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Screen Past Flesh Goin' on to Bone: Musings on Jamaican Tertiary Dance Education Beyond the Time of COVID19

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Abstract

Q: "What time is it?"
A: "Skin, past flesh, goin' on to bone."

As descendants of stolen Black bodies in the 'New World', many dancing Jamaicans have become living anachronisms, unconsciously embodying retentions of life-

renewing cultural movement practices past spirit and bone, into flesh and skin. Jamaican tertiary dance education has long been predicated on this baseline understanding of spirit, skin, flesh and bone as felt things. Although dance educators had grappled with 'dis'embodied millennial audacity before COVID-19, we trusted that corporeal ancestral alchemy would remain, and thought we would always have safe touch in our pedagogy toolkits when words were not enough. This article discusses selected experiences of tertiary dance education at the Edna Manley College of the Visual Arts during the COVID-19 pandemic and questions the ability of ancestral somatic legacies to transcend this 'no-touch', physically distant pandemic moment. Additionally, it highlights key ways in which teaching dance virtually has provided rich embodiment experiences, crossing from screen to bone with technology and imagination, and provides recommendations for dance educators to re-create learning spaces for students which re-connect them with spirit, skin, flesh and bone.

Groundings, Contexts, Positionality

Q: "What time is it?"
A: (with a grin) "Skin, past flesh, goin' on to bone."

The above tongue-in-cheek Jamaican wisecrack, has a punchline underscored by shared understandings of skin, flesh and bone as felt things. Even when located at the usual 'watch-wearing' joint of the wrist, the skin is understood to encase its more vulnerable counterparts in sensory protection from natural and man-made harm and they, in gratitude, give it opportunities to stretch, wrinkle and twist, to feel the joy and security of its moving touch. The body's own sense of itself in exterior and interior space, through proprioception and interoception is magical and mysterious to some, matter of fact to many and nestled in a comfortable unawareness to many more. It is, however, a phenomenon studied from positivist, 'scientific' lenses as well as sensory, somatic ones and the various hybrids found along the spectrum of perspective; further, it is not just passing presence but has resonance across cultural and generational existence. It is a human thing, this connection of embodiment to beingness, of the parts to the greater whole, of the past to the unseen futures, through embodied memory. This construct is investigated across a number of fields, ranging from social justice to musical analysis, and digital design in architecture. In this work, though, I focus on the body as a place in space where embodied memory is held, and through which cultural and generational information is received and transmitted, across timelines. This is certainly not an original direction of thought and coalesces the thinking of such somatic

education and mind-body integration 'pioneers'[1] of the 20th century as Thomas Hanna (Somatics), Irmgard Bartenieff (Bartenieff Fundamentals℠), Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen (Body-Mind Centering®) and Moshe Feldenkrais (Awareness Through Movement®) with the more recent psychobiological work around embodied racialized trauma by Resmaa Menakem (Somatic Abolitionism), Tada Hozumi et al (Cultural Somatics) and Robert T. Carter.

Frameworks such as these, which consider the human body's capacity for "perceptuomotor learning" (Batson and Schwartz, 2017, p. 48) and experience of itself as consciousness connected to a larger state of "resonant unity" (Conrad, 2012, p. 3), also folded neatly into Emilie Conrad's Continuum work which understands the body as an evolving process of being, "a resonating chamber in which the play of breath becomes a kind of music." (Conrad, 2012, p. 141). For Conrad, the human body represented the coexistence of primordial, cosmic and cultural anatomy and yet was not solid matter, but instead always in a state of flow "influenced not only by the interactions of the Earth's electromagnetic and gravitational fields… but also by our internalized structured unconscious, which has been woven over centuries and governs what we think and speak." (Conrad, 2012, p. 7)

It is upon this direction of somatic perspective that my engagement with embodiment as dance artist, educator and thinker is predicated. Like Jamaican dance artist and scholar, Safi Harriott, I also believe deeply in the thinkingness of the body. In a conversation in Jamaica in the mid-2000s, she reminded me that "The body is a thinking thing," an assertion aligned not only with Mabel E. Todd, famed author of The Thinking Body: A Study of the Balancing Forces of Dynamic Man (1937), but with myriad cross-cultural somatic, mindfulness and bodywork frames of reference which assert that the human body is not a machine to be industrialised, sent out for maintenance or discarded when it is deemed obsolete but is, itself, sentient, perceptive, and feeling. Further to this, as a 'thinking thing', the body is also affected by our cognitive processes; words heard and thought are made manifest in bone-deep places and often inscribe states of being upon the human that are riddles to the thinking mind but not to the thinking body. In theorising about this unified body consciousness, Authentic Movement creator Mary Starks Whitehouse wrote in 1958:

> The physical condition is in some way also the psychological one. .... just as the body changes in the course of working with the psyche, so the psyche changes in the course of working with the body. We would do well to remember that the two are not separate entities but mysteriously a totality. (as cited in Johnson, 1995, p. 242)

[1] "Somatic education beliefs and practices build on those that emerged when dance educators and artists applied holistic philosophies to teaching practices from 1913 through the 1950s...."(Dragon, 2015, p. 29). Some of these included influence from such Eastern mindfulness practices and philosophies as Yoga and Tai Chi.

Decades later, and well into a new century, scholarship in this somato-scientific realm has expanded upon Whitehouse's 'mystery' to evolve an even more nuanced yet evidenced understanding of the circular, multidirectional and multidimensional dance between human physiology and psychology, all the time 'borrowing' from viewpoints, worldviews and traditions "used since preliterate times by African, Asian and Native American cultures, and spread to European (or Western) cultures (Dragon, 2008)" (Dragon, 2015, pp. 29 - 30). As Black American embodiment practitioner and writer, Prentis Hemphill, noted, "History arrives, is recreated, interrupted and transformed in each moment through our embodiment, through what we do and what we allow ourselves to feel." (2021) What we are made to feel and believe about ourselves, then, has direct effects upon our physicalities and upon our embodied legacies left for those to come. Traumas and joys, felt centuries before, by our forebears, make their way into the present through the portals of the body, gates which are always open for communication. On this, Hemphill and Conrad agree across space-time as the latter wrote in 2012, "Historical patterns are encoded in styles of breathing. Body tensions are also transmitted at these silent levels." (2012, p. 43)

As a queer[2] cisgender Jamaican dance artist-educator of unknown multiracial heritage, firmly rooted in intersectional womanism, I have seen and known all too well the truths of somatic realities being written upon Afrikan[3]-descended bodies by historico-cultural legacies of White cishetero patriarchy - many of which are not recognised as such. I am, therefore, compelled to address, as background, the particularities faced by the colonised and marginalised bodies in these 'Indies' and further contextualise the Black dancing body conundrum in this 2021 COVID-19 pandemic in Jamaica. This is particularly important as this 'pandemic pause' has created an opportunity to deliberately disrupt, dismantle and replace the colonisation that the inherited practices of formal dance instruction have soundlessly enforced.

