

**TEACHING DANCE AS A MEANS OF INTERCULTURAL RECONCILIATION**

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2014

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**DECLARATION**

I declare that the dissertation hereby submitted for the qualification Magister Artium (Drama and Theatre Arts), titled *Teaching Dance as a Means of Intercultural Reconciliation*, at the University of the Free State is my own, independent work and has not, to the best of my knowledge, been submitted before at any university or tertiary institution. I therefore cede copyrights of the dissertation in favour of the University of the Free State.

Masedi Godfrey Manenye (2003051675)

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## DEDICATION

I dedicate this research to my children, Lesedi and Lethatbo Manenye. Daddy loves you. To my parents, Mpenyana and Keletso Manenye, who tirelessly worked for me to be where I am. I thank you for your constant prayers. To my big brothers, Ramohotsi and Sereko Manenye, thank you for your support when I need you. My only sister, Lerato Manenye, thank you for keeping the family together.

God bless you.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

### *TO GOD BE THE GLORY*

- I would like to acknowledge and express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to co-study friend, Mishack “Bunch” Sekhobo. What a journey! Thank you for your advice and support. To Kingdom Moshoenyane and Kabi Thulo: your encouragement throughout this study did not go unnoticed.
- To my friends, Jefferson Korkee, Karabelo Lekalake, Gali “Mmadikoti” Malebo, Motshilisi Gude, Sijabuliso Hurasha and Petronella van Rooyen: thank you for asking if “I were OK”. It meant a lot to me.
- To my supervisor, Prof. N.J. Luwes: it was not easy, but you took me by the hand and led me on. Thank you for your time and guidance. Your patience and understanding supported me during the research.
- To all the dance students, dance teachers and choreographers who participated in the study: thank you very much; it has been an extraordinary experience.

**Love, peace and happiness.**



## ABSTRACT

The research problem and purpose of this dissertation was, firstly, to investigate the apparent interracial tension and intercultural intolerance in South Africa. Secondly, the aim and objective were to explore dance as a nonverbal artistic teaching tool for intercultural and interracial reconciliation. Investigation of applicable literature in the field of study supported the theory that a devised dance theatre production would be a workable process to attain the aims of the study.

The methodology applied was based on Process As Research (PAR). Student dancers from different racial, cultural and language groups, as well as different genders, were selected to create a dance project under the guidance of a choreographer. Before and during rehearsals and after performances, interviews were filmed and observations recorded. The study describes the processes followed for deciding on the theme and the organisational work plan. The practical implementation of the plan, rehearsal processes and completion of the devised theatre dance project are explained. Initial problematic issues and the ways and means the participants implemented to overcome them, are discussed.

Collected data before, during and after the intervention, indicates how dance can bring about cultural understanding among people of different racial, traditional and cultural backgrounds in a devised theatre production.

Research findings presented, illustrate that dance as nonverbal communication becomes an effective unifying language that can cross intercultural and interracial borders. Thus, the study concludes that dance can advocate to being an effective learning tool for intercultural reconciliation. It brings about respect and awareness, enabling people from different cultures to learn about the 'others'. Nonverbal communication is thus seen as complementary to verbal communication in attaining that. Finally the study proposes that the world outside the theatre and the stage could also be seen as a 'dance floor' for all who are willing to dance into the future as reconciled nations.

## ABSTRAK

Die navorsingsprobleem en doel van hierdie dissertasie was, eerstens, om die oënskynlik onderliggende rassspanning en onverdraagsaamheid tussen kulture te ondersoek. Tweedens was die doel om ondersoek in te stel na dans as 'n nieverbale, artistieke onderrigmiddel vir versoening tussen verskillende kulture en rasse. Navorsing van toepaslike literatuur in die studieveld, ondersteun die teorie dat uitgewerkte ("devised") dansteaterproduksies 'n werkbare proses sal wees om die doelwitte van die studie te bereik.

Deur prosesnavorsing is 'n ondersoek geloods. Studentedansers van verskillende rasse, kulture, taalgroepe en geslagte is gekeur om deel te vorm van 'n dansprojek onder leiding van 'n choreograaf. Voor en na aanvang van repetisies en ná die opvoeringsperiode, is onderhoude verfilm en gewaarwordinge opgeneem. Die studie beskryf die prosesse wat gevolg is om op 'n tema en organisatoriese werksplan te besluit. Die praktiese implementering van die plan, die repetisieprosesse en voltooiing van die uitgewerkte dansteaterproduksie word verduidelik. Aanvanklike problematiek en die werkwyses wat die deelnemers geïmplementeer het om dit te oorkom, word bespreek.

Data wat voor, tydens en ná die intervensie ingesamel is, dui aan hoe dans kan bydra tot kulturele begrip tussen mense van verskillende rasse, tradisies en kulturele agtergronde in 'n uitgewerkte teaterproduksie. Navorsingsbevindinge wat aangebied word, illustreer hoe dans as nieverbale kommunikasie 'n doeltreffende, verenigende taal word wat die grense tussen rasse en kulture kan oorkom.

Die studie is dus van mening dat dans daarop kan aanspraak maak dat dit 'n effektiewe instrument van leer is vir interkulturele versoening. Dit bring respek en bewustheid mee waardeur mense van verskillende kulture in staat gestel word om van die “ander” te kan leer. Nieverbale kommunikasie kan dus meer effektief wees as wanneer verbale kommunikasie alleen gebruik word. Uiteindelik stel die studie dit dat die wêreld buite teater en die verhoog ook as 'n “dansvloer” gesien kan word deur almal wat bereid is om as versoende nasies die toekoms binne te dans.

## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH PROJECT

#### 1.1. Introduction.

The following chapter aims to explain the rationale for the study, provide insight into the research problem and to present a concise outline of the research design and methodology. The research will observe the calculated undertones of the play *Master Harold and the Boys* by Athol Fugard (1982) and a devised theatre production *Harambe/Togetherness* (subtitle “*Seeking for fresh air*”) by a group of drama students from the University of the Free State.

#### 1.2 Background.

The rationale of the study is embedded in the apparent racial tension in post-apartheid South Africa. South Africa is known for its cultural diversity, different languages and various religious beliefs. Eleven official languages are recognised in the constitution, each belonging to a different ethnic group and entrenched in a certain culture. Wale (2013) indicates that these traditional cultural and racial divisions were further emphasised and strengthened by the country’s background of apartheid since the early 1900’s and especially after 1948 when apartheid came into full bloom. Apartheid was a system of legal racial segregation enforced by the National Party government in South

Africa between 1948 and 1994, under which the rights of the majority of 'non-White' inhabitants in South Africa were systematically suppressed by laws<sup>1</sup> and the minority rule by White citizens was maintained. As from 1990 up to 1993, forty-eight years after the institution of apartheid, negotiations between the National Party government and the ANC began. The purpose of these negotiations was to pave the way for talks towards a peaceful transition of power. Apartheid was abolished, culminating in the 1994 elections<sup>2</sup>.

This diversity makes it difficult to define our identity as a South African nation today. "The history of our country is bounded by our political past, especially the role of apartheid, as we move into a transitional period" (Maqoma 2010). At present our society is challenging the cultural hegemony, questioning what it is to be a South African citizen in our diverse society (Wale 2013). Citizens still tend to identify with only those cultures and language groups similar to themselves.

Due to years of practising different ways of self-expression in cultural praxes and the fact that we do not always know, have insight into or understand the history and

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<sup>1</sup> The most prominent laws were the following: Population Registration Act of 1950; the Group Areas Act of 1950; the Prevention of Illegal Squatting Act of 1951; the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act of 1949; the Immorality Act of 1950; the Reservation of Separate Amenities Act of 1953; the Suppression of Communism Act of 1950; 1953 Bantu Education Act and the Bantu Authorities Act of 1951.

<sup>2</sup> Apartheid was dismantled in a series of negotiations between 1990 and 1993, culminating in the first democratic elections of 1994. On 10 May 1994 Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela was sworn in as South Africa's president. The legal apparatus of apartheid was abolished between 1990 and 1996.

meaning of cultural praxes of the 'others', stands in the way of having mutual respect for the cultural praxes of the 'others'. This study aims to bring knowledge to the fore regarding the cultural history and praxis of dance by different cultural groups, and investigate dance as a possible aid for understanding the 'others' on our road to true reconciliation as a united South African nation.

For the purpose of this study, the focus will be on how the different ethnic and cultural groups practise their different dances, and the dance genres and styles will be commented on. South African dance types are distinct from each other because of the diversity of the cultural praxes of the indigenous tribes.

These different dances symbolise different social structures and traditional values of the various people. Hence the study aims at using these different cultural dances to bring about understanding and respect for the 'others' as a means to unite and promote the message of cultural tolerance. Even after 20 years of democracy, the need for striving towards reconciliation is evident.

In South Africa we have different cultures due to the diversity of ethnic and language groups with different historical and traditional backgrounds and beliefs. The ideal for all South Africans would be to strive for a national culture that can unite the nation. In order to attain this, we must find that abstract "mental blueprint" or "mental code" that is shared by all groups in the country. This will involve finding the unifying and learned symbolic

system of values, beliefs and attitudes that shape and influence perceptions and behaviour of all (Luwes 2010).

Having observed this, the study investigates the role dance, as artistic means of communication, can play as a tool that can advocate intercultural understanding and bring about cultural tolerance among all South Africans.

### **1.3. Research problem.**

Since 1994 the South African community has experienced major changes in the socio-political and economic fields. As yet we are still working towards building a positive nation. In 1994 Nelson Mandela was elected the first Black president who was to lead all citizens into a new South African dispensation in a Government of National Unity<sup>3</sup>. Definite steps had to be taken to reveal the atrocities of the past in order to face the truth of our sadly divided history. Ways of understanding the past had to be found before reconciliation could become a possibility. In 1995 the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was established under the National Unity and Reconciliation Act,

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<sup>3</sup> In the election of 27 April 1994 the African National Congress obtained the majority of seats in the National Assembly, and could thus form the government on its own. The two chief parties that made use of the provision for a GNU were the National Party and the Inkatha Freedom Party.

The aims of the GNU centred on correcting social and economic injustices left in the wake of apartheid. The main aim, however, was that of creating a final Constitution. The important mandate of GNU was to gain opinions from ordinary South Africans to be included into the constitution. Between 1994 and 1996 the GNU organised large media campaigns to gather those opinions.

On 8 May 1996 the final Constitution was adopted by the National Assembly. The requirement for the GNU lapsed at the end of the first Parliament in 1999.



No. 34 of 1995. The aim was to expose the crimes and atrocities committed during the years of apartheid, and to bring about national healing by focusing on victims telling their stories and perpetrators confessing their guilt. “The commission aimed at reconciling the country and building unity” (The Nelson Mandela Foundation 2008:186). The ideal was that during the public hearings dialogue between different parties from the political spectrum would be stimulated to bring about national healing. However, Racial Barometer 2013 indicates that the dialogue did not continue long enough to foster a healed multicultural society (Wale 2013:13). The ordinary citizens did not have the opportunity to share their stories. Racial divide in South Africa seemed to be increasing since the short euphoria after the 1994 elections.

The movement towards multicultural unity in South Africa seems to be very slow, mainly because of the lack of continued efforts from all parties involved from the different racial and cultural groups. Everyone seems to live in his/her own culture and language circle, rather associating with and trusting the ‘self’ than the ‘others’. This was particularly evident in 2008 with the racial tension that exploded between White and Black students at the University of the Free State campus after the infamous Reitz video was made public, and caught national and international media attention, causing a public outcry.

The video shows four White male students humiliating older Black cleaners. It was aimed at mocking the University's attempts towards integrating Black and White students' residences. This incident indicated a possibility of disrespect and racial tension between Black and White students that still exists. If this was the case among young students, it could possibly imply the presence of the same tensions and mistrust among older citizens. Prof Jonathan Jansen, rector at the University of the Free State, responded to my questions about the problem areas and if he agrees that dance could be a means for better interracial, intercultural understanding and integration:

Culture can be communicated through physical movement or dance. Culture isn't just [visible in] the classroom. It is also [present in] sport, music and dance. Where we have failed as South Africans, is how we created separate little ethnic homelands again for sport, culture and education. But in terms of integration, in terms of speaking to each other, in terms of Afrikaans being in dialogue with Sesotho and English, in terms of imagining a different world where students gain their education, that is where the problem lies (Jansen 2010).

