

Transcript  
 dancedance/RE♦VOLUTION

Lliane Loots	South Africans are a nation who dance. [Music]
	And revolutions need beauty [Music]
	Dance makes you joyful. [Music]
Lorin Sookool	We don't speak, we move. [Music]
Oscar Buthelezi	I think that's what's special about dance, it's where we actually meet. When you fuse music and dance you actually heal yourself. And heal your soul. [Music]
Lliane Loots	I always think if you're given one moment to make a work and it's like we're given a moment to put a song into the universe, what are we gonna say? [Wind] [Music]
Oscar Buthelezi	Everyone is a dancer in the world. Whenever you move you are actually dancing. [Street Sounds] [Music]
Lliane Loots	Dance is dangerous. Race sits on the skin; gender sits on the skin; class sits on the skin. [Music]
Mzokuthula Gasa	I remember at a young age having to sleep at the bus station. It was very difficult growing up in the township. And dancewise, having to go to dance was very difficult itself. The township where I grew up it was full of violence. It was during the times of Apartheid Regime where people managed to divide people.
Gregory Maqoma	I still have a memory of my own childhood when I was 5 or 6 years old. [Street Sounds]  I can still smell you know, the teargas...I can still see [Gun Shot]  the chaos that was happening around me. In high school in Soweto, we had to, you know, during the state of emergency [Sound of Fire Burning and Siren]  we were learning with a white man holding a gun by the door — just making sure that we don't cause any trouble. To take dance as a profession was unknown during my time, and it was really in the 80s that time, and were still very much under Apartheid.

Gregory Maqoma	<p>[Music]</p> <p>I strongly believe that dance can break cultural barriers. This was a window of opportunity to see that it was possible to use culture and tradition as a weapon to change my own circumstances.</p>
Mzokuthula Gasa	<p>Most of my work speaks about .... I call it black pain.... p It speaks about the townships. It speaks about the things that we experience in the township. It speaks about the sometimes the unfairness of the system. So this piece was inspired by this thing — the driving around the township, growing up in the township, the things that I see there —the overcrowding, overcrowded schools, overcrowded hospital, diseases, the killing, the crime. So as you know the piece is called Abangabonwa, which means the unseen. So I created the piece out of those experiences to say, you know for us to grow up to be this age there must be something looking after us. [Music]</p>
Mzokuthula Gasa	<p>In our dance company we have people who have a background of Pantsula. We have people who have background of Zulu dance ... who have background of Hip Hop, who have background of whatever. We take all these different forms of dance and we put it together. So in in the company we don't have a particular style where we say we stick with this style. We use everyone's different styles so to come up with a very South African language. [Music]</p>
Oscar Buthelezi	<p>When I was dancing I never chose that I wanna do African dance styles only but I was versatile enough to actually try and grab as much as I can to other dance elements. So I wanted to actually incorporate all the roads that I've travelled with my father and actually put them onstage. So I tried to take all the good things that he used to show me, and all the obstacles that I've come across with him. So that's why I actually said "Road." So as you're watching you're not gonna see road to success or road of parting or whatever, but you're actually see layers of roads that each and every person can go through. [Music]</p>
Gregory Maqoma	<p>My personal work makes a huge reference to memory and history plays a huge rule. In "Exit/Exist" I was interested in a character within a family lineage, and the character that I found was of Chief Maqoma who was my ancestor. It was important for me to respect that and to go and do proper research, and also to find permission and blessings from my own from the leaders within the Xhosa tradition, and also to get also his blessing. So I went also to his grave where a ceremony was conducted by the elders to ask him to bless me. [Music]</p>