Colonisation as Context

> The Black body was forced to serve white bodies. It was seen as a tool, to be purchased from slave traders; stacked on shelves in the bellies of slave ships; purchased at auction; made to plant, weed, and harvest crops; pressed into service in support of white families' comfort; and used to build a massive agricultural economy. (Resmaa Menakem 2017, p. 27)

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[2] This writer generally forgoes the use of the label 'queer' in favour of 'non-normative' in establishing positionality, as it carries a residual feeling of 'slur'. Still, it is used here in the spirit of Black American womanist educator bell hooks, who defined it as larger than sexual/ gender orientation, "...queer as being about the self that is at odds with everything around it and has to invent and create and find a place to speak and to thrive and to live." (hooks, 2014)

[3] As regards using the letter 'k' in the spelling of Afrika and its derivatives, I am in agreement with Haki R. Madhubuti's four reasons as written in *From Plan to Planet Life Studies:The Need for Afrikan Minds and Institutions* (p.13).

As at the time of this writing, Jamaica is still denying, reliving, unpacking and repackaging as culture, the merciless legacies of 400-year plus b[lo]odystories of European imperial violence and colonial savagery. These embodied inheritances have reached way past skin and flesh and lodged deep into marrow, competing with - in almost equal intensity - the traditional heritages of ancestral joy and triumph of those who were enslaved or indentured. Noted Jamaican-American historical and cultural sociologist and writer, Orlando Patterson (2019) describes one head of this colonialist hydra, enslavement[4] of Afrikans, as an "institutionalized form of naked violence" (p. 156). In Jamaica, he states:

> … the 183 years of British plantation slavery (1655 - 1838) may possibly have been the most brutal in the abominable annals of slavery. The British spared no quarter in their extreme exploitation of the island and of the Africans imported as slaves to work the sugar plantations, coffee farms, and cattle pens. (Patterson, 2019, p. 5)

This 18th to 19th century human trafficking enterprise from the Afrikan continent to the incorrectly named 'West Indies', and North and South America, was posited by its defenders as a valid and necessary method of procuring labour for the colonial project, economic arguments for which were supported by pseudo-Christian evangelical imperiatives, themselves hinged upon delusions about Afrikan sub-humanity. Enslavement was neither a mere "forced migration" (Madhubuti, 1992, p. 25) nor was it just a matter of the importation of labour, as Patterson 'euphemizes', but instead, it represented the systematic unravelling of Afrikan societal fabric, the stealing of cultural bloodlines and lineages and the relentless ransacking, commodification and denigration of Afrikan-descended memories and futures. This commitment to inhumane and barbaric Afrikan enslavement was rooted deeply in the dissonance of an enduring European predilection for looting and pillaging - itself coming from unhealed trauma (Menakem, 2017, p. xv) - while insisting upon not seeing it as such[5]. Attempts at providing financial and other reparations, especially as an outcome of the former colonisers' public acknowledgement of their "historic and moral responsibility" would most certainly be welcomed by the descendants of the enslaved[6]. Still, none of the colonising 'powers' can return the bodies that were stolen and upon whose beings were enacted the "ritualized" public and private violence intended to forever remove the Afrikans from their

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[4] Unlike Patterson, I term it 'enslavement', not' slavery' as the former, though also a noun, presents this sordid historical reality as a repeated activity, continuously chosen by immoral and inhumane European colonisers. The latter, I believe, numbs the reader into not realising the conscious renewability of the state of enslavement.

[5] The present British Culture Secretary Oliver Dowden, has insisted that the Benin bronzes, pillaged from present-day Nigeria almost 2 centuries ago "...properly reside in the British Museum…" [#] and further suggests that the British government will consider loaning them back to their original owners.

[6] As evidenced by the recent regional resurgence of reparations dialogue - long-championed by Barbadian historian Sir Hilary Beckles and now being brought into more mainstream public debate by Barbadian Prime Minister the Honourable Mia Mottley and Jamaican Minister of Gender, Entertainment Sports and Culture, the Honourable Olivia Grange.

inherent knowledge of self and sense of personhood. This violence, from the horror-filled travel by sea to the humiliating and dehumanising sale at slave markets common throughout the Afrikan Diaspora and common in their disregard for Afrikan dignity and humanity, was the deliberate reminder that their enslaved bodies were always in jeopardy and that the right to safeguard and regulate same would always be beyond their grasp in any colonial system.

Capsules of Memory

> *If we have no bodies then they will not see us and we will not be killed* (Conrad 2012, p.46)
>
> Our bodies have a form of knowledge that is different from our cognitive brains. This knowledge is typically experienced as a felt sense of constriction or expansion, pain or ease, energy or numbness. Often this knowledge is stored in our bodies as wordless stories about what is safe and what is dangerous. The body is where we fear, hope, and react; where we constrict and release; and where we reflexively fight, flee, or freeze. (Menakem, 2017, p. 5)

With somatic experiences such as described above spanning centuries, ancestral disembodiment through transmutation of trauma was inevitable and so I have spent some time in this very uncomfortable discussion because I am in awe of the resilience of the Afrikan DNA for joy which has been able to survive and transmute, so much so that we are in receipt of information through our moving DNA to this day. In spite of "a past drenched in blood, like no other place on earth," (Patterson, 2019, p. 5), our ancestors still found the temerity to defiantly dance and say '*Massa me no dead yet!*' (Williamson, 2008, p. 206)[7] Afrikan-descended bodies in the 21st century continue to be a battleground, not in quite the same ways as those "stolen from Afrika/ brought to America/ fighting on arrival/ fighting for survival"[8] but still under siege politically and materially across the Afrikan Diaspora. Certainly, the plantation and enslavement culture of the New World wrought "utter tyranny on individual bodies...disciplined, molded, and rearranged by dominant powers..." (Banes, 1994, p. 46) and its bequests loom large even in this era of assumed post-coloniality'. Still, these painful, deep-as-bone legacies of unprovoked colonial violence have seeded a wily resilience and cultural survival inscribed on our bodies and which assert themselves through our dance across generations. In lieu of (and in waiting for) the external reparations from the perpetrators, enslaved Afrikan ancestors attempted self-repair for themselves and future generations through a cellular certitude that would rewrite the narratives of historical and intergenerational

[7] Stewart, J. An Account of Jamaica (1808) (2008). In Karina Williamson (Ed.), Contrary Voices: Representations of West Indian Slavery, 1657 - 1834 (p. 206). University of the West Indies Press.
[8] Bob Marley and the Wailers. (1983). Buffalo Soldier [Song]. On *Confrontation* [Album]. Tuff Gong/ Island Records.

trauma. From Dinki Mini to Dutty Wine, Kwadrill to Kompa, Landship to Wuk Up, the dancing body in the Caribbean is, like bodies, the world over, a capsule of memory, a layered vessel of wisdom, a site of our stories, burials, transfigurations.

