconstruct said racialized gender. He asserts subjectivity through his moving body rather than staging a gendered identity for theatrical spectatorship. He thus asks us to reflect upon the terms by which we view his work, much like Houston-Jones and Holland began to do in the 1980s. In this way, Acosta highlights the collective practice of making meaning, which he suggests happens when "people congregate for church, protests, and performances" (Kruszelnicki 2015, 96). By insisting that the meaning of his works is congregationally rather than definitively authored, Acosta invites us to participate in his seeking release from overdetermined conceptions of 'black masculinity.'

Notes

niv Acosta, interview with the author, 6/26/2015.

Cissexual refers to non-transgendered identity (like straight is to lesbian or gay).

For further discussion of the dance see: Gilbert 2014, 292).

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Dynamic Traditions in Kimberly Miguel Mullen's *Yemanja, Mother of the Deep*

Elyan Hill

The evening length performance Yemanja, Mother of the Deep is the product of the transnational and transcultural genealogies through which choreographer and dancer Kimberly Miguel Mullen contributes to a legacy of performers and religious practitioners from Cuba and Brazil. Following cultural theorist Brent Hayes Edwards (2003), I examine diaspora as a network of discourses across difference, yet I locate these discourses in choreographies rather than in archival documents. This framing broadens notions of the transatlantic African diaspora to include artists who identify neither as ethnically Black nor culturally African, but who choose to practice African and Africa evolved practices in ethical ways. I address how a non-Black American like Mullen, who is not a practitioner of Black Atlantic religions, can be included in the African diaspora and propose diasporic genealogies of practice as important networks of artistic heritage and cultural exchange. Through ongoing practice, artists like Mullen perpetuate, complicate, and expand the reach of African diasporic forms. This essay examines the nuances and unresolvable complications involved in Mullen's choreography and the significance of her work to notions of ethical cultural exchange.

Yemanja, Mother of the Deep was performed for two weekends only between March 30th and April 8th 2012 in the intimate setting of the eco-friendly Electric Lodge in Venice, California. The performance featured live music by singer/songwriter Mia Doi Todd and composer and Afro-Cuban religious practitioner Alberto López. Mullen combines the influences of her training in Silvestre technique, a contemporary dance technique based on Afro-Brazilian symbols developed by Rosangela Silvestre, with traditional Afro-Cuban and Afro-Brazilian dance styles in which she has apprenticed with dance masters including Teresita Domé Perez, Juan Carlos, and Juan Dedios for over seventeen years (Mullen 2005). Mullen's choreography in *Yemanja* operates in dialogue with her 2010 performance of *Essensibility*, a duet undertaken with Rosangela Silvestre and with the solo of Yemanja's dance given to Mullen by her Afro-Cuban dance mentor Teresita Domé Perez. Mullen developed the choreography for *Yemanja* based on the many roads, or *caminos*, of Yemanja, an Afro-Caribbean *orisha* who presides over water, so that the dance moves from the aspects of the deity associated with the depths of the ocean to those linked to shallow water.

Hauntingly, Mullen, dressed all in white with her arms held behind her back, comes onstage as Yemanja Olokun. Caught in the center-stage glare of a bright white light, she strains against invisible bindings, the tension apparent in her chest and shoulders. Her shoulders heave and her undulating back expresses the frustration of imprisonment yet,

From left to right: Alberto Lopez, Musical Composer; Kimberly Miguel Mullen, Choreographer and Dancer; Fabiano Do Nascimento, Guitarist; Mia Doi Todd, Singer/Songwriter. Photo courtesy of John Decindis.

despite her efforts, her arms remain firmly clasped behind her back. Her struggles culminate in the violent freeing of her arms. Her newly freed arms wave and gracefully unfurl, complementing the celebratory arching of her back and the joyful movements of her knees, legs, and feet which stir her frothy white skirt into a frenzy…

Choreographing New Legacies

As the musicians began to play and Mia Doi Todd began to sing lyrics that added narrative poetry to Mullen's embodiments of Yemanja, I understood Todd's function as a guide through each transformation that Mullen, as Yemanja, experienced. The dance begins with the road of Yemanja Olokun and ends with Yemanja Mayalewo. Mullen understands the Afro-Caribbean dances she has learned as expressions of her own identity, rather than abstracted traditional forms (Mullen and Todd 2012). As such, she felt that it was important to merge movements from Cuban and Brazilian vocabularies in non-traditional ways to represent her own experience of the traditions (Mullen and Todd 2012). In *Yemanja*, Mullen "creates as well as perform[s] what [she] will do next" (Foster 2002, 13), demonstrating the high value placed on improvisation in strictly established patterns of movement within *orisha* dance communities. She emphasizes the fact that the dance, though improvised, is never freeform (Mullen, Personal Communication, May 22, 2013). Performers improvise such dances based on the whims of the deity (in possession) or the character and movement patterns that best represent the *orisha* (when performed). As such, Mullen enacts her artistic process and her practice of diaspora within *Yemanja* as she improvises, choreographing as she goes, within and across the structures of multiple traditional forms.

Diaspora as Practice

Through the process of apprenticeship, Mullen has received permission from respected dance masters within Afro-Caribbean communities to perform and adapt specific dances. She has been adopted into Afro-Cuban and Afro-Brazilian communities as a dancer but still identifies herself as a cultural outsider. Though she works as an Afro-Caribbean dance instructor, choreographer, and performer, she constantly negotiates her position within the communities in which she has apprenticed by demonstrating understanding of cultural values through movement practices. Her work bridging gaps among different Afro-Caribbean dance forms constitutes an important example of a relationship to the transatlantic African diaspora based primarily on artistic choices and ongoing practice. Mullen's relationship with Yemanja arises out of the transnational circulation of sacred images and knowledge.

Mullen identifies herself as of Filipino descent on her mother's side and Portuguese and culturally Hawaiian through her father. Through her apprenticeships with Afro-Caribbean dance masters, Mullen's teachers include her in specific genealogies. In *Yemanja*, she has chosen to pursue Afro-Caribbean dance in ways that contribute to these creole, or culturally amalgamated, dance traditions. Mullen contributes to ongoing legacies through which she is linked to the cultural practices of the African diaspora. In interviews and personal communication, Mullen was very clear about the fact that her dance masters, who include Black Atlantic religious practitioners and professional dancers, initially retained the right to decide when she was ready to learn and to perform the dances of Yemanja. These dance masters have also taught Mullen about both the sacred and artistic aspects of the dances in cultural context.

Mullen operates in the interstice between the sacred and the secular, since she combines both approaches in her work as a result of training from teachers with different perspectives. Though her dance masters Juan Carlos Blanco and Juan deDios Ramos Morejon claim that performances are always separate from religious practice, Teresita Domé Perez insisted that the form and content of the dance are already set by the orisha. Perez also taught Mullen to dance Yemanja by believing that she actually becomes the deity (Mullen 2005, 11). Mullen recalls that learning to go into trance was an important part of her training and notes that, even when she goes into trance, as a performer she never allows herself to be completely overwhelmed by the deity or the trance since, if she invited the orisha during a stage performance, "there would be no show" (Mullen, Personal Communication, May 22, 2013).

As Yemanja Awoyo, the movements of Mullen's arms evoke the shimmering waves of the ocean. Her feet sidle gracefully and her body sways gently as her skirts flare about her legs, demonstrating the lazy shifts of the sea. Mullen speeds into more aggressive movements and her face expresses the intensity of a trance-like state. Her hair flies, obscuring her face, as she begins to revolve. As she spins faster, circling in one direction and then another, her arms trace their own opposing circles in the air above her head.

Mami Wata in the New World

Mullen and Todd, who is of Japanese and European descent, extend traditional practices by continuing to adapt them to the needs of the present, including the construction of transnational identities and the repurposing of traditional images as a means of building bridges between cultures. During *Yemanja*, Todd mentioned the pan-African mermaid goddess Mami Wata as she described Yemanja as "Yemanja Awoyo, Ancient One, Mami Wata, Mermaid Queen, in your womb the universe revolves, all of life emerges from you" (*Yemanja* 2012). When asked if the figure of Mami Wata influenced her understanding of Yemanja as she prepared the music and lyrics for the show, Los Angeles-based singer-songwriter Mia Doi Todd answered that "There was a traveling visual art exhibit on Mami Wata and it got the cover of the New York Times… and I was captivated by this image. I did not know very much about Mami Wata at that time and I did not know . . . that this was connected to Yemanja . . . [It] was inspiring that we could contribute to the ongoing creation of Mami Wata" (Mullen and Todd 2012).[1]

Todd's experience illustrates the power of what Arjun Appadurai might call "mediascapes," through which images travel across nations and result in transcultural amalgamations (1996, 35). Through the circulation of visual culture, Todd and Mullen were able to integrate images and understandings of Mami Wata into their portrayal of Yemanja.

Yemanja is linked to Mami Wata through an ongoing dialogue between practitioners on both sides of the Atlantic. Art historian Henry Drewal discusses Yemanja's connections to Mami Wata, Yemoja from Nigeria, and the goddess Oshun. Drewal describes Mami Wata practices as commuting back and forth across the Atlantic as Blacks moved between Bahia and the Bight of Benin between the 17th and 19th centuries (2008). He makes a case for influences in both directions, to and from Africa, on the formation of Yemanja: "she returned to Africa with Afro-Brazilians only to become conflated with Mami Wata—because both are often represented as mermaids and are seen as 'mothers' of the sea" (Drewal 2008, 167). Yet, these Afro-Brazilians in West Africa must also have brought their own creolized practices to bear on Mami Wata traditions, and those who travelled back to Brazil must also have taken with them new understandings of both versions of the water goddess. Mullen continues this transatlantic cultural exchange by choreographing Yemanja Mayalewo based on the trope "of the vain and painted white woman with hand mirror and perfume," which African devotees combine with knowledge of water spirits in the worship of Mami Wata (Rosenthal 1998, 117).

Mullen and Todd reinterpret Yemanja transculturally through notions of Mami Wata. They recognize that shifts and changes in traditional practice and interpretation have become "a point of contention amongst people inside of the culture and people viewing it from outside [which stems from] this constant conversation about how to preserve the culture and how to evolve it with the current trends" while preserving the authenticity that gives the traditions their depth (Mullen and Todd 2012). Both Mullen and Todd use the iconography of Mami Wata and Yemanja to construct a place for themselves within the African diaspora, expressing their own hybrid identities through the characteristics of a Yoruba orisha.

