First ever national Black Dance Archive secures Heritage Lottery Fund investment

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From the hip-hop company behind music and dance pieces from the London 2012 Olympic opening ceremony to the pioneers of UK jazz dance in the 1970s, this project will capture 29 collections and collective memories from celebrated individuals and organisations operating in Black Dance in the UK from 1960s to 2000s, brought together for the first time in one comprehensive collection for people to explore.

Kwame Kwei-Armah OBE playwright, actor, broadcaster and Artistic Director of Centerstage, Baltimore comments: "The creation of a national archive for Black Dance is a significant step forward for the cultural landscape in the UK. I wholeheartedly support the pioneering spirit of State of Emergency for the realisation of such a ground breaking endeavour and I look forward to seeing the fruition of the archive."

Dame Jenny Abramsky, Chair of HLF, comments: "From my childhood onwards dance has played an important role in my life so I’m delighted we’re supporting this imaginative project. Once up-and-running State of Emergency’s archive will provide an essential and much needed 'go-to' resource to people with an interest in the history and traditions of dance. It will also give a fascinating insight into how British Black Dance has evolved over the past 50 years and why it’s such an important part of our cultural landscape."

The project will be delivered in partnership with the Black Cultural Archives (BCA), London, the National Resource Centre for Dance (NRCD) at the University of Surrey, the University of Leeds, Birmingham Records and Libraries; Trinity Laban, London and the Victoria and Albert (V&A) Museum, London and will be delivered between October 2013 and June 2016.

Dance activity will animate the archive collections, supported by nine national dance agencies. All partners have fully supported the project’s aim to engage with the broadest possible audiences from children and young people in formal and informal education to community groups and from academia through to the dance community.

To this end, alongside the archive, State of Emergency (SOE), will deliver an extensive, informal and formal participation programme which will include an academic symposium in partnership with NRCD for the University of Surrey; outreach programmes in schools, FE colleges and Universities, as well as a positive action programme for a trainee from the Black and minority ethnic community to focus on digital engagement.

In addition, it will offer lecture demonstrations; an educational resource pack and DVD; an information website and accompanying digital media programme; reminiscence and oral history workshops, and a volunteer programme and training in revisiting collections methodology for oral history interviews. Community dance performances, community dance workshops, choreographer dance master-classes and a touring exhibition will also form part of the programme.

The project will be supported by an information website that will serve as the project 'hub', aiming to provide an information portal giving access to new collections that have previously been inaccessible.

Alongside this, SOE will engage depositors in the process and along with academics invite these communities of interest to offer new interpretations and perspectives that explore, question and shed light on this new, previously

unseen dimension of our shared national heritage.

Deborah Baddoo MBE, Artistic Director / CEO of State of Emergency Productions said: "We are thrilled that the Heritage Lottery Fund has given us support for this valuable project. Without this initiative the contribution that British Black Dance has made to our nation's dance development and cultural life will remain hidden and undocumented. We are now a step closer to preserving this lost history for future generations and to ensuring that this previously hidden treasure trove of information will be available for all to experience and enjoy."

The need for archiving within Black Dance has been expressed as a long-standing need .There are currently very few archive materials that relate to British Black Dance and the amount of accessible information and archive materials is poor and does not correlate with the amount of work that British Black Dance companies have made, or their contribution to our cultural life.

This is compounded by there being no central, comprehensive archive of the history of British Black Dance which means that any materials are hard to access, and very little is known about what currently exists and where it is held.

Through this partnership, we aim to address this challenge in order to safeguard our shared cultural and artistic heritage.

This project aims to open up this rich heritage, and ensure that further generations are able access, learn and build upon previous work.

Notes to editors

State of Emergency is a performance and production company, committed to the creation of high quality work, and to creativity and innovation in the fields of dance and music. As a producer and also as an advocate for artists and performers, State of Emergency has established a national and international reputation. In the field of dance, State of Emergency is at the forefront of pushing the boundaries in the development and profiling of dance of the African Diaspora in the UK, making positive changes in the national dance ecology and gaining both national and international recognition for creating a strong place for these forms in the national culture.

Further information

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