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Black Dance and Cultural Representation in Britain - Commodification of Dance and its Effects on African Forms: The Case of Adzido Pan-African Dance Ensemble

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Abstract

This paper presents some empirical observations arising from the emergence and re-emergence of 'Black dance' and 'African dance' in Britain. The paper responds to the massive commodification of dance which often reduces African forms into mere entertainment activities thereby denying them a place in the artistic world. It focuses on the critical analysis of the formation and operations of Adzido Pan African Dance Ensemble, the Ghanaian traditional dance group whose over two decades of operations in Britain (1984-2005) could be seen as a significant contribution to cultural diversity and education in the country. The paper uses an interdisciplinary approach involving anthropology, history, and performance studies, drawing on both primary and secondary sources to raise issues of cultural identity and politics of representation. The aim is to create a new awareness of the relevance of such minority arts groups to the sustenance of the multiculturalism Britain enjoys today.

Introduction

The contributions of black people who migrated to Britain during the period between the 20th and the 21st centuries, particularly from the 1970s onwards, have significantly enriched the country in the area of food, clothing, language, faith, music and dance. This constant human migration over the years appears to have resulted in a more dynamic economy in Britain with more competition for jobs, access to crucial skills and new ideas, better public services and, more significantly, a richer cultural life. During this period, ethnic minority arts, including African music and

dance, were finally accepted and integrated into education and community activities in British society. My intention in this paper is to highlight the significant contribution of these black and African dance companies. I will now navigate through what is generally known as 'black dance' for the purpose of locating African dance in order to narrow down on Adzido (the Ghanaian company) which is the main focus.

Locating African Dance through the term Black Dance

According to former dance officer of the Arts Council of England, Hilary Carty (2007), the term 'Black' in the British context is used to identify African descendants and its usage extended to include "people who have a history of colonisation and oppression by the British-hence it being used to include Asian communities and even the Irish in some instances" (Carty, 2007: 16). This suggests that the term 'Black' when used without qualification may invite generalisations and this has the potential of stereotyping people. Furthermore, it is too simplistic to assume that groups of people share the same ideals and personality traits just because their historical backgrounds have something in common.

Dance scholars, including De Frantz (2002, 2006), Gottschild (2003, 2012), Nettleford (1998) and Paris (2008), have advanced scholarship into the relevance of Black dance to its custodians as well as the intrinsic elements that underpin its practice. Despite these groundbreaking works that sought to educate the world about the need to understand and appreciate the Black dance and its related art forms, there still exist some issues of public concern. Ukrainian dance scholar, Andiry Nahachewsky (2011), makes us understand that every dance is unique and that even when a dance form is performed and repeated, the two performances cannot be the same. He states: "when we speak of any categories of dance, we have to remember that they are generalisations, abstractions and simplifications that we make for our own convenience" (Nahachewsky, 2011: 6). Therefore, it is imperative to state clearly here that although the mention of Black dance may refer to African dance, its use in this paper, considering its contentious nature, is to provide an umbrella term under which African dance is located, enabling me to navigate through to narrow down on Adzido, which is the focus of this paper.

The Term 'African Dance' and its Complexities

Being the second largest continent in the world with its people constituting about ten percent of the world's population, Africa has over one thousand indigenous languages spoken by various ethnic groups (Stone,

1998). Although these cultural practices continue to influence one another, thereby establishing similarities between and in various cultures, it is very difficult to single out one dance form as representative of African dance.

The African-American scholar, Molefi Kete Asante (1985), comes to the theoretical conclusion that, if there is a European culture, Asian culture, and Arabic culture, then there is also an African culture. Asante's view focuses on the common beliefs and sensitivities African cultures share. Nevertheless, that is not to say that there are no observable and distinct differences between the cultures of different societies in different African regions. Asante realistically demonstrates that, although the cultural histories and linguistic characteristics of different African societies are palpably dissimilar, they share the same overarching culture: "their particular histories are distinct but their general history is the same" (Asante, 1985: 4). Thus similarities that exist in African dance forms suggested the possibility of constructing a generalised dance culture although this is still debatable.