As Yemanja Mayalewo, sometimes known as a forest witch, Mullen moves sensually, adorning herself in the beaded crown and carrying a decorative mirror in which she admires her own beauty, preening girlishly. Mullen's snake-like motions evoke the winding paths of a river. As Yemanja Apara, her shoulders and arms wave from one side to the other, as if to indicate that she is neither sweet nor salty water, but the mixing of both, the confluence of river and ocean. She remains adorned in the crown, mirror and shawl of Mayalewo as she exits the stage.

The transatlantic African diaspora functions as a network through which individuals on both sides of the Atlantic, claiming many different racial, cultural, spiritual, and religious identities, participate in creolized African practices. Mullen's choreography demonstrates ways of participating in Black Atlantic traditions that emphasize the dynamics and relevance of traditional practices in contemporary settings. Significantly, Mullen does not present or discuss Afro-Caribbean practices as universal or homogenous, but rather points out disagreements within and outside of Cuban and Brazilian religious communities. Mullen and Todd demonstrate how artists have employed Yemanja, and understandings of Mami Wata, to transcend national boundaries, bridge cultures, and contribute to vibrant traditional practices. Mullen, located on the cultural interstices between many cultures, negotiates her relationship to Afro-Caribbean communities through dance, extending and complicating the Afro-Cuban and Afro-Brazilian dance traditions to which she contributes.

Notes

The exhibition was *Mami Wata: Arts for Water Spirits in Africa and Its Diasporas* (2008) organized by the Fowler Museum at UCLA and the painting was *Mami Wata* (1999), Acrylic on canvas, by Moyo Ogundipe.

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Reflections of Two Dance Teachers: Teaching and Learning Baakisimba Dance – In and Out of Africa

Jill Pribyl & Ibanda Grace Flavia

Thoughts on Culture: Pribyl and Flavia

Culture is neither a person nor a procession. Culture can be an emotional, kinesthetic and visceral reaction to an outside stimulus. It is linked to the senses and embodies place. It cannot be transported in its entirety and is continually reconstructed. Culture is intrinsically linked to the sensory world that a person inhabits.

Culture is a blend of society and the individual's understanding, experience and exposure to assigned or assumed behavioral patterns. It relates to beliefs, values, traditions, rites, rituals, ceremonies, stories, school and access to physical, mental, material and financial resources. It encompasses the spiritual, emotional, and intellectual life of the people. It is fluid and linked to the "thinking body" in and of different times, cultural interactions and spaces.

Physical Space/Dance – Uganda: Pribyl

When I stepped off the plane into the Ugandan night, I was enveloped in a blanket of moisture and the smell of earth as I descended the stairs of the airplane into the moonless night. I was told that the airport is on the shores of Lake Victoria, one of the largest in the world. Named after Queen Victoria by the explorer John Hannington Speke, in Luganda, the lake is called Nalubaale, or central god.

Banana Plantation, Buganda Kingdom. Photo courtesy of David Kafambe.

Baakisimba Dance performed by Watmon Cultural Troupe. Photo courtesy of Jill Pribyl.

Administration Building, Makerere University. Photo courtesy of Jill Pribyl.

I have lived in Kampala, the largest city in the central region where Luganda is spoken alongside English, for the past 12 years. To me, Luganda is a circular language filled with metaphoric and indirect meaning. The central region traditional dance, baakisimba, is also circular and contrasting in its execution. Performed where the banana trees are plentiful and the soil fertile for cultivation, the dance involves an upper body held erect with the air of nobility while the pelvis and feet execute polyrhythmic beats in a steady yet seemingly effortless continuous motion.

Baakisimba is a royal dance of the Buganda Kingdom and one of the first dances I learned while teaching and conducting research at Makerere University. My initial encounter with baakisimba took place during a "Traditional Dance Practical" course held in the Main Hall of the administration building in the fall of 2002.

The Main Hall is a typical colonial style room with an expansive wooden floor and a stage for lectures and performances. The first tasks for the students in the class were to carry the drums from the department to the main hall and to move the desks and chairs to the sides of the room. Once the room was cleared, approximately 60 male and female students assembled in a circle for the warm-up. We proceeded to stretch, jump, run in place and perform arm exercises in a follow-the-leader style of teaching. Several students led the warm-up exercises and passed the leadership role to one another in a non-hierarchical fashion.

The senior faculty member present was Professor Moses Serwadda. He was most likely in his 70s at the time but looked younger. When he made the slightest articulation of his body, the clarity of his years of training and teaching Ugandan dances was all encompassing. Professor Serwadda began his teaching of Baakisimba with a basic stepping of the feet. The step is simple yet complex. It must be performed with the right amount of effort as if the heel is floating down to the ground from the ball of the foot, in a rhythmic triplet. There was a constant interaction between the musicians, singers and the dancers as a 6/8 rhythmic pattern played on the (engoma) drum.

Main Hall, Makerere University. Photo courtesy of Jill Pribyl.

Traditional Instruments, Makerere University Department of Performing Arts and Film. Photo courtesy of Jill Pribyl.

Moving slowly forward in a straight pathway, we began to imitate the steps. We were told to hold our heads and torsos in the vertical dimension. To draw attention to the waist, we bent our elbows, flexed our wrists and pointed our thumbs toward our hips. After several minutes of walking evenly forward, we gradually added the waist movements. In a figure eight-like pattern executed on the horizontal plane, we began to walk while performing a complex pelvic movement—a highly syncopated symphony all done with composure and grace.

The repetitive movement continued for over an hour. Variations of the arms or different "motifs" were incorporated into the basic pattern. Junior faculty and experienced students guided me through the dance acting as my mirror. At one point, we knelt down and sat on our heels. We placed our hands together and in a prayer-like gesture we sliced the air to the left, then right and then center. It was explained that this was both a greeting and a sign of respect for the King of Buganda, or Kabaka.

Professor Serwadda told one of the stories associated with the origins of baakisimba dance. According to Serwadda, the Kabaka becomes intoxicated from a brew made from the banana plant. As he staggers, the king's musicians create a rhythm to match his movements. The musicians sing, "Abakisimba, be ba kiwomya," meaning "Those who planted the banana gave it the sweetness". The brew or beer is made by stepping on ripe bananas in a wooden trough.

Because the dance was performed in the royal court, it evolved to be slow, elegant and graceful, maintaining the king's dignity. The costumes emphasize the waist. According to Serwadda, the first costumes consisted of banana leaves tied around the waist and later a goatskin to emphasize pelvic movement, considered beautiful in Buganda. Layers of cloth help to accentuate the buttocks of the woman. A big buttocks, big legs, and full breasts are the standard of beauty and femininity in Buganda. Traditionally, women perform the dance, and it is viewed by many as a women's dance. However, men are also seen performing the dance.

Matooke cooking, Makerere University.

Matooke being served for lunch, Guild Canteen, Makerere University.

Although the baakisimba dance is continually being recreated and reinvented, there seems to be an inherent continuity. When I dance baakisimba I feel that I am dancing Buganda in all its complexity and contradiction: it has become a fundamental aspect of my kinesthetic and sensory memory. In many ways, baakisimba dance is linked to place through the banana plant. The staple food in Buganda is "matooke" or cooked bananas. There is a saying in Buganda "olugenda enjala terudda" or one who goes away hungry will never come back.

There is something immediate, personal and communal about dancing baakisimba alongside my Ugandan counterparts. In some ways, my ability to perform the movement "like a Muganda" or person who is from the Baganda tribe, elevates my status as an expatriate in Uganda. I have embodied a cultural movement code, enabling me to find acceptance among the Buganda loyalists. When I am dancing baakisimba, I lose a sense of time in the repetition of the basic movement patterns. Because I have been accepted as a competent dancer, I no longer feel a separation between myself and the other dancers in the space, while the accompaniment is playing and the environment is filled with an unspoken tribal agreement of the values and attitudes represented in the choreography. This quickly fades as the music stops and the post-colonial attitudes towards the "other" in Uganda are highlighted in the color of my skin. Although I will always be a guest in Uganda, dance has enabled me to gain access to a small part in this complex cultural phenomenon.

Physical Space/Dance, New Mexico, USA: Flavia

When I stepped off the plane into the New Mexico afternoon in the spring of 2005, the air was crisp and biting. Perhaps this was a reaction to my 36 hours in the artificial air. The journey from Entebbe, Uganda to Albuquerque, New Mexico was a series of expansive organized airports. People moved in direct pathways with focused determination, unlike Uganda where the streets are full of meandering journeys that are often stopped for conversations. The roads from the airport were clearly divided, and cars seemed to follow each other in a choreographed linear pathway. I knew nothing about New Mexico at the time. All I knew was that I had been invited by my American professor to perform and teach at her university. At that time, Internet cafes in Uganda were few, expensive and slow, so research into where I was going in the USA was not possible.

I had been invited to teach and perform at Eastern New Mexico University. I had never traveled to the USA before. I only had images of large houses and organized structures. From the moment I entered the USA through passport control, I find the communication uncomplicated and direct and the time management impeccable.

When I walked into the dance studio to teach baakisimba dance at the university, I was not sure of what to expect. I was excited yet anxious, intrigued and curious and a tad afraid, questioning who the dancers were and how they would respond to me. They were all waiting dressed in appropriate dance clothing.

The dance studio, the sprung floor, dance mat, mirrors, bars, sound system and piano mesmerized me. Most impressive was the closeness of the performance stage with its fully-fledged technical accruements. I was also aware that there were two other Black dancers in the class, the minority. This was a shift in my visual perception, as I am not accustomed to seeing black dancers standing out in a group. Perhaps these two dancers would assess me differently as I was the African dance expert, making me anxious and curious about their perceptions of being Black Americans learning African dance alongside their white colleagues.

Unlike where I had completed my degree in dance at Makerere University, here in the USA, I was the master teacher, and all eyes were on me to guide the students through an African Dance technique class—a marked difference from my dance classes in Uganda where several teachers and more experienced students would assist in teaching traditional dances. This is especially true when the dance being taught is from one's region where the movements, songs and instrumentation are culturally imbedded in the person.

