

Carnavalesque Therapeutic Arts And Self-Inquiry: African Holistic Dance And Music As Catalysts For Critical Thinking In Education And Personal Development

by

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*Under colonialism, Africans did not learn to appreciate themselves or their art form. All
of these debasing factors need to be dealt with while elevating traditional music and
dance to their proper place.*

(Green, 2010:218)

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Abstract

This article integrates the ‘(neuro) scientific’ with the ‘folkloric’ in Caribbean Carnavalesque Therapeutic Arts, and asserts that the innate African holistic Dances and Musical constructs can be effectively employed as healing interventions for self-inquiry or critical thinking in education and personal development. It thus explores the two critical thought modes - ratiocinating (logical intelligence) and feeling (emotional intelligence), through four junctures. First, a brief introduction sets the scene by examining the Ubuntu-gological genesis and magnitude of African holistic Dance and Music as Integrated Dance Movement Psychotherapy (IDMP), using the Trinidad Carnival as a cross-cultural point of reference. Section two takes stock of the small but growing international literature on African holistic Dance and Music expressly from a Multicultural Medical perspective, thereby underlining the need for this literary contribution to the socially interactive fields of African Therapeutic Arts. Section three is the main part of the chapter, presenting the conceptual framework for African holistic Dance and Music as well as the qualitative methods and the findings of scientific studies undertaken, that attempt to promote these healing arts as Ubuntu-gological agents of critical thinking within the educational context. Finally, the conclusion will clarify the need for further research and exploration of the healing wisdom of African Dance and Music in the post-colonial African Diasporic and Global North Atlantic education system.

Keywords: Carnavalesque Therapeutic Arts, critical thinking, Ubuntu-gology, African dance and music.

Introduction

The opening assertion by Ethnochoreographologist Doris Green provides the mandate for this article¹ which explicates the therapeutic essence and Ubuntu-gological educational technique of African holistic dance and traditional music, as catalysts of critical thinking in teaching and learning. Generally, dance and music (both more integrated than historically appreciated) have always dominated central roles in therapy and healing throughout the African continent. For example, within the West African religious practice of *bori*, or *agun*, women exhibiting signs and impairment associated with particular types of mental disorder, are taken to a shrine where they learn a ceremony involving song and dance for approximately three months. However, during such a ritual of reinvigoration, the process of learning is deemed as equally important for the women’s therapy as the ceremony itself (Some, 1998, Satcher and Pamies, 2006). This particular learning activity can be positioned within the context of intellect and imagination - each purposively qualified by the adjective ‘creative’.

And in Africa, as in the larger Global Majority Community, nothing short of the exercise conjointly of the ‘creative’ imagination and the ‘creative’ intellect can fare with the vibrant kaleidoscopic curiosities of existence that must be identified, investigated, understood and transmitted for living as praxis.

For the purpose of this article, such cognitive alchemy, if anything, signifies the kernel of critical thinking in which “all the disparate elements of reality, seemingly separate and disconnected, must be welded into discernable, manageable patterns of thought and comprehension, as well as structures making up the building blocks of the epistemological edifice that gives us meaning, understanding and the grasp and conquest of truth” (Nettleford, cited in Hall, 2006:72). In other words, critical thinking generates ‘counter-knowledge’. And ‘counter-knowledge’ connotes the marrying of two traditions of self-assertion – *Cogito, ergo sum* or I think, therefore I am (scientific intelligence) and *Senito, ergo sum* or I feel, therefore I am (emotional intelligence).

This article explores these two modes of ratiocinating and feeling, through four junctures. First, a brief introduction sets the scene by examining the Ubuntugological genesis and magnitude of African holistic Dance and Music as Integrated Dance Movement Psychotherapy (IDMP)ⁱⁱ, using the Trinidad Carnival as a cross-cultural point of reference. Section two takes stock of the small but growing international literature on African holistic Dance and Music expressly from a Multicultural Medical perspective, thereby underlining the need for this literary contribution to the socially interactive fields of African Therapeutic Arts. Section three is the main part of the chapter, presenting the conceptual framework for African holistic Dance and Music as well as the qualitative methods and the findings of scientific studies undertaken, that attempt to promote these healing arts as Ubuntugological agents of critical thinking within the educational context. Finally, the conclusion will clarify the need for further research and exploration of the healing wisdom in African Dance and Music within the post-colonial Caribbean and Global North Atlantic education system.

Caribbeanist IDMP is rooted in the sacred geometry of the Trinidad Carnival African Dance and Music as a sanative force and intercessory foundation of perfect self-expression. I initiated IDMP, as an investigator melding my knowledge of the somatic principles centred on indigenous wisdom such as the BaNtu central/southern African concept of NTUⁱⁱⁱ, which further underpinned my thirty-year practice of Caribbean Expressive Arts in Social Therapy, Modern Educational Dance and Euro-American Somatic Movement Education (SME)^{iv}. My aim being to place more importance on my clients’ personal phenomenological experience during their high-energy restorative sessions. This was done by employing the Carnival’s African holistic movement and music for catalysing insight in group dance mileus, plagued by incongruence and the irrevocable consequences of racism, which discourages cathartic social bonding.

