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From Colonial Imposition to Cultural Liberation:
A Journey through Jamaican Dance Theatre

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Abstract

The thesis explores the process of decolonising art and culture in Jamaica through dance theatre. It focuses on traditional and contemporary dance forms, particularly on L'Antech, a Caribbean modern dance technique developed by Dr. L'Antoinette Stines. The study begins with an overview of traditional Jamaican dances and their role in cultural preservation and resistance against colonial oppression, emphasising their significance in maintaining cultural continuity and fostering a sense of community.

The emergence of contemporary dance theatre in Jamaica is examined, focusing on the work of the National Dance Theatre Company (NDTC) and L'ACADCO: A United Caribbean Dance Force. These companies are analysed to demonstrate how modern dance practices have contributed to the decolonial process, challenging Eurocentric norms and creating unique dance languages¹ that reflect Jamaica's rich cultural heritage.

The thesis also delves into a detailed examination of L'Antech as a method of decolonisation. L'Antech blends traditional Jamaican dance forms with classical ballet and contemporary techniques, offering a dynamic platform for cultural expression and education. The technique's emphasis on spirituality, *synerbridging*² and cultural symbolism is explored, showcasing how it reconnects dancers with their ancestral roots and promotes holistic, spiritual, and physical engagement with dance.

However, the challenges associated with using L'Antech as a decolonial practice are also acknowledged. Issues of authenticity, cultural hybridisation, commercialisation, and institutionalisation are critically examined, drawing on the theoretical perspectives of scholars such as Margaret Kohn and Keally McBride. These challenges underscore the complexity of decolonisation in the arts and highlight the need for ongoing reflection and adaptation.

In conclusion, the thesis asserts that decolonising art and culture in Jamaica through dance theatre is a continuous and dynamic process. It emphasises that techniques like L'Antech are crucial in reclaiming cultural heritage, challenging oppressive structures, and promoting inclusive artistic expression. The study offers a hopeful vision for the future of Jamaican culture and identity, emphasising the transformative power of dance on the decolonial journey.

¹ Dance Languages: are structured, non-verbal communication methods used in classical ballet, a distinct mode of body communication from Martha Graham or La Técnica Cubana, involving precise body syntax and movement, gestures, and mime (Stines, 2021).

² Synerbridge refers to combining two or more movement types, facilitating cross-cultural sharing, blending, mixing, or mutating, and making cultural connections. (Stines, 2021).

Background

As a Black Jamaican dancer, my journey across different cultures and continents has profoundly shaped my understanding of race, identity, and the power of dance. I grew up in Jamaica, a predominantly Black society, and was unaware of the harsh realities of racism. In all its forms, dance was a universal language to me—an art form where no style was superior to another, each worthy of recognition and admiration.

I was introduced to classical arts in infancy and naturally gravitated towards more contemporary styles such as pop, hip hop, reggae, and dancehall as I grew older. The 1985 film "White Nights" was pivotal to my artistic development. The film's depiction of Mikhail Baryshnikov's ballet prowess and Gregory Hines' virtuoso tap dancing left an indelible mark on me. The film's themes of diversity, socio-emotional learning, and moral and ethical dilemmas deeply resonated with me and fuelled my passion for dance.

My journey took a significant turn when I joined L'ACADCO, a premier dance company in Jamaica, where I was introduced to the L'Antech technique. Initially, my goal was to hone my skills in preparation for a move to the United States. However, L'Antech opened my eyes to the richness of Jamaican and Caribbean culture. Under the mentorship of Dr. L'Antoinette Stines, the creator of L'Antech, I immersed myself in this unique dance technique. I became a certified teacher, participated in lecture demonstrations, and embraced the profound cultural narratives embedded in L'Antech.

Applying Kendi's ideas, I aim to explore how dance can serve as a medium to challenge and redefine racial narratives. Dance can be a form of antiracist action, asserting the values of diversity and inclusion through performance and community engagement. Kendi emphasises the need for persistent self-awareness and critique, which can be paralleled in the continuous evolution and reinterpretation of dance forms to resist static, oppressive cultural norms.

Acho opens dialogue on the difficult questions surrounding race, which can be analogous to exploring diverse cultural expressions through dance. He encourages open discussions about race and identity, mirrored in this work by using dance as a platform for these conversations. Acho's approach to addressing uncomfortable truths can inspire methodologies in dance that confront and challenge racial and cultural stereotypes, promoting a deeper understanding and appreciation of different heritages.

Jamaica, often described as a cultural melting pot, boasts a rich tapestry of influences, from the Indigenous Tainos to the successive waves of Spanish and English colonialism to the indentured slavery of the Chinese and Indians, culminating in our independence in 1962. Jamaican culture, with its global impact—from Miss World titles to reggae and dancehall music, world-class athletes, and cuisine—has always been a source of pride. However, as I reflect on my childhood and observe current events, it is clear that the decolonisation of our culture remains incomplete. Colonialist mindsets linger, subtly embedded in our societal fabric.

My personal decolonisation journey began with L'Antech. Dr Stines' innovative dance technique prompted me to reconsider the significance of every cultural element and recognise our collective identity as Jamaicans. L'Antech serves as a living narrative, continuously retelling our cultural stories and reinforcing our identity.

Over the past fifteen years, living and working in predominantly white spaces in Cuba, the Netherlands, and Germany has brought me face-to-face with racism, a lack of diversity, and the marginalisation of Caribbean cultures. These experiences forced me to develop coping mechanisms, such as code-switching, while steadfastly clinging to my cultural roots to avoid assimilation and maintain my cultural integrity.

This paper represents more than just an academic endeavour; it is a testament to my belief in L'Antech's transformative power. I hope this research will contribute to the ongoing process of decolonisation in Jamaica and the broader Caribbean. Through dance, we can reclaim our narratives, celebrate our heritage, and pave the way for a more inclusive and culturally aware future.

I aim to underscore the importance of understanding and embracing our cultural heritage by sharing my narrative. This thesis explores dance theatre and is a call to action for the continuous decolonisation of our minds and societies through the arts.

Introduction

Reflecting the ongoing debate on the issue of defining a national dance form, the author critiques how Jamaican folk dance has been described and classified by the "cultural elite" within the context of cultural tourism and national development. He argues that these definitions have been based on colonial-era ideologies of primitiveness and the concept of Jamaica as a cultural "melting pot." As a result, the meaning and significance of Jamaican folk dance and its potential role in creating a national identity have been obfuscated. In some instances, dance forms have disappeared or gone into hiding. This process of silencing and change has occurred due to the convergence of historical factors and events, which form a complex tapestry of internal and external forces of domination and control. This forces the author to put forward the argument that Jamaican folk and traditional dance in its present state is a "colonised entity." (Bilby, 2011). As such, the author positions the investigation as a thoughtful exploration of what decolonising Jamaican dance theatre would entail.

Within the discourse surrounding cultural identity, Kenyan-Mexican actress Lupita Nyong'o astutely observes the profound identity crisis induced by colonialism, severing individuals from their intrinsic cultural roots:

"What colonialism does is cause an identity crisis about one's own culture" (Nyong'o, 2019).

This observation finds resonance in historian Bayyinah Bello's assertion that the battleground for liberation must commence within oneself, recognising the persistent influence of colonial legacies embedded through educational narratives:

"The first war has to be the war on self (...) the white man is living inside of you, he is in your mind, with every book you have studied in school" (Bello, 2018).

Cultural identity forms the core of an individual's self-concept, shaped by the values, traditions, and practices inherited from one's community and history. It is a dynamic construct that evolves through interactions with the surrounding world yet remains deeply anchored in one's ancestral roots. In colonised societies, cultural identity often becomes a contested space as colonial powers impose foreign values and practices, leading to a disconnection from Indigenous traditions. This imposition not only disrupts the continuity of cultural transmission but also creates internal conflicts within individuals and communities, who are torn between their Indigenous heritage and the dominant colonial culture.

In the context of Jamaica, cultural identity has been particularly complex due to the island's history of colonisation, slavery, and the forced migration of peoples. The intermingling of diverse ethnicities and cultures under oppressive conditions gave rise to a unique Jamaican identity, yet one that has continually been influenced and overshadowed by colonial ideologies. The struggle to reclaim and assert a distinct Jamaican identity that acknowledges and celebrates its African, Indigenous, and mixed heritage has been ongoing, reflecting the broader challenges post-colonial societies face in decolonising their cultural identities.

Contemplation of Jamaica's national motto, "Out of Many, One People," instigates a critical examination of the nation's authentic embrace of its diverse heritage, particularly its Black identity. Unveiling the historical backdrop reveals the displacement of Jamaica's original inhabitants, the Taino Indigenous People, whose culture succumbed to the forceful imposition of colonial subjugation following Columbus's arrival (Sherlock & Bennett, 1998).

Despite the legal abolition of slavery in 1834, the psychological emancipation necessary to embrace a distinct Jamaican identity lagged. Many formerly enslaved people clung to their African heritage, resisting the emergence of a specifically Jamaican identity. Only in recent times has a collective acknowledgement of this historical complexity emerged, catalysing endeavours to rectify the enduring impacts of colonialism (Brathwaite, 2005).

The 1950s marked a pivotal juncture in Jamaica's path to decolonisation. Then Prime Minister Dr. Norman Washington Manley played a fundamental role in conceptualising a systematic process of decolonisation. During this decade, a movement for self-governance and national identity grew. The formation of the People's National Party (PNP) in 1938, led by Norman Manley, played a crucial role in advocating for political and social reforms. (Sherlock & Bennett, 1998). As the leader of the PNP and a prominent figure in Jamaican politics, Norman Manley was instrumental in the push for self-governance. He served as the Chief Minister of Jamaica from 1955 to 1959 and then as Premier from 1959 to 1962. His efforts were pivotal in laying the groundwork for Jamaica's eventual independence (Sherlock & Bennett, 1998).

Drawing inspiration from Marcus Garvey's call to "emancipate yourselves from mental slavery," the thesis acknowledges the endurance of a colonial mindset despite Jamaica's post-colonial status. (Azikiwe & Garvey, 2019). The narrative then shifts to dance theatre, positioned as a lens through which the decolonisation of art and culture can be comprehensively explored. As an active participant in Jamaica's dance theatre scene, the author accentuates the fundamental role of "decolonisation" within their practice.

Decolonising art and culture in Jamaican dance theatre mandates a profound understanding of personal and collective history. This necessitates acknowledging colonialism's impact on shaping experiences and perpetuating systems of oppression. The author underscores the significance of self-awareness in Jamaica's diverse society, emphasising that recognising one's cultural context is foundational to decolonising dance theatre and all facets of culture (Smith, 1999).

Furthermore, the process involves a critical examination of the colonial legacy — comprehending the actions, motivations, and lasting effects of the colonisers. This awareness extends to understanding how Jamaica was exploited, emphasising the imperative to prevent the perpetuation of the oppressors' legacy (Smith, 1999).

Inextricably linking culture and politics, the thesis underscores the importance of unravelling the intricate connections between colonial forces and cultural identity. This understanding is deemed crucial for confronting and challenging systems of oppression persisting in

contemporary society. The call for decolonisation transcends theoretical constructs as the world reevaluates historical injustices, evolving into a practical imperative for shaping a more inclusive and equitable future (Smith, 1999).

Transitioning to a different scholarly exploration, the contemplation of N'Gugi Wa'Thiongo's seminal work, "Decolonising the Mind," unveils a crucial aspect of decolonisation often overlooked — the corporeal dimension. The prevailing acceptance of hegemonic norms in movement, particularly evident in choreography set to traditional African music, prompts reflection on the global triumph of colonisation. Classical ballet, considered the pinnacle of dance, exemplifies this triumph, reinforcing that it is the paramount path for dancer training. (Wa'Thiongo, 1986). Despite acknowledging the scientific foundations validating classical ballet, the recognition persists that it is a structured, tried, and proven method. Contrary to this prevailing narrative, the argument contends that constructing techniques rooted in one's historical and cultural data can uplift identity specificity and counteract identity crises (Wa'Thiongo, 1986).

This proposition asserts that decolonising the body necessitates an antecedent decolonisation of the spirit. Given the enduring impact of over two centuries of physical enslavement and the imposition of forced spiritual confusion, both of which persist to this day, the ultimate manifestation emerges as mental enslavement. This cumulative effect severely hampers the ability to envision a fully decolonised body. This challenge is vividly illustrated by the culture shock experienced by Caribbean dancers when confronted with procedures in international dance classes deeply rooted in their own historical and ancestral data (Wa'Thiongo, 1986). The dissonance between the dancers' embodied knowledge and the imposed techniques underscores the profound need for spiritual decolonisation that can precede and facilitate the physical and mental liberation necessary for true bodily decolonisation.

In alignment with N'Gugi Wa'Thiongo's assertion that language is a dominant tool for imperial powers to establish hegemony over the colonised psyche, the contention is that language extends beyond verbal communication. In dance, it manifests in movement vocabularies and training methodologies that prioritise certain forms over others. This echoes Wa'Thiongo's sentiment: "English became more than a language; it was the language, and all the others had to bow down to it." (Wa'Thiongo, 1986, S. 11).

The opening chapter asserts the necessity of thoroughly critiquing the theory of African retentions in Caribbean folk and traditional dance forms and their role in decolonisation. Beginning his anthology with personal reflections on the role of Jamaican national dance, the author examines issues raised by his experiences as a dance student and performer (Smith, 1999).

The endeavour to decolonise the body, specifically by offering a training procedure steeped in Jamaican and Caribbean cultural and historical data, necessitated a conscious rejection of the inclination to "bow down" to the prevailing belief that alternative methods are inferior for cultivating contemporary or modern dancers. This commitment to truth-seeking and cultural

authenticity culminated in the development of the L'Anyah Carimod Technique referred to as L'Antech. Created by Dr. L'Antoinette Stines, this transformative technique represents a tangible manifestation of the academic and practical pursuit of a decolonised approach to dance training rooted in cultural identity (Stines, 2009).

Chapter 1: Decolonisation

1.1. Defining Decolonisation

This chapter offers an introductory understanding of decolonisation and the complexity and controversy around its use or meaning. My use of decolonisation is predicated on the model offered by Smith and others as "the revitalisation of Indigenous cultures and societies through the removal of non-Indigenous cultural and structural impositions." (Smith, 1999). This definition assumes a pre-existing Indigenous 'authentic' culture that elites or spokespersons best represent. Of course, this in itself is a contested position among Indigenous communities. I refer to several scholars who offer the possibility of a post-colonial era in which various cultures may exist without the dominance of any one culture over the other and the disruption of cultural systems and impositions by way of colonial world order (Aschcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 1989). Decolonisation in the post-colonial context also means an "undoing" of colonial culture and the complexities that arise because this culture is necessarily impregnated in the colonised peoples (Wa'Thiongo, 1986). This is far different from what was often referred to in the anti-colonial movements as a return to traditional culture, language, and lifeways as a way of revolting against colonisation. Unfortunately, decolonisation discourse often seems to infer a simplistic binary consumed with evacuating all things deemed Western. This view often ignores that the world we currently inhabit is fundamentally different from the time before colonisation occurred. In the case of dance, some traditional forms are either extinct, have changed into something else (evolved), or are performed today for the tourist gaze. With this understanding, I assert that decolonisation is a term and process that is necessarily partial, uncomfortable, and uneven (Tuck & Yang, 2021).

Decolonisation is dismantling the legacies of colonialism, particularly in cultural, social, and political realms. It involves revitalising Indigenous cultures and removing colonial impositions while acknowledging the complex hybridity that has emerged from colonial encounters. Decolonisation is not merely a return to a pre-colonial past but a dynamic and ongoing process of cultural reformation. Here are some ways in which dance can contribute to the decolonisation of arts and culture:

1. **Reclaiming Indigenous and Traditional Dances:** Many Indigenous cultures around the world have faced suppression and erasure of their traditional dances due to colonialism. Decolonisation involves reclaiming and revitalising these dances, allowing communities to reconnect with their cultural heritage and assert their identity (Smith, 1999). By preserving and practising Indigenous dances, individuals and communities can challenge the dominant narrative that has often devalued or ignored these cultural expressions (Battiste, 2000).
2. **Incorporating Diverse Dance Forms:** Decolonisation also involves challenging the dominance of Eurocentric dance forms and recognising the value of diverse dance traditions worldwide. We can promote cultural exchange, understanding, and respect

by actively incorporating and celebrating dance forms from different cultures. This helps challenge the hierarchy of dance forms that colonial influences have shaped.

3. **Empowering Marginalised Communities:** Dance can be a powerful tool for empowerment, allowing marginalised communities to tell their own stories, express their experiences, and challenge the narratives imposed upon them. Through dance, individuals and communities can reclaim their agency and resist the stereotypes and misrepresentations perpetuated by colonialism. It provides a platform for marginalised voices to be heard and their cultures to be celebrated (Desmond, 1997).
4. **Challenging Gender and Power Imbalances:** Many traditional dance forms have reinforced gender and power imbalances, often favouring male performers and perpetuating harmful stereotypes. Decolonisation involves challenging these imbalances and creating spaces for inclusivity and gender equity. By reinterpreting and subverting traditional dance forms, dancers can challenge gender norms, highlight the experiences of marginalised genders, and promote a more inclusive and egalitarian approach to dance.
5. **Decentring Western Perspectives:** Decolonising arts and culture involves decentring Western perspectives and acknowledging the plurality of worldviews. Through dance, non-Western cultures can gain visibility and recognition, challenging the dominant Western-centric narratives that have influenced the arts and cultural industries. This process allows for a more equitable representation and understanding of diverse cultural expressions.
6. **Collaborative Exchange:** Engaging in collaborative exchanges between different dance traditions and cultures fosters a deeper appreciation and understanding of one another. By encouraging cross-cultural collaborations, dancers can challenge the notion of cultural ownership and create spaces where diverse perspectives coexist and thrive. This promotes a more inclusive and interconnected dance community (Rathje, 2007).

It is important to note that the decolonisation of arts and culture through dance is an ongoing and complex process that requires active participation, reflection, and dialogue. By recognising colonialism's historical and ongoing impact on the arts, we can work towards creating a more inclusive and equitable cultural landscape.

1.1.1. The Significance of Decolonising Dance

Authors have focused on the significance of decolonisation in dance to illustrate why it is a subject that should be valued. Drawing on the history of colonialism and post-colonialism with context, they illustrate how important it is for dance and dancers rooted in the countries and cultures of former colonies to understand the history of colonisation and how it affects their current situation. Thomas and Akporiaye reveal the legacy of colonialism as an influence that lingers in practice, following Western master dance techniques by many contemporary dancers

from former colonies and an underlying hierarchy in the dance world that places Western forms of dance as superior to the traditional forms of dance from these countries (Thomas & Akporiaye, 2020). They also touch on contemporary issues such as globalisation, which they state "continues to work against the interests of Third-World nations or practitioners of traditional dances, who are often compelled to perform for the tourist market, offering an entertaining, yet distorted image of their own culture" (Thomas & Akporiaye, 2020, S. 47).

In brief, decolonising dance is crucial because dance is a powerful medium through which cultural identities are expressed and preserved. Colonialism imposed rigid, Eurocentric forms of dance that often marginalised or erased Indigenous dance practices. Reclaiming and revitalising these traditional forms, decolonisation in dance challenges colonial legacies and reasserts colonised peoples' cultural identities.

1.2. Can Dance be Decolonised?

Why is this still being asked? It presupposes that decolonisation is synonymous with liberation. As we denounce Eurocentric and colonial practices, we can never indeed be free of them. It reignites the dilemma of seeking authenticity within the confines of someone else's racist ideology. The quest for authenticity in decolonised dance forms is complicated. Colonialism has disrupted and altered Indigenous cultures, making it challenging to identify what is 'authentic.' Moreover, cultures are not static; they evolve. Therefore, the pursuit of authenticity must acknowledge the dynamic nature of culture and how history has influenced and reshaped it. This does not necessarily mean it is impossible, but it does question the plausibility of achieving such a goal within the same spectrum.

As a dance theorist, dancer, choreographer, physical therapist, and a leading pioneer of dance therapy, Irmgard Bartenieff once said,

"Can we keep clarity, form and meaning and still liberate it from someone else's ideas, and how can we be sure we have done that?"

This leads to whether we should liberate dance from a particular ideology and whether it remains the same. Moreover, who are the ones to decide what is and is not an improvement? Despite this, the desired outcome is to lose a history of subordination and to progress into a more inclusive and equal future. Bartenieff's question encapsulates the core of the decolonisation challenge: How can we reclaim cultural practices without losing their essence? In dance, this might mean balancing preserving traditional forms and allowing for innovation and contemporary expression. Ensuring that decolonised dance retains its meaning and clarity is a delicate task that requires ongoing reflection and adaptation. If we are to liberate dance from colonial ideologies, we must accept that the result might be a transformed practice. This transformation does not diminish the value of the dance; instead, it can lead to a richer, more inclusive expression that honours its roots while embracing new influences. The key is to ensure that this transformation is guided by the communities and practitioners reclaiming their cultural heritage. Determining what constitutes an improvement in decolonised dance is inherently subjective. It requires input from the communities most affected by colonialism and those who

practice and preserve traditional dances. Inclusive dialogues and collaborative decision-making are essential to navigate this process.

Decolonisation is an ongoing and dynamic process of liberation (Smith, 1999). It acknowledges the effects of colonialism and works to undo the damage; this is true in the context of Jamaica, where British colonialism has had lasting effects still felt today (Hall, 1990). I do not question the intent of those wishing to make changes to the practice and perception of dance, only the efficiency of using the same tools that caused the problem to be fixed. Smith goes on to state that a key question to be asked is "What would need to change for the relationship between the First and Third Worlds to be a just one?" (Smith, 1999, S. 86). We can apply a similar question to the issue of decolonising dance and the cultural and racial divides that are present within it. Applying Smith's question to dance, we must ask what changes are needed to create a just and equitable cultural landscape. This involves addressing the legacies of colonialism, promoting diversity and inclusivity, and ensuring that marginalised voices are heard and valued.

Whether dance can be decolonised remains pertinent because it addresses the broader issue of cultural hegemony and the persistence of colonial legacies in artistic expression. Decolonisation is more than rejecting Eurocentric and colonial practices; it involves a profound transformation of how we understand and engage with cultural heritage. Decolonisation aims to liberate cultural expressions from the imposed frameworks of colonial powers. However, liberation is not a straightforward process. It involves dismantling deeply ingrained systems and ideologies that have shaped artistic practices for centuries. This process can be seen as both a theoretical and practical challenge.