As a teacher and expert in the area of Ugandan dance forms, I had to shift my attitude, focus, and expectations. The role challenged me to be more present, well prepared before class and to research the historical and cultural context of the dance.

I began my class by showing the students a video clip of a baakisimba dance performance. I told the origin story of the dance (the one I know—there are several) and asked the students to assemble to learn the fundamental movements. The twenty students consisted of nineteen females and one male. In Uganda the majority of students in the Department of Performing Arts and Film are male.

The students all faced the mirrors, and I instructed them to face away from the mirrors. Dancing before the mirror was a new experience for me as I was aware of the danger of watching myself versus focusing on the students. This split observation (watching myself and the students, the students watching me and themselves) may prompt the dancers to try to look exactly like me. This would stifle their individual experience and expression, as individualism in the communal baakisimba dance is encouraged. Facing away from the mirror supports and challenges the dancers to find themselves within the dance movements.

I played a recording of baakisimba music to accompany the dance. The 6/8 rhythms are distinctively different from the 4/4 they are accustomed to. Baakisimba music is layered in instrumentation, and the songs are also integral to the dance. The students were concerned with getting the steps "right." They were also not used to repeating one movement for an extended period of time but began to settle into the movement after fifteen minutes. I told them that we were in the court of the King of Buganda, the Kabaka. We must be elegant and graceful showing our deepest respect for the Kabaka, who is supreme leader in the physical world. I wondered if they could suspend their complex world perspectives where issues of race, gender, and religion constructed identities to enter into this imagined world.

I also learned about myself as I took the students through these unfamiliar movements. I realized that my kinesthetic self has culturally embedded movement reflexes. As I taught the students the greeting and sign of respect to the Kabaka, I realized that this is an automatic physical reaction that I perform when greeting an elder.

At the end of the class, I invited questions. I was keenly aware of my otherness accentuated by both my dark brown skin and my British/English accent. I was also mindful of the fact that I might symbolize a representation of Africa or a complex array of media images and messages that do not convey the vast complexities of the continent.

One student asked a question about food and nutrition. I found the question a bit amusing as there is a saying in Uganda that if you want food, plant a seed in the ground, and it will grow. I calmly explained that the food in Uganda is all organic and fresh and that the meals we cook each day are made from scratch—a process that can take hours outside on a charcoal stove. There are no pre-packaged foods like those found here in the USA. I also explained that the staple food in the central region or the Buganda Kingdom was the banana, the source of the dance and song we had just learned.

Reflections: Pribyl and Flavia

Diaspora has been defined as the movement of people through time and space and the transplanting of cultural practices from one locale to another. Dance migration can lead to both the reflection and expansion of the multiple layers that construct individual identities. These layers of spiritual, ancestral and emotional identification can be expanded, challenged and redefined as communities of dancers reflect on learning, teaching, and embodied practice.

Although we come from disparate backgrounds, we are connected by values, beliefs, dance, and gender. We are both independent, unmarried women with children living in a society that views marriage as something that defines a "proper" woman. The Baganda see unmarried women as "girls" or "potential wives" often labeling unmarried women as stubborn or headstrong.

Being a dancer in Uganda, as in many parts of the world, is not seen as something that is a serious pursuit. Living in central Uganda, specifically the Baganda Kingdom, and being both independent and dancers, allowed us the space to find translatable connections, despite our cultural divide. We are also experimenters in dance language, translating baakisimba into a layered meeting of foreign and local interpretations, with the banana plant, a fruit found and eaten throughout the world, as our symbol of confluence.

In conclusion, we return to the banana plant, which is perennial, yields large quantities and requires little attention in the fertile land of central Uganda. It is said that every Buganda household must maintain a few banana trees for the Kabaka although he does not come to collect his yield. It is an unspoken allegiance to a culture tradition, a dance form. Without "matooke" no meal is complete.

We dedicate this article to the late Professor Moses Serwadda to whom we owe our meeting as dancers. Professor Serwadda was instrumental in forming the Department of Music, Dance, and Drama at Makerere University in the early 1970s. He studied dance at the University of Ghana and was a prolific performer and is the author of "Songs and Stories of Uganda". He was a founding member of Heartbeat of Africa, a performing arts troupe that toured nationally and internationally between 1963–1975. Professor Serwadda would often say, "If you love dance, you are married to it."

Choreographing the Individual: Andréya Ouamba's Contemporary (African) Dance Approach

Amy Swanson

"I don't like to be invited somewhere because I'm African. For me, it's like I do not exist. I do not exist in a pocket, you know? I want to exist because I am Andréya."

– Andréya Ouamba[1]

Andréya Ouamba's choreography and pedagogy demonstrate a conflicted response to the incongruity of the persistent label "African." As Director of Dakar-based Association/ Compagnie 1er Temps, Ouamba navigates conditions wrought by expanding neoliberal economic policies. Ouamba and other artists of his generation, having come of age in an increasingly privatized artistic landscape, strive for recognition as individual artists who contribute to global contemporary dance circuits, not as "Africans." Yet, they must contend with the loaded category African and its fraught signifiers that curators and audiences alike attribute them. This essay explores Ouamba's particular choreographic and pedagogical processes as they reflect and constitute his desire to be recognized as Andréya rather than as African and the inevitable contradictions that arise. Focusing on his training workshops Atelier Expérience et Corps (AEx-Corps) and his 2011 work *Sueur des Ombres*, I argue that Ouamba's emphases on individuality, improvisation, and a distinctive signature style – more than specific, codified movements – characterize his departure from notions of Africa and signify the impossibility of any totalizing notion of Africanness for local and global audiences alike. Simultaneously, his tendency to explore subject matter that specifically addresses the African continent and his intention to broaden opportunities available to African dancers suggests that, to some extent, he relies on his African identity and the resources it makes available. This contradiction reflects a tendency among contemporary artists, inflected by neoliberal economics, to construct one's own unique style while translating one's work into legible and competitive terms for funding agencies.[2]

Andréya Ouamba and his Cohort

Born in 1975 in the Republic of Congo, Brazzaville, Ouamba relocated to Dakar in 1999 following an invitation to participate in Germaine Acogny's intensive contemporary dance workshop.[3] He quickly gained international recognition for his choreography and attracted participants to his transnational training workshops and creative residencies. Ouamba's approach and those of his African choreographic contemporaries reflect a shift in artistic practices that responds to increasing global capitalism and neoliberal economics. In the case of Senegal, dance scholar Hélène Neveu Kringelbach identifies differences in access to state patronage as the determining factor that shaped late twentieth-century changes in contemporary dance. The generation of contemporary choreographers that precedes

Andréya Ouamba. Photo courtesy of Antoine Tempé.

Ouamba, including Acogny, relied on governmental support to some extent. These artists revised and reinvented "traditional" dances while framing work as social commentary (2014). The first structural adjustment programs were implemented in Senegal in the early 1980s. With the resulting severe cuts in state expenses, funding for the arts drastically decreased and international funding agencies replaced the government as major patrons for the arts. With state funding for the arts all but disappeared, Ouamba and others compete for limited outside resources, decreasing incentives to link choreography to the nation-state or to notions of tradition and making the establishment of one's own individual aesthetic crucial. Though I assert that Ouamba exercises significant personal agency in his work, I recognize that his emphases on individuality and his deployment of global choreographic practices are in part shaped by the political economic conditions within which he lives and works. The remainder of this essay employs a bottom-up approach, reliant on my kinaesthetic memories and conversations with Ouamba, to describe and analyze his creative process and frustration with the label "African."[4]

AEx-Corps and Sueur des Ombres

At an AEx-Corps workshop in 2011, held in the vast second floor room of the Foyer des Jeunes de Ouakam, the open windows allowing both significant airflow and the noise of the carpentry below to fill the space, Ouamba instructed participants to move across the room while staying low and maintaining a bounded relation to the floor. After demonstrating this improvisatory exercise by flinging his body to the floor, rolling, and bouncing back to his feet, his back curved forward in an arch over deeply bent legs, his focus down and his arms hanging loosely by his sides, the group of approximately twelve dancers experimented with this proposition. We threw ourselves across the floor over and over again, both attempting to imitate Ouamba and discover how our own bodies could uniquely respond to his instructions. The exercise challenged us to come up with our own movement on the spot while remaining within certain limitations. Later that day, Ouamba had the group spread out around the perimeter of the space and instructed dancers to enter at one's will, experimenting with alternative ways of walking or running while always maintaining at least a meter of space between oneself and others. This exercise called on dancers to both explore new ways of travelling through space by extending the simple movements of walking and running beyond their quotidian usage while maintaining awareness of the location and directionality of all others in the room.[5]

In his 2011 evening-length piece, *Sueur des Ombres (Sweat of the Shadows)*, Ouamba's style is discernible on each of the six dancers, visible in their deep pliés, sharp direction changes, quick circles of extended arms, and internal focus, yet they also express their own individuality. For much of the piece, the dancers occupy separate parts of the stage and dance in solos or pairs. They move with and displace twenty-five, two and a half meter-long bamboo sticks throughout the duration of the piece, which often function as spatial boundaries. The entire stage is never available to all six dancers at any given moment, but rather, they constantly negotiate their relationship to the bamboo and to one another. Similar to the AEx-Corps exercises described above, dancers must navigate within specific spatial relationships that limit their range of movement and imply alternative forms of connection to one another. Likewise, the dancers always appear grounded and cognizant of their relation to the floor, whether upright and stationary, scurrying across the floor on hands and feet, or maintaining a deep lunge while moving through space.[6]

Dialectic of Approach, Technique, and Africanness

Together, AEx-Corps and *Sueur des Ombres* illustrate Ouamba's particular movement style and evidence his contention that current and future trajectories of contemporary dance rely on individuality. He states that he is interested in developing and teaching an *approach* to contemporary dance rather than teaching specific movements grounded in technique or prescribed dance forms. "Contemporary dance is not a mixture of traditional dance and contemporary dance, it's not that. We no longer talk very much about technique, we talk much more about approaches."[7] Dismissing simplistic fusions of traditional and contemporary dance steps, Ouamba links his objective of emphasizing approach over technique to broader contemporary dance circles through the use of first person plural.[8] He stresses the importance of artistic autonomy and the capacity to develop one's own unique choreographic approach, whereas technical proficiency limits the artist in that it does not allow for dancers to respond to artistic inquiries and instead propagates a standardized movement vocabulary. Here, Ouamba deploys the terms "technique" and "approach" as oppositional, however, I contend that overlap exists between the terms and additional research is needed to more deeply uncover their meanings for Ouamba.