Linguistically, the word ‘TU’ is a derivative of ‘NTU’ and ‘UBU-NTU’^v, both consanguinary ancestors and analogous to the more familiar magico-spiritualistic constructs, including *Kundalini* (Kemetic), *Aṣẹ* (Yorùbá), *Ch’i* (China/Igbo), *Prana* (India), *Ki* (Japan), *The Great Spirit* (Native American Indian), *Orgone energy* and *Élan vital* (Europe). These are all cross-cultural descriptions of a unifying life force energy that reaches every aspect of our universal existence, discounting bio-psycho-social shorelines, boundaries or cultural littorals. As a principle of coalescence, ‘TU’ therefore asserts a singular appreciation of the congruence of life, which also undergirds the ‘NTU’ principle of *force* and *matter*, *living body (soma)* and *mind*, being a composite truth. This integrated entity was formulated into the famous quantum relativistic equation $E=MC^2$ (C being the speed of light), by the quintessential physicist Albert Einstein, who strongly believed in nature’s innate harmony and that *force/matter* are first and foremost manifested Universal Intelligence or Creative Energy .

The force/matter, acknowledged in ‘TU’ as spirit-energy, befits the operative context of movement as a medium for dance, through which I, as the IDMP-intercessor both cognises and facilitates the phenomenological process, at the core of which, are the diagnostic constellations of: *Harmony, Balance, Authenticity, and Interconnectedness*. Moreover, the key orbicular phases of the IDMP intervention are: *Harmony, Awareness, Alignment, Actualisation, and Synthesis*, while its goal is to assist the clients in realigning their spirit-energies toward a more authentic and healthier process of being, within the ancient healing moralities of Nguzo Saba^{vi} and MAAT^{vii} (see Phillips, in Azibo, 1996; Karenga, 2006 and Mancini, 2004). IDMP is therefore a vehicle that verbes the clients toward achieving the state of awareness, where their intelligence of the universe, and all the elements and forces that structure their body, are in complete harmony with the elements and the forces that structure the body of the universe, so that, when one is in complete alignment or entrainment with the other, that is a manifestation of health (see Chopra, 1993; Lowen and Lowen, 1977).

Modern western scientific studies (see Bynum, 1999; Chopra, 2000; Koen et al, 2011; Lee et al, 2014; Mohanty et al, 2015; Pert, 1997) have confirmed today, what the ancient Africans asserted thousands of years before the dawn of the common era – that the human body is a kind of mansion of the past, a mansion of the ancestors, housing the influences and reminiscences which have prepared us and which demand to be accepted and transformed. In Africa, these ancestors were believed to not only include former living human relatives, they also included all of the natural elements that are anterior to them, that converged to materialise the human relatives. It is within this technical framework that we are to appreciate why Africans acknowledge stones, trees, minerals, earth, wind, water, animals, the planets, fire, etc., as ancestors, because all of these intangible entities, forces, sacred memories (DNA) or powers seamed to create the tangible human being, *à la* the state of Carl Jung’s African-inspired notion of ‘Synchronicity’ (see Burleson, 2005 and Meier, 2001), which is also signified in the quantum physics hypothesis of ‘Schrodinger’s Cat’^{viii} (Gerber, 2001, Herbert, 2011). All of these palpable elements are endowed with NTU energy and the ‘African Unconscious’, which underpin IDMP as praxis.

In pursuing the aim of the article to illuminate the therapeutic architecture of IDMP, the focus must now turn to the epiphenomena of my dance mindscape, which was spawned in the African Diaspora branded historically as 'Plantation America'. These colonies were forged in conquest, and plagued with the memory of slavery, along with socio-political didactic and racial dynamics, which have since been extended to the Black British cultural landscape. It is also in 'Plantation America' that the ancestral guardians of my evolution as a progeny of African holistic dance or what is now opportunistically misnamed 'Black Dance' (and erroneously designated 'ethnic dance' in the North Atlantic), began their life-safari. Their influence and eventual exodus from what was a brutalised, ravaged, and for that justification an endemically rebellious post-colonial estate, provides the springboard at this juncture, for my initiation into the paramedical framework of IDMP, the contextual approach to the three SME principles of Effort, Space and Group Relationship, and eventually the melded IDMP model under review.



Picture 1. Terry Brathwaite IDMP Intercessor in Almaty, Kazakhstan.
Exploring the three SME principles - Effort, Space and Group Circle Relationship'

The Caribbean Ambiguity Syndrome: Mutilations from the Conquest

From our introductory deliberations we see that compliant with the ‘TU’ principle, a harmonious relationship denotes complementary roles that are effected with the criteria of ‘mutual intentionality’ (*à la* ‘Synchronicity’/‘Schrodinger’s Cat’). Within this ‘mutual intentionality’ the laws of MAAT determine that both the conscious and unconscious aspects of the relationship process must be engaged, so that once such ‘mutual intentionality’ is extant, an automatic role reversal becomes manifest. It is then through this role reversal that the actors within the relationships reciprocally recognise (confirm) the other as a person (Karenga, 2006). The result of this act is a current of sincerity, a flow of authenticity which engenders a shared acceptance that seems to further affect a blissful or even sensual mood, as is evident in the theatre of spontaneity of the IDMP Carnavalesque free association interactivities, and the Kazakh holistic dance group circles featured in picture 1 above.

However, such ‘mutual intentionality’ does not happen in the discordant relationship between the roles of the coloniser and the colonised in ‘Plantation America’. And particularly in the case of the Caribbean’s coloniser-colonised affiliation induced by the African Holocaust five hundred years ago, there has never been any ‘reciprocity’, since the European coloniser’s intentions are always ‘unilateral’. Moreover, as in any colonisation act, it is the coloniser who chooses the colonised and decides what is appropriate for the colonised. David Cameron, the serving Prime Minister of the United Kingdom (UK) - coloniser of 13 English-speaking Caribbean islands which are either formally under British rule or still British Dependent Territories - affirmed this verity during his last state visit to Jamaica during 2015. In his address to the nation’s parliament on the issue of ‘Slavery and Reparations’ he bluntly opined:

“That the Caribbean has emerged from the long shadow it cast is testament to the resilience and spirit of its people. I acknowledge that these wounds run very deep indeed. But I do hope that, as friends who have gone through so much together since those darkest of times, we can move on from this painful legacy and continue to build for the future.”

