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# South African contemporary dance funding: perceptions of choreographers in the contemporary dance industry, in relation to shifting funding frameworks.

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**2008-06-24T11:19:17Z**
http://hdl.handle.net/10539/4977

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## CHAPTER 3:
## Findings of the Research

There were 110 names on the list I received from Georgina Thomson: a few of the numbers did not connect; a few numbers were never answered; so I eventually spoke to 68 people. Of this number, only one gentleman refused to be involved, and one other gentleman had to pull out of the research due to time constraints. So in total, 66 people agreed to complete the questionnaire or to be part of an interview. By the end of the research, 14 questionnaires had been returned, and 11 interviews had taken place, bringing the sample group to a total of 25.

In the questionnaires and interviews, open questions gave practitioners the space and freedom to comment on the current financial landscape and how they feel it has shifted, if at all. A list of suggested questions was provided prior to the interviews, allowing the participants the space to reflect privately in a manner that was not restricted by time or by the presence of other people (see **Appendix C**). Interviews allowed for debate to occur, and allowed the practitioner to ask me questions about my research too – about my findings so far, and why I was motivated to carry out this research. I tried to meet practitioners in places where they felt at ease, and explained the value of their contribution to my research process. While I initiated conversation through the use of the suggested questions, I tried to allow the responses of the practitioner to guide how the interviews progressed. This included questions encouraging ideas on what they feel is working or lacking in contemporary dance, whether or not they feel obliged to choreograph in a certain way or to deal with certain issues in order for funding to be granted.

As I am not a well-known or established choreographer or performer, and I was not requesting that participants disclose their personal income, names of their regular funders or how much they have been awarded, I feel that my research gathered fairly accurate responses. I embarked on this research to satisfy my own curiosity, but it will hopefully benefit the industry too. I hoped that this type of environment would encourage responses that were honest and sincere in order for perceptions to be accurately recorded. Qualitative research allowed me to access not only what people are thinking, but how and why they have arrived at their current views too. I hoped

WISED

that the mix of participants would provide a mix of attitudes and outlooks without participants feeling intimidated.

In order to get an overall review of the responses that were given, I have condensed the research into *quantitative* data, which can be found in **Appendix D**. Most of the responses were very straight forward, but where participants have not answered directly, I have interpreted their responses in the most accurate means possible. Some of the question did not lead to direct answers, or were simply left out, so I have counted these as inconclusive, but these have been discussed where I feel they could have swung the majority of responses to a different answer. It is easy to simply map out the responses in a quantitative manner. However, the problem with this is that the reasons, experiences and thought processes behind these responses are not given. Hence the reason to map out the qualitative data from questionnaires and interviews, as follows.

As evident in the data, the majority of participants (15) do not feel secure in the contemporary dance industry. Some are fortunate enough to have full time jobs teaching or in administrative work. This helps with the issue of survival, but as some point out this also interrupts their creative work. Commercial and corporate work also helps to supplement income for some, while some companies are purely supported by corporate work. A few of the participants discussed that it is difficult to have a sustainable dance income, but Lerato Maruping feels that his ability will keep him and his company, 'Urban Rituals', secure.

Maruping also points out that one major problem is that there is not a large enough audience, and that they need to grown and developed. He also stresses the need for more accessible venues, and believes that funds could be attained for them – that if we focus on growing companies, which need their own spaces, more performance spaces could be developed too. Elijah Mofokeng's company 'Targus Dance Group', performs in places such as old age homes, but also lacks a sense of security and despite numerous efforts has never been funded by the NAC. *Anonymous 2* teaches, but has been looking for financial stability for 5 years, and thought that by creating a Section 21 company she would be creating some sort of stability for her creative work, yet a vicious cycle still persists – if there is no funding there is no work, but if

WiSETD

there is no work there is no history for funding bodies to look at. She struggles with the issue of survival: do you remain with the contemporary dance style, or start to venture into multi-media and dance videos as a multi-disciplinary approach may help to generate funds?

Some participants also feel that there is no support for choreographers, that infrastructure is a problem, and that it is difficult to find sustainable dance funding, affecting the maintenance of a professional company and also affecting the experience they feel is required in order to access funds in the first place. Ivan Teme expresses his shaken security and how he feels that accessing funds is not about being good, but about being known. Matthew Manemala does not feel secure in the dance industry despite having a full-time job with a corporate performance company. He feels that he needs to create work that people will come and watch, which targets an audience. He feels that contemporary dance is not a style that is able to fill the Civic Theatre, although it does have some appeal for oversees audiences, but the problem here is that contemporary dance choreographers need to produce work that will sell to our own audiences too.