Central to the Afrikan-Caribbean psyche, and evidenced particularly in our dancing youth of today, is a rooted, irrepressible ability to celebrate the body's moving magnificence in spite of competing inheritances of some of the worst historical examples of the transgression of bodily autonomy. Further, as posited by Yvonne Daniel, Professor Emerita of Dance and Afro-American Studies at Smith College, this physicality was embodied prayer as the enslaved "...across the Diaspora ... performed remembered dance practices as strategies for relief, protection, and salvation. They knew the power of dance supported religious beliefs, solidified the group, and expressed spirituality[9]*;* (Daniel, 2011, p. 133). Even in territories which were more harshly restrictive where Afrikan-derived worship was concerned, e.g., the Dutch or the British Protestant/ Creole colonies, the replication continued and prevailed. "Dance, drumming, and singing combined in the Americas as they could not on the African continent, and new sacred repertoires emerged" (Daniel, 2011, p. 133). Through embodied retentions of life-renewing cultural practices, spiritual, secular and artistic, descendants of the enslaved have therefore become walking anachronisms, with all the times around and within us, dancing past skin into spirit[10]. The fracturing impact of colonial weaponisation of touch through torture, punishment, rape was amplified by a type of dissociation and disembodiment which became key to Black bodies' physical and psychological survival throughout the over 400 years of enslavement in the Caribbean. Descendants have been battling with its psychological consequences ever since. What we have kept, through fragments of genetic healing movement and song memory, have threaded us, connected, across time and dimensional realm. Through these bodies and bypassing the oppressor's written and spoken use of language as a weapon, we still have access to a grandparent's waistline wisdom, a great-grandparent's 'sole' memory of dirt under shuffling feet, a great-great-great grandparent's hand to drum, to waist or to head, in communion, communication and community[11]. We retain, through our dancing bodies, and the awareness enveloped therein the 'shared values" of Afrikan-derived dance spoken of by Daniel (2011, pp. 133 - 134).

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[9] "*The following day we witnessed the preparations for the funeral of their murdered brother, by their fellow slaves. It was conducted in their usual manner, not with the afflicting solemnity of the Christian rites, but with all the mirthful ceremonies of an African burial, forming a scene of gaiety, which consisted of music, dancing, singing, and loud noise. They all seemed to rejoice more in his escape from pain and misery, that they sorrowed for his loss.* " (2008). Pinkard, George. Notes of the West Indies (1806). In Karina Williamson (Ed.), Contrary Voices: Representations of West Indian Slavery, 1657 - 1834 (p. 197). University of the West Indies Press.

[10] "... no membrane between my skin and the drums…" (Conrad, 2012, p. 68)

[11] In speaking of her own channeling of movement across time in order to create the vocabulary for the CariMod technique L'Antech, Dr. L'Antoinette Stines[#] (2014) writes: "*When my spirit began shaping the movement, I was given an instruction from my soul encased in my body to look at the use of strings attached to fingers, toes and joints. These instructions gave me angles in arms and fingers that originally looked as if they were pulling on something. This concept resulted in circles and angles moving in tandem.* (p. 114)

That we have, in spite of centuries of exploitation and misuse of touch and trust, been able to trust the contact of skin, in this heavily loaded situation of neo-coloniality is astounding. Generations later, dancers of the Afrikan Diaspora are still able, through embodied memory, to access the body's "layered divinity" (Issa, 2021, p. 1-9). As dancing people, how have we been able to trust touch, so much so that we depend on it for the transmission of our most embedded knowledge, those for which the only language of understanding is physical, non-verbal, symbolic, energetic? Sonja Dumas, in her October 2021 presentation investigating the somatic inheritances of the Middle Passage, noted, "All the Africans (sic) had was their own bodies," and therein lay their wealth, memories, traditions, secrets and strategies for survival. Writes Menakem (2017):

> Many Black bodies have proven very resilient, in part because, over generations, African Americans have developed a variety of body-centred responses to help settle their bodies and blunt the effects of racialized trauma. These include individual and collective humming, rocking, rhythmic clapping, drumming, singing, grounding touch, wailing circles, and call and response, to name just a few. (p. 15)

Along with the Anansi[12] wisdom of hiding seeds and grains of rice in cornrow hairstyles upon being abducted in Afrika, to the use of said hairstyles to indicate geography, location and plans for escape (Beccia 2021), the internal wisdom of the dancing body's power and "potential to effect change" (Banes, 1994, p. 44) was known and made great use of by the enslaved. Centuries beyond (and yet deeply ensconced in the bequests of) plantation Jamaica, each dancing body, continues to be "... valuable weapon of cultural self-defence." (Nettleford, as cited by Ford-Smith, 2010, p. 42).

Cultural Anatomy

> All cultures move like magnetic filings around the center pole, the axis of their myth. (Conrad, 2012, p. 42)

> White fragility screams this message to people of all colors: Whenever a white body feels unsafe or uncomfortable, it's everyone's job to soothe it down ASAP. IF they don't, a dark body may need to get broken. (Menakem, 2017, p. 193)

Despite this deeper-than-thought knowledge of bodily sovereignty, continued existence as

[12] Anansi is a trickster character from Jamaican folklore, often typified as a spider, who is derived from the renowned Akan folklore character Ananse.

descendants of stolen Black bodies in daily engagement with the New World's systemic racist traditions and rhetoric has remained perilous. The "...slow-motion genocide of the Africans" (Patterson, 2019, p.5) has continued into present-day living circumstances of the descendants of the enslaved and indentured, arguably skewed against the former more than the latter in these 'Americas'. We have only to recall the necessary resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement across North America in 2016 and again in 2020, itself the scion of the American Civil Rights Movement of the 1960's, and the Garveyism of the 1930's. Our ability to communicate, transmit information, learn and teach is set against the juxtaposed suffering/ survival backdrop of this shared understanding of the Black oppressed body's skin, flesh, bone, spirit and resilience.