(Cameron, 2015 [online])

Here, Caribbean critical thinking on the basis of our peculiar history exposes such disjunctions between the coloniser and the colonised becoming possible, because colonisation is also a psychosomatic condition grounded in earlier forms of social cognisance, that are characteristic of both the coloniser and the colonised. Thus, in the game of submission and power, which represents a certain cultural intransience and carries an unambiguous ‘tribal’ baggage, the coloniser is predisposed to calculatingly foisting on the colonised socio-cultural values, politico-economic rhetoric and medico-legal dogma, as Absolute Truth (see Figusch, 2006 and Nandy, 2014).

This is accomplished by the coloniser adopting a modern European '90 degree angle world-view' to interpret/adjudicate on the more ancient African '360 degree life-view' of the colonised. The following anecdote entitled *Little Johnny* (Author unknown), about a mentally-challenged African boy (according to the European psychologists) subtly clarifies this point:

Johnny goes to modelling class in his school for special children and he gets his piece of putty and he's modelling it. He takes a little lump of putty and goes to a corner of the room and he's playing with it. The teacher comes up to him and says, "Hi, Johnny." And Johnny says, "Hi." And teacher says, "What's that you've got in your hand?" And Johnny says, "This is a lump of cow dung." The teacher asks, "What are you making out of it?" He says, "I'm making a teacher." The teacher thought, "Little Johnny has regressed." So she calls out to the principal, who was passing by the door at that moment, and says, "Johnny has regressed." So the principal goes up to Johnny and say, "Hi son." And Johnny says, "Hi." And the principal says, "What do you have in your hand?" And he says, "A lump of cow dung." "What are you making out of it?" And he says, "A principal." The principal thinks that this is a case for the school psychologist. "Send for the psychologist!" The psychologist is a clever guy. He goes up and says. "Hi." And Johnny says, "Hi." And the psychologist says, "I know what you've got in your hand." "What?" "A lump of cow dung." Johnny says, "Right." "And I know what you're making out of it." "What?" "You're making a psychologist." "Wrong. Not enough cow dung!" And they called him mentally retarded!

Little Johnny's appropriate (albeit droll) response to the psychologist denotes the gist of a Caliban/African renaissance ratiocination. Such is the inimitable process of intellection which is redefining the challenge to the European psychotherapeutic episteme that 'governs' through the imposition of a coloniser's language, religion and formal intellectual systems, for perceiving the mindscape both in 'Plantation America' and the Black British-American experience, and acting (or in the case of IDMP, dancing and making music) in it. Notwithstanding, Little Johnny's diagnosis as a 'special needs child' also implies the permanent status of the colonised in the eyes of the coloniser. As a result, the colonised of the Caribbean in 'Plantation America' and the Black British-American experience, have been adversely affected by a Post-traumatic Slave Syndrome of ambiguity or double identity, which includes the survival strategy of volunteered surrender by way of co-optation, or denial of their African Heritage (see Leary, 2005). In other words, while the colonised are navigating the shadowy consequences of oppression, contrariwise, they yearn to be colonisers – colonisers of themselves and/or colonisers amongst themselves.

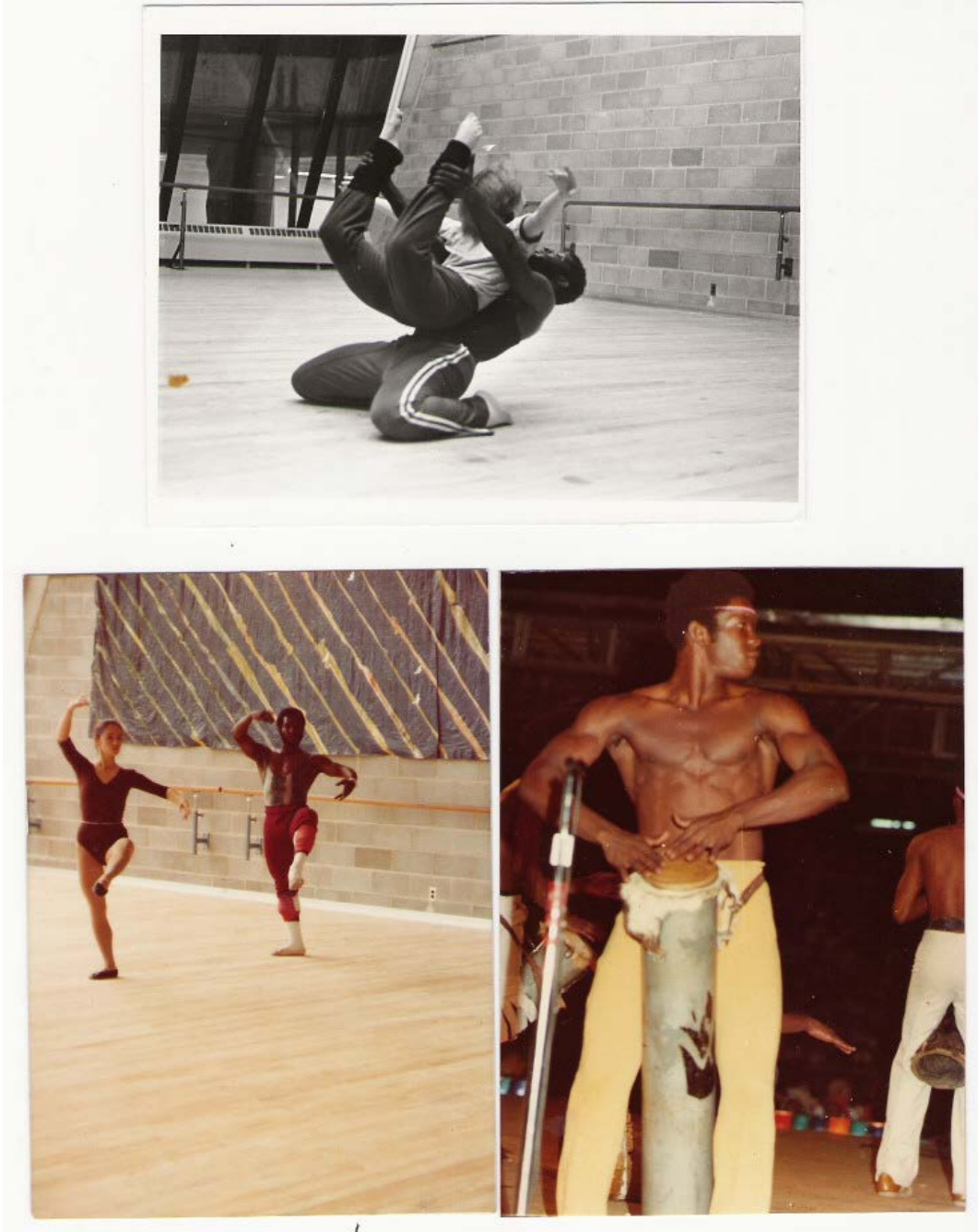
Moreover, they are obsessed with that ritual of socio-cultural cannibalism which accounts for the tradition of assimilating the coloniser and espousing his culture and manners on a wholesale basis. This negation of personal sovereignty is creatively signified in the poetry of the late Jamaican Griot Dr. Louise Bennett, who shares the story of a Jamaican elder reprimanding a younger relative, for not rejecting his Jamaican-ness during his sojourn overseas:

Mi so glad fi si yu come back, bwoy, but lawd yu let mi dung,
Mi shame a yu so till mi proud dis drop a grung
Yu mean sey yu go a merica an spen six whole months dey
And come back not a piece better dan how yu did go wey!
Bwoy yu nuh shame is so yu come,
Not even a lickle language, bwoy
Not even lickle twang!

(cited in Hickling, 2007:5)

In the Black African culture of the Caribbean, where there are no scientific distinctions between the natural and the supernatural (i.e. the living commune with ancestral spirits, and those with the opposite knowledge routinely journey to other worlds of the multiverse), it is the Babaaláwo, Iyalawo or Iyanifa who ‘rules’ with his/her stories, rituals of alchemy and ancient initiations. The colonised cannot therefore be seen to be simply exchanging roles with the coloniser that once held it in a state of suppression, by abdicating its cultural certitude to then operate as a cultural minority according to which, everything originating from the application of creative imagination – philology, spirituality or the creative arts – is regarded as less than first-class by those who are the custodians of the colonisers (Nettleford, 1978).

Yet, such are the epiphenomenal dynamics that have also provided the momentum for me as a Holistic Dance Intercessor, to rely on the proven inner strength of African holistic dance and music for self-determination and intrinsic veracity. Like a ‘desert flower’ of African Diasporic fortitude springing upwards in the coloniser’s terra firma, the innovation of the multi-focal IDMP stands fearlessly abreast the varied strategies of survival the colonised ancestors were emboldened to employ in their trans-generational fight against labour exploitation, which has characterised interpersonal relationships from slavery through indentureship to modern industrial/factory wage earning, both in the Caribbean and in the Global North Atlantic. The study of that history has undoubtedly led to the nature of critical thinking (Caliban reasoning) auditing these well-grounded manoeuvres, which included armed resistance, polemical self-assertion and cultural action, through energetic activity in different spurs of the Arts.



Picture 2. Spurs of Caribbean Dance & Music-Modern Dance, Classical Ballet and African Drumming



Picture 3: A progeny of Carnival Live Arts: Young Indian Dancer

For the purpose of this article, we can now give prominence amongst the performing arts to the rich continuities of African holistic dance and music located in the Brazilian Candomblé, Cuban Santería, Guyana's Cumfa, Haiti's Vodun, Jamaica's Kumina, Trinidad (Yoruba) Shango and the Caribbean's and South American creolised Festival Live Arts, including the Trinidad/Rio Carnivals and Barbados Crop Over Fiesta. These creative performance pursuits are part of the ancient cultural lineage of Africa's richly textured, multi-layered ilk of arts, which have travelled with and emotionally purified the first Africans (and their progenies) on their maiden voyages out of the continent thousands of years ago (Nettleford in Hall, 2006).



Picture 4: The 20th century's only percussion instrument invention - The Steel pan

Today, in the coloniser's UK for example, there are also various forms of chain dances which precede the ancient paganistic African-derived Maypole and the Morris Dance rituals,^{ix} with the earliest chain dance known being seen in a rock carving in a valley northeast of Luxor in Africa's Upper Egypt, dating from around 3,400 BC. That particular carving shows seven girls holding hands, with every two looking at each other (Rippon, 1993).



Black-faced Morris Dancers in the UK

The intrinsic cathartic essence of these African holistic group dances which underlie IDMP are evident today in psychodramatic rituals such as the Egyptian Zar Dance, which is still practised in the Nile Valley. Egyptian Psychiatrist Mervat Nasser, (1987 [online]) describes the actual routine as one that

“Involves the gathering of a group of women who are believed to be possessed by spirits. The gathering is headed by a woman who acts as a leader and is called ‘Kodia’. The Zar ceremony starts off with traditional music and dance, performed by a hired group of dancers, who then urge the women patients to take part in the dance until they reach a point of exhaustion. The Kodia then approaches each individually and asks the devil inside her to leave his victim [see also *Mark 1:21-28*]. The Zar cult has some similarity with the western concept of group psychotherapy. It is a group setting based on the notion of equal participation of the group members. It also provides a milieu for the expression of feelings through dance.”

