

POLITICS OF PERFORMANCE: NEGOTIATING CONTEMPORARY DANCE IN POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA FOR ADVOCACY OF MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES¹

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Abstract

This essay explores the use of Contemporary Dance by South African “choreo-activists”, as I call them, in creating work for marginalized communities. Among the latter, I analyze the stereotypes and violence faced by members of LGBTQ communities, as well as by dancers with mixed abilities. The essay explores the scholarly contributions on “disability dance” made by Professor Gerard Samuel, Head of the School of Dance at the University of Cape Town, and by Professor Lliane Loots at the University of KwaZulu Natal, among other scholarly readings on disability, medical and social information exploring ongoing struggles of access and acceptance for mixed ability dancers and audiences.

Keywords

Discrimination against LGBTQ communities and mixed ability dancers in South Africa; scholars; “choreo-activists” of disability dance; creative choreography by Mamela Nyamza and Remix Dance Company in post-apartheid South Africa

The porous nature of the art form [i.e. Contemporary Dance] facilitates inclusion of a range of movement expressions and this adaptability and deconstruction of hegemonies comprise a fertile space for dancers and choreographers alike. [...] [Contemporary Dance Theater as a form is] being altered by a growing presence of persons with disabilities who challenge not only their right of inclusion within dance as an art form but also the social construct of the “dancing body”. [...] In boldly arguing for dance to be performed by all persons/human beings much could be taught to 21st century youth-obsessed cultures and xenophobic societies. (Samuel, 2009, p. 1)

1 Parts of this essay were first presented at the “Confluences 8” Conference, 16–18 July 2015, School of Dance, University of Cape Town, South Africa, under the title “Negotiating Contemporary Dance in Africa”.

The construction of normative perfect moving bodies has been about excluding a body living with disability; now, critical Contemporary Dance has had to heed the agenda of truly democratizing who can dance and what a dancer should look like. Not all dance education is about creating theatre dancers but rather, too, that the ability to dance and move can become one of the fundamental rights of freedom of expression that all learners should access. (Loots, 2015, p. 9)

Marginalized communities such as the disabled in post-apartheid South Africa use Contemporary Dance / Creative Dance as a preferred form. In this essay, I discuss the potency of this form for the disabled, and the advocacy work of choreo-activists, as I term them. Although South Africa's young democracy (since 1994) guarantees rights of sexual orientation and equal access to the physically challenged, the realities on the ground are strikingly different. I argue that African Contemporary Dance Theater, with its openness of movement vocabularies, provides effective and affective tools of advocacy for artists, choreographers, and socially engaged scholars to challenge stereotypes of the disabled and the sexually "deviant" among LGBTQ communities (the acronym LGBTQ includes lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer). Further, such representations participate in creating a socially just environment that recuperates the denuded humanity of marginalized groups and accepts them as artists.

Gerard Samuel's advocacy work in disability dance uses "creative dance as the methodology for disability dance [...]. Dance became a mediator where disabled dance and mainstream performance dance began to bump and intertwine" (Samuel, 2012, p. 128). The emphasis is not on training and technique but rather on self-expression and communication of a myriad of stories told from the point of view of the disabled. Award-winning black choreographer Mamele Nyamza argues against violence directed at lesbians in a collaborative work, *I Stand Corrected* (with UK-based Mojisola Adebayo), which critiques homophobia and challenges the horrific phrase "corrective rape" used to "justify" male violence in raping and murdering lesbians in order to "correct" them. Both Samuel and Nyamza use the multidisciplinary form of Contemporary African Dance Theater, which brings together the verbal, kinetic, and aural in affective performances.

Gerard Samuel, a South African of Indian descent (of the 4th generation) who grew up outside Durban, has several "firsts" in his life and career. He was the first "colored" person to learn ballet, his passion since he was a young boy, during apartheid with its racial structure of white, black, and the colored as the middle, buffer zone. Currently, he is the first colored South African to be appointed Head of the School of Dance at the University of Cape Town (UCT), where he has augmented the curriculum to include Disability Dance Studies.

