

Voices from the Field: Investigating the Emergent Form of an Indigenous Dance Movement Therapy Training Program in South Africa

来自田野的声音：南非新型土著舞蹈动作治疗培训项目调研

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Abstract

The article describes the author's involvement in the development of an innovative academic dance movement therapy (DMT) training program during her Fulbright Senior Scholar assignments in Johannesburg, South Africa, spanning from the early 2020 to her subsequent return in 2023. It highlights the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and emphasizes the author's dedication to engaging with key interested parties and some of the significant voices in the fields of dance and movement education, community work, training, and therapy in South Africa. Situated within the Drama for Life program at the University of the Witwatersrand, this article explores the author's goal of participating in the dialogue about the crafting of an Afro-centric training program in DMT. This program is designed to integrate existing practices and forms in dance movement and performance with cultural and spiritual elements, incorporating multiple histories, and including indigenous knowledge systems to inspire, and to integrate some of these perspectives and collaborative opportunities within the program design.

Keywords: dance movement therapy (DMT), Ubuntu, dance and healing

摘要

文章介绍了作者在南非约翰内斯堡担任富布赖特(Fulbright)高级学者期间(从2020年初到2023年回国)参与发展创新性舞蹈动作治疗(DMT)学术培训项目的情况。报告强调了全球新冠疫情(COVID-19)所带来的挑战,并注重于作者致力接触南非舞蹈和动作教育、社区工作、培训和治疗领域的主要相关方和一些重要人士,建立联系。在威特沃特斯兰德大学的"生活戏剧"项目中,这篇文章探讨了作者参与对话、精心设计以非洲为中心的舞蹈动作治疗(DMT)培训项目的目标。该项目旨在整合舞蹈动作和表演中现有的实践和形式,以及文化和精神元素,融合多元历史,纳入本土知识体系以激发灵感,并在课程设计中融入一部分 这些观点与合作机会。

关键词: 舞蹈动作治疗(DMT), 乌班图(Ubuntu)(注:非洲南部祖鲁语或豪萨语“人性”/“我的存在是因为大家的存在”), 舞蹈与疗愈

Background on Dance Movement Therapy as a Profession in South Africa

Dance movement therapy (DMT) is recognized as a field by the South African National Arts Therapies Association (<https://sanata.org>), which is a professional association within the health services branch that represents the interests of arts therapists and the four arts therapy professions (art, music, drama, and DMT) across South Africa. It supports the growth of arts therapy professions in South Africa in partnership with key stakeholders, the public, and international associations.

The art therapies in South Africa have garnered recognition from the Health Professions Council, granting art therapists the opportunity to formalize their status as health professionals. However, within this framework, in the case of DMT, it seems that the demand and need do not meet the supply. Surprisingly, there are no formal academic training programs for DMT, necessitating aspiring therapists to journey abroad for their education. Although drama therapy, art therapy, and music therapy have established master's programs at notable universities such as the University of the Witwatersrand (WITS), University of Johannesburg, and University of Pretoria, respectively, DMT still lacks an academic foothold.

Historically, there has been keen interest in utilizing dance and expressive approaches in education and therapy in South Africa. This interest dates back several decades, with a course the author taught on introductory DMT offered in the summer school program of the University of Cape Town in the early eighties. Given this enthusiasm, one might have expected DMT to evolve into a recognized academic discipline within the country. Regrettably, this transformation has not materialized, leaving only a few DMT practitioners with foreign-acquired MA degrees as the only registered arts therapists in DMT in the Health Professions Council of South Africa. The dearth of an academic program for DMT in South Africa is a missed opportunity, as this therapeutic approach holds immense potential for emotional well-being and healing in this context. The development of DMT in South Africa draws upon traditional practices, ceremonies, rituals, and communal living practices, combined with contemporary psychological principles and rigorous clinical training, designed to cater to the diverse interpersonal, social, cultural, and spiritual needs of the population.

Now, the time is ripe for change, and the call and need for the development of DMT as an academic discipline in South Africa and, indeed, across the African continent is more pressing than ever. The vibrancy of life, which is deeply intertwined with music and dance in the South African context, underscores the significance of embracing DMT's potential contributions. This endeavor would not be possible without the pioneering efforts and accomplishments of Warren Nebe, as founder and senior faculty in the Drama for Life (DFL) program at the WITS and without the support of Dr. Petro Janse van Vuuren, the head of the DFL Department along with Linda Mdena Thibedi, the senior faculty member who will carry the torch forward into the promising future.

