

o n i n t e r c u l t u r a l i s m

# roads

crossroads



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This publication was produced by



**IETM (Informal European Theatre Meeting)**  
Brussels, March 2003

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Centro Comercial da Mouraria - Lisbon, 2002)  
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This small dossier was written and compiled at the request of IETM (Informal European Theatre Meeting). It serves as a kind of starter kit for the Satellite Meeting on North-South collaboration in the performing arts that will take place in Brussels from 12 till 15 March 2003.

It was set up as a first step, establishing a format for other texts to be added later on. Indeed, it is the wish of IETM to continue and further elaborate the debate around this theme in the future, and this South-North Information Pack is designed to grow alongside.

As the IETM Satellite Meeting in Brussels is co-organised with the Belgian festival Africalia and coincides with a large African contemporary dance platform, it was decided to focus this first issue on the relationship between Europe and Africa and on dance. Other performing arts and other regions of the world can and should be added on later.

The South-North Information Pack features four categories of texts:

1. Thematic contributions. This first dossier contains two introductory texts on North-South collaboration, one from the point of view of the South, the other of the North. Replies and comments are welcome, but also texts focussing on other themes will follow.
2. Portraits. Short presentations of interesting projects, festivals, art schools, companies, venues, etc. that stimulate North-South collaboration in their daily practice. Here, we present four: Shuttle 02 (Denmark/South-Africa), L'École des Sables (Senegal), Festival

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of the Dhow (Zanzibar), Dançar o que é Nosso (Portugal/Cape Verde/Mozambique/Brasil). It is our wish that other 'portraits' should follow, creating in the long run an interesting catalogue of North-South initiatives.

3. Reports. This chapter will contain reports of various meetings dedicated to North-South exchange. The report presented here is from an international meeting held in Lisbon in June 2002, which led to the realisation of the upcoming Satellite Meeting in Brussels.

4. Contacts. At best, this should become a flexible database for all organisations working around the North-South theme or interested in establishing contacts with 'the other side'. We start out small, with a list of contacts of all people and organisations invited for the Brussels Satellite Meeting. As this database grows, it will undoubtedly have to be restructured, both in content and form, but we decided to get going, adjusting and fine-tuning as we go along.

This being said, we hope that the first edition of the South-North Information Pack will be inspiring and lead to fertile talks in Brussels and lots of future add-ons.

Mary Ann De Vlieg | Network Coordinator, IETM  
Mark Deputter | Artistic Director, Danças Na Cidade

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thematic contributions



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m a r k   d e p u t t e r



*Happiness isn't for tomorrow.  
It's not hypothetical,  
it starts here and now.  
Down with violence, egoism  
and despair, stop pessimism.  
Let's pick ourselves up.  
Nature has given us  
extraordinary things.  
It's not over yet, nothing's decided.  
Let's take advantage of the wonders  
of this continent at last.*

*Intelligently, in our own way,  
at our own rhythm,  
like responsible men proud  
of their inheritance.*

*Let's build the country of our children  
and stop taking pity on ourselves.  
Africa is also the joy of living,  
optimism, beauty, elegance,  
grace, poetry, softness, the sun,  
and nature.  
Let's be happy to be its sons  
and fight to build our happiness.*

Salif Keita, December 2001

It was a happy coincidence that brought this manifest of hope by the Malinese singer Salif Keita to my attention just a couple of days before writing this text. I had set myself the task of writing

about artistic collaboration between Europe and Africa and it helped me realise again how easily we take for granted the value and validity of our knowledge, our money, our models of organisation, our artistic production. How naturally, also, we take on the role of organisers of the world around us, leaving it to others to be directed, to follow. Not only do we readily assume that what's good for us is good for everyone, we are also too easily convinced that it is all right for us to impose (sometimes unknowingly) our models and convictions on whomever we are working with. Salif Keita, as so many other African artists, claims the



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right of the African people to create their own future, "in our own way, at our own rhythm".

In a small survey organised by IETM not long ago, artists and arts organisations from all over Europe were asked about their interest in collaborating with African partners. The response was unusually enthusiastic: 74 of the network members responded that they were already collaborating with African artists and organisations, or were very interested in doing so in the near future. When asked to describe what they felt to be the main obstacles and problems, a large majority (75%) pointed to the lack of information and communication. Where can one see work by African artists? What are the main festivals? How to find a suitable partner? How to make contact and maintain it? Many people (46%) also complained about financial problems: the difficulty to find funding for projects, both in Europe and in Africa, the expensive airfares, the often large number of company members, the fragmentation of funding sources, etc. Structural (16%) and political (12%) problems came next: bureaucracy, the utilitarian view on art

that often prevails in the African context, lack of infrastructure in Africa, lack of professionalism, political instability, visa problems, the low priority given to art by both African governments and international co-operation. Only 8% of the answers, finally, mentioned differences in mentality and cultural attitudes and the existence of prejudices on both sides.

When confronted with these facts and figures, a group of artists and organisers from various West-African countries, I met a few weeks ago at a seminar, reacted surprisingly coolly. Nearly all of them had had previous experiences with European co-operations and foundations and weren't necessarily positive about them. Significantly, the order of importance of the perceived problems was inverse.

The main criticism came down to one thing: as long as the money comes from the North, it is extremely difficult to create equal working relationships. Especially official institutions and representations were readily accused of being unbearably patronising: "Of

course, I understand that they want to know what happens with the money", stated one of the participants, "but often the issue of legitimate control is, deliberately or not, confounded with a very unpleasant type of intervention and pressure."

All too often, Europeans have a clear idea of what they want even before they come to meet their African colleagues. "They don't come to listen", one said, "but instead impose their expectations on our creators and organisers." Or, as a young choreographer from Mozambique once put it: "The tourist industry wants traditional dances in the hotel lobbies, the European programmers want contemporary African dance for their festivals and the international co-operation agencies pay us to make didactic performances about AIDS or the necessity to vote in the next elections. And as long as we are dependent on their money, we are obliged to do a bit of each to be able to survive as artists."

"There are many cultural differences and prejudices", someone summed it all up,

"and people should take much more time and patience to meet. It is a pity that only very few are prepared to invest this time and energy. What is needed is long-term collaboration. Things that have a chance to last, at least for a while."

What was most striking, though, was the fact that the participants of the seminar readily assumed part of the responsibility for these problems of inequality. "If they treat us and our artists the way they do, it is because we let them. African organisers too easily take on the subservient role that is almost automatically given to them by their European partners. The Africans need to learn to respect themselves first and that can be done by gaining expertise and becoming good professionals." Someone else added: "We also need to free ourselves from the obsession that the most important goal to reach is to perform or display our work in Europe. We have to be artists here in Africa first, for our public, with our sponsors, together with our colleagues. If afterwards we can also tour in Europe, that's fine. But don't let it become the first priority."



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These reactions echo a statement made by Senegalese choreographer and dance teacher Germaine Acogny during a conference in Lisbon in November 1999: "The confrontation between two persons can only be positive if it is based on respect and the will to know and understand each other's cultures. If somebody decides to try to impose things, problems will inevitably arise. Colonisation has left us in a state of complete exhaustion and emptiness, but now the Africans need to learn to be proud of what they are and where they come from and be ready to talk to the others on a level of equality. This means that we Africans need to know, need to find out and decide what we want. It is our responsibility to take charge. And when the Europeans come, it is important that they don't come to impose, but take the time to listen". (*Practices of Interculturalism*, Lisboa, 2001).

Are we Europeans ready to listen, to collaborate without imposing? The question sounds misleadingly simple and pitfalls are many, even for people who try to be aware and act with caution and responsibility. European

interference in distant parts of the world and other cultures has a long and sad history. It is not illegitimate to ask whether the recent interest of European artists and arts organisations in faraway parts of the globe is genuine, whether the wish to know the other better, to understand his situation and to appreciate his art and culture, is real. It is often said that globalisation is a fact and that we shouldn't leave it exclusively to politicians and businessmen. The argument seems valid, but aren't we also exploiting the global market for our own purposes? It has to be acknowledged that this is at least partly true. As a matter of fact, many of the problems that arise in cross-cultural contacts and collaborations are an immediate result of conflicting agendas and the unwillingness to think our actions through to their final consequences.

What should we think of the many festivals and venues, for instance, that suddenly create special Africa-events? It is understandable that alert programmers want to show their public the performances that are being created in other parts of the world, but do they

take the time to see what is really happening? To try to understand the (cultural) context of the artists they want to present? To really meet the people they are inviting? Often, the selected performances are felt to stand at odds with the rest of the programme, so they are presented within a special Africa theme. There may be valid marketing arguments, but the consequences can be extremely negative: an Africa Special doesn't include, it excludes, it presents African art as a curiosity, a parenthesis in the 'normal' programme. Artists and their work are not perceived, then, in their own right, but as representatives of something as abstract and vague as 'Africa' (often including all the clichés), keeping their artistic proposals from being appreciated in dialogue with the other performances in the programme.

More often than not, these African companies are invited for one single visit. There are, of course, practical reasons: travel is expensive, it is difficult to follow up on the evolution of the artists concerned and the large investment of bringing over a company can usually only be made by festivals.

Obviously, this state of affairs excludes the creation of a real dialogue, since there is no time to let anything develop. Moreover, these kind of quick invitations create immense expectations and often profound disillusion. No wonder that many artists draw the conclusion that they will be left on their own as soon as they are back in their country and decide to stay in Europe. The way in which the European market deals with artists from Africa encourages emigration and often leads to artistic depletion at home.

Although festivals and international tours have their role and importance, it is obvious that building bridges between different cultures needs a more profound exchange. But making this happen is not without difficulties. If the relationship between a programmer and a theatre or dance company is relatively clear and simple, the situation becomes more complex in the context of a more elaborate collaboration. Anyone who wants to develop joint projects with organisations of artists from the developing countries will soon find out that it is very difficult to create equal relationships when starting from

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unequal grounds. Whether one works together on creation, training or exchange projects, questions will invariably circle around expertise and sound working relationships.

Annemie Vanackere of the Rotterdamse Schouwburg relates how co-producing across cultural barriers raised exactly these two issues: "As a programmer or producer we try to find the proper way to deal with artistic processes. In the case of Saban Ol, I wonder why I was more reticent than usual to interfere: lack of experience with 'intercultural' productions on the one hand (as if that kind of productions needs a different approach - is this a correct assumption?) and, on the other hand, some irrational fear that Saban would interpret my interference as patronising (again, isn't this an unfertile assumption?)" (*Practices of Interculturalism, Lisboa, 2001*). The question marks and doubts speak for themselves. In co-producing artists from other cultural backgrounds, we are fatally divided between our ignorance of an artistic context whose complexity we don't understand and the expertise of our own market, our own public, our

own context. If the discussion about artistic choices is a delicate one, even between producers and artists who have been working together for years, it becomes very hazardous indeed when straddling two different worlds. Who decides what is quality? Is a real dialogue possible? Do we have the necessary knowledge to say whatsoever about a performance from an altogether different culture? Is positive discrimination a good ground to support the work of artists belonging to ethnic minorities or coming from economically weak countries? Or does that inevitably lead to paternalism?

