

The Emergence of Intercultural Dialogues: Children, Disability and Dance in KwaZulu-Natal.

**Case studies of three dance projects held at
The Playhouse Company (1997 - 1999).**

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Abstract

This thesis examines the emerging intercultural dialogues around disability, performance dance and children in the multicultural context of KwaZulu-Natal.

It focuses on creative dance (or modern educational dance), as it has emerged in KwaZulu-Natal schools post-1994. The intervention of the arts and a holistic approach to education is examined by appropriating Rudolf Laban (1948), Smith-Autard (1992) and other guiding principles for dance education. The thesis presents an analysis of how creative dance has come to influence notions of contemporary performance dance. This has provided a framework to argue in favour of dance making by untrained (sic) dance teachers and children with and without disabilities.

The period under investigation post-1994 coincided with fundamental transformations within the South African cultural landscape, including the following: restructuring of performing arts council, the merging of former separate education departments and the strengthening of disability consciousness within human rights culture. These topics are briefly discussed.

The transformation of the arts at The Playhouse Company in KwaZulu-Natal contributed to changes within dance development programmes. These dance development works addressed previously marginalized communities, including the disabled. The potential shifts to mainstream notions of performance dance by children with disabilities have provided an opportunity to theorise the practice of dance in special education and its relation to performance dance in the multicultural KwaZulu-Natal setting.

Chapter one begins by firstly problematising disability, which it argues is an occurrence constructed by medical, social, political, historical, cultural and gender identities. Chapter one goes on to explore the changing concepts of dance for children with disabilities by offering a critique of existing notions of performance dance for children with disabilities. Distinctions between social dance, performance dance, dance therapy and educational dance are clarified and the practice of children's dance is contextualised.

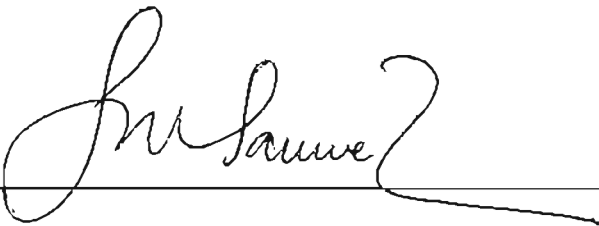
Chapter two argues that 'disability' within a context of multiculturalism in South Africa could be seen as a culture in and of itself. It does this by accessing the critical writings of Schechner (1991), Pavis (1992), Brustein (1991) and others. Definitions of 'culture' are problematised and the debates: high art vs culture, fusion, multi-, intra-, and inter-culturalism in the South African context are explored.

Chapter three looks at three specific dance projects, which emanated from The Playhouse Company. The case studies explore how children between the ages of 8 – 18, who are defined as disabled, have engaged with dance and have had little or no interaction with the performing arts particularly as performers. It critiques and evaluates these projects in order to make conclusions around the following: the need for training of dancers and choreographers with disabilities and to underscore the role of the media in the disabled's plea for access to the performing arts. The idea of integrated 'enablers'(children and adults) with disabled children in the same performance dance work was innovative. Such inclusion and re-dress, as also expressed by The White Paper 6 on Special Education are supported by this thesis. Many children and their teachers have, through these creative movement and dance projects, begun to challenge notions of disability and of performance dance within the 'mainstream' performing dance environment as they emerge as potential artists in their own space.

The thesis concludes by offering suggestions for how dance by those defined as 'disabled' is understood, critiqued and reported by reviewers and researchers of dance. It is hoped that these suggestions would strengthen the wider acceptance of notions of dance that emerge from a range of previously marginalised groups.

Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own work unless specifically stated otherwise in this text. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Arts in the Drama and Performance Studies Programme, University of Natal, Durban and has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other university in South Africa or abroad.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gerard M. Samuel', is written over a horizontal line.

Gerard M. Samuel

15 December 2001

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INTRODUCTION

The emergence of 'disability arts' in theatres across South Africa is still a novel experience for many. The barriers for the disabled to access the performing arts are more than physical. That is to say it is not just a lack of public transportation infrastructure or wheelchair ramps, it extends to education and training of the arts, funding for artistic exploration, adequate peer and media review and the recognition of the disabled's final artistic product or work.

This thesis is located within such a quagmire of inequities and sets out to trace disability dance within notions of 'disability' as a culture in and of itself. The impact of racial and institutional isolation on performance dance expressions by children in KwaZulu- Natal will be tested against notions of multiculturalism, intra- and inter-culturalism. The position of 'Other' as noted by Schechner (1991) is accessed to clarify the space within which the disabled finds her¹ self. Bharucha (1991), Loots (1999) and other writers on issues of cultural politics will substantiate arguments that argue that exchanges between cultures are often hierarchical, influenced by politics, race and gender. The notions that cultures are fluid and evolving will be expanded against South Africa's particular distinction of art and culture, its national ministries and departments.

Pavis (1992) suggestion of source culture (disability) in transition towards target culture in this context - modern educational dance and performance dance - will also be employed to illustrate signifiers of disability culture.

¹ The use of the feminine will be used to signify both female and male persons to challenge the constructed notion of the paternally defined 'subject' as male.

The first chapter will examine concepts of dance for children with disabilities reflecting KwaZulu-Natal and South African contexts. The period of the case studies 1997 –1999, compel the need for the many shifts from within the performing arts, particularly The Playhouse Company² and formal education sectors to be contextualised. The transformations at macro-level (chiefly those that emanated from South Africa's new constitution) and at a micro-level (the rise of disability rights and a growing consciousness of human rights) are broadly reflected upon. The constructed notions of disability including historical, medical, socio-political will be explained and Sinason's (1992) critique of psycholinguistic labels for the disabled are expanded upon.

Chapter two unfolds the argument for disability to be contextualised as a 'culture' located within multi-, intra-, and inter-culturalism debates. Post-1994 many dance practitioners and academics of the South African mainstream performing arts milieu have tended to veer away from Euro-centric art forms to forge new South African dance cultures and dance languages seeking within their own geographic borders for their inspiration. The contribution of dance by children with disabilities as dance performers has not been widely examined within the evolving South African dance culture. This chapter locates the re-examination not only of the processes but also the artistic products of these performers, which has appropriately emerged during the infancy of the new political order in South Africa. The context in which the disabled child's movement becomes defined as dance (and by whom) is an area for much exploration especially by South African dance practitioners and theorists.

² The Playhouse Company is a state funded institution whose mission statement in 2001 is "to preserve, present and promote the cultural identity of and for all the people of the province of KwaZulu-Natal in the performing arts, by providing and facilitating entertainment, education and development in drama, music, dance and other performing art forms" [own emphasis]. It is the largest theatre complex in KwaZulu-Natal housing five theatres and other venues/facilities for conferences, receptions and hire

Chapter three presents a cross-evaluation of three dance projects for children with disabilities conducted by The Playhouse Company between 1997 – 1999. My working relationship within the three case studies as the dance projects' education and development co-ordinator, choreographer (in the workshops' phase) and artistic director (in the performance phase) suggests a uniquely positioned perspective, which has provided an opportunity to theoretically reflect on my site-specific practice. The experience of working intermittently over a seven-year period with many of the same teachers and pupils has presented an additional strength for this thesis. I am also aware that an inability to distance myself from these KwaZulu-Natal based projects is counterbalanced by my abilities and explorations of similar dance projects undertaken in the Scandinavian context. These parallel journeys are also cause for further study.

This research finally suggests changes to the concept of performance dance, which have been affected by the emergence of the disabled child as a potential artist. These findings, it is hoped, will be useful to other dance researchers, educationists, lobbyists of arts and culture, and for the rights of the disabled community in general.

Chapter 1

Concepts of dance for children with disabilities reflecting KwaZulu-Natal and South African contexts

Introduction

Concepts of dance for children with disabilities (a term which will be redefined later) in KwaZulu-Natal will be reviewed by theorising notions of ‘disability’ and providing a contextual landscape of performance dance by children in South Africa. In-depth analytical studies by South African theorists and practitioners within the arts and educational institutions for people with disabilities began in 1994. Examples include the research work undertaken by Samboornam Moodley (1994) and Anusharani Govender (1999). The issue of disability at crossroads with education and culture in KwaZulu-Natal has examined disability, the arts and the role of development organisations through Govender’s example of KwaZulu-Natal Very Special Arts³, and Moodley’s exploration of the culture of physically disabled persons within drama in ‘special’ education.

The first section of this initial chapter will offer a review of concepts of dance for children with disabilities in South Africa by doing the following:

1. Providing a working definition of disability in the South African context by exploring the following - 1.1. theoretical constructs:
 - 1.1.1. historical
 - 1.1.2. social
 - 1.1.3. medical

³ KwaZulu Natal Very Special Arts was launched in 1997. It is a voluntary, non-governmental, non-profit organization that focuses on the development and integration of people with disabilities within the framework of the arts.

1.1.4. political

1.1.5. gender

1.1.6. cultural.

The shift in education and the performing arts in the post-apartheid KwaZulu-Natal contexts will be clarified to locate 'disabled dance' in wider cultural political debates. Section 1.2. of this chapter will provide a contextual landscape for children's dance in the school environment in KwaZulu-Natal, which includes:

1.2.1. An overview of sectors in transition: education and the performing arts

1.2.2. Profiles of the inter-relationship of education for the disabled and wider societal frames of the 21st century

1.2.3. A reflection of the meeting place for KwaZulu-Natal schools and the performing arts: dance by children with disabilities.

The parameter of this study is restricted to the period between 1997 – 1999, a period which has signified radical deconstruction and re-building both politically and socially in South Africa. The third and last section (1.3.) of the chapter locates dance by offering:

1.3. A discussion of artistic production/expressions by children with disabilities within a human rights culture and 'mainstream' dance performance frameworks of KwaZulu-Natal.

The significance of some of these groundswell changes during this transformation in the education and cultural arenas, present further questions for the artistic expression by people with disabilities specifically dance by children with disabilities and for performance culture in general. Several cultural theories (expanded upon later in the second chapter) will be appropriated to map the particular journey of this thesis.

1. Working definitions of ‘disability’ in the South African context

For the purpose of this study, the term ‘people with disabilities’ will hereafter include all persons with impairments. The World Health Organization (WHO) International Classification of Impediments, Handicaps and Disabilities, define ‘impairment’ as any loss or abnormality of structure or function (Wood cited in Sinason. 1992: 9). Disability is defined as a restriction resulting from impairment. Handicap is defined as the disadvantage to an individual resulting from an impairment or disability (Sinason: 2000). This thesis will include the further divisions and sub-groups of those persons who have physical disabilities, mental disabilities (and varying degrees of learning difficulties) and the Deaf under one umbrella label. The use of the term ‘the disabled’ must be understood throughout as a reference to all people with disabilities as if belonging to one community unless otherwise stated.

The term ‘disabled’ for people with impairments has had various predecessors including the retarded, challenged, handicapped, differently-abled and impaired. Professor of Disabilities Studies⁴ at the University of Greenwich, Mike Oliver, articulates that impairment is often the word that one may be seeking in order to describe people with disabilities. He articulates impairment as that which is “lacking part of or all of a limb, or having a defective limb, organism or mechanism of the body” (Oliver as quoted in Govender 1999: 28:). It could be argued that all of these (offensive) labels have a common thread of foregrounding the medical definition of people with impairments, which overshadows their human presence i.e. these terms describe rather what is not their identity rather than what is.

Psychotherapist specialising in working with children with mental handicaps in the UK, Valerie Sinason (1992) maintains that,

⁴ It is significant that in the year 2000, the urgency to establish a disabilities studies programme as part of a university’s course structure has been recognised. This vision signals hope for deconstruction of stereotypical notions of people with disabilities and a wider inclusivity into all levels of society by people with disabilities.

When there are people who cannot think, remember, speak or write, it matters that others take up the scribe function. This applies as much to political prisoners as to individuals with a mental handicap (Sinason: 1992: 3).

Her seminal work Mental Handicap and the Human Condition: New Approaches from the Tavistock (1992) reflects on the widespread absence of psychoanalytical therapy for those with mental handicap. Sinason astutely observes the shifts in language for people with mental handicap noting that the word 'disability' has been associated with physical handicap and is a euphemism which arises due to the "painfulness of the subject" (1992: 40). Sinason devotes an entire chapter in her book to explore the psycholinguistics of euphemism and provides a historical vocabulary of words describing mental illness and handicap. Her comprehensive list begins with the earliest recorded use of the word 'stupid' in 1541 and ends in the present day. Sinason's bold stance is that many are rendered stupid "numbed with grief... [through] trauma as a handicapping agent" (1992: 2). This is pertinent and can be appropriated to the South Africa context where many children were eyewitnesses and victims of political violence and human atrocities. This thesis argues that often the labels/names and manner in which people are defined as disabled may differ in various countries but the human rights for this 'special' category of people do not.

The notion that an 'able-bodied' person can claim his/her position as the rightful norm and the disabled body as the deviation from the norm is a problematic construction for several reasons. Firstly, the defining of these norms have been predominantly done by the able-bodied. Secondly, the word 'disabled' is in itself constructed from the antonym of 'able' or able-bodied and is not claimed but rather an imposed label for people with impairments. The issue therefore, of how 'disability' becomes defined and by whom will be further examined.

For the American scholar Hahn (1986), “the definition of disability, is fundamentally a policy question” (as quoted in Fulcher 1989: 21). In their ground-breaking work Disabling Barriers – enabling environments (1993), British and American authors Mike Oliver, Vic Finkelstein, Sally French and J. Swain set out to re-define disability and the policy which surrounds it by arguing that disability is a ‘socially imposed restriction’ whereas impairment is seen as an “individual limitation” (Oliver in Swain: 1993). Finkelstein (1993) illustrates his agreement with Oliver’s notion of drawing a distinction between impairment and disability and provides the following useful comment.

Not being able to walk is an impairment but [the] lack of mobility is a disability in a situation, which is socially created [problematised] and could be solved by the greater provision of electric wheelchairs, [and] wider doorways (Finkelstein in Swain, J. et al. 1993: 17).

This thesis supports the argument that a distinction between impairment, disability and handicap is an imperative. Sinason (1992) assists by referring to disability as having both a primary handicap (impairment) and secondary handicap as the opportunist handicap (disabling environments). In KwaZulu-Natal it could be argued that the trauma of opportunistic handicaps, for example, township violence were as debilitating as birth defects and brain damage that have caused impairments. Poverty and malnutrition (especially in rural communities), the lack of educational infrastructures and war-torn regions, are just some of the contributory issues to the disabling environment within which the South African child with disabilities is located.

The divisive environment for people without impairments (who are the majority of society) also includes the constructed notion of ‘normal’ or so called ‘mainstream’ society. This construction implies an ab-normal (or worse still – deviant) position for

handed

people with impairments within such a society. It is therefore ironic that disability is rooted in the word ability. Ability refers to capability and aptitude and is found in many people with impairments yet it is the antonym for ability which silences the contribution which people with impairments could make. This categorisation of the disabled as useless, inept and non-mainstream will be reviewed to show how disability is a theoretical construct.

Disability can be explained by the following theoretical constructs: historical, social and medical as suggested by Govender (1999). This thesis will suggest further how political, gender and cultural constructions of disability are also forging hegemony of the 'other' (a term first coined by Simone de Beauvoire in the 1940s). Whilst theatre director Richard Brustein's (1991) comment on society's "compulsion to demonise the 'Other'" (1991: 45) is in relation to cultural and specifically theatre practice, his use of the term 'othering' is a significant construct. Much concern is thus generated around the categories of power, which exist for people with disabilities. For example, the person with impairments who is presented as a wheelchair user and not as an eighteen-year-old whose favourite colour is blue, is 'othered' (Brustein, 1991: 45) by the absence of her humanity, identity and personality. This (sometimes not so subtle) distinction which dehumanises people with disabilities, reveals how persons with disabilities have been branded as non-productive, socially inept, and as such, have a lower status in 'mainstream' society. 'They' (i.e. the 'other') are constructed as lesser beings and defined as having a less valuable contribution to offer towards the development of a culture. Thus, in the above context it is easy to deny the existence of the disabled's own separate culture - which will be argued for in chapter two.

1.1. Theoretical constructs of disability

1.1.1. Historical constructs

The notion that society problematises people with disabilities, constructing and categorising its various peoples into groups or classes is not new⁵. It is therefore significant that the definition of the 'other' takes as its starting point the self (Freud: 1953) as centre or mainstream.

It is problematic that the hegemonic centred position for 'normal' society (not only in South African contexts) is male, white and heterosexual. Any deviation that is not 'self' (i.e. able-bodied, male, white or heterosexual) is therefore 'other'. For people with disabilities, this detached identity for her 'self' through the exclusion from the 'mainstream' society is fixed by the glaring reality that people with disabilities are found within all gender, race and sexual orientation groups.

One of the consequences of historical constructs of the disabled as the 'other' group (Brustein.1991: 45) is that it breeds a lack of confidence and helps develop poor self-esteem for the disabled. The exclusion of disabled from mainstream society breeds a fearful distrust of this unknown, marginalised group.

The historical perspectives, from a range of societies, have shown whether there was an obvious physical impairment and or some perceived threat from that impairment for the whole society, the reaction of 'othering' people with disabilities by the broader community persists (albeit in varying degrees). This theoretical construct fashioned as beliefs or myths about people with disabilities has benefited from both the passage of time and a type of 'xenophobia' of the disabled that still exists today.

⁵ Even a cursory examination of the representation of people with disabilities in the Bible (arguably twenty centuries old) reflects the cries of 'unclean' towards the leper and the ostracising of the lame to live beyond the city wall.

1.2.1. Social constructs

The social models of the new millennium (for example - primarily in the West) are underpinned by capitalist understandings that have labelled some people as unproductive members of a hegemonic society (Govender, 1999: 28). In the wake of the industrial revolution, a Marxist analysis saw the industrialised society as various classes of a capitalist ideal. Marx's analysis of a productive working class in relation to a wealthy bourgeois has signalled (and can be appropriated) for people with disabilities who bear this 'non-productive/useless' label.

Excluded from job opportunities and an equal right to education and training which could equip people with disabilities to become valuable contributors to a society, people with disabilities are gradually sifted out of a productive market. South African based researchers Sadan and Claassens (2001) writing on disability and the budget for the ChildrenFIRST magazine write, "People with disabilities have been socially and economically excluded by barriers that impede their maximum participation in society" (2001:38). The prominent absence of physical access at shopping malls, soccer stadiums, and theatre buildings also blurs the more serious denial of the disabled's economic barriers and access to personal freedom or expression. The urgency for strategies for the empowerment and inclusion of people with disabilities must be seen against the problematic benevolent attitude of society.

Govender (1999:10) offers a 'tragic theory' to unpack these notions of disability by illustrating that people with disabilities have been constructed "concurrently as innocent and suffering"(1999:10). She maintains that,

The state creates separate spaces for this category of people, manages them and thus begins the concept of social welfare, where problematic groups in

society need to be taken care of and managed because they lack the [ability] to do so themselves (1999: 10).

She argues that people with disabilities are constructed as tragic victims in need of special care who in turn become the “burden of the state”(ibid.). Such construction also avoids the real social challenge around disability, which is empowerment.

These social constructs of people with disabilities reinforce the ideas that the disabled are lacking in ability and resourcefulness and thus relegates ‘them’ to lives of dependency and neediness. In post 1994 South Africa, state and race related violence, greater awareness of the abuse in the home and more accurate assessments of poverty levels, has resulted in huge tasks for the State’s welfare departments.

Consequently, Places of Safety were established by the Department of Social Welfare, which offered a complex site for the exploration of parallel social constructions - that of ‘street children’⁶. Like their disabled counterparts, street children are also defined as ‘other’ children. Welfare institutions, which are populated predominately by black boys from low-income/poor working class backgrounds, are brimming with children who are categorised as misfits. The particular treatment of street-children who land up in Welfare organisations in need of care as if deviant is significant as the prevalence of societal disablement in KwaZulu-Natal is high. Police and welfare systems that gather children off the streets in a well-meaning attempt to repatriate them to their families often label them not dissimilarly to the label for disabled children that is to say valueless or needy. Govender (1999) forewarns,

⁶ Many children in the early 1990s who had fled from violence-ridden black townships of KwaZulu-Natal and sought refuge on Durban’s city streets are labelled street children. Again, a ‘pre-fixture’ to their identity is attached that obscures their humanity/childhood.

if one critically analyses the practice of such welfare endeavours and one compares that to the treatment of deviants it is disturbingly similar (Govender, 1999: 11).

The 'street-child' is not disabled but the context of her world very often is, that is to say a dysfunctional, debilitating social environment which presents an opportunistic handicap (Sinason: 1992). Once again a pre-figured label of 'other' for these 'street children' masks their childhood status. The cry for children's rights can be paralleled with people with disabilities whose label (as useless or needy) obscures their rights and ability. The disabled are denied acknowledgment for their entrepreneurial skill and value to a society. In the larger African context, with thousands of orphans (through the AIDS pandemic) and/or those displaced by war, children could be seen as a further category within social constructs of disability, which is the scope of research elsewhere.

1.3.1. Medical constructs

The notion of medical constructs of people with disabilities is centred on issues of deformity, deviancy and or illness. The classification of people based on their overt physical sameness to one another and the exclusion of 'others' as a result of their different-ness, is evident especially in medical definitions for disability. These medical constructs of the disabled as 'other' were consciously supported by the intervention and imposition of state policy. In KwaZulu-Natal (as elsewhere in South Africa), the Department of Education's categories⁷ for admission to schools for disabled is directly based on an organic or medical yardstick.

⁷ For example, in terms of the National Education Department's objectives the criteria for Admissions at AM Moolla Spes Nova School for Cerebral Palsy included that children be medically defined as having "(a) defect or damage to brain tissue occurring before, during or after birth of the child, (b) consequent disturbed neuro-motor, perceptual or communication functions, the chief problem being cerebral palsy or aphasia, not mental retardation or any other handicap. [The child SHOULD be] capable of deriving appreciable benefit from a suitable course of education [and s/he must NOT] deviate from the majority of persons of his (sic) age in body, mind or behavior to such an extent that he cannot derive sufficient benefit from the instruction normally provided in the ordinary course of instruction"(AM Moolla Spes Nova School for Cerebral Palsy - Admissions' Criteria. 1994:1).

The dominant feature for all people with disabilities is the ugly 'pre-fixture' label of their medical condition, which has obscured their identity as human beings capable of contributing to society. The label of 'visually impaired' and 'mentally retarded' for people camouflages their identity in the same way as race is often seen to mark an individual's total identity.

For example, the newspaper article of The Playhouse Company's *African Eagles* dance project for children of mixed abilities in 2001 has the interviewer foregrounding the impairment of individual participants as if this was the public's right to know (Pather: 2001). Whilst the danger of racism and sexism has created awareness amongst some people to see beyond race and gender, clearly people with disabilities are not accorded such human respect. Regretfully, racism, sexism and ignorance of a disability agenda are still pervasive. The media's perpetuation of differences - acceptable actions, which had happened in South Africa's racist past - continues for 'other' groups (like the disabled) in the new South Africa. Unacceptable labels such as physically handicapped, mentally retarded, visually challenged and hearing impaired are all examples, which have been entrenched through the medical (and media) professions.

Thus the medical definition of people changes the focus from the ability and humanity of the person with disabilities, to their impairment. The danger, as people are clustered into groups, is that generalisations, assumptions and prejudices for all persons selected into such a group emerge.

The problematic definition of many disabled young adults as children, due in part to concepts of 'medical age' as first proposed by Alfred Binet (1857-1911), takes on a

special significance. For example, a twenty-year-old young man with cerebral palsy with the cognitive learning ability of a five-year-old child (as defined by intelligence quotient - IQ tests) is often being treated as a child.

British psychotherapist Valerie Sinason (1992) questions these ideas arguing that mental age is a medical construct in relation to, amongst others, intelligence quotient testing. She suggests that the IQ test is “a useful gauge of the state someone can be in at the time of taking a test” (Sinason: 1992: 113), and problematises these ‘intelligence’ findings as potentially misleading.

The construction of complex medical terminology by the medical fraternity has often attempted to provide a salve or euphemisms for society’s uncomfortable conscience. This has frequently resulted in a rejection by the very people who are being defined by these doctors. Medical labels for people with disabilities have largely remained insensitive to pleas from within various disabilities lobbying quarters, which have asked for recognition of the people first, and thereafter their disabilities.

1.4.1. Political constructs

The South African society prior to 1994, which saw the enforced segregation of people based on a classification by their race, negated people with disabilities even further. Recipients of the inhumane laws of apartheid, people with disabilities were caught in elaborately created categories of power wherein a white disabled person became more privileged than her black disabled counterpart. Funding and subsidies to white schools for disabled children was proportionally larger than their black counterparts. This hierarchy, which privileged the white person with disabilities, suggests an even greater loss of self-worth for black people with disabilities.

The effects of the apartheid state imposed a race ideology, which is still being felt today. The delineation of black South African people as 'other', (which apartheid extended), could be seen as a 'disability' for the entire society cast out by the international community. It could be argued that one of the consequences of the international sanctions and boycotts of South Africa was an entire disabled country that saw itself as 'other'. The apartheid state, forced members of a large heterogeneous society (with its diminished self-worth issues) to succumb to a categorisation of people based on race. This estranged society had also established the pursuit of separate identities and of separate cultures. This contributed to a fearful, mistrustful society in which the human rights of the individual were aborted in favour of the white group's 'right' to govern and thereby define all people of the country.

Part of the governance of the old South Africa was the particular 'benevolence' of the South African welfare and the education experience for the different race groups. For children this meant that the hierarchy of the black child⁸ with disabilities placed her at a disadvantage from her white counterpart's privilege. The black child endured a violation in terms of her human rights to access and realise her dreams. For many South Africans with disabilities, their categorisation is made complex by the heightened issues of not only race, but also of gender (expanded later in this chapter) and of class. As British author G. Fulcher (1989) suggests,

Disability is a category, which is central to how welfare states regulate an increasing proportion of their citizens. In this sense and context, it is a *political and social construct* used to regulate. (1989: 21).

As disability consciousness and political movements begin to strengthen in South Africa, the discrimination against people with disabilities is being challenged. Any

⁸ The use of child /children shall include both male and female.

attempts⁹ to “take the ‘dis’ out of disability” (Madlala, 2000: 8) need to remain mindful of the various constructs which are at play for ‘disability’ in order to effectively deconstruct these. Whilst much is being done in post-apartheid South Africa to lessen these race divides, the feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem, especially by black people with disabilities, continues to fester. More and louder voices on the political spectrum of disability’s movements like young dancer Makhotsa Sompane¹⁰, who is also the Acting Secretary of Disabled Youth South Africa in 2001, are beginning to change the face of the political animal that is the disabled. Sompane is part of the ‘new’ disabled who recognise the power of their disability as a political tool.

The danger of the new focus on ability and inclusivity; is that these processes could exclude the disabled from the vital platform where ‘they’ are full participatory decision-makers and not confined to roles as mere recipients of new progressive policies designed by able-bodied liberals.

1.5.1. Gender constructs

The construction of disability can also be paralleled with the classifications around gender. As Jenny Morris (1993) has said,

Gender and disability are both social constructs predicated upon physical characteristics. In each case the physical characteristic has implications for the individual’s life chances, but the experience takes place within a social

⁹ The gala performance *Celebration of Ability* held on 24 November 2000, at the Playhouse Opera theatre, in Durban was such an attempt. News-editor Cyril Madlala quotes Dawn Robertson from the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology on the eve of this event that marked a historic national launch of disabilities awareness campaign through the use of the performing and visual arts (Palmer: 2001).

¹⁰ In March 2001 a television documentary on the challenges which daily face Makhotsa Sompane, a wheelchair bound dancer and activist, was produced by Kagiso TV. This was screened on SABC 3 – national TV broadcast channel. Signature - a TV programme for the deaf community also on SABC 3 featured dancer Andile Vellem on 15 April 2001 and is further evidence of the higher media profile which disabled dance is beginning to enjoy.

context, which largely determines the consequences of being male, female, or having a physical impairment (Morris quoted in Swain, J. *et al*: 1993: 85).

Morris (1993: 90) argues that disability research has either rendered gender as invisible or centred predominately around the American and British experiences of disabled women. The need arises therefore, for an understanding of the similarity with all people regardless of gender or disabilities. British socialist Ann Oakley's position that culture is a strong determinant of gender roles can also be appropriated to notions of constructed disability. She writes,

Not only is the division of labour by sex not universal, but also there is no reason why it should be. Human cultures are diverse and endlessly variable. They owe their creation to human inventiveness rather than invincible biological forces (Oakley as quoted in Haralambos. 1985: 373).