Using the same tools that caused the problem to fix it is a critical concern. While it may be necessary to operate within existing frameworks to some extent, developing new approaches free from colonial influence is also necessary. This might involve creating new institutions, methodologies, and practices that better reflect decolonised values (Wa'Thiongo, 1986).

The decolonisation of dance is a multifaceted and complex endeavour. It challenges us to rethink our understanding of culture, authenticity, and liberation. By embracing this complexity and committing to an ongoing process of reflection and transformation, we can work towards a more inclusive and equitable future for the arts.

1.2.1. Examining the Influence of Colonialism on Dance

An essential aspect of understanding the foundation of dance as an institution in Jamaica is exploring the Spanish and British colonialism period and its impact on dance forms. The Spanish introduced European cultural elements to Jamaica, which were later reinforced and expanded upon by the British. The British colonial period had a particularly lasting influence, introducing European dance forms and social customs that permeated Jamaican society. It is also critical to understand the influence of colonialism on traditional dance and popular culture by exploring slavery and the plantation system.

The plantation system was the bedrock of colonial Jamaica's economy and significantly impacted cultural practices. Enslaved Africans brought with them a rich heritage of dance and music, which they adapted and preserved under oppressive conditions. Dance served multiple roles within the enslaved community:

- **Expression and Resistance:** Enslaved people used dance as a covert means of cultural expression and resistance despite prohibitions. These dances allowed them to maintain a connection to their African heritage and provided a sense of community and solidarity. Dance became a means of psychological survival, a form of non-verbal communication that could convey resistance to the dehumanising conditions of slavery.
- **Adaptation and Survival:** Enslaved people also adapted their dances to include elements of European forms, creating hybrid styles that parodied and critiqued the dominant culture. The "whip syllabus" is an example of this adaptation, using dance as a subtle form of resistance and satire (Nettleford, 2003).

This was a significant factor in the type of dance forms passed down through the centuries, ranging from the post-Emancipation era (Nago, or Nanigging) to Jonkonnu³ bands and many folk forms. Dance forms such as Jonkonnu, which combines African, European, and Creole elements, became prominent. Jonkonnu performances, often held during Christmas and other celebrations, exemplify the syncretic nature of Jamaican culture.

During slavery, dance was practised in various contexts. Primarily, it was done for the benefit of the slaveholders on the plantation in the enslaver's house. This usually took the form of ballroom-type dancing with some of the more educated house-enslaved people and resulted in the whip syllabus, a tongue-in-cheek imitation of the white ballet at the time (Nettleford, 2003). The rest of the dancing was mainly to drum rhythms more covertly in the enslaved people's premises, where it would provide recreation and a chance to move away from European norms and provide some means of cultural expression. This was also when Vodou, as a dance and a culture, was brought to Jamaica by the Haitian French fleeing the Haitian revolution. Its nature is to persist and transform, so dance has been done until today.

Today, Jamaican dance reflects its complex colonial history and diverse cultural influences. Traditional dance forms like Kumina⁴, Bruckins⁵, and Dinki Mini⁶ continue to be practised and

³ Jonkonnu, also known as John Coonering, was one such Christmastide tradition that tapped into its African spiritual roots through combination of costume, music, and dance. The tradition appeared in Jamaica during colonial times, and later spread to other Caribbean islands, Bermuda, and North Carolina. (TryonPalace, 2024)

⁴ Kumina: a religious and cultural tradition in Jamaica with African origins, specifically from the Congo and Ghana. It involves rituals, dance, drumming, and chanting, often used to honour ancestors and connect with spiritual practices. (Stines, 2021)

⁵ Bruckins: a traditional Jamaican dance created by newly freed enslaved Africans to celebrate the Emancipation of Slavery on August 1, 1838. It blends African and European cultural elements, using dance and music to express joy, cultural identity, and emotional release. (Stines, 2021).

⁶ Dinki Mini: a traditional Jamaican dance performed during the wake period following a death. Originating from African cultural practices, it involves lively, celebratory movements accompanied by singing and drumming. (Jamaica Information Service, 2024)

celebrated. These dances are not merely historical artefacts but living traditions that contribute to Jamaica's cultural identity and resilience (Sloat, 2010).

Colonialism had a profound impact on the development of dance in colonised societies. European dance forms were introduced and dominant in Jamaica, while traditional African-derived dances were marginalised. However, these traditional forms persisted, often in covert or hybridised forms, and today, they serve as vital expressions of resistance and cultural continuity.

1.2.2. Challenging Eurocentric Norms in Dance

Post-colonial Caribbean communities and dance researchers have focused on how colonial interference's legacy has impacted cultural and artistic expressions. Scholars have explored how colonial history continues to influence cultural production in the Caribbean, emphasising the need to challenge and deconstruct Eurocentric norms historically imposed upon Caribbean societies (Savory, 2012).

The influence of British colonial rule in Jamaica (1655-1962) was profound, enforcing Eurocentric norms through various means, including education and social customs. The colonial education system sought to instil British values and suppress Indigenous cultural expressions. This system aimed to transform Jamaicans into "British thinking" individuals, which extended beyond the classroom and into broader societal practices, including dance (Savory, 2012).

The style of education implemented in Jamaica was a critical factor in perpetuating British culture. This system sought to create social control by transforming the islands' many "little savages" into responsible, British-thinking men (Nettleford, 2003). It was believed that this system would be more effective than previous attempts to enslave and acculturate indentured servants to British ways of life. However, this socialisation process extended beyond the classroom, employing various tactics to influence all levels of society.

Enslaved Africans used dance as a form of resistance and cultural preservation. Despite the oppressive conditions, they maintained their cultural heritage and adapted their dances to incorporate elements of European forms, often using dance to critique the dominant culture. subtly (Savory, 2012).

As an authoritative body institution, dance played a prominent role in this process. High-society Jamaicans engaged in formal balls emulating similar events in Britain, and elite schools taught European art dances as a sign of class and distinction from the lower classes. This is not to say that dance was solely a tool of the colonisers, as suppressing African body movement was challenging. However, the effect of Eurocentric norms on Jamaican dance was profound, contributing to various movements and attitudes toward different levels of a racial hierarchy, which took a heavy toll on Jamaicans' collective self-esteem.

This dynamic is evident when comparing European art dances with African-derived forms like Jonkonnu, a village masquerade with vital subversive elements often superficially performed for Christmas-time enslavers (Burton, 1997). Jonkonnu exemplifies how African traditions persisted and adapted despite colonial suppression. It combined African, European, and Creole elements, highlighting the syncretic nature of Jamaican culture.

The impact of Eurocentric norms on Jamaican dance continues to be significant, particularly compared to other dance styles. Understanding these changes in the post-colonial era is crucial. Today, traditional dance forms such as Kumina, Bruckins, and Dinki Mini continue to be practised and celebrated, reflecting Jamaica's complex colonial history and diverse cultural influences. These dances are living traditions that contribute to Jamaica's cultural identity and resilience, demonstrating the ongoing negotiation of cultural heritage and identity (Sloat, 2010).

Contemporary Caribbean dance continues to navigate the legacy of colonialism. Researchers emphasise the importance of decolonising dance practices to reclaim and honour Indigenous cultural expressions. This involves challenging the lingering Eurocentric norms and fostering an inclusive cultural landscape that equally values traditional and contemporary forms (Savory, 2012) (Stines, 2009).

1.2.3. Embracing Cultural Diversity in Dance

Traditionally, Jamaican dance, like other Caribbean Island nations and territories, has roots in African and European dance forms. African retention and creolisation provided the background for the emergence of African-derived folk forms that persisted well into the early 20th century. African cultural retention was remarkably resilient, given the sizeable African-descended population and the survival of African religious practices and festivals such as Jonkunnu and Kumina, which have deep African roots and are still performed today (Savory, 2012) (Stines, 2009).

As previously mentioned, European dance forms were part of the educative process, as Jamaica has been rooted in a Eurocentric world dynamic for many centuries. Schools for the privileged taught Western dance forms and sets of European folk dance. Jamaican theatre has had European and North American influence as these cultures historically have usually had control over the political and cultural landscape. This is still prevalent today as Jamaica has a very active Little Theatre Movement (established in 1941) provides a substratum of European and North American dramatic/dance/theatre forms (Savory, 2012). Dance forms in Jamaican theatre are often used as popular recreation and entertainment but are sporadic and of varied genres due to influences from abroad.

Because of the history of modern dance, formal ballet, and other Western theatrical dance forms, the modern dance movement in Jamaica has primarily emulated dance trends from the United States and England. However, as modern dance began to mature and questions of cultural identity became important globally, Jamaicans and other dance artists from former colonised nations, such as Cuba, began to look at their cultural resources as ways of creating

dance relevant to their communities (Stines, 2009). As Jamaicans are over 90% of African descent, they began looking to Africa for its rich dance cultures (Terrelonge, 2022).

This was spurred on by the Rastafarian movement, which sought to redeem people of African descent from the "Babylon system" and looked to Africa as a promised land. Various Afro-Jamaican forms, such as Revival (including Kumina) and Rastafarian nyabinghi⁷, began influencing Jamaican modern dance (Stines, 2009). These folk forms, long shadowed by the stigma associated with a lack of education and lower socio-economic class, started gaining recognition as modern Jamaican society sought to create a national identity. This growing interest in cultural national identity is most recently reflected in the establishment of the National Dance Theatre Company in 1962 and the Jamaica School of Dance in 1970. Both organisations have a mandate to cultivate a Jamaican dance aesthetic and train dancers in the art forms of their cultural inheritance (Nettleford, 1985).

1.3. How Can Dance be Decolonised?

The question of how dance can be decolonised encompasses several innovative approaches and perspectives. One influential perspective is offered by scholars like Brenda Dixon Gottschild, who argues that traditional African dance's embodiment and aesthetics challenge the Eurocentric norms prevalent in dance, which often prioritise linear, rigid body movements over the more fluid and inclusive movements found in many African and diasporic dance traditions (Gotschild, 2003). These Eurocentric norms emphasise symmetry and controlled movement, reflecting a particular worldview and aesthetic traced back to colonial ideologies.

One way to decolonise dance, as suggested by theorists in the field, involves "re-indigenization," a process where dance practitioners reclaim and integrate traditional dances to explore pre-colonial movement styles of the racialised body (Naranjo, 2019). This reclamation is seen as a pathway to recovering and celebrating cultural heritage, which has been suppressed or marginalised by dominant cultures. For the African Diaspora, this could involve African, Caribbean, and Indigenous American dances, which provide a rich source of culturally specific movements and narratives that contrast with European forms (Welsh-Asante, 1996).

Historically, dance has served as a potent tool for resistance among enslaved peoples and post-emancipation societies across the Black Atlantic. Dance can foster community solidarity and empowerment by continuing this legacy and promoting dialogue and collective action. This cultural expression allows communities to assert their identity and resist ongoing cultural assimilation and erasure. Dr. L'Antoinette Stines, a prominent figure in Caribbean dance, has extensively explored the role of dance as a medium of cultural expression and resistance. Stines discusses how dance has historically been used by enslaved and colonised peoples in the Caribbean to maintain cultural identity and resist oppressive systems. She highlights how

⁷ Nyabinghi: a Rastafari celebration involving distinctive dance, drumming, and chanting rooted in African spiritual traditions. (Stines, 2021)

dance served as a covert form of communication and a means to preserve African heritage discreetly during periods of enslavement (Stines, 2022).

According to Stines, dance is a unifying force that strengthens community bonds and solidarity. She points out that community dance gatherings are not just for entertainment but also critical spaces for social cohesion, cultural reaffirmation, and collective empowerment. She explores how dance can be employed to comment on and critique contemporary social and political issues. Through choreography and performance, dancers can address inequality, injustice, and resistance, making dance a dynamic tool for social change (Stines, 2022).

Stines emphasises the empowerment of embracing and showcasing one's cultural roots through dance. She advocates for creating dance works that reflect Afro-Caribbean aesthetics, narratives, and philosophies, arguing that this fosters a greater sense of identity and self-esteem among performers and audiences alike. Stines also touches on the educational potential of dance, suggesting that dance programs incorporating Afro-Caribbean styles and histories can play a crucial role in educating the youth about their heritage and the power of their cultural expressions (Stines, 2022).

Through her work, Stines provides a compelling framework for understanding the multifaceted roles that dance can play in resistance, cultural identity, and community empowerment. Her insights are precious in contexts where cultural expressions have been historically marginalised or suppressed. Her advocacy for a deeper engagement with Indigenous dance forms serves as a call to action for dancers and choreographers to explore and elevate the rich dance traditions of the Caribbean.

1.3.1. Incorporating Indigenous Knowledge and Practices

The depictions of Caribbean dance have sustained the concept of 'Anglo-Conformity' in both the theatrical and social contexts. Since the establishment of the National Dance Theatre Company of Jamaica (NDTC) in 1962 through the work of Prof. Rex Nettleford (Nettleford, 1985), Caribbean communities have been afforded far greater cultural and social representation. Though work within NDTC and other contemporary Caribbean companies has provided richer representation of Caribbean people and life, it can be argued that the penchant for classical western styles and adherence to European choreographic devices have rendered efforts to engage Caribbean people indirectly.

The move towards decolonising dance in Jamaica and the broader Caribbean involves rejecting colonial cultural re-engineering and affirming established cultures and identities. This shift aims to subvert the power dynamics that historically led to the distortion or omission of Indigenous culture in the arts. By embracing local dance forms and Indigenous expressions, Caribbean dance companies can challenge these colonial legacies and create performances that resonate more deeply with local audiences and reflect their authentic cultural landscapes.

It is essential to briefly assess the climate of Jamaican and Caribbean culture under colonial and post-colonial rule to understand the effect that subsequent independence has had on cultural and social identity. Brian Heap states that though independence was gained at the political level, the assimilative process was so deep that at the level of culture and social identity, political independence was primarily a change of leadership of the national elite and not a change-coloured society in any profound way (Heap, 2010). The effect of colonialism in Jamaica and the more significant Caribbean was an initial destruction of African identity. Built on the notion that Africans were 'tabula rasa', therefore making slavery a more efficient process of acculturation. The importation of Africans from various tribes and colonies was intended to break any sense of community and ethnic identity formed amongst enslaved people. To implement this concept of societal tabula rasa, the British and other colonial powers sought to engrain their cultural practices and values into the local populace. This ultimately reduced the cultural knowledge, practice, and values of the Caribbean people to a subordinate position concerning their colonial masters.

1.3.2. Collaborative Approaches to Dance Creation

The Jamaican National Dance Theatre Company (NDTC), founded in 1962 by Prof Rex Nettleford and Eddy Thomas, has pioneered collaborative approaches to dance creation. This method has allowed NDTC to blend a wide array of influences—from African and Caribbean dance forms to classical and modern styles—creating a rich tapestry of performances that reflect the diverse cultural heritage of the Caribbean. This collaborative spirit is rooted in the company's philosophy, emphasising the communal nature of dance as an art form and a means of cultural expression (Nettleford, 1971).

Similarly, L'ACADCO: A United Caribbean Dance Force, under the leadership of Dr. L'Antoinette Stines, employs a collaborative approach to integrating traditional Caribbean and African retention dances with ballet and contemporary dance. This synthesis, "*synerbridging*", as Stines calls it (Stines, 2021), not only produces unique choreographies but also tells stories deeply embedded in Jamaican culture. Stines' creation of L'Antech, a dance technique decolonising the mind, body, and spirit, further exemplifies collaborative methods to explore and affirm Caribbean identity through dance (Stines, 2022).

Although based in the United States and focusing on African American traditions in dance, Philadanco also adopts a collaborative approach in its operations. Founded by Joan Myers Brown, Philadanco has established a structure where collaboration extends beyond choreography to include the administrative and financial management of the company. This approach ensures that the artistic vision aligns with community engagement and educational programs, thus broadening the impact of dance beyond performance to act as a tool for social change (Gottschild, 2012).

1.3.3. Reimagining Dance Education and Training

The notion that Jamaica's traditional and folkloric dance forms have been underrepresented in formal dance education is a valid concern. Historically, dance training in Jamaica has leaned heavily towards Eurocentric techniques, which can sometimes overshadow local cultural expressions. Institutions like the Edna Manley College of the Visual and Performing Arts offer a curriculum that includes Jamaican folk dances; however, there is a significant opportunity to deepen and expand these offerings (McFarlane, 2024).

Innovative programmes like L'Antech are urgently needed to further Jamaica's decolonisation of dance education. L'Antech is not merely a dance technique but a comprehensive cultural expression that merges Afro-Caribbean movements with contemporary dance forms and classical ballet (Stines, 2021). The philosophy behind L'Antech emphasises a reconnection with and revitalisation of Caribbean cultural heritage, making it an ideal candidate for inclusion in dance training programmes (Stines, 2021) (McFarlane, 2024).

Integrating L'Antech into more Jamaican dance curricula could serve several purposes: it would provide dancers with a technique that is culturally and historically relevant; it would challenge the dominance of Eurocentric aesthetics by validating and centring Caribbean forms; and it could potentially attract new generations who are seeking dance education that reflects and respects their cultural identity (Stines, 2024).

Addressing socioeconomic barriers to dance education in Jamaica is also necessary. Making dance training more accessible to lower-income communities could help democratise the arts and enrich the dance talent pool (Terrelonge, 2022). Establishing scholarships, community dance workshops, and outreach programmes that teach L'Antech could open doors for talented individuals who might otherwise be excluded from dance due to financial constraints.

These steps would preserve and propagate traditional Jamaican dance forms and support the broader cultural preservation and innovation mission. By fostering an inclusive dance education ecosystem that reflects Jamaica's rich cultural heritage, the dance community can ensure that its artistic output remains vibrant, diverse, and deeply connected to its roots.

1.3.4. Empowering Dancers from Marginalised Communities

Empowering dancers from marginalised communities in Jamaica involves a multifaceted approach that addresses their historical biases and contemporary challenges. Focusing on creating supportive infrastructures, enhancing educational opportunities, and promoting a broader recognition of diverse dance forms can help achieve this goal.

Historically, the Jamaican dance scene has been influenced by colonial legacies and the island's rich cultural tapestry, including African, European, Asian, and Indigenous influences. While classical ballet and modern dance have been celebrated and taught extensively, Indigenous and Afro-Caribbean styles, such as dancehall, have often been marginalised or undervalued in formal education settings (McFarlane, 2024). This disparity can discourage dancers from these backgrounds and limit their professional opportunities.

One way to empower dancers from marginalised communities is by diversifying dance education curricula. Institutions like the Edna Manley College of the Visual and Performing Arts in Kingston have taken steps in this direction by incorporating traditional Jamaican dance forms into their programmes (The Edna Manley College of the Visual and Performing Arts, 2024). However, expanding these efforts to include more comprehensive training in dancehall and other local styles can further enhance opportunities for local dancers.

Additionally, creating scholarship programs targeted at dancers from low-income backgrounds can help overcome financial barriers to professional training. These scholarships provide access to education and validate the cultural importance of diverse dance forms.

Promoting community-based dance projects can also play a crucial role in empowering dancers. These projects can serve as platforms for expression and innovation while fostering identity and community cohesion. An example of successful community engagement is the NDC and L'ACADCO, which have been instrumental in bringing Jamaican folk and contemporary dance to a wider audience locally and internationally.

Furthermore, providing platforms for choreography and creative leadership within these communities can help challenge the traditional biases favouring teaching over creating. Encouraging and funding choreographic ventures by dancers from these backgrounds can lead to more prosperous, more diverse artistic outputs that reflect Jamaican people's complex identities and histories.

On a broader scale, advocating for the global representation of Jamaican dance forms can enhance their legitimacy and the professional prospects of their practitioners. This includes promoting Jamaican dance on international stages and within global dance discourses, thus challenging the stereotypes and prejudices that often limit the opportunities for dancers from these backgrounds (Stines, 2022).

By implementing these strategies, the dance community in Jamaica can work towards a more inclusive and equitable environment that genuinely celebrates and uplifts its people's diverse cultural heritage. This will benefit dancers from marginalised communities by providing them with more significant opportunities and recognition and enriching the cultural landscape of Jamaica as a whole.

1.4. Realising Decolonisation within Jamaican Dance Theatre

Decolonisation in the context of Jamaican dance theatre is a critical process that entails dismantling colonial legacies embedded in the cultural fabric. As Wa'Thiong'o articulates, colonialism not only imposed conflicting cultures and traditions but also entrenched parasitic capitalism, deeply mutilating societal structures (Wa'Thiongo, 1986). In the Jamaican dance scene, decolonisation involves rejecting the coloniser's cultural and aesthetic norms and the

pervasive structures of colonial society that have historically marginalised Indigenous expressions.

The concept of aesthetics within Jamaican dance traditionally mirrors a Eurocentric viewpoint, which assumes a universal standard applicable to all artistic evaluations. This assumption is particularly problematic in a post-colonial context, where measures of artistic quality imposed by the coloniser often result in the undervaluation of the colonised society's cultural products. Moving towards a decolonised aesthetic for Jamaican dance requires formalising, recognising, and understanding the intrinsic qualities of characteristic Jamaican movements. It also involves navigating and negotiating the differences between these movements and those products of the coloniser's standards.

Scholars like Frantz Fanon discuss colonialism's cultural and psychological impacts, underscoring the need for a cultural reaffirmation in post-colonial societies (Fanon, 1963). Similarly, Molefi Kete Asante highlights the importance of evaluating African and diasporic art forms on their own merits, proposing an Afrocentric approach to art criticism that respects and centres African aesthetics (Asante, 1997).

Practically, initiatives such as those by Nettleford with the National Dance Theatre Company of Jamaica and Stines L'ACADCO have been pivotal. Nettleford's work blended African-derived dance forms with European elements, creating a vibrant expression of Jamaican identity that also served as a cultural reassertion. In contrast, Stines's work depicts the story of Jamaican culture by blending traditional, retention dances, classical ballet, and contemporary dance.

Continuing these efforts requires more than just integrating traditional dance into curricula; it also involves community engagement, public performances, and scholarly writings that challenge and redefine aesthetic standards. By doing so, the dance community in Jamaica can make significant strides toward decolonising its artistic expressions (Stines, 2024).