Questions about expertise, and a failure to 'listen', also resound in another story. Not long ago, I heard Souleymane Koly, the director of Ensemble Koteba from Ivory Coast, mention the "so-called contemporary African dance". My curiosity was aroused: "Why 'so-called'?" I asked. "I have nothing against contemporary dance", he replied, "and I acknowledge that interesting things are happening in that vein, but I am also convinced that a lot of potential has been lost. The contemporary African

dance that we know now is not something that grew from the basis and was explored and invented over years, no, it was imported by the French. A few years ago, it was decided by AFAA that their priority for Africa would be the development of a contemporary dance scene. At that time, a generation of youngsters was experimenting loosely with alternative dance forms in the streets of Abidjan: local dances, traditional dances from the desert, break dance, video clips from MTV, capoeira,... The French wouldn't have known about this, as they were busy creating a contemporary African dance contest with fat (to our standards) prize money and an (almost) all-French jury. Soon our young dancers understood what was expected of them; they dropped what they had been working on and started finding out about this new contemporary dance that came from Europe. I know of several of them that started copying movements and bits of choreography from the video cassettes they borrowed from the French Cultural Centre. I don't want to play down the efforts that have been made and I can see for myself that good things are taking form, but who knows what could

have been accomplished if things had gone differently? Maybe the policy makers of AFAA could have taken the time to discover what was already happening and work from there: working with these young dancers, training them, encouraging them. Not with festivals and prizes, but with patience and understanding."

No matter how much one defends the development of contemporary dance in Africa and supports the idea of proactive policies, the question stands: are we encouraging the creation of a kind of African contemporary dance that is digestible for the European market? Are we disrupting things out of lack of knowledge, even with the best of intentions? Are we creating new forms of dependency? On our money, our knowledge, our standards and tastes?

It is an extremely difficult discussion and none of the questions can be answered with a simple yes or no.

Does this mean that the Europeans should leave Africa alone? I don't think so. It is important to understand that people working in the arts in these

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countries are very well aware that art is moving on a global scale. When they claim autonomy, that doesn't mean that they want to be left isolated. Much to the contrary, choreographers, dancers and producers from all over Africa want to be informed and develop their work in dialogue with what is happening elsewhere. Obviously, the same thing is true the other way round. If cultural exchange is about enriching our view of the world and widening our understanding of the others and ourselves, then it is crucial that we don't close ourselves within our so much heralded European identity. It is important to recognise talent where it stirs and there is no doubt that the dancers and choreographers from Africa have a lot to offer – the work of artists like Salia Sanou, Seydou Boro, Vincent Mantsoe, Raiz di Polon, Boyzie Cekwana, Rary, George Khumalo and many others is there to prove it. Given the opportunity and the time, the dancers and choreographers from Africa will have an important voice and become a source of inspiration for the whole of contemporary dance, just as the musicians already are on the international music scene.

Although there are many problems and the collaboration with artists from other cultures raises lots of questions and contradictions, we cannot refrain from trying to create meaningful collaboration and exchanges. Surely we won't avoid all contradictions or solve all problems and the uneven distribution of wealth and power will continue to distort relationships that try to reach beyond the existing gap. But there is a way and the key, I think, lies with each of us. I strongly believe in the capacity of small-scale, carefully designed projects to create a powerful spin-off. The enthusiastic response of so many IETM members is a hopeful sign, as long as we are willing to stay alert and learn to listen.

Mark Deputter  
January 2003

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s o u l e y m a n e k o l y



**For one, count on your own means in the first place. For the other, respect and humility**

It is 1979. It is only four years since we founded the Ensemble *Koteba d'Abidjan*. After a timid first few years, we have just found, with "*Didi par-ci, Didi par-là*", the path we would follow, our style. From its creation in May 1978, the show had been an undeniable success at every performance, both in Abidjan and in the provinces.

An arts curator that was visiting the Ivory Coast saw the show and recommended it for the World University Theatre Festival in Nancy, which decided to present it in their 1980 edition. Then, began the hassle of finding subsidies for the international travel of thirty elements of the company (actors, dancers, and musicians).

We agreed with the festival organisers to approach the services of the French Cooperation which, in turn, decided to send an "expert" to assess the show before taking a decision. The "expert" arrived, saw the show and concluded that before any financing was forthcoming it was necessary for other "experts", from the north, to rewrite the piece in a "French that was more accessible for the French, re-direct it and, finally, teach the young, pleasant actors how to speak properly". At the most, he recognised our ability and a certain originality regarding the music and the choreography.

Our expert could not have been more wrong! In fact, on founding the Ensemble *Koteba d'Abidjan* in 1974, we had decided to insert it in the cosmopolitan urbanity of a city in expansion, as was Abidjan at the time. We decided to be inspired by the

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Koteba, a tradition of Mali, a mixture of theatre, dance, music, song, humour and satire, so as to be the witness and the vehicle of this new, incipient culture in the popular quarters. A culture of the meeting between the Sahel and the forest, between Muslims, Christians and Animists, between the French-, English- and Arab-speaking peoples in all their ethnic diversity. This culture invented a new language to communicate, new solidarity to survive, new codes to be recognised. Obviously this "popular" culture did not follow linguistic or any other orthodoxy.

We politely but firmly refused the "technical assistance" of those experts that came from way on high... Finally, thanks to the intervention of a friend, the president of the Republic of the Ivory Coast accepted responsibility for all the expenses for international travel. "*Didi par-ci, Didi par-là*" and the Koteba of Abidjan finished up by being one of the revelations of the festival and the company then began an international career that has continued up to our days.

What does this mean? On the one hand, we should have tried every means

possible to be financed in our own land before going cap in hand to the "North"; on the other hand, the "North" would have been more faithful to its promise of co-operation if it had shown more humility and respect for the other party.

### Uncertainty on one hand, invitation to flee on the other

It is 1993. MASA (African Arts and Performance Market) is held for the first time in Abidjan. The Koteba presents "Waramba, Mandinga Opera", which had been created two years before at the Renaud-Barrault theatre in Paris. It took the Afro-American cultural militants that had come to Abidjan in search of another Africa "by storm" (according to their own words). They saw an expression that was at the same time profoundly African, but daringly contemporary. They decided to get to work to get "Waramba" known in America, above all among the Afro-American community. It was not easy, as "Waramba" had a cast of 40 and two tons of equipment.

In 1994, we were contracted to give three shows in the framework of the

cultural events of the Atlanta Olympic Games. Then in 1999 a big tour of ten performances in the United States and Canada was planned. The tour would finish in 2001. The first three performances were given at the New Jersey Performing Arts Centre with a cast of 33 instead of the 40 needed, as seven members of the cast were refused visas, including the choreographer. "Waramba" was well received by both the public and the press. According to our partners, some impresarios had already confirmed our dates for 2001.

As usual, the members of the Company were regularly informed about our projects, remuneration and professional prospects. This did not stop eight members of the group disappearing before we resumed our shows at the Majestic in Brooklyn. After fresh rehearsals and with the agreement of the other venues where we were booked, we managed to finish the tour. In the end, 12 artists chose to stay in the USA. The rest of the Company returned feeling bitter and totally confused as we had lost, at least as far as "Waramba" was concerned, any hope of returning to the USA in the near future.

This programme, however, enjoyed a series of conditions that should have made it a success:

- an artistic proposal that corresponded to expectations of artistic quality and... "militancy";
- the scrupulous respect for the "original" content of the artistic proposal;
- a programme with a time span to prepare for a real "meeting" and find the means to fulfil it;
- working conditions in accordance with the legal and official norms of the host country of the North.

But there is one factor that will make exchange between cultural operators in the north and south very difficult for a long time: the uncertainty of the living and working conditions of the latter.

The Ensemble Koteba d'Abidjan has always included members of at least five different nationalities among the people of the Ivory Coast and West Africa. Among the latter are those that were born and live in the Ivory Coast with their families and those that already know the artistic environment of their own country and have come to Abidjan to join a group of this city and try

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something new. During the twenty years between 1974 and 1994, we made tours of several months and residencies that lasted nearly a year and never did a native of the Ivory Coast or an African that lived there abandon the group. The first time it happened was in 1994, both to our company and others of our country. This phenomenon got worse and worse, until it reached the intolerable proportions of today.

The "invitation to flee", which represents the difference between the living conditions of the countries of the North and South, has always existed. But ten years ago it did not have the same devastating effect on the people of the Ivory Coast as it does today. It is obvious that these untimely desertions are mostly due to the constant and general worsening of living conditions and the precariousness of the artists' conditions. Result: mistrust of festival and venue directors and, above all, the coldness and fear of consular services.

### **Free movement: an essential condition to make meeting possible**

The refusal to grant a visa to the

choreographer of "Waramba" is paradigmatic of the existing situation. Between 1994 and 1999, this lady had been regularly granted visas for the USA within the framework of professional exchange organised and supported by cultural institutions of great renown and she strictly kept to the terms of the visas. In 1998 she was one of the choreographers of a piece co-produced by Koteba and a company from New York, the choreography being the responsibility of a choreographer from the Ivory Coast and an American. Dancers were from the Ivory Coast and the USA, rehearsals took place in the Ivory Coast and the creation in the USA.

When the show finished, two of the people from the Ivory Coast decided to stay in the USA. It was with this argument that, in 1999, the US consulate refused the choreographer of "Waramba" the right to participate in the show that she had helped to create and accompany the company of which she was one of the leading members.

Another country, another company. This case happened following a long creation period of a co-production with a

company from the North. The two groups were preparing to present their work at a big international festival when it reached the ears of the African company that some of its members were planning to flee. Both the police and the immigration services declared that they could do nothing. The management of the company retained the passports of the candidates for flight. The passports were returned at the airport after the intervention of the human rights associations, at the request of the future hosts of the rebel artists. In the following season, on the pretext that some of its members had decided to remain abroad, the company faced problems when it requested new visas. While our ears are filled with enchanting words about the need for exchange and meetings, why is it that companies from the South constantly see their right to free movement restricted due to rebellious people or groups that are easily identified (or identifiable) in the North?