The notion that the disabled are confined to specific roles as a result of their biological life-forces (Samuel, M.A.: 1998) or weaknesses could be argued against as disabled continue to re-invent themselves leading purposeful lives contrary to stereotypical roles. Oakley (1974) further observes that in some societies so called 'natural' women's tasks such as pottery, making clothes or weaving are reversed and practised by men. Researcher Ernestine Friedl (1975) comments in Women and Men: An Anthropological View,

It is significant that in societies where such tasks are defined as male roles, they generally carry higher prestige than in societies where they are assigned to women. (Friedl as quoted in Haralambos. 1985: 376).

The notion that males with disabilities suffer greater indignity due to their former prestigious position in South African society is largely untested. Morris

problematizes masculine identity for the disabled man by suggesting that he is made impotent by society (and not only his impairment where this is indeed applicable). The male roles of bread winner, father and protector are emasculated by his disability especially where he becomes unable to father children, offer physical protection to his family and/or bring home the proverbial pay-cheque. The crossroads of gender and disability as social constructs has remained largely unexplored¹¹ in the South African context. Sociologist Ernestine Friedl (1975) advocates that role reversals should also be seen in relation to male dominance. She defines male dominance as,

A situation in which men have highly preferential access, although not always exclusive rights, to those activities to which society accords the greatest value and the exercise of which permits a measure of control over others. (Friedl as quoted in Haralambos. 1985: 376).

1.6.1. Cultural constructs

The disabled as a community have gradually become located on the fringe of society with little access to mainstream society and its pursuits (Mkhize. 2001: 27). The rights of many people with disabilities to participate in and develop their own cultural expression within the notion of personal freedom has for a very long time been denied (not only in South Africa).

equal rights?

In his address to the London Disability Arts Forum (LDAF) in 1987, lobbyist Vic Finkelstein says,

There has been precious little opportunity to develop a cultural life. Certainly few of us would regard the endless hours that disabled people used to spend

¹¹ While it is important to note the lack of research into these and other notions of emasculation *vis-à-vis* disability in the KwaZulu-Natal context, this imperative is not within the scope of this thesis.

basket-weaving under the direction of occupational therapists in day centres as an artistic contribution that disabled people made to the cultural life of humankind. (Finkelstein as quoted in Campbell. 1996: 111).

*change
allow that*
In apartheid South Africa, the opportunity to develop any cultural life often saw the denial of personal freedom for people with disabilities. This was manifested in several oppressive laws and extended to rights to own property, to marriage and children but especially to access information, resources, and public facilities. The examples of the violation of fundamental human rights can be grouped under the oppressive banner of segregation and discrimination, which people with disabilities endured in the 'old' South Africa. This suggests a culture of insecurity or suppression, ignorance and abandonment (Mkhize. 2001: 28).

*deaf
society
secluded
from normal
society.*

* { The emergence of a disability consciousness and disability movement (Mason in Campbell. 1996: 110) is significant in South Africa post-1994. The emergence of a 'disability culture' in both the performing arts and educational sectors will be expanded in greater detail in chapter two.

An exploration of artistic products by both able- and disabled groups, which nurture and develop culture, is vital. Societal constructs which defined people with disabilities as non-productive, socially burdensome, or 'under-achievers' physically must be reminded of the prolific contribution to society by dyslexic mathematicians, wheelchair bound inventors and not least by the example of South Africa's gold-bedecked Special Olympians¹².

Definitions whether imposed or inherited, which are based on the impairment of individuals and the categorisation of people as 'fringe' society has dire repercussions for the whole of society when society fails to question these constructions. The

¹² In a triumphant return in 2000 the South African Para-Olympic team brought home more gold medals than the so-called 'standard' Olympic athletes. The media attention paid to this event by the disabled was however significantly less than the coverage for the mainstream athletic programme.

deconstruction of the many labels, which the South African black child with disabilities, who has been so far down the welfare chain (and for so long), is proving to be a difficult exercise. In seeking to deconstruct notions of people with disabilities, this thesis argues that the culture of all members of a society is denied (r)evolution when the artistic potential of people with disabilities is excluded or marginalised.

} That's why it is necessary

1.2. A contextual landscape of children's dance in the school environment of KwaZulu-Natal (1997 - 1999).

1.2.1. An overview of sectors in transition: education and the performing arts

The period under investigation in this thesis (1997 – 1999) is significant in the development of a new culture in South Africa. Under the apartheid government, schools and theatres became a site of protest and covert assembly for highly charged political endeavour.

With the establishment of a new philosophy post-1994 to develop an approach to what education ought to be, Curriculum 2005 was gazetted in 1997 by the then Education Minister and the new arts and culture learning area was emphasized. The subject – dance (though hardly visible as a matric level subject in the Natal of old) - was repositioned in the education context as both methodology and within a wider subject area. The challenge for dance within the arts and culture learning area was not only to engage in a wider interpretation, (which included traditional, indigenous and classical dance styles, non technique-based methods for dance, creative movement, popular and social dance forms) but dance within cross-curricula contexts and the recent integrated arts approach.

Integral to this new direction was Outcomes Based Education (O.B.E.), which introduced a move away from traditional 'content' driven approaches to learning and teaching within a subject, towards a focus on the development of skills, knowledge and values (competences). For many schools, from each of the nine provinces, the move away from subjects to learning areas felt like an insurmountable task to implement as they were under-resourced in many areas: personnel, resource materials and physical infrastructure.

In KwaZulu-Natal the period of transition meant a merger of five formerly separate departments of education. These were the Natal Education Department (former White schools); Department of Education of the House of Delegates (former Indian schools); Department of Education and Culture (peri-urban former Black schools), Department of Education and Training (predominately rural based former Black schools) and Department of Education of the House of Representatives (former Coloured schools).

Merger of
ed. dep'ts.

Understandably, KwaZulu-Natal and other provinces experienced (and is still experiencing) various delays to the implementation of several of the new and radical education policies¹³ including the newly introduced arts and culture learning area (Macfarlane. 2001: 4). Constraints included "impending rationalisation of colleges" (Samuel, M.A. 1998: 45), teacher re-deployment; the establishment of professional qualification boards (which acknowledged past teaching experience); the re-structuring of criteria for promotion and professional development; the re-assessment of teaching standards and the fight for parity within new salary structures. These events coincided with other driving forces of various teachers' unions mandated with

¹³ The discussion document for A Curriculum Model for Education in South Africa whilst completed by Heads of Education departments in November 1991 dissolved with the collapse of apartheid structures. Following extensive consultation in the education sector across racial lines began in the early 1990s; the White Paper on Education and Training emerged in 1995. This was later government gazetted in 1997. The draft White Paper on Arts, Culture and Heritage dates to 1995 and the White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy was tabled in November 1997. The variable reactions to the changing forces described above from within the formal education, culture and disability sectors were key motivators for this study. July 2001 has seen the publications of the Education White Paper 6 Special Needs Education: building an inclusive education and training system.

dismantling the disorder of a previous regime. In summary, many restrictions strangled the newly established KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and Culture by their pleas for assistance to their multifaceted needs. These dire needs were also to become the burden of cultural development units like those of The Playhouse Company (which will be expanded later in this chapter).

The period of transition also raised high expectations for the previously marginalized groups. Delays, postponements and setbacks experienced by the many historically disadvantaged communities, highlighted the unsatisfactory reality that apartheid had created an entire country with sociological impairments and 'opportunistic handicaps' (Sinason. 1992: 2).

In a region of approximately 5000 schools/learning institutions for children aged between 6 –18 years, many of which are still without proper sanitary facilities and clean drinking water, the number of schools for children with disabilities in KwaZulu-Natal in the year 2001 is sixty-two with the larger proportion still effectively emerging from the former 'Black education' department's wing. } statistics

The historical inequity for former black schools was despicable and whilst the quantum leap of racially integrated schools post-1994 is acknowledged, it is an imperative that this historical imbalance be recognized. The table below offers only an approximation of the disparity that was experienced and is illustrative in its content. The table is generated from a snap survey¹⁴ provided by the Department of Education and Culture in 2001 and is also mindful of the establishment of non-governmental, community driven schools/centres for disabled. The inability to

¹⁴ A snap survey is usually conducted on the 10th day of a school term and is in itself problematic. In order that a school population is recorded as very large which would then entitled it to a larger subsidy/more textbooks, teachers etc. Field researchers have already noted unconfirmed reports of 'other' pupils being bussed in.

accurately trace the exact numbers for thorough empirical research is a typical feature of the transitional status of the education sector at this time. The ratio of schools per Learners with Special Educational Needs (LSEN) divided by race in KwaZulu-Natal is examined below.

***TABLE SHOWING APPROXIMATE RATIO OF SCHOOLS PER LEARNER AS DIVIDED BY RACE.**

	White (as governed by the former Natal Education department)	Indian (as governed by the former House of Delegates)	Coloured (as governed by the former House of Representatives)	Black (as governed by the former homeland KwaZulu- Natal government – department of Education and Culture, and the former Department of Education and Training)	Total
Number of schools for disabled	12 (20%)	9 (15%)	4 (7 %)	35 (58%)	60
Number of learners	1000	1500	500	8000	11000
Ratio of schools per learner	1.2%	0.6%	0.2%	0.4%	0,6% (average)

The table suggests that the number of schools for disabled allocated for historically white learners was more than double their need and yet for historically black schools only one-third. The large volume of black children present in the province should be reflected in the number of schools established for black children with disabilities. This proportional allocation, not unexpectedly, reveals a shocking inequitable distribution of resources, which were allocated on the basis of race. To further complicate the issue, a white disabled child was more able to access her allocated school thorough her historic socio-economic privileges. This also impacts on the figures for the above table.

To further problematise the situation, some schools for children with disabilities had begun a process of integration with ‘mainstream’ classes motivated by a lack of

resources and not the recent formulation of an education policy of inclusion. As stated in the Education White Paper 6 Special Needs Education: building and inclusive education and training system, they were “mainstreamed by default” (Department of Education. 2001: 5). Examples in rural schools such as Nonoti Primary on the KwaZulu-Natal North Coast situated outside of the town KwaDug^uza (formerly known as Stanger) reveal such practices. This former ‘Indian’ school under the jurisdiction of the former House of Delegates coped with the increasing entry of many second language isiZulu speaking young learners who became defined as LSEN (Learners with Special Educational Needs) with all those already categorised in need of the ‘special class’ by combining the children.

The socio-political climate of the recent past, which established a hugely disproportional distribution of both human resources and physical infra-structure between the schools based on the white, Indian, coloured, and black categories. This resulted in former white schools enjoying a privileged status and a favoured provision of services, whilst many of their historically black counterpart schools languished in abject poverty and need.

Historically white schools and some of the more privileged former Indian schools had more opportunities to explore dance even if this was in a rudimentary, culturally specific manner. They were able to afford and present avenues for dance via important school calendar events. For most historically black schools the exploration of dance as methodology - an authentic medium of education - was not regarded as a high priority. This status for dance as peripheral/side-show entertainment is one of the main reasons for attempting to research the intersection of disability, children and dance in KwaZulu-Natal. Very little theoretical exploration has been undertaken in dance for the disabled in the South African context. Further, the vast majority of schools for children with disabilities in KwaZulu-Natal pre-1994, were not exposed to dance as methodology within special needs education. The consequent practice of

creative dance (a term which will be defined later in this chapter) by children with disabilities has remained largely absent or at best barely evident. The range and brevity of the needs of schools in KwaZulu-Natal has overshadowed the need for an exploration of the intersecting relationship between dance at schools for disabled and performance dance by children.

1.2.2. Profile of the inter-relationship of education for disabled within wider societal frames of the 21st century.

In July of 2000, Mike Oliver professor of Disabilities Studies at the University of Greenwich (Britain), posed serious questions at the International Special Education Congress, on the role of special education in the 21st century. Oliver had concluded some years earlier that,

True { nothing short of a radical deconstruction of special education and the reconstruction of education in totality will be enough – even if it takes us another hundred years (Oliver :1995: 67).

The need for a re-design of special education in South Africa should heed Oliver's key point - total radical reconstruction. Oliver's example of the British experience can be appropriated to South Africa as "the symbiotic relationship between regular and special education constrains theory making. Special education does not exist in some kind of privileged vacuum which will keep it immune" (Slee as quoted in Oliver. 2000: 2).

The South African experience of special education is likewise not in a vacuum. As it enters a more welcoming global context of special education, it could benefit from progressive models such as those in Britain. The British experience over the past 70 years of a greater disability consciousness has evolved a virtual disability industry,

which South Africa is still to fully encounter (Tomlinson as quoted in Oliver 2000). Within the confines of such an 'industry', the topic of dance for the disabled in South Africa is only just emerging e.g. a full-time professional dance company or courses for aspiring teachers of disability dance.

Whilst the British models offer arguments for inclusivity and independence, our own complex nation state is far less of a hegemonic society than is Britain. South Africa is arguably even more culturally and economically diverse than Britain. Our sub-cultures are challenged by the recent legacy of apartheid, poverty and crime as well as a national thrust towards South Africa's unified identity. The impact of sub-cultures of first world wealth and a burgeoning cultural tourism (Schechner: 1991) will feed the disabilities industry. The measure of all these specific differences within a South African context, will be subsumed within the future 'industry' that is special education. In this regard, research in Sally Tomlinson's book A Sociology of Special Education (1981) that examines who the 'benefactors' of special education really are, is long overdue in a South African context. Tomlinson raises the controversial question of whose needs are being met in the disabled industry. She maintains it is "the professional staff that works in both special and ordinary education that really benefits"¹⁵ from the existence of the special education system" (Tomlinson cited in Oliver. 2000: 6).

questioning
validity of
special
ed

Tomlinson's research suggests that should South Africa attempt to re-position its special education system in step with the advancements of the 21st century then similar base line studies need to be undertaken. The prejudices around dance for disabled in South Africa need to reveal the systemic inequities/biases of the past. To date there is no specifically developed curricula for the study of dance and creative movement for schools for children with disabilities in South Africa.

¹⁵ Special education systems provide numerous direct and indirectly job opportunities for health care professionals and therapists. As wider acceptance for the role of the arts in special education gains momentum many artists could also find employment here.

In terms of disability constructs raised earlier in this chapter, Oliver (2000) concurs that even with enlightened shifts towards the inclusion of the disabled child into 'regular schools' the educational needs of the child is still underscored by her medical definitions. She is positioned more in relation to 'child development' (Piaget cited in Sinason. 1992: 186), her 'mental age' (Binet in Sinason. 1992: 257) and less in relation to emotional or 'body intelligence' (Gardner cited in Greenland. 2000: 25).

Special education also operates in the context of an emerging disability consciousness and disability movements of the post-modern world in 2001. The modernist welfare society (Govender: 1999) has undergone change as various media have created a heightened profile of the disabled. The possibility to generate public awareness about the disabled is now much more available than at any other stage in human history. Oliver suggests, "that the new welfare state must switch to being a "risk-management" enterprise whose aim is to prevent problems from occurring rather than one which compensates afterwards (Oliver. 2000: 8). It is ironic that a society that can disregard wheelchair access at public buildings can simultaneously argue for the disabled's inclusion and create national media-hype for a single gala concert performance by for example Steve Kekana¹⁶. The rationale of the disabled's sameness to all members of society are at once dividing and uniting them.

*
False
top/ans
The alarming reality of the 21st century is that it offers the medical possibilities of eradicating the differences that are concurrently the stigma and hallmarks of the disabled. Through 'progressive' medical developments such as genetic engineering, selective abortion and other medical treatments, these differences can be obliterated, which could see the disabled as a vanishing community. Sinason (1992) observes the particular dilemma when a handicapped young woman undergoes enforced

¹⁶ Critically acclaimed musicians Steve Kekana and Babsie Mhlange referred to in Sharika Regchand's article (2000) are examples of highly accomplished, successful artists who are visually impaired.

sterilization and also draws attention to the notions of 'abnormality' whenever a disabled foetus/baby is diagnosed.

Imagine it other way round: computers for people with one hand or leg, where non-disabled people had to function

In respect of social paradigms, Oliver's (2000) bold contention argues that the need for education (including special education) is linked to notions of the sustenance of a capitalist nation state. Further, the inclusion of the disabled into a broader society must also note their role as a unit of labour and their representation as a potentially cheap labour force. The rise of Oliver's multi-national companies is therefore important in the argument for the total deconstruction of special education. Oliver maintains that the power of these multi-national companies is beginning to supersede that of some nation states. This is particularly evident in the larger context of the African continent. The job market of the 21st century is an increasingly flexible site where life-long learning and standard assessment tests are rapidly becoming a norm. It is within such a technologically advanced and shifting world that special education (or education for the disabled) needs to carve and define its own niche.

capitalist Plot

Long-serving London activist for the disabled, Vic Finkelstein, paraphrased in Campbell (1996: 111), had earlier warned that it is computer literacy, the development of entrepreneurial skills for micro-businesses and information technology, which will result in self-sustaining people with disabilities and not semi-skilled basket-weavers. These examples, he vociferously argues, are some of the new maps with which the disabled should be equipped to independently charter.

The need for re-definition of special education in KwaZulu-Natal in the year 2001 is great. This section has highlighted the shifts required in KwaZulu-Natal: increased funding; adequate resources and strategies to correct attitudinal changes from both within the education sector and for those external to it (general public, media). The urgency for re-presentation of people with disabilities e.g. in textbooks and films is great. People with disabilities should be described as integral to the fabric of South

African identity and its culture. Within the specific spheres of the performing arts for disabled and educational systems for disabled, KwaZulu-Natal with its rich Asia-centric, Euro-centric and Afro-centric culture, has much cross-fertilization to offer. The challenge to both practitioners and theorists is to chart the role that special education will play in the context of the dynamic, shifting 21st century.

1. 2. 3. A reflection of the meeting place for KwaZulu-Natal schools and the performing arts: dance by children with disabilities.

This study of the introduction of dance in education projects within KwaZulu-Natal schools for disabled acknowledges the existing dance practices therein. The emergence of 'disabled dance' work as begun by a series of projects by The Playhouse Company and its initial partners including, John Mthethwa¹⁷ and KwaZulu-Natal Very Special Arts, will be examined within a broader climate of the performing arts (via a cross-evaluation of three selected case studies in chapter three)

The foundational premise for dance practices that is being used in special¹⁸ education in KwaZulu-Natal (should dance actually be present) is that the dance presentation emerges exclusively from traditional or culturally bound (Degenaar: 1995) dance forms. These racially divided 'special needs' schools had some dance activity present but no formal approach to teaching through dance (i.e. dance as a methodology for life skills and cognitive learning) as an accepted medium of education for children. Former Indian schools for the Deaf (such as V.N. Naik School for the Deaf, in KwaMashu, Durban), offered some Indian dance classes whilst former black schools

¹⁷ John Mthethwa, Director of the KwaZulu-Natal Ballroom Dance Association for the Disabled, which he launched at The Playhouse Company in 1997. He is a pioneer/teacher of ballroom dance for disabled for over 20 years in largely black townships and rural communities (Naidoo: 1996). His nomination as Shoprite Checkers Community Builder of the Year in 1998 came as no surprise.

¹⁸ The words 'special school' was a euphemistic label for schools earmarked for the educational instruction of children with disabilities. See also reference to 'tragic theory' referred to by Govender (1999:10) on page 11.

dance this meant that in many schools learners were taught dance and not encouraged to experience dance.

without your
body here you are
not being
acknowledged

former
school
system

In the 'formal' school environment, as custodian²⁰ the dance teacher held onto notions that she was to impart knowledge to her class from the defined knowledge on the subject dance. This meant that very often it was she who solely decided the parameters of creation, execution and its value for the child. In dance presentations by children with disabilities it became a staggering rarity to find these children creating and performing their own dances let alone taking the proverbial 'centre stage'.

Shortly after South Africa's first democratic elections, the interim National Curriculum for Dance Creative Movement from Grade One to Standard Seven (Glasser, S. & Waterman, J.: 1995) was available but still not widely implemented. Contributing factors to the dilemma to implement creative dance in KwaZulu-Natal was on the one hand, the dearth of full-time qualified dance teachers in schools and on the other hand the array of traditional dance forms/styles which were present in this province. Also, political and cultural notions of what constituted dance within a new South Africa were only just beginning to be debated. Resistance to the introduction of new dance styles and dance as a methodology was experienced especially from those dance teachers who had worked from within the 'ballet equals dance' frame of reference.

Courses and textbooks such as the milestone work Teaching Creative Dance: A Handbook (1997) by dance academic Jennifer van Papendorp and dance lecturer at the University of Cape Town, Sharon Friedman, became readily available but many non-dance trained school teachers still found this new experience of dance

²⁰ The role of the state and religion as the custodians of knowledge is problematic as it is open to subversion. The definition of whose knowledge and who selects the constitution of 'valuable' information must also be taken into account. The cultural frame of the family within a community and within the state is also significant as particular brands/types/sources of information become more 'tasteful'.

intimidating. In the late 1990s dance academic Jill Waterman and others in the Gauteng province also conducted support initiatives for teachers. Van Papendorp comments that creative dance as a new type of dance has been “called, variously, Creative Dance, Creative Movement, Educational Dance, Expressive Movement or Movement for Actors” (1997:1). For the purpose of this study, it is this dance form, which is being investigated when examining the three case studies. Van Papendorp further clarifies creative dance by describing it as,

a dance form based on natural movement rather than a particular style or technique, it is expressive and non-prescriptive in that it prescribes *no right or wrong way of doing things* because each movement is a personal decision of the mover. It is not technically orientated although certain mastery may be achieved through it. It is a creative art experience, which celebrates uniqueness, emphasizes individual creativity and structures opportunities for interaction in a safe environment (Papendorp. 1997: 1)

defⁿ creative dance.
↓
disabelled
People can do that.

In the run up to curriculum 2005, teachers enlisted in professional development courses in creative dance as much for upgrading their teaching skills as for their own job security. Outcomes Based Education (O.B.E.) became a buzz word in the midst of widespread teacher re-deployment.

Most of the South African child's learning experience about dance prior to the advent of creative dance in schools had been teacher-centred (This thesis will argue that this was even more so for the disabled child's experience with her special need). The study of dance in KwaZulu-Natal with few exceptions²¹ took place outside of a curricula status – as an examinable subject. Consequently, the realm of performance

²¹ The former Durban's Art, Ballet and Music School (under the auspices of the former white education department in Natal [NED] conducted dance classes as a seventh/optional subject in its school curricula. Some private schools also offered space for dance study as did a few more affluent former 'white' high schools. However, the dance form being taught was almost exclusively classical ballet.

dance by children in a mainstream theatre environment remained predominately culturally specific to classical ballet and its technique-based 'professional approach' (Smith-Autard:1994). Further, it could be argued that this dance form was largely constructed as a 'white' endeavour as both teachers and learners were predominantly white and economically privileged.

The role of dance teacher in historically black cultural contexts and schools remained largely informal/ or seen as an extra-mural activity for the black child often centering around the propagation of Zulu culture and/or religious contexts of a particular community. Large government-sponsored events saw public performances in sports stadiums and other venues where black children performed 'traditional Zulu dance'. The norm for dance became a problematic appreciation of indigenous forms (a term which will be defined and expanded in chapter two) exclusively.

Teaching Resource

Unlike many UK based schools where the study of dance as art and its long-term contribution to the development of British culture was prevalent since the mid-1970s (Brinson in Ballantyne. 1998: 11), South African schools made their provision for dance in education as late as 1984. The actual implementation of this form of dance at grass-root level was, however, virtually non-existent in some provinces even in as late as 1996. Most teachers' interaction with dance (where they felt comfortably proficient to teach the form) was either in classical ballet, ndlamu or ballroom. Proportionally few teachers had any formal teaching experience of working in/through dance for the purpose of a wider education in an arts and culture learning area. The situation that the learning area itself was still being defined also problematises the teachers' willingness to come forward and claim their rightful position of dance or creative movement teacher.

* For the South African child with disabilities marginalisation, which racially segregated special education schools, conceived more than an inability to access the

dance in education available to her able-bodied peers. It was a planned discrimination of many fundamental human rights that made it complex for her to claim her identity and rightful place within the wider arts community.

The clamour for political rights by variously labelled disadvantaged sectors created a re-thinking of both the human rights' issues and re-definitions of 'the disadvantaged'. Terms such as 'community', 'development', 'previously-disadvantaged', often became euphemisms for groups which bore the 'black' label. Many of the historically special needs schools were categorised under all these labels in KwaZulu Natal: black, previously disadvantaged, infra-structurally at or below development conditions. They were assigned geographic space beyond the urban environment not unlike children in a Victorian parlour (to be seen but not heard). These schools or institutions of care also experienced a lack of social interactivity, political and economic accessibility.

The geographic specificity of such institutions needs to be challenged as an understanding of the impact of long-term detrimental side-effects of such designated placement is sought. The plight of children who became socially disadvantaged, unmotivated and dislocated by the extreme distances from their families whilst in boarding schools, needs to be further examined. In some examples, children found themselves being instructed in a language that was not their home language.

Many institutions were predominately run by female teachers both during and after school hours, which contributed to a skewed interaction with male members of a community. Many management structures within the schools had white school principals and senior staff members whilst black members of staff were either junior/non-permanent/menial workers. This contributed to perpetuate notions of a white superiority. These and other consequences of isolation threw a permanent noose which tended to hamper the child with disabilities to realise her full mental, emotional and creative potential.

Within the South African scenario of poverty, housing shortages, clean water, welfare and hospital sector needs and the broad national educational need for all schools, dance as methodology and its practices for 'special schools' became a minor concern, which remained largely culturally specific. Former 'Indian' or 'black' schools for children with disabilities proudly presented dance as the cultural re-presentations of their children in relation to age old traditional dance forms. The expression of individual artistic expression of the child as embodied in creative dance was mostly unheard of. The disabled child's struggle with her disability in relation to society expressed via the medium of dance was very limited. As a medium for education the offer of dance as a cognitive learning tool was absent in most KwaZulu-Natal schools. }

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1.3. Locating dance by children with disabilities within a Human Rights culture and 'mainstream' dance performance frameworks.

With the dawn of the new South Africa came a national decree to define and claim the human rights of all citizens. The formulation of South Africa's new constitution (Act 108 of 1996) was internationally recognized as one of the most progressive in the world. As employment equity, rights to basic education, including adult basic education outlined in Section 29(1) of Act 108 became enshrined the opportunities for the disabled held much promise. The Equality Clause Section 9 of the Bill of Rights gazetted in 1996 articulates the rights of the disabled by noting that,

Rights of Disabled

The state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth. (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. 1996: 7).

The urgency to empower especially those previously marginalised groups and individuals regarding their fundamental human rights was accepted by provincial role-players in the performing arts such as The Playhouse Company. Lobbyists for the inclusion of the disabled and organisations such as the KwaZulu-Natal Very Special Arts found like-minded partners in The Playhouse Company who were able to further the cause of the previously disadvantaged.

interest in
the
disabelled
community.

Funding and performance spaces were precipitously made accessible and in the national current of transformation, the print and electronic media gave hitherto unforeseen coverage to the previously marginalised. The disabled's (often problematic) media newsworthiness has anchored her position in wider South African cultural politics.

Unrestricted by the freedom to exercise their newly proclaimed human rights, the disabled were able to question and, if necessary, demand access to mainstream theatre venues. This thesis argues that the dance as a non-verbal medium could be as powerful as print and electronic media given the psychological impact and transformative qualities of the arts.

The fact that
the disabelled
are fighting
for rights
shows that
they mentally
function as
normal.

The dialogues through dance between groups made possible through their bodies and not language continues to be of interest for many dance researchers and practitioners. British pioneer of developmental movement since the late 1960s, Veronica Sherborne²², is concerned with both the development of physical and psychological learning experiences through the body, especially for the child with disabilities. Sherborne writes,

22

Veronica Sherborne acknowledges the strong influence of Rudolf Laban and his analysis of human movement. Sherborne's work has enjoyed wide support especially in Europe and Scandinavia. She was formerly a senior lecturer in special education at the Bristol Polytechnic, UK, having begun her life's journey of developmental movement via physical education and physiotherapy. Her thinking for the holistic understanding of the 'severely mentally handicapped' has been promulgated through her books, theories and many experiences, and has seen the establishment of The Sherborne Foundation, which is based in Leeds, UK.

The early learning experiences of being safely held and contained with good feeling have a marked effect on a young child's ability to respond to human contact and to form relationships (Sherborne.1990: 38).

Sherborne's work covering a thirty-year period suggests that body awareness or intelligence (Gardner cited in Greenland. 2000: 25) leads to body mastery, which is of the utmost significance for the disabled child. She is strongly influenced by her mentor Rudolf Laban, whose ideas are expanded in chapter three. Sherborne strongly argues that one of two basic needs for the child is the need to form relationships, which can be achieved through good movement teaching. Her belief that "movement experiences are fundamental to the development of all children but are particularly important to the disabled child with special needs who often have difficulty relating to their own bodies and to other people" (Sherborne.1990: vi) is finding empathy with South African practitioners.

*
good
intro.