Moving into Curriculum Development beyond COVID— Building upon Traditions of Ubuntu

In the wake of the global COVID-19 crisis, the need for innovative approaches to curriculum development has never been more apparent. South Africa, with its rich

traditions of Ubuntu, offers a unique foundation upon which to build. In 1999, Ubuntu was eloquently described by Archbishop Desmond Tutu (1999, p. 35):

A person with Ubuntu is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, based from a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed.

This philosophy emphasizes the idea that our well-being is intrinsically tied to the well-being of others, reflecting the core principles of DMT.

For me, as a dance movement therapist with over 45 years of international program development experience, the concept of Ubuntu is deeply ingrained in my body and in my being. Growing up in apartheid-era South Africa, I witnessed the power of seeing and being seen by others, a concept closely related to the fundamental practice of mirroring in DMT. It underscores the importance of acknowledging and reflecting on one another's experiences, a process that fosters connection and healing.

The COVID-19 pandemic has thrust us into a liminal space, a threshold between the pre-pandemic world and an uncertain future. In previous publications, Marcow-Speiser and Speiser (2021, p. 1) have asserted that:

People are living in a “liminal” in-between threshold space from pre-pandemic times to the space of the moment, in between what was and will be. Issues we are living through are immediate and also existential as we negotiate local, national and global collective anxiety, trauma and survival.

It has brought to the forefront immediate and existential challenges, encompassing anxiety, trauma, and the quest for survival on local, national, and global levels. As we navigate this transitional phase, it is imperative to reconsider the development of DMT programs and particularly the effect of the 3-year hiatus in progress at WITS. During this liminal period, the landscape of academic program development has transformed. Traditional approaches may no longer suffice, requiring a fresh perspective on giving birth to new initiatives. This process mirrors the creative act itself, where artists embrace the unknown and ambiguity as integral to creation.

In the aftermath of the pandemic, the landscape of education has been forever altered. Universities worldwide transitioned to online teaching, revealing disparities in access to technology and resources. In South Africa, challenges like electricity load shedding and high internet data costs further complicated the educational arena, creating unequal opportunities for students. Although some programs have returned to in-person learning, a hybrid format has also emerged, combining in-person instruction with online components. Creative arts therapy students and faculty adapted to learning artistic, theoretical, and clinical practices through online platforms during the pandemic. The long-term impact on clinical practice remains uncertain, demanding ongoing research. In South Africa, programs like the Art Therapy Program at the University of Johannesburg, which developed during the COVID years, have embraced this hybrid model, offering

greater flexibility and access. The DFL program has also adjusted to the evolving educational landscape, providing online opportunities alongside in-person learning.

As we move forward, flexibility and adaptability are crucial. Education in South Africa, and indeed worldwide, has evolved into a dynamic blend of modes, reflecting the resilience of both students and educators. The shifting educational paradigm demands a response that honors the principles of Ubuntu. In this liminal space, we have been given the opportunity to redefine the future of education, guided by the spirit of Ubuntu and the transformative power of DMT. There are, however, certain problems involved, as Peters et al. (2020, n.p.) point out:

Digital pedagogies are of course not neutral with respect to the kind of sociality they encourage. Since a core function of education has always been social and cultural formation, the question arises as to what kind of sociality is possible when students and their faculty only meet in the digital space.... Also important of course are the issues of inequalities of access and outcomes in the new pedagogic spaces, and how they might be mitigated both within and across nations.

Challenges and Strengths of Teaching and Learning in South Africa

In South Africa, the educational landscape is shaped by a complex interplay of challenges and strengths. Factors such as the enduring legacy of decolonization, government corruption, and profound health disparities loom large (Marcow-Speiser & Speiser, 2022). There are critical issues surrounding access to food and medical supplies, a persistent homelessness problem, rising criminality, and an overwhelming burden of unemployment and poverty, particularly impacting the younger generations (Marcow-Speiser & Speiser, 2022; Fogel, 2021).

