

***Diaspora & Embodiment of Hope: Performances of Spirit & Sustainability***  
**Centre for Performance Philosophy, University of Surrey**  
**April 19<sup>th</sup> 2018 (PATS, University of Surrey)**



University of Surrey



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2-pm        **Registration**

2:30pm     Welcome & Introduction (L Cull/ S Sorgel)

3pm        **Keynote Lecture** (Response: S Sorgel)

Prof Christopher Balme (LMU Munich): Dancing on the Bandmann  
Circuit: Brokering Dancers between East and West

Response: S. Sorgel

3-4pm:     **Paper Presentations** (Chair: H McClure)

Luciana da Costa Dias: STAGING ANTROPOPHAGY: Avant-Garde  
Movements and Post-Colonialism In the work of Teatro Oficina

Adriana Pegorer: Contact Tango: finding a sustainable practice

4-4:30pm **Coffee Break**

4:30pm-6pm: **Practice Workshops/ Performance Lectures** (Chair: S Sorgel)

Sandra Golding: PERFORMING SANKOFA (45 min)

Debbie Fionn Barr/ Vidya Thirunarayan: Individualising Cultural  
Knowledge in Clay Body Sites (45min)

6-7:15pm: **Dinner Break** (Wates Pub)

7:30-8:30pm: **Evening Performance Programme** (with post-show Q&A)

Stella Uppal Subbiah: UYIR in Unarvu

Francis Angol/ Movement Angol: Shift – Voicing Presence

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## Abstracts & Biographies

### **Christopher Balme: Dancing on the Bandmann Circuit: Brokering Dancers between East and West**

#### **ABSTRACT:**

Between 1900 and 1930 the Bandmann Circuit was the most extensive regular touring network East of Suez. Over this period The theatre manager Maurice E. Bandmann transported between 1000 and 2000 performers around the two dozen cities on the circuit. While most belonged to musical comedy companies, he or his Bandmann Eastern Varieties company also promoted solo dancers including Anna Pavlova. These activities extended well after his death in 1922 into the 1930s as his successors made use of the existing network to move dancers in both directions. This paper will employ network theory to discuss a number examples of such theatrical traffic including Western dancers sent East as well as South Asian dancers sent West. The latter include the prominent Indian dancers Menaka and Uday Shankar. The lecture will draw on rare archival material.

#### **SHORT BIO:**

Christopher Balme currently holds the chair in Theatre Studies at the University of Munich. Born and educated in New Zealand, where he graduated from the University of Otago, he has lived and worked in Germany since 1985 with positions at the universities of Würzburg, Munich and Mainz. From 2004 to 2006 he held the chair in Theatre Studies at the University of Amsterdam. He has published widely on German theatre, intercultural theatre and theatre and other media. Professor Balme is a former president of the German Society for Theatre Research and is past-president of the IFTR. From 2004 to 2006 he was Senior Editor of Theatre Research International. He currently edits the journal *Forum Modernes Theater*. Recent publications include *Decolonizing the Stage: Theatrical syncretism and postcolonial drama* (Oxford 1999), *Pacific Performances: Theatricality and Cross-Cultural Encounter in the South Seas* (Palgrave Macmillan 2007), *Cambridge Introduction to Theatre Studies* (Cambridge 2008) and *The theatrical public sphere* (Cambridge 2014). His current research interests focus on the legacy of modernism in the globalization of the arts; theatre and the public sphere; and the relationship between media and performance. He is director of the Global Theatre Histories project ([www.global-theatre-histories.org](http://www.global-theatre-histories.org)).

### **Luciana da Costa Dias: STAGING ANTROPOPHAGY: Avant-Garde Movements and Post-Colonialism In the work of Teatro Oficina**

#### **ABSTRACT:**

*The Cannibalistic Manifesto* (in Portuguese *Manifesto Antropofágico*) was published in 1928 by the Brazilian modernist poet Oswald de Andrade. One of its most iconic quotes is "*Tupi or not Tupi: that is the question*". The line is, simultaneously, a celebration of the Tupi-Guarani tribes (once majoritarian in south-eastern regions of Brazil – today barely extinct) as one root of Brazilian identity; and the exacerbation of a metaphorical instance of cannibalism as a very distinct Brazilian cultural feature. Since the 1920s, the concept of anthropophagy (or "cultural cannibalism") has become one of the richest categories associated with Brazilian

identity in cultural studies, challenging dualities as civilization/barbarism, modern/primitive, and original/derivative, colonial/decolonial. Could such metaphor, as a cultural category, be considered a survival strategy or could it, also, be related to some kind of (proto-)hybridism?