1.4.1. Preserving and Celebrating Jamaican Cultural Heritage

The resurgence of interest in traditional Jamaican dance forms reflects a broader cultural revival and reclamation of Jamaican identity, especially evident since the country's independence. This renewed focus has been driven by a desire to preserve and celebrate the rich traditions that define the nation's heritage.

Historically, traditional and folk dances in Jamaica were marginalised during colonial rule, where European cultural standards were predominantly enforced. Post-independence, there has been a concerted effort to reintegrate these traditional forms into the cultural mainstream, recognising their value as art and as pivotal elements of national identity (Nettleford, 1971). Education systems have increasingly included Jamaican folk dance in their curriculum to foster a deeper appreciation and understanding among new generations.

The historical context of enslaved Africans, who were often skilled musicians and dancers brought to Jamaica, underscores the intrinsic role of dance in Jamaican culture. These individuals brought rich musical and dance traditions that have significantly shaped local dance forms' evolution. Preserving these dances has been crucial in maintaining a connection to African roots and enhancing cultural continuity.

Crawford's observations highlight the interconnection between Jamaica's dance, music, and communal life. Traditional Jamaican dances are not only entertainment but are integral to various social and religious events, serving specific communal functions (Crawford, 2001). This integration ensures that traditional dance remains a vibrant part of community life, accessible and relatable to the broader population.

Traditional dances in Jamaica often serve distinct social or religious purposes, reflecting the dances' integral role in community and cultural rituals. These dances are more than artistic expressions; they are vital to communal gatherings and celebrations, reinforcing social bonds and cultural identity (Patterson, 1982).

1.4.2. Engaging with Local Communities and Artists

In modern societies, the engagement of local communities and the role of the arts in addressing broader societal issues have become increasingly important. At Edna Manley College of the Visual and Performing Arts, the School of Dance (SOD) exemplifies this engagement through its commitment to fostering cultural expression and identity. This dedication is particularly vital in the face of globalisation, a process that, as sociologist Jan Nederveen Pieterse (Pieterse, 2019). It often exacerbates inequality and increases migration, leading to significant societal shifts. For Jamaica, these dynamics present challenges and opportunities in cultural preservation and community engagement.

SOD's role extends far beyond traditional dance education; it is deeply intertwined with national efforts to promote cultural heritage and create viable career paths in the arts. The school's programmes are designed to train students in concert and folkloric dance and equip them with the skills necessary to compete in the global arts industry. This dual focus is crucial in a country where artistic expressions like dance are often not considered sustainable career options.

Engaging with local communities through dance provides a unique platform for addressing social issues and giving voice to diverse perspectives. SOD's initiatives foster dynamic interactions between students and community members, enabling the transfer of knowledge and traditional dance forms while also providing a space for the articulation of contemporary social challenges. These interactions benefit marginalised groups, including the underprivileged and disabled, offering them opportunities to engage in cultural and artistic expressions through structured programs.

However, limited funding and resource allocation pose significant hurdles, mainly where economic constraints limit government spending on the arts. In response, SOD has actively

pursued partnerships with both the public and private sectors to maximise resource sharing and promote corporate social responsibility. These efforts are essential for sustaining and expanding arts education, as well as for advocating for the arts as a critical component of national development.

SOD's initiatives also align with broader global objectives, such as those championed by UNESCO, which emphasise the preservation of intangible cultural heritage. Advocacy for international recognition and support can lend additional momentum to these initiatives, highlighting Jamaica's cultural heritage's universal value and contribution to global cultural diversity.

Recent research by Dr Victoria Durrer of University College Dublin and Dr Aoife McGrath of Queen's University Belfast offers valuable insights into how cultural policies can foster community engagement in the arts. Their work, which explores the intersections of cultural policy, community engagement, and artistic practice, underscores the importance of creating spaces where local cultures can flourish.

Durrer and McGrath emphasise the necessity of inclusive cultural policies that support local arts initiatives, particularly in post-colonial societies. They argue that such policies help preserve cultural heritage and empower local communities by granting them agency over cultural expressions.

This research is particularly relevant to Jamaica, where engaging local communities in dance and other cultural practices is essential for advancing decolonisation. By adopting strategies similar to those proposed by Durrer and McGrath, Jamaican dance initiatives like L'Antech can enhance their community engagement efforts. This could involve developing more collaborative projects involving local artists and community members, ensuring that the decolonisation of art and culture is a collective effort.

Moreover, Durrer and McGrath's work highlights the importance of connecting local practices with broader global movements. By aligning Jamaican cultural practices with international efforts to decolonise the arts, there is an opportunity to amplify the impact of these initiatives, fostering a more inclusive and interconnected global cultural landscape.

1.4.3. Addressing Power Dynamics and Representation in Dance Productions

The exploration of power dynamics and representation in Jamaican dance productions reveals the profound effects of colonisation on cultural expression. These dynamics often manifest through the preference for European aesthetics, which leads to the marginalisation of Afro-Jamaican movement vocabularies and the under-representation of Afro-Caribbean people in mainstream dance productions. This phenomenon is not unique to Jamaica but is a pervasive issue in many post-colonial societies, where the legacy of colonialism continues to influence artistic expression and cultural identity.

In Jamaica, incorporating European aesthetics often relegates traditional Afro-Jamaican dance to a secondary role, used merely as an exotic enhancement in productions otherwise anchored in Western dance forms. This practice limits the scope of Jamaican dance. It impacts the artistic choices available to local dance makers who seek to align their work with their cultural heritage while addressing contemporary issues.

Jamaican artists face a dilemma in navigating these power dynamics. They must decide whether to conform to the dominant aesthetic standards or endeavour to preserve and promote traditional and folk dance forms as mediums for expressing contemporary Jamaican issues. For some artists, the desire to internationalise their art and gain broader recognition may lead them to assimilate into more globally dominant cultural standards. However, for those committed to cultural preservation, this can pose a significant conflict of interest, as highlighted in academic discussions on post-colonial cultural recovery and resistance.

Prominent scholars such as Fanon and Wa'Thiong'o have addressed these themes, discussing how post-colonial societies can reclaim and revitalise their cultural legacies. (Fanon, 1963) discusses colonialism's psychological and cultural impacts and emphasises the need for cultural liberation as part of broader decolonisation efforts. Similarly, (Wa'Thiongo, 1986) argues for rejecting colonial cultural impositions and reviving local cultural practices as an act of resistance.

To address these challenges in Jamaican dance, educational institutions, cultural organisations, and policymakers must work together to promote and institutionalise traditional dance forms. This can help ensure that these dances are preserved and appreciated as vital expressions of Jamaican identity and legitimate art forms worthy of study and performance on national and international levels.

1.4.4. Supporting the Development of Jamaican Dance Scholars

Supporting the development of Jamaican dance scholars is crucial for preserving and innovating the country's rich dance heritage. While international influences can enrich the educational landscape, it is essential to prioritise and celebrate Indigenous dance forms to ensure they remain vibrant and relevant.

It is often observed that institutions, including the Academy for the Arts, have historically looked to European repertoires for inspiration, which might overshadow local traditions. However, fostering a curriculum integrating global influences with a strong foundation in local dance forms can create a more dynamic and inclusive approach to dance education. Such a balance encourages cultural exchange while affirming the value of Jamaican artistic traditions. (Smith, 1999). This integration not only enriches students' learning experience but also helps in preserving the unique cultural identity of Jamaican dance.

Students deeply rooted in their cultural traditions can provide invaluable insights that might lead to curriculum enhancements. By formally understanding dance's theoretical and practical

aspects, these students can articulate how these theories intersect with or diverge from their cultural practices. Such insights are crucial for continuously adapting and improving educational programs to serve all students' needs better, particularly those from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Establishing a continuous dialogue between Jamaican dance scholars and international scholars who study Jamaican dance can be profoundly beneficial. This exchange can help in the mutual understanding of different artistic perspectives and foster a global appreciation for Jamaican dance forms. Such collaborations could also lead to joint research initiatives, publications, and exchange programs that further Jamaican dance's academic and cultural impact (Taylor, 2020).

The role of academic institutions in advocating for the preservation and recognition of Jamaica's cultural heritage, particularly in dance, cannot be overstated. Efforts should be made to secure recognition from international bodies like UNESCO, which can provide moral and material support for cultural preservation initiatives. Such recognition elevates Jamaican dance's global stature and ensures that these artistic practices are preserved for future generations (UNESCO, 2021).

Conclusion

This chapter has provided a foundational understanding of decolonisation, particularly in the context of art and culture, and explored the complex dynamics at play in this ongoing process. Decolonisation is not a simplistic return to pre-colonial cultural practices but rather a multifaceted and evolving journey towards reclaiming and revitalising Indigenous cultures while addressing the legacies of colonialism. This chapter has highlighted how decolonisation involves dismantling colonial power structures, challenging Eurocentric norms, and promoting a more inclusive cultural landscape.

In dance, decolonisation plays a crucial role in restoring and celebrating the cultural identities of colonised peoples. Key strategies in this effort include reclamation of Indigenous and traditional dances, incorporating diverse dance forms, and empowering marginalised communities. However, the process is fraught with challenges, including the complexities of authenticity, the risks of cultural appropriation, and the persistent influence of colonial ideologies.

The chapter also examined whether dance can be decolonised, acknowledging the inherent difficulties in seeking authenticity within post-colonial contexts where colonialism has profoundly altered cultures. This inquiry is central to understanding the broader implications of decolonisation, as it underscores the need for continuous reflection, adaptation, and a willingness to embrace cultural transformation. Ultimately, decolonisation in dance is not merely an academic exercise but a dynamic and practical process that requires active participation from practitioners, scholars, and communities. It is about creating a more equitable and just cultural landscape where diverse artistic expressions are valued and

colonised peoples' histories and identities are honoured. As this chapter has shown, the decolonisation of dance is both a challenge and an opportunity to redefine cultural heritage to reflect the realities and aspirations of post-colonial societies. Through ongoing dialogue, collaboration, and innovation, the dance community can continue pushing the boundaries of decolonisation and how it can be achieved in the arts.

Chapter 2: The Role of Traditional and Folk Dance in Jamaican Culture

2.1. Historical Context of Traditional Jamaican Dance

The historical context of traditional Jamaican dance is deeply rooted in the island's colonial past and the cultural amalgamation that ensued. The diverse dance forms present in Jamaica today reflect the island's complex history of slavery, colonialism, and cultural exchanges between African, European, and Indigenous peoples.

Traditional Jamaican dance has its roots in the island's colonial history, where African, European, and Indigenous influences merged. Despite the oppressive conditions of slavery, African-derived dance forms such as Kumina and Jonkonnu persisted and evolved, serving as vital expressions of cultural identity and resistance. These dances, which blend African rhythms with European forms, have become integral to Jamaica's cultural heritage (Nettleford, 1985) (Crawford, 2001).

The influence of the Spanish and British colonial periods also significantly shaped the cultural landscape of Jamaica. The Spanish introduced European cultural elements, which the British later reinforced and expanded upon. European dances such as the Quadrille⁸ and Maypole⁹ were introduced and adapted by the local population, leading to a unique blend of African and European dance traditions (Burton, 1997) (Sherlock & Bennett, 1998).

2.2. Cultural Significance

Traditional dances in Jamaica are more than just artistic expressions; they are deeply embedded in the social and spiritual fabric of the community. They are performed at key life events, religious ceremonies, and community gatherings, reinforcing social cohesion and cultural continuity. For example, Kumina, often performed at funerals, reflects its deep spiritual significance, while Jonkonnu, with its elaborate masquerades, is a staple of Christmas celebrations, symbolising both festivity and resistance (Bilby, 2011) (Crawford, 2001) (Burton, 1997).

2.3. Preservation and Evolution

Formal and informal efforts have significantly influenced the preservation and evolution of traditional Jamaican dance forms. Institutions like the National Dance Theatre Company (NDTC) have played a crucial role in documenting, preserving, and revitalising these dance forms. The NDTC has ensured that these cultural expressions remain relevant and vibrant by

⁸ Quadrille Dance: a historic dance popular in Europe during the 18th and 19th centuries. It consists of a sequence of dance figures performed by four couples arranged in a square. (McKenzie-Kennedy, 2024)

⁹ Maypole Dance: a traditional dance from England's May Day celebrations, brought to Jamaica in the 1800s. In this dance, people move around a pole with colourful ribbons, weaving in a circle to music. (McKenzie-Kennedy, 2024)

incorporating traditional dances into contemporary performances (Nettleford, 1985). It was formed when Jamaica gained independence from Great Britain in 1962.

Additionally, community-based initiatives and cultural festivals have been instrumental in keeping traditional dances alive. Events such as the annual Jonkonnu Festival and various local dance competitions organised by the Jamaica Cultural Development Commission (JCDC) provide platforms for showcasing and preserving traditional dance forms. These efforts have helped to maintain Jamaica's cultural heritage while allowing for creative adaptations and evolutions that keep the dances dynamic and relevant (Crawford, 2001).

Modern adaptations of traditional dances have also contributed to their preservation. For example, incorporating and evolving traditional movements into reggae and dancehall performances has brought these cultural practices to new audiences, both locally and internationally. This blending of traditional and contemporary forms ensures Jamaican dance's evolution and vitality (Nettleford, 2003). This can be seen in performances such as *Kumina* by Rex Nettleford (National Dance Theatre Company of Jamaica, 1971), or *Satta* by L'Antoinette Stines (L'Acadco: A United Caribbean Dance Force, 1985).

2.4. Resistance and Empowerment

Traditional and folk dances in Jamaica have long been a means of resistance and empowerment for marginalised communities. During slavery, dance served as a covert form of resistance, allowing enslaved Africans to maintain their cultural practices and assert their humanity in the face of dehumanising conditions. The subversive elements of dances like *Jonkonnu* (Jowallah, 2022), which often included satirical portrayals of enslavers, exemplify this spirit of resistance (Burton, 1997).

In contemporary times, traditional dances continue to be a source of empowerment, providing a means for Jamaicans to assert their cultural identity and resist the lingering effects of colonialism. Dance initiatives led by community organisations and cultural activists have utilised traditional and popular dance forms, such as dancehall, to foster pride and solidarity among Jamaican communities, particularly in socio-economic challenges and cultural globalisation (Nettleford, 2003).

These cultural practices play a crucial role in decolonising Jamaican art and culture through preserving, celebrating, and evolving traditional Jamaican dance forms. They serve as narratives of resistance, resilience, and identity, reflecting Jamaica's rich cultural heritage and ongoing journey towards cultural liberation.

At the Edna Manley College of the Visual and Performing Arts, the School of Dance (SOD) has integrated traditional dance forms into educational curricula and community programmes (McFarlane, 2024), promoting cultural awareness and pride among younger generations. These efforts ensure that traditional dances remain a vital part of Jamaica's cultural identity and

contribute to the broader movement of cultural preservation and empowerment (Crawford, 2001).

L'ACADCO: A United Caribbean Dance Force (L'ACADCO), founded by Dr. L'Antoinette Stines, has played a pivotal role in preserving and innovating Jamaican dance. Established to create a platform for Caribbean dance, L'ACADCO blends traditional Caribbean and African dance forms alongside Asian traditional dance forms, namely Bharatanatyam from India, with contemporary dance and ballet. This fusion preserves traditional dance forms and brings them into dialogue with modern dance practices, creating a dynamic and evolving dance language (Stines, 2021).

Stines' creation of the L'Antech technique within L'ACADCO exemplifies this innovative approach. L'Antech, a dance technique that integrates elements from African, Caribbean, Asian, and modern dance and ballet, serves as a decolonial practice by reclaiming Indigenous knowledge and traditions while simultaneously acknowledging colonial history. This technique empowers dancers to explore their cultural identities and histories through movement, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of their heritage (Stines, 2021).

L'ACADCO's performances often highlight cultural resistance and empowerment themes, using dance to tell stories of Jamaican and Caribbean experiences. Through its productions, L'ACADCO has not only preserved traditional dance forms but also adapted them to address contemporary social and political issues, as seen in [No Justice, No Peace](#), choreographed in 2010 (L'Acadco: A United Caribbean Dance Force, 2010). This approach has helped to keep traditional dances relevant and vibrant, ensuring their continued evolution and significance in modern Jamaican culture (Nettleford, 2003) (Stines, 2021).

Furthermore, L'ACADCO has engaged in extensive community outreach and education, offering workshops and training programmes that introduce traditional and contemporary dance techniques to new generations of dancers (L'Acadco: A United Caribbean Dance Force, 2024). These initiatives help to democratise dance education, making it accessible to a broader audience and fostering a deeper connection to Jamaican cultural heritage (Stines, 2021).

Conclusion

Traditional and folk dances in Jamaica are integral to the nation's cultural fabric, embodying its people's rich heritage, resilience, and creativity. These dances are potent expressions of identity, social cohesion, and resistance, reflecting the island's complex history and ongoing journey toward decolonisation. Through institutions like the NDTC, community organisations, and dance companies like L'ACADCO, traditional dance forms have been preserved, revitalised, and adapted, ensuring their relevance in contemporary society.

L'ACADCO, under the leadership of Dr. Stines, has been particularly influential in bridging the gap between tradition and modernity, creating a dynamic dance language that speaks to the diverse cultural influences that shape Jamaican identity. The innovative L'Antech technique

exemplifies this fusion, incorporating elements from various dance traditions into a cohesive, empowering practice that celebrates cultural heritage while addressing contemporary issues.

The continued evolution and celebration of traditional Jamaican dances are essential for maintaining cultural identity and promoting social empowerment. By integrating these dance forms into education, performance, and community activities, Jamaica can ensure its cultural legacy remains vibrant and influential for future generations. This ongoing process of cultural preservation and innovation highlights the vital role of dance in the decolonisation of Jamaican art and culture, providing a hopeful vision for the future of Jamaican identity and artistic expression.

Chapter 3: Contemporary Dance Theatre and Decolonial Practices

3.1. Emergence of Contemporary Dance Theatre in Jamaica

The emergence of contemporary dance theatre in Jamaica is rooted in the island's post-colonial quest for cultural identity and artistic expression. Establishing the National Dance Theatre Company (NDTC) in 1962, coinciding with Jamaica's independence, marked a pivotal moment in developing contemporary dance. Under the leadership of Prof Rex Nettleford and Eddy Thomas, the NDTC sought to create a unique Jamaican dance language that integrated traditional Caribbean dance forms with contemporary techniques (Nettleford, 1985).

The NDTC's innovative approach combined African, European, and Indigenous dances, reflecting the island's multicultural heritage. This fusion not only showcased the richness of Jamaican culture but also challenged the dominance of Eurocentric dance forms. The company's repertoire, which includes works like *Gerrehbenta* and *Kumina*, exemplifies this synthesis and has been instrumental in locally and internationally promoting Jamaican contemporary dance (Nettleford, 2003).

3.2. Decolonial Aesthetics in Contemporary Dance

Decolonial aesthetics in contemporary dance involve challenging and redefining the artistic standards imposed by colonial powers. This process requires critically examining how colonialism has influenced perceptions of beauty, form, and technique in dance. In Jamaica, choreographers and dancers have increasingly sought to decolonise their art by embracing Indigenous movements, rhythms, and narratives.

One of the key figures in this conscious movement is Dr. Stines. Stines exemplifies the decolonial approach by blending traditional Jamaican dance forms with contemporary techniques. Her creation of the L'Antech dance technique, which incorporates elements from African, Caribbean, Asian, modern, and ballet dance, significantly contributes to the decolonial aesthetics in dance (Stines, 2021).

By incorporating Indigenous knowledge and practices, contemporary Jamaican dance challenges the Eurocentric norms that have historically marginalised non-Western dance forms. This approach reclaims cultural heritage and fosters a more inclusive and diverse representation of artistic expression (Wa'Thiongo, 1986).

3.3. Fusion of Traditional and Contemporary Forms

The fusion of traditional and contemporary dance forms in Jamaica reflects the dynamic and evolving nature of the island's cultural landscape. Choreographers like Nettleford and Stines have been pioneers in integrating traditional folk dances such as Kumina, Dinki Mini, and Jonkonnu with contemporary dance techniques. This fusion creates a unique and distinctive

Jamaican dance language that honours the past while embracing the present (Nettleford, 1985).

This blending of forms allows for a rich exploration of identity and history, providing a platform for dancers to express contemporary social and political issues through the lens of traditional cultural practices. For example, the NDTC's repertoire includes pieces that address themes of resistance, empowerment, and community, drawing on the symbolic power of traditional dances to convey these messages (Crawford, 2001).

The fusion process is not merely a blending of styles but a deliberate and thoughtful integration that respects the integrity and significance of each dance form. This approach ensures that traditional dances are not appropriated or diluted but are revitalised and recontextualised in a contemporary setting (Stines, 2021).

3.4. Impact and Reception

The impact of contemporary dance theatre in Jamaica has been profound in terms of artistic innovation and cultural affirmation. Companies like the NDTC and L'ACADCO have garnered international acclaim, showcasing the vibrancy and diversity of Jamaican dance on global stages. Their performances have entertained audiences and educated them about Jamaica's rich cultural heritage.

Contemporary Jamaican dance has received an overwhelmingly positive reception, with critics and audiences praising the performances' creativity, technical skill, and cultural authenticity. Jamaican choreographers and dancers' work has been celebrated for its ability to transcend cultural boundaries and resonate with diverse audiences (Nettleford, 2003).

However, the journey towards decolonising dance is ongoing, and challenges remain to overcome. Issues such as funding, access to training, and representation continue to affect the dance community in Jamaica. Nevertheless, the achievements of contemporary dance theatre in Jamaica serve as a testament to the resilience and creativity of its artists, who continue to push the boundaries of artistic expression and cultural representation (Stines, 2021).

3.5. Global Influences and Decolonial Practices

The decolonial movement in dance is not confined to Jamaica. Across the globe, choreographers and dance companies have been engaging in similar practices, challenging Eurocentric norms and embracing their Indigenous and traditional dance forms. This section explores the contributions of notable international figures and companies to the decolonial aesthetics in dance.

Katherine Dunham:

Katherine Dunham, an African American dancer, choreographer, and anthropologist, played a pivotal role in decolonising dance in the United States and beyond. Often referred to as the "Matriarch of Black Dance," Dunham's impact on the dance world is profound, particularly in her efforts to challenge the dominance of Western dance aesthetics and promote the rich cultural heritage of the African diaspora.