Contemporary African Dance

Contemporary Dance and, within Contemporary Dance, the delineation of "Creative Dance" provide the space and freedom to explore the body's movement potential, including its limits for different body types. Such an avenue is more open-ended than the strictures of any classical form such as

ballet, which has strict regimes of movement, not open to adaptation for differently able bodies. As Gerard Samuel (2007, p. 139) remarks: "Disability dance has the unique power to reposition contemporary theatre dance notions."

In the South African context, with its colonial and apartheid legacies, unconscious norms that still prefer the normative, thin ballet body prevail. As Juanita Finestone argues effectively in her MA mini-thesis entitled *The Politics and Poetics of Choreography: The Dancing Body in South African Dance* (1995), postmodernism that favors multiplicity over unitary (such as a "common" identity in the "rainbow nation"), that fragments rather than unifies identities, that challenges debilitating binaries (inherited from Western epistemologies) of high/low art or, to extend this, the able/disabled, offers useful avenues for choreographers to explore. "Postmodern choreographic strategies," Finestone (1995, p. 2) points out, are useful "for formulating and articulating new dance directions in South Africa". Contemporary Dance in this context welcomes a palimpsest of various vocabularies and welcomes different body types to experiment with movement and music. Finestone's distinction between "the social body" and "the dancing body" is useful to discuss marginalized bodies – blacks, disabled, lesbians. As Finestone (ibid.) suggests, it is useful to "demystify and deconstruct [...] previous *official* representations of the dancing body".

Since marginalized communities – disabled and LGBTQ – favor Contemporary Dance in their work, it is important to discuss its history in the South African context, especially the Contemporary Dance Conference hosted by JOMBA! in August 2004 in Durban. What changes/continuities do we observe from 2004 to 2015? Lliane Loots, Lecturer at the University of KwaZulu Natal and Artistic Director of Flatfoot Dance Company, continues to be a powerful advocate for the marginalized in her spearheading training programs for disadvantaged children and youth, and in her choreographic work for the Company. In speaking of Contemporary Dance, it is important, as Loots argues in her article in *Agenda* (2015), to seek alternatives to canonic and received notions of Modern/Contemporary Dance from the global North following pioneers such as Graham and Cunningham. Loots probes methodologies appropriate for the global South and the South African context, when, even in post-apartheid times, class often supersedes race. It is crucial not to be "homogenized" in universal, i.e. Western, notions of dance but to remain rooted in South African local issues such as poverty, HIV/AIDS, unequal gender norms under traditional patriarchy, and rigid roles for boys and girls.

In a useful article entitled "Under Fire: Defining a Contemporary African Dance Aesthetic – Can it be Done?" (about the JOMBA! 2004 conference) Gilbert Douglas et al. (2006) remark: "Practitioners from around Africa engaged powerfully" with this topic. "Their discussion revealed mostly divergent, occasionally intersecting and often heated opinions on the issue, clearly indicating that the notion of what constitutes an African Contemporary Dance aesthetic is highly contested" (ibid., p. 103). Sichel (ibid., p. 109) quotes Gregory Maqoma's remark that "each choreographer and artist has a responsibility of cultural translation to mediate but not be swallowed up". Several participants spoke of researching their own indigenous traditions, creating a

“new body language”, even being open to borrowing/appropriating styles from other places while keeping their own identity and integrity. Some speakers connected the word “contemporary” to our present technological age. While some embraced the word “African”, others wanted to be regarded as “artists” who could belong anywhere. There is an overt or unspoken expectation that, even while doing “Contemporary Dance”, a dancer must show that s/he is influenced by “traditional dance”. Or else, one might be accused of trying to be a European. Augusto Cuvilas (ibid., p. 107) expressed discomfort with the designation “African Dance”, since which Africa and which Africans are included in that? Also in talking of Contemporary Dance, he asks if one “is talking of technique or style or aesthetics” (ibid.).

