

# HOTFOOT

ONLINE

Spring 2017

*Journeys and  
International Connections*

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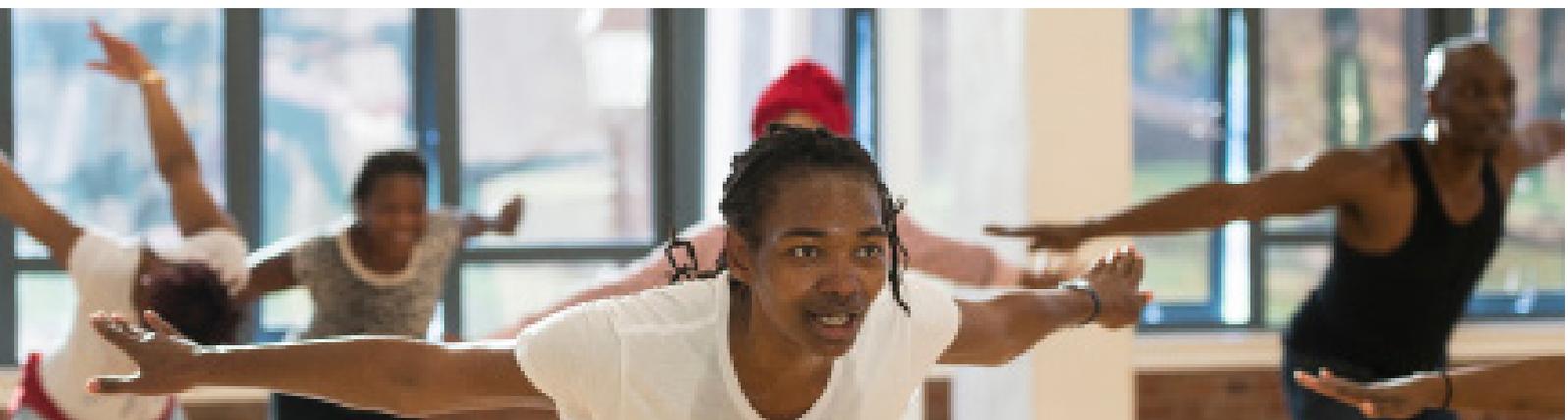
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# Foreword

Mercy Nabirye  
Head of Dance of the African Diaspora  
One Dance UK



In keeping with the legacy of those that have been before us, I am proud to present this *HOTFOOT* Spring 2017 edition. In this edition, we have created a bolder design and we have introduced more digitally interactive features to update you on developments within Dance of the African Diaspora. The focus is *Journeys and International Connections*.

Since its inception in 1994 as a monthly newsletter, *HOTFOOT* has gone through many incarnations and many people will agree that it has been an important channel for many voices in the African Diaspora in all its diverse forms. We have hundreds of informative past editions in print and online with an avid readership of many thousands of individuals.

I would like to thank all those people who have contributed to these past editions as editors, writers, dance artists, students, researchers or enthusiasts.

This new bi-annual incarnation is a milestone for us. We invite you to celebrate with us and add your voices and opinions, for the benefit of future generations.

Key features of this edition include celebrating Beverley Glean's contribution to dance and her recent MBE award; interactive video links to keynote speeches from November's Re:generations 4 conference by Dr Anita Gonzalez, Dr Hilary Carty and Peter Badejo OBE; and two book reviews.

I hope you enjoy this new edition as much as we have enjoyed putting it together.



**COVER IMAGE:**  
*Tabanka Dance Ensemble Crew*  
performing at Re:generations 2014.  
Photographer: Foteini Christofilopoulou  
[www.tabankacrew.com](http://www.tabankacrew.com)

# Welcome

Andrew Hurst

Chief Executive, One Dance UK

Welcome to the latest issue of One Dance UK's bi-annual publication focusing on Dance of the African Diaspora (DAD). Through its valid content, *HOTFOOT*, which provides a platform for critical debate surrounding the dance practices of the African Diaspora in the UK. The theme for this issue is *Journeys and International Connections*, building on key discussions that took place during our latest Re:generations conference, held in Birmingham in November last year.

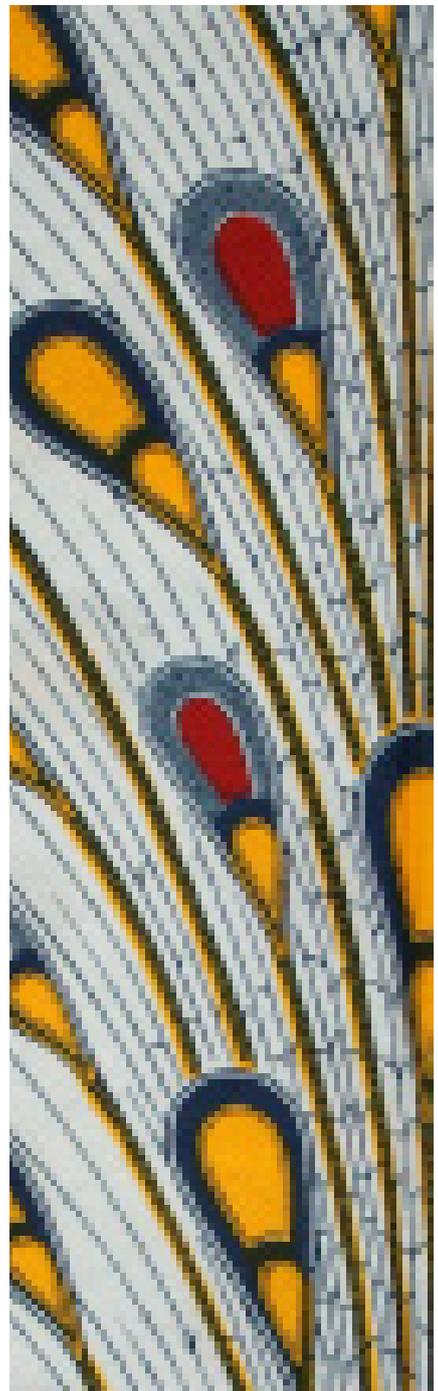
Articles cover issues ranging from artistic, practical, political, theoretical and historical, and artists are encouraged to add their voices to the global discussion by contributing articles about their own practices, or by taking part in interviews.

Coverage of DAD practice and research is still limited in the mainstream and specialist dance press in the UK, so *HOTFOOT* was set up with the aim of redressing this imbalance, providing a dedicated forum for discussion and critical debate specifically focused on these dance forms.

One Dance UK is committed to continuing this work through performance reviews, interviews, feature articles and thought pieces, in order to increase understanding and appreciation of DAD, raise the level of critical debate surrounding these forms, profile artists and develop writers for the sector. The range of dance forms covered in *HOTFOOT* includes traditional and contemporary Caribbean and African forms, and strong African influenced forms from the Americas such as capoeira, samba, jazz, tap, street and hip hop.

I would like to thank our funders, donors and supporters, in particular our Principal Sponsor Harlequin Floors. We welcome your suggestions for future issues of *HOTFOOT* - do get in touch with the team with feedback and ideas.

I hope you enjoy reading *HOTFOOT*.



## Peter Badejo OBE becomes Patron of One Dance UK

Peter Badejo OBE, a well known and respected individual in the dance sector, is now a Patron of One Dance UK. Peter Badejo OBE is one of the most esteemed custodians of African dance culture in West Africa. He joins Carlos Acosta CBE, Dame Gillian Lynne DBE, Arlene Phillips CBE and Bob Lockyer as a Patron of One Dance UK.

Peter has had a dramatic impact on British arts in general, leading to his being awarded the Order of the British Empire (OBE) by HM Queen Elizabeth II for his contribution to the development of dance in Britain. He is one of Nigeria's foremost choreographers, dancers and performance specialists. After a long and distinguished career in Nigeria and the United States as a performer, director, teacher and academic, Peter moved to the UK in 1989 and became Artistic Director of Badejo Arts, a company he founded in 1990, where he successfully choreographed and produced a number of contemporary African Dance productions. Peter's commitment to the field of African performance arts has also involved research conducted through universities in the UK, USA and Ghana.

This is a pivotal moment for us as Peter lends his name and support to advocate and champion our work thus raising the public and global profile of Dance of the African Diaspora.

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For advertising and Listings enquiries,  
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# Q + A

One Dance UK's Dance of the African Diaspora (DAD) London Programmer, Heather Benson, talks to Beverley Glean MBE about IRIE! dance theatre and her work cultivating diversity in education and the UK dance sector.

*I believe there is recognition that African People's Dance is a critical part of the creative landscape of the UK. The impact is positive and can only get better.*

Beverley Glean MBE



Adrian Falconer & Simone Foster in IRIE!  
dance theatre's *Life's Footnote: Stay Afloat*

*We were delighted to see that Beverley Glean received the MBE for her invaluable contribution to African and Caribbean dance in the UK, so soon after receiving a Lifetime Achievement Award from One Dance UK's DAD programme. Most recently, Beverley was a key partner and contributor at our Re:generations conference which saw a record number of international delegates gathering in Birmingham for workshops, talks, practical sessions and performances, celebrating and investigating Dance of the African Diaspora. Recently, Beverley relaunched the IRIE! dance theatre professional company to continue the work and legacy of her contributions to African People's Dance (APD) in the UK.*

---

## **Why have you decided to relaunch the IRIE! professional company?**

For me, it was never a case of IRIE! not performing or being relaunched in the future. The fact of the matter was that within the APD sector there are so few of us who have the opportunity to develop and nurture. When you're focusing on one thing, it requires all your attention and motivation to do that thing to the best of your ability. We realised there was a huge deficit in the discourse around APD, however our communications showed that people were open to finding out more about the form, in fact there was a real hunger for it. We wanted to address the issue, which we felt was to focus on the formal element of African People's Dance. We considered the huge demographics of young black children in our inner city secondary schools, who were interested in dance and were bringing their cultural and social dance styles to the classroom. This wasn't featured nor reflected in the curriculum.

So we took on that challenge to address the barriers to APD in formal education. IRIE! as a performance company had been going for almost 25 years. We knew we couldn't commit fully to both things. We felt that IRIE! had enough of a profile, therefore we could bank it (the professional company) for a while and put our energies into looking into dance and diversity within the formal education curriculum. This led to the three-year dance and diversity research project that spearheaded a number of developments, including IRIE!'s *Re:generations* partnership with One Dance UK.