Ouamba's insistence on an individual approach operates in opposition not only to technique but also to dance marked as African. Whereas African dance classes and performances across the globe mobilize a specific iteration of "African dance," Ouamba typically does not draw on traditional dance vocabularies in his choreography.[9] His frustration with the label "African" stems in part from the widespread association of "African dance" with the neo-traditional genre and the particular images and representations that the genre generates. He states that "African" is tied to many connotations and in the case of dance, the label signifies "one who plays the tamtam, one who dances with raffia, one who has a lot of energy" while implying homogeneity "as if Africa is one country."[10] Rather than employing neo-traditional dances, or any predetermined movement vocabulary, Ouamba allows the work itself to dictate his choreographic approach, often grounded in improvisation. As a strategy to contend with the weighted significations, over-simplified meanings, and implied homogeneity inherent to the category "African," contemporary choreographers including Ouamba attempt to eschew the qualifier "African" altogether in favor of labeling themselves "contemporary choreographers."

However, Ouamba often refers to Africa as subject matter of his choreography and centers the continent in his stated objectives. *Sueur des Ombres* explores memory in relation to the Republic of Congo Civil War and his 2015 *J'ai arrêté de croire au futur (I stopped believing in the future)* critiques false promises of African politicians. Ouamba frames his workshops and choreographic works as conduits for increased access to contemporary dance for African dancers and aims to provide opportunities to support the next generation of African choreographers.[11] This complicates his stated desire to be recognized regardless of his African identity, suggesting that his African identity is one among many labels that he may draw from at any given time, while bearing the question of the prescriptive power of international funding agencies.[12]

Andréya Ouamba's choreography and pedagogy is at once local and global, both specific to a notion of "Africa" and distant from it. His work exists at the crossroads of locality and globality as well as his personal subjectivity and the political economic conditions that structure it. Ouamba, and the larger cohort of similarly-sited contemporary choreographers who live and work in Africa, embody the impossibility of any totalizing notion of Africanness through their individual choreographies that do not shun the continent or resist their affiliations with it. They gesture towards a future in which ample opportunity for artistic production on the African continent exists and in which such artistic production is recognized on its own terms rather than as automatically and predominantly signifying "Africa."

For the moment, this future remains opaque, as arts institutions across the world face challenges wrought by rising cuts in funding. To what extent can African choreographers create the work that matters most to them when their livelihoods depend on obtaining increasingly competitive funding from limited agencies with separate agendas? Even as African choreographers employ non-Africanist aesthetics, what types of audiences will eventually perceive and judge their work based on criteria that does not include a pre-conceived notion of Africa? In other words, will the global arts market ever allow Ouamba and others to fully emerge from the pocket that the label "African" places them within to embrace their individuality?

Notes

1. Reggie Wilson and Andréya Ouamba. (2010, 89).
2. I use D. Soyini Madison's definition of neoliberal economics as an ideology, prevalent since the 1980s, based on individualism and free markets and including such economic policies as privatization, deregulation, and free trade (2012, 66).
3. Germaine Acogny, founder of Ecole des Sables, International Centre for Traditional and Contemporary African Dances and Company Jant-Bi in Toubab Dialaw, Senegal, is widely recognized as a founding figure of contemporary African dance.
4. A bottom-up approach attempts to understand artistic practices and cultural narratives in terms of the artists' own concerns. See Elizabeth Harney's *In Senghor's Shadow* (2004, 4).
5. Notes, Dec. 16 2011.
6. Ouamba, Andréya. "Andréya Ouamba/Cie 1er Temps *Sueur des Ombres* clip 01."
7. Notes, July 18 2014.
8. Texts by other authors indicate that numerous pan-African choreographers of the same generation as Ouamba share similar values including individuality, improvisation, collaboration with dancers, and the transmission of choreographic tools over technical proficiency. See Douglas, Gilbert, et al. "Under Fire: Defining a contemporary African dance aesthetic – can it be done?" and Sieveking, Nadine. "'Create Your Space!': Locating Contemporary Dance in Ouagadougou."
9. Paulla A. Ebron, Francesca Castaldi, and others elucidate the ways in which notions of "Africa" and "African dance" have been produced, circulated, and consumed globally.
10. Andréya Ouamba, personal interview.
11. Andréya Ouamba, interview with Esther Baker-Tarpaga and *Pamoja*.
12. In his essay "African Identities," Kwame Anthony Appiah argues that African identity can be "a vital and enabling badge," but that it is one among many "salient models of being" and that there are certainly times when the African label is not needed (2008, 90–1).

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Dancing Dakar, 2011-2013

Keith Hennessy

In 2011 I was invited to teach and choreograph at AEx-Corps, an annual training and festival of contemporary dance in Dakar Senegal, produced by Andréya Ouamba and Association 1er Temps. In 2013, Andréya invited me back to Dakar to mentor emerging choreographers from five African countries. Both trips were funded by The Suitcase Fund of New York Live Arts (NYLA) with performances presented at Dakar's French Institute (L'Institut Français du Sénégal). This writing began as a final report to the funders but was later developed as a way to introduce the contemporary dance situation in Dakar, and to describe how I approached my work there. I was imagining a potential guide for teachers and choreographers from outside the African continent.

Teaching and performing at AEx-Corps, 2011

I taught at AEx-Corps from Nov 3–19, 2011. Additionally while in Dakar I made a new performance with three of the workshop participants. Negotiate was presented at the French Institute on Nov 17 in a shared program with a recent work by Andréya Ouamba, director of the contemporary dance company, Cie 1er Temps, and the semi-annual training program, AEx-Corps.

AEx-Corps 2011 involved six weeks of training with four teachers and a series of performances both by professional companies and by workshop participants. The teachers included: Keith Hennessy (San Francisco), Mar Gomez and company (Barcelona), Fatou Cissé (Dakar) and Andréya Ouamba (Dakar/Brazzaville).

Training involved two classes of 3.5 hours, five days per week. I taught one of the daily classes from November 3–19. My work was divided into three segments, built around the themes of Failure/Experimentation, Ritual/Energy, and Representation/Realness.

Student numbers fluctuated from twelve to seventeen from a total pool of approximately twenty young dancers. In addition to Dakar-based dancers, there were two dancers from RD Congo, and one each from Togo, USA, and Gabon. A dancer from Japan also dropped in for a few days. Most of the workshop participants were in their early 20s.

The students came with previous training in folkloric and/or hip hop dance. Additionally all of them had been exposed to contemporary dance through previous workshops and performances and a few of them had more than three years of activity in the hybrid field of contemporary dance. Several of the dancers were members of active companies, again mostly folkloric or hip hop, and a few of them were already engaged in making their own contemporary choreographies.

Momar Ndiaye, Yves Mwamba. Photo by Keith Hennessy.

The dancers from RD Congo (Yves Mwamba and Michel Kiyombo) had been training with Faustin Linyekula and Studio Kabako in Kisingani (RDC). The dancer from Togo (Francis Djidjo-Blassou) is active in Lomé (Togo) and had previously traveled to a contemporary dance festival in Mali. The dancer from Gabon (Kaïsha Essiane Ti Coeur) was a college student in Dakar and part of the vibrant Gabonese hip hop community in Senegal. The Senegalese dancers had all previously studied with Andréya Ouamba and most had participated in workshops with international teachers as part of Ouamba's work with Association 1er Temps. Some had also worked in the nearby town of Toubab Dialow with noted choreographer and teacher Germaine Acogny and members of her company Jant-Bi. Two of the dancers (Kumba Deme and Saliou Diene) were performers with a local mixed ability dance company (featuring differently abled / disabled dancers) that has toured in Europe and worked with both local and international choreographers.

The contemporary dance community or scene in Senegal is small yet dynamic. The French Institute annually programs visiting artists from France and other African countries. 2011 presentations included a work by Jérôme Bel and an evening of digital dance created by a collaborative team from Europe and Senegal.

Physical conditions for dance in Dakar are rough by US and European standards. I did not see or hear about a sprung-wood dance floor in Dakar, which is something that US and European dancers take for granted and often insist upon. My classes were held at the Foyer des Jeunes in the neighborhood of Ouakam. For a dance floor, Cie 1er Temps uses a thin soft mat (imagine a play surface for children) to protect dancers from the hard tile or cement floors. Ouakam is a large and vibrant, mostly working class neighborhood. Most of the roads are

Negotiate (2011). Pictured: Momar Ndiaye (Dakar), Yves Mwamba (Kisingani), Francis Djidjo-Blassou (Lomé), Keith Hennessy (San Francisco). Video Screen Capture.

dirt. The area around the Foyer des Jeunes is experiencing a lot of middle-class housing construction, but sightings of horses, sheep and cows are just as frequent. The dance space was dusty but lovely and no one ever complained. There were no injuries. After I left, Mar Gomez' classes were held outdoors at the famed Blaise Senghor Cultural Center. The mats were placed over a concrete floor, and a shade structure was created to protect from the relentlessly hot sun.

All workshop participants ate lunch together in the courtyard of a local family, the sister of Andréya Ouamba's wife, dance artist Fatou Cissé. This shared social time was an important part of the community building that marked AEx-Corps as generous and convivial. Food sharing is central to Senegalese culture and any guest was welcome. When I met friends that I knew from Europe they were immediately invited to join us for lunch.

The performance I made in Dakar is called Negotiate (Négocier). It featured Momar Ndiaye from Dakar (now Chicago), Francis Djidjo-Blassou from Lomé and Yves Mwamba from Kisingani. Music included both US/American pop and an original remix by DJ Klou / Momar Ndiaye. Negotiate was presented on the outdoor stage of the French Institute on Nov 17, 2011. There were approximately 150 people in the audience, a mix of local dancers and their friends, with members of Dakar's large international community (working at the UN or one of many NGO's or studying at universities). After the performance I spoke with audience members from France, Spain, USA, Togo, Cameroon, Niger, Congo-Brazzaville, Congo-Kinshasa, Gabon, Slovakia, South Africa and Senegal.