#### **SHORT BIO:**

Luciana da Costa Dias is core founder of the Performing Arts Post-Graduate Program at the Federal University of Ouro Preto (PPGAC/ UFOP), in Brazil, working at UFOP as Adjunct Professor of Aesthetic and Theatre Theory since 2011. She is also a founder member of the Brazilian research group: "APORIA: Philosophy and Theatre Studies" since 2014. Her doctoral degree in Philosophy is from University of the State of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ), having developed her doctoral studies, partially, with a DAAD scholarship, at the Freiburg Universität, under the supervision of Dr. Günther Figal. Luciana's research activities are focused on a hermeneutic-phenomenological approach to art and modernity. For her postdoctoral research, she is particularly interested in the crisis of modernity (as a metaphysical crisis and its possible overcoming in art) through the works of Nietzsche and Artaud; as well as in a transversal perspective on art/performance – as an immediacy of presence – and how this might affect theatre studies.

#### **Adriana Pegorer: Contact Tango: finding a sustainable practice**

##### **ABSTRACT:**

Tango Argentino and Contact Improvisation are social dances that have significantly spread globally over the last 20 years. They are rather different: the first originated from a cultural melting pot in the late 1800s and developed into a strictly structured traditional form. The second emerged in the 1960s from a quest for freedom from hierarchical structures and codified dance vocabulary. A handful of European dance practitioners started playing with their similarities in the late 90s and Contact Tango as-we-know-it today was born. This hybrid, cross-bred form now gathers from far and wide dancers who seek a more equitable way to practice Tango Argentino and/or Contact Improvisation. With a predominant focus on cultivating somatic awareness and celebrating diversity, participants can experience a playful, welcoming model within which their movement practice and passions can develop and thrive.

Questions arose from practising Contact Tango have ranged from what kind of clothes and shoes should one wear, to should a non-Argentine 'change' the tango? Interestingly, Contact Tango recently sprouted in Argentina and Uruguay, where tango is an "intangible cultural heritage" (Unesco, 2009). I will share some of my experiences, conversations and reflections on teaching, dancing and performing Contact Tango at various festivals, workshops and jams and my intervention will include a short and optional practical activity.

##### **SHORT BIO:**

Adriana Pegorer is an Italian interdisciplinary dance artist based in London. The exploration of the fusion of Tango Argentino and Contact Improvisation started during her Bachelor of Arts degree at Chichester University, UK (1998-2001) and developed during the 'National Identity and Cultural Translations' course with Prof. Marta E. Savigliano in Buenos Aires (2007). She organized monthly Contact Tango events (2008-2012) at the Siobhan Davies

Studios [London] and four 'Tango Diferente' research weeks (2012-2015) at Ponderosa Dance [near Berlin]. She taught at each Wuppertal Contact Tango Festivals since 2013 and at Queer Tango Festivals in Hamburg, Stockholm and Berlin. She shared her work and research in the UK and abroad in various settings, including 'TANGO! Dance the world around: global transformations of Latin American Culture' (Boston, 2008); 'Body, Movement and Dance in Global Perspective' (Hong Kong, 2008); 'Tango: Creation, Identification, Circulation' (Paris, 2011); 'Touching and to be touched - Kinaesthesia and empathy in dancing' (Berlin, 2011). Her teaching and practice is informed by diverse release based techniques, Pilates, Contact Improvisation and Tango Argentino.

## **Sandra Golding: PERFORMING SANKOFA**

### **ABSTRACT:**

"Performing Sankofa" is structured to allow one 'to go back and fetch what is needed' to develop a deepened sense of awareness of the body, whilst enjoying their moving journey in a safe supportive space, facilitated by rhythm, gentle movement, breath, meditation and dance. Aspects of the physical workshop and discussion explore the following: 1.) Standing in your cultural ground learn the importance of having a sense of being really grounded remembering to walk and dance with energy, depth and a purpose. 2.) Colour your dance discovering ways of relaxing by finding balance truth and ultimately healing through creative movement and traditional therapeutic African and Caribbean dance. 3.) Moving Ankh Mediation develops a mindfulness of the body by learning how to create circulate and move energy. Helping to release tension and achieve a feeling of wellbeing. The benefits of "Performing Sankofa", aims to balance, cultivate the ability to move freely without inhibition enabling the creation of better health, wealth happiness and success through the power of movement.