We had no idea it would take as long as it has, which isn't daft really as we realised that we were trying to change a framework that has existed for hundreds of years and a national curriculum operating since 1988. It felt like we were infiltrating because the barriers were difficult to overcome. That's what took the time; making the case for how important and critical these developments were and the value it would add to performing arts and education. Part way, we realised the approach needed to be via Higher Education (HE).

I believe we were fortunate, as the pathway via HE moved things along. Obviously, there is still a long way to go. By now, with our Dance Foundation Degree (DFD) - in partnership with City and Islington College and London Metropolitan University - running successfully for eight years we felt we'd done a lot with the accreditation, development and talking. It was time for people to see what we are talking about. The time is right to have the performance company run alongside the other work that we're doing in terms of accreditation.

*The impact is about greater creativity through greater understanding.*

### **How have you seen IRIE! impact the sector over the years as you entered in the education realm?**

Firstly, being able to recognise the real deficits we have as an art form within formal education and the arts. Also, our links with One Dance UK, who are encouraging conversations between academics & artists; artists and practitioners have become more open about their creativity and are ready, unapologetically, to explore fully their diversity.



Beverley Glean accepting ADAD's Lifetime Achievement Award, with His Excellency Karl Hood (L), High Commissioner of Granada, and Jackie Guy MBE, CD



*Choreographers are fusing their cultural heritage with their UK experience unapologetically. Individuals are less fearful of having the conversations about culture, diversity, inequality and access.*

The 'powers that be' are recognising that too. On some levels it can be tokenistic, but I believe there is recognition that APD is a critical part of the creative landscape of the UK. The impact is positive and can only get better.

## **What do you think are the main challenges facing the dance sector in the UK context generally, and specifically with DAD work?**

I wish I could say that we're getting there with a real sense of confidence. I say this, because it seems to take so little in terms of a change in policy or a change in direction of a certain mainstream organisation or funder or social issue to impact, this can shift everything so it almost feels like you're starting from scratch.

Nevertheless, we have to keep having the conversations. It was really interesting doing the review on Hilary Carty's *Re:generations 2016* speech ([see page 28](#)).

Sometimes the simplest things are the things that make the biggest impact. She talks about how we keep our trailblazers, the people who've gone before, how we keep them in the now. She said we just simply keep mentioning their names. It really is about the small steps and keep pushing to make sure we're seen and heard.

**Listen to an audio capture of Heather and Beverley's interview!**

**Follow this link to listen**

This page: The company perform IRIE! dance theatre's *Life's Footnote: Stay Afloat*  
Choreography: Denzil Barnes, Beverley Glean, Rosie Lehan and company.  
Opposite: City and Islington College students

More specifically, I think it is always the issue of funding, more importantly about opportunity and access. I can see now that key venues are beginning to open their doors. One Dance UK has a lot to do with that in terms of being present and focusing on individual talents and allowing artists to hone their skills and talent while One Dance UK engages and partners with key venues for access. One Dance UK's Trailblazers programme demonstrates what a small amount of funding is able to do for individuals and how, with support, those individuals have contributed by feeding back into the sector. Again, access, opportunity, and funding. Some may say, 'it's not all about the funding' but actually, it is!

**So with these challenges, how does it reflect in the movement or the work that you do with IRIE!, with the Foundation students or the movement vocabulary created with the professional company?**

The movement vocabulary has always been about the dynamics of my culture, both as a woman of the Caribbean linked with my British experiences. I mean 'diverse within its diversity' - how we as a people have been able to fuse and synthesize and all the time embracing other influences to create new and fantastic work. The interest for me is about body language, the form of Caribbean communication nuances that is so profound; it's better understood than speech.

I want to develop work that audiences, especially black audiences, are able to recognise themselves. Individuals will be able to look at the work and get a sense of where it's from, why it's being done, and what it's saying. That's why reggae music and its cultural influences has been the creative language of my choice.

Also, to see a cross section of young and mature people from different cultures that have been part of the course, working with African and Caribbean dance forms where they can identify the synergies and use the forms to develop their own language; it's a beautiful thing.



**For more information:**  
[www.iriedancetheatre.org](http://www.iriedancetheatre.org)  
[@IRIEdance](https://www.instagram.com/IRIEdance)

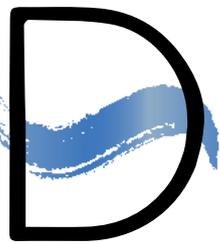
## What message do you have for those young people who've come through your programme that you've influenced? What do you want them to take away from their experience with IRIE!?

We want them to understand that there's no wrong or right way. It's about self-belief and hard work; gaining a greater understanding of other cultural influences which can only make your work more substantial and more creative. More often than not there are more similarities in what you are doing rather than differences.

## Finally, with receiving The Queen's honour and your MBE, what does it mean to you and what might it mean for dance of the African Diaspora in the UK?

Personally, one of the issues within the creative sector and/or voluntary sector is that we move so fast. We don't often get time to sit and reflect on what we've done, what we've achieved, how we've managed it and who are the people who've held us up to do that. What the MBE did in a sense was allow me to go 'Wow! There are people out there who believe what I do is of value, it has some significance, and somehow it has helped change the landscape a little bit or change individual lives or attitudes.' For me that's heartfelt and humbling.

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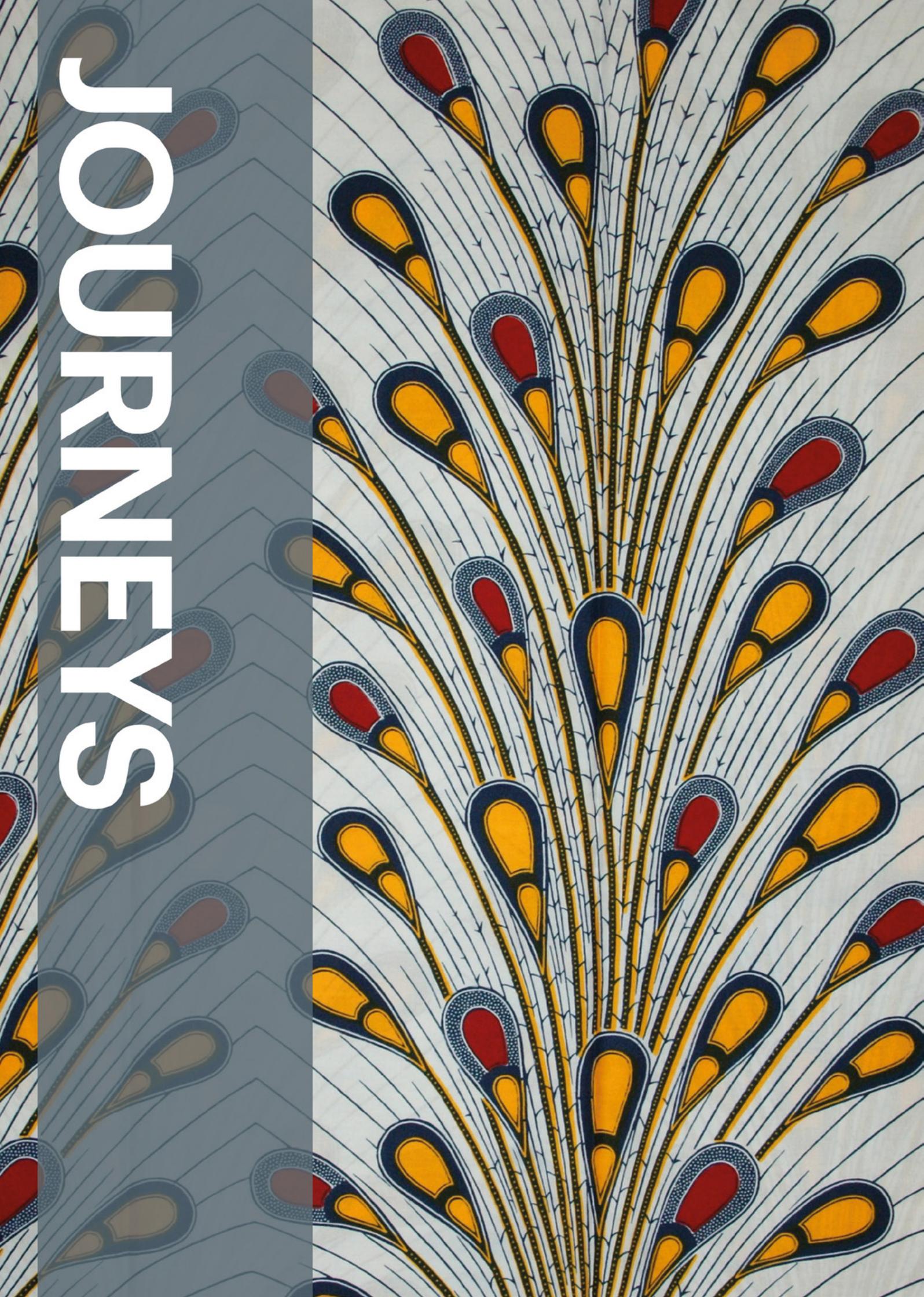
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# JOURNEMYS



# Dance, Africa, Dance!



Choreographer and Artistic Director of AVA Dance Company, Avatâra Ayuso, recalls her time at Danse l'Afrique danse! festival in Burkina Faso, collaborating with local artists and discovering more about various cultures and dance styles.

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In November 2016 I had the chance to take part in what was the biggest contemporary dance festival in Africa to date: the International Dance Festival of Ouagadougou (FIDO), part of *Danse l'Afrique danse!* The event was held in Burkina Faso, one of the many West African countries which is pushing its cultural development.

I went to Burkina Faso thanks to support from the British Council to carry out research on the local contemporary dance sector, and of course I managed to make my visit coincide with the festival, so I could gain a better insight into what is happening in Africa.

Under the artistic direction of choreographers Salia Sanou and Seydou Noron, in collaboration with Irène Tassebedo, the theme of the festival was Memory and Transmission, bringing together works by emerging choreographers as well as new pieces by more established ones. Economic support came from the Institut Français, the Burkina Ministry of Culture and Tourism, and the oil company TOTAL.

All shows and activities were free to attend. There were conferences, workshops, short and full length productions, indoor and outdoor events (all under a constant heat of 40 degrees!). According to their records it was the first time programmers from all over the world were attending a festival of this scale in Africa.



L and R: Dancers in workshop with Avatâra Ayuso  
Above R: Public performances, part of *Danse l'Afrique danse!*



*Art has to promote change, and many of the artists use their work to shake things up.*

I was the only one from the UK, and I was there as an independent artist researching, not as a programmer. Important representatives of African dance such as Germaine Acogny (the “grande dame” of contemporary dance on the continent) were there to contribute to the discussions on ‘what’s next’ for contemporary dance in Africa.