Another conundrum was that, if “Contemporary Dance” is associated with the West, and with modern dance, how could this be brought together with indigenous African traditional dance with its own techniques? Would this endeavor end up as another form of colonization? If traditional and contemporary were “fused”, would the African identity of dance be lost? Would this only become another expression of what Zakhele Mhlongo (ibid., p. 112) describes as “conforming to the universal aesthetic of Contemporary Dance”?

In a review of Lliane Loots and Miranda Young-Jehangeer’s edited volume, *African Contemporary Dance? Questioning Issues of a Performance Aesthetic for a Developing and Independent Continent*, Vasu Reddy (2007, p. 117) astutely points out “the essential ambiguity” of the title. Does the title point to “a type of dance practice” or does it express “resistance [...] to any fixed, redetermined classification”? Does “African Contemporary Dance” point to “the ontology and epistemology” of this genre? Does the question mark after African Contemporary Dance register “possible fault lines”? Reddy (ibid.) points out that participants emphasize the interface between their contexts and their creative work, which share a symbiotic relationship. In the myriad ways that African Contemporary Dance can be delineated, in its postcolonial context, this style is “characterized by hybridity (emphasis on appropriation, assimilation, synthesis and questioning)” (ibid., p. 118). While there can hardly be consensus on a single or even a set of definitions of African Contemporary Dance, it is significant to continue critical reflection of both theory and practice that blends both personal experience and testimony with political and cultural analyses. It is important, as Reddy (ibid., p. 120) notes, to “rethink and conceptualize African Contemporary Dance in non-essentialist frameworks that open up stimulating interpretative modalities focused on a rich, engaging and creative performance project”.

I now turn to the use of Contemporary African Dance Theater by marginalized communities, disabled and LGBTQ, who continue to face the harsh realities of race with attendant inhumane degradation faced particularly by blacks during and after apartheid. In South Africa’s young democracy (since 1994) the Constitution guarantees rights to all its citizens of diverse races, ethnic groups, sexual orientations, and physical abilities (categories that are not even mentioned in the Constitutions of other African nations). However, the road to full recognition and equal access for blacks, the disabled, and the LGBTQ communities is a long and difficult one even though the

Department of Education's White Paper (2001) states that "inclusive education" (or "integrated education") for "the disabled and the able-bodied is part of a human rights culture" in South Africa. As Gerard Samuel (2012, p. 139) remarks, "[i]n South Africa's fledgling democracy, the re-prioritizing of disability within the human rights debate meant that through Creative Dance, the voice of the disabled could be heard". Similarly, Liane Loots (2009, n.p.) advocates in agreement with "radical education theorist Paula Freire, [who] offers alternative ways of imagining a localized education paradigm that allows for the agenda of growing people rather than [...] Northern-based economic and social agendas – and indeed, dance practices". Further, Loots (ibid.) points out that "in post-apartheid South Africa education divisions are no longer along race lines but still exist in terms of class and what school you are able to access or afford to attend. Often township schools (for example) are still beleaguered by poorly trained teachers and no cultural programmes due to funding cuts". Above all, I agree with Loots that dance education is less about "a well-pointed foot" but about "this agenda of 'growing people'; that education and pedagogy should be about [as Freire puts it] 'becoming more fully human'. [...] Dance education can become a site of activism for rethinking who we are both locally and globally and what we are worth" (ibid.).

