

Focusing a Choreographic Lens on Fresh Practices of the Imagination

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The films “Movement (R)Evolution Africa” and “Nora” have shared their myth-busting stories of African experimental dance artists with approximately 200,000 audience members worldwide to date. The films have been awarded 30 top prizes in over 100 official selections throughout the world, including Toronto Film Festival, New York African Film Festival, Cannes African Film Festival, Ann Arbor, Oberhausen, and Clermont Ferrand, to name just a few, highlighted by a rousing reception at the official selection screening of both films at FESPACO in February 2009 in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso.

The riveting work of the late Béatrice Kombé (1971-2007), Ivorian artistic director of the women’s dance company TchÉTché, planted the seed of African contemporary dance in my imagination. The more I learned about this extraordinary movement, the more it grew. Ms Kombé was later featured in the Center for African Studies’ inaugural arts-based Gwendolen M. Carter Conference “Movement (R)evolution Dialogues: Contemporary Performance in and of Africa,” on which my film “Movement (R)Evolution Africa” was based. In the film, experimental choreographers personalize an emergent art form by sharing their diverse viewpoints and stunning choreography: their works challenge stale stereotypes of “traditional Africa” and reveal soul-shaking choreographic responses to incidents of beauty and tales of tragedy.

Along with Ms. Kombé, the film features the choreographic signatures and philosophies of Germaine Acogny and Pape Ibrahim N’Diaye (Jant Bi, Senegal), Faustin Linyekula (Studios Kabako, DRC), Souleymane Badolo and Lacina Coulibaly (Kongo Ba Teria, Burkina Faso), Sello Pesa (South Africa), Ariry Andriamoaatsiresy (Ariry, Madagascar), Nora Chipaumire (Zimbabwe), and Rosy Timas and Rosy Fernandes (Raiz de Polon, Cape Verde), among others.

“Nora” was shot in Mozambique in fall of 2007 and features Nora Chipaumire, directed by



Alla Kovgan and David Hinton, in a choreographic recollection of her youth in Zimbabwe with original music by Zimbabwean legend, Va Thomas Mapfumo. “Nora” was commissioned by EMPAC Dance MOVIES, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, in association with the University for Florida Center for World Arts, with additional funding by the University of Florida Center for African Studies, Office of Research, Fine Arts Scholarship Enhancement Fund, and France Florida Research Institute, and funding from Capture, and Movement Revolution Productions.

The films were also selected by AFRI-Doc, an organization dedicated to disseminating fresh stories about Africa to distributors and broadcasters across the Continent and the Diaspora, helping to create new paradigms of thought, expression and social action for the twenty-first century. “Movement (R)Evolution Africa”

and “Nora” will soon join forces in a broadcast initiative by the National Black Programming Consortium, the principal provider of African American programming to PBS, who is taking the lead in a rapidly changing digital media environment with initiatives designed to maximize the potential of multiplatform delivery systems, in order to foster black public engagement and enrich mainstream public interest media.

Both “Movement (R)Evolution Africa” and “Nora” will be screened at the Reitz Union at the University of Florida in February 2010.

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