As "ensembles of social meaning" (Banes, 1994, p. 47) though, the bodies of the new millennium, especially in the Jamaican tertiary education dance landscape have been evidencing a growing disconnection from history, culture, presence and body, preferring instead the sensoriness of the swipe on a mobile device screen. This 'swipe' generation came of age with digital technology's own evolution[13] and so has shown decreasing patience for the analog life, with which dance is intimately connected. Those born in the 1990s (todays' millennials) experienced, as part of their childhood development, the release of early internet, smartphone, social media and Bluetooth technology all within that decade and entered the new millennium (and their teenage years) at the same time that some of the most enduring elements of the second and third digital revolutions (Google, Facebook, YouTube, the iPhone for example) were taking shape. As a craft and a technology which is by and large, established upon an understanding of and engagement with physicality in its first instance, though, dance's ability to make visceral impact upon the watcher and the doer may well be eroded by this and successive generations' growing preference for digital dance experiences in favour of in-person ones. The evolution of mediated dance experiences is not at all unwelcome, and its wonders include the provision of a level of accessibility beyond body that previous generations would deem magical; only decades ago, viewing the moving body through an interactive two-dimensional flat screen in real time was the stuff of science fiction. Nevertheless, the instantaneity of the digital dance space, the immediacy of feedback and the validation for product, with even processes being packaged as such were some of the red flags that were being raised by this new generation's digital leanings.

[13] https://stfc.ukri.org/files/digital-revolution-infographic/

'Dis'Embodiment of Di 'Swipe' Generations

At least ten years prior to the almost wholesale digital migration of dance occasioned by the late 2019 into early 2020 unfolding of the COVID-19 pandemic, colleagues and I across the Caribbean were brainstorming strategies for making the sensoriness of swiping culturally relevant instead of throwing our hands up in despair. As concerned educators, we worried that our students' dependence upon the immediacy of onscreen interactions coupled with the addictiveness of social media validation would move them further and further away from understanding their bodies as portals for connection to deep self-knowledge and also to ancestral movement legacies. Would their mediated experience of their bodies result in a greater lack of somatic awareness? Would the hard won gains of dance pedagogy be dismissed with each successive swipe of a finger? The gap in translation was widening exponentially, making it more difficult to connect with our dance students around the needs of dance, as we knew them to be. With templates for embodiment which appeared so disparate from our own, and with barely any resonances from the anatomical and cultural reference points we believed we all shared, we tried to understand how these new Caribbeans were experiencing their own bodyness. Was what we saw as a distancing from body through engagement with mobile devices merely an expansion of their body awareness to include technology and further, a widening of their abilities to connect to others beyond the physical?

In Jamaica, our teaching of dance in the formal tertiary setting has always been predicated on the baseline skin-flesh-bone understanding, an unspoken prerequisite for in-studio curricular engagement. This common denominator has been particularly important because Jamaica's primary and secondary school education sectors have still not integrated dance into the delivered curriculum. In spite of the valiant efforts of teams of Jamaican dance educators who have entreated the relevant government ministries with arguments, evidence, proposals and prepared curricula[14], the ministerial obstinacy is deeply ingrained and, I presume, the 'legitimacy' that will come to a body-based arts through its curricular embeddedness will have too many implications for the populace's personal autonomy and self-esteem. But I digress. Those young Jamaicans who are interested in pursuing dance at the tertiary level have, quite often, only experienced it as part of their extra-curricular, weekend, community or worship life with much of the focus being upon performance as a product to be rewarded with praise or a medal. Dr. Nicholeen DeGrasse-Johnson, esteemed Jamaican dance education consultant and Principal of the Edna Manley College of the Visual and Performing Arts (EMCVPA) in Kingston, Jamaica, framed it thusly:

[14] "For the past three decades, Dance educators in Jamaica have developed Dance curricula for public educational institutions, but there is still a need to justify the validity of Dance as part of the general school curriculum and the advantage of its institutionalization to the wider society." (DeGrasse-Johnson 2014, p. iii)

> In 1991, the CTC[15] Jamaica School of Dance was attaining world standards in practice and curriculum development ... yet dance was not formally present in the general school curriculum in Jamaica. This discrepancy meant that potential applicants to the EMCVPA School of Dance had to acquire pre-requisite dance knowledge and skills independently. … Jamaica was continuing to perpetuate the notion that one does not have to be qualified in Dance to be able to teach Dance… in particular parliamentarians, principals, teachers, and parents—did not seem to be concerned about standards in preparation for teaching dance. The emphasis in teaching dance was on product and not about the process or benefits beyond performance. (DeGrasse-Johnson, 2014, pp. 9 - 10)

What the School of Dance, EMCVPA, has had to create, then, is a pedagogical approach and culture acknowledging the gap in formal instruction faced by our applicants. Our audition processes, by extension, assess not just the applicants' presented technical skills, but also their potential for dance development based upon their abilities to demonstrate ancestral legacies of rhythm, groundedness, shape, form and style in spite of a dearth of 'formal' instruction. Our audition format has always included African/Caribbean Traditional Folk Forms, Modern Dance and Ballet as the shared class experience, with the scouting for potential ensconced in the assessment rubric and criteria. Possible students could therefore, have had no formal instruction in Ballet or Modern Dance, but be accepted upon the strength of their dexterity with Jamaican Traditional, Folk Urban forms and their ability for 'quick pick-up' and recall when introduced to the newer information in the audition class. Further to this, academic interrogations of our inherited physical languages have, since 1976, been embedded in curricular focus upon the retention-rich Jamaican and Caribbean Traditional and Folk Forms, and so we have always felt that our students would have access to these 'shared understandings' and, in problem-solving with their bodies, readily drop into expressing their own ideas about the rapidly changing world through the language of body, first. Even though, pre-COVID-19, we found ourselves grappling with the disembodied millennial audacity of "the swipe generation"[16], we trusted that the ancestral alchemy of the moving body would remain, and that genetic memory would support our work in studio. Although our young dancers seemed, in the last two decades to be drifting away from 'body' as a physical experience and, instead, to be existing more virtually through technology-based presentations of themselves, we took it for granted that we would, at least, always have safe touch in our dance pedagogy toolkits to help guide them towards line, shape, function and feeling when words were not enough to bring them back home to their bodies.

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[15] The Cultural Training Centre (CTC) was the name of the combined schools of visual and performing arts from the inception in 1976 untilits renaming and reclassification as the Edna Manley College of the Visual and Performing Arts (EMCVPA) in 1995.

