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## **DANCING THE OTHER IN SOUTH AFRICA**

Gerard M. Samuel

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Supervised by Associate Professor Sally Swartz and Professor Ida Mara Freire

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Gerard M. Samuel

9 November 2016

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## **Abstract**

At the centre of discourse of Dance in South Africa is the notion of Other. The form and approach in Contemporary Dance in South Africa in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has been shaped by cultural forces such as apartheid and colonialism. This thesis sets out a phenomenological study of Othering in Dance in South Africa through a hermeneutical unpacking of 'Older dancing'. Its critical question grapples with the notion of age as a new marker of alterity in Dance and asks: How does dancing the Other bring new ways of seeing bodies? The lived experiences of four categories in Older dancing: dancers, choreographers, directors and dance critics, in and outside of South Africa since the 2000s, will be analysed. My own position in each of the categories above has allowed me to participate in Contemporary Dance and the performing arts field in South Africa for over 45 years. A partial history of Contemporary Dance in South Africa is explicated in order to provide paradigmatic frames for this study. The philosophical enquiry of this thesis has foregrounded Dance Studies as a discrete research field in order to highlight dance and the body itself, and to reassert an enviable position of dancing bodies as research instruments and knowledge producers.

A hermeneutical narrative analysis was deployed following twelve interviews that were conducted over 4 years (2012-2014). Seven South African and five non-South African 'voices' were analysed and coded against four primary lines of enquiry in Experience: notions of cultural inscription and dancing bodies as blank slates; questions of (in)visibility and frailty of older persons, wisdom and (in)dependent older dancers and the ontologies of marginalisation for Older dancing within concert theatre Dance. This suggested a thesis of wider Body-space reading and continuum for Dance that could be useful in understanding epistemology of prejudice. Recommendations that flow from this study will relate to Dance Studies in South Africa that is already moving away from its anthropological roots in tribal dances, experimentations with multicultural dance, towards unpacking intersectionality, public art and the contested label African dance. It provides Body-space as a further theoretical tool with which to observe dancing and bodies as states of becoming that will be of interest to Dance Studies, Performance Theory and Cultural Studies.

### *Keywords:*

South African Contemporary dance, Older dancing, Body-space, Other



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## CHAPTER ONE: MAPPING THE STUDY

### Background to the study

When the older dancer began to move on stage, some of the audience near to me giggled nervously. This response to the commissioned work *To Whom Shall I Leave My Voice* (2010) by Carolyn Holden, for La Rosa Spanish dance company in Cape Town, intrigued me. What made some of this audience at the Baxter Dance Festival in Cape Town uncomfortable and why? Did they find this heightened visibility of the older dancer inappropriate and if so, in relation to what normative positions held in concert theatre dance<sup>1</sup> in South Africa? Were they embarrassed for the older dancer and by her assumed lesser athletic ability? What was the experience of older dancing in the minds and bodies of these audiences and for choreographers, directors, and the older dancers themselves?



**Illustration 1:** *To Whom Shall I Leave My Voice*. Baxter Theatre. Cape Town. 2010. Veronica Williams (draped in black shawl) and Nicole Kleinhans. Photo courtesy of the Baxter Theatre.

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<sup>1</sup> I refer here to dance forms and aesthetics in so called mainstream theatre/concert hall spaces. I am very mindful that this phrase should not signal a privileging of any particular dance art form especially given the complex multicultural country that is South Africa. This phrase is used only for consistency purposes. An overview of the history of Dance in South Africa will be covered in Chapter Two.

The term older dancer in this thesis will be ascribed to professional dancers within concert theatre dance who are over 35 years of age. I acknowledge that the notion of ageing and getting older itself varies from one culture to another and have chosen the term older dancing to contain my accumulated (over 40 years) engagement with Dance that has noticed retirement from professional life<sup>2</sup> at around the mid-thirties for many dancers in South Africa. I have noticed that some choreographers in South Africa are increasingly working with older dancing since 2000s. The term older dancing will refer to contemporary dance works that are choreographed especially by, with and about older professional dancers viz. those who chose to continue performing after the average retirement age of 35 years. This thesis considers dance works such as the tea dances discussed by Diane Amans (2013) where older people engage in recreational dances in the context of a community. This type of dance, however, is not the focus of this thesis. The focus of this study is on older dancing-its performers, the dance works, the creators and those who (re)view older dancing as a specific form of concert theatre dance in South Africa.

In probing Lisa Blackman's (2008) discussion of thinking through the body, I will illustrate in what manner diverse dancing bodies are made (in)visible within the field of Contemporary Dance,<sup>3</sup> and in South Africa. This thesis attempts to offer a more nuanced and in depth reading of these phenomena and questions whether age has become a further category of Othering, one that is becoming marked in Contemporary Dance in South Africa? Given the impact of South Africa's apartheid<sup>4</sup> and colonial past on Dance, engagement with difference as embodied in race, gender, sexual orientation and disability by many local choreographers is political movement (Glasser, 1991). In the context of this thesis, the primary paradigmatic

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<sup>2</sup> Elizabeth Triegaardt, CEO of Cape Town City Ballet, notes the official retirement age for classical ballet dancers in her ballet company is forty (Samuel, 2011b).

<sup>3</sup> In this study, such notions of Contemporary Dance exclude social dance forms like ballroom dance, hip hop, salsa, and jazz. Further it differentiates itself from the more populist dances and/or any association with dance as Sport. I acknowledge that the term Contemporary Dance would be referred to as Modern Dance especially in the USA. In South Africa, Modern dance is the nomenclature for jazz and show dancing whilst in America Modern Dance refers to all forms of what is discussed as Contemporary Dance in South Africa. Therefore, in this thesis the term Contemporary Dance will be used throughout to assert a South African perspective. As a rapidly evolving dance form Contemporary Dance has embraced the strong leg work of classical ballet and placed greater emphasis on the articulate torso which shares some similarities with traditional African dance forms. The principles *fall and recovery*, and *contraction and release* are integral to Contemporary Dance as a form as are improvisational techniques, floor and release work.

<sup>4</sup> The use of the term Black, White, Coloured and Apartheid throughout this thesis is deliberately spelt in the lower case to signal a de-emphasis and deconstruction of race privilege that is endemic in South African cultural politics.

frame for Contemporary Dance will be as a dance form but it will also be discussed as an ideology and choreographic approach.

As an emerging performing art form in South Africa since the 1950s, the development of Contemporary Dance could be seen as a response to the dominant traditions and aesthetics of classical ballet and African dance.<sup>5</sup> The term 'African dance' is problematic as it covers a wide spectrum of dances from the African continent and could reflect hundreds of complex dance styles and forms some of which are traditional and others contemporary. Similarly, Indian dance i.e. dance emanating from the South Asian continent, also thrives in South Africa particularly in Durban and Johannesburg during the same period of this study. However, very few scholarly accounts of Southern African Dance exist within a rich, complex, diverse and highly contested terrain. In my view, Contemporary Dance began as political acts with a series of aesthetic and movement explorations by a range of choreographers within the concert theatre dance scene in South Africa and can be seen as an Othered dance form in and of itself. The ensuing chapters will chart and untangle the history of both black<sup>6</sup> and white dancers in South Africa who resist their cultural frames to find new and powerful voices for the marginalised. An initial introduction of these pioneering artists include women like Suria Govender and her Indo-Zulu dance troupe, Surialanga, Tossie van Tonder, Sylvia Glasser and her Moving Into Dance company, and Sonje Mayo and Jeanette Ginslov in the 1970s. Such engagement extended to the unbundling of gender stereotypes that was vigorously pursued by Alfred Hinkel's Jazzart Dance theatre in Cape Town the 1980s, Pather's Siwela Sonke Dance Theatre and Liane Loots' Flatfoot Dance Company in Durban in the 1990s amongst many others. The mid 1990s saw further progress and wider acceptance of multicultural dance forms. Lynn Maree<sup>7</sup> was former Director of The Playhouse Dance Company and a key figure

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<sup>5</sup> It remains a highly contested term and is used here (only in its most generic sense) to include the myriad number of indigenous dance forms present in the region. This term fails to address the millions of people who now call Africa their home and their dances that have been brought here, not to mention the hybrid dance forms that have also since emerged and evolved on the continent over time.

<sup>6</sup> The terms black, white, Coloured and Indian will be found in this thesis to aid a contextual reading of the frame that was apartheid and should not be viewed in any way as the author's re-insertion of the derogatory classification of people born and/or located in South Africa.

<sup>7</sup> Maree also offered a useful bridge to grasp the emergence of Contemporary Dance in the UK from the 1970s bringing a range of philosophical approaches to inter and multi-cultural debates of hybrid dance works. Thus, Edward Salt's steps into dance, Jasmine Pasch's introduction to dance by children with special educational needs and Royston Maldoom's large scale youth dance projects that fosters inter-racial and intercultural relationships were all regular visitors to Durban's shores in the mid-1990s.



at The Playhouse Company in Durban. This was a period in which Maree had supported notions of dance artists as workers in line with their new-found inalienable human rights. The rupture in the hierarchical systems<sup>8</sup> of governance within classical ballet companies due to the dissolution of the Performing Arts Councils established in 1962, gave rise to a new order resulting in union representation in line with the democracy ethos that was sweeping the country. As a member of the Playhouse Dance Company under Maree's directorship, I witnessed her fostering of a Human Rights culture that could take effect in and through the performing arts. The deconstruction of disability as another category of difference was also critiqued by Nicola Visser and Malcolm Black's Remix Dance Company in Cape Town, Gladys Agulhas' Agulhas Theatre Works in Johannesburg and my own LeftfeetFIRST Dance Theatre in Durban.

One of the main aims of this thesis is its discussion of Othering in Dance. I hope to contribute to the current literature on Dance through my gathering and analysis of especially the South African dance histories in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. A shifting attitude to concert theatre dance has prompted the critical question - how does dancing the Other bring new ways of seeing bodies? And, sub questions such as-how does age become another marker of difference in Dance? What could be learnt from the experience of older dancing and, in South Africa?

Performance frames offer interesting ways to compare the manner in which age is (de)constructed within Dance, and those dance companies established to engage specifically in older dancing such as *Nederlans Dans Teater 3* and *From Here to Maturity* dance company in the UK, provide useful exemplars that describe this experience. In this context, the phenomenology of such performers and performances, the artistic imperatives that led to their success and/or the constraints of this phenomenon, is considered. Dance and cultural theorist, Ann Cooper Albright's (1997) works in Dance, and Rustom Bharucha's (2001, 2014)

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<sup>8</sup> The Performing Arts Councils (PACs) in South Africa were established from 1962 to promote the arts and culture of South Africa. In practice this meant White culture. In terms of Dance, classical ballet companies were heavily funded or state subsidised, each of the five provinces working through their own arts council. In the Western Cape Province, Dulcie Howes became the first Artistic Director of CAPAB Ballet company based in Cape Town; Dawn Weller, Artistic Director of PACT Ballet in Pretoria in the 1980s; Dudley Davies for PACOFS Ballet in Bloemfontein in the 1970s, and Ashley Killar, NAPAC Dance co. in Durban in the late 1980s. A joint organisation of the SA Performing Arts Council (SACPAC) hosted nationwide awards ceremonies in which this author had performed in Durban's Natal Playhouse, Opera house in the late 1980s

theories of the politics of performing bodies drawn from the world of Theatre, will be accessed to unpack the politics of body in Dance, and in a transformatory society such as South Africa.

Classical ballet is arguably more bound than contemporary dance<sup>9</sup> by rules of conformity and distinct aesthetic and performative markers. By its very nature, Contemporary Dance is disruptive of norms and in its approach frequently grapples with topical issues that are not always in line with so called mainstream values. As Pertti Alasuutari writes, “One of the key concerns of cultural studies has indeed been to study the social construction of desires and the cultural background of normative rules ... how to draw a dividing line between ‘high’ and ‘low’ culture; what makes high culture so valuable and mass culture normatively condemnable” (1995:33).

This thesis will investigate the hegemony surrounding dancing bodies accessing a range of Dance texts including Ramsay Burt’s analysis of masculinities in Dance (1998), Andrea Stuart’s (1996) exotic dancers and Lynn Fauley Emery’s accounts of black dance (1988). Julia Buckroyd (2000), raises concerns about the training of students of dance. This issue will be located in Michel Foucault’s (1975) earlier social critique of the disciplined and docile body. And, the extraction of Body and Mind is re-investigated in work by dance scholars: Maxine Sheets-Johnstone (1979) and Jane Desmond (1997), work that was extended by Sondra Fraleigh (1987). Judith Butler’s (1998) critique of gender is accessed by dance historians including Sally Banes (1987), Ann Daly (1991) and Christy Adair (1992), in order to highlight issues of Othering that I maintain is beginning to foster older dancing.

The discourse of the older dancing will be problematised, as some older dancers are prized for their strength yet docility, and others demeaned and quickly branded as boring and in need of frail care. This discriminatory treatment is deliberately located in the discourse of classical ballet and will be unpacked in later chapters. Links between age, dance and difference in South Africa, will be argued. Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s view of embodiment (2002) will be discussed in light of the sharp criticism from Butler (1988) of the gendered body he largely ignored. A variety of frames such as history and aesthetics will be used to investigate older dancing? This thesis also develops the argument of Israeli Human Movement scientist Moshe Feldenkrais

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<sup>9</sup> In this thesis, contemporary dance refers to dance works current at a particular time whereas Contemporary Dance (capitalised) refers to the specific dance form which is the focus of this study.

(1949) for the interconnection of mind, body and soul which suggests that the exploration of difference in Dance can have profound impact on the bridging of the social divides particularly in segregated and brutalised communities. This thesis will show how for both black and white, Gay or straight, male or female, young or old dancers were affected by colonialism and apartheid. This research articulates the practices of older dancing bodies and exposes a dialogic interplay between that which is held at the core and periphery within Contemporary Dance in South Africa since 2000s. It introduces the term older dancing to provoke a philosophic debate around the constructs of the Other.

### **Positionality of the researcher in this study**

I have been defined as the Other: Indian, non-white and exotic, during South Africa's apartheid era. To some, I am a South African Indian or of South Asian descent, given that my paternal grandfather was born in Chennai, India. I have defined myself as black, as I am not a white South African. As a second generation South African of mixed race, I am a descendent of a family from India, and from Europe. My own journey in this writing thus becomes a deepening reflection of (in)visibility of dance in South Africa more especially as I chose to study classical ballet - a dance form that was outside of my so called cultural boundary. To compound matters, I eventually joined Durban's classical ballet company in the apartheid era at a time which marked me as the first Indian dancer to join a White classical ballet company. I am an insider - a male dancer within the elite world that was classical ballet in South Africa pre 1994<sup>10</sup> and simultaneously an outsider - a choreographer and academic who is today re-examining my own historical placement as the first professional classical ballet dancer to emerge from an Indian community to join NAPAC Ballet Company in Durban, in 1986. At the time of this writing, I am Senior Lecturer and Director of the University of Cape Town (UCT) School of Dance, the very same school where I was once a student. I came from the distant province of Natal to Cape Town's prestigious UCT Ballet School in a university that was predominantly a White institution. I have turned fifty years old and could be seen as an older dancer in the new South Africa and in terms of this thesis. My last appearance as a performer on stage was in

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<sup>10</sup> 1994 could be considered a watershed year in the history of South Africa as it marked the birth of a democracy. The term new South Africa denotes not only a point on the calendar or socio-political climate change but cultural shift.

Robyn Orlin's *That's the way the cookie crumbles* (2007) at the Baxter Theatre mentioned earlier. I had retired from the life of professional classical ballet due to serious injury in December 1994, and could also be seen by some as being an impaired former dancer. I have chosen this topic as I believe that my unique and clear voice can speak from multiple experiences of Dance in South Africa, one which I contend through a Dance phenomenology offers alternate readings of issues of race, gender, sexual orientation, disability and age. My embodied knowledge can be located in and beyond the moment of my lived dance experience and is thus contained in this thesis. Though authored by me, it is not, however, an autobiography.

In trying to fathom what explains the experience of older dancing, I began my process of dance research by returning to an adult class in classical ballet in Cape Town in 2010. In Chapter Five I will clarify even further how my distinct position situates me in relation to my chosen research topic. My five-year journey of research for this PhD study has continued to illuminate the reaction of society when confronted by an older dancer.

## **Rationale and significance of the study**

There are many firsthand journalistic accounts of South African concert theatre dancing and scores of personalities involved, but these writings emanate generally from newspapers and magazines and are largely under theorised in South African Dance discourse. Only a handful of scholarly-driven papers, journal articles, books or theses on Dance in South Africa have been written. An exhaustive volume – *The History of Ballet in South Africa* written by former dance history lecturer at UCT Ballet School, Marina Grut, has resolutely traced the history of classical ballet across the country and established its roots in Cape Town since the early 19<sup>th</sup> century (1981:1). The book devotes over half of its content to the classical ballet companies that were made possible by funding from the apartheid government through the Performing Arts Councils, but does not critique the iniquitous socio-political landscape. Some notable exceptions to such silences in Dance scholarship may be found in dance conference proceedings, most notably *Confluences*<sup>11</sup> that can be traced back to 1997. Newer books, such

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<sup>11</sup> *Confluences* is an international dance conference that has been hosted by the University of Cape Town since 1997. It has drawn not only the leading dance scholars from SA, but eminent authors, dance historians, professors of dance, and specialist dance educationists from countries such as USA, UK, Brazil, Sweden, India,

as *Post-Apartheid Dance many bodies many voices many stories* (2012); and various scholarly articles (discussed below), may also be found. Analyses of the performing arts is also available in related academic journals such as the *South African Theatre Journal* co-published annually since the mid-1980s by the Centre for Theatre and Performance studies, University of Stellenbosch and Taylor & Francis. There has also been a brief appearance of *Dance Journal* published by Wits University in the early 1990s, and since 2011, the *South African Dance Journal* published bi-annually by the University of Cape Town.

Additional primary data can be found *inter alia* in dance programmes through notes written by directors and choreographers. These are catalogued in recent archives including those established at the University of the Witwatersrand-Ar(t)chive, and the UCT School of Dance archive which was inaugurated in 2014. Souvenir programmes, brochures and magazines, devoted to dance, especially classical ballet, including *Scenaria*, and *Dance Gazette*, similarly fill in gaps (that are not necessarily scholarly). These publications could be investigated to discover wider cultural contexts affecting dance. Coverage in print media: mostly notable (in English) *The Star* in Johannesburg; *The Daily News* and *The Mercury* in Durban; and *The Cape Times*, *Argus* and (in Afrikaans) *Die Burger* in Cape Town were rich sources of primary data surrounding dance companies, tours and dance performances occurring during the period of the study. These local newspapers also offer opportune sites for comparative study of the socio-political spectrum in which dance is embedded. I have visited national and international archives and museums including the South African Archive in Cape Town from 2011. These and other custodial spaces trace performances and dance events some from as early as the late 1800s and are also valuable avenues for any future researcher in many cross-and inter-disciplinary fields.

Richard Glasstone (1996, 2010), Gary Rosen (1999), Eduard Greyling (2000) and the commemorative book; *75 years of dance UCT School of Dance* (Samuel, 2009) provide a discussion of Cape Town's dance aesthetics and history that I have found useful as a leverage point from which to negotiate this study of older dancing. To give further context to such infancy in Dance Studies, it is significant to note that there are only approximately 20 Masters

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Uganda, Nigeria, Hawaii and Finland. The theme for *Confluences* 7(2013) was Dance, Religion and Spirituality. In 2015, Negotiating Contemporary Dance in Africa was the theme for *Confluences* 8.

in Dance, mostly unpublished, from universities in Johannesburg (Tshwane University of Technology, and Wits School of the Arts' Theatre and Performance department), Durban (University of KwaZulu-Natal), Grahamstown (Rhodes University) and Cape Town (University of Cape Town, and Stellenbosch University) between 2002 - 2012. Within the category that may be referred to as Dance Studies, even fewer works account for Contemporary Dance with some exceptions including the formidable contributions by Sharon Friedman (1997, 2008, 2010, 2011, 2012), Lliane Loots (1999, 2010, 2011, 2012), Gary Gordon (1999), Jeanette Ginslov (1999), Jill Waterman (2001), Clare Craighead (2006), Pather (2006), Maqoma (2006), Juanita Finestone-Praeg (2011), Samantha Prigge-Pienaar (2011), and Adrienne Sichel (2012). Life histories and biographical accounts of some South African dance pioneers are only just beginning to be recorded (Botha, 1988).

Few media or journalistic interviews on the subject of older dancing in South Africa exist. Very little scholarly analysis and review of interviews and older dancing as performance texts in South Africa has been undertaken to date. No scholarly writing on the intersection of Age and Othering in dance in South Africa has been found. This doctoral thesis intends to push such boundaries and extends arguments of my position papers: *Dance is for the youth-filled body* (2011b) and *Black bodies matter: with apologies to Beyoncé* (2015b). All of these writings have propelled my interest in teasing out the accounts of older dancing to argue the notions of Othering in dance. My research work intends to expand knowledge of older dancing in South Africa that may have resonance beyond the confines of southern borders. It will act as a complementary activity to the existing and rich investigations of persons, their works and the divergent events that surround South African concert theatre dance. The research is intended to bridge such gaps as may be encountered in the extant literature of South African Contemporary Dance noted above. The discursive trajectories of Contemporary Dance found in this region will be strengthened by this study. Finally, parallel to this doctoral research process will be the ways in which my critical writing and use of interpretative phenomenology of Dance in South Africa will, in the broader sense, contribute to Dance Studies and discourses of the body. I propose that multiple views of the Other in South Africa may be learnt from older dancing. This aligns with views that support the notion that we are all part of the same fabric of society and should be less concerned with normative behaviour and the manner in which bodies are trained (Guilherme & Freire, 2014).

## **Structure of the overall thesis**

Following my introductory mapping in Chapter One of the rationale of the study, paradigmatic frames for older dancing and my positionality as a researcher, Chapter Two traces the origins of Contemporary Dance in America and Europe in order to situate a distinct South African Contemporary Dance scene in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. Some of the key pioneers are introduced and their specific influences on the shifts in approach to Contemporary Dance are explained. Three urban sites, Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban are chosen for their potential to illuminate in what manner the dynamic between the three cities forms an important part of the argument around the emergence of older dancing as aspects of Othering. I consider the developments within concert theatre dance in South Africa to suggest how these experiences were aligned and differentiated. These are contrasted with developments in Dance in smaller, peri-urban spaces and with festivals which are the life blood of contemporary works. A history of classical ballet that is rooted in colonial discourse is clarified to suggest a counter history for Contemporary Dance one that emerges in the former Dutch and British colony.

Chapter Three examines the many locations in which Dance studies finds itself e.g. Ethnomusicology, Cultural studies. It explicates the feminist markers and their impact on Contemporary Dance. I broadly link this discussion to notions of racialised and gendered bodies in South Africa drawing from the discourse of body as text, and site for political resistance. This section discusses Choreographic studies as a sub-field within Performance studies and reports on developments from Kinesiology and Somatics to its current frame, Body Theories.

Chapter Four, examines the pathways to the deconstruction of Other. Issues of race, gender, class return and a new frontier of Age is presented. This section of the thesis examines the notion of experience to suggest a re-evaluation of Dance through a phenomenological reading; one that suggests an alternate way of knowing and producing knowledge from and of the body.

Chapter Five rationalises the selection of the subjects for the study and explains how the knowledge shared was coded and analysed. The specific research methodologies of

phenomenology and life history are clarified. This chapter also outlines the limitations of the study and recommends possible new directions for future research.

Chapter Six closely analyses the twelve interviews, several performances of older dancing and proposes four themes that emerge as key vantage positions from which to grapple with complex lives in Dance. It further situates productions by Fuch's *Fragile falling* and Nyamza's *The Meal/ Okuya Phantsi Kwempulo*<sup>12</sup> as exemplars of older dancing in South Africa. This section untangles notions of Othering in Dance which builds towards Chapter Seven—Body and Space for older dancing. This concluding chapter offers a final encounter from the interviews conducted over five years, a statement of the thesis and some propositions. The implications of the study as a viewing of Othering on the body-one that is dancing the Other in South Africa is discussed and some concluding thoughts are provided.

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<sup>12</sup> Nyamza's work has both an English and IsiXhosa title. For reasons of consistency I will use the English title throughout this thesis.



## **CHAPTER TWO: THE GEOGRAPHIES AND HISTORIES OF CONTEMPORARY DANCE IN SOUTH AFRICA**

In order to understand dancing the Other in South Africa, it is necessary to locate an epistemology and ontology of Contemporary Dance in the region. This chapter charts a chronology and genealogy of Contemporary Dance and opens a discussion of Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban as key urban spaces of experimentation since the 1970s that fed the development of Contemporary Dance in the 2000s. The marked distinction between urban and rural spaces is necessary to contain a discussion of colonialist discourses: cultured vs. uncivilised, elite vs. working classes, powerful vs. disenfranchised and white vs. black. The description of certain dance companies in the former homelands such as Bophuthatswana<sup>13</sup> and smaller towns within South Africa rooted an understanding of multiple forces that have challenged and contributed to a Dance industry in the region. Finally, this chapter acknowledges that history is partial, subjective, reflecting certain socio-political conditions, role-players and events and excluding others. However, it remains an appropriate tool for an analysis of the incubators and catalysts of older dancing in South African Contemporary Dance.

I have situated my interrogation in three urban centres: Cape Town, Johannesburg and Durban to assert that these geo-political spaces sustained a pioneering dynamic for choreographers especially from the 1970s, one that flowered in the mid-1990s into a form and approach towards Contemporary Dance that was recognisable as disruptive of the dominant dance culture. I also contend that dancing the Other was a powerfully transformative act that shaped the notions of new South African culture itself. This chapter attempts to unbundle and explain some of the factors that have led to the trajectory of older dancing found in concert theatre dance in South Africa in the 2000s. It initially provides an overview of the significant forces: the pioneers, and the specific events such as the establishment of performing arts councils, local festivals, and international tours. The notion of these local festivals will be unpacked in

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<sup>13</sup> As part of its separatist ideology, the Apartheid government created zones based on tribal lines that supposedly gave tribal chiefs and leaders a level of autonomy and independence. This was a further ruse and part of the divide and rule tactics of the Pretoria regime. These regions were often situated in remote and agriculturally barren regions of the country where bizarre laws governed entertainment, specifically gambling. It was thus legal for casinos to operate with their associated cabaret style topless dancing in the homelands but illegal in the rest of the country (see also Crous-Huyser, 2002).

Chapter 5 to suggest in what manner these events acted as lifeblood in the dance industry. In addition, this chapter will mark the new choreographic directions such as Afro-fusion in some of the early South African contemporary dance works. I begin with a brief review of the birth of Modern Dance<sup>14</sup> in America to clarify the specific form that landed on South African shores in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Further, I articulate how aspects such as political activism, creolisation and other objectives, for instance the fostering of African renaissance agendas by many South African choreographers e.g. Glasser, Pather and Hinkel, won critical acclaim both locally and internationally. Through my examination of selected key dance works undertaken by the new cultural order, I signal how the Other features as a central and recurring theme in the deconstruction of post-colonial dance.

This chapter contributes to the writing of a partial history of Contemporary Dance in South Africa and attempts to trace some of the materials that are fragmented and unrecorded. What emerges are three primary birthplaces: Cape Town, Johannesburg and Durban and a number of key personalities and national events. There is no singular and equivalent account such as Grut's work on ballet in South Africa (1981) for a history of Contemporary Dance in South Africa. I begin by untangling an historical account of some of the major pioneering Contemporary Dance companies and their artistic leaders in order that my discussion of older dancing may be read as a nuanced view of a genealogy of Contemporary dance. I have deliberately selected cities from three different geographic regions in South Africa to demonstrate the manner in which transitions in Dance reflect the politics of these spaces. This objective advances my argument that changing attitudes to persons defined as Other based on race, gender, class and disability, occurred on a national and provincial scale in varying degrees in the aftermath of apartheid. These attitudes may also be found in the activism in Contemporary Dance which occurred earlier than the 1970s—a period that many consider a turning point in South African history. Such critique is largely under theorised in scholarly writing and, for example, in teaching aid guides (Botha & Levy, 2012) which service secondary schools that offer Dance Studies in South Africa. In my view, the advent of older dancing since

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<sup>14</sup> In South Africa, Modern Dance is the nomenclature for jazz and show dancing whilst in America, Modern Dance refers to all forms discussed as Contemporary Dance in South Africa. In this thesis the term Contemporary Dance will be used throughout to assert the South African perspective.

2010 is a new category of Other which attempts to further deconstruct ideas around prejudice and discrimination.

This chapter acknowledges the complex terrain that is Contemporary Dance: traditional African dance, diasporic Indian dance and Spanish dance in this southern African region as well as later developments such as Physical Theatre<sup>15</sup>, all of which play important roles in the discourse of the Other. However, these dance forms will not be the focus of this thesis. It can also be argued that the Expressive/Modern Dance that was being explored in some spaces like Stellenbosch University in the late 1960s, positioned it as an Othered dance form as it was rooted in this university's Physical Education department and not a Faculty of Music or Arts as was the case with the University of Cape Town's Ballet School (later School of Dance). Thus, the Cinderella status of Contemporary Dance will be extrapolated from these hierarchical contexts and discussed in relation to her celebrated sibling, classical ballet, and other forces both constraining and enabling.

The particular form of Contemporary Dance that is currently spread across South Africa has, in my view, been able to grow and sustain itself through its acceptance of myriad forms of dance, especially African dance. In the 1970s, Glasser, Robyn Orlin and later Hinkel and others, dramatically shifted the frequency of production, valuing and users of this dance form. This porous attitude however poses a conundrum-what can(not) be considered Contemporary Dance in South Africa today and was a key talking point at the 10<sup>th</sup> JOMBA!<sup>16</sup> in 2006. The issue of whether all dances of today on the African continent are not African Dance in contemporary Africa remains. The mid 1990s had already seen raging debates around the blanket term of Afro-fusion that was coined by Glasser (1991). As multicultural dance forms

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<sup>15</sup> The term Physical Theatre is used in this thesis beyond a descriptive to suggest sub category within Contemporary Dance that is beyond a style of a dance form. This is made complex as my discussion of Contemporary Dance itself encompasses an approach to dance making as well as a loosely held though specific form of dance.

<sup>16</sup> The JOMBA! Contemporary Dance Experience presented by the Centre for Creative Arts and the College of Humanities of the University of KwaZulu-Natal is in its 17<sup>th</sup> year in 2015. Its leader Loots has ensured this increasingly diverse event includes performances, commissioned works, masterclasses, and workshops. JOMBA! has created opportunities for seasoned professionals, young choreographer and artists to enter into rich dialogues with the dance loving public. It has drawn choreographers from Mali, Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Netherlands, and France and in 2015 continues to build its relationships with Chicago based Deeply Rooted Dance Theatre. Performances spaces include the Elizabeth Sneddon theatre, artSpace gallery and The Open Air theatre which is outdoors. It is the premiere dance event in the Durban arts calendar and lifeblood to Contemporary Dance in the Southern African region. I will use only the word 'JOMBA!' throughout the thesis to refer to the JOMBA! Contemporary Dance Experience.

began to explore creolisation subtle hierarchies reared themselves in the naming of the new dance form. Thus, Contemporary African dance vs. African Contemporary dance could be seen as loaded terms within the notion of Afro-or Eurocentric dance forms. Some choreographers such as Maqoma at the 10<sup>th</sup> JOMBA!, had even suggested that the label African Dance was most politically correct as it was an unapologetic indicator of dance from the African continent created today (2006). The study of the phenomenon of older dancing within this discussion forms part of a rapid maturation of many voices in South African Dance, and seeks both recognition of its independence in the future and connection to its past origins.

### **Origins of Contemporary Dance: Europe and America**

Contemporary Dance in Europe and America has its roots in modernist impulses. As modernism in literature, music and art gave birth to Ezra Pound, Arnold Schoenberg and Edouard Manet respectively, one could argue that the first generation of modern dancers were anti-establishment in both the content and delivery of their dances. The dominant position of classical ballet and its ideological underpinnings and associated value systems which was challenged by what was to emerge as Modern/Contemporary Dance will be more fully discussed in Chapter 3. Some of the earliest reflections on these new works since the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century can be found in the writings of Dance critic Joseph H. Mazo, (1977), and dance historian Sally Banes (1987). These critiques are strengthened by, amongst others, Alexandra Carter (2004) and Marcia Siegel (2010). Together they provide a compelling reading of the first generation of Modern Dance pioneers that include the rebels: Loie Fuller, Ruth St Denis and Isadora Duncan and their protégés including Ted Shawn, Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey and Charles Weidman. These figures are widely accepted as founders of Modern Dance in the United States of America at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and are a focus in this section because of their strong influences that can be traced to key pockets in the colonised world including South Africa. Historian Grut confirmed that amongst others, Isabel Nel, (later Professor of Physical Education at Stellenbosch University) had studied Modern and Educational dance at Wellesley College, Massachusetts, USA, (Grut,1981:398). Having rejected the mythologies and methodology of classical ballet, Modern Dance pioneers found new ways to express the human condition particularly in response to global socio-political shifts. Isadora Duncan's abandonment of the corset can thus be read as an outward

manifestation of an inner turmoil in American society-the strong desire for the emancipation of women. At a time when floor length dresses and Victorian high collars were *de rigueur* for especially American and European women of assured social position, her gauzy costuming revealed an unfettered body, and associated it with Dance. To choose the life of such a dancer was, through this association, to be perceived as a person with a lack of social restraint. The female dancer became marked as a sexualised commodity or promiscuous, something to be physically admired from afar but undesirable in terms of class mobility. Stern religious upbringing and conservative attitudes appear as unifying threads for most of the early practitioners of American Modern Dance. Mazo had written “All the pioneers of American dance were evangelistically inclined. Loie Fuller had been a temperance lecturer; Duncan, the atheist was driven by a need to preach her physical truth; St. Denis was raised on the Bible and came early to mysticism” (1977:88).

Interestingly, these Modern Dance pioneers could also all be labelled, in terms of the definitions set out by this thesis, as older dancers as they had continued to perform well after their mid-thirties. Consider Loie Fuller who danced in her 60s, Ruth St Denis who danced until her 80s and Isadora Duncan who danced until her 40s, dying at the relatively young age of 49 (Mazo, 1977). As Mazo points out “The pioneers of modern dance were rebels, and rebels, by definition, must have antagonists” (1977:18). It is these rebels, their descendants and a series of antagonising socio-political forces that must also be considered in order to broaden understandings of the phenomenon of older dancing and theorise notions of Other found in South Africa.

The professional dance world in Europe and America at the beginnings of the 20<sup>th</sup> century would still have included the dominance of classical ballet. The primary performance space would be a proscenium arch theatre with companies, and later theatre institutions and conservatoires, as primary custodians of the performing arts. White male directors were its leaders. This pattern in concert theatre may be traced to even earlier roots in 16<sup>th</sup> century; Europe in its royal courts and palaces. It may be possible to chart the myriad shifts and inclusive practices that led to the advancement of Contemporary Dance in South Africa to illustrate a trajectory that is rooted in de-construction. Thus, the undiscovered world of older dancing can be explored by interpreting these force fields of change within concert dance that are both independent and inter-connected: geographically, socially and culturally.

Friedman<sup>17</sup> cautions that Contemporary Dance is not a dance form *per se* or technique but rather an approach within dance making and appreciation. She defined Contemporary Dance as:

Contemporary Dance (Modern Dance to the Americans), is not simple to define, and despite general principles that have emerged since it was invented in the first decades of the 20th century, the term is not precise. It includes a huge variety of dancers, choreographers and movement styles and the common element is more of an approach than a single style. It is an art that changes rapidly as it was, and still is, developed by people whose perceptions were constantly altered by new ideas, new attitudes to the facility of the human body in movement, and new methods of perceiving the world (Friedman, personal communication 2015, April 14).

By comparison, one would not consider classical ballet as an attitude towards Dance but rather a legitimate and independent art form in and of itself. If one agrees with Friedman, then to avoid any essentialised account of Contemporary Dance one should also reflect on the many forces from the wider socio-political and economic contexts of South Africa on this way of dance making. This expanding notion of Contemporary Dance takes into account the manner in which the art form is a barometer of South African culture, and how a reconfiguration of style of dance reflects a rapidly changing form of concert theatre dance itself. These re-views consider diverse issues affecting Contemporary Dance including advancements in technology, changes in sources of funding and the supply of well-trained dancers. Related fields such as internationalisation, migration, global disease, world sporting events and international fashion are also pertinent to the continued growth of South African Contemporary Dance and are beyond the parameters of this thesis.

The disciples of the first wave of Contemporary Dance must include Martha Graham who had studied and performed with the Denishawn Company, Doris Humphrey and Charles Weidman, all of whom extended the initial rupture of Modern Dance. Interestingly, in South Africa to have technique, was perceived as demonstrating a specific set of movement skills associated with classical ballet, the implication being that Contemporary Dance comprised a lesser set of

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<sup>17</sup> Friedman was the first lecturer to introduce a study of Contemporary Dance at the UCT School of Dance in 1987. She also considerably revised and strengthened the Dance History courses given her qualifications in historical studies. Friedman remained the only staff member to be a published author at her retirement in 2011. Her handbook on Teaching Creative Dance (1997) and edited work, *Post-Apartheid Dance many bodies many voices many stories* first published in 2012, are seminal South African Dance texts.

complex skills. This hierarchy is compounded by the recognition and acceptance in Contemporary Dance of multiple body types in the accomplishment of its art. Progressive rungs in the development of Modern Dance have included the naturalism that is associated with Duncan, the Orientalism of St. Denis and later, to connections between movement and its meaning—a psychological fascination of Graham's given the writings of Sigmund Freud and later Carl Jung that were stirring in the milieu. A fascination with individuals as uniquely expressive bodies was, from the outset, a focus. These early and ground-breaking dance companies in America were spearheaded by women who were White and are significant as South African Contemporary Dance pioneers share the same demographic profiling. But, what explains the slow emergence of male dancers and especially Black dancers who seem to have been positioned on the periphery in the USA? What were the various positions of power for dancers, choreographers and directors? American Modern dance seems to follow the universal pathways of liberation, first for women and later for Black freedom and equality. The period of the Great Depression of the 1930s and World Wars in which the USA became embroiled was also to profoundly alter the landscape of Modern Dance globally both in its training and in its performance. These influences found their way to remote regions in Africa as evidenced in Pearl Primus' journeys in the 1940s to Liberia, Congo, and Rwanda (Schwartz & Schwartz, 2011). In the same period i.e. 1940s, Grut (1981) records that South Africa's lesser known teachers, Isabel Nel, Edith Katzenellenbogen and Gisele Taeger-Berger (in Stellenbosch), Masha Arsenieva (Port Elizabeth) and Elizabeth Sneddon (in Durban) had introduced Educational and Expressive Dance.

From the 1940s, the first two black women, Pearl Primus and Katherine Dunham, and later Alvin Ailey, began to articulate issues of race through their concert dance works that may have spawned the term Black Dance (Emery, 1988) in America. Although Humphrey had meticulously codified her own choreographic method, and sought to establish a definitive American-ness in her Modern dances, it is Graham that holds the iconic position as Modern Dance itself. Graham's legacy as reductionist practice for the basic training and development of the dancer's body is perhaps superseded by her even more powerful artistic contributions. She created potent choreographies and danced solo for most of her appearances. In her lifetime, Graham choreographed over 60 dance works and amongst her most emblematic works would be *Lamentations* (1930), *Appalachian Spring* (1944), *Diversion of Angels* (1948)

and *Clytemnestra* (1958). Graham, as the most visible of the Historic generation of Modern Dance, not only enjoyed a long career as choreographer but was performing in her mid-70s. I contend that this older dancer was a prototype who offered the earliest glimpse of interiority and position of Other; the key subject of this thesis. According to Graham:

Dance ... is another way of putting things. It isn't a literal or literary thing, but everything that a dancer does, even in the most lyrical thing, has a very definite and prescribed meaning. If it could be said in words, it would be; but outside of words, outside of painting, outside sculpture, *inside* the body is an interior landscape which is revealed in movement. Each person reads into it what he brings to it (Mazo, 1977:189).

The next generation include; Merce Cunningham, Erik Hawkins, Paul Taylor, Jose Limon, Alwin Nikolais, Bonnie Bird, Jane Dudley, Helen Tamiris and Anna Sokolow who were in turn profoundly affected by other proponents of Modernism such as composers John Cage and Aaron Copeland and artists Pablo Picasso, Salvador Dali and later Andy Warhol and Jackson Pollock. Notable as well was German Expressionist dancers from the Mary Wigman tradition, who worked in America. For so many of these artists, especially in the 1940s, New York and Union Square was the epicentre for their new and experimental concert dance works. This South African thesis, written five decades after much of this development, is able to now interrogate with greater confidence, the episteme of these Modern Dance pioneers both men<sup>18</sup> and women.

In Europe, specifically Germany, Mary Wigman, Rudolf von Laban, Gret Pallucca, Kurt Joos and Sigurd Leeder could be considered the pioneers of Modern Dance. Whilst it may be tangential to the primary argument of this thesis, it is nevertheless helpful to, as Susan Funkenstein asserts, "demonstrate(s) the centrality of the body in discourses on modernism" (2012:59) and its manifestation in dance education, and, finally in concert dance performance. The legacy of Rudolf von Laban, who could be seen as the father of Dance in Education in the UK, is significant as Laban Movement Principles have been used extensively as choreographic tools and in choreography written for older dancers. A lineage and dance genealogy can be made from Laban and Feldenkrais, to the Alexander technique employed by South African artistic

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<sup>18</sup> It is important to also note that it was male teachers like Kurt Joos, Sigurd Leeder, and Harald Kreutzburg that had a profound influence on the American women pioneers as these women are perhaps exalted as the more enduring faces of Contemporary Dance today. Isa Partch Bergsohn's account of the first congress in Modern dance held in Magdeburg, Germany in 1927 suggests to me that other interested roleplayers existed and may have been forgotten over time (Partsch-Bergsohn, 1995).



director Hinkel who is closely associated with the oldest Contemporary Dance company in the country—Jazzart Dance Theatre. The processes of transition experienced by Davids, Mamela Nyamza, Fuchs and Hinkel (mentioned above) and many others should be seen as significant links to approaches in working with the body and history that was Martha Graham.

Kathleen Shorr's paper, *Dancers of the Third Age* offered at *Confluences 2* in Cape Town, South Africa, in 1999 gives ample testimony of the many examples within the USA of dance classes and companies for older adults. Her comment on the effectiveness of Liz Lerman's ground-breaking work that follows changes in public perception is thus useful here. Shorr maintains a more acute reading of the teaching and learning environment is critical to understanding processes of transition, for the following reasons

The class [in senior centres] is held in such a public environment, it will affect non participants, including staff, who may not understand its value at first ... There are always observers who do not fully participate in class and they should be encouraged because even watching can be helpful for them. For some of these people it is the only way they can become involved and even vicarious watching can be enriching (1999:171).

An examination of the impact of related experiences surrounding performances and dance training with older persons will be discussed in this thesis and it is vital to consider such a wide landscape and perspective. Many, such as Marilyn Strawbridge, add their voices to this debate. Her recent journal article title—*Just because you are old doesn't mean you have to give up sport* (2011), is self-explanatory. Nancy Upper, former USA ballerina, writing about the lives of classical ballet dancers post retirement (2004), presents new directions for the retirees including non-dance career paths. Her writing provides a useful counter point to Jacky Lansley and Fergus Early's interviews with experienced dancers (2011). The counter-hegemonic position of Contemporary dance will be expanded upon in later chapters. These and several other views of dancing by older persons and how these bring new ways of seeing bodies will be discussed later on in this thesis.

## **Birthplaces of Contemporary Dance in South Africa 1950 to 2000s**

It is not the intention of this thesis to provide a detailed historical account of the development of Contemporary Dance in South Africa. However, my overview is intentional and supports an interpretative phenomenological argument of dancing the Other in South Africa. Classical ballet in South Africa has held a stranglehold on concert theatre performances since the 1800s

and is accounted for in great detail by Grut (1981). Grut notes the presence of classical ballets in the garrison town of the Cape as early as 1802 which, in my view, may begin to explain the struggle for the formation and recognition of Contemporary Dance for all bodies. At Stellenbosch University, Expressive and Educational Dance was being taught (even though the context at that time this would have been white dancing bodies). A question arises as to the threat such Contemporary Dance would have presented to the elitist bodies associated with classical ballet at the University of Cape Town Ballet School.

Could the elevated and hegemonic position of classical ballet in South Africa be explained by the desperation of a white minority to align itself with the notions of civilised Europe as entrenched by the colonial governments rather than uncouth Africa? As one colonial power in South Africa replaced another (Bickford-Smith, 1999) they became, in Freirean terms, the next generation of “oppressors, or sub-oppressors” (Freire, 1996:27) duplicating injustices. The practices remain but unfold through different languages. The particular performing art form and dance that arose in South Africa from the 20<sup>th</sup> century with its associated etiquette and fine manners became a manifestation of acceptability and therefore the predictable adoption of Western cultural values and Western paradigms ensued. Settler life praxis in this region was complex, and relations between slaves and their masters which produced uncomfortable and ill-defined offspring many of whom were (in)visible as new cultural groups, has been widely reflected upon (Erasmus, 2001; Rive, 1990; Viljoen, 2013; Ebrahim, 1999). South Africa’s past which has been scarred by colonialism and apartheid and emboldened by plentiful natural resources and a virtually unrivalled democratic Constitution has given rise to a land of contrasts. Compound questions in the performing arts surfaced such as: what were to be considered appropriate dances in such a poly-cultural space, by whom, and for which audience. Who decided who should be allowed to dance, and where, became important as colonial norms obliterated other voices. Friedman in 2008 had asked whose dance was being taught in South African Schools (2008). And Loots, even earlier, had critiqued how some dance forms seemed to be positioned as high art and others as tradition and cultural practice (1999).



**Illustration 2: *Ariane et Corisane*. The Little Theatre. Cape Town. 1948.** Jasmine Honore's (centre) work can be read in several ways namely; an elitist form of dance (classical ballet), the imposition of European cultural heritage (note the mid-18th century French styled costume), the emergence of a local, female choreographer in a male dominated field.

This above photograph of the stage rehearsal reflects prevailing socio-cultural interests and practices. The work was performed to music by Mozart and offers a fragment of the ontology and sustenance of cultural privilege and transitions in dance that may be investigated. These and many further related questions of the phenomenon of (un)acceptability of certain cultural expressions that are present in South Africa will be unpacked below. This thesis attempts to unravel how older dancing explains issues of Othering and asks whether age can be seen as a further category of Other that is manifest in Contemporary Dance. It further asks whether this is different in South Africa

But, one might ask, what is the necessity for the history of diverse events and people in a philosophic study located in the post-apartheid era? The ideas of Othering and Age that will be explored in thesis are rooted in significant histories that have impacted on the public and private lives of older dancers. Editor John O'Neill in *Phenomenology, Language and Sociology* (1974) reminds one of Merleau-Ponty's ways of thinking when he says, "Philosophy is not a particular body of knowledge, and it is the vigilance which does not forget the source of all knowledge" (1974:v). I intend to deliberately argue the importance of multi-faceted sources shaping the extant historical account of Contemporary Dance in South Africa which may offer and arrive at new insights into bodies.

A multi-faceted approach is welcomed as a strategy that can pool many fragmented views some of which were situated in provincial theatres, in programmes from dance festivals, in university and other libraries, in cultural houses and institutions, and personal collections of devoted dance lovers. Attempts are underway by, amongst others, former specialist arts writer for *The Star* newspaper Adrienne Sichel, Eduard Greyling, guest lecturer and former unofficial archivist of UCT School of Dance, and Julie Strauss senior librarian at the WH Bell Music Library in Cape Town until 2014, and myself, to establish dance archives as a resource centre. These spaces hold primary data: programmes, commemorative books, annual reports and photographs and are still undergoing formation. In South Africa, such reservoirs and/or data bases at universities are under threat from a larger Transformation agenda that needs to challenge the vestiges of colonialism including classical ballet. Finally, this chapter will examine a list of pioneers of Afro<sup>19</sup>-Contemporary Dance in South Africa especially since the 1970s in order to illustrate how a deconstruction of Other was written on the body. The following section will highlight such key figures and events since the 1970s.