This exploration of the feelings, images, sensations and intuitions of the group dancers involved in the therapeutic Zar dance now provides a suitable springboard to acknowledge the contextual approach of employing IDMP to facilitate critical thinking in education.

Cogito, ergo sum. Senito, ergo sum: IDMP as Praxis in Education

The African holistic dances and music of the Caribbean mentioned earlier are comparable to the Zar ritual in that they all involve exertive, synchronised movement to invigorating cadences, thereby representing an effective group bonding activity (see Bronwyn, et al, 2015). They also encompass a distinctive set of movement characteristics that combine jumping, spreading, light effort, upward, vertical movements, which Shafir et al (2013) affirm enhance a specific emotion – happiness. Finally, these African holistic dances all epitomise a complex intervention, which provide an appropriate challenge for service users in acute mental health settings, while contributing to a sense of biopsychosocial integration, which can even extended to the realm of occupational therapy (Frogett and Little, 2010).

Transferred to the mindscapes that engage with the school curriculum, IDMP becomes the driving force of critical thinking. For as Nettleford (cited in Hall, 2006: 73) eloquently reminds us, “thinking with our hearts and feeling with our heads, sequentially and simultaneously, in the way one is able to see the music and hear the dance, is the source of wisdom for Caribbean society with its multi-layered, multifaceted landscapes of reason, juxtaposed to intertextualised intuition or the scientists’ sense of keen observation, systematic storage and miraculous hunch, triggering retrieval and discovery with the artist’s intuition, third eye and broken logic.” Correspondingly, employing the Caliban ratiocinating (*cogito, ergo sum*) and feeling (*senito, ergo sum*) inherent to African holistic dance and music as critical thinking interventions in education, indorses artistic imaging is as scientific as empirically based accounts can be imaginative. For example, what a young Caribbean schoolchild dancing an Indian Mas’ or playing the steelpan represents on the Kiddies Carnival stage is a result of observation and critical analysis through distillation (i.e. rejection and assimilation), with the final representation being an exposition of data observed and structured into a meaningful creative whole called a ‘journey’ through art, not just an entertaining performance or a destination.

On a recent visit to Trinidad, I was fortunate to witness - in veneration - the concurrence of these supposedly two different modes of ratiocinating and feeling in effect, during one of the Kiddies Carnival Live Arts parades organised for the nation’s schoolchildren. Featuring a mobile fusion of African holistic dance, music and visual arts, what became most apparent from the architecture of the festive experience was the in-built critical thinking and the underlying processes which prepare the product of any profound learning system. As the children and their chaperons danced in ‘free association’, their capacity to cope with the sophistication of the involvedness of self-inquiry which inheres in the dynamic intertextuality of the Carnavalesque Therapeutic Arts, in turn tasked both chaperon/teacher and reveller/student, to a productive and rewarding coexistence within the learning process. Both active partakers were grasping the lived knowledge - textured, intertextual, complex, diverse and defiant of linear exploration or representation – informed by the healing wisdom of the African-inspired Carnival Live Arts.

Moreover, looking at the young school children playing the steel pan from memory without stands or music sheets, was the musical equivalent of my seeing high-wire trapeze artistes perform without a safety net, or any recourse to anything apart from their own trust in each other. For the steelpannists, there were no contingency plans apart from their forensic knowledge of the music within – a Caliban critical thinking ‘journey’.



Picture 5. Carnival Pan-tastic!: A Caliban critical thinking ‘journey’.

Transcending national, social and disciplinary boundaries, employing IDMP in education is therefore the empathetic use of a whole array of these African dance cultures and naturalistic movement vocabularies. As a creative intervention IDMP is not thought to ‘cure’ in the modern Western sense of prophylaxis and the immune reaction, but rather seeks to maintain or re-establish within the body, the balance of cosmic forces, without which, health and vigour are unobtainable (Highfield, 2007). Driven by polyrhythmic music, IDMP therefore embodies a complexity of symbols, metaphysical meanings, and an assemblage of imagery celebrating the synchronicity of life as it is lived.

The Historical Significance of IDMP

Modern scholars agree that humanity originated in Africa, where generations upon generations of prehistoric tribes survived with non-verbal modes of communication - animal-like throaty sounds, movement gestures, sketches - to exchange their ideas before they became dependent on a single prehistoric African mother tongue/verbal dialect (Derbyshire, 2011). Since then, we have become an eclectic human race collectively migrating and evolving under one sky. However, non-verbal forms of communication such as dance continue to play an important part of all aspects of social life, as the 'story-telling vehicles' which furnish the necessary background perspective to enable the onlooker to fully appreciate the history and culture of a people. For example, during the Caribbean Live Arts Festivals of the multicultural Commonwealth Caribbean, the visible movements of the body (or 'dancing the body music') with a dramatic gist, arouses the spectators' mass participation in action, reaction, inner-conflict resolution, harmonising of the complete personality, and eventual social restorative justice. Thus, rather than use the foreign expressive arts concepts of their former 'colonial landlords' as universal instruments to help analyse and solve their problems, or improve their mode of life, these colonised and post-colonial communities re-shaped and indigenised such dance and movement languages to retain a deeper meaning that was inexpressible verbally, but extremely rich in metaphor, mythology and imagery. In other words, to understand Caribbean culture, one must first get to know its people and experience their story, not 'his-story'.

How Does IDMP Work?