This lack of security does not only stem from difficulty in maintaining paying employment, but it also stems from a lack of various skills – writing of proposals, budgeting, business planning and marketing, for example. In this sample group, only nine people feel confident in their skills, three feel that they still need some assistance, but the large number of ten choreographers mainly feel unequipped, and struggle to find people who are willing to be paid minimally to complete the work for them. In this question, if the one inconclusive vote had been 'yes', then the same number of participants would have felt equipped as those who don't. I still feel that this number of those not feeling equipped is far too high, and this needs to be addressed as soon as possible. Participants also experience difficulty costing productions or projects, as there is no guideline for payment of salaries or fees, and quite a few of the participants admit that finance is their most difficult area. Another main concern is that of language, not only of feeling obliged to write in English (which is often a second language), but also the difficulty of expressing a creative project in words when one has not even begun rehearsing. *Anonymous 1* likens the process of writing applications to writing an exam, and *Anonymous 2* feels that she can write and budget

WiSETD

accordingly, which she has learnt through trial and error with the help of a colleague, yet found the application form difficult and full of jargon. *Anonymous 11* feels that she is not even remotely equipped, but rather just "stumbling around in the dark".

Mlu Zondi, of PANSA KwaZulu Natal, feels confident due to the fact that he has a job that requires a lot of arts administration, and Teme is confident because he learnt these skills through an institution. Despite working for companies, *Anonymous 4* and *Anonymous 10* are understaffed but do not have the funds to employ an administrator to oversee their bookkeeping, and do not have the experience or time to cover these areas themselves. They also cannot find someone who is available, sufficiently skilled, or willing to work for such a low salary. *Anonymous 12* feels that accessing funds is a full time job in itself, and that it is difficult to then try and create work at the same time.

Maruping would not trust his own monetary skills for budgeting, but feels that white people know what they want, and that funding bodies will accept financial breakdowns from whites but not blacks. This is a particularly worrisome view as it suggests that racial margins could be beginning to create tensions, especially if this is felt on a broader scale too. These margins are not related to artistic vision, but rather to resources, despite all of the transformations that have been determined by our policies in order to address issues of imbalance inherited from the previous government. Some participants feel that those with the skills are not willing to share them with others, and many still feel that despite having some knowledge about proposals, budgets, etc., there is still a need for skills development, guidance and support as many other dancers and choreographers are not equipped. As Moeketsi Koena says, in order for the community to grow, proper administrative understanding needs to come from the discipline too. There is a definite call for workshops and programs to teach these skills, and the predominant feeling is that this is the responsibility of the DAC and the funding bodies together.

One problem that seems to stem from this lack of security could be directly related to the lack of knowledge about amounts of funding and also simply around dates of application deadlines. I was shocked to see how little people knew about the actual amounts given to contemporary dance. Only a few of the participants admitted to

WITSETD

knowing how they could access the information, and no-one really seemed willing to answer who they thought was getting the funding. I wonder if this is because they really do not know, or because they don't want to jeapardise anyone's position in the industry. When the figure of R10million, awarded to dance as a whole by the NAC in 2005, was mentioned to interviewees, they appeared to be rather stunned, and Manemala finds the figure hard to believe as he feels he cannot see the change created by these funds. This is very worrisome, as it suggests that some practitioners may feel that the industry is not benefiting as a whole, and that only a few people are gaining from the new framework. I was also shocked by how few participants seem to know about funding deadlines. Constance Mcunu and *Anonymous 7* feel that the deadlines are always announced too late – saying that this then affects the quality of written applications and how projects are planned and budgets worked out. The only funding body whose deadline was mentioned was the NAC, and only 4 participants feel that it is their responsibility to find out.

The feelings of a lack of skills, and the evident lack of knowledge regarding funding and application deadlines could also be affecting the opinions regarding participants receiving their fair share of the funding. 12 of the 25 participants in the sample group feel that they do not receive their fair share, and only 2 participants feel that they do. Some feel that it is only people who are recognized by funding bodies who receive funding. Mcunu, who doesn't work independently but for a company, feels that there is not enough base support for choreographers, who must then struggle to create new works, and even struggle to tour old works. *Anonymous 4* answered that funders are not interested in "artistic experimentation". He is from the Eastern Cape, and believes that funding bodies are not sensitive to how his province falls behind in terms of "infrastructure, diversity of funds and financial support of any kind, audience support and education level". As previously mentioned, the distribution of resources provincially is already very imbalanced. This is a very important issue as it raises questions of accessibility to all funding bodies. I understand that funding demands are concentrated in certain geographical areas, but this gives all the more reason to ensure that fair distribution still occurs in all provinces.

A lot of the participants in this research are fully aware that there are more people trying to access the same resources, and that giving smaller amounts of funds to more

WitsETD

people allow the funds to reach more people. *Anonymous 2* only looks for funding for specific projects, but experiences problems with funding when she performs for a company. She feels that there is only "basic provision for basic survival", and has witnessed projects fall away because money is not available or has not been delivered. She has received funds from the NAC, but has still found them difficult to access. It has since been revealed that these problems of access were due to issues concerning the election of a new board – that an official board was not in place to sign over the allocated grants. *Anonymous 7* works with his own group, but feels that he can't create new and innovative options because he is afraid – if he has technical costs, actors, live musicians and dancers, how does he support them all? He feels that he is in a 'Catch-22', and that the people making the criteria do not care about dance or performers. He feels that they don't understand what's happening, and have no idea about investing in the arts. Sadly, he is not the only participant with this comment, as discussed a little later in this chapter.