Dunham's journey began with her academic pursuits in anthropology at the University of Chicago, where she conducted extensive field research in the Caribbean, particularly in Haiti, Jamaica, and Trinidad. Her immersion in these cultures allowed her to study their traditional dance forms, which she meticulously documented and later integrated into her choreographic work. This research was revolutionary, as it not only preserved these dance traditions but also positioned them as valuable and sophisticated forms of artistic expression in their own right.

The development of the Dunham Technique, which emerged from her synthesis of African, Caribbean, and American dance forms, is a testament to her decolonial approach to dance. Unlike classical ballet, which emphasises verticality and restraint, the Dunham Technique is characterised by its polyrhythmic complexity, grounded movements, and the use of the entire body in a fluid and expressive manner. This technique challenged the prevailing norms of Western dance and offered dancers a way to connect with and embody the cultural practices of the African diaspora.

Dunham's work extended beyond the studio and the stage; she was an outspoken advocate for civil rights and used her platform to address social injustices. Through her dance company, the Katherine Dunham Dance Company, and her performances, she brought African and Caribbean dance forms to mainstream audiences, challenging stereotypes and reshaping perceptions of Black culture.

One of Dunham's most significant contributions to the decolonisation of dance was her emphasis on the movement's cultural and spiritual significance. She viewed dance as more than physical performance; it was a means of storytelling, cultural preservation, and spiritual expression. Her choreographic works, such as [Barrelhouse Blues](#) and [L'Ag'Ya](#), showcased her dancers' technical prowess and communicated the African diaspora's lived experiences, histories, and resilience.

In addition to her work as a choreographer and performer, Dunham was a dedicated educator. She established the Katherine Dunham School of Dance and Theatre in New York City, where she trained a generation of dancers in her technique and philosophy. Her school was not just a centre for dance instruction; it was a hub for cultural exchange, where students were encouraged to explore and honour their cultural identities (Dunham, 2005)

Dunham's legacy in decolonising dance is immeasurable. She broke barriers in the dance world, proving that non-Western dance forms were equal to and could enrich and expand the vocabulary of modern dance. Her life's work is a powerful example of how dance can be a tool for cultural affirmation, social change, and the reclamation of identity. Dunham's influence

continues to be felt today, inspiring contemporary choreographers and dancers to explore and integrate their cultural heritages into their work, further advancing the decolonial movement in dance.

Martha Graham:

Martha Graham, widely regarded as one of the most influential figures in modern dance, made significant contributions to the decolonial practices in dance by incorporating elements of Native American and African American cultural expressions into her choreography. While she is primarily celebrated for her innovations in modern dance, Graham's work also challenged the Eurocentric dominance in the dance world by exploring and integrating diverse cultural narratives.

Graham's approach to dance was revolutionary. She rejected the rigid forms of classical ballet in favour of a style that emphasised the raw emotional power of movement. Her choreography often drew inspiration from various cultural sources, reflecting her belief that dance could be a universal language capable of expressing the full spectrum of human experience. This philosophy led her to explore themes and stories outside the traditional Western canon, bringing marginalised cultural expressions into the spotlight.

One of the most notable examples of Graham's engagement with decolonial practices is her work [*Primitive Mysteries*](#) (1931). This piece was inspired by the rituals and religious ceremonies of Native American tribes, particularly the Pueblo people. Graham spent time in the American Southwest, immersing herself in the local cultures and learning about their spiritual practices. *Primitive Mysteries* was a groundbreaking work that broke away from the European-centric narratives prevalent in dance at the time, focusing instead on the spiritual and communal aspects of Native American life. With its stark simplicity and profound emotional depth, the choreography conveyed a sense of reverence for the cultural practices it depicted, challenging audiences to appreciate the beauty and significance of non-Western traditions.

Another important work by Graham that reflects her decolonial approach is [*Embattled Garden*](#) (1958), which drew upon themes from various cultural sources, including the biblical story of Adam and Eve. While rooted in a familiar narrative, Graham infused the piece with elements that alluded to broader, more universal struggles, such as the tension between tradition and modernity and the conflict between individual desires and collective responsibilities. By weaving these themes into her choreography, Graham expanded the scope of modern dance, allowing it to serve as a medium for exploring the complexities of cultural identity and resistance to colonial influence.

Graham's incorporation of diverse cultural elements was an aesthetic choice and a political statement. Drawing from Native American and African American cultures, she challenged the notion that Western culture was superior and universal. Her works suggested that the stories and traditions of all people, regardless of their cultural background, had value and deserved to

be explored through dance. In this way, Graham played a crucial role in broadening the horizons of modern dance, making it a more inclusive and representative art form.

Moreover, Graham's influence extended beyond her choreography. Through her company, the Martha Graham Dance Company, she mentored and trained generations of dancers from diverse cultural backgrounds. Her approach to dance education emphasised the importance of individuality and self-expression, encouraging her students to draw upon their own cultural identities in their work. This ethos helped to foster a more inclusive dance community and contributed to the ongoing decolonisation of the art form (Graham, 1991).

In summary, Martha Graham's contributions to decolonial practices in dance are evident in her integration of non-Western cultural narratives into her choreography and her commitment to expanding the boundaries of modern dance. By challenging the hegemony of Eurocentric traditions, Graham opened up new possibilities for artistic expression and laid the groundwork for future generations of dancers and choreographers to explore and celebrate their cultural identities (Martha Graham Dance Company, 2024).

Alvin Ailey:

Alvin Ailey, the visionary founder of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre, made monumental contributions to the decolonisation of dance by foregrounding African American cultural expressions and narratives in his choreography. Ailey's work challenged the dominance of Eurocentric dance forms and provided a powerful platform for African American voices and stories in modern dance.

Ailey's approach to choreography was deeply rooted in his own experiences growing up in the segregated South. His early life in Texas exposed him to the rich cultural heritage of African American communities, including the spirituals, blues, and gospel music that would later become central elements in his work. Ailey believed that dance could be a vehicle for social change, and he used his choreographic voice to explore themes of identity, resilience, and the African American experience.

One of Ailey's most iconic works, [Revelations](#) (1960), exemplifies his decolonial approach to dance. Revelations is a powerful exploration of African American spirituals, drawing on Ailey's memories of attending church services with his mother and the profound sense of community and spirituality he experienced there. The choreography is a profoundly moving portrayal of the struggles and triumphs of African Americans, from the pain of slavery to the joy of liberation. Through Revelations, Ailey celebrated African American culture and asserted its place as a central narrative in the broader American cultural landscape. The work's enduring popularity and status as a cornerstone of the modern dance repertoire underscore its significance as a decolonial statement.

Ailey's contributions to decolonising dance extended beyond his choreography. The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre, founded in 1958, was a pioneering institution that provided a platform

for African American dancers and choreographers when opportunities were limited due to racial discrimination. Ailey's company became a symbol of Black artistic excellence, and its success challenged the prevailing racial hierarchies in the dance world. The company's diverse repertoire, which includes works by Ailey and other choreographers of colour, continues to promote a more inclusive and representative vision of modern dance (Ailey, 1997) (Lincoln Center, 2024).

In addition to *Revelations*, Ailey's other works, such as *Blues Suite* (1958) and *Cry* (1971), further illustrate his commitment to decolonising dance. *Blues Suite*, Ailey's first full-length work, captures the essence of rural African American life with its vibrant depiction of the juke joints, work songs, and blues music integral to Southern Black culture. *Cry*, dedicated to Ailey's mother and "all Black women everywhere," is a solo that celebrates Black women's strength, resilience, and dignity. These works, like *Revelations*, are rooted in African Americans' cultural and historical experiences, and they highlight Ailey's dedication to using dance as a means of cultural affirmation and resistance.

Ailey's legacy in decolonising dance is profound. Through his choreography and company, he redefined modern dance and created a space where African American culture could be celebrated and shared with the world. His work continues to inspire generations of dancers and choreographers to explore and embrace their cultural identities, contributing to the ongoing decolonisation of the dance world.

In summary, Alvin Ailey's work is a testament to dance's power as a decolonisation tool. By centring African American cultural expressions and narratives, Ailey challenged the dominance of Eurocentric traditions and redefined what modern dance could be. His contributions have had a lasting impact on the dance world, paving the way for a more inclusive and culturally diverse artistic landscape.

Alvin Ailey's American Dance Theatre is another significant contributor to decolonial aesthetics in dance. Ailey's choreography often drew from African American cultural heritage, including blues, jazz, and spirituals. His masterpiece is a profound example of how traditional African American cultural expressions can be integrated into contemporary dance, creating a powerful narrative of struggle, resilience, and hope (Ailey, 1997) (Lincoln Center, 2024).

Akram Khan:

Akram Khan, a British-Bangladeshi dancer and choreographer, is one of contemporary dance's most innovative and influential figures. His work is characterised by a unique fusion of Kathak—a traditional Indian dance form—with contemporary dance, creating a hybrid dance language that challenges and transcends cultural boundaries. Khan's choreography reflects not only his dual heritage but also a decisive contribution to the global conversation on decolonial practices in dance.

Born in London to Bangladeshi parents, Khan grew up navigating the complexities of a bicultural identity. This duality became a central theme in his work as he sought to reconcile and integrate his South Asian roots with his experiences in the Western world. Khan's early training in Kathak under the tutelage of the renowned Sri Pratap Pawar laid the foundation for his artistic journey. With its intricate footwork, rapid spins, and expressive storytelling, Kathak provided Khan with a deep understanding of rhythm, narrative, and the cultural significance of dance in South Asian traditions (Roy, 2015).

However, Khan did not limit himself to Kathak alone. His exposure to contemporary dance during his studies at the Northern School of Contemporary Dance and later at De Montfort University broadened his artistic horizons. It was here that Khan began to experiment with blending the precision and discipline of Kathak with the fluidity and innovation of contemporary dance. This synthesis became the hallmark of his style, allowing him to craft performances that resonate on multiple levels—culturally, emotionally, and politically (Fraleigh, 2015).

Khan's choreography often addresses themes of identity, migration, and cultural memory, reflecting his experiences and broader societal issues. His works explore the tensions and intersections between tradition and modernity, East and West, and the personal and the universal. By doing so, Khan challenges the binary thinking that often characterises discussions about culture, identity, and artistic expression (Akram Khan Company, 2024).

One of Khan's most acclaimed works, [Desh](#) (2011), exemplifies his decolonial approach to dance. *Desh*—meaning "homeland" in Bengali—is an autobiographical solo performance that delves into the complexities of cultural identity and the diasporic experience. The piece is a journey through Khan's memories and imagination, exploring his relationship with his ancestral homeland of Bangladesh and his life in Britain. *Desh* is a poignant reflection on the concept of "home," not as a fixed place but as a fluid and evolving idea shaped by memory, history, and personal experience.

The choreography in *Desh* is a seamless blend of Kathak and contemporary dance, interwoven with elements of storytelling, visual art, and multimedia. Khan uses this hybrid form to convey the fluidity of identity and the multifaceted nature of the immigrant experience. By drawing on his cultural heritage and the broader South Asian diasporic narrative, Khan's work challenges the dominance of Eurocentric perspectives in contemporary dance, asserting the relevance and richness of non-Western cultural expressions (Sweeney, 2013).

Another significant work by Khan is his reimagining of the classical ballet [Giselle](#) (2016), created for the English National Ballet. In this version, Khan infused the traditional ballet with contemporary elements and a narrative that reflects the struggles of migrant workers and the exploitation they face. This interpretation of *Giselle* modernises the classic tale and brings issues of social justice and cultural displacement to the forefront. By doing so, Khan disrupts the conventional narratives of ballet and injects them with contemporary relevance and decolonial perspectives (Clarke, 2016; Soloski, 2016).

Khan's impact on the global dance scene extends beyond his choreography. Through his company, Akram Khan Company, he has fostered a space for cross-cultural collaboration and innovation. His works have brought together artists from diverse backgrounds, creating artistic groundbreaking and culturally resonant performances. This commitment to inclusivity and diversity in his creative process further underscores Khan's role as a decolonial artist (Akram Khan Company, 2024).

In addition to his stage works, Khan has also engaged with film, most notably in [The Vertical Road](#) (2010). This piece explores the spiritual journey of a group of dancers influenced by Sufi philosophy. Like many of his works, this work draws from a rich tapestry of cultural references, blending them into a coherent narrative that speaks to universal human experiences. By incorporating such diverse influences, Khan continues to challenge the hegemony of Western cultural narratives in dance, offering instead a vision of dance as a global and inclusive art form (Akram Khan Company, 2024).

Khan's contributions to decolonial practices in dance are profound. By blending Kathak with contemporary dance, he preserves and celebrates his cultural heritage and transforms it, making it accessible and relevant to a global audience. His work challenges the conventional boundaries of dance and offers a powerful critique of cultural hierarchies, advocating for a more inclusive and pluralistic approach to artistic expression (Fraleigh, 2015).

In summary, Akram Khan's work exemplifies the potential of dance as a medium for decolonisation. His innovative fusion of Kathak and contemporary dance creates a robust dialogue between cultures, challenging the dominance of Eurocentric traditions and promoting a more inclusive vision of dance. Through his choreography and company, Khan continues to push the boundaries of what dance can be, making a lasting impact on the global dance community and contributing to the ongoing process of cultural decolonisation.

La Técnica Cubana and Ramiro Guerra Suárez:

During my years living in Cuba and studying at La Escuela Nacional de Arte de Danza, I had the unique opportunity to immerse myself in the creation and practice of La Técnica Cubana, a modern dance technique pioneered by the visionary Cuban choreographer Ramiro Guerra Suárez. This technique was not just something I learned academically—it was an experience that transformed my understanding of dance at its core.

La Técnica Cubana emerged as a robust response to the pervasive influence of Western dance forms, mainly classical ballet, which had long dominated the Cuban cultural landscape. Guerra's innovation lay in his ability to weave Afro-Cuban rhythms, movements, and cultural expressions into contemporary dance, creating a style deeply rooted in the Cuban experience [Ramiro... Siempre la danza](#) (National Contemporary Dance Company of Cuba, 2022). Learning this technique was a profound reconnection with my body and heritage, as it emphasised fluidity, grounded movements, and the intricate rhythms that are the heartbeat of Afro-Cuban traditions.

The experience of studying under this technique was not merely about learning steps or routines; it was about embodying a cultural identity and challenging the colonial legacies embedded in dance. Guerra's work transcended the local context, inspiring a wave of choreographers across Latin America and the Caribbean, including myself, to explore and reclaim our Indigenous and African roots through dance.

It reminded me of L'Antech, which is unsurprising given that La Técnica Cubana has played a pivotal role in Stines' journey of decolonising dance. The technique's deep focus on cultural identity, historical consciousness, and integrating traditional forms into contemporary practice aligns with her work in Jamaica. Drawing inspiration from Guerra's approach, Stines has adapted and expanded upon it, developing L'Antech with a similar goal: to uplift and affirm cultural identity through dance. The influence of La Técnica Cubana on Stines' work highlights the rich exchange of ideas within the decolonial dance movement, illustrating how local practices can inspire and reinforce global efforts to decolonise art and culture.

Through my experience with La Técnica Cubana, I have seen it not just as a technique but as a movement—a reclamation and celebration of the cultural heritage that defines us as dancers and individuals. This practice has shown me that dance is far more than an art form; it is a powerful tool for decolonisation that continues to inspire and shape the global dance community.

Conclusion

Contemporary dance theatre in Jamaica and beyond is a powerful vehicle for decolonising art and culture. By blending traditional and contemporary dance forms, choreographers and dancers actively challenge Eurocentric norms and reclaim their cultural heritage. This integration process reaffirms the value of Indigenous and local traditions and disrupts the dominant narratives that have historically marginalised non-Western forms of artistic expression.

The work of pioneers like Rex Nettleford, L'Antoinette Stines, Katherine Dunham, Martha Graham, Alvin Ailey, Akram Khan, and Ramiro Guerra Suárez exemplifies the transformative power of dance. These artists have used their craft to transcend cultural boundaries, promoting a more inclusive and diverse artistic landscape. Their contributions demonstrate how dance can serve as a form of resistance, a means of asserting identity, and a tool for social change.

The evolution of contemporary dance in Jamaica, characterised by a dynamic interplay between tradition and innovation, underscores the importance of maintaining cultural identity while embracing new influences. This ongoing evolution is crucial not only for the preservation of cultural heritage but also for the empowerment of communities. By fostering a sense of pride and belonging, dance can inspire individuals and groups to engage more fully with their cultural roots and to contribute to the broader decolonial movement.

Integrating traditional and contemporary dance forms into education, performance, and community activities is essential for ensuring that these art forms continue to thrive. Educational institutions play a pivotal role in this process by incorporating diverse dance traditions into their curricula, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity among students. Similarly, community-based dance programs provide opportunities for people of all ages and backgrounds to connect with their cultural heritage, learn new skills, and express themselves creatively.

Furthermore, the global dance community is responsible for supporting the preservation and promotion of these diverse dance forms. This involves recognising the artistic value of non-Western dance traditions and advocating for their inclusion in mainstream cultural discourse. By doing so, the dance community can contribute to a more equitable and representative artistic landscape that honours the richness of global cultural traditions.

The continued celebration and evolution of traditional and contemporary dance forms are vital for decolonisation. As dance adapts and responds to changing social and cultural contexts, it remains a powerful tool for cultural preservation and innovation. This process safeguards cultural legacy and promotes social empowerment and cohesion, offering a hopeful vision for the future of artistic expression and cultural representation.

In conclusion, contemporary dance theatre is more than just an art form; it is a living testament to the resilience and creativity of diverse cultures. By championing traditional and contemporary dance integration, the global dance community can play a crucial role in decolonising art and culture, ensuring that these rich traditions remain vibrant and influential for future generations.

Chapter 4: L'Antech: A Caribbean Modern Dance Technique

Introduction

In the vibrant tapestry of Jamaica's cultural landscape, L'Antech emerges as a beacon of resistance and transformation, challenging entrenched colonial legacies and paving the way for a more inclusive and authentic artistic expression. Rooted deeply in Jamaican and Anglo-Caribbean cultural heritage, L'Antech transcends conventional boundaries to offer a dynamic platform for reclaiming Indigenous knowledge, empowering artists, fostering community solidarity, and promoting education and awareness about Jamaica's complex colonial history. This chapter explores the multifaceted role of L'Antech in the ongoing process of decolonising art and culture in Jamaica, highlighting its significance as a catalyst for change and a testament to the resilience of Jamaican identity. The technique blends traditional and retention dances with ballet and contemporary dance, creating unique choreographies that tell Jamaican stories. L'Antech serves as a method of decolonisation, aiming to decolonise the mind, body, and spirit through dance (Stines, 2021).

L'Antech is built on the foundational movements and philosophies of Jamaican traditional dances like Kumina, Bruckins, and Nyabingi. It integrates these with classical ballet techniques to form a distinctive Caribbean contemporary dance language. This approach preserves traditional dance forms and empowers dancers to express their cultural identity within a contemporary framework (Stines, 2021).

At the heart of L'Antech lies a commitment to cultural representation and celebration, providing a space for the authentic expression of Jamaica's rich and diverse cultural heritage. By integrating elements from traditional folk forms to contemporary expressions, L'Antech serves as a platform for reclaiming Indigenous knowledge and traditions that were historically marginalised or erased under colonial rule. Through its inclusive approach, L'Antech celebrates the vibrancy and resilience of Jamaican culture, challenging Eurocentric norms and asserting the right of Jamaican artists to define and shape their own artistic identities (Stines, 2021).

Central to the decolonisation process facilitated by L'Antech is the reclamation of Indigenous knowledge and traditions embedded within Jamaican dance forms. Drawing inspiration from African tap roots, classical ballet, and movements from Egypt, Congo, and Asia, L'Antech embodies a fusion of cultural influences that reflects the complex history and heritage of the Caribbean region. By incorporating elements from diverse cultural traditions, L'Antech challenges the hegemonic narratives imposed by colonial powers and asserts the cultural sovereignty of the Jamaican people (Stines, 2021).

L'Antech may catalyse Jamaican artists' empowerment to assert their agency and creative autonomy within the global arts community. By providing a platform for artists to explore and express their cultural identities authentically, L'Antech fosters a sense of pride and ownership over Jamaican cultural heritage. Through its inclusive approach, L'Antech empowers artists to

challenge the systemic inequalities and injustices that have historically marginalised their voices, fostering a greater sense of solidarity and collective resistance against colonial oppression (Stines, 2021).

In addition to empowering individual artists, L'Antech is crucial in fostering community building and solidarity within the Jamaican art scene. By creating spaces for collaboration, dialogue, and mutual support, L'Antech strengthens the resilience of Jamaican artists in the face of systemic oppression. These solidarity networks provide artists a sense of belonging and support and facilitate collective resistance against the enduring legacies of colonialism that continue to shape the island's cultural landscape (Stines, 2021).

L'Antech is a powerful tool for educating and raising awareness about Jamaica's complex colonial history and its ongoing implications for contemporary society. By incorporating historical narratives and cultural symbolism into dance practice, L'Antech promotes a deeper understanding of Jamaica's cultural heritage among artists, audiences, and the wider community. This educational aspect of L'Antech is instrumental in challenging colonial ideologies and promoting critical consciousness about colonialism's impact on Jamaican society (Stines, 2021).

L'Antech emerges as a transformative force for decolonising art and culture in Jamaica, offering a dynamic platform for reclaiming Indigenous knowledge, empowering artists, fostering community solidarity, and promoting education and awareness about Jamaica's complex colonial history. By celebrating the vibrancy and resilience of Jamaican culture, L'Antech challenges Eurocentric norms and asserts the cultural sovereignty of the Jamaican people. As Jamaica continues its journey towards decolonisation, L'Antech stands as a testament to the enduring spirit of resistance and resilience that defines Jamaican identity.

4.1. Origins and Development of L'Antech

“I spent many years both viewing and experiencing many different dance techniques as a dancer and concluded that the spiritual act of dancing accomplishes unity, love, and oneness”
(Stines, 2024)

L'Antech was developed by Dr. L'Antoinette Stines, a visionary in Caribbean dance who sought to create a dance technique that encapsulated the rich cultural heritage of the Caribbean. Stines' background in traditional Jamaican dances, modern dance, and ballet provided the foundation for this innovative technique. Her work with L'ACADCO: A United Caribbean Dance Force was instrumental in shaping L'Antech as a method that blends traditional Caribbean and African dances with contemporary and classical ballet movements (Stines, 2021).