Van Papendorp expresses her belief in the power of movement and thereby dance by sharing that,

Creative dance activities can provide a vehicle for developing trust, enhancing inter-cultural understanding and celebrating both the uniqueness and diversity of people (Van Papendorp.1997: 5).

The power of dance is unrecognised as it remains chiefly a transient medium. The further issue of the ability of dance to reflect and profoundly expresses the complex nature of the individual is perhaps novel. Many dance practitioners, including one of

the founding members of CandoCo²³ in the UK, Adam Benjamin, subscribe to the notion of a 'pared down' and 'naked soul', which can only be expressed in dance.

The use by several pioneers of creative dance to reveal hidden life histories (Samuel, M.A.: 1998) and the strength of dance as therapy²⁴ is well documented especially in the United States of America. Dance's ability to conceive profound change has been theorised by many dance and non-dance practitioners. Benjamin (1993) suggests a rebirth for dance arguing that,

dance as therapy

Art therapy, Drama therapy and Dance therapy seem however to be undergoing a renaissance perhaps because they are returning to their roots; the role of the arts after all, is to allow into our lives and into society those vital yet non-rational parts of what it means to be fully alive, fully human. In this sense the arts are all about making us whole; allowing us to access our gods and our demons, our capacity to rejoice and celebrate, to experiment and destroy, to express our fears and course our visions. (Benjamin.1993: 5)

Purpose of Dance

Dance therapy

In the United States, dance therapy practice has a long and mapped lineage. Since the late 1940s, the approach to healing through dance has been sanctioned by pioneers such as Blanche Evan (1945), Marian Chace (1953, 1979), Mary Whitehouse (1963), Liljan Espenak (1966), and more recently Fran Levy (1979, 1988) .

In South Africa, creative movement and dance is gradually finding a root and is arguably seen as a life-changing or healing experience not only for recipients but also

²³ CandoCo is a professional full-time contemporary dance company consisting of both disabled and able-bodied dancers based in London who seek to redefine dance language through their collective histories, different- and same-ness as performers. This experimental dance company which began in 1991 include founding members Celeste Dandeker and Adam Benjamin.

²⁴ The American Dance Therapy Association has been holding annual conferences since 1966. The American Journal of Dance Therapy has published articles since 1976.

for the care-givers as the participatory dance teachers. Contemporary dance academic, Sharon Friedman, writes,

Dance as a vehicle for healing and transformation has a special relevance in an attempt to bridge the gap between previously advantaged and disadvantaged pupils. This art form can provide a vibrant and enjoyable means of learning across the curriculum (as quoted in Van Papendorp. 1997: 5).

In an age that has witnessed violence, abandonment and mistrust, creative dance (however small), has offered another means of reconciliation for the many estranged South African communities. As education systems came under scrutiny and re-design in KwaZulu-Natal, the focus of dance as methodology overshadowed the need to value dance as a therapeutic tool. Practices of visual art therapy, sensory awareness: tactile enhanced spaces, music and other examples of art therapy were not widely used in most KwaZulu-Natal schools in the 1990s. The shift towards learner-centred experience of dance is beginning to unshackle the notion of dance as being formal or only technique-based. This implied that the art of dance was accessed through the mandatory mastery of codified steps: professional model (Smith-Autard: 1994). For many South African dance practitioners, this model was still being held as more valuable than the improvisational approach associated with creative dance. Many within the educational and performing arts sector shared this bias. The familiar standard of structured forms such as classical ballet continues to plague the mindset of many teachers today.

evidence
from people
who have
been in
the field
for years.

American dance therapy teacher, Blanche Evan, who expressed that "teaching dance technique to children is peculiar to our [American] culture" (as quoted Levy. 1988: 35) would perhaps be surprised that this also persists in the South African context of mainstream performance dance in the year 2001. Evan felt that "other cultures in which dance is indigenous to life and is transmitted as part of the whole culture" (as

quoted in Levy. 1988: 35) better equip their children to cope with their lives intra- and inter-personally.

It needs to be noted, however, that the experience of dance emanating from so-called 'indigenous life' within South Africa is complex. The position amongst all dance forms indigenous and foreign and their featuring on mainstream stages in KwaZulu-Natal is not a simple journey. The notion that African dance exists in a stasis of South Africa culture is very problematic. This thesis strongly maintains that all dance forms, whether indigenous or foreign, have imbibed through their practices from one another. Clearly some researchers exoticise/idealise African contexts of dance and movement teaching for example Sherborne writes of "some African and Asian mother who massage their babies as part of their culture" (1990:38). She successfully argues that such practices establish a bond and early body awareness as if consequently the African or Asian child is more likely to have a responsive body. Whilst this thesis does not wholly dispute Sherborne it does argue that such thinking perpetuates race stereotypes that state 'black people have rhythm' - stereotypes that are potentially destructive.

Even in the KwaZulu-Natal context of the 21st century the western approach to formal technique-based dance teaching was upheld as the standard in schools and in mainstream theatres. This has positioned classical ballet above other forms of dance. The prevalence of this technique-based form which was predominately in former white schools (whether as intra-curricula or extra-mural activity of a school) also meant that 'white standards' for dance were the ones upheld. The notion of dance for everyone (including the disabled) and not only for those with certain pre-defined body types and gender biases still needs to be confronted. Creative dance and its 'non-technique' based art form propagated by The Playhouse Company and other stakeholders made a wider accessibility and acceptability of such a dance form to all schools. The opportunity to use this methodology, which could in a broader context

also allows for people without any previous training to learn.

Notion of 'dance' every 1, 4

aid in healing school environments through a non-culturally specific art form, was met by many former black and white schools with some hesitation.

Much has been written in the Western context (Europe, the United States and especially Britain) about disability art, dance as therapy and dance in education (Jennings: 1975, Levy:1988 , Smith-Autard: 1994) where a culture of Human Rights has existed for a long time. The democratic changes in South Africa of 1994 and their impact for the restructured Playhouse Company (formerly known as the Natal Performing Arts Council - NAPAC²⁵) resulted in a new mission statement. Children with disabilities became another marginalized group in need of urgent re-dress alongside racially 'disabled' groups, art forms and even certain age groups. Programmes were quickly designed and implemented and although from within developmental and not professional paradigms, as will be attested by the three projects from with the former Education and Development department²⁶ of The Playhouse Company, they will clarify the changed position for disabled children within a Human Rights culture and the mainstream theatre frameworks. H.R.

The noticeable absence of disabled dance as a mainstream activity is perhaps suggested by the following issues including: the dearth in the number of full-time professional artists with disabilities, the lack of funding and other support mechanisms to nurture artistic growth and the ignorance by some print media and fear of sponsors to profile the concerns of a minority group. Other extenuating factors are the positioning of responsibility on the shoulders of children with disabilities to

²⁵ The old NAPAC (prior to 1970s) existed at time in South African history when theatres were racially segregated. Definitions of 'high art' which were statutorily approved were chiefly opera, classical ballet and symphonic concerts for its stages. Common theatre practice included dress codes of black tie. The associated elitist label with such programming continues to haunt the performing arts councils (in varying degrees) around the country even today.

²⁶ The philosophy of the Education and Development department was driven by a three-pronged approach to redress past imbalances. Disadvantaged communities were offered a wider exposure to various other art forms, professional skills to develop their own art forms and performance opportunities to present their work at the former whites only institution of The Playhouse Company.

articulate the needs of the entire disabled community and the lack of experience by people with disabilities to fully articulate their artistic needs within the existing infrastructure of mainstream theatres.

Lastly, in the anomaly that is the performing arts, children who have a unique perspective of innocence, naivety and boundlessness to offer to society are generally not taken seriously as artists. As artists pursue their quest for the exposition of the soul of a nation pared down to its child-likeness, it is ironic how much the child is disregarded. Given this scenario it is difficult to imagine the burden her production suffers as an artistic endeavour for all people with disabilities within a Human Rights culture as they negotiate mainstream theatre frameworks.

The context of disabled equals that of student productions. The response is 'aah'.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to paint a complex contextual landscape of the changing borders within school and the 'mainstream' dance performance environments. Any definition for disabilities is made complex by race, gender, political, medical and class issues. The history of apartheid South Africa still has its effects in KwaZulu-Natal schools for children with disabilities, which has seen problematic responsibility for these children as artists. Most of the South African child's learning experience through dance is teacher-centred and even more so the disabled child's experience with her special need. The particular context that is South Africa for a study of this nature cannot be over-stated as much of the colonial history has meant a harkening to external European models. Whilst Peter Brinson (1991) and Veronica Sherborne (1990) offer breakthroughs for the use and strength of creative dance and developmental movement as a radical medium: non-verbal, non-cultural specific, this discovery is chiefly uncontested in an African setting.

The context in which the disabled child's movement becomes defined as dance (and by whom), its value as an educative and healing tool is an area for further exploration. The absence of full-time dance artists with disabilities in South Africa and the inclusion of disabled into mainstream dance performance has been briefly raised. The need for informed assessment of disabled dance is also noted. British choreographer and lobbyist Adam Benjamin (1993) writes,

Just as Celeste²⁷ has had to re-find her own dance so too the company has begun to re-define dance itself and is demanding a new language and appraisal of language to accompany that process.” (Benjamin. 1993: 4)

South Africa post-1994 has seen many practitioners and academics that have tended to veer away from Euro-centric art forms to forge new South African dance cultures and dance languages. For example works such as Jay Pather's²⁸ *Shifting Spaces, Tilting Times*, in 1999, reflect the architectural and societal juxtaposition achievable via the contemporary dance medium. Pather and other choreographers such as Lliane Loots, Gary Gordon, Robyn Orlin and Boyzie Cekwana have begun to seek, within their own borders, for definitions of an illusive, truly South African dance. This thesis argues that the sudden access to new geographic and cultural spaces has allowed 'disabled dance' as a category within South African contemporary 'mainstream' dance, to emerge. This is significant as this specific evolution provides a unique perspective to examine the birth and transformation of South Africa's new dance languages and thus, its culture.

The infancy of the new political order has allowed a wide and grasping search for

²⁷ Celeste Dandeker was a former full-time dancer with the London Contemporary Dance Theatre. Her life was changed through the effect of a spinal injury

²⁸ Jay Pather is Artistic Director of Siwela Sonke Dance Theatre Company established in 1997. The company evolved under The Playhouse Company wing to forge its own South African dance identity. Trained dancers brought their various experiences of dance including: ndlamu (Zulu dance), classical ballet, African-contemporary dance, Spanish dance and kathak (Indian dance) to the evolution that is one of Durban's most controversial dance companies.

dance within the arts and culture learning area. As performance dance of the mainstream welcomes disabled dance stages that are provided for on an equal footing, the dialogues between groups and cultures can and must be carefully observed. Choices such as the combination of white Afrikaner male, Ndebele women, European ballerina and mpantsula jiver (Pather: 1999) and the exclusions by new choreographers (including choreographers with disabilities) will develop South Africa's unique dance and her culture. This multi-layering or 'inter-textuality' (a term expanded in chapter two) which includes disabled dance within contemporary performance dance will offer important sites for future investigation.

The practices by disabled artists can begin to be theorised and the inevitable hierarchy of cultural exchange by the euphoric children of the 'Rainbow nation' - the disabled - can be critiqued.

Finally, this chapter has argued that the movement by young dancers with disabilities in South Africa to take up the banner for their inclusion into mainstream performing arts by subverting old norms, is fast gaining momentum. Dance for children with disabilities that is emanating from education systems within the South African context in the 21st century is intersected with the rapid changes in the performing arts and school environments.

Within South Africa's evolving multicultural (a term which will be defined in the next chapter) framework, the introduction of 'disabled dance' could alter the way contemporary dance in South Africa is being defined. Questions such as when does movement become defined as dance and by whom, what is the dancing body, and

Future
implications
of mixed
ability
dance

when and where dance is out of its text²⁹ (Shakespeare in Durband. 1985. 60), have cracked opened welcome debates. These and other debates of cultural construction and cultural politics will be explored in the next chapters.

²⁹ Act One scene 5 (line 211) of William Shakespeare's Twelfth Night the coquettish Countess Olivia asks Sebastian (Viola) to remain within his sappy delivery of the preacher-like message from the noble Duke Orsino in whom she has no interest. The notion of text as a defined/ immovable space is questionable not only in this lyrical play but in all performance.

Chapter 2

Disability as ‘culture’ located within Multi-, Intra-, and Inter-culturalism debates and the specific South African and KwaZulu-Natal contexts.

Introduction

The unfolding process of a disability ‘culture’s’ development in a post-apartheid South African performing arts environment suggests more than a multi-racial, multi-disabilities interweaving. In order to locate ‘disability culture’ within competing definitions of culture and disability, this chapter sets out to develop a theoretical framework by attempting to address the following:

- 2.1. Existing Definitions within Cultural Politics: Culture, Fusion, Multi-, Intra-, and Inter-culturalism
- 2.2. The Location of Disability ‘Culture’ in the framework of South African Cultural Politics
- 2.3. Disability Dance as an Emerging Performance Culture in KwaZulu-Natal within notions of Children’s Performance.

Several existing theories of cultural politics, as defined by cultural theorists Richard Schechner (1973, 1991, 1992), Robert Brustein (1965, 1970, 1991), Rustom Bharucha (1990, 1997) and Patrice Pavis (1992), will be accessed to present a landscape of cross-culturalism and interculturalism. The American, Indian and French contexts of the selected theorists will be appropriated and critiqued as this thesis begins to locate a South African context for interculturalism. This chapter will define disability - in

and of itself - as a culture and specifically examine 'disability dance' or 'dance by disabled' in a children's performance context.

2.1. Existing definitions within Cultural politics: Multi-, Intra- and Inter-culturalism.

2. 1. 1. Definitions of culture

Before a closer examination of cultural politics in the South African context can be entered into, it is important to create a working definition of the term 'culture'. American cultural anthropologist, Clifford Geertz (1973), offers a definition for culture from a perspective of the study of human behaviour and ritual as,

culture is a system of symbols by which man (sic) confers significance upon his own experience. Symbol systems, man-created (sic), shared, conventional, ordered, and indeed learned, provide human beings with a meaningful framework for orientating themselves to one another, to the world around them and to themselves (Geertz cited in Pavis.1992: 9).

He argues that the human individual assigns meaning of his/her world in an elaborate system of signs and symbols which is the foundation in which the identity of the individual is located. This 'identity formation' is accomplished in relation not only to the individual but also to the group or community identity/culture. Geertz's symbol system offers the notion of shared meaning. This thesis suggests that an ordered placement or hierarchical value system arises within various cultural groups who hold common identities and beliefs. Patterns of behaviour and ritual practices which are

integral to the group culture, suggest that they are not only circumscribed by members of a defined group but are learnt and perpetuated by them.

The earliest recorded use of the word 'culture' dates to around the sixteenth century in Europe and emanated from society's cultivating practices (Holloway.1999: 172). Culture in this period referred to whether a society grew crops, practiced animal farming or pursued nomadic lifestyles. The definition of 'culture' has evolved over the centuries to include references to society's acceptance of specific behaviours, especially in relation to art.

The English word 'culture' that evolved from the German (and still earlier Latin) - Kultur - as a 'root' word for culture offers an insight to the elitism and exclusivity which has come to be associated with the word culture. The connotation for culture has thus come to mean civilised behaviour that is inextricable intertwined with the arts. This word 'culture' is defined by the 1969 Oxford dictionary as the "trained and refined state of the understanding of manners and tastes, phase of this prevalent time and place" (Fowler.1969: 200). While linked not only to the arts, this definition is still narrow and problematic as culture as shared ideology will be explained later in this chapter.

Further, an acceptance of culture as merely a refined sense of manners and tastes is also problematic. The probing question of whose tastes and whose manner is acceptable and to whom is more the issue. In the South African context, this problem of whose manners and tastes and definitions of civilised art become more complex when one begins to define culture. South Africa's colonial history and indigenous³⁰

³⁰ The term indigenous according to The United Nations (Doc E. CN 4. Sub 2/1986/7 add 4) refers to

peoples cannot be ignored as a definition for culture (and later cross-/inter-culturalism in this chapter) is sought. Johan Degenaar proposes that a view of culture considers,

in both the plural and singular senses ... how our understanding of culture is enriched by the tensions between them (Degenaar: 1995: 61).

In developing a working definition of the term 'culture', it must also be noted that culture has a changing label as a theoretical construct over the centuries. Culture has been used as a political tool³¹ and as a means of propaganda that is socially defined in place and time.

Colonisers often cloaked with their own prejudices and pre-conceptions of civilised behaviour, maligned the socially acceptable behaviours - culture - of the people being colonised. The link between culture and civilised behaviour as it identifies exclusivist attitudes (often racist) are frequently done in the name of culture. For example, in the South African context where the use of the word 'culture' was camouflaged as an indicator of a particular race group's cultural practice/product (and often their religious expression), a racially neutral definition for culture becomes difficult. Thus, classical ballet was a supreme expression of European art and ndlamu a ritualistic Zulu cultural practice.

"communities, peoples and nations, having a historical community with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their own territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of society, and are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories and their ethnic identity, as a basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal systems"(cited in Xulu *et al*: 2000).

³¹ Theorist of theatre, August Boal (1979), maintains that performance is inseparable from politics. Both the performers and the performance exist in socio-political context. An extended example in music: German composer Richard Wagner's works, which were used to fortify nationalist hopes in 'volk und vaterland' for Nazi Germany in the early 1940s.

The establishment of a political hierarchy for the various race groups in South Africa's recent past created a consequent value system that was attached to the cultural production and artistic endeavour for the diverse race groups. South African dance academic and choreographer, Lliane Loots (2001), illustrates some of the unnatural distinction made between art and culture in the South African context by her example of the privileged position of classical ballet as 'high art' form and ngoma³² as lowly cultural dance practice. The production of art by some race groups was privileged and led to a high art label for some, e.g. ballet, operas and western orchestral musical forms. She clarifies how "through access to funding for the training of dancers and privileged access to space to perform" (Loots. 2001: 2) the prejudice of racism and colonialism were entrenched. In South Africa, the apparent absence of any 'formal' training within some art forms has labelled these art forms as being culturally inferior. For example, the oral tradition which is so widespread in Africa as a 'training method' and a source of various insights of a culture was maligned by the apartheid government due to its 'informality' or lack of codified structure.

In order that a definition of culture could be clarified, this thesis opposes the particular distinction of art and culture, which is made at national levels in South Africa where the development of culture was controlled through the manipulation of funding and of race. The long-term effect of colonisation and later apartheid on the indigenous production of art, e.g. ngoma, ishayameni and ndlamu has dismissed this type of art to a low art status. Art and the inherent culture "from the motherland of Europe" (Loots: 2001:2) was more highly prized and promoted as 'high art' with art forms such as classical ballet, opera and western classical music enjoying a privileged position.

³² One of many African/Zulu dances usually performed at wedding feasts and other important celebratory occasions.

Often the term 'culture' in the South African context was a euphemism for cultural practices by black and indigenous African peoples.

The issues of dance and the status for dancers trained in a classical ballet technique (based on 400 year old training methods) versus dancers trained in ndlamu (via centuries old oral tradition) is pertinent in the South Africa context. The legacy of colonisation and the tensions it sowed for the various racial groups present, established a culture of the oppressor and the oppressed, which gave birth to a resistance and 'protest theatre' within the broader frame of human rights culture.

American theatre director and cultural theorist, Richard Schechner (1991: 29), suggests that developing notions of culture definitions should include orientations and ideologies such as oppression, feminism and gay culture. This thesis extends his notion by arguing for the inclusion of disability as a culture. For the dancer with disabilities her position as activist and negotiator of uncharted performance space within a wider notion of culture will be examined in greater detail in later chapters. The disabled have had much to overcome in their fight for human dignity including racist attitudes, lack of recognition of their potential artistic contribution and obstacles to access all facets of society. As artists their voices add to the development of a human rights culture in the new South Africa.

South African cultural writer, Johan Degenaar (1995), expands these notions by offering,

if on the one hand one views humanity as consisting only of distinct cultural groups, it leads to an exclusivist notion of 'cultures as bounded wholes' and

contact between cultures becomes difficult if not impossible. If on the other hand, one only operates with the notions of culture in a universalist sense, it leads to the denial of the rich texture of cultural variety (Degenaar: 1995: 61).

The acceptance of a one-sided definition for culture as if 'culture' is universally defined, is problematic as it could exclude 'non-believers' of the commonly held beliefs by individuals of a specific group. The danger of accepting definitions of culture that fail to embrace the notion of a sharing of ideological similarities by groups and/or individuals must also be expressed as many examples of cultural practices such as, funerals, birth customs and matrimony traditions (which feed the notion of the culture for a specific group) are cultural taboos for another group. This difference has not prevented the pursuit of nationhood and a unifying culture by societies and their sub-groups.

In South Africa the term 'non-racial' society³³ has become a desired label as the shifts towards a greater unity are pursued. During this same period of transition, the term 'non-cultural' as an acceptable label would seem absurd. The suggestion that a society should have no-race is seemingly acceptable but no-culture is unthinkable (Nettleford: 1994). Loots (2001) illustrates the issues of multiple identities in the South African context by suggesting that,

none of us bear only a single cultural, racial or gendered identity and part of the politics of our 'nationality' is how we mediate amongst identities (Loots. 2001: 5).

³³ The term 'non-racial' is itself a re-action to the racially imposed label for all South Africans. For many their desire to rid themselves of such race labels and be counted as South Africans first and of specific race heritage (only if necessary) afterwards has made it commonly acceptable to brandish the non-racial terminology.

This notion of a multiple identity for all South Africans, disabled or not, is complex as young post-apartheid South Africans journey through several scars of apartheid. For example, a dancer within the Siwela Sonke Dance Theatre could be seen as part of dance culture; gay culture; black culture and women's rights culture (Schechner: 1994). With the understanding that cultural multiplicity could offer a layered revelation of a society, the claim that a universally accepted idea of culture for a society even exists is unfounded. The boundaries that distinguish one culture from another are blurred by globalisation and advancements in technology make the definition for culture profoundly complex.

G. K. Verma and C. Bagley (1984) speak of "culture (whatever it is) is not a static entity, a 'culture' is dynamic; it changes over time" (as quoted in Chorn 1995: 5). These perspectives of fluid symbol systems are a characteristic feature of any culture, which Robinson (1989) argues,

implies organic growth and development [for culture]. Individuals who inherit cultural ideas and values also contribute to them, evaluating and changing them. Cultures evolve. (Robinson as quoted in Chorn 1995: 5).

The acceptance of a constantly evolving definition for culture that is located within socio-political and socio-economic frames is significant. In KwaZulu-Natal with its many cultural and racially defined groups which have been both forced apart and pulled together by circumstances of a historic process, this interpretation of culture is vital.

It is anomalous that South Africa - one of few countries worldwide - has a joint national ministry for arts and culture. The Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology³⁴ (DACST) offers a somewhat unique distinction of cultural development as if artistic explorations/products do not underscore an evolving South African culture in transition. It could therefore be construed that South Africa's pursuit of artistic endeavour prior to the 1990s was that 'art' was the privilege of a white elite and 'culture' the domain of the black poor. The notion that a culture was racially exclusive and should not be embraced by members outside of that race group has been imprinted through a systematised legacy which makes the definition of post-apartheid, post-colonial South African culture particularly complex.

Finally, Raymond Williams's (1983) exasperating comment of culture is summed up as the search for a working definition of culture is sought. He says culture is in fact "one of two or three most complicated words in the English language" (Williams quoted in Holloway.1999: 171). What culture is not, is often the starting point for its discovery – the cultural exclusions -, which will illuminate a common ground. Culture is more than an adhesive for the identity of an individual/group that shares commonly held beliefs or refined tastes. Religion; visual art; fashion; music; film; language; feminism, gay, terrorism and dance are all part of cultural construction.

2.1. 2. Definitions of Fusion

To understand cultural politics in the South African context, the search by the American pioneer of cross-cultural forays with his New York based The Performance

³⁴ The motivating factors for the combining of the Science and Technology sectors within a ministry for the Arts and Culture are also problematic. The value systems for the production (and producers) of art and the development of a culture by all South Africans are revealed by the disproportional funding for the arts as a sector as they continue to be lumped together with other ministries like Science.

Group of the late 1960s, Richard Schechner's insights are useful tools to clarify definitions of fusion, multi- and inter-culturalism (terms which will be expanded later in this chapter). The definition of fusion, he cautions, is problematic as the process by which a new culture emerges often ignores the power relationships that are at play when cultures meet. Nicki Taylor (2001), a young South African student reviewer's response is typical for both reviewers and audiences of dance work that emanates from many cultures. Her comment of a 'fusion' dance group is that they "first presented in their traditional form and then together in a whirl of multi-cultural colour and movement" (Taylor: 2001.1). Schechner more powerfully suggests,

Fusion occurs when elements of two or more cultures mix to such a degree that a new society, language or genre of art emerges (1991: 30)

Schechner's use of the 'melting pot'³⁵ analogy - a space in which cultures collide/fuse can be appropriated as an understanding of the term 'multiculturalism' in South Africa is sought. Schechner explains that, "American multiculturalism is actually an inversion of the melting pot [where all cultural groups keep their] own distinct qualities" (1991: 29). The desire to establish a unified culture needs to question as much as who is being excluded as well as included.

American scholar, J. A. Banks (1981), who writes from the multi-ethnic education standpoint, recognizes the unequal relationship which exists between dominant and newly introduced cultures who are allowed access to the shared space. He argues that "most of the immigrant and ethnic cultures stuck to the bottom of the mythical

³⁵ The 'melting pot' theory arguably originated with a play by Israel Zangwill in which America is described during the heyday of European immigration through New York as "the great Melting Pot where all races of Europe are melting and reforming" (Zangwill, I. 1907: 37 cited in Vold, 1989:4).

melting pot” (Banks. 1981: 4). These power relationships for ethnic minorities are also evident in multicultural performance works of South African origin. The notion of traditionally accepted performance spaces and performing groups within those spaces is problematic. The ability to access a performance space must also consider some of the many stumbling blocks: financial resources; language accessibility³⁶; geographic position of the new users. For Schechner these divisive scenarios exist when cultures meet could “further entrench the status quo and its inequities”(1991: 29). Power groups through financial and political muscle could subvert emerging and previously marginalised art forms in the name of cultural transformation.

Fellow American cultural writer Robert Brustein (1991: 45), suggests that there is an inherent inequity that establishes a hierarchical pattern in cultural shifts. South African Johan Degenaar also reminds that during a period of transformation - “the vocabularies, assumptions, paradigms, methodologies and interests in art and art talk” need to be carefully scrutinised (Degenaar.1995: 58). Papers presented during the Conference on Arts and Culture in the New South Africa which was held by The National Arts Coalition in 1995, question the borrowing, appropriation, de-contextualisation and the transfer of cultures. These notions are significant as imperialist attitudes often arise in the exchange of cultures. The scourge of colonisation has had profound impact on existing cultural practices (referred to earlier in this chapter) that is to say their lowly status and forced subversion.

The arguments within cultural politics around ownership and the voice of the authentic speaker as cultures meet and boundaries blend becomes more difficult

³⁶ South Africa has eleven officially recognized languages and for many children from disabled schools English is a second language. English is used predominately in all mainstream theatres and is the language of the economy.

(Spivak: 1990). The parochial claim by individual cultural groups over works that bear a fusion and intercultural performance label is noted by many theorists. Brustein notes these trends which he argues are,

Among the reasons for the current climate of racial and ethnic assertiveness, is that regardless of origin or political point of view, most people share a compulsion to demonise 'the other' (1991: 45).

This cultural 'othering' (as discussed in chapter one) or marginalisation of disabled, or of foreigners, is a kind of xenophobia, which is politically and socially problematic in the South African context. For example, the emergence of performing art festivals³⁷ which bear either a national label and/or those which are rooted within a particular language are subtly engaged in exclusion. Festivals such as the Standard Bank National Arts Festival; The South African Women's Arts Festival; Aardsklop Fes; Oppiekoppie Fes and other examples, illustrate the divisive preferential acceptance for selected language groups and/or indigenous works.

Nettelord's (1994) conference paper challenged notions of fusion by discussing 'creolisation' a term borne out of language theorists and social anthropologists such as M.G. Smith, and Furnivall. He maintained that creolisation also manifests itself through "the exercise of creativity in the field of the arts" by interested individuals especially those who have been historically marginalized. His study of the Caribbean experience: the disadvantaged whose creative expression existed "beyond the reach of the oppressors" (Nettelord.1994:154), support a notion that creolisation forges a new identity. Nettelord's example of the Caribbean creole language which arose out of "the symbiotic interaction between people and cultures in their separate encounters"

³⁷ Whilst the origin of such festivals in the light of a divided apartheid history is understandable an ill-defined or on-going pursuit which excludes the 'other' is detrimental for all artists - South African and non-South African.

(Nettelford 1994:153) shows that this type of indigenisation/multiculturalism is a difficult concept for western societies who would prefer an 'either/or' definition of reality and thus of fusion.

