Post-Apartheid Dance

Post-Apartheid Dance:
Many Bodies Many Voices Many Stories

Edited by

Sharon Friedman

CAMBRIDGE SCHOLARS
PUBLISHING

Post-Apartheid Dance:
Many Bodies Many Voices Many Stories
Edited by Sharon Friedman

This book first published 2012

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

12 Back Chapman Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2XX, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN (10): 1-4438-4036-X, ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-4036-1

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE

SHARON FRIEDMAN

The intention of this book is to present perspectives on post-apartheid dance in South Africa by South African authors. Beginning with an historical context for theatre dance in South Africa, the book moves on to reflect the multiplicity of bodies, voices and stories suggested by the title. Given the diversity of conflicting realities experienced by artists in this country, contentious issues have deliberately been juxtaposed in an attempt to draw attention to the complexity of dancing on the ashes of apartheid. Although the focus is dance since 1994, all chapters are rooted in an historical analysis and aim to offer a view of the field.

The analytical documenting of theatre dance in South Africa has been fragmented. Until the early 1990s, the few articles and books that were available focused on the development of the classical ballet tradition using a format that was narrative and mostly uncritical of socio-political and other contexts. From 1990 onwards, successful attempts have been made to begin to address the often unique issues that surround the South African dance context. Many of these issues have been documented in research papers, conference proceedings (local and international) and reports on seminars and discussion forums. However, as yet, there has been no collection of writings in book form that attempts to provide a cohesive account of the range of voices within dance in post-apartheid South Africa. This book aims to bridge that gap. The chapters attempt to open up the conflicts, politics and tensions between modernity and tradition and the demand for dance to reflect community. If the chapters and discourses often suggest frustration and occasional acrimony, it should be remembered that such a platform is also what prevents complacency and allows for an energetic pursuit of the ideal. Any volume such as this, by its very nature, includes and excludes partial history. In recognising this, it is my hope as the editor, that this book becomes the first of many such endeavours.

In the company of established academics and prolific writers, it is with forethought and some pride that I have also asked younger, previously unpublished authors to contribute to this book. Their take on the current socio-political and artistic scene is refreshing. The writing style of the

contributors varies considerably. For some, the writing represents recent embodied memories with which they are still engaging which leads to very personal accounts. For others, the choice has been to rather engage with theory and critical distance.

In the first chapter, I have attempted to sketch a broad historical landscape in which the chapters following will begin to fill specific dance sites. In Chapter Two, Elizabeth Triegaardt, current Executive Director and former principal dancer and ballet mistress of Cape Town City Ballet, introduces the challenges facing a Eurocentrically perceived dance company in post-apartheid South Africa in a climate of financial hardship for the performing arts. In Chapter Three, Steven Van Wyk, a young academic as well as talented performer and director, engages with what he perceives of as the practice of "whiteness" in ballet in South Africa. He argues that although veiled, whiteness becomes visible and open to critique through representation in dance performance. Such critiques being salient in post-apartheid dance, he considers how the issue of who may tell the story of the "other" affects the enactment of whiteness in this era of identity politics. Chapter Four navigates current theoretical perspectives on women's intercultural performance. Lliane Loots choreographer, academic writer and Director of the Flatfoot Dance Company at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, examines ideas around culture, nation, race, gender and identity in performance specifically in the area of women's contemporary theatre dance, post-apartheid, in South Africa. It focuses on the examples of choreographic works by Loots herself, as well as artists like Desiré Davids and Nelisiwe Xaba. In Chapter Five, Maxwell Xolani Rani, lecturer in African Dance at the University of Cape Town (UCT) School of Dance in Cape Town and prolific contemporary African choreographer, focuses on the Western influences that occurred as rural African populations migrated to urban areas. These influences profoundly altered the physical, socio-cultural and ideological spaces in which traditional-social African dance takes place. In Chapter Six, from the vantage point of 40 years in the professional dance community as a choreographer and teacher, and as a Senior Lecturer in contemporary dance, Western dance history and teaching methodology in the dance department at UCT, I explore the impact of the tourist gaze on the voice of South African contemporary dance and attempt to assess to what extent this gaze influences the perception of serious concert dance. Chapter Seven, written by Adrienne Sichel, an award-winning journalist who has worked tirelessly for the advancement of contemporary dance in South Africa, addresses the decided influence of dance festivals in South Africa since the mid-1980s, when South African contemporary dance was in

serious gestation. These festivals became an increasingly important platform for showcasing the concerns of the dance community and continue to play a major role in developing artists and conscientising audiences. The research and practice of Gerard Samuel, current Director of the UCT School of Dance, has led him to work extensively with disabled bodies. He positions the role of the disabled dancer as a particular dance community that has been significant in defining notions of choreography and/ or performance. In Chapter Eight, he clarifies the birth and development of disability dance as a cohesive phenomenon in the contemporary dance scene in post-apartheid South Africa. Finally in Chapter Nine, Kristina Johnstone, young academic and choreographer as well as teacher of contemporary dance and Artistic Director of an important community dance programme in Cape Town, provides a broad overview of some community dance practice in South Africa, and considers its relationship with "professional theatre dance". She argues that "community dance", as art and as social action, is insufficiently problematised in the South African context and suggests that, rather than constituting a threat to "professional" dance, it is a valuable artistic and economic area of dance production and dance research that can contribute to the emergence and further development of new forms of contemporary dance and culture in African contexts.