It is evident that due to cultural and especially language diversity, intercultural verbal communication seems to be a major challenge in South Africa (Wale 2013). This inability to communicate freely with the 'others' seems to create misunderstanding, tension and cultural intolerance within the country. In order to overcome the burden and complexities of verbal communication, this study therefore seeks to explore the nonverbal route to bring about intercultural understanding of the 'others' through a

series of intercultural dances as part of a dance project undertaken by students from different cultural, ethnic and language groups.

The study is also informed by interviews conducted with cultural leaders and choreographers from different cultural groups, practising different ethnic dance styles.

This study also reflects on the leitmotiv in Athol Fugard's play, *Master Harold and the Boys* (1982), that suggests dance as a means of reconciliation.

The study aims to get answers to the following questions:

- What is the role of dance in nonverbal communication?
- What is devised theatre?
- To what extent do the different dances reflect the different cultures?
- To what extent can dance, as a medium of communication, improve intercultural knowledge and understanding to enhance intercultural tolerance?

#### **1.4. Research methodology and design.**

Research methodology reflects the kind of tools and procedures a researcher intends to use (Mouton 2001:56). The study applies Process as Research (PAR) methodology. A systematic investigation through practical action is calculated to devise or test new information, ideas, forms or procedures and to produce communicable knowledge.

Academia is undergoing an arguably positive development in its recognition of artistic activity as a form of research strategy to produce valid knowledge.

The introduction of Practice as Research, Practice-based Research or Practice-led Research, is a research methodology that erodes the traditional tension between theories and practice while purporting for artistic practice as a primary means and form of theorizing, investigating and knowledge creation that facilitates academic interdisciplinary research (Archer 1995: 6-13).

Additionally, it proposes an interesting dialogue about ways in which performing arts practice can be productive within the domain of mainstream and traditional knowledge generation and qualification.

The research project includes theoretical/quantitative and practical/qualitative components. The study will start with a general literature review focusing on the role of dance within the nonverbal communication system, in order to inform the next step of the research process. Books, academic articles, newspaper articles and internet articles will be consulted to review the existing body of knowledge in the field of study. This material will be used to enlighten the research by compiling an inclusive and thorough report on dance as a possible method for gaining intercultural reconciliation.

The application of the qualitative research method includes discussions with dance leaders/choreographers and knowledgeable persons to gather more data on the history, styles and meaning of the different dances. Interviews will be conducted with choreographers like Gregory Maqoma, Elize Cogle, Reginald Danster about teaching dance for intercultural understanding. Feedback from student dancers participating in the devised dance production of *Harambe*, regarding the processes and challenges they faced during the creation of the production, will further inform the study.

The second phase of the research involves the use of the PAR method by exploring the possibility of dance in a devised dance theatre production as a method towards intercultural reconciliation. This phase focuses on dance as nonverbal communication and responses will use the qualitative research method to report individual data. The research then aims to put to the test the rationality of some of the theoretical claims made in the literature review and interviews with other participants regarding the use of dance as a tool for intercultural tolerance.

Dance is a wide concept, but the study focused on African cultural dance, Afrikaans and English dance. The idea was to take the three cultural dances; Volkspele (Afrikaans), Waltz (English) and Zulu and teach them to a multicultural group, and then from those dances create an intercultural dances by merging three cultural dances. The resultant

dance forms that emerged from the merger are seen in the hybrid nature of Modern dances like Contemporary, *Langarm Sakkie-sakkie*, Hip-hop and Marabi dances<sup>4</sup>.

The practical component of the study was conducted with University of the Free State (UFS) students participating in a devised theatre production. Observation of the process in the devised dance production forms an integral part of the research methodology applied in the study.

A group of students from different cultures were brought together and divided into three different multiracial groups. They were asked to devise dances that reflect their own tradition and culture. The idea was to introduce to the 'others' their own cultural background and meaning of their own dances. Then the three groups were brought together. The different dance styles were then choreographed and performed as a final production. The study focuses on what they have learnt about each other and to what extent their perspectives regarding tolerance had changed as a result of the interracial and intercultural exposure. To avoid leading the questions by the researcher, their reflections as reported to the objective group leaders will be reported in the final chapter<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> See Appendix B, DVD

<sup>5</sup> See pg. 51, Chapter three: Intervention and Report

A research design is defined as a plan or strategy that is used to acquire information with the intention of provoking something (Babbie 1989:78). The research layout is structured as follows:

- Chapter 1: General introduction to the research project.
- Chapter 2: Literature review on nonverbal communication, dance and devised theatre to serve as an academic basis for the PAR section of the general study in order to identify and draw up specific questions for questionnaires and interviews.
- Chapter 3: A report on the interviews with role-players, including students and dance leaders/choreographers practising different dance styles, as well as their reflections on the different cultural identities as displayed in the different dances, will be presented.
- Chapter 4: Participants' feedback. Reflections of students, both before and after their participation in the devised dance production *Harambe*, regarding their perceptions of the 'others' as far as interracial and intercultural matters are concerned, will be presented.
- Chapter 5: Conclusion on the effectiveness (or not) of dance as a method of working towards intercultural/racial understanding and tolerance.

### **1.5. Ethical consideration.**

The research strives to be objective and to maintain integrity by adhering to ethics of reporting the true outcomes without laying participants on the line. According to Babbie (1965:320) the researcher can only report the truth in the study if the researcher is aware of the general agreement shared by the participants about what is proper and improper in the scientific field of the study. In this study the student dancers and choreographer fully agreed on the idea to create the production and associated themselves with the purpose, method and aims of the study. The researcher was given permission to observe the devising process of the production and report on the final results of the production. Ethical concerns regarding the findings and interviews were considered by the researcher through explaining the aims, the concept and method of the research, and the ethics of the process. All participants agreed on taking part and gave permission for their names to be used in the final report of the interviews.

### **1.6. Limitation.**

In general, dance is used as a form of social entertainment and most books on dance concentrate on the traditions, historical origins and styles of specific dances. The preliminary research acknowledges a lack of specific books, articles and information on dance as a tool to develop interracial tolerance as a means of conflict resolution.



This study therefore had to rely on exploring the idea and measuring the validity of the hypothesis that dance can function as a tool to promote interracial tolerance, and can be a possible method of conflict resolution and reconciliation. The exploratory nature of the research process led to a prolonged time span, with classes and rehearsals for the production spread over the academic year according to lecturing hours for movement and dance. In retrospect the participants should have been isolated, and the process of the specific production *Harambe* and its intervention should take place within a more concentrated time span.

The fact that the participants were students who also had contact with various 'other' races in class during the year, might have contributed to intercultural and interracial tolerance. For similar future research the ideal situation would be to select a group that only has contact during the official intervention and rehearsal period.

### **1.7. Value of the research.**

The study aimed to measure if dance can be an effective method of promoting understanding and tolerance between different cultural and racial groups under participants on the UFS campus. The study might be an example of a method to attain and promote understanding, awareness and intercultural tolerance in South Africa. If

proven effective, the programme will form part of a first-year Movement module in the Department of Drama and Theatre Arts at UFS as from 2015.

## Chapter 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1. Introduction

Academic research relies on a structure from which it can draw thought, intervention and intention. It needs some sort of image that can guide the writing and identify subject-specific research. This sort of image will also help the study to adhere to the context and not stray unnecessarily. According to Mouton: “a solid literature review provides an overview of learning in a certain discipline, through an analysis of trends and debates” (2001:179).

The following chapter focuses on a literature review to provide the necessary theoretical perspective on nonverbal communication and dance as a medium that can bring about a change in society and promote tolerance. The research will also provide insight into the creative process of devising theatre in the case study to determine, observe and report on the validity of a devised dance production as a possible tool for reconciliation. In Athol Fugard’s play, *Master Harold and the Boys*, the leitmotiv of the dance scene can serve as an example that suggests that dance can be a method to heal social disintegration owing to cultural differences in South Africa.

## 2.2. Background

This section aims at defining in short what is meant by nonverbal communication and devised theatre. The metaphor of dance from the play *Master Harold and the Boys* will be applied in the comparison with dance as an artistic form in the devised dance production, and investigate dance as a proposed tool for cultural and racial reconciliation.

## 2.3. Defining nonverbal Communication.

Nonverbal communication is a subsection of the broader concept of communication (Elam 1980). The term communication has been defined in many ways by many linguists and structural communication analysts. Sheila Steinberg (2007:39) found that there were 126 definitions, and that since then more definitions have been formulated. She suggests two basic views on the foundations of the varying definitions, viz. a technical view and a meaning-centred view:

Theorists who adopt a technical view are concerned with how accurately and efficiently messages can be transferred from one person to another along a channel such as a telephone wire or the airwaves that carry sound and pictures to radios and television sets. A second and more complex view of communication is that, in addition to the transmission of messages, it involves their interpretation and meaning. This view considers communication as a human phenomenon and the central aspect of human existence (*ibid*).

In the broadest sense, the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines communication as the imparting or exchange of information by speaking, writing, or using some other medium. This definition incorporates both the technical and meaning-centred view. However, Birdwhistell (1970:95-98), defines communication as a structural system of significant symbols (from all the sensorial based modalities) which permit meaningful exchange in human interaction.

Communication is regarded as not only an interactive process of exchanging meaningful messages, but as a transaction between the participants during which a relationship develops between them (Steinberg 2007:39)

It is on these grounds that this study draws its meaning for communication, viz. an exploratory and meaningful exchange of interaction between different cultural backgrounds, in order to reach a tolerant society that is attempting to develop a consensual relationship. The aim is to apply dance as a form of nonverbal communication in the theatre, and to achieve the goals of the aforementioned dance project. First of all, it should be realised that theatre practitioners use many methods in training actors, but very few, however, concentrate on using dance for the purposes of intercultural or interracial reconciliation. *The Actor Trainer Manual* (Alison 2010:26-30) is a compilation of writings, mostly by the students of prominent actor trainers, that focuses on their methods of training. Alison Hodge discusses actor trainers from

Stanislavski, Michael Chekhov, Michael Saint-Denis, Jacques Copeau, the Knebel Technique and the methods of Vsevolod Meyerhold.

The study will draw a definition of communication in physical terms from these trainers with the aim to qualify dance as a form of nonverbal communication and a possible solution for cultural intolerance. Alison Hodge explains Meyerhold's biomechanics as the implication of the connection with the technology of the body (how the body works, from the sender to the receiver). He wants the actor to be both the organiser of the material and the material itself. Meyerhold seems to be one of the theatre practitioners that fully realised the use of the actor's body as tool of effective communication.

### **2.3.1. Nonverbal communication**

Researchers outside the field of theatre have also studied nonverbal communication. Keir Elam (1980), Jonathan D. Evans and Andre Helbo (1986), Baruch Fichnoff (2012), Teresa L. Thompson (2011), Roxanne Parrott, June Luchjenbroers (2006) and Alfred G. Smith (1966), did extensive research on nonverbal communication while focusing on the disciplines and areas of cultural anthropology, social psychology, linguistics, literature, semiotics, communication studies and kinesics. Their research also investigates nonverbal communication with a focus on communicative body movements, colour, culture, class, gender and the ecological influences on language.

For the purpose of this study Albert Mehrabian's definition of nonverbal communication seems appropriate. Mehrabian (1972:1-5) defines nonverbal behaviour as actions distinct from speech. It thus includes facial expressions, hand and arm gestures, postures, positions, and various movements of the body like the legs and feet. Sheflin (1964:1) describes a few examples:

A communicator may use changes in posture, eye contact, or position to indicate (1) he is about to make a new point, (2) he is assuming an attitude relative to several points being made by himself or his addressee, or (3) he wishes to temporarily remove himself from the communication situation, as would be the case if he were to select a great distance from the addressee or begin to turn his back on him (Sheflin's, 1964:1)

It becomes clear that movement and dance as nonverbal communication can carry messages and meaning. Sheflin's (*ibid*) study of the concept of regulation gives guidelines to nonverbal behaviour, how it can be defined and applied in the transfer of intentions and meaning also in dance.

Birdwhistell states that the meaning of body motion is not so simple that it can be itemised in a glossary of gestures. It can only be derived from the examination of the patterned structure of the system of body motion as a whole, as this manifests itself in the particular social situation. While body motion is based in the physiological structure,

the communicative aspects of this behaviour are patterned by social and cultural experiences (Birdwhistell, 1970:173-174).

For the purpose of this study Birdwhistell's statement is of importance, for this meaningful pattern of behaviour does reflect in different dances by different cultural and racial groups.