South Africa stands as a nation grappling with extreme inequalities, with a labor force struggling under the weight of unemployment, especially among the youth, reaching a staggering 76% (Fogel, 2021). It is a country where the chasm between extreme wealth and dire poverty is stark, and the normative presence of violence, state dysfunction, and deficient public services underscores the challenges faced by its people (Fogel, 2021). These social and cultural realities are the crucible within which the academia could provide a shielding support by offering programs for human development and healing.

Artists are accustomed to navigating in liminal spaces, as the creative process itself thrives on ambiguity and the unknown (Marcow-Speiser & Speiser, 2022). The introduction of a DMT program within the DFL program at WITS is poised to offer a pathway toward healing, which is essential for South Africa's progress in these tumultuous times. The groundwork and strengths for this endeavor are laid by the existing resources, academic programs, and collaborative networks established by DFL. This proposed innovative educational and therapeutic DMT program holds the potential to make a meaningful impact on emotional health and well-being in South Africa.

Starting with Dance: New Frameworks for Knowledge

To understand the development of new forms and methodologies for teaching, understanding, and communicating about DMT, it is important to note that there is already a large body of work established in dance movement training approaches that have been embedded in choreography and performance since the mid-1970. This belief is rooted in an understanding that this process is already operational and will build on practice and knowledge within this sphere and move it into the academic arena drawing upon the work already done by visionary pathfinders in this country. This undertaking will take into account the dancer as a holistic being in relationship to the multiple levels of human communication that the arts work with, namely the interpersonal, intrapersonal, social, cultural, and spiritual. Innovative pathways already exist in ways of understanding and building embodied approaches toward knowledge systems that theorize and imagine anew. Dance movement and performance in South Africa has been a potent and powerful force toward understanding what Adrienne Sichel (2018, p. 17) has described as “contested terrains, congested histories.” Feeling sometimes that I am not doing just and diligent enough due service to all the voices I “should” have included in this conversation, I have been encouraged to continue by the words of Breyten Breytenbach (1980, p. 250) when he writes:

to dance as one should
 you must be blind
 and groping

with as your audience
 your entire spent life
 as echo and mocking moon

but before you begin to dance
 blindly, cast a measure of your blood
 into the dust

and model in mud
 notes for your song

Brief Overview of Dance and Movement Forms in South Africa Since the Mid-seventies

The trajectory of dance and movement forms in South Africa since the mid-1970s bears witness to remarkable contributions, such as that made by Sylvia Glasser’s groundbreaking work at Moving into Dance that stands out prominently. In a previous publication (Speiser, 2023, p. 94), I underscored the immense impact of her work that “continues and remains a living and iconic force in contemporary dance in South Africa today.” Glasser’s pioneering efforts shattered boundaries not only in terms of dance forms but also in fostering interracial collaboration among cast members and

audiences during the apartheid. Notably, influential figures in South Africa's dance scene, including Gregory Vuyani Maqoma and Vincent Sekwati Mantsoe, received their initial training in this company. Maqoma, widely regarded as one of the foremost dancers in the field today, also serves as the director of the Vuyani Dance Theatre Company. Sichel (2018, p. 25) observed that "dance-makers are thriving and carrying contemporary dance toward a new level that transcends cultural barriers, creating a new dynamic culture constantly reproducing history by how they live and respond to their circumstances."

Friedman (2012) outlines the evolution of dance forms since the 1980s, highlighting a quest for commonality and experimentation with "fusion" dance, which deliberately blends Western dance forms with traditional African or township rhythms and dynamics. This fusion concept sparked lively debates regarding the creation of a definitive "South African" style (Friedman, 2012, p. 6). Since the 1980s, the applications of dance and movement in performance, education, and community engagement have continued to be innovative and inclusive, pushing boundaries and stretching artistic forms. Creativity flourishes as dance becomes a medium for breaking new ground and genres. Pather (2006, 9) describes this style as a "response aesthetic" in which the moving, rhythmic body serves not only as a means to an end but also resonates in ritual and performance.

Pather and Boule (2019, p. 2), state that "In South Africa, live art is born of extremity. Its syncretic form has evolved in response to rapidly changing social climates, colonial imposition, cultural fragmentation and political upheaval; its affective tenor of excess and irrationality embodies the unpredictability of crisis. It proffers a new language that resists the narratives of certainty and linearity through which a neocolonial agenda has been perpetuated."