[16] As coined by Jamaican embodiment educator, Lee Rose, in conversation with the author, 2016

In October 2017, as part of the Rex Nettleford Arts Conference in Kingston, Jamaica, I presented a paper entitled *Of (Dis)embodiment and Modernity: ReFiguring Approaches to Embodied Knowing*. Central to this presentation was the recognition that in order to secure the continuance of dance in Jamaica, especially as an area of formal inquiry, dance educators would have to look beyond the cross-generational misunderstandings and stereotypes of the younger generations [Z et al] as being social media and phone-addicted, impatient, sensitive digital natives who "hashtag everything."[17] Instead, I proposed that we recognise skin as a sense organ allowing for the swiping that took place in their interactions with devices [as portals to other realities] to be a felt, sensed action. What we felt was disembodiment, could be re-figured as 'dis'embodiment, using the Jamaican vernacular for the determiner 'this'. I took it to further indicate that we would be wise to really see 'this' embodiment for what it was instead of assuming it to be less than the 'full-bodied' engagement we had come to see as necessary for the transmission of dance's legacy. Admittedly, 'dis' rising generation, coming into their young adulthood, grew up with algorithms (software patterns of data) which did so much of the 'heavy lifting' for them and so would capture problem-solving processes but say nothing about where the steps ultimately led. At the same time, internationally, the youth had been proving themselves to be highly entrepreneurial and very socially conscious[18], ready to mobilise around issues of social and political justice[19] even on ubiquitous social media apps such as TikTok, which is commonly used for the remixing of dance videos and internet challenges. In our studios, this sometimes took the shape of distraction, with the pull of easy connection to the global pulse through technology often-times being stronger than the work of internal connection with one's own impulses for movement mediated through body and sound. Still, our youth were still part of a generation of shape-shifters who easily cross realms through available technologies, and are in the processes of unfolding new rituals of *embodiment*, teaching us about a variant sense of body awareness and humanness in and through time-space. In iterations of the body as original portal, these young consciousnesses have been able to occupy multiple dimensions simultaneously and catalyse global shifts instantaneously - all upon the bedrock of inherited body legacies of rhythm and ritual still seen in Urban folk and Dancehall innovations. How, then, could we 'old-timers' ever propose to them the need to slow the vibration in order to live (through) the density of only three dimensions?

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[17] Then second year BFA student of the School of Dance, Dadriel Bent, in conversation with the author, 2017

[18]https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2020/05/14/on-the-cusp-of-adulthood-and-facing-an-uncertain-future-what-we-know-about-gen-z-so-far-2/ (Albeit in reference to the population of the USA, this still brings perspective to the discussion as global general characteristics do emerge)

[19]."K-pop Twitter and Alt TikTok have a good alliance where they spread information amongst each other very quickly. They all know the algorithms and how they can boost videos to get where they want."Mills, D. (n.d.). *Tiktok teens Tank Trump rally in Tulsa, they say - the new ...* Retrieved October 25, 2021, from https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/21/style/tiktok-trump-rally-tulsa.html

Screen-past-flesh-going-on-to-bone was rapidly becoming their reality as mobile communication devices morphed from being items of luxury in the late 1980's Jamaica to virtual appendages in the 21st century, with economies of scale allowing for greater affordability and access for most youth in our school demographic (the majority of whom range from 16 to 25 years old). Their experiences and new habits were bucking up against the more concrete histories of dance and dance scholarship and even 'A' students were declaring disinterest in dance pioneer biographies of struggle and hardship, and wanting instead to only hear about those who 'made it' and who could give the blueprint without all the missteps. Although our faculty tried to meet them where they met each other, and use the landscape they were shaping to, in turn, shape their engagement with dance as a discipline, something was shifting in the fundamental premise from which they operated. Whether or not we moved class discussions to WhatsApp, included Instagram posts as assignments or asked students to vlog their journals, there was still a sense that their engagement with the very craft of dance was 'once-removed' and that was being noticed in our studios. The in-person centrality of the act of dance, the body-based nucleus of wrestling with the physical puzzle into solution, with all its attendant legacies, was being sidestepped in favour of esteem-boosting social media snapshots and video clips. The body sovereignty for which our enslaved ancestors gave life to reclaim was being (un)consciously handed over to another kind of body-snatcher, the anonymous and omnipresent metaverse.

The Pandemic Push to Swivel, Pivot, Connect

On March 12, 2020, Jamaica shut down. In alignment with arts, entertainment and educational closures being implemented across the world, the Government of Jamaica ordered all schools, from early childhood to tertiary levels, to close for fourteen days, in response to the presence of cases of COVID-19 in Jamaica[20]. This rearrangement of world affairs drilled down into daily shifts and changes intent on limiting social interactions and exposure to this evasive virus. In what felt like an inordinately long blink of an eye, major dance companies, freelance commercial choreographers, dance professionals and students internationally had to re-format, re-figure and re-present the teaching, learning, making and performance of dance. Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and TikTok became the virtual classrooms, studios and stages in which dancers moved. What were, in their first iterations, supplementary spaces for the dancer to visit, became the hub for all dance interaction as no-movement orders and physical distancing protocol in the effort to flatten the pandemic's curve made it near impossible for many dancers to continue training with others in-person. Now, with this new 'venue' for all things dance, global dance companies increased their social media engagement beyond the usual archival material, publicity and advertising as addendum to their off-line activity.

[20] Communications, O. P. M. (2020, March 12). *News from the OPM*. Office of the Prime Minister. Retrieved October 25, 2021, from https://opm.gov.jm/news/schools-closed-for-14-days-in-light-covid-19/#:~:text=The%20Government%20has%20ordered%20the,schools%2C%20community%20and%20teacher's%20colleges.

As governments scrambled to consult the science and draft policy which used informed projections for the not-too-distant future, the global dance community had to completely migrate to the internet's 'cold' two-dimensionality and has, since then, been constantly 'pivoting' to keep up with changing information about COVID-19 spread, variants, vaccinations and hoaxes. Some Jamaican dance companies and studios quickly turned live 'riddims' into 'algoriddims' and used the (relatively) low-cost access to popular internet-based platforms to their benefit. Those who had already been offering dancehall classes to an international clientele e.g. Dance Jamaica, Dance Fyah and Dance Xpressionz made great use of the technology to share Jamaican popular dance via interactive screen, not just as content but as experience and even pivoted further to use the 'downtime' created by the initial 'pandemic pause' to manifest other creative online projects e.g. Dance Xpressionz's YouTube drama series, 'The Bartender', which stars all of the group's members and provides employment for other members of the dancehall community.

The pandemic situation has certainly been a gamechanger in the world of dance in the area of access. At present, the internet space is rife with technique classes, courses, conferences and workshops which can be accessed from the comfort of one's home for a fraction of the pre-COVID-19 cost. This, of course, takes for granted that access to the internet through WiFi, wired ethernet or data bundles is possible. It is the areas of the world, like Jamaica, where this access is not guaranteed because of cost, topography etc. that suffer the most in terms of moving forward in dance education in this time. Although, with an average class size capped at 20 students in a minimum 30' x 37' open-air studio, our relatively low class numbers at the EMCVPA School of Dance had always been cause for concern, they were in this instance, a boon for us in terms of thoughts of in-person re-entry into the studios, but we had to make it through the online frontier first. This has been a dizzying pursuit, not only because of the large-scale experiment that it has been, but also because of 'dis' layer of embodiment which it forced upon us all, buttressed by an encouraged lack of trust of one's own touch and the proximity to others. Once Faculty and administration were able to navigate contradictory scientific information, consult best practices and figure out the safety of instructing and learning dance skills remotely, the international dance education community adapted in record time, keeping connected through open Zoom seminars and check-ins, whether individually or facilitated by such global organisations as National Dance Education Organisation, dance and the Child international, Dance Studies Association and International Somatic Movement Education and Therapy Association.