### **SHORT BIO:**

Sandra Golding, MA Dance and somatic wellbeing: Connections to the living body, is currently an African Holistic Dance practitioner workshop facilitator, community artist, Choreographer and performer specialising in African Caribbean dance. Sandra gained over 15years valuable experience in African Caribbean dance as principal dancer/teacher of Birmingham based Kokuma Dance Theatre Company under the artistic direction of Jackie Guy MBE. All of which has contributed to the focus of her work, promoting the unification of African arts through performance in collaboration with national and international artists. Providing dance and music workshop as well as performing opportunities for individuals who have a passion for dance. Since graduating with an MA Dance and somatic wellbeing: Connections to the living body at the University of Central Lancaster, Sandra has taught nationally and internationally, choreographed for Jamaica 50 celebration in 2012 at symphony hall Birmingham and was guest teacher for 'L'acadco' Dance Company and 'Ashe' Community Arts Company in Jamaica. Dub Qalandar is a spectacular inter-cultural performance. During the summer of 2015 Sandra delivered, African holistic dance workshop for the Spiritual Living Consciousness Awakening retreat and conference in the Centre for Peace Geneva and performed in Dub Qalander an inter-cultural collaborative performance of Sufi and roots rock reggae music at Symphony Hall Birmingham.

Her dedication and passion for the survival of African and Caribbean dance has resulted in development and delivery of African holistic dance a complimentary therapeutic dance, movement education within the community, with a focus on the Health and wellbeing of the

individual and their relationship with their bodies and connection with nature. Dub Qalandar is a spectacular inter-cultural performance especially created for Birmingham Weekender by the Drum's artistic director Mukhtar Dar. An ensemble of master musicians, vocalists, poets and dancers, including the sensational reggae band; Legend, Azad Kashmir Folk Group, Sufi singer; Lala Qadeer, Surj Sahota of the Sahotas, Yaz Alexander, dub poet Moqapi Selassie, Sanyogita Kumari, and many more come together in a spiritually uplifting tapestry reflecting the rich cultural diversity of Birmingham.

## **Debbie Fionn Barr and Vidya Thirunarayan: Individualising Cultural Knowledge in Clay Body Sites**

### **ABSTRACT:**

This presentation considers the relationship between migrated dance form (Bharata Natyam) and colonialist locale (the UK). It examines an individualised response to Bharata Natyam in the adopted locale by focusing on potter and co-founding Artistic Director of Sankalpam (UK Bharata Natyam company) Vidya Thirunarayan. It questions how this Diaspora artist has negotiated dislocation from the cultural, religious, historic and social moorings that support her Bharata Natyam form and practice, as highlighted by Indian arts scholar Kapila Vatsyayan (2015). Furthermore it investigates the ways Thirunarayan reclaims specificity of her migrated classical practice (Buckland 1999) through clay and dance.

For Thirunarayan, working across the physical mediums of clay and dance has led her to consider communal aspects of the individual forms, noticing key embedded elements, such as the roles of physical preparation, centering and ritual. The artist's curiosity has led to a proposition that each medium might in fact unlock aspects of and access to the other, creating new entry points and different lenses (Thirunarayan 2016).

Reclaiming specificity of a migrated cultural form in a way that is meaningful to the practitioner can be difficult in an arena of modernist arts' sector consciousness and globalised dancing bodies, where cultural forms can become flattened and differences erased (Ananya Chatterjea (2013: 7). This presentation, therefore examines Thirunarayan's individualised responses to embedded cultural knowledge, by assessing the impact of clay upon the artist's process, presentation and corporeal site. Clay is thus examined as a catalytic and transformative medium that enables Thirunarayan's relationship with Bharata Natyam to evolve.

The issues are explored in a live interaction between audience and performer involving demonstration and explanation, inviting question and consideration and encouraging participation and engagement.