Three of the participants received funding from the NAC the first time that they applied, and felt that this funding was sufficient for their projects, and covered costs that they couldn't have covered without funding. Another participant has never been funded, despite numerous applications, and three have never applied for funding. One of these is Teme, who was under the impression in February 2006 that NAC application forms were not available because they were in the process of sorting out their board. The second is Maruping, who raises his own funds but sees funding problems from both sides: that the NAC does not have enough money for everyone, and that choreographers do not get what they ask for. Linda-lee Mhlongo feels that the criteria are too stringent, and application forms too thick and complex. While he has been given advice over the phone, he has not received feedback as to why his applications for funding weren't awarded, despite asking for it. He feels that he should shift his focus and be more resourceful in order to acquire the funds he needs.

The third participant who has never applied for funding doesn't know who to write to. She has little faith that she will receive funding anyway as she is white, and suspects that the only people getting funding are those dealing with AIDS, and that this infringes on her artistic freedom. These types of negative feelings are particularly dangerous as they could very well lead to issues of intolerance and inadvertent

WISETD

feelings of being subjected to racism, no matter who is saying it. Mofokeng feels that "half a loaf is better than nothing" but that this doesn't provide for a better future, despite his company doing work to benefit their community. There is only so much optimism that can be generated and held onto while trusting that things will get better. Promises need to be delivered in order to avoid a bad taste from remaining, and while they may not be deliverable immediately, allowing people to voice their concerns and listening with a sincere ear can go a long way in keeping up morale.

Manemala doesn't think that funding is the only problematic concern, but believes that people need to take responsibility for how they are funded. He describes how choreographers should align themselves effectively with concepts such as 'transformation' and 'economic empowerment' in order to meet the requirements of the funding environment and receive what one applies for. But skills are needed in order to effectively understand and implement these concepts while avoiding work that is only investigated on a surface level, or is purely for show. This is particularly relevant when it comes to training, as I suspect that many newly established companies are not aware of the opportunities to develop programmes that could lead their participants to acquiring qualifications recognized and registered with the South African Qualifications Authority. This is by no means a quick answer to the situation where the country is in desperate need of dance teachers, and certain standards do need to be upheld. But perhaps this is an issue that could be addressed through the opening up of channels for discussion. *Anonymous 10* feels that their company is receiving their fair share (despite delays in receiving said funds) compared to other companies – especially when you weigh this against their achievements and capacity to implement given projects. She is quick to point out that this does not necessarily mean that these funds are sufficient – but that staff salaries and project budgets are both still too low.

Participants of the research also predominantly feel that funders are not achieving what they set out to do, or that the funders themselves are not really aware of what they are trying to achieve, and if they were, practitioners would be receiving more funding. *Anonymous 12* feels that his time is being wasted because he has no idea of what funders are looking for, and *Anonymous 1* feels that this depends on what you think achievement is – that funding bodies say they are furthering opportunities for

WitsETD

many people, but the public never hears from the recipient choreographers again after the Dance Umbrella. He can see that people are getting funds, but feels that other people should be asking how they're using them. Zondi feels that a large portion of funding goes into projects with a short lifespan, so they are not benefiting anyone in a sustainable manner. He feels that practitioners do not believe that those inside the funding bodies know their own criteria or have an understanding of the dance world and the challenges it faces. *Anonymous 7* says that funders are still thinking of the modern dance, and do not understand contemporary dance, which he feels is the least funded dance style. This would indicate that funding bodies are not shifting with and understanding larger developments in dance, and are instead focusing on trends that have since dated. It is Vivian Viljoen of 'Kusile Youth Dance Theatre' who answers positively though, saying that although they only receive a percentage of what they need to survive, the government is achieving something as communities are being helped.

While the fact that works are being created might indicate that funding bodies are achieving their goals, Manemala feels that dancers need to improve their networks, to align themselves accordingly and to consider in which way they then apply for funding. One participant believes that funders know exactly what they are doing, and that it is actually managers who sometimes lose proper count of their group fees. Again, this is a very interesting answer, as one must question if this experience is a result of poor skills and a lack of information, or simply the result of dishonesty. *Anonymous 4* explains that he doesn't know what funding bodies want anymore, and that their phrases such as "national importance", "development" and "artistic excellence" seem to have lost any depth to their meaning. He points out that "artistic excellence" cannot be achieved without sustaining companies, and that "pumping" money into underprivileged areas and many community groups does not necessarily result in skills development. He further describes how he has seen amateurish work from Gauteng go to the Eastern Cape, but feels that the province can't expect the development of "dance teaching skills" to happen in just one week, "to the extent that unemployment is reversed". Despite this, this participant acknowledges that festival commissions or assistance does help to stimulate and develop new works, but that of you have to travel far in order to get to festivals, a large portion of your funding is

WiSETD

spent on traveling and accommodation so that little is left for salaries or the production.