A great variety of proposals (conceptual, physical, theatrical) from many of the African countries were presented: from Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Congo, Gabon, Ivory Coast, Madagascar, Mali, Mozambique, Senegal, South Africa and Tunisia. The level of the dancers was admirable, as was the dramaturgy of the work.





It was very refreshing to see a great variety of body shapes. It was clear that body aesthetic is not a priority for them, rather the quality of dance of their performers. Most of the works were associated with political issues (done in a very elegant and effective way).

Among much good work, there are two works that were personal highlights. Salia Sanou is from Burkina Faso and is well known in Africa. Her piece *Du Désir D'Horizons* focused on refugees and was performed with such sensitivity, strong physicality and poetry; and a piece by an emerging female choreographer Kaisha Essiane from Gabon, with her piece *XXL* - a reflection on unconventional bodies.



It was a privilege to be present at such an important moment for contemporary dance in Africa. They have a lot of things to say and I found their discussions of what is coming next for the sector in Africa very stimulating. They are raising their voices, their artistic voices, in a dance landscape that is young and very promising indeed.

Top to Bottom:  
Ayuso (R) with festival director Irene Tassembedo  
Delegates at the FIDO  
Workshop participants

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# The Ancestral Call



Director and dance artist Rachel de Garang attended the Silvestre Intensive training programme in Brazil, reconnecting with her dance roots, exploring local customs and delving into ancestral memories. She tells us of her powerful experience.

---

*It was the summer of 1999 in Penzance, South West England and the sound of Brazilian rhythms filled the air. I was on high alert - my heart racing. Why was it so familiar? How was it I knew how to dance to it?*

I was born into the Dinka tribe in South Sudan, I moved to England at the age of ten. I had never been to Brazil and up until that time knew nothing about it. I was drawn to find out more. So my journey began.

At a time when slavery around the rest of the world was decreasing, the inland areas of South Sudan became accessible to European traders. To this day, the family blood lines of those that participated in or were taken into slavery are known through stories and historical records. These document the fact that almost every family in the area had someone taken or killed during the slave trade period. I then came across the theory of 'ancestral memories': genetic memories carried in our DNA and passed down through generations.

In January 2017, I arrived in Salvador, Brazil at the start of the second week of the four-week Silvestre Intensive training programme along with 150 international and Brazilian dancers. At the end of my first week dancing four to six hours every day, I could barely get out of bed. It hurt to walk and every part of my body ached. At age 57 with early onset arthritic knees, I had not danced properly for more than two years. I was scared ...*what the hell was I thinking?*





*It seemed I had been called by my ancestors!*

Miraculously, during my second week, I stopped hurting and was able to immerse myself fully in the work. My dancing body 'rebooted' so much so that dancing five hours each day for two days in the Salvador Carnival parade was a breeze – I was ecstatic.

Everyone in Salvador is born into a *Candomblé* house and belongs to it whether or not they choose to be initiated. Each house is dedicated to a particular *orixa* (divine spirit), but in ceremonies all of the *orixas* are acknowledged and paid homage to.

Each *orixa* has their designated day of the week, function, rhythm and gestures/movement. Thus, throughout the week there is a ceremony evoking an *orixa* in at least one of the many houses.

I was lucky enough to attend five different *Candomblé* ceremonies. The costumes were spectacular and the rhythms and movement familiar. I recognised the dances we were learning in class. Although these dances were underpinned with technique, they were performed in a natural 'non-stylised' manner, highlighting the symbolic expression of the *orixa* in their embodiment.



Silvestre Intensive  
2017 rehearsal

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One of the last ceremonies I attended will be etched in my memory forever. Drummers had already started playing. Our host, a priestess herself, but not presiding on this occasion was sitting downstairs. At the start of the ceremony, I began to feel extremely tired: my eyelids and head were heavy. I tried to shake off this 'sleepy' feeling. Every time I tried to lean back, I would feel an arm in the way. I remember feeling irritated – I could not understand why someone chose to sit right behind me when there were plenty of seats elsewhere. No matter what I did, the arm was always there. Eventually, to my relief, the extreme tiredness passed and the arm was gone.

Later I learned the same thing had happened to one of my colleagues from the dance programme. What we were both experiencing was entry into a trance state and the start of possession by an orixa. Our host had spotted this and sent worshippers to 'guard us' and stop us being 'taken over'. As we were not initiated, it would not have been safe to allow us to be possessed. This was not my first trance experience, but was a more profound and deeper experience.

In Brazil, ancestral memory is not a theory - it's a spiritual and cultural practice deeply engrained within the fabric of the city and its people. Working with the deities, the ancestors, paying homage to them and conducting rituals is part and parcel of every Bahian's daily life.

As I left Salvador, my life had acquired more meaning, value and purpose. I was overwhelmed with a sense of belonging, combined with a deep longing as if I had not yet arrived. I need to return to Salvador to reconcile the full messages contained in my ancestors' call.

My journey continues...



Pure Dance Items © Stephanie Berger

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# Transatlantic Exchange



Dance Artist, Choreographer and Academic 'Funmi Adewole recounts her inspiring choreographic exchange with Québec artists - forging links and developing their artistry.

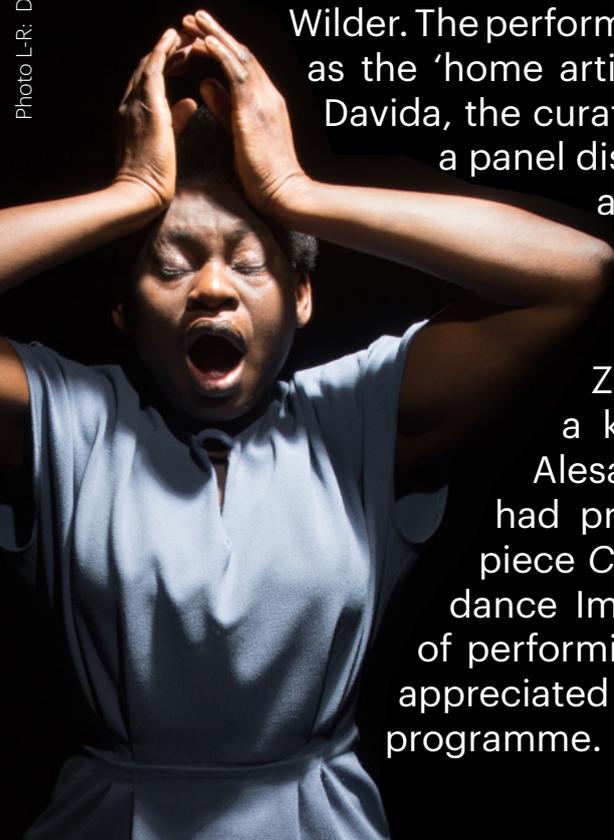
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Over the past four years, some strong and supportive relationships have developed between artists and organisations in Britain and Canada. It was at Re:generations in Bournemouth in 2014 that I first met Vivine Scarlett. I was impressed by her quiet strength and focus. She was introduced to me by Mercy Nabirye, who had worked with her on a previous project. Vivine was in England to gain experience of dance of the African Diaspora in this country. She attended with Ghislaine Doté, and her company Virtu'o Danse, who performed at the conference.

The following year, Ghislaine returned for a residency and created a piece with Andrea Queens, which was performed at the Bloom Festival 2014 and again at Re:generations 2016. Andrea, along with Freddie Opoku-Addaie and Alesandra Seutin, joined Ghislaine Doté in Canada and performed at the Rebel Bodies exhibition at the Musée de la Civilisation in Québec. I was delighted to be participate in the next trip to Canada which took place at the end of February, organised by the One Dance UK Dance of the African Diaspora programme, Tangente in Montréal and dance Immersion in Toronto.

In Montréal, I was performing alongside Ghislaine Doté and Alesandra Seutin in a triple bill, comprising three solos which Tangente named *Recounting Africa*. We had the honour of being the first performance in the organisation's new space, named the Wilder. The performances took place between 2 and 5 of March. Ghislaine as the 'home artist' made Alesandra and I feel very welcome. Dena Davida, the curator at Tangente, who is also an academic, organised a panel discussion in which she invited Karla Etienne, a dancer and manager, who works with Zab Maboungou, to contribute.

Alesandra and I were also invited to watch Zab Maboungou leading a dance class. She was a keynote speaker at Re:generations 2014. This was Alesandra Seutin's third time performing in Canada. She had previously performed the ten-minute version of her piece *Ceci n'est pas noire* (This is not black) in Toronto with dance Immersion . According to Alesandra, the experience of performing in Canada was an enriching one, and she really appreciated the interest that the Montréal press took in the programme.



*Recounting Africa* was instigated by Ghislaine with the support of Dena Davida, who stated that the event was "a powerful juxtaposition of three contemporary women's solos from the African Diaspora". She added, "There were many rich threads that tied them together as a curatorial event: exploration of differing approaches to narrative form, interdisciplinary practices and political critique".

The exchange in Toronto was an eye-opening experience for me. I gave a lecture on the contribution that dramaturgy can make to dance of the African Diaspora and I was pleasantly surprised that it was attended both by artists, some who had attended Re:generations 2016, and members of the general public.

The workshops brought me in contact with some innovative and experienced artists, working with a variety of dance forms – ranging from old school reggae, to traditional and contemporary African and Western dance techniques. Further, dance Immersion organises a variety of professional development opportunities for their artists.

*I found there were a number of courses and workshops for people interested in African and Caribbean dance forms for all ages and artistic exchange between Africa, America and Europe.*

I was pleased to hear from Cassandra Belafonte, the Programme Director, that the workshops I delivered were well received by the participants and they are helping them to gain a deeper understanding of their choreographic language, process, delivery and aspiration.

Ghislaine Doté, who instigated this strand of exchange, would like to see *Recounting Africa* staged in Britain. She has found the cultural exchange enriching, and has made stronger connections in the UK which she finds useful. The trip to Canada has made me think more deeply about the importance of an international context for dance. Artistic exchange plays a role in the sharing of practice, forming of strategy, and the building of audiences.

Our vision grows.