Gregory Maqoma	And this was a man that was imprisoned twice on Robben Island, and when we speak of Robben Island we talk of the Nelson Mandelas and the political struggles of the 20 <sup>th</sup> century, and we forget that there are people that who have fought the struggle before them.
Lliane Loots	I think for me art is activism. You know, the idea that, that we can't pretend that our art is not political. All art is political. If it chooses to be simply art for art's sake, it's still a political choice that an artist is making. 'Cuz I mean the body is the front line of all politics. It's the child who's throwing stones at, you know, the cops. It's being shot. It's being tortured in prison. It's being, you understand oppression through the body. You know, you understand hunger and class through the body. You understand gender through the fact that you wake up as a female and you experience the world differently because you are female, you know. Well, I'm interested in that. I'm interested in that way in which the body can speak about repression, but it can also find, that cathartic, liberation, in the moving and the doing and the telling. I challenged the dancers to think about a space within our city that they connected with, and that they felt spoke to some aspect of one of the stories that was eventually chosen. So for example the opening Sifiso Khumalo, that's Claremont township, where he lives, and that's Zazi Street, which he speaks about in the work. So it's quite a you know, that it connects with a narrative of him doing it. So was the idea of the memories of him growing up as a young boy in a very political area, where there was a lot of in-fighting, political infighting, in the 1980's. And him watching as a young boy of six or seven, watching people being necklaced and burnt alive, which no child should ever have to watch. [Music]
Nomcebisi Moyikwa	What I usually want to do in my pieces to, for someone to be a witness of an experience. I'm not a person who really pays attention much to my personal experiences. I always want to juxtapose them to the greater context of the world. You need to talk about sexuality. You need to talk about rape. You need to talk about where women are put in the world. You need to put where man are put in the world. There are a lot of black female choreographers who are making work that that speak about the world and how the world is. It's like when you say, they usually say black females are straight to the point. [Music]
Lorin Sookool	So "Her_Ass_Meant," the collaboration between Julia Wilson and myself, it started when we had discussions about what could we do that was relevant to us right here, right now? I was

	<p>walking home and this car with three guys pulled up beside me. Calling me words like, “Hey honey, hey sugar, mmmmm, looking sexy or you know.” And at the end, he just said, “Oh well, you’re just another bitch anyway.” And then he sped off. I was so angry. I just felt.... I just went hot inside.</p>
<p>Julia Wilson</p>	<p>I refuse to let it be okay to be spoken to in these ways, to be addressed in these ways by men who don’t know me. And for this to be my experience everyday. I think it’s really important to start drawing on our power as women and going actually no we have a place here. We have a voice and we need to speak.</p> <p>[Music]</p>
<p>Lorin Sookool</p>	<p>I have had a waiter tell me he wanted to get me drunk and take advantage of me. What’s worse is that a friend later asked if I was fully dressed, and whether my hair was up or down. My friend was dropping me off at home. We sat outside chatting for a bit. Some cops came up and asked us if we were gay, what we were doing, our names, and then proceeded to say that they think they left their pants in my house. This guy kept asking me for my number. Apparently the fact that I said “no,” wasn’t enough.</p>
<p>Gregory Maqoma</p>	<p>Within a situation that is about you, about your identity, you are somehow forced to look deeper and to search for meaning. If you’re looking at you know, our situation in the country that not so many people are still open to the idea of homosexuality as part of a system, as part of a community, or as even if you know to the extent of accepting them as human beings, as accepting them as same as anybody, and as capable and they can take leadership in every level. And in most cases be even better at it, because they also understand the suffering that goes with it, the suffering that one has to.... The isolation that even your own family tends to drive you into, and because one has experienced that, they have a better understanding and an empathy towards other injustices. All of us as human beings, we need to accept each other. Hence my idea about breaking barriers within the traditional forms is important because ultimately I am also dealing with a fact of acceptance. [Music]</p>

