

VRYSTAAT ARTS FESTIVAL – Bloemfontein, South Africa

SCREENDANCE: DIVERSITY & REPRESENTATION MATTERS

An online panel discussion via Zoom 02 July 2020 14-15:30 BST

Hosted by Georgina Thomson and Jeannette Ginslov

Introduction

This is an online Screendance panel event that presents and discusses the art form, Screendance. Screendance artists from diverse backgrounds have been asked to present their work, revealing what Screendance is, how they create it, and why it matters. It is also a panel discussion about the form of Screendance, the representation of bodies on screen, cultural diversity and its representation at International Screendance festivals.

Given the current socio-political climate we can no longer skirt around the issues of bodies race, diversity and their representation on screen. To date, this topic has never been fully discussed on a Screendance panel. Being highly contentious these issues are often difficult to talk about and overlooked in favour of other discussions on funding and networking, for example. These are also important issues, but the representation of dancing bodies cannot and should not be a discussion held by academics behind closed doors. Yes, it may be uncomfortable to talk about race and representation, but this discomfort needs to be discussed as we cannot get away from bodies, their representation and context. They are the very medium of Screendance, entangled with the medium of cinema. So how do we overcome something that we cannot and should not ignore? How do we ask these questions in and with our work and how is this represented on screens internationally? There may be no answers, but at least let us try to talk about these issues. We have work to do.

SCREENDANCE: DIVERSITY & REPRESENTATION MATTERS

Many thanks Georgina for the invitation to host this event and Isabel for your technical assistance, making this webinar possible. And a big thank you to all the Screendance practitioners attending this online panel discussion and your willingness to discuss your work and the issue at hand. So, I would like to introduce them all.

Omari Carter: Screendance practitioner, lecturer and body percussionist: UK

Gabri Christa: Dance filmmaker, Assistant Professor of Professional Dance Practice Barnard College and Curator-Director of *Moving Body-Moving Image Festival*: NYC USA

Simon Fildes: Screendance practitioner, producer, curator and teacher: Scotland

Robin Gee: Screendance practitioner, Associate Professor of Dance, University of North Carolina, Greensboro: USA

Smangaliso Siphesihle Ngwenya: Screendance practitioner, writer, choreographer and performer: South Africa

Dominique Roxanne Jossie: who is a Curator/Director of Screendance Africa, and a Film and TV Director and Producer, based in South Africa

Tania Vossgetter, who is a dance and screendance practitioner based in South Africa.

Welcome all. I intentionally selected this diverse group of Screendance practitioners, from various places around the world, to give voice to the issue at hand, that is so pertinent, given the times we are living in right now.

The topic: SCREENDANCE: DIVERSITY & REPRESENTATION MATTERS was instigated by the recent global Black Lives Matter protests and that got me thinking about race, identity and representation in Screendance and at Screendance Festivals. So, this event today is about opening up these issues, by asking some questions, perhaps not to solve these issues but to bring them to everyone's attention. So we will be looking at:

- 1) The creation of Screendance: how the invited Screendance practitioners create their work, and how they tackle the issue of people of colour in their Screendance.
- 2) Then we will open up to a panel discussion about the perception of Screendance Festivals and how they represent people of colour
- 3) Then we'll talk about Curation and Commissioning: what gets selected and funded and why
- 4) Lastly we'll look at how to tackle these issues followed by a Q&A by the online audience.

So now over to the practitioners who will discuss their works. Unfortunately, we can't stream the works through Zoom as the video streaming function is very glitchy. However, the online viewer may look at the YouTube links to the Screendance works that are listed in the Facebook livestream and here in the chat room. So over to the practitioners who will talk about their work. I invite you to ask questions after each presentation if you wish.

Omari Carter: *Ease on Down*

Gabri Christa: *Quarantine*

Simon Fildes: *Trio for a Quartet*

Robin Gee: *Wanting*

Smangaliso Siphesihle Ngwenya: *Fragmented Scribbles*

DISCUSSION:

Questions:

- 1) Perception of Screendance Festivals: From your perspective, do you see enough diversity and representation of people of colour at Screendance Festivals? Do you see yourself represented on screen.

- 2) As far as I have seen, the issue of race, identity and diversity very rarely crop up in Screendance. Why do think this is so? How and if you do, tackle these issues in your practice?
- 3) As far as I have seen, there are predominantly white dancing bodies in most of the Screendance at Festivals? Why do think this is so?
- 4) Screendance is still growing in most continents around the globe, but not in Africa. Why do you think this is happening?
- 5) The curation and the commissioning of Screendance seems to be problematic in the face of diversity and the representation of people of colour? Is this so and why?
- 6) How do we tackle these perceptions and challenge the status quo? What is the way forward?

Q&A

Open up to online viewers' questions.

SCREENDANCE PANEL 02 JULY 2020: Playlist on You

Tube <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL-byKtwPMjA5oLMeMID9zHL6farkpUqds>

Omari Carter: Associate Lecturer and Screendance Practitioner: UK

Ease on Down:

<https://youtu.be/MHw2LyTBWko>

Gabri Christa: Dance filmmaker, Associate Professor of Professional Dance Practice Barnard College and Curator-Director of Moving Body-Moving Image Festival: NYC USA

Quarantine:

<https://youtu.be/9iZH1BP6KvE>

Simon Fildes: Screendance practitioner, producer, curator and teacher: Scotland

Trio for a Quartet:

<https://youtu.be/kFzKJORI2H0>

Robin Gee: Screendance practitioner, Associate Professor of Dance, University of North Carolina, Greensboro: USA

Wanting

https://youtu.be/oSSu_W2I3Ho

Smangaliso Siphesihle Ngwenya: Screendance practitioner, writer, choreographer and performer: South Africa: Fragmented Scribbles

<https://youtu.be/K9xO88y7qk4>