There also seems to be the opinion that funding bodies are not meeting the needs of artists, as they do not speak to them. *Anonymous 11* feels that there is no effort by funders to become familiar with a choreographer's work when allocating funds. Even if the executive structure of the body is fine, it is felt that administrators are not available to answer questions. Three participants do not know the goals of funding bodies and one of these does not feel inspired to find out. This information can be found out by accessing websites and by phoning the specific funding bodies, but it cannot be assumed that everyone has the resources to retrieve this information, especially if phone calls are not returned and you have no access to the Internet. This research will hopefully flag this problem, and lead to steps being taken to decrease problems of resources and access to information. Mhlongo expressed these points, and feels that you need to know someone inside the funding body in advance. Maruping feels that funders are achieving their goals, as funding was provided for the Grahamstown Festival. He feels that sustainability can be achieved through corporate work, and by performing as well as choreographing, and that this will create dance as employment, and not just as a hobby. Teme feels that funders need to try and understand and see choreographer's visions, and should see and monitor what work is being done. He too sees some of the problems that the NAC faces – that some choreographers create problems for others by not sticking to their budgets or working the hours they said they would.

*Anonymous 5* finds not receiving funding problematic to one's conviction as a choreographer, as it could suggest that one's work is not of an acceptable standard, even if this is not so. She also questions why society won't support contemporary dance as it opens discourse, even if it doesn't serve consumerism. Perhaps this aversion to consumerism is what sets contemporary dance apart from other dance styles, and therefore represents very different needs too.

This brings me to the question of whether or not there is a problem with contemporary dance. Many problems were pointed out for this question, starting with the feeling that there is not enough money and that the same people receive funding, as

WISETD

previously mentioned. Mcunu feels that the benefits of contemporary dance for our country are not seen and there is therefore less respect for it. I wonder if this lack of respect is really a result of a lack of exposure or information surrounding contemporary dance to a larger audience, and if improved media exposure and marketing would improve this as more information provides more understanding. *Anonymous 1* feels that funders see an artform that is not supported, and then question why they should support it, instead of looking for ways to grow audiences as well as performers and develop the industry as a whole. Participants repeat that funding is not accessible, and that funders do not send emails or pamphlets telling the public about themselves. Many of the interviewees refer mainly to the NAC, and quite a number have not heard of BASA or ACT. It is obvious that the ACT has a smaller purse than the NAC, but awareness about the funding that has been provided and of joint ventures between the researched funding bodies might give a sense of an environment that is growing through many different routes, and not just through the size of its budget allocations. I find myself wondering how many of the research participants know of research that has been conducted by the funding bodies, but I also find myself wondering how many of them would have attended any seminars revealing the information.

Zondi points out that almost all of Durban's contemporary dance companies have closed due to a problem with funding. This causes dancers to create smaller companies that in turn need funding, but have no lifespan and disappear. He highlights the fact that most choreographers need affiliations with main companies for experience and work, and feels that a large percentage of funds should be going to full-time companies and then a smaller percentage to independent choreographers. This appears to be the kind of route Monamodi is trying to introduce at the NAC. *Anonymous 4* stresses that funders are not aware of the negative impact of repeated gaps in funding.

He believes that especially with dance, ongoing training is needed and that a momentum and relationships are built up, only to be put on hold while new funding is sought out and dancers seek alternative work for a month, or two, or six. He emphasizes that this is "exacerbated" in the Eastern Cape, as dancers often then move away to cities or overseas and don't return. The whole cycle must then begin again,

WitsETD

but from scratch, which he finds “frustrating and demoralizing”. He also points out that funders don’t understand the experimental nature of contemporary dance, and how this style often develops into mainstream trends; that there is little in the way of long-term value and that the artistic and cultural value of contemporary dance cannot be measured only in economic terms. Often the value of a series of dance workshops does not lie in the art of dance at all, but rather in the power of bringing people together and allowing them the space to express themselves through the art of movement and to feel part of a network that extends not only into their communities, but further too. Sometimes the power of a contemporary dance work is in challenging public perceptions, or in revealing certain truths that may touch the experiences of the audience too, validating feelings and connecting people. These too cannot be measured or valued through economic terms, and need to be assessed and gauged under their own conditions. This includes giving the respect deserved of the artistic and creative process of producing a contemporary dance work. An environment that demoralizes and therefore loses its artists, speaks of judgment and a lack of respect that the new South Africa is supposedly built upon.