We hope that these chapters will stimulate an interest in South African dance and encourage further debate around the discourses.

Sharon Friedman

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book has been written because a small group of academics, writers, choreographers, performers and lecturers (some of them wearing all these hats at the same time), committed themselves to finding time in their extremely fraught schedules to discuss, debate, argue and finally write the chapters that constitute this book, a first in South Africa. They have submitted themselves to interminable phone calls and e-mails at inappropriate and inconvenient times and to the constant irritant of "How far are you—hurry up!" I wish to acknowledge their enthusiasm for, and dedication to, this project, as well as their willingness to take the time to read and comment on each other's chapters. I also wish to express the appreciation of all of us for the generosity of the photographers who have allowed us access to their beautiful dance pictures: Val Adamson, Pat Bromilow-Downing for Cape Town City Ballet, Lettie Ferreira for African Footprint, John Hogg, Henning Hjort, Greg Miller, Sydelle Willow Smith for the Africa Centre, Gwen Van Der Eijnde and Jan Van Schaik. My sincere thanks to Dr Eduard Greyling from the UCT School of Dance, Clare Craighead from the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Georgina Thompson from Dance Umbrella for their assistance, Julie Strauss and David Kruger from the UCT Music library, and Professor Christy Adair who, on a short visit to Cape Town, took the time and interest to read on-going drafts. My gratitude also goes to Stephen Heyns who stepped in to format the manuscript for me and to the publishers who enthusiastically encouraged this project from the outset, especially Amanda Millar who has patiently answered endless questions.

CHAPTER ONE

MAPPING AN HISTORICAL CONTEXT FOR THEATRE DANCE IN SOUTH AFRICA

SHARON FRIEDMAN

Background

The arts in South Africa have emerged from, and been shaped by, a history of colonialism and apartheid. Both the colonial and apartheid regimes devalued indigenous African culture reducing it at best to ethnic curiosity. In dance in particular, the apartheid government, despite being freed from the bonds of colonialism, chose to value and fund British ballet as a high art form above all forms of dance.[1] According to Clare Craighead,

> Apartheid and its severe imposition of the notion of separateness meant that the Black/White dichotomy was fuelled by an ideological discourse that violently placed White on a pedestal and Black at its base… When one investigates the history of dance in this country, it emerges that the high art/low, popular art dichotomy is a reinvention of the abovementioned Black/ White dichotomy (Craighead 2006:22).

In addition, the context for the development of South African arts and culture was particularly affected by the policies of separate development and rhetoric utilised by the apartheid government which came to power in 1948. The mandatory and forced removal and restructuring of communities was not only to have a profound effect on the development of a composite South African culture in general, but the spatial separation affected the performing arts (Johnstone 2010). Most theatres prescribed to the cultural and artistic norms promulgated and imposed by apartheid, and

[1] One of the reasons that suggest themselves for this phenomenon may have to do with Paulo Freire's contention that dominating colonial powers devalued the cultural capital of the oppressed so that the oppressed themselves came to see the culture of the oppressor as "high art".

only a handful of independent theatres such as the Market Theatre in Johannesburg, the Stable Theatre and Asoka Theatre in Durban, and The Space and the Baxter Theatre in Cape Town made attempts to challenge the system (Meersman 2007; Van Graan 2006 in Johnstone 2010).

How these theatres, as well as individual dancers, choreographers and directors (some of them mentioned in this and other chapters), were able to challenge the laws of the time with some success, is not always clear. In some cases, as with the Space Theatre in Cape Town, the theatre simply declared itself a private club. The law was clearer on only strictly segregated audiences in venues which were designated for different race groups. The understanding was that there should be no mixed race casts on the stage, yet certainly in Cape Town the ballet company employed dancers of colour throughout the apartheid era and the same applied to Durban. The National Arts Festival in Grahamstown (from 1974) from the outset mounted works that were both politically contentious and often "multiracial". Some dancers from that time remember a police presence fairly often in the auditorium and an occasional banning of a performance but much was simply left to continue at will. When dance artists from abroad broke the cultural boycott (called for internationally from the early 1960s and gaining momentum through the 1980s), they did so without much visibility, although Margot Fonteyn performing in Cape Town in 1972 with the ballet company, demanded a "multiracial" audience and a "permit" was organised for one of the "coloured theatres". It is entirely possible that the answer lies in the relative insignificance of certain of the arts to the ruling government which did not consider dance to be of sufficient political consequence to pose a threat. Theatre was more carefully monitored. However, finding documented evidence around this issue has proved difficult and the memories of those who were active members of the arts community are often inconsistent and contradictory. Strong feelings also surrounded many of the attempts to compromise when such a course was offered. For example, although the Nico Malan Theatre (now Artscape) was opened for all races in 1975, its location in a "whites only" area not only severely limited accessibility for other races, in particular those from the Black townships, but political activists in the arts continued to boycott the theatre.