Dittmann (1972:22), through communication theory, attempts to define interpersonal communication of emotions. His research indicates that nonverbal communication acts as a transferor of a certain message, ranging from culture to culture. Dittman summarises the dimensions of nonverbal communication as follows:

**Intentional control** refers to an encoding process whereby a communicator either allows his emotions to be expressed or controls them. **Level of awareness** concerns a decoding process whereby a message is transmitted with full consciousness, so weakly that it does not draw the receiver's attention (subliminal), or kept out of awareness entirely (repressed). **Communication specificity** refers to the information value of a message. A communication continuum might range from the most communicatively expressive messages (e.g. body movements such as manipulations), to the 'others'. In between might be facial expressions and paralinguistic cues that convey less information than words but more than body movement. **Channels of communication** refer to two overlapping dimensions: one ranging from discrete to continuous, the other from high to low capacity. Discrete messages (such as verbal statements) are more communicative, and continuous ones (like hand-rubbing) are more expressive; high-capacity channels



(such as facial expressions) convey more information than do low-capacity channels such as body movements (Dittmann 1972:22).

Dittmann (*ibid*) refers to the above as indicative behaviour, stating that the continuous nonverbal communication may be more difficult to interpret, but are not less meaningful than language. Nonverbal communication provides a sense of information about motives or intentions. One of the problems that the study aims to address is the cultural differences and how nonverbal communication can consolidate a solution through the art of dance.

Dittmann's (*ibid*) concept of continuous congruency of meaningfulness of nonverbal communication, when compared to that of language, implies that different languages may have different interpretations; thus different nonverbal signs might also vary per language culture. If the research draws the analysis to the individual differences, obviously embedded in the nature of the difference among cultural denominations, it will be valuable to consider Steinberg's (2007:140) definition of the 'self'.

The 'self' can be seen in two dimensions. The 'self' is an internal thing – a composite of personality characteristics, attitudes, values, beliefs and habits that make us unique. It is a social thing – it grows out of contact with others and functions primarily to guide our communication (Steinberg's 2007:140)

The first half of the definition agrees with the views of this study, viz. that every human being has a unique way of communicating nonverbally. The second part of the definition about 'self' from a social realm i.e. society, agrees with the views of this study in defining 'self' as a concept that differs from one cultural group to *another*.

Culture can be studied indirectly by studying behaviour, customs, language, material culture like artefacts, tools, technology, etc. If culture is learnt by someone, it implies a process of enculturation – a learnt culture. If culture is shared by the members of a society, it implies that it is not solely the culture of "one", but a shared culture. If people in a society live, think and act in ways that form definite patterns, it can be called a patterned culture. Over centuries these patterned culture(s) were imbedded in different cultural groups in S.A. In order to understand and respect different cultures in S.A., and hopefully to attain a uniting South African culture, it must be mutually constructed through a constant process of social interaction. Dance as a form of art can play a role in attaining that (Luwes 2010).

The study seeks an artistic solution to the intolerance in South Africa and advocates dance as a nonverbal communication vehicle through which a solution may be explored.

#### **2.4. Dance as nonverbal communication**

The reason why dance is chosen for this study as a means of intercultural reconciliation is based on various values and cultural understanding of dance. According to Reginald

Danster (2009) the first lesson of teaching dance, is that dance is devoted to teaching good manners and respect.

Dancing may be used as an instrument to develop social etiquette. From it, an individual is able to learn good posture, proper greeting, improve their communication skills (listening and talking), and learn proper and acceptable body gestures. An individual is also able to learn professional soft skills like time management, and presentation skills which may include confidence, awareness of your environment and knowing what you will present.

Social etiquette plays an important part in effective verbal and nonverbal communication.

According to Gregory Maqoma (2010) dance is a language. It is an educational tool to develop cultural identity; it's responsible for enhancing the mind and spirit; and it's used to acquire the higher mental qualities and to exercise them. Maqoma mentions that Aristotle maintained that "dance is a body instrument of communication regained by those who dance seriously. Dance conserves a vital and precious phase of civilised culture".

According to Kraus & Chapman (1981:109), Aristotle also dealt with dance in education, although he had not favoured it as a formal educational activity before. He later saw the value of dance as affording intellectual and artistic gratification of the highest type. "In his view, it was useful in purging the young students' souls of unseemly emotions and it

helped to prepare the future citizens for understanding and building unity” (*ibid*). Dance demands the involvement of all man’s faculties. Dance as an art form that activates the mind and sharpens man’s mental apparatus, and it requires the creation of new and meaningful movement patterns communicating relationships between men, his fellows and his environment (Thornton 1971: 32).

#### **2.4.1 About Dance**

In order to establish the place and function of dance as a form of nonverbal theatre, the study looks at research that has been undertaken around the discipline to find the definition and characteristics thereof. Defining dance is the first step in this section in which the researcher aims to extract an own definition of dance in relation to the aims of the study. Danielle Mary Jay and Gayle Kassing define dance as:

The human body rhythmically moving through space in time with energy and effort. Furthermore, dance engages the dancer’s physical, mental and spiritual attributes to perform a dance form as a work of art, a cultural ritual, social recreation and an expression of the person (Kassing & Jay 2003:4).

The definition also corresponds with the views of Susan Kozel in a collection of essays by Desmond Jane (1997). Kozel states that in dance theatre the story is told as a history of the body, not as danced literature (Jane, 1997:101). However, Lepecki (2006:1) defines dance through function. He sees movement as an entity that is not invincible to hiccups. Lepecki writes:

Perception of hiccupping [interruptions] in choreographed movement produces critical anxiety; it is dance's very future that appears menaced by the eruption of kinaesthetic stuttering. Before a purposeful choreographic interruption of "flow or a continuum of movement", the critic offers two possible readings: either those strategies can be dismissed as a "trend" – thus casting as a limited epiphenomenon, an annoying "tie" that does not deserve a too serious critical consideration; or [those strategies] can be denounced, more seriously, as a threat to dance's "tomorrow", to dance's capacity to smoothly reproduce itself into the future within its familiar parameters (*ibid*).

Dance is seen as a link to produce flow and fluency between movements to avert interruptions or what Lepecki calls 'hiccups'. This is important in interpersonal communication through movement. The communicated meaning carried by a movement, e.g. a gesture, is linked to another individual movement by dance; in order to produce a flow between meaningful movements to produce a story. Suzan Kozel (1997:101) analyses the work of Irigary and Bausch and comes to suggesting that dance may be a product of culture.

Hanna (1987:75-76) suggests that the difference in styles of dance relies on cultural differences as a source. He analyses movement as motion involving the anticipation, continuation and cessation of exploratory behaviour:

... There's pleasure and power in the mastery of body movement as a child learns to turn, crawl, hold and operate (grip development), walk, coordinate eye-hand motion, such

as rocking, swinging, and spinning. All of which hold the characteristics of learnt nonverbal behaviour that manifest itself as communication through intention. These can be learnt from immediate surroundings, and the messages may differ per cultural group.

The preceding analysis indicates that, for the purpose of this study, dance can be considered an imitation of immediate life, i.e. society, culture, etc., and that it combines all the movements (gestures, symbols) through the enhancement of flow and link up to narrate a story.

African traditional and cultural dances remain rich in meaning, but have become more moderate and beautiful in form. Today's dances are less ritualistic and not attached to daily activities, but they still communicate a certain message. It is without any question that dance played a more important role in storytelling and cultural teachings of ancient people. It was rich in culture and held the highest position of education.

The role of dance in today's society is not much different. Traditional and cultural dances display lesser ritualistic elements these days, but to those who are practising traditional dance the meaning and discipline that it had in the past has not changed. The aims are still the same: to teach and educate (Kraus & Chapman 1981:21). Especially the role that dances played in traditional African cultures cannot be underestimated.

Any form of dance, is a form of communication and besides its nonverbal implications, it knows no limits. Marabi dance, for instance, has a fascinating history, because it was created to unite people and cultures. The art of Marabi was set in the multicultural environment of Sophiatown; a setting which allowed people to mingle and share ideas regardless of their cultural affiliations. There is a strong American influence in the music for this dance form. It became an art form created not only for protest purposes against apartheid, but also [served as] a platform where liberation reigned. It allowed people from different races to unite and learn from each other (Maqoma 2010).

Elize Cogle, however, raised a concern when asked if there was a need for practising and teaching traditional cultural dances. She answered by indicating the advantages of practising and teaching traditional cultural dances.

There is a need for cultural dances. But if people stop dancing them, they are going to die down, so it is important to learn the origins of a certain cultural dance. One of my learners who were introduced to gumboot dancing did a school project on it. What she has done got her parents to understand the origin and cultural background of gumboot dancing. There is a lot of conflict because people don't understand each other; and teaching them dance – and not only dance, but its cultural origin – helps them to know and understand each other's cultures. This is evident in most of our productions. We never have problems because we learned about each other through dance and the history behind it (Cogle 2010).

### **2.4.2. Teaching dance**

It is clear from the above that the role of dance to bring about intercultural understanding should not be underestimated.

Dance education transforms children into healthier, graceful, sensitive, courteous, cooperative, cultured and charitable citizens. Teaching is used by educators to develop human character. Its main function is to contribute to the achievements of the ideal future, and it shapes and directs us to a better tomorrow. Education is a planned program of character development to achieve remote goals, in which there is a consistency of consequences (Rogers 1941: vii).

Dance is learnt from a society and comprises all society's physical behaviours which are arranged into movement with guidance of musical rhythm. Cultural dances can be learnt and reciprocated into cross-cultural form, which can influence and inform across cultures. It is because of this possibility that the study considers dance as the focus of social learning theories in interactions between people and as a primary mechanism of learning:

Learning is based on observation of others in a social setting. Social learning theories in the 1940s drew heavily from behaviourism which suggested that imitative responses, when reinforced, lead to the observed learning and behavioural changes. Four processes form the cornerstones of the observational learning theory. These are attention, retention (memory), behavioural rehearsal, and motivation. All four processes contribute to learning by observation. Many useful concepts emerge from the social learning orientation including motivational strategies, locus of control, social role acquisition, and



the importance of interaction of the learner with environment and other learners (Merriam & Caffarella, 1991:124).

According to Merriam & Caffarella (*ibid*) these steps can be broken down in the following manner for the sake of assisting the researcher with his goal to teach dance as a means of promoting intercultural understanding and respect:

- Attention: When an individual from a specific culture is placed in different environment with its culture resonating through dances, the individual's attention will be drawn to this new moving image that is played in front of his/her eyes. The individual will focus on it and the mind's curiosity will be at work.
- Retention (memory): The focus extends itself into a series of images observed through time. It takes memory to recall all the other images to make sense of the present move. The individual remembers recall the moves and learn how to execute them.
- Behavioural rehearsal: Learning the moves is nothing without adjusting oneself to the attitudes attributed to the dance itself. One must then learn the weight of each move and what muscles are used in its execution. One must also rehearse how to behave around the dance, embrace the brilliance of the meaning of the dance.

- Motivation: Finally, one has to find the definition and motivation behind each attitude and its physical execution. Why the dancer displays this attitude or behaviour for this specific move? What are they thinking when they dance this? What is the dance suggesting about their culture? The answers lie in the essence of finding the motivation behind each move and attitude. While an individual is discovering the motive, he/she is busy experiencing and learning about the other culture, and dance becomes the subtle and powerful messenger.

Maqoma stresses the importance of understanding the cultural background of the dance.

Without any cultural background, a dance will hover around without a substance platform to land on. My body needs the ability to culturally communicate. Therefore I have to be certain about a culture in order to train and work with different people. I have to develop a certain culture and certain aesthetics, and that [...] is very much based on my cultural background (Maqoma 2010).

Dance, carrying much weight in terms of cultural identity, can be learnt. The aim of the study is to use dance to introduce different cultural groups and the world to the cultural diversities of South Africa in order to promote an improved state of intercultural tolerance. If a specific culture can be placed in an environment of another culture to observe their dances and its implications, it is possible for the 'others' to learn from the 'others' and bring about tolerance. Dance, because of its nature of verbal silence and

the fact that only sound is used, can be taught without verbal language. Through non-verbal observation, encrypted in the culture and nature of the dance itself, learning can indeed take place.

Maqoma (2010) strongly supports the idea that dance is an excellent tool in attaining intercultural and interracial understanding and tolerance:

Dance is a form of communication [and] because dance is nonverbal, it knows no colour and has no limits or barriers. It is a way through which I can interrogate other cultures. It's also a way in which I would find my way in other cultures, to communicate, find access to other cultures and forms in order to create. I am more informed about other cultures with clear intentions. I make sure that I am more sensitive to other cultures, so I put myself in a position whereby I learn a lot about the culture, not just the movement, but also the background, where things originate from. I am fascinated by origins (Maqoma, 2010).