Left: 'Funmi Adewole  
Right: Alesandra Seutin



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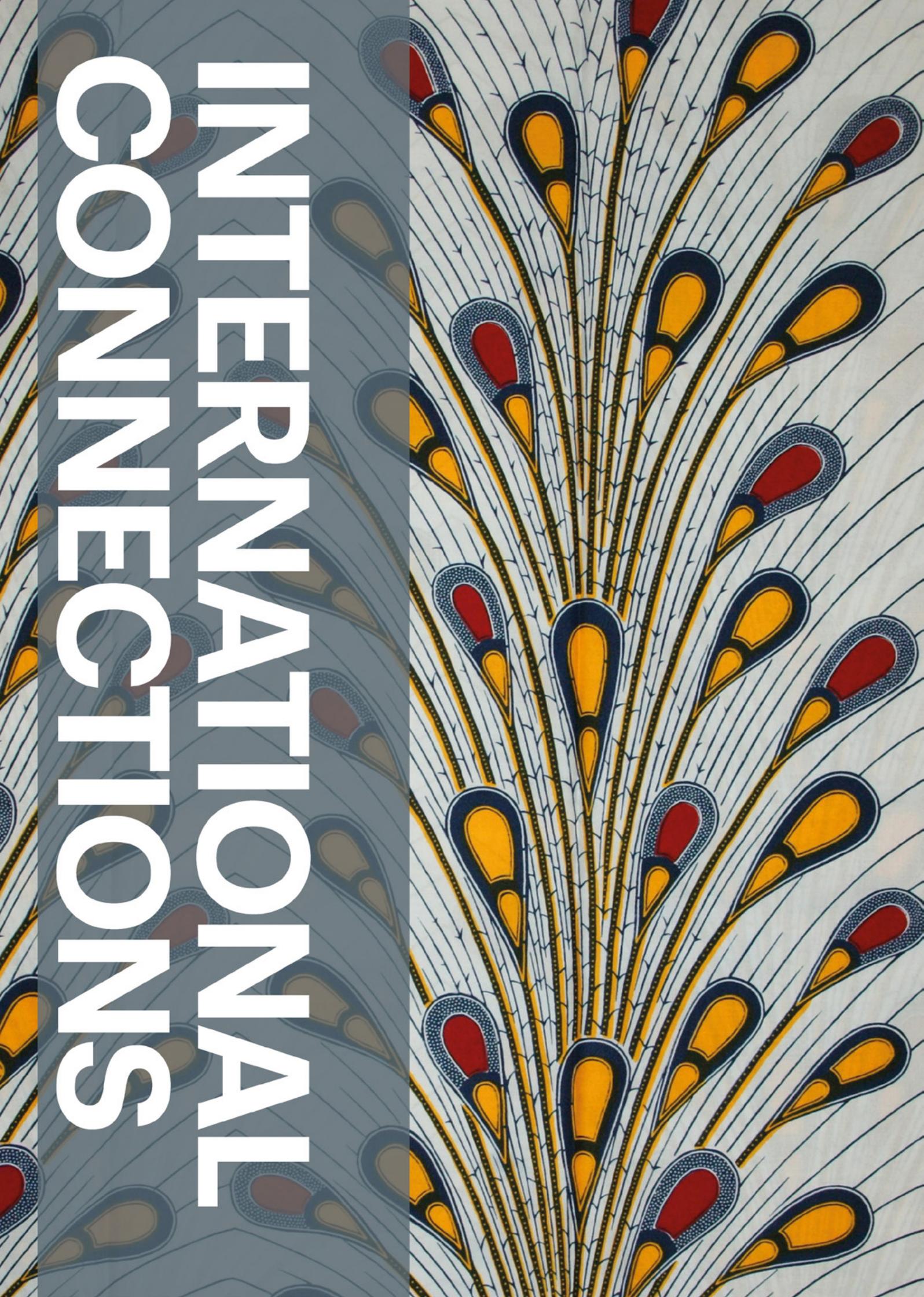
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# INTERNATIONAL CONNECTIONS



# Legacies of Imagination



Baraka Sele, an independent producer and consultant from New Jersey, USA, provides us with her reflection on November's Re:generations conference.

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At a time when the world appears to be coming apart at the seams and splitting into clubs, factions and secret societies, there are also those people below the surface who believe that collaboration and connection still have precious value. This sentiment certainly seemed pervasive among those who attended *Re:generations 4 - Diasporic Dance: Legacies of Imagination* at mac Birmingham.

The biennial conference focused on the "heritage, histories, geographies, legacies, places and spaces of dance of the African Diaspora" and was developed with many partners, including ACE Dance and Music, IRIE! dance theatre, De Montfort University, dance Immersion in Canada, and independent consultants.

Speakers tackled profound and provocative topics ranging from *The African Peoples' Dance Movement in Britain and The National Arts Movement of Ghana* (Funmi Adewole) to *The Black Dancing Body Versus the Black Dance Form* (Yassmin Foster) and *The Concept of Africanicity in Dance* (Gossano Malone).

The conference programme also featured panel discussions with influential figures from the arts and academia, lecture demonstrations, workshops, and public performances by UK and international dancers and companies. A new production by Birmingham-based ACE Dance and Music was a highlight, and will have a future presentation in Toronto, Canada, hosted by dance Immersion.



At every turn, conference attendees were immersed in enlightening conversations and learning opportunities, interspersed with informal networking sessions. Everyone interviewed seemed to feel enthused by those they met and invigorated by the connections they made.

We realised what a precious opportunity and privilege it was to be a participant in an extraordinary gathering: new colleagues and old friends from Uganda to the United Kingdom to the United States and beyond. It will be exciting to witness One Dance UK working together with its existing partners and newly-found friends, capitalising on the remarkable momentum that gathered pace at Re:generations 4.

*Translating such enthusiasm into tangible developments is sure to be exciting, challenging and ultimately rewarding.*

Analysis, assessment, thoughtful deliberation, and measured movement that will navigate the craft through what may be choppy and uncharted waters is exactly what is needed. There are many, including this writer, who are anticipating the possibilities and cheering for Re:generations' safe and successful landing at ports known and unknown.

**For more information:**

[barakasele@gmail.com](mailto:barakasele@gmail.com)

<http://bit.ly/RegenConference>



# The Keynote Speeches



Access the inspiring, fascinating keynote speeches from November's Re:generations 4 conference. Over the following pages, we introduce the speeches from leading figures in the African Diasporic art world. Be sure to click on the interactive link to footage of each speech.

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## Peter Badejo OBE (Nigeria)



Peter Badejo OBE is one of Nigeria's foremost choreographers, dancers and African performance specialists, and was recently announced as a Patron of One Dance UK. After a long and distinguished career in Nigeria and the United States as a performer, director, teacher and academic, Peter moved to Britain in 1990. He is the Artistic Director of Badejo Arts.

Dance companies throughout Africa, Europe and America have commissioned Peter Badejo's work. Greatly in demand as a teacher, Peter has conducted residencies and workshop programmes throughout the UK. He now freelances worldwide.

## Hilary Carty (UK)



Hilary works internationally as a consultant (NTL UK), facilitator, coach (CIPD), Visiting Professor (Kufstein University of Applied Sciences) and speaker, embracing significant experience in leadership, management and organisational development.

With a distinguished career over 25 years as a cultural leader, Hilary has spearheaded a range of initiatives with some of the UK's most prominent arts and cultural organisations and now draws on that experience to successfully impact a range of sectors and organisations. She has held a range of influential roles including Director of Dance for Arts Council England.

## Anita Gonzalez (USA)



Anita Gonzalez heads the Global Theatre and Ethnic Studies minor at the University of Michigan. Her research and publication interests are in the fields of ethnic performance, 19th century theatre, maritime performance, and the way in which performance reveals histories and identities in the Americas and in transnational contexts. She is an Executive Board member of the National Theatre Conference, an Associate Member of Stage Directors and Choreographers. Currently, Dr. Gonzalez is a member of the Executive Committee of the University of Michigan Press.

# The Legacy of Things Past, Things Present and Things to Come

Peter Badejo OBE (Nigeria)

Introduction by Oluwatoyin Odunsi  
Dance of the African Diaspora North Programmer,  
One Dance UK

**CLICK TO VIEW THE  
KEYNOTE SPEECH**

As reported earlier in *HOTFOOT*, Peter Badejo OBE is one of Nigeria's most influential choreographers, dancers, teachers, academics and African performance specialists innovating the practice of African People's Dance form and language in the UK since the 1990's.

Peter has been one of the many early dance pioneers championing the dance form of African People's Dance and developing the 'Bami Jo' dance language, technique and its cultural history for the UK dance sector.

His keynote speech involved beautiful singing and dancing, inspiring and stirring the audience up to action, charting the history of African People's Dance (APD) in Britain over the last four decades from the 1970's to the present time.

He eloquently articulated the impact that different cultural communities from across the globe had contributed towards the social, political, cultural and economic branding of cool Britannia in the art forms and creative activities of music, fashion, festivals, food and dance.

Describing passionately the cultural value that African and African Caribbean dance artists, choreographers, practitioners and dance companies in the past had enriched Britain's dance history both spiritually and creatively; infusing the essence of APD styles, music and artistic narratives; by slowly influencing and contributing towards the British dance cannon.

*“When you free the body you  
free the mind.”*

Peter Badejo OBE

Peter's look at APD chronology illustrated this period of change and transformation within the British African Diasporic dance movement. He used the example of German-American psychologist Kurt Lewin model of 'change theory' to express how the APD language, aesthetic and context in the UK has evolved with the new generation of dance artists, choreographers, practitioners and dance companies. He explained how they are creating their own imaginative and dynamic dance narratives, styles and techniques rooted in the new 21st century British culturally diverse hybrid dance ecology.

As his session was coming to an end, he reminded the audience of the importance of defining their own dance language, technique, aesthetic, narrative, cultural history, creative process and research. By the sector naming their artistic work, connecting, documenting and archiving the past artistic history to the present and finally being imaginative and innovative to take the art form in to the future.

# Women in Dance and International Dialogues

Hilary Carty (UK)

Introduction by Beverley Glean MBE  
Director, IRIE! dance theatre

[CLICK TO VIEW THE  
KEYNOTE SPEECH](#)

Hilary Carty's keynote speech on day two of the conference addressed the theme of *Women in Dance & International Dialogues*. With such a broad remit, Hilary herself said she thought intently about the direction the keynote would take. The speech was personalised with a rich blend of aspiration, celebration and empowerment at its heart. Reflecting the theme, she focused on five women who have impacted on her life's journey in dance. This narrative was framed by using five verbs, to convey the individual contributions:

Sheila Barnett - *inform*

L'Antonette Stines - *create*

Jawole Willa Jo Zollar - *experiment*

Beverley Glean - *educate*

Pawlet Brooks - *empower*

Hilary was keen to inform the audience that she had just touched the surface with the women highlighted in her speech. She acknowledged, that before and beside the women mentioned, there were and are many others globally who are shaping the way for dance of the African Diaspora (DAD). She called on us to recognise their contributions, an important reminder for educators, in particular higher education professionals as we move towards a more diverse curriculum-reflecting DAD, she asks "just keep saying the names".