### **One more burden in the North-South exchange**

An Italian student of cultural

anthropology wanted to spend at least one year with an African company and we received her in Abidjan. At her request, she was lodged with a family and she insisted that she took part in the family's daily life just like other girls of her age. During rehearsals she insisted in assuming a position that she considered should be hers: a beginner. Even so, the rest of the group would never be able to see her as such. For them, she was always the "white girl" who "knows" and "has". So the people charged with fitting her in never taught her with the same diligence and strictness, as they would treat any local beginner. When the group went out, everyone expected her to offer to pay. After some adjustments by the management, some social meetings of the company and with the passing of time things improved a little. It must be recognised, however, that after 18 months of living with us she continued to be the "white girl who knows, who has".

Heavy is the burden of the past, heavy the weight of our preconceptions!

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### Leave the initiative to the ones that are directly involved

Let us relate one last experience to confirm – as if that were necessary – that good will, good faith and financial means are not enough to guarantee success and satisfaction for both parts in the North-South relationship. We refer to the programme "For a Contemporary African Dance" set up by the French foundation "Afrique en Création".

The programme was centred on two main points:

The first was a series of sessions of sensitisation held all over Africa by a choreographer resident in France. These actions were articulated around three points: a dance workshop, an exhibition of photography and a conference, all based on the personal theoretical reflections of that choreographer. The aim of all this was to encourage a new approach to African dance on the continent so as to create a "contemporary African dance".

The second was the initiative "Les Rencontres de la Création Chorégraphique d'Afrique et de l'Océan

Indien (*Meetings for the Choreographic Creation of Africa and the Indian Ocean*), a contest of which the competitive character and financial muscle power were designed as the main instruments to stimulate the creation and development of contemporary dance (more than 33,000 Euros to share among the three winners).

Despite having evolved somewhat since its creation in the mid-nineties, this programme raises a number of relevant questions.

Why should the decision that a "contemporary African dance" is necessary be taken outside Africa?

Was it sensible to trust the definition of the theoretical bases to an individual living outside the continent and who, what is more, had never revealed to the public or the African and international artistic community any work of his own that could have served as a reference in the matter?

Wasn't the denomination "contemporary dance" propitious to sow confusion in a world that is already shackled by many interrogations regarding the bases of its own identity? "Contemporary dance" is

a precise genre within the currents of dance, with its theoretical, conceptual and aesthetic bases, its predecessors, its innovators, its representatives and its schools, just like "jazz", "classic" and "modern". When the creators of the programme talk about "Contemporary African Dance" is it this specific genre they refer to or do they simply wish to refer to the "African dance of our days"? If it is the former, we come back to the initial question: was it sensible to impose this genre from the outside? And, while we're at it, why this genre and not another? If it is the latter, we can reply that this dance is practised each and every day by dancers from all over Africa and has its own currents, its representatives, its disputes, its strengths and its weaknesses.

Wouldn't it have been better to initiate a dialogue with the promoters of this African dance in order to identify the needs so as to implement, in mutual agreement, actions of all types to promote development, perpetuation and innovation?

Finally, by launching a programme of this type based on competition and

valuable prizes among a youth in such fragile and precarious conditions, aren't we running the risk of:

- exacerbating rivalry in an already-divided community?
- encouraging the multiplication of creations (pieces, companies) that will not last longer than the duration of a competition?
- favouring the predominance of a certain aesthetics just because it is the aesthetics of the jury of the competition?
- leading young Africans to progressively abandon other African dances that are also respectable: patrimonial dance, so-called "creative dance", urban dance?

### North-South Exchange: Some Conclusions, Some Points for Reflection

North-South cultural exchange cannot free itself from the influence of the past and preconceptions. It obviously depends on the balance of forces that can be seen in contemporary international relations. If it were otherwise, how can one understand, for example, that the 'cultural exception' for



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which Europe struggled tooth and nail against the United States ceases to be a guiding principle from the moment the frontiers of the South are passed?

If we cannot be free of them, there is a way to at least reduce the effects of this influence, which is to make an effort for relations to be established chiefly between citizens and agents that do not belong to state apparatus.

This presupposes the existence of strong and interested non-government organisations.

So the agents of the South should urgently:

- organise themselves so as to become forces of intervention and put forward proposals to their national civil communities, so as to see their specificity recognised by public entities;
- fight against their systematic dependence on the North and come up with alternative local solutions adapted to the means and the evolution of their society: count on their own means before begging from others: isn't it usual to say that the hand that receives is always under the hand that gives?

As far as the agents of the North are concerned, it would be good if they ceased to think and make decisions for the South, even if the financing does come from their countries. From this point of view, it would be desirable for, in one way or another, the South to make a contribution, even modest, to the cost of any North-South exchange.

Exchange cannot be decreed. It comes about through meeting and a strong wish to collaborate and the whole process should take its own time.

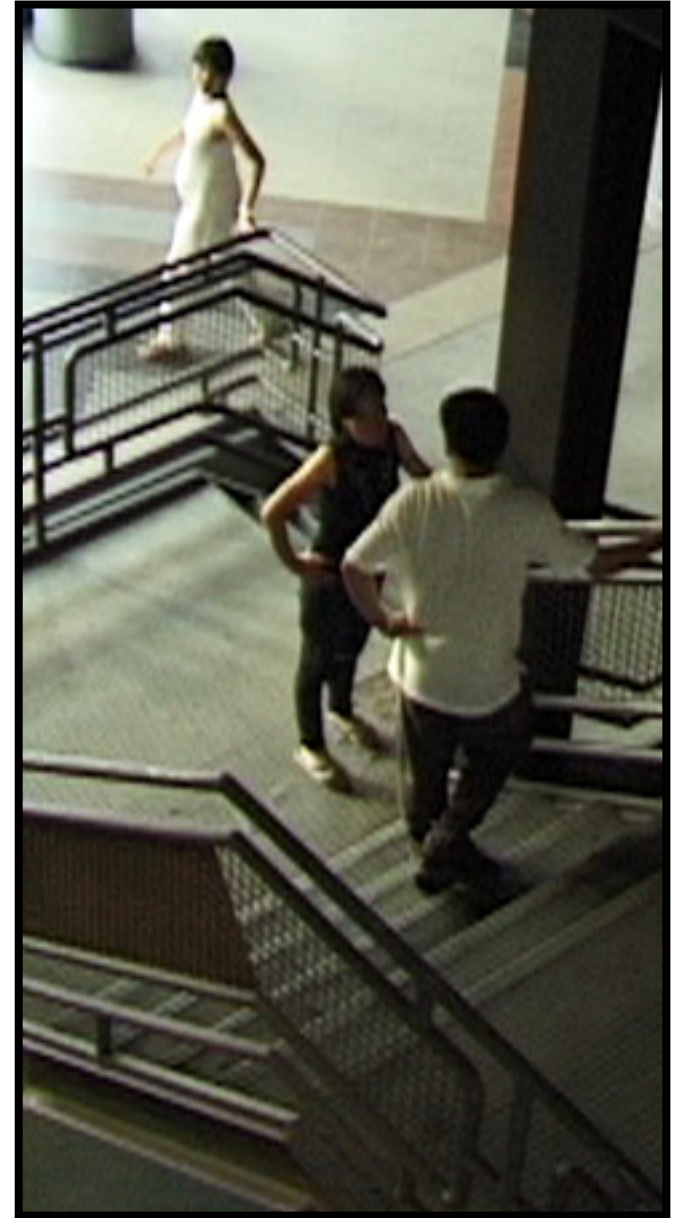
Exchange demands respect and sharing: don't expect from the other that which we want him to give, but learn to receive from him what he is willing and able to give.

Abidjan, Ivory Coast  
December 2002

Souleymane Koly,  
director of the  
Ensemble Koteba d'Abidjan

# cross

portraits



z i f f / f e s t i v a l o f t h e d h o w c o u n t r i e s

cross

y u s u f m a h m o u d



### I. organisation / objectives / activity

Zanzibar International Film Festival [ZIFF] is a non-governmental, non-political and non-profit organization established in 1997 in Zanzibar, Tanzania. ZIFF's mission is: "*to promote internationally and to develop film and other relevant cultural industries as tools for social and economic growth in the region, as exemplified in Zanzibar*". The principal activity of ZIFF is the annual Festival of the Dhow Countries, which is now the largest annual cultural event in East Africa, and among the eight major festivals in sub-Saharan Africa. It features an international film and video competition, music, theatre and performing arts, workshops, seminars, conferences and other related arts and cultural programmes. The festival programme is centred in a variety of magnificent venues near the seafront in the historic Stone Town; with a Village Panorama that extends the festival to rural communities; Women's Panorama, which provides a focus for women's issues; Children's Panorama, which provides for the participation of children and youths.

The main objectives of the Music & Performing Arts programme of the Festival are:

- to *organise* festival events and other concerts, meetings, seminars and workshops;
- to *build* capacities for local musicians, artists, technicians and cultural workers and nurture growth for the music and arts industries of Zanzibar;
- to *provide* the opportunity for all artists of the Dhow Countries to present their diverse works in celebration of their common

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heritage; to *present* the inhabitants of Zanzibar and East Africa with a rare platform to enjoy music and performing arts from Africa and the Indian Ocean region - ie. related to their cultural background;

- to *enhance* education and cultural awareness of the general public through the use of music, arts and cultural activities;

- to *develop networks* and foster solidarity with other festivals, promoters, cultural organisations and arts institutions in Africa, the Dhow Countries and internationally.

In July 2002, the 5th Festival of the Dhow Countries featured 56 groups of musicians and performing artists, comprising forty music groups, nine theatre and five dance groups, two acrobatic troupes and a storyteller. Of these, 20 were from Zanzibar, 20 from Tanzania mainland, 4 from Kenya, 7 from Egypt / Middle East and 5 from other areas, including Europe and India.

The Village Panorama has the overall goal of providing an opportunity for people in the villages to have access to and participate fully in the Festival, within the context of cultural, social and

economic development. The programme works closely with leaders from the local communities to bring festival activities to more than 200,000 people in a number of villages and peri-urban 'clusters' within the Zanzibar islands of Unguja and Pemba. The Women's Panorama aims to encourage women's participation in film, art, drama and in society in general. The Children's Panorama provides a forum for local children and youth to participate in the Festival, educating themselves and the community and showcasing their talents in writing, drama, fine arts and music.