Sexual orientation: Marginalization and violence against LGBTQ communities

Art has developed me, and opened a totally different book for me to explore the impossible, which is now possible. [...] I love my art [dance] because we have this powerful tool that speaks to all without a word. Giving back to the community is helping those that come from where I come from [Gugulethu, Cape Town], and showing them that this art [...] can heal a lot of them that are born out of issues just like myself. (Nyamza cited in Brand South Africa, 2011)

Mamela Nyamza, winner of South Africa's prestigious 2011 Standard Bank Young Artist Award Winner for Dance, grew up in the 1980s in Gugulethu, Cape Town. She was born on 22 September 1976 (the historic year of the Soweto student uprising) into a large family, and connected with dance from a young age as a means to understand the world around her. At age 8, in 1984, as apartheid's racist policies were being increasingly challenged, Nyamza started ballet classes at the Zama Dance School in Gugulethu with a white Jewish woman, Arlene Westergaard. She then completed a national Diploma in Ballet at the Pretoria Technikon Dance Department in Pretoria.² Like other black women aspiring to become ballet dancers, Nyamza also faced the usual prejudices of not having a thin body type, nearly a compulsory requirement for female ballet dancers.

2 I rely on prominent South African arts critic and journalist Adrienne Sichel's unpublished essay, "Legacies of Violence/Art Resolution: Mamela Nyamza and Fellow Trailblazers" (2014), for biographical details on Nyamza. I am grateful to Sichel for sharing a copy of her essay with me.

Nyamza's yearlong fellowship at the Alvin Ailey Dance Company in New York City was significant in validating her black female body in the ballet studio.

Nyamza, like choreo-activist Gerard Samuel, is committed to community educational work through dance. She has been project coordinator for the University of Stellenbosch's Project Move 1524, which uses dance movement therapy to educate and demonstrate on issues relating to HIV/AIDS, domestic violence and drug abuse. She believes passionately in empowering youth through dance training, from teaching ballet in Mamelodi to doing volunteer work at Thembaletu Day School for the Disabled.

Nyamza's own mother was raped and killed, a horrifyingly scarring experience for the daughter. She began to use her autobiographical material as she developed her own strong, unique signature style. "After my mother died," remarks Nyamza (2009, n.p.), "I could feel her in my dreams telling me to use my dance to tell real stories. I also later came out of the closet and I started experiencing discrimination in society and that's when I thought, 'you know, I'm an artist, so let me be the voice that addresses all these issues'." Nyamza remarks (ibid.) that she had "forced" herself "to live the model life women are expected to have, that of getting married and having a child. But I realized I was not myself [...] I came out as a lesbian and left my husband for a woman. [...] Since then I blossomed into the artist I have always wanted to be".

Nyamza describes *I Stand Corrected* (her collaborative work with Modisola Adebayo) as "dark strange, witty, and absurd". The piece evokes issues of homophobia and rape via layered movement, props, and symbolic gestures.³ Adrienne Sichel, prominent South African arts critic, in her aforementioned essay "Legacies of Violence" (2014, n.p.) comments on this work as "a passionate response to an epidemic of rape and murder in South Africa". A real event – the gruesome murder of a lesbian woman whose body was dumped into a garbage bin – provided urgency and inspiration for *I Stand Corrected*. Nyamza plays the murdered woman who returns to her female lover after her death to "correct herself". According to Sichel (ibid.), "*I Stand Corrected* weaves a theatrical spell through a fractured, dramatic narrative which succinctly choreographs an epitaph for ordinary people textured with love, pain, loss, brutality and dignity [...] a landmark dance theatre work which marries the skills, experience, sensitivity, sensuality and artistry of two African artists – a theatre director, actor and playwright and an uncompromising dancer and choreographer. The final message is love is stronger than death" (ibid.).

Disability Dance

Let me begin this section with an example of how Contemporary Dance movement, its free and "porous" nature, to use Samuel's word quoted in the epigraph, along with its use of music and rhythm, provides an artistic avenue for differently able dancing bodies to express themselves

3 A short trailer of this work is available on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DWpccCym-RY>

as dancers and as full human beings. As Coralie Valentyn (2015) remarked in her paper presented at the SDHS/CORD Conference in Athens, Greece, “[d]isability expands the possibilities of dance. [...] Disability creates new possibilities in dance choreography [in which] the vocabulary of movement is radically expanded”. Further, Valentyn (ibid.) regards “integrated dance as making new meaning in South Africa where new identities can be imagined”. Disability Dance enables viewers to challenge ideas around bodies and abilities, accepting the fact that not all bodies are perfect. It is equally a challenge for able-bodied dancers to learn how to work with the differently able. The able-bodied dancers need training, flexibility, and reciprocity, not simply sympathy. They have to rethink what dance is, and to transform their normative aesthetic responses.