Grut provides one of the earliest records of concerts including Contemporary Dance in South Africa in the 1940s. She describes the Expressive and Educational Dance undertaken by Nel as an attempt to start “to clarify her own point of view” (1981:385). Grut’s inclusion of this quote may be read as congratulatory or as a criticism of a dance form that belonged in Physical Education and was not to be confused with the art of classical ballet. The kind of dance that was being explored by Nel in 1958 had its roots in Laban principles originating in the UK and practices established in the USA by amongst others Margaret H’Doubler. Nel was a strong advocate for the inclusion of dance in the Physical Education programme in South Africa. Her students included Katzenellenbogen and Taeger-Berger who had studied with Limon and Cunningham, and at the Jooss Leeder School which moved from Essen, Germany to Dartington Hall in Devon, UK. Limon and Cunningham could be described as the second generation of Historic USA Modern Dancers and teachers. Katzenellenbogen would have been exposed to this fertile environment and had also undertaken choreographies, Modern Dance performances and even a film titled *The Soil is Life* in 1965. In March 1969, Taeger-Berger performed at The Little Theatre at UCT. Very little is known of the presentation of the *Modern*

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<sup>19</sup> The term Afro in many contexts is increasingly a contested site; e.g. Kristina Johnstone’s keynote presentation at *Confluences 8*.

*Dance Evening* described by Grut, (1981:450) but one can observe an overwhelming reflection of classical ballet compared to the short notes for this emerging dance form. This hierarchy begins to change as an evolving Afro-contemporary dance took its place as a concert theatre dance form in the late 1970s and 1980s. This scenario stems from the hegemonic position which classical ballet enjoyed as British colonial cultural expression and high art during the apartheid era.

The period of the 1970s in South Africa is filled with the violence of apartheid: separate cultural development-a euphemism for the denigration of African art and its dance. And yet, the birth of the oldest Contemporary Dance companies that envisioned multiculturalism and African renaissance objectives can be linked to this decade. Friedman had briefly danced in the Jazz Plus company in Israel and later became a pioneer dance educator in her own right. She noted that, “The [History of Contemporary Dance] journey begins much earlier than 1970s with women like Rhoda Orlin in Johannesburg” (Friedman, personal communication, 2013, December 9). Rhoda Orlin is the mother of Robyn Orlin, *enfant terrible* choreographer since the 1980s. Orlin (senior) had studied classical ballet in 1960s. Robyn Orlin and Tossie van Tonder became leading voices for Contemporary Dance in the region. Friedman explained that:

The first person to teach modern dance and encourage student dance drama in South Africa was Teda De Moor in Johannesburg who had also promoted black performances for white audiences from 1941. Bluma Rubin (who was Rhoda Orlin's sister) studied with Teda. Rhoda worked with Bluma until she moved to Israel (Friedman, personal communication 2015, September 28).

As one of the advocates for this approach to concert dance, Friedman’s first encounter with Contemporary Dance was with the Israeli based Bat Dor Company in 1968, where her former classical ballet teacher, Jeanette Ordman was Artistic Director. A visit to Cape Town by the dynamic male dancer, Moshe Romano from the Batsheva Dance Company<sup>20</sup>, further convinced Friedman of the value of Graham’s technique. She located that lexicon in Contemporary Dance in Cape Town which is still evident in 2000s. The earliest encounters with Contemporary Dance experienced by South African born Desiré Davids (whose life and

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<sup>20</sup> The Batsheva Dance Company was formed by Batsheva de Rothschild and none other than the key founder of Modern dance, Martha Graham.

works will be analysed later), can be traced to her dance teacher, Friedman<sup>21</sup> in Cape Town. Romano had influenced Mayo who in turn shaped Jazzart.

In South Africa, the presence and leadership of many Contemporary Dance companies by Jewish<sup>22</sup> women (Orlin, Glasser, Mayo, Friedman, Adele Blank) has not been fully critiqued though some attempts have begun (Friedman, 2012). Many Jews had fled Europe from the 1890s and settled in Cape Town. These groups enjoyed the privilege of white citizenship which continued during the apartheid era. Sichel noted that, “In terms of these laws, including the separate development policy (we could all practice our cultures-separately), [but] black South Africans (this included citizens who were classified as coloured and Indians) were prohibited from performing on certain stages, in whites-only theatres and in certain venues” (2012:108). On these stages, Jewish performers and choreographers were highly visible. The activities of Jewish women as the leading Contemporary Dance teachers in an unequal country with shifting cultural agenda will require far greater investigation that is beyond the scope of this thesis. For me, the empathy of the pioneering Contemporary Dance teachers and their position in South African society played a major role in advancing the cultural and political rights of several black South African dancers.

The late 1990s saw the closure of the Performing Arts Councils (PACs) and a mushrooming of small independent dance companies such as Fantastic Flying Fish Dance Company (Durban), Soweto Dance theatre (Johannesburg), Jagged Dance and Phenduka Dance Theatre (Cape Town). These entities struggled to survive, and some have disappeared in the face of unreliable national funding and shifting goalposts from key funding sources. The National Lotteries Distribution Trust Fund and newly established National Arts Council provide funds to only a few determined young dance artists and companies. Organisations like Dance Alliance in Johannesburg in the mid-1990s and later KZNDancelink under Lynn Maree’s<sup>23</sup> leadership in Durban became influential lobby groups promoting Afro-fusion and multi-cultural dance

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<sup>21</sup> Friedman had trained in classical ballet and was taught by Jeanette Ordman who was the Director of Bat Dor, sister company to Batsheva Dance Company.

<sup>22</sup> A similar tale of Jewish women as pioneer modern dance leaders may be found in the Graham era in the USA. The critiques of the work of these women linked to their counterparts in South Africa could form part of a fruitful future study.

<sup>23</sup> Maree’s own position as self-exiled dance educationist and lobbyist offers vantage points of UK dance and South African Dance. She has witnessed and been integral to the formation and development of Afro-Contemporary Dance especially in the KwaZulu-Natal region.

platforms. Sichel as dynamic advocate for Contemporary Dance is also a key role-player within this historical account. Many in the Dance fraternity would consider her name synonymous with the emergence of the South African Contemporary Dance itself. Since its inception in 1989 Dance Umbrella is one of the longest running dance festivals dedicated to Contemporary dance and celebrates its 27th year in 2015. Johannesburg has also been home to Free Flight Dance Company, led by Blank, Jackie Semela's Soweto Dance Theatre, and Tribhangi Dance Theatre – an Indo-fusion Contemporary Dance company, led by Jayesperi Moopen.

The new Millennium saw some companies like the Flatfoot Dance Company based at the university in Durban come into their own and are recognised as a force to be reckoned with. Cutting edge choreographies and invitations to tour abroad streamed in for many of these small outfits. An example includes Boyzie Cekwana's Floating Outfit Project. Many have attempted to emulate such a model of a core group (comprising often only 2 dancers) that was periodically augmented by ad hoc/contract-term dancers. Whilst this may have afforded continued work for these fledgling companies, it remains difficult to explore a multicultural identity in such shifting sands. Small companies in Durban like LeftfeetFIRST and Eric Shabalala's Shwibeka Dance Theatre and young choreographers Mdu Mtshali, and Musa Hlatswayo have struggled to maintain themselves in this context. Many of these smaller South African dance companies took on what has been variously described as commercial or corporate work offering spectacular and vacuous entertainment in a range of venues from car showrooms to airplane hangars in order to survive. In addition, further opportunities arose for choreographers who found jobs in edutainment-a formulaic multi-cultural Contemporary Dance platform used to educate (read propagate) a particular marketing quest or product, usually to the un-educated masses. These contracts came not only from State or municipal departments but benevolent corporate entities as well. Some of these deals ushered in unwelcomed entanglements and led to corruption of young and often inexperienced Dance role-players. These opportunities began to surface as more pressure mounted from Education, Health, and Tourism sectors (amongst others) to address a plethora of social ills facing the country. Such edutainment and development projects in and through dance paid well and art for art's sake became the domain of festivals.

By 2010, South Africa had embraced the hysteria of regular world events on our doorstep such as World Summit on Racism, high level meetings of the African Renaissance and FIFA Soccer

World Cup tournaments. During this period, some Contemporary dancers did find employment and outlets for their artistic expression. To what extent these particular modes of art were tempered by the agenda and interests of their clients' remains to be probed. Many like David Matamela, choreographer closely associated with the international success that was *African Footprint* and Somizi Mhlongo, were part of the first wave of black male choreographers to rapidly rise to positions of key influence. Black female choreographers like Nelisiwe Xaba, Nyamza, and Davids have only most recently begun to carve their own international profiles. Over the past 5 years most of these artists find work as soloists abroad. Dada Masilo completed a tour in Paris as part of the French Season in late 2013.

Subsequently, the Contemporary Dance scene continues to see Vuyani Dance Theatre and works by Gregory Maqoma, Luyanda Sidiya and PJ Sabbagha's Forgotten Angle Dance Theatre. Infecting the City a potent interdisciplinary experience of the contemporary arts held in the streets and actively non-conventional performing spaces like the central station terminus, shop fronts and outside the old Slave Lodge in Cape Town, has been curated by Jay Pather in recent years. Brave young artists like Kristina Johnstone, Thalia Laric and Nicola Elliott, recipients of the 2014 Young Choreographer commission of the National Arts Festival, continue to write and explore aspects that range from gendered lives to notions of Contemporary Dance in Africa itself. Their most recent venture *Plastiek* (2014) underscores what in my view is Afrikaner abjection as expressed by feminist psychologist Julia Kristeva (1982). The work points to a sophistication of interrogation of place and identity which belies its simple performance space-that of an old church hall in the suburb of Observatory, Cape Town. The dancers expose through their physical theatre dance style, a darker mechanics of power as the mother's milk is ritually both imbibed and spat out by her family (stern husband and naive children). Costumed in traditional long farmer's dress, apron and obligatory mop cap (or *kappie* in Afrikaans), Mother (played by Elliott) is pivotal to the plot which unfolds with songs and music that add to a general state of despair and foreboding. Contemporary Dance in South Africa has unsurprisingly found most of its audience in the urban centres of Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town where resources are more available and haunting political activism raged through the arts throughout the 1970s, 1980s, 1990s and 2000s. The form is still politically potent and moving into conceptual territory in the 2010s. Nyamza's



offering *Wena Mamela*<sup>24</sup> (2014) was staged at the inaugural Cape Town Fringe Festival in October and is one of numerous works that is adding to this next wave.

The above account provides a broad overview of Contemporary Dance in South Africa. However, to grasp a more nuanced reading and locate the manner in which Othering operated when, and for whom, in Contemporary Dance, I focus on geographic specificity. Notions surrounding Cape Town as Mother City, Johannesburg as City of Gold—*Egoli*<sup>25</sup> and Durban as touristic playground and last outpost of the British colonial empire, are reflected in the dance that has emerged from these cities. What can be learnt from the ways in which geo-politics may have articulated the Other is the focus of the next section.

### *Johannesburg: City of Gold*

All of the above cities may also be seen as reservoirs of colonial and apartheid power and any study of dance in South Africa needs to consider that these urban spaces are as dynamic as the dancers, teachers and choreographers who will be discussed hereafter. Legislation like the Group Areas Act of 1950 that defined where one could live, work and trade had scarring effects that remain visible for both the privileged and the oppressed. There are many dance teachers and choreographers who form part of the substructure that was to become Contemporary Dance in Johannesburg in the 1980s. A list of early concert theatre dance pioneers in Johannesburg would include Marjorie Sturman, Faith De Villiers, Yvonne Mounsey, Ivy Conmee, Reina Berman and Sheila Wartski (Grut, 1981). Wartski was a members of the Johannesburg Ballet Theatre founded by Faith de Villiers in 1948. According to Sichel:

Wartski taught modern and maybe tap and also worked with Sylvia Glasser. Wartski choreographed the original Ipi Tombi which toured to Broadway and Nigeria! She also taught at Mrs Vera Jacob's City Ballet School (where DTH's Augustus van Heerden was trained before going to UCT) in Coronationville. She co-founded Experimental Dance Theatre (EDT) in 1967 with Sylvia Glasser and Wendy de la Harpe joined by Rhoda Orlin in 1971. In 1975 Robyn Orlin danced and choreographed at this annual choreographic showcase which had its last edition in 1976 (Sichel, personal communication 2011, February 19).

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<sup>24</sup> Very loosely translated from IsiXhosa this expression reveals a disappointment and chiding which Nyamza explains her grandmother made whenever she avoided her chores. It could encapsulate in 'Hey you...', or 'You naughty!'

<sup>25</sup> Johannesburg is colloquially known as *Egoli*, named after the discovery of one of the richest gold reefs in the world in the 1800s. It remains the financial epicentre of South Africa.

Friedman and Sichel confirmed that Wartski<sup>26</sup> had also trained Adele Blank as a young dancer. Blank is currently an award winning freelance choreographer and founder and Artistic Director of Free Flight Dance Company which was based in Johannesburg in the late 1980s. Her Free Flight Dance Company performs a fusion of contemporary dance styles that included jazz and may have led to their popularity in the commercial dance world. Friedman was also a pupil of Wartski from 1961-1965. Wartski brought her experience of Modern Dance from abroad to South Africa. Friedman recalls “Wartski established a youth company which performed a variety of contemporary dance styles in and around Johannesburg” (Friedman, personal communication 2013, March 28). From these accounts the multiplicity of styles and the influence of the many pioneers that encompass Contemporary Dance today may be established.

Johannesburg also saw the formation of the Federated Union of Black Artists (FUBA) which was set up in response to apartheid policies: segregation and censorship as described above. Amongst its earlier dance teachers was the dance anthropologist Glasser who had returned from the USA, and taught here from 1979–1982. Sichel notes that “Robyn Orlin taught dance at FUBA and FUNDA ... Also teaching at FUBA were Leslie Carlese and Walter Mathews” (Sichel, personal communication 2014, February 19). Sichel confirms a significant part of this history:

In 1983 Orlin directed the FUBA Dance Company in what must have been South Africa’s first black dance company performance. It was funded by the Genesis Foundation, USA. Eight works were at The Market Theatre (Upstairs) and at the Eyethu Cinema in Soweto on November 28 and 29 [at] 8pm in a programme of live African music and dance. The Contemporary Dance programme was choreographed by Robyn Orlin, her sister Nadine Seagal and the finale *African Sky Blues* (music by Juluka) was created by the company. The evenings were sponsored by Bols. (Sichel, personal communication 2014, February 19).

Sichel attended performances at both venues and notes that “In the company were Lucky Diale, Carly Dibakoane, Sally Leballo, Patrick Mdluli, Marcias Nhlapo, Moses Nkala, Given Sebitlo and Nono Kobe. The programme was dedicated to the memory of Leslie Carelse” (Sichel, personal communication 2014, February 19). Such evidence of practices that were an

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<sup>26</sup> Wartski was noted as the choreographer of the iconic South African musical *Ipi Tombi* that premiered at the Harkness Theatre in London in 1977. This position can be problematised further as the musical also comprised hybridised traditional African dances and copyrights of those specific dances remains unclear.

alternative to classical ballet and concert dance projects can also be found in the work of Nomsa Manaka a young black dance director who, as Sichel attests, “had started the Soyinkwa Pan African Dance project ... in Diepkloof, Soweto” (Sichel, personal communication 2014, February 19).

Many dance scholars in South Africa consider Glasser the most critical role-player in South African Contemporary Dance. Whilst a raging Feminist movement, advancements in Space travel and the Cold War were pre-occupations in the West, the same period in South Africa, i.e. the 1960s to the 1980s, saw the tightening of apartheid laws: including the Group Areas Act and Separate Amenities Act of 1957, and the hardening of social norms and support for a cultural and sports boycott. In terms of concert dance in South Africa, these wider frames were challenged by Glasser in the work of her company, Moving Into Dance-Mophatong and her provocative *Is dance political movement?* paper (1991). In this article, Glasser disputed the status quo by stating, “In South Africa, *where* you dance, *with whom* you dance, *what kind* of dances you perform and *your attitudes toward dancing* will say something about you as a political being, as well as saying something about you as a performer/artist” (1991:34).

Moving into Dance Mophatong also found itself in the heart of what was to become the Newtown Cultural precinct post 1994, a site that included the famed Market Theatre, home of many protest theatre works and Museum Africa. The formation in 1978 of her independent, non-racial dance company in Johannesburg is a testament to her courage and vision to restore African arts and culture to its rightful place. Glasser had trained as a dancer and anthropologist and had brought together both white and black dancers to forge Moving into Dance. This act signalled her defiance of the status quo which privileged classical ballet and Whiteness. From 1978, her early works such as *African Cassandra* (1978), *Dansynergy* (1978) and *Tranceformation* (1991), attempted to educate audiences about the diversity of African dance vocabularies and simultaneously engender a respect for African culture. At a time when high art was the domain of Western classical music, opera and classical ballet, Glasser deliberately selected African Traditional music, attire and movement as her preferred choreographic tools. The contextual paradigm of wealthy white mine bosses and a city of Gold/*Egoli* it can be argued, served to entrench not only race but class divides which is reflected in the exalted position of classical ballet, and this by a white Afrikaner government. The Other in Johannesburg was the poor and working classes and little interest was accorded to their

dances, save for where these propped up the position of the authorities e.g. Gumboot dancing on Gold mines was predominately for the spectacle and pleasure of largely wealthy white audiences. By 1991, Glasser had coined the term Afro-fusion to describe the ways in which together with her dancers she created an interwoven dance language that was simultaneously hybrid and singular. Her Moving into Dance Company become widely recognisable as the premier South African Contemporary Dance. Young dancers of that time would have included Vincent Mantsoe, Maqoma, Portia Mashigo, and David April.

The three major urban centres dominated the dance scene through powerful and wealthy classical ballet companies that took pride of place in the arts councils. Most performances by these companies were supported by live musical accompaniment provided by full-time orchestras of upwards of 50 members that were also located within each of the Performing Arts Councils. The elitist position of classical ballet that was born in colonial heritage was now guaranteed even more by an apartheid government, one that though Afrikaner<sup>27</sup> nationalist in character, ironically supported a British and English heritage and art form. Ballet productions were lavishly complemented by fully resourced costume and set building departments as well as entire marketing and publicity divisions. In Cape Town, the University of Cape Town Ballet company which was formed in 1934 became the dance company of the Cape Performing Arts Board (CAPAB) in 1964 (Triegaardt, 2012). These councils were comfortably housed in full-size theatres that boasted the very latest stage technology, lighting and sound equipment. The change in circumstances for these classical ballet companies when the Performing Arts Councils were disbanded in 1997 is dramatic as present day realities are just the opposite. CAPAB housed the Jazzart Dance Theatre company under its Drama department and not Dance, which was the preserve of classical ballet and this differentiation, in my view, contributed to the marginalised tag for Contemporary Dance and for all those who engaged with it. By 2014, Cape Town City Ballet [CTCB] (formerly known as CAPAB Ballet) was struggling under constant financial threat. Current Artistic Director Robin van Wyk confirmed this in his interview with Tiara Walters when he said, “The 80s were our heyday, when we were getting, like, R33-million a year from the government. From 94, the ANC didn’t feel the arts were the most important thing. They had every right—people were starving, there was no

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<sup>27</sup> Given the context of the Anglo Boer war, and earlier colonial enterprise, it is plausible that an Afrikaner nationalist government of the 1950s would have rejected English cultural symbols. However, it is my contention that Ballet allowed a safe cleavage to Eurocentrism.

education. We are not bitter, but we're struggling (2014:8). Triegaardt in 2012 was rightfully proud of CTCB's survival when she proclaimed that "its 78 years of existence mak[es] it South Africa's oldest, at times, only extant professional classical ballet company and one of the oldest in the world" (2012:17).

The Performing Arts Councils certainly played an important role in the emergence of Contemporary Dance which, in my view, begins in the performing arts council in Durban and not in Pretoria with the formation of PACT Dance Company in 1988. Events such as Dance Forum spearheaded by Ashley Killar<sup>28</sup> in 1986 were reflections of a critical mass reached by choreo-activists which led them to comment on social ills and seek new directions for a troubled and fragmented South African dance community. Sichel confirms this when she writes:

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

The PACT Dance Company under the artistic headship of Esther Nasser was differentiated from PACT Ballet and included dancers of colour such as Nyamza and Davids. Davids also enjoyed a professional career in Durban's Playhouse Dance Company in the mid-1990s and continues to perform currently. Her positionality and work is discussed in depth later in this thesis.

By the mid-1990s Dance Umbrella, a festival celebrating dance a range of forms and styles was firmly established at the Wits Theatre at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, led by Nicola Danby and later Georgina Thomson (Sichel, 2012). What profile of dance works could be described as older dancing in this complex, and fast-paced urban setting? The city of Johannesburg is home to the largest centres of power; the Department of Arts and Culture (DAC), the National Arts Council (NAC), The National Lotteries Distribution Trust Fund (NLDTF)

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<sup>28</sup> Killar also established a NAPAC junior dance company that employed a large number of so called Coloured dancers mostly from Cape Town in the late 1980s. These included, Merle Gideon, Astrid da Silva, Ebrahim Medell, and David Adams. Arnold Simon and Quinton Ribbonaar also joined the NAPAC Dance Company around this time.

and various embassies. It is widely regarded as South Africa's financial centre, and is home to the highest number of independent Contemporary Dance companies. A competitive spirit seems to be part of its composition and many of the Johannesburg based dance companies see a high turnover of young dancing bodies. In this highly charged atmosphere where are the older dancers finding the space and recognition for their art?

While Johannesburg may host a range of competing Contemporary Dance companies, the beginnings of Contemporary Dance in Cape Town saw greater partnerships according to Sichel (2012). There were several spaces in Cape Town and Stellenbosch where Contemporary Dance was taking root. Memories of forced removals in places like District Six in Cape Town were still fresh in the minds of Capetonians as communities were flung apart through the oppressive apartheid legislation. Author Richard Rive writes, "Thus, when the forced removals started in 1966, District Six became the nucleus of opposition to the Groups Areas Act" (1990:111). It could be argued that some of the Mother City's authorities though compelled by apartheid laws did not strictly enforce these segregationist laws on individual classical ballet dancers but rather on the physical spaces where classical ballet was performed (Triegaardt, 2012). The effect nevertheless was to hold Contemporary Dance on the periphery as if it was of very little consequence. This is evidenced in *Recollections of a Life in Dance* by Dame Mavis Becker (2015) and her accounts of mixed race dancers at the Space theatre in the Mother City. In 1973 Jazzart, a renegade dance studio comprising dancers of mixed race, was founded by Sonje Mayo. Mayo was born in Durban, had trained initially in classical ballet with Marjorie Sturman (Sichel, personal communication 2014, February 19) and later in Jazz, in America. Mayo's group of pioneering dancers included (female dancers) Parker, Friedman and (male dancers) Christopher Kindo, Gregory Alexander, Achmat Ockards, Richard Pretorius (who would have been discriminated against as they were classified as coloured). Jazzart studio paved the way for a highly visible multi-racial dance company in the Cape. Their rebelliousness extended to the dance form itself as American Modern dance and Luigi-style jazz was at its core and extended and experimented upon. According to Friedman, Mayo had returned to South Africa and opened a dance studio with little interference from the authorities. This could be explained by a perceived insignificant position in relation to CAPAB Ballet-a large and lauded classical ballet company of over 30 dancers with several full length dance works in its repertoire that was at the centre of Cape Town's high society in the early 1970s. Sichel writes:

Until desegregation in 1978, many dances of colour left the country in order to dance professionally. These included Vincent Hantam (who had a long career with the Scottish Ballet) and notable dancer and choreographer Christopher Kindo who returned to South Africa from the United States in 1978 after the theatres and stages were opened to all races (2012:108).

Sue Parker bought the studio which was based in Long Street, Cape Town from Mayo and created a professional ensemble that was known as Jazzart Contemporary Dance Company. This ensemble included Val Steyn who later began her own PACE Dance Company rehearsing out of small premises in Observatory, Cape Town. Steyn also choreographed *Mango Suite* (1990) for the NAPAC Dance Company's schools touring programme and a comic duet for Merle Gideon and myself that became a perennial favourite for these tours. By 1986, fellow dancer Hinkel (who had initially trained in classical ballet with, amongst others, Lindy Raizenberg<sup>29</sup>), took over Jazzart's reins. Hinkel broadened the repertoire through skills he had learnt in Drama and more especially principles of Alexander technique. Thus, mind, body and soul connections, argued in Feldenkrais would have had profound impact of healing for especially the segregated and undervalued "non-white" dancers with whom Hinkel chose to work.

Indeed, for both black and white dancers traumatised by apartheid, Contemporary Dance offered an avenue for reconciliation and greater appreciation of a variety of aesthetic and cultural frames. For some, these reparation years of Jazzart under Hinkel's leadership cover the period 1986–1996. During this restorative period, dancers like Pather<sup>30</sup>, John Linden, Dawn Langdown (now with Nam Jive project in the Northern Cape) Heinrich Reisenhofer and Jacki Job<sup>31</sup> took their first professional steps with Hinkel. Many of this original group have forged similar contemporary companies in their own right. This 'first generation' was quickly

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<sup>29</sup>Raizenberg was the first winner of the Standard Bank Young Choreographers award in 1972. She is currently Course Convenor of UCT School of Dance's Choreographic Studies

<sup>30</sup>Pather is currently director of Siwela Sonke Dance Company a celebrated dance company based in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal that explores interdisciplinary and public art works with gusto. Pather is an outspoken dance critic and academic who leads the Gordon Institute of Performing and Creative Arts at the University of Cape Town where he is also an Associate Professor in the Drama department. He is a multiple award winning theatre director and choreographer.

<sup>31</sup>Jacki Job was a long serving member of the Jazzart Dance Theatre Company and later formed her own Jagged Dance company in partnership with Debbie Goodman. Job moved to Japan to further explore her interest in Butoh in the late 1990s. She returned to the city of her birth in 2011. In 2012 Job enrolled for post graduate study at the University of Cape Town and has completed both a Bachelor of Music Honours (Dance Studies) and a Masters in Music (Dance) by full dissertation.

followed by Sbonakaliso Ndaba, Ondine Bello and Sifiso Kweyama<sup>32</sup> (who later established Phenduka Dance Theatre in Durban i.e. in the late 1990s). Ananda Fuchs was a young dancer with Jazzart during this period of expansion driven by Hinkel. Many attribute the growth and glowing reputation of Jazzart to Hinkel who maintained a collaborative and workshopping process as a cornerstone for the dance company. At its peak in mid 2000s, Hinkel handed over this legacy to a former dancer in his company, Jacky Manyapelo.

It could be argued that Mayo's legacy were derivatives of Jiří Kylián, Alvin Ailey and other Moderns which also shaped the core identity and direction<sup>33</sup> of Contemporary Dance as a form in South Africa. Her Jazzart Company's works bore virtually the same choreographic movement, structure and even costuming of e.g. Ailey's *Revelations* (Triegaardt, Friedman & Botha, personal communication 2015, August 20). Perhaps this was not as an infringement or violation of these choreographers' copyrights but rather a salute to the exciting new voices of Modern Dance from abroad in a period when South Africa was particularly isolated through the cultural boycott. This tendency to glance over a shoulder to acknowledge the Western and Northern aesthetic continued in 1960s but by the 1970s one notes a new hybrid dance language that incorporated regional African dances and young Black contemporary dancers began to take a more central position. For example, Kindo established himself as a serious choreographer in his work *Me & You* (2003) written for Ballet Theatre Afrikan company.

But Contemporary Dance in Cape Town was not limited to Jazzart Dance Theatre or Mayo and Hinkel. Community arts centres such as the Eoan Group, founded by Maisie Southern-Holt in 1933 and Wilvan<sup>34</sup> School of Dance with its focus on Spanish Dance founded in 1968, remain part of this interwoven landscape. The Eoan Group originated in the infamous District Six discussed above. Arguably, its aim was to foster arts activities for a diverse community but from the onset it met with challenges of indigeneity vs. a perpetuation of colonialist values. The group's identity was located in its opera company and classical ballet programmes thereby subtly negating Africanist agendas. Whilst there are some accounts of the cultural multiplicity

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<sup>32</sup> Sifiso Kweyama is the current director of Jazzart Dance Company as of March 2015. He has been an external examiner for the African Dance courses at the University of Cape Town

<sup>33</sup> Part of Mayo's influence can also be seen in the example of one of her works *Soul of Afrika* which was widely performed by three different companies and schools including: NAPAC Dance Company, UCT Ballet School and BOP Dance companies in the major urban centres and many cities in South Africa and abroad

<sup>34</sup> Sadly the Wilvan School of Dance closed its doors in 2014 after a losing the fight to keep financially viable service for its struggling communities.



and complexity of those who lived in District Six such as that provided by Noor Ebrahim (1999), a more incisive critique of the formation of coloured identity and its aspiration towards British cultural values is given by Zimitri Erasmus (2001). Further, I would argue that a master-slave dichotomy can be perpetuated in Contemporary Dance by such allegiances. For example, to what extent does a desire to learn and perform Opera and or classical ballet not reflect a desire to share the values of the colonial master? Or, when elocution lessons or learning to speak English properly were given, what mother tongue<sup>35</sup> was being eradicated and how was this denial not an enslavement to Eurocentric cultural values? Thus, the Eoan Group's national tours exerted an influence of Eurocentricism that was widespread not only in the so called coloured communities but across South Africa. Following the inhumane forced removals of the entire District Six community to the far flung Cape flats in mid 1970s, the centre moved to Athlone and its current home-the Joseph Stone Auditorium in Klipfontein Road. Here its latest visibility is ironically given prominence on the historic corridor to the Cape Flats (mostly Coloured and Black townships). Klipfontein Road has seen passionate human rights demonstrations and deaths amidst calls for socio-political activism. This uprooting does not seem to have shifted the Eoan Group's artistic focus as it has created for the new community arts centre in Athlone an admirable daily training programme rooted in classical ballet for the underprivileged children and youth in the locality. However, the dominant pattern for most of its dance training remains classical ballet and even where it introduces Hip Hop, this form could also be seen as external. How can a dismantling of superiority and elitism that is associated with the classical ballet as an art form begin for the young bodies in this former Coloured township that remains largely racially divided in 2015? The notion of an 'aspirational culture' located in the West has in my view become so powerful so as to obliterate local, indigenous dances. Social and traditional African dances have been included in main stream performances of dance in Cape Town and much more research needs to be undertaken to unravel a MacDonald's or Disneyesque culture to ask who dances what dance?

Over the past 8 years in Cape Town, I have observed Indonesian dances performed by the Eoan Group. These performances led me to question the discourse of coloured identity in

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<sup>35</sup> These debates have not subsided and continue to be heard in radio talk shows. For .e.g. at 9h00 on radio SAFm, on 7 April 2014, phone in callers heatedly discussed the politics of correct(sic) English pronunciation in what I think is an absence of any notion of multiple Englishes as suggested by Rajend Mesthrie and other linguists (Mesthrie & Hromnik, 2011; Mesthrie, 2002).

South Africa and the celebration of a select ancestry: Malaysian and Indonesian. This allegiance to that which is not African (Europe, the West, the so called Far East) I find is symptomatic not only of the Eoan Group but the wider Dance and Theatre community. Thus terms like Motherland, the Continent, overseas, are frames that need to be problematised as self and other are being examined here. The articulation that is associated with an urban, politicised, racialised space, warrants even further investigation as colonial discourse shrouds the city of Cape Town. The ways in which a diverse dance community in Cape Town responds to its own position in a founding city often referred to as the Mother City, needs unpacking. Some historians such as Thomas Huffman and Edwin Hanisch (1987) argue that much earlier founding cities for example that which is termed the Great Zimbabwe Ruins, existed as early as 11<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> century Their research offers compelling evidence of sophisticated Venda and Shona civilisations that could oust Cape Town's 17<sup>th</sup> century colonial birth. Such issues of what constitutes civilisation, and whose aesthetic, become unstable and raise further questions. When post-colonial societies like South Africa are negotiating culture and aesthetics, then such complex investigations are compounded by age as yet another category of the Other. My research work will explore this slippery and unstable terrain.

The Eoan Group led by Ebrahim Medell<sup>36</sup> launched a professional dance theatre company in 2012, with a specific interest to explore their art through Contemporary Dance. This is significant. Medell who had enjoyed a successful career began his professional life with The Playhouse Dance Company as soloist in Durban in 1996. His move to Bophuthatswana, and Johannesburg was followed by short stint dancing in Europe (Denmark, Sweden, Switzerland and France). A new, more contemporary aesthetic by the Eoan is being forged and is awaited with eager anticipation by not only its community dance following in Cape Town but by national dance audiences.

The Silver Leaf Performing Arts Association in Cape Town was also born out of the need to nurture community values and love of the performing arts as identified by its founder Amelia du Toit. Silver Leaf was established in the early 1970s and a small group had already toured to Teheran by 1973 (Gideon, personal communication 2015, March 4). In the Western Cape, given the socio historic context of aspirational Western cultural aesthetic frame and classical

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<sup>36</sup> Ebrahim Medell trained briefly at the UCT Ballet School in the early 1990s with Dudley Tomlinson and later danced for Durban, Johannesburg and Bophuthatswana dance companies.

ballet as the preferred and sanctioned dance form over any other that may have existed, this youth dance programme that was formed by Amelia Du Toit, taught principles of Modern Dance to its population of mostly young Coloured girls. Teachers included Patricia Whittock who had trained in Modern Dance in London, New York and the West Indies (Grut, 1981). Grut provides useful Modern Dance ancestry as Whittock not only had trained at the Martha Graham School but had also studied José Limon technique, with Lucas Hoving (who later was to influence the character of *Nederlans Dans Teater*) and Ivy Baxter in the West Indies. Her dance experiences in Guyana, South America and Malawi no doubt shaped much of her work that was jointly explored by Trevor Whittock. The pioneering Patricia Whittock undertook performances in the controversial Space Theatre in Cape Town in 1972 and “she even had us (Silver Leaf group) dance at St George’s Cathedral” (Gideon, personal communication 2014, February 1). Kindo (mentioned earlier), who in turn was briefly taught by Cecil Jacobs (who had trained briefly in London) likewise taught Silver Leaf and left his mark as did Friedman who directed The Silver Leaf Youth Company in the 1980s. The group toured extensively in the Cape Province to many small towns and farming districts and doubtless left their mark behind. Du Toit had trained in Laban and Leeder principles and thus these widening philosophies of the Body became implanted in the coloured community, not only in the context of Silver Leaf, but also in the Physical Education syllabus of the Coloured Education Department where Du Toit was a teacher and later inspector. Some excellent dancers that this stable produced were Leslie Ann Mitchell who joined NAPAC Ballet (and later went on to star at the Sun City casino complex), Merle Gideon who furthered her training at UCT Ballet School (as it was then known) and joined NAPAC Dance Company, in Durban in 1996. Gideon has forged a successful career as production manager and project manager having worked with a series of hotels on the Mediterranean and Turkey. The latest crop of Silver Leaf dancers included two sisters, Melissa Jansen and Jamie-Lee Jansen both of whom completed a Bachelors of Music (Dance) degree at UCT School of Dance in the Pedagogue stream in 2014.

In more recent years, Cape Town has seen the formation of the Cape Performing Arts academy, run by Debbie Turner. Another role player in this region must include Ikapa Dance Theatre led by Theo Ndindwa<sup>37</sup> and Tanya Arshamian (who trained at the Rambert Ballet

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<sup>37</sup> A former student of *Dance For All* established by former principal dancers of CAPAB Ballet, Philip Boyd and Phyllis Spira.

School, UK). This series of connections between the key players and leading institutions in South Africa discussed above, presents a dense interconnectedness and some might argue an incestuous pool that has shaped South African Contemporary Dance. On the other hand, these linkages also demonstrate the direct relationships to Britain, Germany and North America as birthplaces of Modern Dance. The dance form that has come to be referred to as Contemporary Dance in South Africa also needs to be more closely examined for its link to local African dances that were positioned as exotic by colonial forces. This investigation of the mysterious other is undertaken in the next section.

### *Durban: exotic hinterland*

The collapse of apartheid and dawn of the first democratically elected government in April 1994 not only facilitated political freedom but invited new questions around the notions of cultural liberation and its manifestations in Contemporary Dance in Durban. In order to better understand the notion of Other in Contemporary Dance, I have deliberately selected the three major urban centres—Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town described above as incubators or reservoirs. This may suggest a safe haven but only for white culture as each city also reflected the tragedy of apartheid especially for the so called non-white cultural groups. For example, it can be argued that the pernicious migrant labour system, supplier of cheap labour and the concomitant denigration of Zulu cultural life emanated from the port city of Durban as hundreds of Black males left the villages and farms of colonial Natal to work in the Gold mines of Johannesburg. The history of Durban, a city with replicas of British architecture and many other colonial trappings (Miller & Maude-Stone, 1998), includes the arrival of indentured labourers from India in the 1860s. As a second generation South African of mixed race decadency with family from India and from Europe, my own journey in this writing thus becomes a deepening reflection of (in)visibility more especially as I chose to study classical ballet and was accepted into Durban's NAPAC Ballet company.

With the formation of performing arts councils by the apartheid government from 1962, NAPAC Ballet Company was established and well recognised until its demise in 1976 (Grut, 1981). The new, re-purposed Princess Theatre and Playhouse Theatre rebuilt as The Playhouse Theatre Complex was completed in 1985. British director and former classical ballet dancer of London's Festival Ballet, Ashley Killar became Director and chose for his new NAPAC Dance

Company's inaugural season in 1986 to offer contemporary dance works which was a change from an exclusive classical ballet repertoire.



**Illustration 3: *The Miraculous Mandarin*. The Natal Playhouse. Durban. 1989.** Ashley Killar rehearsing with Gerard Samuel (far left), Robyn Segel (principal ballerina), and John McGeechie (leaning on bed).

Killar's inaugural programme included Robyn Orlin's *Beloved Country*. (1986). The work, a duet performed by Leslie Anne Mitchell and Mark Hawkins, had, as its second cast, its choreographer, Robyn Orlin, and a young Pretoria Technikon trained dancer, Andreella Papanicolou as its second cast. Early dance seasons of the NAPAC Dance Company<sup>38</sup> included Tossie van Tonder's *The River People* (1987). Orlin was also to return on several occasions with, *If everyone in China jumped up and down at the same time the earth would shift* (1989), *The explosion of stars is not for ticket holders only* (1994) and *That's the way the cookie crumbles* (1996). Mayo was also a guest choreographer and remounted her *Soul of Afrika* (1988) with David Krugel as the soloist. Whilst the NAPAC Dance Company of which I was member from 1986 performed classical ballets, Killar was determined to carefully introduce his predominately white classical ballet audiences to other ballets and/or contemporary dance works. I performed as The Middle Man in Marlene Blom's work *Cave Canem* (1987) with set and costume designs by acclaimed artist, Andrew Verster, and in Hugo le Roux's Contemporary Dance works during this period. Cape Town based premier classical ballet

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<sup>38</sup> NAPAC Dance Company's repertoire at this juncture (1986–1990s) included ballets by John Cranko (*The Lady and the Fool*, George Balanchine (*Four Temperaments*, *Allegro Brillante*, *Shostakovich Pas de deux*), Massine (*Le Beau Danube*) as well as perennials such as *Giselle*, *Les Sylphides* and *Petrushka*.

choreographer, Veronica Paeper, also wrote a work at NAPAC-*Elastakovitch* (circa 1980) in which I performed. Neo-classical and contemporary ballets<sup>39</sup> were being created at a time when Contemporary Dance works were also conceived and performed across the country. International tours (to Switzerland, Finland) by the Playhouse Dance Company that was to succeed the NAPAC Dance in 1994, likewise reshaped the identity not only of the dance company, but the South African Contemporary Dance scene itself. Choreographers and producers struggled with issues of cultural identity and in some works such as Killar's *Other people* (1989) with Mary Ann de Wet, David Krugel and Isak Coetzee. The dance vocabulary remained largely classical ballet although narratives and choreographic approaches were contemporary. Other works such as *Siyatatazela* (1994) choreographed by Boyzie Cekwana, began to draw on more widely identifiable black South African dance styles for example; Gumboot, mpantsula and traditional Tswana and were perhaps more obvious contestations of contemporary dance forms from Africa. Cekwana's works could be read as pastiche or an authentic Afro-contemporary representation dependent on the vantage points of the viewer. The varying levels of education of the multi-cultural audiences at the time also meant many differing opinions of identity and authentic dance were expressed. How to deal with the matter of exoticised Afro-contemporary dances produced locally and performed especially on foreign soil is part of this investigation and has been argued earlier (Loots, 2001; Opondo, 2006; Friedman, 2012 & Samuel, 2015).

The city of Durban itself needs contextualising as it is marketed as the gateway to the Kingdom of the Zulus (perhaps no other population group on the African continent has been as richly mythologised as the Zulu nation). The social construction of this nation, moreover, needs expanding. Contemporary Dance emanating from Durban as a coastal African city on the Indian Ocean presents a particular type of voyeurism, a glimpse of exoticised Zulu bodies. Questions of power relations, and interculturalism, were central to Pather<sup>40</sup> and his Siwela Sonke Dance Theatre and are embodied in early titles such as *Unclenching the Fist* (1998), and *Shifting Space tilting times* (1998). Both Pather and Hinkel's lives are intertwined in both the

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<sup>39</sup> The terms Neo classical and contemporary ballets are deliberately nebulous as some early works were little more than classical ballets without pointe shoes. The aesthetics of the dance work i.e. the costumes, music and choreographic structure adhered to the traditional canons of classical ballet.

<sup>40</sup> Pather is Artistic Director and currently an Associate Professor at University of Cape Town's Drama department. His numerous works and contribution to what could be seen as Contemporary Dance in South Africa, especially since the 1990s and in the 2000s also needs unpacking.

geographic spaces of KwaZulu-Natal and the Western Cape Province through their shared subversive artistic impulses. Hinkel and Pather at the invitation of new Dance Director at the Playhouse Company, Maree,<sup>41</sup> established Siwela Sonke as a dance training programme as part of an outreach agenda on the cusp of the new democratic order. As Dance co-ordinator within this organisation at the time, I have first-hand accounts of Hinkel and later Pather's programmes. Pather eventually consolidated and launched the trainees as a professional dance company by the late 1990s establishing a unique identity and direction for the multicultural group. Founding members included: Eric Shabalala, Fuchs, Nelisiwe Rushualang, Ntombi Gasa, Mdu Mtshali (currently teaching Dance at the Durban University of Technology) and Vusabantu Ngema (first black teacher of African Dance at UCT School of Dance). One could argue that such subversive dance was already a feature in Durban as dancer-choreographer, Suria Govender had already begun her Indian dance fusion company; Surialanga Dance co. which explored the crossover and fusion of traditional Zulu dances with *Bharatanatyam*. One of the most auspicious events in that company's history must be their performance at the inauguration of first democratically elected president of the Republic of South Africa, Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela in 1994.

Choreo-activist Loots, trained in classical ballet as a young dancer with Iris Manning in Durban and at the Laban Centre in London in 1990. Manning also trained Mark Hawkins as a child. He later became a soloist ballet dancer with CAPAB Ballet and in the 1990s a leading voice in Contemporary Dance in Durban alongside Loots who had completed a Master's degree in Women's Studies at the University of Natal. On her return to South Africa in 1994, Loots took up a position as lecturer at the University of Natal. She established a dance training programme within the Drama and Performance Studies programme and Flatfoot Dance Company was launched out of this initiative as a professional dance company by 2003. Loots

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<sup>41</sup> Maree was former Director: Dance, at The Playhouse Company at a crucial period in its history (transition from performing arts council to more independent cultural institution) in the mid-1990s. It could be argued that performing arts councils such as The Playhouse (formerly the Natal Performing Arts Council-NAPAC) determined what dance and by whom should be seen and valued. Given the slow change of the other arts councils, the Playhouse could be seen as re-defining the centre. Maree is one of the unsung founders of Siwela Sonke Dance Theatre based in Durban. Having initially sprung from the amalgamation of Wouter Geldenhuys's Phenduka dance and as an adjunct dance training programme, the project to which I was also party (I was Dance Co-ordinator within the Education and Development department of The Playhouse Company at that time), grew under the artistic leadership, initially of Hinkel and later, Pather who continues to head the company.

confirms that their “first performance was at the Playhouse’s Dance Shongololo. If I recall, we did a work called *Soul Spirit*. The company’s first professional season was at the Sneddon; Orion Project ... went on to the Dance Umbrella the following year (Loots, personal communication 2014, February 17). As currently the only surviving professional Contemporary Dance company in Durban, Flatfoot Dance Company articulates Loots’ vision for African Contemporary Dance; a contentious area around which she has published several academic articles. Flatfoot boasts a proud legacy under Loots activism and leadership and many of her works have premiered at The Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre.<sup>42</sup>

An earlier ad hoc group of dancers including Jeannette Ginslov, under the leadership of Jillian Hurst and Margaret Larlham gave performances as Barefoot Dance Company at the University of Natal in from the 1970s until 1985. At this time Pieter Scholtz was the head of Natal University’s Drama department and successor to the founder of the Drama Department Elizabeth Sneddon herself. This lineage is important to trace as Sneddon was the first professor of Speech and Drama at the University of Natal and was one of the first to introduce Modern Dance in the South African region on her return to South Africa in the 1940s . Sneddon had a direct relationship with the ideas of Rudolf Laban. According to Loots, Hurst studied movement at the Laban School, UK as well as other dance styles in New York before 1990. Thus one can situate Durban’s shift in approaches to dance making or choreographies in concert theatre dance since the 1950s and draw parallels with Stellenbosch University pioneers Nel and Taeger-Berger, who were teaching in the same period. With bold developments in Cape Town like Jazzart and Moving Into Dance Company and the FUBA in Johannesburg, it becomes easier to see how they take up a greater or more central space in the National Dance Studies Curriculum. It could be argued that the principles of Modern Educational dance (later to be reshaped as Creative dance and movement), and Contemporary

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<sup>42</sup> The Sneddon Theatre which is situated on the property of the University of Natal may be considered an alternate/peripheral space and therefore non mainstream. This is read in comparison to, for example, the Opera house of the Natal Playhouse which would have been part of apartheid structures given its funding through the performing arts councils set up from 1962. Even though the University of Natal would have been a Whites only university, its theatre garnered space for a leftist political respectability. For example, the independent Durban Film Festival ran by Roz Sarkin was held there for over 10 years and dodged several threats and potential banning orders.



Dance, surfaced in these much earlier formations. For example, Grut's annotation could point out that Nel had already begun to teach in Bloemfontein Teachers' College in 1948 in what I believe to be one of the earliest expressions of the pedagogy of Modern Dance. I too can recall that designs for productions by Barefoot Dance Company were regularly provided by Patty Slavin and were visible in the Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre where I have also performed. Slavin, says Loots, "worked as the Theatre Arts lecturer under Scholtz" (Loots, personal communication 2014, February 17). Importantly, Flatfoot Dance Company under the leadership of Loots redefines access to, and the expression of, Contemporary Dance itself. Her dancers are drawn from all racial groups: Indian, black, coloured and white, some for the first time. This begins to challenge and profoundly shift notions of dancing bodies that are engaging with this new dance method and approach to concert theatre dance. Since its inception, the company has created award winning work and acted as primary host to the premier contemporary dance event JOMBA!, which receives support from the Centre for Creative Arts and is housed by the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Flatfoot's founding members included Sifiso Majola, Musa Hlatwayo, and Vusi Makhanya.

Following the demise of NAPAC in 1994, the dance company became the Playhouse Dance Company. Sadly, as funding dwindled to an all-time low, that entity also closed. Mark Hawkins the company's last Artistic Director immediately formed Fantastic Flying Fish Company (FFFDC), with Peter Taylor (company manager), David Gouldie (resident choreographer) and a small group of ex Playhouse dancers including Andrew Gilder<sup>43</sup>, Quinton Ribbonaar, Deborah de la Harpe, Ebrahim Medell, and Angela Lardant. Boyzie Cekwana<sup>44</sup> and Desiré Davids conceived Floating Outfit Project as an independent company. Key components in this section on Durban as exotic hinterland must also acknowledge KZNDancelink, the primary network organisation for dance companies, studios and teachers in the Durban region. This was spearheaded by Maree who had returned to South Africa following a period of self-imposed exile in the UK to take up her position as Director: Dance for The Playhouse Company in 1994.

What could be read from the above is the multiple ways in which, Contemporary Dance in South Africa, that is under review in this thesis, its earliest contributors both persons, events

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<sup>43</sup> Later a dance critic in Cape Town and Johannesburg and currently practising as a lawyer.