Using as its foundation the power of such symbology, colour, and voluntary human interaction in the African-Egyptian-Caribbean Live Arts Festivals, IDMP complements the creative art of dance, with polyrhythmic music, song, drama, visual spectacle, poetry and play in a truly inimitable manner. This is because the diverse, visible patterns of dance in IDMP are dictated by the client's choice of corresponding arts forms, that are rudimentary to the African socio-dramas which take place in the villages, and which provide an opportunity for participants and spectators to mobilise their feelings of comfort or discomfort with improvisational authentic movements, that signify a spontaneous, holistic emanation of their daily lives.

Moreover, on the African continent, the music is much older than the dance, and before a dance can be created, an event (whether positive or negative) must happen that the people choose to remember. The dance movements are then set to the existing music of the milieu. Therefore as an effective therapeutic itinerary embodying the dance between 'joy' and 'pain', IDMP furthers the emotional/physical integration of an individual and/or group, by also paying particular attention to the place which transgenerational oral lore plays in their lives.

The IDMP-intercessor therefore serves as a catalyst, employing techniques of storytelling and movement diversity, which speak directly to the development of survival adaptations (either comfortable or uncomfortable), that are deemed necessary for enduring the ongoing emotional damages suffered in people's past and present experiences. Finally, IDMP addresses how these adaptations continue to be reflected and can be modified in those people's psychosocial behaviours, for an optimistic outcome to their daily 'stories'. Through IDMP, clients are therefore able to interact art with worldview by expressing their inner emotions as 'OUR-story', via indigenous and indigenised body language. Furthermore, regardless of ability or disability, colour, creed, race, sex/sexual preference, age or national origin, each client is free to invite the IDMP-Intercessor to 'come live with me', one day at a time.

How does IDMP work for arts workers/community school groups?

Aim:

- To encourage community school group dance members to critically appraise their personal unquestioned beliefs or worldview, so as to better understand their own views/feelings and those of others with regard to cultures in and outside the world around them.

Learning Objectives:

- To transform authentic movement into a springtime symbol and a mode of communicating inter-racial understanding, using the ancient African-Egyptian legend of the Maypole dance which represents renewed life and fertility both transgenerationally and cross-culturally.
- To involve the community school group children in applying body forces, tensions, qualitative space awareness, time and positive attitudinal preparation, in order to create a work of art - in this case, a dance driven by polyrhythms.
- To encourage a non-competitive, relaxing atmosphere which allows the community school group children an opportunity to unwind and tell their story as inspired by their diverse experiences, while strengthening their ability for greater expressiveness, self-confidence, deeper breathing, relaxation and social functioning.

Structure: Whole group, if possible in a team of six or ten during any one session.

Time: 5 – 10 minutes per group dance session.

Equipment: Optional – open-air general space or indoor studio

Materials: A round white pole about 10 feet high and 5 inches in diameter is rested in the ground and supported on its own or by two short persons, on the ground. To the top are attached coloured half-inch ribbons as streamers about 15 feet in length. Assorted percussions are used to accompany the dancers during each session. Blindfolds are provided for three of the dancers if the group includes six members, and five of the dancers if the group is one of ten members.



Picture 6. School children dancing the Maypole in Jamaica

Methods: Each coloured ribbon on the Maypole represents a different racial culture e.g. Romanian Gypsies, Caribbean Immigrants, Jews, Irish people, Pakistanis, Africans, Latin Americans, Tibetans, North American Native Indians, Palestinians etc. It is important to note that the intention here is not to imitate, or pretend to be nationals of the various cultures. Instead, it is to try and think as they may have had to think, to show initiative and resourcefulness as they were forced to do, to open the minds of the community groups to another way of life and, most importantly, to combine fun with learning.

Preamble: The Pharaonic Egyptians created the obelisk in which they believed that the spirit of their Sun god, Kheyera or Ra, resided. Thus the whole custom of the Maypole celebration can be traced to ancient spring fertility and prosperity festivals in North Africa, with the pole symbolising the male spirit of nature, while the wreaths and multi-coloured streamers signify that of the female.

Subsequently, the Maypole rites have been adopted and performed in Asia and Europe, and later on transplanted around the rest of the world. It was initiated as a European dance in Trinidad by the Spanish colonials, then endorsed by the French, and finally the British plantation owners, who discouraged their slaves from engaging in any home-grown performing arts retained from their African heritage. Although done mainly by children, it is still indulged in on special occasions by adults. The Maypole dance is mainly seen during the Trinidad Carnival season. This is ironic, because while the Africans were prevented from dancing, drumming, or singing in their native languages, yet allowed to indigenise the Maypole dance, little did the British colonials know then that the majority of their slaves were descendants of the Yoruba tribe in West Africa, which traced its history back to the exiled Baladi Egyptians, who in turn introduced the Maypole (obelisk) rituals and the original Carnival 'Passion' festivals to the world. In keeping with the spiral nature of the Maypole dance, here was an apt situation of 'what goes around, comes around' and we may now use this lesson to fulfil the main aim and objectives of this dance exercise as highlighted above.

To Do:

Circle - A group of six or ten young male and female dancers are chosen, and a circle is formed around the Maypole. Such a wide formation normally increases opportunity for eye contact and enhances the feeling of group unity, since the power of the world works in cycles like a Mandala (healing circle).

Music - The dance is accompanied by free-style percussion playing and singing.

Primary Movement Format - The loose end of each streamer is held by a female or male child who is positioned in the circle, perhaps five or six feet from the base of the pole. Half of the dancers face one direction in one circle, while the others face the opposite way in another circle slightly apart. As the music plays the participants all dance around the pole, alternating their moving in and out to the left or right, and then bending to move forward under the next person's ribbon. The ribbons are thus woven one over the other. The effect derived around the pole from the top downwards is that of a completed diamond shape. The dance is continued until the ribbons in the hands are so short that the dancers are unable to move in the space between their circle and the pole. The steps are: hop left (one two); hop right (one-two); hop forward (one-two) and then hop left (one-two) and so on.