We would like to turn Zanzibar into an example. At present, we have a fast-growing population in Zanzibar with more than 60% unemployment. The jobs that do exist are mostly within 'civil service' (very poorly paid and only available if you're 'part of the family'), seasonal farming/fishing (very poorly paid and perceived to be low status/uncool) or in the tourism/hotel industry (slightly better paid but mostly positions of subservience!). The annual ZIFF festival has demonstrated that music, arts and culture can provide

income and employment that is meaningful, giving voice and promoting self-expression as well as work that people can put their hearts and soul into! However, this is only for a few weeks each year, and then people have to revert to other means of scratching for a living. At present there is still not much work during the rest of the year (except for eg Eid or New Year celebrations) for local artists, although recently we have witnessed some growth in interest, eg. from some of the more enlightened hotel owners occasionally promoting local arts groups.

Also young Zanzibaris look to Dar es Salaam, across the water, where over the past couple of years the Swahili rap and hip hop scene has brought success to a few young artists, and even the older generation are waking up to the fact that being a musician no longer has to lead down a 'dead end street'! Participants of a recent OCRE seminar in Durban affirmed that "Africa's greatest resource is the culture of its people". But few artists are able to earn a living in East Africa due to rampant piracy, lack of professional skills or support from the state or private sectors.

### **II. financing / organisation structure**

The annual budget for the Festival of the Dhow Countries is around € 300,000, of which approximately € 50,000 is allocated to the music and performing arts programme (includes costs for flights and technical equipment). One of ZIFF's priorities is to keep the Festival accessible for local people, whose average daily wage is a little over one euro per day. Hence ticket prices of 50 cents for residents and € 3 for visitors, with many free performances, seminars and workshops.

The main funding sources for the organization come from private foundations (Ford Foundation, Prince Claus Fund), foreign governments (Switzerland, Denmark, Finland, Sweden) and international agencies (HIVOS, UNICEF). Some finances are also raised through sponsorship from the corporate sector, but to date income from this area has remained limited. ZIFF receives no funding from Zanzibar or Tanzania governments. Allegedly, they don't have anything to give, other than rubber stamps and some support in terms of allowing things to run smoothly (eg

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transport, immigration, protocol). The fact that most subsidies come from foreign cooperation agencies and foundations influences the festival. They like to support the women's/children's/village activities as well as eg. HIV/AIDS education oriented activities. It is very difficult to get support for artistic programming and/or for the festival agenda of promoting film, music and arts from Africa and the dhow region, persay.

Zanzibar is an island partner within the United Republic of Tanzania. It is a semi-autonomous state within the "United" Republic, having its own "Revolutionary Government", exercising some control of some of its internal affairs, including immigration issues and education for example, but not taxation or defence.

### III. strengths / successes

The strengths and successes of ZIFF are:

- the high level of interest and popularity amongst the local population: the festival attracts all sectors of local society, who look forwards to the event every year; of the

5,000 or so people who are there each day, more than 80% are local people, who participate with enthusiasm;

- the high level of staff commitment;
- unique concept for promoting film, music and arts from Africa and Indian Ocean region;
- strong brand name and identity, defined by location of Zanzibar and symbolism of Dhow.

Another aspect is concerned with the ability to bridge the political divide in Zanzibar and unite people. The last two elections in Zanzibar, in 1995 and 2000, were the first that were "multi-party" and both times were won by Chama cha Mapinduzi, who also rules on the mainland. The Civic United Front (CUF) main opposition party, disputes the results of both of these elections, which it says were rigged. This has resulted in a lot of political wrangling and occasional outbreaks of violence. The Festival actively seeks to include people of "both sides", who have always participated in the spirit of the festival.

Other positive aspects are:

- Economic boost for Zanzibar, benefiting hotel industry, restaurants and bars, craft sellers, street traders,

artists, drivers, guides, fixers and the majority of people living around Stone Town;

- International exposure for local musicians and performing artists, many of whom as a result of ZIFF have been invited to perform at other festivals in Africa and Europe (Zimbabwe, South Africa, Kenya, Comoros Islands, Cote d'Ivoire, Germany, Holland, UK);
- Also local demand for Tanzanian music and Swahili films has dramatically increased;
- Many artists use festival as forum to educate and create awareness for eg health/social issues;
- Inspires local musicians and performers to aspire to greater artistic heights - through gaining new ideas of music creation, stage presentation and choreography as well as being a catalyst for new artistic cross-collaborations.

One important aspect is the fact that it nurtures a sense of cultural identity and pride in the wealth of local artistic talents and the value of local customs. There is the understanding that the Festival of the Dhow Countries would reflect the various traditions and expressions that make up the Swahili

culture of East Africa and the cultures of the Indian Ocean region as a whole. The Dhow is therefore a compelling symbol for people of this region. It is a symbol of migrations and journeys of social and personal significance to peoples from diverse communities and cultures.

### IV. weaknesses / problems

The weaknesses and problems that we identify at the Ziff Festival are:

- *Equipment*: lack of quality sound, lighting and other technical equipment available locally; lack of own equipment - spend large amounts of funds on hiring in every year;
- *Board and management*: the Board of Directors is largely inexperienced in arts festival management and board individuals' commitment varies from constantly trying to micro-manage to almost complete non-involvement; lack of Board and management consensus;
- *Management skills*: lack of strategy and strategic direction and focus; lack of professional fundraising skills; lack of means to effectively measure organisational performance and success;

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weaknesses in decision making and financial control;

- *Finances*: compelled to do activities that meet external (eg donor) objectives; late receipt of donor funds; lack of legal support, eg, enforcement of international copyright law.
- **Networking**: lack of regional cooperation amongst artists and cultural workers;

This seems to illustrate that although ZIFF has worthy intentions of including mostly local Zanzibaris in its board members, administration staff and management, these same people actually have little of the relevant exposure required to understand what is really required for the day to day running of operations for an international arts festival of this size. I do think that the problems outlined above are very specific to the moment in the organisation's development, and can be resolved over time, with more focused training for example, but also point to the possible need for directors/management with the relevant international experience.

Extra challenges to building networks and touring circuits are faced by

cultural practitioners in Africa and the developing world. In this aspect, there are difficulties and challenges, in some items: lack of management and touring agency services; language and communication; lack of good sound/lighting equipment; audience/performer/venue expectations differ; visas and red tape; transport costs.

### **V. future plans**

Our future plans include:

- Invest in our own equipment, saving rental costs and providing a source of income-generation throughout year;
- Zanzibar to host a second annual arts festival (music-focussed) every February;
- Establish audio visual institute in Zanzibar;
- Widen funding base, including from corporate world; more secure long-term funding
- Board development and recruitment of an international Board of Advisors;
- Provide more training, for staff, local artists, cultural workers and technicians and promote exchanges for festival personnel to enhance skills (e.g. admin; marketing; technical).

- Build cross-regional and intra-regional co-operation and partnerships to foster cultural exchanges for artists from Zanzibar and other parts of Africa, Europe and Indian Ocean region; build a regional East African Promoters Network and Touring Circuit (our partners could be, for example, music and arts promoters and venues, radio stations, recording studios, record companies and music distributors, musicians and performing artists, educationalists, organisations and people with influence).

Yusuf Mahmoud



é c o l e d e s a b l e

cross

g e r m a i n e a c o g n y



What is the *École des Sables (School of Sands)*? In the first place it is a small village where the colours of the earth are predominant, in an incomparable African landscape on the edge of a lagoon visited by the birds of the wind. But it is also a solid structure that, little by little, emerges from the land to be inevitably transformed into that which it was meant to be: the chief meeting point of contemporary African dance.

We will try to be brief, as we have been allotted a limited space. We will try to enumerate the aims of this project in an orderly way:

- Encourage and support the development of a new African Dance that will be Contemporary African dance;
- Improve the statute, the working conditions and the life of the dance professionals in Africa;
- Stimulate demand and encourage the creation of new jobs so that African dancers/ choreographers can deservedly – or even exclusively – live from their art;
- Attract a new public through a distinctly different image of African dance, especially among the young people of the continent;
- Facilitate the access of African companies into the world of dance.

Let us now supply some details of the summary that we have just made. In each of our training courses, we offer to about thirty dancers and choreographers complete technical training. They must be given the possibility to evolve their body language



## é c o l e d e s a b l e

through the acquisition of a wider and varied gestural vocabulary that will make their future choreography richer.

A difference between original techniques and the teaching of a contemporary African and western dance must be established so that they may discover their creative potential and freely develop it.

It is necessary to re-establish a close link with traditional dance, an indispensable, basic element for the creation of contemporary choreography rooted in time. "Link the memory of the past to faith in the near future".

It is important not to leave the students out of sight (continuous training). They must be provided with the pedagogical techniques of teaching that will allow them to transmit their acquired knowledge to the dancers of their respective companies.

The École de Sables of Toubab Dialaw: an international centre in Senegal for training in contemporary African dance. Artistic director: Germaine Acogny / Administrative director: Helmut Vogt.

Due to an ever-increasing dynamic in the world of dance, numerous initiatives have contributed to the development of contemporary African dance since the beginning of the nineties. The Choreographic Meetings initiated and organised by "Afrique en Création" since 1995, the Radio France Internationale contest, the MASA d'Abidjan (African Market for Performance and Art) have become compulsory meeting points for both professionals and amateurs of choreographic creation in Africa. Not to forget the great international workshops at Montpellier Dance Festival and the Vienna Dance Weeks, which offer study grants to some of the most talented African dancers.

French and European choreographers such as Mathilde Monnier, Bernardo Montet, Claude Brumachon and Jean-François Duroure, to mention just a few, have given several African dancers the chance to take part in large projects, thus allowing them to see other points of view and discover new work methods that are more demanding and professional.

Among all these initiatives and activities, mainly geared towards

performance, the École des Sables undoubtedly occupies an exceptional place as it periodically welcomes to African soil dancers and choreographers carefully selected from the best companies of Africa.

Four professional training periods of three months each were organised at the École des Sables in 1998, 1999, 2001 and 2002. In all 108 dancers from 19 African countries benefited from high-level technical training given by African and western teachers of international renown. Apart from classes in traditional and contemporary dance, the training includes choreographic composition, improvisation and theatrical representation.

Following the first training period in 1998, we created a contemporary dance company. Its first performance was *The Cock is Dead*, choreographed by Avi Kaïser and Susane Linke, for a meeting of contemporary German and African creations. The second creation of the company was a meeting between Butô and African dance depicting the genocide in Rwanda. Choreography was by Kota Yamasuki and Germaine Acogny.

Through these training periods, which are intense and privileged moments for all the participants, Germaine Acogny and her directors obviously want to stimulate creative African choreography and at the same time encourage young choreographers to accept the challenges that were awaiting them. Another aim is to help African companies to become professional and reach a vaster public, namely by trying to attract the interest of the young generations of Africa for their artistic projects.

Encouraged by this experience, most of the highly motivated trainees return to their countries determined to transmit their newly-acquired knowledge, encourage new initiatives and create promising perspectives for the young dancers/choreographers that wish to break out of the isolation in which they find themselves.