*Anonymous 10* reveals that the company she works with does community/developmental work as a “pay-off” for funding received, allowing the company to then create work. She feels that these pathways should be linked, but that there needs to be the realization that some people are better equipped to train, and others to create. For this reason, she maintains that artistic products should be treated and assessed differently to projects focusing on community or skills development. She also points out that too much emphasis is placed on how the proposal is written (given the language and educational context of South Africa). *Anonymous 10* gives the suggestion that *projected* outcomes be assessed through interviews and discussions. Then *achieved* outcomes could be assessed through actually visiting projects during the process of the project and after its completion. She feels that this might help to avoid people who write well from portraying the project as successful when its value is in fact questionable. This also relates back to the question of skills development, for I suspect that many companies are doing community work without being aware of means of generating feedback and evaluating their projects.

WiSETD

*Anonymous 2* supports the question around assessing projects through written work instead of assessing projects visually. She also sees that companies need to be sustaining themselves and looking for alternative sources of funding, but that there should be a balance between sustaining growth and stimulating new voices. She sees this approach to funding as "mature", and without it achievement can't be accomplished. Funding bodies are also trying to promote sustainability, but while many of the participants see this, I do not think they see how this could be achievable. Funding bodies can't function on the notion that everyone knows how to operate in a sustainable manner without ensuring that those in the industry have a way of understanding and learning the means to do so. Practitioners do have the responsibility of keeping themselves informed, but funding bodies need to make sure that information is being interpreted correctly too.

*Anonymous 6* has also experienced the problem of only receiving funds late, forcing her to draw on her own resources to pay performers, designers and herself. This created a poor working environment and a circle of debt. This could affect how many people would be willing to work with her in the future, even if she is considered to be a strong upcoming choreographer. This shows how certain funding bodies are putting recipients at risk, not only artistically and professionally, but in personal financing too. *Anonymous 6* also questions the sustainability of the current funding environment, pointing out that small amounts of money only allow a work to appear once, and resources are not available to grow the product and increase its size.

Maruping agrees that there is a problem, and that funders don't think contemporary dance is very strong because there is a lot of repetition of vocabulary. Mhlongo feels that the problem is that there is more interest in traditional and popular dance, and that dancers need to be "classically" trained, be it Indian, African or Ballet. *Anonymous 7* sees a problem with the large gaps in time between platforms in the Dance Umbrella, at the Dance Factory and the Grahamstown Festival, pointing out that platforms help to build audiences. These large gaps in time also affect issues of sustainability, especially if companies are not able to contract their performers if they are receiving no income. Festivals and platforms allow choreographers and performers to choose dance as their career paths, and not just approach it as a sideline salary. He lays emphasis on the fact that skills development is vital as it's not enough to just

WiSETD

choreograph because funders also focus on workshops. On top of this, he reminds us that we are also competing internationally. He feels that it is more difficult to receive funds from the NAC now than previously, and that the process of funding is difficult, that the DAC takes 4 months to process applications and can't answer questions about their own forms. He is very wary of "popular entertainment" developing for the 2010 Soccer World Cup. He believes that some people are holding workshops in order to attract funding, but that others are also trying to give something back. Teme has also experienced this, but more as a manner of tokenism – where workshops are only offered in order to attract funding. Teme feels that he is creating to get funding and not because he feels inspired, and Manemala supports this approach that it is not always about artistic passion, but about earning money off which to live. He stresses too that an intervention is needed with the government, as they are just doing what they think is right for the arts without confirming their belief with practitioners.

I think that it is already becoming evident that there is a lot of negativity among the participants of the research. When asked about the situation of dance funding in South Africa currently and in the future, only one participant was optimistic and opinions then ranged from hopeful to very negative. Firstly another participant, Mcebisi Bhayo felt that the situation is not good, but that through meeting and discussing problems we can make a change for the better. At the moment, *Anonymous 6* believes that the people running the funding bodies come across as being inexperienced, and while there is friendliness from funding bodies, they could still be more supportive as it is challenging enough simply trying to support oneself. A slightly different angle comes from *Anonymous* 7, who feels that it's only international guests that are seen watching works at festivals, and not funders (whom he believes simply read the press for feedback) or even our own local artists. *Anonymous 11* has been at sold out performances where seats reserved for funders remained empty. Mhlongo would like the local councils to take more interest in the work of contemporary dancers – as far as he knows, their limit for funding is R5000. Even then, he feels that his work is expected to be political, and agrees with the approach that funders need to do site visits before they reject or provide requested funds. This influence from funders is also expressed by *Anonymous 1*, who says that while funders think things are actually going well, it is not that easy if you are not connected to or using HIV/AIDS as a theme; he wants artists to be supported for

WiSETD

expressing their views on what they want, and not have their creative interests be predetermined by what the government wants, unless they get hired to do so.