<sup>44</sup>Cekwana was first black male dancer to join NAPAC Dance Company

and even notion of spaces (mainstream or peripheral), need to be viewed as one tapestry. Furthermore, it is necessary to take note that analysis of the contribution of dance to multi-cultural life in South Africa today has been noticeably absent in available literature. Dancing the Other in the South African context opens up the discourses of Othering itself including xenophobia, racism, voyeurism, tribalism, sexism and colonialism. This soup suggests a complex, interrelated histories which this thesis will endeavour to explore.

### *Spaces for Contemporary Dance outside of the major/urban centres*

This historical overview of Contemporary Dance in South Africa must also consider the key drivers in smaller towns such as Grahamstown; home to Rhodes University in the Eastern Cape. Founded as a frontier town for the British Cape Colony in the early 19th century Grahamstown was of strategic importance to the opposing forces-the Xhosa and the English. It represents one the most visible divides in South Africa's colonial past-its history one of bloodshed and conquest. The battle of Grahamstown in 1819 saw the Xhosa prophet and Chief Makana lose hundreds of warriors through a barrage of British firepower from the garrison that was once his settlement. Post-modernist choreographer, Ginslov, indicated the urgency of opening such memories when she wrote

As with blood, the work "written in blood", is our personal story and South Africa's story. We are all part of this text. However many of our stories lie hidden in memory, in the visceral, in our life juice, in our blood ... Blood and life, blood and stores, the body and language are tied together. The inarticulate repressed body, in our storehouse of memory and herstory[sic], the blood sweat and tears must be set free and unravelled in a an intravenous and circuitous route. The body will be spoken (1999:73).

The Physical Theatre that was developed by Gary Gordon, as Head of Rhodes University's Drama department in Grahamstown, continues this articulation and becomes even more poignant within a retelling of the history of Grahamstown. Gordon had strongly challenged the Dance community in South Africa advocating that it "must formulate, express and communicate our observations, thoughts and visions on a subject that has for too long remained a marginal activity because it is regarded beyond spoken or written language" (Gordon, 1999:77). He argued this through several works such as *Shattered windows* (1993) and *The Unspeakable Story* (1995) and forged a unique identity for his dancers. His appropriately named First Physical Theatre Company was born in 1993 with a triple bill programme aptly entitled *Manifesto* (Parker, personal communication 2014, February 11).

The young dance company included PJ Sabbagha (current Director of Forgotten Angle Theatre project), Anthena Mazarakis, Juanita Finestone-Praeg (Acting Head of Drama department at Rhodes in 2011), Lanon Prigge, Samantha Pienaar (current Movement Lecturer at Stellenbosch University), Andrew Buckland and Lulu Khumalo. These trail blazers fearlessly threw themselves into Gordon's daring works such as *Shattered Windows* (1994) *Travellers* (1995) and *The Unspeakable Story* (1995) to tear down many stereotypes of dance theatre conventions and dancing bodies (Parker, personal communication 2014, February 11). Gordon also contributed to the diverse repertoire of The Playhouse Dance Company with his remounting of *Travellers* (1995), in which I took part, in Durban. The work was deliberately performed on the apron stage of the Playhouse Opera theatre with the fire or safety curtain as its chosen backdrop or cyclorama, because part of the Opera theatre had been damaged by fire due to possible arson. Such defiance of theatrical norms was not, therefore, only a result of *chutzpah* on the part of the dancers, but an active demonstration on the part of Gordon, Hawkins and others who were adamant to showcase Contemporary Dance.

Grahamstown, as host city to the National Arts Festival established in 1974, is also closely linked with any retelling of the journey that was Contemporary Dance as many contemporary dance works have premiered at this significant geographic and cultural space. As a frontier town for British troops of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, it is no accident that the name of the main theatre in Grahamstown, The Monument Theatre, acknowledges the 1820s British settlers. This theatre remains to this day a space of privilege. I contend that a performance at this theatre marks the arrival of a company as a professional entity in the South African arts scene. It is furthermore not insignificant that Contemporary Dance works were first performed in less prominent performance spaces and ballet performances occupied central spaces for so long as to make it normative. This Cinderella position for Contemporary Dance existed in all the major urban centres and provinces.

Whilst Port Elizabeth as the major port city in the region of the Eastern Cape boasts a sumptuous Victorian theatre, it is significant that very few seasons of Contemporary Dance have been showcased there. It is however noteworthy that a Modern dancer of the Wigman and Laban school, Masha Arsenieva "was made president of the Port Elizabeth Ballet Club" (Grut, 1981:353) in the mid-1940s. Historian Grut's inclusion of Arsenieva in her list of biographies of South African dance personalities is telling, not only as Arsenieva is of Russian

heritage but that she has been clearly set apart as a Modern dancer and not ballet dancer. Similarly, two other inclusions in Grut's seminal dance text point to the location of Modern Dance as an adjunct activity associated with notions of Physical Education training and are in keeping with the hierarchies within Dance in the Cape at that time. Stellenbosch University would already have been strongly influenced by Katzenellenbogen and Taeger-Berger in the early 1960s. Katzenellenbogen writes Grut "had studied with Isabel Nel at the University of Stellenbosch" (1981:385). In turn, Nel introduced these modern dance notions twenty years earlier in Bloemfontein, a growing city in the central plains of the country in 1948.

To augment these observations, it is necessary to frame concert dance that occurred and was supported in homelands like Transkei, Venda and Bophuthatswana. For example, the Bophuthatswana Dance company under the artistic direction of Adam Sage and Ballet Mistress Dianne Richards (former Artistic Director of Hong Kong Ballet and Ballet Mistress of NAPAC Dance co in late 1980s), performed Afro-fusion or contemporary dance works as well as some ballets in 1991. A founding company member, Medell confirms this when he says

We had Christopher Kindo. Sonje [Mayo] she wrote *Mantis* and also David [Krugel]. Kindo wrote *Candles, Chairs and Chimes*. Then when I returned from PACT in 1992, Bop was busy with *Tabula Rasa*, *Concerto for marimba* and Sonje Mayo's *De Aar*. She named that after the actual place. And David Krugel choreographed *Stabat Mater* to Vivaldi's music ... not the Penderecki (Medell, personal communication 2014, February 14).

Other founder members would include Ellington Mazibuko, Tebby Ramasike (currently in the Netherlands), Robert Philander (ex CAPAB Ballet co, ex NAPAC Dance) and Sage (ex principal dancer from NAPAC Dance Co., and current Artistic Director of Milwaukee Ballet in the USA), Mary Ann Salvage (current RAD ballet teacher in Durban, and Deborah de la Harpe (member of Playhouse Dance co and Fantastic Flying Fish Dance Company, in Durban).

#### *Foreign emissaries: more external influences on SA contemporary dance*

The lifting of the cultural boycott and the end of the isolation of South Africa, the demise of the anti-apartheid movement, has seen many from the international community revisiting our shores since the late 1980s. Organisations such as *Pro Helvetia*, the *Alliance Française*, French Institute, British Council, Goethe Institute, as well as the Netherlands and USA embassies, brought the latest Contemporary Dance works to the South African dance community. These exchanges influenced the artistic work of South African dancers and choreographers, many of

whom had little prior opportunity or means to travel. In addition, many, especially young South Africans, could be described as relatively uninitiated audiences, inexperienced producers and new critics. The visits of Introdans (Netherlands), the Dance Theatre of Harlem (New York, USA), Shobana Jeyasingh and Akram Khan dance companies (London UK) in the 1990s, were part of what could be seen as the first of the visiting choreographic waves. The ebb and flow of visiting performances was, however, uneven as economic constraints largely limited the hosting of foreign guests by South Africa. But the new South African brand of Contemporary Dance was being increasingly felt in many European and other festivals from London to Paris, Copenhagen, to Malmo and even to the Francophone Reunion Island as Afro-politan dance emerged. Loots, Rorvik and Thomson were amongst the early partners to engage with African counterparts and negotiate visits by guest companies from Congo, Nigeria and Zimbabwe. The works and choreographic approaches of artists like Kettly Noël (Mali), Faustin Linyekula (DRC) and Tumbuka (Zimbabwe) became more widely known in South Africa. Sponsorships initially came from the banking sector including First National Bank, Standard Bank, and Nedbank—a leading sponsor of art and dance events.

The Scandinavian response included projects such as Shuttle 99 (with expertise shared by Lene Thiessen and Karen Vedel) and choreographers such as Marie Brolin-Tani who offered South African dancers opportunities to perform in Europe. The Danish Cultural Institute in particular has been very supportive of disability arts projects and my own projects span a period between 1996 and 2008. These exchanges provided an avenue for my contention that disability arts choreographies could emanate from children with disabilities and were greatly influenced by pedagogues like Lene Bang Larsen, and Janne Aargaard who advocated the use of the creative arts (especially dance, music and theatre) for, and with, the mentally handicapped in Denmark. As with many other artists of this period, I found support for my work half way across the world when funding bodies in my own country were largely unwilling to support this specific initiative. The emergence of disability arts as a category of Other in the context of the racialised, gendered and highly segregated country that was apartheid South Africa is also significant in the context of this thesis and has been commented upon in my earlier writings (2009b, 2012, 2013, 2015b). This has hopefully contributed to a discourse raised by many others including Benjamin (2002) and Sandahl, (2006). Othering in South

African dance is not a unique phenomenon. Holden's<sup>45</sup> thesis maintains that Flamenco, despite its role in altering the fabric that is South African concert dance was marginalised as an exotic Other.

Against the complex map of birthplaces of Contemporary Dance both outside and inside of South Africa, and an overview of some of the key role-players that have shaped Contemporary dance in South Africa today, a parallel chart of the socio-political events must be taken into consideration. I have proposed that the period from the 1950s has foregrounded certain patterns. The geopolitical events include: the arrival of Modern or Educational dance found in Physical Education curricula in the 1950s, the formation of the Performing Arts Councils in the 1960s, the horrors of the 1976 Soweto Uprising, the first choreographic forays by Jazzart Dance theatre and Moving into Dance Mophatong companies and the restructuring of localised performing arts councils since 1997.

The notion of an aspirational culture located in the West has, in my view, become so powerful as to obliterate local, indigenous dances. How can a dismantling of the superiority and elitism associated with classical ballet as an art form begin for the young bodies in the former coloured townships that remain largely racially divided in 2016? Social and traditional African dances have been included in main stream performances of dance in Cape Town and more research needs to be undertaken to unravel a notion of homogenised global culture to ask who dances what dance? Landmark collegial platforms – Dance Forum in Durban in the 1980s, Dance Umbrella in Johannesburg and Confluences in Cape Town, festivals such as the National Arts Festival (NAF) and JOMBA! in Durban, all offered platforms for these debates and showcased new Afro-fusion dance works especially since the 1990s. The rise of black male choreographers followed quickly by black female choreo-soloists in the 2000s likewise played their role in challenging normative differentiation. However, these bold pioneers and inspirational events were mainly located across urban spaces and highlight the shifting conservatism of Cape Town, the voyeurism of Durban and the arrogant global and African

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<sup>45</sup> Carolyn Holden died suddenly in April 2013 only three months after the completion of her Masters dissertation entitled *Flamenco in South Africa: Outsider in two places*, which I had supervised. Holden graduated with distinction from UCT in December 2012. She also held other professional qualifications including *Profesor de Baile*. She was an international examiner (Spanish Dance Society) and had received SAQA accreditation for her Diploma in Spanish Dance. There were many Indicators of her future dance scholarship that sadly was not to be.

powerhouse that is Johannesburg. Each of these places resonates differently with notions of the Other. In my view, the first example of Othered dance has deconstructed race and gender issues since the 1970s. The new dance works address issues of class and ageist stereotypes. This suggests a further reshaping of Contemporary Dance in South Africa. In my research of all three urban centres hosting these new dance works, some have turned their eyes toward older dancers. Thus, investigating older dancing in South Africa required a survey of what may be present in literature on such dance. This will be the focus of the next chapter.

In the next chapter, I examine new theories of the Body to examine in what way these theories are becoming erasure routes to alterity located in Dance.

## **CHAPTER THREE: A REVIEW OF LITERATURE IN DANCE STUDIES**

### **Other attempts at theorising Dance**

In this next chapter, I borrow from the term repertoire,<sup>46</sup> as a device to comment on the parameters in literature pertaining to Dance that variously celebrates and hides older dancing. I begin by introducing the key authors of various subfields within Dance Studies: Dance History, Dance Criticism and Dance Pedagogy in order to map discourses of Other dancing bodies: black, women, the disabled and especially older dancing bodies. A discussion of Age and Dance, (Lerman, 1984; Shorr, 1999; Upper, 2004 & Lansdale, 2011) is included to illustrate the polemic views on older dancing bodies. I have noted what may be considered dominant paths and traditional spaces for the study of Dance viz. Cultural Studies and Anthropology and examined the manner in which this specific location has shaped understandings of Theatre and Performance Studies. The links of Dance Studies to other fields like phenomenology that have principally begun by Sheets-Johnstone (1979), and Fraleigh (1987) were explored given their role as seminal texts albeit written from perspectives in the USA. In this chapter, I compared Mazo (1977), Banes (1977), Siegel (2010), and Carter (2011), for their selected

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<sup>46</sup> The description – ‘the repertoire of’ a professional dancer can at once trumpet the broad range of her capacities as an artist, and signal the gaps and limitations of her unique skill.

accounts of dance history and criticism also located in a perspective that is the North and West. I draw on the critique of racialised dancing bodies by Emery (1988), Dixon-Gottschild (1996) and Chatterjea (1997) and include feminist perspectives in Dance by important voices such as Adair (1992), Cooper Albright (1997), and Foster (2010). Benjamin (2002) grounds my discussion of disabled dancing bodies as I set out this survey of literature surrounding the Other in Dance from an African vantage point. Theatre director and drama<sup>47</sup> scholar Mark Fleishman (2006, 2011) adds his voice to understandings of South African bodies especially those in theatre, and enhances performance theories through his questioning of the performance of memory.

Whilst I deeply respect the many authoritative voices who have advanced the field of Dance Studies, this chapter aims to point out their specific positionality and possible geo-political bias in order to explore current writing on Dance in South Africa. I will offer a brief review of insider texts such as Loots (2006), Pather (2006), Finestone-Praeg (2011), Johnson Jones (2011), Friedman (2012), Castelyn (2013a) and Farrugia(2013) highlighting discourses of difference in South Africa that is embedded in the sub- fields (mentioned above). Intercultural notions proposed by American scholar and theatre director, Richard Schechner (1992) have raised questions in post-apartheid South Africa and have been cited variously by South African dance scholars, Loots, Craighead and Job (2015), who continue to grapple with a heady multi- and inter-cultural space that is South Africa. As even more fluidity between religious, language and cultural groups began post-1994, many attempts were undertaken to find a more equitable and level playing for an articulation of the diverse dance practices located in and emanating from the Southern African space by these dance writers. Many local scholars found kinship in the body and politics debates raised by bell hooks (1992), Bharucha (2001), and Gayatri Spivak<sup>48</sup> (2006).

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<sup>47</sup> In South African universities today many theatre studies departments began in the traditional spaces of Speech and Drama departments. As the field of Drama studies shifted so too did its constricting label that was associated with written texts (and especially texts of a Eurocentric ilk) change.

<sup>48</sup> On 27 September 2011, I had the privilege to attend the University of Cape Town's Vice Chancellor Open Lecture Series that was presented by Professor Gaytri Spivak. With her many degrees from Cornell University, and current position in Columbia University in the US, I felt intimidated by this scholar's (now in 70s) string of accolades and PhD in Literature. The talk centred on the "Tension between critique and dogma" which was sprinkled with introductory remarks on the shifting positions of philosophers Emmanuel Kant and Jacques Derrida.



For me, all these insights introduce more questions such as how do the artists that have emerged from the ashes of apartheid provide a unique view of the Other? What are some of the new ways gendered and racialised bodies have been written about by South Africans? Who is writing about, for example, the older South African bodies who are engaging with dance? Is there an examination of ageist notions surrounding dance and how have these been critiqued within the South African socio-political paradigm? What are other attempts to theorise dancing in South Africa and why are these topics selected and not others? Dance theorisation and especially the link between Dance and Other by South Africans themselves seem to have only begun to be tested since the 1980s. A literature search in this context would be plagued by several gaps and encounter many fragments.

I have included some concepts such as embodiment, phenomenology, re-presentation from fields such as Philosophy and Psychology as these, in my view, profoundly enrich the articulation of Dance Studies. This assertion will become clearer in later chapters. The recent shift towards a greater engagement with Body theories: Blackman (2008) and Gilleard and Higgs (2011) that has emerged especially in the UK will also be commented upon. This chapter attempts to recalibrate South African Dance literature. I argue that through an understanding of the historical, artistic and socio-political contexts of dancers' lives one can probe dance performances and their processes of creation more insightfully. Such reflection on dancers' lives are Life History Research according to Dhunpath and Samuel (2009) that may offer new insights into the changing attitudes to dancing bodies and bodies in general. Some (auto) biographical accounts exist e.g. Fonteyn, Isadora, and later Yvonne Rainer, Merce Cunningham. However, Dance books especially those commenting on classical Ballet celebrate at length, artistic achievements but, offer scant reflection on politics of the day. Titles such as *The Ballet of the Second Empire 1847-1858*, by Ivor Guest (1955) and *Great Male Dancers of the Ballet* by Water Terry (1978) are typical examples. A list of such authors could include the duo Nigel and Maude Gosling who wrote under the pseudonym, Alexander Bland (1976). Amongst early writers who shifted the attention in classical Ballet from adoration of the ballet star, towards Dance in Education Valerie Preston-Dunlop (2008) who was influenced by Rudolf Laban, and much earlier, Russell (1958) are pioneers. Preston-Dunlop endeavoured to unpack earlier attempts, some conducted since the French courts of Louis XIV in 17<sup>th</sup> century, to codify movement and train a dancing body. The development towards

forging a systemic movement language that grew into a dance syllabus later continually feeds a porous Dance curriculum. Whilst on the surface this goal may seek the establishment of best teaching praxis, in my view, it should also be discussed within colonial discourse of subjugation, order and rule. I argue that in South African early dance writers e.g. Grut (1981), Botha (1988), and Glasstone (1996) have largely followed the same artistic interest as the earliest Dance authors aforementioned leaving wide open a field for future contextual and methodological research. Several critiques of a conservatoire model for Dance pedagogy exist (Stinson, 1999; Smith-Autard, 2002 & Buckroyd, 2000), which I maintain may have impact on older dancing making their writing an important facet in this thesis.

Where Dance as scholarly publication in South Africa does exist further analysis reveals that writing about South African concert dance by South African dance researchers is limited. The subject of this thesis - older dancing in this specific context in South Africa - is almost non-existent. Tossie van Tonder's book, *Nobonke She of All People*, published in 2013 offers a poignant autobiographical account of a life of a physical theatre dancer during the apartheid era. Whilst Van Tonder could be assigned the position as an older dancer, her largely autobiographic account though contextual rich does not focus on theorising the meaning of older dancing itself. Similarly, narrative reflections on artistic works and lives e.g. the life of Cape Town's prima ballerina, Phyllis Spira, by Botha (1988), and richly detailed accounts of the trials and triumphs of founder of the UCT School of Dance, Dulcie Howes, by Glasstone (1996) are dominant. Whilst these are all highly necessary, they do not in themselves offer analysis and critique of historical contexts; rather they focus on artistic highs. More theoretical explorations of Dance for example, the claim of dance as cultural text by Loots (2010), consequently finds its space within Post-colonial Studies. Dance frequently appears in a variety of fields including Ethnomusicology and when discussed as language could even be found under the banner, Linguistics.

The key authors of the relatively new sub field – Dance and Gendered bodies (Adair, 1992; Manning, 2004; Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, 2006 & Foster, 2010) draw attention to the manner in which this particular lens can assist in the reading of Dance. Their feminist thinking applied, especially to the emerging context of Choreographic Studies, in colleges, university dance and physical education departments strengthen the veracity of Dance Studies. Scholarly attention on Dance as an independent site for study increased especially in the USA and

Europe in the 1970s. The critique of dance making – its (re)production/(re)presentation by Cooper Albright (1997) and others was nurtured by complementary theories of the processual and performing body espoused by Lepecki (2006) and Martin (2012). The Body and Performance with its concomitant question of aesthetics that seem to govern some bodies became challenged through this new wave of dance writing. This fuelled local dance scholarship and my own investigation of power and cultural discrimination – othered bodies who do not fit these moulds.

This chapter opens up the aforementioned terrain through a discussion in four sections of intertwined discourses to articulate a reading of cultural hegemonies such as older dancing in South Africa. Section one opens up a discussion about dance that located in cultural studies and anthropology. In Section two, the chapter looks at dance as cultural marker – as language that unifies and separates. Section three comments on the literature on racialised and gendered dancing bodies examined within post-colonial contexts, and the final section expands contemporary dance and its role in the field of education in South Africa. The chapter purposefully draws on these multiple vantage points to illustrate how older dancing may be observed in an articulation of itself.

### **Dance's location in cultural anthropology**

This literature review begins by noting that much of the Dance research in South Africa is located within prevailing Humanities and Social Science Faculties and is shaped through discourses of the Arts which are sidelined in favour of faculties such as Health Sciences, Engineering. Dance Studies that could be seen as a powerful cultural marker alongside language, race, and religion thus finds itself under theorised. As Dance is concerned with the body it can also be found in enquiries in Sports, and as a form of therapy that places it in the Health Sciences. Loots<sup>49</sup> begins by framing post-apartheid Dance through the discourse of performing arts by borrowing from Philosophy and its Foucauldian notions of power and hegemony to problematise ballet and its social construction as High Art. In doing so she not only disrupts a reliance on speaking about dance from a vantage position of classical Ballet

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<sup>49</sup> Loots deepens this argument of Dance suggesting ways in which it can act as subversive tool that opens race and gendered closets through her examination of Pather and his Siwela Sonke Dance theatre's works. I concur with Loots' claim that these are some of the prime examples of artistic rupture in South African contexts (Loots, 1999).

but opens avenues to theorise South African dance from the body itself. This is an issue that I will later expand. Loots appropriates and later problematised the Foucauldian notion pointing out that the female body as a site for struggle for meaning and power is neglected. This assertion is in turn picked up by the dance researcher Johnson-Jones' plea for an isolated South African indigenous community – Nama women and their threatened ceremonial dances for pubescent young girls. Johnson Jones commentary in *Nama stap* (2011) whilst opening up untold research can unintentionally serve to reinforce anthropologic associations for dance. Whilst one can celebrate linkages between meaning and epistemological accounts of for example, Gumboot dancing and/ or *isicathamiya* (Hauptfleisch, 1992; Erlmann, 1999; Dovey & Impey, 2010) these acts can also serve to re-enforce certain Africanist stereotypes. Achille Mbembe (2004) refers to this as a perpetuation of notions of Africa, and I suggest its dance, as geographic accident. Following these writers, I want to argue for a far wider reading of Dance from Africa and dances that undertaken on African dancing bodies in my attempt to locate older dancing as a humanist reading and re-searching about Dance and the Body. In this thesis I have purposefully attempted to resist any narrow category of Africanist Dance. Rather, my literature search echoed the notions of bodies that are revolting against norms and canons in theatre suggested by Finestone-Praeg (2001). She had claimed that:

To watch a performance like this means opening oneself up to the experience that becomes possible only when modes of knowledge break down; it shatters ideas about mastery over the body through artistic representation and expresses a body that refuses to be domesticated, pinned down, or contained: a body of questions, permanently in revolt. A body that is revolting (2011:25).

This bold statement supports the earlier one raised by Gordon when he critiqued modes of enquiry in dance noting that:

For far too long dance in South Africa has been regarded almost solely as a technical and performing activity. Furthermore, conservative and traditional attitudes toward technical training have tended to dominate educational strategies providing on the one hand rigorous programmes and impressive dancing but on the other hand minimising rich understandings of creative processes that I believe can be articulated, discussed and reviewed (1999:77).

This deepened my search for discourses of Dance and the Body and its knowledge. My search extended to understanding notions of the black dancing Body in Africa and its diaspora. Greyling (2012) and Wilson (2012) offered Southern African and Jamaican vantage points through their discussion papers delivered at a symposium by the University of Cape Town held

in 2012. Greyling had noted, “A brief reminder of the related centuries of slavery, starting from within Africa, when during the 9<sup>th</sup> century African slaves from central and eastern Africa were sold in the Middle East and eastern Asia, may allow us to appreciate the full complexity of the Atlantic Slave trade” (2012:1). And Wilson maintains that “Historically as people moved across borders, be it by force, as in the case of the enslaved Africans, or by choice, as in the case of the indentured laborers and the European colonizers, their culture and their dances came with them” (2014:163).

For some, Dance is claimed as natural cultural expression of African bodies as if an un-natural practice of dance occurs outside of the African space. Such uncontested statements framed within cultural theories become bound in notions of tradition and heritage that is somehow a preserve of an ‘African’ discourse which I found unhelpful. Whilst Tracy Snipe affirms social traditional dances in South Africa in his essay *Bridges to humanity* (1996) he also writes “in Africa the notion of art for the sake of art is a foreign concept” (1996:63). I also found this to be problematic as it can perpetuate exotic stereotypes noted earlier in this chapter. To imply that artists from the African continent are exclusively bound to religious and/or ritualistic practice is to further entrench the exotic other. Any attempt to define the term ‘culture’ should be compound and fluid as its possible origins can be found in multiple meanings viz. farming, bacteria, nomadic lifestyle, manners. Rachel Fensham provides a critique of concepts of nature and the binaries such as Father/Mother, Reason/Passion to explain such gendered distinction that is also locked into concepts of Dance as natural for some which is significant here. She explained, “Other binary differences regard Culture as about civilization, and Nature as that which belongs to so called primitive society; a structural dichotomy confirmed dangerously in the modern science of anthropology” (2011: 6).

For example, sociologists such as Clifford Geertz (1973), Stuart Hall (2006), and others argue cultural definitions based on agreed signs and symbols help to define social groups. Cultural practices have thus shaped communities and it can be argued that these shared ideologies have given rise to new cultural formations or sub-groups. In the South African context one could claim a ‘culture of oppression’ that was prevalent in the apartheid era, and sub-cultures of Gay political activists working through Dance. But, notions of culture are not neutral as evidenced in the ‘high art’ vs. ‘low culture’ debates proposed by Loots (1999). This has pointed to a contested terrain for the older dancer that is both personal and political. Bharucha (2001)

extends that challenge by refuting a homogenised and global culture. In his seminal book, *The Politics of Cultural Practice* (2001), Bharucha interpretations of interculturalism have introduced new ways of thinking of culture beyond socially agreed systems of signs, symbols, and accepted behaviours in fixed realms.

This thesis asks how dancing can illuminate new readings of the Body itself, and locate it within many discourses of the post-colonial body, of difference, indigeneity, diasporas, virtual worlds that have now emerged. Many of these cultural theories have been developed alongside post-colonial impulses (Badmington & Thomas, 2008). Geertz's (1973) notions of culture as an agreed language-system becomes narrow in the face of post-colonial experiences by many older dancers in South Africa who seem to have banded together as disparate persons that share similar ideologies. A reading of culture in these multiple contexts leads me to trace the thinking around colonialism and cultural transfer that was critiqued by Frantz Fanon (1965); and Homi Bhabha (1983, 1994). I re-read *Where east meets west – dancing*, a potent newspaper clipping written in 1976. It recorded my first forays into classical Ballet and provides ample evidence of my own exoticised position in this historic period. At age twelve, I had already been branded as an exotic curiosity. My responses have only just begun to be articulated in 2015 (Samuel G. M., 2015) in my choreographic work and writing where I question: Who is the exotic other and how does s/he become socially constructed? Paul Gilroy (1993) and authors in *Deviant Behaviour: Deshotels*, Mollie and Forsyth (2012) confirmed my understanding of the embedded institutional power, and impact of what some may have placed as an exotic Indian male dancing ballet. I question what lies ahead for those dancers similarly marked and Othered in this way. Hall had already written in 1990s of a widening notion of cultural markers and identity when he suggested that "Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to the continuous play of history, culture and power" (2006:435). So how to understand the repository of multicultural and intercultural experiences and the dance by older dancers in a deeply divided country like South Africa?

In the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, the notions of multiculturalism, trans-culturalism and interculturalism were being challenged by scholars and practitioners in the performing arts. In theatre most notably, such a list may include, Schechner in the USA, Peter Brook in UK and Eugenio Barba (who later founded the Odin Theatre), in Denmark, amongst others. Schechner's article, *An Intercultural Primer*, written in 1991 opened the debates of cultural

exchanges, and though located in Drama/ theatre contexts these can be extended to Dance. In South Africa's new democracy Schechner's ideas find resonance, as multi culturalism and an urgent need for nation building became the order of the day, in the post-apartheid experience. Pather who had studied with Schechner in New York University returned to South Africa at a crucial juncture in the late 1980s. Fleishman wrote:

Pather refuses the monolithic interpretations of masculinity, of Indian-ness and of being black in South Africa which were shaped by apartheid in the first place and are being reshaped once more by the developing hegemony of the democratic state. Pather is unwilling to accept the pre-conceived categorisations – Indian man; black man; gay Indian man; gay black man - for himself (2001:106).

Many local dance events and festivals in the early 1990s had a series of dance platforms where diverse dance groups were invited (largely by an old, White guard) to perform alongside one another, in happy combinations and variety concerts. There was little or no cross over between dance companies who were representative of different cultures. The inherent power relations between cultures manifested in assigned performance spaces, misreading of aesthetic nuances and in some cases ignorance. This was especially evidenced in critical reviews of the multi-cultural dance works being shown. The initial euphoria of *Simunye* (a popular slogan 'we are one' of the early 1990s on South African television stations) quickly waned. Glasser had sought a re-valuing and re-introduction of indigenous African dance forms through her productions and in her writings (1991, 1999). She had cautioned the need for dancers to interrogate their politics. Therefore, an understanding that Dance and politics could not be separated in such an environment is key to this thesis also. I agree with Joann Kealiinohomoku's (1983) challenging article, that classical Ballet be also viewed as an ethnic form and add that failure to do so is to entrench Ballet's elitist position. Classical ballet in South Africa is a localised dance form that has enjoyed great privilege. Hierarchical cultural framing was experienced by South Africans that was based on race. Whilst Larlham (1991), Fleishman (2001) and others have interrogated Theatre in transition, the powerful effects of marginalisation of some cultures and their dances (discussed in Chapter Two) should not be forgotten.

As advocate of social integration through dance, Glasser (1991) had advised against the wanton appropriation of African dance forms without a deep sensitivity and respectful appreciation of complex and nuanced African cultures. I concur with Glasser that particularly

in the context of cultural exchanges much more careful readings of the nature of collaboration must be undertaken and well before any integration with so called mainstream dance forms. In the 1990s, inclusion of marginalised groups had understandably, initially, focussed on racial integration. Later, other areas of inequality and the status of all those who had suffered some form of discrimination were reviewed. Joseph Harker's book *Apartheid* (1994) provided invaluable photographic records of the conflicted lives of all South Africans. Many of these shocking visuals told in black and white photographs were banned in South Africa but in London (and possibly elsewhere) as they were published by the Guardian Newspapers. They boldly illustrated the horror of apartheid on so called ordinary lives and filled a gap in my understanding of oppression on both sides of the racial divide that was denied through the orchestrated censorship of the Apartheid regime. Post-apartheid, South African choreographers revelled in an experimentation of fusion and cultures previously inaccessible. Many works of hybrid nature including Glasser, Pather, Jayesperi Moopen, P.J. Sabbagha, and Mantsoe echoed the multi- and inter-cultural debates of power, authenticity and border. Bharucha (1997, 2001, and 2014) also addressed the impossibility of neutral cultural exchanges arguing that such collisions may have been under critiqued by Schechner. Bharucha wrote "Schechner's use [and cultural clash] amounts, in my view, to a naive and unexamined ethnocentricity. Quite simply ... the borrowing, stealing and exchanging from other cultures is not necessarily an enriching experience for the cultures themselves" (Bharucha in Loots, 2006:95).

South African dance has developed from a fraught space and is part of the peaceful transition to democracy but perhaps is less known globally for its self-reflection of certain tastes and aesthetics which it has inherited. Choreographer and artist born in South Africa, Jeanette Ginslov, and Loots are amongst many who challenge the ideas of cultural formation and composition. As Ginslov says "Blood and life, blood and stories, the body as language are tied together. The inarticulate repressed in the body, in our storehouse of memory and her story, the blood, sweat and tears must be set free and unravelled in an intravenous and circuitous route. The body will be spoken" (1999:73). This suggestion of an alternate reading of dance as visceral, history and memory provided an impetus for my search within these postcolonial thoughts to understand the lived experience or embodied encounter of older dancing and to ground these notionally and paradigmatically.



## **Dance Performance as cultural text**

Loots (2006), begins a discussion through her challenge to view dance performance as cultural text and especially within Dance that is further framed within development and globalisation contexts. Contemporary dance works in South Africa in 2000 are confusingly both in marginal and central spaces as suggested by Fleishman (2001) who observes this particular tension in drama/theatre practices in South Africa in the period 1991-2001. His foray into the centrally held power bases in Johannesburg's theatre establishments and disquiet from the rural provinces consolidates my belief. But, before one can critique hierarchies observed above and their manifestation in Dance, one needs to anchor the notion of the dance performance itself as a cultural text. A survey of literature pertaining to Dance for this thesis has found anthropological and ethno-musicological spaces for the discussion of dance such as Hall's (2006). Pather (2006) maintains Cultural identities are transitive. Performance theory arguments for this multiplicity of voices can be found in Craighead's (2006) rejection of racist dog tag whilst a discussion presented by Kenyan born, Patricia Opondo, Director of the African Music Project based at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa strongly argues in favour of embodied and indigenous knowledge production (2006). Opondo writes, "To create new knowledge as exhibited in the cultural heritage, the ways of knowing are embodied in the symbolic forms of music, dance, gesture and poetic song texts" (2006:72). This notion provided a basis from which I was able to test my thesis of older dancing as performances of distinct cultural texts that could usher in new ways of seeing bodies. This way of knowing has encouraged a wide literature search. It has identified a gap within the literature on Contemporary Dance in South Africa that of older dancing which I suggest (at the end of this chapter) may be answered through phenomenological lenses.

The disabled as sub-cultural group may provide answers to questions of Other raised by this thesis also as they begin to script their embodied lives in performance. Pioneer of integrated dance for people with disabilities from the UK, Benjamin writes:

believing in their individual ability to express themselves through movement, each realizing that they and their bodies were full of possibilities, each trying on the daunting title of 'dancer', while beneath us on the second floor, children whose every dream was to become a ballet dancer, were having their bones measured simply to gain access to the auditions (2002:5).

Thus, equal opportunities for dancers with disabilities becomes more than issues of rectifying poor access, providing more stage roles or more designated parking bays for the disabled but points to policy that address greater resources, substantial funding, and wider education of the significance of artistic contribution by the disabled. How to construct policy and disseminate knowledge of the Other becomes the greater challenge for shrivelled societies who have been systematically denied such information. In my literature search I encountered Spivak, who suggested that to shift notions of Literature it was imperative to engage with issues of social justice. She remarked how fervently she would like to teach students how to read robustly, or to reach a point where one could suspend oneself in the text (2011). Her need to develop an activism is a goal I share for a reading of other dancing bodies. Spivak challenged her audience in a UCT address which I attended in 2011 and asked Was it not Socrates who advocated playing to lose – to explore, challenge, seek new knowledge? She stressed the importance of quality education, and not education for globalization and reminder this audience that the Women's Charter is an English charter and that even the Declaration of Human Rights has a specific subject person (position). This I found significant for an understanding and valuing of the subject position, hegemonies and norms embedded in Dance in South Africa. I concurred with her implication that subservience to knowledge production from the north from a position of the global south has to end (2011). In Dance, new questions will arise as knowledge of the body and Dance through an understanding age is sought. Who is the author of this delicate dance script? What are their subject positions? How can my lived experience as Gay, older dancer add value to an understanding of the Other dancer in South Africa?

In the 2000s, South African contemporary dance seems to have embraced some openly Gay themed work. Examples would include *"Stories about..."* choreographed by Levern Botha with Marlin Zoutman and Grant van Ster in 2007 and performed at the Baxter Dance Festival in August 2008. Nyamza's *Kutheni* (2009) a reflection on the murder of black lesbians created in 2007 (Samuel G. M., 2010) and *I stand corrected* (2012) that explored the heinous notion of 'corrective rape'. Some of these works exemplify personal narratives but all include a choreo-activist role mentioned above through their not so quiet surfacing of Gay rights issues. As a new cultural text in Contemporary Dance i.e. embodied Gay lives stepped forward alongside black bodies and gendered bodies it began to compel audiences to rethink traditionally

assigned roles for bodies. Dance performance as text revealed the ways in which bodies can and have assigned meaning both in their epistemology and ontology.

### **Post-colonial dancing in South Africa: racialised and gendered bodies**

Before one can delve into the literature surrounding politics of the colonised body and how this may be different in South Africa it may be necessary to locate a colonial discourse. Concert theatre dance's place can be located in what Spivak described as a capitalist globalised marketplace which is an aspect of this study. Dance in South Africa today cannot be separated from the colonial enterprise that has superimposed and supplanted certain cultural values and aesthetic missives over others. The ways in which the body as text that is culturally inscription in relation to the historical and hegemonic position of ballet will be more fully discussed in a later chapter. As international governments and civil society reflected on their collective responsibilities, for example, the South African government ministers engaged with COP17<sup>50</sup> in Durban, forces of glocalisation on Contemporary Dance must be recognized. Spivak's demand for an unpacking of the underlying social contract is apt. This is an imperative and can be appropriated to support one of the arguments of this thesis around the social contract and construct for the older dancer. Do older and Other dancers become redundant in the face of disinterested and/or uninformed audiences? What development needs to be undertaken to shift these paradigms? Will answers be found in a more educated society? Thus, Spivak reminds one that such education is 'ethical health care' (2011). In her address noted earlier this renowned literature scholar asserted that equality is not sameness (2011). I suggest that through an interrogation of discussion of post-colonial goals such as Education, and by extension the education about older dancers, the Other can be become more identifiable and understood. This may not need to be about providing the same opportunities for performance by older dancers but a more specific, comprehensive policy and response. Such a plan should redress ageism, dance and the body. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin reminded one that:

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<sup>50</sup> The 17th Conference of the Parties (COP17) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the 7th Session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties (CMP7) to the Kyoto Protocol, held in the city of Durban, South Africa 28 November-9 December 2011.

In a more general way the 'fact' of the body is a central feature of the post-colonial, standing as it does metonymically for all the 'visible' signs of difference, and their varied forms of cultural and social inscription, forms often either undervalued, overdetermined or even totally invisible to the dominant colonial discourse. Yet, paradoxically the resulting self-consciousness, as Fanon perceived, can drive the very opposition which can undo this stereotyping (2006:289).

The notion of dancing body as more than a Foucauldian site of discipline but rather a site of resistance as suggested by Elizabeth Grosz provides a welcome space from which to argue how black (and brown) dancing bodies have been framed in South Africa. This was critiqued by Loots in her aptly entitled article *Navigating African identities, Otherness and the "Wild Untamed Body" in Dance training and pedagogy in South Africa: a case study of Flatfoot Dance Company's dance "Development" programmes in 2009*. As one of those self-conscious dancers who was positioned as exotic, seemingly due to my Indian heritage, and who deliberately chose to self-identify as black, in response to my relegated position as non-white, media attention to my race often obscured critiques of the quality of my dance performances and/or choreographies. Consider the difference for my white counterparts and their artistic achievement discussed earlier. This conundrum was not an uncommon experience for many of my fellow dancers of colour at that time – late 1980s. Aubrey Mokoape who is president of the Black Consciousness Party and founder member of South African Students Organisation that was to become a powerful anti-apartheid movement suggested that:

From that time on we refused to be called non this or non that. We were not the negatives of whites or Europeans. We were not an afterthought in their order of creation. We and we alone had the right to name ourselves, and we named ourselves black, a political black as opposed to a pigmentary black, a black that encompassed all the oppressed people of our country – Africans, euro Africans and Asio-Africans. We rejected all terms such as coloured and Indians because they militated against black solidarity of the oppressed (2015:10).

Emery's (1988) account of pioneering artists like Katherine Dunham, Pearl Primus, Asadata Dafora and others shared a similar journey (that of periphery) and fate (recognition much later in life and sometimes even after their death) to the South African counterparts mentioned earlier. What can be learnt from these testimonies of prejudiced lives, of black American male dancers like Arthur Mitchell, Alvin Ailey and the first generations of black ballerinas like Joan Myers-Brown discussed by Dixon-Gottschild's (1996) is the contention that the Africanist aesthetic is in-validated and its contribution to the history of American ballet usurped through hegemonic whiteness. These are only some of the partial responses to this situation. Adair's,

20 years' study of the British Dance company, Phoenix Dance covered in her book, *Dancing the Black Question: The Phoenix Dance Company phenomenon*, in 2007 added to these positions as she questioned the institutionalised racism and lack of arts funding contributing to the demise of Phoenix. The extent to which such companies and individuals are coerced into flag bearer positions or to be voices for an entire black community needs to be read in the relation to the freedom and privileged hegemony of their non-black peers. In his seminal writing *'I write what I like....* Steve Biko (1978) had written "Being black is not a matter of pigmentation – being black is a reflection of a mental attitude" (1978, p. 52). It is this latter definition of blackness that I evoke here, to suggest vigilance for those silenced lives and Othered dancers. As young dance-theatre choreographer and director, Steven van Wyk cautioned, the "insidious power of whiteness manifests culturally in more covert ways" (2012:31) and I would add if left unchecked perpetuates psychological abuse. Spivak's address suggested a re-examination of the term 'ab-use' and a deepening of the understanding of colonial discourse (2011). Her argument resonated with notions of imperialism and the native that was also investigated by Bhabha (1983a); and Fanon (1965b). Benita Parry maintains:

For Spivak, Imperialism epistemic bellicosity decimated the old culture and left the colonised without the ground from which they could utter confrontational words; for Bhabha, the stratagems and subterfuges to which the native resorted, destabilized the affectivity of the English book but did not write an alternative text – with whose constitution Bhabha declines to engage, maintaining that an anti-colonialist discourse 'requires an alternative set of questions, techniques and strategies in order to construct it' [Bhabha 1983a:198] (2006:49).

The anti-colonial discourse facilitated my challenge of how to view Othering in dance in South Africa and found resonance in such post-colonial writing and suggested an alternate discourse in current thinking around Dance in South Africa. Spivak suggested that September evening, a re-examination of the words subvert and sabotage which for me become heightened for the ways in which ageing bodies may be subverting and sabotaging extant Dance discourse. What new and different meanings could be learnt from older dancers and their performances? What issues of othering could be added to texts on colonial theory? Could a post-colonial lens born from Literary Studies offer up insights on Dance Studies? I argue that this is not only plausible and will prove invaluable.



**Illustration 4: Tweede Nuwe Jaar/ Cape Minstrels Parade. 2015.** Dancer and choreographer, Desiré Davids (seated on the doorstep of a home in the Bo Kaap [the old Dutch slave quarters]) takes in the merriment of the crowds gathered to celebrate this day of pride and remembrance of slave histories at the Cape Colony of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

My research on older dancing resonated with texts from the 1940s, that had initially explored notions of Orientalism, nationhood and the exotic as emergent themes of the Other. I began with Homi Bhabha's comments on mimicry (1984), and became curious as to the master-slave narrative that unfolded in South Africa. Shaun Viljoen's (2013) further unpacking of Richard Rive's book, *Writing Black* (1981) affirmed my notion of voices that could speak back to a domineering centre. I was further intrigued by Spivak's (2006) pleas for the subaltern. Spivak had proposed a new way of thinking of sabotage – something that could bring about change, but not only to destroy or obliterate, a sabotage that could be understood in an affirmative sense. I began to question to what extent older dancing was a subversive act and was reminded of her earlier concern for the voiceless (1990). For me, not only did she reframe the philosophical question 'Who speaks?' but more provocatively who is listening. Ketu Katrak, author of *Politics of the Female Body: Postcolonial Women Writers of the Third World*, (2006) further problematises colonial discourse when she challenges the sense of belonging for Third World women as sites of resistance and oppression. In her ground breaking *Contemporary Indian Dance: New Creative Choreography in India and the Diaspora*, (2011) she throws down the gauntlet of politics of appropriateness and the female Indian body in the diaspora. I also began to read South African women authors closer to home such as Anita

Desai and Pamela Jooste whose works in fiction explored how the Othered half lived. Spivak's notion of silenced and silent voices was extended by Sally Swartz in her thought provoking article, *Can the clinical subject speak? Some thoughts on subaltern psychology* (2005). Swartz had argued for the notion of a clinical subaltern that has limited power. In seeking answers to the philosophical question who is listening, I concluded from these writings that a relative vantage point should be made clear also. Thus, cartographies and several old maps (Thomas, 2004) and the infamous Peter's projection map (Castelyn, 2013:11) have reflected shifting proportions of Africa, the dark continent when seen from an Enlightened Europe.

I began to rethink colonial subjects that were straddled between Europe and Africa and their effect on a post-colonial space such as South Africa. A variety of magazines on dance (mostly ballet) like *Scenaria* and *Arabesque* whose series run from the 1980s also provided insights to the love affair with all things British, or European dance and ideas that re-enforced a superior Motherland and her Third world progeny. Throughout most of these magazines a thread of the Other's representation and re-presentation emerged that confirmed the habit of Dance criticism and review of South African concert theatre dance's uneasy relationship with Other, discussed in this thesis. To this specific end, Joan Acocella's opposition to such genteel writing and Siegel's reliance on choreometrics was an affirmation (Jowitt, Acocella, & Siegel, 1995). Even though Protest theatre in South Africa through plays<sup>51</sup> and Ngema's musical *Sarafina* (1988) paved the way for a decentred Western aesthetics, and new approaches like workshopping,<sup>52</sup> very few works in dance were analysed for their role as Protest dance. Some interventions through Dance have begun like Maxwell Rani's *Coal train* (2009) that could be described as a troubling of the intersections between modernism and what he termed social traditional African dance (Rani, 2012). I have argued earlier that Glasser and others laid the foundations for a trajectory of protest dancing in South Africa. The discourse surrounding aesthetics as well as an attack of the implicit norms for black dance by Emery (1988) , Dixon-

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<sup>51</sup> A list of protest theatre plays could include Athol Fugard's *Boesman and Lena* (1969), *Master Harold and the boys* (1982); Ronnie Govender's *At the Edge* (1996), *The Lahnees Pleasure* (1992); and Percy Mtwa and Mbongeni Ngema's *Woza Albert* 1981.

<sup>52</sup> Workshopping as a theatre methodology could be seen as part of a wider democratisation and an undoing of the prevailing cultural order of authoritarianism of the White director .

Gottschild (1996) and others has in turn provoked my own protestation around aesthetic sensibilities in post-colonial and apartheid South Africa that hinder older dancing.

The notion of Other when exposed reveals an episteme within Feminist discourse that suggests Culture in the new South Africa should be re-framed and contexts such as Dance examined for its roles as arbiter of human rights and social justice. The relationships between race, gender, disability, and age can be found in Queer theory and by extension in Crip theory (McRuer, 2006). This is useful when explanations and correlations between culture and the performing body are being made. In South Africa Jonathan Jansen remarked:

You cannot 'prove' that you are not a racist because you will always sound guilty in the mind of the accuser and the many South Africans who are ready to judge you as guilty on the flimsiest piece of evidence of racial discrimination. It is like witch hunting in the northern provinces – accuse the person of being a witch, then destroy her, and maybe get to the facts after the funeral (2011:193-194).

This kind of witch hunting has damaging consequences for persons and phenomena that stand accused as discriminatory practices making it all the more necessary to investigate social norms such as masculinities, whiteness and age within the old cultural order. These are important discourses within Contemporary Dance too and germane to the discussion of older dancing in and outside of South Africa today. Given the history of concert theatre dance in the specific context - Colonialism and Apartheid, the position of white male dancer cannot be ignored. As recent post graduate of UCT, Steven van Wyk maintained (and I agree), "Nowhere are such critiques [of whiteness been] more salient than post-apartheid South Africa – a nation which has overcome white political domination, but where the insidious power of whiteness manifests culturally in more covert ways" (2012: 31). However, before one is able to adequately investigate the power of white, male and age, it becomes necessary to recall, the dancer as post-colonial object and contested site that was discussed in previous chapters. In her forthright chapter Loots extended this further by confronting such hegemony when she wrote:

The body is not only a site for struggle and meaning but wears the embodiment through colour and sex, of much of our physical identity and definition; surely it is up to the artists of the body, choreographers and performers, to disrupt and resist closed and narrow definitions of who we are so that we can produce discourses that challenge the normalised and naturalised power relations around issues of race, gender and culture (2012:70).