Jay Pather	<p>My dad who was a political activist at the time, and we were kind of avowedly Black Consciousness, so you know so there was a there was a certain level of political activism and seriousness and <i>gravitas</i> in the home. Curiously didn't take too kindly to a boy dancing. And I think it was not you know.... To his credit a lot of it came was the pressure from the community at the time. The environment you know, equated dance and men dancing with homosexuality and with gayness. I did this piece Nadaraja, which was about a dance for my father.</p> <p>I got my mother's sari and I tied it around my waist, and I was trying to get this thing on in order to perform for him at this little party we were having. And he had heard about it and stopped me from doing it.</p>
Jay Pather	<p>I took one last fleeting glance at my father. He was staring at me straight into my eyes. He was very cross. [Music]</p>
Jay Pather	<p>So I made this entire piece about that moment when I get stopped, and then I'm allowed to do it very much later. And I think that it's an important piece that I keep going back to about how valuable my life has been since, because I tried to still undercut that and overturn it and you know, become a choreographer. I think those were some of the defining moments in my life that made me understand how my work would be located in sexuality, in politics, in issues of social import and political import.</p>
Athena Mazarakis	<p>The source of my creative work is often personal. It's often based on personal narrative. I suppose for me there's been a journey of trying to engage myself as a gay person. So a lot of the work that I've been dealing with recently, such as my piece "Standing By" deals quite strongly with issues of "corrective rape." Lesbians have been raped and murdered in order to cure them of their homosexuality. If it's something that deals with the gay body, the black body, it is something that kind of white South Africa very easily pushes aside. And so I chose to make a work about this because the question I wanted to ask is: "How are we standing by and letting this violence occur? How do we? Are we going to be bystanders and just let it happen? Or are we going to take a stand." So I was playing with those words, of "standing by, being on standby, being bystanders." And I felt that there's something about the moment of live performance,</p> <p style="text-align: right;">[Music]</p> <p>which brings us into the present of that issue that we can't turn away from.</p>

Kamogelo Molobye	I think “Lipstick” actually was the first ever work that I did that fully dealt with, or that fully tried to tap into my being. And by that I mean being black, and being queer and growing up in a township environment. I have done, I think, two site specific work, and I think the difficulty with site-specific work is that you can’t impose choreography into the site. And so in creating that work, myself and Jeanette were looking at the ways in which this black, queer boy can sort of be in a space that is both constricting with regards to architecture, but constricting with regards to institution, and find a way where they could exist and belong without judgment, or perception, or stereotype, or external factors saying who you are. [Music]
Kamogelo Molobye	I remember seeing this show on television with this tall lady just dancing around in her tutu skirt. And at that point I knew that that was what I wanted to do. Put on my lipstick, play dress-up, put on that tutu skirt and just dance around like she did. [Music] [Street Sounds]
Jay Pather	To say that I’m an African is both a truth and a wish. I am passionately concerned and involved in all that is, in that which is South African. It’s not that I am not concerned about the world, and I’m not concerned about universal issues but my lens is South African. So I guess that makes me African.
Mzokuthula Gasas	My work is pure African contemporary. It’s pure, African contemporary. Everything I do bows to Africa. [Music]
Mzokuthula Gasas	Most choreographers wants to impress certain individuals, so they can be in the so-called “global dance world.” And where as, with myself to be honest, I stay true to myself. I stay true to the story of my people.
Jay Pather	I don’t need to have to create for a particular audience. “Body of Evidence” was created for a hospital downtown Johannesburg originally, and then I showed it in different places. And then it went to the Netherlands and it played to quite a diverse audience. And I never felt at any point that I had to change anything. [Music]
Nomcebisi Moyikwa	So if you want to come with the art that’s gonna shift you or shift your thinking or engage you in a different way, then that’s the art I try to make every, every, every, every day. And because it pushes myself, and not because it makes me feel better. It just opens up new conversations.

Kamogelo Molobye	<p>Black contemporary South African artists are extremely radical, in that they aren't apologetic about what they put in space and on stage. That is the only space you can be honest with yourself and honest with your audience, and truly make them understand how it is that being black still resonates with Nina Simone's "Strange Fruits." You are hung on an oak tree, waiting to dry and the crows are surrounding you. And so existence is through the suffocation of trying to survive</p> <p>[Music Nina Simone's "Strange Fruit"]</p> <p>when you're actually dying, most times. And so it becomes difficult. It becomes difficult to at times find joy as a black person when you know that even in finding joy you have to choose to be happy, most times. Because there's a struggle, and a violence, and a persistent violence in being black.</p>
Nomcebisi Moyikwa	<p>There's always this thing that, white people it's your time to shut up and black people talk. And I say white people, don't shut up, talk. And black people, it's time for you to talk as well. Let's talk at the same time. Let's not run away from the collisions of different worlds that don't necessarily understand each other. Because if you keep quiet, then you still have your those same ideas, and you live in them for 50 years in your head because you are afraid to voice them out.</p>
Kamogelo Molobye	<p>And I think that's what makes South African contemporary work relevant at this point, is that it forces audiences to ask questions.</p>