The development of L'Antech was driven by a desire to create a dance form that could serve as a vehicle for cultural expression and decolonisation. By integrating movements and philosophies from various cultural traditions, L'Antech challenges the hegemonic narratives

imposed by colonial powers and asserts the cultural sovereignty of the Jamaican people (Stines, 2021).

4.2. Core Elements of L'Antech

L'Antech is built on the foundational movements and philosophies of Jamaican traditional dances like Kumina, Bruckins, and Nyabinghi. It integrates these with classical ballet techniques to form a distinctive Caribbean contemporary dance language. The technique emphasises fluidity, *groundedness*, and breath, reflecting traditional Jamaican dance forms' spiritual and physical connections (Stines, 2009) (Stines, 2021).

The path of enlightenment in which dance knowledge resides is often lost to surface or peripheral observers. The interpretations proposed by the organic scholars from the Jerusalem Schoolrooms of Indigenous and traditional dance do not necessarily concur with those documented and disseminated by academia. Properly applied purging, observing, and absorbing should bring one to fully appreciate the variety of source information feeding into the dance as the proper finale of an experience.

“I think grounding of Caribbean dance aesthetics is (w)holistic. SPIRIT first, MIND second and BODY last, nurtured by the power of stored ancestral memories. They (w)holistically come together as one synerbridge” (Stines, 2021, S. 16)

Organising the inventory to structure a process that validates the ontology of the space it endeavours to represent requires structuring the data to *synerbridge* movements into a complete technical procedure. Decisions then must be taken about the precise continuities on which the research will be focused. While observing and absorbing the dance studio, Stines was drawn mainly to the religious spirit dances and their rituals. The research process enabled her to stack the data she planned to use for developing mirror images of the Jamaican iconographic traditional ontology in dance (Stines, 2021).

The five traditional movement prototypes pivotal to the grounding of L'Antech are Kumina, Bruckins, Nyabinghi, Dancehall (*Daaance'all*¹⁰), and Yanvalou¹¹. Stines says each was chosen because it is chronologically crucial in the overall history of Jamaica and the importance of Caribbean dance (Stines, 2022). Other essential components are Gerreh¹², Dinki Mini, Arará, Yoruba found in Revival, Bambosh, and Piquet. Also included are European Classical Ballet,

¹⁰ Daaance'all, pronounced "Dancehall," refers to a gathering place where people from diverse socio-economic backgrounds gather for relaxation, release, and entertainment through dancing. (Stines, 2021).

¹¹ Yanvalou: a traditional dance originating from Benin, Africa, and is primarily associated with the Vodoun religion in Haiti. It features rhythmic, undulating movements and has several variations, including upright, isolated shoulders, and crouching forms. (Stines, 2021)

¹² Gerreh: a traditional Jamaican dance performed during funeral wakes and celebrations. It features energetic movements, drumming, and singing, honouring the deceased and providing comfort and community support to the bereaved. (Jamaica Information Service, 2024)

movements from Chinese and Indian culture, and the imprinted knowledge from Egyptian hieroglyphics (Stines, 2021).

The traditional ancestral presence of the fifteenth-century Kumina is Congolese retention that has been well preserved (including the Ki-Congo language, chanting, and spirit dances associated with it); Kumina is regarded as the primary and oldest African retention in Jamaica. The Kumina ritual was a revolt against cultural annihilation and slavery and aided the struggle for its abolition (Hill, 1992). The Indigenous-traditional Jamaican nineteenth-century Bruckins is documented as the practice created by the enslaved to celebrate freedom and the abolition of slavery in Jamaica. Bruckins is the philosophical foundation on which L'Antech stands. It accepts who we are as Jamaicans, knowing that freedom means responsibility. The twentieth-century manifestation of Nyabinghi, a *groundation*¹³ existing within Rastafari worship and celebration with its elements of chanting, drumming, and spirit dances, has been included as this is where revolution and resistance are firmly voiced (Stines, 2021, S. 23). Nyabinghi continues to revolt against “Babylon”, i.e., oppression and oppressors, local or foreign. The conscious effort to reclaim Africa begins with Rastafari, from which the songs and movement of Nyabinghi were heavily influenced by Revivalism (Stines, 2021, S. 23). Nyabinghi revolted against imperialism with the primary goal of claiming and attaining Bob Marley’s exhortation of “freedom from mental slavery” which stems from Marcus Garvey. Dancehall is the now globally accepted revolutionary voice of the once marginalised. It exploded from the inner cities, using the body and music as the primary instruments of revolution and fighting for equality. Dancehall represents the revolt of the marginalised underclass for recognition, respect, and gainful employment (Stanley-Niaah, 2010) (Hope, 2006). According to Stines, L'Antech fights for equality concerning a method of moving that respects all that has become *synerbridged* to one (Stines, 2021). “L'Antech claims the struggles and revolts; L'Antech accepts the freedom of the body.” (Stines, 2021, S. 39).

After years of observing, absorbing, purging, and developing experiential insight into the Caribbean dance canons, Stines understood that extensive research is imperative for developing an Indigenous technique so that the inventory becomes inclusive (Stines, 2021).

Critical elements of L'Antech include:

4.2.1. Synerbridging

Synerbridging combines various dance forms to create a unique and cohesive movement language. It is a hallmark of L'Antech. This concept involves integrating various cultural elements to create a unique and cohesive movement language.

4.2.1.1. Fusion of Traditional and Classical Techniques:

¹³ Groundation: a Rastafarian religious ceremony involving drumming, chanting, and dancing. It serves as a form of communal worship, celebrating and honouring spiritual beliefs, particularly the reverence of Haile Selassie I and the connection to African heritage. (Stines, 2021)

L'Antech incorporates movements from traditional Jamaican dances like Kumina and Bruckins with classical ballet. For instance, Kumina's rhythms and specific steps, known for their spiritual and ancestral significance, are fused with the disciplined structure of ballet barre exercises. This blending respects the origins of each form while creating a new, hybrid technique that embodies Jamaica's cultural richness (Stines, 2021).

An example of this fusion is the adaptation of Bruckins' regal and ceremonial movements with the precision and alignment of ballet, resulting in technically rigorous and culturally resonant exercises.

4.2.1.2. *Cross-cultural Sharing and Mutation:*

L'Antech facilitates cross-cultural sharing by borrowing elements from various dance traditions and allowing them to evolve together. This cross-cultural blending is evident in how the technique integrates African dance's *groundedness* and rhythm with the verticality and grace of European ballet.

This synergy is exemplified by borrowing classical ballet barre exercises and modifying them to include traditional Caribbean movements. Dancers perform pliés and tendus with rhythmic accents and movements drawn from Kumina, creating a dynamic and culturally rich training regimen.

4.2.2. Cultural Symbolism

Cultural Symbolism incorporates symbols and movements from African, Caribbean, and Indigenous traditions. It emphasises the spiritual and cultural significance.

4.2.2.1. *Use of the Circle:*

The circle, a powerful symbol in many African cultures representing unity, continuity, and the life cycle, is a fundamental element in L'Antech. Floor exercises before the barre often involve circular formations and movements, echoing traditional African dance's communal and inclusive nature (Asante, 1997).

This use of the circle also facilitates a spiritual connection among dancers, creating a sense of community and shared purpose.

4.2.2.2. *Integration of the Star of David:*

The Star of David, a symbol used in Rastafarianism, is incorporated into some L'Antech exercises. This inclusion honours Rastafarianism's spiritual and cultural heritage, significantly influencing Jamaican culture.

The geometric precision and spiritual resonance of the Star of David provide a framework for movement sequences that are both physically engaging and spiritually meaningful. (see Imagine 1, Appendix 2)

4.2.2.3. *Etching of the Fingers and Toes off the floor:*

Borrowed from Indian classical dance forms, the finger etching in L'Antech adds a layer of intricate expressiveness and cultural depth. This detailed hand movement enhances the storytelling aspect of the dance, allowing dancers to convey complex narratives and emotions.

Similarly, using the toes off the floor, inspired by Indian classical dance, introduces an element of grace and precision. This technique involves dancers lifting their toes slightly off the floor while performing specific movements, adding an elegant and controlled dynamic to the dance.

The integration of these finger and toe movements exemplifies the technique's commitment to cross-cultural respect and innovation, enriching the visual and expressive vocabulary of L'Antech. (see images 2 – 4, Appendix 2)

4.2.3. Spirituality in L'Antech

Spirituality: Emphasizing the spiritual aspects of dance, connecting the physical movements with cultural and ancestral roots. It is a fundamental aspect of L'Antech, deeply embedded in its philosophy and practice. This emphasis on spirituality is crucial for several reasons:

4.2.3.1. *Connection to Ancestral Roots:*

L'Antech strongly emphasises connecting dancers to their ancestral roots. Including movements and rituals from traditional dances like Kumina and Nyabinghi, which are rich in spiritual significance, helps dancers reconnect with their heritage and honour their ancestors. This connection is vital for reclaiming cultural identity and resisting the erasure of Indigenous spiritual practices imposed during colonialism (Bilby, 2011) (Stines, 2021).

4.2.3.2. *Holistic Approach to Dance:*

The spiritual dimension of L'Antech promotes a holistic approach to dance, where physical, emotional, and spiritual elements are integrated. This approach reflects traditional African and Caribbean worldviews, where dance is not merely a physical activity but a spiritual and communal experience. By fostering this holistic perspective, L'Antech encourages dancers to engage with dance as a form of personal and collective healing and empowerment (Asante, 1997).

4.2.3.3. *Ritual and Ceremony:*

L'Antech incorporates elements of ritual and ceremony into its practice, drawing from traditional Jamaican spiritual practices. These rituals, including drumming, chanting, and specific dance sequences, create a sacred space within the dance environment. This sacred space allows dancers to transcend the everyday and engage with more profound spiritual and cultural truths. Including rituals also helps preserve these practices and pass them on to new generations (Stines, 2021).

4.2.3.4 *Resistance and Empowerment:*

The spiritual aspect of L'Antech serves as a powerful tool for resistance and empowerment. By reclaiming and integrating spiritual practices that were marginalised or suppressed during colonial rule, L'Antech provides a means for dancers to assert their cultural and spiritual autonomy. This reclamation is a form of resistance against the cultural homogenisation and spiritual disenfranchisement that colonialism sought to impose. Dancers can find strength and solidarity through spiritual engagement in their shared heritage and experiences (Wa'Thiongo, 1986)(Nettleford, 2003).

4.2.3.5 *Healing and Transformation:*

Dance in L'Antech can be viewed as a transformative practice that can facilitate healing. The spiritual elements help dancers to process and transcend personal and collective traumas associated with colonialism and its aftermath. This healing aspect is crucial for the decolonisation process, as it addresses not only the physical and cultural but also the psychological impacts of colonialism. By promoting spiritual healing, L'Antech contributes to the overall well-being of individuals and communities (Stines, 2021).

4.2.4. The Ten Commandments of “DAUNCE” and “DAAANCE”

Stines, in her exploration of dance and cultural identity, introduces two contrasting sets of "commandments" (Stines, 2021, S. 17-18) that articulate the fundamental differences between what she terms "*DAUNCE*¹⁴" and "*DAAANCE*¹⁵." These commandments profoundly critique the Eurocentric norms embedded in classical ballet and celebrate the spiritual and cultural depth of traditional African and Jamaican dance forms. By juxtaposing these commandments, Dr Stines highlights the decolonial potential of embracing Indigenous dance practices while exposing the restrictive and often oppressive nature of Western dance traditions.

¹⁴ Daunce critiques the exclusionary and culturally disconnected practices in certain Western dance traditions, highlighting the need for a more inclusive and culturally resonant approach to dance. “My daughter just came from daunce class”, signifying that the child just came from ballet class. (Stines, 2021)

¹⁵ Daaance is a term for Spirit dances, including Indigenous, traditional, and contemporary dances. It is pronounced using the phonetic pronunciation of grass-roots people, as Dr. Stines quotes, “Me a go a one Daaance. “It resembles the long 'a' spelling of Ki-Kongo words in Maureen Warner Lewis's Central Africa in the Caribbean. (Stines, 2021).

The Ten Commandments of "DAUNCE"

"DAUNCE," as defined by Dr. Stines, represents the rigid, Eurocentric principles that have historically dominated classical ballet and similar dance forms. These commandments reflect values that prioritise a specific body type, aesthetic, and cultural disconnection, ultimately alienating dancers who do not conform to these narrow standards.

1. Thou shalt not preferably be Black.

This commandment underscores the racial exclusion inherent in classical ballet, where dancers of African descent have historically been marginalised.

2. Thou shalt not encourage parallel muscles.

Ballet's emphasis on certain physical forms, particularly the elongation and straightening of muscles, often disregards the natural anatomy of dancers, especially those of African descent.

3. Thou shalt disconnect the dance from the drum and from chanting.

This highlights the removal of rhythm and spiritual elements, integral to African dance, from ballet, reducing dance to mere physicality devoid of deeper cultural connections.

4. Thou shalt not display a 'bum' or buttocks.

Ballet's idealisation of a slim, flat body shape often stigmatises natural body types, particularly those prevalent in African communities.

5. Thou should not be full-breasted or otherwise buxom but should be slender or even bony.

The commandment criticises the unrealistic and exclusive body standards in ballet, which favour a particular type of physique that is often unattainable and unhealthy for many dancers.

6. Thou shalt disassociate the spirit from the dance.

Ballet often strips dance of its emotional and spiritual depth by prioritising form over feeling, reducing it to technical perfection.

7. Thou shalt forget all ancestral memories/disown all ancestral lineage other than Europe.

This commandment exposes the erasure of non-European cultural influences in ballet, promoting a singular, Eurocentric narrative.

8. Thou shalt not rotate your hips.

The restriction on hip movement reflects ballet's rigid control over the body, contrasting sharply with the fluidity celebrated in African dance.

9. Thou shalt not bend nor contract your spinal column.

This further emphasises the rigidity and stiffness imposed by ballet, which often suppresses natural movement and expression.

10. Thou shalt give reverence to European and North American constructs in dance and delete the Indigenous, traditional, and popular dances as mimicry and, therefore, unworthy.

The final commandment criticises the devaluation of non-European dance forms, often dismissed as inferior or mere imitations.

These commandments illustrate how classical ballet has perpetuated racial, cultural, and aesthetic biases. By enforcing these standards, "DAUNCE" alienates those who do not fit within its narrow physicality and cultural identity definitions.

Counter-Argument: The Evolution of Classical Ballet

While Dr. Stines' critique highlights significant historical issues within classical ballet, it is essential to recognise the evolving nature of this art form. The assertion that classical ballet universally excludes Black dancers or those who do not conform to its traditional aesthetics is increasingly being challenged.

Increased Diversity in Ballet: The dance world has seen significant strides toward inclusivity. Ballet companies globally feature Black and non-White dancers in prominent roles, challenging the notion that classical ballet is inherently exclusionary. For instance, Misty Copeland's rise to principal dancer at the American Ballet Theatre exemplifies how these barriers are being broken down.

Cultural Exchange and Hybridization: Classical ballet is not static; it has absorbed and integrated various cultural influences over time. Many contemporary choreographers now incorporate diverse cultural elements into their works, creating hybrid forms that resonate with a broader audience and allow for more inclusive representations within ballet.

Agency of Dancers: Many dancers from diverse backgrounds have found ways to subvert and reshape the art form from within, bringing their cultural identities into their performances. This counters the idea that dancers must conform strictly to Eurocentric standards, showing that ballet can be a platform for cultural expression and innovation.

Artistic Evolution: Ballet has undergone significant changes, especially in the 21st century, where there is a conscious effort to dismantle rigid stereotypes and embrace a more inclusive approach. This evolution suggests that while ballet has a problematic past, it is not immune to change and adaptation.

These counterpoints suggest that while Dr. Stines' critique captures important historical truths, the landscape of classical ballet is changing. Recognising these developments is crucial in understanding the ongoing discourse on decolonisation and inclusivity in the arts.

The Ten Commandments of "DAAANCE"

In contrast, Dr. Stines presents the "Ten Commandments of Spirit DAAANCE," which celebrate African and Jamaican dance traditions' inclusivity, spirituality, and cultural richness. These commandments offer a liberating framework for dancers, encouraging a holistic connection between body, mind, and spirit.

1. Thou shall be any shade in skin colour.

This commandment affirms the inclusivity of "DAAANCE," where all skin tones are celebrated, reflecting the diversity of the African diaspora.

2. Thou shall have any anatomical muscle structure or body type (buttocks included).

Unlike ballet, "DAAANCE" embraces all body types, recognising the beauty and strength inherent in diversity.

3. The daaance is the movement of the spirit, mind, and body in harmony with the drums and chanting. Therefore, thou cannot begin the experience without a drum - physical or metaphysical.

Central to "DAAANCE" is the integration of rhythm and spirituality, where the drum is not just an instrument but a conduit for connecting with ancestral roots and the divine.

4. Thou shall move your hips and the supporting spinal column in all possible directions.

This commandment celebrates the freedom of movement, particularly the expressive use of hips and spine, which are vital in African dance traditions.

5. Thou shall remember, preserve, and disseminate ancestral retentions and continuities.

"DAAANCE" is a vehicle for cultural preservation, ensuring that ancestral knowledge and practices are honoured and passed down through generations.

6. Thou shall not execute the daaance without associating oneself with oneself.

This emphasises the importance of self-awareness and authenticity in dance, where each movement reflects the dancer's inner being and cultural identity.

7. Thou shall fearlessly celebrate your flesh and even eroticism.

"DAAANCE" encourages dancers to embrace their bodies and sexuality without shame, recognising these as natural and powerful aspects of human expression.

8. Thou shall be spiritually grounded.

Spiritual grounding is essential in "DAAANCE," where dance is not merely a physical activity but a spiritual practice that connects the dancer with higher realms.

9. Thou shall give respect to elders and the ancestors.

Respect for elders and ancestors is paramount, as well as acknowledging the wisdom and cultural heritage passed down through generations.

10. Each part of one's body may be required to move at different rhythm patterns concurrently, and this should be executed with elegance and discipline.

"DAAANCE" challenges dancers to embody complex rhythms gracefully and discipline, showcasing African dance's sophisticated and multidimensional nature.

These commandments embody a dance practice deeply rooted in cultural identity, spiritual connection, and physical freedom. "DAAANCE" is not just a form of artistic expression; it is a powerful tool for decolonisation, offering an alternative to the restrictive norms of "DAUNCE" and celebrating the richness of African and Jamaican cultural heritage.

The contrast between "DAUNCE" and "DAAANCE", as articulated by Dr. Stines, is more than a critique of dance forms; it is a commentary on the broader cultural and racial dynamics that have shaped artistic practices globally. By challenging the narrow, Eurocentric ideals of "DAUNCE," Dr. Stines advocates for a more inclusive and spiritually connected approach to dance that honours the diversity of human experience and the depth of cultural traditions.

"DAAANCE" emerges as a liberating force, reconnecting dancers with their ancestral roots, bodies, and spirits. It offers a pathway for decolonising dance and the way we understand and engage with art and culture. Through "DAAANCE," dancers are encouraged to break free from the constraints of colonial legacies and embrace a more holistic, inclusive, and empowering approach to artistic expression.

In Jamaica's journey towards cultural liberation, "DAAANCE" represents a reclaiming of identity and a celebration of the resilience and creativity that has sustained Jamaican culture through centuries of oppression. As Dr Stines' commandments illustrate, the future of dance in Jamaica—and indeed in the wider world—lies in honouring and integrating diverse cultural expressions, creating a richer, more inclusive tapestry of human art and experience.

Visual Demonstration: To better understand the practical application of L'Antech, I have included a video titled "[Infinity \(part 1\)](#)," choreographed by myself in 2015 at Codarts: Rotterdam Dance Academy. This piece demonstrates how L'Antech is integrated into contemporary dance education, showcasing students as they engage with the technique's unique blend of classical ballet, modern dance, and Caribbean movements.

4.3. The Integral Role of Drums and Rhythms in L'Antech

L'Antech is a Caribbean modern dance technique that draws deeply from the rhythmic and spiritual traditions of African and Jamaican dance forms. Central to this technique is the role of drums and rhythms, which serve not merely as a musical accompaniment but as a core element that informs and shapes the movement vocabulary of L'Antech.

4.3.1. Drums as the Heartbeat of L'Antech

In L'Antech, the drum is not just an instrument; it is the heartbeat of the dance, the driving force that connects the body, mind, and spirit. The drum provides the rhythmic foundation that guides the movements, allowing dancers to tap into ancestral memories and spiritual energies. This connection to the drum is reminiscent of traditional African dance forms where the drum is a sacred tool that facilitates communication with the divine and the community.

The rhythmic patterns played on the drums in L'Antech are carefully crafted to reflect the cultural and spiritual context of the Caribbean. These rhythms, often polyrhythmic, challenge the dancers to move in technically demanding and spiritually grounding ways. The use of drums in L'Antech is a deliberate act of reclaiming and honouring African heritage, serving as a counter-hegemonic force against the Eurocentric dominance in traditional dance education (Stines, 2021).

4.3.2. Synerbridging Rhythms in L'Antech

Synerbridging, which involves the seamless blending of different cultural elements, is particularly evident in how rhythms are used in L'Antech. The technique incorporates a variety of rhythmic patterns from traditional Jamaican forms such as Kumina, Nyabingi, and Daaance'all. It combines them with the structured rhythms of classical ballet and modern dance. This *synerbridging* creates a unique rhythmic landscape that is both complex and dynamic, reflecting the hybrid nature of Caribbean culture.

For example, the "Bap Bap Rhythm" used in the Battement Fouetté exercise is a *synerbridged* rhythm combining traditional African drumming elements with contemporary dance beats. This rhythm, along with others like "Afua" and "Cranberry and Sham," not only guides the dancers' movements but also evokes specific emotional and spiritual responses, reinforcing the connection between the dancer and the ancestral spirits.

4.3.3. The Drum Circle and Spatial Dynamics

In traditional L'Antech classes, the spatial arrangement of dancers often mirrors the ritualistic circle found in African spiritual practices, with the drummer positioned at the centre. This setup is not merely for practical purposes but is deeply symbolic, representing the circle of life and the cyclical nature of time and existence. The drum circle in L'Antech serves as a sacred space where dancers can reconnect with their spiritual roots and channel the energies of their ancestors through movement.

The physical act of dancing in a circle, guided by the drum rhythms, allows dancers to experience a sense of unity and collective consciousness. This communal aspect of L'Antech reflects the communal nature of African and Caribbean societies, where dance, music, and spirituality are intertwined and inseparable.