The programme of the fifth training period, from February to April 2003, has been elaborated in conjunction with DasArts, a department of the Amsterdam Fine Arts School, its main feature being its multidisciplinary dimension: twelve students of different

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nationalities from the Amsterdam school will dedicate themselves to several artistic disciplines and for nine weeks will work, exchange and create with twelve African dancers/choreographers. The aim of this original experience is to encourage new artistic approaches at the highest professional level so as to create new sources of inspiration.

The training periods for 2004 and 2005 are already being prepared. The one of 2004 will concentrate on traditional dance and on the meeting in Toubab Dialaw of some of the most prominent representatives of this greatest expression of African culture. The one of 2005 will be dedicated to emphasising the importance of the African diaspora and its influence on present-day creation.

It must be added that training periods for amateur dancers may also be organised. And why not turn to cultural tourism?

### Financing

The total cost of the project is estimated at € 1,110,000, broken down in the

following way:

Self-financing: € 330,000

Arts International, United States:  
€ 200,000

European Union: € 465,000

French co-operation: € 50,000

Swiss embassy: € 18,000

German embassy: € 6,000

Private donations: € 41,000

We thank the following institutions for their financial support:

AFAA (Association Française d'Action Artistique), Afrique en Création programme; CND (National Dance Centre), Paris; APEFE (Association for Promotion, Training and Education for Foreigners), Belgium; The French Community of Belgium; European Union; Festival Africalia, Belgium; Prince Claus Foundation, Low Countries; Jean and Claire-Lise Coppen, Switzerland; The Mali Government; The Senegal Government; Dance United, United Kingdom; Goethe Institute; UNESCO; French Co-operation; Ford Foundation; Senegal National Lottery; Nestlé Senegal; French embassies and French cultural centres of Ndjamena (Chade), Accra (Ghana), Lomé (Togo), Harare

(Zimbabwe), Praia (Cape Verde), Kinshasa (Congo Democratic Republic) and Libreville (Gabon).

### Analysis of the project's strong and weak points

As always happens, in whatever we do or create, besides the certainties, there are areas of doubt that need to be cleared up with time. But we are sure that the positive side prevails, as does our hope for the future.

For example: we are convinced that, benefiting from the wide diversity of active partners in Africa, Europe and the United States or anywhere else, African dance can only be enriched by this powerful link. A link that can demolish frontiers between dance companies, dance organisations of the whole world, and even between the dancers who fly with their own wings.

The Centre has built a link between all the infrastructure, from accommodation, spaces for dance and rehearsals, catering, conferences, etc. This can provide it with great management autonomy, which

should allow it to make better use of its premises and so aspire to lose its constant dependence on subsidies.

If some weak points should be mentioned, they refer to the present. As has already been mentioned, the Centre still depends exclusively on subsidies. It has not yet managed to elaborate a programme of projects and activities that will lead to a clearer financial equilibrium, which is of the greatest importance. We still face, as we have from the beginning, serious problems, such as the fact that we have not yet been able to arrange a connection to the water and electricity supplies, due to a lack of money. The organisms contacted so far do not have the right to invest in construction.

We also had difficulties, especially in the beginning, with the means of communication to enter into contact with dancers and make our projects known. Dancers in Africa do not have any means available to finance their training, and local government is not willing to recognise the importance of serious training in the

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field of dance.

### The future

Things we are planning for in the future: the Centre will be increasingly open to dancers from other places and with wider horizons; the possibility of transforming the present space into a meeting point, a kind of federation that could gather all future spaces that feel like using the same model; to invite dancers from all over the world; the launching of projects between dancers from Africa and from other parts of the world and the establishment of productive exchanges; the possibility of children from all over the world meeting here one day and dancing together; collaboration with other training centres; the inclusion of traditional African dance in Senegal's school programmes, beginning with primary school, so that the children get to know more than the rudimentary elements of it, in order to safeguard the links between culture and tradition.

It is also important to think about training initiatives for non-professional dancers. Provide them with perspectives of wider horizons, meetings with their counterparts that make dance a

profession and thus open vistas previously unimaginable.

We should also think about how to free the dance, that is performed wherever tourism reigns, from its usual banality, thus enriching commercial tourism with a more cultural dimension. In our opinion, this would be a valuable contribution to the country's tourism and an opportunity to put an end to the rampant mediocrity of most that is being offered to the tourists nowadays in the field of dance.

Germaine Acogny

s h u t t l e 0 2

# cross

l e n e t h i e s e n



Shuttle 02 was a Danish follow-up from Shuttle 99 – a large scale cultural exchange between five Nordic countries and South Africa, initiated by the Nordic Council of Ministers, which ran for a two year period 1998-99. This network based programme proved to be so successful that it generated a number of long-term exchanges and development programmes. The Danish government decided in July 2001 to follow-up on this initiative with a Shuttle 02 programme that concentrated on dance, music and art administration.

The Shuttle projects were essentially a different way to make international cultural development programmes, built on the principle of exchange and with equal interest in each other's culture as a premise. Shuttle 02 was a kind of structured cultural barter where the participants exchanged what they were best at, and where collaborations were based on common interests.

### **The Objectives**

The overriding aims were on one hand to support and develop human resources in the creative process and at the same time to contribute to the development of dance and music as essential art sectors within contemporary South African culture and society. Moreover, by making the exchange the focal point, it was hoped to establish lasting contacts between individuals and institutions in the South and the North.

## s h u t t l e 0 2

The point of departure was the actual reality of the performing arts in South Africa and Denmark, thus maximising and supporting existing networks in both countries. By supporting dance and music not only as an art form, but also as sectors including pedagogical, administrative and technical approaches, it was the aim to ensure wider social repercussions and to contribute to the development of a stable South African society, where the arts have an important role to play.

### The Shuttle Model

Shuttle 02 had a double strategy: On one hand it focused very precisely on the artists' and the cultural workers' specific needs by creating tailor made exchange programmes for selected individuals and institutions. On the other hand Shuttle 02 contributed to create platforms, neutral floating islands, such as seminars and discussions with space for reflection and networking. This created a synergy that secured the long-term influence of the sector.

The Shuttle model can be characterised

as a process orientated network-concept, which allowed programmes to develop naturally and to include individuals and institutions with their own ideas and resources, thus creating a sustainable and flexible programme structure for the project, i.e. the process becomes the steering mechanism.

Shuttle 02 worked within existing networks in the art sector, thus developing a collaboration with the main players of a "community" on different levels, including official institutions and support agencies, independent artists and arts structures through to community groups.

### The financing and organisational structure of the project

The Danish Centre for Culture and Development (DCCD) in Copenhagen has been the formal organiser of Shuttle, with responsibility to the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which together with DCCD and the International Secretariat of Cultural Relations funded the whole project. I was appointed project manager and

functioned independently as the co-ordinator and administrator of all projects, whilst the individual partners had responsibility for their own projects. The overall co-ordination included project development, setting up budgets, formulations of contracts, raising supplementary funds, financial control and overseeing all ongoing information and practical operations. The projects took place in Johannesburg, Durban, Cape Town, Copenhagen and Aarhus. The project co-ordinator paid three visits to South Africa at strategic points during the programme excluding the initial research visit four months prior to the project.

The Danish government invested 153,000 € in Shuttle 02. Some 35% (53,000 €) were allocated to cover all management and communication costs. With 100,000 € left to donate to the projects and a further estimated 66,000 € generated, a total amount of 166,000 € was available for the individual projects. With some 20 projects, this equates at around 8,000 € in core support for each project, which makes Shuttle 02 a low cost project.

### Partners in the South and in the North

A large number of partners took part in the project: 33 in SA and 18 in DK participated, both as recipients and as initiators. Among the partners were: In South Africa: Moving into Dance Mophatong, Jomba! Contemporary Dance Experience, Centre for Creative Arts, Natal University, the Cultural Helpdesk, PANSAs (Performing Arts Network in SA), FNB Vita Dance Umbrella, Fantastic Flying Fish, Jazzart DanceTheatre, Awesome Africa Music Festival, South African Roadies Association (SARA), the Bat Center plus a number of individual experts. In Denmark: The School of Modern Dance, MBT Danseteater, Dance in Education Ass., Lene Østergaard Co., New Danish Dance Theatre, Nordic Forum for Dance Research, The Rhythmic Music Conservatory, the Roskilde Festival, The Aarhus Technical College, various schools plus a list of individual experts.

### Projects and Activities

Shuttle 02 developed a total of 20 projects within 8 main sectors, with

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dance as the primary sector and music as the secondary: 1. Dance in Education in schools and communities, 2. Dance History and Cultural Heritage, 3. Choreographic exchanges and training, 4. Support to individual dance and music projects, 5. Music training of young professionals, 6. Lighting design, 7. Sound & production exchange training and 8. Arts Administration.

### Some examples of Shuttle 02 projects:

#### - African Dance Seminar.

A project on the analysis and codification of African dance with regards to African Dance Curriculum.

A core group, together with specialists within 3 dance traditions (Zulu, Xhosa, Tswana), was responsible for the seminar, which attracted educators, dancers and scholars from 5 regions. The seminar – the first ever in South Africa – was a landmark for South African traditional dance, which the National Arts Council has since promised to develop.

#### - Dance in Schools.

2 SA teachers from Moving into Dance taught Edudance in Danish schools and teachers' colleges in Copenhagen and Aarhus. The project was a follow-up of previous exchanges of SA teachers in Edudance and schools in Denmark, launched by Shuttle 99.

#### - Dance Research Project.

A 3-fased project for the development of research skills in dance history. 14 participants from 4 regions, mixing experienced with less experienced SA dance researchers, and 2 from the Nordic countries. The project succeeded in locating dance resources, promoting dialogue about different ways of collecting and selecting information and opening new opportunities for dance history research. The seminar resulted in a publication and is to be continued.

#### - Choreographic Residency in DK.

Two young graduate SA students from Durban were in residency at the School of Modern Dance, Denmark, for 3 months where they followed the daily training with a special focus on contemporary choreography.

#### - MBT Dance Teater in SA.

Marie Brolin-Tani has been collaborating with South African artists since 1996 and has made an indelible mark on SA dance theatre. Her "Loving Othello" with SA dancers in the leading roles was performed at the State Theatre in Pretoria. Marie Brolin-Tani – now director of Skånes Dansteater in Malmö – has 4 SA dancers in her company; she continues to develop her collaboration with the SA dance theatre.

#### - Dance Desk.

A small administrative unit for dance was established within Cuhede (Cultural Helpdesk), Newtown, Jo'burg. Dance Desk facilitated and developed four contemporary dance companies with the long-term purpose of contributing to their economic independence. A part-time administrator as well as a number of consultants and two administrative trainees have been linked to the project. The Dance Desk ran tentatively for a year, but will continue with new funding.