The officially sanctioned art forms being Eurocentric, led to the establishment of fully funded professional ballet companies of the highest order. However, this choice also exacerbated the manner in which art and dance in South Africa were valued or not valued. In the field of contemporary dance, the first company to receive government funding was the PACT (Performing Arts Council of the Transvaal) Dance Company in

1988. Despite a lack of government funding for nearly all other contemporary dance, attempts were being made to move beyond the simplistic replication of the mostly American modern dance techniques (principally Graham and Limon-based) which were being taught extensively in South Africa by the late 1970s. "African" dance began to develop a theatrical and concert dance repertoire built largely around the contentious identity embedded in the word "African". The emerging theatrical style would develop into an evolving repertoire referred to as either Contemporary African Dance or African Contemporary Dance, depending on the viewpoint (and standpoint) not only of the choreographer, but also of the audience and critics.

This chapter will provide an historical overview of the often controversial issues that have emerged from this context and sketch a landscape in which to situate the chapters that follow.

The Theatre Dance Landscape

The tradition of formal classical ballet was pioneered in South Africa and in particular in the Cape, in the first two decades of the twentieth century. The Cape development was closely followed by similar developments in what was then the Transvaal (now Gauteng) province and Natal (now KwaZulu-Natal).

Performing ballet companies were, prior to 1963, largely amateur or semi-professional, with corps de ballets comprised of students and principal roles being danced by teachers and ad-hoc artists. Most were short-lived. Ballets reflected a predominantly Russian and British heritage and choice of repertoire was facilitated by strong links with companies in the United Kingdom and Western Europe. With few exceptions, attempts made by local choreographers to produce works peculiar to South Africa, enjoyed little notable or lasting success (Triegaardt 2000).

From 1962, the apartheid government established regional performing arts councils (funded by public monies) in all four South African provinces. The considerable amounts of funding budgeted for the art was made available largely to the Arts Councils' companies and projects and the dance budget was designated almost exclusively for classical ballet. As an indication of the "culture" valued by the apartheid government, the structure of the Arts Councils made no provision for the development and practice of so-called "indigenous" South African art forms. Apartheid policy governed the demography of the companies and special permits were needed for students of colour to attend the training at the only tertiary ballet school at the University of Cape Town. It should be noted that throughout the apartheid era, both the founder of the UCT Ballet School

(1934) and the University of Cape Town Ballet Company, Dulcie Howes and her successor, David Poole, were to take an unequivocal stand against regulations governing the profile of performing companies and their audiences. However, while the companies included dancers of colour, the audiences for which they performed were strictly segregated. Poole, himself the victim of an irrational system of race classification, was equally proactive in his attempts to have the country's theatres open to all. Their foresight provided the crucible for the art of classical ballet to develop in South Africa's diverse cultural communities, and provided a blueprint for its survival (Triegaardt 2000).

While the two strongest companies in the Western Cape and the Transvaal (now Gauteng), survived the forty-six years of apartheid rule, despite the years of sanctions imposed by foreign unions and other artists in their attempts to isolate the Nationalist government, the others did not. Since 1994 when the Performing Arts Councils were dissolved[2] to be replaced by other funding structures including the National Arts Council (NAC), even these companies have faced increasing pressure undergoing downsizing and retrenching.

Although there were some attempts by the classical ballet companies to delve into South African culture by utilising myths or stories as a basis for choreographic works, the form in which this material was expressed was based on European or North American aesthetic criteria and often exhibited a profound disregard for, or appropriation of, the cultural capital (language and lifestyle) of the oppressed. In an interview with Christy Giesler in 2010, Elizabeth Triegaardt current Executive Director of Cape Town City Ballet, maintained that

> What remains to be seen, however, is whether marrying [...] the wealth of local topics with the classical technique [...] which is [...] an unexpressed but clearly essential requirement to attract funding from regional and local Government, is a successful model according to which we can construct a sustainable future for ballet in South Africa (Triegaardt in Giesler 2010:21).

[2] The former performing arts councils were dissolved and through the promulgation of the Cultural Institutions Act of 1998 and the Public Finance Management Act of 1999, effectively became cultural institutions. Together, these new laws created the shift that saw the disbanding of the arts companies viz, theatre, opera, orchestra, and ballet (and contemporary dance) companies contained within the separatist councils. Any new artistic director of a dance production now had to apply to the National Arts Council (NAC), the Arts and Culture Trust, the National Lotteries Board and other sources for funding.

This raises the on-going discourse, applicable to all dance genres, around the problems involved in appropriation of form. There are, however, individual examples of works where such amalgamation was attempted with varying degrees of artistic success (ibid). In particular the contemporary notions regarding the use of ballet (vocabulary, style, costume, and subject matter) which have been used by prominent South African choreographers such as Mamela Nyamza and Dada Masilo (both from 2008), indicate a deconstructive, highly experimental, choreographic approach, and this approach might offer possibilities for alternative avenues of sustainability for ballet in South Africa (ibid:29). However, as Hayley Kodesh points out,

> In ballet, what is valued is the ability to perform to a particular model. In contemporary dance, the model is being recreated all the time (Kodesh 2006:42).