*Anonymous 4* is of the opinion that public and corporate funding had turned away from dance and now favours "recognizably "artistic" or "entertainment" genres" such as visual art and jazz (he has reached this opinion when comparing awards and festivals available to the different genres). He relates this to the marketing potential within contemporary dance, and how it does not appeal to the "traditional sense of aesthetic" associated within classical dance, and therefore does not appeal to the same size audience. *Anonymous 4* feels that contemporary dance is justified through two ways: through "affirmation of cultures", or "community development work". He maintains that the artform, and its associated investigations and innovations, always takes second place. He thus prefers the greater artistic freedom he experiences in his solo work, when compared to creating work for public funders. He is willing to create smaller scale works in order to maintain this artistic satisfaction. I find this to be very unfortunate, as I am sure he is not the only choreographer to feel and do this. Trusting that the funds are available, and that there are no artistic strings attached to these funds, should not be something that choreographers see as impossible. Well-known dance critic Adrienne Sichel points out that solo work is what some of our choreographers/performers, such as Vincent Mantsoe, have become known for[1]. This may work for some choreographers, but as a whole I feel the industry needs to remain conscious of how much this is happening, in order to avoid an environment consisting predominantly of solo works or small casts.

Throughout the research, it was expressed that dancers are paid terribly, and that if things are not rectified soon, we run the threat of losing a lot of talented choreographers and dancers. Zondi stresses that the dance industry needs a lot of work, and is actually getting worse, and Mcunu also asserts that the situation is deteriorating badly – that established companies have been closed because of a lack of funding, and many more are hanging on by a string for the same reason. She believes that this is a result of problems with management in the funding bodies and not because there is no money set aside for contemporary dance, and this is also noted by

[1] Telephonic interview with Ms Sichel, 12th August 2006.

WitsETD

*Anonymous 9* and *Anonymous 2*. The latter is not positive about the future as she feels that the past and the history of misspent funds have not been properly dealt with, and that relationships need to be built without affiliations becoming problematic. If there was more communication between the funding bodies and the dance community as a whole, these types of issues could be addressed and openly discussed, instead of allowing them to remain unresolved and incorrectly portrayed. *Anonymous 10* is not very confident, and suspects that policy could change for the worse at any moment, without the policymakers consulting those within the industry. This adds to the feelings of suspicion and distrust, which creates even more tension between choreographers and funding bodies.

Maruping feels there are not very many sources from which to grow the funding pot, yet he also acknowledges that the demand for resources is too large for just the NAC to deal with. He suggests that someone like the NLDTF should help in establishing companies and their own homes – including proper dance floors, music systems, mirrors and body conditioning apparatus, and Teme also highlights the problem of finding a space to rehearse and perform in. *Anonymous 5* notes that people need to know what the minimum payment is, and how notions such as "earn-while-you-learn" could help in avoiding community work from being seen as "tokenism" or insincere. Manemala suspects that dance drags behind the other creative industries, and *Anonymous 11* voices her opinion that other artists, such as musicians, don't only receive money from funders, but are making money too. Manemala emphasises the need for choreographers and dancers to share information and to speak out because no one seems to know how they're surviving, and stresses that stakeholders need to play a bigger role in the development of contemporary dance, especially because the DAC does not see dance as a viable career, as it "doesn't grow the economy".

This brings us to the question of whether participants believe funders are looking for certain criteria in order to grant funding, or not. This question was interpreted in two general ways: firstly, some took the criteria to mean themes, while others interpreted it as set criteria outlining what they will or won't fund. In terms of themes, a variety of differing opinions emerged. Some feel that race is very important, and dealing with HIV/AIDS and culture, or coming from a disadvantaged background was also mentioned. One gentleman feels that the chances of having traditional dance funded

WISER

are very slim, and that contemporary dance take preference, while another feels that "African style" dance takes preference. Some of these are discussed further when the question of boundaries is addressed. *Anonymous 2* feels that the criteria are always changing, and that artists do not know what they should be building into their projects in order to improve their project's chances of receiving funding, such as outreach/nation building/political or social issues.

The more administrative criteria that were acknowledged were that it is more difficult to receive funding if you are not registered and that that you need references. Many have correctly stated that the NLDTF does not accept applications from individuals, but only one has added that individuals can still apply through institutions. Some of the participants believe that it is not only about meeting the wants of the government, but about selling a viable product, and that one shouldn't send the same proposal to all of the funding bodies, emphasizing the importance of how you apply. One lady still maintained that some funders do not even know what their own criteria are, and that it is sometimes as if they fund via a random selection. One gentleman maintains that he does not know what they want, and that when he does, the same companies get funding anyway. It seems that most of the participants are quite opposed to the complexity of the required documents, and I can understand this as nobody wants to be interrogated simply for wanting to create a work.