*"Our challenge is not the absence of heroes & heroines, but rather the absence of recognition."*

Hilary Carty

She informed us that her route to dance 'wasn't conventional'. For many in the sector, this is likely to be a shared experience. However, she is an example of how the arts, dance in her case can transform lives. Her eclectic encounters encouraged a shared understanding of equality and diversity that informed her vision. Noting, that even though "we in the UK have a distinct voice, it is critical that we continue to blend our views to become part of a global creative narrative".

The speech encourages the DAD sector to take pride in its history, culture and hold steadfast to its vision. "Take time to think, stop and reflect'... see our aspirations and ambitions as strength". This I felt was our opportunity to consider our successes and lessons learnt, but on the other hand not to forget areas of inequality.

Hilary's points brings into questions issues of empowerment, critical reflection, discourse, invisibility, development of archives etc.

Finally, she calls on the sector to "build new images of who we are and new opportunities to strengthen ourselves and build the infrastructure that we the sector critically need". Hilary managed to eloquently, intelligently and passionately set the agenda for day two of Re:generations 4.

# Legacies of the Imagination

Anita Gonzalez (USA)

Introduction by Mercy Nabirye  
Head of Dance of the African Diaspora, One Dance UK

**CLICK TO VIEW THE  
KEYNOTE SPEECH**

Anita Gonzalez' speech addresses two certain important themes:

- How we imagine ourselves within the field of dance
- How we write ourselves into the history of the field

She sees the Re:generations international gathering as a special opportunity to gather together as a community to support each other and consider pathways that bring us together in a place of artistry and inquiry. The presentation gave us huge amounts of information and it was clear that there is a lot out there which we can continue to build on. She also says that we are evidence of an ongoing and continuous Diaspora expressed through embodied theory and practice. And that it's time for us to define and write our experiences on our own terms.

Anita shared works of black artists from past centuries through the history of transatlantic journeys, exchanges and collaborations. Acts that took place in the UK including performances by Master Juba; dancing the cake walk which became an international craze; Katherine Dunham's collective which was described as "elegance and ecstasy, mystery and magnetism"; the success of the Blackbird Ladies with some 518 performances; the famous stair dance; and Berto Basuka and his Ballet Negre as the first European black dance company, with dancers from Trinidad, Nigeria and Ghana.

*"Diversity is about the process of this translation  
of who we are."*

Anita Gonzalez

Like dance artists today, early 20th century artists booked international tours to increase their recognition while reaching new audiences and for some, financial success. Through this history, Anita sees repeated patterns on these journeys as they continue back and forth; artists searching for opportunity, searching for identity, striving to be recognised for their artistry and not their skin colour.

She recommends that we move forward by '...shifting the way we see ourselves and focusing on how we write ourselves into these histories.' She mentioned some of her projects which explore and question: how we can collectively talk, write, translate, communicate, make work about black identities; and what is unique that animates people around the world who respond to our performance practices.

She asks us to rearticulate our legacy to to assure our future.

Her message to us is - 'Let's write and theorise together'  
'Let's write and make ourselves visible'  
'Let's write ourselves into history'  
'Let's dance our imagination'

# Picture Gallery



Some highlights from the Re:generations conference at mac, Birmingham.



**Clockwise from top left:**

- African Heritage UK
- Yassmin Foster
- Dollie Henry and BOP Jazz Company
- Dr Sheron Wray delivering a presentation
- Ella Mesma leading a class
- Bantu Arts
- Inner-Minds-Eyes
- Virtu'o Danse (centre)



HEAR WHAT SOME LEADING ARTS FIGURES HAD TO SAY ABOUT THE CONFERENCE BY FOLLOWING THE LINKS BELOW!

[Jackie Guy MBE, CD](#)

[Beverley Glean MBE](#)

[Bob Ramdhanie](#)



## Re:generations 4 Academic Papers

by Yassmin Foster

This year's conference welcomed papers from the United Kingdom, the African continent and the Caribbean. The plethora of proposals gave an indication of the reach of the conference's focus, truly 'dance of the African Diaspora'. Entering its fourth year, the Re:generations biennial three-day conference included parallel papers delivered by an array of academics, artists and researchers. Topics included dance gender and sexualities, APD (African Peoples' Dance) in Britain and France, African contemporary/ contemporary African, Black dance styles and identities.

Speakers tackled and opened up discourse on the concepts such as 'performativity', namely, how and where the Black body unapologetically celebrates 'otherness'. Melendez Mulero spoke on the emergence of vogue, and how it established a gendered aesthetic, from an arguably non-binary disposition. She argued that vogue celebrates queerness, otherness and Blackness through the performativity of gender fluidity and hybrid identities. Tia-Monique Uzor discussed the challenges and success of the Black body to define its own space: how artists are challenging subjugation, by creating their own spaces by employing ephemerality between their movement and identities.

Alison Ray and 'Funmi Adewole focused on new histories. Adewole spoke on the practice of traditional African and Caribbean dance in the 1970s, as a catalyst for establishing the Black Dance Development Trust. They shared how cross-cultural attributes that included theatrical dance, concluded in the shape of dance drama in the UK. Ray's investigation uncovered two French African choreographers, how they were able to produce and tour professional work, through France's financial support mechanism. Both authors elaborated on the support structure and development opportunities in Britain and France, for dance of the African Diaspora.

'Africanity' was the topic of Gossano Malone's paper, in his exploration of historical concepts, narratives and movement patterns of the Black body. Through lived experience and collective memory, Malone argues the theme of protest that manifests in Black dance. Lastly, my own contribution attested the ability to recognise Black dance, even when it is not being performed by a Black body. This generated conversation on the undocumented body of tacit knowledge that comprises dance of the African Diaspora, and archiving as intangible cultural heritage.

Speakers shared overlapping, contested and congruent perspectives on dance of the African Diaspora with their peers and colleagues. Papers covered historicised, current and futuristic themes, which perpetuated a chain of reasoning and healthy debate as part of another successful conference.

If you would like more detail on any of these papers, contact [HOTFOOT@onedanceuk.org](mailto:HOTFOOT@onedanceuk.org).

# Canadian Connections



dance Immersion was a key partner in the recent Re:generations conference. The organisation's Founder and Curator, Vivine Scarlett, recognises the extent of the Canadian involvement in the conference.

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dance Immersion is an organisation that supports dancers and dances of the African Diaspora with a variety of programmes designed to enhance the careers of dance artists. The organisation's office is located in Toronto, Canada, where we have been strategising over the years on various initiatives that foster exchange between Canadian and UK artists. The invitation to be part of the planning committee for the conference led to dance Immersion facilitating the inclusion of a Canadian contingency of 22 people which contributed in Birmingham at the 2016 Re:generations conference.



The contingency was supported by the Canada Council for the Arts, enabling senior and emerging voices to share their diverse expressions on panels, instruction of dance classes, and presentation of works.

Over the three days the participation of Canadians included: John Alleyne who hosted the opening night showcase and participated on panels discussions. Ghislaine Doté and her company Virtu'o Danse performed a work. Ghislaine performed in a collaborative piece with UK's Andrea Queens for the opening night reception. Jasmyn Fyffe and her company Jasmyn Fyffe Dance performed a work. Esie Mensah conducted a dance workshop and her company Esie Mensah Dance performed. Kevin Ormsby participated on a panel, and his company KasheDance performed. I participated on a panel and Roger Singha performed a work with dancers from Virtu'o Danse, and conducted a dance workshop.

L-R: Vivine Scarlett (L) and Cleo Parker-Robinson at Re:generations 2016  
Opposite: Jasmyn Fyffe Dance at Re:generations 2016

*The conference provided the opportunity for Canadian participants to network amongst the international delegation, providing input as part of a global community who relates to their understanding of the challenges faced in defining, practicing and evolving the field of African People's Dance.*

John Alleyne connected with many new dance professionals including a ballet dancer seeking advice and mentorship from a professional ballet dancer. Ghislaine Doté continues working with Andrea Queens in developing work. Jasmyn Fyffe was able to expose her dancers to the many aspects and concerns that specifically speak to dancers and dances of the African Diaspora. Esie Mensah was introduced to Rachael Nanyonjo (UK) to discuss future possibilities. Kevin Ormsby connected with Jackie Guy (UK), both from Jamaica, to discuss future possibilities. Roger Singha was exposed to the many aspects and concerns of APD, where he was able to compare and draw on similarities in form and techniques. Throughout the weekend, we all continued to connect with established contacts while developing new relationships for future initiatives.

dance Immersion continues its ongoing relationship with UK artists. Most recently 'Funmi Adewole participated in teaching dance dramaturgy in March 2017, and in February we presented the Canadian premiere of *TEN* by ACE Dance and Music in Toronto.

dance Immersion is dedicated to the advancement, development and dissemination of artists and their works from Canada, and as we continue to self identify, define and articulate our expression in dance, the Re:generations conferences offer a platform where like minds can come together to share, learn, converse and explore the field of dance from the African Diaspora.



**For more information:**

[www.danceimmersion.ca](http://www.danceimmersion.ca)  
[@danceImmersion](https://twitter.com/danceImmersion)

# Capturing Regional Perspectives



Last November's Re:generations conference was attended by a strong cohort of artists from Bristol and Wales, with many attending for the first time. They spoke with Dance of the African Diaspora (DAD) South West Programmer, Katy Noakes about their observations.

*What follows below is part of a much longer conversation that took place with artists Camille Barton, Helen Wilson, Jazlyn Pinckney and Cardiff based June Campbell-Davies. For many of them, this was their first experience of Re:generations, their visit made possible through Theatre Bristol's artist bursary scheme TB Agents. In January we huddled in a café to see what had been learned and provoked.*

Jazlyn is a recent dance graduate, working in intergenerational arts and developing her practice: "I am fairly new to dance, this was the first time I've ever taken myself seriously as a dancer and tried to better myself. So to hear from people from Canada, USA, New Zealand....that's such a long way to travel for this conversation. It felt great to be accepted into a conversation that I'm always thinking about but never had the opportunity to join."

For Helen, the Founder and Artistic Director of Rise Youth Dance Company, this was a return visit. Helen brought two young members with her and the pertinent issues were around connecting the past, present and future: "There were a couple of points that really stuck with me - a disconnect between the old and new school artists that sometimes felt like two distinct groups. How do we learn from the older artists and how do they acknowledge the work happening in younger generations? We need to archive and reflect but also to look at what's happening now."