#### - Danish Lighting Designers in SA.

Three projects were developed, two of

them with specific SA dance companies and a third one with the Dance Umbrella Festival in Jo'burg. These collaborations will probably be developed independently.

#### - Music Training Project at Bat Centre, Durban.

8 young musicians were selected to take part in a 3 week long training course run by South African music teachers and Danish music teachers from the Rhythmic Music Conservatory (RMC). 2 of the musicians have been invited for a 6-month residency at the RMC in Copenhagen in 2003. The RMC has – as a result of its programmes in Shuttle – received a 3-year government grant for collaboration with South African musicians.

#### - Sound and Production residencies for trainees at Roskilde Festival.

As in the previous 3 years, 4 SARA (South African Roadies Association) trainees were invited to a 2 week long residency at the Roskilde Music Festival. The SARA director was invited to develop his discussions with technical colleges in DK in order to

## s h u t t l e 0 2

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secure long-term capacity building with permanent partners in Denmark.

### Strengths and weaknesses of the Shuttle

#### Strengths:

- Viable financial model and cost effective, since the partners involved invested their own resources
- Many small projects rather than a few major ones secured flexibility, informality, anti-hierarchy, as well as a direct dialogue between donor and recipient
- Each sector was approached on a number of fronts, from "high" art to community projects, which secured both synergy and networking within the sectors as well as creating awareness of the Shuttle 02
- Recipients also functioned as donors in different projects, this interdependency released the static "donor" and "recipient" model
- The importance of the individual commitment resulted in long-term collaborations and mutual friendship
- Although the North provided most of the money, it was still a collaborative exchange

- Decentralised organisation involving many partners secured transparency and responsibility.

#### Weaknesses:

- The amount of co-ordination and project management required was extensive in particular in the initial phases
- In order to be long-term and sustainable, programmes should run for at least 3 years
- Due to budget constraints, there was no overall local co-ordinator in South Africa, which put additional strain on the management of the project. Co-operation should be at all levels of the operation
- The lack of hosting capacities in both countries caused a few disappointments
- More active commitment at government level (from Denmark) might support more long-term results
- The political situation in SA lead to certain difficulties in establishing neutral frameworks in SA

#### Main problems encountered

The main problems experienced were specific to the countries involved.

As regards Denmark, the lack of knowledge as to how SA functions and how artists in SA function. This reflects the relative lack of contact between the North and South within the arts in general. In SA, the main problem was to secure an open structure, free of sectorial, personal and ethnic interests, in which information could be shared freely. This reflects not only SA's past but also the reality of the present where competition and infighting for survival is a daily chore. Thirdly, the task (as an independent project) to secure a formal collaboration and involvement at government level is extremely difficult.

#### Most important gains

Allow me to quote Adrienne Sichel, South Africa's leading Performing Arts journalist:  
 "...As a sequel to Shuttle 99 this strategically timed spin-off has served as a jump-start cable for relationships and partnerships as well as an incubator for specific ideas and strategies (...)  
 When evaluating projects statistics and facts are measurable. It's the intangibles that are more difficult to assess. Those

immeasurable moments of creative conflict, those miracles of revelation and self discovery on stages, in rehearsals, in studios, in the audience, at the conference table, during coffee breaks, over the e-mail (...). Given the logistics, and reach of the various modules, which functioned in a turbulent cultural environment, Shuttle 02 has left an enduring legacy and a vital lifeline for aspects of cultural development. Specific needs were foreseen and targeted, new friendships forged, existing ties across the continents strengthened and collaborations launched." (From "Report on Shuttle 02")

#### Future plans

On the individual plan: Several projects will be continued by their respective partners with own resources and ad hoc funding.  
 On the donor plan: DCCD has engaged discussions with selected project co-ordinators in SA in order to secure the future of a number of projects.  
 On the overall plan: The Shuttle projects can be considered as a pilot project, hopefully to be included in Denmark's



## s h u t t l e 0 2

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newly adopted strategy on "Culture and Development", which stresses the importance of the cultural dimension in all foreign aid.

For my part, I would add that these four years of Shuttle experiences prove that even with a very small budget one can achieve an amazing amount. It is my hope that this experience will contribute to persuade the Danish government that the cultural exchange model of Shuttle is both viable and possible and that the model ought to be developed and adapted to a number of different sectors and situations.

### **Shuttle 02 report**

A full Shuttle 02 report is available from:

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d a n ç a r o q u e é n o s s o

# cross

j a s p e r w a l g r a v e



*Dançar O Que É Nosso* (Dancing what is Ours) is a long-term exchange program, initiated by the Portuguese non-profit organisation *Danças na Cidade* in 1998. It is aimed at stimulating collaborations and exchange between artists and organisers, working in the field of dance, from Europe, Africa and Latin America, thus opening new ways for co-operation between the North and the South. Since its implementation, *Dançar O Que É Nosso* has been primarily directed towards collaboration with the dance communities of the Portuguese speaking countries in the world - Angola, Brazil, Cape Verde, Mozambique and Portugal - but always in a broader international context. The general goals of the program are:

1. To promote intercultural exchange on a long-term basis
2. To help create the basis for the development of an African artistic community turned towards the creation of contemporary art, within an international context
3. To stimulate sustained development through the professionalisation of dance.

#### Lines of action

To reach these goals, *Dançar o Que É Nosso* develops an integrated strategy. Even though the situation varies largely in the different countries where we work, four main fields of action are to be distinguished.

#### 1. Training

Since 1998 seven artistic residencies have been organised in Cape Verde, and four in Maputo, Mozambique, involving about 25

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Portuguese and 15 foreign artists/teachers and hundreds of participants. In Cabo Verde, these residencies are organised in close co-operation with the dance company *Raiz di Polon*, in Maputo partnerships were established with the Companhia Nacional de Canto e Dança, *CulturArte*, Casa da Cultura do Alto Maé and Escola Nacional de Dança.

In these residencies artists and performing arts professionals stay for two or three weeks to work intensively with the local artistic community. Every residency contains three to six training courses, mainly in contemporary dance, but also in production, marketing, music, light design, etc. Through a regular offer of courses, by different teachers, we try to create continuity and to provide a broader vision of contemporary dance. Although the residencies are short, they have a strong impact on local communities with few opportunities of receiving information from abroad. This information is analysed, worked on and used intensively within the local dance groups, long after the teachers have returned home.

### 2. Exchange

*Dançar O Que É Nosso* includes a number of activities specifically designed to create cross-cultural exchange. Once a year, a number of dancers from all over the world (with a special effort towards African participants) are invited to meet in Lisbon for the Encontro Internacional – International Meeting. These meetings generally last for three or four weeks and have ample space for collaboration, debate, training initiatives and informal presentations, in a truly multicultural context. In August 2003, a meeting of this type will take place for the 4th time.

At other times, the meetings of *Dançar O Que É Nosso* are directed towards professional producers and dance programmers from North and South to discuss common themes and exchange ideas. An international conference has been held in November 1999 (related in the publication *Practices of Interculturalism*, Ed. Mark Deputter, Lisboa, 2001) and a smaller seminar in June 2002.

Finally, exchange is also promoted through the presentation of

performances. Thus, *Danças na Cidade* has promoted a small tour of six Portuguese performances to Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo in the fall of 2000. It has also organised presentations of performances of Vera Mantero and António Tavares in Cape Verde and Thomas Hauert in Maputo. Inversely, *Danças na Cidade* has brought artists from the South (Cape Verde, Madagascar, Mozambique, South-Africa, Brazil, Indonesia, Burkina Faso,...) to Lisbon to perform in its festivals and at the Centro Cultural de Belém.

### 3. Creation

Through a continuous policy of commissions and co-productions, *Dançar O Que É Nosso* stimulates the process of artistic creation of contemporary dance in the South. In only four years, this effort has made possible the creation of four pieces by Raiz di Polon and three by their Cape Verdean colleague António Tavares. In 2001, *Danças na Cidade* joined forces with the Mozambican Companhia Nacional de Canto e Dança to create "*Maputo*", a programme including two creations of the Mozambican choreographer Augusto Cuvilas and one

of the Portuguese Francisco Camacho. Last year, *Danças na Cidade* and the Mozambican arts centre *CulturArte* organised the international dance project "*Alma Txina*", in collaboration with the European network *Départs* and the Belgian festival *Africalia*. The project combined training activities for the whole dance community and the creation of five short choreographies with a selected group of 16 dancers and 2 musicians.

The project *Dançar O Que É Nosso* does not only support the process of creation itself, but also international touring. "*Maputo*" has been shown in Maputo, Lisbon, Oporto, Viseu, Harare, Tokyo and Tanzania and "*Alma Txina*" in Maputo, Lisbon, Oporto, Viseu, Hamburg and Brussels. António Tavares and company *Raiz di Polon* regularly present their work in Cape Verde, Europe and the rest of the world (Portugal, Belgium, Netherlands, Germany, Croatia, Rumania, UK, Madagascar, Senegal, Brazil, Mozambique,...).

### 4. Professionalisation

Professionalisation is in the first place a matter of the creation of working

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structures and jobs. The situation of most African dance companies is precarious. Through a policy of commissions and the insertion of performances in the international market, a considerable flux of income has been created for the companies involved. Where possible, we also help our partners in convincing their authorities and international co-operation agencies of the importance of their work.

Furthermore, we offer help in building/renovating infrastructures and the acquisition of necessary equipment. In a short period of time progress has been booked with the *Casa Padja* in Praia, Cabo Verde, which recently has been recognised as a centre for the local dance community. In Maputo, *CulturArte* will be opening a small Dance Development Centre in the course of 2003, with the necessary infrastructure (office, dance studio, library, video-room, classroom, etc.) and a small team of collaborators.

### Assets and weak points

In many ways, the strong and the weak points of *Dança o Que É Nosso* are

linked to some of its most characteristic features.

**1.** In the first place, *Dança o Que É Nosso* is an independent, non-governmental programme. This has great advantages in terms of flexibility, communication and understanding. Since we freely decide our own policies, there is a real sense of joint decision making between the partners, which is much more difficult to obtain when dealing with governmental institutions. After having defined our strategies and programmes we go looking for funding in Portugal, the partner countries, the European Union, embassies, international co-operation agencies, foundations, etc. Fundraising is a shared responsibility.