When examining this from a phenomenological perspective, I am suggesting that choreographic and pedagogic imperatives of key role-players of Contemporary Dance in South Africa, such as Hinkel offer prime points of resistance and rupture to dominant discourse surrounding both masculinity and whiteness. Danie Fourie skilfully problematised masculinity and dance, when he asked, “Just what about the nature of Western male theatrical dance inspires homophobic responses from a host of oppositional forces?” (2011:16). His article sets up heterosexist paradigms for male dancers and rugby players, by bringing into focus the insidious ridicule of male dancers in the art of ballet in South Africa. Fourie’s rebuttal of the careless and damaging inferences of male ballet dancers made by rugby coach in 2009 is apt. One can begin to value Fourie’s argument through some of his many unanswered questions: “What is the purpose of rugby as spectator sport: is it a theatrical presentation? Which physical and mental aspects of the male dancer are admired or ignored? How do we communicate and recognise masculinity? Is there an erotic significance tied up in the concept?” (2011:22).

But, Rugby as homoerotic contact sport and unresolved issue with machismo is not the area under investigation here. The notion of macho dancing and performance of the exotic has been prominently tackled by Tolentino (2009) and performance artist Gomez-Pena (2001), and others and offers oppositional views. Tolentino’s expose on male exotic dancers and shifts in the labour market in the Philippines enunciated new and complex cultural markers. As a feminisation of labour, Tolentino’s new path for the male exotic dancer is a frank critique of neoliberal events. No stranger to controversy, Hinkel<sup>53</sup> is a strong and influential innovator of Contemporary dance works in South Africa. By mid 1970s, inter-racial dance companies were largely unheard of (exceptions would include the original Jazzart Company run by Mayo, and South Africa’s 2<sup>nd</sup> oldest contemporary dance company Moving into Dance Company that initially worked out of its founder, Glasser’s garage in Parktown, Johannesburg).

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<sup>53</sup> Hinkel is artist, social activist and teacher and remains active in the milieu even today. Hinkel is locally well known for engaging in controversial subject matter and/or approaches to choreographic works of which I have first-hand account since 1994. In my opinion, a most recent example of his subversive work would be *Dansmettieduiwels* written in 2012, that tackled the issue of sex scandals within the Catholic church which, could be seen as a taboo subject for some conservative members of Cape Town’s dance audiences. Hinkel trained in classical ballet at UCT Ballet School in 1970s but did not complete this dance education programme switching instead to a study of Drama. After having danced for PACE Dance Company with Sue Parker and in Windhoek, Namibia, he purchased the studio from Parker and forged Jazzart Dance Theatre Company with John Linden, Dawn Langdown, and Pather in Cape Town, South Africa in 1975.

The Dance literature in this chapter thus far has looked at cases when dance itself is being discussed in terms of representation – a sign or symbol for something and/or someone else. In other words, dance viewed as a cultural marker, and tool. I have briefly noted dance's role as an educative instrument. But how does dance change behaviour and influence attitudes towards persons different from ourselves? What are the ways in which dancing bodies can introduce and sustain notions of difference and Othering through this performing art? Previous chapters have reflected on the dancer as exotic creature. From the era of Ruth St Denis's to the showgirls discussed in Andrea Stuart's book *Showgirls* (1996) which I critiqued in my conference paper, *Black bodies matter: with apologies to Beyoncé* (2015), one can follow a fascination with difference and a resultant exoticism. Dance has powerfully conveyed narratives and in South Africa one notices dance's power to convey political narratives. But, one also needs to look at Dance that has power and agency. The next section begins to shift the focus as dancing bodies become more porous signifiers of meaning. This in turn provides a deeper analysis of the transformative power of the arts and performance itself.

## **Contemporary Dance and the field of education**

This next section will provide a concise account of some of the literature surrounding pedagogy in dance in South Africa to argue the subjective role dance education plays in shaping the phenomenon of older dancer. Paulo Freire theories of pedagogy and can be extended here to reflect how South Africa's oppressive education systems infused certain notions of dancing bodies, and what constitutes valuable dance itself, which lays buried in what I argue are factories of power. Freire wrote that "There is no freedom without authority, but there is also no authority without freedom ... Freedom and authority cannot be isolated, but must be considered in relationship to each other" (1996:159).

Following the collapse of colonial and apartheid education systems, new freedoms and a much celebrated cultural revolution attempted to heal the scars of Bantu Education that produced oppressed bodies and minds in South Africa. The difficult questions for many educationists post 1994 included how to merge the various education departments that were set up for each race group, and to develop a curriculum that would express the vision and hopes of a highly segregated population. In terms of dance pedagogy during the apartheid era in South African school environments where one may have encountered dance as a child (or learner as

they are defined nowadays), the brutal reality of the colour of a learner's skin determined what experience of dance was allowed. For example, in the Western Cape Province this meant that in some schools for white and coloured children the form of dance taught was predominately classical ballet, whilst in the former Natal province, in a rural school for Black children, that learner may have exclusively encountered *ndlamu* and *isishaymeni* - traditional Zulu dances. In examining older dancers from South Africa, it is these dancing bodies from the apartheid era that are placed under scrutiny throughout this thesis. They are today amongst that category of dancer that could be defined as the older dancers of South Africa. These are the bodies that in Freirean terms were oppressed and are now dancing in relative freedom in a new South Africa.

One could argue that the purpose of Education is to develop and nurture young, enquiring minds wherever these bodies may find themselves but, in Bourdieu's sense, such bodies are located within a specific culture or worldview. Steven Pinker reminds one that these bodies undergoing such education are not a blank slate and in his book, *The Blank Slate: the modern denial of human nature* (2002), critiques the nature versus nurture debates that shape such bodies. He also refuted an anxiety surrounding the demise of the elite arts. Pinker pointed out those visual systems (like dance) are pre-wired in many regions of the brain and noted that "As the visual system convert raw colors and forms to interpretable objects and scenes, the aesthetic coloring of its products get even richer. Surveys of art, photography, and landscape design, together with experiments on people's visual tastes, have found recurring motifs in the sights that give people pleasure" (2002:405). For Pinker, dance is thus far from dying. Whilst he does posit a more in depth reading of psychology of tastes, he also upholds that reportage on art has superseded the art as subject matter itself. This generates another problematic area for analysis of art as probing aesthetics has the potential to silence the dance itself. For Pinker, "Modernism and post modernism cling to a theory of perception that was rejected long ago: that the sense organs present the brain with a tableau of raw colors and sounds and that everything else in perceptual experience is a learned social construction" (2002:412).

He strongly urges that, "When we perceive the products of other people's behaviour, we evaluate them through our intuitive psychology, our theory of mind" (Pinker, 2002:412). Pinker makes a strong case in art which I borrow for my discussion of dance as a learnt social

construction one that is vulnerable to particular cultural *habitus*. I agree with Pinker that dance educationists could look more closely at psychology to advance not only how tastes become defined but how such traits are passed on to impressionable young dancers that are in training. I am excited by Pinker's foretelling of the use of science when he maintains, "I predict that the application of cognitive science and evolutionary psychology to the arts will become a growth area in criticism and scholarship" (2002, p. 418). He concludes by affirming the profound connections between the arts and the sciences and the psychological complexity of human species, and refers to John Updike in Pinker (2002) who wrote "To be human is to be in the tense condition of a death-foreseeing, consciously libidinous animal. No other earthly creature suffers such a capacity for thought, such a complexity of envisioned but frustrated possibilities, such a troubling ability to question the tribal and biological imperatives" (2002:419).

To understand and respond to the human need to dance, in other words to ask, 'why do we dance?', is vexing question and I would argue 'How do we dance in a traumatised society like South Africa?' is a contradiction in terms. For many Dance is a celebratory activity, but what else or rather what does dance do in particular that sets it apart from other areas of arts education. This puzzlement has prompted many others in South Africa such as Finestone-Praeg, Glasser, Friedman and others to ask 'Whose dance are we teaching?', since the 1990s. Friedman's repeated questioning of contextual directions for Dance pedagogy in 2008, remains.

The teaching of Dance as a subject in schools in South Africa today varies greatly. Friedman has written several papers (1997, 2008, 2009, and 2011) which had provided a contextual and conceptual challenge of the initial inclusion of Dance within the Outcomes Based Education (OBE) systems, and pattern of classical ballet teaching as the vanguard from which all things dance could be taught. Further, she has critiqued the paradigms of dance teacher training programmes arguing in support of Michael Samuel's broad and holistic perspective for teachers that are not servants of policy. Van Papendorp and Friedman had both worked tirelessly to advance modern and creative dance as counter discourse to the over 50-year legacy that was classical ballet in schools of the Western Cape region. They write, "Creative Dance is based on principles of human movement which are essentially universal. Creative Dance is not limited to any particular style, period, vocabulary, historical or social context, nor

is it a prescribed set of steps or a language. Creative Dance celebrates the uniqueness of the individual while affirming the commonality of the human and natural elements inherent in each of us” (Van Papendorp & Friedman, 1997:122).

In spite of such an open ended syllabus, schools in South Africa nevertheless operate within prescribed notions of Dance. It could be argued that tertiary institutions such as universities and colleges as centres of Dance learning have an even greater level of freedom in their selection and design of curriculum, which tends to outstrip the policy driven school environments. However, some may observe that even such academic freedom is also curbed. Thus, in the example of the University of Cape Town’s School of Dance, that was formerly the UCT Ballet School; the curriculum for the study of ballet followed a conservatoire or performing arts academy model since its inception in the early 1930s. This remained largely unchanged until the late 1980s when this became challenged by the impending collapse of apartheid. By the 1990s one sees the UCT Ballet School began to reposition itself as a Dance department widening its scope of learning to dance disciplines like Contemporary Dance and African Dance. In 1998, the department was renamed as the UCT School of Dance and engaged with more distinct ‘dance as research’ activities and was even more aligned within a Faculty of Humanities. At this stage it gained recognition of its Bachelor of Music (Dance) degree, and its Post graduate offerings at the Honours and Masters levels. The trickle-down effect of these changes finds its presence in the details of re-curriculation which has led to a greater emphasis overall in the academic intent of their programmes. Thus, an earlier reverence to British ballet repertoire (conservation mode) on the one hand, has given way to theorising of dance praxis, choreographic studies, and eating disorders in the context of dance research (critical/exploration mode), on the other.

The pre-eminent author in this specific field of Dance, Julia Buckroyd, was also a keynote speaker at UCT’s *Confluences 7*, wrote,

The child and the adolescent is very dependent on her body self for her sense of self, but I have also argued that the body self is a capable active self whose accomplishments can give pleasure and satisfaction and a sense of value. The young woman who has little sense of herself as capable and valuable is vulnerable to a value system imposed from the outside (2000:168).

University curricula are thus challenged by such notions of value systems which make the study of Dance all the more complex. In her seminal book, *The Student Dancer: emotional aspects of teaching and learning dance* (2000), Buckroyd said

Although I have argued earlier in this book that to require students to be thin to the point that their welfare is put at risk is unethical, it is certain that many dance schools comply with the perceived demand of current aesthetic and technical fashions and put very great pressure on students to be thin (2000:169).

It becomes important therefore not only to consider how value systems are imposed, but how they are entrenched. For example, through the pressure and implicit curriculum that comes to bear on students. In my 2011 conference paper for *Confluences 6 – Dance, Physicality and Performance* in Cape Town, I discussed a recent dance work, *Wake Up Everybody/ The Teachers' Dance*, choreographed by Ina Wichterich-Mogane that was performed at the Artscape theatre (the mainstream concert theatre arts complex in Cape Town). This clarion formed part of a showcase of a variety of dance works performed by mostly High school learners drawn from schools of the Western Cape's Education Department (predominately in and around Cape Town) where Dance Studies is offered as a focussed /learning area of the WCED' curriculum (colloquially, these spaces are termed 'Focus schools' [for the Arts]) . Wichterich-Mogane's short dance work<sup>54</sup> drew on more than twenty participating Dance teachers (2 men and the rest women) from these schools. This tongue-in-cheek dance work reminded its audiences, comprising mostly parents and friends of the dance learners, of the dual roles that many of their teachers can play. In this context, their educators were seen as performers of Dance and not just teachers of Dance, thereby unsettling the myth that teachers of Dance do not perform. The overwhelming majority of these teachers were 30 years old and older. So, what are the values incorporated into a Dance curriculum? For Stinson

Many students come to identify values related to both individualism and community. Dance can be a way to teach students to recognize and value individual differences and to recognize their connectedness with others. My job as teacher, of course, is not to impose my values but to push them to consider more difficult issues (1999:186).

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<sup>54</sup> As choreographer, Wichterich-Mogane who had worked with legendary German choreographer Pina Bausch, utilised the choreographic tool of movement developed from gestural language she parodied dance teachers daily professional lives/ life at school. For most of the dance, the 'teacher- performers' remained seated in their chairs that were placed in a long straight line across the front of the stage. Although many danced mostly seated, some virtuosic elements in the full performance space were evident. The dance spewed witty and provocative movement language that questioned the categorisation of ideal dancing bodies.

How to challenge the explicit and implicit curriculum? What are some of the ways in which dance education is liberating or constraining notions of the older body? These are just some of the issues with which this thesis will grapple. Of paramount interest for me, is the question, where is the body addressed in the South African education's syllabus at the school level? In South Africa like many other post-colonial countries Sports education is funded twice as much as Arts education. There are numerous sports academies and training camps dotted around the country and one could argue an aesthetic of sport exists that is preoccupied with body - its super-efficiency, and therefore it's potential for decline and dis-ease. But, one could also suggest that notions of body image begin in Life Orientation classes. This is a new learning area in the national curriculum for primary schools and is compulsory subject up to Grade 12 at High school levels. A brief overview of this subject reveals a curriculum that is locked into a study of the body in terms of biological wellness.

In this respect, one can observe that Dance is located in several spaces in Education. Whilst it is promoted as definitive marker in Cultural Studies and discussed via Music it is also treated as lesser art. This is made more invidious when South African Music<sup>55</sup> is lauded internationally and Dancing positioned as semi-skilled. For racialised and gendered dancing bodies the struggle to be visible saw entry in the Education sector. But, this too can be problematic. Whilst the curriculum may be attempting to find a balance for the body between the health and biology, it may be lacking in its acknowledgment of the social self where notions of wellness including healthy ageing, and older dancing bodies could be explored. In the next chapter, I examine new theories of the Body to see how these are becoming erasure routes to alterity located in Dance.

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<sup>55</sup> Funding for Music in South Africa through the National Arts Council far outstrips that of Dance, Klotz claimed orchestras receive funding through ring fenced budgets (Klotz, personal communication 2014, July 7).

## CHAPTER FOUR: ERASURE ROUTES TO ALTERITY

In the previous chapter I attempted to chart the literature surrounding Contemporary Dance and concurred with various authors that understandings of this genre could be found in Cultural and Performance Studies and the new directions within Body theories. In this chapter, I will examine particular philosophies of the Body to suggest how bodies have come to be marked as mere vessels, and the implicit perception of the body as incapable of producing knowledge in and of itself. I introduce a discussion of the dancing body, which is at the core of my investigation, and suggest that the body in fact offers a pathway to understanding difference which poses new problems in the discourse of Othering in South Africa. In Section One of this chapter, I begin by asking the following question: If thinking and feeling is present in a body, how has the inter-relationship between Body and Mind become separated? I trace the object-subject dialectic for the Body that has its roots in *philosophic* enquiry. I tested the dualism that is at play for the dancer's bodies – one that sadly positions dancers as non-thinking (a term that I will clarify below). Section Two unpacks this notion through an argument as to how bodies have been marked as signifiers, tools and constricted by colonial and other forces. These, I argue, are *socio-cultural* forces that create both constricting and enabling parameters of the notion self and other which I maintain is compounded in the context of apartheid. My contention that difference or alterity is found in a range of constructs for the body which include male and female, black and white, disabled and non-disabled,<sup>56</sup> victims and tyrants, youth and age is explored, and is mindful that such divisions are not exhaustive. The interrogation of these notions, deepens my search around the Othered body as subject. In Section Three, I examine the ideals and stereotypes for dancing bodies that mould the Other. Whilst dancing bodies may be situated within a lofty hierarchy of athleticism expressed in a range of performance forms and styles, these expressions are nevertheless placed within categories of *Body Theory* such as object, cheap unit of labour, ethereal and vacuous. Contemporary Dance was investigated for responsiveness to socio-political contexts, cultural values and body ideals. This range of reply is the focus of the analysis in Section Three. Furthermore, this chapter suggests that the field of *Phenomenology* can offer a temporary

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<sup>56</sup> I use the term non-disabled to intentionally signal and contest the hegemony surrounding ablest bodies in an attempt to resist this power through language.



lens through which to analyse older dancing that is emerging in South Africa. This new lens formed a basis for the design of the methodology which is outlined in the next chapter.

Following my review of current literature and theoretical framings of a Philosophical, Socio-cultural, Body Theory and Phenomenology, the critical questions of this study therefore have evolved to become:

What are the current hegemonic versions of power and aesthetics in Contemporary Dance?

How is the Othered body formed and sustained in terms of Contemporary Dance?

How do Othered dancing bodies exercise their agency?

Why does Older Dancing illuminate conceptions of body?

## **Theoretical underpinnings**

### *The object-subject dialect: a philosophical lens*

For over 300 years, the French mathematician and philosopher, René Descartes theories have dominated Western philosophy. Descartes had separated matter/body from mind arguing his *cogito ergo sum* (I think therefore I am) theory which linked the mind to a space of thoughts, rational thinking and producer of knowledge. Through 17<sup>th</sup> century theory of Cartesian<sup>57</sup> dualism, the body in itself becomes dismissed as a non-thinking space, incapable of producing knowledge. What is to be the fate of dance in such a view? How does the notion of body as object differ from body as subject when either is being discussed and written about through dance?

Elizabeth Grosz suggests that the history of the body in modern philosophy from its very inception in ancient Greece is established “on the foundations of a profound somatophobia” (2005:47). Grosz suggests that through a critique of the heirs of Cartesianism we can know more about, and from, bodies and writes, “There are at least three lines of investigation of the body in contemporary thought which may be regarded as the heirs of Cartesianism” (2005:49). She discussed these lines of investigation as three key points. The first is the *body as object* for natural sciences: exploring the medicalised and biologicistic view in which man is

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<sup>57</sup> For a more complex reading of Cartesian dualism and how this relates to mapping the body see also Tuffnell, M. & Crickmay, C. ( 1990 ), Grosz, E. (2005), Stilwell, R. (2014), and Kristeva, J. ( 1982) amongst others.

positioned as a more complex creature than animal. This is a view of psychology, where emotions, behaviours, attitudes and affect that stem from the body, and, ethnography, with its cultural frames for a body that can be closely examined. The second examines the *body as metaphor* for example; instrument, tool, machine or vessel. This notion aligns the body as thing and possession which becomes problematic in the face of feminist theory around bodies. Thirdly, Grosz suggests a line of investigation of the *body as signifying medium*. The body in this latter investigation is positioned as a two-way conduit. What is problematic for me in this latter role, is the assumed passivity of the body. How can we arrive at a reconciled and integrated body – the body (corporeal), mind (intellectual) and the soul (spiritual)? The answers may lie in examining the relationships between these key elements of selfhood. In the first path, Cartesian dualism has argued for a separation of substances. In the second path, the body is placed at the service of the mind and soul: as medium, vessel, and conduit. And, in a third path, the body, mind and soul are integrated: a holistic view.

It is important to reflect on prevailing concepts of body: the body as medium suggests in what way it conveys notions of corporeal identity, intellectual identities, and can celebrate a journey towards a spiritual plane. In this sense, it provides a dialogue between competing notions of being human, i.e. to be a corporeal, rationale, spiritual being. The accompanying ethical issue arises for this association when the body as medium can stand for something else. It may represent a new identity or character – the body becomes a signifier. Who is responsible for the ethics and consequences of the message? The body as the means through which stories are told therefore needs to be re-examined for its power – facilitatory roles that give rise to sources of knowledge and truth. However, distortion on the part of the messenger can serve to confirm the body's position as a highly subjective and unreliable aspect of the self. What Grosz nevertheless explicates, is the subjective nature of bodies as valuable and deserving of affirmation. For me, the body is not only reliable, but becomes heightened in the particularly visible space and act of performance when it re-engages with memory and history under contemporary conditions. The multiple cultural identities for a body are moreover not rendered mute when difference is defined as skin colour and texture of hair but offer a point of rupture and erasure of alterity.

Grosz notes the problematic notion of a neutral body object as if the body can be devoid of its specificity. The concept of body as object is contained in the reductionism of mind-body

splits that have operated since the 17<sup>th</sup> century. She strongly rebuked such thinking when she wrote that:

the body must be seen as an unresistant pliability which minimally distorts information, or at least distorts it in a systematic and comprehensible fashion, so that its effects can be taken into account and information can be correctly retrieved. Its corporeality must be reduced to a predictable, knowable transparency; its constitutive role in forming thoughts, feelings, emotions, and psychic representations must be ignored, as must its roles as threshold between the social and natural (2005:50).

Grosz further argued that Descartes' Cartesian dualism – a separation of the body and the mind, dichotomised the body's link to spirit/soul. She wrote:

What Descartes accomplished was not really the separation of the mind from body (a separation which had already been long anticipated in Greek philosophy since the time of Plato) but the separation of soul from nature. Descartes distinguished two kinds of substances (*res cogitans*, mind) from an extended substance (*res extensa*, body); only the latter, he believed could be considered part of nature, governed by its physical laws and ontological exigencies (2005:48).

This positioning of soul which does not form part of nature allows for the advancement and validation of the Sciences and its body of knowledge, which was perpetuated by colonial powers. Colonialism in South Africa, especially the Dutch and British edition, brought with it Christianity and strong Catholic,<sup>58</sup> Protestant and Calvinist traditions which separated the body (evil), from the soul (pure). Therefore, a denial of the body promoted by Calvinistic Christianity in places such as South Africa saw the body subjected to labour in order to reach greater purity. In these scenarios, much of African indigenous ways of being and knowledge<sup>59</sup> have been oppressed and many, lost. Through a claim that knowledge production can only originate in the mind and thus the Sciences, it is possible to begin to trace the distrust of knowledge that emanates from nature or the body, and bodies that are dancing today.

Echoing the Cartesian body-mind duality, Robynn Stilwell compounds these issues by remembering the privileged space of the mind inhabited by Music as opposed to the phobic

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<sup>58</sup> There are alternative reading of Christian theology which argued for a holism: such as Franciscan philosophy which was perceived as radical by the Catholic Church in 12<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>59</sup> For example, orality as methodology of sharing cultural knowledge was treated with suspicion and derision by many colonial forces. In pre-colonial times, the holism of body, mind and spirit was perhaps more integrated. The reassertion of the body as medium, vessel and conduit may be used to re-interpret the non-subjugated African being: to return to a fuller, more integrated understanding of selfhood and of society, of the relationship between the material, the intellectual and the spiritual. However, care needs to be taken not to romanticise pre-colonial Africa which in fact entrenched patriarchal systems and forms of subjugation.

space for the body and hence, Dance. Stilwell writes “Western Musical philosophy since the Enlightenment has often been premised upon music’s ineffability and sublimity, its seeming ability to appeal directly to the mind; the ‘vulgar’ traces of the body were almost always denied or ignored” (2014: 468). Stilwell’s views were initially explored by Julia Kristeva’s<sup>60</sup> (1982) seminal enquiry that had clarified notions of Othered bodies. Chris Gilleard and Paul Higgs wrote:

Kristeva, a philosopher and psychoanalyst, shifted the use of the term [abjection] from a description of the conditions of the underclass within pre-war society – “the miserable dregs” – to a more culturally framed concern over gender, bodies and the unstable relationships between self and other. She treated abjection not as the bi-product of class oppression but as a necessary part of the human condition, part of a universal dialectic between defilement and purification - what she calls ‘the primers of my culture’ (Kristeva in 1982:2). Key to the shame associated with abjection is the individual failure to manage one’s own corporeal boundaries and the resulting failure to sustain the distinction between oneself as subject and oneself as object (2011:136).

Kristeva challenges the revulsion to that which is from and of the bordered body, inviting a re-consideration of the abject. I began to review the notion that dance can be seen as an act of transgression from the body and the impact of such re-presented bodies. The analysis of Kristeva by Gilleard and Higgs (2011) raised another question – that of victimhood experienced by some bodies. This became important as discrimination, oppression and trauma are recurring (sometimes covert) themes in many South African dance works. I contend that the body as object and subject is located as a means to read, interpret and provide commentary on the multiple facets of being: corporeal, intellectual and spiritual. It is a medium through which to communicate thoughts, emotions, and soulful awareness and has a potential for erasure. The dancing Body becomes a means to re-read our colonised and imposed selfhoods and re-construct a fragmented sense of being. The idea that bodies are acted upon suggested that they may have agency in the socio-cultural sphere. This latter issue is discussed hereafter.

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<sup>60</sup> Insight into a complex terrain from which to grasp this instability was provided by Kristeva’s work *Powers of Horror: an essay on abjection* (1982). She wrote “One thus understands why so many victims of the abject are its fascinated victims – if not its submissive and willing ones” (1982:9)

### *Marked and othered bodies: a socio-cultural lens*

The notion that the Body can be objectified has already been refuted by many scholars including Jill Green (2007), Don Johnson and Elizabeth Behnke (Behnke, 1995). They instead argue for the body to be understood as culturally inscribed. In 2011, I began to explore perspectives of such cultural inscription to examine in what way constructs such as age may nudge older dancers to peripheries (Samuel G.M., 2011b). This amplified my search around the Othered body as subject rather than object as can be evidenced in my work in the late 1990s with children and in particular, integrated dance and disability arts. How is the body acted upon, marked, formed and sustained in terms of representation in dance? In a hostile context such as South Africa with its history of apartheid, understanding of in what manner marginality operates for particular bodies when there is a simultaneous gravitation towards social cohesion, became a key aspect of my deepening enquiry in the 2000s. The inner life and experiences of the dancer and what may lie in the in-between spaces of dancers' notion of self and Other, become vital to understand. Likewise, it became important to distinguish between power which is *imposed* as opposed to *produced* by some bodies as Others. Bodies are constructed through cultural, aesthetic and socio-historical inscriptions which signify certain bodies as normative and others as marginalised. A closer examination of the bodies performing these debates of power and agency was needed.

The Body/Mind dualism that began in the West in the 17<sup>th</sup> century permeated African cultures and thinking especially (though not exclusively) during the colonial era and should not be underestimated for its long term impact. Stereotypical images of virile and muscular black men and voluptuous black women have provided ample fodder for Contemporary Dance choreographers who wish to resist such notions of black bodies as sexualised and exotic objects. African bodies became trapped in hetero-normative hegemonies via systemic positioning that arose not only via colonial systems but patriarchy within Africa itself. Othered bodies were treated as silent – unthinking and unfeeling machines. The resultant touristic gaze directed towards these objects as spectacle conveyed through dance, has been critiqued by Friedman (2012), and Castelyn (2013) amongst others. Their writing extended the concept that “The body is a thinking, feeling, acting, expressive whole” (Fraleigh, 1987:59) as was argued earlier by Sheets-Johnstone (1981). Such treatment and categorisation has permitted a privileged space for males, whites and heterosexuals to take root. In my view, it is within

such licensed perceptions that pernicious claims for example; black bodies have more natural rhythm, can begin to be traced. I concur with Rosemarie Roberts (2013) that understanding the hyper-visibility of race in the construction of certain bodies is paramount. Roberts had asserted that “This issue is surmounted by the ways in which the hyper visible Black and Brown body has been readily constructed as a site of social problems, risk, contagion, dysfunction and pathology” (2013:7). This contention is rendered all the more powerful in the context of South Africa where such bodies were dehumanised through the oppressive apartheid system. Signage such as No Blacks and Dogs Allowed posted in public spaces had a stupefying consequence which is well documented (Rive, 1981; Kearney, 2012). I too, was personally subjected to these insulting and psychologically damaging signs which were the outward manifestation of the prevailing laws. This had a profound and lasting effect on all bodies – those defined as non-white: black, coloured, Indian, and white. The Other became determined in relation to the normative space of whiteness. The highly offensive implication that these Othered bodies were no better than animal, may explain why campaigns such as Save the Rhino<sup>61</sup> produce conflicting responses. Dehumanising signs remind these Othered bodies of the territory that is marked out for their community as a result of their defined socio-cultural difference.

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<sup>61</sup> Rhinoceros poaching is widespread in many game parks in South Africa and environmentalists are determined to see poachers arrested and justice served. Ironically, many communities, some living inside such game parks, have dire needs but their social welfare has not seen a similar scale in an outcry for justice by the public.



**Illustration 5: *Secret Journey from Suite Sting*. The Playhouse Company. Durban. 1994.** North Beach was a racially divided space during Apartheid. The photograph on right taken in April 1994, two months after the first democratic election in South Africa, reveals a bitter-sweet moment for The Playhouse Dance Company's multi-racial dancers: Gerard Samuel (foreground) , Joseph Clark (background) and choreographer Boyzie Cekwana (the first black dancer to join this groundbreaking company). The photograph on left is Mark Hawkins who later became the Artistic Director (1993–1998), and Selva Hannam, Brazilian-UK dancer.

But, what does territory and community mean in a new South Africa that has been terrorised and scarred by apartheid and colonialism. In Bharucha's latest book, *Terror and Performance* (2014) as well as in his earlier works, he offered a compelling critique of performance that reminded me of the vigilance required when examining relationships between author, text and the audience. I extend his ideas to interrogate relationships of power and agency that may be at play in older dancing. Many layered and complex relationships exist between dancers, choreographers, audiences, and funders (all of whom are involved in older dancing), that either enable or constrict older dancing as a style. Understanding the various stages of life and the manner in which these stages intersect with notions of dancing itself, became a necessary next step.

The field of Gerontology is littered with writing about interventions and therapies for those in advanced life stages. Works such as those of Lionel Corbett (2013), Celia Bevan and Baseer Jeewoody (1998) that emanate from Australia, typify the premise that to be old is to be marked as an Othered body – one that warrants remedying. Whilst it is necessary for health practitioners at times to provide care for older persons, the demarcating of the aged as a

deviant from the norm requires further challenging. The processes through which older bodies become marked as fragile and dependent can be found in Kristeva's line of argument of the masculine subject and feminine object. According to Kristeva, older persons euphemistically labelled variously as senior citizens, old age pensioners and retired, become nevertheless the outsiders within many societies especially those deemed developed. But, what are the issues for these victims of Othering? How has the Other been submissive or consenting towards the tyrant given Kristeva's claim of the "*jouissive* dialect with tyrant?" (Kristeva & Lotringer, 1999:27) By calling for an opposition to and erasure of Othering, it may be possible to trace what constitutes the power of older dancing.

According to John Blacking (1983), much can be learnt from movement and its meaning when the body is viewed from a social anthropological perspective. Thus, Dance as meaning-filled movement from the body, should include Othered bodies. Older dancing bodies can therefore be seen to create meaning and act as a valuable space from which to obtain insight, perspective and knowledge. Chapter Two and Chapter Three of this thesis has contextualised sites for knowledge production arguing that socio-historic location and seats of power have a role to play in cultural formation<sup>62</sup> and that culture itself is vulnerable to prevailing tastes and aesthetics operating within shifting cultural zones of time and space. Notions of knowledge production itself, which are strongly influenced by the forces of established institutional systems such as education, colonialism, and even the social media becomes questioned. It is useful, therefore, to focus on transgression and new knowledge made possible via bodies, and through dance. Dance presents a particular lens through which to view performative acts of the self and the Other. In dance it is possible to begin to read the messages that seep through marked and Othered bodies such as older dancing bodies as noted above.

### *Dancing bodies: A body theory lens*

The narratives of dancing bodies are located in social, political and cultural contexts that are themselves rapidly changing and responding especially to technological advancements in the

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<sup>62</sup> Judith Butler has written widely on the notion of a liminal space for the formation of the subject itself (1997). She suggested that "We understand power as *forming* the subject as well, it provides the very condition of its existence and the trajectory of its desire, then power is not simply what we oppose but also, in a strong sense, what we depend on for our existence and what we harbour and preserve in the beings that we are" (1997:2).



21<sup>st</sup> century. From Mumbai to Hollywood dancing bodies have become fetishised and ghettoised. With advancement in plastic surgery and myriad diets, the pummelling of the body can be observed. Is this maybe a return to the earlier Cartesian dualism as if bodies are silent sculptures that can be acted upon by a scalpel and/or starvation induced by fickle societal norms? The body becomes thus, performed or re-enacted. For me, the question that arises is in what way the body enacts age as a process that makes visible thinking and feeling that is in and of the body? Studies of the body, especially in the Health Sciences, frequently position the object-body above the subject-body. These divided sites present challenges for those dance scholars desirous of integrating body knowledge (Green & Sullivan, 2009). In a world where cloned bodies and Dolly the sheep already exist, definitions for a variety of bodies have been challenged. This next section builds upon arguments for bodies that should be celebrated made by Loots (2010), and Pather (2009) and their claim that South African bodies may be read as history and archive repositioning their value as a “bottomless cabinet of memory” (Pather in Smart, 2009:1). Loots maintained that “Dancers bodies are used as a means of expression; perhaps we could say the dancer ‘speaks’. Dancers’ bodies are used as vehicles through which motion and dance languages are accessed by the choreographer to communicate and articulate meaning to an audience” (2010:107).

Merleau-Ponty problematised the notion of body as *object* and *subject* and had claimed that what and how we see is in itself relative. He also maintained that, “It [the body] is neither tangible nor visible insofar as it is that which sees and touches. The body therefore is not one more among external objects, with the peculiarity of always being there” (Merleau-Ponty, 2002:105). Loots takes this notion a step further inferring that Merleau-Ponty’s embodied “I” suggests that language from the body is constructed and is a site of meaning and power. I concur with her feminist argument of the body’s non-neutral status as demonstrated in *Bloodlines* (2009), in which she challenged contemporary history and acts of remembering and memory. Loots references Bill T. Jones’s *Still/Here* where the fit and healthy bodies of dancers are able to engage in “alternate discourses to illness and dying” (Loots, 2010:112). Thus, an understanding of diverse dancing bodies not only for the choreographic project but within the human condition itself may be gleaned.

The field of Psychology has been criticised for its divisive role in an engagement with human beings via its perpetuation of Body-Mind splits or re-enforcements of Cartesian dualities.

Thomas Lewis, Fari Amini and Richard Lannon in their *A General Theory of Love* had written, “When a person starts therapy, he isn’t a pale conversation; he is stepping into a somatic state of relatedness” (2000:168). What is the relatedness of age to the dancing body when that body has been defined as old? Justine Coupland, suggests that ageist assumptions surrounding Dance makes some bodies (un)watchable (2013). Coupland claimed, “It proves to be the case that, while dance as a practice for older women remains fitfully tainted by culturally dominant ageist assumptions about the body and ageing, it also opens up far more emancipating ideologies” (2013:3). I wanted to investigate in what way some dancing bodies become less confident given current patterns of privilege and prejudice. Peter Lovatt’s (2011) study in the UK analysed 13 700 persons who watched a video and then completed an online survey so that he might learn more about how dance confidence varies with respect to gender and age groups. His study of the connections between social dance and self-esteem reinforces a sense that older dancing is limited to recreational activity which I find problematic. An interest to engage in dance with older persons has blossomed in the USA and UK since the 1970s, however it is coloured by what I maintain is a therapeutic and/or recreational lens. For example, recent writing in the *Journal of Aging Research* by A.B. Evans and M. Sleaf offers an account of perceptions of aquatic physical activity for older adults in the UK (2012). Diane Amans (2013) discussed older people engaging in community dance practice in the UK, and Victoria Watts (2013) reported on the Royal Academy of Dance project – *Dance for Lifelong Wellbeing in the UK*. These views are insightful as they clarify a gap in the Dance literature and the preponderance of critique of concert theatre dance. Nevertheless, they are mostly undertaken in UK contexts and this cultural specificity should not be ignored. In a sharply contrasted country like South Africa with its polarised, and, some may claim, traumatised communities, older persons have continued to dance. This act constitutes part of the fabric of South African poly-cultural expressions. For example, certain traditional Zulu dances continue to be performed by elders in that community, in Indian dance one could find older teachers who continue to perform at family celebrations, and in Ballroom dance which continues to be practised in some coloured communities of the Western Cape, older dancing couples could even be considered a norm. Very little scholarly writing exists from this perspective.

Most of the examples above are situated outside the framework that may be considered concert theatre dance. Susan Foster had raised similar concerns in, *Dancing Bodies* when she

investigated two key areas: training processes i.e. from student dancer to performer, and the complex relationships between such training and new directions that were developing around the whole notion of the choreographic project (2010). Her writing is echoed by Eliza Steinbock and Maaïke Bleeker in the USA who described the 1980s as a period in which “the grotesque, abject, material, leaky, visceral, performative and signifying body was popular” (2008:2). Foster’s earlier writing in the 1980s was careful to problematise an American milieu. Interestingly, her positionality in relation to racialised bodies was less obvious. Loots provided tools for understanding dance situated in Africa and in the south. I concurred with Loots who supports Merleau-Ponty’s (1962) views “that the body is our prime way of being in the world and thus our best reference for understanding it” (2010:122). The South African dancing body can thus be framed within non-verbal communication which is culturally bound but can speak out about its past. Jill Green (2007) suggested that more attention needs to be paid to listening to the Body made possible via an inclusion of Somatic study within institutions and the academy. These new bodily narratives will be shaped by the dancers’ cultural paradigms claim Johnson and Behnke (1995). And, I would add, that by understanding the choreographer’s intentions, spectator’s wants and critic’s preferences, all of which are all highly subjective, personal and political articulations of bodies affords a new mapping of memory.

Sheets-Johnstone’s notions of conditions that are ripe for articulation in terms of movement is for me a fitting term for the transformation period in South African dance. Rothfield writes:

Sheets-Johnstone’s experience of movement as a revelation of force was embedded within a particular kinaesthetic context. This is not a deficiency but rather an indication of the corporeal means by which dance is known. In other words, experience is not a pure zone whose analysis can reveal a set of structures whose totality expresses the phenomenological essence of dance. But it is an important aspect of the practice of dancing and its perception. The experiential aspect of dance, which we might call its perception, is an embodied corporeal act, one which is embedded in the conditions of articulation (1998:310).

Lisa Blackman’s suggestion that the capacity of the body to affect and be affected is a key concept which may be more widely interpreted. She questions superficial reading of the multiple identities for Body noting that “Perhaps rather than thinking about the subject as multiple we also need to think about how singularity is lived in the face of multiplicity” (2008: 138). Blackman’s commentary on the disciplined and docile body, as first suggested by Michel

Foucault,<sup>63</sup> draws attention to the body in process. Foucault's critique of bodies under strict surveillance and the ensuing discourses of power are highly relevant for the world that is dance as bodies can become docile through devices like mirrors in dance studios. However, Foucault also maintained that

We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it 'excludes', it 'represses', it 'censors', it 'abstracts', it 'masks', it 'conceals'. In fact power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production (1991:194).

Foucault's disciplinary knowledge suggests a far more open landscape from which multiple understandings of agency for the body and thus for dance can be understood. He problematised the concepts of normalcy and deviancy which may then be applied to the institutionalised contexts of the mainstream concert theatre Dance. In appropriating Foucault's genealogy as he investigated beyond linguistics to the nature of society and the very nature of man, Heather Ritenburg (2010) successfully explores social construction and the ideal body. She specifically asked how certain ballet dancing bodies become framed within the hegemony of George Balanchine's ballerinas. Ritenburg explained the dynamic and power relationships in normalising and naturalising dominant discourses for ballet bodies and claimed that "Ballet studios and programs, for example, take up the dominant discourse of ideal female ballet dancer's body in their need and desire to produce 'dancers'" (2010:73). Her study of photographs of principal dancers of Balanchine's New York City Ballet dancers and children's books about ballet in the USA, revealed that to be in the hallowed space and identified as a ballet dancer, was to succumb to well-defined body markers. She wrote:

A visual comparison of the six Balanchine ballerinas in the six photographs speaks the following: dancers are White and they are young; they are very thin with small breasts and narrow hips; their legs are long and lean; their arms are long and slender; their torsos are short with a flat stomach and abdomen; their heads are small atop a long slender neck (2010:75).

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<sup>63</sup> Foucault's fascination with madness, drug addiction, perversion and his own homosexuality point towards a deepening enquiry of relationships of power and knowledge and those on the margins of society. His interest in the 18<sup>th</sup> century social systems such as prisons and schools and how these spaces were able to maintain discipline through surveillance can be borrowed to explain many South African lives that also became self-regulating under apartheid rule.

Whilst Ritenburg argues the prevailing discourses, she also acknowledged Foucault's caution of power and resistance that are in dialogue. Foucault maintained:

Discourses are not once and for all subservient to power or raised up against it ... We must make allowances for the complex and unstable process whereby a discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy. Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart (1998:100-101).

By extending Foucault I recognise that philosophic, socio-cultural and discourses of Body renders the twelve voices discussed in the next chapter as complex, fragile and having agency. These voices grapple with the issues of alterity, power, docility, embodiment that have been raised in this chapter and how these can be linked to age. Ritenburg asked important questions as to the extent to which counter-discourses of ideal dancing bodies has the effect of re-enforcing the norm. I agreed with her reflection that self-discipline and self-surveillance can shift the burden of responsibility when she maintained that:

By engaging the medical discourse of dancers needing to improve their self image, to feed their bodies nutritiously, and to attend counselling to avoid disordered eating, the knowledge, that is, the truth of the ideal body remains the same but the surveillance is shifted to a new authority – that of the individual dancer, and in this case, of children themselves. It in effect shifts the burden of responsibility to understand, to cope with, and to resist the strength of the discourse away from the many social contexts in which it is produced and reproduced, and situates it in the single, psychological context of the dancing child (2010: 81).

The array of experiences from numerous social frameworks that surround dance is the focus of the last section of this chapter which has suggested a phenomenologic approach which may offer new and in depth understandings of dancing the Other in South Africa.

### *Phenomenology and the dancing Body*

The idea of body as a bundle of nerve endings and amassed sinews can potentially reduce it to a highly sophisticated transmitter of information or muscle-truck that carries codes from the brain to the feet. I suggest a new working definition for the body – that of library source of knowledge and site of becoming knowledgeable, and thus welcomed fellow dance scholar, Fraleigh's argument of the body's interior experience that is continuous with its exterior self. In her seminal work written in 1987, Fraleigh noted "the former is not a cause, and the latter the display of a cause" (1987:59). Through embodied or lived experience and body

intelligence<sup>64</sup> that is deeply connected to a sentient self, the 17<sup>th</sup> century Cartesian body and mind separation can be freed. I claim that the indivisible entity of a dancing body is profoundly aware and expressive of the multiple paradigms of the human experience and I wanted to know more about knowledge derived from older dancing.

One of the earliest examinations of dance by adults that I traced was first shared by Shorr in Cape Town where I teach. She described Liz Lerman's dancers in Washington in her conference paper entitled *Dancers of the third age* which was delivered at *Confluences 2* in South Africa in 1999. Shorr discussed some of the many beneficial aspects of dancing by older persons referencing the experiences of Lerman's dancers. She elaborated Abraham Maslow's theories of need and the human desire for self-actualisation in particular, as well as psychologist Carl Jung's appeal for a greater engagement with age and death. According to Shorr, "Carl Jung said that we need to create new schools for older learners where students can delve into spiritual issues, studies of death and dying, and promote self-discovery through literature, art and music. Everyone has reasons to dance" (1999:173). Most of the literature on the specific topic of older dancing that I was able to locate, stemmed from the USA and UK and has been published since the mid 1990s. The more recent shift to accounts of the abilities of older dancers and affirmations of their practices was found in sources including Sara Houston (2005), Jillian Harris (2013), and Marilyn Strawbridge (2011). The latter viewpoint was located in an article in the *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation and Dance* entitled "Just because you are older doesn't mean you have to give up sport" (Strawbridge, 2011:8).

How can phenomenology as a methodology assist in explaining a concert theatre form such as Contemporary Dance, one that may be morphing an acceptability of older dancing? Merleau-Ponty's abstract idea of the self and Other that is both in and of the world, (which arose from Edmund Husserl), may be further extended here in seeking further understanding of the experiential encounter with older dancing bodies and, what I suggest, may be their inter-subjective space. As youth filled dance clings to the subject space, how to describe the experience of older dancing that seems to stand on the margins? Merleau-Ponty maintained:

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<sup>64</sup> Howard Gardner (2011) had already argued for recognition of movement or bodily- kinaesthetic intelligences in 1983 which can be extended to this theorisation of older dancing as an additional avenue of intellectual engagement with potential to offer meaning.

[Phenomenology] is the search for a philosophy which shall be a 'rigorous science', but it also offers an account of space, time and the world as we 'live' them. It is a direct description of our experience as it is, without taking account of its psychological origin and the causal explanations which the scientist, the historian or the sociologist may be able to provide (2002:vii).

Broader psychological questions arose out of my curiosity about attitudes and behaviour of certain audiences towards dancers perceived of as Other. These questions shifted into the realm of philosophies of these bodies. Thus, to ask what is happening when someone giggles (as described in Chapter One) is to grapple with an essence of Merleau-Ponty's notion of direct experience. Such a search for a return to the naming of essences was espoused by Husserl in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and continued with Martin Heidegger and still later Merleau-Ponty whose quest to understand human behaviour led him to ask profound questions about how we see and the nature of perception itself. Merleau-Ponty placed the experiences of and from the body at the centre of his enquiry. In discussing the relation of the body and object he wrote:

Now the permanence of my own body is entirely different in kind: it is not at the extremity of some indefinite exploration; it defies exploration and is always presented to me from the same angle. Its permanence is not permanence in the world, but permanence on my part. To say that it is always near me, always there for me, is to say that it is never really in front of me, that I cannot array it before my eyes, that it remains marginal to all my perceptions, that is *with* me (2002:103:104).

This line of thinking piqued my interest as it seemed to provide a space from which to understand the lived experiences of older dancing bodies in South Africa, a place that had negotiated body object-subject dichotomies. The multiple ways of seeing like post-impressionist artist Cezanne, offer a repainting of a consciousness into a presence which I want to test for its usefulness. Merleau-Ponty concluded:

Thus the permanence of one's own body, if only classical psychology had analysed it, might have led it to the body no longer conceived as an object of the world, but as our means of communication with it, to the world no longer conceived as a collection of determinate objects, but as the horizon latent in all our experience and itself ever-present and anterior to every determining thought (2002:106).

The idea that bodies are wellsprings of information and potentiality is posited by education theorists, Freire (1996), and Pinker (2002) – the former who rejected notions that learners are porous objects into which knowledge needs to be poured, and the latter who critiques the notion that we are somehow blank or un-inscribed. Freire opposed the banking concept view of education. He said, "The scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as

receiving, filing and storing the deposits ... in the last analysis, it is the people themselves who are filed away through the lack of creativity, transformation, and knowledge in this (at best) misguided system” (1996:53). Freirean notions of transformation and agency can be aligned to questions of the body and its intentionality, one that is not positioned as a shapeless mass or void but rather, as Grosz might suggest, the ‘body-as signifying medium’, In my view, the ‘body for Other’. A further question arises – how do older dancing bodies embody such agency? Sheets-Johnstone’s deliberations on thinking in movement and actions that can flow from dance are key to finding answers to this question. Some of her work was published as early as 1966. She agreed with Wittgenstein and Merleau-Ponty that thoughts do not exist separately from their expression and argued for a poetic or metaphoric language to provide the reflection on first person accounts of dance. Her explication of improvised dance as “the dance as it comes into being at this particular moment at this particular place” (Sheets-Johnstone, 1981:99) and aligns with Merleau-Ponty’s ideas of the lived moment, state of becoming and experience. Sheets-Johnstone maintained “A dance improvisation is process through and through, a form which lives and breathes only in the momentary flow of its creation, a flow experienced as an ongoing or prolonged present” (1981:400).