Secondary Movement Format – Once the dance has been visualised and experienced by all without blindfolds, in the case of the group of six, three members are now blindfolded and they are placed in between the three whose eyes are uncovered. If a group of ten children are involved, five members will be blindfolded, and the same arrangement around the Maypole is adopted. Each blindfolded member will choose a racial culture as his/her own, with the ribbon representing that choice.

The members who are not blindfolded will also choose, but those three or five (as the case may be) must agree to represent one dominant racial culture with their streams of ribbons. Although all the participants will move into the traditional spatial formations around the pole, the volunteers who are blindfolded will be able to participate by following the guide of the others through touch, sound, and the interconnecting rhythmic flow of the dance movements.

Learning Outcome(s)/Comments

The communicative intention here is to build a deeper sense of trust - the golden key to cross-cultural human relationships – while experiencing uncertainty in a strange world of ‘darkness’ (blindfolded). The group members should be allowed to alternate the blindfolding activity as they see fit, so that everyone is given the opportunity to experience and tell the story of their personal dance between ‘joy’ and ‘pain’ in a world outside their own comfort zone of unquestioned beliefs.

Conclusion

However, during the Caribbean’s post-Federation years, the region’s colonised ‘noble savages’ have sought to militate against the coloniser-imposed hurdles to retaining and maintaining a human equilibrium, within a New World Order that had developed in an asymmetrical fashion to Africa and the African Diaspora’s decided handicap. As the eminent Trinidadian and intellectual strategist C.L.R. James (in Ramdin, 1982) asserted, West Indians always reach a certain personally-defined stage where, as ‘foreign-natives’, they seek to make a complete transformation. Therefore, in view of the countless generations of African-cum-Caliban slaves who survived the Middle Passage hostility, such a metamorphosis would have been instigated in Africa and continued once they came into the Caribbean and went straight into that modern industry – the sugar plantation – where they realised that to be a slave was the result of them being ‘black’. James (ibid.) avers that the colonised saw the ‘white wo/man’ was not a slave. And therefore, not being accustomed to that kind of slavery in Africa, one dominant fact in the history of the West Indies remained crystal clear in their minds - the desire for freedom (physical and mentally). Sometimes expressed, sometimes unexpressed, that desire for liberty or ridding themselves of the particular baggage which is still today the special inheritance of the melanated skin in the Caribbean and the Global North Atlantic, has always been there. This is an African renaissance episteme of the West Indian James emphasised that one needed to know, otherwise one would not know the West Indian at all.

Notes

¹ Dedicated to Mrs. Dawn Allison Brathwaite (celebrating her pearl wedding anniversary, 2016).

² IDMP was pioneered in the Caribbean, Europe, Asia and North America by the author. It is rooted in the episteme of the 'Trinidad Carnavalesque Social Theatre & Ethnopsychotherapy of the Oppressed', which is underpinned by the philosophies of 'African-centred Psychology' (Akbar, Boal, Bynum, Leary, Sumner, 2012), 'Psychology of Differentness' (Fanon 1961,1967; Horney, 1937 and Sanchez, 1932), and African-Caribbean historiography (Asante, Ben-Jochannan, Davidson, Diop, Goveia, Garvey, Karenga, Krishnamurti,, James, Nettleford, Obenga, Padmore, Rodney, Rogers, Van Sertima and Williams). As a cross-cultural expressive arts therapy intervention IDMP purposively employs a mixture of creative arts in combination with social bonding dance movement activities during treatment. Its aim is to foster awareness, encourage emotional growth, and enhance relationships with others, whilst also offering a unique freedom of self-expression, improvisational (physical) theatre and multi-modal creativity for physically/mentally/emotionally-challenged persons. IDMP is thus actuated on wholistic ethnopsychological tools of insight, of knowing the time-tested sagacity passed on by the wise African solons, whose intention was to preserve the 'Reciprocity Principle' in our transgenerational memory, so that the self-healing power - our Aṣẹ - can be intensified within the sociodrama of our Carnavalesque life, where art imitates nature and everyone is a revolutionary 'spec-actor' (see Boal 1979, 1998 and Brathwaite 2009). Notably, as an inherently sociodramatic mode of Live Arts, the world-renowned Trinidad Carnival, (upon which IDMP is predicated) is the only creative channel via which the cerebrally-enslaved tenants of the Caribbean archipelago could audaciously express their inner feelings publicly with self-determination, while progressively journeying from exteriority to interiority and gaining 'consciousness' of their humanity, without ostracism from their former colonial landlords (see Brathwaite 1997, 1998, 2009 and 2009). Academic training in IDMP was inaugurated and directed by the second author, as a flagship post-graduate Master of Science (MSc) Degree Programme at the University of Worcester, UK in 2010.

³ For the BaNtus, NTU (pronounced "in-too"), is the universal force that constitutes entirety. The BaNtu cannot distinguish anything as being separate and apart from its NTU. Thus NTU is that force/energy (not substance) which nurtures everything. Notably, the BaNtus view reality as a force in preference to a substance, which is a significant distinction in the construction of healing as energy and suggests dynamism and interaction rather than passivity and objectification (see Phillips, in Azibo, 1996).