Certainly classical ballet in South Africa has been minimally successful in imagining itself beyond the colonial model and as yet no choreographer has emerged to make ballet "South African" in the manner which, e.g., George Balanchine achieved in America. This does not, however, negate the high standard of the traditional classical repertoire currently mounted by the two remaining companies—Cape Town City Ballet and South African Ballet Theatre—which work with steadily decreasing resources.

Outside of the Arts Councils, both small contemporary dance companies, many of which were attempting some redress of cultural bias, as well as numbers of arts education projects had from the 1970s been energetically promoting theatrical dance in the disadvantaged communities. Apart from a genuine desire to foster talent in children and potential artists without access to training as well as attempting to preserve a cultural heritage in the face of non-funding, the organisations also sought to defy the separate development policies by establishing non-racial companies; for example Sylvia Glasser's Moving Into Dance Mophatong, founded in 1978. Again, although the performers on stage may have been of mixed race, separate performances would be given to racially divided audiences.

As the anti-apartheid struggle for political and social liberation intensified in the late 1980s, the creative and performing arts began to be extensively used as a protest medium. Ideology began to play an increasingly influential part not only in choreography but also in teaching projects as debate raged around what to teach and how to teach it. In some cases, the genuine attempts of the education programmes were to fall foul of politics as ideology came to play an increasingly acrimonious role in artistic decisions even in community arts practice. One such instance was

the dance programme of the Community Arts Project (CAP) based in Cape Town, dismantled in 1988 due to political disagreement amongst its leaders. The Eoan Group in Cape Town, a community arts project based in the historically "coloured"[3] community in Athlone which staged both ballet and opera of a high standard, was also not immune to the politics of the 1970s and 1980s. The Eoan Group's acceptance of support from government institutions led to the boycotting of the organisation by the very community it wished to serve (Johnstone:96).

A search for commonality was to be a major concern of the 1980s and experiments were being made with "fusion" dance; the deliberate combining of western dance forms with traditional African or township rhythms and dance dynamics, the "fusion" aspects inspiring a vigorous debate around the concept of a "melting pot" of polycultural genres to produce a definitive "South African" style. Although fusion of dance styles is nothing new and often occurs unconsciously, deliberate experiments were now being made. Much of the work produced was original and exciting. The hybridity should not have come as a surprise, and in fact had been happening, particularly in music, for some time. As Enocent Msinda points out, although colonisers brought with them assumptions about African traditions and culture, imposed ideologies were not always completely successful. There were times when

> Africans incorporated some of those ideologies into their own with the result that the product was a hybrid identity –which is not purely African or purely Western (Msinda 2009:1).

According to Jay Pather,

> African assimilation of Western techniques, materials, ideas and forms has been creative, selective and highly original. The result is a continuous recreation of forms and styles (Pather 2006:13).

[3] The Group Areas Act of 1950 began to be implemented in earnest in inner-city Cape Town (District Six) from 1966, instigating the grand-scale removal of coloureds from the city centre to disparate new neighbourhoods in the Cape Flats. Interviewees maintained "…There is no single 'coloured identity', it was an apartheid construction". Furthermore, they [interviewees] argued, "coloured people differed in religion (Christianity and Islam), language (Afrikaans and English), ethnicity (Malay, Griqua, Khoisan), class and political ideology/opinion" (Baxter 2001:90 and Horstmeier 2002:68–9 in Johnstone).

Dance in a Transforming Society

Since 1994, the new democracy has created the space for most aspects of life to be revisited. As noted by Gay Morris

> in the first decade of the "new South Africa" a widespread impulse to generate a culture that endorsed racial, ethnic and linguistic diversity, human rights and access for all to all the arts was entrenched by legislation (Morris 2008:109 in Johnstone 2010).

Dance makers have been increasingly challenged to re-appraise the manner in which dance has been traditionally composed and to review the relevance of the subject matter in the search for a South African voice.

Choreographers (some of them also academics), were concerned with writing South African stories on the bodies of their dancers. The question of a "South African" identity was intrinsic to much of the work. Black choreographers were exploring their roots with pride, often for the first time. Vincent Mantsoe, international award winning choreographer and then Associate Artistic Director of Moving into Dance talked of "freeing the spirit of our ancestors" in his search for identity. In the programme notes to his solo *Mpheyane* (1998), he wrote,

> There is a final realisation that an assimilation and appreciation of other cultures will lead to personal enrichment but only when the link to your heritage is known and restored.