He elaborates by proposing that white Americans fail to "accept that they are as much Negritised as their African-American counterparts are Europeanised" (Nettelford, 1994:153). South Africans share a similar phobia that they are as much Africanised, Indianised from one another. Student reviewer, Nicky Taylor (2001) highlights the diversity within the *South Africa - One Nation, Many Cultures* dance performance held at the Grahamstown national arts festival by noting the complex rapport between

Graceful Indian dancing, vibrant Gumboot and Zulu, energetic Street Dance and precise Celtic tap, [that] eventually "meet" and are unified through drum music (Taylor, 2001: 15).

The context of gumboots which includes narrative exploration (such as AIDS issues) and poly-rhythmic conversation between kathak and Irish folk are prime examples of dance dialogues.

Finally, 'fusion' performances offer a hope for the inclusion of all cultures but cannot avoid the inequities of the past by these 'micro-cultures'. That cultural dominance thus secures its space is through the flexing of its fiscal resources, the mega-powerful media and the information technology of the 21st century.

2.1.3. Definitions of Multiculturalism

The exploration of multiculturalism in America in the 1960s can be paralleled with South Africa in the early 1990s. Following the demise of the forty-year legacy that

was apartheid, shifts in power bases both economic and political resulted in radical societal transformation. Principles such as “non-racism, non-sexism, democracy, a unitary system of education and redress” (Chorn.1995: 48) highlighted in Chorn’s intercultural music education study were rapidly being discussed by practitioners and researchers. A new constitution (recognised internationally as being progressive) offered human rights on a previously unheard of scale. Old systems of governance were being questioned, axed and re-fashioned. Access to various strata in virtually every sphere of South African life: education, housing, welfare, ‘culture and the arts’ (as discussed earlier in this chapter) was in the process of being re-dressed. The notion of development for the disabled, their economic integration into open labour markets, was also being examined (Moodley: 1997).

This climate of radical change - a state of transformation – also shared similarities with many other nations. Fellow American and cultural historian, Robert Brustein (1991), writes that multiculturalism in America was born out of moments of great turmoil and societal upheaval in world histories such as the “Civil Rights Movement, the Vietnam war and the radical 60’s” (1991: 45).

The recent history of South Africa which held bounded ideas for multiculturalism could benefit from a collision with Schechner’s ideas which suggests that multiculturalism,

is not limited to ethnicity [a self enclosed whole], marginalized/sub-groups but includes orientations and ideologies [including] gay, feminist...(Schechner. 1999: 29).

An understanding of gay³⁸ or black culture as an ideology and notions of First and Third world paradigms opens the debates around multiculturalism in the South African context. As a country with the majority of its population from within African race groups, notions of black culture have extended beyond race to represent the disempowered worker, marginalised art forms and the disenfranchised landowner. Political commentator Diane Ravitch reminds, that

within every major racial group, there are many different cultural groups, and within every major racial group, there exists serious ethnic and cultural tensions. To ignore these differences is to exchange one set of chains for another (Ravitch cited in Brustein, 1991: 142).

Clearly, the racially dividing borders that prevailed in South Africa via policies such as the oppressive Group Areas Act³⁹ extend to ideas that defined culture and communities by race. Within notions of black culture it could be argued that further serious cultural tensions exist, for example - the South African black gay male. The question of his identity rests within several sub-groups including not only his sexual orientation but also his political identity. Issues of religion, class and economic standing also come into play in this identity struggle.

³⁸ Gay activism has enjoyed the reprieve brought about by the much-publicised New Constitution and the plethora of openly gay clubs and advice centres are, in part, a testament to this. However, whilst the establishment hereof may be insignificant, the practice of self-regulation in gay clubs results in many 'Boy zones' that are still racially divided. For many black gay men the fore-grounded identity still remains his black-ness and not gay-ness. Yet he is very much a part of Gay Pride marches, a statistic in the AIDS pandemic and in the legal system.

³⁹ Group Areas Act of the Union of South Africa in 1950 which was consolidated as Act. Number 77 in 1957 was one of the cornerstones of the former apartheid regime which separated residential, commercial and recreational zones based on race.

Many South Africans are only just beginning to make sense of their identity within the new rainbow nation⁴⁰. South Africans are finally free to find common ground outside of race as their own definitions of South African culture is being sought. With the new freedom of the rainbow nation has come noticeable confusion, mistrust and searching. Many communities cling to their cultural root or resonance whilst simultaneously searching for shared identities, commonly held beliefs, behaviours and similar cultural patterns with the 'other'. This journey has been difficult, e.g. the practice of women dancing bare-breasted may be commonly accepted by one race group but for another race group this practice would be taboo.

Within the search of cross-cultural and fusion debates. Schechner (1991: 28) recognises a need for distinction between multiculturalism and interculturalism. This thesis argues that the use of the label 'multiculturalism' simply used interchangeably with interculturalism is incorrect. Given the cultural politics and shifts which present themselves in a rich artistic environment like South Africa, the label for interculturalism (a term which will be expanded further) could often be the term intended rather than multiculturalism.

The Latin word *multus* meaning 'many' suggests a working definition for multiculturalism which is no more than a side-by-side placement of the many varied cultural expressions. For example, in a dance performance context, separate dance pieces that have not in any way changed or mediated a change between dance forms are merely multifarious within the range of the art form of dance. Whilst the kathak dancer may have taken her rhythmic flow from the beat of an ngoma drum, the lack of dialogue/exchange allows her to remain sealed in her specific cultural identity. Where

⁴⁰ With the release of Nelson Mandela in 1994, Archbishop Desmond Tutu's fervent hope for a racially unified and peaceful South Africa was expressed in a rainbow image.

no change to the dance has been made either in its vocabulary (individual dance steps/movements) or to its choreography, then no fusion or intercultural endeavour has begun. Events such as these are multicultural in practice and perhaps intercultural in their intention.

The euphoria of post-1994 elections left many South Africans eager “to celebrate the many different racial, ethnic, and sexual strains and backgrounds” (Brustein. 1991: 45) of the country. Cultural role players became anxious to establish solutions by tracing a common intersected view of South Africa’s varied heritage. In short, an aspiration towards a new nation - A ‘Rainbow Nation’ which was as far removed from the years of brutal racial segregation and the dominant white Afrikaner culture as possible.

Schechner notes that the desire to propose “universalist solutions” (1991: 30) is often the aim of intercultural (and multicultural) performances. For many South Africans this desire, which “originated out of warm humanist feelings and progressive social values” (Brustein.1991: 45) however well-intentioned, blind-sided these cultural designers to the problems which lay in the years ahead. South African cultural role-players mistakenly down-played the imbalances between previously marginalised artists and overlooked their inability to fully access these new opportunities. The desire for syncretic solutions avoided the stark realities of First and Third world paradigms. Multicultural performances were like safe houses⁴¹ which introduced different cultural groups to one another. With the dramatic shifts of power in South Africa came the temptation to exploit the weaker cultural groups. Like casualties in

⁴¹ In times of political instability safe houses were used to shield political prisoners from an oppressive regime. The metaphor is used to indicate the ‘subversive’ activity of cultural interaction.

cross-cultural exchanges, the weak minorities like the disabled were largely spoken *for* and not spoken of *by* themselves.

Feminist author Gayathri Spivak's (1990) viewpoint further asks, "For me, the question 'Who should speak?' is less crucial than 'Who is listening?' (1990:59). Spivak's concern as to who is allowed to speak, who cannot speak in the context of the disabled is significant. The belief that the mentally disabled cannot speak for themselves is controversially argued by Sinason (1992). Her contention (expanded in chapter three) that it is not only the disabled who are often rendered "stupid 'numbed with grief' (Sinason. 1992: 31) is significant. In the context of disability arts the question of 'who is listening?' and 'who is not speaking?' compounds the making of artistic work. The inability to access funding from 'deaf' national arts councils or institutions and the absence of media attention, who could be articulating the disabled needs, are just a part of the dilemma that makes the disabled silent, stupid, and invisible artists.

The reception of multicultural performances by ignorant arts bureaucracies, audiences and/or arrogant, uninformed media is hugely problematic and are some of the mitigating factors to the advancement of 'ability arts'.

The central question in the hegemonic construction of the disabled as 'other' is: who is being shown, whose truth, whose objective/subjective position, who is the outsider and who the insider? (Minh Ha, T cited in Pines, J: 1989). Multiculturalism in a South Africa finds itself on the one hand attempting to give a voice (Spivak: 1990) to previously marginalised cultural groups and on the other hand is caught in a performance space where the dominant 'singer' is not so willing to leave the spotlight

or the front page.

In America, the period of the 1960s saw a resurgence of the feminist discourse within post-colonial cultural political debates raised by authors such as Spivak (1990) and Mohanty (1991). This offers another facet for the complex topic of multiculturalism. The notion of culture as an expression of shared ideologies is supported by feminist writer Chandra Mohanty's (1991) search for black feminism in so far as her pleas for Third world women - a further sub-group within the construct that is feminism. She notes that,

Unlike the history of Western (white, middle-class) feminisms, which has been explored in great detail over the last decades, histories of third world women's engagement with feminism are in short supply (Mohanty, 1991: 3-4).

This lack of information raises questions such as: to what extent is the notion of Third world located geographically and/or how is this internalised by women? This thesis argues that the disabled are a marginalised cultural political space that is 'Third world' representation of a most impoverished sector. The further delineation of the disabled as a consequence of her race in the South Africa context is overt. This thesis suggests that her gender and age betrays her claim in such political space.

Thus, the danger of a narrow definition of multiculturalism is that multicultural performance presents a separatist fusion of the existing cultures. Multiculturalism needs to acknowledge that cultural federalism is hierarchical and does not embrace the notion of cultural equality towards nation building (regardless of whether this would be possible). Van den Berg's notion of "frozen cultures" (quoted in Chorn

1995: 11) for indigenous forms challenges such enclave thinking and is supported by this thesis. South African writer, Daryl Chin (1992), concurs by adding that the idea of “rezone[d] culture into separatist districts” (Chin. 1992: 15) is problematic.

Finally, the experiences of other nations (notably America) and their ‘mono-cultural perspective in education’ (Chorn. 1995: 28) offers a parallel from which we could learn to re-fashion South African multiculturalism and our own context of cross cultural politics. This thesis supports Chorn’s (1995) argument that the unifying attempts by the American education system through their strategies for assimilation for their ethnic minorities and people of colour into Anglo-conformity failed to establish a new order for them. In South Africa, the foray into cultural politics by some stakeholders has meant a retreat to cultural federalism or a myopic (sic) search for a singular identity. Loots’ (2001) suggestion of mediated ‘multiple identities’ (refer also to page 55 of this thesis) offers hope as diverse cultural groups - the disabled - enter public spaces to discover their shared cultural selves.

2.1.4. Definitions of Intraculturalism

Within the broad constraints of a defined cultural group, there is much evidence of ‘intra’ cultural groups or groups that desire to maintain a separate identity whilst holding onto a parallel identity of the ‘mother-culture’. The Deaf could be described as a separate, withdrawing division from within the disabled community, an intracultural group that simultaneously exclude themselves and plea for inclusion into mainstream society. Interviewee Paddy Ladd (cited in Campbell: 1996) fuels the fight by the Deaf who wish to be recognised as a further independent sub-group/sub-

culture. Ladd (cited in Campbell: 1996) proudly comments,

Culture as in art is one thing. Culture as in deaf culture is another. Basically deaf people whose first language is BSL (British Sign Language) should be seen as a linguistic minority. It helps to think of us parallel to, say, an Asian community (Ladd cited in Campbell. 1996: 120).

The Deaf have suffered arguably less of an intellectual challenge through their physical impairment than their mentally handicapped sisters and see no need to be categorised similarly. On the one hand the Deaf community are admired and have become a beacon for the rest of the disabled community with whom they share an ideological history. On the other hand, the Deaf are a little like the gay man who is intolerant of the trans-sexual sub-group within the broader label of gay community⁴². Although housed within the wide umbrella that is 'the disabled', the Deaf actively seek to re-define their position and forge their own cultural identity.

French culturalist, Patrice Pavis (1992), comments on actors' assimilation or inculturation into drama culture could also be paralleled with another introspective group - the disabled as a cultural group. Pavis' comment for actors is useful and is appropriated to explain,

This process of *inculturation*, conscious or unconscious, makes them [the actors] assimilate the traditions, and (especially corporal, vocal and rhetorical) techniques of the group (Pavis 1992: 9).

⁴² The term gay community includes lesbian, trans-gendered, bi-sexual and other non-heterosexual minorities who also see themselves as independent from the general gay label.

Intracultural works appear to follow the codified systems already positioned by dominant cultures without losing their original essence. This thesis observes the example of gumboot dance works that transpose their performance space away from dockyards in KwaZulu-Natal and gold mines in Gauteng. The assimilation into urban performance contexts and proscenium arch spaces since the 1960s forced an embrace of theatrical conventions and the consequent English-speaking white audiences for gumboot dance practitioners. The change to gumboots as a dance form, which was mostly performed by isiZulu speaking males demonstrating their poly-rhythmic virtuosity, is significant. The demand for multi-lingualism, a greater narrative style and the introduction of flamboyant exits and entrances: these transitions became more visible at public performance spaces as more gumboot dance troupes began to perform at international airports, beachfront hotels and theatre playhouses in the 1990s. Camouflaged by their assimilation into a world culture, these intra-cultural dance works are now insiders (Minh Ha cited in Pines, J. et al. 1989: 133) that have survived the effects of rapid cultural political change.

These notions of inculturation are significant in the context for transformation. For example, for many black children post-1994, the process of adaptation to their new school's norms meant a denial of their own ideas of accepted behaviour. These (suffocating) new boundaries were captured by the example of well-known South African playwright and satirist, Pieter Dirk Uys' play, entitled *Adapt or Dye* (1986). For many black children the indoctrination during a euphemistically named orientation week presented a 'sink or swim' a challenge.

The definition of intraculturalism, in the above example, refers to those sub-cultural groups who have been broadly accepted into the new system (during classroom hours) but who have, through choice and or circumstances, separated themselves (during the break times).

In the world of dance that is classical ballet, evidence of such intracultural groups is offered by the example of the Dance Theatre of Harlem, “the first permanently established black ballet company in America” (Emery 1972: 279). American author Lynne Emery (1972) comments that this company did not initially intend to express the black viewpoint but rather evolved “as a reaction to the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr...[in order to create] a much-needed self awareness and better self-image of the [black] student themselves” (1972: 282). The risk which intracultural groups often face is an insecure need to be ‘as good as’ the dominant/target culture

A fledgling sub-culture or intracultural group exists in the wake of a domineering ‘mother-culture’ surviving in relation to her position of strength and the group’s desire for its separate identity.

2.1.5. Definitions of Interculturalism

The search for the spaces between cultures or inter-cultural forms remains an intrigue for many culturalists. Schechner (1991) offers a pathway to follow notions of interculturalism within the cultural politics debates. He offers that interculturalism is a shared space between two or more colliding cultures wherein the interactive nature of this cultural exchange within a no man’s (sic) land challenges the old ways of seeing

(Berger.1972). This thesis argues that disabled dance performance is a shared space for both the able-bodied person and his disabled counterpart within the contemporary dance setting as each group mediates an unfamiliar middle-ground. The notion of an intersection of 'disability dance' and mainstream contemporary dance suggests an intercultural disabled dance performance.

Schechner describes the intersection of cultures as marked by a cultural uneasiness and argues that,

Interculturalists probe the confrontations, ambivalences, disruptions, fears, disturbances and difficulties when and where cultures collide, overlap or pull away from each other (1991: 30).

He proposes that the current aims of intercultural performances, apart from highlighting the cultural uneasiness (referred to earlier), tend to offer "universalist solutions" and to this end appear to be the greater goal for South African artists (Schechner. 1991: 30). Should interculturalism therefore be concerned with the search for common ground between power groups only once the playing fields have been levelled?

For independent writer and theatre director Calcutta-based, Rustom Bharucha the ethics of representation when cultures meet is paramount. Bharucha's intercultural investigations which began in India in the 1980s have included dance-theatre and dance-drama. A renowned critic, he is often vigorously opposed to Schechner's and others insensitivity towards the source of their 'new' work (Bharucha: 1990). This thesis supports Bharucha's admonishing that

Borrowing, stealing and exchanging from other cultures is not necessarily an enriching experience for the [source] cultures themselves. Interculturalism [he says] can be liberating, but it can also be a 'continuation of colonialism, a further exploitation of other cultures (Bharucha. 1990: 14).

Culture being appropriated without any due regard for the context of the source culture is tantamount to theft. In his book Theatre and the World: Performance and the Politics of Culture (1990), Bharucha rejects Schechner's American magnanimity and implied equal status when cultures meet arguing that the cultural exchange is far from celebratory for the usurped culture. His many articles reflect a concern that "interculturalism is [not] applicable and acceptable to everyone" (1990: 41). Bharucha reminds,

In our search for 'other cultures' we often forget the cultures within our own boundaries, the differences that are marginalized and occasionally silenced in our imagined homogeneities (1997: 31).

The disabled have historically been a forgotten community. The oppressive politic in South Africa by dominant white minorities aimed at various levels of society was, until most recently, experienced first hand by all people with disabilities. The 'voice' of the disabled expressed through the performing arts offers an intersecting site where borrowing and appropriation as suggested by Bharucha can occur. The exploitation of the disabled as they are homogenised into a wider culture needs to be addressed. Whilst national statutory changes in policies have begun, the changes to ordinary lives for people with disabilities unravel much slower.

As part of a homogenised new South Africa, children with disabilities: a minority voice, are easy to ignore. As later chapters will attest, much of the disabled voice and manifestation of its culture is articulated through children. French theoretician Patrice Pavis (1992) offers analytical tools to examine the changes in cross-cultural transfers. He hopes his study of intercultural theatre will,

produce a new way of understanding theatre practice and will thus contribute to promoting a new methodology of performance analysis (Pavis. 1992: 4)

Pavis' offer of the hourglass model of transient cultures wherein the foreign or source culture journeys towards a target culture, allows one to analyse the process that could be described as an emerging 'voice' by the disabled in cultural debates.

For Pavis, his strange metaphorical tool is neither mill nor merely funnel. He argues that it would be naïve to consider a milled foreign culture that would miraculously melt and be reduced to a radically different substance in the "crucible of humanity where all specificity melts into a universal substance"(Pavis. 1992: 6). This thesis supports his contention that to wholly destroy the foreign culture through the intercultural transfer is often neither desirable nor designed.

Pavis clarifies that an acceptance of the foreign culture as if only through a 'funnel', would be an incomplete analysis. He argues against the notion that a foreign culture

will indiscriminately absorb the initial substance without reshaping it through a series of filters or leaving trace of the original matter (Pavis. 1992: 5)

He maintains that inevitably change or reshaping will occur during the intercultural transfer, as the existing cultural parameters, viewing habits and other complex series of “filters [are] interposed between ‘our’ culture and that of others” (1992: 5). These new influences colour and/or obscure the understanding for both participants and viewers, which is of great significance. Finally, Pavis reminds one that

as soon as the users of a foreign culture ask themselves how they can communicate their own culture to another target culture... it is turned upside-down (Pavis: 1992: 5).

Thus, the intercultural transfer is in operation once more. The development of an emerging voice within scenarios of transition: foreign culture towards target culture (ever-flowing) will be highlighted in later chapters. The example of the progressive introduction of ‘enablers’ within the three Playhouse Company case studies will be critiqued in relation to Pavis’ hourglass model⁴³.

The intercultural space that ‘disability dance’ affords is the intersection by the disabled as previously racially divided community and its role within contemporary dance performance as the ‘other’ in a mainstream dance performance culture. The impact of ‘disabled dance’ as introduced by the three case studies emanating from The Playhouse Company, could usher in new debates for a performance culture of activism and protest with the disabled dancing body as site of mediation.

⁴³ The introduction of so called ‘mainstream’ scholars as ‘enablers’ in the three case studies parallel a notion of interculturalism. The integration of children with disabilities and so called ‘mainstream’ children will be evaluated in greater detail in the following chapters.

The vision for disabled dance is that its dancers like CandoCo (referred to earlier in this thesis) “asked to be judged not on a political aesthetic but on artistic merit” (Charman, 2000: 7). London based CandoCo, established amidst Thatcher’s 1980s, profoundly shifted the way dance by the artist who is disabled is being reviewed and reported. CandoCo’s groundbreaking work by adults with and without disabilities has had increasing impact internationally within notions of contemporary dance.

Potential artists engaging with South African disabled dance find themselves still having to claim their rightful space in the political pecking order within dance. British freelance dance consultant and occasional dance writer, Elizabeth Charman (2000), offers a message of hope by noting,

“In the early days we had to break down the barriers, to say, ‘you don’t have to be careful with us’ but there is less to prove now.” (Charman: 2000: 7).

Whilst this may be the British experience in the year 2000, South Africa is only just beginning its journey of inclusion for performers with disabilities in mainstream art production.

Finally, in the opalescence that is intercultural dance performance this thesis supports the visionary comment that “civilisations flourish by opening themselves to the impact of outside influences” (Brustein, 1991:46). That which propels culture is both evolution and revolution. Intercultural disabled dance is defined by that dance which is created and performed not only by dancers with disabilities but artists internal and external to the disability movement. The focus on disability issues thus need to be

seen within the wider human rights debates and supports the idea of culture that is constantly evolving.

2. 2. The location of disability culture in the framework of South African cultural politics.

Having opened up some working definitions of culture, disability and the issues surrounding cultural politics, the argument for the acceptance and unique position of disability culture is strengthened by several key indicators. Culture is circumscribed by language, race, religion, tradition and the production of art. All of these elements are contained under the umbrella that is culture.

Disability culture could be described as the accepted code of behaviour and established patterns for people with disabilities defined *by themselves*. On the other hand notions of people with disabilities are often stereotypically defined *for them* by the able-bodied⁴⁴. Both parties are responsible for the fixed idea of the possible achievement by people with disabilities whether artistically or towards their integration into so called 'mainstream' societies.

One of the major areas of cultural significance for people with disabilities is their shared ideological identity as 'other' group - their marginalization aids in defining them as a 'unified' cultural group and separates them from mainstream - which is problematic. The Deaf as a sub-group/sub-culture have a further key indicator of culture: a highly developed gesture system of signs, i.e. Sign Language, which they presently argue should be recognised as South Africa's 12th official language.

⁴⁴ The term able-bodied will be used to distinguish people without impairments/disabilities from people with disabilities.

If we consider “The recognition of language as the key entry point to the understanding of culture and its dynamics” (Xulu, 2000: 10), then Sign Language is a key that could unlock an understanding of the term ‘deaf culture’ and hence ‘disability culture’ in all its multifaceted forms. Further, various languages could exist within the disabled community including dance as a non-verbal language and effective means of communication.

Anti-apartheid lobbyist, Vic Finkelstein, highlights the complex social relationships (Finkelstein cited in Campbell: 1996) that exist even within the disabled as a community. Many in the disability movement have found the pathway thereto from a political consciousness. Finkelstein, who had fought against apartheid in South Africa, was imprisoned and later deported. He says,

Some of the arguments that I was raising about the oppression of disabled people originated from oppression of black people. It was a direct connection (Finkelstein cited in Campbell, 1996: 120).

A higher profile of disability consciousness as in Britain, which strengthens their disability movement, is already surfacing in South Africa. As recently as January 2001, the front page of a KwaZulu-Natal daily newspaper, The Daily News, featured an urgent plea from Fawzia Jamal, Head of the Department of Language Literacy and Communication. Jamal speaks of the denial for Deaf pupils unable to

use *their* natural language [as being]... tantamount to linguistic genocide (Jamal quoted in Khan, 2001: 1).

As a champion for the acceptance of Sign language as the 12th official language of South Africa, Jamal argues that it be given the same status as any other language including English. Her support for a separate development for the Deaf must be seen against the background of the Deaf's dispossessed past.

Many examples of marginalisation and discrimination against people with disabilities exist. Damaging parameters for disabled are evident not only in the education-, social-environments but also in the workplace. South African visual artist Mandla Mabila's (2000) dream, highlights the disabled's plea for acceptance and inclusion into the realm of art production by people with disabilities. This thesis supports Mabila's moral stand for a humanist space and argues in favour of disability culture which can be expressed, challenged and mediated through the arts. In Mabila's words

My dream is to see disabled people participating fully in the society that gave birth to them - projecting an image of pride in which we are in anticipation of the great people we could become (Mabila quoted in Murray. 2000: 4).

2. 3. Disability dance as an emerging performance culture in KwaZulu-Natal within notions of children's performance.

Disabled dance in KwaZulu-Natal is located from within (intra) the broad category of South Africa contemporary dance and has absorbed its dance vocabulary (hence its inculturation). Contemporary dance has in turn evolved its language as reaction to classical dance forms (most notably ballet), from traditional folk dance forms and from creative dance and movement as conceived by modern dance in education

pioneers such as Rudolf Laban⁴⁵. New labels for disabled dance such as 'wheelchair dance' for people with disabilities and 'developmental movement' (Sherborne: 1990) will be examined in greater depth (and in a KwaZulu-Natal context) in chapter three.

The powerful agency of Laban's (1948, 1950) human movement principles and its *Laban* evolution have underpinned modern dance in education and creative improvisational dance performance forms in the 20th century. Several dance companies and agencies, especially in the United Kingdom, continue to reflect Laban's teachings which tend towards holistic, open-ended vs defined, formulaic approaches to dance making. The natural flow and suitability of his work for people with disabilities is apparent through Laban's foundational axis - that of dance for all. The individual character and uniqueness of each person is accommodated by Laban's principles which support personal rather than group responses. Disabled dance performances which include examples of Laban's movement concepts such as weight, space, time and flow have taken on new meanings, e.g. a dancer in a wheelchair carves her space in the performance area and the dancer with an atrophied limb could signal a fall by thrusting her crutches into the air. Whether these creative dance works have mediated a new dance language will be contested as a search for disability dance in the multicultural South African context is sought.

In the socio-political frenzy of mid-1990s, marginalised cultural groups such as the disabled were gaining greater access to funding and performance space. The former privileged groups had firmly established themselves as the voice of authority on

⁴⁵ Rudolf von Laban has been variously described as the Father of Modern Dance, philosopher, dancer teacher, choreologist and educationist. His human movement principles in the early 20th century rocked the western world from its stalemate with classical ballet introducing dance as an expressive medium for all - dancers and non-trained dancers. He is jointly responsible for the notions of dance as therapy which has become evident in many western societies since the early 1930s.

performance dance implicitly sidelining the disabled as unfortunate outsiders (Minh Ha cited in Pines, J. et al. 1989: 133). The tensions which the disabled groups posed contributed to the reaction by some 'establishment' to remain separate - slowly drawing themselves into a static introspection (Verma & Bagley: 1984). This state of non-inclusion as if hermetically sealed from all outside influences, did not augur well for the development of disabled dance. The creativity and innovation which could have been brought about by interactivity was cautiously received by these formerly separate communities.

In the next chapter, the three case studies will examine to what extent the interactivity from equally nervous communities from within the disabled and able-bodied, offers a hope for children's performance dance. This thesis will explore the influence by children with disabilities on mainstream children's performance and will argue that it contributed to the acceptance of intercultural dance emanating from KwaZulu-Natal.

The stranglehold on the production of art (and specifically dance) for people with disabilities was more than a denial of access to equal education, health care and recreation as outlined earlier. It was an exclusion of entry into levels of society, which have allowed people with disabilities from their perspective of 'other' to critique both their private world and the environment at large. The dismissive attitude by performing arts institutions prior to the early 1990s of other 'intelligences'⁴⁶ (Gardner cited in Greenland. 2000: 25) by people with disabilities and their contribution was detrimental to all audiences. The simple common-space interaction of disabled and the able-bodied has become less significant to choreographers in recent years. The use

⁴⁶ Howard Gardener (1993) has identified seven separate intelligences: linguistic, musical, logical-mathematical, visual-spatial, bodily kinesthetic and two personal intelligences (internal: access to one's own feeling life, and external: the ability to make distinctions, and influence things, in the external environment).

of the wheelchair occupied by a person with disabilities as a prop or her extended limb which is capable of carving new pathways in space, has become the intrigue. The overall effect of non-integration for both groups, that is to say disabled and able-bodied dancers, is that it stifles the growth of contemporary dance culture for both parties.

Thus, the intersection of two or more cultures disability culture and mainstream performing arts culture in KwaZulu-Natal poses challenging and significant questions. what is the role of the disabled children's dance in the formation of disability culture, and how does 'disability' redefine children's performance dance in KwaZulu-Natal. If so, how does one define disability as an emerging culture given the consequences of Richard Brustein's coining of 'the other' for this specific marginalized group? The responsibility for disability consciousness is not entirely vested in performances by children. The lack of (amongst other issues) full-time performance training for children with disabilities muffles their little voices. The effect of the introduction of children with disabilities within dance performance spaces, even if armed with a better awareness of her human rights, can only begin to be measured as she emerges as the leading young choreographer, dance writer, dance lighting designer and others of their ilk in the ensuing years.