Dance as a broad (in)visible phenomenon she went on to argue, needs to be contested (Sheets-Johnstone, 1979). She was adamant that to ignore the ways in which the body explores in time and space is to deny its capacity to think in movement. She said, “to separate “mind-doing” and “body-doing” is to perform a radical surgery upon the body such that its lived reality is reduced to a faint impotent pulp, or excised altogether” (1981:402). Fraleigh’s *Dance and the lived body: a descriptive aesthetic* published in 1987 supports Sheets-Johnstone’s earlier works and offers a meeting place for my barrage of questions. These included: what are some of the markers of difference in Dance in South Africa today? what could be learnt from the experience of older dancing and in South Africa? and how does older dancing as a process bring new ways of seeing bodies? All the above becomes all the more relevant when marginalised dancing bodies are being examined.





**Illustration 6: *Silent Love*. Jomba! Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre. Durban. 2003.** LeftfeetFIRST Dance Theatre's young dancers explored intimacy and the sexual lives often denied to the disabled. Their work choreographed by Gerard Samuel opened the Jomba! Festival.

I maintained that from a Foucauldian framing of theories of power, post-apartheid dance where perceptions of the encounters with older dancing can be accessed for their nuanced insights, may be understood. But, how have the docile bodies mentioned above responded to the freedom in the New South African space? How has the status quo i.e. youth filled dancing remained? For me, characteristics and properties of older dancing as object are less significant than understanding the innerscapes of the subject, older dancing. Answers to Dance read through phenomenology are bound to be complex. A deepening enquiry has led me to seek in what ways dance recognises the self in the Other? Dance has variously been described as a means of communication, an expression of culture, as a non-and pre-verbal form of communication. Theorising the experience of Dance its power and agency by those positioned on the margins to find meaning in dancing seemed to be elusive. What happens to audiences who are watching dance sanctioned by certain categories of persons as Other? In the concert dance of Apartheid South Africa, this Othering would reference blacks (as the chief marker of discrimination), black women, the disabled, Gays and the aged and should be read as loaded categories. These groups were largely excluded from the concert theatre space and this omission, is echoed in their scant, often absence from South African Dance literature. This thesis is an attempt to theorise who and what were the gatekeepers that make and sustain this absent/present phenomenon in post-apartheid South Africa. Susan Kozel called attention to a relooking at the unhelpful divides or old dualities like practice and theory; mind and body; and solitary and shared experiences that needs to be undertaken. She suggested "Instead of

stitching these domains together in a unifying gesture that still preserves a fundamental antinomy, a shift of perspective is enacted: by viewing both theoretical and practical pursuits in terms of motion and materiality it is possible to avoid reinforcing such an unhelpful distinction” (Kozel, 2011:204-205).

Dance studies benefits from Phenomenology and can reflect both the inner and outer selves. Judith Butler’s critique of Merleau-Ponty’s views as gender biased notwithstanding, notes that a master-slave narrative is also in operation. Butler said, “The master, who at first appears to be “external” to the slave, re-emerges as the slave’s own conscience. The unhappiness of the consciousness that emerges is its own self bereavement, the effect of the transmutation of the master into a psychic reality” (Butler, 1997:3).

South African bodies have endured the brutalising forces of colonialism and apartheid and assaults on dancers as unthinking, mechanical bodies that could be read as part of larger anti-body tropes. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, social media and technology have made great strides in connecting people but have tended to alienate the body to body or human encounter. Other forces such as like capitalism has also seen the development of new masters and slaves which affect the body, and modernism itself has shifted the goalposts for the experience and proximity to social traditional dance forms. What messages from the body lurks in the psyche? Can Dance be a mediator of psychic expression through the body and act as a primary means of knowing past histories and lived experiences? I have argued that Contemporary Dance performances by older dancers advanced theoretical, contextual and methodological means of knowing through bodies. The many issues of alterity, agency docility, embodiment and how these relate to colonial and apartheid experiences and the diverse South African dance /dancing bodies will be more fully discussed in a later chapter. In the next chapter I will probe the research considerations of this study, discussing the paradigmatic frames and methodological issues that have governed my research focus.

## CHAPTER FIVE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A study of dancing the other through the lived experience of older dancers in South Africa arises from a multiplicity of motivations, assumptions and limitations. These issues have been raised in earlier chapters as a background and rationale for this study. The politics of geographical spaces, histories and geographies have also offered contextual frames. The literature review in the previous chapter discussed notions of Contemporary Dance and identified gaps in the critique of older dancing. This chapter considers the research methodology deployed during this study and is detailed in five sections. The first section provides an examination of the methodological approaches and draws attention to the choice of the phenomenological approach to data production. The second section presents a discussion of the actual data production technique and research instrument chosen to engage with interpretive understandings. Section three clarifies the position of the researcher. This is followed by a discussion of the three phases of the interviews and the four spaces of the study. Two dance festivals in South Africa are investigated and the interview process itself and my particular focus, a series of interviews with twelve individuals who are all over 35 years of age, is critiqued. As editor, Jonathan Skinner (2012) pointed out:

The interview has the potential to give us access to the life world of the respondent, to articulate lived meanings, 'to make visible the invisible' (Kvale 1996:53), not just in exploring the subject's consciousness, but in gaining insight into his or her deliberations, perspectives, viewpoints, understandings, points of view, re-actions, plans, imaginings, jealousies, strategies, hostilities, madnnesses, reasonings, hurts, ambitions, loves, losses—verily his or her life stories past, present and future (2012:10).

Eight of the interviewees are South Africans, three British and one from Denmark and are predominately female. There are two male interviewees and both are South African. Section three clarifies the overall research process that also included participant observation, site visits and research journal inputs. It also demonstrates the means used to generate the trustworthiness of the data gathered. In the fourth section, certain analytical strategies were employed to construct a thesis from the fieldwork data. This section explains by what means matters of limitations of the research design were addressed. Finally, section five clarifies the ethical considerations related to this study.

The primary focus of the period under investigation was from 1994 to the present day, which in the context of South Africa could be considered post-apartheid Dance (Loots, 2012). This is

intentional as the date 1994 marks a significant point of disruption within South African performance and cultural studies. To paraphrase South African Constitutional rights advisor Albie Sachs, who is referred to in theatre director, Peter Larlham's<sup>65</sup> article published in 1991, there can be no political freedom without cultural freedom. This thesis purposefully responds to such notions of cultural freedom as this might pertain to the rights and freedoms of older dancers. It acknowledges new constitutionally sanctioned freedoms, Human Rights and the rapid promulgation of anti-discriminatory laws in South Africa in its search for Othering made (in)visible through Contemporary Dance. I have therefore attempted to seek research methods that would clarify issues of dancing the Other.

### **Examining the methodological approaches**

What research methodology would most appropriately apply to a study of Contemporary Dance as performed by older dancers? The nature of Dance performance as ephemeral has been widely described as problematic for researchers seeking a more complete account of the fleeting phenomenon that is Dance. Any re-search of a dance becomes reliant on accounts of the dance through the dancer, other bodies, filmed accounts and still photographs as witnesses to an event and as such, these become valuable but secondary texts. To further compound the matter, Rene Descartes would have one agree with a body-mind spilt arguing that "The body was subject to the laws of nature and the mind was separate and subject to mental law – ideally the laws of logic and reason" (Morehouse, 2012:13). This concept has been refuted by many later generations who position the notion of the dancing Body as integrated in body and mind; this synthesis generating text. This discourse has been extensively advanced: consider Craighead (2006) in South Africa, Dixon-Gottschild (1996) in the USA, and Adair (1992) in the UK. Even the diaries of choreographers such as those of the Russian choreographer Marius Petipa, have been lamented as an incomplete account of the mind of the Russian genius and his contribution to the ballet art form (Garafola, 2005:13). Thus, studies in Dance are suited to a broad range of phenomenological investigation that could include Narrative analysis, Life history (Dhunpath & Samuel, 2009) that is different from Oral history . The method in which the folktale or story unfolds differs and thus one

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<sup>65</sup> In Peter Larlham's article, he noted Albie Sachs' presentation at an in house ANC seminar in 1990s in which Sachs had advocated "that the vision of political and personal freedom be matched by an artistic and cultural one" (1991:200 -201).

choreographs the story (Janesick, 2010). The rationale of this study with its many (hi)stories has already been outlined in Chapter Two. I have observed how colonialism and apartheid ushered in powerful notions of other bodies in the geographic space that is South Africa and it could be argued that bodies in Contemporary Dance in South Africa, have been sharply divided by social constructs such as race, gender, class, economics and religion since the 17<sup>th</sup> century, perhaps even earlier. One may even agree that these issues are compounded by the rapid transformations in South African society of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that was spurred on by events such as the discovery of gold and diamonds. Earlier chapters reveal the extent to which different bodies were able to enunciate (create and perform) difference in concert dance in the 20<sup>th</sup> century in periods before, during and after Apartheid. This study uses tools from predominantly qualitative approaches in order to re-imagine Dance that has traditionally been critiqued in South Africa in locations like Music, Media, Performance and Sociology. As a social science, Dance has been examined anthropologically (Blacking, 1983; Glasser, 1991). Even when its power to expand aesthetic frames is unpacked, these have largely remained in cultural discourse.



**Illustration 7: Cultural diversity at Graduation. University of Cape Town. 2014.** Katie Thorp (centre) from New Zealand is adorned in her Maori Honours Cloak, as a Masters in Music (Dance) graduate having passed with Distinction. Thorp is congratulated by her supervisor, Dr Rob Baum (blue cap) and mother. Other mothers dressed in traditional African attire share in the pride of their children's recent achievement. Photo taken on the grounds of University of Cape Town.

This study presents another vantage point; that of dance and the body in a philosophic enquiry and resonates human embodiment as noted by Mike Proudfoot, (2003). This research work found a home in the discourse in psychology unpacked by Swartz (1995, 2005), and finally

rested within notions of phenomenology and difference as suggested by Ida Mara Freire (2008).

### *Anthropology*

I could be described as an ethnographer as I am embedded in the society that may be defined as the Dance community in South Africa. Given that I am the first male ballet dancer to emerge from an Indian community in a predominantly white classical ballet world in the early 1980s, one who quickly shifted to a leading position in tertiary Dance Education in South Africa by mid 2000s, I could describe myself as an insider. Consider Kenneth Bailey's depiction of the enabling and constraining factors during interviews; factors that he maintains "may affect the relationship between respondent and interviewer include race or ethnicity of each, their sex, their social status, their age, and their clothing and grooming" (1987:209).

My positionality as researcher and interviewer will be clarified as I embody various roles in relation to the interviewees. I intersect within these roles or defining categories described earlier with several sectors of the Contemporary Dance community within South Africa which, it could be argued, is a cultural group in and of itself. I am one of that first generation of post 1994 Contemporary Dance choreographers who explored at the coal face the integration of dance forms by black and white dancers in a community located within a deeply segregated society. My insider position is evidenced in dance works that I wrote such as *Prabhati* (1995), *The Man I Love* (1996), *Awaiting Islands* (2001) and *Milky Tears* (1999). My choreographic exploits began in the late 1980s, and were given more prominence post-apartheid, a period filled with transformation that is shared with my contemporaries e.g. Cekwana, Gouldie, Nyamza, Fuchs and Davids. Significantly, I have not performed since 2004 whereas most of the aforementioned have continued a performance career and consequently I could be situated as an outsider.

My positionality as researcher with each interviewee will be expanded in greater detail below. This distance or objectivity as a researcher is something I have welcomed for reasons set out hereafter. Of the persons selected for interview, Davids<sup>66</sup> was one of my dance partners in

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<sup>66</sup> Throughout this chapter I will use the actual surnames of the interviewees who have given their permission for me to do so. I hope to signal a clear intimacy that I share with them and to mark this as a strength and asset for this study. A variety of relationships exist between us which are clarified in this chapter.

numerous dance productions for Durban's Playhouse Dance Company over a period of more than 5 years. We have toured together nationally and internationally. I have written ballets in which Davids was one of my chosen cast members; in other words, I have choreographed specific and leading roles especially for and with Davids in mind. I have known Davids for a period of more than 20 years and followed her work in Denmark, Sweden, France and in South Africa. Davids' career in the more recent period (i.e. since 2008) and her shift from dancer to choreographer is less known to me. During this period of her career, much of which has occurred abroad, I am thus positioned as an external viewer. I am not directly involved or part of her creative performance process. I now live and work in Cape Town whilst Davids creates and performs her dance work in Durban, South Africa or in Paris and Lyon, France. As a social anthropologist, I am a curious outsider, one who sees this opportunity as allowing a new kind of possible participant-observer. My broad enquiry into that social group who may label themselves as older dancers places me as older dancer but one who has not performed with any dancers I include in this study.

### *Ethnography*

Theresa Buckland (1998) in her discussion of the shifting perspectives of Dance Studies, noted the ethnographers' traditional field of interest when it came to Dance. She exhorted:

Until the closing decades of the twentieth century, ethnographic studies of dance were mostly restricted to dance practices that were positioned as Other to European and North American concert dance. Going into the field to produce dance ethnography was often a methodological necessity as the dancing to be investigated might well have lacked a significant critical and historical literature. Ethnography was a preferred and often necessary approach to dance study that espoused scholarly interest in genres that were variously labelled as primitive, folk, tribal, social popular, vernacular, or simply not Euro-American (1998:336).

Buckland seems to acknowledge the existing, and I will add, sophisticated indigenous knowledge that such exotic and foreign spaces may have held which earlier outsider-investigations may have overlooked. Using a new ethnographic lens then, I began examining a sub-species within the Dance world, that of older dancers, from both an emic and etic perspective. Although on the one hand I have danced in my 40<sup>th</sup> year, I have not performed with any of the persons whom I have interviewed. In Chapter Six I will offer a brief insight into the experience of being an older performer at age 40. This insider perspective will be situated within the rest of the data gathered.

### *Why the choice of a phenomenological approach?*

Many studies of Dance in the 1970s have been located in Cultural studies as was discussed in Chapter Three. Theories of culture as a bounded whole were challenged as more fluid notions became accepted. In order to find an alternate reading of cultural production and processes I have deliberately chosen to move away from the inherent notion of hierarchy found within Cultural Studies. I have focused on what Peter Ashworth described as experiences of individuals and their life-world seeking out the interconnected meanings which can be found in personal experiences (Ashworth in Smith, 2008). My reading of Peter Ashworth's existential phenomenology in Jonathan Smith's work, *Qualitative Psychology: a practical guide to research methods* (2008), opened a doorway through which understandings of Dance that seem to be offered by Edmund Husserl and Ashworth could be accessed. Ashworth wrote:

Husserl established that human experience in general is *not* a matter of lawful response to the 'variables' that are assumed to be in operation. Rather, experience is of a system of interrelated meanings—a Gestalt—that is bound up in a totality termed the 'lifeworld' (Husserl 1936/1970). In other words, the human realm essentially entails embodied, conscious relatedness to a personal world of experience (Ashworth in Smith, 2008:11-12).

I began to question the embodied experiences of older dancers; the life-world that surrounds them. What is being assumed by conscious choices that they make in the creative process and performance? How to unpack the personal ways in which older dancers navigate their life-world? These queries have suggested the research method that is thus deliberately phenomenological and hermeneutical, one that seeks, through narrative analysis, to find answers to an absence/presence of Otherness in Contemporary Dance in South Africa. Buckland suggests that some of the conceptual tools of culture such as text and structure allowed a shift in Dance studies from "dances [that] were replaced by dancing, the product by the process and the abstract by the experiential" (1998:337). In attempting to study older dancing as a phenomenon, and particular experiential encounters within Contemporary Dance, that of dancing Otherness, I have traced the theorised notion of Experience to Husserl, founder of phenomenology (Smith, 2008). As a phenomenologist-researcher, I am simultaneously on the inside and outside and can draw on my own experience and life-world as a dancer. This is a pronounced strength and advantage in this study which aims to gain insight through interviews as a deliberate methodological approach. Given the phenomenological nature of the overall thesis, my subject position and role as the primary researcher and interviewer, and the relationship between the interviewees and myself, will



be carefully unpacked below. I deliberately do not use any titles such as Dr. Professor, Mr. or Mrs and maintain the academic convention of the use of surnames of the interviewees. The choice of surname acknowledges that individuals are found in both discrete (first names) and group identity (surnames). The interviewees are thus affirmed as individuals and a group in full complexity for the nuanced knowledge producers that they are and recognised as being in constant evolution. These choices were deliberate.

## Data production technique

### *Sampling: the selection of the interviewees*

To begin my qualitative study, I considered the many individuals located within the phenomenon of older dancing in Contemporary Dance and created four organisational categories: dancers, choreographers, directors,<sup>67</sup> and arts critics.<sup>68</sup> I then, selected individuals and began interviews by asking them to self-identify into any one or more of these categories. Given that my study explores a South African perspective, and that much about dance from Africa is written from a north-south outlook, I sought more South African interviewees and points of view. In the case of the non-South Africans, it is only with Pasch that I have an existing working relationship which began in 1995. Farrugia is also known to me but we have a much more recent working relationship through her attendance at *Confluences 6* in 2011 and *Confluences 8* in 2015.

**Table 1: Self-Categorisation of the individuals selected for Interviews for the study**

SA/non SA	Dancer	Choreographer	Artistic director/ producer	Audience member: Arts critic/writer	Gender
SA born resides in UK	-	-	Yes, but former director	Yes & writer	female
SA	Yes, but not currently dancing	Former chor. But not for older dancers	-	Yes & writer	female

<sup>67</sup> An artistic producer is traditionally a financial backer or broker whereas an artistic director may (but not always) invest financially in the costs of any dance productions and is primarily responsible for artistic choices within a production.

<sup>68</sup> The arts critic is often an audience member associated with dance writing for newspapers and magazines and limited by the editors. The dance writer, by comparison, contributes to the Dance Studies canon through chapters in books and journal publications and tends to enjoy greater critical freedom. The forces of a market place and commercialism also play a hand here.

SA born, resides in France & SA	Older dancer	yes	yes	yes	female
SA	Older dancer	yes	yes	yes	female
SA	Former dancer	yes	yes	yes	female
SA	No. But has danced in Fuchs work.	yes	yes	yes	male
Non SA	Yes but not currently dancing	-	-	Yes & writer	female
Non SA	Older dancer	yes	yes	yes	female
Non SA	-	-	-	Yes & writer	female
Non SA	Older dancer	yes	Yes	yes	female
Non SA	-	-	-	Yes & writer	female
SA born resides in Netherlands	Older Dancer	-	-	yes	male

Interviewees were asked which one or more of the above categories described them best. In most cases more than one category was chosen. I suggest that interviewees could be divided even further into two broad categories. The first category: dancer and choreographer, and the second category: artistic directors, producers, audience members, and arts critic and writers. This is to refine and draw attention to the relationship of each person to process and product in Dance. It could be argued that dancing contains an embodied or lived experience that overshadows the re-lived experience of the dance by the viewers or audiences. These complex relationships that seem to position as most desirable; the dancer, and least desirable; an audience member, will be analysed to shed light on hierarchies and power in Dance that may in turn bring about new understanding of Otherness.

### **Positionality of the researcher and how it was negotiated**

The next section will clarify the working relationship and familiarity (if any) I have with the person/s I interviewed. I have already described my relationship to Davids above. A glance at all twelve interviewees notes a wide range from acquaintance to an over 20 year-intimate relationship. Three of the interviews are first time encounters viz. the interview with Dickie,

Staverman, and Stage. In my interview with Dickie, Pasch is present and an open conversation flows between old friends. I was able to interview Stage (in Copenhagen) and later Staverman (in Rotterdam) privately after a short introduction earlier that day. All encounters could be described as being relaxed and highly informative exchanges. There are also various juxtaposed roles and a positional status between myself and the interviewees e.g. that of junior dancer to senior dancer; dancer to dancer, dancer to director, inexperienced researcher to authoritative professor and mentee to mentor that need to be mentioned. These relationships will be clarified in the next chapter when the salient points of each interviewee are raised. The interview process was thus conducted with a specific person in mind and accepted my own subjective position. Any intermediary steps taken during the interview period are detailed next. These interconnections; known to unknown and stranger to friend, are highlighted to accentuate my choice of hermeneutic narrative analysis. I acknowledge this process as an interpretation of a narrative that will further situate my attempt to find meaning in specific experiences of the interviewees. My relationship to each of the twelve is unpacked below in the chronological order and three phases in which the interviews occurred.

### **Chronological order of interviews**

#### *Phase one: South Africa (Durban, Johannesburg, and Cape Town), September–December 2012*

The very first interviews were with Ballantyne, Maree and Davids in Durban. Ballantyne who is known to me through her work with Dance Umbrella in Johannesburg, has never been employed by me nor do we have any current direct working relationship. This feature is of relative significance as she is the only female South African in the interview group with whom I share such a relationship. Maree, as the newly appointed Director: Dance at The Playhouse Company where I was employed, had initially been my employer both when I was a dancer, and later when I was a junior administrator in the Education and Development department. Our working relationship changed when Maree retired. I became the Arts manager, (again for the same company) and was her contractor for dance programmes from the KZNDancelink—a network organisation of which Maree was chair. I would consider Maree to be one of my mentors. Davids, (see artistic relationship disclosed above), was not interviewed at home or in theatres in which we had worked, but in the coffee shop of an art gallery, purposefully

chosen as a neutral space. These interviews were followed by Fuchs and Nyamza in Cape Town. I note that Fuchs, the first interviewee in Cape Town (in the Baxter Theatre), enjoyed a managerial relationship with me when she was a young dancer in Siwela Sonke Dance Training Programme led by Hinkel<sup>69</sup>. The above power relationships to the interviewees includes Nyamza who at the time of her interview, was a GIPCA Fellow attached to the UCT School of Dance. I was host to Nyamza as dance researcher–choreographer in my position as Director: UCT School of Dance and had not had any prior relationship with this acclaimed dance-artist.

*Phase two: Europe (London, Copenhagen, and Rotterdam), August–September 2013*

The second phase of the interview process took place in London, Copenhagen and Rotterdam in August and September 2013. My first London interview was facilitated by Pasch to whom I am deeply indebted for creating in me a lifelong interest in the Other. I met Pasch in Durban in March 1996 where she was guest teaching for The Playhouse Dance Company at the invitation of Maree (discussed above). As a disability arts education specialist, Pasch conducted workshops for the dancers who were beginning to engage with community arts development work through Dance.<sup>70</sup> I have been introduced by Pasch to numerous dance colleagues: dance academics, musicians, choreographers, consultants, and teachers in the UK. Pasch introduced me to Dickie, the Artistic Director and dancer of From Here to Maturity Dance Company based in London. This first meeting was audio recorded.

I had met Farrugia, a Senior Lecturer in Dance Studies in the Faculty of Education of the Royal Academy of Dance in London, at the Congress on Research in Dance conference, De Montfort University, Leicester in June 2009. Farrugia accepted my invitation to attend *Confluences* conference in Cape Town the following year. I continue to assist her research work on the South African born ballet dancer, Yvonne Mounsey-one of Balanchine's ballerinas. Very early on in our discussions, I noted that Farrugia's Maltese ancestral roots might also place her as outsider in the UK. Although we had had many brief exchanges both in the UK and South

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<sup>69</sup> I had assisted Hinkel and Pather in establishing Siwela Sonke's reputation and later its position as an independent Contemporary Dance company that continues to thrive in Durban.

<sup>70</sup> These development programmes were met with mixed feelings by some of the professional dancers given their elitist perception that community development through Dance was not one of their responsibilities. I was drawn to Pasch's philosophies and practice and not only ferried her to local schools for disabled children but accompanied her to various Places of Safety (organs of the Police and Welfare) in and around Durban. Together we developed medium scale dance productions, underwent further professional development in Sherborne Developmental Movement in the UK and have remained in contact over the years.

Africa, the lengthy interview was a welcomed, focussed opportunity to discuss Dance research.

As one of only a few PhDs in Contemporary Dance that emanate from Scandinavia, my reconnection with Karen Vedel<sup>71</sup> was fortuitous. Vedel contacted Stage, a well-known independent dancer and choreographer working with older dancers in Copenhagen to meet me at Copenhagen University in 2013. The interview of our first meeting was manually recorded.

The interview with Staverman, the musicologist researcher working with Dutch choreographer Jiří Kylián, was held at Codarts, Rotterdam and audio recorded<sup>72</sup> My host, Hilke Diemer (from Codarts with whom the UCT School of Dance has an agreement of mutually beneficial cultural exchange), had facilitated this exchange between Staverman and myself.

### *Phase three: a return to South Africa, March 2014*

The final interview was conducted with former NDT3 member, South African born, male dancer, Krugel<sup>73</sup> in Cape Town in 2014. Krugel had left the ballet company prior to my foray into choreography and did not dance in any of my works. Although I am aware of his professional career path that included a term as Director of BOP Ballet, his collaboration and appearances in Sonje Mayo's work, and his time with NDT 3, prior to this interview, I had not spoken with Krugel in over 10 years. His two day visit to Cape Town City Ballet and UCT School of Dance was occasioned through a new collaborative project, *A Spartacus of Africa* (2015) that was underway between renowned South African choreographer, Veronica Paeper and Krugel.

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<sup>71</sup> Vedel is known to me through the historic cultural exchange project between Nordic countries and South Africa in the mid-1990s. Part of the Shuttle 99 project comprised a Dance research writing workshop that examined the then largely uncharted territory of an emerging South African Contemporary Dance field. Vedel was one of the preeminent dance academics leading that workshop in Johannesburg.

<sup>72</sup> Staverman, who I was meeting for the first time, had attended my guest lecture at Codarts in which I had discussed some popular South African dances: Gumboots, Isicathamiya and Mpantsula.

<sup>73</sup> I have known Krugel for over 30 years. We were members of the NAPAC Ballet Company in Durban. He was already ranked as soloist and later a principal artist at a time when I would have been a member of the corps de ballet. We performed in numerous dance works together and would have toured locally i.e. within South Africa's borders.

## **The Four Spaces of this study**

The study was broadly located in four geographic spaces: South Africa, United Kingdom, Denmark and Netherlands. South Africa remains the geographic focus of my study and the festivals discussed above are located within its socio-historic frames. I attempted to draw respondents from the three major urban centres of Cape Town, Johannesburg and Durban in order to reflect the urban base and history of the Contemporary Dance industry (this is not to imply any lack of activity that may be occurring in rural areas). Access to urban voices proved to be cost efficient and expedient.

I located part of the study in the UK as South Africa does not have any full time dance company that identifies itself as exclusively for or about older dancing. In Europe I gained access to such companies. My initial investigation of South African artists that I had defined as older dancers confirmed that most of these were solo artists: Van Tonder, Ginslov, Nyamza, and Davids discussed above. I considered that the UK interviews would provide a useful comparison of the types of engagements with older dancers and issues surrounding Otherness. I identified Fergus Early's Green Candle dance company, The Royal Ballet's Company of Elders, and Ann Dickie's From Here to Maturity as dance companies that are all notable in the UK for their work in locating older dancing. Unfortunately, I was unable to secure an interview with Early in 2013, however, I was able to interview Dickie, an artistic director and self-proclaimed older dancer at age 67 years who was a member of the From Here to Maturity Dance Company. Farrugia provided key insights into Company of Elders that had grown out of an over 60s support group of The Royal Ballet. She opened a unique window into the Dance for Lifelong Wellbeing project of the Royal Academy of Dance that had concluded shortly before my visit to London in 2013. It felt appropriate that Pasch, who had first exposed me to the disabled as Othered dance community, now facilitated the interview with Dickie's From Here to Maturity Dance Company. In addition, I wanted to corroborate the European experience of Contemporary Dance for older dancers and therefore interviewed Stage a Scandinavian older dancer. Stage is one of few Danish choreographers for older dancers with a direct relationship with European Modern Dance pioneers through the Joos-Leeder schools and Pina Bausch. The major influence of Bausch's work on Contemporary Dance in general and Stage's direct experiences are critiqued below.

I am of the strong opinion that any study of older dancers should take cognisance of European pioneer Kylián and his *Nederlans Dans Teater*<sup>3</sup> (NDT3) Company as it is widely regarded as the premier and first ever contemporary dance company globally that is specifically devoted to an examination of the subject of Age. NDT3 under the artistic directorship of Kylián, was a crucial source of data for inclusion in this thesis and was provided through Krugel and Staverman. Access to any insights into the rationale for the formation of the company, its highlights and challenges, and the eventual demise of NDT3 were welcomed. The study of NDT3 is viewed from two perspectives; insider-Krugel (one of NDT3's five only membership team), and outsider-Staverman. The ways in which these companies located in European countries influence understandings of older dancing would prove invaluable. The interview with Krugel in particular, presents a previously unpublished first-hand account of life in NDT 3. This thesis attempts to explain how, as a not so silent force, the influence of European dance companies on the content, choreographic methods and critical reception of Contemporary Dance in South Africa and specifically Cape Town, has proved enlightening.

## **Two dance festivals in South Africa**

This research work has concentrated on two specific contemporary dance festivals in South Africa: The Baxter Dance Festival<sup>74</sup> in Cape Town and JOMBA! Contemporary Dance Experience in Durban. Through a brief summary of similarities and differences between the festivals, I attempt to illustrate the interrelationships between the phenomenon that is the older dancer. This untangling, in my view, generates philosophical insights of Otherness.

Both the Baxter Dance Festival and JOMBA! comprise Main and Fringe programmes and provide established as well as emerging dance artists with funding to assist them in making their work possible. Postings by their Marketing Executive, Fahiem Stellenboom on the Baxter Theatre Centre's website noted that, "The Baxter Theatre Centre will provide a

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<sup>74</sup> The Baxter Dance Festival (BDF) celebrates a range of dance performance genres and has been in existence since 2004. The BDF comprises a Main and Off-Main programme and since 2007, includes a Baxter Dance Film Festival component. I have attended the festival since 2009 and note a predominance of Contemporary Dance performance although the BDF does not appear to be an exclusive Contemporary Dance festival. Its counterparts: Dance Umbrella (Johannesburg) and JOMBA! Contemporary Dance Experience (Durban), have a defined Contemporary Dance agenda. The BDF is held at the Baxter Theatre Centre located within the University of Cape Town and JOMBA! is based largely at the Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

comprehensive production package which includes lighting, sound, technical assistance, publicity, box office facilities, printed programmes and pre-show rehearsal arrangements, making it a hassle-free experience for participating dance groups and companies (Stellenboom, 2015). The Baxter Dance Festival commissions a new work which anchors the main programme and extends a general call for applications each year. Criteria for proposals include: professional status, duration of the work, number of dancers and whether the proposed work will include audience age restriction on account of sex, nudity, violence or strong language. Festival organisers are challenged each year in their desire to grow their festivals as applications increase while funding from national and corporate sources is limited. Partnerships are vital for survival. The Baxter Dance Festival differs from its colleagues as it hosts a dance film festival Cinedance, which since 2007 has enjoyed support from the Netherlands. In 2012, The University of Cape Town's Gordon Institute for Performing Arts (GIPCA) lent its support to the Baxter Dance Festival by offering the works of South African born dance film maker, academic and choreographer, Jeannette Ginslov.

The presence of international work at the Baxter Dance Festival and JOMBA! as a whole is significant as notions of benchmarking and power begin to surface. How is the global Contemporary Dance scene affecting the local scene? What global forces of older dancer are being brought to South Africa's shores via these and other forums? A wider discussion of both the cultural (re)integration of South Africa onto a world stage and the isolation experienced during the years of cultural boycott arises. These questions are examined below. The period and impact of the Cultural Boycott on developing and safeguarding stereotypes becomes another thorny issue to unravel. The Main festival programming can be viewed as having been successful if measured by its growth (number of entries) and whether artists from outside the city participate. The appearance by international dance companies is another measure and reflects positionality around notions of successful dance festivals. Whilst other dance festivals do occur in the major centres of South Africa in particular Johannesburg, and Grahamstown, the narrow focus of this study is very deliberate and it is trusted that from such a study as micro phenomena, a larger extrapolation of macro occurrences and persuasions can be made. The peculiarities of geo-political forces and the two locations have added depth to the findings which will be discussed below.



I identified older dancing in South Africa or Europe since 2000 where the subject of age was a central theme or where older dancers were part of a production. I selected from these dance works (which I have viewed more than once), only two South African works for a deeper interrogation i.e. Fuchs and Nyamza's works. I have personally had the opportunity to see both *Fragile falling* and *The Meal* in live performance contexts which I will analyse in Chapter Six. Excerpts from both works were uploaded on YouTube by 2015.

## **The interview process**

Attempts were made to audio record all twelve interviewees and shorthand note taking was undertaken periodically during each interview. In the case of two interviews only (Hinkel and Stage), the recording device failed and I have had to rely on my detailed handwritten notes to recount those events. This record was made available to the interviewee. I am encouraged by Madalina Florescu's experience during her research in Angola and her strong assertion that attention be paid not only to the 'positive' duration of the interview (recording) but the 'negative' duration (for example interruptions and silences). Florescu writing about the complexity of the interview processes itself in Skinner (2012) notes,

The memory of those present at the event is thus an integral part of the 'ethnographic document'. Thus, the ethnographic document may be seen as an object in the ethnographer's collection, itself a composite of diverse materials and technologies that is the visible and tangible aspect of memory of a particular context of a situation whose invisible or intangible aspect is the embodied memory of participants to the event (2012:192).

I am fully confident that rich material emanated from this unrecorded 'negative' duration of my interview with Hinkel and in our subsequent exchanges he confirmed the accuracy of what was said and exchanged. This notion of an embodied means of knowing which feeds an understanding of experience is a key aspect of the study and is discussed later. Further, Florescu contends that the production of anthropological knowledge itself depends on the ethnographers' cultural backgrounds and preferences and will contain and exclude certain materials (Florescu in Skinner, 2012:192). This interconnection and degrees of cultural separation between interviewees and myself is noted in the South African and European divide established above. The critical questions of this study were posed to all interviewees. At its core I ask: How does dancing the Other bring new ways of seeing bodies? This central

question was teased out to include four sub themes and questions during a conversational interview. As Bailey pointed out, “Conversation and interaction are closely regulated by orderly rules. Although these rules are often taken for granted as commonplace and are adhered to routinely or even subconsciously, they provide an orderly and generalizable structure of interest to ethnomethodologists” (1987:281).

Turn taking or frequency and shifts in the dialogue with the interviewees was not analysed although I was aware that conversational interviews were valuable. I discussed the following: Otherness in Dance, normative bodies, differences between the experiences of older dancers performing classical ballet and Contemporary Dance, and finally, the performative phenomenon of absence/presence of older dancers. A list of open ended questions was prepared for the four categories outlined above. The questions included: *Do you consider yourself to be an older dancer? What does it feel like to portray an older dancer? What was your experience of the politics of race, age and body in your dance work?* These questions were framed in socio-political contexts. Interviewees were then asked to comment on their roles as dancers, choreographers, artistic directors and critics or writers. What in their view influenced the shaping of ideas of what may be considered normative dancing bodies? I was eager to examine what determines choreographic choices in the manner in which old age and the older person is and can be shown to the public. What were their views on the gate-keeping of dancing norms? What were the circumstances surrounding such inclusion and exclusion of bodies? What hegemonies exist within Contemporary Dance that aid or prevent the narrative of the older dancer? Who were the actors: advocates, policemen, judges of such standards? The interviews were conversational in tone and could be defined as semi-structured in terms of the specific set of written questions.

I was further interested to learn more about the extent to which audiences contributed or subverted thinking around older dancing. Much has already been written about the normative dancing body in the developing world (Buckroyd, 2000; Benjamin, 2002; Sandahl, 2006). I therefore deliberately provided room by waiting silently for interviewees to articulate their own views in a manner comfortable for them. Sometimes I simply waited until they were relaxed enough to reply to a question. Their answers have aided my attempts to locate the politics of their art making, and its reception as older dancers within a wider discourse of Otherness.

Interviewees were asked to share and compare the experiences of older dancers in classical ballet and Contemporary Dance in South Africa. For example, *Do they perceive older dancers in Contemporary Dance performances any differently from commercial dance performances or performances of African dance or Indian dance, and if so why? Why do so few Contemporary Dance stories have as their central figures an older dancer? What were some of the great performances by these elusive dancers in each of the genres?* Various interviewees were approached to describe the ways in which as dancers they continued to prepare their bodies for dance performances. *How does training nowadays differ from when they were younger?* The final aspect of the semi-structured interview attempted to determine the following: What, if anything, do older dancers bring in terms of an experience to a dance performance? Could they describe or say more about Life experience that was witnessed by an audience? Is there a connection between frailty, death and older dancing? How did interviewees (as audiences) recognise stage presence in an older dancer? If dance by older dancers was so well received, why do we see so few performances by older dancers?

These questions were asked of the South African interviewees and some responses were gleaned through what feminist sociologist Ann Oakley describes as an intimate reciprocity (2003). I concur with Oakley's contention that rapport craved between interviewer and interviewee cannot be built from a cool detachment, but rather an emotional and highly sensitive (and I would add intuitive) approach is welcomed as a prized social research instrument in the interview process. Anne Montgomery argues, "For Oakley, there is no intimacy [rapport] without reciprocity' (1981), and reciprocity is given by, for example, personal disclosures, helping with housework or conveying the attitude and actions of a helpful friend rather than a researcher" (2012:147). Oakley contends that "an attitude of refusing to answer questions or offer any kind of personal feedback was not helpful in terms of the traditional goal of promoting rapport" (2003:253). I accepted the rekindling of old friendships during some of the interviews as I had not seen some of my fellow dancers in more than 5 years. I was very much aware of the reciprocal nature of the interview and felt it appropriate to share some of what others had said thus far as trust and rapport was established. The long standing friendships that I share with some of the interviewees will be critiqued in a detailed analysis in Chapter Six. I have thus attempted to consider the views

expressed during the specific moment of their particular interview without ignoring our shared and rich experiences in the past.

### **Participant observation, field notes, research journal and site visits**

Prior to the 12 interviews I had undertaken field work. I learnt about an open classical ballet class for adults conducted at UCT School of Dance when I returned there in 2008. I was curious as to who would attend such a class; older dancers, who were ex-professional ballets dancers or members of the general public. The average age range was unclear as was the motivation. Did attendees have an interest in ballet as a recreational experience of the classical art form, or was it for physical exercise or were there other motivations? I joined these classes for a short two-month period in 2010. A self-reflection of this return to the barre in my mid-forties as a male, former ballet dancer one who is also head of school is briefly commented upon in Chapter Six. It is intended as a further phenomenological response to thoughts on race, maleness, and hierarchies within then lives of dancers. The account is provided in relation to discourse surrounding Age.

In the context of this study of Dance, programmes and news clippings relating to the works cited or the dancers mentioned have been treated as primary sources. Throughout the period of research, I have been encouraged to strengthen my free writing skills and have also retained a handwritten journal of dance and performance related events which I attended. These provide unedited thoughts of the Body and performance. Thus far I have completed over 6 journals (approx.200 pages). Accounts are from Brazil, Rotterdam, Durban, and Cape Town. The deliberate act of putting pen to paper in unadulterated form has provided me with data.

The performance spaces at which I witnessed the live performances referred to in this research are the theatre at the Baxter Theatre Centre (Cape Town) and the Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre (Durban). The Baxter theatre is a proscenium arch theatre with auditorium seating that is located in stalls and a balcony. The seating capacity is 1200 patrons. For many Baxter Dance Festival events, the technical sound box is located in the middle rows at the back of the stalls. During *Fragile falling*, as well as *To whom shall I leave my voice*, at the Baxter Dance Festival, I sat in the cheapest stalls towards the back of the auditorium close to the technical

sound box. This self-imposed hierarchy becomes significant as my account of responses in the auditorium is from those patrons in the so called cheap seats.

In Durban, my eye witness account took place in the Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre, similarly a proscenium arch venue. The difference between the theatres lies in views of the stage and an associated hierarchy of seating. In Durban, the technical sound box is located out of the public view in an enclosed gallery at the rear of the building. In this auditorium, rear seating is not necessarily regarded as cheaper. This should not suggest however, that any comments during a performance are limited to cheaper seating. Once more I sat towards the back of the auditorium. In both cases, I am well acquainted with these performances spaces as I have directed works and performed in both these theatres and thus have knowledge of backstage, on-stage and the technical spaces i.e. sound and lighting boxes. The importance of these issues of familiarity with, as well the authenticity of the spaces as a kind of politics of Body-space, will be critiqued later.

### **How data was deemed trustworthy**

This section attempts to provide further detail as to how data was cross-checked and verified as trustworthy. In the context of phenomenology, data arising from an interview that is the interviewee's reality and experience cannot be separated, or as Ashworth contends, "bracketed" (Ashworth in Smith, 2008:11). This is problematic when it comes to that which may be imagined or real, said or unsaid. During the transcription process, I made detailed notes of the silences, pauses, increases and decreases in volume (whispering, raised voices) and noted gestural action and emphasis. Silence may be construed as consent and lowered or hushed tones may imply a complicit act on the part of the interviewee. A key ingredient of this thesis and major goal in arguments presented throughout the study has been to arrive at new meaning. Thus, I have attempted to provide a holistic account of the interview data as a lived experience, one that is a reflection of meaning-making in older dancing. In addition, a further evolution of thoughts and knowledge were shared with me by the interviewees. I made a determined effort to evaluate my relationship to an interviewee and address any uncomfortable relations of power. For example, in Nyamza's case, it can be argued, that as she was a guest teacher at my School and I was her host, she could feel compromised during an interview. I addressed this issue by deliberately scheduling her interview away from my

offices and the environment of UCT and even away from the Baxter Theatre. I again applied this strategy when meeting with Davids in a cosy coffee shop. The Contemporary Dance community in South Africa is relatively small and in many instances details of one interviewee's works and comments are corroborated by another. I have furthermore sought verification telephonically and via email from experts in the field. Articles, reviews and programme notes are just some of the many other spaces that have also assisted in substantiating data.

### **Analytical strategies employed in constructing this thesis.**

#### *How was data for the thesis produced?*

For this specific re-viewing of older dancers as Other, the data set was derived from various activities, the most significant of which was the live interview. Following these twelve interviews, I listened carefully to the recording of each one to begin a process of detailed transcription. As mentioned earlier, these interviews were semi-structured with key questions penned in my notebook that was placed on the table as a guide. My approach was deliberately relaxed and conversational. I hoped to arrive at less superficial responses to these questions and had asked for about 45 minutes to one hour from each interviewee. I had previously had innumerable conversations about Dance with most of the interviewees, some of whom I have known for over 20 years. Only three of the interviewees (Stage, Staverman and Farrugia) were largely unknown to me. Listening to the tapes, I immediately noticed an overlapping of the voices of interviewer and interviewee. I therefore began by attempting to listen to one voice at a time (interviewee responses, and interviewer's questions) and to transcribe what each one had said. I then combined each of these into one flowing recorded dialogue. I have also painstakingly noted a pause e.g. a waiter's interruption serving tea, loud or noisy vehicles driving past, laughter from the nearby table, as these occurrences may have resulted in subtle shifts in the interviewee's response. These nuances are reflected in my data analysis.

The scope of the research included attending live performances, reviewing footage on DVDs, YouTube, websites and undertaking recorded interviews with the twelve pre-selected individuals. Photographic images, captions and placement in programmes, theatre foyers, magazines and news media reviews were also noted and the age ranges of audiences

attending performances was observed. In the case of the dancer-choreographers in South Africa, I attended the following live performances of older dancing in Cape Town: Nyamza's work *Hatched* (2012) and *The Meal* (2012). In addition, I have witnessed her site specific dance work, *Kutheni* <sup>75</sup>(2010) in the streets of Observatory, Cape Town. I have watched David Gouldie's *New Age Circus* in Durban (2003). I attended *Fragile falling* after interviewing Fuchs a few weeks prior to its premiere in 2012. I later viewed Davids's work *The ColouRED Chameleon* at the Joseph Stone Auditorium, Cape Town (2014). I have examined photographs of her work *Who is this Beneath My Skin?* written in 2010 and premiered at JOMBA! in 2011. Davids was the first older dancer-choreographer that I interviewed.

I was unable to secure an interview with the choreographer of NDT3, Jiří Kylián but had secured an interview with Staverman, a researcher on Kylián's *One of a Kind* project in 2013. I have viewed a full length, multi-camera DVD copy of Kylián's acclaimed production for NDT3, *Birth-day* (2001). This work is prominently featured in the Dance Gazette (Albert, 2006:20). During the September 2013 visit, I viewed a selection of 3 of Kylián's works written for the NDT 1 Company, at their theatre in Den Haag, Netherlands. I subsequently interviewed at some length South African born Krugel, who is considered a founding member of NDT3 the internationally renowned dance company of older dancers. I have not seen any of Danish dancer-choreographer, Stage's works. However, her interview recorded at Copenhagen's university has proven useful. I have watched Dickie's London based From Here to Maturity dance company on YouTube. I recorded a conversation with Pasch, Dickie and myself in Waterloo, London, UK. This was the first time I had met Dickie.

In the category of dancers, I was able to interview both South African and non South African dancers who self-identify as older dancers and choreographers. This list includes women like Davids, Nyamza (who prefers being referred to as a creator), and Fuchs (who prefers being referred to as teacher) and men such as Krugel (who considers himself as first and foremost a dancer) and Hinkel (who no longer sees himself as a dancer but did perform in Fuch's work). In the category choreographer, director (and producer), I interviewed Hinkel. All the interviews could be described as semi- structured and were later fully transcribed from the

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<sup>75</sup> Kutheni was commissioned by FNB Dance Umbrella and performed at the Wits theatre, in Johannesburg in June 2009. The music used included Shwi Nomtekhalala, Ladysmith Black Mambazo and Letta Mbulu. The work was part of a triple bill produced by Mzansi Productions and hit an emotional note given that it disturbed the taboo subject of homosexuality in the black townships.

recorded audio interviews (except for Hinkel and Stage discussed above). Several academics and colleagues<sup>76</sup> responded to my many emails and telephone calls. Choreographer Marlin Zoutman openly shared experiences of his choreographic process for *Stories about...* (2000) and the challenges and highlights of working with Remix Dance company in 2012 whilst choreographer and current Artistic Director of the Eoan theatre group, Ebrahim Medell, confirmed data especially around the early years at BOP Dance company. Zoutman and Medell's data is critiqued later. Former Artistic Director of Hong Kong Ballet, Dianne Richards (and my previous ballet mistress during the Playhouse Dance company years) verified data around The Playhouse Company as well as the history of ballet in South Africa. Data surrounding the history of Contemporary Dance in South Africa was confirmed by amongst others Friedman, Sichel, and Loots.

All twelve interviewees may be categorised as audience as they have all witnessed performances that included older dancers (as defined by this thesis). Attention must be drawn to Maree who noted, *"Well I'm not, not, not a dancer anymore, (slowly) I never was a professional dancer. And, I'm not a choreographer and (smiles) I'm not an artistic director, so presumably I have to be an audience member?"* (2012). This new position as audience that was implied as being less than, does not in my view diminish her important status as the former Director: Dance for the Playhouse Company and formidable role as an innovative arts producer in Durban in the mid-1990s. My relationship with Maree was discussed above. Ballantyne is another such audience member, although as arts writer, critic and advocate of Contemporary Dance, is a particular kind of audience member a status which she seemed very happy to signify. A similar position may be assigned to Farrugia in the UK and Staverman in the Netherlands, who do not define themselves as older dancers, choreographers for or with older dancers, and are not to my knowledge artistic directors.

Once the transcription process of over 7 hours of recorded tape was completed, I reread all twelve transcripts several times to identify the salient themes running through the interviews.

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<sup>76</sup> This list should include Dance academics in South Africa such as Sharon Friedman, Liane Loots and Clare Craighead who responded to emails and telephone calls especially when I had queries of an historical nature that needed to be verified. Ida Mara Freire, Mariene Hundertmark-Perobelli (Brazil), Karen Vedel (Denmark); Dr Sarahleigh Castelyn, Dr Kathrina Farrugia (UK), and Hilke Diemer (Rotterdam, Netherlands) are some of the many colleagues who have corroborated ballet and contemporary dance histories and philosophic enquiries. The above listing is by no means exhaustive.



I began by asking myself the question: why I am interviewing this person? In other words, I questioned my own assumptions in relation to categories of power and the politics of identity with regard to each person. I noticed that despite the interviewees demonstrating a range of views on the subject, I was at the time, biased towards the opinion that older dancing is powerfully expressive. This process foregrounded for me that socio-political forces exist in Contemporary Dance that could clarify notions of marginality.