Camille Barton, a live artist working in dance, media and research, wondered if the issue of skin privilege plays out here: "Is it perceptions of 'Blackness' and the fact that hip hop has a white crossover that creates that tension?... I really enjoyed hearing Anita Gonzalez talk about the need to create theory or have an investigation point for the work that we create."

*Battles have been hard fought for. We can so easily go backward as well as forward. We always need to stay vigilant.*

June Campbell-Davies



Below: Jazlyn Pinckney (L) and Helen Wilson at the Re:generations discussion  
Opposite: Camille Barton in *Space is the Place*

We mused on the seemingly easy relationship between the North American pioneers and the younger, inter-sectional American artists, wondering how different the conversations may have been, if Re:generations had happened after rather than before the US elections and how we can build stronger dialogue between traditions and cultures in the UK.

For Jazlyn, as someone who was born and grew up in the USA, the different race politics in the UK carries both benefits and risk. “Black culture is so much more segregated in the States that it’s easier for different forms to recognise each other. In UK it’s a bit more muddled, a bit more blurred, there’s not always such a distance between Black and White cultures.

Camille: “I’d like to meet people who have a real area of research, it can feel disrespectful if there’s no acknowledgement, or if a form is taken out of context. It can change the meaning.”

Helen: “People need to be honest with themselves as artists and as teachers, I can teach some dancehall but it’s not my specialism. I acknowledge that and work with guest tutors.” As someone who trained and apprenticed with RJC Dance, the space that events like Re:generations creates is crucial: “I feel most connected to African Diasporic dance and I’m interested in connecting with dancers using those forms to devise in new ways. I feel like there’s so much focus on contemporary White dance forms that there’s very little space for this sort of conference.”

Jazlyn: “It’s so important to have a safe space to ask those questions. The issues are still live and we need space to reflect honestly on the quality of each other’s work and check that we are always creating, programming and talking progressively.”

One thought we all shared - that whenever we are vulnerable, whether in North America or Europe, or across the UK, working in traditional African or developing younger diasporic forms - our strength lies in inclusivity. Let’s keep reaching out across the oceans and the generations.



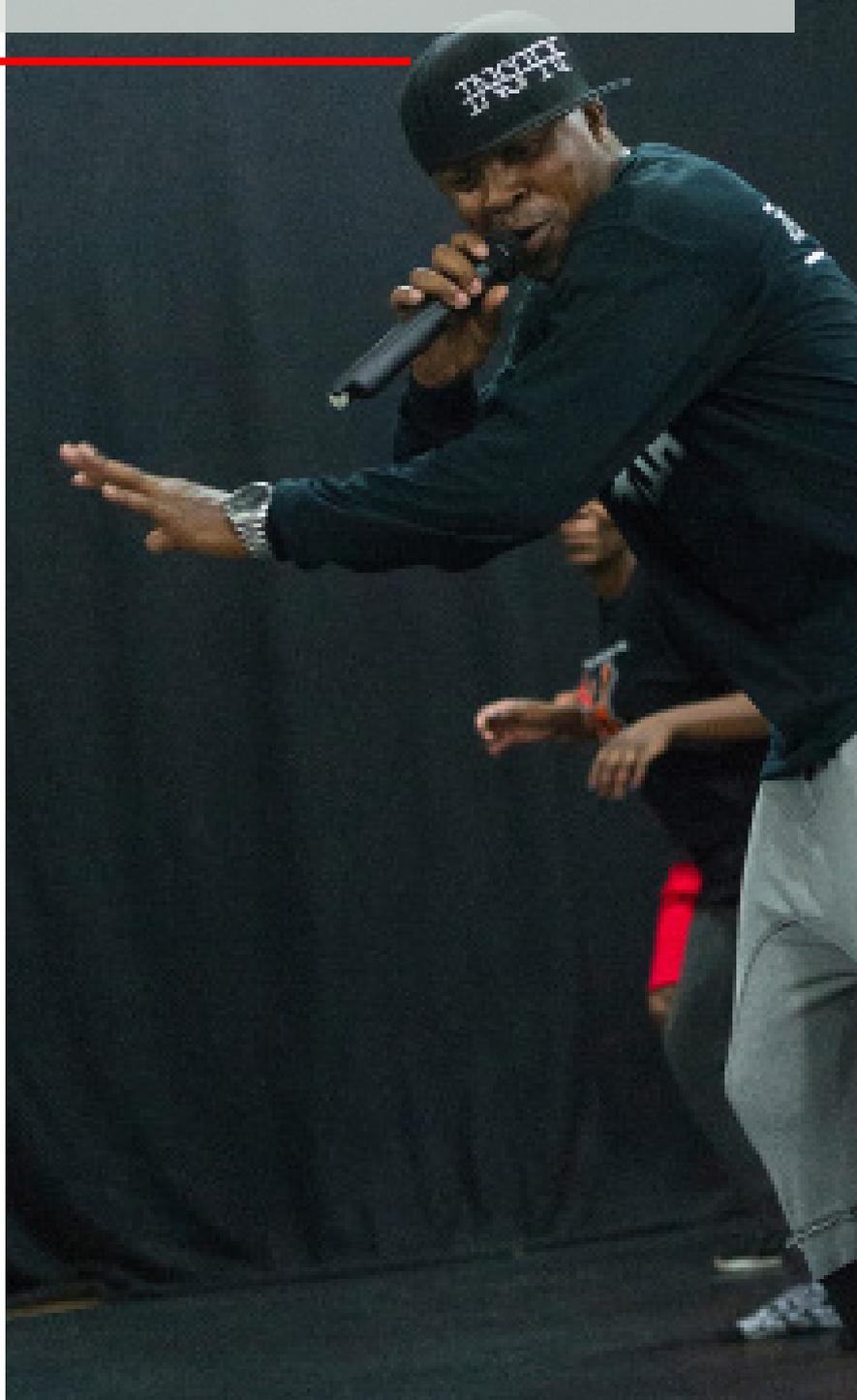
# Impact of Future4 Youth



Re:generations was an event of inspiration and connection - not just with established dance artists and academics, but also the younger generation. Coordinator for Impact Youth, Kate Harrison, tells us of the international links made with the new generation.

Last November, Impact Youth was given the opportunity to perform their new piece *Voices* at Re: generations in Birmingham. For some of the young dancers this was the first time performing on a stage alongside international companies. It was a great opportunity for them to watch and perform alongside different artists from different arts and cultures including Untold from Amsterdam.

Untold is a cultural organisation which engages young people in the arts specialising in West African and West Caribbean dance and music styles. It prides itself on working with groups that do not normally visit the theatre giving them the opportunity to learn dance and music. It has many youth groups as well as a touring adult company who performed at



*Both companies are excited about the opportunity*

Main: Hakeem Onibudo leading a workshop at Re:generations 2016  
Opposite: Untold performing at Re:generations 2016

## The Next Steps

From meeting at Re:generations, Untold and Impact Dance have decided to collaborate and work together in an exchange project in the summer. The project will be known as Future4Youth International. Future4Youth (F4Y) is a concept Hakeem Onibudo, Artistic Director of Impact Dance, together with ACE Dance and Music, previewed in 2014. The idea was to explore and understand the connection between hip-hop and African dance using young people's perspectives. The project brought 17 youth companies from all over the UK together to participate in workshops and a scratch performance, which empowered each young individual on their own dance journey.

Impact Youth will now continue the journey of F4Y in Amsterdam working with Untold's youth company at Untold's base, Biljer Park Theatre. It will be an opportunity for each dancer to learn and find a connection with different cultures and environments, to create new relationships, enrich their dance knowledge and to broaden their horizons as individuals.

Both companies hope for it to be a great success and to continue with international dialogues creating more opportunity for young people. This leads to the empowerment of more skills and experiences, providing them with a brighter future.

**For more information:**

[www.impactdance.co.uk](http://www.impactdance.co.uk)  
[@Impact\\_Dance1](https://www.instagram.com/Impact_Dance1)





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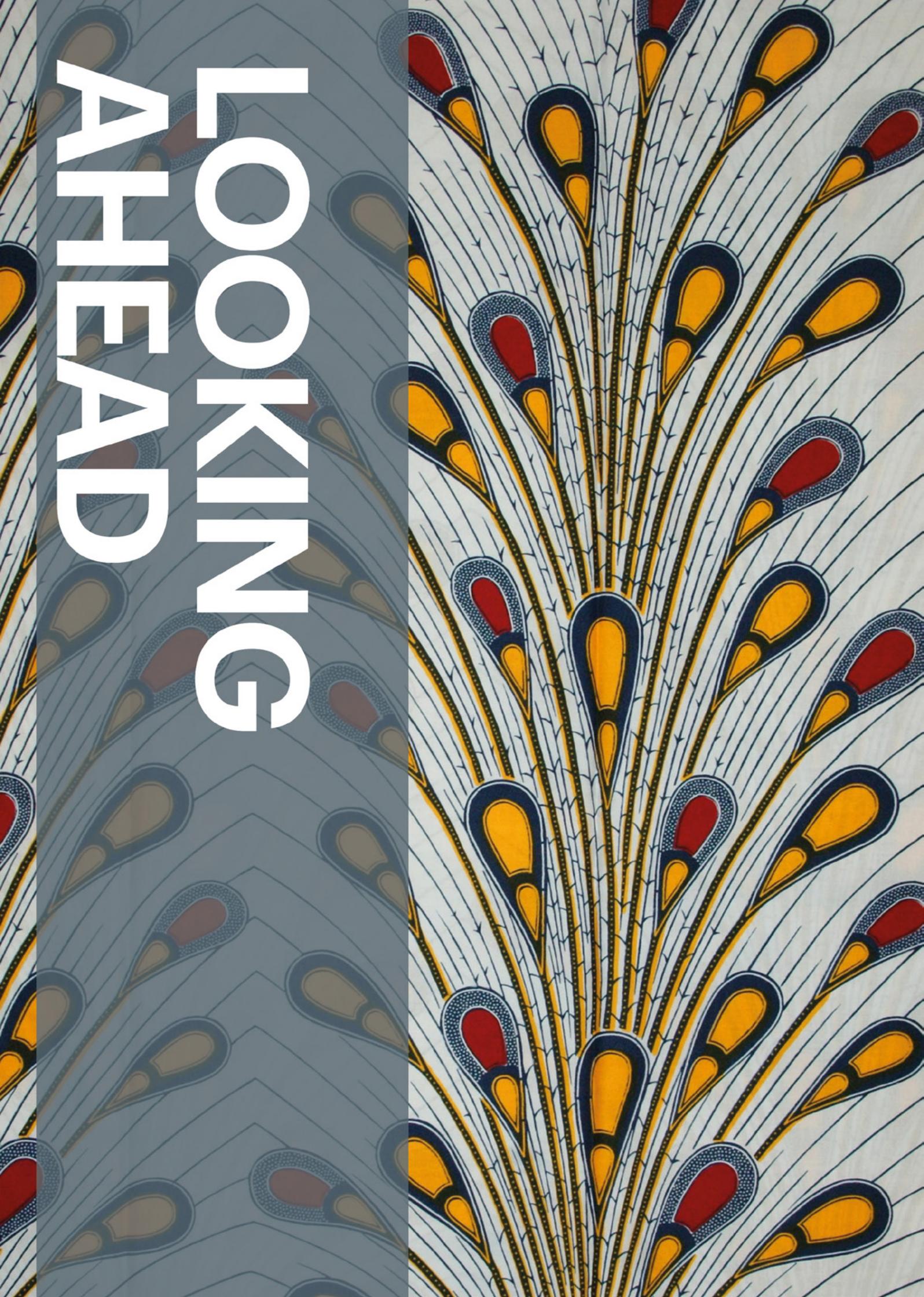
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# LOOKING AHEAD