Therefore, including drums and rhythms in L'Antech is not just a stylistic choice but a deliberate and essential component of the technique. The drum is a powerful medium for dancers to access more profound spiritual and cultural identity layers. By grounding the movements of L'Antech in the rhythms of the drum, Dr Stines ensures that the technique remains connected to its African and Jamaican roots, offering a dance experience that is both technically rigorous and spiritually enriching.

4.4. L'Antech as a Decolonial Practice

L'Antech is a powerful decolonial practice that reclaims and revitalises Indigenous knowledge and traditions deeply embedded in Jamaican dance forms. This technique, rooted in Jamaica's rich cultural heritage, draws inspiration from African, Caribbean, and other diasporic cultural sources. It effectively challenges the dominance of Eurocentric dance forms that have historically overshadowed non-Western artistic expressions. By integrating these diverse influences, L'Antech promotes a more inclusive and equitable representation of artistic expression, paving the way for a broader understanding of what contemporary dance can encompass (Stines, 2021).

At its core, L'Antech is not just a dance technique; it is a cultural reclamation project that seeks to restore the value and visibility of Jamaican and Caribbean traditions in the global arts landscape. This reclamation is achieved by deliberately incorporating traditional rhythms, movements, and spiritual elements passed down through generations. By doing so, L'Antech reaffirms the importance of these cultural practices and ensures their survival in a rapidly globalising world where homogenisation often threatens the diversity of artistic forms.

The practice of L'Antech encourages dancers to engage deeply with their cultural identities and histories through movement (McFarlane, 2024). By embodying the physicality of their ancestors' experiences and expressions, dancers gain a profound connection to their heritage, which fosters a deeper understanding and appreciation of their cultural roots. This embodied learning process is crucial in decolonising the mind and spirit, as it allows practitioners to internalise and express their cultural narratives in authentic and empowering ways.

Moreover, L'Antech empowers individual artists by providing a framework to explore and articulate their personal and collective identities. The technique offers a space for creative experimentation where traditional and contemporary elements coexist and inform each other. This creative freedom enhances dancers' artistic expression and contributes to Jamaica's broader project of decolonising art and culture. By offering a counter-narrative to the hegemonic influences of Western dance forms, L'Antech challenges the global dance community to reconsider its often-narrow definitions of artistic excellence and to embrace a more diverse and inclusive understanding of cultural expression (Wa'Thiongo, 1986) (Smith, 1999).

L'Antech's role in the decolonisation process extends beyond the studio and stage. It is a technique that engages with the broader cultural and political contexts in which it is practised. By advocating for the recognition and integration of Jamaican dance traditions into formal education and global performance spaces, L'Antech actively dismantles colonial power structures that have long marginalised non-Western cultures. This advocacy is essential in ensuring that historically oppressed communities' voices and artistic expressions are heard, valued, and preserved for future generations.

Furthermore, L'Antech serves as a bridge between generations, connecting young dancers with their cultural heritage while also allowing them to innovate and adapt these traditions to

contemporary contexts. This intergenerational dialogue is vital for the sustainability of decolonial practices, as it ensures that cultural knowledge is preserved and continuously reinterpreted and revitalised. Through this process, L'Antech contributes to the ongoing evolution of Jamaican culture, making it a living and dynamic force that reflects the complexities and diversities of the Caribbean experience.

L'Antech is a testament to dance's power as a decolonisation tool. Reclaiming and reimagining Indigenous cultural practices challenges the global dominance of Eurocentric forms and advocates for a more inclusive and diverse artistic landscape. Through its emphasis on cultural identity, historical continuity, and creative freedom, L'Antech empowers individual dancers and plays a crucial role in the broader movement to decolonise art and culture in Jamaica and beyond.

4.5. Impact on Caribbean Dance and Culture

L'Antech's impact on Caribbean dance and culture has been profound. By providing a platform for integrating traditional and contemporary dance forms, L'Antech has helped preserve and revitalise cultural heritage. It has also inspired a new generation of dancers and choreographers to explore and celebrate their cultural identities through dance (McFarlane, 2024).

L'Antech's influence extends beyond Jamaica. Dancers embrace its principles and techniques and dance companies throughout the Caribbean. This widespread adoption reflects the technique's relevance and effectiveness in promoting cultural expression and decolonisation (Stines, 2021).

4.6. Educational and Social Dimensions

L'Antech holds significant potential to transform dance education and community engagement in Jamaica by providing a culturally relevant and enriching approach to teaching and practising dance. Integrating L'Antech into formal dance curricula within educational institutions, from primary schools to universities, would enhance students' technical skills and foster a deeper connection to their cultural heritage and identity. This culturally embedded approach to dance education would ensure that students receive training that is not only physically rigorous but also intellectually and emotionally resonant with their cultural experiences (McFarlane, 2024).

Incorporating L'Antech into dance curricula offers several key benefits. First, it provides students with a framework for understanding the historical and cultural contexts of the movements they learn. By tracing the roots of L'Antech back to African and Caribbean traditions, students gain insight into the rich tapestry of influences that shape Jamaican dance. This historical grounding deepens their appreciation for the art form and instils pride in their cultural heritage. Such an approach counters the often Eurocentric bias prevalent in many dance education programs, which can marginalise or overlook non-Western forms of expression.

Second, including L'Antech in educational settings would empower students to explore their identities through movement, allowing them to express their personal and collective narratives in meaningful and authentic ways. This process of self-exploration and cultural affirmation is essential in postcolonial contexts, where the legacies of colonialism have often led to the erosion or suppression of Indigenous cultures. By reconnecting with their cultural roots through dance, students can reclaim their histories and assert their identities in a world that often privileges Western norms and values.

Beyond the classroom, L'Antech also has the potential to impact community engagement and social cohesion profoundly. Community-based programs and workshops utilising L'Antech can offer accessible and inclusive opportunities for people of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities to engage with dance and cultural expression. These initiatives are potent tools for building community solidarity, promoting cultural awareness, and fostering social inclusion (Stines, 2024).

L'Antech workshops can provide a vital outlet for creativity and cultural engagement in communities where resources and opportunities for artistic expression may be limited. By bringing people together to learn, practice, and perform, these programs help to break down social barriers and build bridges between different segments of society. They offer a space where individuals can share their stories, celebrate their cultural heritage, and support one another in their personal and collective journeys of self-discovery.

Moreover, L'Antech's communal nature reinforces the importance of collective memory and shared cultural practices. As participants engage in the dance, they learn movements and participate in preserving and transmitting cultural knowledge. This intergenerational exchange is crucial for the sustainability of cultural traditions, ensuring that they are passed down to future generations in relevant and vibrant ways.

L'Antech-based community programs can also play a key role in addressing social issues and promoting mental and emotional well-being. As a form of physical and emotional expression, dance has been shown to have numerous benefits for mental health, including reducing stress, improving mood, and fostering a sense of belonging. For marginalised communities, where access to mental health resources may be limited, L'Antech can provide a therapeutic outlet that supports both individual and collective healing. By creating safe spaces for expression and connection, these programs can help to empower individuals and strengthen community ties.

Furthermore, L'Antech can be leveraged for social change by raising awareness of cultural and social issues through performance. Community-based performances of L'Antech can serve as platforms for highlighting the stories and struggles of marginalised groups, drawing attention to their challenges, and advocating for social justice. In this way, L'Antech not only celebrates cultural heritage but also acts as a catalyst for social transformation, using the power of dance to inspire and mobilise communities.

4.7. Critical Reception and Global Influence

The critical reception of L'Antech has been overwhelmingly positive, with critics and audiences praising its innovative approach and cultural authenticity. The technique has garnered international acclaim, with performances and workshops in various countries showcasing the vibrancy and diversity of Caribbean dance.

L'Antech could have global influence, as it has already inspired dancers and choreographers in the global South to explore and integrate elements of their cultural heritage into their work. This cross-cultural exchange can enrich the global dance community, fostering a greater appreciation for the diversity and complexity of dance traditions (Stines, 2009).

Conclusion

L'Antech, as a Caribbean modern dance technique, represents a unique and powerful approach to decolonising art and culture in Jamaica. By blending traditional Jamaican dance forms with elements of classical ballet and modern dance, L'Antech challenges the dominance of Eurocentric aesthetics in the world of dance and reclaims the cultural narratives of the Caribbean. This fusion not only celebrates the richness of Jamaican cultural heritage but also redefines what contemporary dance can be, making it more inclusive and reflective of diverse cultural identities.

The technique, developed by Dr. L'Antoinette Stines, goes beyond the physical act of dance. It is a holistic practice that seeks to decolonise the mind, body, and spirit, providing practitioners with a means to reconnect with their roots and reassert their cultural identities. In doing so, L'Antech serves as a form of resistance against the cultural erasure imposed by colonialism and a powerful tool for cultural preservation and empowerment.

However, L'Antech's future faces challenges, including the need for broader acceptance within mainstream dance curricula, the risk of cultural appropriation, and the ongoing tension between preserving tradition and embracing innovation. Addressing these challenges requires a concerted effort from practitioners, educators, and cultural institutions to ensure that L'Antech remains true to its decolonial objectives while continuing to evolve in response to contemporary cultural dynamics.

Moreover, the success of L'Antech as a decolonial practice will depend on its ability to engage with local communities, secure institutional support, and gain international recognition. By fostering these connections and advocating for the inclusion of L'Antech in global dance discourse, its proponents can help ensure that this technique remains a vital and dynamic force in the ongoing process of decolonisation.

In summary, L'Antech embodies the potential of dance to serve as a medium for cultural reclamation and resistance. As it continues to develop and gain recognition, it stands as a testament to the resilience and creativity of the Caribbean people. Through the continued

practice and promotion of L'Antech, Jamaica can contribute significantly to the global movement for cultural decolonisation, offering a model for how traditional and contemporary dance forms can coexist, enrich each other, and lead the way toward a more inclusive and equitable cultural landscape.

Chapter 5: Potential Challenges of Decolonisation

5.1. General Challenges of Decolonisation

Decolonisation is a multifaceted process involving dismantling colonial legacies and rebuilding societies on terms that reflect Indigenous values, governance structures, and cultural identities. However, this process faces significant political, social, and economic challenges.

5.1.1. Political Issues:

Decolonisation necessitates restructuring political systems often designed to serve the interests of colonial powers rather than the colonised populations. Several political challenges can arise:

Legacy of Colonial Governance: Colonial powers often left behind political systems that were hierarchical and exclusionary, designed to maintain control over the colonised. These systems may include bureaucracies, legal frameworks, and policing structures that do not align with Indigenous governance practices and may perpetuate inequality and disenfranchisement (Mamdani, 1996).

Political Instability: The transition from colonial rule to self-governance can be fraught with instability. Newly independent states often face power struggles, civil unrest, and conflicts over the direction of political reform. The lack of established democratic traditions can lead to authoritarianism or political corruption (Fanon, 1963).

National Identity and Unity: Decolonisation often requires forging a new national identity encompassing diverse ethnic, linguistic, and cultural groups within the country. This can be challenging, especially in countries where colonial powers exacerbated or created ethnic divisions as a means of control (Anderson, 2003).

5.1.2. Social Issues:

Socially, decolonisation involves reclaiming and revitalising Indigenous cultures, languages, and identities suppressed under colonial rule. This process is complex and multifaceted:

Cultural Erasure and Revitalisation: Colonialism often sought to eradicate Indigenous cultures and replace them with the colonisers' culture. Reversing this erasure involves significant effort to revive lost languages, traditions, and cultural practices. A lack of documentation and living knowledge of pre-colonial cultures can hinder this (Wa'Thiongo, 1986).

Education and Knowledge Systems: The education systems established by colonial powers were often designed to undermine Indigenous knowledge and promote colonial ideologies. Decolonising education involves reforming curricula to include Indigenous histories, languages,

and perspectives and valuing Indigenous knowledge systems alongside Western ones (Smith, 1999).

Social Cohesion: Decolonisation efforts must also address the social fractures caused by colonial policies, such as ethnic segregation and discrimination. Building social cohesion in postcolonial societies requires promoting inclusivity, equality, and reconciliation among diverse groups.

5.1.3. Economic Issues:

The economic dimension of decolonisation involves addressing the structural inequalities and dependencies established during colonial rule:

Economic Dependency: Colonial economies were often structured to benefit the colonial powers, with colonies serving as sources of raw materials and markets for finished goods. Postcolonial states can struggle with economic dependency, needing to diversify their economies and develop self-sufficiency (Rodney, 1972).

Resource Exploitation: The extraction of resources for colonial benefit left many postcolonial states with depleted natural resources and environmental degradation. Addressing this legacy requires sustainable development practices and equitable resource management.

Global Economic Inequalities: The global economic system often perpetuates inequalities between former colonial powers and postcolonial states. Trade imbalances, debt burdens, and unequal access to technology and markets can hinder economic development and independence (Ohiorhenuan, 1978).

5.2. The Challenges Dance Faces with Decolonisation

The decolonisation of dance and other art forms faces unique challenges, particularly regarding authenticity, representation, and institutional support.

5.2.1. Authenticity and Representation:

As a cultural expression, dance often involves performing traditional practices closely tied to community identity and heritage. Decolonising dance involves reclaiming these practices from colonial distortions and ensuring they are represented authentically. This can be challenging, as decolonisation must balance preserving tradition and allowing contemporary innovation (Stines, 2009).

Preserving Tradition vs. Innovation: One of the central challenges in decolonising dance is balancing the preservation of traditional forms with the need for contemporary innovation. When traditional dances are integrated with contemporary styles, there is a risk that they might

be altered or diluted, leading to debates over what constitutes authentic representation. Dance practitioners must balance honouring traditional practices and allowing creative evolution (Terrelonge, 2022).

Representation and Inclusivity: Decolonising dance also involves ensuring that the voices and perspectives of Indigenous and marginalised communities are adequately represented. This can be challenging in environments where Western dance forms have been historically privileged, and access to training and performance opportunities remains unequal. Ensuring inclusivity means creating spaces where diverse dance forms can be taught, performed, and celebrated equally with Western styles (Desmond, 1997).

5.2.2. Institutional Support:

The institutional support for decolonising dance is often limited. Traditional and Indigenous dance forms may not receive the same funding, recognition, or resources as their Western counterparts. This disparity can hinder efforts to promote and sustain these practices locally and globally (Desmond, 1997).

Funding and Resources: Traditional and Indigenous dance forms often do not receive the same funding, recognition, or institutional support as Western dance forms. This disparity can hinder efforts to preserve and promote these dances, limiting their visibility and development. Securing funding for traditional dance projects requires advocacy and support from both the public and private sectors (Desmond, 1997).

Institutional Bias: Dance institutions, such as conservatories and cultural organisations, may have entrenched biases favouring Western dance forms. Overcoming these biases requires significant institutional reform and advocacy to create a more inclusive environment for diverse dance traditions. This includes revising curricula, diversifying faculty, and creating platforms for traditional and Indigenous dances (Smith, 1999).

5.2.3. Cultural Appropriation:

Another significant issue is the risk of cultural appropriation, where elements of traditional dance are taken out of context and used in disrespectful or commodifying ways. This can undermine decolonial efforts by reducing rich cultural practices to mere entertainment or commercial products.

Misappropriation and Exploitation: There is a significant risk of cultural appropriation, where elements of traditional dance are taken out of context and used in disrespectful or commodifying ways. This can undermine decolonial efforts by reducing rich cultural practices to mere entertainment or commercial products. Protecting cultural integrity involves educating practitioners and audiences about the origins and meanings of traditional dances and setting ethical guidelines for their use.

5.2.4. Community Engagement and Empowerment:

Community Involvement: Successful decolonisation of dance requires the active involvement of the communities from which these dances originate. This ensures that the practices remain authentic and meaningful. Community engagement can include participatory dance projects, community-led performances, and workshops that empower local practitioners (Chilisa, 2012).

Empowerment Through Dance: Traditional dance can serve as a powerful tool for community empowerment, helping to reinforce cultural identity, pride, and cohesion. Programs focusing on youth engagement, especially in marginalised communities, can use dance to build confidence, foster teamwork, and promote cultural heritage (Nettleford, 2003).

5.2.5. Global Dynamics and Exchange:

Cross-Cultural Exchange: The globalisation of dance offers both opportunities and challenges. While it allows for greater exposure and appreciation of traditional dance forms, it also risks diluting them through homogenisation. Facilitating respectful cross-cultural exchanges can help maintain the integrity of traditional dances while allowing them to evolve and reach new audiences.

Navigating Global Markets: Traditional dances entering global markets must balance the tensions between maintaining cultural authenticity and appealing to international audiences. This requires careful curation and presentation to ensure that the essence of the dance is not lost in translation (Smith, 1999).

5.3. The Challenges that L'Antech Faces with Decolonisation of Art and Culture in Jamaica

L'Antech, a decolonial dance technique, faces several challenges and limitations that must be addressed to ensure its continued growth and relevance in Jamaica's cultural landscape and beyond. These challenges are deeply intertwined with issues of authenticity, control, and the preservation of cultural integrity, and they span from Stines's inception of the technique to its potential future in a rapidly evolving world.

5.3.1. Authenticity and Control:

The fusion of traditional Jamaican dances with classical ballet and modern techniques, central to L'Antech, raises important questions about maintaining the authenticity of the traditional elements. Ensuring that L'Antech remains true to its cultural roots while embracing innovation is a delicate balance that requires continuous oversight and community involvement. Practitioners must remain vigilant in preserving the core principles and cultural essence of L'Antech (Stines, 2021) to avoid diluting its traditional aspects or losing its cultural identity.

through hybridisation (Kohn & McBride, 2011). This challenge is compounded by the blending of diverse cultural elements, which can sometimes lead to the loss of distinct cultural identities, raising concerns about cultural dilution and misrepresentation.

One of L'Antech's fundamental challenges is maintaining control over how the dance form is taught, practised, and performed. As it gains popularity, there is a risk that individuals or organisations outside of Jamaica may adopt the technique without fully understanding or respecting its cultural significance. Establishing clear guidelines and potential legal frameworks for the use and dissemination of L'Antech can help mitigate this risk and ensure that the technique is preserved and practised with integrity.

5.3.2. Commercialisation and Commodification:

As L'Antech gains recognition, it faces the risk of commodification, particularly in global markets. This commercialisation could prioritise the more marketable aspects of the dance form while neglecting its more profound cultural and spiritual significance. Such a shift could undermine the decolonial intentions of L'Antech, transforming it into a product for consumption rather than a genuine practice of cultural reclamation and resistance. The pressures of the global dance market, which often favour performances that can be quickly packaged and sold, might simplify or alter L'Antech to make it more palatable to international audiences. This commercial pressure necessitates the establishment of ethical guidelines for performances and collaborations (Smith, 1999). To ensure that the essence of L'Antech is preserved.

5.3.3. Institutionalisation and Educational Integration:

Integrating L'Antech into formal dance education and mainstream cultural institutions presents another set of challenges. While institutional recognition can provide valuable support and legitimacy, there is a risk that L'Antech could be co-opted in ways that align more with institutional norms rather than its original decolonial goals. This standardisation could dilute its transformative impact and make it part of the structures it seeks to challenge. To counter this, it is crucial to involve original practitioners in the development of curricula and to provide comprehensive training for instructors to ensure that they can convey the technique authentically (Smith, 1999).

Moreover, as L'Antech becomes part of the curriculum in dance schools and universities, there is a concern that it might be taught in ways that do not fully capture its cultural significance and decolonial intent. Overcoming this barrier involves advocating for recognising L'Antech as a valuable contribution to global dance that merits study and practice within formal educational settings. This challenge underscores the need for a sustainable framework that balances the preservation of L'Antech's foundational elements with the necessity of allowing for creative growth and adaptation (Tuck & Yang, 2012).

5.3.4. Preservation vs. Evolution:

Like many decolonial art forms, L'Antech must balance preserving its traditional elements with the need for innovation and contemporary relevance. This balance is delicate, as too much change can dilute the traditional aspects, while too little can make the art form seem outdated. The challenge lies in evolving to remain true to its roots while incorporating new influences and ideas. This evolution must be guided by a deep respect for the original cultural context and an awareness of the broader decolonial objectives. Establishing forums for continuous reflection and feedback from the community can help manage this evolution (Chilisa, 2012). Moreover, there is ongoing dialogue and collaboration among practitioners, scholars, and cultural custodians to navigate (Nettleford, 2003).

5.3.5. Association with Dr. Stines and Future Sustainability:

A significant challenge for the future of L'Antech is its deep association with Dr. L'Antoinette Stines. While her vision and experiences have been a source of strength, they also pose limitations. The technique's identity is so closely tied to Dr. Stines that its broader acceptance and integration into mainstream dance curricula and practices may be hindered. There is a risk that L'Antech might struggle to evolve or be reinterpreted without her direct involvement, leading to challenges in sustainability and adaptability, especially as dance evolves and new generations of dancers seek to learn and practice the technique.

Moreover, Dr. Stines has been highly selective in choosing who can learn and teach L'Antech, creating a limited pool of instructors. This exclusivity could potentially hinder the wider dissemination and adoption of L'Antech, confining it to a small, select group rather than making it accessible to a broader audience. Additionally, there is a perceived issue of ownership and control, with some members of Dr. Stines' company feeling intimidated to use the technique creatively due to its association as a "L'Antoinette Trademark." This perception could stifle creativity and innovation within the technique, preventing it from evolving naturally.

To address these challenges, it is essential to establish a sustainable framework for teaching and evolving L'Antech. This could involve developing certification programs that offer structured training while encouraging creative interpretation and innovation. Creating a dedicated institute focused on preserving and promoting L'Antech could also provide a centralised platform for its continued development. By involving a broader community of dancers, scholars, and cultural custodians, such an institute could help democratise access to L'Antech, making it more widely available and less dependent on a single individual's influence.

Fostering an environment that encourages open discussion about the ownership and creative use of L'Antech could also help alleviate concerns about its future. Practitioners need to feel empowered to explore new possibilities within the technique, knowing that their contributions are valued and part of the ongoing evolution of L'Antech. Establishing clear guidelines and a shared understanding of what constitutes respectful and authentic use of the technique could help preserve its integrity while allowing it to remain a living, adaptable practice.

5.4. Supporting L'Antech as a Method of Decolonising Art and Culture in Jamaica

Drawing on academic literature and practical approaches, several strategies can be implemented to address these challenges and support L'Antech as an effective method of decolonising art and culture in Jamaica.