I consider my data analysis as phenomenological as it recognises the responses to the interview questions as fragments of a total experience that includes older dancing works themselves. This 'total experience' interfaces with a variety of my relationships: dance partner, choreographer, dance administrator, dance academic, member of the audience. I therefore began by asking what had I learnt or discovered from this interview. As my research methodology included an interpretative approach to narratives, I reflected on the interviews as an experiential encounter and coded aspects of these narratives that stood out for me. My enquiry focussed on the question: What did they say specifically about older dancing bringing new ways of seeing bodies? Much of my research has centred on the consideration of a state of becoming and/or experiences that are becoming known in and through the body – a dance phenomenology. In Dance terms this could be likened to a choreographic process or experiment-something evolutionary where the performance of the choreography is the final, though ephemeral, experience of the dance located in a specific time and space. My fourth cluster of questions addressed the particular notion of lived experience and embodiment. Some of the more recurring questions were; What did they say about their experience of being an older dancer, choreographer, artistic director or producer? What did they think and feel was their experience in the category as an audience member, one who was viewing older dancers, and in South Africa? What were the responses from each of various perspectives? Finally, I examined the data to note how their responses fit into my key questions. I wanted to extrapolate from the data the theories, especially cultural and performance theory, accessed in developing my own dance phenomenology theory. I reminded myself of my own subjective position and coded a sub-section entitled What interests me?

In my effort to extract overarching themes in the data, I began to note how issues raised by one set of data from an interview differed from one another. Thus, contradictory as well as complementary ideas, particularly where one statement seemed to follow on from another,

were identified. Where such illumination unfolds across continents this was also marked. I created a separate code for those places where none of the interviewees mentions a particular viewpoint that is shared by the others. These I will analyse as singular views. I identified these as gaps in the data.

### *Dealing with matters of limitation of the research design*

Various matters of limitation pertain to this study including sampling, methods and length of study. Any reflection of dancing in South Africa needs to remain mindful of the scale of a country with a population of over 52 million people, 11 official languages and great diversity in ethnicity, religion and cultural practices. A limitation of this study may be the relatively small sample within Contemporary Dance as a concert theatre dance form and the largely urban environments from which the selection was made. As a South African study, one of the flaws may be a perception that older dancing in Johannesburg is under represented. I contend that I have viewed many live performances of Contemporary Dance works in Johannesburg mostly at the Wits Theatre during the Dance Umbrella Festival. I have observed over 75 Contemporary Dance works from Johannesburg based dancers since the 2000s. These will have included Mantsoe, Gladys Agulhas, and Nelisiwe Xaba whose performances I would have watched in Durban, Cape Town and Grahamstown particularly during the National Arts Festival. Their performances may also be considered older dancing in term of this study as they are over 35 years old and Mantsoe and Agulhas retired from the larger dance companies where they began their dance careers. Today all three frequently work as solo artists. This closeness to the performative and choreographic aspect and simultaneous distance from the response of a Johannesburg audience is an important distinction to mark from a phenomenological point of view as Durban and Cape Town may appear to be my focus. Many older dancers, who originated from Johannesburg schools and dance companies, maintain a home base in South Africa but also live and work for long periods outside the country. However, the study is concerned with understanding alterity or Otherness and as such it becomes difficult to generalise whether there is uniquely South African notion to Othering when this type of immersion, sense of home and thus construction of self is itself shifting. The small sample may also be criticised as only 2 males were interviewed. However, it needs to be noted that concert dance in South Africa follows the global trend where traditionally more

females are visible as dancers than males. The role with which each gender engages within dance activities is intriguing.

I also acknowledge the limitation of the use of observation in terms of methodological approach and concur with Carol Roberts' standpoint of subjectivity. Roberts points out the possibility of observation bias in this method of inquiry (2004). I have already extensively detailed the working relationships with the interviewees and the possible consequent bias that may have ensued as well as measures undertaken to avoid compromising data. It could be argued that given the relationship between the oral history methodology (interpretative narrative) and its implications for social justice, that this study has been compromised. But, as Valerie Janesick writes, "Oral history validates subjectivity and embraces it. Oral history can be a key element in documenting stories of those on the periphery of society. Thus it validates a multicultural and diverse approach to documenting the lived experience of individuals and groups and becomes an important path to social justice" (2010:16).

The dearth of literature in dance from the South African perspective and powerful legacy of protest theatre that surrounds Dance as a performing art are just some of the mitigating circumstances to propel dance works by Others which could be seen as acts of social transformation. This study began in 2012 and is nearing its completion in 2016 thus the length of the study sees new sets of older dancers emerge that are beyond 35 years of age but not factored in to the data analysis.

## **Ethical considerations**

Part of the challenge of this study was to ascertain in what manner I could best respect the privacy of individuals and deal with confidentiality especially when the persons approached for an interview could be considered high profile, public figures in the wider South African dance scene. For most of the interviewees, the experience of being interviewed by the media (newspaper, radio and television in particular) is part and parcel of their professional lives. I therefore tailored my approach when seeking their consent for an interview clearly framing this request to be within the specific context of my Dance research work. Once there was agreed participation, I then asked for a convenient interview date and place "to ensure that they will not be subjected to any stress or anxiety beyond and above what they might

reasonably experience in their everyday lives” (Smith, 2008:191). As Smith maintains, such ethical consideration should be part of the overall practice and research design. I purposefully selected spaces for the interviews that were both cosy and offered as much privacy as possible. For example, I chose a table in a quiet corner of the space (coffee shop, restaurant, committee meeting room, office, or tea garden) and deliberately sat next to and not facing the person with whom I was engaging. I was not refused an interview by anyone that I approached for the study. On the contrary more than one person, including Nicolette Moses and Jennifer van Papendorp, asked when I would interview them. In these cases I have welcomed their conversation and input via email and telephone conversations. I was vigilant in making persons aware that I was conducting research that would contribute to the publication of my PhD thesis. In addition, I pointed out that their ideas would enrich the UCT School of Dance archive. Interviewees were assured that copies of the transcripts of their interviews as conversations would be available to them for any comment.

### **Summative remarks of this chapter**

This research methodology chapter has been a road map and guide to this study of dancing the Other in South Africa. It has clarified an interpretative phenomenological analysis as the most suitable primary methodology for an examination of a fleeting performance form – Contemporary Dance and by older dancers in South Africa. The advantages and disadvantages of my working relationship with each of the 12 persons that were interviewed was discussed, and support for my particular role as a former dancer is therefore ideally placed to conduct such Dance research. This notion is supported by Helena Wulff’s observation that:

Dancers and writers differ, however, when it comes to verbal eloquence, and thus how they talk about their work in interviews. Dancers are trained to talk with their bodies while writers are trained to talk with words. When I was interviewing dancers it was an advantage that I used to dance. There is still a dance sensibility in my body, which dancers recognized (2012:174).

Wulff’s anthropology of communication and aesthetics merges with my own Dance phenomenological views that Dance itself has the possibility to bring thought into existence. The Body as a thinking and feeling entity can act as an emancipatory knowledge producer. I maintain that a dancing body can bring clarity of Othering and of Age which this thesis fundamentally argues. I strongly maintain that my own position as a former dancer,

choreographer and director is integral to this theory. The research work and unfolding of three phases in South Africa and Europe was explained as a partial means to establish data trustworthiness. This is further corroborated by my embodied knowledge as I have danced with Davids and Krugel, and worked with Maree, Hinkel, Nyamza, Fuchs, Pasch and Farrugia. However, the experiential encounters with Ballantyne, Dickie, Stage and Staverman, with whom I share no such history, remain undiminished. Chapter Six will further illuminate how data from across the global spectrum was substantiated. A key element in Chapter Five with regard to the choices of Research Methods, was the selection of hermeneutical analysis. The manner in which the interview questions were coded in order to answer the main critical research question: how does older dancing bring new ways of seeing bodies? should be noted. I argue that the answers will extend the discourse of Contemporary Dance in South African and its performance practice. A detailed transcription process gave birth to multiple data sets to develop a thesis that can now be represented in this PhD thesis and future publications. However, the philosophic question as to whether persons as phenomena can be fully represented in such written text remains. Dance as a specific text of and from the body, presents a challenge which the limitation of this written thesis needs to accept. In the next chapter, the prominent themes, points of convergence and separation from all data gathered will be presented. I will unpack these convictions to return to a central thread – that of Othering and Age, which I feel strongly is constructed as (in)visible in Contemporary Dance in South Africa.

## CHAPTER SIX: DATA ANALYSIS

This chapter interrogates the responses of twelve selected persons who were interviewed about their experiences of older dancing. I begin by critically analysing what each voice or respondent had said in relation to the phenomenon older dancing and Othering and gathered these fragmented responses. This suggested four themes. The responses to my questions arose from semi-structured interviews and/or my observation of their performance, where this was possible (not all interviewees were dancer-performers). The four themes should be read as blurred boundaries that cover conceptual, affective, and reflexive positions and are listed thus:

- Neither Obedient nor Blank Choreographic Slate
- Invisibility and Frailty
- Generosity and Wisdom
- (In)dependent older dancers

This chapter also examines the vantage point of particular audience members of older dancing. Whilst these audience members are not older dancers themselves, they have a certain intimate knowledge, which I will clarify below, given their professional working relationships with Dance. I also layer a contextual frame of two performances in Cape Town of older dancing: *Okuya Phantsi Kwempumlo/The Meal*<sup>77</sup> choreographed by Nyamza in 2012 and *Fragile falling* by Fuchs in 2012. These serve as exemplars of some of the themes which have emerged in my cross analysis of their lived experiences.

I have detailed the relationship of each interviewee to the dance work under investigation to facilitate understanding of some of the differentiated relationships within older dancing. At the outset, all the interviewees were invited to categorise themselves in any one or more of the following categories: dancer, choreographer, director, arts critic and audience member. The one category into which all interviewees fall is audience member as they have all witnessed older dancing. Whilst this was my initial observation, I immediately noticed how

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<sup>77</sup> *Okuya Phantsi Kwempumlo/ The Meal* won a Standard Bank Ovation Award and was also nominated as best performance in Dance and Physical theatre for the Kyknet Awards in 2013. For purposes of consistency I will use a shortened form, the English title when referring to this production.

that shared experience differs from the experiences of dancers and how the dancers nuanced responses provided ample room for my analysis. During this process, the interviewees described and introduced new categories upon which I will comment: creator, teacher, researcher, and mature dancer. This chapter therefore attempts to discover what lies beneath the multiple ways in which older dancing and Othering is being felt and thought about by some older dancers, choreographers, directors and audience members who view such performance; women and men in South Africa and Europe. In this study, three interviewees were not older dancers but are included for their close proximal encounters<sup>78</sup> with the phenomenon under review. Judith Butler had warned of the “multiplicity of cultural, social and political interactions in which the concrete array of ‘women’ is constructed” (1990:19). Butler’s notions are extended here to suggest how older dancing may be constructed in multiple ways that could shed light on practices of marginalisation in concert theatre Dance in South Africa in particular. My developing discourse surrounding Dance and ageism needs to reach beyond an anti-youth cry and resist a singularity cautioned by Butler:

Feminist critique ought to explore the totalizing claims of masculinist signifying economy, but also remain self –critical with respect to the totalizing gestures of feminism. The effort to identify the enemy as singular in form is a reverse –discourse that uncritically mimics the strategy of the oppressor instead of offering a different set of terms (Butler, 1990:18).

In order that a wider set of understandings for older dancing, such as notions of health, career and sexuality may be read, I have clustered views that have emerged from the narratives of older dancing into four themes. I believe this grouping enhances a reverse-discourse of older bodies in concert theatre Dance performance.

One of my objectives during this process was to highlight contradictory responses between one interviewee and another and draw attention to such responses especially where these arise in the same interview. This was not to discredit any remarks made but to show how shifts can occur during such a process. I was reminded of Diane Taylor’s *The Archive and The Repertoire* (2003) in which she argues for muffled (especially Latin/o) voices to be heard.

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<sup>78</sup> In each case, the women had access to older dancers as defined by this study that stems from their professional working relationships. This can be seen as a close and emic perspective that is of great value e.g. Staverman worked as researcher and musicologist for the choreographer Jiří Kylián who pioneered the NDT 3 company. Thus, the selection of these interviewees should not be read as any random member of the general public even if my categorisation places them as audiences of older dancing.

Taylor writes, “I chose not to smooth out the differences in tone, but rather let them speak to the tensions between who I am and what I do” (Taylor, 2003:xvi). The recounted experiences were carefully unfurled to observe such tensions: shared views of identity and isolated remarks around choreographic voice. Furthermore points of divergence, for example boys training in ballet and older Spanish dancers, were noted.

The interview process began in late August 2012 and ended in March 2014. The first set of South African interviewees was Ballantyne, Maree, and Davids who were interviewed in Durban. I conducted interviews in Cape Town, first with Fuchs, then Hinkel and finally, Nyamza. At this stage, I was satisfied with a South African perspective and the predominant focus of women’s voices<sup>79</sup>. I gained access to interview leading European choreographers and older dancers in London, Rotterdam and Copenhagen in August and September 2013. The European group included Dickie, and Pasch<sup>80</sup>, Farrugia, Stage and Staverman. Given my resource limitations I did not conduct interviews in the USA. I felt confident that data saturation had been reached after the three sets of interviews (11 interviews were completed by 2013). Having completed my data gathering in 2013, an unscheduled visit to Cape Town, his home town, by former *Nederlands Dans Teater3* (NDT3) dancer David Krugel in March 2014, shifted the parameters of the study once again. South African born Krugel was a founding member of the iconic NDT3, a dance company especially framed for dancers over 40 years. At age 55, Krugel<sup>81</sup> is still performing even though NDT 3 closed due to financial reasons in 2006.

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<sup>79</sup> To further highlight the voices of all twelve interviewees I have italicised all their direct quotes from the interviews to highlight and offset these against any other in-text references.

<sup>80</sup> Ann Dickie and Jasmine Pasch were interviewed together and individually they offered many strong opinions in a three way conversation that was filled with wit and insights of older dancing and lived experiences of othering. Jasmine is known to me for over 15 years and this was my first meeting and first interview with Ann Dickie. The pair are also very close friends and live very close by to one another. I sensed an immediate warmth and caring friendship. The easy flow as one began a sentence that was concluded by the other, overlapping remarks and a natural ‘British’ banter did make transcription challenging. Nonetheless, I have attempted to be explicit when extracting each interviewee’s specific thoughts, remarks and feelings that were shared.

<sup>81</sup> Krugel is a professional older dancer now living in the Netherlands. He is a male dancer, choreographer and former artistic director of Bophuthatswana Dance co., in the former homeland of the same name, during the Apartheid era.



I anticipated complexities in this data analysis given the scope of the study and volume of data generated and present this analysis of a phenomenological approach to the study via the four soft-bordered themes noted above.

### **Theme 1: Neither obedient nor blank choreographic slate**

The question of how a dance is created and, I would add, by whom, is important. The role of the choreographer as sacrosanct seems to emerge in both the rehearsal space (process of the creation) and the theatre space (place of the performance). This section examines some of the perceptions of this role, and the manner in which relationships between choreographer and dancer, especially when that dancer is older, shift. It suggests that older dancers are neither obedient nor blank slate, terms that will be discussed hereafter.

Although Davids and Stage come from different geographic spaces (South Africa and Denmark), and were interviewed more than one year apart (and to my knowledge do not even know each other), they have many common experiences. Both have been professional dancers in their youth and have continued to dance whilst forging a new identity as choreographer as they have become older. They described a feeling of being caught in a gap. Davids said *"I'm still a dancer but I've become more interested in the creative process ... and I guess at the same time you feel 'cos of the age gap."* (Davids, 2012). And Stage said, *"I see the challenge of how to stay in dance and don't leave it? ... Some older dancers become academics but many don't have the education for it. I mean choreographers told you what to do. So now the older generation sits in the gap ... But why should I be excluded?"* (Stage, 2013).

Davids maintained that as a choreographer *"I don't like at the moment working with people who just come in, stand and [say] 'show me what to do and I'll do [it]. Show me steps' ... that to me is not interesting?"* (Davids, 2012). Earlier in her interview Davids had said, *"I'm more interested in working with experienced dancers [as] I think older dancers bring so much more to work because of their experience. They can really delve into the thought process. You can really communicate on a deeper level"* (Davids, 2012). She discussed her most recent collaboration with Helen Cathala who is in her mid-50s. This process was filled with exploratory shifts as the dancers interwove their creative processes. It was sharply contrasted with the idea that a dancer is an empty vessel or neutral mediator of a choreographer's

message and will be found in Nyamza and Krugel's<sup>82</sup> narrative as well. Davids went on to explain that as an older dancer *"you know you have your limitations ... you can feel the change in your body ... [it takes an] acceptance of that [to] to find new ways of saying what you want to say ... [it's like] then you write your own poetry"* (Davids, 2012). Davids explained how part of her process as a choreographer nowadays was to allow her dancers to creatively explore and search beyond a fixed notion of a South African aesthetic. She said *"people always comment on the energy of South African dance ... [commenting that ] 'you're so powerful', 'there's so much energy', 'it's alive' ... and that's great, and that's really something to be proud of [but] at the same time it can be so limiting"* (Davids, 2012). She reflected on her explorer position querying *"how to work in a different way ... to find subtleties ... and that I've learnt especially in my time in Europe"* (Davids, 2012). It was important to her *"that we are not always boom, boom, boom (pounding her fists on the table) and then it's finished. We also have that [stillness]"* (Davids, 2012).



**Illustration 8: *The ColouRED Chameleon*. The Joseph Stone Auditorium. Athlone. Cape Town. 2014.** This bold, questioning pose by Desiré Davids acted as a focal point in the poster design for her work that premiered in December 2014. The image is courtesy of Pascale Beroujon.

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<sup>82</sup> Krugel became the last person that I interviewed in early 2014. The interview unfolded in three intervals one at the School of Dance (an unrecorded reunion as we had not seen each other for over 10 years), and the second and third recorded interview interrupted by tea drinking at the outdoor restaurant at Rhodes Memorial, on Cape Town's Table Mountain. I had originally hoped to interview Krugel who is a South African born dancer now living and working in his new home town, Rotterdam, Netherlands. Krugel was a founding member of the iconic NDT3 dance company until its closure in 2006.

Stage said that even though one is seeing older dancing nowadays it not easy as jobs<sup>83</sup> are hard which is also evidenced in Davids *“you don’t have regular income”* (Davids, 2012). Stage’s final statement, *“For me, an older dancer is challenging our ideas of performance”* (Stage, 2013), is the subject of the critical analysis below. Davids ended her story of older dancing by revealing that *“as an older dancer [you have to decide] how you want to be seen or portrayed. Because, I think, all dancers still want to have dignity. There are not many choices [in South Africa] that you have as an older dancer”* (Davids, 2012). This final comment revealed her feeling of exclusion and disregard which is a significant marker of marginalisation. In addition, her plea for dignity underscores a shameful position in which older dancers in South Africa are often placed.

As an older dancer turned choreographer of work that may be positioned as older dancing, Davids explained how within her creative process she gives various tasks to her dancers to explore. She expressed that it was not interesting anymore to be *“imposing my way of moving”* (Davids, 2012). Her ‘anymore’ comment suggests an earlier life as a younger dancer where absolute compliance to what was being taught by the choreographer and artistic director was without question. Stage described her strong preference for a dialogic as opposed to submissive choreographic process; one that was supportive of the range of contributions. This autocratic way of behaviour is emphasised by Davids and supported by my own experience. The dominant experience as a young dancer was where *“you danced the choreographer or someone else’s steps”* (Davids, 2012). Davids’ explained *“the way I like to work now is to know the concept, then find give instructions and tools to research the way. And off course ... give an outline of what I would like but then to have that body in front of me, [to] find a way to make it happen* (2012).

This is not to suggest that all choreographers operated in an authoritarian way as I recall the respected Musical Theatre director, Geoffrey Sutherland’s approach to *The Great Waltz* (1987), and Andrew Lloyd Webber’s *Jesus Christ Superstar* (1991) produced at NAPAC in Durban, as just some examples in which dancers were encouraged to improvise. In fact, one of the key tenets of Contemporary Dance composition is the employment of workshopping as

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<sup>83</sup> The question of the limited number of jobs and/or opportunities that are available for dancers in general terms also remains.

part of the creative process<sup>84</sup>. As a young dancer at NAPAC at the time, I found this choreographic approach liberating. The old school assumption that the dancer was mere body or vessel and with no mind can be found in Krugel's initial remarks when he said "*I can say what you the choreographer actually wants to say ... I am only a tool*" (Krugel, 2014). This may be interpreted as Krugel offering his body to the choreographer as if it can be delivered as a *tabula rasa*. He explained that being the blank slate allows the choreographer the possibility to write through the dancer as if the body was an unsullied parchment. As an older dancer, Krugel's, experience may be set apart from the other dancer-choreographers interviewed as he did not choreograph works on or for himself. Krugel was, on the other hand, given certain movement tasks to explore, specifically during his audition for NDT 3, when he was requested to improvise his life. Krugel frequently presented himself as if as a dancer his *self* was absent. And yet he is adamant that the choreographic work filters through his life experience when in performance. This way of giving expression to another's ideas and experiences as a dancer seems to follow what UK based advocate for Community dance for older persons, Dianne Amans, describes as a choreographic continuum when she wrote "At one end of the continuum is the traditional 'choreographer as expert' process where dancers are 'instruments'. At the other end is a more collaborative relationship where both choreographers and dancers may share ownership of the material created" (2013:168). Amans argues that choreographers need to be much clearer about "why we are putting on a performance and who the audience will be" (2013:172). Later Krugel agreed with me that he was not a neutral space as the choreographer's message is filtered through his body and life experiences. Krugel said, "*it's gotta mould itself. It's still gotta like seep through my blood ... under my veins. It's still gotta be injected into my veins yes for it to be seen?*" (2014). This reshaping or remoulding of the dance through an older person's body is powerful and allows for a resonance in audiences who are also a diverse group.

Krugel attempts to describe the vulnerable role of the dancer in relation to the powerful, commanding choreographer when he says "*I am completely naked in front of you. What do*

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<sup>84</sup> During Dickie's choreographic process her dancers are given specific exploratory tasks. In *By Design* the dancers were tasked to survey the architectural space of the hospital. Dickie explained, "*I began by instructing them to work in different places in the hospital, to take moments and influences from the surroundings*" (2013). Once this was complete, she further developed the movement material towards a specific purpose.

*you need [me] to say; I will say it for you using all of my body expression, body, mind, sensations” (2014).*

Fuchs highlights the powerful messages that are inscribed on and through the body. I interviewed Fuchs on the eve of her premiere, *Fragile falling*, a dance work comprising a large and varied cast: women and men, black and white, trained and untrained, a deaf male dancer, and older dancers that are both on film and live on stage. As the choreographer of the Baxter Festival’s commissioned work *Fragile falling* in 2012, Fuchs wanted to explore “*the connections between things ... what are the threads that happen*” (Fuchs, 2012). She confessed to having a “*very strong need to know why. And to understand the ways things work. Whether it be the world, whether it be a person’s body*” (Fuchs, 2012). She confirmed that her choice of such a diverse group was deliberate and described them from the youngest to the oldest who was 66 years old. She explained her core identity not as choreographer rather as teacher and unqualified movement therapist. This led to an introspection to her process and chosen cast which is reflected in her statements “*[it was] a wonderful challenge [to] get rid of the residue of ... somebody else’s aesthetic [that was] dumped on someone*” (Fuchs, 2012). She emphasised that her deep interest was to reveal what was in the mind’s eye’ of each of her dancers and to work with the cloaks of their body memories. Fuchs clarified her strong preference for working with older dancers and echoed many of the views already mentioned above. She said:

They’re not as dependent as younger dancers and I’m not meaning school going. I mean like from young adults going into a professional career ... where you literally ... where the energy is completely different. So you have a group of young people say in their early twenties, even from y’know just before 20? Till about 30, 32 where it’s all about what it looks like. It’s very super ... without it sounding ... I don’t mean to judge it, and it’s not really the case with ... it’s just so exterior, because it’s about how high you can jump, work with your feet, and what kind of technique you have ... whether you can be perfect. So it’s about ‘getting it right’ (Fuchs, 2012).

She lamented the fixation on technique and notion of perfection echoing the ideas of a unmitigated life discussed earlier. Fuchs unknowingly agreed with Dickie, Pasch, Nyamza, and Krugel when she admitted that with older dancers “*what I can see is the [life] experience*” She digs deep accessing memory: “*through the joints ... and this is where everybody kind of holds their stuff is in their bones*” (Fuchs, 2012). This confirmed notions that dancers whether young or old cannot be treated as blank canvases in spite of their obedience or compliant attitude

when working with choreographers. Such docile behaviour has been critiqued by Katze (2014) who has extended Foucauldian notions in her analysis of ballet dancers. In my view, each dancer has a uniquely expressive instrument that comprises his emotional, spiritual and physical self – a life experience that is in constant flow. This is present in both the creative and performative processes of the dancer. The depth of the older dancer's interiority is what could provide them with a deeper wellspring from which to express their unique, interesting and clear voice.

According to Krugel, not all older dancing would be arresting to watch. He maintained that either you have it or not, remarking *"that not all dancers because they are older become older performers"* (2014). For him the dancer, no matter the age, would need a certain X factor. He was proud that Kylián had seen this illusive quality in him at the age of 39 years and offered him a place in the NDT 3 Company as Kylián had established the company for dancers over 40 years of age. As a leading European choreographer and one of the first to bring to world attention the potential and necessity for celebration of the older dancer, choreographer Kylián and his NDT3 were a major force. Kylián could be seen as an advocate for the older dancers' independence and right to dignity. The choreographers of older dancing that were interviewed all seemed to be very aware of working within the limitations of waning physical ability and drawing from their abundant life experience and histories. Davids confirmed that she does not jump as much, or as high as she did before and that her preparation before classes and rehearsals has changed accordingly. She said, *"Before you start real training ... I mean for me, for instance, I need at least half an hour to warm up for a class"* (Davids, 2012). This admission underscores the powerful association some dancers make between physical prowess and athleticism and dancing itself. In her interview, Pasch confirmed, Lauren from the From Here To Maturity Company was an extraordinarily powerful and athletic dancer. Fuchs disclosed that multiple life histories and abundant stories were available for her choreographic process. Her recent work stemmed from grandmothers' stories about hair<sup>85</sup> straightening and hair styling. Fuchs described herself as a teacher and facilitator, not as a choreographer possibly indicating a resistance to the dictatorial position usually assigned to

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<sup>85</sup> The issue of hair as cultural marker becomes heightened in a context like South Africa where the infamous 'pencil test' – a pencil pushed through the hair, was used on particularly black and Coloured families to determine their race. This degrading practice inflicted deep psychological scars and marked thousands of South Africans as an inferior race.

this role. She explained that in her artistic process she provides her dancers with specific, thematic tasks and in the case of *Fragile falling* she had asked her dancers to recall and offer childhood memories of hair that would begin a gestural language. Fuchs elaborated her method noting,

*So what usually happens is through the process and accessing memory, and accessing memory through the joint ... and this is where everybody kind of holds their stuff are in their bone ... literally in their joints, their knees, hips that's where the injuries are. So usually because it's such a kind of deep situation people start to feel what we looking for, but also to help ... so that we work ... so that somebody feels completely comfortable not naked emotionally on stage (2012).*

I am aware that Fuchs has a keen interest in Dance Movement Therapy which may explain her choreographic approaches that includes healing<sup>86</sup> the body. The value of complex dancers: experientially laden, burdened in their bodies and minds is evident for Fuchs, Davids and Stage who notice the multiple inscriptions on these older bodies. The older dancer thus becomes prized by these choreographers who increasingly want to find new ways to communicate to a variety of audiences. This attention to abundant life histories and relationship to athleticism offers hope for modified behaviours for those who might engage with older dancing.

Nyamza is a controversial (mostly solo performer) and choreographer based in Cape Town who explores beyond her Africanist and gendered heritage. Nyamza's interview occurred only a few days after her multiple award winning<sup>87</sup>, *I stand corrected* (2012) which explored Gay marriages, notions of sexual violence and abuse towards especially lesbian women. This setting framed the entry point for the interview. Nyamza is quite frank about her multiple positions as dancer, mother, creative artist, choreographer, lesbian, and assertive about being black. This I found courageous as discrimination towards black lesbians in South Africa is still very prevalent. She began with *"I am an artist who think and do. And I will only think about the audience after the show"* (2012). Nyamza said *"I believe that Arts is so strong that it can*

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<sup>86</sup> The difficulties surrounding the articulation of the therapeutic value of dance is made more complex in South Africa where currently, avenues to study within this valuable field do not exist. This places Fuchs and others who share her interest, yet again on the margins of society.

<sup>87</sup> The production which she shared with UK based, Mojisola Adebayo in London in 2012 won no less than five separate West End.com awards: Best Script, Best Choreographer, Best Ensemble, Best Lighting, Best Production, and Best New Play. In 2011, Nyamza was awarded a fellowship with the Gordon Institute for Performing and Creative Arts and was based for one year at the UCT School of Dance in 2012. She was also the recipient of the Standard Bank Young Artists Award and showcased her new work *Amafankong* (2011) at the National Arts Festival in Grahamstown.

*spread what's happening in the country to kind of form a debate"* (2012). She was clearly excited that lesbian issues from all parts of Africa were able to be addressed through panel discussions that followed immediately after each of her London performances undertaken with Mojisola Adebayo. Her disobedience and defiance of norms for black women was clearly evident.

Maree's comments also raised important questions on the subject of gender based violence when she recalled her experience of *A Spring (two) matter* choreographed by Jens van Daele (Holland) which featured Flatfoot Dance Company (South Africa) together with Ensemble Batida (France and Switzerland) at the JOMBA! festival in 2012. Her provocation that "*he [van Daele] showed strong women but, he, the man, made them get those bruises*" (Maree 2012) begs the question: Who should articulate the pain, misogyny and thirst for power? Are male choreographers to be excluded from this domain because of their gender, and if not, can any (re)presentation of female bodies be set apart from the question of their social construction? The question of literal, versus symbolic representation, seems to me to lie at the heart of all dance performance and is complex. Nyamza argues that embodied histories especially of trauma contained within older persons are invaluable to a choreographer, and that she finds that the re-presentation of these accounts less convincing by younger dancers.

During her choreographic process for *The Meal*, Nyamza changed one of the dancer's roles as she found the young dancer, Ndawo, lacked a sense of knowing or embodied knowledge of the moment in Apartheid history that she wished to evoke. In this work, three intergenerational women shared stories and examined the transfer of tradition using the metaphor of learning dances. The visual splendour of two black dancers in oversized and saturated deep pink tutus teaching each another was, for me, satire at its best. The work began provocatively with Nyamza on her hands and knees scribbling on a 10 meter long sheet of paper "*I must not have a big bum*" (2012) in an act of punishment. Commenting about herself in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person Nyamza stated "*you can see Mamela is like ... has experienced both [apartheid and democracy] She's born 90 what? ... so she [Ndawo] knows nothing. But she's heard about it, but she knows nothing. No experience*" (2012). This suggested to me that such second hand knowing was less potent for Nyamza (as choreographer) than the lived experiences of both the older dancers Eppel and Nyamza. They had both lived an almost equal number of years during the Apartheid era and the democratic era and Ndawo had not. This is



not to suggest that Ndawo the younger dancer is a blank slate, rather what it may point towards is the greater ability of older dancers to appreciate and synthesise the many experiences in life and share these with an audience. Nyamza also stated that there is something for the choreographer to learn from younger persons. She says, *“I’m a Madiba (deepens her voice), Bantu education y’kno. [GS and MN laugh]”* (2012). This laughter acknowledged our shared Apartheid contexts of education and arts frames in which teachers, choreographers and White voices were unquestioning authorities. In the piece, Ndawo attempts to copy or imitate the movements made by Nyamza who said,

*It’s made clear that she [Ndawo] is learning but she also the one freeing Mamela ... I would say my son as my child he is freeing me in other things I’ve never known ... on new education, the things they’re teaching him at school ... I’ve never done that y’know ... and exams* (2012).

We both laughed at how Nyamza was now learning about Science, denied to her during the Apartheid years with its deliberate dumbing down of curriculum in the Black schools to which Nyamza was restricted. Nyamza confirmed and replied *“So in a way I’m being freed by my own son”* (2012). Nyamza’s production *The Meal* also began through a workshopped process of fragmented stories which were often painful memories.



**Illustration 9: *The Meal*. Iziko Museum. Cape Town. 2011.** This exemplar of an intercultural aesthetic confrontation presented Dinah Eppel (left) singing in isiXhosa and tapping the rhythm on her *uhadi* (single bowed instrument) whilst a barefooted Kirsty Ndawo (right) dressed in an eponymous ballet tutu attempts the footwork as instructed.

Nyamza recalled her first ever ballet teacher, Arlene Westergaard who, she maintains, had taken a risk to teach *“this black girl ballet”* (2012) and who was strict. This she expressed through the re-use of ubiquitous hair pins associated with the making of a ballet bun. She said, *“the pins ... [the] pain of ballet”* (2012). In my view, such loaded personal histories that are fearlessly exposed find empathy from new audiences especially those who grew up during both Apartheid and democracy in South Africa. The role of authoritarian figures and the care of older persons by the State, has begun to change since democracy in South Africa and is to be lauded. However, the aged are also dogged by old habits of prejudice, maltreatment and are often the victims of crime.<sup>88</sup>

As a former dancer for the Ballet Rambert Company and current Artistic Director of From Here to Maturity Dance Company, Dickie remembered with pride the origins of her company and their first outing of *By Design* production, staged in a newly refurbished St. Stephen’s Hospital<sup>89</sup>, in 1999. With the formal registration of this company, and the funding that followed, they were able to undertake limited tours outside of their London base. In the case of Dickie in London, a young choreographer had asked her *“Y’know when you’re in front of an audience you want them to love you?”* [to which she responded] *“No I don’t!”* (Dickie & Pasch, 2013). This assumption that the performative (dancer) and creative (choreographer) process is automatically undertaken for an approving audience was challenged by Dickie who embodies both of these roles. Choreographers Nyamza, Dickie and Pasch all argued that the impetus for their work is not about whether audiences will be approving. Firstly, Nyamza declared, *“I don’t think of the audience when I write or it’s not for the audience ... or they can watch me if they want”* (2012). Pasch adds to this view by asking *“Did they get it? Did the pennies drop? Will they go away thinking differently ... Whether they liked me or not is by the by, might be a more mature response”* (2013).

Pasch, I would argue, seeks a clearer primary goal – that of a challenge to the experience of older dancing in terms of meaning. Similarly, for Krugel, performance is not a self- gratifying act. He argued that the power of the older dancer lies in the ability to offer compelling and

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<sup>88</sup> eNews Channel Africa reported the following “1 July 2015 – At least nine pensioners and two guards were wounded when robbers opened fire, as Fidelity guards were delivering cash to a pension pay point at Soshanguve Mall in Pretoria Wednesday morning” (Booi, 2015).

<sup>89</sup> In her interview Dickie related how she was informed by her surgeon that Vaslav Nijinsky, the most celebrated dancer of Diaghilev’s *Ballets Russes*, was also once a patient at St Stephen’s Hospital.

unselfish communication. This, he said, was key and where he felt like saying to many younger performers *“go into your living room, close the curtains and do it there. The problem nowadays is they perform for themselves!”* (Krugel, 2014). Krugel may be claiming that young performers are egotistical and disconnected in the public sphere where performance unfurls. As a choreographer I am of the opinion that the dance is always created for, and in relation to an audience, the dancer in the performance process should not indulge in some masturbatory act nor should their choreographic process be an act of obedience. In this sense, I maintain that the exchange between choreographers, dancers and audience should be dialogical.

Davids, Nyamza, Dickie, Pasch and Krugel point to other challenges for choreographers of older dancing when they wish to promote or market the product (dance performance) especially when this is to new audiences. Dickie and Pasch suggest that part of the problem lies in misperception by audiences of older dancing. She said, *“People think going to watch older people is boring and depressing, and embarrassing”* (2013). Pasch mocked such thinking adding *“it’d be about dying”* (2013). Dickie continued this line of thought stating that for older dancers *“they’re all so slow, dribbling (laughs) and I hope there’s no ... nothing to do with sex”* (2013). This control of obedient dancer, one who follows instructions becomes threatened by free thinking dancers no longer perpetually frozen in their 20s.

## **Theme 2: Invisibility and Frailty**

The correlation between older dancers and audiences, their implicit invisibility and notions of frailty will be unpacked in the next section. To begin, a distinction needs to be made between being visible and being popular as these notions may not be same for the phenomenon of older dancing as described by the interviewees. For example, Stage’s work seemed to focus towards an increased visibility. She explained that the group of dancers with whom she collaborated range in age from 45-50 years. She stated:

*We try to figure out how we need each other or not. We create a repertoire of dances that is interesting just to see the human. In the beginning they may see ‘old women’ but it’s not about high legs, not in balance ... But this is not a mistake, but part of it. We are not trying to impress with beauty, physical strength ... [but simply] to be visible. We like to be here. Not to be a machine who uses the artist to deliver news* (Stage, 2013).

This desire for recognition is noted in other interviewees; Davids, Ballantyne, Krugel, Dickie and Nyamza. Davids considered that *“I ’m quite proud to be still dancing [but] it’s hard to make*

*a decent living ... I think in South Africa we're less used to older dancers. In Europe its ... eh you dance until you (laughs) can't move anymore. But I think that's really the difference* (2012). The context here also confirmed the high regard, greater resources and funding for the arts (and therefore dance) in general terms that is available in Europe as compared to South Africa. For Krugel, the very definition of dance itself comes into question, he stated, *"I mean, here in this country, they think dance and they think (loudly) wow! big leaps ... jetés ... jumping around. It's what they think dance is. So, when they think older person dancing ... no [it] can't be (sighs) phew! No!"* (2014).

So, how is a shroud of invisibility created and maintained? And is such marginalisation culturally specific? Dickie suggests that the problem may rest with promoters and marketers who perpetuate invisibility. For older dancers as professionals in all the countries visited, it would seem barriers to their artistic process vary from adaptations to physical changes in their own older bodies, to societal expectations of what older people ought to be doing. The value of older dancer to funders and marketers of dance performances is altered by notions that older dancing is a risky investment and that there are no audiences for this type of work. These are just some of the factors contributing to a marginalised experience by such dancers. However, Dickie's angry retort *"There is an audience whatever those bloody marketers say, those venue ... there is an audience. It's a lie that there isn't any audience!"* (2013) illustrated Dickie's frustration with those who publicise older dancing. As gatekeepers, marketers are of critical importance to the exposure of the work that Dickie and others undertake. From Dickie's own experience, audiences are not being actively mobilised and from a range of age groups. Her distress is shared by Stage who had a similar experience to Dickie when attempting to shatter this myth. Stage said of a recent performance by older dancers in Malmo, Sweden, *"My friend said 'Oh, don't worry there will be tickets ... its Modern dans. ... It was full!"* (2013). This suggests a larger kind of prejudice not only towards older dancing but towards Modern (Contemporary) Dance itself. These views need to be interpreted in relation to the visibility and popularity of the traditional dance; ballet in a Scandinavian context.

For example, concert theatre Dance in Denmark is synonymous with the esteemed choreographer Auguste Bournonville and has been promoted to the public since the mid 1800s. Stage says

*we look at breaking mythical gender issues. wanted to find human ways of showing stories feelings, fear sexuality, power. All kinds of feelings, relationships and taboos ... human ... and absurdity. I used to be very serious but now (laughs softly). The worse thing about getting old is that you get invisible. It's our job to show reality (2013).*

It was evident from several interviewees that the idea of watching older bodies even prior to attending a performance made some audiences uncomfortable.

In terms of expectations from an audience, as with Dickie and Nyamza Fuchs claimed, “*I haven't really created [my new work] based on that*” (Fuchs, 2012). All three choreographers shared the view that audience approval was not a goal but that recognition of a contribution to the art of dance was paramount. The question of who was best suited to advance these goals whether younger or older dancers in the very performative act itself reveal subjectivity. According to Fuchs:

*Y'know the fact of the matter really is that there is so much more to give when you are older, and you're an older dancer ... that you have with you, to be generous with that. I personally would prefer to watch that, than a whole bunch of really young people bouncing around and ... energetically I kind of relate to it, but in terms of ... on a human level I'm not quite sure how I feel about it (Fuchs, 2012).*

Fuchs had no desire to portray older dancers and especially her female older dancers as frail or [she used the term] decrepit, grey haired and brittle. She was adamant about this which is evident in the use of stylised white wigs.



**Illustration 10: *Fragile falling*. Baxter Theatre. Cape Town. 2012.** Maphathiyane (centre) shares her story with the others dancers: van Papendorp (left) and Pankhurst (right) in *Fragile falling*. Still photography by Lenore Cairncross.

When I asked her to reflect on working with her former Artistic Director, Hinkel who is white-bearded and clearly older, in her new work, Fuchs said how happy she was to have had the

filmed extract of his dance in Okiep included in the final work. She celebrated the experience noting that *“Alfred Hinkel has not danced ... has not performed for as long as I have known him, which is my whole adult life”* (Fuchs, 2012). Later she chided herself to not over analyse him as knowing Hinkel for over 20 years allowed her to observe and place his dance in her *Fragile falling* narrative where it could be most effective. Hinkel, she said,

*[has] been watching bodies, young bodies moving and stuff ... so he has a point of reference that not [only] includes himself in the picture ... I saw of his improvisation was 100% him ... it was really beautiful ... and on top of that the meaning of each and every thing [he did/ offered] that I could actually work with that* (Fuchs, 2012).

It was clear that her enthusiasm for even faint gestures was unperturbed by any notion that the dance from this popular artists ought to be strong. Rather, his strength and value was to be found in his older self and presence today.

Dauids had mentioned that one of the cornerstones and challenges of the older dancer was maintaining a level of dance fitness and to be in their best possible condition no matter the age. For her this was a given. Krugel shared the same concerns of optimal health if one wanted to continue dancing that was mentioned by Dauids two years before. Both Dauids and Krugel maintain an exercise regime that includes floor barre, active walking and strength training. Part of Krugel’s healthy maintenance plan he said includes the following:

*Yoga, weight training but very light as not to build up the body. It’s just muscle definition that is. I walk on the ... sometimes on the treadmill, cycle ... I mean [the] Dutch have this tradition of cycling. I cycle everywhere ... And [I] maintain myself at home, cleaning the apartment, building stuff, I’m also painting* (2014).

He also said of this practice *“I’ve also found nowadays, in my later years that doing too much is dangerous. This causes injuries”* (Krugel, 2014). Like Dickie who has had two hip replacements, Krugel has had his fair share of injuries; he stated *“I have a double herniated disk in my spine. And [I’ve] been operated on in my neck vertebra”* (2014). Whilst declining strength and suppleness have been my own experience when returning to the ballet class at age 45 years as part of field work for this study, it is the encounter with my ageing body which needs respect.

Fuchs deeply respects Beatrice Maphathiyane, who she admitted was not a dancer, nor actress nor performer but *“the lady that’s been helping me in my house for the last seven years.* (2012). This revelation demonstrated to me her resolve to work with untrained dancers

as yet another category of Othered persons in concert theatre Dance. As a choreographer, Fuchs could be criticised for a tokenistic inclusion of both Maphathiyane and Vellum (who is deaf) but I believe her impulse stems from a desire to reject what she sees as the tainted movement vocabulary of trained and approved dancers. Most of the available freelance dancers in her cast have ballet and/or Contemporary and jazz dance training making the impossibility of blank slate as discussed earlier even more potent here.

Fuchs repeatedly refers to a cloak and particular aesthetic that dancers receive *“from their teacher or lecturer or whatever, or their artistic director ... that still hangs there quite strongly”* (2012). This constraint of the body through formalised dance training may explain why she begins her creative process with improvisation that could be construed as a neutral palette. However, she seems to be less aware of the manner in which Maphathiyane’s life history, cultural frame and context would inform her choices during improvisation tasks. Fuchs observed a fear experienced by some of her older dancers when undertaking risk and their levels of insecurity during the choreographic process. For her, working with older dancers was a slow process beginning with confidence building. She also felt that some older dancers’ expectations are hindered by a sense that they had peaked physically at an earlier stage in their lives and therefore may not have much to offer today. She had detected that some of her dancers find fault with themselves stating *“But I used to be able to that but I can’t anymore, So what am I gonna do? ... I can’t balance or do adage or whatever it is. So now what have I got to offer?”* (Fuchs, 2012)

She mentioned that the male dancer, Vellum is deaf only once to me and passed no further comment about him or the subject of disability during the interview. Given that Fuchs is aware of my own ‘disability arts’ work, this single utterance about Vellum may reflect that for Fuchs inclusion of a dancer with disabilities is a non-issue. I ask, does the mere appearance of Other dancing bodies in the performance space ignite a change in behaviour or are even greater performative acts necessary to shift attitudes towards the Other? How does issues of Othering experienced by older persons become known, felt and or experienced by audiences? Fuchs’ latest work *Struck Silent* that premiered on 9 September 2014 centrally situates the issue of

older persons. This performance was the second instalment of the collaborative project<sup>90</sup> between the Baxter Theatre Centre, (Cape Town, South Africa) and Scenkonst Sörmland (Sweden) that began in 2013. *Struck Silent* confronted issues of ageism in relation to the global economic crisis, and invited audiences “to choose perhaps to extinguish our anger with forgiveness and reclaim our dignity. At this point there seems to be a preference for silence ... the relief of giving ourselves permission to pass on the responsibility of our legacy” (Extract from Choreographer’s Note, programme, 2014). Many of the interviewees including Fuchs, Stage, Dickie and Krugel have enjoyed long and influential careers in dance and are familiar with the new territory of the older dancer having provoked questions on many social issues like ageism. For some, such as the American Modern Dance pioneer Anna Halprin who was performing in 1999 at the age of 78, such longevity and familiarity takes on a new meaning. Janice Ross attests:

Additionally, what is arresting about it [Anna Halprin’s *From 5 to 110* performance] as a beginning is that she is, intuitively, expressing a lamentation for the dislocation of the elderly. We suddenly realize that as spectators of an aged performer we are worried that the elderly on stage are going to lose their sense of place and that in their journey of transformation they will forget the way back. For most of us, the theatre is by definition a deeply unfamiliar place, where location is continually redefined. For some with Anna’s [Halprin] duration as a performer, however, the theatre is extremely familiar and its paths well mapped (2007:339).

This anxiety around forgetful bodies and persons who could be seen as weak is picked up in my encounter with Maree and others including Kylián. What remains interesting for me is, Kylián’s recurring theme of death. Why does Kylián toy with the endpoint of Death – frailty? I suggested to Staverman that connections between life and death are more present in South African culture given the closeness of ritual and traditional dance to concert theatre Dance. For example, Glasser’s Afro-fusion Contemporary Dance company Moving into Dance Mophatong, which explored such connections. Staverman felt that such modern vs. traditional cultural intimacy was not the case in the European context. She explained Kylián’s keen

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<sup>90</sup> As the South Africa - Sweden project’s selected choreographer in both 2013 and 2014, her earlier work *I hit the ground running* “depicted the experience of young unemployed people of their place in the [economic] growth spiral”(extract from programme 2014). *Struck Silent* in 2014 grew out of engagement with small, ‘reference’ groups of pensioners in both countries. Fuchs suggests “We have come from such a deep relationship with our work which strongly connects our identity and our sense of worth. Without work we struggle with purpose, or the lack thereof.” (Extract from Choreographer’s Note, programme, 2014).



interest in Aboriginal culture and visit to the island of Arnheim, Australia as some evidence of similar connections. However, she suggested *“if we talk about dance embedded in the [European] society, then it’s more like street dance here ... but not what we call Modern dance”* (Staverman, 2013). The fusion of street dance forms with ballet that is traditional dance in Europe, revealed for me the tension between high visibility vs. popularity. I agree with Staverman that *“maybe the fact that in your country [South Africa] there is still so much ... connections between dance and the society and from the folkloric side [...]”* (Staverman, 2013). She re-emphasised how Kylián wants to show the *“energy and this ... really vividness [of the older dancer]. For him its ... he mentions the power of age. So the power of age ... the older dancer has so much to give”* (Staverman, 2013). Kylián’s image of strong, dynamic older dancers became widely known even in South Africa. The NDT 3 company performed at the Civic Theatre, Johannesburg, Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre, Durban and the Nico Malan Theatre In 1996<sup>91</sup> and were the antithesis of invisibility and frailty.