Because spaces for tertiary level dance education teach towards embodiment, virtuosity, qualification and certification, our operations in the online space required necessary differences from the general dance community. Many of our international counterparts had already ventured into online and remote learning, with robust and comprehensive online

platforms and support systems, so the COVID-19 push to near-total online offerings was a startling, but not too steep learning curve to broach. In Jamaica, our education system's colonial and neo-colonial predispositions towards in-person heavy, chalk-and-talk/ studio-and-sweat teaching modalities across learning levels would make the journey much more difficult for us.

Our educational legacy, despite its present-day push towards S.T.E.M. (Science, Technology Engineering, Mathematics) education and the governmental campaign to equip students with technological resources during this pandemic challenge, is still haunted by initial British colonial misconceptions about the need for curricular disparities which maintain the status quo. The Education Ministry's rebranding and new strategies for more holistic engagement of its over 100,000 student stakeholders - its watchword is now "Every Child Can Learn, Every Child Must Learn." - still have not filtered through to equal consideration of all aspects of education, and the arts, which would be essential in a S.T.E.A.M. (Science, Technology Engineering, Arts, Mathematics) education framework, are still conveniently eliminated from the critical discussions about approaches, pedagogies and funding[21].

This is, itself, another haunting from a colonial past which sought to tie education to a reductive one-to-one relationship with the country's economy; whatever could not be directly linked to the maintenance of economic inputs and outputs as the administrators knew them to be were considered ornamental pursuits and so would not be centred in curriculum or in resource allocation. After all, to the minds of the administrators, the arts do measurably little to assure the "enrichment and upward mobility… through education" ((About the Ministry – Ministry of Education and Youth, n.d.) that the Ministry's mandate speaks of. The Cartesian elevation of mind over body, itself buttressed by Euro-Christian dogma, has also been an ancestral legacy on this island and so, pedagogies of the body, outside of the teaching of physical education and sport, have still found no place in the national education conversation despite the deep connection our enslaved ancestors understood between the body's intelligence and their own survival. Copious curriculum research and arguments have come up ineffective against the constant dispute between mind and body that is the Jamaican psychological reality.

Edna Online

It's about time/ Log On dance dun/ Everybody ah On Line (Elephant Man, 2002)

With the distinction of being the only college of its kind in the Anglophone Caribbean, the

[21] On December 10, 2021, the Ministry partnered with the British Council (the cultural and educational outreach arm of the British High Commission) to present a National S.T.E.A.M. Forum. To be noted, no arts educator was on the stated panel. Neither was the event publicised on either organisation's social media pages.

EMCVPA had long held prestige in its brick-and-mortar presence as crucible for in-person scholarship in the performing and visual arts and a channelling space for the unnamed enslaved ancestors buried below its foundations, and had ventured into online programme delivery at the post-graduate level in collaboration with Ohio State University. Still, like the regional University of the West Indies with its literal foundations laid on sugar plantation soil, as well as the island's only national University, the University of Technology, the EMCVPA was still primarily biased towards an in-person pedagogical culture.

Although "The EMCVPA's, Edna Online pilot for undergraduate course delivery had started in September 2019, with a few theory-based courses from each School having been transferred to the Moodle platform, COVID19 (sic) created a need for warp speed so that the semester could be completed online for as many courses as possible – while maintaining the integrity of course content and competencies." (Ebanks, 2020, p. 7) Our Faculty had to quickly move from 'skin' to 'screen' and re-imagine all practical courses in the online realms. The Schools of Dance and Drama were particularly challenged because of the in-studio tethering of our practical work but we considered it an opportunity to discover previously unnoticed and unidentified aspects of our disciplines. In anticipation of full-scale Moodle migration, we jumped immediately into investigating a range of available platforms for real time and asynchronous class delivery (from Google Classroom to Instagram) and exchanged notes often regarding the benefits and drawbacks of each. By April 2020, the semester's courses for all the Schools were uploaded and the 'Zoomiversity' adventure truly began. As dance Faculty, although our identities as educators were "... (a) malleable and evolving center of connections where all that constitutes an individual's life coalesces to inform teaching beliefs, values, and behaviour…" (Dragon, 2015, p 27) and so knew that we would consciously and unconsciously fold this new dispensation into our teaching philosophies and practices, we had no idea what we were in for. Like our colleagues around the world, we were very nervous about the ability of these mediated modalities to help us truly engage our students in the experiences of themselves through dance, especially without the foreseeable option of in-person engagement to enrich the online delivery. The latter had been critical to the strategy of many online-centred dance programmes which offered the global equanimity of online access with crucial meeting moments for intensive work in person over their durations. At EMCVPA, we were glad for the chance to create a reliable hub with repositories of information for our students to reference at their own convenience and welcomed the further agency that this gave our learners, who were, in the same breath, mourning a different kind of forced migration, this time to online learning and yet, ready to optimistically "Move forward and join the world on screen."[22]

[22] Stacy-Ann Nelson, School of Dance graduand, in conversation at the 2021 Rex Nettleford Arts Conference, October 7, 2021.

The School of Dance's teaching culture has always been hybrid, having had, from its inception, to be a one-stop institution for all persons interested in tertiary education in dance. The School's intake was varied and dynamic, with students hailing from beyond our shores and parish lines, each with a different intention and purpose for their study. The usual hard line drawn between a conservatory approach and a dance education approach to teaching dance did not quite apply to the School which had both mandates and a number of them in between the apparent poles to fulfil. Graduating from its programmes each year would be cultural change agents, dance administrators, choreographers, tourism entertainment managers, costume designers, dance teachers, performers and community workers. The Jamaican economy had not been built out to accommodate and compensate with a fair wage dance professions outside of the easily understood integration with the teaching profession and so our programmes, though loosely bifurcated into Education and Performance and Choreography could not receive the kid of support needed for further build out into discrete areas. The hybridity of the School of Dance experience is also evidenced in the interplay between teacher- and student-centred engagement, with a number of teaching philosophies "silently embedded" (Dragon, 2015, p. 25) in our individual and collective pedagogical decisions. In one day, throughout their timetable, student experience runs the gamut from replication of technique skills to creative expressivity, self-directed learning to collaborative problem-solving, in the effort to empower new generations of not only disciples but also explorers (referencing Don Hanlon Johnson) and cultural change agents with in/direct impact upon national development. Faculty concern about the new online terrain was also set against this backdrop of larger purpose.