The case for using dance as a means to bring about intercultural and interracial understanding and tolerance has been made clear. For the purpose of the practical experimental intervention with a group of students from different cultural groups, a theatre dance project had to be devised. The next section focuses on identifying the nature and processes of devising such a dance theatre project.

## 2.5. Defining devised theatre?

For the aims and purpose of this project, a Devised Dance programme seemed the most appropriate as every participant brings in his own different cultural background.

According to Alison Oddey (1994:1) devising is:

... a process of making theatre that enables a group of performers to be physically and practically creative in the sharing and shaping of an original product that directly emanates from assembling, editing, and re-shaping individuals' contradictory experiences of the world.

The process of devising theatre is about expanding our own limited experiences and understanding of ourselves, our culture(s), and the world we live in. A group of individuals come together to discuss a major social or political problem. The discourse is focused on the shared experience amongst the group members and acts as the starting point of the creative process. Any definition of devised theatre must include the process (i.e. finding the ways and means to share an artistic journey together), collaboration (i.e. working with others), multi-vision (i.e. integrating various views, beliefs, life experiences, and attitudes to change world events) and, finally, the creation of an artistic product (Oddey 1994:3).

This means that individuals from different backgrounds can share the opportunity to create a product that speaks in one voice to all. Different individuals, as representatives

of where they come from and their cultural distinctions, will enhance the complexity and multiplicity of the cultural solutions that will become the artistic product – in this case a dance project.

Different cultures will, in other words, combine to create a culture shared by all, and participants can make sense of their own cultural and social communities in relation to others. The process of devising on artistic project is about inventing, investigating, forming, selecting, improvising and experimenting around a certain issue. Views are shared, interpreted, discarded and adhered to, and participants get to understand their differences and how these differences can contribute to the subject matter (*ibid*). The idea of using dance as an interracial unifying metaphor in a theatre production is not new. In the next section, attention is given to Athol Fugard's use of dance to attain exactly that.

## 2.6. Athol Fugard's analogy of the use of dance in *Master Harold and the Boys*.

In *Master Harold and the Boys* Athol Fugard (1982) explores the potential of a dance competition as a means of cultural reform. Fugard is a leading practitioner of political theatre. His plays like, *Playland* (1993), *Sizwe Banzi is dead* (1972), *The Island* (1973) and *Blood Knot* (1987) focus on the aspects of segregation during the apartheid years in South Africa. In his play *Master Harold and the Boys* (1982) he attempts, through his analogy of a dance competition in the play, to bring to resolution racial disharmony. He founds this strong metaphor on black and white South Africans' lack of interracial harmony. The cultural reconciliation referred to in the play is to obtain a normal society, where cultural segregation was to be restrained and a united society created. By using the artistic form of dance, he strives for educational freedom and intercultural tolerance. *Master Harold and the Boys* advocates an apparent proposition to the socio-political problem of interracial intolerance by introducing the metaphor of dance as a potential solution to the situations faced by the characters from different cultural groups.

The similarities between devised theatre and the dance in *Master Harold and the Boys* will be revealed, and the process of making the new presentation will be recorded as an observation report to be written as a research journal. The results of the presentation will be reported on in this dissertation.

The actual presentation, for the sake of the literary review, is the text of *Master Harold and the Boys*. What the play stands for and how its thematic content arrives at a potential solution for socio-political conflict, will be investigated. By paralleling the use of dance as a means of interracial reconciliation, as suggested in *Master Harold and the Boys*, the new devised dance project for this study will broadly follow a similar theatre-making process.

The excerpt below summarises Fugard's view that dancing together is just the first step towards facing interracial understanding in a bigger socio-political context.

Hally: There's more to life than trotting around a dance floor ...

Sam: It's harmless pleasure, Hally. It does not hurt anybody (p.31).

Hally is made to see how dancing and the harmony it evokes, can contribute to a peaceful South Africa. Sam uses an annual cultural activity to indicate the importance of learning through an art form and explains that to the curious Hally.

Hally: When you're dancing. If you and your partner collide into another couple ...

Sam: If me and Maria bump into you and Hilda ... Hally, Hally!

Hally: What? What did I say?

Sam: There's no collision out there, Hally. Nobody trips or stumbles or bumps into anybody else. That's what that moment is all about. To be one of those finalists on that

dance floor is like ... like being in a dream about a world in which accidents don't happen (p.36).

Athol Fugard, through the character of Sam, speaks of a world without collisions in his metaphor of the dancing environment. The world as an environment is compared to the dance floor as an environment. The want for cultural understanding and moving towards peace in the play, is paralleled to the music and the ultimate prize. The people, Blacks and Whites, are compared to the couples on the dance floor. This image of people dancing to the music becomes a perfect example for a South Africa where everyone understands the beauty of the 'others' special art form and its cultural implications. Fugard advocates that dance is a possible solution to promote intercultural learning, which was stunted during the apartheid regime, and that a new South African environment – without racism/hate/injustices/misunderstanding, but with harmony – can be acquired through the use of movement, viz. dance

Hally: Jesus, Sam! That's beautiful!

Sam: Of course it is. That's what I have been trying to say to you all afternoon. And it's beautiful because that is what we want life to be like. But instead, like you said, Hally, we're bumping into each other all the time. Look at the three of us this afternoon: I've bumped into Willie, the two of us have bumped into you, and you've bumped into your mother, she bumping into your dad ... None of us knows the steps and there's no music playing. And it doesn't stop with us. The whole world is doing it all the time. Open a newspaper and what do you read? America has bumped into Russia, England is bumping into India, and rich man bumps into poor man. Those are big collisions. Hally, they make for a lot of bruises. People get hurt in all that bumping, and were sick and tired of it now. It's been going on for too long. Are we never going to get it right? Learn to dance life like champions instead of always being just a bunch of beginners at it.



Hally: You've got a vision, Sam (pp.36-37).

Athol Fugard uses dance as the potential tool in *Master Harold and the Boys* to demonstrate the power of dance in social reformation. He hides the fragility of a harsh South African political situation in the subtlety of his characters by liberating them. He displays his characters as victims of a social condition, of cultural segregation under the previous dispensation. The message of the play reaches its climax in a background-motivated argument between the characters. This feud reveals the actual nature of the separated South Africa of that time.

## 2.7. Summary

With the above example and acquired knowledge from opinions of dance teachers and literature, the value of nonverbal communication for intercultural and interracial understanding is evident. From the role that dance can play as a unifying tool, and the aims, format and processes of devising a dance theatre project, it is evident that dance holds the potential for intercultural education and promotion of interracial harmony. From what we have learnt about the practice of dance, it is obvious that the dances of different cultures hold within themselves certain meanings. The teachings of most traditional dances are still the same – they promote discipline, respect and the preservation of cultural heritage. The focus of social learning theories indicates that

learning needn't only take place with the help of verbal communication, but also through nonverbal communication. This theoretical viewpoint will serve as the basis to evaluate the process of the devised production, *Harambe*, and to validate the outcomes of the study, viz. to measure the effectiveness of dance as a tool to promote intercultural and interracial harmony.

The effort of the devised dance project could then be said to be a striving towards a culturally reconciling solution for a societal problem that involves all the participants. The effectiveness of the project will be measured from answers and opinions collected from the different participants in the project.

## Chapter three

### INTERVENTION AND REPORT

Devising the dance project *Harambe/Togetherness* (subtitle “*Seeking for fresh air*”)

#### 3.1. Introduction

In this chapter the research focuses on the process of devising and performing the dance project, *Harambe*, the processing of the outcomes of the interviews with students, and the opinion of the choreographer on the production by student dancers of University of the Free State. The presentation will provide a summary of the following aspects:

- a) Summary of the plot of the play;
- b) Action plan;
- c) Summary of the rehearsal process; and the
- d) Production showcase

The previous chapter on the literature review explained the process of devising theatre and its appropriateness to create a platform for intercultural exchange and experiences. The data collected will form part of the evidence obtained from the observation, and the

interviews will be analysed to indicate how the students reflected on the process of utilising dance to promote intercultural tolerance. The information obtained in this chapter, will measure the possibilities of dance as a tool to promote and communicate cultural reconciliation between the 'self' and the 'others'.

### **3.2. Background**

A group of University of the Free State students, White, Black and Coloured, and from different cultural and language groups in South Africa, were brought together with the aim to explore an idea of a multicultural devised dance production, and to create an awareness of the 'self' and the 'others' on the UFS main campus after the Reitz video scandal. On the very first day of the meeting, to discuss the aim and goal of the project and the production roll-out plan, there was a cultural interchange during discussions of how to approach the goal.

These students from different cultural and racial backgrounds were expected to work together as a team and teach one another about their cultural differences. The clash of cultures regarding the selection of cultural dances to draw on for the project and the ways to put them together was huge, but all participants enthusiastically bought into the concept of a multicultural and interracial dance project to promote reconciliation. At this

point it was still an idea lying ahead of the actualisation of the idea and the process of creating the dance. The first step was to develop and agree upon the plot of the dance.

### **3.3. The plot**

The plot of *Harambe* is the story of two first-year students from different races – Black and White to be precise. The two have to share a room at a university residence. The two come from totally different cultural backgrounds. There is initial mistrust of the ‘other’ as a result of racial and cultural divide from previous years. This is soon to be solved when they discover a shared aspiration. They both loved dancing and got to know each other through dancing.

The project used a script devised by the students and choreographer. The script displayed all the challenges like, mistrust, language barriers, the cultural differences of their dances, and the music they listen to. Virtually all factors that hampered the progress of tolerance for the ‘others’, this dance project decided on addressing the burning issue of racial integration within the University. The students were then later interviewed to share their experience.

#### **3.3.1. Action plan**

Seven Black, five White and two Coloured students would participate. Actors included Nelson Mafata, Angelo Mockie, Heinie de Jager, Daniel Wolmarans and Ntsieng Malete, and dancers, Imke Smith, Makara Makara, Marnel Bester, Nthabiseng Diphoko, Annerien Erasmus, Modiegi Choenemang, Jefferson J. Korkee, Khumoetsile Moraka, Juliana Geldenhuys and Yolanda Mzoyang.

### 3.3.2. Plan

Place	Group	Demographic & Language Divide
Scaena Theatre, University of the Free State, Bloemfontein	University students	
	Nelson Mafata, Angelo Mockie, Heinie de Jager, Daniel Wolmarans, Ntsieng Malete, Imke Smith, Makara Makara, Marnel Bester, Nthabiseng Diphoko, Annerien Erasmus, Modiegi Choenemang, Jefferson J Korkee, Khumoetsile Moraka, Juliana Geldenhuys, Yolanda Mzoyang.	<p><b>Blacks: 7</b> Sotho, Xhosa, Zulu and Tswana</p> <p><b>Whites: 6</b> Afrikaans and English</p> <p><b>Coloured: 2</b> Afrikaans and English</p>
		Total: 15 students

These students used to dance together after hours for fitness purposes. Experiencing the unrest of integration at the University, the students, the choreographer and the

researcher came up with an idea to devise a production that would promote awareness of intercultural conflicts. The choreographer, Angelo Mockie, was chosen because of his multilingualism; he speaks English and Afrikaans, and a bit of Sesotho. He was able to communicate with most of the cast members in their own language – exactly what the production needed, since the study identified language barriers as one of the challenges that students faced during the process of the production.

### **3.3.3. Intellectual background to the process for devising a dance project.**

The researcher first had to explain to the participants what the aims of the project were, as well as the methods and processes that would be followed. Oddey's theory was decided upon.

Oddey (1994:11) explains that in devised experimental theatre, where the body is the primary signification of the text, the gestural language (through the combination of narrative, text, and physical movement) is the performance vocabulary for the work. It is made up of visual images, movement, music, and use of objects or props in new ways. It is a different way of using a performance language, which, in turn, requires an analytical language that relates to the work's vision and frames of reference. The body and the use of physical, visual imagery are the focus of the performance. Thus, a form of language or vocabulary is needed to analyse work that integrates different kinds of

'text', albeit physical, visual, or verbal. Devised theatre also necessitates a new relationship between writing and the making of performance. The participants understood the concept fully.

### 3.3.4. Summary of rehearsal process

Rehearsals were scheduled for three weeks before the students were given an opportunity to showcase their product to an audience. The following rehearsal schedule was drawn up and handed to the cast.