Our working language was French with occasional translations into Wolof. All of us were speaking French as a second or third language. Nonetheless conversations were rich, driven by earnest curiosity and fierce opinions. Politics and family histories, religion and pop culture, art and economics were subjects of ongoing debate, investigation and exposition. The general tone of the workshop was a fusion of rigorous practice and warm generosity. It felt great everyday both to arrive in the studio and to say goodbye after a days work.

Two excerpts from my journal:

1. Andréya works them harder physically. Today they are rolling, working low, movements motivated by arms reaching into spaces around the body, an action that pulls the torso into twists but also seems to center the dance in the hands or in the mind driving the hands. He explicitly demonstrates that they should not drive the dance from an undulating spine and an articulated torso. Which seems counter to what I would tend to prioritize. My classroom proposals also tend towards habit interruption or deconstruction; awareness of habits or norms, then questioning and critique. But it shouldn't be the role of a white guy from SF to move these dancers out of "African" habits and bodies towards "European" habits and bodies. Not that anyone is doing that but that's mostly because we've internalized this critical perspective. When I discuss this with Andréya he talks about mobilizing or accessing the energy that they bring to folkloric dance into a single gesture or action. (Folkloric/traditional dances and hip hop are key dance experiences and references for most of these dancers). He points out that the dancing they are most familiar with is driven by music and pleasure, and that it engages the whole body simultaneously. Andréya then demonstrates a single arm movement extracted from Sabar, the most popular of Senegalese dances, and questions how to fill this gesture with the energy of a whole body event.

2. I wasn't prepared for most of the dancers to be devout Muslims. I knew that 90% of Senegalese identify as Muslim but somehow I didn't expect my pop music and hip hop aficionado students to be praying after lunch and for some of the females among them to quickly pull two scarves out of their backpacks as we left the studio, one to cover their hair and another to fashion a quick skirt. I decided to shift a lot of my usual language about art making - not the political stuff, which they were fierce about engaging, but the language of ritual and energy. The students who weren't Senegalese/Wolof were not Muslim either, but they were from Christian sects including Assembly of God and smaller evangelical communities. Despite being super warm and generous people they all participate in contexts and beliefs that are negative about gays and atheists. I did not come out as gay, queer, or as a non-believer. Instead, when answering the frequent question about being married, I told them that I live at a critical distance to religion, government and traditional family systems. We discussed the parallel between an art practice that aims to reframe social norms and one's personal life. I made frequent comments about gender and they responded mostly favorably to my many challenges to their choreographed representations of normative gender roles. When I answered no to questions about believing in God or being part of a religion, the conversation ended or switched topics, not dissimilarly from my experiences with religious people in my own family or social contexts in the US.

Mentoring choreographers, AEx-Corps 2013

For my second trip to Senegal, I was hired to "coach" five emerging choreographers selected by the core members of Pamoja, a pan-African network of dance production and residencies initiated by Andréya Ouamba (Dakar), Faustin Linyekula (Kisingani, DR Congo) and Panaibra Canda (Antananarivo, Madagascar). The choreographers' age range was 25-42. They had a wide range of training and experience (including PARTS/Brussels, Jant-Bi/Sénégal, folkloric/traditional, street dance/hip hop, improvisation, release, contact improv...) and each have toured internationally—although perhaps not with their own work - meaning outside their home country and all to Europe at least once.

Fatou Cissé: Dakar, Senegal

Bertrand Saky: Dakar, Senegal (originally from Côte d'Ivoire)

Adonis Nebie: Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso

Lovatiana Erica Rakotobe: Antananarivo, Mozambique

Oumaïma Manaï: Tunis, Algeria and Paris, France

In each of these locales there is already a hybrid and emergent dance culture that is situated in relationship to the practices recognized in Europe as “contemporary dance.” The term “African contemporary dance” is used frequently even if it is just as likely to be avoided as both vague or falsely unifying.

When I arrived the five artists had already been working for three weeks on a new choreographic work, rehearsing in various spaces from a neighborhood cultural center, to a youth facility, to the gleaming, massive and under-programmed National Theater. Manaï and Rakotobe were each working on solos engaging political themes. Rakotobe was also choreographing a duet with two local dancers, Dame Kassé and Badara Diop. Saky was working on a duet about street kids that referenced his own childhood, with Abdoulaye Kane, a fellow dancer from Germaine Acogny’s all-male company Jant-Bi. Nebie was working on a duet with Fanny Mabondzo, a dancer from Congo that he had met three years previously at the festival Dialogue de Corps in Ouaga. Cissé was working on a women’s quartet, with Aïcha Kaboré, Alicia Gomis, and Clarisse Sagana, looking at women’s social status and the role of appearance, especially clothing, in crafting social identity. All of the local dancers seemed to have extensive experience if not training in folk/traditional dances including Sabar, a traditional Wolof dance named after the Sabar drum. Two of Cissé’s dancers were also involved in the vibrant, local hip hop scene.

For the first two weeks, Monday through Saturday, I led a morning choreography lab for the five choreographers. Each day I proposed a single approach or question and the work that followed ranged from two-hour discussions to intensive creative projects with immediate showings or physical/performance research sessions. A morning focused entirely on space (dramaturgies of space) might be followed by a lab in which dancing was recontextualized or generated by face-distorting masks. Additional proposals included political images (making, reading), the influence of training on choreography (or not!), working with objects, tasks, non-ordinary states of physicality-consciousness, the duet, synchronized movement (or not!), and Curtis/Scaroni’s score of symmetrical movement as a rupture of what are now habitual ‘dances’ based on spirals, circles, flow, quotidian, efficiency, and making contact at oblique angles. A few sessions were facilitated by the participating choreographers. Rakotobe shared some exercises developed during her work with blind dancers in Madagascar. Adonis proposed more intensely physical and repetitious, energizing exercises. Cissé guided a somatic process that began with shaking to activate interior body awareness leading to exterior and peripheral body attention as the dancing continued.

In the afternoon, the choreographers would rehearse 3-5 hours in their various studios. I would see one or two projects per afternoon, asking questions, provoking discussion and giving feedback. During the second week we shortened the lab from 4 to 3 hours so that participants could have more time to focus on their own projects.

We were occasionally joined by dancers Abdoulaye and Fanny and our showings and discussions often included Andréya, Ndèye, the company administrator, a young woman who seemed liked an intern, a young Senegalese theater director, two Dakar-based photographers who frequently document Andréya’s projects, as well as Momar Ndiaye, an ex-local now living in Chicago who has been an active participant in several previous AEx-Corps trainings, including with me in 2011. Participation was fluid, and there were soft borders around those who constitute the working group. I can’t tell how much this is just what they expect or habitually experience or if it flows from my own soft border work to include anyone who walks into the room.

Also during the first week, the four non-Dakar based artists (Louva, Oumaïma, Adonis, Keith) took a quick trip to Ecole des Sables, an hour away in a small fishing village called Toubab Dialow. The school is the home base for Germaine Acogny and her male and female companies, Jant-Bi and Jant-Bi Jageen. When the school is not in session with trainings in African-centric modern and contemporary dance, it is used as a residency site for visiting choreographers. During our visit we met French choreographer Olivier Dubois who was working on a piece with six male dancers, coming from six countries around the African continent (Egypt, Senegal, RD Congo, Côte d’Ivoire, Morocco). Sharing a bissap juice (hibiscus) with Germaine, she told us, “African contemporary dance should not all look the same. It should have regional flavors.”

On Monday and Tuesday of the third week, all efforts went to rehearsing and tech’ing the works-in-progress for a group show at the French Institute (aka L’Institut Français aka CCF for Centre Culturel Français), arguably the city’s most important cultural venue, especially for contemporary dance. All things considered—in presenting six unfinished works on a warm Tuesday night on the outdoor raised stage of the Institute—it went surprisingly well. The mixed audience of locals and ex-pats included many dancers including a few who had taken class with me in 2011. The feeling of community, of respectful and curious engagement, was not unlike a showing of new work in San Francisco, New York or Berlin. On Wednesday I facilitated a long feedback session which included overall notes or lessons learned as well as nearly 30 minutes of group commentary for each piece. We looked critically at patterns and tropes among the pieces, and lamented the last-minute lighting decisions that influenced the work differently than intended. Oumaïma and I both offered the suggestion that one or two days of the lab (perhaps next year) should be dedicated to working with lighting and other elements of theatrical staging that are difficult to imagine in the studio. On Thursday I directed a process of creating and producing an entire work in one hour—including budgets, a discussion of theme(s), promotional text, dramaturgical notes, casting/collaborators, initial movement research, title, three motivating questions, a tech rider, three proposed venues/co-producers and two additional sources of funding. The rest of the session involved presenting these works—on paper—and giving group feedback on the ideas, practicalities, potential resources, problematic politics and more. That night we all went to see Faustin Linyekula’s moving and well-crafted solo Le Cargo at the Institut Français, as part of a ground breaking 17-city African tour which included N’Djamena (Chad), Nouakchott (Mauritania), Djibouti, Matabo & Bata (Equitorial Guinea), Niamey & Zinder (Niger), and other cities far from the known contemporary dance circuits. On the final day of the six-week residency, and my last day of the three week choreographic lab, we were treated to a final session with Linyekula who spoke at length about *Le Cargo* and prompted deep questions and discussion about dancing, story telling, conflicting versions of history and conflicting visions of the future, tensions around traditional and folkloric dance, the overwhelming influence of European, especially French money and programming, as part of the ongoing life and afterlife of colonialism...

I am a close watcher—with curiosity, with concern—about the role of European and American money, leadership, opportunities, and aesthetics in the work of contemporary artists in Africa. In my limited experience with dance artists from various regions of the continent, I find them to be very conscious and strategic about European programmers, festival directors, and funders. Post, neo and straight up colonialisms are neither invisible nor unnamed, as they are for (too many) white artists and arts administrators. With these observations in mind, I arrived full of doubt, hopes, intentions and especially questions: Can teaching or coaching be part of a mutual gift economy across lines of difference, a negotiated and collaborative encounter despite asymmetrical power and resources rather than unintentional neo-colonialism? What are the implications and results of “teaching” techniques and aesthetics sourced in American and European discourses, economies...? Am I providing access? Am I just doing what I’m always doing, wherever I am? And if so, how heavy or unaware is the whiteness in my work with students in Europe or the Americas? In my journal notes on the eve of starting the lab I wrote: I am nervous about meeting the students tomorrow and excited to be figuring out how I can help them achieve what they want to achieve...