Sadly, Maree noticed that older dancing was virtually invisible in JOMBA!! and therefore it came as no surprise that the focus was on youth. She was unsure whether *“we’re anything solid enough in South Africa, in terms of audiences, to particularly go in that [older dancing] direction, at this stage?”* (Maree, 2012).

Maree was doubtful about the new dance practices in Contemporary Dance and particularly the oppression and marginalisation of women dancers yet again. She said:

I don’t know if I really want to ... the girls to be so bruised as those three were ... they throw themselves, throw themselves to the ground. They were all bruised. Hard haematomas from doing it so much. I don’t know why that’s necessary? Maybe we could have seen aggression another way on Thursday night? Maybe that’s not necessary for strength? If you’re showing the positive ... negative strength of stuff, fine, I like ... I like the contrast, but y’know I’m not sure that’s the only way to represent it? (2012).

Her final statement was *“Well y’know fine, he showed strong women, but he, the man, made those bruises [...]”* (2012). Maree once more pointed to the controlling, patriarchal forces that dominate the concert theatre Dance scene. She mulled over her thoughts that audiences would eventually change their focus to older dancers but after a long pause resigned herself

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<sup>91</sup> The works in the 1996 South African tour included: *So Sorry*; *The Old Man and Me* and *Silent Cries*. The NDT 2 Company toured in 1997 and NDT1 Company in 1999. Over twenty-five works in total have been performed in South Africa by the three companies (Lever, personal communication 2015, October 9) according to the offices of the NDT Managing Director, Den Haag.

to this fact and said *"Who knows, the world will always focus on younger, and younger, and younger and people's lives ... Life's usefulness will be shorter, and shorter (softly laughs), and shorter"* (Maree, 2012). Her melancholy extended to *"I am more and more distanced from those [young] bodies because they are not representing mine at all (strongly). They are not. There is no help given to me"* (Maree, 2012). This lack of representation seemed to be both an individual and community experience and was of concern to me. Jade Gibson writing on some of the social drivers within notions of *communitas* and the specific example of the Cape minstrel community offered a welcome perspective of potentiality. She proposed that,

Within the walking and parading, is reconstituted history, stories of slavery and creativity, the coming of the minstrels to Cape Town and a black diaspora, the forcibly removed persons of the city and their fragmentation and re-assemblage as a 'community' through the parading, music and dancing that reconstitutes their world, and hopefully has the potential to cross other barriers of segregation also (2013:103).

If, as Maree suggests, older dancers are branded less useful and largely invisible, then their inclusion could afford visibility and an avenue for a reconstituted dance community. In the context of South Africa which has experienced many divided lives, I suggest that the experience of witnessing older dancers can reconstruct the thoughts and feelings of audiences and offer new ways of seeing marginalised bodies. Bodies that are not only sometimes broken and frail but also full of energy and potential. Such nuance and colour of the human condition should be welcomed everywhere.

### **Theme 3: Generosity and Wisdom**

The cliché that with age comes certain wisdom can be found in the various responses from interviewees. Dance advocate Maree also commented on her experience of cherished older dancers within African dance and Indian dance. She mentioned that as far as she knew in traditional Indian dance *"you could go on [dancing] for much longer ... for as long as you stayed fit"* (2012) and that she was aware of Indian dancers Pratab and Priyah who danced well into their 50s. In her knowledge of traditional African dance this was similar. She did however suggest that that the motivation for a longer dance career was more likely as a form and perpetuation of a specific cultural heritage. This view was also shared by Krugel in his comment about the advanced age of *butoh* dancers. The reverence of older persons as custodians of culture seems to transfer to older dancers who become viewed as wise sages or

gurus. Maree's remarks suggested further questions for me, of whether the dance by the Zulu Mama Group should be read as traditional African dance or older dancing within concert theatre Dance – one that was shifting to a theatre performance space? For me, dance performances in spaces such as a theatre changes its form and content Patricia Opondo (2006) has argued this view stating that the analytic frames of cultural codes are altered in shifting performance contexts. She maintained that:

By reviewing these inner and outer spaces, one becomes conscious of the surroundings, including the audience. Active engagement with these spheres results in dialogic communication on various levels and includes the use of specific metaphors in the body gesture and in poetry, and ultimately affects the total presentation and reception (Opondo, 2006:70).

What is interesting is how the above quote applies to older dancers and their art and whether the experiences of ageing bodies that dance can shift attitudes to different bodies in general. What is it about the quality of experience emanating from older dancers that prompts Ballantyne to describe older dancing as *"it's more of a generosity maybe?"* (2012). Nyamza recounted her experience of working with an older person with delight noting *"What I liked about an older person ... they're very open, they're not shy. I feel like there's something about actually people appreciating their selves later on in life. They are not afraid of anything."* (Nyamza, 2012). Davids said *"I find older dancers are much more open ... They're not so concerned about the way they look"* (2012) Fuchs commented on the roles assigned to dancers *"which are not connected as much to the ego"* (2012). These qualitative accounts confirm a central role of fragile ego that seems to be disconnected from the older body and its memory and history. Davids shared Stage's thinking stating *"when you're young it's really [about] technique. It's really all about y'know doing twelve pirouettes and doing amazing stuff physically"* (2012). The sheer physicality and force of the young dancer seems to excite audiences and was confirmed by Hinkel, Krugel and Dickie. Dickie explained how younger dancers need to *"chase coupe jete all over the shop ... barrel turns and pirouettes ... all this and that and now you just need this (waves her arm) still to be effective"* (Dickie & Pasch, 2013). The wisdom of knowing when and how to do less and with less ego as a performer, is the focus of this next section.

The stereotype of the agile dancer that is most valuable in the eyes of the public can be coupled with other narrow definitions of the ideal dancer that include slim bodies for females

and muscular physiques for males. In addition, in the recent past, to be a white dancer in South African concert theatre Dance was to be in a position of sought after privilege. The interview with Hinkel, unearthed very strong views of the roots of such stereotyping as he saw it. Hinkel was of the view that ignorance surrounding older dancing originated from a larger community. He said *"Dance and the Gay community is ageist! To be an older dancer and Gay is not pleasant. We are guilty of creating the stereotype. We are obsessed with youth"* (Hinkel, 2012). This suggested to me that he may have felt there was little room for the older dancer in Contemporary Dance.

By highlighting yet another category of Other, in this case homosexuals, Hinkel demonstrated that even within these marginalised groups prejudice was still pervasive. His attack on thinness as the ideal body shape for dancers, especially women ballet dancers is clear when he said that in ballet *"it's very interesting that everyone looks like young boys ... even the women"* (Hinkel, 2012). Buckroyd has written extensively of the disconnection many dance trainees have with their bodies stating *"they feel alienated from their bodies and talk about parts of their bodies as though they had no identification with them ('I hate my boobs'; 'Is my bum that big?'); [They] are often engaged in a frantic struggle for 'control' of a body that seems to belong to someone else"* (2000:14). Whilst Hinkel pointed out that *"in ballet they make room for the [older dancers through character roles like the Queen]"* (2012), he does not comment on an exclusionary attitude toward Gays in Contemporary Dance. He was adamant that in *"Contemporary Dance there is strong sense of sexuality, the muscular male. It's very present, ubiquitous even. The black, muscular male but the subtle message is of homosexual aesthetics"* (2012). He commented on a work he had created in the 1970s, with a rugby player about whom Hinkel said, *"I asked him 'would you do this for me? You don't have to dance. Just chuck her in the air and catch her before she hits the ground.' (laughs), John was a rugby player. Oh! Boy when he appeared they went bananas ... Later he confessed, 'I think I have contributed to this stereotype too ... But now I'm questioning my own ... it's time to do something about it'". ... He goes on to argue that "The African continent was never ageist. It's changing 'cos of the US influences!"* (2012).

Hinkel said, *"We weren't seduced by the athleticism ... there is in the body, absorbed knowledge, information as it lives. Working in visual art and with kinaesthetic energy, we respond to people's energies. The older dancer carries a lot of information"* (2012). This latter

statement, suggested Hinkel's distaste for the naiveté of young dancers and admiration for the greater wisdom of the older dancer. Dickie later confirmed Hinkel's comments, *"They don't work so hard to communicate something to someone who is watching"* (Hinkel, 2012). Hinkel observed that with young dancers *"they want to leap and do as many turns as possible. In partly God all that John did was walk on and stand. But I could feel the electricity in the audience"* (2012). After an initial resistance to Fuchs' request for Hinkel to perform, Hinkel confirmed that he had enjoyed his experience and that he had suggested that Fuchs put this on film for practical rehearsal reasons. He felt *"I am so used to directing that I had to switch it off ... [the experience] was painless and relaxed"* ... Hinkel's opening remarks were *"I understand the sexuality, sensuality and athleticism can be very seductive. Invariably that is what they expect ... the bravura, the spectacle, young sensual, sexual bodies. The older dancer shows how there is much more"* (2012).

A closer examination of Farrugia's narrative reveals a link between the aged as in need of remedy on the one hand and the celebratory status of ballet dancer in her advancing years . Her appreciation of the Royal Ballet's Company of Elders; older people taking ballet class and even ballet examinations at age 60 years, re-introduces the notion of dance for recreation vs. dance as art making. Farrugia described the range of participants in the community dance project Dance and Lifelong Wellbeing Conference of the RAD held in April 2013, included South Asian dancers and even a group with a cross dresser. This she finds significant in relation to the RAD's prior exclusive focus on classical ballet. She highlighted the integration of trained and untrained dancers, women's agenda and community dance engagement and noted that nowadays, in London, classes that are opened to the dance public are populated by a variety of differently aged bodies. Several experiences of community dancing with the elderly in homes for the aged were shared and the importance of social connection repeated. Farrugia stated that in the UK, *"we addressed notions of youth culture"* (2013) during the Olympics and that the mood now seemed to swing towards the aged. This mood for social development and cohesion reflects a paradigm of repair that is well known in South Africa.

Farrugia's attention shifted to the career paths of professional ballet dancers inquiring *"what do we do with ourselves as dancers [as] everyone is getting older"* (Farrugia, 2013). She reflected on the transition to repetiteur of Gary Avis, a former principal dancer from the Royal Ballet, and the appointment as president of the RAD of Darcey Bussell, former ballerina of the

same company. I asked Farrugia how she felt about Bussell's inclusion as a retired ballerina in a world event like the Opening Ceremony of the London Olympics and her initial response was "*tokenism*" (Farrugia, 2013). This softens and changes as the memorable event became a joyous experience for her students who had the opportunity to dance together with Bussell. The latter part of the interview with Farrugia reflected what she described as an aura of the older ballet dancers of yesteryear: ballerinas such as Margot Fonteyn, Alicia Alonso and even earlier icons, such as Olga Spessitseva as well as Carla Fracci who had danced the role of *Juliet* in her 60s. During this section she questioned whether "concerns [such as age were] prevalent back in the [day]" (Farrugia, 2013) i.e. When the ballet, *Pas de Quatre* was written in the 1800s.

I argue that even this study could be read as an attempt to memorialise life histories of such iconic figures in South African Contemporary Dance. As a fellow dance historian, Farrugia welcomed my intended use of Life History research as a methodology as scant analytical writing around the lives of South African ballet dancers who have danced in the UK and beyond, exists. The subject of life experience is mentioned by many of the interviewees, for example Dickie mentions "*an older person brings so much more to their performance, because of their life experience*" ... that is welcomed by choreographers. She briefly explained the sometimes young choreographers who were less accustomed to working with older dancers have unrealistic expectations of what is like to work with older dancers who are less interested in "*technical prowess and physicality of the dancer*" (2013).

Discussing the quality of the dance movement and an astuteness as to where to place emphasis, Dickie agreed with me when I suggested that older dancers seem to be able to do so much less and yet "*say so much more*" (2013). Whilst the term embodiment was not used directly, Pasch felt that, "*there is something (louder) in the body of the dancer that (still louder) holds all of the experience, history, knowledge, all of that whatever it is, doesn't matter how old the external one is, that little thing comes shining out*" (2013). This comment triggered another view when Pasch stated that this arresting quality of older dancing need not always employ comedy or rely on empathetic responses to be captivating. The role of the fool or clown who is able to pose the awkward question or comment is a compelling concert theatre device. Pasch felt strongly that older dancing has the possibility to generate questions from its audiences and that therein lay some of its wisdom. Dickie strongly resisted the notion of "*a*

*template of what [older dancing] should be*” arguing that older dancing can through its artistry, offer new ways of seeing older persons. She suggested that older dancing as a concert theatre form is diluted by the connections made to the role of dance as only a recreational activity for older persons. Dickie emphasised that *“for audiences to be able to look at someone up on a stage doing something really funny, interesting or exciting, it’s fantastic ... kind of role model if you like”* (2013). Pasch clarifies this by noting that for some older dancing groups *“they’re seeking somebody from the outside to tell them how to be, and what to do, and how to look good”* (Dickie & Pasch, 2013). Both Dickie and Pasch’s experiences of marginalisation of older dancing were confirmed through many instances and reactions to ageist assumptions and stereotyping which they have experienced over the years. Dickie final comments were *“I have to say, I think less about the older dancer and more about just dance”* (2013). This final comment underscored both her intent as a dancer, and as a choreographer; how to sustain generosity and wisdom especially in the face of bigotry.

#### **Theme 4: (In)dependent older dancers**

The absence of healthy role models and representations of older persons in dance is part of the troubling mix that perpetuates the myth of dependency. Discussing the young ballroom dancers that Maree had recently seen, she complained, *“It’s not stopping you from enjoying it but, it is not representing you at all. You are further and further away”* (Maree, 2012). The epicentre of Dance seems to remain young dancers, which shifts the autonomy of older dancers and is critiqued hereafter.

Maree pointed to the current generation of independent dancers who are grappling head on with transitions in traditional African dance that are influenced by the impact of modernity. Her list included founding members of Moving into Dance–Mophatong Dance Company: Mantsoe and Maqoma, and Sifiso Majola from Flatfoot Dance Company. As African Contemporary Dancers (should they accept such a label) these dancer-choreographers could also be considered older dancers in terms of this study. Maree also commented on older dancers in ballet who were moved to the position of character dancer which for some dancers is experienced as a lesser<sup>92</sup> role given that the exalted position would be the principal role.

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<sup>92</sup> Character roles in ballet require a great set of skills, maturity and experience. Some of the greatest character dancers in ballet included Robert Helpmann of the Royal Ballet and John Simon of the CAPAB Ballet in South

The older ballet dancer in South Africa presents a complex site of dependence as the experience of many ballet dancers will demonstrate. For example, the former UCT Ballet School (UCT School of Dance from 1998) included a junior ballet school where children as young as 8 years old would enter the ballet environment and if successful move through their high school and college years into a fully professional ballet company all on the same doorstep. During the sensitive formative period of a young person's life, this limiting worldview becomes problematic. Dancers who are subjected to the often daily praise and criticism of their dance and school teachers also contribute to an unhealthy dependency for their identity. This scenario has been described in numerous biographies including, Edward Villella's *Prodigal Son: dancing for Balanchine in a world of pain and magic* (Villella & Kaplan, 1992), and Julie Kavanagh's *Rudolf Nureyev-the life* (Kavanagh, 2007) and critiqued by many including Stinson (1991), and Buckroyd (2000). This model of feeder school to company is still prevalent throughout the world and may be found in The Royal Ballet in London, The American Ballet company in New York, Paris Opera in France, The Royal Danish Ballet in Copenhagen, The Bolshoi and Kirov Ballet in Moscow and St. Petersburg, respectively. Thus, when Maree expressed her interest to know more about how people feel about themselves ageing, I noted her specific remark, "*and how younger people treat them and see them. I'm very interested in it now in a larger sense but to think about dancers is very helpful*" (2012). This suggested to me that impressionable young dancers could be provided with fresh, outsider insights through older dancing which might alter ageist attitudes in general.

The phenomenon of older dancing that is present in classical ballet provides a rich insight into (in)dignity as roles that are assigned to the ballerina is within a bounded environment. Maree states "*classical ballet also required the young*" ... It is expected that "*the older dancer had gone and done [or does] the character parts.*" ... Interestingly, she claims that "*the end point of her [career] is the character dancer*" (2012). During the interview, I gave Maree an example of how institutional values and traditions of the Royal Danish Ballet are transmitted and confirmed that I had also witnessed this phenomenon as revealed to me by one of the most celebrated Bournonville principal dancers, Thomas Lund. Lund remarked that to be a company member was to have stood both on the bridge and on the stage in *Napoli*, a treasured work

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Africa. However, these roles tend to be supplementary and not in the full glittering limelight which is often assigned to the leading roles.



by Bournonville. This exposure for a young dancer in my opinion, is illustrative of the way in which the ontology of the art form classical ballet becomes embedded. This process may unlock how and why certain habits begin to be valued while others are not and may lead to a deeper understanding of Othering. I wanted to establish Maree's views on the valuing and agency of the older dancer in classical ballet. She replied:

*You can have zillions of children all thinking they might be dancers, then you have a select groups of those becoming dancers, and you only have one character dancer at the end of it. So there's something, with which people are being shed ... turned into audience members as that process goes on (Maree, 2012).*

Although Maree goes on to argue for an alternate experience for an older dancer who may want to continue to perform, it is the side-lining of such persons that is of concern to me. Pather in Judith Browne argues that:

We live in a society where we have inherited this notion of humans as 'waste' ... At the height of colonialism and slavery, a deeply entrenched sense of who we were as possessions for the masters, or for the apartheid government, was engrained. So were notions of masterhood in those who were privileged over others in these systems (2014:5).

Classical ballet in its treatment of older dancers offers fertile ground in which to examine the specific markers present in its re-presentation of age. Within the art form of ballet, distinctions may be made between the presence in dramatic or narrative ballets of older characters e.g. The Mother in *Giselle* (1989) and the absence of older characters in abstract and contemporary ballets such as *Serenade* (1983) by Balanchine and *Connotations* (1990s) by Val Canaporoli. In my experience, the chronological age of the dancers portraying an older character is not necessarily a deciding factor or consideration in casting. The model of intergenerational dancers who perform together as espoused by the Royal Danish Ballet, seems to draw strength from Bournonville, who according to Vedel had "deliberately created roles for older dancers so as to guarantee them an income. [He] also supported the establishment of a pension fund for dancers" (Vedel, personal communication 2014, November 7). Many other European ballet companies follow this intergenerational tradition and as a result of colonialism, this marker is also evident in South African ballet companies especially in the 1970s and 1980s. Recounting his performance of their acclaimed *Napoli* (2003), Lund's remark reflects a loyalty and pride. One can observe the dependent pathway followed by children from entry into the illustrious school of ballet as mere children followed by membership of the Royal Danish Ballet Company as young dancers who work through its

ranks from *coryphée* to *etoile* as they mature into adulthood. Finally, in their later years, they are accorded the dignity of character work in roles such as Madge in *La Sylphide* (1980s) or Queen Mother in *Swan Lake* (1971).

However, as Stage suggests, such a cosseted journey comes at a high price, “*Everywhere in the big culture scene is this way [older dancers in her view are educated very narrowly]. We are from the old school. And, I think we are not good educated, not innovated*” (2013). This old school to which Stage refers suggests a trained body that is beautiful, obedient and silent as discussed earlier in this chapter. This docility in Foucauldian terms becomes even more pronounced when shifted to South Africa where sensibilities regarding surveillance and dependency are acute. This frame must also consider the benevolence of the Performing Arts Councils towards passive ballet dancers. Ballantyne felt that there are fewer activist older dancers in ballet as she says, “*I think ballet is harder on the body [and that] eventually the body just gives in ... Contemporary [dance] is more open to older dancers ... its free.*” Exacerbating this issue for her was that “*In South Africa we’re not used to seeing [ballet dancers] dance past 30-35 ... it’s probably because society [as a whole has] become pretty ageist, everything turned to the youth*” (2012).

Choreographers, she felt are:

not writing [for older dancers] through a variety of reasons ... we don’t have [a range of] classical [ballet] choreographers. I think ballet is pretty stuck [and] they’re stuck in terms of that there is not enough money to actually make new [works]. You can just about afford the rights to do *The Nutcracker* twenty times over. So they’re bound by [existing] repertory (2012).

She agreed with me that perhaps as older dancers we have relinquished our space to dance. Few of the former ballet dancers in Johannesburg with whom I am acquainted, are older dance performers. Some still take adult ballet classes which Ballantyne thinks “*maybe [provides] a space they feel safe and where they can express themselves*” (2012) to which I would add that such space could be viewed as relatively free from critical eyes. Much has been written about body image, eating disorders and the classical ballet body (Buckroyd, 2000), ways in which it is under surveillance (Craighead, 2006; Loots, 2010) and hyper-criticised. I maintain that Ballantyne’s remark “*how will I matchup to a 25 yr old*” (2012) is still prevalent and forms an active deterrent for older dancers of ballet who compare themselves to the dominant dance group. Ballantyne states “*we’re outnumbered [by youth] ... and we’ve gone into mentorship*

*and teaching roles that may have compromised choices for former dancers”* (2012). To be an older dancer of ballet in South Africa seems to call for a defiance.

Davids moved the discussion of independence and dignity in a new direction to question the multitude of dance languages available to dance artists today. As an older dancer, who is trained in classical ballet and previously performed in ballets, Davids’s current need *“to find my way of dancing is strong. [She acknowledges] I don’t really want to classify myself as one type of dancer”* (2012). Subsequent to the influence of classical ballet, she acknowledges her new and varied approaches that stem in part from her artistic partner Cekwana and others such as Mantsoe. This move away from ‘technique’ - a kind of synonym for training in ballet, is that young dancing *“It’s really all about doing twelve pirouettes and doing amazing stuff physically”* (2012). Davids has made a shift toward dance as conceptual art where one is able to communicate on a deeper level. For her, such language is found more readily in the older dancer who is far more open to this way of working. Davids seems to be less or *“not concerned with technique [and the] the set vocabulary that you do”*(2012) in ballet. Some of Nyamza’s responses echo these assertions and are detailed below:

I mean as a dancer, I was told so many things as a black woman, my black body ... Apartheid was hurting in our bodies, in our minds or in our psychic world ... I’m not a ballet dancer and I was never a ballet dancer ... I can’t call myself a ballet dancer, I dunno. But I can, I’m never comfortable ... to call ... But I’ll always say I was classically trained ... I don’t claim that space (2012).

This response is complex and suggests firstly that to be a dancer is to be in a privileged position but to be a ballet dancer is to be further exulted within a normative goal of Whiteness. In her work, *The Meal*, Nyamza explores how messages of the dancing body are passed on from generation to generation. She said. *“In terms of where in the piece this comes in I feel like I had this ... I was spoon-fed in this way, like the country was spoon fed, yah? I would say in our country we were told everything by the white people ... So in a way I’m saying that’s how hurting ballet was in my body. That’s how in apartheid was hurting in our bodies, in our minds or in our psychic world”* (Nyamza, 2012). Her painful remarks strip classical ballet in South Africa from its claimed space of non-racialisation and confirm an Othering and experience of insufficiency, one which both Mamela and I have experienced to varying degrees.

Maree expressed a satisfaction for the anti-ageist activism undertaken through older dancing. She said *“I should think there are people subverting it, but small in number ...* She spoke of

barriers that included the new and popular dance forms that require dancers to be fit, supply *“to be able to fall and not get injured because you’ve fallen”* (2012). Maree agreed with my reflection on performance theorist André Lepecki’s critique of the devaluing of stillness in performance. This aspect was also shared by Davids who spoke of South African energy and attacking quality in performance. The veneration and gratitude towards older dancers by Kylián and others is clear. Krugel’s experience as an older, male dancer I imagined, would be different from other professional older female dancers with whom I had spoken. This was not the case. He emphasised that *“when someone says ‘are you still dancing?’, [his reply is an emphatic] ‘No!’*. Krugel felt there is a big difference. He said, *“No, I’m not dancing ... performing. Big difference. Because I can still be on stage and be able to look and have presence ... [to] move and command the attention of an audience. That’s performing. That’s not dancing* (2014).

He described Kylián’s work *Last touch first* in which he moved in slow motion throughout the work which ran for about one hour. Krugel explained that the full-time career path for an older male dancer was more difficult than for female older dancers. In his experience, on the whole, most female older dancers were dependent on, and supported by, their *“spouses who have nothing to do with dance and who maintain them ... pay the bills so to speak”* (2014). He felt that very few males can be full-time independent performers as work though very well paid (in the Netherlands), was not regular. Many males branched out into other related dance field such as teaching, choreography or directing. For him, the issue was that his work was not a project that some males may undertake for fun on a sporadic basis but rather a way of life. *“It’s my living”* (2014) Krugel said that he also challenged the notion of older dancing as afterthought or ‘nice to have’ recreational activity marking a clearer distinction between his work and the recreational dance described earlier by Farrugia. Krugel maintained, *“Because you cannot maintain a lifestyle as a performer if you’re just performing to just 40 people a night”* (2014). He described a recent short season in Taipei where he played to audiences of 2400 people at each performances. Such reception is what Krugel has become accustomed to and his gratitude was palpable. He said, *“I just know from the comments from the audiences, that I’ve encountered that watched ... that have seen me as a performer, or seen the company, NDT 3, is that they were so riveted* (2014).

He confirmed that he felt that in the Netherlands they were so lucky and that NDT3 was a highly regarded, recognised and respected dance company which attracted a large following. He was adamant that the refined quality of the work which together with his fellow artists (Kupferberg, and le Maitre, for instance) that engendered their successful performance. There was no place for mediocrity. For Krugel, at the heart of the world wide admiration for NDT 3 was the genius of Kylián. Krugel also referred to their status as virtual royalty given that NDT 3 had on many occasions accompanied the Dutch Queen during her state affairs and international visits. His vivid account of dancing in front of several European heads of State including, Merkel, Putin, and Sarkozy reflected a great pride and sense of accomplishment. This continues to motivate Krugel even after the closing of NDT 3 in 2006. His latest undertaking at age 55 years is *Act your age* (2013). The work entitled *Love-ism* was a project with 24 year old Israeli choreographer, Mor Shani which premiered in December 2013.

Krugel held the lack of education in South Africa responsible for what he saw as a stigma about concert theatre Dance in South Africa itself. He felt that in other cultural frames, for example African dance or butoh, audiences attend not to see the older dancer *per se* but to see or affirm the culture. Krugel, older dancing was not about being pitied or being apologetic but being a clear tool to convey the thoughts and ideas of a choreographer. He agreed that this was not a neutral space as the choreographer's message is filtered through his body and life experiences. He said:

it's gotta mould itself. It's still gotta like seep through my blood ... under my veins. It's still gotta be injected into my veins yes for it to be seen?" ... The gift of the older performer he suggested was "because I'm really looking at you. Really looking ... wanting you, to look differently at you" (2014).

This belief in the power and agency of the older dancer in performance was found in the interview in London with Dickie and Pasch, and also Staverman in Rotterdam, and may demonstrate a consistent position for such persons in Europe. Dickie echoes a concern that "*The whole theatre system, I feel is geared towards the young. It's like they who still have it*" (2013). She provoked the very question of age "*I knew about dance and the community projects wanting to address those with sedentary life style. But if you're 55years ... what is the notion of old?*" (Dickie & Pasch, 2013) Both Dickie and Pasch had seen many performances of classical ballet and Modern Dance in Europe over the years. Pasch cited compelling performances by Rudolf Nureyev and Merce Cunningham when they were much older. Pasch

said, *“Yes, some of the athleticism was gone but so what”* (Dickie & Pasch, 2013). Later she commented on the quality of such older dancing, describing these kinds of performances as *“something more internal, isn’t it, something more arresting, more engaging, something you can get your teeth [into]”* (Dickie & Pasch, 2013).

As professional dancers who continue to perform past the threshold of 35, and who readily consider themselves in the category of older dancers, both Nyamza and Krugel share a greater sense of independence and pride at being in this space. Nyamza confided that her experience of Other in dance began early and that she was not comfortable with being a ballet dancer even though she was classical trained. She linked this to a kind of apartheid a space where self-regulation was rejected in favour of iron fisted authoritarianism. Her new work *The Meal* explores this history further and she described it as forging links. She said:

*But then these connections are not only about being a dancer also politically there’s as message about what the white people did to us black people. But I use ballet because it’s like a white woman who taught me ballet. So now it’s not apartheid, but at the same time, you think of ballet as a white, elite dance rather than our dance in the community. So in a way there’s history* (2012).

She clarified that this work was not a personal attack on her first ballet teacher, who was very strict but also caring and who is White, but a larger system that meted out social division. Her comment *“I feel like I’m also celebrating democracy in my own body as an artist [one who is] comfortable to say, I’m a Contemporary dancer”* (Nyamza, 2012) is telling. This distinction to be (or not to be) seen as ballet dancer in South Africa, is thus significant as I was similarly defined as non-white, studying and later performing classical ballet within a white world. A good deal more research needs to be undertaken in the field of Dance Studies around the discourses of (non) performance of race and victimhood. In my view, classical ballet, for Nyamza, signifies her symbol of oppression. She explained her use of hair pins in *The Meal* (2012) stating, *“So in a way, I’m also saying that’s how hurting ballet was in my body ... That’s how in apartheid was hurting in our bodies, in our minds, or in our psychic world”* (2012). She provided many painful accounts of marginalisation that was both physical and psychological. For example, she explained, *“I mean as a dancer, I was told so many things as a black woman, my black body”* (2012). With this I agreed, given my own recollection of hurtful remarks made of black dancing bodies. Later, she pointedly said, *“right now it’s not about my cellulite, my*

*body, my bum*" (2012). This comment reminded me that, for Nyamza this was, and is, her embodied experience.

Although Nyamza accepted my category of older dancer, she preferred the term mature dancer. This term, she considered, assisted in perceiving the older dancer as self-determining, full of confidence and a graceful person instead of implying incompleteness or inadequacy. Nyamza was delighted to be working with inter-generational dancers in her latest dance work and added that working with older persons has numerous benefits for instance, a distilling of movement to its essence. She remarked "*She doesn't have to do much ... she has done much*" (2012) – these and other comments reflect her thinking. She embraced the unique way of moving and the language of the older dancer suggesting that it offered a new dance form. She said "*I feel that art [it] is a new form of art, a new vocabulary that is so innocently beautiful when you see it, it's not written with ego, its written with soul ... it's the soul dancing ... the soul speaking rather than the dancer who is young*" (2012).

I contend that society starts to feel complete when they watch older dancers as they see the full spectrum of themselves from young to aged person. For Nyamza, older dancers embody a wellspring of life experiences, she maintained "*it's like stamped in their bodies*" (2012). She felt that untrained older dancers do not carry the baggage of prescribed ways of moving and this to her was an insight into pure movement. She was excited by the presence that shone when the older dancer was on stage and commented that "*there's a story without a story*. (2012). In this regard, she shared views of the rich narratives embodied by older dancers also suggested by Dickie and Pasch. Nyamza noted that older dancers "*know how to capture the audience*" (2012). Again, she echoed Dickie and Pasch's concerns for audiences to be moved rather than any need for approval from their audiences. She stated, "*not only to entertain [but] also to provoke them*" (2012). As with Davids, Nyamza felt that a lack of funding for the arts and dance in particular in South Africa, resulted in so few opportunities for older dancing in this country. Nyamza said:

and also a White women plaiting a black girls [hair] hello ... there's a stronger story ... like becos' of the dance ... the swans ... like [they were] the most beautiful in the [ballet]story. I was the lonely duck [in The Meal] because my duck ... so few of us [black women] were in ballet. This whole 'ugly duckling' thing ... also the duck died but Kirsty's duck at the end, it doesn't die. She lives freely. [A] happy ending (2012).

Nyamza reminded me that her work *“was a story ... [that] would be loved by older and younger people”* (2012). For me, given her sad experiences, her pride and independence to be choreographing and performing is evident in her final statement *“and that it is [or can be] presented on stage”* (2012) is remarkable.

Both Fuchs and Nyamza reported that their experiences in working with older dancers demonstrated a freedom to take risks. Nyamza’s account of the courage it takes to perform was in itself revealing. She said *“So in a way its more about the work first, ‘cos I feel like sometimes if I don’t think and do, I will never do and somebody else would do it.”* This remark is echoed by Davids who mentioned that this call to action, to begin and perform a work required fewer egos. Part of the act of performance needs a willingness to be aware of the next person and for Davids is motivated by her clear purpose and choreographic intent. Davids added, *“Like I said you don’t have to jump one meter off the floor, but you can find a different energy and that energy doesn’t diminish. It doesn’t show you less of a dancer or ... it’s a different ... you take yourself as a dancer to a completely different level ”*(2012). For Nyamza, *“It’s about my body onstage. Being present. The presence of a mature dancer ... I can suggest one or few gestures. So I feel like as a mature dancer it’s about saying I’ve done that but can ... I can just explore this now ... ‘cos I’m talking about this now, y’know?”* (2012).

The majority of interviewees in this study located predominately in South Africa and in three European cities, have suggested that the value of older dancers could originate in their life experiences which they bring to their work. When questioned as to what life experience means in an older dancer Nyamza had remarked *“the dance is embodied in them ... it’s like stamped in their bodies”* (2012). Nyamza, Davids, Dickie, Pasch and Fuchs’ commentaries are supported by Thomas DeFrantz who similarly claims that *“[Dance] demonstrates what it is to be fully present in the moment. It reminds people how to be engaged in their lives. And yet, it seems to be something that can be done without any particular meaning at all”* (2012:168).

Dance and the body have the potential to create meaning and impart knowledge and in addition, act as central markers that frame understandings of culture. The experience of older dancing contributes to this discourse. The theme, core and periphery, will be examined in the final chapter to demonstrate how older dancing and Bodies as subject, take up each of these positions on the Contemporary Dance floor.





## CHAPTER SEVEN: BODY AND SPACE FOR OLDER DANCING

*Take up your position, centre stage*, an instruction usually received from a director, can imply a site of importance and is the final metaphor that I will employ to embolden older dancing in this closing chapter. Throughout this thesis I offered an account of the emerging terrain within Contemporary Dance which illustrates how older dancing may be read and appreciated through various lenses including Cultural Anthropology, Historical Studies, Phenomenology, Performance Theories and notions of Body. This concluding chapter comprises five sections and begins with a synthesis of the narratives of the twelve interviewees. I consider an overarching commentary of what older dancing entails and how such bodies are held at the margins in South Africa of the 2000s. Section Two constitutes the building blocks for the construction of the thesis of this study which consists of four main parts: questions of identity, the multi- and inter-cultural debates: relations of power and agency, a discussion of the performance continuum – the politics of body and the politics of space. The section ends with key propositions emanating from the above. In Section Three I deal with the implications of these propositions for practice, policy and theory in the contextual space of a changing South Africa. Section Four identifies more explicitly the contribution of these constructs to our existing knowledge. Finally, Section Five shares the concluding thoughts of this exploration, including the limitations of the study and indicates possible future directions for research that may stem from this enquiry into Dancing the Other in South Africa.

### **Findings: A synthesis of the narratives**

In the previous chapter, I analysed the narratives of the twelve interviewees extracting and building four key themes: the inscribed and embodied lives of older dancers which refute claims that dancers can be perceived as blank slates or choreographic playthings, some of the ways in which bodies have become or have been rendered unimportant which, I argue, perpetuates invisibility in concert theatre dance, extracts from their numerous accounts of the value of older dancing; terms such as rich, wise, generous and full of life experience which suggest a model of resourcefulness rather than hindrance and various challenges that have contributed to dependency for older dancers; these included funding, infrastructural support and existing models which seem to bind older persons to a life of dependence and in need of remedy. A dichotomous core and peripheral reading for older dancing bodies has emerged

that does a disservice to the complexity and nuance of the lives that embodied older dancing. In 2011, I offered a conference paper: *Dance is for the youth-filled body* (2011b) Without repeating the full contents of that conference paper, some of the key issues that I had raised included; giving voice to the peripheral dancer, the context of human rights in South Africa, and a critique of youth-filled bodies in the global concert theatre dance scene. My chief contention is that an obsessive youth-filled-ness is held in Dance and is maintained through forces such as such as advertising, television and the social media and extends to a Marxist reading of the Church and State. Together these agents act as key determinants of cultural formation. I echoed Cooper Albright's call for a re-envisioning of dancing bodies. She wrote, "by re-envisioning just what kinds of movements can constitute a dance and, by extension, what kind of body can constitute a dancer" (1997:57) we can tear down stereotypical ideas of dancing bodies and dance forms that have emerged in concert theatre dance in South Africa. The identity of dancer in this scenario seems to reject particular kinds of bodies and remains undisturbed, marked by privilege and a sense of righteous belonging. Contemporary Dance in South Africa has dislocated these idealised bodies by positioning the complex variety of humankind: black, Gay, disabled, plus-sized and older bodies as some of the new champions of dance. These bodies are asserting their presence on the centre stage and present challenges to all sectors of Dance from the novice dancer and choreographer who is still acquiring a set of skills, to the seasoned or experienced dance reviewer.

In order that my main argument for this wider reading of older dancing within Contemporary Dance and its resistance to Othering may be understood, I dispute the value of a Body-space reading for dancing. I unpack this concept through the following: questions of identity (including self-identity and notions of acceptable bodies), debates surrounding power and agency, investigations of the politics of performance with regard to body and of space.

## **Thesis: Dancing the Other in South Africa**

### *Responses to questions of identity*

South African dance works for instance Nyamza's *The Meal* and Fuch's *Fragile falling* constitute an emerging category that is in its initial stages of exploration and could be labelled

as choreographies of older dancing. These dance works reflect the older dancer performing amongst other roles as keeper of stories, which suggests an honoured space for the elder in our midst, one who transmits knowledge and wisdom. However, it can also serve to reinforce ageist assumptions for older persons by limiting their roles thereby hindering possible alternative contributions. The distancing of older people has been created through the virtually exclusive representation of young dancing bodies as a norm in many media including Contemporary Dance works or as Maree rejected, *“as an ageing person they are not representing mine [my body] ...* She complained that several barriers prevent older dancers from being on stage including *“the kind of dance forms [like Hip hop] that are growing or popular [where] you need to be young and fit, and supple ... the need for the younger, and fitter and more extraordinary and different from ordinary people dancers are required to be* (2012).

This is part of what I describe as the hegemonic construction and identity for dancers who are not seen as ordinary people but rather definitive people with an implicit body that is young, fit and extraordinarily supple. This narrow selection process effectively excludes a range of bodies that do not fit these strict criteria and entrenches the aesthetic of who should dance. Additional privileged bodies include those that have access to training in certain dance forms and styles and, I would add, those incapable of acquiring cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) in the sense of a particular dance form such as classical ballet. Again, bodies that have little access to learning such a particular form are likely to be positioned on the margins in terms of Body and of space.



**Illustration 11: *Fragile falling*. Baxter Theatre. 2012.** Andile Vellum is reflected in a large mirror on stage that begs the question: just who is watching whom? in Fuch's *Fragile falling*. The photo by Mark Wessels is used courtesy of the Baxter Theatre.

The idea of working with untrained bodies, for example where Fuchs deliberately invited Beatrice – “*the lady helping me in my house*” (2012) to participate in her commissioned work *Fragile falling*, could thus be viewed as a strong resistance to such normative positions currently held within Contemporary Dance in South Africa. Whilst the choice of working with an untrained dancer may have been shocking for some in the Baxter audience in 2012, we can now take stock of a choreo-activist choice already explored since the 1960s in the USA and on South Africa stages as practice (refer to the works of Gouldie in Chapter Two and Hinkel in Chapter Six) but whose agency has been largely under-theorised in South Africa, until recently.

The gap that Contemporary Dance creates when it positions itself as a voice of youth widens the divide not only for older dancers but for other norms that have been set for dancing bodies. As Ballantyne<sup>93</sup> commented on dance, “*it’s a very youthful genre, I think in terms of whom we see on stage. It’s [older dancing] very rare*” (2012). This raised questions of identity for me as the older dancer is rooted in a complex set of issues given the difficulties

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<sup>93</sup> Ballantyne was the very first person I happened to interview. As an arts writer based in Johannesburg, she sits both from afar observing the older dancer (object) and is at once at the centre of constructions of older dancing (the subject) through her critical reflection of what others write.

experienced by many South Africans with a sense of belonging. The tensions between indigenous, colonial and diasporic communities still play out in acts of violence and xenophobia that has been widely reported in the media. Older dancers' lived experience in South Africa includes both the incarnation of an apartheid world and the democratic space of the new South Africa. For those like Fuchs, Nyamza and Davids, whose lives are impacted by these forces identity formation is rendered complex.

The problem of acceptable dancing bodies and specifically older dancers therefore resurfaces. I have described at length older ballet dancers and older dancers of Contemporary Dance as two separate categories (in Chapter Two) and explained how in South Africa, older dancers and especially black male older dancers remain a rarity. Ballantyne suggested why older dancers are found in more in Contemporary Dance and less in ballet. She felt that, *"Ballet is harder on the body and that you probably can't eventually do certain [physical] things as you would like to. I know I can't do plenty of ballet (laughs loudly). Eventually the body gives in. I think contemporary [dance] is far more open to older dancers. It's freer"* (2012).

This openness, or freedom from the restriction which ballet is perceived to impose, may spring from the impulse to explore, a rejection of old ways of doing, an interdisciplinary trajectory and non-conformism<sup>94</sup> in a general sense that is bound up in the notion of Contemporary Dance. Ballantyne noted *"I think especially in South Africa we're not really used to seeing them [ballet dancers] dance past 30 ... 35 or 36"* (2012). She provided more examples of classical ballet dancers in Johannesburg who are no longer performing and explained *"I think it's probably because society's become pretty ageist anyway, everything's tuned to the youth. The youth ... the youth"* (2012). This comment on an ageist concert theatre community and perhaps a wider society was echoed by both Maree and Hinkel. They expressed disillusionment that the central space in Dance is held by youth. Maree's exasperation *"the only way you don't age is if you die young, yah?"* (2012) is revealing. All bodies in themselves will atrophy and eventually die.

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<sup>94</sup> Whereas in classical ballet, it may be argued that a preservationist model and transfer of age old culture predominates (which is not to suggest that attempts have not been made to re-imagine classical ballets in a contemporary or even African form, Paeper's *A Spartacus of Africa* (2015) and Masilo's *Swan Lake* (2009) amongst many others being cases in point).

To defy existing norms for dancing bodies that are required to be trapped in perpetual youth, is to undertake a brave challenge against the dominant Concert Theatre Dance form in South Africa which, in my view, remains classical ballet and the ballet body. Women's bodies in particular, are frozen in a pubescent longing for escape from adulthood as underdeveloped breasts and hips are prized in many ballet companies. It becomes clearer that rambunctious Contemporary Dance pioneers as Other bodies may have experienced isolation and censure during particular historical periods in South Africa. For example, Gary Gordon was older than most of the dancers in his First Physical Theatre company based at Rhodes University, Grahamstown, of which the young Ballantyne<sup>95</sup> was a member. I maintain this unapologetic action would have profoundly altered the prevailing perception of who should or could dance. Responses to the question of multiple identities for older dancers are as varied as the dancers themselves.

### **Multi- and inter-cultural debates: relations of power and agency**

A study of older dancing in South Africa necessitates location within multicultural and intercultural discourses given the significance of the cultural formation, transition and re-integration of South Africans into international spheres explored in general terms in Chapters Two and Three. For the first time, anti-apartheid friends and previously clandestine emissaries were able to freely engage with one another in the post-apartheid era. These exchanges however, retained their unevenness particularly regarding funding, technological advances and education amongst other resources. Multi-cultural exchanges were marked by specific relationships of power. The range and frequency of international collaborative Contemporary Dance projects increased dramatically and examples such as *Shuttle 99*, exchanges made possible by the British Council, *Alliance Francais* and Pro Helvetia *et al.*, gave rise to dialogues such as the Davids and Cathala choreographic explorations, the Baxter Theatre and Scenkonst Sörmland exchanges and Nyamza and Mojisola collaborations. This work is all evidence of what may variously be described as revived interest in the other, part of development agendas

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<sup>95</sup> Ballantyne's comment "he danced for a long time into past 50, I'd say even ... I didn't really think about this age as I was watching him ... the piece was lovely...he danced it beautifully. It was emotive ... it didn't really bother me ... occur to me that I was watching an older dancer" (Ballantyne, 2012) can now be better understood in this wider context. Ballantyne's respect and admiration for Gordon is clear.

and, (some may even argue), colonial guilt. Much still remains to be re-examined as these issues of power and agency are at play in these impactful cultural exchanges.

In the 2000s, these Contemporary Dance exchanges, in my view, thrust classical ballet to the margins in several subtle ways. Although classical ballet did see exchanges across its borders as far back as the 1940s, the allure of Contemporary Dance as an all-inclusive, new dance form increased although did not replace classical ballet as is evidenced in the 3 predominantly Contemporary Dance Festivals discussed in earlier chapters. The stigma of classical ballet as an elite dance form associated with Whiteness seems to endure as can be observed by audience reach which has not waned dramatically (especially in the Western Cape where ballet has enjoyed the longest history). The move into a survival mode where there is little or no money for new work, partly explains why most classical ballet companies repeatedly stage works from their repertoire. Previously the financial underpinnings for classical ballet in this context were met by an apartheid regime funding base which included for example in set design, costumes and choreographic copyrights and offered a certain privilege denied to other dance forms. The formation and ongoing development of the Othered dancing body that is Contemporary Dance must be viewed in this holistic view. If, older dancing in South Africa were to succeed, it would need to overcome a relatively hostile environment which includes a majority of the youthful South African population. Unlike our European counterparts, this young audience may display a narcissistic appetite for dance by youth, for youth, rather than a perceived notion of older dancing.

An additional burden for Contemporary Dance which emanates from South Africa is the perceived need to legitimise itself as African which oddly bolsters its agency by further provoking the Africanist discourse. For instance, South African artist Maqoma, was *“accused of being not African enough in other parts of the world”* (Ballantyne, 2012). This window into the bounded positions for Contemporary Dance from Africa that will only consist of dance by the young, acceptable notions of being black and/or African sadly continues to prevail. Many, including Ballantyne, are vocal on this issue arguing that some festival organisers in the West want a version of Contemporary Dance palatable to their tastes. *“But they want the vision ... or version rather, of what Europeans or Americans have of Africans, or black Africans, doing Contemporary Dance [that] hasn’t moved from the skins and rattles versions* (2012).



These comments resemble fractious fault lines in the South African dance scene as, in my view, they serve to reinforce stereotypes for dance originating in the South. Contracts are scarce and commercial interests can drive some choreographers to pander to such tastes. Ballantyne chided these gatekeepers saying, *“Sometimes we resist change that happens because we have this [fixed] vision of artists. But, they must evolve and their work must evolve”* (2012). Regrettably, there are audiences, both local and international, which hold narrow views of the capability and contemporaneity of black choreographers who, on the periphery in the 80s, rapidly emerged on to the Contemporary Dance scene following the collapse of apartheid in the mid-90s. This inadequate lens positions them as limited artists who were expected to be engaged in discourse of hybridity – one that is depressingly framed in the West and that desires happy natives executing a variety of traditional African dance styles. The artistic work of black choreographers such as Maqoma and Boyzie Cekwana then, when seeking exposure for contemporary experiments which employ more conceptual approaches of personal interest, may become penalised and marginalised. This unrecognisable African choreography becomes outside of the marketable frames held by international festivals.

Maree was one of the very first people I had selected to interview. I noticed early on in the interview that she experienced discomfort with the categories within concert theatre dance that I requested her to assign for herself. She responded after a series of negatives to the various categories (dancer, choreographer, director and audience member) and finally said *“so presumably I have to be an audience member”* (Maree, 2012). My interpretation of her surrender generated a further question of hierarchies in Dance which I may have created and allowed greater exploration. For me, to be the final recipient of the dance as an audience member was to occupy a position of honour. I have already opened the construct of elevated position of dancer and turn here to Maree’s sigh at the notion of mere audience member – as if audiences have less agency or influence on what appears on the dance stage. From my perspective both as a member of Dance audiences and embodied experiences as a professional dancer on stage in South Africa for over a thirty year period, audiences

exercise their power through a number of mechanisms including (non)attendance and vocal responses (jeering and applause), amongst other diverse forms of feedback. Audiences are consequently very powerful and frequently poorly considered in the creative act of dance production. Opportunities therefore exist for older dancing as most concert theatre audiences

in South Africa comprise so called middle aged. Staverman similarly confirmed that the profile of audiences for concert theatre dance in Europe in general, seems to be older persons.