The extent of disabling policies is far-reaching and beyond educational or schooling needs of children with disabilities. This thesis argues that policies for people with disabilities are so damaging that they could prevent the cultural aspirations of disabled coming to fruition. The lack of programmes in dance created and driven by people with disabilities and the absence of curricula for training of young dancers are imperatives in need of immediate attention by the policy-makers. Mentoring projects

and increased visibility of these dance performances by the disabled could focus and direct the disability awareness campaigns.

These opportunities will allow the disabled to question whether they do dwell on mostly anti-establishment or protest theatre work and is vital for the range and depth of future 'disabled dance'. It is imperative that the disabled are also free to unpack perceptions of dance, e.g. whether dance should be culturally bound. Failure to do so or an insular attitude will further confine these future makers of dance.

One of founder members of British based CandoCo (see also references in chapter one), Adam Benjamin, extends the notion of marginalization of the disabled further by arguing for greater inclusion of people with disabilities at the creative as opposed to implementation level. He challenges the stereotype for people with disabilities by saying,

There is no reason why one of the great choreographers of the future should not be someone with a severe physical disability, as long as they are given the opportunity to study and experiment and as long as the educational establishments take their wish to study seriously. (Benjamin, 1993: 7).

Disabled dance presently housed with children with disabilities (custodial artists) becomes part of the evolution of South African performance dance. This phenomenon could offer new interpretations of the dancing body which in turn fuels exploration and contestation of the definitions of dance and movement. Sadly, for many disabled dancers the dominant experience of performance dance is that they find themselves waiting in the wings of the mainstream performance dance experience.

‘Disability dance’ is a most profound and unique medium for mediation of multiple identities of the disabled and could be accessed by many dance practitioners, dancers, choreographers, animators and therapists working with people with disabilities. The offer of creative dance which has the ability to transcend the limiting cultural boundaries of language race and gender, will be substantiated in later chapters.

Conclusion

KwaZulu-Natal choreographers and dancers operate in the rapidly changing cultural politic which surrounds dance in its many forms in South Africa. When two or more cultures (disability culture and mainstream dance culture) intersect, the subtle xenophobia of the ‘foreigners’ i.e. disabled children-performers, is a far cry from the happy melting pot of cultures (Banks: 1981) that most dance makers (teachers and choreographers) would have us believe. The heady mix of all that is South African culture camouflages the pungency of the ‘haves’ and the mildly insipid ‘have-nots’ in this intercultural cauldron.

The thesis notes that the incubation period of apartheid has realised self-doubt and categorisation from within the disabled community itself. Like the memorable statement “all animals are equal but some are more equal than others” in George Orwell’s novel *Animal Farm* (1951: 114), the hierarchy for disabled must be noted as “cultures collide” (Schechner.1991: 30), transfer and intersect. The position of the Deaf as an intracultural group must be recognised as a strong debate for their rightful space is sought. The counter-debates around definitions of what, when and where is culture (established by a ‘civilised’ language, religion, race) need to continue alongside arguments of the ownership of culture. Finally, the borders which are

needed (by some) for a better understanding of interculturalism, especially in the South African context, are blurred as kathak is performed to the rhythmic pulse of a djembe⁴⁷.

Some of the dangers for the disabled dance in KwaZulu-Natal are that it merely imitates the performance dance that is presently available for mainstream adults. To lose sight of the creative exploration through dance by children with disabilities (as custodial artists) and their understanding of a world previously hidden would be a denial of these young peoples' unique 'voices'. As potential dancers, choreographers, directors and artists of the future children with disabilities carry the hope of South Africa's cultural future.

As multicultural and intercultural dance works the three case studies of The Playhouse Company in the following chapter will reflect the many faces of children with disabilities' dance performance in a South African context: a culture of protest theatre, the culture of classical *vs* traditional forms of ndlamu, kathak, contemporary dance and other marginalized dance forms. The fragile culture of learning in KwaZulu-Natal (especially in former black schools) which intersects with the specific culture within schools for disability, needs to be contextualised for a clearer understanding as disability as a culture is located within multi-, intra-, and inter-cultural frameworks. This thesis maintains that 'disability' as a culture in and of itself (within the above context) is therefore, not an implausible theoretical construct.

⁴⁷ An African drum (possibly originating from West Africa) that is carved from wood in a distinctive 'Y' shape. The stretched drum skins are often made from cow's hide, antelope or sheep's skin.

Chapter 3

A cross-evaluation of three dance projects for children with disabilities conducted by The Playhouse Company between 1997 – 1999.

Introduction

The potential of dance as a medium through which estranged communities intersect and thereby evolve a new and commonly accepted ideology (a culture), remains uncontested in the South African context. This chapter will set out to describe and evaluate a process of ‘cross-disability and integrated dance’ work (a term which will be clarified later), which suggests that disability within a performance culture expands the notion of intercultural performance. Documentation including project reports, marketing tools (press releases, programmes), reviews by the media and participating children and teachers involved in the three projects hosted by The Playhouse Company: *Come Sing and Dance With Me* (1997), *Journeys in Dance* (1998) and *Dance Dreams* (1999) will be examined. The findings of these case studies will be critiqued in relation to:

3.1. Historical, political and social frameworks for the case studies prior to 1997.

3.2. A discussion and analysis of the three case studies by:

3.2.1. Explaining and describing each of the projects

3.2.2. Revealing the demographic context in relationship to rural, peri-urban and urban schools

3.2.3. Recounting the project’s design: workshop and performance phase

- 3.2.4. Critiquing the aims and objectives which the projects opened up around 'disability' as a culture
- 3.2.5. Cross-evaluating the findings in relation to multi-, intra and intercultural theories (as critiqued and discussed in chapter one of this thesis).

The context for 'disability dance' at The Playhouse Company prior to 1997 will be briefly discussed in order to foreground the significance of disability's redefinition of performance dance in the multicultural context of post-apartheid South Africa. This chapter will show how the three case studies, which engaged children with disabilities, were borne out of a need to rectify the imbalances and injustices which the disabled suffered as a pool of potential artists.

Whilst this thesis acknowledges the prevalence of dance performance by people with disabilities prior to 1997, it maintains that these dance performances by the disabled were chiefly engaged in technique-based dance forms such as classical ballet, ballroom dance and traditional Zulu dance⁴⁸. It could be argued that 'traditional Zulu dance' is a technique-based, structured art form as particular individual folk dance steps are being taught and learnt within an agreed notion of what is and is not the art form. By comparison, the term 'disability dance' as a label for the creative dance employed in the three case studies, is a largely 'unstructured', non-technique-based dance form. The opportunity to define a participants'/dancers' own movement

⁴⁸ The further acceptance of a prefixure label - 'traditional' for the term 'Zulu dance' as if the art form consisted of only one style is very problematic. One needs a thorough examination of the covert oversimplification of this Southern African dance form which is located along the east coast. Such a review should also not be conducted in isolation to the accompanying music of Zulu dance forms. The highly politicised nature that is Zulu dance and the global context, in which it rests, is beyond the scope of this thesis. It is imperative that some of the notions of the 'noble savage' which were perpetuated by 'high' art forms (as referred to in chapter two) such as classical ballet, are critiqued. The manipulation by political parties, including the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) and the African National Congress (ANC), of this old art form also needs further in-depth study which is beyond the scope of this thesis.

vocabulary through the medium of creative dance has allowed an expressive dance form to emerge that is individually more interpretative.

Finally, the chapter will examine how these three dance projects for children with disabilities contribute to an argument for the acceptance of notions of a 'disability performance culture'. The ideological concerns which the example of these dance projects for children with disabilities in KwaZulu-Natal will be scrutinised (as a microcosm) for signifiers of an emerging disabilities performance culture (a reflection of the macrocosm) in and of itself, which is separate to the wider disabled community's cultural production.

3. 1. Historical, political and social frameworks of The Playhouse Company's dance education and development projects for disabled prior to 1997.

Since 1994, The Playhouse Company (formerly known as NAPAC) had established a separate Education and Development department specifically to "reallocate public resources to other disciplines and areas of redress" (Department of Arts, Culture Science and Technology: 1996: 22) in its chief constituency – KwaZulu-Natal. Projects and programmes undertaken by this department built on the extensive community programme KWASA⁴⁹ which had been successfully led by Themí Ventúras in the earlier 1990s (Ventúras had in his turn developed the 'community' network begun by his predecessors, Robert Cross and others, as the old NAPAC had

⁴⁹ This thesis acknowledges the community driven initiatives begun by former sections within NAPAC. It notes, "NAPAC had long been searching for ways to extend itself into the broader community. Discussions between decision makers of this Art Council [NAPAC] and affiliates of the Natal Cultural Congress towards the close of 1990 had exposed extensive common purpose, and with the appointment of Themí Ventúras as NAPAC's KWASA Co-ordinator at the start of the calendar year, the idea crystallized and the fledgling programme came into being" (Ventúras cited in NAPAC Annual Report 1991- 1992: 1992).

conducted far-reaching tours to schools - albeit predominantly former white schools - virtually since its inception in the late 1960s).

In writing this thesis at the dawn of the new millennium, my role as The Playhouse Company's dance project co-ordinator, choreographer and later director for the three case studies is openly declared. It is hoped that through the writing of my working experiences with dance for children with disabilities, this thesis will begin to theorise the process of dance making and the practice of learning about dance with this particular group of dancers.

The establishment of a full-time Education and Development department in 1994 was unique to The Playhouse Company. As a state-funded organisation, other performing arts councils⁵⁰ had not infra-structurally provided for a fully-fledged, separate department, whose mission statement (and budgets) stated their vision of dance development in the context of the performing arts.

At the core of The Playhouse Company's Education and Development department was an ethos of human rights and dignity for all South African artists that especially noted the history of previously marginalized communities. For example, this department facilitated the introduction of musical art forms such as *isicathamiya* and *maskanda* on its main stages, celebrated integrated youth drama performance projects such as *Taxi Jam*, provided adult training via in-service teacher training courses and

⁵⁰ Performing Arts Councils were established under the former apartheid government structures to service the artistic and thereby cultural needs of their constituency, which was predominately white. Cultural boycotts prevailed at these institutions. By 1994, four PACs had survived viz. the Performing Arts Council of the Transvaal- PACT, the Cape Performing Arts Council - CAPAB, the Performing Arts Council of the Orange Free State - PACOFS and the Natal Performing Arts Council - NAPAC. Prior to the dismantling of PACs some of these councils had established mobile theatre, small educational tours, some minor activities but no sizeable budgetary and/or human resource commitment to rectifying the inequities experienced by most black South African artists.

invited, in a professional performance capacity, dance works such as Indian dance, ballroom dance, mpantsula and disabled dance. Amongst other marginalized art forms it encouraged artists, especially in dance, to explore cross-cultural and fusion works.

This institution remained mindful that in the past, through the planned suppression of funding and the denial of access to mainstream performance space, many dance communities other than ballet had remained impoverished. Within this scenario, the introduction of dance as an educative tool for all (as outlined in chapter one) was accepted as integral to many projects designed for the disadvantaged communities. Many youth dance groups and school teachers interested in working through dance were given skills and training to utilise broad-based principles of choreography and dance making.

In the beginning, the journey of acceptance of the disabled dance projects evaluated in this thesis was uncomfortable for those who grappled with this new non-technique-based, unstructured dance form. This thesis recognises that creative dance projects were an 'outsider' in relation to the privileged position that was once classical ballet within the former performing arts councils and 'traditional dance' within the former separate education systems.

The former NAPAC did offer limited space for 'non-traditional' dance prior to 1990, however, the dominant performance dance experience was classical ballet which did not reflect the many dance styles within the broad demographics of the KwaZulu-Natal province.

As classical ballet was being held as the yardstick for performance dance on

mainstream stages in South Africa, so was the implicit notion that contemporary dance and 'traditional dance' was the step-child with an 'inferior' label. It could be argued that even further aside was 'disabled dance' which stemmed from creative modern dance in education processes that were largely aligned with contemporary dance. The struggle for creative dance to establish itself as a reputable performance dance medium met with hesitance from existing dance audiences and the media. Some dance teachers disregarded it as being an accepted performance dance form.

In the South African context of former black schools in KwaZulu-Natal in the 1990s, the reaction to Laban's ideas (expanded upon earlier in this thesis), which have evolved creative dance, were also met with scepticism. The notion of the uniqueness of each individual "to develop his (sic) own approach and use his own interpretation" (Laban: 1948: 51) is fundamental to Laban's theory of movement. A process based (and not product) structure is typical of creative and developmental dance work that has evolved from his teachings.

In South Africa, the dominant experience for the learning and teaching of dance for historically black schools and especially the historically white schools was a technique-based professional model (Smith-Autard: 1994). For most historically white schools, the 400 year old legacy that is classical ballet has stood firmly as the only model. This thesis maintains that the prejudice of the same historically white schools could malign modern educational dance (Laban: 1948), as if classical ballet was the pinnacle of all dance-teaching methods. Further, that ballet had remained an elitist performance medium in the South African dance performance space or context through apartheid legislation means that the impact of creative dance as a methodology would take years to deconstruct ballet's privileged position.

Whilst KwaZulu-Natal enjoys the legacy of the 52 year old Speech and Drama department of the University of Natal and its root in Professor Elizabeth Sneddon - a former pupil of Rudolf Laban himself, the perpetuation of Laban's (1948) ideas are subjugated by her position within white education systems (of which this university was part). The vast majority of historically black schools in KwaZulu-Natal were not able to access creative dance either as methodology or performance via the former white university. Much of the radical deconstructivist work of modern dance revolutionaries in South Africa such as Elizabeth Sneddon, and her subsequent students Jillian Hurst, Gary Gordon, Jeanette Ginslov and many others, has questioned and shifted notions of dance performance on mainstream stages throughout South Africa. This phenomenon was only beginning to dawn in the debates of arts and culture in the context of the historically black schools of KwaZulu-Natal in the early 1990s.

Professor Elizabeth Sneddon has perhaps set a precedent in South Africa for the holistic approach to movement training – a philosophy embraced from her mentor, Laban (1948) – that is a shift away from technique-based work only. Hence, a genealogy could be traced at the University of Natal's drama department from Prof. Sneddon's many graduates (now working as educators and as leading South African choreographers) to the father of modern educational dance – Rudolf Laban.

These significant developments from within former white South African institutions have impacted on the mainstream education and cultural systems in KwaZulu-Natal. The acceptance of dance as methodology and creative dance as a viable performance dance form in the rest of the country also owes much to these early South African key-players, e.g. Gary Gordon, Tossie van Tonder and Jeanette Ginslov

Former black education institutions, particularly those of rural constituencies, also contribute to the shaky birth of 'disabled dance' and creative dance as methodology. The context for the study of dance in the historically black schools unfolds within a one-sided definition of Zulu culture often to serve political ends. The notion that culture is a static entity not to be watered down by any individualist thinking (especially western) meant that old, 'traditional' ideas could flourish. These cultural models for the study of dance were often smokescreens to maintain a racial divide. The natural flow of (r)evolutionary influences from 'other' cultures (as referred to in chapter two) was interpreted as potential threats of bastardisation.

The gradual acceptance of learning through the performing arts for all South Africa's citizens evolved in a climate of events and influences from leading personalities such as those at The Playhouse Company where pilot projects were being set up for many estranged communities (including the disabled). The Playhouse Company's response must also be seen against the wider national political changes of the period. As an advocate for change of dance ideas in Europe since the 1940s, Laban (1948) had strongly felt that,

One of the main aims of recreation through the art of movement, [was] not only for the stage dancer, but [also] for everybody (Laban as quoted in Thornton: 1971:35).

The profound effect of Laban (1948) and others who supported dance for everyone meant that through dance it became possible to not only experience but also amplify the movement expressions beyond "normal effort experience" (Thornton.1971: 34). Proponents and educators of Laban's (1948) thinking and a human rights culture

(largely void in South Africa prior to the first democratic elections of 1994) gave rise to a climate which allowed the birth of creative dance projects for disabled. Initiatives such as the three The Playhouse Company projects in KwaZulu-Natal during the late 1990s, involved integrating previously racially divided communities who had not lived outside of their own experience as a result of apartheid. This intersection makes it possible to examine 'disabled dance' for the earliest traits of an emerging culture. Dance became a mediator for these uneasy worlds where disabled dance and mainstream performance dance, much like Schechner's (1991) cultures, began to collide and intertwine.

The world of the disabled child could, in this new scenario, be visible and expose her inner most conflicts⁵¹. Even the smallest flickering, or as Laban biographer Thornton refers, "*shadow* movements are particularly revealing of an inner state of conflict or serenity" (Thornton 1971:34). Dance became an ideal tool to mediate the social and political conflict between formerly separated communities by virtue of its attributes such as communication through body language and non-verbal, gestural communication. The meagre physical resources so vital for some performing arts productions meant that wealth (and related class) issues could be circumvented by artists accessing creative dance. The basic requirement for this type of dance was the body and not external costumes, stage props and scenery. Not unexpectedly, 'disabled dance' became more visible when this atypical dancer 'body type' was placed in the conventional mainstream stage setting.

The context of performance by disabled was predominately evident in cultural events

⁵¹ Laban's aims, by the application of his theories on the art of movement, were to help a person reach a more accurate understanding of him (sic) and through this, a better understanding of others. By means of the understanding of others there would be a greater facility for forming good human relationships; and with the creation of situations, at work and leisure, an individual would be able to fully realise his own capabilities (Thornton: 1971).

or school-based programmes⁵² often linked to Deaf Awareness Week in the month of September. The fledgling democratic climate of South Africa in 1996 also saw the Schools Act which recognized Sign Language as a first language and medium of instruction. Many national public holidays of commemoration saw dance as part of it multicultural/variety concerts in non-mainstream venues, especially school and community halls.

Amongst the driving forces of change towards disability and their performance abilities was John Mthethwa (referred to in chapter one). Working in ballroom dance, arguably one of the most strict technique-based forms, Mthethwa has persevered over a twenty year period to attempt to provide for the physical and social upliftment of the disabled in KwaMashu and Umlazi (the black townships which surround the unicity of Durban, KwaZulu-Natal). With little financial aid, Mthethwa had long embraced the spirit of The Bill of Rights (referred to in chapter one) through his community-based initiatives to muster groundswell support and recognition for his KwaZulu-Natal Ballroom Dance Association for the Disabled. His band of self-qualified student teachers and their projects⁵³ were invaluable contributors to a wider human rights culture that was rapidly becoming a reality for all South Africans.

⁵² Few examples such as *Urashimo Taro* - a musical theatre performance based on a Japanese folk tale, cautiously interacted with mainstream performance culture. This performance by the V. N. Naik School for the Deaf mediated virgin territory at The Playhouse Company in 1995. A cast of deaf pupils and some teachers presented a full-length work in the professional surrounds of The Playhouse Company. Later, The Playhouse Company hosted the V.N. Naik School for the Deaf and the Fulton School for the Deaf as the two schools contributed to the *Partners in Dance* programme. This event in 1996 was another showcase for the talents of disabled children, which laid the foundation for the creative dance work which was to follow.

⁵³ The titles for John Mthethwa's projects conducted in collaboration with The Playhouse Company since 1996 embody an underlying philosophy. *Anyone Can Dance* and *Dance Across the Floor* captured media attention at a time when much parliamentary floor crossovers were the order of the day. His work had already embraced some of the 'new' culture of racial tolerance, particularly the acceptance of difference.

The climate of radical political change, the end of apartheid and a new culture of human rights saw dramatic changes to dance development for The Playhouse Company. The question of what dance development should be and the needs of new communities (the formerly disadvantaged – referred to earlier) saw much intersection. Ideas for ‘reconstruction’ and ‘development’ became the current buzzwords for all Playhouse Company dance seasons and projects. At the invitation of Lynu Maree (The Playhouse Company’s former Dance Director from 1993 – 1999), the arrival of artist Royston Maldoom⁵⁴ - British-based dance choreographer and activist for youth theatre - was opportune. The year 1994 was a backdrop for his first visit - a turbulent climate ready for in-depth and sweeping change.

Maldoom’s (choreographer for both community dance and professional theatre) repertoire resides in some of Britain and the United States’s most favoured ballet companies of the 1990s. He was also Director of the European Youth Dance Project, which is held annually in Germany.

As choreographer of Reachout - a youth dance performance project based in Durban that introduced creative dance to children with little or no prior formal (technique-based) dance training, Maldoom was a bold pioneer. By his own admission, he ideologically supports British theatre director Peter Brook who said, ‘I’m not interested in anything except the quality of the experience. That’s all that matters’ (Maldoom as quoted in Bramdaw. 1994: page unknown). Over a period of four years

⁵⁴ Maldoom’s *Adagietto Number 5* set to Mahler’s Fifth Symphony and *What have they done to my soldier son?* was part of the repertoire of the New York-based Dance Theatre of Harlem who toured to South Africa in 1992. His experience includes The Royal Ballet (London), Scottish Ballet and Alvin Ailey (New York). *Sarajevo Ceasefire* was a workshopped dance work for the former NAPAC Dance Company in 1994.

he fostered an acceptance of the dance for all (trained and non-trained dancers) as a progressive concept.

Maldoom is perhaps best remembered in KwaZulu-Natal for his offer of contemporary dance for all shapes, colours and creeds of young dancers. He began in 1994 (the year of South Africa's first democratic election) and quickly established a philosophy which could be encapsulated by journalist Adrienne Sichel remarks,

Maldoom never targets age, numbers or experience. ...He works with people from eight to 80, able-bodied and disabled... he says [critics are realising that] all dance is dance (Sichel. 1994: page unknown).

Maldoom trained at the Ballet Rambert and London Contemporary Dance companies in the 1960s. His strong socio-political convictions have seen his dance works emerge in countries as diverse as Bosnia-Herzegovina, Ethiopia and South Africa during 1994. In his own words Maldoom articulates his driving conscience,

With the equity ban, I waited patiently to visit these shores, and with a democratic government taking over two weeks ago, this was the soonest I could arrive here with a clear conscience (Maldoom as quoted in Bramdaw: 1994).

By retaining his focus of working towards the dance performance experience for the young people, Maldoom did not compromise on the inherent social responsibility of racially integrating groups of children in new democratically elected South Africa. In

KwaZulu-Natal he succeeded in staging mass dance performances with over one hundred participating children of all races groups on a professional theatre stage.

With the broadening of the accessibility to the arts in 1994, came British dance education consultant Edward Salt⁵⁵, who was brought to South Africa by the former Playhouse Company's Dance Director, Lynn Maree. Salt introduced the "first ever dance course of its kind to [South Africa]" (Coleman. 1994: page unknown). Salt was one of the co-authors contributing to the development of dance in the national curricula for British schools in the 1980s. After qualifying as a teacher at Worcester College of Education in the UK, he studied at the Laban Art Movement Studio in Addleston. His extensive creative dance teaching experience of over 40 years (Jenkins: 1997) includes his role as advisor for dance and inspector of dance, in the Oxfordshire county. He was a staunch advocate for the wider interpretation and compulsory inclusion of dance as an examinable subject for children independent of their physical education⁵⁶. As a strong motivational course leader of teacher training programmes, Salt's demand is firmly secured in various dance-related spheres (increasingly worldwide) long after his formal retirement in 1993.

Salt provided the necessary tools for the teaching of creative dance to members of the former Playhouse Dance Company and to any teachers interested in working in dance as a means of education/methodology. Most of these 'interested dance teachers' were as untrained as their future learners. The dance form - creative dance - and these teaching methods were the preferred option by the recent policies. Curriculum 2005

⁵⁵ Salt's return to the UK saw him chart a similar journey in Dublin for the Republic of Ireland's Department of Education.

⁵⁶ Salt was offered the position of Primary School Inspector for the Oxfordshire County in 1992. He began his career as a primary school teacher which eventually led to his appointment as an advisory teacher for dance and physical education

encouraged a learner-centred approach to teaching in line with outcomes based education (O.B.E). Salt was in tandem with the broader principles of changing South Africa's national education framework and its new arts and culture learning area.

For many teachers, the disarray of the newly established KwaZulu-Natal Education and Culture department created opportune moments to upgrade their professional skills and/or pursue their (not so) hidden interests in the arts. Through the auspices of The Playhouse Company and The British Council in Durban (as negotiated by former Dance Director Lynn Maree), Salt was, over the next four years, able to offer pre- and in-service dance teacher training courses. These experiences disseminated ideas directly from the British 'textbook experience' to a vibrant live experience for the eager course participants⁵⁷.

In 1996, the arrival of Jasmine Pasch - unique dance teacher specialising in working with the disabled - within the above landscape was a further significant development for novice teachers engaging in dance for children with disabilities. Pasch introduced the idea of the enabling partner who extended the range - sense/weight - of movement during her creative workshops (Hathway.1996. 5). She interwove professional dancers and those dancers in wheelchairs to add another hitherto unseen dimension in her

⁵⁷ Teachers who were starved of any professional development programmes (many since their own first period of study and graduation as teachers) readily came forward to glean as much information firsthand from this author's mouth! I was also one of these early course participants.

Whilst these courses remain an invaluable exposure to the British dance learning/teaching model few trainees developed their own South African contexts for teaching practice preferring readily accessible and structured lesson plans which they could in turn implement.

Attempts at establishing teacher forums to support the rich knowledge so generously shared by Salt waned under the burdensome strain of the day-to-day teaching environments. Innumerable media reports in the mid-1990s of classrooms that were congested, toilets that were broken, school fees that were long outstanding, strikes by school support staff, criminal elements inside the schools' properties - these and other destroying realities weighed down the indomitable spirit of even the most hardy teachers.

workshop. Her first visit unfolded in the contexts of the recent political violence within the province which had seen many children fleeing from their burning townships. Since the early 1990s, many children became displaced, socially traumatised⁵⁸, disconnected, arguably disabled and wound up in statutory Places of Safety of the Welfare department. Pasch had advocated dance as a healing art and non-verbal medium which tentatively negotiated a space for the suppressed physical and emotional anxieties of the many 'new South Africans' with whom she interacted. As former contemporary dancer of the London School of Contemporary Dance (1972 - 1975), this artist and teacher (graduate of the University of Nottingham) further equipped by her academic qualifications in counseling from the University of London's Goldsmith College (1989), Pasch's work has seen her travel to fields as far away as Australia and South Africa. In interviewing Pasch, critic Roseanne Cartwright (1996) felt that

Jasmine's work is not just about teaching dance and the arts to the physically challenged, it's also about opening the minds of able-bodied people to what her changes are capable of (1996: 3).

Her pioneering spirit has opened doors for adults in 'old age' homes/residential care centres and hospitals. Pasch's enthusiasm and vision⁵⁹ has taken disabled dance to

⁵⁸ Stone (1984) argues for the expansion of disabled category regarding "certain incapacitating conditions [which] are *socially caused*". The relationship between welfare and disability means an ever-widening notion for disability.

⁵⁹ For more information see www.phewartiscompany.co.uk. Pasch has also had several articles published in the Disability Times, Artery and in the Laban Guild Magazine in the UK. Her widely-published African Eagles article was also published in SA in 1998 by ChildrenFIRST journal.

Pasch's contribution to South African 'disability dance' was once again renewed by her return visit in February/ March 2000. She co-directed The Playhouse Company's *African Eagles* - dance project for children with mixed abilities. Her gentle new work *Woza Moya* with children from Inanda Special School challenged boundaries, as a graph score for improvised saxophone (composed by Ian Stewart)

non-conventional performing spaces like shopping malls and the forecourts of office blocks. Pasch has also significantly contributed to the ethos and repertoire of the Magpie Dance Company⁶⁰, situated in Berkshire, UK and is mentioned in earlier in chapter two. For Pasch her work (in her own words),

is a process of cultural access, making sure no area is denied to special needs people because we adults are behaving in an ignorant way. (as quoted in Cartwright: 1996: 3).

Thus, the context for the introduction of disabled dance at The Playhouse Company from historic and socio-political perspectives includes the death of five separate education departments, the earliest shifts of 'ability performances' from small-scale school/community halls to mainstream dance performance spaces, the increasing awareness of disability in the media and the synergy of teaching influences from local and international dance specialists. In South Africa's fledgling democracy, the reprioritising of disability within the human rights debates meant that through creative dance the voice of the disabled could be heard from another vantage point.

3.2. A discussion and analysis of the three Playhouse Company case studies between 1997 -1999.

3.2.1. Case study number one: *Come Sing and Dance with Me* (April – June 1997).

became the canvas on which they painted their choreographic/dance innovation.

⁶⁰ Magpie Dance Company based in Brimley, UK, is a company of consisting of adults with learning disabilities. They integrate with able-bodied both in their community classes and performances. For more information see www.urban-magpie.co.uk.