The need to restore this link was reflected in much of the company's work. Younger choreographers, often worked with similar themes, for example Gregory Maqoma's *Rhythm Blues* (2000) paid tribute to the black South African musicians of the 1950s and 1960s with the kind of energy and nostalgia reminiscent of Ailey's *Blues Suite* of 1958. At the same time it should be pointed out that Mantsoe's work was facilitated by a white woman, Sylvia Glasser, and that Maqoma emerged from the same dance company. It was indeed Sylvia Glasser who, from the founding of the Moving into Dance Company in 1978, was a seminal and ground breaking influence on the hybrid dance form she called Afrofusion. This serves as a reminder that the influences on our work derive from all our intermingled hybrid identities.

Women's experiences, in particular the gradual but growing resistance of African women to a male-dominated society, was slowly beginning to be foregrounded in the work of the few, at the time, black female choreographers. Lliane Loots was to write that within the South African

context, black men have been afforded a certain level of privilege denied their female counterparts:

> performance dance has attracted far more numbers of women than men and yet, that the 'mysterious artistry' of choreography has mostly not opened itself to black women says something more about continued racist and-gendered structures and to whom support, funding and training is given (Loots 1999: 111).

The work of women like Portia Mashigo and Gladys Agulhas clearly reflected the above concerns and began to draw considerable attention. An increasing number of women choreographers notable amongst them: Desiré Davids, Lliane Loots, Nelisiwe Xaba, Mamela Nyamza, and Dada Masilo continue to produce often ground-breaking work.

Black choreographers were also trying to transcend the years immediately preceding liberation in which anything black was acclaimed by partisan groups in South Africa and most definitely abroad. A European appetite for often romanticised African performance, while certainly providing funding, a platform for performance dance groups and choreographers, and recognition not generally available in South Africa, did not necessarily stimulate the development of new and thoughtful choreography. In some ways it perpetuated the "curio" image. Training in western dance forms and exposure to work abroad was to raise other questions concerned with a South African dance aesthetic, particularly for black dancers. Young black dancers were increasingly spending time on training scholarships abroad. Although this was to broaden experience and outlook, they often returned to mount work derivative of the European experience. Awareness of the need to "translate" acquired concepts and vocabulary into the South African context would take some years. Not all black dancers were consciously concerned with issues of roots. For example Boyzie Cekwana, who still works and performs internationally, feels his work emanates from intellectual concepts and ideas although his background has a subtle influence. He claims that he is not consciously aware of making a statement or referring specifically to the South African context although he had performed in such pieces and that he is comfortable with who he is and no longer has the need to search for identity.

White choreographers and dancers struggled with the issue of whether they could be truly considered South African (an acrimonious issue at the time), and to what extent they needed to minimise Eurocentric training and aesthetics in order to fulfil the perception of what was truly South African. There seemed to be more criticism within the dance community for white

choreographers who made no direct statement in their work. And there were, and are, certainly issues in South African society to be dealt with. In 1993, Gary Gordon created the significant First Physical Theatre Company at Rhodes University, Grahamstown which has consistently explored the notion of physical theatre to produce innovative, cutting edge choreography much of it interrogating aspects of South African culture. This company continues to spawn teachers and choreographers of note.

One other such example of the work of white choreographers in the 1990s included Jeanette Ginslov's *Written in Blood* (1998) for the State Theatre Dance Company which dealt with a heinous attack on a farm which left victims either raped and speechless, injected with chemicals, or shot or burned. She attempted to tell both a personal story and South Africa's story

> ... to reveal [in a dance work], the pain and horror of the event (Ginslov 1999:65–73).

Robyn Orlin, internationally acclaimed for her work in the arena of Performance/ Live Art, was to (and still does, although she lives abroad) consistently produce work from late 1989 which commented on the South African context. Alfred Hinkel of the Jazzart Dance Theatre produced throughout the 1990s, work which was increasingly politicised and critical of the status quo.

From within the dance community, however, were also accusations that many pieces reflect the issues without commenting on them. Choreographers retaliated by pointing out that there was a need to face the issues and allow audiences to take what they want from the performance. Not all choreographers chose to address South African concerns so directly. Rather, as with Boyzie Cekwana, they dealt with concepts that are ultimately informed by, but do not literally mirror, the South African context. David Gouldie in a collaborative work with Tamlyn Martin … *when shadows of your past have finally faded*, seen at the Jomba Dance Festival in Durban 1999, attempted to

> Scrutinise and re (dis)cover our position as artists in a transforming society. We address the notions of dislocation, disarmament and dysfunction, and look at the disharmony of femininity, which has been damaged but is still brave (quoted in Jomba Contemporary Dance Experience programme notes, 1999).

There were also those who reacted with frustration against the constant call for "relevance". Mark Hawkins, who together with David Gouldie formed the independent Fantastic Flying Fish Company in 1998, while

admitting the need for statements, cried out for dance which focused on artistic worth alone,

> it's just that we are so bombarded with politics, I decided to do something where I am not chasing after a new dance vocabulary, or a new dance style that is special to South Africa or rich in social commentary ... (quoted in Jomba Contemporary Dance Experience programme notes, 1999).