Upon my return I wrote a short essay based on these considerations, grounded in my personal experience in Dakar. Titled “Colonial Pedagogy” the essay attempts to foreground what is usually shadowed or simply tolerated in the disidentificatory practice that African artists engage on a daily practice. I hope to open more of a space for critical engagement and generative resistance in my teaching, not by arriving as a modernist liberator with decolonizing illusions, but through a shared recognition and “owning” of the structural asymmetries of power and access that produce not only my presence in Africa but the information or practices that I’ve come to share.

I heard from the local team several stories about foreigners having a difficult time adjusting to daily life in Dakar. I offer these reflections as potentially useful to future travelers along this (contemporary dance) route between the Americas and Africa, USA and Senegal, between any American city (except maybe Detroit and post Katrina New Orleans) and Dakar. Unless you are an experienced traveler in the world that cannot be named but has been called the Third World, a developing nation, or simply Africa, you will probably find it quite difficult especially during your first week. I found the food unfamiliar and the recommendation to avoid ingesting tap water became much harder to follow than I had anticipated. Disruptive noise (construction, airplanes landing nearby, soccer matches, amplified Islamic chanting) interrupted both sleep and studio rehearsals. Dakar is both simultaneously similar and dissimilar to big cities of Europe and North America. There are fancy and working-class malls, theaters, tall buildings, extreme wealth disparity, too many cars, an airport. Less familiar to me were the urban livestock, the taxis/

houses/restaurants that would never pass any minimum hygiene or physical safety requirements in the US, intense diesel or dirty gasoline fumes especially in traffic jams, constant price haggling or negotiation (including for taxis), a lack of towels, dust or sand everywhere yet somehow my hosts seemed to stay cleaner than me, pedestrians and cars in much closer proximity than might at first seem safe or sane, litter and trash everywhere, really loud and low flying major airplane traffic, and the possibility of power or water outages that locals will find annoying but not surprising. There is an industry of tactics for surviving and thriving in this "new and different" world. I was glad that I had asked for advice before traveling but wished that I'd asked for more. Before going I watched a couple of Senegalese movies, I studied maps and read a little bit about Senegalese history, geography, and recent politics. One of the best preparations was reading Saidiya Hartman's *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route* (2007, Farrar, Straus and Giroux) for a deep and personal reflection on visiting West Africa, slavery tourism, African independence since the 50s, the afterlife of slavery, American and African American fantasies about the motherland, and African responses to these fantasies (projections, desires, misunderstandings...). I had to repeatedly let go of middle-class habits and white privileges (especially those connected to comfort) so that I could delight in a hands-on, ground-level, generous and privileged experience of how the majority of the world lives, and in the art and artists whose genius emerges from these social and material contexts. Two practices that had a significant and positive influence on my trip: three drops of concentrated grapefruit seed (GSE) extract daily AND frequent swimming or beach time. Also, wifi access has grown enormously in two years. I could turn off data roaming and was still able to use email/web on a smart phone all over town.

Yet despite having previously been to Dakar and having experienced temporary living in various contexts marked by poverty, failed or anti-capitalism, and recent war, I still had a tough time during my first week when my apartment had no running water for five days, the food choices within walking distance of both my apartment and the lab studio were very limited, and the loud speakers from the neighborhood mosque were waking me up before 6am every day. Writing on the plane back to the US, I feel really lucky and very inspired right now, and I look forward to returning. The experiences I had in Dakar could not be replicated by story or website or live performance at a white-led festival, and I wouldn't trade the experiences I had here (human encounters, discussions, studio performances, daily sights and sounds, stories, laughs, misunderstandings, fabric and fashion) for a working shower, drinkable tap water or fresh kale. Seeing *Le Cargo* in Dakar, within the walled colonial campus of the French Cultural Center while surrounded by Senegalese and African dancers, seemed so much more important and dangerous than when I saw it at the amazing TBA Festival in Portland.

Andréya and team, including his wife/partner Fatou, are making something lasting and important in Dakar. Building partnerships around Africa, especially with Pamoja, and internationally (primarily in France and in the US with The Suitcase Fund and the Africa Contemporary Arts Consortium) they are nurturing long-term visions for a sustainably growing contemporary dance community in Dakar, and for increased international exchange and collaboration within and beyond the African continent. I was honored to be invited back. Fingers crossed, this won't be my last visit, and I truly hope that I can inspire the support (find the money) to bring more people with me the next time. Why? Because I am increasingly confident that the lone artist as authority or master teacher is not the best way to teach, let alone to participate in dialogic, collaborative, and negotiated cultural exchange. And because I know so many artists, of African and other descents, in San Francisco, on the West Coast, and in Europe who are so genuinely curious, inspired by, and concerned about "Africa" and could give and get so much out of meeting their colleagues in Dakar (or Ouaga, Kisingani, Tana, Nairobi, Jo'burg, Bamako, Tunis, Algiers, Lomé, Marrakesh, Akkra...)

Positioning the speaker

My perspectives bear the imprint of my experiences and identities as a hybrid artist-activist-academic, white, middle-aged, college educated, queer/gay, cismale, non-US citizen, Irish & French Canadian Anglophone who speaks French, and an ex-punk with hippy values, San Franciscan since 1982. Through active engagement in leftist, anti-racist, anti-imperial and feminist social movements since the early 80s, I have become increasingly motivated by African American histories of struggle, philosophy, and art. bell hooks' naming of white supremacist capitalist patriarchy inspired me to re-consider my own investment in whiteness. My artistic and scholarly practices, re-imagined as decolonizing and anti-racist, have led me to more closely observe and more ethically support black genius and black resistance. My invitation to Dakar was recommended by Faustin Linyekula with whom I have occasionally collaborated since 2005.

I don't know how to write this biography without performing "the confession of privilege," which, "while claiming to be anti-racist and anti-colonial, is actually a strategy that helps constitute the settler/white subject" (Smith 2013).

Notes

For visual materials related to these events, please see these videos: Choreographic mentorship, AEx-Corps 2013 (Dakar) https://vimeo.com/108893255; and Workshops, AEx-Corps 2011 (Dakar) https://vimeo.com/36361209.

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Whiteness Revisited: Reflections of a White Mother

Esther Baker-Tarpaga

Seeing the structures of whiteness erected in me and creating an interior prison state and choosing to go with the life of revolt against that prison state.

– Mirrors of Privilege: Making Whiteness Visible

I am a White American woman, a dance improviser, a performance artist, an educator, and a choreographer. I am married to a Black man from Burkina Faso who is a choreographer, musician, and educator. Our daughter is eight years old and a fierce dance improviser. She shows me new ways of viewing the world. In our exchanges she reinterprets my language and flips the script. In our family there is a passing down of information from old to young and learning horizontally. Our daughter dances her spirit. She mixes her African dance with her ballet with her creative dance. She puts out her body intelligence in the world.

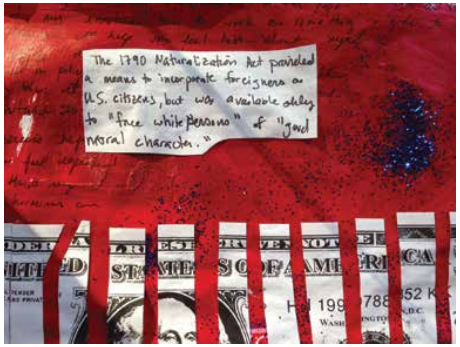
I think of an Africanist Affect as a passing of cultural, aesthetic, physical, and social knowledge from parent and community to child. Encouraging the young and old within a horizontal, not vertical learning structure. Community surrounds the soloist or the duets and trios as dancers throw down their codified steps, rhythms, and personal variations while surrounded by community. In the circle or cypher. Dance can be transformative and teach collaboration. Bodies learn to move together across the floor, in unison, in time, in rhythm, at times with exact precision, at times with individual flairs. Dance can be a place of healing the body and the community.

Being a White mother to a Black daughter in the USA brought me into the continuing civil rights movement to dismantle racism. I was concerned about the future of my child and since her birth, I committed to work to undo the trauma of white supremacy and systemic oppression. When Michael Brown was shot and Ferguson was on the news, my daughter told me she was scared of being shot. She drew an anti-gun protest sign to put in our window.

In my 1980's public school childhood in Fort Collins, Colorado, there was nothing outright visible about white supremacy in the canon. We did learn about slavery but we were never instructed to see our white selves in this history and how we continued to benefit from white privilege. When I think about my childhood, and the white privilege in which I navigated, minus the few moments when I was tokenized for being the only Jew in class, I remember feeling safe, protected, served. I remember having access. The boys and girls looked like me in the books most of the time, the teachers looked like me, and so did all my doctors, dentists, and dance teachers.

Whiteness Revisited at Bali Spirit Festival, Ubud, Bali 2016. Photo by Mathew Oldfield.

#Body As Place for Action to Examine Race at Middlebury College, Vermont, Clifford Symposium 2015. Photo by Todd Balfour.



Handmade Book by Esther and Windega Tarpaga (2014). Photo by Derek Blackman.

My daughter is going through elementary school in a predominantly white school. Recently I noticed an activity on the walls. The activity heading read: "The real me: the skin I'm in is just a covering. The real me is inside." I wrote to the principal that this project was problematic because it suggested colorblindness or erasing the skin. This principal responded right away saying she would meet with the teachers and change the activity. Yet not all gatekeepers are willing to listen. The therapist I took my daughter to in Iowa City had one Princess Tiana figurine, one Mammy figurine, and twenty-five white figurines for sand play therapy. I told her I was concerned about the white supremacy she was enforcing for all the children that came in that office and she responded to me saying she was getting out of practicing therapy. One result of white privilege is being able to walk away when things get uncomfortable.