~ January 2010 ~						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3	4 Meeting and handing out of schedules	5 Fitness exercises 08:00 – 09:00	6 Fitness exercises 08:00 – 09:00	7 Fitness exercises 08:00 – 09:00	8 Fitness exercises 08:00 – 09:00	9
10	11 African dance styles 08:00 – 09:00 & 16:00 – 18:00	12 African dance styles 08:00 – 09:00 & 16:00 – 18:00	13 African dance styles 08:00 – 09:00 & 16:00 – 18:00	14 Afrikaans and European dance styles 08:00 – 09:00 & 16:00 – 18:00	15 Afrikaans and European dance styles 08:00 – 09:00 & 16:00 – 18:00	16
17	18 Afrikaans and European dance styles 08:00 – 09:00 & 16:00 – 18:00	19 Mixing dances together, the first conflict arises. 08:00 – 09:00 & 16:00 – 18:00	20 Choreographer using Stanislavski exercises to calm the 08:00 – 09:00 & 16:00 – 18:00	21 Devised dance 08:00 – 09:00 & 16:00 – 18:00	22 Devised dance 08:00 – 09:00 & 16:00 – 18:00	23



## Teaching dance as a means of intercultural reconciliation

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~ January 2010 ~						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<b>24</b>	<b>25</b> Devised dance 08:00 – 09:00 & 16:00 – 18:00	<b>26</b> Devised dance 08:00 – 09:00 & 16:00 – 18:00	<b>27</b> Devised dance 08:00 – 09:00 & 16:00 – 18:00	<b>28</b> Devised dance 08:00 – 09:00 & 16:00 – 18:00	<b>29</b> Devised dance 08:00 – 09:00 & 16:00 – 18:00	<b>30</b>
<b>31</b>	<b>Notes:</b>					

<http://www.wincalendar.com/2010-Word-Calendar.htm/rehearsal/schedule>

The choreographer, Angelo Mockie, picked leaders from different cultural groups to teach their traditional dances to the others. Once again this sparked disorder in the rehearsal studio. This was owing to a cultural clash at a physical level. Each student from a particular environment was accustomed to a particular way of moving and dancing that reflected the ‘self’ in the particular and unique way of their own traditional dance styles. This problem had to be solved, as the students were converged for the sake of a calculated result of promoting intercultural respect and harmony. The quest to solve the problem continued daily.

One incident occurred when one of the Black students became frustrated with the language used by the White students. She told them that she did not understand Afrikaans. [She then asked if they] couldn’t rather speak English, the language that everyone understood. We discovered that the reason for the disorder was not a matter of not wanting to work together, but [the] lack of communication owing to [the] language barrier. But once they started dancing, all of that was put aside and they became one big family. If you get to know the ‘others’ you will be comfortable with them and vice versa,

and it is easy for someone to understand dance. Dances can be one of the vehicles that transport culture ... (Mockie 2010).

Exactly this was the aim of the exercise: to get people from different cultures together in one room with the intention to find understanding through the medium of dance. However, the researcher was also aware of the challenges embedded in this quest. To resolve conflict, student dancers first had to be united. Uniting them for cultural exchange was subtly facilitated by the exchange of knowledge about the 'other' by teaching one another their own dance moves. The different students were brought together and dance was to be the language they were going to use to direct their message of understanding and respect for the 'others'.

In order to assist in the process of the rehearsals that were full of tension and mistrust, the choreographer used physical tension exercises and relaxation exercises; yoga and the meditation methods of Stanislavski were applied. They had to understand that tension affects the ability to think and imagine. Physical tension exercises were used to observe the tensions in others, while carrying out simple tasks. This helped them to start noticing the tension in themselves.

Relaxation exercises were utilised to improve the imagination:

This is why we do relaxation [exercises]; it helps us, as actors, move from thinking about what the audience thinks of us, to imagining what our character is thinking and doing. It helps the actor move from a passive imagination to a more active imagination (O'Brien 2011:62)

According to O'Brien (*ibid*) yoga and meditation help students to relax, refresh and observe their minds and bodies to create a state of calm before starting their work. After the exercises, the group started to analyse each other's way of moving. Each leader had to explain every move in their individual group step by step. Once the students understood what the moves symbolised, and their meaning in that cultural dance, they could experience the moves and learn them. After they had taught one another the dance steps, the choreographer combined the different dances to create a new dance. They then rehearsed it by memorising the moves and finally finding a motivation for each physical move – all this combined with understanding the purpose and aim of the dance.

They learnt from one another by combining their physical actions from their different cultural dances. The choreographer asked the dancers to stop talking and dance in silence. The agreement was to let the dance do the talking. Finally, co-operation, harmony, understanding and knowing the dance of the 'others' prevailed.

### **3.3.5. The production showcase**

Rehearsals started on 4<sup>th</sup> of January 2010 at the Scaena Theatre Movement room. At the end of the formal three and a half week rehearsal schedule, the decision to perform the dance publically came as student initiative. They were seeking a way to resolve the separation and racial challenges they were facing on campus. Motivated by the 2008 Reitz sage, the students chose to perform the production of *Harambe* publicly as a tool to encourage better interracial relations to all on campus and for the public. This created a platform for the broader student community for interaction at a social and an intellectual level.

The performances took place at the University of the Free State Scaena Theatre in Bloemfontein, from 1 – 6 February 2010. The poster was designed by Douglas Merriman, lighting was designed and operated by Niel Tait, and recorded and operated by Nicola Oosthuizen. Posters were placed around campus, targeting students from different cultural backgrounds. The student dancers did further marketing for the show by word of mouth and flyers.

All the students involved in the production invited their loved ones and friends to come and see the production. Bearing the cultural variety of our student dancers and actors in mind, audiences of different cultural backgrounds attended the production. On opening night (1 February 2010) the theatre was filled with people from different cultural and

language backgrounds, from different levels of society, including the media, dancers' parents and a number of University staff members.

The enthusiastic reaction of the press below echoed the reaction of public. A crowd of multicultural South Africans gathered for the same reason as the dancers participating in the project, viz. to improve interracial respect and to understand the culture of the 'others'. Those students, who have learnt just this, were now going to teach and demonstrate interracial respect and understanding to those who had not learnt it yet – the multicultural audience.



HENNIE DE JAGER (left) and Angelo Mockie do the Two Step.



THE enormously talented cast of *Harambe*.

Photos: Andy Galloway

# Come together in dance

► Andy Galloway

**TWO** men – one black and one white – share a room in a residence at the University of the Free State (UFS).

They are separated by racial aggression, culture, status, position and religion.

For a while the divide between them is too deep and wide to conquer. Then they join hands and dance the “langarm” (long arm Two Step).

Then their friends – from diverse races – join in and dance along.

So that’s how things are now at the UFS? The same UFS that not so long ago had the Reitz saga? The bones of contention? The seething racial boiling pot?

Well, yes. And no. And perhaps.

YES – because visionaries Angelo Mockie and Godfrey Manenye and an

## Listen to the song inside

enormously talented cast have shown what is possible in the recent *Harambe* (Swahili for “togetherness”), presented by the Department of Drama and Theatre Arts at the UFS.

*Harambe* ran from 1 to 6 February at the Scaena Theatre and included students from different faculties within the UFS coming together in dance.

“We live in a world that is constantly divided by every trick and scheme of the enemy.

“We can only overcome this distraction by listening to the song within us and the movement of our soul dancing like a breath of fresh air,” says Mockie, who portrays the part of a first-year student

sharing a room with a student from a different race.

Altogether 15 talented dancers and actors made *Harambe* sizzle. It’s not theatrical perfection, but the enormous message it conveys overshadows any shortcomings.

NO – because while the audience attending *Harambe* was diverse and appreciative, each race was still sticking to its own when it came to seating arrangements. No, because racial tension is still a brutal – albeit now more subtle – reality at the UFS, say some of the students interviewed before the production.

Perhaps – because most of the students

interviewed say that racial tension is no longer a concern on the campus.

“I’ve been here two weeks and even though there are still divisions, there is no problem,” says Lola, a first-year drama student.

“In our experience there is no racial tension here,” say Jan, Wiun and Jeanette, third-year medical students.

“I have not seen a problem. Most of the white people go to the Afrikaans classes. When I walked into my class I thought, ooh, no white people, and then I remembered they were in the Afrikaans class,” says Daphne, a first-year Economics student.

“It’s a new year. Everyone is trying to forget and focus on moving forward. That’s what our rector has been talking about,” says Godfrey, a lecturer.

[andy@weeklies24.com](mailto:andy@weeklies24.com)

The participating students had to face many challenges in the making of this production. With every challenge met, tolerance was premised among the students. The aims were, *inter alia*, to incite togetherness within the institution, and, above all, to have fun despite racial groupings and political ideologies and other factors relating to segregation of the 'others'. The play, like the study, was brought to life because of the burning issue of integration within the University.

Based on the interviews with dancers, it is evident that one cannot separate dance from human nature and its environment, its culture and moral values.

Dance can teach; it has a culture and social element that is rich in representation of who we are as different South Africans. Its means of communication and cultural lessons can be conducted through the use of the means [of dance] (Mockie 2010).



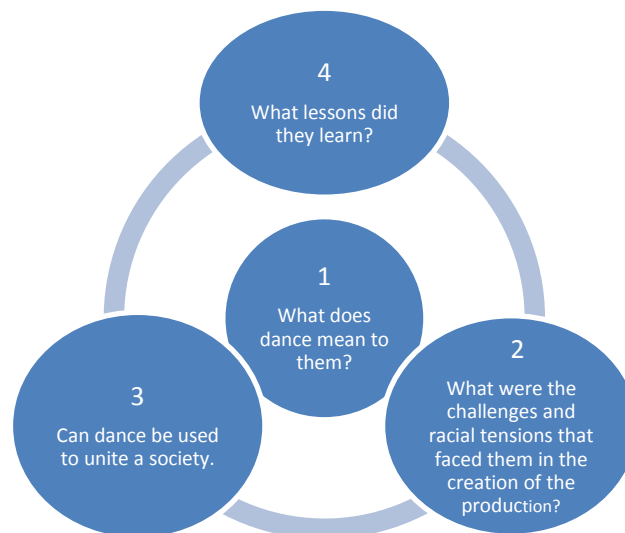
## Chapter four

### PARTICIPANTS' FEEDBACK

#### 4.1. Introduction

In order to investigate the effectiveness of teaching dance as a means of intercultural reconciliation, this chapter analyses the feedback on interviews conducted between the researcher, the fifteen student dancers and the choreographer. They were asked what their perceptions of dance were, whether they viewed traditional dance as a means of transmission of culture, if there was any interracial and intercultural tension among themselves at in the beginning of the project, and if they thought that dance could be a tool to overcome interracial and intercultural tension so as to work towards uniting a society. They also commented on the challenges that they faced and the lessons they learnt during rehearsals and the production. Fig. 1 below demonstrates the questions.

Fig. 1





## 4.2. Background

The groups were separated again at the end of the production to reflect, with their selected group leaders, on the outcomes of the production by means of a questionnaire. The student representatives were from different cultural, racial and gender groups. The choreographer also reflected on the outcomes. The rest of the responses from the other participants will be summarised around the specific questions.

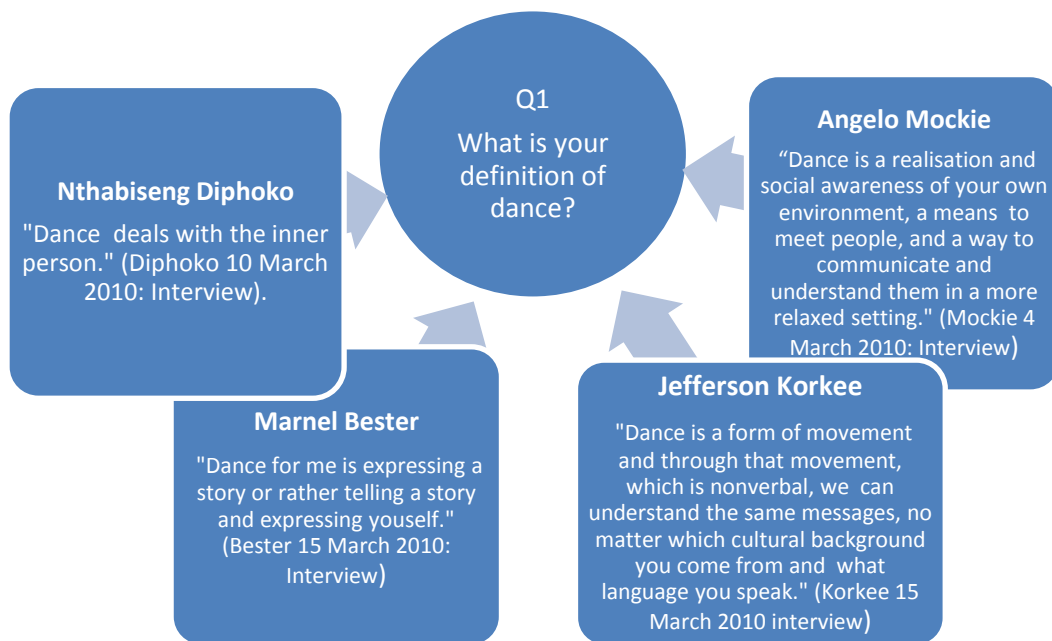
First of all the responses of the choreographer and then responses from four representatives from the different cultural groups are discussed.