### **SHORT BIO:**

Irish Choreographer **Debbie Fionn Barr** has been making work with diverse communities for over three decades. Collaborators have included the Queen's Gurkha Regiment, Mathmos lighting company, classical Indian and contemporary dancers, migrant communities, theatre directors, writers, film makers and musicians. Fionn Barr has toured independent and commissioned productions as Associate Artist with Swindon Dance (NDA) The Lighthouse, Poole and with her company, The Fionnbarr Factory.

Fionn Barr's choreographic practice utilises oral history testimonies and interdisciplinarity as methodology, investigating the connected moments between performer, performance and viewer. To this end, Indian classical performance philosophy influences her explorations within interdisciplinary mediums. Selected outputs include Freedom on the Tyne (2017) Duet

(2010), The Butcher Street Girls (2007), Migrant Voices (2004) and full-length productions 21 Tales (2005) and Three Go To Pieces (2003).

Fionn Barr's doctoral research explores the Individualisation of cultural knowledge in UK Bharata Natyam company Sankalpam. The research considers Sankalpam's evolving relationship with Bharata Natyam through interactions with diverse practitioners, both within and beyond the form. The impact of these relationships upon practice and pedagogy is examined against the oscillating role of Bharata Natyam, which navigates traditional heritage, current practice and future potential.

Fionn Barr has held senior academic posts at three UK Universities and is currently completing her doctoral studies at Coventry University.

**Vidya Thirunarayan** trained as a performer in the Indian Classical Dance style, Bharatanatyam. Over the last 25 years, as a dance artist she has been privileged to work within the various facets of the performing arts. It has been the artist's and artistic director's perspective that has largely informed her work. From this core, she has reached out to the cultural sector and organizations in diverse roles such as founder, choreographer, performer, tutor, board member, entrepreneur and advisor.

She is also irritatingly positive. Her breadth of experience and interests spill beyond the world of dance, and her specialism includes arts education and the world of arts management. Most of the things she does are an attempt to deepen her engagement with learning, living beyond self-imposed limitations, discovering the extraordinary within the ordinary and leading a useful and full life.

As she grows older there is a growing pleasure in seeing others, young and old, realising their full potential and discovering new ways of seeing and thinking that can add to the general stock of wisdom for the betterment of all. Somewhere along the way she started playing with clay. Initially, as a relaxation from dance, it has slowly and steadily crept in further and has become an integral part of her lifestyle. She has finally given in and has a ceramic studio where much play happens integrating performing arts, craft and education.

<https://www.vidyathirunarayan.com/>

## Evening Performance Programme

### **UYIR/ Stella Uppal Subbiah (London): UYIR in Unarvu**

UYIR was born out of a desire to provide a performance platform for a group of adults re-discovering Bharatanatyam. Following extensive research in Colombo and Jaffna, UYIR in UNARVU showcases the role of Bharatanatyam in people's lives. Exploring the experiences of mature students and an international team of professional dancers, and accompanied by renowned musicians, UNARVU deconstructs the relationship between dance and dancer. The performance draws on the dancers' lived-in experiences, memory and emotion to evoke resonance both real and imagined.

UNARVU= a knowledge based on innate feelings and perception

ARIVU= knowledge based on observation and deduction

<https://www.facebook.com/UYIR-1661226160807900/>

### **Movement Angol Dance Performance (London): Shift – Voicing Presence**

#### **Performance 1: Moving - Breathing - Being**

15 minute solo exploring embodied presence, a fundamental aspect of Movement Angol's language of Contemporary African dance. The solo explores the embodied relationship between the intoxicating dialogical artistry of rhythm in conversation with the physical and mental body, embellished by one's individual experience of self other and existence.

*(Performed by Francis Angol)*

#### **Performance 2: I Care, You Care**

As part of the company's Engaging Ageing project, 'I Care, You Care' is a new creation, reflecting the issue of being a carer. The work performed by an all male company of three, dynamically unfolds with an animated sensibility, to give an emotional response to the experience of a care giver. Through the expression of contemporary dance art that is underpinned by the dynamics and lyrical contemplations of Angol's movement sensibilities, framed within its polycentric moves and rhythms, the piece will pleasantly take you through a journey that will inform and entertain the onlooker. *(Performed by Company)*

<http://movementangol.co.uk/>