In the 1960's Malcom X encouraged white organizers to figure out strategies to break down the prejudice that exists in white communities. In anti-racist organizer spaces we are encouraged to talk with our white families to work towards undoing racism. Frances Kendall writes, "Coming to grips with actual US history, as opposed to the sanitized version we are generally taught, pushes many of us into profound

Esther and Windega at Marin Headlands Artist in Residency Open House, Marin, California, 2013. Photo by Aja Mujinga Sherrard.

cognitive and emotional discomfort that we resist the information . . . . I wasn't told, or didn't take in, the information that almost all of the framers of the Constitution were slaveholders. . . . As white people, we have to believe that we can change ourselves and our institutions. Without that belief, the system of the supremacy of whiteness continues to work exactly as it was set up to work, and all our lives are lessened" (2012, 17).

I listen to white people struggle daily to dismantle systems of oppression while blindly clinging onto their whiteness and its supremacy and I have to remind myself, "a fish doesn't know it's in water." I recently saw a famous choreographer who spoke about growing up gay and how that shaped his worldview, but not once did he mention about how he grew up white. He omitted that from his entire presentation and his career. Perhaps he felt it was not necessary, or he felt that he did not have the words to speak about race. But as I watched him speak with a large audience of University students, many of whom identify as Black or Latinx, I became frustrated that he did not speak about being a white male and how that shaped his worldview. And, how for the white students and faculty listening to his talk, he is again enforcing the blindness of white privilege.

I can see the trauma of white supremacy in the bodies and choreographed campaigns of the current political elections. Donald Trump harkens back to the good old days when the protesters would get shut down. "You see, in the good old days, law enforcement acted a lot quicker than this," Mr. Trump said, as security officers made their way toward the protester. "A lot quicker. In the good old days, they'd rip him out of that seat so fast."[1] He encourages his supporters to heckle the protestors, and if you decide to punch a protestor, he will pay your legal fees. Hillary Clinton got angry and defensive when a protestor held up a sign at one of her events. Clinton later responded and it was apparent her PR people helped her craft her statement. Bernie Sanders gave space at his podium when the Black Lives Matter Seattle protestors spoke, although his audience yelled at them.

My dancer friend told me today as we improvised that I was addicted to struggle. In my improvisations I slam my body against the floor, I put material limitations on my body such as ropes or a twenty-pound skirt tied around my waist. When I move I feel the layers in my body history. I feel the layers in the person I am moving with, the layers of the audience that is witnessing. I feel our collective traumas and I feel our collective potential for transformation through moving. My body feels

multiplicitous—one layer is this white skin, this organ that is the biggest organ holding together my body. My audiences touch my body. At times they are radically tender, at times they fear touching me. When we touch another body, skin joins and it may be sweaty, sticky, and hot.

I am interested in the merging space where dance and art come together in dissonance and unity to transform individuals and communities. I am interested in bridging the ways in which language can only speak to a certain degree to undo trauma, and then bodywork is needed. Dance is needed. I am interested in mulit-racial spaces of coalition where anger, pain, love, and joy can all be present. I find myself in a between space. My family is mixed—black and white, my daughter, who I birthed, is part of my body.

I process my life through dance and performance and am thankful for this work of the body, the history of moving through, for, against, and with. I believe that we as movers can offer physical practices to the anti-racist movement to work with the traumas that reside and are held in the body. I focus on my breath and action of compassion as I work with my racist white community. The binary of "good" and "bad" white people does nothing to undo racism. We need to listen to each other, heal, and take action. I spoke with my white male anti-racist trainer friend and he is in an interracial relationship and has children. He said that at times he thinks he cannot really have true love and equality in his relationship until racism is no more.

We cannot live in the past; it is gone. Nor can we live in the future; it is forever beyond our grasp. We can live only in the present. If we are unaware of our present actions, we are condemned to repeating the mistakes of the past and can never succeed in attaining our dreams for the future.

– S. N. Goenka

FREE To Be You and Me
@ https://vimeo.com/121484362

At times when she wants to snuggle
We listen to the music together
Ram ma da sa sa sey so hum
I birthed to this meditational music
Our blood and bones together formed in my uterus
Merging forever
This is where time stands still
And color is part of the beauty in our landscape
Our geographical history of
Together
We dance together in front of the mirror
She sees me and I see her
Mother daughter
We choreograph movement
I follow her as she punches out the repetition
Of the song
The other day she came home and took
Off her clothes
Mom I want to dance naked
I want to paint my body
She painted her body red
We put newspaper around her
Little body- taped it- and then she broke
It apart as she danced quickly
Put on the fast one she says

Special Thanks: Tarpaga Family, Raquel Monroe, and Etta Cetera

Notes

1. http://www.nytimes.com/politics/first-draft/2016/02/27/in-good-old-days-donald-trump-says-campaign-protesters-got-more-than-just-an-escort-out/ 27 February 2016. Accessed 4 March 2016.

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Contributors

Takiyah Nur Amin, PhD, is Assistant Professor of Dance Studies and Affiliate Faculty in the Department of Africana Studies and the Women and Gender Studies Program at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. Her research and teaching interests include Black performance and aesthetics, 20th century American concert dance and pedagogical issues in dance studies. Dr. Amin is currently working on a book project that explores the work of Black women choreographers during the height of the US-based Black Power and Black Arts Movements. Dr. Amin is a member of the Board of Directors for the Congress on Research in Dance (CORD,) co-founder (with Dr. Nyama McCarthy Brown) of CORD's Diversity Working Group and a founding member of the Collegium for African Diaspora Dance (CADD).

Esther Baker-Tarpaga is a performance artist and choreographer. She co-directs Baker & Tarpaga Project and an arts exchange program in Burkina Faso. She was a US cultural envoy to Botswana, South Africa, and Guinea. She recently performed at Bali Spirit Festival, Ubud, InOut Festival, Bobo Dioulasso, The Wassaic Festival, NY, and Kelly Strayhorn Theatre, Pittsburgh. She toured with David Roussève and is a performance associate of Guillermo Gomez-Pena/La Pocha Nostra. She is an Assistant Professor of Dance at University of the Arts, Philadelphia.

April Berry, certified Dunham Technique master, dance educator, and internationally-recognized dancer currently heads the Community Engagement and Education Program at Kansas City Ballet, and previously served as Artistic Director of Dallas Black Dance Theatre. Actively involved in the field of dance education and outreach since 1992, Berry served as Director of Education at Charlotte Ballet and BalletMet Columbus and as a master teacher has travelled to Cuba on a Denison University Research Grant and taught at various universities and dance institutions around the country.

Mark Broomfield, Assistant Professor of Dance Studies at SUNY Geneseo (PhD, MFA), is the Associate Director of the Geneseo Dance Ensemble. His article "Branding Ailey: The Production and Liberation of the Queer, Black, Male Dancing Body," is forthcoming by Oxford University Press. He is currently working on his book and documentary "Passing for Almost Straight." Broomfield is the recipient of the Woodrow Wilson Career Enhancement Fellowship, the SUNY Faculty Diversity Award and The Ford Foundation Fellowship.

Tanya Calamoneri is a Visiting Assistant Professor of Global Dance at Colgate University. She previously was the Project Manager of DanceMotion USA, a cultural diplomacy program of the US State Department, produced by Brooklyn Academy of Music. She met Mr. Holland through DMUSA, through which he joined the Illstyle and Peace Productions tour in Belarus, Russia and Ukraine. She completed her PhD in Dance at Temple University and her MA at New York University. Her writing has been published in *Theater, Dance and Performance Training, Routledge Butoh Companion*, *Dance Chronicle* and *Movement Research Journal,* as well as BAM's DanceMotion USA blog and *BAMbill*.

A'Keitha Carey, originally from the Bahamas, received her BA in Dance from Florida International University and MFA in Dance from Florida State University. She completed her Certificate in Women's Studies from Texas Woman's University where she is currently working to complete her PhD. A'Keitha created CaribFunk™ technique, a genre fusing Afro-Caribbean, ballet, modern, and fitness principles. Her research attempts to establish relationships between CaribFunk™ technique and Caribbean popular culture, and its import for students of color as a form of embodied protest against the politics of domination.

Ellen Chenoweth is currently the director of development and communications for Pig Iron Theatre Company and writes regularly for Philadelphia-based dance journal *thINKingDANCE*. She previously held positions at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and the Dance Exchange. She holds a Bachelor's degree from Rice University and a Master's degree in dance from Texas Woman's University. Ellen is a recent graduate of Wesleyan University's Institute for Curatorial Practice in Performance.

Born a Hoosier, **Thomas F. DeFrantz** is Professor and Chair of African and African American Studies at Duke University, and Past President of the Society of Dance History Scholars. Director, SLIPPAGE: Performance, Culture, Technology, a research group that explores emerging technology in live performance applications. Books: *Dancing Many Drums: Excavations in African American Dance (University of Wisconsin Press, 2002); Dancing Revelations Alvin Ailey's Embodiment of African American Culture (Oxford University Press, 2004); Black Performance Theory, co-edited with Anita Gonzalez (Duke University Press, 2014); TBS 46.1 Black Moves: New Directions in Black Dance Studies,* co-edited with Tara Aisha Willis, and *Choreography and Corporeality, Relay in Motion,* co-edited with Philipa Rothfield (Palgrave, 2016).

Doran George has a PhD that looks at somatic dance training and is a funded artist. They are published in journals and anthologies, produce symposia and conferences, and teach in universities, art colleges, and professional dance. They have danced for various choreographers and also mentored artists through the Choreographers In Mentorship Exchange program and The Wellcome Trust. They were trained at the European Dance Development Center (NL) and completed an MA in Feminist Performance at Bristol University (UK).

Dionne C. Griffiths is a program coordinator at the University of Louisville. She was a Fulbright Fellow to Trinidad (2006-2007) where she researched dance and choreographed for the Metamorphosis Dance Company. She earned her MA in Choreography from the University of North Carolina-Greensboro and graduated Magna Cum Laude and Phi Beta Kappa from Spelman College with a BA in Comparative Women's Studies. Dionne has performed, choreographed, and taught dance nationally and internationally.

Avis Hatcher-Puzzo is Associate Professor of Dance at Fayetteville State University. She received her BA in Dance/Theater from Trinity College, her MFA in Theater Arts/Dance from Case Western Reserve University. She has created a Minor in Dance for the university, and published, "Popular to Proficient: Cultivating a Contextual Appreciation of Dance On a Rural Historically Black College Campus" in the *Journal of Dance Education Spring 2014*.