# Trailblazers Fellowships



The Trailblazers Fellowship is an annual One Dance UK leadership programme, designed to support the professional development of artists working with African Diaspora dance forms in a contemporary context. The programme reflects One Dance UK's continuing commitment to advancing the genre of Dance of the African Diaspora in this country.

Trailblazers features two strands of development, which alternate annually: *Starters* for first time mid-career applicants and *Champions* for past recipients of the fellowship who have demonstrated strong leadership and entrepreneurial spirit. Since its inception in 2003, 38 artists have significantly benefitted from the programme and, as alumni, they remain as advocates for our work at One Dance UK.

On 10 May at The Place in London, One Dance UK's Trailblazers Showcase featured original works created and performed by two One Dance UK Trailblazers Champion Fellows: Adesola Akinleye and Ithalia Forel, and guest artist Sara Dos Santos (pictured), who is a recipient of the Neriah Kumah Legacy Fund.

This much-anticipated performance was an integral element in the continuing professional development of these artists, and is testimony to One Dance UK's continuing commitment to the development of artists and the advancement of dance of the African Diaspora in this country.

The three original pieces, *Baptism in three songs* by Adesola Akinleye; *Afro Play - Colour vs Place* by Ithalia Forel and *Frontline* by Sara Dos Santos, each explored the individual artist's personal interest in universal themes.

## Trailblazer Starters 2017-18

From a large number of high-quality applications we are pleased to announce the four Trailblazer Fellowship Starters for 2017-18 are:

**Iris De Brito**  
**Jamaal Burkmar**  
**Dickson Mbi**  
**Zinzi Minott**

These exciting new talents are set to impress with much-anticipated performances in an integral element to the continuing professional development of these artists. We look forward to working with them.



**For more information:**

[www.onedanceuk.org](http://www.onedanceuk.org)

# Vision for the Future



**Tell us about how you developed your interest in dance, and what informs your specific style.**

I developed my interest in dance from my family who were always dancing around the house and generally spreading positive energy. I used to be inspired watching the breakdance movies from the 80s, which many will know as *Breakin' 1 & 2*. I then learned b-boying during the 2nd year of my psychology degree. I instantly fell in love with the art form as it not only gave me the tools to express myself freely, but also taught me a lot about myself as a human being physically, emotionally and spiritually. Over the years, I learned other styles of dance and all of them inform my practice on a physical level.

However, my style is more-so informed by emotional connection. We may not all be intellects, but we are all human beings who experience the same emotions and so I strive to create art that people can relate to on an emotional level. For the past three years, the most profound thing that has defined my style is learning so much about visual impairment. I have gone on an intense journey which started out of a fear of something I didn't understand. I decided to develop a curiosity about this fear and it has completely transformed my methodology in which I make art, the way I see the world has made me a better human being. It has truly been life changing to the point where pioneering research into the unlikely link between hip hop and visual impairment has now become my life's work!

**Who are your gurus?**

My gurus are my mother who raised me with such strength and dignity, my martial arts teachers who have put me on a path not only of self-discovery but self-acceptance, and my five-year-old daughter who teaches me to see the world from unique and beautiful perspectives.

Of course, I could name famous dance artists whose work I have seen and yes they made an impact on me but really and truly the people who inspire me the most are those I connect with on a daily basis.

*Inspiration can be found anywhere,  
and in the simplest of things.*

*HOTFOOT* Editor Cameron Ball talks to a Trailblazer Starter, 2015-16 and director of Rationale Productions, Nathan Geering, about his creative inspiration, what the Trailblazers programme has meant to him, and the exciting projects this creative talent has in store.

**You've done a lot of work in the Yorkshire region, including, of course, your upcoming work with the Special Olympics this summer. Why is it important to you to focus your work in this area?**

I choose to focus on work in this region because I feel it is important for people to realise that you don't have to follow conventional routes to make a successful career out of doing something you love. A lot of people still think the only way to "make it" in the dance sector is to be conservatoire trained, seek your fortune in London and attend endless auditions. I am living proof that things don't have to be that way. You can make a stand from where you are and draw on your inspirations around you to make great art.

So, long as you're willing to work hard and be patient you will inevitably make so much noise that the rest of the world has no choice but to listen to you. The fact that you chose not to go down a conventional route just adds to your unique selling point.



***You were one of the Trailblazers Starters in 2015-16. Was there anything in particular you took away from the experience?***

From being a Trailblazer I took away a number of skills from the life coaching sessions we were given. Most importantly though I learned that your fellow Trailblazers are your greatest resource and you can find support and the answers to most of your problems if you take the time out to truly connect with one-another.

My fellow Trailblazer Starters (Rachael, Yami and Mbulelo) have now become my family and even though our Starter programme is over, we still meet up and connect with one another.

***What advice do you have for emerging choreographers and artists?***

For emerging choreographers and artists I would advise you to quieten all the noise around you and listen to your authentic self. Don't follow trends but follow what your true inner voice is saying. If you follow trends you will always be playing catch up and be mediocre at best.

Remember, nobody is better at being you than you, so put your energy into expressing yourself honestly. This is how you find your niche and truly stand out from the sea of thousands of other artists... even when it's tough and it feels like nobody is supporting you, stick with it because the universe is working behind the scenes for you.

**For more information:**

[www.specialolympicsgb.org.uk](http://www.specialolympicsgb.org.uk)

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# Trailblazer

Dance of the African Diaspora

## ***What does the future hold for you?***

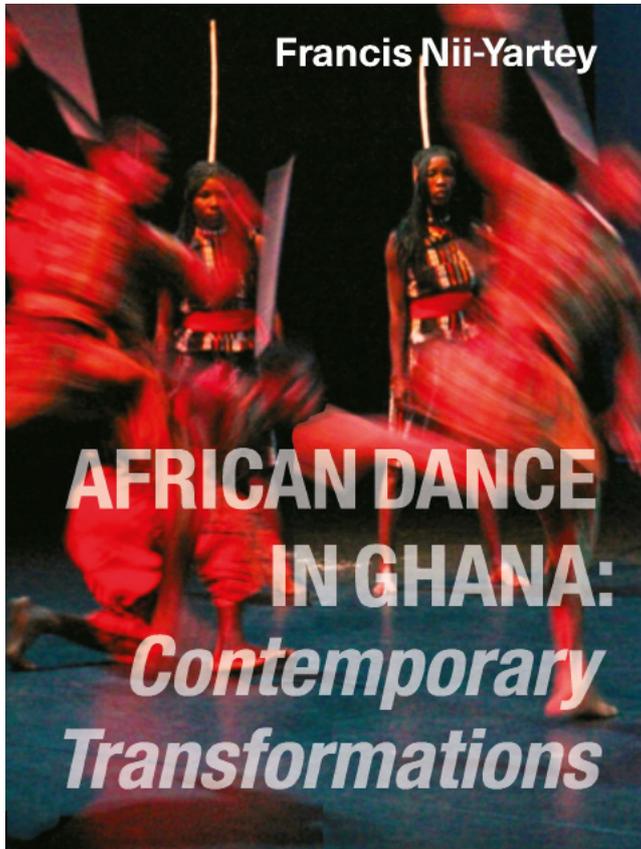
The future for me is looking very exciting (and busy) as so many things are taking off right now. There are too many to mention but here are a few highlights:

Firstly, through the Step Change Program I have recently been appointed Associate Producer for the New Wolsey Theatre and DanceEast. During my time there I will be leading a project for Ramps on The Moon where I will be sourcing cutting edge technology for disabled artists to explore ways in which these new technologies can be used to enhance creative practice.

The next highlight is that my company is about to enter into the next phase of our audio description research which utilises the skills of a beatboxer to provide a richer soundscape for people with visual impairment. From this I will be creating a new language similar to Laban notation to facilitate a ground-breaking way for people with visual impairment to be able to choreograph work.

In addition to all of this, as mentioned I have been appointed as the Artistic Director of the Special Olympics Opening Ceremony which is on 8 August. This is a great honour for me and I am very excited about the creative brief I have designed to showcase what artists and athletes with intellectual disabilities are truly capable of. We will be raising people's expectations and the aim is to inspire the nation to achieve greatness - not only in art and sport but in everyday life.