All interviews were filmed on DVD and are attached as Addendum B. The first interview is with Angelo Mockie, choreographer of the production. He holds a B.A. Hons (Drama and Theatre Arts) at the UFS and is a playwright, choreographer, musician, producer and director. He is thirty-five years old, of Coloured decent, and speaks Afrikaans and English. The student dancers interviewed, included Marnel Bester, an English-speaking second-year student at the University of the Free State. She has been dancing since the age of 10, doing tap, hip hop, freestyle and modern dancing. She is a White Afrikaans-speaking girl. Jefferson Korkee, an Afrikaans-speaking Coloured fourth-year Honours student in Drama and Theatre Arts at the University of the Free State,

representing the Coloured male group and Nthabiseng Diphoko, a Sotho-speaking second-year Drama student representing the Black female group.

Following are a few highlights of comments from the interviewees.

**Fig. 2: What is your definition of dance?**

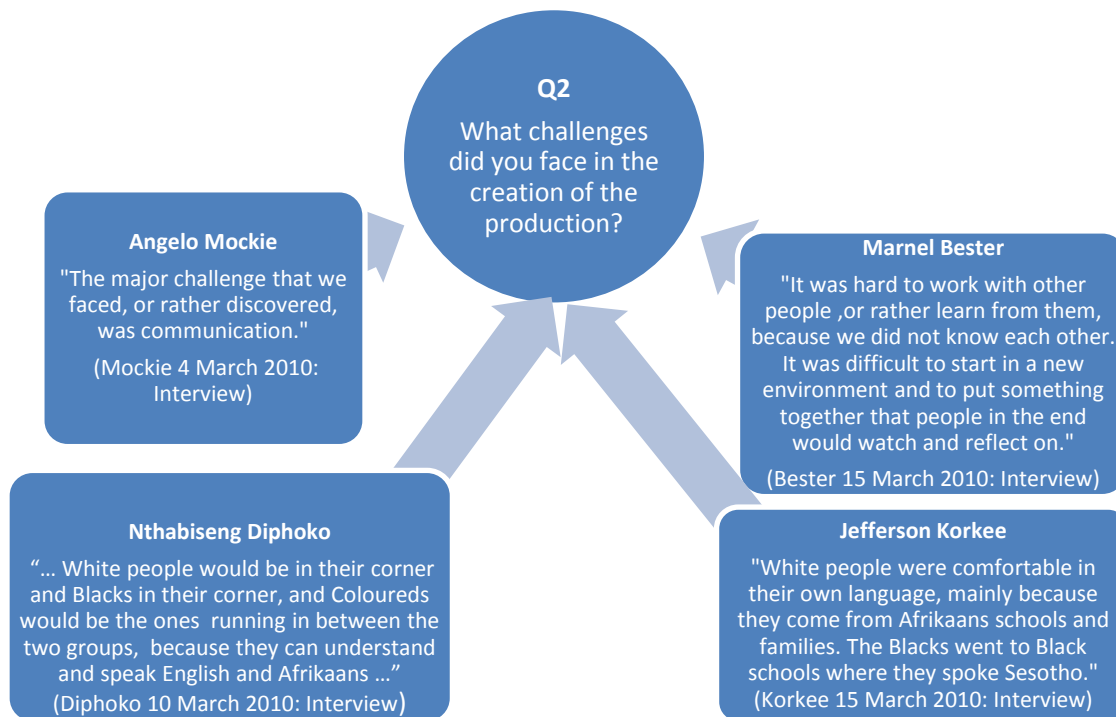


**4.2.1 Comment Q1:** The responses from the students from different cultural groups varied. They also differed from that of the choreographer, in that they used words like, 'expressing', 'dealing', 'realisation' and 'awareness', but most answers reflected similarities. They agreed that dance, as nonverbal communication, express stories of different people and make them aware of their environment, irrespective of the cultural

background they come from. They can understand the intercultural nonverbal communication expressed via dance. In their reactions to the question whether dance can be used to advocate intercultural understanding, the general response was that dance reflects who you are, makes you aware of your environment, and makes you understand the 'self' and the 'other'. This was in line with what the research project aimed at.

On Q2 below individual responses were as follows.

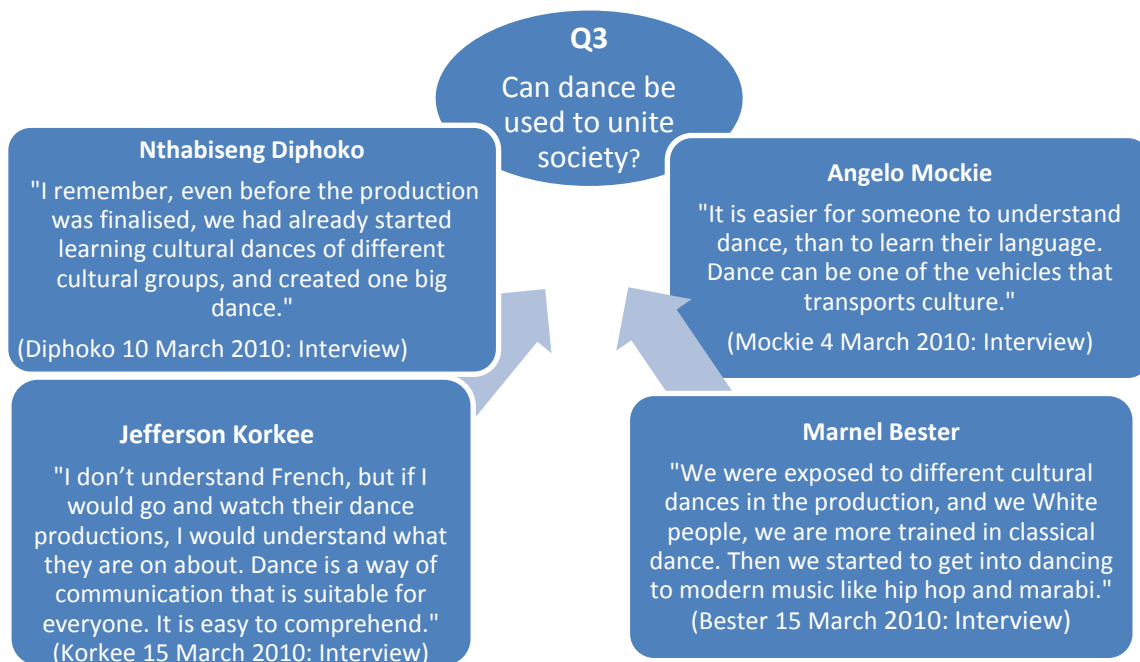
**Fig. 3: What challenges did you face in the creation of the production?**



**4.2.2. Comment Q 2:** Because of cultural diversity within the cast, challenges were expected from the initial phase of planning the devised dance production. The responses of the students to this question indicated mainly the cultural conflict stemming from the language barrier. They identified language – as verbal communication – as a problem. They felt comfortable in their own language group. They acknowledged that, once they stopped arguing and started dancing, they all became one big family. Dance, as nonverbal communication, proved to be a more effective tool to bring about harmony and bringing a family spirit to the cast.

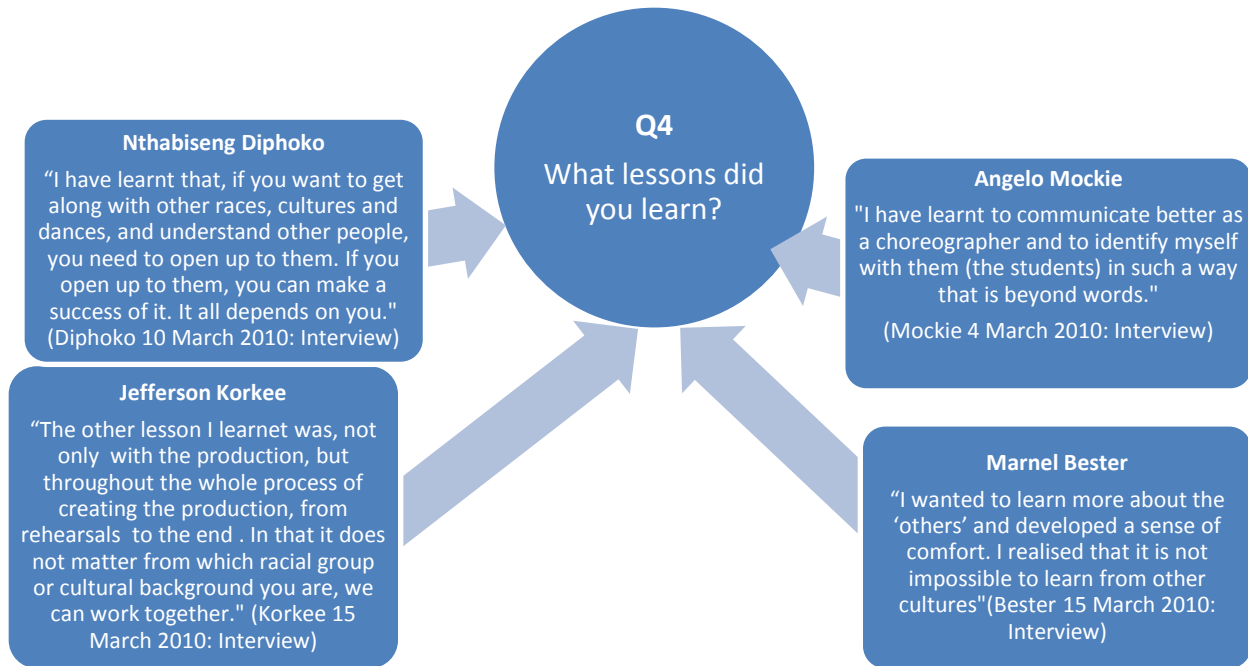
On this question all responses were positive.

**Fig. 4: Can dance be used to unite society?**



**4.2.3. Comment Q3:** In response to the question whether dance can be used as a means to unite society, they all agreed. A society is commonly known as a group of people who live together and share the same customs, traditions and value system. Originally we started working with three different dance styles. The experiences of all three groups Black, White and Coloured, exemplify the new unity that came about while dancing together. People from different cultural backgrounds got the opportunity to interact and set aside their differences by learning the same dance routine. Everyone related with each other at a new level through sharing strategies and experiences. The White dancers could assist with the dances they inherently knew, and the Black dancers could do the same by sharing and teaching their dances to the White participants. Dance ultimately created a unique form of communication where people could express themselves in a unified dance, where everyone's movements were synchronised in harmony in a new, combined style. The responses made it clear that the intervention generally was a success as far as interracial and intercultural cohesion were concerned.

**Fig. 5: What lesson's where learned?**



**4.2.4. Comment Q4:** The lessons learnt from this experience, were those of getting into the unknown and finding a common ground where both parties could be comfortable. This was shown in the realisation that it was not impossible to learn from people outside your own cultural sphere. Willingness to learn individual responsibility and ownership of another culture were highlighted as a matter of importance for achieving success.

Participants' responses indicated that they were eager to learn from and understand the various cultures of people from backgrounds other than their own. Dancing together was a process where an individual had to step out of his or her comfort zone and to experience a new environment where everyone worked together in the same frame of mind.

Participants' responses indicated that cultural or racial differences did not restrict them from working together, as everyone worked together as a team to achieve the same goal. If one gets to know the 'others', one becomes comfortable with the 'others' and vice versa. Participants found it increasingly easy to understand and enjoy dancing with different cultural groups. Learn different dances seem to be one of the vehicles that transfer different cultures.