Keith Hennessy dances in and around performance. Born in northern Ontario, he lives in San Francisco and tours internationally. His performances engage improvisation, ritual and public action as tools for investigating political realities. Practices inspired by anarchism, critical whiteness, punk, and queer-feminism motivate and mobilize Hennessy's teaching, writing, dancing. Hennessy directs Circo Zero and was a member of Contraband with Sara Shelton Mann. He holds a MFA in Choreography and is a PhD candidate in Performance Studies at UC Davis.

Elyan Jeanine Hill is a PhD candidate in the World Arts and Cultures/ Dance Department at UCLA. Her research interests include collective memory, West African transnationalism, and Mami Wata's influence on performance idioms and visual culture in Ghana, Togo, Benin, and their diasporas. More specifically, her dissertation research examines festival and ritual performances by Ewe artists in both Ghana and Togo as dynamic forms of history-keeping, problem-solving, and traditional education for young women.

Duane Lee Holland began his career as a gymnast on the Jr. National Olympic US Team at twelve years old. At the age of 17, Duane began dancing professionally, as a founding member of Rennie Harris Puremovement, the first theater Hip-Hop dance company. While performing with RHPM, he also taught at Broadway Dance Center, MIT, Stanford University, Jacobs Pillow, University of Utah, UCLA, Monte Carlo Ballet Company, Pennsylvania Ballet Company, Philadanco, and Alvin Ailey Dance Theater. He has danced with Ronald K. Brown/ Evidence, Peter DiMuro's Public Displays of Motion and Kun-Yang Lin Dancers, to name a few. Duane was also an original Broadway cast member of "The Lion King" and assistant choreographer and Dance Captain for the Broadway hit, *Hot Feet*. He has performed in videos with Will Smith and Jill Scott. Duane completed his MFA in choreography at the University of Iowa in May 2015, and is currently a Visiting Assistant Professor at UI for 2015–16.

Grace Flavia Ibanda is a seasoned social artist, educator, and creative arts facilitator with over 25 years of empowerment work with children, youth and adults, locally and internationally. She draws on the creative and performance arts, mainly dance to expand individual/group communication, expression and exploration. Grace's artistic roles among others include: learner, teacher, performer, choreographer, director and producer of theatrical performances. Sharing her love for dance wildly; she trusts that all people can dance, and so live more holistic, fun and rewarding lives.

Dr. Hanna Järvinen, PhD, Docent, works as a University Lecturer at the Performing Arts Research Centre of the Theatre Academy of the University of the Arts Helsinki, Finland, where she teaches doctoral candidates in artistic research. Her interest in Michel Foucault's theories of power and knowledge led her to the epistemology and ontology of dance and to postcolonialist theory. She is the author of *Dancing Genius* (Palgrave Macmillan 2014) as well as articles in e.g. *Dance Research* and *Dance Research Journal*, and she is currently the Treasurer of SDHS.

Maura Keefe is a contemporary dance historian. She is a scholar-in-residence at Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival. Her writing has been published in *Taken By Surprise: The Dance Improvisation Reader, When Men Dance: Choreographing Masculinities Across Borders, The Gay and Lesbian Review and Performance Journal*. She has served on the board for the Congress on Research on Dance (CORD), as a dance panelist for the New York State Council of the Arts (NYSCA), and as chair for the Department of Dance at the College at Brockport.

Keefe has an MFA in choreography and performance from Smith College and a PhD in dance history and theory from University of California, Riverside. She is the Associate Director of the School of Theatre, Dance, and Performance Studies at University of Maryland, College Park.

Gregory King holds an MFA from Southern Methodist University and is certified in Elementary Labanotation by The Dance Notation Bureau. He has performed with The Washington Ballet, Donald Byrd/ The Group, The Metropolitan Opera, New York City Opera, Erick Hawkins Dance Company, and The Lion King on Broadway. Currently he serves as Visiting Assistant Professor of Dance at Swarthmore College and writes for several dance journals in the Philadelphia area. As a teacher, he is fascinated by the multi-cultural and multi-ethnic roots of various dance traditions and continues to share their histories with students. Currently, Mr. King serves as assistant professor of dance at Kent State University.

Mario LaMothe is a Postdoctoral Associate at the African-American Cultural Center of the University of Illinois at Chicago. He received a doctorate in Performance Studies from Northwestern University. Mario's research interests focus on theories of Caribbean performance traditions and African diaspora health cultures. His book project, Giving Bodies: Dance, Memory, and Imagined Haitian Identities, employs Vodou epistemology and critical ethnography to question what is at stake when performing and visual artists reframe Haiti's embodied traditions to devise new images that counter internal and foreign negative representations of Haitians.

Joshua Legg (*author of Introduction to Modern Dance Techniques*) is a performer, choreographer, director and writer currently running Lake Superior State University's dance program. He has served as a master teacher and guest lecturer/speaker for ACDA conferences, ADF's Paul Taylor Project, the Dance Teacher Summit, and various universities. Recent guest lectures and residencies include Tennessee Tech University, Washington and Lee University, Wilson College, and Davis & Elkins College.

Jill Pribyl, MA, CMA, is an arts educator, dancer, and choreographer who has lived and worked in Uganda for the past 12 years. In 2002, she received a Fulbright Scholarship to teach and conduct research in the dance section of Makerere University. In 2005, Jill relocated to Kampala where she has continued to teach at Makerere University. Her interests lie in how Ugandan cultural dances are transmitted, appropriated and preserved through teaching practices.

Neith Sankofa is a researcher and writer in the areas of ritual, dance, and religion. She has a BA and MA in Religious Studies and enjoys exploring movement as advocacy. Ms. Sankofa has been a presenter at the American Academy of Religion (AAR) Annual Conference and featured as a guest writer for the "Religion Nerd" online publication. For more information on booking a guest lecture, writing or speaking engagement, she can be reached at NeithSankofa@gmail.com.

Amy Swanson is a PhD candidate in the Interdisciplinary Theatre and Drama program at Northwestern University. Her research focuses on generational changes in contemporary dance in Senegal in relation to political economy and gender politics. Research interests include postcolonial studies, critical race studies, performance studies, and contemporary African art. She is a dancer and choreographer and holds a BFA in dance from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She is a recipient of a Fulbright-Hays fellowship.

Alessandra Williams is a UCLA Culture & Performance PhD candidate. Through ethnography and dance analysis of choreographies by David Roussève/REALITY and Ananya Chatterjea/Ananya Dance Theater, she researches postmodern dances of the African and Asian diaspora as decolonizing, or challenging gender, racial, and sexual oppression. She also earned her BA in American Studies and Dance at Macalester and is originally from Minneapolis where her community organizing earned her the Grassroots Solutions Organizer of the Year Award.

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The Editorial Board of the Society of Dance History Scholars is actively seeking submissions of manuscripts for its book series Studies in Dance History.

Because the Society defines dance history in the broadest possible terms, the board encourages submission of manuscripts on a wide range of topics. Submissions and inquiries may be sent at any time to Rebecca Rossen, Chair, Editorial Board: r-rossen@austin.utexas.edu

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https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/congress-on-research-in-dance

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Apr. 7–8, 2017. Special Topics conference with SDHS.
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October 19–22, 2017. Joint conference with CORD.
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The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio
Call for Papers and information: http://www.sdhscordconference.org/
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Call for contributions: Conversations Across the Field of Dance Studies 2017

Guest editor: Sanja Andus L'Hotellier
Deadline for submissions: December 4, 2016

Teacher's Imprint – Rethinking Dance Legacy

Historically, institutionally as well as symbolically, the status, role and importance of a dance teacher have evolved. Numerous biographies take the moment of meeting with a master as a vocational origin, making it a common rite of passage within a life story. Throughout the dancer's career, this foundational imprint on the dancing body will be reactivated with every new professional encounter.

When discussing the nuanced and complex concept of transmitting dance, French theorist and historian Laurence Louppe (1938-2012) states that beyond language, and beyond sign, the passing of knowledge consists less in offering the movement no matter how sublime, than in opening up a threshold to a secret and indefinable zone. If teachers create a founding reference ground for the experience of the body, then their imprint, according to Louppe, relates more to a form of nomadic memory, intercorporeal "mysterious contagions," travelling from body to body, amongst groups of dancers, from one aesthetic imaginary to another, and this, even in their absence.

How does a dancer participate in the making of a teacher and what in turn makes someone a disciple? According to which modalities of transmission and tacit agreements are both figures— that of the teacher and that of the dancer—constructed and shaped? This issue of Conversations will explore the two-way kinesthetic negotiation and dialogue, and the underlying, radical and durable effects of a teacher's presence in structuring a dancer's body and work. We seek to understand the articulation of the mutual recognition, debt and legacy whether it resides in the institutional frame of a school, or of a company, or within as well as against certain processes that are inherent to transmitting socio-cultural traditions across time and in accordance with specific aesthetic genres.

With a maximum of 2,000 words, we welcome contributions in the form of essays, transcribed oral histories, field studies, archival documents, notation, fiction, in written, graphic or photographic form. Submissions could relate but are not limited to the following proposed themes across dance studies, movement analysis, aesthetics, ethnography, anthropology and cultural studies:

- What constitutes danced affiliations between teachers and students?
- What are the challenges of intergenerational embodied memory?
- How is the heritage of historically significant teachers activated today?
- What is the aesthetic imprint of a teacher after his/her disappearance?
- Beyond technique, what comprises transmitted dance knowledge?
- How and when does transmission within a/various dance context(s) across the globe incorporate or transgress power dynamics, authorial hierarchies or cultural /social/ ancestral forms?
- In what ways might looking to non-Western dance pedagogies, such as the Indian guru-shishya system, make us reconsider the interpersonal dynamics of dance teaching in the West?
- How might we engage with dance pedagogy as intercultural models of knowledge transmission?
- How do contemporary networks (e.g. collectives, YouTube instruction) inform or reimagine the teacher-disciple paradigm across geographic, cultural, class, race and/or national boundaries?

Please send inquiries and submissions to Dr. Sanja Andus L'Hotellier (sanja.lhotellier@gmail.com)

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