***African Dance in Ghana:  
Contemporary Transformations***

**Author:** Francis Nii-Yartey

**Pages:** 130

**ISBN:** 978-0-9569670-2-2

**Reviewer:** 'Funmi Adewole

**Publisher:** Mot Juste – [www.africandanceinghana.com](http://www.africandanceinghana.com)

**Price:** £16.00

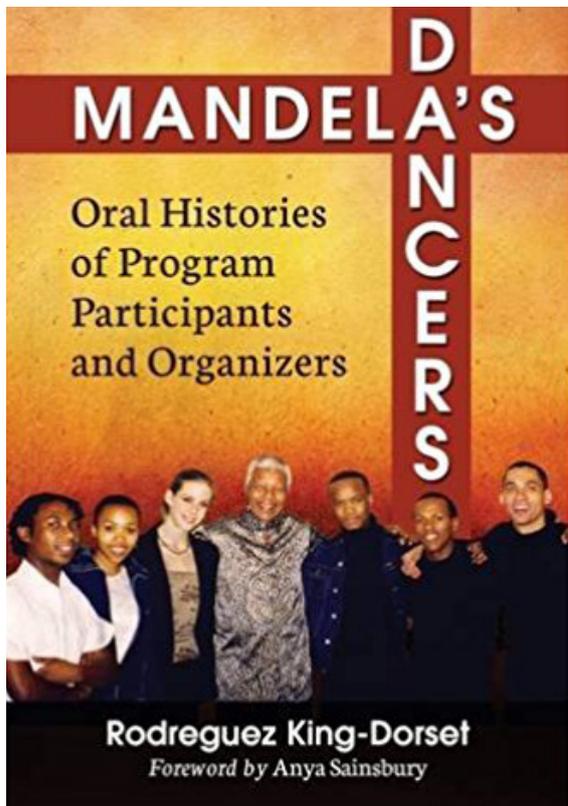
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*African Dance in Ghana: Contemporary Transformations* was written with both the general reader and academic in mind. The late Francis Nii-Yartey, was a practitioner, former artistic director of National Dance Company of Ghana and founder of Noyam, a contemporary dance company and institute, as well as a professor at the University of Ghana, Legon. The book, told from a personal point of view, offers information that is priceless for the dance researcher.

He starts with an overview of dance in different contexts in Ghana. He looks at the importance and features of dance in traditional contexts such as ceremonies and ritual, and mentions popular dance in urban events like the Miss Ghana competition. David Amoo's illustrations are fetching and informative. The bulk of the book however is about theatrical dance, his domain. In discussing the development of theatrical dance at the University of Ghana, Nii-Yartey is careful to explain the policies and pan-Africanist philosophies behind this initiative.

Nii-Yartey first describes the two genres that the National Dance Company of Ghana were famous for: Neo-traditional dance and dance theatre. He discusses the basic approaches to creating within these genres. The first focuses on adapting participatory traditional dances to suit an audience's gaze and the second uses a three-act structure to tell a story with dance and mime. Lastly Nii-Yartey tells of his own approach to contemporary African dance, which he calls *Noyam* (Moving On). He draws on symbolism and movements from African dances to create phrases of choreography. Philosophically his work feeds from the same framework as neo-traditional dance and dance drama but is orientated towards a younger generation and a global audience.

A major contribution of this book to academic study is the description of dance productions that Nii-Yartey includes. Most are illustrated with photographs. Not only are they treasures in themselves; they provide an example for further documentation. Sadly Francis Nii-Yartey died in India in 2015. This book however is part of his legacy. Hopefully it will encourage the emergence of more practitioner-researchers like himself.



## ***Mandela's Dancers: Oral Histories of Program Participants and Organizers***

**Author:** Rodreguez King-Dorset

**Pages:** 212

**ISBN:** 978-0-7864-9986-1

**Reviewer:** Nicky Clayton FRS, Prof. of Comparative Cognition, University of Cambridge; Scientist in Residence, Rambert

**Publisher:** McFarland

This wonderful book tells the true story of the Mandela's Dancers. Twenty-seven dancers have benefited from this rich cultural exchange - the creation a series of scholarships to promote talented young dancers from South Africa to study at the Rambert School of Ballet and Contemporary Dance in London. I first heard about this first-hand through Rodreguez King-Dorset, when I introduced him to the late Sir Bob Hepple, who served as Master at Clare College, Cambridge, where I am a Fellow.

The idea behind *Mandela's Dancers* was the brainchild of Lady Anya Sainsbury (née Anya Linden), former ballerina at the Royal Ballet. It all started in 1993 at a private party. Like many innovative ideas, enthusiastic serendipity prevailed. Lady Sainsbury and her husband Lord Sainsbury were invited to an informal gathering in Johannesburg hosted by their friends Clive and Irene Mendell. Among the many invites was guest of honour Mr. Nelson Mandela, who had recently been elected President of the ANC party. Needless to say conversations with and without words ensued, including what must have been a magical dance, judging by the photographic evidence and personal testimonies. A few minutes later a plan was hatched: the result was this innovative project in which Anya Sainsbury set up the Rambert School South Africa Scholarship Fund with Nelson Mandela as its patron. The first five successful dancers arrived at Rambert school in 1994 - and the rest is literally history, and a huge success.

This beautiful book tells the history of this project through a series of interviews and testimonies from some of those dancers and teachers including former Principal and Artistic Director of Rambert School, Ross McKim, and Head of Music, Barry Ganberg, and of course from Lady Anya Sainsbury, both Patron and Teacher and inspiration to one and all. The chapter by Nicholas Dromgoole is so moving, and the photograph of him with Dame Marie Rambert is gorgeous - it captures their perpetual movement. My favourite chapter is the grand finale "Where did all the blackness go?" which synthesises the cultural issues involved, and pays tribute to the core of Rambert - Past, Present and Future.

All of this has been achieved through the hard work and dedication of Rodreguez King-Dorset, a fellow dancer who studied with the first cohort of Mandela's Dancers at the Rambert School. Later on in his career Rodreguez also choreographed dance works for them, and then during his time as a researcher in performing arts at the Centre of African Studies at the University of Cambridge from 2011-2015 he created a documentary feature film, *Mandela's Dancers*. This book arose out of that programme of research. It is extraordinary and serves to highlight the creative genius and milk of human kindness that lies at the heart of this project. The chapters are movingly written as a series of personal journeys, each one prefaced by a smidging of history about Rodreguez's personal connection with them, sensitive and spot on. Sadly Nelson Mandela is no longer with us, but his legacy rules on. In true character, Rodreguez has done him proud.



Bloom, the National Festival for Dance of the African Diaspora, has been running biannually since 2009, where the first event took place at Southbank Centre. Bloom aims to respond to regional needs, raise awareness of the artforms to new audiences in new spaces and to cultivate artists who are rooted, confident and flourishing 'blooming where they are planted'.

Bloom 2017 unfolds as event chapters between May and November, as stand alone or as a festival within festivals across the UK and gives a glimpse of the dance talent that is growing in our communities.

**For more information and to find a Bloom Chapter taking place near you, go to [www.onedanceuk.org](http://www.onedanceuk.org)**



# JOIN US

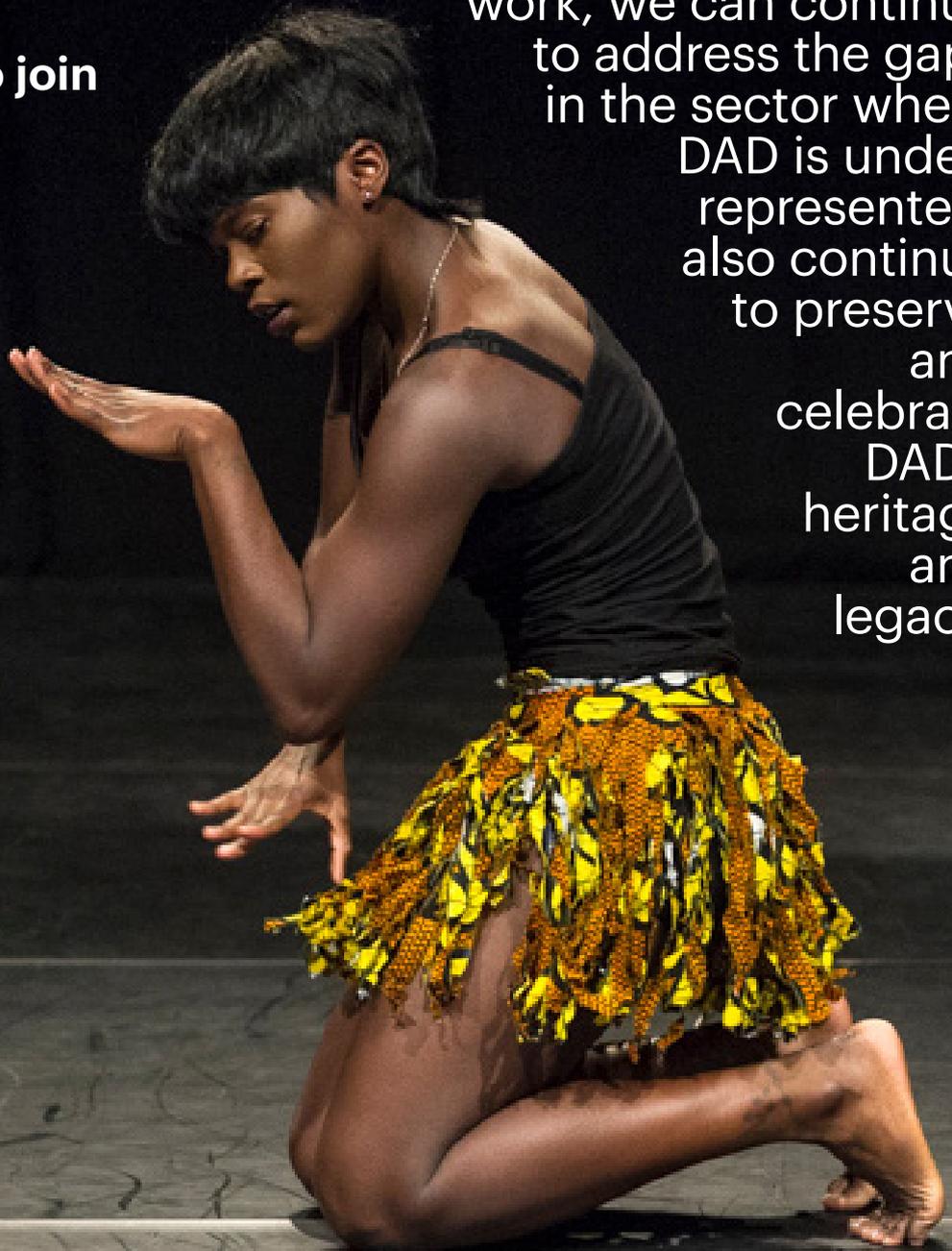
**One Dance UK supports the practice of dance of the African Diaspora, with the aim to make the form visible and valued as part of the British cultural experience.**

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- Discounted advertising in *HOTFOOT*, *One* and the One Dance UK website
- Access to discounted Public Liability Insurance

**With your voice** added to our work, we can continue to address the gaps in the sector where DAD is under-represented, also continue to preserve and celebrate DAD's heritage and legacy.



# Listings

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## AVA DANCE

AVA Dance is a contemporary dance company lead by Avatâra Ayuso, existing to develop relationships with artists from different cultures and disciplines. Her talent development programme is a tool for any participant that wants to develop a career in dance.



[www.avadancecompany.com](http://www.avadancecompany.com)

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We welcome your feedback and ideas for future editions.

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