If you get to know the 'others' you will be comfortable around them, and it is easy for someone to understand dance. I took an initiative to learn some of the cultural dances of the other cultural groups within the group. The students saw me doing them freely, with an open mind, and with the aim to learn and understand where they originate from and on what day or occasion they dance them. It helped them to take [this] from me and apply it themselves. This attitude really boosted their confidence. Dances can be one of the vehicles that transport culture (Mockie 2010).

Jefferson J. Dirks-Korkee articulated his answer to the question if dance could serve as a tool for the transfer of culture as follows:

Yes, I learnt as much as I wanted to and, yes, dance does transfer culture. Even though I am not a dancer, I learnt a few things, especially when we did the marabi dance. We discussed the many moves we did. That helped me in understanding why certain moves were done and it gave us insight into life in the township. So, I think yes, dance is a carrier of culture, because all those dances came from different and diverse races and cultures where they took their own form (Korkee 2010).

As expected his notion of dance as the carrier of culture was supported by many other responses from other participants. Marnel Bester's response runs in symmetry with Jefferson's response.

Dance is nonverbal communication. Whether being happy, sad or any other emotion, you get to experience it in dance. I got to learn not to underestimate other people and put them in boxes. Also to look at them as people and not just as colour, and not only as they are good at that and not at this, but as one [unique individual]. And dance was the communication [tool] that we needed, a language that unified us. Dance [as an art form] eventually was the winner at the end of the production, having placed all those different cultural dance styles in one [production] and [we] danced together as a [unified] group. It brought us closer to knowing each other better. Dance is the transferor of culture and the answer to our cultural intolerance (Bester 2010).

In general, it seemed that with every challenge overcome, tolerance was premised among the students. One of the aims was to incite a feeling of togetherness within the participating group, which could serve as an example to other students and members of the Institution. Above all, we wanted to have fun regardless of our racial groupings, political ideologies and other factors relating to segregation from the 'others'. The dance performance supported the aim of the study, viz. interracial and intercultural integration within the University. Bester's comment sums up the success of the dance project: "We were fortunate enough to get an awesome and wonderful cast that could come together and create that great production and at the end we were one big family" (Bester 2010).



Based on the interviews, it is evident that you can't separate dance from human nature and a specific environment that carries cultural and moral values. Dance can teach one about the 'others', as it carries rich cultural and social elements that represent who we are as different South African cultural groups. Dance serves as an effective means of communication, and intercultural lessons can be learnt through the use of this medium. In the next section the responses of dance teachers, who were not directly involved in the intervention with the students, will be discussed.

#### **4.3. Interviews with dance choreographers and teachers**

I had the privilege of interviewing some of the leading choreographers and dance teachers in South Africa to further my investigation and conversation on teaching dance as an artistic means to promote intercultural and interracial tolerance. Interviews with, Gregory Maqoma, Elize Cogle and Reginald Danster, coming from different cultural backgrounds, reflect their views from their various perspectives.

##### **4.3.1 Gregory Maqoma**



Interview with Gregory Maqoma (24 May 2010)

Gregory Maqoma, a contemporary African dance maker, was born and bred in Johannesburg. He started his training in 1990 at Moving into Dance, Johannesburg. In 1999, while he was training at Performing Arts Research and Training School (PARTS) in Belgium, he formed his own dance company, Vuyani Dance Theatre, in Johannesburg. As a choreographer, teacher, dancer, artistic consultant and creative director, he has taught and presented work in the Netherlands, United Kingdom, Sweden, Switzerland, Mexico, Finland, Burkina Faso, Austria, Nigeria, France, Senegal, Norway, Belgium, Germany, the USA and in South Africa. He has won several awards, accolades and nominations in South Africa and internationally. This includes the FNB Dance Umbrella Choreographer of The Year, Standard Bank Young Artist for The Year and Gauteng MEC Award for Choreography. He has been a Rolex Mentor and Protégé Award finalist as well as a Daimler Chrysler Choreography Award finalist.<sup>6</sup> Maqoma also

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<sup>6</sup> He won the FNB Vita Choreographer of the Year in 1999 and 2002 for *Rhythm 1.2.3* and *Southern Comfort* respectively. He got the Standard Bank Young Artist award in 2002. Maqoma was finalist in the Daimler Chrysler Choreography Award in 2002 and in the Rolex Mentorship Programme in 2003. Over the years, Maqoma has been booked for residency directorships at some institutions outside South Africa and created his second trilogy based on beauty. In 2006 and 2007 Maqoma won the Gauteng MEC Award for his work *Beautiful US* and *Beautiful Me* respectively.

serves as Associate Artistic Director for Moving into Dance and as Artistic Director of the Afrovibes Festival in the Netherlands.

In the interview with the researcher, Maqoma responded positively to the question whether dance can unite a society:

Dance can shape the world. Dance can [unite] because it has no politics or that Black and White thing, dance is pure movement that really speaks to emotions and if you touch the emotions of somebody, then you move them in one way or the other. That's the power of dance – you speak true emotions to the other person and their emotions [speak to you]. Creating a reaction to their emotions helps our consciousness to be alive, in order for us to be conscious of our own actions and to be conscious of the actions of the others (Maqoma 2010).

As choreographer he defines dance as an important form of nonverbal communication. Through the art form a dancer is able to explore his interest in cultural differences and become more informed with what is unfamiliar to him. He therefore can create more meaningful dance interpretations after understanding where certain dances and moves originate from. When asked about the possibility of dance uniting a society, he reflected on politics, truth and power. He refrained from coupling dance to political issues of race, gender and colour. He rather highlighted the power of dance as pure movement that speaks to emotions of 'self' and the 'others', that reflects the true emotions that connect us as humans. The idea of the "power" of dance furthers the aim of the study, viz. to

come closer to utilising dance as a means to improve intercultural understanding and harmony.

Referring to the Reitz Residence incident in late February 2008, with the University of the Free State faced controversy when a video against racial integration saw the light, Maqoma admitted that certain challenges lay ahead, as verbal communication alone seemingly failed to stem the racial intolerance. He stressed the universal power of nonverbal communication in dance as unique.

The fight in dance is how to make your 'self' a better person; we fight responsibly. If you look at the situation that happened at the University of the Free State [after the release of the video], it is purely a verbal fight. We as South Africans are intolerant of something we don't know. We created fear within ourselves because of the lack of [Intercultural and interracial] understanding (Maqoma 2010).

Maqoma advocates that dance can overcome this cultural intolerance stemming from a lack of understanding and knowing the 'others'. He identified dance as a responsible tool to teach the 'self' about the 'others'. When asked about whether dance can be seen as a carrier of culture, Maqoma supported the idea:

I deal a lot with human races in my productions, and I look a lot into humanity. Where do we originate from? You always need to find ways in which you may think about who we were before as humans. Where do we originate from? It has always been part of my take on my work. I also relate it to where we are now [by] using the past that is unknown, in

trying to understand the now and the atrocities that humans are capable of doing to ourselves and to humanity (Maqoma 2010).

Maqoma reflected on dance as a carrier of culture from a humanistic viewpoint.

The origin of culture plays an important part in bringing across the message. Part of the task of the choreographer is to understand human behaviour, by making historical information relevant and applicable to the current situation. When I teach, I don't go in and say I am going to present this culture because my culture is so broad [meaning complicated and rich in variety]. I cannot bring it down to one single item. That is why I call my work a cocktail, because it is really a cocktail of generous, aesthetic forms and traditions of histories packed into one package and when I teach, I teach that cocktail. I teach those different forms. I cannot separate one from the other; it's a mixture of all. My body has responded to that and it is unleashing all of that training and all the experiences; I cannot define it in one single term and say this is what it is (Maqoma 2010).

From his last comments it is clear that a new dance experience can be created from exposure to a 'cocktail' of dances. This is exactly what the intervention strives to attain.

### 4.3.2 Interview with Elize Cogle



Interview with Elize Cogle (15 October 2010).

Professional dance teacher, Elize Cogle, is from Bloemfontein. Her qualifications include an IDTA (International Dance Teachers Association): Tap Associate in 1995 and an SADTA (South African Dance Teachers Association) Stage Branch. Cogle has been a member of the Modern Dance Association from 1995 and the Hip Hop Dance Association from 1994. She has been a Ballroom Branch Freestyle Associate member since 1995 and a member of the AFSA (Acrobatic Federation of South Africa) Advanced Teachers since 1995. She joined SADTA: Stage Branch as an Advanced Teacher with Modern full membership in 1997, and obtained a licentiate in Freestyle in 2001. In the Ballroom Branch she has been a student teacher in Latin since 2004, after completing Freestyle in 2009. She also qualified as an Aerobics Instructor in 1988. In 1994 and 1995 she taught Dance at the Department of Drama and Theatre Arts at the UFS to first and second-year students. She is Chairperson of SADTA Free State Branch and dance performance moderator for the Department of Education in the Free State. Cogle (2010) responded as follows on the question if dancing could be seen as a carrier of culture:

Absolutely! It's a carrier of culture and communication; it's an expression [of culture]. When people dance, they come alive. When presenting a class, one must create curiosity for learners. They must learn to ask questions about historical backgrounds of other people, and of themselves and their surroundings. That is why dance remains a most important study [field], because that is where people learn to build bridges, and they learn to look differently at the world (Cogle 2010).

It is clear that Cogle (2010) supports Maqoma's (2010) beliefs that dance is not only a carrier of culture, but also an important vehicle of nonverbal communication. Her opinion that dance is an expression of the 'self' and that it stimulates curiosity amongst learners to learn about themselves and other people, underpins the importance of dance studies and the value of being exposed to and practicing intercultural dance by all dancers. It can broaden their world views in a changing world. Supporting the statement of Maqoma, Elize Cogle identifies misconceptions among the 'self' and the 'others' as a problem.

You have a situation where parents are sceptical, especially when a Black person is the one teaching, but once they start dancing, they all start enjoying dance for what it is. Even the sceptical parents [of my students] started joining the classes. Challenges that are facing dance are misconceptions and political ideas. Our upbringing plays a major role in this misunderstanding. We can't ignore each other if we are confronted with the situation where we have to work together (Cogle 2010).

However, when I asked if she sees the traditional African dance as a demonstration of a welcome greeting by the dancers from that particular group, she responded as follows:

We do it [the dance] as another way to introduce people to our culture, but I have a problem that I sometimes wonder if it is about the Whites understanding the Blacks' [dance traditions and culture]. Because if I look at the curriculum, it looks like it is about [only] the Whites [efforts in] understanding the Blacks. That is where my worry is (Cogle 2010).

Cogle seems concerned that very little attention is given in the dance curriculum to the history and origin of traditional Western dances. The other problem is the issue of the dying out of traditional African dances due to Western influences.

My other worry is even the Black people are losing their culture, so it is very good to show the world our [Black] culture, but maybe we need to show them everything [all the diverse cultures] in our country. Having visited overseas [countries] constantly (sic), you look at their descriptions of South Africa [and] it is mainly [about] Black [cultural dances]. Yet our country is a diverse nation. On another trip, we went as a multicultural group, but all the attention was given to Black dances. I think we should just find the balance in welcoming the other nations to us as a rainbow nation [as well] (Cogle 2010).

Cogle's (2010) experiences abroad, where the country is only reflected with an interest in Black cultural dances and where people are not aware of the diverse South African dance cultures, proved that foreigners do not have a true impression of the dance



traditions of all in South Africa. She voices her concerns about the misrepresentation in foreign countries and of foreign visitors to South Africa about the traditions of all South African cultural groups as follows:

Dance can be seen in two forms. One [traditional dance form] can be seen as a cultural product where it can sell the country, but [it] can also give the wrong impression of what the country is about and what [South African] dance is, and the state of [dance and the variety of dance styles practiced] in South Africa. One always needs to try and find a balance and [the] reasons why we are displaying that kind of [traditional style of African] dance (Cogle 2010).

It is clear that, although there is space for the traditional African dance styles practiced in the country and that they are strongly supported and utilised to attract tourists to the country, there is a neglect of introducing the full variety of dance styles for the same purpose. Both Cogle and Maqoma seem to agree that dance practice should also include new forms of dance in our multicultural society. In the next section their opinions will be compared to those of Reginald Danster.