Like others within Jamaica's larger education system, myriad obstacles have threatened to erase our students' optimism. Primary to this has been the lack of reliable access to the internet, which is the lynchpin of this new phase of dance content delivery. Having been on various iterations of lockdowns in their family homes, they now combat new impediments to their continued study in dance, not the least of which have been "a lack of conducive spaces for physical training, having to travel back to their home countries and the associated quarantines upon arrival, responsibilities for siblings and household activities, lack of family/ community support for their choice of study, less-than-optimal devices for the volume of work being done and mental and emotional fatigue because of worry about the pandemic." (Ebanks, 2020, p. 7). Faculty re-orientation around the 'new studio/classroom' has also been daunting, with work-from-home situations erasing the necessary demarcation between work and personal spaces. Although the class sizes at the School of Dance have been even smaller during this time, capping at an average of 9.5 students per year group[23]Faculty fatigue is no

[23] At the beginning of the 2021 - 2022 academic year, the School of Dance lost four (4) Year Two students who deferred studies for the year, citing COVID-related financial constraints as well as family deaths and the difficulties of online study. We enrolled only two (2) students in the Year 1 cohort despite accepting more than

less felt. The necessary flexibility regarding timelines, assessments, delivery modes and the expansion of deliberate checking-in with students' social and emotional health is continuing to take its toll on all our nervous systems even as we are making room there for growth opportunities.

Almost superhumanly, with a resilience that would, we hope, be a cause for ancestral satisfaction, our students and Faculty at the School of Dance are still, in this Fall 2021 phase of the COVID-19 pandemic working valiantly and with integrity to learn and present dance in this new way. Traditional Folk and other practical classes have worked through a combination of asynchronous online tasks and assignments, synchronous online conversation, presentation and analysis and small in-person classes with live music with lecturers' use of online and asynchronous options guiding students towards more self-directed and autonomous learning. Because we have strived to centre operations around the truth that, "On the screen is a whole human being." (Andre Adman, Acting Dean of the School of Music in conversation at the 2021 Rex Nettleford Arts Conference, October 8, 2021) to date, the School has been able to successfully graduate two 'COVID' cohorts of BFA students with specialisations in Dance Education and Performance and Choreography.

On the Screen is a Whole Human Being

The challenge of this moment in dance history has been met by some of our students not with reticence and resignation but instead with a widening embrace of the channels opened for exploring expressivity and presentation. In my own teaching for the Fall semester, Year 2 student journal responses about external challenges being experienced in their learning of Modern Technique online, mentioned the difficulty of executing floorwork on a tiled surface and the unreliability of their internet connection but made no reference to a difficulty in translating the mediated movements, guidance or coaching points to their bodily experiences[24]. For many of them who are native 'netizens', though, the cycling of information from *screen-to-bone* was already in train and was nowhere near as foreboding as the Faculty (many of whom are of the Boomer and 'X' generations) had feared. The transposition of choreographic ideas to the realm of for-screen presentation, though not new to the Jamaican dancescape, had still remained on the fringes of choreographic exploration, with many Jamaican choreographers appreciating Videodance and Dance Film created in the rest of the world but preferring to work in the three-dimensionality of the live body. The pandemic push

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fifteen (15) students after major auditions in June 2021. Those applicants who could not accept the placement offers cited similar reasons as the above.

[24] *"I found it challenging working the exercise on the tile, the bone of my ankle and foot was pressing on it." (D.M.)*

"I'm learning that the room has strong and weak points where it receives the Internet, and that has been a bit frustrating, as some parts of the room do not allow me to have the best camera set-up. However, I'm trying to be as patient as I can, despite the challenges as the Internet is outside of my control." (L.M.)

ensured that the new stage became virtual and so our students, too, had to quickly spring into intuitive and instructed action and allow their choreographic visions to branch into online processes, from Zoom rehearsals to Instagram Live presentations. This has, interestingly, worked well for some of our more introverted students who found energy in the required self-reliance occasioned by the mandatory physical distancing and the learning from home. One such student, now in the final year of our BFA Performance and Choreography, Giselle Bain opined, "For most people, the pandemic has been silencing, but for me, it has been amplifying."[25] Bain, who is now also the President of the School's performing corps, DanceWorks, comes from a dance-focused family background and so creating from home has, by and large, been a manageable experience. Other senior students, with multiple home bases have had more challenging experiences with online learning, especially synchronously, and yet many have returned to the studios for brief periods of cohorted in-person classes with a deeper, more embodied execution of technique and skill than exhibited during their initial years of study, which were focused on in-studio learning almost exclusively. Our deaf dancers - there are three in our school population - have been rising to meet every challenge of this historic time. With the aid of their interpreters, they have been able to circumvent the difficulties of the inevitable lag in synchronous video communication in the online spaces such as Zoom, by using the platform's chat feature as well as WhatsApp to supplement. To their credit, Zoom developers listened to the demands for accessibility and created an option for live transcription (automatic or manual) to be available to all subscribers by Fall 2021, and despite Artificial Intelligence's inability to correctly translate English spoken with a Jamaican accent, it can still be counted a win for deaf learners everywhere.

While this new, no-contact moment that is the COVID-19 pandemic, has certainly complicated our mission, teaching dance in virtual environments has, thankfully, given rise to many valid experiences of embodiment, crossing from screen to bone using technology and imagination. As educators, our voices have become our hands, carefully coaching with detail and supplementing our often-glitched physical demonstrations. What was just a year ago conveyed through ethical, considerate touch, for correction, comfort or congratulation in the in-person dance class has been channelled into keen listening, looking and speaking, all for the purposes of nurturing, in this harsh soil, our students' capacities for feeling, empathy, joy and connection. Lecturers too have learned about patience or as our Head of Department for Dance Education, Sophia McKain, termed it, "The power of giving people time."[26] As content requires more time to be taught because of internet delays, variances in student processing times and so on, McKain found that although the online space has seemingly slowed our pace, it has not slowed our learning, a distinction which is not often made in the studio setting as in-person teaching easily becomes impatient teaching. Our teaching-learning

[25] In conversation at the 2021 Rex Nettleford Arts Conference, October 7, 2021.
[26] In conversation at the 2021 Rex Nettleford Arts Conference, October 8, 2021.

culture has had to loosen its attachment to outcome-driven, performance-based evaluation of student growth - which, although summative, still involved a highly weighted final practical examination - and instead, embrace the process-based methods which transformed final examinations into synchronous final class assessments or asynchronous final video submissions of technique work. It has, indeed, been a clarifying time, allowing our faculty to see what really matters to transmission and embodiment in dance education. Still, as guides towards 'bodyness' we are tempted to ask, "How do we get back to the 'thing' itself, that which the virtuality of technology re-presents?" This long moment, however, gives us enough pause to consider that technology is also substantively 'the thing' and has much to teach us about our own engagement with our realities.