Also, at the 2015 SDHS/CORD Conference, Professor Lisa Doolittle of the University of Alberta shared her experiences of running an “All Abilities” rather than a “Mixed Abilities Class” (Paper presentation). Doolittle (2015) renamed the category of the “disabled” as dancers “with” and dancers “without”, in fact making the able-bodied carry the negative connotation rather than the ones “with”. Students “with and without”, as Doolittle noted, omitting the word “disability”, created a work entitled *Unlimited Party*, inviting the audience to enter what Doolittle called “a new conceptual terrain” that created a sense of inclusion with 7 simple works: “May I please have this dance?” High-class ballroom dance expectations were deconstructed as differently able bodies moved on stage, “demonstrating their limitlessness”. This work activated empathy rather than sympathy in positively affective ways. Rather than a charity model, the audience was inspired to rediscover how social justice projects involve the whole community.

This is reminiscent of John Mthethwa’s “perseverance over a 20-year period” in using “ballroom dance, arguably one of the most codified forms”, as Gerard Samuel (2012, pp. 136–137) comments, “to provide for the physical and social upliftment of the disabled in KwaMashu and Umlazi [the black townships which surround Durban]”.

In Cape Town, Remix Dance Project (since 2000) has accomplished its mission of including differently able dancers in highly evocative Contemporary Dance choreographies. Loots (2015, p. 4) describes Remix’s work with different bodies as “its impulse towards a type of visceral democracy that honours difference, be this racial, gendered, or disabled”. Award-winning choreographers like Nicola Visser and Malcolm Black of Remix “argue for legitimacy of the disabled as dancer and valued human being” and assert the subversive quality of their work. As the first and one of the longest-standing integrated dance companies in the country, Remix seeks, through its work, to educate and challenge attitudes and policies that concern the disabled with programs of high artistic excellence. In particular, social and cultural attitudes towards dance, gender and disability within the dance world are tackled. Their mission is “to strive to create innovative dance theatre performance and education programmes that bring together people with different body histories, body types and abilities” (cited in Loots, 2015, p. 4). Great emphasis is placed on audience development in the disabled communities where transport is difficult and where a culture

of watching theatre and dance still needs to be fostered in all South African sectors. Remix continues to pioneer innovative productions and collaborations.

Similar to Remix's mission, UK-based Jasmine Pasch recognizes that teaching dance to the physically challenged is one task; equally important is "to open the minds of able-bodied people to what (the disabled) are capable of" (cited in Samuel, 2012, p. 132). Samuel (ibid.) remarks that "in 1996, Jasmine Pasch, a unique dance teacher working with disabled youth, was arguably the first to encourage expression of the latent dance within disabled children that emerged on Durban's opera stage".

I shall now discuss one of Remix's works (available on YouTube), *On Your Island Does the Night Fall Later?*, with dancers Nicola Visser and Malcolm Black, the latter in a wheelchair. This was presented in 2001 at the prestigious FNB Dance Umbrella in Johannesburg. When both dancers are on the floor, there is a sense of equality between the two differently able bodies. The upper body of the male dancer in wheelchair begins to imitate the standing female dancer. As the wheelchair spins, there is a sense of motion as the able-bodied dancer runs around the wheelchair. At one point, the wheelchair tilts and is balanced at a diagonal. The shadows on the wall make both figures larger than life. The able-bodied Nicola sits on top of the male body in the wheelchair. As the male in the chair gently pushes her off, he demonstrates physical strength and agency. She approaches him and drags him down to the floor, and the two bodies are on top of each other. Such creative expression makes audiences look at rather than look away, as often happens when encountering someone in a wheelchair or with a visible disability. "Looking away from people who make us uncomfortable," remarks Rosemarie Garland-Thomson (2009, p. 83), "differs from granting them visual anonymity. Looking away is an active denial of acknowledgment rather than the tacit tipping of one's hat to ordinary fellow citizens expressed in simply not noticing one another. Looking away is [...] a deliberate obliteration of personhood."