The deconstruction of stereotypes in Dance pertaining to race, gender, sexual orientation and disability has been actively undertaken by Contemporary Dance practitioners in post-apartheid South Africa and was discussed in Chapter Two. Many examples of choreo-activism in Contemporary Dance over the past 20 years are notable and any selection made here would serve only as my highly subjective listing. Challenges to the barriers of race and gender politics might include; Hinkel's *Bolero* (1989), Pather's *Ahimsa – ubhuntu* (1996), Gordon's *Shattered Windows* (1994), Ginslov's *Written in Blood* (1998), Davids' *The Coloured Chameleon* (2014). To sexual politics, Snyman's *Moffie* (2015), Xaba's *Uncles and Angels* (2012), Nyamza's *Kutheni* (2009) and to disability arts, Vellums' *Unmute* (2014), Wichterich-Mogane's *Lovaffair* (2010) and Samuel's *Who says, The Ugly Duckling?* (2003) all of which have been noted in this study. Consider one of the earlier examples of agency in Hinkel's duet *Pad onbekkend* written in the early 1990s in which a rugby player performed as a dance partner. Hinkel's use of this person who could be read as a culturally iconic figure – representative of all things white, Afrikaner and male, into Hinkel's world of dance with its associations of femininity and creativity served, in my analysis as a triple attack. Firstly, this inclusion destabilises machismo tied into the sportsman as he appears in graceful and powerful movement associated with dance. Secondly, any religious conservatism that disallowed the frippery of dance and/or was considered sinful, and of the flesh, was challenged by Hinkel's open display. Thirdly, the noble white master who is customarily not the centre of labour, was in this setting lifting and supporting his dance partner.

### **The performance continuum: A politics of space**

Since the 1990s, the phenomenon older dancing began to appear more frequently in concert theatre spaces especially in Europe with its ageing population. As A.B Evans and M. Sleep maintain, the "number of perceptual barriers that were contoured by wider social representation of older adults" (Evans & Sleep, 2012:1) has shifted. This has resulted in deepening investigations of the older adults, their social and recreational needs, health

concerns and issues of longevity. Part of the overall landscape that is South Africa dance i.e. a predominance of dance in the major urban centres was discussed in Chapter Two. The account by Dickie of a touring programme in the provinces in the UK and a lack of performance opportunities in London's major theatres is apposite to their mainstream experience. These are admittedly singular accounts and more work remains to be done around responses to older dancing by audiences in rural villages in contrast to urban centres. Other performance frontiers as discussed by Opondo (2006), may include issues of dress that relate to fashion and require much further examination of the range of cultural policing of bodies. What selected bodies may or may not wear, when and where, are beyond the scope of this topic but remain valid to broader frames of marginalisation. For example, the use or non-use of the *hijab*, the (in)appropriateness of 10-year-old girls dancing in revealing costumes, lipstick and rouged cheeks in a country like South Africa where the incidences and reportage of rape is shockingly high, is pertinent.



**Illustration 12: *Kaisiki Natakam*. Thirukurungudi, Tamil Nadu, India. 2015.** Local children (left) using suitable props, and later Srikanth and Ashwathy Srikanth (right) perform *bharatanatyam* inside the 10<sup>th</sup> century, Vishnu shrine in November 2015. The performance was a prelude to the larger annual ritual, *Kaisiki Natakam* revived by Dr Anita Ratnam since 1999.

Contextual frames for the reading of any dance performance is vital as can be seen above. The performance space for *Kaisiki Natakam*, the 13<sup>th</sup> century ritual inside the sanctum of a temple alters its reception and intent. Further the presence of so called low caste children in the inner sanctum that was ushered in by Directors – Anita Ratnam and Ramanujam could be read as revolutionary, indeed visionary. From the above photograph complex insights into the politics of space – the many ebbs and flows of socio-political history, religious implications and shifting performance practices over many centuries can thus be analysed.

Dickie's work *Any Queen* (2007) is a further example of destabilising the frontiers of perceptions of older dancing. Read at its face value when she said "Yes, well anyone can be a queen. Well I spoke about queens did the drag bit" (2013) might suggest that this solo work was a re-presentation of the British monarchy. Rather, it disturbed the clichés of Gay people as hysterical, overly dramatic personality types as told through older dancers. Her response to the publicity which Company of Elders enjoyed following their television exposure was telling of the hegemonic power of the media. Dickie claimed that the Company of Elders "got plenty of publicity and attention for dance and older people but it suggested a template of what it should be" (2013). This statement reflects her rejection of norms, and certain types of acceptable behaviours or correct and appropriate topics for older dancing which was shared by South Africans interviewed.

The role that the media plays seems untouchable. On the one hand, through its tales of 'Do's and Don'ts' (a Cape Town radio station in August 2015 seems to have no compunction in telling its diverse listenership what to wear or how to eat), it is powerfully instructive, and on the other it is vulnerable as we have seen through the suppression of journalists and an increase in violence toward the media. One of the most recent examples of this shift would be the brutal murder during a live television broadcast of the journalist, Alison Parker and her cameraman Adam Ward in Virginia in August 2015. To complicate this issue further, the media exists in multiple formats: print, film, television, concerts, trade fairs, conferences and even world summits. This makes the scope of an investigation of the Media and older persons, specifically older dancing exhaustive. Scrutiny of the subject Dance within television programmes for instance *The Golden Girls* and, films: Maggie Smith in *Quartet*, Julianne Moore in *Still Alice* with its commentary on life with Alzheimer's and even Tyler Perry's *Diary of a Mad Black Woman* are potential sites laden with nuance of generational frames for Body space. The magnitude of social media and its impact on cultural formation and expression points towards new spaces from which to understand for example, the complexities of Olympian, Caitlin Jenner and her transgendered journey. What shape will such a story take in a retelling and setting in for example, the concert theatre dance domain? How to remain sensitive to that which is mediated through choreographers, producer-directors and an expectant audience?

Audiences are bombarded through a media that exists in multiple formats commenting voraciously on all forms of art and entertainment. Ballantyne who discussed her willingness to attend older dancing in South Africa used the word witness which suggests an advocacy for older dancing as form and its artists which I have borrowed for my own thesis. She remarked:

*I think it's more about being a witness to that ... those years of training and intellectual capacity, emotional intelligence. Young dancers, I mean they're gorgeous to look at but there's not always that ... thinking that comes through ... some have it, some don't, but very often, I dunno, it's probably me the older dancers there's more shared experience on the stage. It's more of a generosity maybe? (Ballantyne, 2012).*

The skill and agency of older dancers has been persistent but it is necessary to heed the role of an old, wise person as discussed at the beginning of this chapter. Davids in *The Coloured Chameleon* (2012) and Nyamza's *Wena Mamela* (2014) are for me the new examples within a category for older dancing that wish to foreground coloured identity and multiple identity rather than the notion of age. Davids had confirmed this view stating that *"obviously Contemporary Dance now"* has a range of influences and approaches and explained how *"the influences of Boyzie, working with him, his approach which also pushed me in a different direction ... not to be so concerned with technique. That the technique comes but to delve much deeper"* This unwillingness to be boxed into a definition of older or women or Gay ... which she perceives as limited, is part of the freedom which allows her *"To be able to choose per project, what I want to say"* (2012).

Initial analysis may suggest that Contemporary Dance is all encompassing, progressive and even a democratic environment for the body. However, the experiences of older bodies and the very spaces in which such experiences are aired become highly contested zones of operation within the exchange of human encounters mentioned above. Thus, the various media, theatres and parking lots, open streets, shop front windows and public gardens become shifting sites and territories for dance.



**Illustration 13: *Fragile falling*. Okiep. Northern Cape. 2012.** This photo still from *Fragile falling* reunites dancer, Ondine Bello (white dress) with her former Artistic Director, Alfred Hinkel (black suit and hat). The Victorian inspired costuming complementing the harsh landscape of this semi desert region of South Africa can be read against the free flowering burst of seasonal colour.

### **The performance continuum: A politics of body**

The dangerous assumption that parameters for dancing bodies can be conceived of as singular and not multiple approaches, often pre-determined in the West, was rejected by all voices screened in this study. This perception is being tackled head on by local choreographers such as Davids, Fuchs and Nyamza (and, I would argue, the European colleagues in this study) as they challenge stereotypes for women, race and issue of age. Ballantyne had pointed to a dearth of choreographers of all forms of older dancing in South Africa, lamenting that “*nobody’s writing*” (2012) especially for them. She provided numerous examples of successful South African dancer-choreographers who could, in the context of this study, be considered part of an older dancer group i.e. older than 35 years of age. Her list of names included Maqoma, Mantsoe, Athena Mazarakis and Juanita Finestone-Praeg. She was excited about the developments in the South African Contemporary dance scene and the explosion of cross-border work especially across Africa or inter-Africa and the sophisticated use of technology in new choreographies. It is not surprising then that for Darkroom Contemporary Company and Underground Dance Theatre, two of Cape Town’s newest Contemporary Dance companies, physical theatre and site-specificity are two key elements of their creative work (Cohen, 2013).

I have already alluded to the significance of the politics of space and of public space in Chapter Four. In Underground Dance Theatre's experimentation with strong gestural language (as with Bausch), one can witness a contemporary South African choreographic approach that colours their work significantly.

During the interview process, Ballantyne commented with pride that her 3-year-old son was taking ballet noting *"it's been interesting [to see] people's reaction to him doing ballet"* and how many mothers felt uncomfortable and may exclaim *"Oh my husband would never let little Charlie do [that]"* (2012) revealing yet again, stereotypes for males who want to dance. This aspect of social conditioning is important to grasp as it feeds the (non)acceptance of older dancing. Risner (2007) and Burt (1999) have written extensively on the challenges to the boy code that can be appropriated here to suggest an equally powerful youth code that exists in Contemporary Dance one as was evidenced by the twelve interviewees.

One of the earliest choreographers and pioneers of work with older dancers is German choreographer, Pina Bausch. As doyenne of *tanzteater*, Bausch's work 1980 profoundly affected British actress, Fiona Shaw, who confessed to the editor of *Dance Gazette*, David Jays, "And I thought: the reason why this work has really affected me is that it's not just aesthetically mind-blowing, but it's provoking memory – and turning *my* memory into something beautiful" (2006:45). Such an ability to transport audiences, to shift or unblock cultural patterns and hardened memories that Shaw experienced, becomes invaluable in understanding memory, marginalisation, forgetting and trauma in South Africa. The threat to a transforming society of such living histories and the historians who embodied these stories, becomes all the more serious when repressed and untold. Future generations are denied a choice to learn from the experiences of the past making it vitally important that the various dance role-players reconsider the lived experience of older dancers and potent agency that they manifest in the performative act I concur with Ballantyne when she said *"maybe some part of us yearns for that deep experience ... that lived experience ... that ability to really be in the moment in the piece and really just draw it out"* (2012). She gestured a plucking from the heart that suggested a certain influential expression that only older dancers could offer in their performance. This notion of body as a frontier latent in its evolving experience, can and should be more widely appreciated.

Choreography as a primary act of the dance creation process – a storytelling through the body, transcends the image of dribbling, frail persons once marginalised to command insightful reflections of the human condition and should be celebrated. We can begin to understand older dancing as stories that illuminate various stages of life: childhood, youth, adulthood as equally significant golden ages. The so called middle age crisis in this scenario becomes insignificant in the delight and promise of significance at each age. Could a warm welcome await older dancing that challenges what audiences perceive to be authentic dancing? The answer is complex as South African concert theatre audiences of dance during apartheid would have considered ballet as its norm for over 300 years, a consideration that post-apartheid is quickly changing.

Future research around all the subfields alluded to above could yield important results if derived from a range of responses from audience members who have experienced older dancing in Contemporary Dance works rather than my sample of those who have intimate or close connections. As I approach the closure of this study, and my encounter with older dancing, I offer my insights (a nexus of performance, body, space and age) that have emerged from my specific research experience over the past 5 years and lived dance experience of over 40 years.

### *Key propositions of the thesis*

Identity formation is fluid and in a constant state of becoming that remains in critical dialogue with socio-cultural hegemonies. Therefore, to be defined as an older dancer, becomes multi-determined by several forces that lie both inside and outside of the performing arts world. Older dancing may be viewed in ideological terms to be open to all interested in articulating its concerns, even if current voices for older dancing in South Africa, seem to arise from former professional dancers over 35 years of age. Many of these advocates were selected to share their views in this particular study.

The world in which older dancing unfolds is constricted by normative practices that have given rise to silenced, withdrawn and retreating Others who struggle against these norms and prejudices. Various described as debilitating and in some cases as catalysts, for example preferential race, gendered and ablest practices, have begun to be challenged in the post-apartheid era in South Africa by marginalised dancer-choreographers. However, strong class



divides, the greater integration of foreigners especially from within Africa, engagement beyond a largely Christian aesthetic, are areas that are largely uncharted in Dance.

Concert theatre dance as a form grapples to transcend the confines of the proscenium arch and its Western<sup>96</sup> theatre constructs of performance. Contemporary Dance in South Africa within this scenario breaks new ground as it increasingly enters the public space. The presence of missing or absent voices such as older dancing reasserts and integrates older persons as part of the common human condition and experience.

Whilst the agency of the older dancing body has been recognised and key forces in the Contemporary Dance environment such as the acclaimed NDT 3 have highlighted, there seems to be a potential danger in retaining a discreteness of foci on age that can alienate and further entrench an exoticisation of the older dancer. A more flexible model, one that includes proportionate younger dancer participation may offer a new site of agency. When the notion of body as meaning is more widely recognised, then older bodies that encompass both past histories and present lived experience could offer new knowledge. The embodied self has value not only in terms of its intellect but in its ability to share ways of being made possible through dance. The older dancer is thus a permeable, unbounded self.

## **Implications of this study**

If a politics of the ageing body and a politics of space for older dancing bodies contained in the term Body-space for readings of dance is now accepted, what are some of the implications of this study for the practice and theorisation of older dancing situated in South Africa? Firstly, much ground work will need to be undertaken to develop new policies that may give fuller expression to the lives of older persons who want to dance both professionally and as recreational and communal activity. There are no adequate avenues where older dancers as a defined group can access proper resources to build their art. Programmes that consider their re-integration into other arts related (and non-arts related) fields are not yet in operation and even where these may exist, perhaps in White paper provisioning for the aged, a wider

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<sup>96</sup> The notion of the North or West that is used in this thesis does not refer to any geographic position but alludes to a wider socio-political orientation. It forms part of a counter-hegemonic response to challenge ideas of civilisation and cultural production. Its usage intends to signal and thus problematise notions of superiority, aesthetic sophistication and/or issue of First World and development. By framing this notion of 'North', spaces such as Kazakhstan and Zimbabwe can both be rendered as south.

orientation of who falls within the Dance sector will need to be undertaken. Older dancers could be more widely integrated and perform amongst other roles, as teaching assistants in schools, mentors in arts festivals, co-choreographers, programme managers and directors.

The needs of, and resources for, older dancing will differ considerably from those for youth and careful attention should be paid to the type of access and sustainability of resources made available to this genre. The practice by professional dancers within concert theatre dance wanting to engage with older dancing will need to be more widely acknowledged and supported. All policy makers and role-players within the performing arts, social welfare and health sectors will require a reimagining of their existing offers to older persons and this dance genre and any recommendations emanating from further research will need interrogation. As dance opens its doors to the Other and older dancing, the cultural sectors, particularly performing arts institutions, theatres and festivals, will need to review the ways in which older dancing is being included in their objectives: programming, funding and audience development strategies. The education sector could make important inroads as currently we are ill-prepared for adult learning in Dance. Doubtless, apt education programmes will need to be devised to clarify the value and contribution of older dancing and widely disseminate these findings to all in our societies. These multi-dimensional processes should include amongst other key drivers, government and civil society, organisations, ministries and cultural institutions in their various incarnations and the practitioners themselves.

Dance choreographers will become challenged to find fresh ways in which to articulate these new bodies – the body that is in a state of becoming rather than the pretended arrest of a body stuck in its perpetual youth. Dance directors and producers in rethinking their notion of profit-sustainability, may be surprised by box office gains and spin offs from astute marketing strategies dependent on how successfully they grow these new audiences. All of these factors play out in a society that currently has as its majority population, youth. In terms of the South African population overall, where 79% percent of the total population is classified African, 52% of the total population is between the ages of 15–35 years old. Statistics reveal that 51% of the South African total population is female. (Statistic South Africa, 2013) In the next 20-30 years, this population dynamic will see a black majority that will be largely 35 years and older. These meta-level shifts will impact on dance producers, policy makers and others that are

planning and provisioning. As South Africans we need to draw on the experiences of our European counterparts who are already operating in largely ageing populations.

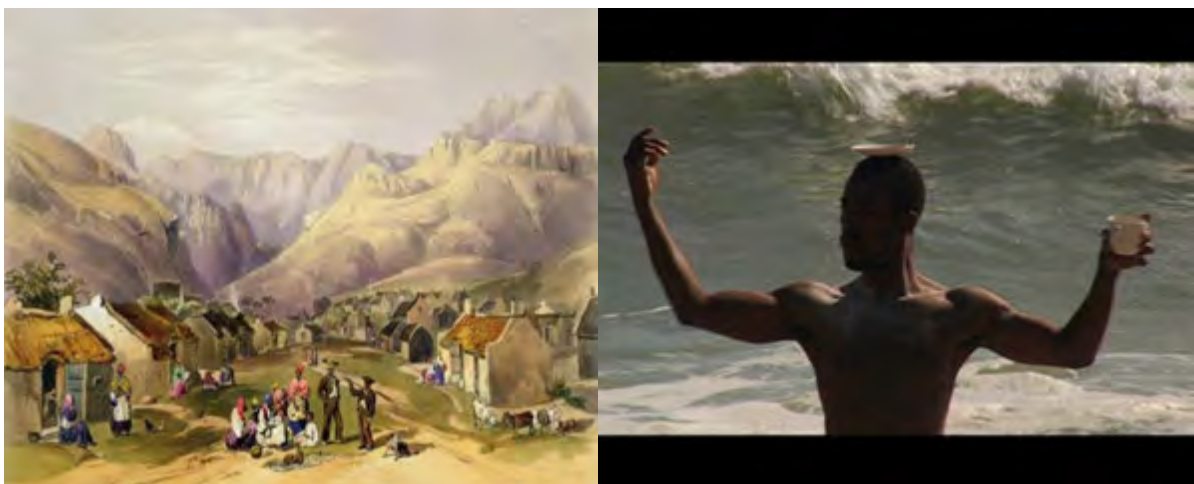
Dance writers and critics will need to navigate innovative vocabulary to report what they have perceived or seen (in a phenomenologic sense) to a growingly discerning dance audience which will themselves be witnessing or experiencing a range of bodies, some like their own, in the new celebrated performance space whether in a concert theatre or under a tree. Documentary research around older dancers cast in various roles for example, mentors to young dance academics is underway. Some earlier examples of such work include the dance writing research workshops in which Sichel, Vedel, Hagerman and Waterman generously shared their expertise in 2000. The JOMBA! dance festival organisers have, over the past few years, recognised the role older dancers can play but more can be accomplished to share and integrate their embodied knowledge of South African dance. If older dancing becomes more valued across Contemporary Dance, further collaboration is likely to emerge and unhelpful relativist choreographic notions which pit youth against older dancing will be able to be critiqued and theorised. Paradigms of certain truths for dance and old beliefs for dancing bodies should be unpacked for hidden prejudices that position norms and confine Others to the margins.

## **Contributions to the field**

This study marks one of the first doctoral theses with a specific focus on Dance and its location in South Africa conducted by a South African dance scholar who identifies himself as black. Further, it has focussed on Contemporary Dance and the even narrower area of older dancing to problematise notions of Othering. It has accessed a fairly sweeping field of literature, paying close attention to works written both over passages of time and of place. I have attempted to signal key texts in Dance Studies to illuminate a South African perspective in the hope that this approach will position Dance Studies as a particular contributor to knowledge production within the Humanities and Social Sciences. This thesis has attempted an overview of primary and secondary sources in the South African terrain of Dance that is largely unmapped and opens for further interrogation numerous connections and explorations. It will consequently identify gaps in Dance research.

I have argued that through embodied experiences of older persons, temporal and spatial shifts such as the mid-70s, and early 90s in South Africa and Europe can be understood through dance. These temporal nodes vary significantly and therefore influence hegemonies of power and aesthetic for older dancing. South African Contemporary Dance in the 1970s varied greatly from Contemporary Dance in 2000s. Therefore, I predict that in the future, older dancing will take its place within the hierarchy: early afro-fusion, dance theatre, performance and public art that has already developed in Contemporary Dance in South Africa. Unsurprisingly, this will create niche audiences which begs the question: How will the identity surrounding older dancing impact on sustaining the genre and grow new relationships with its audiences? My study had set out to examine older dancers in the Contemporary Dance environment and to ask, amongst many other questions, whether they suffered the same ignominy as their classical ballet counterparts. This study was also curious about the form and approach in Contemporary Dance practice itself and seems to suggest that certain inhibitors such as inter-generational performers, themes and content that are antithetical to a mould for older persons and non-proscenium arch performance spaces, can, and are beginning, to halt prejudices towards the perception of older persons.

The study has criticised essentialist Africanist notions and provided evidence of the complexity of what it means to be an African dancer today – to resist the romanticised and preservationist notions of the Dark Continent.



**Illustration 14: *Place of Grace*. Langebaan, Western Cape. 2010.** George French Angus's painting of Genadendal, a rural Mission station, and the site of the first Moravian church in South Africa in 1742 provided a springboard for a interdisciplinary research project culminating in an especially made dance for film entitled, *Place of Grace* in 2010. The project and film work was directed by Gerard Samuel and performed by Jamila Rodrigues, Ilona Frege and Mduduzi Nyembe (pictured above).

According to Ballantyne, Mantsoe's<sup>97</sup> *Skwatta* (2012) was disparaged locally at the National Arts Festival (she did not clarify the specificities of these audiences). Such reactions to African choreographers as to prescribe what constitutes Africanist works have the potential to diminish their work and may ultimately lead to the loss of their presence in their home country. In the case of Mantsoe, this has already occurred. The above issues present formidable opponents and challenges to the representation of self and the Other and suggest how the experience of the encounter with the African Other has been formed and sustained.

Power relationships between dancers, choreographers, directors, critics and audiences in what Opondo (2006) described as a performance continuum, have similarly been placed under the spotlight. This study has suggested the manner in which these pressures act as constraining or liberating frames in relation to age. Dance criticism and performance review constructed norms which were acknowledged and served as an archive which emerged over time. However, these standards have not for the most part, reflected the lives of those on the margins. Much has already been written about the effects of a bad or even non-review (see the Arlene Croce-Bill T. Jones affair discussed in previous chapters) that I will not repeat here.

Where you perform – in South Africa or in international contexts, community halls or acoustically exquisite opera theatres will reflect the prevailing politics of space and has been critiqued previously (Glasser, 1991; Johnstone, 2010; Opondo, 2006). What I have found significant for older dancing, is a reverse discourse evidenced in mainstream festivals such as the Baxter Dance Festival and the artistic programmes of large cultural institutions for instance Artscape Centre in Cape Town. These spaces have thankfully given some opportunity for the showcasing of older dancing and many of these works were discussed in this study. However, this may act as a kind of approval and recognition from the mainstream spaces and older dancing is noticeably absent in smaller venues and towns in this country suggesting a pattern of migration occurring in dance.

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<sup>97</sup> Mantsoe who is renowned for his articulation of Glasser's early works (see also Chapter 2) and for his breakthrough *Gula* has come to embody the link between an ancestral or traditional cultural heritage that embraces the *sangoma* and contemporary concert theatre dance. His distinctive early works that frequently lead to trance dance was a major talking point in the 90s and thus I can understand how his new paths that move away from re-contextual to inter-textual and even to sub-textual paradigms can unseat the expectations of certain audiences. But, I do not see this kind of yoke or mantle imposed on French, or British or Danish choreographers.

This study has demonstrated that the role of the choreographer as lynchpin is part of an ongoing narrative of dethroning power and modalities to widen dialogues of older dancing. The body needs to be recognised as part of a performance continuum, one that is being performed, celebrated or obscured. The character which the body is cloaked is frequently parodied as a mechanism not unlike the court jester who is free to articulate to the prevailing courts its foibles and woes. Staverman confirmed that in Kylián's work the older dancer offers a perspective or vantage point of life that is often told through comic and absurd sensibility, for example, *Birth-day* (2008) and *Tar and Feathers* (2006). In my opinion, to acknowledge the frailty of older black male dancing bodies is antithetical to macho constructs of male bodies and requires greater interrogation. Although Mantsoe, and Cekwana are in their 40s, Dance study that is *about* the older black male dancer in South Africa is to my knowledge still to be explored in its multidimensionality as of 2015.

### **Concluding thoughts: Limitations and future research**

One of the key findings of this thesis is the multiple ways in which older dancers are responding and reflecting the shifting terrain that is the art and dance of the contemporary world. They do not dwell on issues of their chronological age but draw on their life experiences to generate, articulate and highlight new ideas that are relevant to contemporary society speaking from the margins back to the centre, as it were. These responses are not only about how they work with their own experiences, but how they appropriate their own perspectives to engage with experiences of Others including young and older dancers, traditional choreographic and even post-modern choreographic notions in dance. These developments suggest in what way the value and contribution of older dancing becomes part of artistic responses to rapidly changing societal systems.

Older dancing is engaged in a complex act of critical self-reflection holding up a mirror both to older persons in society and the individual older dancer. Many works are exploring fresh ways of showcasing the experiences of these frequently marginalised lives and the manner in which they might be operating in a complex and changing world (locally and globally). This

articulation is made manifest through both young and older dancing bodies but become more pronounced when the older social commentator takes centre stage.

At the outset of this thesis, I had explored the impact of the geopolitical terrain on the development of Contemporary Dance in South Africa. Cultural phenomenologist and ethnographer Thomas Csordas (1993) had, according to Rothfield claimed that “having a culturally specific body means also that one perceives and understands the world in a culturally specific manner” (1998:311). How has an understanding of culture provided clarity on discourses in Dance and specifically dance by older dancers in South Africa? In this study culture is perceived as a euphemism to support hierarchical, elitist class systems on the one hand, and offer a reservoir of certain traditions and communal values imposed on the other. I have provided an account of the South African Contemporary Dance context not to essentialise the complexity of our cultural hybridity, but rather to illustrate the means by which the effects of an institutional attack scarred individual freedom of expression on especially South African dancers desirous of exploring multicultural frontiers. As matters of race and gender were transformed, this change may have contributed to the courageous identity formation of older dancing in South Africa today.

The question of identity within audiences is of heightened significance in South Africa as who was permitted in theatre houses was a privilege accorded to persons based on race. The legacy of apartheid cannot be wished away. For the disabled in society, the matter of mere physical access was one of their experiences of exclusion. Any attendance at dance performances according to Maree was to reaffirm dignity or “*feeling involved, feeling connected and being enthusiastic*” (Maree, 2012). She alluded to the history of black audiences, who were not connected to the dominant concert dance form – that of classical ballet and, who are now beginning to assert their presence in what was an elite membership reserved for older white people. Maree observed that to be part of an audience is to agree to its sometime invisible set of rules and practices. Thus, yelling at the end of every single piece could become frowned upon by prevailing White audiences. She acknowledges that such abandon is however very affirming for new audiences and is “*encouraging for the performers*” (Maree, 2012). What she describes is that to be young and black nowadays, is to be powerful.

Given the colonial interconnectedness of dance forms that are currently visible, notions of monolithic African dances, including contemporary dance that emanates from Africa, are potentially damaging to multicultural lives and a complex human condition. A more detailed analysis of the powerful urban centres within South Africa and their impact on the cohesion and strengthening of the rapidly evolving form that is Contemporary Dance in South Africa, was presented in Chapter Two of this thesis. In South Africa it would seem that not only does the choreographer exercise power over who will be on stage, but more importantly can be a gatekeeper of that which can be represented in the performance space. Artistic directors and dance reviewers share in these loaded decisions and in defining events such as admission and retirement in the life of a dancer and of choreographers. This is problematic as notions of bodies can be made vulnerable through this manipulation which in turn situates certain bodies as normative. This study within a highly polarised society and its cultural products, including the performing art of dance, has demonstrated the manner in which some dance forms were positioned as celebrated and others shunned as exotic. Contemporary dancers such as Nyamza, Fuchs and Davids continue to create and perform their works thereby contesting such constructs and norms. Nyamza's work, *Wena Mamela* (2014) and Davids' first collaboration, with the Eoan Group Dance Theatre; *The Colou(RED) Chameleon* performed in December 2014 are examples of such endeavour. Both these works premiered in performance spaces outside of the so called main stream theatres. Nyamza deliberately chose UCT's Hiddingh Hall and Davids the Joseph Stone Auditorium in Athlone<sup>98</sup> township. They seem to recognise the need for dancing by older dancers in South Africa to continue as a subversive activity.

In Chapter Three, I addressed the challenges presented in the framing of some of the questions for Dance in South Africa given the extant literature. The parameters of Cultural Studies and Anthropology, Education and Dance as methodology in a needy society with aspiration for cohesion were explained. This study has highlighted the earliest voices of South Africans writing back to the centre of Dance discourse whose concerns were issues of colonised, gendered and bodies marked by race. In terms of dance research, the introduction

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<sup>98</sup> Athlone may today be considered a suburb by some but in this context I am referring to its roots as a designated residential area for Coloured population only as defined by the Group Areas Act of 1950s. Davids work is due for release in the Eoan group's new home, the Joseph Stone Auditorium in Klipfontein Road, Athlone this lesser space.



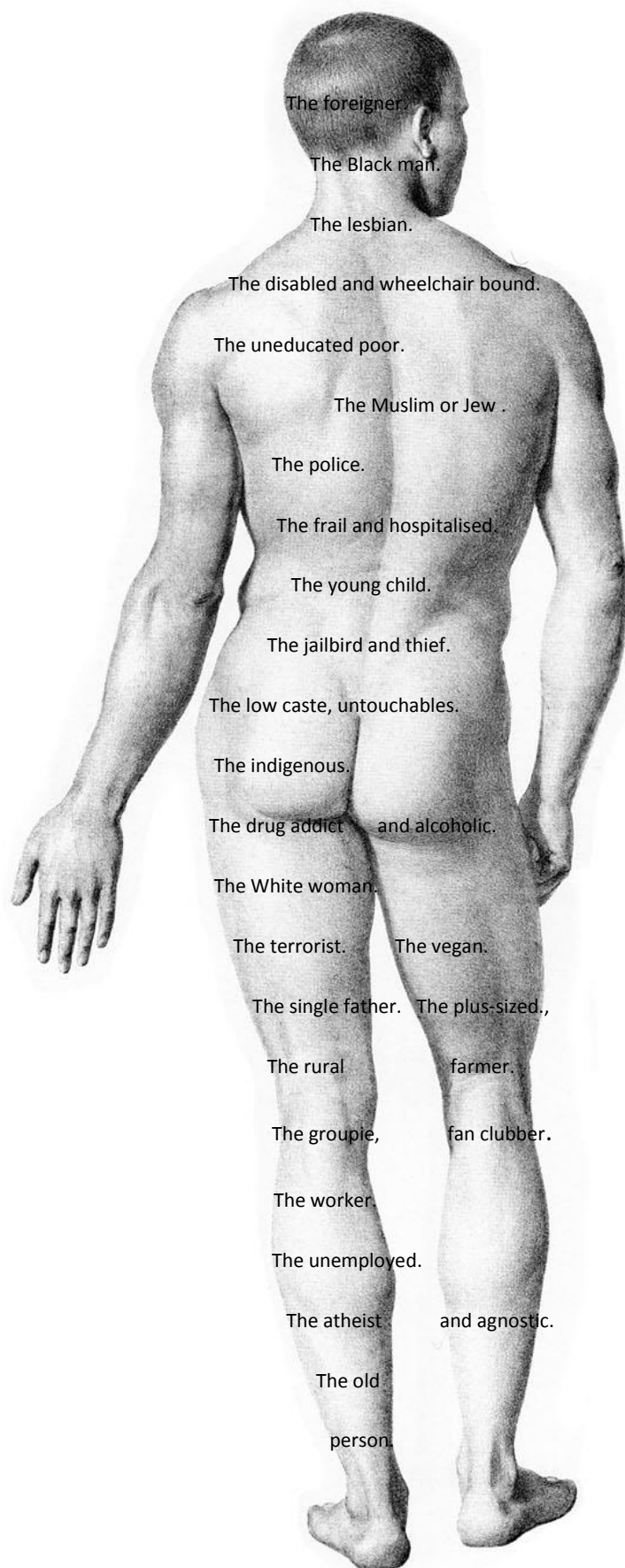
of Dance and Body theory is at the forefront of conversations around performance. According to Susie Orbach, “What is new today, however, is the way in which bodily transformation is no longer linked to social ritual within the family but is part of the individual’s response to wanting to produce what is an acceptable body” (2009:82).

For me, the question who decides what is an acceptable body can be extended to include the question of which of the various life stages of the body should be celebrated. During the interview, Farrugia had asked of her dancers: *“should you exit at your prime? Is there a prime now? I mean, are we more open towards having older dancers on stage?”* (2013). I would argue that these boundaries are being tested by a generation of defiant South African dancers who continue to perform after their so called prime. Farrugia asks *“Who were they applauding? What were they applauding?”* (2013). In Chapter Four we encountered questions around the importance of valuing Dance Studies and understanding the ontology of Body that is present in performance, philosophy and psychology. I have asserted that unique ways exist to understand what may be happening in dance experiences and offered tools for the theorisation of Dancing, suggesting that there are theoretical, contextual and \*methodological means of knowing bodies through the lived experiences of dancers and the dance. The lives presented have demonstrated that as older dancing becomes more visible, audiences begin to see beyond the dazzling physique and virtuosity of young dancers they are offered an opportunity to celebrate the richly embodied lives of older persons, which can be strong and independent. The voices of older dancing have new stories to tell. The danger of adopting an age politics becomes clear when older dancing is hidden from view and/or made absent from mainstream performance space. A new politics of Body and of space – Body-space must be written for Dance in order that older dancing bodies in this sense emerge.

I have examined the manner in which lived bodies contain corrosive and enriching experiences and finally attempted to articulate why performance by older dancers offers an insurgent space of the body. As Body-space, not any body but this body in its space seeks alternate ways in which to express itself beyond race, gender, age and other stereotypical markers. Dance and the society become provoked into rethinking old assumptions and beliefs. Csordas (1993) had maintained the body itself was not just artefact but the means of experiencing the world. Whose body in this Csordasian sense is being taught and performed? How does it matter? These and other questions have predominated Dance conferences and collaborative dance

projects between South Africa and other countries since in the mid-1990s. The delineation of persons into categories including African and classical ballet, young and old, needs to reflect not only polemic cultural debates but, the politics of body, space and meaning. For me, the body as a centre of knowledge production filled with meaning and possibility for transformation must be tattooed onto a world where the mind for too long has remained king.

## Epilogue: the other



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## Appendix 1 – List of interviewees

No.	Name	Date	Place of interview	Duration
1	Tammy Ballantyne	31 August 2012	Circus Circus cafe, Durban Beachfront, SA	46mins.46sec
2	Lynn Maree	1 September 2012	At home, Glenwood, Durban, SA	37mins.15sec
3	Desiré Davids	1 September 2012	Natal Society for the Arts (NSA) Gallery coffee shoppe, Durban, SA	58mins.17sec
4	Ananda Fuchs	5 October 2012	Baxter Theatre restaurant, Rondebosch, Cape Town, SA	28mins.20sec
5	Alfred Hinkel	23 October 2012	OR Tambo Airport, Johannesburg, SA	Approx. 55mins
6	Mamela Nyamza	14 December 2012	Mimi's Cafe, Observatory, Cape Town, SA	50mins.57sec
7 & 8	Ann Dickie & Jasmine Pasch	7 August 2013	Waterloo, London, UK	52mins.19sec
9	Kathrina Farrugia	8 August 2013	Waterloo Station, London, UK	48mins.55sec
10	Camilla Stage	13 September 2013	Office of Prof. Karen Vedel, University of Copenhagen, Denmark	Approx. 50 mins
11	Desiree Staverman	26 September 2013	Codarts, Rotterdam, The Netherlands	43mins.50sec
12	David Krugel	27 March 2014	Rhodes Memorial, Tea Garden, Rondebosch, Cape Town, SA	72mins.25sec

## Appendix 2 – Example of ‘deed of gift’

I, Gerard M. Samuel (the interviewer), a PhD candidate of the University of Cape Town (UCT) state that it is my intention is to conduct research on ‘Dancing the Other in South Africa’ and to document this in digital format i.e. audio-visual and/or transcript form.

In order for your interview/s to be placed in the UCT School of Dance’s archive for future research use, it will be necessary for you to sign this agreement. Before doing so, you should read it carefully and ask any questions you may have regarding its terms and conditions.

I,.....

[interviewee]

Of.....

[full address]

.....

herein permanently donate and convey to the UCT School of Dance archive my oral narrative. In making this gift, I understand that I am conveying all right, title, and interest in copyright to the UCT School of Dance’s archive. In return, the School grants to me a non exclusive license to utilize my interview/s during my lifetime. I also grant to the School the right to use my name and likeness for the purpose of research publication.

I further understand that I will have the right, should I wish to do so, to review and edit my interview/s before it is/they are made available for research whether in audio-visual and/or transcript form.

The School will then make my interview/s available to researchers. Future uses may include quotation and publication or broadcast in any media, including the Internet.

Interviewee..... Interviewer .....

Date ..... Date .....

## **Appendix 3 – Copy of interview questions (dated 29 August 2012)**

What do you see as your primary identity – dancer, choreographer, artistic director, dance critic/audience member? (If that falls into 2 or 3 categories, please specify which hat you are wearing with each answer)

### **Dancers**

How would you describe yourself/your professional identity to someone who doesn't know you or hasn't seen you perform?

What is it like to be thought of as an 'older dancer'?

What would you say that your years of experience add to the dance?

How do you feel, imagine or experience about your dancing body that takes away from the dance?

Describe the experience of portraying an older person in a dance work? Tell me how you feel and why this may be so.

Explain how dancing with an older dancer may change your performance?

### **Choreographers**

What is your experience with working with older dancers or 'other' bodies?

Tell me some of the facilitatory and/ or inhibiting contexts surrounding your creative process with older dancers?

Describe any of your choreographic methods when choosing to represent the older body.

What determines your final choreographic choices when working with an older person?

Is there any aspect of this choreography that you do not show to the public? Explain why.

What would you say are some of the labels within Contemporary dance for the older dancer? Can you find a word less negative than stereotypes?

What are some of the typical roles that older dancers will be asked to perform?

Do you see these as stereotypes/clichés?

What in your view might be some of the issues that prevent any new or different stories of the older dancer from emerging?

### **Artistic Director, Arts critics, Audience member**

In your view, who forms the majority age group/groups in performances of Contemporary dance?

Are there in your experience a mixture of ages in some arenas?

Having viewed the performances during JOMBA! / Baxter did you see older bodies on the stage? What did you think about this? How did that make you feel? Can you imagine an alternate experience?

Do you think of older dancers in a Contemporary dance work, differently from older dancers in any other dance forms such as African dance / Classical Ballet / Indian dance? If so, state why?

Describe how seeing an older person in a leading dance role in a commercial dance production might make you feel? / Can you imagine an alternate experience?

Are there any changes generally to the Contemporary dance that you have seen in the last say 5–10 years?

Have you noticed any changes around the portrayal of older persons in Contemporary dance? What are some of these?

Have there been any changes to the position of older dancers in Classical Ballet in the past 5–10 years that you have noticed? What are some of these?

What would you say are barriers experienced by the older person to being on the stage in SA?

How do you feel the representation of older dancers create new ways of seeing bodies in 2012?

## Appendix 4 – Dance Works Appearing in this Study.

Note: This appendix provides a context of the particular year and specific place of the performance of the dance works referred to in this study and must not to be confused with a chronology of the premiere of dance works.

Year	Title	Choreographer	Place
1930	Lamentations	Martha Graham	USA
1941	Pas de Quartre	Anton Dolin after Jules Perrot	London, UK
1944	Appalachian Spring	Martha Graham	USA
1948	Diversion of Angels	Martha Graham	USA
1958	Clytemnestra	Martha Graham	USA
1969	Modern Dance Evening	Gisela Taeger-Berger	The Little Theatre, Gardens Cape Town South Africa
1970s	Pad Onbekkend	Alfred Hinkel	Okiep, Northern Cape, South Africa



1971	Swan Lake	Atillo Labis after M. Petipa & L. Ivanov	The Nico Malan Theatre, Cape Town, South Africa
1977	Ipi Tombi (Musical)	Sheila Wartski	London, UK
1978	Dansynergy	Sylvia Glasser	The Market Theatre, Johannesburg, South Africa
1978	African Cassandra	Sylvia Glasser	Johannesburg, South Africa
1983	African Sky Blues	Robyn Orlin	Johannesburg, South Africa
1983	Serenade	Balanchine staged by Patricia Neary	The Nico Malan Theatre, Cape Town, South Africa
1986	Beloved Country	Robyn Orlin	The Opera, The Natal Playhouse, Durban, South Africa
1986	The Lady and the Fool	John Cranko	The Opera, The Natal Playhouse, Durban, South Africa
1986	Le Beau Danube	Leonide Massine	The Baxter Theatre, Cape Town, South Africa
1987	The Great Waltz (Musical)	Geoffrey Sutherland	The Opera, The Natal Playhouse, Durban, South Africa

1987	Elastokovitch	Veronica Paeper	The Opera, The Natal Playhouse, Durban, South Africa
1987	Cave Canem	Marlene Blom	The Opera, The Natal Playhouse, Durban South Africa
1987	The River People	Tossie van Tonder	The Opera, The Natal Playhouse, Durban, South Africa
1988	Soul of Afrika	Sonje Mayo	The Opera, Natal Playhouse, Durban, South Africa
1989	Other people	Ashley Killar	The Opera, The Natal Playhouse, Durban, South Africa
1989	Four Temperaments	George Balanchine staged by Bart Cook	The Opera , The Natal Playhouse, Durban, South Africa
1989	Giselle	Ashley Killar, with Dianne Richards after Dolin & Markova	The Opera, The Natal Playhouse, Durban , South Africa
1989	If everyone in China jumped up and down at the same time the earth would shift	Robyn Orlin	The Drama Theatre, The Natal Playhouse, Durban, South Africa
1990s	Connotations	Val Canaporoli	The Playhouse Opera Theatre, Durban, South Africa

1990	Les Sylphides	Ashley Killar with Dianne Richards afer M. Fokine	The Opera, The Natal Playhouse, Durban, South Africa
1990s	Bolero	Alfred Hinkel	Artscape , Cape Town, South Africa
1990	Mango Suite	Val Steyn	Studio Theatre, The Natal Playhouse, Durban, South Africa
1991	Tranceformation	Sylvia Glasser	The Market Theatre , Johannesburg , South Africa
1991	Mantis	Sonje Mayo	Bophuthatswana, South Africa
1991	Candles, Chairs and Chimes	Christopher Kindo	Bophuthatswana, South Africa
1991	Jesus Christ Superstar (Musical)	Andrew Lloyd Webber	The Opera , The Natal Playhouse, Durban, South Africa
1992	Tabula Rasa	David Krugel	Bophuthatswana, South Africa
1992	Concerto for marimba	David Krugel	Bophuthatswana, South Africa
1992	De Aar	Sonje Mayo	Bophuthatswana, South Africa
1992	Stabat Mater	David Krugel	Bophuthatswana, South Africa

1993	Shattered windows	Gary Gordon	Grahamstown, South Africa
1994	Siyatatazela	Boyzie Cekwana	Basel, Switzerland
1994	The explosion of stars is not for ticket holders only	Robyn Orlin	The Drama theatre, The Natal Playhouse, South Africa
1995	The Unspeakable Story	Gary Gordon	City Hall, Grahamstown, South Africa
1995	Travellers	Gary Gordon	Playhouse Opera Theatre, Durban, South Africa
1995	Prabhati	Gerard Samuel	Playhouse Drama Theatre, Durban, South Africa
1996	Ahimsa-ubhuntu	Jay Pather	India
1996	The Man I Love	Gerard Samuel	Playhouse Drama Theatre, Durban, South Africa
1996	That's the way the cookie crumbles	Robin Orlin	The Drama Theatre, The Natal Playhouse, Durban, SA
1996	So Sorry	Jiří Kylián	Cape Town, South Africa
1996	The Old Man and Me	Jiří Kylián	Cape Town, South Africa

1996	Silent Cries	Jiří Kylián	Cape Town, South Africa
1998	Unclenching the Fist	Jay Pather	Playhouse Drama Theatre, Durban, South Africa
1998	Shifting Space tilting times	Jay Pather	Playhouse Drama Theatre, Durban, South Africa
1999	Milky Tears	Gerard Samuel	Square Space theatre, Univ. KZN. Durban, South Africa
1999	By Design	Ann Dickie	England
2001	Awaiting Islands	Gerard Samuel	Square Space Theatre, Univ.KZN, Durban, South Africa
2013	Birth-Day	Jiří Kylián	Netherlands
2003	Soul Spirit	Liane Loots	Playhouse, Durban, South Africa
2003	Me & You	Christopher Kindo	Johannesburg, South Africa
2003	New Age Circus	David Gouldie	The Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre, Durban, South Africa
2003	Who says, the Ugly Duckling?	Gerard Samuel	Albertslund, Copenhagen, Denmark

2003	Napoli	Bournonville	Royal Danish Ballet Opera House, Copenhagen, Denmark
2006	Tar and Feathers	Jiří Kylián	Den Haag, Netherlands
2007	That's the way the cookie crumbles	Robyn Orlin	The Baxter Theatre, Cape Town, South Africa
2007	Stories about.....	Levern Botha, Marlin Zoutman and Grant van Ster	The Baxter Theatre, Cape Town, South Africa
2007	Any Queen	Ann Dickie	London, UK
2008	African Footprint (Musical)	David Matemela	Lyric Theatre Johannesburg, South Africa
2009	Kutheni	Mamela Nyamza	Cape Town, South Africa
2009	Coal Train	Maxwell Xolani Rani	The Joseph Stone, Auditorium, Athlone, Cape Town, South Africa
2009	Bloodlines	Liane Loots	Durban, South Africa
2010	To whom shall I leave my voice	Carolyn Holden	The Baxter Theatre, Cape Town, South Africa

2010	Who is this Beneath My Skin?	Desiré Davids	The Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre, Durban, South Africa
2010	Lovaffair	Ina Wichterich-Mogane	Baxter Flipside, Cape Town, South Africa
2011	Amafonkong	Mamela Nyamza	Grahamstown, South Africa
2011	Wake Up Everybody/The Teacher's Dance	Ina Wichterich-Mogane	Artscape, Cape Town, South Africa
2012	Dansmettieduiwels	Alfred Hinkel	The Baxter Theatre, Cape Town, South Africa
2012	Fragile falling	Ananda Fuchs	The Baxter Theatre, Cape Town, South Africa
2012	I stand corrected	Mamela Nyamza	London, UK
2012	The Meal	Mamela Nyamza	Whale Room, Iziko Museum, Cape Town, South Africa
2012	Hatched	Mamela Nyamza	Queen Victoria Street, Cape Town, South Africa
2012	A Spring(two) matter	Jens van Daele	The Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre, Durban, South Africa





2012	Uncles and Angels	Nelisiwe Xaba	GIPCA, Hiddingh Hall, Gardens, Cape Town, South Africa
2013	Skwatta	Vincent Mantsoe	The Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre, Durban, South Africa
2013	Gula	Vincent Mantsoe	UCT School of Dance, Rondebosch, Cape Town, South Africa
2013	Act your age	David Krugel	Netherlands
2014	Unmute	Andile Vellum	Dance Space, Newtown Johannesburg, South Africa
2014	Struck Silent	Ananda Fuchs	The Baxter Theatre, Cape Town, South Africa
2014	Last Touch	Jiří Kylián	Netherlands
2014	Plastiek	Underground Dance Theatre	Observatory, Cape Town, South Africa
2014	Wena Mamela	Mamela Nyamza	Baxter, Cape Town, South Africa
2015	Revelations	Alvin Ailey	Artscape, Cape Town South Africa
2015	A Spartacus of Africa	Veronica Paeper & David Krugel	Artscape, Cape Town, South Africa