3.2.1.1. Project description

The project's primary focus was a creative dance project for children with disabilities. It was conducted in two phases: firstly, a series of workshops followed by the performance phase. Children between the ages of 8 – 18 years were engaged in creative, freely expressive dance (as opposed to structured, social or traditional dance forms).

A memorandum to the marketing department of The Playhouse Company in May 1997 refers to the style/concept/content of the project thus,

It is unique in that young people and children with varying abilities including the hearing impaired, physically handicapped, those with mental handicaps, behavioural and learning difficulties are in a JOINT, SINGLE, DANCE and MUSIC creative work. The feelings and stories of the children and NOT the teachers are to be shared with the audience. Another difference is that physically able children from mainstream schools participate as fully integrated performers with disabled children ...The process of bringing young people together particularly from racially segregated disabled schools is paramount and this process and not a stage production has the greater emphasis for this project (Samuel, G.M.: 1997).

There were also other inter-related activities with The Playhouse Company's partner, KwaZulu-Natal Very Special Arts, who had co-ordinated a small arts and crafts exhibition entitled *Ubhuntu*. Art works (mainly hand-painted drawings and sketches) were submitted by a range of KwaZulu-Natal schools for disabled. The KwaZulu-

Natal Very Special Arts also launched a poetry book by long-standing lobbyist for the disabled, Zorah Moosa.

The workshop phase of the project was conducted primarily in the Greater Durban area and in Inchanga (i.e. a rural town in the KwaZulu-Natal midlands – 45kms outside the Durban metro region). The performance phase was held in The Playhouse Company's Studio theatre⁶¹. Thirteen short dance pieces made up the programme with pertinent titles such as, *Trapped In My Silent World*, *Let Me In*, *Aren't We All Just different Shapes* and *What We Really Are*.

3.2.1.2. Project demographics

Approximately 70 children and teachers from all races groups constituted the dance related participants in the project. Another 30 persons were involved in the other activities noted above. The following schools participated:

TABLE SHOWING URBAN - RURAL DISTRIBUTION OF PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS

Urban (10kms radius)	Peri -urban (20kms radius)	Rural (30kms radius)
Open Air School (Glenmore)	V.N. Naik School for the Deaf (KwaMashu)	KwaThintwa School for the Deaf (Inchanga)
Durban Girls' High (Berea)	Brookdale Secondary (Phoenix)	Inchanga Primary (Inchanga)
	A.M. Moolla Spes Nova (Phoenix)	
	RP Moodley school for physically handicapped, (Clare Estate)	
	Fulton School for Deaf (Gillitts)	
	Werde Hoërskool (Hillary)	

⁶¹ The Studio Theatre was specifically set aside for the former Education and Development department's use as a performance space for the promotion of developmental and experimental work.

The table simplistically illustrates the geographical position of the schools by area which suggests that the rural schools from former black education departments may have experienced greater economic difficulties to access such 'progressive' dance projects. There is also a smaller number of urban schools represented. This thesis argues that these schools⁶² that are represented by fewer participants could be stifling their own cultural development in the long-term.

The data could also be interpreted that urban and rural schools hold entrenched notions of dance as a result of their longer 'over-exposure' to structured or classical forms of dance. The economic pressures from some schools may not have been the only reasons for their non-participation and thereby smaller representation. Their unwillingness to participate could have been a resistance to 'progressive', 'unstructured' creative dance.

3.2.1.3. Project design

Through a six-week series of dance workshops, the project co-ordinator and teachers choreographed several short dance pieces. Two dance works were 'choreographed' by children with disabilities under the guidance of the project co-ordinator. The foundation for the choreographic process was an introductory teachers' workshop series in which many of Laban's ideas and some aspects of Veronica Sherborne's techniques of developmental movement were shared. Finally, the combined experiences of the project's dance co-ordinator and his influences from teachers

⁶² Although the project was conducted in post-apartheid South Africa, schools for the disabled were still predominately one or the other race group. It is also important to note that as much as this project was engaged with new ideas within dance, many participants were also interfacing with race and with gender issues for the first time. The project's dance co-ordinator was male and for many black children, prior to this project, their teachers' of dance and of any 'cultural studies' were conventionally female.

including Edward Salt, Royston Maldoom and Jasmine Pasch (referred to earlier) were brought to bear on the tasks at hand - to create a dance programme of approximately 45 minutes duration for all the varying abilities of the participating children.

3.2.1.4. Project aims and objectives

These were multi-fold and included the following paraphrased from the general press release by The Playhouse Company (see appendix - MacLennan: 1997):

To showcase the talents of disabled children in partnership with able-bodied children.

To highlight the abilities of this previously marginalized community while giving disabled and able-bodied children the opportunity to interact with each other.

To provide an opportunity to work in creative movement, dance and song.

To tear down racial barriers between schools for disabled.

3.2.1.5. Summary and findings of case study number one in relation to multi-, intra- and inter-cultural theories.

In 1997, the lobbying for the inclusion and integration of the disabled by

organisations such as the KwaZulu-Natal Very Special Arts (referred to in chapter one) was very strong. The holistic development of the child and the offer of a wider learning experience through the performing arts became more agreeable for many schools. Various national ministries such as the Education and the Arts, Culture Science and Technology (D.A.C.S.T) supported the call for inclusion of the disabled at all levels of society. South African, Samboornam Moodley (1994, 1997), Chairperson of the KwaZulu-Natal Very Special Arts, had advocated in her programme message that the project is,

a partnership of creative development dance and song between students from regular school and special schools. [It is] our reflection and celebration of the talent of those children who would otherwise be kept in the margins of society (Moodley: 1997).

Moodley (1997) and others shared a belief with Juliette Alvin (1965), an American scholar and pioneer since the 1960s, who wrote,

Music may represent to him (sic) a non-threatening world with which he can communicate, where he had known no failure, where he can integrate and identify himself (Alvin. 1965: 3).

Alvin (1965) who worked extensively with the disabled in music had noted that the tool which music provided towards the total development of the disabled child was profound. This thesis concurs with Alvin's plea for music and its suggestion of an inclusive non-threatening environment and maintains that her plea for music could

also hold true for dance. The first case study reveals the emphasis on partnerships and integration of the disabled in a dance project on many fronts.

Like Brustein's "warm humanistic feelings" (1991: 45) the project evolved out of a need for the inclusion of previously marginalised groups as was evident in the imploring title - *Come Sing and Dance With Me*. The project which also marked the second year of collaboration between The Playhouse Company and the KwaZulu-Natal Very Special Arts⁶³, naively called for an acceptance and wider integration of the disabled. Its strength was also the quasi oblivion of the extent of the fragmented disabled community – divided by race and socio-political factors highlighted in earlier chapters.

As a marketing tool for the production in The Playhouse Company's Studio Theatre, the project's title captured the ethos of the ten-week dance project, i.e. calls for inclusion, participatory engagement and process. The *Come Sing and Dance with Me* project which was striving for integration, however, also revealed a subtle hierarchy within the disabled groups. The Deaf schools, for a variety of reasons, performed some dance works exclusively by the Deaf. These included economic constraints (to attend combined rehearsals) and a fear of the lack of common language and perhaps purpose. Brustein's (1991) comment of the eagerness to celebrate cultural diversity is a reminder for South Africans facing inequities, not only of race but also of socio-political and economic tensions that they will initially come together in the same common space but remain culturally separate. Evidence of this phenomenon was the resultant disabled dance works which were presented side-by-side and not as wholly

⁶³ KwaZulu-Natal Very Special Arts was launched in September 1996 with the *Partners in Dance* programme. Approximately 80 students from 10 different schools (read former black Indian and white schools) participated.

integrated groups. This thesis argues that the dance programme revealed a further inferiority issue, which was not unlike Banks' (1981) lowly ethnic minorities. Within the exchanges between the disabled, some dancers, for example the Deaf working separately from children with mental disabilities, still appear to be "stuck to the bottom of the mythical melting pot" (Banks. 1981: 4).

For many disabled schools, entering their separate work on a shared programme was not uncommon. This thesis is gratified by the performances by the disabled that took place in school halls and in the smaller theatres (when performances did eventually enter this arena). It notes, however, that these dance works usually kept the separate identity of the physically disabled, the mentally disabled and the Deaf. In addition, the issue of racially segregated schools for the disabled prior to 1994 meant that within the category, e.g. physically disabled schools, former white, Indian, coloured and black schools, could not perform together. Therefore multicultural events, as they were advertised in the late 1990s, were very often rather more correctly multiracial events in which school groups (formerly divided by race) interfaced in the same performance space but not in the actual dance work itself.

It is also significant that the *Come Sing and Dance with Me* project was presented between 25 – 27 June 1997 was not linked to the Deaf Awareness Week in September. This rescheduling reflected a shaky step of independence for the disabled performance as a free-standing event that was disassociated from its 'needy/welfare' status (referred to in chapter one). The performance became a celebration of artistic expression and multicultural performance of differently-able groups.

Within the performance the majority of dance pieces clung to the separateness for each disability type. The beginnings of a singular dance work in which some of the dancers were Deaf, some physically disabled and some so called 'mainstream' children were noted with interest. This thesis maintains that the body of work in the programme was more multicultural than intercultural. Complicating the issue even further was the fact that not only were the disabled groups thrown together in a melting pot (Banks: 1981) but the 'other' children in this particular scenario were the mainstream children - a reversal of conventional roles.

The journey that dance by children with disabilities was making involved a move away from formulaic 'cultural events' and commemorative dates and is demonstrated by the example of the opening dance work – *Aren't We All Just Different Shapes?* This dance work used the metaphor of a jigsaw puzzle to illustrate the complex ways in which each solitary figure/dancer is connected to a wider notion of the whole picture that is society. It attempted to break free from stereotypical notions of the disabled as a dancer and her dance as a fixed cultural artefact. This mixed abilities⁶⁴ group included: A. M. Moolla (former Indian disabled school), Brookdale Secondary (mainstream Indian school), Open Air (former white disabled school) and Durban Girls' High (former white mainstream school). By 1997 all of the participating schools had become more multiracial in the above melting pot.

To return to Alvin (1965) and her studies of the value of music and its intersection with disability this thesis notes her caution that,

⁶⁴ The term 'mixed abilities' refers to the collective group of children with varying abilities including those from the various categories of schools for disabled and the mainstream schools. It becomes increasing evident in the media and used in common practice in the subsequent case studies.

The handicapped child unless quite exceptionally gifted, should not be expected to become a good performer of a normal standard, or to be able to understand complex music. There is a belief that a handicapped child is musically as good as a normal one, or even better. In fact, however, he (sic) will not achieve in music more than his general ability permits, a truth that applies to almost everything in his life, and has to be faced (Alvin: 1965:3).

Whilst Alvin's position appears to accept the problematic notion of 'normal standard' the *Come Sing and Dance With Me* did not set out to prove the abilities of children with disabilities in relation to notions of a norm for dance performance by children. Its objective was to simply celebrate the general ability of each of its individual participants some of whom were children with disabilities (and others not).

The Daily News article, in referring to the curtain-raiser by Giséle Turner's pupils from the Deaf Can Dance Company (Fulton School for the Deaf) observes, that the project was one, which

Even seasoned mime artists would envy the innate skill of some of these performers – there is a deftness in the movements coupled with an integrity of feeling (Chetty. 1997: page unknown).

The actual programme showed a few non-integrated or separate dance works, which proposed that the Deaf could be likened to intra-cultural group. Their common language (sign language) identified their non-mainstream position and further separated the group from within wider confines of the disabled. Like the insider who

is from the outside (Minh Ha, T. cited in Pines, J. 1989), the Deaf remained largely a separate group of performers.

It could be argued that disabled poet Zorah Moosa's book launch, which coincided with the production, was an intra-cultural product borne out of the pain of exclusion. As a black, female, disabled writer, Moosa's strong desire to be heard through her poetry in a hearing world is positioned outside of the mainstream, which is white, male and able-bodied. Spivak's extension of the notion of 'other' (1990) can be appropriated and extended to Moosa's personal experience as non-white, non-male, dis-abled other.

The issue of the multiple identities of the disabled is reflected by the programme message of Lynn Maree, former Director of Dance in 1997, in which she asserts,

'It isn't that artists are special kinds of people: it's that people are special kinds of artists. That is what is special about human beings' (as quoted by Maree. Author: anonymous).

This thesis supports Maree's view that the disabled are seen as human beings first who are capable of the creation of art as are other gifted human beings. She expands this notion by inviting "All of us **can** dance, and all of us **must** dance, to reach our full potential as human beings, and to join with each other"(Maree: 1997). Her ideas of the inter-connection of humanity can be linked to the buzzword of the 1990s 'ubhuntu' (the title for the art and crafts exhibition), which is of isiZulu extraction and refers to the notion that 'we are all one community'. This intangible thrust was central to the full artistic presentation and is still being explored at many levels in South

African society As the various participants work from within their own 'culturally uneasy' perspectives the rocky pathway to a culturally unified South African nation is being travelled with much caution (Schechner. 1991: 30).

Finally, it should be noted that the driving force for this project, given its historical position, social and political context, is also propelled by national and regional call for integration or normalisation for the wider disabled community. Whilst several disability groups were brought together by the dance works in *Come Sing and Dance With Me*, individually the works were not integrated in their entirety. This criticism of a side by side notion of cultures - multiculturalism – allowed for the way forward for more intercultural projects for the disabled that were to follow.

3.2.2. Case study number two: *Journeys in Dance* (April - July 1998).

3.2.2.1. Project description

This creative dance project for children with 'mixed abilities' developed the relationships (established through the KwaZulu-Natal Very Special Arts) with schools that had participated in the 1997 project. Many teachers and some pupils who had previously participated, enrolled for a second time. The project's artistic and teaching team included a new dance teacher i.e. choreographer, Linda Peyters, who co-choreographed a few of the dance works with the project co-ordinator. Charlene Bezuidenhout, née Moodley, was The Playhouse Company's full-time publicist assigned to sustain a marketing campaign⁶⁵ for this 'education and development'

⁶⁵ Although allocated a very small marketing budget, the steady increase over a five-year period (1995 -2000) in this particular area of the project's funding has had great impact on their overall profile and visibility within the arts sector. Through the dance development programmes The Playhouse Company has fuelled discussion of Laban, creative dance, developmental dance and finally disability dance.

project (one she undertook with great zest).

The project was once again collaboration between the KwaZulu-Natal Very Special Arts who had, in the interim, been able to receive some funding from the recently constituted National Arts Council⁶⁶ and also the continued infra-structural support of The Playhouse Company. Once again, an art exhibition - *Journey Through Art* was presented by KwaZulu-Natal Very Special Arts in conjunction with the dance project. The focus of the project shifted its aim to unleash greater choreographic depth as a challenge for the children as potential dancers and for their teachers as future 'choreographers'.

Schools were invited to establish twin schools with their immediate neighbours in an effort to bring about a natural integration in the localised community between disabled and 'mainstream'.

3.2.2.2. Project demographics

The project had 85 children aged between 8 –18 years. A larger number of boys participated which encouraged separate dance works created for this sex group⁶⁷.

⁶⁶ Further to the restructuring within the performing arts sector in South Africa was the establishment of the National Arts Council (NAC). Unlike the centrally situated government subsidy received by para-statal arts institutions such as The Playhouse Company, the NAC is situated provincially and was set up to provide access to funds for local arts companies, groups or organisations. In the midst of funding applications by organisations such as the KwaZulu-Natal Very Special Arts, the KwaZulu-Natal Arts and Culture Council (KZNACC) was riddled with rumours by the media of mal-administration and mismanagement of government funds. Several independent organisations including those former dance companies of The Playhouse Company - Siwela Sonke Dance Theatre - apply to the offices of the NAC as a primary source of funds for their activity in the performing arts.

⁶⁷ The role of male dancer within South Africa's male dominated history in the performing arts (specifically dance) and his non-participation, a surrounding homophobia and culturally specific dances for the sexes is a thesis unto itself. The notion of an unusually large number of male participants bears mention here only because within this project for the disabled, gender issues and stereotypes were also being addressed. In as much as separate dance sequences for the male and female groups were being designed these were mostly deliberate choreographic elements positioned for emphasis. In other instances conventional roles for males and females were also purposefully subverted.

TABLE SHOWING URBAN - RURAL DISTRIBUTION OF PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS

Urban (10kms radius)	Peri -urban (20kms radius)	Rural (30kms radius)
Open Air School (Glenmore)	V.N. Naik School for the Deaf (KwaMashu)	KwaThintwa School for the Deaf (Inchanga)
	Brookdale Secondary (Phoenix)	Arthur Blaxhall School for Visually Impaired (Pietermaritzburg)
	A.M. Moolla Spes Nova (Phoenix)	H.S. Ebrahim School (Pietermaritzburg)
	RP Moodley School for physically handicapped, (Clare Estate)	Tongaat School for Learners with Special Educational Needs (Tongaat)
	Durban school for the Hearing Impaired (Isipingo)	Goldensteps Training Centre Verulam

The above table reveals that more rural schools participated than in previous years. This could be attributed to the prestige associated with a performance at mainstream theatres of the Playhouse and less concerned with experimentation of new ideas of dance. Following a commission in 1996, the Ministry of Education released Consultative Paper 1 Special Education, building an inclusive education and training system in 1999. The term 'learners with special educational needs' (LSEN) entered the fray (see name change for Tongaat school on the page above). New attempts to advocate that learning disabilities arise from the education system and not only the child with disabilities saw shifting terminology like 'barriers to learning and development' arise (Department of Education: 2001: 12). Sinason (1992), referred to earlier in this thesis, had some years before cautioned that a distinction between systemic, institutionalised/societal disability and "organic/medical causes" of impairment (Department of Education: 2001: 12) was an important ideological shift for notions of disability.

3.2.2.3. Project design

The project's theme, which incorporated journeys; discovery; support; overcoming obstacles and survival, was conducted over 3 months (April - July 1998) excluding the schools holidays. It had a lengthy workshop phase that explored Laban's ideas of pathways in space, relationships and had much time to illicit input from children and teachers. In the production brief to the marketing department, the project co-ordinator noted that,

Throughout the project the experiences and sharing of the children has been given prominence and emphasis. The project has allowed teachers of disabled students to witness first-hand the process of developing dance stories and the method of instruction. Twelve interlinked dance stories transport the viewer through themes of discovery, survival, rejection, triumph, rejection and adventure (Samuel, G.M.: 1998).

Schools for disabled were once again urged to establish mainstream 'sister' schools. Once more the role of supporting team (with few exceptions) consisted of teachers and care-givers (including some parents of the disabled children) from disabled schools and mainstream schools.

The content of the dance programme in its final stages attempted to sew one interconnected dance piece with no breaks in the music, thereby evoking a larger 'mood' dance work which shifted tones as "a series of vignettes, playlets" (Samuel, G.M.: 1998) unfolded. The programme was deliberately embarking on more abstract dance contexts and themes, which were a shift away from the linear narrative dance styles so dominant in most of the experiences of performance dance by children with disabilities.

A strong focus on performance ability and the role of performance following the workshop process was maintained. Stage technical notes were discussed at pre- and post-rehearsal sessions and a thorough stage rehearsal process (stage placing, lighting and sound rehearsals) was undertaken. The same 'standard' for youth theatre as undertaken by the project's chief co-ordinator and the overall choreographer/director was desired without being overtly benchmarked.

Two teachers also presented dance works that were prepared exclusively by them. Professional choreographer Jay Pather's work *Breaking the Silence* opened the programme⁶⁸.

3.2.2.4. Projects aims and objectives

Clearly, a good deal of the same work (a 'means test' of the previous year) was repeated with vigour. The memorandum to the marketing department of The Playhouse Company attests that one of the specific aims was to achieve a

broad, representative coverage in the print and electronic media, which acknowledges the status of a performance [by children with disabilities] in the Playhouse Drama [theatre] (Samuel, G.M.: 1998).

Accordingly, this thesis concludes that the project's expectations were bold. They included a strong desire to be seen on

TV programmes especially KZN TV, DTV, Sign Hear, Impressions Community Desk, Radio: community radio in Phoenix, PMB (Pietermaritzburg), and Lotus Fm (Samuel, G.M.: 1998).

⁶⁸ This cross-disability dance work was first performed in São Paulo, Brazil, as part of the First Latin American Very Special Arts Festival in May 1998. Pather's relationship with KwaZulu-Natal Very Special Arts during this period is critiqued as part of a Master's thesis by Anusharani Govender, which was submitted to The University of Natal in 1999.

This challenge to create an extensive awareness of 'disability dance' is evident from these and other statements. It reflects the heady excitement of 'disability dance' - an area that was mostly unexplored by the local and national media.

3.2.2.5. Summary and findings of case study number two in relation to multi-, intra- and inter-cultural theories.

Within the context of this specific project, i.e. a creative dance project for children with disabilities, it must be noted that The Playhouse Company was also engaged with John Mthethwa's Ballroom Dance for Disabled Association. Mthethwa's collaborative project with The Playhouse Company, *Dance Across the Floor*, had been performed only months before (November 1997) and drew some media and corporate interest.

The generally lukewarm response by national arts bodies to the idea of South African 'disability dance' within the formal performing arts sector was lost in light of the variety of restructuring activities for theatres and schools. This was problematic. Caught unaware by these and other examples of pilot projects, national structures for disability dance were seemingly not completely in place. With both disability projects (ballroom dance and creative mixed abilities dance works) being located in KwaZulu-Natal, which is away from a notion of the 'epicentre' of the performing arts and their decision-makers, it could be argued that some of these programmes were accorded pilot projects status by arts policy makers.

By their own admission some newspaper critics revealed,

I certainly do not have the knowledge or skills to judge performances of the creative arts (Jaggernath: 1998).

Jaggernath's confession could be extended to note the absence of any process for the review/criteria when work by disabled as a performer is being presented on mainstream stage by not only the media. This thesis notes the absence or struggle for the 'performance by disabled category' from performing arts awards⁶⁹ organisations such as the FNB Vita Awards - their prestigious yearly trophies for contemporary dance and other sponsors of the national ballroom dance competitions.

On the other hand, journalists like Lliane Loots (1998) who writes for The Mercury, were more able to express the issues around 'disability dance' that were being unearthed. Loots challenges the very notion of dance by her contention that

Dance, as 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 these perfect bodies (1998:6).

She finds agreement with the choreographer's own statements that

Dance is not about right and wrong and 'perfect movements'. That's what an old legacy from the days when ballet dominated an audiences' idea of dance ... Working with the support of KwaZulu-Natal Very Special Arts, [the performance] is beginning profoundly to challenge audience assumptions of what constitutes the dancing body (Loots. 1998:6).

As some teachers grappled with an unsuccessful dance work with the abstraction (too much rolling) in *Journeys in Dance*, the children like grains of Pavis's (1992) funnel, pleasantly bumped and collided mediating their transition towards an emerging target

⁶⁹ The status of the disabled as a performer is largely unrecognized for her contribution to the arts. Performances like *Urashimo Taro*, which was performed by the V. N. Naik School for the Deaf, went unannounced by existing awards organisations. This discrimination extends to performance spaces - school /community hall or developmental theatre space. Even The Playhouse Company had earmarked its development theatre space - The Studio theatre - for disabled dance in 1995 and 1996.

culture. Their transition faced a dual challenge to evolve a unique voice (Spivak: 1990) free from the stereotypical norm of both the past dance practices for the disabled and the present mainstream dance practices.

The production of *Journeys in Dance* was most successful⁷⁰ in contributing to new “ways of seeing” (Berger: 1972) intercultural dance. Audiences had become somewhat accustomed to multicultural performances (despite attempts by some artists like Jay Pather and the Siwela Sonke Dance Theatre to steer these performances away from becoming mere multiracial affairs) but were largely unprepared for intercultural work. By its very nature, intercultural work exposed the uncomfortable “borrowing, stealing, and exchanging from other cultures” (Bharucha.1990: 14). The dance works confronted taboos, e.g. sexuality within disabled, gender stereotypes - the female dancer, ageism and prejudice based on teacher/pupil status. Duets explored the tender feelings, shyness and eagerness of a young teenage girl and boy. Teachers and pupils danced with equal status as the metaphor of a bus stop departure lounge expressed their own loneliness and sense of loss amidst insensitive human traffic.

The programme note for the final dance work, *The Voyage*, which read “our life’s journey in dance, an island of hope, hold on, for it begins” (Samuel, G.: 1998), suggests an eternal flow of cultures as ‘islands’ reconnect in their discovery of one another. This reconnection links to Pavis’s hourglass which can be turned upside-down as source and target cultures mediate their new circumstances. It illustrates the journey that is always in motion between cultures.

⁷⁰ The success of this **dance project** could also be reflected by the spin-offs, which culminated in an international art exhibition by Danish artist Søs Brysch. The ten mixed media works that were exhibited in Sofienholm Denmark in 1999 and Durban, South Africa in February 2000, affirm the notion of relationships between the various performing, visual and **literary arts**. Brysch was inspired by the gift of a collection of short poems written for *Journeys in Dance* **by the choreographer** which were published by the Danish Cultural Institute in 2001.

**3.2.3. Case study number three: *Dance Dreams*
(March – May 1999).**

3.2.3.1. Project description

The project's approach was an integrated cross-disabilities one that worked in creative dance over ten weeks and was seen as a continuum for the similar dance for disabled projects begun in 1997 and 1998 by The Playhouse Company. Its newest element was the challenge for teachers to create their own short choreographed works for children with disabilities and their mainstream enablers who were randomly grouped. The project was limited to four schools and a more intensive interaction was expected from teachers who were given weekly tasks to prepare and execute for the assembled children/participants.

Under the guidance of the overall director/choreographer, teachers co-choreographed ten short dance works during the workshop period. The group was ably assisted by volunteer dance facilitator (cultural and media studies student from the University of Natal) - Anusharani Govender (1999).

In contrast to the previous project, the final dance production was presented in the smaller Studio theatre (refer page 106). The programme exposed all the children to a wide variety of music including western classical music, contemporary pop and African jazz. Loots' (1998) encouragement that *Journeys in Dance* in 1998 utilised wide music choices seemed to have been a springboard for many teachers who began to explore the wider notions of 'music' by using the lyrics or vocal text to accompany their dance pieces. She writes,

Dance languages and music choices range from rave music and club dance

styles, to more contemporary dance techniques (Loots.1998: 6).

Consequently, in 1999 the musical variety and score for the programme diversified. This thesis argues that such review by media of the previous project contributed to the pressure on teachers as choreographers for *Dance Dreams* to create work of choreographic substance or maturity which consequently elevated the role of the disabled children as performers. Examples of new music included teachers who utilised the poetry of American Langston Hughes for their choreographic inspiration.

3.2.3.2. Project demographics

The choreographer selected four schools, with eleven teacher representatives that had participated in previous projects for disabled over a five-year period (1995 –1999). There were 42 children as dancers/participants between ages 8 –18 years.

TABLE SHOWING URBAN - RURAL DISTRIBUTION OF PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS

Urban (10kms radius)	Peri -urban (20kms radius)	Rural (30kms radius)
Open Air School (Glenmore)	A.M. Moolla Spes Nova (Phoenix)	KwaThintwa School for the Deaf (Inchanga)
	Brookdale Secondary (Phoenix)	

Once again the thesis notes that most participating schools came from the peri-urban environs.

3.2.3.3. Project design

Building on the planning structure of the first two projects, the first four weeks were spent on creative play based on Laban's eight 'action words': thrust, whip, press, wring, dab, flick, glide, float (Russell.1958: 26) as these related to the chosen theme

of *Dance Dreams*. The letter of invitation to parents/guardians by the project's co-ordinator clarifies this idea of action words and the general theme. He writes,

Your children and their teachers will workshop the theme dream time, the hopes and dreams of all kinds of children and share in their hidden meanings. A lighter comic approach will also be shared as we unveil some nightmares too (Samuel, G.M.: 1999).

A feature of the programme was that it was the first time that some of the children from a mainstream school included children with disabilities into a dance work which they had previously workshoped as an entry for the performance phase of the production. This combined work, aptly entitled *Circle of Friends*, was unlike the dance works in the 1997 case study which had dance works choreographed by disabled children ('internal' choreographers) for one another⁷¹.

3.2.3.4. Project aims and objectives

Govender (1999) notes that the role of the disabled children as performers working with 'external' choreographers has been problematic. She highlights the comments such as "they [i.e. disabled children] have the potential. I think they could have been led better" (Govender.1999: 97) and "it was supposed to be collaborative but it ended off being directive" (Govender. 1999: 101) made by members and ex-members of KwaZulu-Natal Very Special Arts when referring to the creative process for the dance piece of the Brazil festival. This thesis notes the conflicting statements made to choreographers who appear to be admonished for being on the one hand too authoritarian/direct and on the other, not leading enough. These statements reveal the

⁷¹ In 1997, case study number two had two dance works choreographed by the children/participants themselves but these remained within their disability category i.e. the Deaf children choreographed for other Deaf children and those with learning difficulties also choreographed for one another. This appears to have been partially as a consequence to initial project designs which did not make separate time available for the children to choreograph but instead wholly preoccupied them with the contribution they were to make to the choreographic process by their teachers and/or the choreographer.

levels of mistrust and the patronising ‘neediness’ (referred to in chapter one), which surrounds work within the disability sector itself.