Similar to Remix's mission and values, Gerard Samuel advocates for able-bodied and disabled dancers to work together. Samuel has worked with disabled children in Europe who receive more state funding than in South Africa. In Denmark, Samuel has pioneered several integrated disability arts programs, most notably *Who Says, The Ugly Duckling?*, for three years, in collaboration with educationist Lene Bang-Larsen of Klubvest, Albertslund, Denmark. *Who Says, The Ugly Duckling?* was created in an after-care center for the mentally handicapped from ages 13–20. Five episodes of *The Ugly Duckling* explored notions of the insider/outsider for the disabled using the popular Hans Christian Anderson stories for improvisation. "I have purposefully," remarks Samuel (2009, p. 3), "set out to make works that are socially engaging – that do not ask for the sympathy vote nor are about insipid fairies dancing in the glen. These dances hopefully reposition a 'black is beautiful' and 'the disabled is beautiful' consciousness. As the voice of these dancers matured, these new dance (his)stories saw an increasing acceptance of these differently-abled/otherly-shaped bodies as out and proud dancers who had something of significance to say."

Speaking from the South African context, Samuel (ibid., p. 2) remarks that society views “a person with disabilities as deviant, separates ‘them’ from ‘our’ society (sic) and inflates the position of power and superiority for able-bodied, white and female persons”. Additionally, South Africa’s apartheid system validated ballet as norm, and as performed by perfect, thin bodies. Samuel (cited in Loots, 2015, p. 9) points out that disabled people face barriers to arts training, funding and “inclusion of disabled community’s contribution of artistic product as work”.

Samuel’s significant advocacy as choreo-activist and scholar for the disabled in South Africa includes his work (before he assumed his position as Head of the School of Dance at UCT) as Education Officer within communities and in schools around Durban always striving to integrate rather than segregate the disabled in “Special Needs” programmes that, though well-meaning, perpetuate social stigma. As noted in *Durban Arts* (1998), “[t]eachers of the disabled have been involved in skills workshops and dance courses in creative developmental movement hosted by the Playhouse Company whose education and development dance coordinator Gerard Samuel has been working with 90 pupils from nine schools in the greater Durban area. They will present their shared dance works” entitled *Journeys in Dance* and *Dance Dreams* at the Playhouse Theater in Durban.

Samuel has also written several important scholarly essays in this field, such as “Undressing the (W)rapper: Disability Dance” (2007), in which he asks *why* Disability Dance is *not* considered dance. How are dance forms judged consciously or subconsciously against the norm of the “perfect” ballet body to which several large black women and most disabled people cannot belong? How can negative stereotypes of differently able people as stupid, dunce, moron, retard – “corrosive labeling”, profoundly damaging for anyone’s self-respect, be challenged? For the disabled, or the physically challenged, or the differently able – a “constant adaptation” of this category, remarks Samuel (ibid., p. 138), is telling as struggle between negative and positive names, and worse, negative attitudes continue. As Lliane Loots (2015, p. 5) asks, “does the inclusion of the disabled body into dance result in a disruption of perceptions around who can dance or is the disabled body asked to ‘transcend disability’ to take on the hallowed title of ‘dancer’?” Loots (ibid., p. 7) states that “what is at stake in the questions is not only audience expectations of a correct dancing body, but the very nature of dance as a form of social, sexual, political and cultural representation”. As Ann Cooper Albright (cited in Loots, 2015, p. 9) notes, “insertion of bodies with real physical challenges can be extremely disconcerting to [...] those who are committed to an aesthetic of ideal beauty”.