In this creative *mélange* of boundary-breaking and inclusionary participatory engagements, the evolution of DMT in the South African context takes root. Drawing from this rich tapestry of artistic expression, it adapts to the ethos of South Africa, embracing diversity and embodying the spirit of resilience and transformation.

Moving Together into the Present: Exploring Dance and Movement in South Africa

South Africa's rich history of dance and movement is marked by influential figures who have left indelible imprints on the fields of performance, choreography, education, community, and therapy. These luminaries have contributed significantly to the evolving landscape of DMT in South Africa. I have extracted excerpts from their writings and interviews to illustrate some aspects of their contributions.

Tossie van Tonder: A Multifaceted Force of Transformation

One such luminary is Tossie van Tonder, also known as Nobonke van Tonder. She is a prominent dancer, author, educator, and ontological coach/therapist since the early 1980s. Van Tonder's impact extends beyond generations of her audiences, clients, and students, leaving an enormous footprint on the field of dance/movement therapy.

Her work transcends physical and memory landscapes, integrating the spiritual, emotional, political, and transpersonal realms. Van Tonder's approach is deeply rooted in alchemical processes, and she applies aesthetics and movement principles as tools for mental health. She emphasizes the importance of immersion in experiences at the leading edge of thought, guiding individuals away from limited perspectives. Her approach is an ancient yet continually evolving process, birthing new desires and life forces. Her book, *My African Heart* (van Tonder, 2014), delves into the transformative character of South Africa and its potential for reimagining identity. In the preface to her book, van Tonder (2014, n.p.) writes:

I am being transmuted by the disruptive character of my country, which on the latitudes and longitudes of the soul is the true heart of a re-imagined map of Africa, a ground for sophisticated ideas around identity.

Van Tonder's extensive body of work highlights the potential of DMT in South Africa. It showcases how the form can be influenced by the nation's history of colonization, decolonization, as well as the personal connections formed through heartfelt interactions. Her work can be accessed at <https://theimageofyourperfection.co.za>. From her website, she writes:

Immersion is experience at the leading edge of thought—the furthest extension of that thought. It is the best tool with which we help ourselves away from limited ways of seeing. You cannot bring the same stale self to the world and expect the world to be new for you. Philosophy and tools of creativity and wisdom evoke new desires, a particular life force. This work is ancient and yet, not been born, except at the moment of rapture.

Van Tonder's body of work in teaching, therapy/coaching, and performance, over many decades, is vast and iridescent as the luminosity of African skies and landscapes. She continues to engage the body in breaking through all barriers obstructing the human psyche for herself and for others. Her work is emblematic of how the form of DMT in South Africa is influenced by its history of colonization and de-colonization and what can be achieved through the simple connections that can be made heart to heart.

P. J. Sabbagha: Shaping the Landscape of Physical Theater

P. J. Sabbagha is another influential figure in South Africa's history of physical theater and the use of dance/movement in performance and community contexts. As a co-founder of the Forgotten Angle Theatre Company (FATC), Sabbagha has been instrumental in fostering both performance and community engagement. FATC, established in 1995, initially served as a theater company for WITS School of the Arts students. Since its move to its present location in Mpumalanga, the organization has played a vital role in training dancers, educators, and community activists.

FATC's contemporary dance works have explored critical personal, social, and environmental issues, presenting them on local, national, and international platforms (https://forgottenangle.co.za/perf_comp.html). Sabbagha envisions dance and the

arts as vehicles for a career in service to others and a means of sustaining life on the planet. He emphasizes the importance of fostering a balance between individuality and community within South Africa's diverse linguistic landscape. His work transcends conventional notions of art for art's sake. He encourages students and performers to engage with the world through their artistic practices, promoting human rights and social justice. FATC has evolved into a vocational skills training program accredited by SETA, encompassing performing arts education and administration, including financial management. In an interview on February 13, 2023, he states that:

I see it as necessary to broaden consciousness and awareness of how art works and as I see it not just as work for art's sake but there are multi-levels of work needed. We at FATC are trying to move people into a career in service to others, to all of life and to sustaining life on the planet. My life has been devoted to carving out a place for the work we do, that is in challenging the zeitgeist, including the economy and widespread unemployment. It seems today that students are on the attack and that the dialogue is framed by "attack-eruptions" and confrontations. I think that dancers need to do more than just dance. It's a way of finding a balance by thinking differently about finding a balance through serving human rights and thereby finding the balance. I see this as a kind of relearning, a re-listening to find the relevance of what we do and to allow people to engage in their own process through allowing for individual support and encouragement. I see this not as found in the rhetoric, but in the ways in which each individual sits in their own knowledge in eleven different languages found in this country. It's a matter of finding and sitting in one's own little place and finding a way to accept and respect the individual journeys. The work now is about creating a space and a platform for this to happen. It's the work of holding and creating a space for others to tell their stories. I see this as students looking for an education where there is an altruism at work and not in creating a pipeline in dance that is commercial.

Bonwa Mbontsi: Exploring Dance Education and Cultural Meaning

Bonwa Mbontsi, a former trainee in FATC's theater program at WITS in the 1990s, is deeply involved in movement/dance education, particularly concerning boys in the Pietermaritzburg area. His work draws inspiration from traditional cultural forms, exploring themes of identity, movement, and the human experience. He sees dance as a means of addressing existential questions, shedding light on humanity's path.

Mbontsi seeks to offer a different perspective on life through dance. In an interview on January 17, 2023, he states that:

My work draws from traditional cultural forms looking at the storytelling and meaning, asking questions like who am I, why do I move, wrestling with existential issues and the fundamental question of what does it mean to be a human being. I see my work as a place of refuge to be seen and be heard and

embody core values and a sense of integrity. Living in difficult times I see the responsibility we all bear, especially as artists to shed light and tell out truths. I believe that disembodiment creates existential concerns about where we are going as a species. I want to establish a platform to teach others to experience dance. It's my way of giving back to the people who mentored me. I see this as an extension of dance and dance ideas of serving others through dance as a way of giving and receiving, drawing upon spiritual, intellectual and psychic wealth and for allowing others to find their own voice.

Vincent Sekwati Mantsoe: Bridging Worlds through Dance

Vincent Sekwati Mantsoe, influenced by his family's Sangoma healings tradition and ancestral connections, has emerged as a prominent dancer, choreographer, and teacher. He taps into ritual processes, evoking ancestral spirits and entering trance-like states of consciousness during his performances. Mantsoe's work exemplifies the interplay between the living and the dead, exploring transformation through movement and ancestral connections.

Mantsoe believes that movement can both damage and repair, emphasizing the need to channel this capacity sensibly. He recognizes the transformation of the body in performance, emphasizing humility and acceptance. His work seeks to heal individuals and society, drawing upon dance as a unique form of healing energy. In an interview on January 31st, 2023, he states:

I come from a knowledge of ritual processes. I grew up around and within them in this world where there is a connection between the living and the dead. I saw people going into trance, where it can look like pain and suffering but that's just part of the process. I found myself questioning in my family of Sangomas about how to "mingle" between worlds and I was asking and given permission to do this in a cycle of ceremonies. When I am dancing I was given the ability to connect through movement. My role was understanding how to do this with respect and understanding and asking for permission, I connected to the bridge between the past and the present. I believe that movement can damage or repair and works on how to channel that capacity without doubt, and to engage with it with sensibility. Once the threshold is breached, it's a matter of entering the space and being true to who you are. In performance this happens within the context of the work. There is a transformation of the body and I have learned to be humble and accept what is happening. This is the task both for the performer and the spectator. The question I ask is "how can we now heal ourselves?" And dancing gives me the opportunity to do that.

Gregory Vuyani Maqoma: Decolonizing Dance for Healing

Gregory Vuyani Maqoma, who also came out of Sylvia Glasser's training at Moving into Dance, has become an internationally acclaimed dancer and choreographer.