But being independent also creates fragility and the financial base of our work is invariably precarious. The Portuguese artists and cultural organisations are working in increasingly difficult circumstances at home and international exchange has very little support, even though cultural co-operation with the Portuguese speaking countries is said to be a

priority. This is even more so for our partners in Cape Verde, Mozambique and Brazil, as their governments have no or very little money for culture. Therefore, fundraising efforts have to include dozens of different agencies, institutions and foundations. For the past five years, *Dança O Que É Nosso* has had to be realised with successive small project grants, which has greatly complicated advance planning.

**2.** *Dança O Que É Nosso* is a small-scale and long-term program. It focuses on a limited number of partners and localities over a long period of time, so as to assure effectiveness and a lasting impact. This is one of the strongest assets of the projects as it allows for real partnerships to emerge. *Raiz di Polon* has had the time to grow from a loosely organised group of dancers into a small professional dance company and an efficient producer of events and training courses. *CulturArte* will open the first independent choreographic centre in Maputo to function autonomously as a support for local independent dancers. By staying small and taking the time to grow, *Dança O*

*Que É Nosso* has succeeded in creating a tight collaboration between stable partners, which, so we believe, is the best guarantee to create a strong spin-off.

Still, the fact that the number of people we directly collaborate with is limited can create the impression of favouritism and lead to disillusion. We start to feel that things are evolving too slowly and with excessively long intervals, but both the small scale of *Danças na Cidade* and its partners, and the limited sources of funding won't allow for things to be different in the near future, so it appears.

**3.** *Dança O Que É Nosso* is in the first place an artistic project. The advantages are obvious: the program has a firmly defined set of objectives, it is embedded in a very elaborate network of contacts and informal partnerships both in the North and South, and creates ample space to work on crucial matters regarding artistic creation and intercultural collaboration. As such, it has strong chances to generate interesting artistic results – the only

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asset that can secure long term sustainability.

Still, we feel we could learn a lot from the expertise of NGO's working in co-operation and development. Tapping into the accumulated knowledge of NGO's regarding funding possibilities, social organisation, economic planning, etc. is an important mission for 2003.

### Where to get in the long run

A short outline of our expectations and desires for the future, following the main lines of action:

#### 1. As a training program

- Training initiatives should happen at a progressively more continuous and regular basis.
- It is important to be able to **widen the program** and develop a stronger regional collaboration between African partners, so as to use to the full the expertise that is already present.
- To reach the goal of an independent and professional dance community, it is necessary **to train future teachers** in dance and all the related areas. We would like to set up a system of grants

to facilitate access to higher education and opportunities for trainees.

#### 2. As an incentive to creation

- An effective way to stimulate artistic creation is through **commissions and co-productions**. It would be good to find a few reliable partners with economic capacity to take on this role.
- Also the capacity for **international touring** can still be strengthened, not only in the North, but also on the African continent.

#### 3. As an exchange program

- The continuation of the **Meetings** is a significant contribution. We would like to be able to co-organise these meetings also in the countries of our partners.
- We also want to support the **presentation** of international performances in these countries, besides continuing to bring African performances to Europe.
- We are participating in the construction of an informal Euro-African **network**, to stimulate exchange between dance organisations of both continents.

#### 4. As a vehicle for socio-cultural development

- It is necessary to obtain support for the creation of mechanism of **structural support** for dance and the performing arts, through permanent local sponsoring.
- The dance community needs to get organised in order to define its goals and fight for its claims as **a professional class**.
- Obtain and ameliorate **infrastructure** for dance.

Jasper Walgrave

# roads

reports





5 t h m e e t i n g d a n ç a r o q u e é n o s s o

# roads

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## Fragments of Dialogues – Report of the 5th Meeting Dançar o que é Nosso

More than twenty representatives of dance organisations and/or companies of Africa, America and Europe met at the Taborda Theatre in Lisbon for two days in June 2002 in the 5th Meeting Dançar o que é Nosso (*Dancing What is Ours*), which was held at the same time as the festival Danças na Cidade. The meeting was to reflect on four main themes – “mobility and touring”, “financing and finances”, “information and communication” and “training and exchange” –, but many other associated questions were brought up during the discussions. The predominant idea was the need for close collaboration, a true exchange that recognizes the lack of knowledge of the partners involved and their wish to contribute to improving mutual development. This sentiment was constantly repeated in words such as “we need each other, Africa needs Europe and Europe needs Africa”.

The participants in the meeting were: Alida Neslo (Dasarts, Holland), Ann Rosenthal (Mapp, USA), Boyzie Cekwana (Floating Outfit, South Africa), Dieter Jaenicke (Arhus Festival, Denmark), Dominique Thiange (Africalia, Belgium), Emanuel Brandão (Raiz di Polon, Cape Verde), Georgina Thomson (Dance Umbrella, South Africa), Germaine Acogny (JANT-BI, Senegal), Lenka Flory (Cia Déja Donné, Czech Republic, Italy), Lia Rodrigues, (Panorama Rioarte, Brazil), Mark Deputter (Danças na Cidade, Portugal), Mary Ann de Vlieg (IETM, Europe), Nganti Towo (Festival Kaay Fecc, Senegal), Opiyo Okach (Cie Opiyo Okach, Kenya), Panaibra Gabriel (Culturarte, Mozambique), Suzette Le Sueur (Dance Factory, South Africa), Theo van Rompay (P.A.R.T.S., Belgium), Vicky Geller (Africalia, Belgium) and Virgine Dupray (Centre National de Danse Centre, France).



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The following report is the summary of the meeting that was possible. Some possible disequilibrium among the questions announced must be pointed out, a fact that was due to the poor sound recording conditions and the consequent difficulty in writing down the conversations.

### Training

The inadequate training of teachers who, in many cases, possess a poor knowledge of artistic activity was one of the facts mentioned for the low level of dance teaching. One aspect that was condemned was the fact that "many of the artistic viewpoints of dance training and much of the teaching policy are elaborated by academics and not by professionals with artistic activity in the area".

Let's start by identifying the low qualification of teachers, an aspect that becomes even more worrying if we take into account that the ideal situation would be for dance to be taught in public schools. Germaine Acogny (JANT-BI) gives the example of Senegal: "It is incomprehensible that dance is not

taught in school, there is no tradition... If there were, everybody could learn to dance in school and could then choose if they wanted to turn professional. It is very important that we become the teachers of teachers".

The need to guaranty the qualification of the teacher is obvious. «What is happening in France is that many people from Africa who never danced in their countries go there to make money. What they teach is not tradition, it's a mixture. The Africans come, see a fashion in Europe and give very bad classes.» Theo Van Rompay (P.A.R.T.S., Belgium) qualifies this reality of proliferation of schools of flamenco or African dance as «dance supermarket».

One of the questions that remained unanswered was how to offer students quality in their training experience. One of the ideas put forward was collaboration among institutions of different countries. Exchange, even between teachers, is seen as a proposal to be considered, as it could produce significant improvements in the quality of teaching. There is a possibility of P.A.R.T.S. going to an African country in

order to provide and receive training. Another collaborative project, between DasArts (Holland) and École des Sables, is aimed at exchange between students of both schools at various levels.

There are many prejudices to combat in regard to the importance of qualified exchanges in the field of teaching and artistic creation. One example of this, according to Germaine Acogny, is the fact that there is an inclination to welcome art from Europe and America in detriment to that of Africa. Germaine saw this tendency overcome, exceptionally, when she was invited to work in Brazil. She recalls this experience as extremely positive as it led to an increase in the interest as to what was being done in Senegal, but it was not enough to give continuity to a more regular or productive collaboration with that country. Another preconceived idea was pointed out by Suzette Le Sueur (Dance Factory, Johannesburg, South Africa), who proposes that people look at what already exists instead of insisting in trying to create something supposedly new when, in fact, it is already a reality that only needs to be recognized and developed so as to make

it more efficient. One case of this, according to Suzette, is the fact that there are already teachers in Africa, "it is only necessary that they start being recognized".

Emanuel Brandão of dance company Raiz di Polon (Cape Verde) described what happens regarding informal teaching in Cape Verde. "All the dancers of Raiz di Polon teach and direct workshops, also for traditional dancers who wish to learn contemporary dance. They give informal classes in which they invite friends to participate. We do not have the tradition to pay for these lessons. There is no dancing in public schools. There is rhythmic gymnastics, but chiefly for children. People love dancing, but it is something that is natural..."

Mano Preto (the name by which Emanuel Brandão is known in the dance world) said he had learned contemporary dance in Portugal with choreographers such as Clara Andermatt and with Mónica Lapa through participating in the project Dançar o que é Nosso. But while the creator chose to return to Cape Verde he

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noticed that his fellow-artists were leaving the country. "We have lost some good dancers in the last seven years. Some come to Europe, above all Portugal, and do not return because they have no chance in Cape Verde as they cannot live from dancing".

The panorama is different in Mozambique, according to David Abílio (Africa Theatre and National Song and Dance Company of Mozambique). There is a national dance school and private schools, but there is still a lot of ignorance.

### Contemporary dance versus traditional dance

Preconceived ideas (like the preference of the public for traditional African dance) can give rise to creative restraint. It is felt that in Africa people are "confined in their bodies and confined in their heads", although there are some who develop a personal work within the historical and geographical context in which they find themselves. But even these have to face the common situation of people wanting to see an African dancer interpret traditional

dance. "The choreographer Boyzie Cekwana used classical dance to express himself at a conference in New York in 1995. The Americans were amazed. They asked why, as he was African, he did not interpret African dance. Nobody has the right to tell choreographers from South Africa what they should or should not do. Looking at Boyzie's development, it can be seen that he has come a long way and is now a long way from the training he had, which included African traditional dance, ballet and contemporary dance. But this training allowed him to reinvent African dance".

But also the African view of Europe is riddled with preconceived ideas. "The legacy of slavery takes a long time to be eradicated" and there are contexts that change meanings, like the complex and subjective notion of contemporary dance. Germaine Acogny maintains that what she dances is recognised in Africa as contemporary, but in Europe it is seen as traditional, which she rejects. "We are contemporary within time, but not in relation to a style at this moment. To me, this means freedom within discipline. Discipline is necessary,

as with everything, but then one is free to do what one wishes".

It was pointed out by Opiyo Okach (Opiyo Okach Company, Kenya) that the predominance of traditional dance, in many African countries, is linked to tourism. "We have traditional dance. It is something that has existed for many centuries, but is today placed in a different context. The idea of creating a new work with a new language is something for which there is naturally no space. If one produces traditional dance and presents it for tourists, there is a market; if one produces a more original, creative work, there is neither public nor a place to present it".

### Financing for survival

**The example of the Companhia Nacional de Canto e Dança - Mozambique**  
David Abílio, director of the Africa Theatre and the Mozambique National Song and Dance Company, favors the development of his company in three ways, taking the reality of his country into account: civic education, traditional dance and approximation to

a more contemporary creative practice.