The Things We Must Keep

> All action begins in rest (Lao-Tzu, n.d.)

The moment is, once again, changing. As vaccination drives push our country to reopen and in-person dance becomes an option, what lessons will we re-enter our studios with? Beyond the necessary sanitisation protocols, mask-wearing (itself a dangerous modification of the practical class experience) and physical distancing mandates, what would we have learnt about dance itself through the screen that we can take with us?

Below are a few ideas:

1. Reading the Room: To be sure, we cannot forget that our words took the shape of our hands and so we had to be much more deliberate with their use. In order to make a bone-approaching impact on our learners we have had to, of necessity, dip into bell hooks' ideas of 'radical pedagogy' and create and sustain practices which recognise the contribution of all present to class dynamics and which honour the very souls of our students. Even, and especially in these times of engagement online, we have learnt to "...insist that everyone's presence is acknowledged." (hooks, 2014, p.8) and further, must re-integrate this understanding into the in-person teaching and learning situations. A camera turned-off could indicate anything from a minor, surprise interruption to an emotional crisis, and we must learn to read the 'Zoom room'.

2. Contact with Consent: We will, also, have to re-integrate our use of safe touch in our studios, deliberately engaging conversations about consent and being open to students and others being unwilling to engage touch, because of COVID-19 concerns or other factors. This opportunity for our students to grow their agency in dance spaces as regards bodily autonomy and touch is critical as it allows for a loop to be closed across generations. Ancestral legacies of exploitation of body and spirit can be moved

towards healing through the deliberate acknowledgement and practice of student bodily autonomy in our dance space. The colonisation that the inherited practices of formal dance instruction once represented can now be dismantled and replaced with opportunities for young dancers to engage the craft from a place of safety, certitude and choice. Previously, pedagogical practices in dance were built on the idea that the teacher had the right to move the students' bodies as per the needs of the lesson. For those who refused to acknowledge the dancers' body autonomy, this is a rude awakening. We have been fumbling towards consent conversations; a concept learnt by those of us who studied elsewhere, still hasn't taken root in the larger dance community in Jamaica. We can, in studio, guide them back towards the self-trust that is the foundation of self-determination, helping them to re-embody varying levels of tactility, through contact with surfaces, objects, themselves and, eventually, with each other encouraging them, always to remain in present-moment engagement and connection with the felt self and their capacity to be stirred.

3. <u>'Dis' embodiment and Re-embodiment:</u> In designing our re-entry into in-person dance education we must remember our duty to develop artists and change agents who can sensitise civil society to the process of becoming and remembering body as "a thinking thing", the original communication portal. They, themselves, must be always sensitive and sensory, even in the face of changing embodiments and times. This moment can be a tipping point for student agency and somatic intervention. Through the integration of such inner-directed work as improvisation and somatics into our technique and performance classes, we can encourage "attentive dialogue" (Lester, 2017, p.32) with self and help our students to track the changes in their own rituals of 'dis'embodiment and take charge of their evolution.

4. <u>Pedagogies of Rest</u>: Dance education has developed with a "culture of rigor" (Baston and Schwartz, 2007, p 47) as a central principle, especially in spaces which prize continuous practice as the only pathway to virtuosity. One of the enduring legacies of enslavement and the plantation economy was the focus on work as not only indicative of value as human resource but also aligned with one's usefulness, self-esteem and right to life. Rest was not an option for our enslaved ancestors and so they had to use other, more active means of collective movement, sound and stillness to help to resettle their nervous systems and make "room for growth in traumatized flesh -and-bone bodies" (Menakem, 2017, p. ix) Although the School of Dance's pedagogical culture fuses process- and product-oriented methods there has not been the deep understanding of, as Batson and Schwartz have phrased it, "...the role of restful reflection in learning to move." and the positive implications for technique and creative practice when rest is engaged as a pedagogical strategy. (Batson and Schwartz, 2007, p. 47). As Sophia McKain previously acknowledged, there is great

> need for patience and pause[27] in this time of online learning and this can be implemented from an administrative timetabling standpoint as well as an individual class design. Embedding rest within activity[28], which this pandemic pause can lead us to better understand, must be embraced as a deliberate way to remind students of their "kinesthetic authority" (Batson and Schwartz, 2007, p. 50) as movers and sites/subjects/experiencers of their own embodied research.

This COVID-19 moment is giving Jamaican dance educators at the tertiary level an unprecedented opportunity to take a step back from deeply ingrained dance philosophies and identities and to make new choices in teaching and learning which acknowledge, interrogate and embrace the importance of 'dis' new embodiment and its new habits of embodied knowing. What is certain is that reminding our students what to notice in this age of distraction must become our signal mandate in moving dance through COVID-19 and beyond. In this way we can guide them (and each other) back to a more information-rich and culturally grounded embodiment, helping them to connect the historical dots, and mapping for them the ancestral journey through body to this moment, with nuggets of felt and experienced insight by which to be nourished and replenished.

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[27] "... pausing relieves the nervous system from its organizational processing in order to integrate (neurologically) new details of a person's self-image into the pattern of action." (Batson and Schwartz ,2007, p. 50)

[28] Recall Constructive Rest position (Swiegard), Yielding in Body-Mind Centering (Bainbridge Cohen) and Savasana in Hatha Yoga.

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About the Author

Artistic Director and Founder of Jamaican dance aggregation eNKompan.E™, Neila Ebanks holds a Master of Arts in Physical Theatre from Royal Holloway University of London and the University of Surrey [UK], a Bachelor of Science in Sociology from the University of the West Indies, [JM] and a Certificate in Dance Theatre and Production from the Edna Manley College of the Visual and Performing Arts [EMCVPA], School of Dance.

Ebanks was, until 2018, Chief Examiner for the CAPE Performing Arts examination and was also the first ever Dance recipient of the Commonwealth Connections Residency [CA]. Her diverse Jamaican and Caribbean connections include her present work with the EMCVPA School of Dance as Director of Studies [Acting] and with eNKompan.E™, as well as past work with Continuum Dance Project [TT], The Stella Maris Young Adult Dance Ensemble [JM], The University Dance Society [JM], L'ACADCO United Caribbean Dance Force [JM], Dance Theatre Xaymaca [JM], ASHE Performing Arts Company [JM], Movements Dance Company [JM], The Company Dance Theatre [JM] and the National Dance Theatre Company of Jamaica. Internationally, she has also represented Jamaica in the Bienal de Danza del Caribe [CU], the Caribbean Educative Arts Festival (BB), Tobago Contemporary Dance Festival [TT], Skjoldungefestival [DK], COCO Dance Festival [TT], CARIFESTA XIII [BB] and OUTBURST Queer Arts Festival [IE].

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