However, while this search for a "South African" identity in the performing arts was and remains both a necessary and desirable aspect of social transformation in South Africa, there remains the danger that what is perceived as desirable and politically correct by both policy makers and funders, not only can lead to work that is made in a hodgepodge of styles in attempts to please the perceived requirements of what is politically correct, but that so called "South African" dance may become prescriptive. When that occurs, according to Ilona Frege, the freedom of the artist to articulate his or her personal creative expression in any meaningful way is eroded (Frege 2006:66). Currently there does appear to be a growing acknowledgment that the very cultural diversity and plurality of South African cultures means that artists should be free to express themselves in a wide variety of dance genres and styles.

The work with inter-cultural elements has continued, the multitude of cultures in South Africa providing fertile ground. Because of the myriad of cultural forms in South Africa, and because growing up in a divided society we were deliberately kept separate for so long, much work involves moving through cultures in order to both explore and celebrate our polyculturalism. In the 1990s, Jay Pather, then Director of Siwela Sonke Dance Theatre in Durban, used "democratic choreography" as embodied in workshop theatre to achieve a synthesis of meaningful art works. He pointed out that

> Democratic choreography is a complex process in constant evolution ... in a more robust democracy, the process demands a greater interrogation of the various ethnic dances from isicathimiya to classical ballet before they are juxtaposed or even overlapped … that this process is not without its pitfalls and clichés, ... but that, the process is vital in developing a large enough palette to contain a complex multi-(dance)lingual culture, the dance between the dances (Pather 1999:131).

Pather used multicultural forms symbolically - the ballerina losing her pointe shoes at the end of *Shifting Spaces Tilting Time* is less a representative of white South Africa and more a symbol of the New South Africa, en pointe, teetering, fragile, a fairy-tale democracy (ibid: 132). In

both Indian (predominantly Bharatanatyam and Kathak) dance and Spanish dance, theatrical dance genres which thrived in the polycultural and hybrid South African environment, choreographers like Jaysperi Moopen in a combination of African and Indian dance, and Mavis Becker and more recently, Carolyn Holden in Flamenco dance, attempted a fusion of these styles with African rhythms and vocabulary with varying degrees of success. Alfred Hinkel, then Director of the Jazzart company, was to experiment with combining Ravel's Bolero with South African urban gumboot dance.

In education, the post-apartheid dance studies curriculum was conceived in an attempt to serve the purpose of redress and provide a more balanced appreciation of our multicultural heritage. With the shift in government, came the inevitable shift in the ideology underpinning the curriculum towards an increasingly Afrocentric approach and the need to

> write an arts curriculum to accommodate all cultures, to satisfy conflicting demands for both a Western discipline specific and an African integrated approach (Van Papendorp 2003:197).

Yet questions about the actual achievement of this so-called fusion or integration of polycultural dance genres were already being asked. Lliane Loots (interview, 2010) points out that many critical dance makers started to make work that questioned not just the assumed cultural harmony after the end of apartheid rule, but also began to question political processes and, indeed, notions of nation. The on-going search for a South African identity was a contentious and earnest one particularly in the light of Stuart Hall's assertion (cited in Opondo 2006:62) that identity is not fixed to an essentialist past, but subject to continuous plays of history, culture, and power and are the names given by us to the different ways in which we are both positioned by, and position ourselves within historical narratives. Gregory Maqoma describes the particular anomalies of the South African context as follows:

> I am quite aware that I cannot be the sole representative of that indigenous tradition since it is different from what I regard as my current identity … other cultural forms and traditions have in fact affected my outlook as much as that I consistently explore the aesthetic forms and ethical values in a personal and stylistic manner or approach. I also still refer to certain aesthetical traditions, community norms and societal issues. These complex explorations continue to develop my tradition just like everybody else (Maqoma 2001:76).

Above all there was, and still is,

> a drive and a need to write our stories on the body, to express a South African voice while at the same time looking for individual voices in the rich and varied landscape (Gordon 1999).

Twelve years into the new millennium, the focus of South African contemporary dance has shifted to include a considerable canon of work that is creating, in the words of Gregory Maqoma (2004:27) "a domain of reality in which social and emotional conflicts can be brought out into the open and made available for public discussion". But, as Pather (2006:14) notes, "we might ultimately not have a set, neat body of African Aesthetics because we are in flux".

Theatre dance: An endangered species in South Africa?

Underlying, underpinning and indeed also undermining all the above work is the issue of funding, a theme which will recur throughout many of the chapters to follow. As explained above, when the Performing Arts Councils were dissolved in 1994, a major shift in funding for the arts in general occurred. Apart from the National Lotto, The National Arts Council (NAC) is currently the main funding body to which artists can apply for funding although there are a few other complementary funding bodies alongside some trusts and financial institutions which are available to artists, professional theatrical dance production and performance. The catch remains that day to day running costs for these independent dance companies are not covered by most new funding systems. This has created a flawed model that continues to flounder 18 years into our democracy. What is also troubling is that relationships between the funding bodies and the dance fraternity remain tense. Allegations of malpractice and maladministration have contributed to an uneasy and distrustful partnership. Exacerbating this situation, is the perception of the arts community in general, that there is a current absence of any integrated arts policy in that the core identity of the NAC is not clear. In a country which creates a Ministry of Arts and Culture as one entity, the manner in which the various arms of the NAC (which supports heritage, literature, visual arts and crafts as well), are managed is not transparent and there is little evidence of any consistent or sustainable arts policy at all. The situation is further aggravated by seemingly random decisions taken by the NAC Executive Committee (with little concern for the advisory panels' recommendations), with regard to handing out the admittedly far too meagre allocation from the Department of Arts and Culture to the