⁴ Inspired by Laban Movement Analysis, the Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen's Body-Mind Centring (2014), Mary Whitehouse's Authentic Movement (Adler, 2002; Foster, 2004), Katherine Dunham's Ethnochoreology/African-American Modern Dance (Aschenbenner, 2002 and Haskins 1982), and particularly Dunham's mentee Emile Conrad (2007), whose explorations of her bio-lineage through the dynamism of the Dunham 'Black dance' technique, and complex rhythmic undercurrents intrinsic to Afro-Caribbean Haitian rituals and masquerades, spawned her Continuum hypothesis. Upon Conrad's return to North America, Continuum was consequently developed as an African- inspired SME system embracing the essential elements of breath, sound, movement, sensation and pleasure, as a counterpoise to the fixed Eurocentric dance routines accentuating department or overstated exercises, that maintained prefigured structures, without emotional release or destabilisation of the body's habit of being bound to one plane of being.

⁵ The African principle of Ubuntu ("I am because we are") is also the mind-body connection prototype to the modern Christian Eucharist doctrine of Consubstantiation i.e. the belief that the body and blood of Jesus Christ coexist in the bread and wine consecrated at Communion, with the natural elements of which the bread and wine are made.

⁶ The *Nguzo Saba*, denotes the Seven Principles of the African Value System of *Kawaida* - a Swahili word signifying "tradition" or "reason," (pronounced *ka-wa-EE-da*). This philosophy is a synthesis of nationalist, pan-Africanist, and socialist ideologies created and defined by Professor Maulana Karenga, African-American scholar of Maatian ethical thought, and pioneer of the all-embracing celebratory holiday *Kwanzaa*, during the height of that black pride and self-awareness drive, which distinguished the Black Power crusade in 1966. Dr. Karenga believed that African/African Diasporic people needed a transformation of consciousness before they could prepare a political struggle to galvanise themselves. He averred that the repossession of an African value system and the creation of *Kwanzaa*, underpinned by the *Nguzo Saba* (seven principles) of *umoja* (unity), *kujichagulia* (self-determination), *ujima* (collective work and responsibility), *ujamaa* (cooperative economics), *nia* (purpose), *kuumba* (creativity), and *imani* (faith), would provide the stimulus to inspire, fortify, and cultivate the African/African Diasporic struggle against racism (Karenga 2006, 1997).

⁷ Maat is both a Goddess and a concept. As a Goddess she is portrayed with the Maat feather on her head, and an Ankh cross (symbol of life) on her lap. She is also the daughter of the sun god Ra, his mother, his food and food of all the gods/deities. As a concept, the principals of Maat (Truth, Justice, Order, Righteousness, and Balance) are based on the cosmic harmony, while being consistent with the fundamental magico-religious ideas of ancient Kemet. These Kemetic concepts propose that from an African-life view, wo/man-kind is much more than bones, flesh, proteins and cells, because we are interconnected to all life across space and time, in dynamic equilibrium with a universe of energy signifying the spirit realm.

Thus free associations/social bonding and healing are sustained through the ewers of healthy relationships, relationships that are in harmony with the 42 Laws of Maat in the great Kemetic tradition. Notably the 10 commandments of the African-Egyptian Moses are essentially 10 precepts appropriated from the 42 Laws of Maat (Monderson, 2012 and Karenga, 2006).

⁸ Carl Jung's concept of 'Synchronicity' suggests that our Cartesian design of reality (what is logical/tangible) includes a principle of acausal connection (what is illogical/intangible or not governed by laws of cause and effect), that manifests itself most visibly in the form of consequential concurrences (Jung, 1973). Jung's hypothesis is quite comparable to the search for that mythical cat - 'Schrodinger's Cat' - a thought experiment, sometimes described as a 'paradox', concocted by Austrian physicist Erwin Schrödinger in 1935 (see Gribbin, 2011). The experiment illustrates what he viewed as the problem of the Copenhagen interpretation of quantum mechanics applied to everyday entities. The scene features a cat that may be synchronously both alive and dead. This condition known as a quantum superposition, is as a result of being linked to a random subatomic event that may or may not occur, thereby creating a paradox or perplexity. Hence, in the sphere of quantum reality, where the laws of physics that are familiar from the everyday world no longer work, the invoking of 'Schrodinger's Cat' is also analogous to the accepted fundamental realities of the African life view. In the Yoruba philosophy for instance, the Spirit of *Esu* or *Elegbara* - the divine trickster, messenger and gatekeeper of the *Aṣẹ* or life force with which Oludumare/God created the Universe - is invoked to make the paradoxes and synchronicities between the quantum world and the everyday world very clear. Notably, *Elegbara* among the Yoruba also became the messenger angel *Gabri-El* (word reversal) in the Western Biblical literature. Moreover, when the Muslims say "Allah Akbar (Allah is great, most powerful)", they are actually invoking the old African deity *Esu/Elegbara* - guardian of the *Aṣẹ* or living force, which 'entangles' the intangible ancestors with the tangible human beings.

⁹ Steelpans (also known as steel drums or pans, and sometimes, collectively with other musicians, as a steel band or orchestra) is a musical instrument originating from Trinidad and Tobago. Steel panmusicians are called pannists.

¹⁰ Stemmed from Moorish or Morisco - a form of chain dancing peculiar to the Moors, and brought to England from Spain around 1360AD by John of Gaunt (brother of Edward, 'the Black Prince'). Appropriated from the Moors in North Africa, where today one can still see similarities of the popular Cotswold Morris dances in countries like Tunisia, this celebration type ritual was originally a pantomime of war performed on May Day. It was accompanied by a solitary musician playing a flute, an Egyptian derived bagpipe, a violin, an accordion or a Tabor, and introduced with hundreds of performers depicting the struggle of the Moors and Christianity. In executing the modern English version of the Morris dance, the participants often paint their faces black, a feature which the audience relatively compared to the dark-skinned Moors who once ruled Europe for 700 years. (See Forrest, 1999).

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