It is *Anonymous 10* who seems to be supportive that funding bodies have some form of criteria by which to select recipients. She explains this by pointing out how a lot of emphasis has been placed on "good governance structures" and "financial accountability or compliance" within government structures. Yet she still warns that this should not be detrimental to those artists who are just starting out, lest we find ourselves in the situation where only established companies could access funds. Liani Mare became frustrated though when she kept being asked for more documents as she progressed through the process of application. She believes that the process needs to be streamlined, and *Anonymous 2* questions if a file is kept on applicants so that the process does not have to be repeated with each application. Mare was surprised when she (with a partner) was funded the full requested amount the first time she applied. She had been advised that this wouldn't happen. She does admit that it was a politically based work though, showing how things are different today.

WISETD

*Anonymous 4* wrote that if his money is obtained from public funds, he feels obliged to meet their criteria, but then feels artistically constrained. Maruping feels that criteria don't affect artistic decisions because some very extravagant artists are able to show their work. Yet, *Anonymous 7* feels stifled by the criteria as he feels it goes against the very nature of contemporary dance and that his artistic integrity is affected. He feels and that you may as well be doing purely "African" dance for entertainment instead of choreographing what he really wants to. It is these types of artistic criteria that particularly sparked my attention at the beginning of the research. One of the most interesting questions to me was if participants feel boundaries are created within the dance world by funding.

Zondi pointed out that boundaries exist everywhere, especially in art. Yet the types of boundaries that are described by the participants vary from physical boundaries to creative boundaries. One participant believes that boundaries are put in place by funding only being available for one term, but Mcunu wrote that boundaries are created when funds are not available to help to effectively run the company. She highlights how trying to manage one's own company and projects inhibits creativity. *Anonymous 4* also points out the link between funding and artistic vision – how more funding places less limitations on artistic vision – but is very quick to point out that given South Africa's funding history, huge expenditure becomes obscene, and to question "who says what is too much, and in relation to what?" Two more points of interest that Mare makes are the following: choreographers need to be mindful of whom they approach for funding, as organizations have certain agendas and policies determined by their boards; and that a lot of the available funds constitute public money and therefore need to serve the public, even if it is only indirectly. She questions why public money should support the work you create if nobody wants to see it, but then who has the right to dictate what the artistic product should be.

*Anonymous 4* points out that discrimination exists between the Eastern Cape and metropolitan areas, between contemporary dance and other genres, and between experimental ethos and producing the known. He admits that while this discrimination may not be intentional or clearly stated, its effect is still felt. Mofokeng believes that you must do contemporary dance in order to receive funding,

WITSETD

while *Anonymous 7* believes that contemporary dance is the least funded genre and that the funding process is stifling. He emphasises that these boundaries are not necessarily about race, but about a certain way of thinking, that the people reviewing are thinking the same way. Other participants mention that race (subtly), HIV/AIDS and politically correct works receive funding, that because of what South Africa has been through people keep "hammering on" the same topics because funders like to fund what is familiar. Two participants believe that if you want funding, you must conform to what everyone else is doing resulting in no new or original works being created, and that the industry is stuck in a rut.

The effects of funding are felt by *Anonymous 6*, who says that it complicates her work process, and that she now creates work of a more political nature instead of about her preferred issues dealing with humanity. Mhlongo feels that there are no regular (or even occasional) meetings between artists and funders, and so artists need to also take responsibility for the situation that we find ourselves in, and responsibility for the future that we rapidly approach. *Anonymous 1* feels that "democracy has not come into play fully" and that government funds according to race. For this reason, he (a white male) feels he needs to seek funding with private people. I found it very interesting that all of the white participants mentioned feeling insecure in the industry because of their race, but only one black participant mentioned race, and this was in the context of funding bodies trusting and believing the accuracy of budgets in applications of whites over blacks. The issue of race is a very difficult one to tackle, one that requires its own research and understandings, but it is important to question if this racial mental divide is being reflected further in the industry too. It would be a great pity if the very system we have managed to grow out of is being repeated in a different, and more dangerous manner – unconsciously and silently.

Participants were also asked if they feel it is more difficult to access funds as an individual or as a group, and as a new choreographer as opposed to an experienced choreographer. There were also some conflicting responses given: *Anonymous 8* feels that it is more difficult to access funds as a smaller group, while Zondi describes how in Durban (despite the loss of large companies), people like himself are creating new works because it is cheaper to be smaller. Ros Wood-Morris found her experience fairly easy, but believes that this is because she filled in her form correctly.

WISETD

Mcunu states that it is always hard to access funds, as there is not enough support or care for contemporary dance. *Anonymous 4* points out some other binds created – when he applied for funding as an individual, and was turned down, he too was advised to set up a company as he can then justify larger amounts of funding as salaries spread between a few people. However, if he was to ask for the actual amount needed to survive as an individual artist, he feels that it would probably be an amount too large to be considered; he also points out that as an individual, his capacity to offer redress and community benefits seem to fall away, leaving him less preferable to companies who can offer these criteria.