His work reflects a commitment to decolonizing dance during and after apartheid. Maqoma emphasizes the importance of preserving existing practices and creating new combinations. He envisions dance as a means of mitigating trauma, healing societies, and touching upon senses that no other art form can reach. Maquoma integrates his ancestral lineage and heritage into his work, shedding light on historical injustices and the ongoing struggle for land rights in South Africa. Through his art, he seeks to inspire hope, illuminate stories, and bring about positive change. In an interview on June 5, 2023, he states:

There is an insistence in me that is vital in acknowledging people. It's the energy that one carries that is saving me and saving us all. This is the community where I live. We have the same mindsets, looking for renewed energy. I believe that we can create it here in nature, and on the stage. When closing down is too hard, the shaking and moving and chanting that happens in dance is healing. I see dance as another skill set to channel that healing. I see this as the part of the indigenous heart that can be transferred to dance therapy here. Not mirroring the west but utilizing what can be incorporated from what is happening here within the aesthetic and form of dance. It is there in the relationship between audience and performer, in the breathing of the audience which is breathing back to the performer where it becomes part of the dance in an exchange without words. I believe that this happens when and because performance can become a safe space where the audience has been given license to respond. In giving the audience space to respond, where there are no rules about having to sit quietly and watch, you begin to see people jumping out of their seats and moving with you. It becomes an illumination in real time while the performance is happening. As a performer I feel the immediate effect of giving the audience the license to take it all out. I feel that I, as a performer as well as the audience, are walking out of herein a different way. That there has been a cathartic release of energy in a healthy way.

These remarkable individuals represent the essence of dance and movement in South Africa, using their creativity and expertise to address complex social and cultural issues. Their work, rooted in diverse traditions and experiences, continues to shape the landscape of dance movement forms in the country, offering healing, transformation, and inspiration to all who encounter it.

Athina Copteros: Dance Movement as Intrinsically Healing in the South African Context

Athina Copteros is one of several Health Professions Council-registered arts therapists falling under the DMT category. She recently represented South Africa in the World Arts and Embodiment Forum2023 in the global conversation about DMT, and the following excerpts are taken from that conference presentation found at <https://www.inspirees.com/waef2023-dt-mt-end-huge-success/>.

Athina believes that

Dance and movement as a healing, ritualistic art has been part of South Africa's indigenous cultures and means of expression for generations. This art is intimately linked with healing and our connection to each other and the natural world.

She continues:

Like all western disciplines, dance/movement therapy in South Africa has to respond to the current context as well as to a history of colonialism, oppression and segregation; an experience where peoples' inherent connection to nature, place and their own bodies was violently stripped and used for the benefit of whites.

High levels of poverty, HIV/AIDS, unemployment, crime, violence and social, racial, gender and economic inequities are some of the many challenges South Africa currently faces. Despite having one of the best written constitutions in the world, with a highly progressive bill of rights, South Africa has some of the highest rates worldwide of violence against women and children, child-rape, HIV/AIDS, road rage, road deaths, corruption, violent crime, poverty, xenophobia and mortality.

She concludes her presentation by stating:

Dance movement therapy in South Africa has to include a deep awareness of South Africa's psycho-social dynamics as embedded realities, which are rooted in people's bodies and their relationships with each other and the environment. This goes a long way in constructively engaging with embodied trauma, through the enactment and expression of empathy, as well as the experience of equal partnership in the process. The embodied connectedness to each other through communal activity, together with the involvement of movement and ritual which a practice such as dance movement therapy introduces, at the same time also powerfully resonates with many indigenous cultures and practices in South Africa.

Moving into the Future with DMT in South Africa

The initiation of a formalized and structured academic progression toward the establishment of a DMT program at WITS draws upon the capacity for rhythmic connection that is so deeply ingrained in the culture. The progression that is envisioned consists of the development and implementation of a PDGA (professional certificate in Dance in Education and Social Contexts) program in 2024, followed by the Honors and Master's degrees in DMT in 2025 and 2026 respectively. This would constitute the academic launching of a professionalization of the field in an innovative formalized clinical training program in DMT at WITS. Drawing upon the belief that the arts

mobilize passions and courage in the service of our common survival and embodying the idea that the arts can and have built bridges that cross boundaries and have the capacity to unite people through their common humanity and need for creative expression.

This program intends to build sophisticated and civic-minded graduates who are able to respond to psychosocial challenges in a globalized environment through the use of dance movement and embodied practices. The program is designed to develop students' creative, imaginative, and critical knowledge skills, along with academic research capabilities within the domains of the dance movement, drama and creative arts therapy discourse. In keeping with the university's focus on promoting African scholarship, this program addresses the need for academically sound and adept, discipline-specific approaches that are indigenous to the culture. Much of the coursework has already been developed and meetings with interested parties both within the university and within the professional community have been held.