Loots (ibid., p. 10) recognizes Gerard Samuel as:

Beginning to profoundly challenge audience assumptions of what constitutes a dancing body. Dance as an art form defines itself on the use of fit, able performers and has often excluded the possibility of challenging the elitism of a dance world, which demands perfect bodies.

Loots, Artistic Director of Flatfoot Dance Company, Durban, also manages Samuel's Durban-based LeftFeetFirst Dance Company since Samuel now lives and works in Cape Town. The very names of these dance companies critique ballet norms such as arched feet, and the notion that many people cannot dance since they supposedly have "two left feet". As Professor Sarah Cordova of the University of Wisconsin-Madison pointed out to me, the names of these companies are symbolic and resonant in advocating for the disabled. "Flatfoot Dance Company takes its name," as Loots (2009, p. 294) states, "from a race legacy that has said many black dancers cannot do certain types of dance forms due to a dropped arch and a 'flat foot'."

Social vs. medical prejudice

For the person who is defined as disabled, a constructed notion of her humanity has over many years been infested by various theoretical constructions including medical, historical, political, and I would even posit a cultural definition which could obscure her human presence as a complex dancing being. (Samuel, 2007, p. 139)

In this final section, I draw attention to the *social* rather than the *medical* difficulties that visibly disabled individuals face in daily life so as to better understand the disabled dancers on stage. In an essay entitled "Dancing Wheelchairs: An Innovative Way to Teach Medical Students about Disability" (2011, p. 886), US-based medical practitioner Johanna Shapiro notes the need to "challenge assumptions often made about individuals with disabilities, such as the inherent difficulty of their lives, their lack of sexuality, even their mobility restriction". Shapiro (ibid.) notes that "the social construction of disability" is different significantly from the medical one. The awkwardness of 'staring at' a disabled person, socially different from 'a clinical gaze', embodies how disability becomes a lens through which all aspects of a person are filtered [...] especially the visibly different other". Shapiro (ibid.) also points out the "fear of contagion" as though disabled people carried an infectious disease and, hence, must not be touched. Rather, disability dance ruptures such stereotypes by showing physical connections, caring gestures, and open empathy.

Shapiro (ibid., p. 887), in response to a DVD entitled *Outside-In* made by the University of California, Los Angeles Professor Victoria Marks, which includes able-bodied and disabled in a work by AXIS Dance company (Oakland, California-based), points out an important response to judging disability dance, namely "the persistent seduction of triumphalism, the need to 'defeat' adversity". Shapiro (ibid.) continues:

I am struck by how often students glorify the skills of the disabled dancers, speaking of them as "inspiring". While given the technical and artistic expertise of the performances, such approbation is not misplaced, it also enables a discussion of how excessive admiration of individuals with disabilities can restrict their full humanity as much as denigration and avoidance.

“People with visible impairments,” as Philip Auslander and Carrie Sandahl (2004, p. 2) remark, “almost always seem to ‘cause a commotion’ in public spaces.” Another scholar, Bree Hadley (2014, p. 2), echoes this idea, namely that a disabled body on the street, or in a theater “becomes a spectacle”. It “becomes the focus,” continues Hadley (ibid.), “of more or less furtive stares as passers-by who attempt to make sense of its startling, unruly or strange corporeality. [...] [This] makes the disabled body a source of curiosity, discomfort, stigma or pity”.

In conclusion, varieties of South African Contemporary Dance used by choreo-activists such as Samuel and Nyamza are, according to Samuel (2011, n.p.), “re-choreographing post-apartheid society”. It is crucial to tell the stories that have yet to be told and also for those stories to be heard. For Samuel, Contemporary Dance Theater in South Africa is one significant tool to rupture power relationships in dance and to work fruitfully towards full access and inclusivity of differently able human beings in post-apartheid society.

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