Once again a memorandum to the renamed Corporate Affairs and Marketing department of The Playhouse Company clarifies succinctly the 1999 project’s aims as,

To draw public awareness and focus of the abilities of all children whether disabled or not.

To focus on the power of dance as a medium and healer.

To lobby for the continued support of performing arts for and by disabled communities (Samuel, G.M. 1999: 2).

The need for further expansion of ‘disability dance’ as a form in the face of budgetary cuts in the performing arts appears even greater. The tensions that exist between the formal performing arts sector and the emerging practice by the disabled have contributed to the main objectives for this project.

3.2.3.5. Summary and findings of case study number three in relation to multi-, intra- and inter-cultural theories

The notion that a dance performance could be viewed as a layered text or ‘inter-textual’ experience was beginning to be explored. The small example of Tremaine Brislin’s dance work (a teacher at the Open Air School) that utilised the historic ‘I have a dream’ speech by the black consciousness activist and freedom-fighter Martin Luther King Jnr. demonstrates not only a bold initiative but one which is profound. It could be argued that this is an example of inter-textual performance as its subtexts include that it was: led by a dancing sign language artist, the dance was co- performed by young men who were from obviously different race groups, they danced to words

and not only to 'music'. The loose phrase 'dancing sign language artists' described a dancer who used the gestured nature that is sign language which is extended in movement terms. This could be described as a dance in and of itself. The hidden messages that are encapsulated in Brislin's programme note when she refers to Martin Luther King Jr's universal message, is one of hope and are further revealed by the layering of: dance movements and gestures: expressing struggle, capture, rigidity and freedom. The famous speech provided a musical score, the dancers's bodies – their skin colour as 'black' and 'white' individuals - and finally, the context of the performance space⁷² all contributed to an inter-textual understanding of this choreographically 'mature' work.

This thesis argues that the four schools that were participants in each year had sufficiently absorbed mainstream theatre practices and conventions as they were exposed to a developing technique for dance with children with disabilities over a three-year period (1997 – 1999). Theoretician Patrice Pavis (1992: 9) observes that assimilation towards the tradition and techniques of the group is both conscious and unconscious. Further, the choreographer's desire to "cultivate the critical eye necessary to allow their pupils expression through dance" (1999) suggests that there was already a teacher's expression/idea for the children with disabilities under her care.

The changes to a mainstream performance climate by the project for the disabled - *Dance Dreams* – appears to be both an intra- and inter-cultural product emanating from children with disabilities. Therefore, as new languages emerge, ideologies become defined as a fledgling 'disability culture' is suggested.

⁷² The notion of performance space as context refers here to the prestige/high art value attached to mainstream theatre venues such as The Playhouse Opera and Drama theatres. The unpacking of wider arguments, which reveal Site specific performance spaces, e.g. parks, building sites and swimming pools, are beyond the scope of this thesis.

Conclusion

As the three projects evolved, several theoretical constructs (raised earlier) within the cultural /political debates are noted. *Dance Dreams* attempted to draw even closer to the voice of the authentic speaker – the child with disabilities and teachers working directly with children with disabilities. The idea of ‘disability dance’ initially contained by definitions of ‘multiculturalism’ as in the *Come Sing and Dance with Me* project were interwoven with ideas of ‘interculturalism’. *Dance Dreams* embraced the interculturalism as explored in *Journeys in Dance* - enabling children to work in randomly mixed groups of children with a variety of (dis)abilities. The 1999 project began to show a cohesion - a loose but common ideology - which could also be interpreted as ‘intra-cultural’ within notions of mainstream contemporary dance performance culture.

The strong desire for integration and ‘normalisation’ spurred onwards by KwaZulu-Natal Very Special Arts and The Playhouse Company could easily blur the consequences and needs of the disabled in relation to their own cultural production. Schechner’s (1991) humanitarian feelings could be appropriated to The Playhouse Company’s needs to highlight the disabled as a marginalised community. This urgent redress was prompted by a need for broad societal change that required national governmental attention and intervention.

British clinical psychologist and social worker, Shulamit Ramon (1991), challenges these debates by noting,

Without necessarily glorifying the quality of ordinary living, it is unashamedly assumed within the normalisation approach that such a lifestyle is qualitatively better than the one currently available to most people with disability in Western societies (Ramon: 1991: 7).

Her position that the response by (especially) governments to a collective guilt, which drives the process of inclusion for people with disabilities, could be paralleled with South Africa's performing arts institutions' guilt and the related remorse by organisations for disabled. Situated underground for many years, the ideological aspirations of people with disabilities – their disability culture became exposed in dance performances and magnified by the media in a 'global' context of the birth of democracy in South Africa.

The initial programme's contents designed by teachers, co-ordinator and all the children as participants reveal at their core the 'dislocation-from-society' position for the disabled. The content of dance projects number two and three also show the reaction to the varying degrees of misunderstanding, ignorance and general prejudice that still exists for people with disabilities. The young participants' experiences of mainstream society's inclusion often felt like a perpetual swim in an *Underwater Restaurant* (a title used for one of the dance work in – *Journeys in Dance* - case study number two). Their sorrow and hurt at being rejected was being spoken through the non-verbal language of their bodies – dance. A new language, that of 'disability dance' which was culturally specific to them, spoke through the universal medium that is dance.

As The Playhouse Company responds to its mission statement of redress and reconstruction, the case studies have promoted the notion of equal access to performance space for all people including those with disabilities. The three case studies reveal that as choreographers, South African dance teachers need to build on

their British experience to allow for their *African Eagles* (the title for the 2001 dance for children with mixed abilities project) to soar.

The gradual acceptance of the process of working across disability like many multicultural performances saw mainstream children and the disabled in a singular integrated dance in a short period of three years. This exciting exchange of life skills and experiences, problem-solving, social and physical development for all the participants has meant that through these dance projects a privileged insight into lives of the 'other' was provided. The notion of intercultural performance which has been dominated by inter-racial paradigms, was able to reflect that disability was another possible site of cultural intersection.

CONCLUSION

The site of exploration: children, disability and dance performance culture in KwaZulu-Natal has raised several issues for researchers, media, teachers/choreographers of 'disabled dance' and the children (and adults) that participated therein. A recognition of 'ability arts'⁷³, still in its infancy in South Africa, has thankfully begun. The emerging macro-issues for disability culture - the release in July 2001 of the White Paper on Special Education - will be expanded upon as a conclusion to this study of intercultural dialogues is presented. Finally, suggestions and concerns are articulated which offer some implications for future research and development of 'disability culture'.

Chapter one has argued that 'disability' needs to be defined in the South African context. It explored the constructed notion of disability, which is bound by (amongst other) historical, social and political frames. This examination of 'disability' as constructed identity was observed as chiefly grounded in medical definitions. The particular circumstances of South Africa in which the three case studies were located, revealed that disability categorisation was also marred by race and gender.

The locale of 'disabled dance', which emanated chiefly from within KwaZulu-Natal schools and theatres also exposed the incongruence and inequities of these places of learning in the wider context of the birth of a democratic South Africa. The legacy of apartheid' five separate education government departments and the impact of under-resourced schools for disabled were outlined. Tragic distinctions between a former white disabled child and her black counterpart was laid bare to reveal that less than one third of the needs of a former black disabled child was met in relation to almost

⁷³ Director of Culture and Development at DACST, Steven Sack's opening reference to ability rather than disability arts at the first Strategic Planning Meeting of the Disability Consultative Conference on 31 August 2001, is borrowed here.

double the need for her white classmate *vis a vis* the provision of schools. It was argued that these and other shameful inequities contributed to the rationale that there are few disabled artists and that their artistic growth or development is slow and unsophisticated. The problematic notion of disabled children as custodial artists who are currently unable to receive training in and about the performing arts has been discussed.

The first chapter foregrounded the practice of dance for the disabled in KwaZulu-Natal. Early pioneers of ballroom dance for disabled such as John Mthethwa and the contributory work by schools for the Deaf, e.g. Fulton School for the Deaf (see appendix) and KwaThintwa School for the Deaf were noted. The range and depth of dance presentations by schools and the concerns of non-governmental organisations - KwaZulu-Natal Very Special Arts, were briefly articulated. It was noted that the dominant performance culture embodied in a mainstream notion of theatre practices revealed a fundamental axis existed between classical ballet ('high art') and contemporary and 'traditional' dance (low art/cultural expressions). The practice of 'mainstream' contemporary dance had not considered the widespread entry of people with disabilities as artists (specifically dancers) in their own right. The study contextualised The Playhouse Company's dance development programmes within the transition of all state-funded organisations in South Africa.

This thesis has suggested that as 'disability dance' emerged, the performing arts and the education sectors together with the media could inadvertently position this form of expression as developmental theatre and/or create a separate, new elitist group. It also argued that a distinction between 'mainstreaming' and 'inclusivity' needs to be made

and noted the shifts away from performances by disabled that were tied to awareness days and commemorative public holidays towards independent performance seasons.

Chapter one argued that disability consciousness in South Africa strengthened in the wake of the human rights culture of post-1994. Just as equal education and the employment equity acts were being promulgated, so too was the debate that 'disabled dance' could offer another influence for all choreographers working in contemporary dance. These arguments expanded the definition of the 'dancing body' and of 'dance', proposing that the emergence of creative movement in the performing arts and education sectors (and thus disabled dance), needs to be acknowledged by teachers and so called mainstream choreographers. Laban's (1948) movement principles, Elizabeth Sneddon's praxis as well as Gardner's (1993) offer of 'body intelligence' verified the arguments for holistic, integrated understanding of movement training for all children (especially the child with disabilities). The articulation of and by the disabled body has created public awareness not only of disability constrictures but of intolerance, racism and discrimination. This thesis has maintained that 'disability dance' by children strengthens not only disability culture (via its dances and choreographic output) but that it could significantly contribute to the notions of 'dance' and of dance performance culture.

To support these arguments, chapter two set out to unpack notions around culture. The thesis has traced and expanded notions of 'culture' locating South Africa's colonialist past and critiqued the blinkered acceptance of (predominantly Euro-centric) professional models for dance training and performance in KwaZulu-Natal. It supported the suggestion of a 'midway model' as articulated by (Smith-Autard: 1992). Culture as a non-static, ever-evolving entity capable of several transformations was

clarified and a working definition of culture was offered. The historical profile of children's dance in KwaZulu-Natal was located in such an aspect of ever-changing performance culture.

The thesis reiterated the debates of high art *versus* culture, arguing that several further anomalies exist including: the distinction in South Africa of a separate national arts and culture ministry, the promotion/marginalisation of professional art and indigenous culture, the access of art and culture as political weapons. These issues were raised in wider contexts of definitions of cultural politics. The need to look at disability as a culture in and of itself was supported by Sinason (1992) who extends notions of disability as an industry.

The advent of external influences (in particular from the UK) post-1994, new work methodologies in dance, a variety of dance styles and genres offered a background to underscore the notion of an emerging South African dance language. Schechner's notion of 'other' for the disabled was appropriated and explained. The theoretical underpinnings of multi-, intra-, and inter-culturalism were explained by accessing Schechner (1991), Brustein (1991) and Pavis (1992) amongst other cultural theorists.

In chapter three, a mainstream theatre's (The Playhouse Company) dance development projects for children that were defined 'disabled' were selected as case studies which offered a parallel notion of cultural politics revealing that with each progressive introduction of disability group and/or enabling group, a deepening dialogue emerges. This thesis has argued not that the case studies in themselves have brought about a disability culture but that the earliest signifiers of disability as a culture are beginning to emerge.

The first case study as a multicultural event showed various but separate disabled groups coming together providing an ice-breaker or common space within which the whole group interacted. This healthy communication however, occurred within a vacuum as the 'development or community' status was still attached to the disabled as 'other' performance group within mainstream notions of performance dance.

The second case study revealed how the Deaf chose to remain on the outside within the context of disability performance akin to an intra-culture. It noted significant shifts from with the organisations and the media.

Finally, the 'enablers' from so called mainstream schools that were thrown into a melting pot (Banks: 1981) were also engaging across disability, which revealed a mixed ability group for all children in case study three, whether they were defined 'disabled' or not.

Given South Africa's divided multi-racial, -cultural past, disability was proposed as a culture that intersects with many new minority cultures including: gay, black, first world. Disability as intra-culture, e.g. the Deaf and their intersection with wider South African society and the inter-cultural dialogues (within macro and micro contexts) were argued. The disabled child as a performer mediates her new space as several constructed identities are at play: race, disability, high art, protest theatre, which are of concern.

Emerging macro issues for disability culture: the White Paper on Special Education

Teachers in schools for disabled can look forward to years of ‘choreographer’ role-playing as the disability sector ravaged by apartheid unravels and reconstructs itself. In the words of the national Minister of Education, Professor Kader Asmal,

This White Paper, [The Special Needs Education White Paper 6: building an inclusive education and training system], together with Education White Paper 5 on Early Childhood Development, completes an extraordinary period of seven years of post-apartheid policy development and policy making outlined in Education White Paper 1 on Education and Training that began in the final quarter of 1994. It is a policy paper that took us more time to complete than any of the five macro-systems policies that it follows upon. This means that it has benefited the most from our early experiences and knowledge of the complex interface of policy and practice ([own emphasis] Department of Education. 2001: 4).

Professor Asmal’s introductory comment to the Education White Paper 6 substantiates the complexity of the interface of disability within the education sector and can equally be extended to the performing arts’ frames. Thus, the untrained teacher as choreographer is a role for many dance seasons yet to come.

The notion of integration and mainstreaming for the disabled has bred some distrust. Not unexpectedly, the disabled reject the idea that they should be expected to ‘fit in’ to any existing system.

The constant movement (at macro level) of South African dance (of which disability dance is part) gathers the influences of many cultures as artists and groups collide, evolve and intersect. With the disabled as a young participant within the mainstream (funded) performing arts sector, these participations could constrain her separate/private development of disabled dance (at micro-level). The current inclusion of disabled into the broader performance culture could be motivated by the example of the White Paper 6 Special Needs Education: building an inclusive education system and training system, that strongly suggests a focus on “the adaptation of and [establishment of] support systems” (Department of Education. 2001: 17). The need for new support systems within the performing arts sector that consult with the disabled to clarify her aspirations is clear.

Amidst the intercultural dialogue between disability, children and dance in KwaZulu-Natal is the wider frame in South Africa - that of the state, religion, community and family that are also undergoing its own private transformation. Perhaps the largest shift as cultures meet will come from the formal education systems. It is predictable that eventually a dance in special education curriculum will also emerge. Already, the education and training sector has begun its discussions to establish norms and standards. Qualification frameworks are being mooted and therefore systems for accreditation for those studying across disabilities dance work, its integration and inclusion in contemporary dance performance will need to be validated.

Implications for future research and development, suggestions and concerns.

Although much of the dance work examined by this thesis reflects issues that speak of disability culture *vis à vis* the lives of disabled, it notes that very little dance work is being created solely and independently by the disabled. Moreover, disability dance of South African origin that interfaces at inter-provincial and or inter-national level is scarce⁷⁴.

The late 1990s saw a shortage in South Africa of skilled artists working in dance with disabled children (in a school's setting) towards a performance cultural context. The idea that such a role existed was novel. In KwaZulu-Natal, many teachers were charged with the responsibility to co-ordinate the cultural activities within their schools for disabled. They found their new job-title (that of 'choreographer') daunting when entering the performance cultural context. Teachers were ill prepared for the holistic construction of a dance work, as was the custom in proscenium arch or mainstream theatres. Support systems need to be put in place, which include choreographers for disabled dance that have evolved from both sectors of education and the performing arts.

The untrained teachers as choreographers in the field, the interested pupils as young choreographers and mainstream choreographers all have significant roles to play in their involvement with disability dance.

⁷⁴ A disability dance component was evident in the *Celebrate South Africa* event in London, UK in May 2001. The Tshwarangano Dance Company was assisted by DACST as the first integrated disability arts company with national representation.

The role of choreographer in any dance work ranges from autocrat to broadly consultative workshopper. As progenitor of all that encompasses the dance in a theatre performance context, the role of choreographer/director is paramount. The choice of music, costume, stage design (including lighting effects) and the conception of intricate dance patterns, inter-relationships and new dance vocabulary is vital to the successful expression of the artist. Therefore, it could be argued that to deny choreography by artists with disabilities evolves a 'removed position' for the disabled. Boal's (1979) contention that the theatre is a political tool and can be appropriated and extended to the disabled artist who finds herself being spoken for, through, and about, by her teachers and 'other' choreographers. Thus the disabled's world is expressed from the vantage point of the able-bodied (adult, very often female) teacher.

This thesis strongly supports the arguments by Augusto Boal (1979), Loots (1996) and others that the 'personal is political' and therefore supports the notion that the artist with disabilities must be encouraged to develop and independently articulate her own inner voice.

The further issues of gender representation within the disabled artists' group and the role of female teacher-choreographers must guard against the stereotypical role models where ultimately no boys as dancers or choreographers are supplied from within the disabled community. This criticism and the general lack of critique of KwaZulu-Natal dance as theoretical construct, is another broad recommendation.

The need for dynamic, effective training mechanisms and materials for both pre- and in-service teachers that are interested in working in dance is urgent. With the

formation of The Playhouse Company's Education and Development departments and later organisations such as the KwaZulu-Natal Dancelink⁷⁵, support for such dance development initiatives could create more examples such as the three case studies that were examined in this thesis. More of these avenues for teachers of pupils with disabilities will begin to change notions of dance by the disabled themselves.

With several mainstream choreographers now exploring working with the disabled in a performance context, the issue of the exploitation of dancer with disabilities is also problematic. Sinason (1992) had earlier warned of the disability industry which often emerges. Caregivers, helpers, facilitators and guardians are in dangerous proximity to obliterate the voice of the disabled. The disabled is often wheeled, positioned into place or spoken for not unlike a puppet. Practitioners and researchers of these new debates have the challenging task to explore the right to freedom of expression for each choreographer and the threat of the silenced dancer with disabilities who is merely the choreographer's puppet.

As greater numbers of mainstream artists and practitioners in various arts related fields become involved in the disability arts sector the danger of establishing another elite - that of independent, non-integrated disability dance company - is also problematic. The strong will to establish independent companies of disabled artists as a reaction to the absence of any visible 'mainstream' dance by the disabled must be contested.

The media's reaction to (dis)ability arts (whether to free-standing events or dance seasons) is critical as this will expand public awareness and could dispel prejudice

⁷⁵ KwaZulu-Natal Dancelink, established in 1998 is an umbrella body for many dance companies, local artists and teachers.

that continues to surround disability. The lifeblood of the arts - popular media - could finally channel the plight of the disabled – access – by placing her needs first or manipulate the articulations of disabled for its own commercial devices.

Finally, some of these issues will assuredly re-emerge at the historic, first national Disability Consultative Conference to be held in the year 2002 that is temporarily entitled - access, awareness, arts - which will continue to explore the emergence of intercultural dialogues: disability, children and performance dance.

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Appendix A - Come Sing and Dance with Me

- Poster reduction
- General press release by The Playhouse Company
- Reviews.

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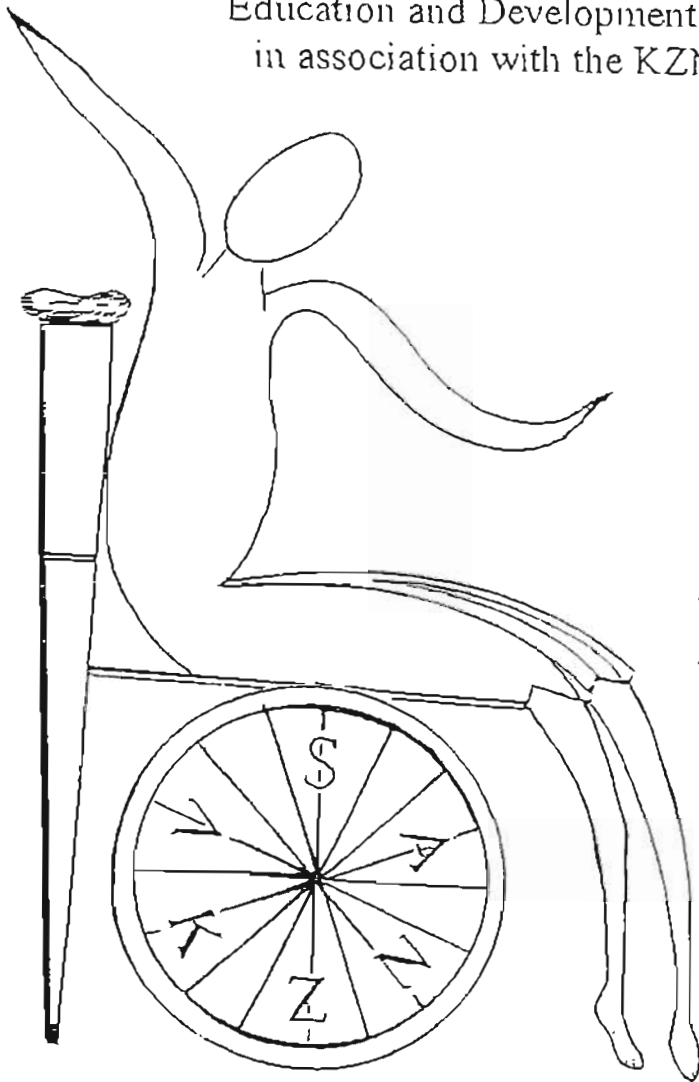
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The Playhouse Company

presents an

Education and Development Department initiative
in association with the KZN Very Special Arts



**COME
SING
AND
DANCE
WITH
ME**

The Natal Playhouse. Studio Theatre.

25-27 JUNE. 19H00

Tickets available at Box Office and participating schools
Contact: 369 9555 or 262 9095



The Playhouse Company

Incorporated Association Not For Gain. Reg. No. 64/00006/08

P.O. Box 5353 Durban 4000, 29 Acutt Street, Durban, 4001, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa
Telephone: (031) 3043631, Fax: (031) 3062166. Production Services: Mayville Tel: (031) 284171

GENERAL PRESS RELEASE

COME SING AND DANCE WITH ME

"The disabled child is often side-stepped and turned invisible by many, and it is our fervent wish to invite the broader public to witness the expressions of young people in the performing arts", says Gerard Samuel, The Playhouse Company's Education and Development Dance Co-Ordinator.

Presented by The Playhouse Company's Education and Development Department in association with the KZN Very Special Arts, **COME SING AND DANCE WITH ME** is a project of creative dance and music showcasing the talents of disabled children in partnership with able-bodied children.

Following last year's successful **Partners in Dance**, **COME SING AND DANCE WITH ME** highlights the performing arts abilities of this previously marginalised community while giving disabled and abled children the opportunity to interact with each other. Anriette Chorn, Education and Development Music Co-Ordinator, commented that "this is a unique and exciting opportunity for young people with varying abilities to discover the joys of sharing their experiences in creative movement and song".

More than 70 children from schools for the disabled, including Fulton School for the Hearing Impaired, VN Naik School for the Deaf, Open Air School, KwaThintwa School for the Deaf, AM Moolla Spes Nova and RP Moodley School for the Physically Handicapped, will take part in the programme which includes dance, song and poetry.

An exhibition of arts and crafts reflecting the theme of Ubuntu (community) will also be on show in the Studio Theatre foyer. Produced by students from schools for the disabled and training centres across KwaZulu-Natal the exhibit will include pottery, embroidery, weaving and watercolours.

Don't miss the opportunity to see **COME SING AND DANCE WITH ME** in the Playhouse Studio Theatre from June 25 - 27 at 19h00. Tickets are available at the Playhouse Box Office and at participating schools at a cost of R12.

ENDS

Issued by: Shannon Mac Lennan (Publicist)

May 27 1997

TEL: (031) 369 9497

FAX: (031) 304 2290

The deaf can dance

Getting their act together

The stage opens up new vistas for a special school, writes Daily News Reporter VANASHREE CHETTY.

ECHOES of laughter rise and fall as pupils, gathered in clusters around the hall, tease and test each other's dramatic skills.

Twenty-four volunteer pupils from the Fulton School for the Deaf in Gillitts, near Durban, have joined their teacher, Ms Gisele Turner, and formed a dance company.

With their exuberant personalities, their passion for theatre and their fierce determination to succeed, the fledgling Deaf Can Dance company aims to bring a fresh dimension to the South African theatre.

Even seasoned mime artists would envy the innate skill of some of these performers - there is a deftness in their movements coupled with an integrity of feeling.

Communicating via an interpreter, the troupe were often beset by stage fright, anxiety and nerves - but they pushed themselves because of their love for the theatre.

Interpreter Lee-Anne Reynolds said she felt proud and couldn't wait to show everyone that deaf people were able to act, dance and perform on stage. "It's hard work for me, but one day I want to get into film," she said.

The choreography expresses the company's innovative style through mime, dance and story theatre, with everyone getting a chance to develop and display creativity.

Deaf Can Dance has already received fame in open competition against "hearing" schools at the National Youth Festival held in May at Durban's Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre.

Their dance piece, *Celebration*, a light-hearted and refreshing look at joyous moments in life, won that sec-



PICTURE: GISELE TURNER

BRIGHT EYES: Ecstatic members of the Deaf Can Dance company express their joy at winning a special prize at the National Youth Festival.

tion of the competition.

A second piece, *The King's Silent Son*, a piece of story theatre, was judged in a category of its own and won a special prize for best contribution. The com-

pany has been invited to perform at the Playhouse in June and will stage the "curtain-raiser" at Come Sing and Dance with Me concert.

Ms Turner, director of the

company, said she felt there was a wealth of unexplored talent among the deaf pupils and that lack of opportunity was the only hindrance to their performing. "Being in a profession-

al company allows students an opportunity to break new ground and it also makes them aware of the possibilities of the theatre as a future career," Ms Turner said.

Show will highlight talents of disabled children

Highway Mail
Reporter

THE Playhouse Company's education and development department would like the broader community to witness the expressions of young people in the performing arts.

To achieve this the company is joining forces with the KwaZulu-Natal Very Special Arts to host "Come Sing and Dance with Me", a project of creative dance and music which showcases the talents of disabled children.

"Following in the footsteps of last year's successful 'Partners in Dance', the show will highlight the performing arts of this previously marginalised community," Mr Samuel said.

"It will also give these children the opportunity to interact with each other."

More than 70 children from schools for the disabled, including Fulton School for the Hearing Impaired, VNNaik School for

the Deaf, the Open Air School, KwaThintwa School for the Deaf, A M Moolla Spes Nova and the R P Moodley School for the Physically Handicapped, will take part in the programme.

An exhibition of arts and crafts reflecting the theme of "Ubuntu" (Community) will also be on show in the Studio Theatre foyer. The exhibition will include pottery, embroidery, weaving and watercolours.

"Come Sing and Dance With Me" can be seen in the Studio from 25 to 27 June at 7pm. Tickets are R12 each and can be bought at the Playhouse box office or from participating schools.