As far as many African companies are concerned, the international market represents the means to finance their artistic activity. Even so, it only allows "survival". The money from ticket sales at the Africa Theatre, even when sold out, is not enough to defray expenses and patrons are non-existent. The Mozambique National Song and Dance Company is financed through three main sources: 25% comes from the government, 25% from ticket sales (tours and shows) and 50% from sponsorship and international organisations. Sponsors include the Ford Foundation of the United States, an organisation that is very active in its support for African culture, and the European Union. David Abílio also referred to other sources of finance, mainly from the Scandinavian countries.

David Abílio's company has drawn up its own strategy to attract sponsors: "We have an annual programme, finalized in September of the year before the activities to which it refers, which we send to the sponsors, who in turn choose the type of initiative they are

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interested in supporting. We start receiving replies the following year, informing us if they want to back presentation, production or training. Sponsorship by national organisations works like this, but it is not regular". He gives examples of national sponsors such as the Machel Foundation.

All in all, the Mozambique National Song and Dance Company is an exception. The dancers receive a fixed monthly wage and have an annual contract, which provides them with stability and financial rewards, above the national average. In a country where "most of the companies are not professional and are made up of students or people who have other jobs and dedicate themselves to dance in their spare time", there are no "professional structures for artists", according to David Abílio. The financial viability of these small companies does not depend on the support of international organisations, as these demand a high degree of bureaucracy and imply the collaboration of specialists in the field of economy. In the case of Mozambique, there is a Fund

for Cultural Development, which provides funds for day to day expenses in all fields of art. But it is difficult to get access to this Fund.

### The experience of Raiz di Polon (Cape Verde)

The financial viability of Raiz di Polon is maintained by means of tours and co-productions. Despite being recognized in Cape Verde for its work (in 2001 it won the award as the most important cultural entity of the country, a prize already attributed to Cesária Évora), it receives no backing from the government. Emanuel Brandão says he has no knowledge of the existence of any fund for the arts, but any money that may be available for culture is never attributed to dance but is channeled to areas like the theatre or visual arts. In Cape Verde, the company is seen as being made up of "stars". He says that: "people think we are rich because we travel a lot, but we have great difficulties". One guaranteed concrete support, is that theatres allow the company to use their premises free of charge.

Raiz di Polon splits its year in two parts. The first is for creating new work, the

second is for touring. This is the only way it can guarantee its survival. In the last two years the new pieces have been made possible through co-production with a European partner, namely Danças na Cidade.

### Bureaucratic difficulties

One of the problems the African dance companies face is the difficulty to elaborate projects that, in formal terms, correspond to the characteristics required by the international organisations that potentially have financial capacity to subsidise them. As much interesting the proposals might be, there is a declared difficulty in the formal preparation of official documents. This handicap represents an extra cost, as specialized persons need to be paid to make the application, without knowing if the support will be granted. It was recommended that the documents to be filled out should be simplified and adapted to the reality they are intended for.

One example how this difficulty can be suppressed is mentioned by Mark Deputter (Danças na Cidade) referring to

a North-American organisation, Help Desk, which orients independent companies in their management – administration and fund raising – and is financed by foundations. But the difficulty, in this example, is how can one create a structure like that in a country where there isn't even a fund to be managed?

### Changing mentalities

One of the problems that dance faces in Africa is the fact that it is seen as a natural condition of the African, a reality that exists on the streets, where one can find people singing, dancing... This frees the government from responsibility, as it feels that it does not need to subsidise something that exists naturally. This means that a lot of work has to be done in order to change mentalities, a process that has already begun, according to David Abílio: "New groups of young men and women that make it possible to affirm that dance is also a form of art have started to appear. But we still have a long way to go to attain recognition that dance is a form of art." The profession of dancer is a new reality

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that still has to be recognized. It needs a legal framework that, in most cases, is non-existent and that has to be built up from the inside, through internal progress. There is a mentality that also refuses to recognize the importance of contemporary dance, as it is seen as irrelevant for national culture, and that constantly defends the importance of traditional dance. It is a discourse that is sustained by the ignorance on the part of responsible entities of what contemporary dance is and what it can mean.

Public preference for traditional dance – supposedly more representative of the culture and the feelings of the African than contemporary dance – is not exclusive to Africa, but it does have a more visible impact on the creativity in the countries of this continent. It presupposes a “dangerous definition” of what “the dance of a country should be”. And this can become even more dangerous when African countries are seen as homogeneous, when in fact the cultural and geographical diversity is a largely undiscovered wealth.

### **Mutual ignorance**

African dance festivals don't know each other well enough. At present, initiatives to hold meetings to promote a possible co-ordination and collaboration are beginning to appear and African national theatres are being encouraged to elaborate a strategy so that they can work together in the future. This initiative may make it possible to attract sponsors more easily, as it will allow them to see a spectacle in which they have invested performed in a larger number of auditoria and cities. This articulation does not exist at the moment but it should be seen as a proposal to follow up, even when taking into account the different sensibilities and the various degrees of motivation for cultural collaboration.

### **Communication and information**

The Internet can be a crucial vehicle for the dissemination of information, as can be seen from the case of the Centre National de la Danse in Paris (which is developing a web site with the intention of making it one of the biggest dance data bases in the world, not exclusively

for French choreography and targeting a wider public, rather than only professionals). Discussion groups can be created via the Internet as a continuation of training initiatives, to further discussions on specific dance themes or as a way to make up for physical absence (as is the case of many projects developed by Ghislaine Boddington, Shinkansen London). Still, this immense potential often remains untapped because of the ignorance of new technologies in many African countries, to which must be added the diversity of local languages that coexist in any one country. Information often circulates by oral communication, especially in rural areas, which implies a huge personal effort when working with the community.

### **Financing and mobility**

The difficulty of making a tour in Brazil and Latin America begins with the financing. Companies have to arrange funds to cover all expenses at the outset, as box office receipts come later, a fact that determines the short life of performances on tour. One of the main sponsors of tours in Brazil is Petrobrás (the oil company).

One of the main difficulties in Africa pointed out by Georgina Thomson (Dance Umbrella, Johannesburg, South Africa) is the non-existence of structures that enable companies to communicate with dance agents easily, a simple thing such as offices working daily with faxes and telephones. This deficiency makes it impossible to exchange information and establish relations of mutual collaboration and so contacts and the possibility of staging shows are lost.

In the specific case of African francophone countries, such as Burkina Faso, where it is difficult to arrange spaces to work and where the government cannot afford to subsidise tours, sponsorship comes from the AFAA (French Association of Artistic Action) – which works through the “Afrique en Création” programme – and other French organisations. The money pays for travelling, does not cover expenses for food and accommodation, but does support festivals. These, in turn, manage to cover their financial deficit and carry out their programmes. Festivals, therefore, shoulder the burden of creating opportunities to present the work of African creators, except in rare

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cases in which a creator or company enjoys extraordinary conditions to present performances. This situation can cause some surprise, as it continues, up to a point, the dependence on an institution of a colonising country. It raises the question of the influence that this factor may or may not have on the production of art.

Another question that was raised in relation to the support given for tours, is the fact that foreign institutions, such as the Goethe Institut, are motivated to support the presence of a German artist in, for instance, Brazil, but find it difficult to invest money to take a Brazilian company to Germany. How can one arrange funds from European organisations to finance projects in African countries or in Brazil?

Foundations mentioned include the Ford and Philip Morris foundations. Whatever the situation, the question of financing tours depends on the financial capacity of the company itself, as support is never 100% of what is needed.

Another problem that has to be faced is the fact that some foundations back cultural projects that have a social or

educational component. This is a facet that needs to be clarified and which could lead to the acquisition of new sources of finance by means of a possible reformulation of the discourse of projects. This need not entail a change in the proposals put forward by creators and artistic organisations interested in requesting these funds.

Another question raised was the case of Brussels (Belgium), where foreign institutions have set up a network – Goethe, British and Cervantes Institutes – due to the presence of the European Commission in that city. This has led to collaboration of these institutions in some joint programmes. The question was raised in order to find out if similar networks existed in other countries, but no reply was forthcoming.

### The case of Brazil

Brazil is a very specific case in the context of contemporary dance. The cultural diversity and geographic immensity of the country creates a very peculiar reality in which two distinct panoramas must be taken into account, as Lia Rodrigues (Panorama Rioarte, Rio de Janeiro) pointed out: one refers to

the great urban centres, namely Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, and the other to the rest of the country. "The problem of mobility lies in the fact that we do not have support in the cities in the north and interior of the country to present work and it is very difficult to find interlocutors. Despite this, we have tried to set up the embryo of a network that will lead to more efficient mobility and a greater capacity to arrange funds in places such as São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Rio Grande do Sul, Brasília, Rio Grande do Norte and Fortaleza. But the country is enormous. I can only present my company in cities near Rio de Janeiro, which is a very positive city in this respect because we have the backing of the City Hall". The problem of travelling in Brazil is mostly a question of money to do so and, when this difficulty is overcome, we face the problem of finding theatres to present our show. There are several reasons for this, one of them being the poor state of the theatres in Brazil.

### Working proposals and/or reflection

- The need to find models for financing at various levels that can be

used as an example.

- Find people with the sensibility and specific knowledge for the areas that need to be developed.

- Elaborate a structured and wide-ranging overview on existing financial programmes and systems related to mobility, co-production, co-operation between Europe and Africa, within Africa and between Africa and South America.

- Create programmes of dance information and training that can be presented on the Internet, or through videos and books, that makes information more efficient (there is an idea to produce an "information box" with books, magazines and videos on dance).

- Set up an effective nucleus of co-operation with a small group of people in order to launch a more open, structural support model for dance in Africa, which would not impose the ideas of the sponsors and could be based on a wider support network so as to find co-producers, arrange funds, partners, etc. One of the intentions is to set up an African Fund for the Arts.

Cláudia Galhós

# crossroads

IETM (Informal European Theatre Meeting) is grateful to:

The European Community for support under the budget line  
'support to organisations who support European culture'

The Ministry of Culture of the Flemish Community of Belgium

The Ministry of Culture of the French Community of Belgium

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Sciences of the  
Netherlands

Africalia, Belgium

This publication is associated with a series of meetings  
between African and European performing arts professionals  
which have been - and will continue to be - organised and  
supported by a number of committed individuals,  
organisations and institutions. The meetings include but are  
not limited to:

Danças na Cidade / Dançar O Que é Nosso, Lisbon, November  
1999 and June 2002

IETM / Africalia Satellite Meeting, Brussels, 12 - 15 March  
2003

IETM Annual Plenary Meeting, Birmingham 9 - 12 October  
2003