5.4.1. Emphasising Community Involvement:

Participatory Approach: Engaging local communities in developing and preserving L'Antech ensures that the dance remains true to its cultural roots and is practised respectfully and authentically. This approach aligns with participatory research methods that emphasise collaboration and co-creation with local stakeholders (Chilisa, 2012).

Community Workshops and Performances: Hosting workshops and performances within the community helps to keep L'Antech grounded in its cultural context. These events allow community members to learn, practice, and celebrate their cultural heritage through dance (Smith, 1999).

5.4.2. Promoting Cultural Education:

Educational Integration: Integrating comprehensive cultural education into dance training programs can help dancers and audiences understand L'Antech's historical and cultural significance. This education can include workshops, seminars, and collaborations with cultural historians and practitioners who can provide context and deepen appreciation of the dance form (Smith, 1999).

Curriculum Development: Developing curricula that include the historical, cultural, and philosophical aspects of L'Antech can help ensure that students receive a well-rounded education. Involving cultural experts and original practitioners in the curriculum development process can enhance the authenticity and depth of the education provided (Nettleford, 2003).

5.4.3. Creating Protective Policies:

Cultural Safeguarding: Developing policies that protect L'Antech's intellectual property and cultural integrity can prevent misuse and appropriation. These policies can include guidelines for how the dance should be taught, performed, and represented, ensuring it remains true to its decolonial objectives.

Ethical Guidelines: Establishing ethical guidelines for the practice and dissemination of L'Antech can help maintain its cultural integrity. These guidelines can cover aspects such as respectful representation, cultural sensitivity, and the involvement of community members in decision-making processes.

5.4.4. Ensuring Sustainable Funding:

Resource Allocation: Securing sustainable funding sources for L'Antech can help overcome the economic challenges of decolonising dance. Grants, sponsorships, and partnerships with cultural organisations can provide the necessary resources to support training, performances, and outreach programs.

Financial Management: Effective financial management is crucial for sustaining L'Antech. Establishing transparent and accountable financial practices can help build trust and ensure funds are used effectively to support the dance form's growth and development (Smith, 1999).

5.4.5. Encouraging Global Collaboration:

International Networks: Fostering global collaboration with other decolonial dance practitioners and organisations can create a network of support and shared knowledge. These collaborations can lead to joint projects, exchanges, and the promotion of L'Antech on international platforms, helping to validate and sustain the practice.

Cross-Cultural Exchanges: Facilitating cross-cultural exchanges with dance practitioners from other cultures can enrich L'Antech and promote mutual understanding and respect. These exchanges can provide opportunities for learning, collaboration, and the sharing of best practices (Stines, 2021) (Nettleford, 2003).

5.4.6. Leveraging Technology:

Digital Platforms: Utilizing digital platforms can help promote L'Antech to a global audience. Online workshops, performances, and educational materials can increase accessibility and reach, ensuring that L'Antech's decolonial message is shared widely (Smith, 1999).

Documentation and Archiving: Digitally documenting and archiving performances, workshops, and educational materials can help preserve L'Antech for future generations. This documentation can also serve as a valuable resource for research and education (Chilisa, 2012).

Conclusion

L'Antech presents a profound opportunity to contribute to the decolonisation of art and culture in Jamaica, serving as a vital tool in reclaiming and reasserting cultural identity. However, the journey to fully realise its potential is fraught with significant challenges. These challenges are multifaceted, encompassing authenticity, cultural hybridisation, commercial pressures, and the risks associated with institutionalisation.

While foundational to its development, L'Antech's deep association with its creator, Dr. L'Antoinette Stines, also presents a potential limitation. The technique's future evolution depends on its ability to transcend its origins while remaining true to its decolonial intent. Similarly, the limited dissemination of L'Antech beyond Jamaica points to the need for broader institutional support and more significant efforts to introduce the technique to international dance communities.

Resource constraints and societal perceptions of dance as a less viable career further complicate L'Antech's growth and sustainability. Without increased recognition of dance's value and a commitment to integrating L'Antech into formal educational systems, its broader acceptance may remain constrained. Additionally, balancing the preservation of L'Antech's traditional elements with necessary innovation is crucial to keeping the technique relevant while safeguarding its cultural integrity.

Looking forward, the sustainability of L'Antech, particularly post-Stines, requires strategic planning. Establishing frameworks such as certification programs, dedicated institutes, or formal curricula that honour the technique's origins while promoting its growth will be essential in ensuring its longevity. Moreover, creating protective policies and ethical guidelines will help mitigate the risks of cultural appropriation and commodification, safeguarding L'Antech as a genuine practice of cultural reclamation.

Ultimately, L'Antech's success as a decolonial technique lies in a collaborative and multifaceted approach that includes community involvement, robust cultural education, and strategic global partnerships. By addressing these challenges head-on and fostering an environment of support and innovation, L'Antech can continue to evolve and thrive as a powerful method for decolonising art and culture in Jamaica, leaving a lasting impact on future generations.

Conclusion

Decolonising art and culture in Jamaica through dance, specifically through the innovative technique of L'Antech, presents both profound opportunities and significant challenges. L'Antech, created by Dr. L'Antoinette Stines, is an emblematic example of how traditional and contemporary dance forms can be synthesised to create a unique artistic expression that entertains, educates, and empowers. However, for L'Antech to fulfil its potential as a decolonising force, it must navigate and overcome various obstacles related to authenticity, hybridisation, commercialisation, and institutionalisation.

One of the foremost challenges for L'Antech is maintaining authenticity. The technique blends traditional Jamaican dance forms, classical ballet, and modern dance, raising concerns about the potential dilution of its cultural roots. Authenticity in this context is about preserving the movements and maintaining the cultural narratives and historical contexts that these dances embody. Ensuring that L'Antech remains true to its origins requires continuous oversight and involvement from cultural custodians and community members who hold the traditional knowledge.

Cultural hybridisation, while a strength in creating a dynamic and contemporary dance form, also poses risks. Blending different cultural elements can lead to the loss of distinct cultural identities. For L'Antech, this means carefully balancing the integration of diverse dance styles while preserving the unique aspects of Jamaican cultural heritage. This requires a deep understanding and respect for all contributing cultures to prevent any form of cultural erasure. The challenge is creating a cohesive dance form honouring its multiple influences without allowing one element to dominate or diminish the others.

Commercialisation and commodification present another significant hurdle. As L'Antech gains popularity, there is an inevitable risk that it could be commodified, especially in global markets. This commercialisation might prioritise marketable aspects of the dance form while neglecting its more profound cultural and spiritual significance. Such a shift could undermine the decolonial intentions of L'Antech, turning it into a product for consumption rather than a genuine practice of cultural reclamation and resistance. Balancing commercial success with cultural integrity is crucial to ensuring that L'Antech does not lose its decolonial edge. This balance can be achieved by establishing ethical guidelines for performances and collaborations, ensuring that commercial ventures respect and reflect the technique's cultural and spiritual foundations.

The institutionalisation of L'Antech also presents a double-edged sword. While integration into formal dance education and mainstream cultural institutions can provide necessary support and resources, it can also lead to standardisation and regulation that may dilute its transformative impact. As L'Antech becomes part of the curriculum in dance schools and universities, there is a risk that it might be taught in ways that do not fully capture its cultural significance and decolonial intent. To counter this, it is essential to involve original practitioners

in the development of curricula and to provide comprehensive training for instructors to ensure that they can convey the technique authentically.

Furthermore, L'Antech faces the challenge of evolving while preserving its cultural heritage. Culture is not static, and neither is dance. The technique must balance preserving traditional elements with the need for innovation and contemporary relevance. This evolution must be guided by a deep respect for the original cultural context and an awareness of the broader decolonial objectives. Establishing forums for continuous reflection and feedback from the community can help manage this evolution.

Several strategies can be implemented to support L'Antech as an effective method of decolonising art and culture in Jamaica. Emphasising community involvement is critical. Engaging local communities in developing and preserving L'Antech ensures that the dance remains true to its cultural roots and is practised respectfully and authentically. Community workshops and performances can allow members to learn, practice, and celebrate their cultural heritage through dance.

Promoting cultural education is also vital. Integrating comprehensive cultural education into dance training programs can help dancers and audiences understand the historical and cultural significance of L'Antech. This education can include workshops, seminars, and collaborations with cultural historians and practitioners who can provide context and deepen the appreciation of the dance form.

Creating protective policies is another crucial step. Developing policies that protect L'Antech's intellectual property and cultural integrity can prevent its misuse and appropriation. These policies can include guidelines for how the dance should be taught, performed, and represented, ensuring it remains true to its decolonial objectives. Establishing ethical guidelines for practising and disseminating L'Antech can help maintain its cultural integrity.

Ensuring sustainable funding is essential for L'Antech's growth and development. Securing sustainable funding sources, such as grants, sponsorships, and partnerships with cultural organisations, can provide the necessary resources to support training, performances, and outreach programs. Effective financial management is crucial for sustaining L'Antech, and establishing transparent and accountable financial practices can help build trust and ensure that funds are used effectively.

Encouraging global collaboration can also support L'Antech's decolonial mission. Fostering global collaboration with other decolonial dance practitioners and organisations can create a network of support and shared knowledge. These collaborations can lead to joint projects, exchanges, and the promotion of L'Antech on international platforms, helping to validate and sustain the practice.

Leveraging technology can further promote L'Antech to a global audience. Utilising digital platforms for online workshops, performances, and educational materials can increase

accessibility and reach, ensuring that L'Antech's decolonial message is shared widely. Digitally documenting and archiving performances, workshops, and educational materials can help preserve L'Antech for future generations and serve as a valuable resource for research and education.

In conclusion, while L'Antech holds significant potential for decolonising art and culture in Jamaica, it faces numerous challenges related to authenticity, hybridisation, commercialisation, and institutionalisation. Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach emphasising community involvement, cultural education, protective policies, sustainable funding, and global collaboration. By aligning with these strategies, practitioners and supporters of L'Antech can ensure that it remains a powerful and authentic tool for cultural reclamation and decolonisation, contributing to the broader movement for cultural sovereignty and empowerment in Jamaica and beyond.

Contemporary Application: To illustrate the ongoing influence and evolution of L'Antech, I have included a recent choreography by Orville McFarlane on L'ACADCO, created in 2024. This video demonstrates how L'Antech continues to shape contemporary dance in Jamaica, blending traditional forms with modern expressions in a way that honours the technique's roots while pushing the boundaries of Jamaican dance. [Clip](#)

“Reggae music was created with the kind of lyrics sung because we refused to bow down. L'Antech is to dance, as Bob Marley is to music (...) For me, it's freedom. They are no longer enslaved; we are not slaves to the system. (...) We are free” (Stines, 2024)

Further Questions for Research

Exploring L'Antech as a method of decolonising art and culture in Jamaica opens up several avenues for further research. Future studies could delve into the following questions:

1. How can the authenticity of L'Antech be maintained as it evolves and gains international recognition?

What mechanisms can be implemented to ensure that L'Antech remains true to its cultural roots while allowing for creative evolution?

2. What are the specific impacts of cultural hybridisation on the perception and practice of L'Antech within and outside Jamaica?

How do different audiences interpret the blend of traditional and contemporary elements in L'Antech, and what does this mean for its role as a decolonising practice?

3. How can the risks of commercialisation and commodification of L'Antech be mitigated while still promoting its global reach?

What ethical guidelines and protective measures can be developed to balance commercial success with cultural integrity?

4. How can educational institutions integrate L'Antech into their curricula without compromising its cultural and decolonial objectives?

How can original practitioners be more involved in the academic integration of L'Antech to ensure authentic teaching methods?

5. What role can technology play in preserving and promoting L'Antech, and what are the potential pitfalls of digital dissemination?

How can digital platforms enhance L'Antech's reach while ensuring its cultural context is preserved in translation?

6. How can global collaborations be structured to support the decolonial mission of L'Antech?

What models of international cooperation have been successful in similar decolonial projects, and how can these be adapted for L'Antech?

7. What are the long-term impacts of L'Antech on the cultural identity and empowerment of Jamaican communities?

How does participation in L'Antech influence individuals' perceptions of their cultural heritage and their roles within the broader movement for decolonisation?

8. How can sustainable funding models be developed to support the growth and preservation of L'Antech?

What innovative funding strategies can be employed to ensure the financial stability of L'Antech without compromising its core values?

Future research can address these questions, contributing to a deeper understanding of L'Antech's role in the decolonisation of art and culture in Jamaica and helping to refine strategies for its preservation and promotion.

Glossary

Bruckins: a traditional Jamaican dance created by newly freed enslaved Africans to celebrate the Emancipation of Slavery on August 1, 1838. It blends African and European cultural elements, using dance and music to express joy, cultural identity, and emotional release. Bruckins marks a significant historical and socio-cultural moment, symbolising rebirth and the struggle for recognition and justice in Jamaican society. Today, Bruckins is primarily performed during cultural festivals and is preserved through efforts by organisations like the Jamaica Cultural Development Commission (JCDC) and dedicated dance practitioners (Stines, 2021).

Carimod is a term coined to define a modern dance style dominated by Indigenous, traditional, and popular Caribbean movements. It rejects classical ballet's structural formality and frivolity, favouring more accessible movement styles with bare feet over pointe shoes. Carimod combines these dances' spirituality, aesthetics, and body language while incorporating some classical ballet forms (Stines, 2021).

Daaance is a term for Spirit dances, including Indigenous, traditional, and contemporary dances. It is pronounced using the phonetic pronunciation of grass-roots people, as Dr. Stines quotes, "Me a go a one Daaance. "It resembles the long 'a' spelling of Ki-Kongo words in Maureen Warner Lewis's *Central Africa in the Caribbean* (Stines, 2021).

Daaance'all, pronounced "Dancehall," refers to a gathering place where people from diverse socio-economic backgrounds gather for relaxation, release, and entertainment through dancing (Stines, 2021).

Dance Languages: are structured, non-verbal communication methods used in classical ballet, a distinct mode of body communication from Martha Graham or La Técnica Cubana, involving precise body syntax and movement, gestures, and mime (Stines, 2021).

Daunce critiques the exclusionary and culturally disconnected practices in certain Western dance traditions, highlighting the need for a more inclusive and culturally resonant approach to dance. "My daughter just came from daunce class", signifying that the child just came from ballet class (Stines, 2021).

Dinki Mini: a traditional Jamaican dance performed during the wake period following a death. Originating from African cultural practices, it involves lively, celebratory movements accompanied by singing and drumming. The dance honours the deceased and provides emotional support to the bereaved, transforming mourning into a communal celebration of life. "During the performance, the male dancer bends one leg at the knee and leaps high on the other foot. Both males and females dance together with very suggestive pelvic movements. An integral aspect of this dance is using the instrument called a benta." (Jamaica Information Service, 2024).

Gerreh: a traditional Jamaican dance performed during funeral wakes and celebrations. It features energetic movements, drumming, and singing, honouring the deceased and providing comfort and community support to the bereaved. Gerreh has African roots and is part of Jamaican cultural practices celebrating life and death. “It is similar to the Dinki Mini (...) with more emphasis on the hip movements executed mainly by the female dancers.” (Jamaica Information Service, 2024).

Groundation: a Rastafarian religious ceremony involving drumming, chanting, and dancing. It serves as a form of communal worship, celebrating and honouring spiritual beliefs, particularly the reverence of Haile Selassie I and the connection to African heritage. Groundations are significant events that reinforce Rastafarian cultural identity and unity (Stines, 2021). It refers to the rooting of oneself.

Jonkonnu: also known as John Coonering, is a Christmastide tradition originating in Jamaica during colonial times. It involves revellers dressed in masks and costumes travelling house to house, singing and dancing. The performers enjoy themselves during the festivities, and homeowners, usually enslaved, pay them in coins (TryonPalace, 2024).

Kumina: a religious and cultural tradition in Jamaica with African origins, specifically from the Congo and Ghana. It involves rituals, dance, drumming, and chanting, often used to honour ancestors and connect with spiritual practices. Kumina has a significant cultural impact, influencing various aspects of Jamaican life and maintaining African heritage within the community. Although misunderstood as merely a dance, Kumina encompasses a broader religious and philosophical system. Despite variations in spelling and interpretation, it remains a vital expression of Jamaican identity and spirituality (Stines, 2021).

Maypole Dance: a traditional dance from England's May Day celebrations, brought to Jamaica in the 1800s. In this dance, people move around a pole with colourful ribbons, weaving in a circle to music. It usually happens outdoors, at picnics, school events, and gardens. Sixty-three people danced the Maypole Dance to celebrate Jamaica's independence from Great Britain. This dance is an integral part of Jamaican culture (McKenzie-Kennedy, 2024).

Nyabinghi: a Rastafari celebration involving distinctive dance, drumming, and chanting rooted in African spiritual traditions. It honours Emperor Haile Selassie I and Ethiopia as the spiritual homeland. Nyabinghi is a sociocultural and religious expression that emphasises rebirth, unity, and resistance against oppression. It integrates ancient African religious practices, with movements symbolising communication with the divine. Nyabinghi, created by Rastafari practitioners in Jamaica, is an essential part of the cultural and spiritual identity of the Rastafari community (Stines, 2021).

Quadrille Dance: a historic dance popular in Europe during the 18th and 19th centuries. It consists of a sequence of dance figures performed by four couples arranged in a square. The dance involves coordinated steps and movements, often to lively, classical music. The quadrille was a typical social dance at balls and other formal gatherings, and it often included elements

of ballet and folk dance. Over time, the quadrille spread to other parts of the world. It became a part of various cultural traditions, including in the Caribbean, where it remains a popular folk dance (McKenzie-Kennedy, 2024).

Synerbridge refers to combining two or more movement types, facilitating cross-cultural sharing, blending, mixing, or mutating, and making cultural connections (Stines, 2021).

Yanvalou: a traditional dance originating from Benin, Africa, and is primarily associated with the Vodoun religion in Haiti. It features rhythmic, undulating movements and has several variations, including upright, isolated shoulders, and crouching forms. Yanvalou was introduced to the Caribbean and the United States by Madame Lavinia Williams-Yarborough and influenced dance techniques like Katherine Dunham's. The dance represents spiritual and physical aspects, often honouring deities like Danbala (the Sky Father) and Erzulie (the Goddess of love and water). Yanvalou emphasises fluid movements to loosen the back and has influenced modern Caribbean dance styles, including Jamaican Dancehall (Stines, 2021).

Appendix 1

Interview 1

Interviewee: Hon. Alando Terrelonge, MP, Minister of State in the Ministry of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport (Minister)

Interviewer: Adrian Wanliss (Interviewer)

Date: 07.11.2022

Interviewer: *“Out of many, One People”- our motto celebrates who we are as a nation: many. Do you think we, as Jamaicans, truly honour this?*

Minister: “Out of many, One People” has been, as we noted, the motto on which we’ve built our country. And yes, it is beautiful. It is inclusive, and that’s what makes it powerful. We do recognise that the large majority of Jamaicans, more than 95%, are Afro descendants. When you look at North America, for example, and all the race relation issues that they have, and the African Americans who are speaking about introducing Critical Race Theory in the country and then you have certain conservative elements within that country, speaking about “no it’s not permissible” etc., but then there’s this sort of element of white supremacy, that sort of confederate, that clouds to their society. So, it’s good that we have a powerful motto because, at its genesis, it speaks about respecting individuality, respecting self, and respecting the other, which is very important for national development and racial harmony. However, notwithstanding that there is an element in Jamaica that people would say, “Jamaica is not racist; Jamaica is more class”—class because of the history of enslavement of our forefathers. Class also tends to follow colour, as well. And the truth is, whilst in North America, they are speaking of Critical Race Theory, in Jamaica, I’m speaking of an element of anti-blackness that exists in our society. I did a presentation in parliament on this. It has nothing to do with the government, but it’s just that it’s something that is cultural after 300 years of enslavement and the impression and discrimination against one people. Obviously, there is this residual mindset, what Bob Marley and/or Marcus Garvey talk about mental slavery. So that still happens. It’s that sort of mental slavery that exists in Jamaica. For example, last year (2021), at the Mannings School graduation, a memo was issued to the graduating class, that Afrocentric hairstyles, like Nubian knots, were not permissible, however, hair extension, like the Brazilian weave were. So, I like to focus on how we see ourselves as a people in Jamaica, because ultimately, how we see ourselves as Afro descendants is going to affect and impact how others also see us. The truth is, there are some Jamaicans that feel that lighter is better, and this is a part of our culture that we don’t like to speak about. It is swept under the carpet. Yet we see the harmful practises of skin bleaching, for example, because people think they’re going to be prettier, or they’ll be more accepted or get a particular job, etc. So, it’s a sort of cultural mindset (mental slavery) that

we need to get rid of. While in America, they are discussing the introduction of Critical Race Theory, I am thinking about how to introduce the teachings of Marcus Garvey. So, in my parliamentary presentation, I said that it is time, and we owe it to ourselves, in as much as I will always advocate for increased education in technology to empower people and, especially young black kids. The next generation of black Jamaicans will understand that they are a mighty race and, that they also belong, and that Jamaica is as much theirs as it is anybody else. Also, I think we need a greater focus on African history—pre-transatlantic slave trade. I love the book “How Europe Underdeveloped Africa” because it tells us about the ancient civilisation of Benign and the great kingdoms of Kush (modern-day Sudan) and Kemet (modern-day Egypt). There is so much to be understood, the legacy of Africa. To understand that many of these European philosophers studied in universities in Africa. That is a sense of empowerment. So as much as we do have this powerful motto “Out of many, one people”, when you look at the sheer economics of it all, you'll see an underrepresentation of persons who look like you and I within that top 10 percent.

Interviewer: Our music and dances have done extremely well overseas. But I find that the creative and cultural industry (CCI) is greatly underfunded and underappreciated. What are your thoughts?

Minister: Well, I don't think the creative industry is underfunded, and I don't think it is underappreciated. So, I don't agree with the question. Certainly not from a policy perspective or not from a government policy perspective. What I would say is that it is time, that Jamaica invested more funds in terms of building up a performing arts space. When you look at The Little Theatre and how long the theatre has served Jamaican theatre, it has done its time. So, there are plans (from the government) to build this massive concert hall and performance art theatre with a bigger stage, better seats, better lighting, etc. So, as a government and as a ministry, we appreciate and will continue to request funding for those plans to come to fruition. Like last week, our Prime Minister broke ground for our first S.T.E.A.M. school, with a big emphasis on the “A” emphasizing the performing arts at a high school level. It's important to hone these skills. It will then help supplement tertiary institutions like Edna. However, ultimately, there must also be a grand performing arts centre that merits Jamaica's cultural progress on the global level.