Drawing upon the voices of leaders in dance performance, education, and therapy who participated in meetings and interviews for this article, it is clear that there already exists substantial resources that can be drawn upon in the development of the field and academic practice and discipline of DMT in South Africa. Utilizing traditional healing practices and communal forms of living and relational realities that are context-specific and adapted to intrapersonal, interpersonal, social, cultural, and spiritual interconnected realities that exist here including the ways in which music, dance, and embodiment are used in the rituals of social engagement with traditional ceremonies held for individuals and groups as a way of marking passages such as transitions in the life cycle, bindings such as weddings, separations, life-stage passages such as initiation ceremonies, and occasions for collective healing. Such ceremonies can include the cleansing of evil spirits, spiritual benevolence, the healing of illness and a way to relate to individual and collective phenomena and experiences including natural and supernatural circumstances and powers. Music and dance constantly celebrate and affirm the vibrancy of life itself and are embedded in the generational passage not only of time but of the very nature of the social fabric of South African life. This program will draw upon the ritual aspects of dance/movement, embodiment, rhythm and music in the design of an African-centered dance therapy program at WITS. In addition, the engagement with some of the leaders in the field of practice, including dancers, dance movement educators, and dance movement therapists will include their voices in the design of programs and curricula. As Marcow-Speiser and Speiser (2022, p. 75) have articulated this process:

We are re-minding and re-bodying ourselves into a larger sense of togetherness deriving from an Ubuntu sense of community interdependence—a larger sense of belonging. We are entering another kind of dimension that we can tap into a liminal, in-between dimension in which the arts reside, that artists bring forward and make available to us.

Concluding Thoughts

This investigation has included some small part of the history and an articulation of some of the voices toward the creation of a bridge leading toward the form that DMT

will take in the academic context in South Africa. The reiteration of the importance and significance of human connection and capacity is evident. The power of seeing and being seen, thus collectively creating identity in ways that not only touch on the individual persona but encompass all forms of human existence is clearly expressed throughout these reflections. Although these forms of expression are familiar to western thought and models for DMT, what is novel and a major challenge is to build the South African model while integrating indigenous models that include the use of ritual, ceremony, musical rhythms, and the connection with spiritual practices and ancestral traditions.

There is an almost universal understanding that the power that dance movement creates a space that can heal and transform. The dictionary defines healing as “to make whole,” but what of the shattered and broken parts that so many experience in South African society, including the loss of hope and innocence that poverty, discrimination, and exposure to crime have instilled in the culture. To heal must also include living with all parts of this process including the making whole and the falling apart of the pieces. To some extent, the artist understands this form of expression and holding. The dance movement therapist is also trained to create space that holds this duality.

In tracing this brief history, through the words of some of the leading voices in the field who have been involved with dance in education, performance, therapy, and community work, I am in awe by what has already been accomplished in this country. It is this work and effort that ultimately will impact upon the installation of the field of DMT as it evolves in form and practice in South Africa. This form will be drawing upon and using the practices that are already here, bringing together the possibility of new collaborations through these re-combinations and including some of the multiplicity of voices in the ongoing dialogue. The use of dance movement became a form of protest and transgression during the apartheid. At the same time, it has also worked toward mitigating trauma pre- and post-apartheid, and this legacy and history will be translated into the future practice and professional training of dance/movement therapists in the future. Working together, we will dream and design the future of dance therapy as an academic discipline specific to South Africa and the African continent. The philosophical and spiritually embedded Ubuntu traditions of human connection and ways of being, as well as the existing indigenous healing practices, coupled with rigorous clinical training in dance/movement therapy will have a significant role to play in defining and refining the curriculum and ultimately will contribute toward healing in the community. It is hoped that in creating new forms of scholarship and pedagogy integrating movement and dance, creative and practical resources will further develop and that the program will establish new networks across the African continent. It is hoped that this exchange and mobilization of new knowledge will also inform and enrich the development of the creative arts therapy fields both in South Africa as well as other African countries.

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