company funding in the performing arts. Of this allocation, a large bundle is directed, at source, to the orchestras and in addition, the Minister of Arts and Culture may distribute to his/her preferred projects from a "discretionary" fund. The outcomes certainly in 2012 when this book goes to print are catastrophic. The first round of funding awards for core company funding (professional, semi-professional or training) in 2012 will see at least four established and fully functional companies (some of whom have outreach community projects also dependent on this funding) fold before mid-year with others following as they run out of money by the end of 2012.

It is difficult to see how the vision of the Ministry of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology's White Paper on Arts, Culture and Heritage (1996) which argued that arts and culture are crucial to reconstruction and nation-building is in any way being realised. The view of the dance and theatre communities, is that there are currently no strategies in place that would guarantee the long-term survival and further development of individual dance artists and companies and ensure the production of "quality work". Many of the country's foremost choreographers (including Mantsoe, Davids and Maqoma) either live abroad or work mostly abroad returning to perform at the dance festivals or by invitation only. The Dance Festivals continue to play a major role in providing a platform for South Africans to mount and/ or view both local and international work. And even here, the festivals are under threat as corporate and National Arts funding dwindles. In addition, the festivals rely on companies using their allocated NAC funding to come to the festivals. As to the contribution of philanthropists, Gillian Mitchell, in an article following the National Arts Festival in Grahamstown in 2011, commented that discussion around the role that philanthropy should play in sustaining the arts is noticeably absent. While accepting that given the urgent social needs of our society, (education, health, capacity building and environment), philanthropic support over the past two decades has been focused on these issues, she points out that concomitant support from this sector for the Arts has diminished to a point of crisis. This situation runs the risk of relegating the arts to a peripheral position rather than an integral part of South African society. As Mitchell points out, the history of South Africa demonstrates that

> the arts and the fight for democracy were inseparable …It is one of the most remarkable aspects of the South African story and one without which we could not have reached this point in our development. As such they are deserving of strong, visionary philanthropic support (Mitchell 2011:6).

That our capacity to continue to write our stories on the body is under constant threat is of grave concern and a challenge which needs to be met with all our creative resources if this very rich polycultural dance landscape is to survive. Given the history of theatrical dance in South Africa however, somewhere a phoenix arises yet again from the ashes; somehow, our art continues to be made. The work of the current young voices in dance which include Musa Hlatshwayo, Athena Mazerakis, Sello Pesa, Nicola Elliot, Acty Tang, Thabo Rapoo and Gregory Maqoma as well as many others, who determinedly carry on writing and performing, will ensure that this happens.

This chapter has attempted to sketch a landscape in which to locate the chapters to follow.

The ideas and concepts which inform the eras discussed are a reflection of the journey the dance community has taken but are also a very brief summary of a minefield of assertions, opinions and discourses which are fervently debated in conferences and other forums. Similarly of necessity, the dancers, choreographers and work referred to are but a sample of the myriad contributions made to the richness of this landscape. The author also acknowledges that although referred to above, the contribution of Spanish dance as well as Indian (predominantly Bharatanatyam and Kathak) dance are absent from this particular account of dance in South Africa as is the impact of urban and commercial dance on contemporary dance works. Research and writing is currently in process which will allow for analysis in future accounts. The chapters which follow will engage further with what are some of the controversial issues emanating from a chorus of voices in South Africa.

Bibliography

Craighead, C. 2006 Black dance. Navigating the politics of “black” in relation to the dance “object” and the body of discourse. *Critical Arts*, 20(2):16–33.

Frege, I. 2006 The interaction between Dance Education and Contemporary Theatre Dance and Performance in South Africa and the Emergence of a South African Performance Aesthetic. in *Proceedings of Colouring Senses*. daCi conference, Den Hague, Holland:65-69.

Friedman, S. and Triegaardt, E. 2000 Dancing on the Ashes of Apartheid. in *Proceedings of Dancing in the Millennium Conference*, Washington DC.

Giesler, C. 2010 *Fate of the Art? Assessing the sustainability of ballet in post -apartheid South Africa*. University of Cape Town School of Dance.(unpublished Hons. dissertation).

Ginslov, J. 1 999 Articulating the Unspoken: Choreographing the Visceral-written in blood. in *Proceedings of Confluences 2: Articulating the Unspoken*.,University of Cape Town School of Dance:65–75.

Gordon, G. 1999 Articulating the Unspeakable: private sights, theatre sights and citing a physical theatre. in *Proceedings of Confluences 2: Articulating the Unspoken*. University of Cape Town School of Dance:77–80.