Interviewer: Are there programmes, institutions, or systematic policies that could be put in place to ensure the honing of the CCI in Jamaica?

As a government, we will continue strengthening our support for the industry players. At the Ministry of Culture, we have an entertainment advisory committee consisting of artists, managers, and businesspeople to create policies whilst keeping contact with the artists. During COVID, we had several meetings with artists to hear their views because, for almost two years, the

entertainment industry was shut down. We've spent millions of dollars in packages and grants to artists approved by the Ministry of Finance. As a government, we do care and understand the power of our culture, and our culture continues to give us global dominance and recognition. Civics is very important and will impact that greater sense of pride in the next generation of Jamaicans. At the national scholarship awardee ceremony, the Jamaica Labour Party, as a political party that's in control of the government now, awards past members who have made a significant contribution to nation-building. One of the awardees for computer programming created a model to teach civics using AI. We have the C.H.A.S.E Fund (Culture, Health, Arts, Sports and Education Fund) that gives out millions of dollars of funding towards the arts every year. JCDC (Jamaica Cultural Development Commission) introduced this short film category in their festival. Someone was awarded three hundred dollars, and the aim is to help build our local film industry. In fact, there is a separate category for animation. There are programmes that are put in place to support the arts industry in Jamaica. It may take a little research, but they are available. Just this year, we launched a programme to give people internships with established people within the music, fashion, and dance industries. It also includes architecture as well. There are plans for a music museum. There are plans for a creative space. We are still finalising the entertainment zones.

Interview 2

Interviewee: Mr. Orville McFarlane (McFarlane)

Interviewer: Adrian Wanliss (Interviewer)

Date: 18.03.2024

Interviewer: Could you introduce yourself?

McFarlane: My name is Orville McFarlane. I am a dancer, teacher, choreographer, and all-round creative. I am a principal dancer with L'Acadco: A United Caribbean Dance Force and a part-time lecturer at Edna Manley College: School of Dance. I completed my bachelor's in fine arts in performance and choreography, and I am at Level 5 in L'Antech.

Interviewer: Can you share your journey with L'Antech and how you first encountered this technique?

McFarlane: I first encountered L'Antech during the initial staging of Jamaica Dance Umbrella, where the company performed Hounfor. It was a pivotal moment for me, having grown up immersed in traditional dance forms. Witnessing the fusion of modern dance with elements of my cultural heritage on stage was captivating. That marked my introduction to L'Antech, although, at the time, I couldn't fully grasp its significance. It wasn't until later, after possibly attending a class or two, that I realised this was a space I wanted to inhabit, drawn by the innovative approach to dance, particularly spearheaded by Dr. Stines.

Formally joining L'Antech in 2012 was my true initiation into its multifaceted world. Prior to that, it was merely a tantalising glimpse of something intriguing without fully understanding its depth or history. Dr. Stines often emphasises how L'Antech can be a culture shock, even though it's rooted in our own culture. This rings true, as it challenges conventional notions of movement and dance forms, creating a new lexicon of expression.

For me, it was indeed a culture shock, unravelling familiar movements and reassembling them in unexpected ways. It required mental, physical, and spiritual adaptation. Delving into the historical and spiritual significance of Jamaican folk forms added another layer of complexity. The juxtaposition of these traditions with ballet and modern dance felt like worlds colliding.

Navigating this terrain was a journey of discovery, marked by moments of discomfort and revelation. Yet, despite the challenges, there was a sense of growth and evolution. L'Antech continually pushes boundaries, ensuring that one never becomes too comfortable. It's an ongoing journey of exploration and refinement, where each step unveils new layers of understanding and appreciation.

Interviewer: How has L'Antech influenced your approach to choreography and dance creation?

McFarlane: That's a fascinating question because it really delves into the evolution of my choreographic style. Initially, when I began choreographing, I had this notion of being a contemporary choreographer solely focused on that identity. However, over time, my style has organically evolved. While I still consider myself rooted in contemporary dance, I've found myself incorporating influences from my upbringing, such as dancehall and other earthy, grounded movements.

This evolution has been influenced by exposure to L'Antech and its approach to blending different dance forms. I've started to carve out my own identity by infusing these diverse influences into my work. It's as if L'Antech introduced me to the idea that I could integrate various elements into my choreography, expanding my creative palette.

In essence, L'Antech showed me that there's more to explore beyond the boundaries of traditional contemporary dance. It encouraged me to experiment with different ingredients to create something truly unique. This mindset has been invaluable in my journey as a choreographer, as it pushes me to find my own voice and niche within the dance world.

For instance, I might come across a dancehall step and contemplate how it could be reimaged in a contemporary context. This process leads me to develop entirely new movements that may not exist elsewhere. L'Antech has unknowingly opened doors for me in this regard, guiding me towards a more expansive and inventive approach to choreography that feels innate to who I am.

Interviewer: In what ways do you incorporate elements of L'Antech into your works? Can you give some specific examples?

McFarlane: (Laughs) It's funny how things turn out because I distinctly remember telling myself that I would never touch L'Antech with a 10-foot pole. I was adamant about learning it but swore I wouldn't incorporate it into my choreography. However, as fate would have it, I found myself pondering the possibilities. You see, having worked with Dr. Stines, I knew firsthand how she utilised L'Antech in a very specific manner, often paired with particular types of music that were integral to her expression of the technique. Yet, a thought lingered in my mind: "What if L'Antech was employed in a way that defied expectations?"

This notion sparked inspiration, leading me to contemplate the idea of creating an entire piece centred around L'Antech—a decision that would become one of the most challenging endeavours of my life (laughs). The entirety of the piece was steeped in L'Antech; while there may have been moments that appeared contemporary, in my mind, L'Antech served as the foundation. My aim was to contemporise it further, taking elements of the technique and infusing them with a modern twist.

This endeavour presented numerous obstacles, particularly in deconstructing and reimagining the lengthy exercises inherent to L'Antech. I had to carefully select and adapt specific components to effectively convey the message I intended. It was a process of trial and error, pushing the boundaries of both my creativity and technical prowess. Yet, in the end, the challenge proved to be immensely rewarding, offering a newfound appreciation for the versatility and potential of L'Antech within the realm of contemporary dance.

Interviewer: What is most valuable about using L'Antech in your creative process?

McFarlane: I think the one thing I find valuable is the vocabulary. It is endless, and it's the first time I've created and choreographed a dance that I could use such a large vocabulary. Normally, with choreography, the struggle is to find movement. There is so much that one can choose to use or not to use. So, I think that was one of the things I appreciated - the vastness of the movement vocabulary. For example, you can literally take a single part of an exercise and create a lot. Based on my studies at school, we were taught to dissect so much that it becomes 8 more movements, but L'Antech has so much that I realised I could literally just create an entire dance based on 1 exercise alone. So, I guess that's one of the biggest benefits- the vocabulary.

Interviewer: How does L'Antech contribute to your choreography's authenticity and cultural richness?

McFarlane: I find myself utilising my so-called "Jamaican-ness" in choreography. And I see that was because of the influence of L'Antech. I don't think the international audience would say that it's "Jamaican" but rather "this is unique; this is different". They would be able to identify themselves somewhat to it, but they would also not recognise things. I believe it's something L'Antech has been doing for a long time. When on tour, we have heard comments like "I'm intrigued; I'm

interested; it's so different; it's so unique; I've never seen something like this before”.

L'Antech is Jamaican at its core. It utilises ballet, different folk dances within the culture, and different African dances; it draws on Indian dances and Chinese forms. It is a true identity of who we are as Jamaicans—European, African, Asian, and Caribbean.

The difference between Dr. Stines and me is that she tends to use reggae music to give it the extra stamp of Jamaican-ness, but I am exploring using the technique with different forms of music, like with my choreography.

Interviewer: Can you describe a specific instance where L'Antech helped you overcome creative challenges or limitations in your work?

McFarlane: I have not really utilised the technique in that sense, but I have utilised the process in which L'Antech was created. So, I have used the fusion of different types of techniques, the “synergy-bridging”, as Dr Stines has called it. There is a piece I created on NDTC that was basically an abstraction of dancehall steps from the early 2000s because that was the time I grew up in, and I fused it with other dance styles and techniques.

L'Antech helped me unlock how I created that piece and how I came up with manipulating the steps to fuse contemporary and dancehall. So, I would say the methodology helped me a lot.

Interviewer: How do you think L'Antech differs from other dance techniques or methodologies you've encountered?

McFarlane: I think it's her (Dr. Stines) use of syner-bridging. I don't have much experience with Dunham, but I believe L'Antech is more identifiable as a Caribbean modern dance technique, but you can clearly see the Caribbean in it. What you can also see is that it has modern techniques as well as ballet foundations that makes it different from all the other techniques. The fact that she (Dr. Stines) has created something, or rather the way she has created something unique and different to other techniques, makes it different, especially the utilisation of spirituality within the technique.

You learn about ancestral forms and their meanings, what influenced them, and why certain steps are the way they are. You tap into the identity of a Black Caribbean person.

L'Antech has its own freedom of expression. You are free to be yourself, to add your own thing within the technique itself, and not just choreograph a piece of these specific steps but add your flavour to it. Rather, there's literal room for play. I think those are some of the things that make it different from other techniques.

Interviewer: From your perspective, why do you believe L'Antech is a beneficial tool for creating dance works, particularly in the context of Jamaica's cultural landscape?

McFarlane: I think the answer is simple. I think that it covers everything, especially in the realm of dance. It also forces you to use the Jamaican background and the history because it's so deeply entrenched in the different folk forms. I think it's very important because we often try very hard to be what we think the Western world or the white man's world wants instead of really zoning in and utilising what we already have. Yes, we are influenced by that world, but we have a rich culture in our dance forms and in our history that we can and should utilise—L'Antech forces you to do just that.

I think that the richness of our history put into L'Antech is very important for us because it is a very identifiable stamp that helps set us apart from the world. Instead of trying to look like America, how about we try looking like us, Caribbean? Jamaican?

Jamaica is so complex itself. We come from so many different cultures, and it's layered, and it's all in L'Antech. So, therefore, it's a playful playground that we can use not only to create and continue to create within a Jamaican cultural landscape but also to tell our history.

Interviewer: Have you noticed any specific impacts or transformations in your artistic practice since incorporating L'Antech into your repertoire?

McFarlane: After my last choreography on the company (L'ACADCO), I feel like there is more room for me to explore – to play, to tap into different things I was unsure about. It has opened my eyes a bit more to see how much more I can create. My world has opened. There's more room for me to explore this and that. My brain is tingling. I have different ideas of things that I can probably do. So, I feel that's how it's impacted my practice going forward.

Interviewer: Looking ahead, how do you envision the continued role of L'Antech in your future choreographic endeavours?

McFarlane: Now that I've created the work and that she (Dr. Stines) has entrusted me with creating, I feel like going forward, I can say L'Antech is something that I can probably put into my choreographic toolbelt. I am interested in seeing how many different ways I can utilise L'Antech, which is the norm. Or that she has created it to be the norm.

Interviewer: Do you think L'Antech should be taught in the Caribbean?

McFarlane: 100% yes. I definitely think it should be taught, especially at the first and only English-speaking Caribbean arts university. A modern dance technique that is not being taught at the school; in fact, dancehall is not even taught at the school. Only as an elective.

I definitely think it should be taught not only in Jamaica but also in the different Caribbean islands as well, where they dance a dance curriculum. It's very important for Caribbean people to have a voice that you can immediately identify, and I think L'Antech does that. At the end of the day, it creates a more

rounded dancer because you get a taste of everything and historical knowledge of culture.

Interview 3

Interviewee: Dr. L'Antoinette Stines (Stines)

Interviewer: Adrian Wanliss (Interviewer)

Date: 21.03.2024

Interviewer: Can you provide insights into how your personal experiences and cultural background have influenced your perspectives on decolonisation and its importance within the arts?

Stines: Well, my personal experience didn't begin as an adult began as a child. And I really think that that beginning influenced my consciousness because I had to be decolonised before I could decolonise. No decolonisation can happen by the creator of something unless that person is consciously aware in the forefront of their consciousness of what it is something that needs to be decolonised. I feel that decolonisation and colonisation have become so hyped that I wonder if the people writing about decolonisation are aware of what it means to decolonise. But in my childhood, there was a lady who worked for my mother, who was a revival practitioner. So, when my mother went to work at nights, I was taken to Windward Road. As a little girl, I had a tambourine in my hand and a piece of white cloth on my head, and I was having fun. I was not thinking about what was happening. The people around me took care of me. I was told I had rhythm and could move, and it was a big commotion when I danced because I was pickney (child). But what was happening was that my body was becoming attuned to the rhythms of the drums and the awareness of spirituality in a consciousness called revival.

The other thing that happened was that I was fortunate to be trained by a woman who, after a ballet class, would have a Kumina class. The Kumina class was taught by the Kumina practitioner. So, I was not taught that one is better than the other, but that they were equal in the consciousness of the Caribbean human being, specifically Jamaican. Then, the next day, I had a Graham class because Clive Thompson had taught me. So, I'm becoming aware of not only what is in Jamaica but with a global consciousness of dance. And at that time, I was very young, and I wasn't even aware. I am now speaking based on memory and reflection.

And then things would be said, for example, that same woman who looked after my mother and looked after me wasn't aware that she was black and would say to me that she was brought up thinking brown is better than Black, and that she's not Black, she's "brown". But even when she is doing that, she is not decolonised.

Then, that cultural environment in my dancing days was not decolonising only as a person in the dance sector, but as a human being who overtime started to

become aware of enslavement, what happened before enslavement, and the success of European consciousness because of diva marketing. It (slavery) was marketed and promoted. Even after slavery had been abolished and were coming to Kingston, people were told, in dance class, to “make your foot do the good thing” and then “make your foot do the bad thing”. The “good thing” was pointing, and the “bad thing” was flexing.

I believe I was chosen because a lot of things have been said to me since I was a little girl. I believe my ancestors assisted me so that the information would be presented in front of me and through my own experiences.

So, my own experience at the revival and after coming back to Jamaica, delving into Kumina and dancing other Caribbean dances gave me a perspective of what the enslaved left. But my interpretation of decolonisation does not ignore the fact that when the ship landed, both the colonialists and the Africans landed together.

There is a book by Hilary Beckles that talks about the colonists' relationships with the enslaved—buying their freedom. It is a fantastic book, and there are many untold stories.

So, decolonisation for me is deconstructing to reconstruct.

So, my cultural experience, unknowingly, brought me to my perspectives on decolonisation. It really wasn't until I started to write my PhD thesis and codify the technique that things came into perspective. If you had asked me this question 20 years ago, I probably wouldn't have been able to answer it.

Interviewer: In your opinion, what are some of the most significant barriers to decolonisation within the dance and broader cultural sectors, and how can these barriers be effectively addressed?

Stines: That's a good question because many people think that because their skin is Black and they are fighting for freedom, or in recent times, the Black Lives Matter movement, they are already decolonised. And my best example of not knowing that you are not decolonised is my experience at the International Association of Blacks in Dance (IADB), where I heard this wonderful, southern soul music playing, with lyrics about enslavement and the pain of being Black and I snuck into the rehearsal to watch. When I took away the music and the costumes, they were doing a ballet- pure classical ballet. So, the barriers begin with not knowing who you are – your ancestral knowledge. In my thesis, I write about identity crisis and identity specificity.

Some people are fully unaware that they are having an identity crisis because they are so entrenched in Eurocentric behaviour. Once upon a time, Black women would not feel beautiful if they didn't have a wig or straight hair. What's beautiful to see today is the natural hair movement. However, there are still many in positions that you look up to that still do not have natural hair unless it is stipulated to do so in a film or something. Also, when it comes to attire, it is primarily focused on Eurocentric beauty standards. My problem is that it is so successful because it is in the cells- in the genetics. So, the barriers are like a jail

cell, and you get a life sentence. I feel like it is life enslavement. I believe what Bob Marley sings, the words from Marcus Garvey, “Emancipate yourself from mental slavery”, is something we need to strive for. I have been heavily judged because I have been so focused on decolonisation that it comes off as being crass. When I came back to Jamaica, wearing African clothes, people didn’t like it. People are now talking about it (decolonisation) today, and I have been talking about it for 50 years ago. I have been choreographing it all my life. Black Lives Matter is something I have been choreographing all my life. I just never named it Black Lives Matter; I had just put it on stage.

I am going to leave this earth, and God is going to reincarnate me. I hope when I come back, I’ll remember where I’ve reached with decolonisation. Decolonisation has many barriers: Spiritual, Physical, Emotional, and Psychological.

Writer Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o’s book was like my bible. And Judith Lynne Hanna’s “To Dance is Human” is a great book every dancer should have. She writes about dance in Africa, from being on stage at the Lincoln Center. Another great and important writer from Cuba is José Martí, who writes about bodies in the ocean and what has happened with the mind. If you don’t practise a European religion, you’re the devil. So, when I came home and said that I am a Yoruba Priestess, I am an awful Obeah woman. My then supervisor, Hilary Beckles, mentioned that I should never forget “the movement of people. Don’t ignore that people move for the trading of spices and this and that all over the world. So, when you see something, be careful when you say it is pure anything!”

Interviewer: How do you see the relationship between decolonisation and cultural preservation?

Stines: Cultural preservation will assist decolonisation. If you don’t have cultural preservation, you cannot achieve decolonisation. And that is why, in L’Antech, I insisted to use the body as the instrument to preserve cultural. So, the body is a library is of information. Naming is important. All my exercises are named with information that preserves culture. So, without preservation, you cannot have decolonisation, and you can’t reconstruct.

Interviewer: In what ways do you think the mainstream media and entertainment industry perpetuate colonial narratives and stereotypes, and how can decolonisation efforts within the arts challenge and subvert these narratives?

Stines: I’m going to tell you something that you probably won’t believe. Jamaica was the first Caribbean nation to report the news in Patois. I was very shocked that day. The mainstream media and entertainment industry often perpetuate colonial narratives and stereotypes by enforcing Eurocentric standards, including language, culture, and identity. These standards marginalise non-Western cultures and impose a sense of inferiority on them. A vivid example of this can be seen in how the Jamaican media was initially criticised for reporting the news in Patois, a language deeply rooted in the island’s African heritage. The pushback

came from a Eurocentric mindset ingrained in the Jamaican consciousness, which viewed Patois as inferior or unprofessional compared to English. However, decolonisation efforts within the arts have the power to challenge and subvert these narratives. In Jamaica, the breaking down these Eurocentric barriers is largely attributed to cultural icons like Hon. Louise Bennett Coverly. By embracing Patois in her poetry and songs, she legitimised and celebrated the language, making it an essential part of Jamaica's cultural identity. Similarly, when the Prime Minister of Barbados spoke in a heavy Bajan accent, it represented a rejection of colonial expectations and an affirmation of local culture.

In the context of decolonisation, artists and media creators can follow in the footsteps of figures like Louise Bennett Coverly by using their platforms to elevate Indigenous languages, stories, and perspectives. By doing so, they not only resist the imposition of colonial narratives but also empower communities to reclaim and take pride in their cultural heritage. This approach challenges the dominant Eurocentric paradigms and paves the way for a more inclusive and representative media landscape.

Interviewer: How do you navigate the tension between preserving traditional cultural practices and embracing innovation and evolution within the context of decolonisation?

Stines: The only way I can answer this question is by saying that this L'Antech. (laughs) Because that is what L'Antech is. It is cultural preservation and innovation. I take movements like Kumina battements and bubble shuffle and create innovative movements which are inclusive of cultural preservation.

Interviewer: What do you find most valuable about L'Antech?

Stines: I find that I am at home. I feel as if my ancestors are happy and are being honoured. And I know sometimes when I get up and dance, it's not me dancing because at this age, for me to lift my leg the way I can, it must be blessings and my ancestors. I feel humbled to be able to honour my ancestors. For me it's freedom. They are no longer slaves, and we are not slaves to the system because I fight the system. We are free.

Interviewer: How does L'Antech differ from other dance techniques or methodologies?

Stines: In comparison to Dunham, I would show them that it is not authentically Caribbean. I am a Caribbean person who created a Caribbean technique. Katherine Dunham said that she never came to Jamaica for more than seven days and never set out to create a technique. She wrote this in a book and also in my interview with her. She also said that Jamaica was not included. She did not do any dance in Jamaica, but she is famous in Haiti. So what she has done is not English-speaking Caribbean. It might be French Creole because of the Haitian influence. It doesn't represent the English-speaking Caribbean, which is predominately Congolese retention and West African retention.

Then, I don't have to use words to explain; I can use the body, which is language.

Interviewer: Looking forward, what are your hopes and aspirations for the future of decolonisation within the arts, and how do you envision L'Antech continuing to contribute to this ongoing process?

Stines: There will be a structured method of certification for people. That's one. They will be able to come in and get certified to teach level 1 or 2. There will be a legal process for that.

In terms of decolonisation, that won't happen by me alone. All of you who have worked with me are the ones that will continue to carry the mantle and continue the decolonisation process. I think I've done my part a lot. People have come to be wanting to be ballerinas and have left with a better understanding of their culture and who they are as a person in the Caribbean. For me, the fact that we have proven that blacks can do ballet is wonderful, but when we stop there, we are stagnant. We don't have to prove to anybody that we can do things. What we need to do is prove to people that what we have can be used. If we keep wanting to prove that we are as good as the white man, we are saying, "Yes, Massa". Reggae music was created with the kind of lyrics sung because we refused to bow down.

L'Antech is to dance, as Bob Marley is to music.

Appendix 2



Image 1: The Star of David (Reverence)



Image 2: Toes off the floor



Image 3: Reverence Position with etched fingers (representing women)



Image 4: Reverence Position with etched fingers (rep. man)

Positions in L'Antech vs. Classical Ballet:



L'Antech first position vs Classical Ballet first position



L'Antech second position vs Classical Ballet second position



L'Antech third position vs Classical Ballet third position



L'Antech fourth position vs Classical Ballet fourth position



L'Antech fifth position vs Classical Ballet fifth position



L'Antech sixth position

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Chemnitz, 26.09.2024

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