A number of participants are thinking of opening their own companies now, and have also been advised by people inside funding bodies to do this. It is easy to see why this may make sense, when you see some of the reasons given for individual funding being more difficult: it's harder to become known internationally as an individual; it is more risky as it's more difficult to be recognized; you have no profile and groups benefit the community, making group funding easier; less accountability as an individual and therefore greater reluctance on behalf of the funders to support you. As Teme says, even the established choreographers had to struggle through their early years.

The majority of participants are under the impression that it is more difficult to access money as a new choreographer, as opposed to applying as an established choreographer, and to some this is understandable as people want to see references and backgrounds that they can look up. But *Anonymous 1* says that in this background check, funders want to see if you have reached a wide variety of people or why should they bother funding if there is nothing in it for them. He feels that this is when choreographers then start to conform to themes. Zondi bares witness to well-known, established choreographers who cannot seem to access funds, but Wood-Morris was funded by the NAC despite the fact that she doubts they know who she is. Bhayo acknowledges that it is very difficult when you are new, but that this also makes you work harder, while Mcunu feels that as an experienced choreographer funding gets easier because you have bank statements and a rich CV that shows your success. Again though, *Anonymous 1* argues that being successful makes funding

WitsETD

easier, but that new underprivileged choreographers will get funding because of a greater community status gained by funders through supporting them.

Other reasons given for perceiving that being a new choreographer is more difficult is because with experienced people funders can see longevity and can begin to form partnerships with you; new choreographers still have a lot of risk associated with them and people are wary of taking risks when distributing funding money. *Anonymous 10* raises the question: "how do you get a track record if you are not able to access funds in order to make work in the first place?" while *Anonymous 2* questions whether projects really need lots of money anyway, stating that some people are still able to make a plan through perseverance; that artistic integrity needs to be maintained. One participant feels that some requirements from newcomers are not requested from experienced choreographers, and that funding only supports a select few who are recognised. The circle is then repeated, where they are recognized and therefore funded again, relating back to the question posed earlier on in this paragraph. This participant also would like some funding before she is recognized, enabling her to ascend the funding ladder too.

*Anonymous 7* feels that one needs to be a company for the associated security, even though it is hard to maintain a company professionally with little funding. But Teme suggests that funding bodies should support new choreographers for about six months, and then renew the funding if they see evidence commitment and perseverance. For the second time in his interview, Teme points out that he also sees how other new choreographers have ruined the chances for others to receive funding, by not delivering on their promises.

Participants were also asked if they felt certain styles or themes take priority. While two participants answered "no", there were a variety of styles mentioned that other participants feel do take priority: ballet (x3), African (x2), African contemporary, contemporary, traditional (yet another participant felt that traditional will not be funded), and anything close to a Western aesthetic. A number of themes taking priority have already been mentioned in earlier questions, but some more appeared here: work with a "South African flavour", black companies/black South African issues, Soweto, politics, community, and these were listed by participants across

WJSETD

races. It seems that Hagemann's theory of the danger of "market forces" is supported here – that through the desire or need to attract and effectively access funds, participants feel the pressure of conforming to certain themes or ideas instead of creating works that speak deeply and honestly.

*Anonymous 1* has nothing against people liking African contemporary dance, but feels that because it is well received, people continue to do it. He just feels that there should be more on offer. Zondi feels that contemporary dance takes priority because he feels that it is one form that can transcend all genres, and is in line with contemporary art. He feels that it is also highly profiled by festivals such as the Dance Umbrella and Jomba. *Anonymous 10* would like us to consider how much funding is awarded to orchestras and ballet companies. She acknowledges that they have very large staff requirements, but feels that the amounts allocated are disproportionate when compared to contemporary dance. This participant states that this is probably because they are seen as being more important, and taken more seriously as "real" art (depending on which funding body you are looking at).

Some participants do not feel that race has become an issue in the contemporary dance world. But the experiences of two participants prove otherwise – one feels that an all white company finds it difficult to find funding, and is forced to change the profile of its performers in order to suite funders, instead of suit their own artistic needs. *Anonymous 2* does not feel that this is about "giving back" as she questions who considers what can be called "giving back". *Anonymous 6* points out that as a white female she feels her proposals will be overlooked. Her ideas and themes are then influenced by what she thinks is expected from funders. Instead of race, *Anonymous 7* talks about quality being lost, and that he often he feels he is performing to drunk businessmen in order to make a living. He feels that in France, people want to see you do African steps with a bare chest; he sees these expectations overseas, yet feels that this is being promoted in our own country too.

Looking back on the interviews and questionnaires that have been processed, I am concerned by the overwhelmingly negative responses from the majority of the participants. There are the odd few who mention some positive points, but even if these were to make up half of the answers, it would still not be enough. I do not feel

WISETD

that there were sufficient positive answers to say that the participants of this research perceive the contemporary dance funding in an encouraging way. So while it is evident that this genre is receiving more funds in total, it is even more apparent that my sample group still feels that there are significant problems that urgently need addressing.

WitsETD