Appendix B – Journey in Dance

- Poster reduction
- General press release by The Playhouse Company
- Reviews:

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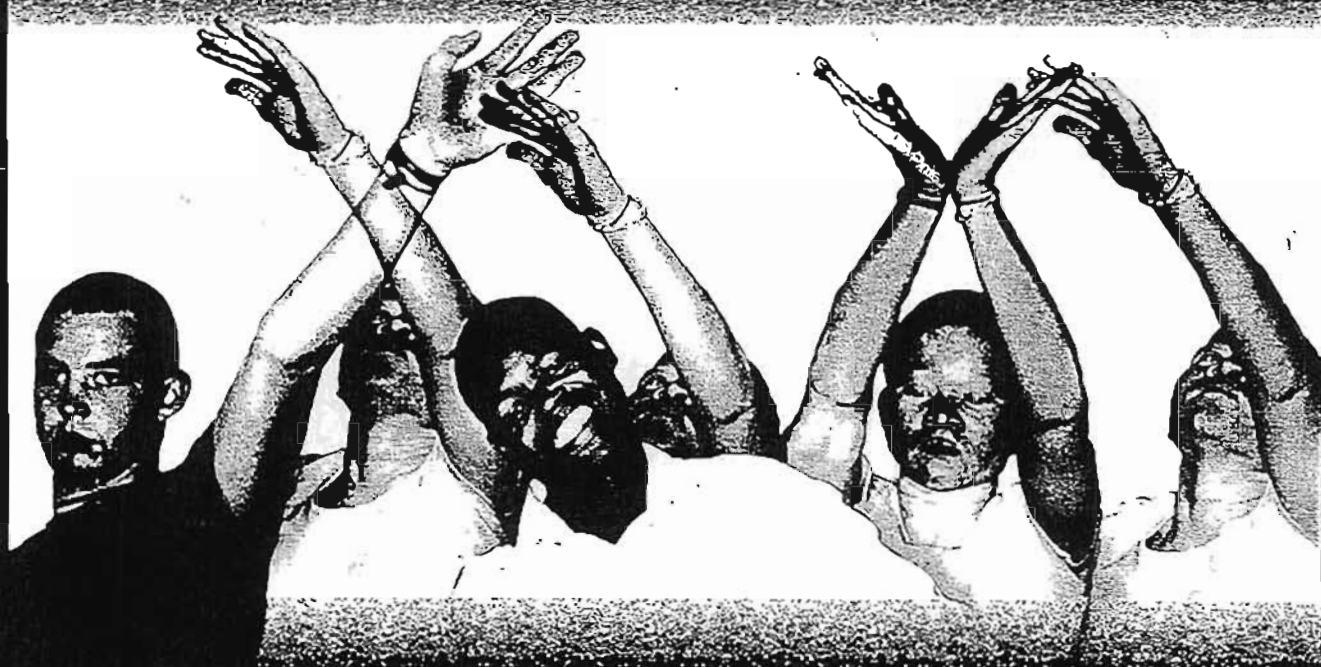
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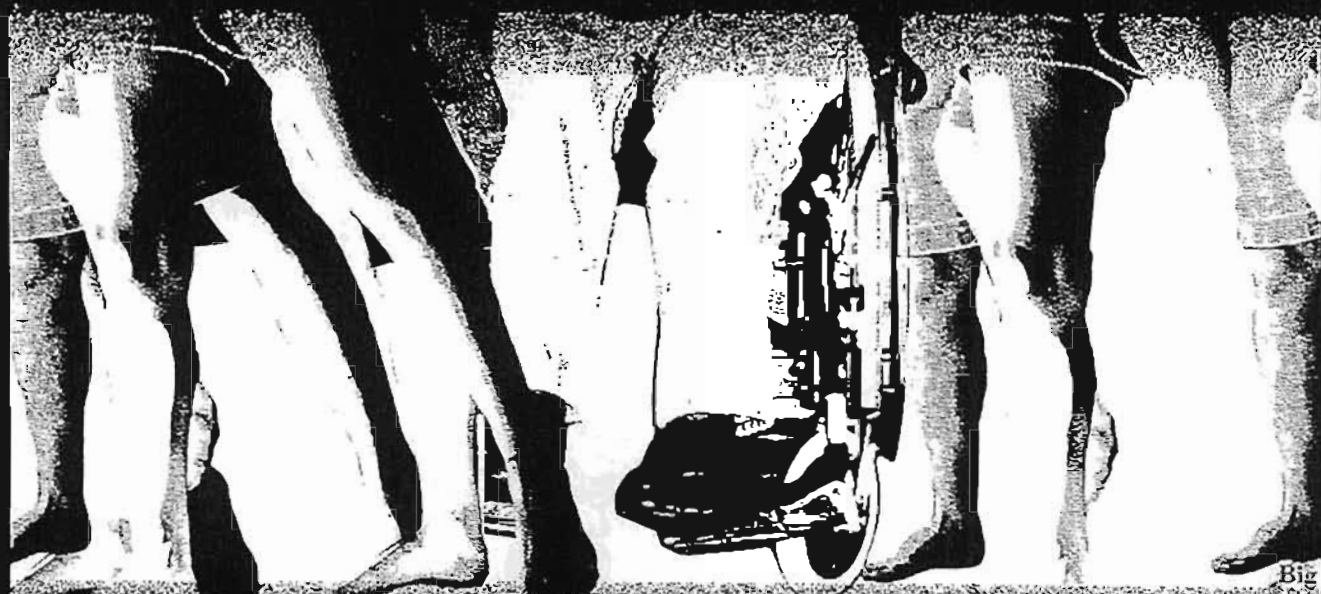
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**PRESENTS AN EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE
IN ASSOCIATION WITH K2N VERY SPECIAL ARTS**



JOURNEYS IN DANCE



**THE PLAYHOUSE COMPANY • DRAMA THEATRE
ON THURSDAY 30 JULY 1998 AT 11H00 & 19H00
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Telephone: (031) 3043631, Fax: (031) 3062166. Production Services: Mayville Tel: (031) 284171

GENERAL PRESS RELEASE

JOURNEYS IN DANCE

The Playhouse Company's Education and Development Department is once again co-ordinating a dance development programme for the disabled in conjunction with KZN Very Special Arts, entitled **JOURNEYS IN DANCE**.

Teachers from various schools and centres for the disabled have been involved in several dance courses in creative and developmental movement, as well as skills workshops hosted by The Playhouse Company.

Bringing together mainstream scholars and those from schools for the disabled, **JOURNEYS IN DANCE** aims to give expression to the feelings and experiences of the physically and intellectually challenged using the medium of dance.

Gerard Samuel, The Playhouse company's Education and Development dance co-ordinator, has been working with 90 pupils from nine schools in KwaZulu-Natal on this very exciting dance project whose theme incorporates journeys, movement, discovery, survival, support, overcoming obstacles and action.

They will present their shared dance works at the Playhouse Drama Theatre on July 29 at 11h00 and July 30 at 11h00 and 19h00. Tickets for the 11h00 shows which are aimed primarily at scholars, are R8 with tickets for the evening show priced at R15.

An art exhibition linked to the show's theme is being presented in the Drama Theatre foyer over this period. Pupils, who have been assisted by South African and international students of Edgewood Teachers' Training College, as well as volunteers from the Durban Art Gallery, will have their work on display.

-ENDS-

23 June 1998

Issued by : Charlene Moodley, Corporate Public Relations Co-ordinator

Telephone : (031) 3699488

Fax : (031) 3042290

Journeys in Dance – a very special show

IT HAS taken me more than two weeks to get down to writing about the experience I record in this column.

I have had to work through a conflict of emotions, not knowing how to describe what was a phenomenal turbulence of feelings.

Emotional conflicts often arise out of simple things, such as a little child pirouetting like a dainty bird in the breeze of some enrapturing musical strain, floating gently through the cascade of emotions that each changing note brings, until she flutters down like a tiny lost feather to nestle lightly on the ground.

That was what I saw, through interludes of great surges of human movement as arms and legs stretched out and bodies turned into gymnastic forms through "journeys in dance".

The occasion was a superb performance by disabled children – some blind, some deaf, and others physically and mentally challenged in other ways – under the aus-

SATHISH JAGGERNATH

FLIP
SIDE



pices of Very Special Arts, KwaZulu-Natal.

This body is part of an international initiative which has set out to harness the talents of disabled children in rising above the conventional notions we have of their artistic capabilities.

In KwaZulu-Natal, the chairman of VSA, Sam Moodley, got together some dedicated and skilled artists, like Gerard Samuel and Linda Peyters, to select children from the various 'special' schools and launch them on an exhilarating display of *Journeys in Dance* at the Playhouse.

I sat in the audience wondering how the children would fare under the spotlight of an intimidating pro-

fessional stage. After all, some of them would not be able to hear the music to which they would dance. Others would not see, except perhaps in their mind's eye. And there were others who I thought would not understand. But what I saw was far beyond my expectations.

I certainly do not have the knowledge or skills to judge performances of the creative arts. Yet I am able to cry when something tugs at my heart strings or to be joyous when something bubbles in victory. And the spectacle that I saw truly moved me to declare that it was magic dancing in wondrous beauty before my eyes.

To some of the most beau-

tiful music, these children danced in such splendour and with meaning that every movement told a story the way the onlooker wished to interpret it.

There were stories of love, pathos and humour and of how each of life's many challenges could be conquered by pushing away the frontiers of human resilience.

There were worlds within a wider world perceived through the minds of the disabled, and interpreted through the dexterity of their hands, the nimbleness of their feet and the agility of their bodies – notwithstanding the hurdles that nature bestowed.

In the words of Gerard Samuel, what the world was asked to see was "our life's journey in dance... an island of hope..."

And the world needed to understand that what the children were inviting was not sympathy and pity, but a recognition of their innate talent to give expression to the world's unique to them.

And as Gitanjali Pather,

head of the Playhouse's education and development department, said, those journeys were "a process of helping these young performers tap their creativity and so begin a wondrous journey of discovery to locate the dancer in themselves".

But why my initial unease in reflecting on my liberating experience? The answer perhaps lies in the way we respond to those who are marginalised in society.

These children were brilliant in their own right. They didn't need the tears that were about to well up in my eyes every time I saw a movement, an expression, a feeling that conjured their beauty of purpose and their mastery over nature's impediments. They wanted me to rejoice with them. And so I did.

To the organisers of *Journeys in Dance*, a brilliant performance by any standard. I urge them for an encore, this time for the wider public to see. In short, play it again, Sam.

Challenging performers and audience



To the POINTE
LIANE LOOTS

THE brainchild of dancer and educator Gerard Samuels, who is dance co-ordinator for the Playhouse Company's education and development department, *Journeys Into Dance* is a production which is the third of its kind.

It's to be seen at the Playhouse Drama at 11am tomorrow and again at 11am and 7pm on Thursday.

For three years, Samuels has been running workshops and choreographing performances for disabled dancers and now, working with the support of KwaZulu Natal Very Special Arts, he is beginning profoundly to 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 these perfect bodies.

"Disabled dancers on stage may be a shock to an audience which assumes that only non-disabled performers have something to offer," says Gerard.

Journeys Into Dance, a full-length work, challenges this by not asking an audience to watch for a paternalism that says: "Aren't they wonderful? So brave and so tragic."

The focus of the production is not disability, but dance.



TWO IN TUNE: Gerard Samuels and Linda Peyters, choreographers of *Journeys Into Dance*.

Linda Peyters, who has been assisting Gerard in the choreographic process for *Journeys Into Dance*, and who recently returned to Durban with a masters degree in dance education, from New York University, said choreographing with disabled dancers was no

different from working with non-disabled dancers.

"The process is exactly the same, as you have to work through the artistic intention of a dance piece."

Both Linda and Gerard speak about the joy of working with a group of

people who have been told their whole lives that they will never dance.

Says Gerard: "Dance is not about right and wrong and 'perfect movement'. That's an old legacy from the days when ballet dominated an audience's idea of dance.

"*Journeys Into Dance* is about the joy of movement and about using, for example, wheelchairs as just another challenge to a dancer, choreographer and audience."

Much of what Gerard and Linda have been doing has a strong resemblance to what is being done by a British dance company called CandoCo – the name saying it all.

CandoCo, a professional dance company formed around 1990, has stunned the world with its sheer audacity of dance work, totally integrating the disabled and non-disabled dancer.

One of the company's performers has no legs and, far from watching spectacle, when you see him dance you begin to question why it is we need legs in the first place.

This is not dance that elicits sympathy, but instead pushes artistic boundaries.

Journeys Into Dance is such a "boundary-pushing" endeavour, one that combines the talents of more than 70 students from local schools for the disabled, as far afield as Tongaat.

The performances are the end result of a dance education drive that began with school workshops for both teachers and pupils.

One of the aims of this project was to get schools for the disabled and schools for the non-disabled to form partnerships.

Gerard feels that there is "still so much prejudice out there, that this aspect of the project is an ongoing one".

Journeys Into Dance picks up on the themes of leaving and the types of journeys we make in our lives.

The dance languages and music choices range from rave music and club dance styles, to more contemporary dance techniques.

So don't arrive for this production expecting to have your heartstrings pulled. Instead, go anticipating a truly captivating dance performance that relies on hard-edge choreography.

Using dance to convey experiences

Post Reporter

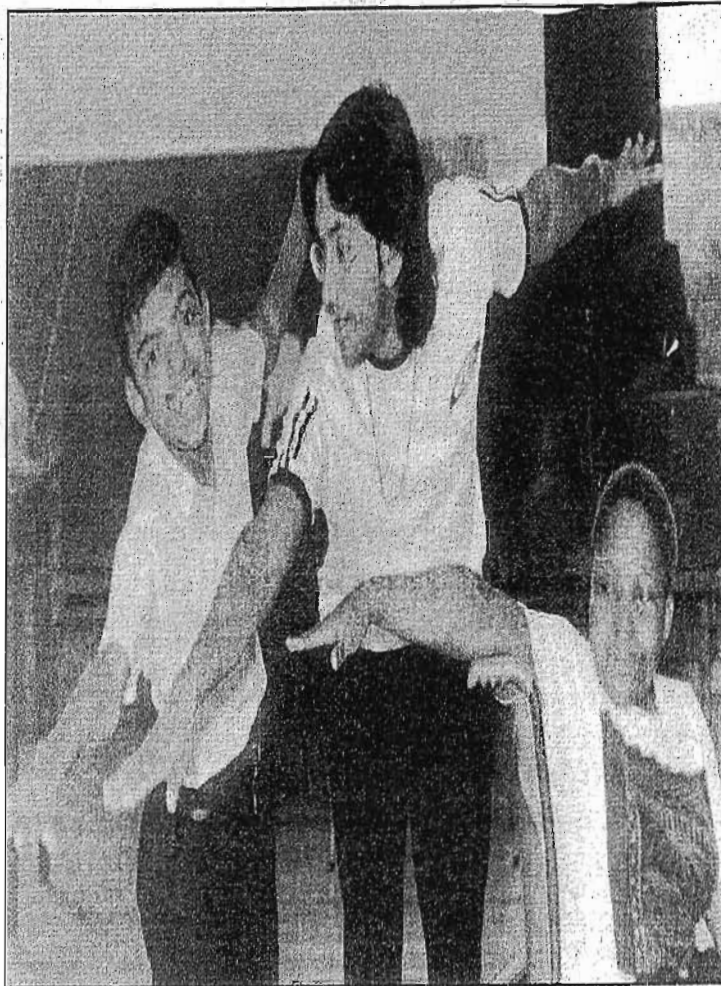
THE Playhouse Company's Education and Development Department is once again co-ordinating, in conjunction with KZN Very Special Arts, a dance development programme for the disabled, entitled Journeys In Dance.

Said Playhouse Company's corporate public relations co-ordinator Charlene Moodley: "Teachers from various schools and centres for the disabled have been involved in several dance courses in creative and developmental movement, as well as skills workshops hosted by The Playhouse Company.

"Bringing together mainstream pupils and those from schools for the disabled, Journeys In Dance aims to give expression to the feelings and experiences of the physically and intellectually challenged, using the medium of dance."

She said Gerard Samuel, The Playhouse Company's education and development dance co-ordinator, had been working with 90 pupils from nine schools in KwaZulu Natal on "this very exciting dance project where the theme incorporates journeys, movement, discovery, survival, support, overcoming obstacles and action".

She said the team would present their shared dance works at the Playhouse



Gerard Samuel puts the kids through their paces

Drama Theatre on July 29 at 11am and July 30 at both 11am and 7pm.

Tickets for the 11am shows are R8 and tickets for the evening show are R15.



CAN'T STOP DANCIN': Dolly Simelane, 18, Asma Ismail, 15, and Wayne Lombard, 16, will step into the spotlight when they perform in *Journeys In Dance* at The Playhouse next week
Picture: JACKIE CLAUSEN

I can dance, and so can you and everybody

★ **NOTHING** can stop a child from dancing. An exciting project scheduled for The Playhouse Drama Theatre this month has proved that all children can dance, even if they are confined to a wheelchair.

Ninety children, many of whom have physical disabilities, are ready to make their debut performance in *Journeys in Dance*.

On July 29 the curtain will come up for the youngsters who have devoted themselves to dance for the past few months.

Gerard Samuel, The Playhouse company's education and development dance co-ordinator has worked with children from nine Kwa-Zulu-Natal schools encouraging them to express themselves through creative movement.

"I'm not focusing on the child's disability, I'm looking at their abilities," said Samuel.

He said the young performers were becoming more confident about themselves as they practised for the performance.

In one scene the children build a human pyramid on the stage.

"It is so amazing to see a child who cannot see, standing three me-

tres above the ground," said Samuel, adding that if a child does not have the full use of one of their senses, then the other senses are heightened.

"Dance is a powerful tool. The deaf children have the most ama-

zing sense of beat and keep up with the music just like everyone else.

"I think this project has been a profound experience for all the children. I would really just like to inspire other teachers to continue this kind of work."

Appendix C - Dance Dreams

- Poster reduction
- General press release by The Playhouse Company
- Reviews:

The Natal Mercury reporter. 1999. Challenging dance works. The Natal Mercury. 21 May.

The Playhouse Company proudly presents

dance dreams

Playhouse Studio

Thursday 27 May at 12h00

Friday 28 May at 12h00 & 19h00

Book now at Computicket or Dial-A-Seat on (031) 3699444





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Dance Dreams

**Playhouse Studio
27 & 28 May 1999**

Focusing on the artistic expressions and aspirations of physically challenged young people, The Playhouse Company's **DANCE DREAMS** project integrates over 40 young, spirited "mixed ability" scholars through the powerful medium of dance.

Culminating in four performances in the Playhouse Studio on 27 and 28 May, **Dance Dreams** will feature children and their budding 'teacher-choreographers' from the Open Air School, Brookdale Secondary, AM Moolla Spes Nova and KwaThintwa School for the Deaf.

When taking to the Playhouse Studio stage these children will showcase their varied talents and express their shared love for creative movement and the performing arts.

Gerard Samuel, the Playhouse Company's enthusiastic Manager of Dance and Drama at The Playhouse Company has been working intermittently with teachers from a number of schools for both physically challenged and mainstream pupils for the past three years.

Most of the teachers taking part in the the 1999 project have had no prior dance training, presenting Samuel with what he described as an "exciting challenge". This challenge is also passed on to the 11 teachers involved who must meet the demands of cross-disability choreography.

"I needed to facilitate teachers' skills development and assist them in the cultivation of the critical eye necessary to allow freedom of expression through dance," he said.

Following last year's widely- praised *Journey's in Dance*, **DANCE DREAMS** will incorporate themes of dream time, reflecting the hopes and dreams of all children, and evoking childhood innocence in its audiences. Take this opportunity to escape into the world of **DANCE DREAMS**.

Performances are as follows : Thursday 27 May at 10h00 and 12h00 (schools only); and Friday 28 May at 12h00 and 19h00. Tickets, at R12 each for the evening show and R8 for the matinees, can be booked at Computicket. Dial-A-Seat on (031) 3699444 or call TicketLine (after hours) on (031) 3042753 for credit card bookings. Assistance for wheelchair patrons will be available.

-ends-



LOCAL TALENT: Some of the 40 spirited disabled children taking part in *Dance Dreams*, to be staged in the Playhouse Studio on Thursday and Friday next week.

Challenging dance works

A PRODUCTION focusing on the artistic expressions and aspirations of some 40 physically challenged young people will be staged on Thursday and Friday next week in the Playhouse Studio.

It's *Dance Dreams*, integrating "mixed ability" students through the medium of dance, and also featuring budding teacher-choreographers from the Open Air School, Brookdale Secondary School, A M Moolla Spes Nova and KwaThintwa School For the Deaf.

Gerard Samuel, the Playhouse Company's newly designated manager of dance and drama, has been working intermittently, over the past three years, with teachers from a number of schools for both physically challenged and

mainstream pupils. Most of the teachers taking part in the 1999 project have had no prior dance training, presenting Samuel with what he describes as "an exciting challenge".

This challenge was passed on to the 11 teachers involved, who met demands of cross-disability choreography.

Following last year's production, *Journeys In Dance*, *Dance Dreams* will incorporate themes of dream time, reflecting the hopes and dreams of all children and evoking childhood innocence in its audiences.

Next week's performances will be at 10am and noon on Thursday (schools only) and at noon and 7pm on Friday.

Tickets are R8 (R12 for the evening show). Booking is at Computicket.

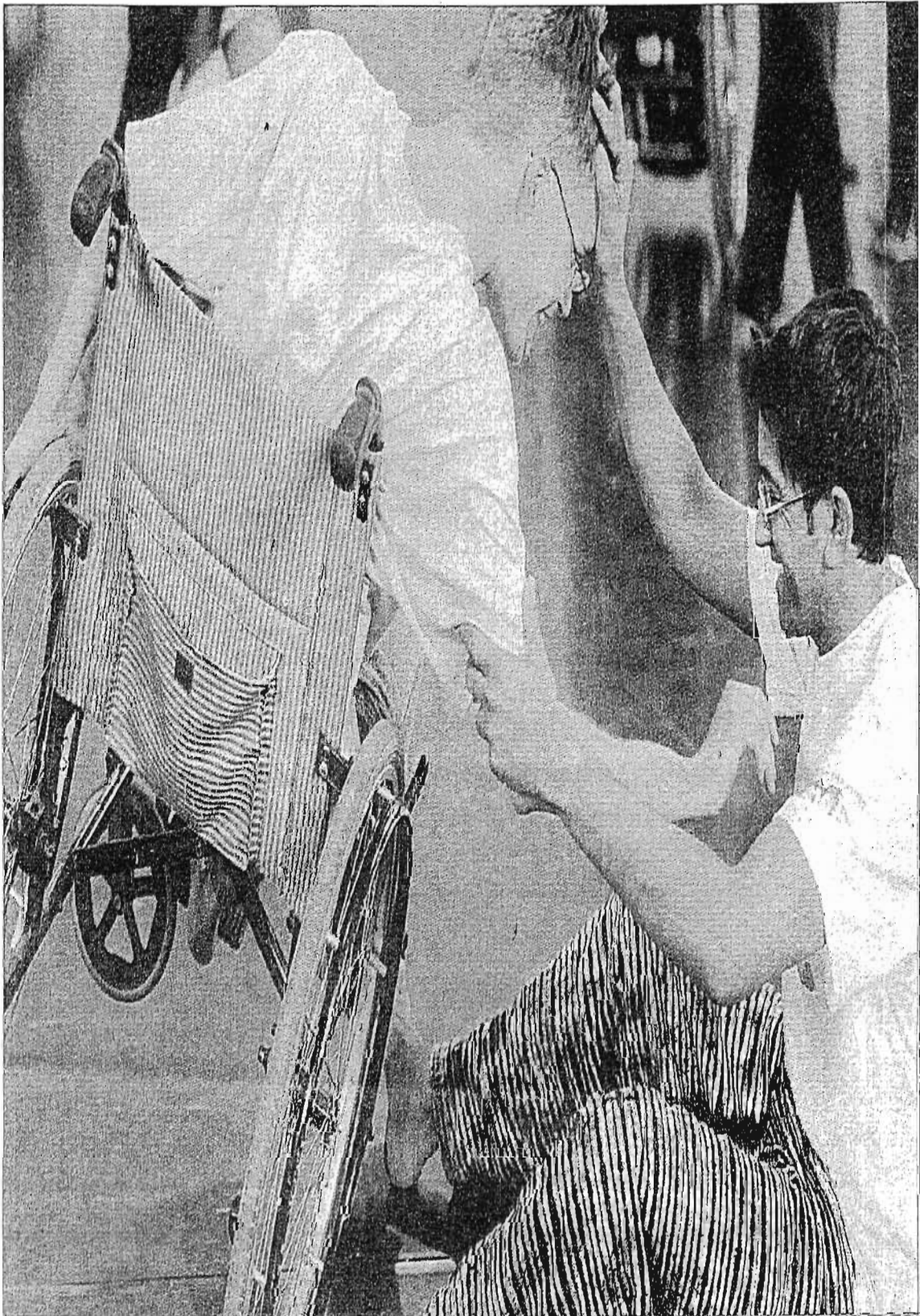
Appendix D

- Review of the Tshwarangano In Touch: Integrated dance project.

Sichel, Adrienne. 2000. Wheelchair wonders. The Star. 24 October.

*Differently abled performers display indomitable spirit and the power
as they express themselves creatively through touch*

Wheelchair wonders



In touch ... wheelchair dancer Malcolm Black, from Cape Town, and The Playhouse Company's dance and drama manager Gerard Samuel, having fun at The Dance Factory in the Tshwaragano skills development workshop

PICTURE: JOHN HOGG

**BY ADRIENNE
SICHEL**

The swish of wheelchair wheels and the crack of falling crutches textured the swoop of arabesques

It was hard not to cry last week as I observed the first phase of *Tshwaragano - In Touch: Integrated Dance Project* at the Dance Factory and the Adelaide Tambo School in White City, Soweto. The tears welled up not out of pity for the participants, but for the sheer beauty, the scaring honesty and the shining integrity of the movers and the movement.

This six-day workshop for the disabled and non-disabled, which ended on Saturday, was part of the British Council's Britain and South Africa Dancing project. The council's Tshwaragano partners are the National Arts Council, Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology, and Medunsa Organisation for Disabled Entrepreneurs (Mode).

The training component brought together 34 people of mixed abilities from nine provinces to share and learn skills under the expert tutelage of Adam Benjamin. This independent British teacher, choreographer and writer was co-founder in 1990 of the extra-

ordinary CandoCo. He was assisted by wheelchair dancer and landscape artist Tom Saint Louis, a former bricklayer, and professional dancer Louise Katerega.

The timing for this long overdue landmark event is perfect, given the advent, in December, of the African Decade of Disabled Persons. Major players in making this amazing initiative a reality were the British Council's arts manager Nomsa Manaka, who was originally

inspired by seeing CandoCo in 1995, and dance development consultant Jill Waterman, who co-ordinated the project.

The clue to the uniqueness of Tshwaragano is the word "integrated". Deaf dancers, professional dancers, ballroom dancers, choreographers, teachers, activists and administrators shared the floor with dancers in wheelchairs and on crutches. Whether the disabilities are caused by polio, spina bifida, political violence or other causes, everyone is equal in their power to express themselves. They take a liberating journey where listening to energies, gauging physical and

emotional connections underpins the poetry of touch.

The key is contact through improvisation, in carefully structured exercises, which trigger intrinsic personal and artistic expression in pathways of personal and interpersonal rhythms. The simplest action like a handshake or a push in the base of the back or the back of a wheelchair can spiral into choreography. Choreography which was presented at the official launch at Museum Afrika on Thursday evening, which amazes and inspires.

This performance piece was created in two afternoons. As Benjamin pointed out to the elated audience, "If we can do

this in six hours, what could we do with appropriate support and funding?"

The skills gained in the first two days were immediately implemented during visits to the Adelaide Tambo School, Johannesburg's Hope School and Ezibeleni in Katshehong. The South African trainees gained hands-on experience under the guidance of Katerega and Saint-Louis.

The local dance professionals included Gladys Agulhas, Themba Nkabinde, Moeketsi Koena, Caroline Mofokeng and Tiro Motlhalhedhi. They are involved in the audition phase, which ends today, for a professional Dance Umbrella 2001 work.

Tshwaragano may not have had the high profile of the Dance Theatre of Harlem and Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre outreach projects. Yet in so many ways it outstrips those undeniably historic happenings. This is particularly true of its national networking reach and its already proven ability to trigger, like wildfire, a whole new era in developmental, community and professional theatrical dance.

In touch indeed.

• Tshwaragano 2000 ends on Thursday with a Mode workshop

clung to ndlamu as a wider notion of dance experience was not readily acceptable. The fearful mistrust and suspicion stoked by apartheid education systems contained and encouraged introspection rather than collaborative exchanges. The engagement with dance as a free bodily expression of an individual's creativity and her mastery of movement was to be avoided and therefore is largely absent. The argument for a wider acceptance of notions of 'dance' (and its possibilities) is observed by dance administrator for the Western Cape's education department, Jennifer van Papendorp, who writes,

Because movement is common to all people, heedless of language and cultural barriers, and because dance is a communal activity, it is uniquely suited to social interaction and healing activities. Creative Dance activities can provide a vehicle for developing trust, enhancing inter-cultural understanding and celebrating both the uniqueness and the diversity of people... This art form can provide a vibrant and enjoyable means of learning across the curriculum (Van Papendorp. 1997: 5).

Dance as a learning area was mostly unheard of as a means to access subjects across the curriculum such as geography, mathematics and science. With the introduction of curriculum 2005, which contested teaching practices that were mostly teacher-centred and not learner/child centred came greater cross-curricula avenues and an integrated arts approach¹⁹. The role for the teacher prior to curriculum 2005 was her responsibility as custodian of all knowledge. The implicit notions of the teacher-centred approach - the 'emptiness' of the child went relatively unquestioned. For

¹⁹ In an attempt to develop a new ideology for school systems on a national level, discussions around the design, contents, skills and competences necessary for learners began in the early 1990s. The phased in implementation of various new curricula is to be fully operational by 2005. Integrated arts included dance and movement especially at early stages of learners' development.

Curriculum 2005 came to include dance as part of the wider learning area of arts and culture. In KwaZulu-Natal the subject cultural studies was the natural home under which children explored traditional dance forms and 'mainstream' (sic) performance dance. Dance *per se* was hitherto absent as an examinable subject for most historically black schools.