#### **4.3.3 Interview with Reginald Danster**



Interview with Reginald Danster (12 June 2009)

The well-known dance choreographer, Reginald Danster, was born in Johannesburg and was later based in Bloemfontein, 2005 – 2010, as the dance co-ordinator at the Performing Arts Centre of the Free State (PACOFs). According to his curriculum vitae and my interview with him in 2009, he was awarded the Rio Tinto Scholarship for a full year study at the London School of Contemporary Dance from 1999 to 2001. He collaborated and performed with Sylvana Gironi and the Ritmo Spanish Dance Company, and with Jayespri Moopen's classical Indian Tribhangi Dance Theatre from 1998 to 1999. As a member of Soweto Community Dance Project, Danster was fortunate to have had a period of training in 1994 with the legendary Germaine Acogny. She studied classical ballet and contemporary dance before going back to her native Senegal to study African dance. With this background, Germaine Acogny formulated her own technique of contemporary African dance in which Danster participated. In the same year, with funding from the National Arts Council and the Dance Factory, Danster was commissioned to teach Germaine Acogny's dance technique to the Meadowlands

youth group of dancers and to create a production. This work was first performed as part of the New Moves Initiative of the FNB Vita Dance Umbrella. Reginald Danster is now a freelance choreographer and dancer working in Mafikeng on a dance project which will be showcased at the Grahamstown Arts Festival in 2014.

As to Maqona and Cogle, the same question was put to Danster regarding the possibility and value of teaching dance as a means of intercultural reconciliation. He also stressed the fact that he has been influenced by various dance styles, and that cross-cultural assimilation of dance traditions and dance styles forms part of his latest work.

Having worked with different people from different cultural backgrounds, what I have experienced as a dancer is that, when we get into the space, we exchange our physical expressions and create beyond our thinking of class, race and perception. Dance [preferences] can be compared to music. When you go to a jazz show, you will find predominantly Black people [in the audience]. When you go to a classical [music] show, you come across predominantly White people [in the audience] (Danster 2010).

Danster then makes one important observation regarding dance as a unique genre that crosses the traditional cultural and racial barriers so typical of our divided South African society.

... But with dance, when you go to a dance show, you get people of all races. It shows that it [communicates] beyond words, beyond race and other things that limit people to

interact. It is a unique genre. Dance is the soul, and it is very hard to discriminate [against] a dancer, because he deals with inner expression (*ibid*).

According to Danster's experiences in different countries, he believes that dance does not create a platform for people or dancers to discriminate against each other on the basis of race or other differences. On the contrary, universal expressions of emotion are depicted through movement – a universal visual form of communication that is understood by all.

He then agrees with Maqoma (2010) and Cogle (2010) that dance can unite a society and can play a major role as a tool that can bring about intercultural and interracial understanding and reconciliation in South Africa. He talks about his experiences shortly before and after the downfall of apartheid during the early 1990s.

It can [bring about reconciliation]. In fact, it is proven. When I started dancing, we were the second generation to cross over to an intercultural dance space. We would be separated in two groups as young Black men and young White girls dancing together in one space. Our work gained lots of interest from many people, particularly our politicians, seeing us dance together, tour together, eat together, sleep together, and sharing the same space through dance. It was then when music and other forms of the arts started working together. Dance has the capacity to break barriers. Dance played an important role in liberating and uniting our society before and after the abolishment of apartheid (Danster 2010).

Now, many years later, the deeply imbedded social divide as far as race and culture are concerned, has not totally disappeared in South Africa. This researcher supports Danster's belief that dance can further unite our society, even after so many years of striving towards racial harmony.

This has been proven by Danster's successes during the years of racial segregation created by apartheid. Danster's groups from the apartheid era, as well as the post-apartheid generation, had the opportunity to explore the world of the 'others' without barriers of colour, race and cultural grouping while dancing and working together. They were showing the world the possibilities of uniting a diverse society through dance. The problem of the cultural divide that was brought about by the distancing of cultural groups on a race basis, emanated from the apartheid system.

This problem has only been partly overcome in South Africa within the new political dispensation after the first democratic elections in 1994. If Danster's past successes with his small dance group are taken into consideration, it is quite astounding what the value of dance could now be in a broader South African and within an international context as far as improving human relationships is concerned.

#### 4.4 Chapter conclusion.

In this chapter, feedback from the student dancers, the choreographer of their production (Angelo Mockie) and the external dance practitioners (Maqoma, Cogle and Danster) all seemed to agree that original mistrust and misunderstanding of the 'others' can be ascribed to the racial and cultural divide that was brought about by the long history of the segregation policies from the early 1900s and the apartheid policy from 1948 to 1996. It is also clear that this divide has not been overcome as successfully as one would wish since democracy after 1996. The language barrier in particular seems to be the most important factor contributing to this dilemma.

According to the feedback, nonverbal communication in the form of an interracial and intercultural dance project created an opportunity for learning about the 'cultural backgrounds and dance traditions of the 'others'. This nonverbal communication form of demonstrating and talking about the origins and meaning of the separate traditional dances contributed to the process. Learning the dances of the 'others' contributed to the exploration of a new dance centred on an agreed theme and storyline by the group. A new rich 'story' could be told easily.

All participants agreed that working together towards one goal during the rehearsal process, removed interracial and intercultural prejudice. Dance, as nonverbal

communication seems to be a very effective tool to start working towards mutual understanding, respect and reconciliation.

Finally, the feedback from all the participants and my own observations during the process – is best summed up in the words of Dunster (2009): “It [dance] shows that it is [communicates] beyond words, beyond race and other things that limit people to interact.” The overall response was that they did not only succeed to create a successful multicultural artistic production that displayed a new dance style that combined traditional styles, but that they also enjoyed working together on a project that brought them together as human beings, irrespective of their cultural or racial backgrounds.

## Chapter Five

### CONCLUSION

#### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter will provide the summary and findings of the study on the hypothesis that dance could be an effective tool in working towards interracial and intercultural reconciliation. The study aimed at looking into the value of dance as another tool for reaching understanding of the 'self' and the 'others' without the demarcation of different cultural backgrounds of participants.

#### 5.2 Aims and objectives

In short, the research aimed at realising the objectives of the study by undertaking a literary review to identify if dance as nonverbal communication can promote interracial and multicultural tolerance. A practical intervention to support the objectives of the study took the form of an interracial and intercultural dance project with fifteen students as participants under the guidance of a choreographer. Participants were selected from different races, cultures and genders. The researcher acted as observer and kept a journal of the whole process. The pre- and post-questionnaires and filmed interviews with student dancers, the choreographer and external dance practitioners, supported the findings of the study.



The study assessed the extent of participants' racial and cultural prejudice of before and after the intervention, and the extent to which their dances reflected their traditional cultures, as well as the extent to which participants would work together in the process of creating a new dance programme and a production of a new production, called *Harambe*. The study then reflected on the findings of the role of dance as a medium of communication and as a tool that could possibly devise interracial and intercultural tolerance.

### **5.3 Structure and research methods**

The study followed three chronological phases, viz. the literature review, the rehearsal and production process of the devised dance programme, and the conducting and filming of interviews. The study applied both the quantitative and qualitative research methods in the Process as Research project (PAR) (Candy 2016). After the introduction Chapter 2 focused on the general literature review of different theories and the role of dance as a tool to advocate cultural understanding was argued. This informed the next step of the research process.

Chapter 3 involved the application of the qualitative research method in the Practice As Research (PAR) phase. After the practical intervention, in the form of the dance project and with the accompanying discussions with the participants, the choreographer and leading local and national dance practitioners, the interviews were conducted with open-end questions and the data recorded on DVD for analyses. The responses were captured and discussed in Chapter 4.

#### **5.4. Findings and Report**

The aim of the research was to put to test some of the theoretical claims concerning the use of dance as a tool for intercultural tolerance, as identified in the literature review. The study focused on nonverbal communication, and dance and its potential to unite cultures. The literary data studied, supported the study's hypothesis that the nonverbal communication method of dance as a tool for gaining intercultural tolerance is a potentially better and alternative medium of communication than verbal communication.

Although responses during interviews with students and dance leaders/choreographers varied slightly as per interview, there was a sense of similarity and overall agreement in most of the interviews on the value and effectiveness of dance as a means of promoting interracial and intercultural reconciliation. The external dance practitioners shared the

same sentiments on the power of dance as a teaching tool that can bring about intercultural understanding.

The feedback in the study indicated that a sense of harmony was generated in the process, because all participants felt like they were part of a solution to a problem. In this case, devising and practicing multicultural dances seem to be a possible way of solving interracial and intercultural mistrust and tensions in order to bring about reconciliation.

The reader is reminded of Athol Fugard's example when he relates the story of dance as a possible solution to cultural collisions. He claims that, taking Sam as an example in *Master Harold and the Boys*, that those differences which are embedded in the nature of our different backgrounds can be brought to reconciliation through the art of dance.

### **5.5 Recommendation and final conclusion**

The research reflects that there is a need for intercultural activities – such as dance – for cultural exchange. The information collected, suggests that people learn effortlessly about the 'self' and the 'others' through nonverbal communication. The outcomes of this study propose that dance can be an effective medium of creating understanding and

tolerance between different cultural groups, and the 'others' and the 'self' on the UFS campus and elsewhere.

The focus on dance as an effective tool of change as part of the nonverbal communication system, was not meant to challenge the effectiveness of other forms of communication, such as verbal communication, but rather to indicate its power and effectiveness as an alternative tool to fill the gaps in finding a solution to cultural intolerance in the multicultural South African context.

The results of the study did, in fact, come to the conclusion that dance can communicate and transfer certain aspects of culture, promote intercultural understanding and respect, and bring about reconciliation between the 'self' and the 'others'. The intervention can serve as good example of promoting understanding, awareness and intercultural tolerance. Dance cannot, however, claim to be the only method to bring about change, intercultural tolerance and reconciliation.

When considering the effectiveness and value of other forms of communication to bring about the changes mentioned above, one should bear in mind that there is a notion in African culture that if you speak my language, you are moving closer to knowing me. Ngungi's (1986:4) argument on the value of language as verbal communication must be

seen as valid: “Language has the duality of being a means of communication and a carrier of culture.” Although he is correct in his assumption, the question still remains: How do I access that if I do not understand and speak your language?

If the African notion on the power of language and Ngungi’s argument above are to be taken seriously, it is imperative to tackle the disabling of the time-consuming and complicated barrier of different languages as part of the verbal communication system as soon as possible. The idea of incorporating more African languages in the school curriculum seems to be a good starting point. But overall there are more values that bind us together than there are dividing us, and all effort should be taken to re-discover those values.

Luwes (2010) supports the idea that the work to promote interracial and intercultural understanding and tolerance is never complete and that it should be an ongoing effort by all. According to Luwes, the need to find a unifying ‘language’ for reconciling a nation consisting of different cultural and racial groups transcends the verbal and nonverbal communication systems.

The need would be to identify the unifying ‘language’, thoughts, actions, beliefs and ways of living and dealing with matters of importance that are based on unifying symbols and shared symbolic meanings. We all share the same thoughts on various matters such as respect for the elderly and fellow citizens,

resistance to crime, etc. Acknowledging this is less problematic for all than the language issue. Identifying shared actions, like taking care of our families and nature, work ethics, moral principles, values and codes, beliefs, etc. is also not really problematic. If we, as representatives of all cultures, can start to agree on things like these, and live according to a new and fresh general South African culture that respects the unique 'imbedded' or 'inner' cultures of all the different ethnic groups that form part of the "mosaic" of a truly South African culture, we will succeed as a nation (*ibid*).

One can only agree with that, as the results and responses in this study suggest that dance is indeed the tool to sensitise participants and to discover in the 'others' those unifying characteristics irrespective of race, creed, or gender.

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**DANCE LEADERS/CHOREOGRAPHERS AND STUDENT DANCERS**

**QUESTIONNAIRE**

APPENDIX: A

**QUESTIONNAIRE ON TEACHING DANCE AS A MEANS OF INTERCULTURAL RECONCILIATION.**

*The following questionnaire is aimed at collecting data that will influence the outcome of the study. Valid and reliable information will be appreciated.*

**PART 1: FOR DANCE LEADERS AND CHOREOGRAPHERS**

1. Please state your general information and your level of education as a dance choreographer and leader.

- a) Informal training (self-taught)
- b) Training received
- c) Formal training (Tertiary education)

2. What is your definition of dance?

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3. To what extent do the dances reflect culture?

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4. To what extent can dance, as a medium of communication, generate tolerance?

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5. What challenges do you as a choreographer and dance leader face in teaching a multicultural class?

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**PART 2: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENT DANCERS**

1. What is the meaning of dance to you?

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2. With what challenges and racial tension were you faced in the creation of the production?

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3. Can dance be used to unite a society?

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4. What lessons did you learn?

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Extra comments on the study

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