Johnstone, K. 2010 *Interrogating Community Dance Practice and Performance in African Contexts.* University of Cape Town School of Dance. (unpublished MMus dissertation).

Jomba Dance Festival, 1999 Programme Notes.

Kodesh, H. 2006 Cultural cocktails: The choreography of Gregory Maqoma. *Critical Arts*, 20(2):39–60.

Loots, L. 1999 Articulating the Unspoken—Gender and Race (and Cultural) Constructions of the Moving Body in Contemporary Dance Theatre in South Africa(with specific reference to the Kwa-Zulu Natal context). in *Proceedings of Confluences 2: Articulating the Unspoken.* University of Cape Town School of Dance.:105-115.

Maqoma, G. 2001 Cultural identity, diversity and modernity in education. in *Proceedings of Confluences 3: From Concept to Concert.* University of Cape Town School of Dance:75–80.

—. 2004 Beyond ethnicity: Keynote address. *Proceedings of the 7th Jomba Contemporary Dance Conference.* .Durban, University of KwaZulu-Natal:26–29.

Matshikiza, J. 1999 SA Groups Dance into Controversy: _ with the lid off. *Mail and Guardian* :19 Nov. http://www_sn.aDc.org.lwmaiVissuesl991119/news23.htm

Mitchell, G. 2011 Calling for a Leap of Faith. *Natal Mercury* 16 August: 6.

Msinda, E. 2009 Naming the African: Questions of identity, tradition and history. *The Archival Platform*. www.archivalplatform.org/blog/entry/naming_the_African, accessed 20 October 2009.

Pather, J. 1999 Democratic, Intercultural Choreography: Searching for the Dance between Dances in *Proceedings of Confluences 2:Articulating the Unspoken*. University of Cape Town School of Dance :129-133.

—. 2006 A response: African contemporary dance? Questioning issues of a performance aesthetic for a developing continent. *Critical Arts*, 20(2):9–15.

Van Papendorp, J. 2003 Dance in Culture and Curriculum in *Proceedings of daCi conference- Breaking Boundaries: dance, bodies and multiculturalism*. Salvadore, Brazil:195-201.

CHAPTER TWO

CAPE TOWN CITY BALLET: CONSERVING THE VOICE OF CLASSICAL BALLET

ELIZABETH TRIEGAARDT

Ballet, one of the oldest theatre dance forms in the world, is alive and well in Cape Town, South Africa. Once considered as being reserved principally for the enjoyment of the privileged white minority, classes are now widely offered in a variety of venues and the numbers of those attending indicate that ballet is now popular with adults and children everywhere. From the Cape Flats to Constantia and Kenilworth to Khayelitsha, youngsters of all ages are swopping their soccer boots and netball sneakers, donning their ballet pumps and lining exercise barres all over the city. Even older ballet enthusiasts are slipping into their lycra tights and heading to ballet classes at the gym, dance studios and church halls, where they seem to prefer plies and pirouettes to push-ups and pumping iron.

The Ballet Company in the Mother City

The Cape Town City Ballet (CTCB) celebrates, in 2012, 78 years of existence, making it South Africa's oldest, and at times, only extant professional ballet company and one of the oldest in the world. The CTCB has a proven track record of delivery of the finest in classical and neo-classical ballets, danced and produced by South Africans, for audiences in the Western Cape, South Africa and abroad. It has created many hundreds of jobs for local dancers, giving them the opportunity to pit their dancing and interpretive skills against their foreign counterparts. Founded in 1934 as the University of Cape Town Ballet Company, it became the dance company of the Cape Performing Arts Board (CAPAB) in 1964, when the Performing Arts Councils were established and in 1997, was restructured

Fig. 2-1: *Giselle* Act 2 – 2012.
Photo: Pat Bromilow-Downing.

as a Section 21 company when the Arts Councils were disbanded.[1]

Since its inception, the CTCB has been housed at the University of Cape Town Ballet School (since 1997, known as the UCT School of Dance) in Rosebank, where it has had the benefit of a close association with the School, providing employment for countless UCT graduates. It has had as local performing homes, the historic Little Theatre on the UCT Hiddingh Campus, UCT's Baxter Theatre, the Maynardville Open-Air Theatre and the Artscape stages (formerly known as the Nico Malan Theatre Centre). It was the first company to perform in the Maynardville Open-Air Theatre, in the Nico Malan Opera House, the Oude Libertas Amphitheatre in Stellenbosch, the refurbished Port Elizabeth Opera House and the Settlers' Monument Theatre in Grahamstown.

Dr Dulcie Howes, the first Artistic Director of the company and simultaneously the Director of the School, was adamant that, from the

[1] Section 21 companies provide some public service or have some public purpose that goes beyond serving the personal interests of the members (such as the promotion of social welfare, economic development, religion, charity, education or research). They may make a profit, but may not distribute their property or profits to their members. They use any profits they make to further their public interest objectives. They frequently do not generate enough income to cover all their expenses, so they raise funds from the public or donors. The new Companies Act (2010), converted all existing Section 21 companies into non-profit companies under the new Act.