Predecessors of Adzido

The modern history of Black theatre dance in Britain, according to Carty (2007), can trace its roots to Berto Pasuka, a Jamaican-born dance artist who learned dancing from the Maroon Negroes, descendants of runaway slaves, before moving to Britain in 1939. What drew British public attention to Pasuka was the fact that, he formed the first Black British dance company/troupe called *Les Ballet Nègres* in 1946. Cultural theorist Bob Ramdhanie (2005) states "Pasuka's Company rehearsed in studios near Piccadilly Circus and opened with four ballets at the Twentieth Century Theatre in Bayswater" (Ramdhanie 2005: 155). According to Ramdhanie, *Les Ballet Nègres* was not only the first black dance company in Britain, but also the first of its kind in the whole of Europe, and indeed soon they were embarking on international tours.

Despite the impressive performances of Pasuka and his company, *Les Ballets Nègres* was excluded from the 1951 festival of Britain probably because it was believed to represent colonial and not British culture. "Pasuka's work was viewed as 'exotic' and 'primitive' but it was the fillip needed to uplift the spirit of sections of British society". (Ramhanie, 2005: 157) This clearly shows how the company's Africanist expressions marginalised them. Although credited for dancing innovations, they were ultimately excluded because of their 'Otherness'. Scholars such as Goldberg (1996), Hegel (1999) and Sorgel (2007) have discussed how 'otherness' was synonymous to inferiority as a perception held by colonisers about

the colonised. Sorgel, for instance, writes, "Representing the colonised as subhuman species, colonialist hegemony was founded on a make-belief strategy which superimposed colonialist discourse on difference as Other, ie inferior and more importantly: free labour to uphold early capitalism" (2007: 27). Sadly, this European 'selfhood' could not allow Pasuka and his group to be accepted as part of the canon in Britain. The question here is: would they have been accepted as part of the canon if they had not expressed Black ideology? Or would they have been encouraged and maintained if they had employed the concept of 'double consciousness' to express White dreams in their Black dance performances. Like Paul Gilroy, Elizabeth Chin (2011) also adopts W.E.B Du Bois' concept of double consciousness to discuss Michael Jackson's 1991 Panther dance which accompanied his song, *Black or White*. She explores the misunderstanding and vilification of panther dance as an organised practice deeply connected to racial dynamics in the United States. Chin's article touches on how Black dream ballets were considered as entertaining but not artistic due to the fact that they did not express White dreams-a preferred taste of their White dominated audience. She however argues that the work of African American dancer Katherine Dunham and Jackson's creation stand out as two distinct Black creations that defied the expectations of White audience taste and yet they were outstanding. "Both Jackson's *Black or White* and Dunham's choreographic statement in *Stormy Weather*, both of which explore Black dreams that lie outside the territory laid out by the expectations of White audiences while remaining inextricably bound up with these expectations" (Chin, 2011: 61). Chin's point could explain why Pasuka's company had been considered as an entertaining group and not an artistic one with the required qualifications to be part of the canon in Britain. Another response may give consideration to the identity of the dancers, or the choreographic pieces or both in classifying them as successful entertainers but not up to that level of qualification to the status of a dance company worth accepting into the canon. Whichever angle we analyse it from, this treatment meted out to the company could be considered as the beginning of the racial storm which eventually relegated African and Caribbean forms and idioms to the margins and rendered them illegitimate and lacking in credibility. The situation sadly denied them official subsidy, making it extremely very difficult, if not impossible, for them to survive on proceeds from box office takings alone to maintain the dancers and create new works. "Les Ballet Nègres operated between 1946 and 1953 but the lack of public subsidy and Pasuka's own diminishing funds meant that the end was drawing nigh" (Ramdhanie, 2005: 158). As a result, the company lasted for only six years. "Les Ballets Nègres could not get funding though and survived only on box-

office receipts. Hence, despite tremendous popularity here and across Europe, it folded in 1952" (Carty, 2007: 17). Therefore, Black dance, one of the ethnic minority arts, suffered serious neglect, which led to its near disappearance in Britain during the 1960s.

Sankofa, a Ghanaian Group on British Tour

One could argue that the movement towards multiculturalism in the 1970s was initiated politically by Prime Minister Harold Wilson and its subsequent implementation saw the leadership of James Callaghan with new legislations, including equality rights such as "the 1976 Race Relations Act" (Grau, 2008: 232). This certainly created a welcoming environment for the re-emergence of African dance in Britain (Khan, 1976), hence a fifteen member group of dancers and musicians led by George Dzikunu with the name *Sankofa* travelled from Ghana to Britain in 1974. The main purpose of this group was to perform Ghanaian dances as a way of promoting the cultural heritage of Ghana. While some members of Sankofa made their way back to Ghana after a successful British tour, others decided to stay in London to become cultural ambassadors due to the enthusiasm and prestige with which their performances were received.

But these cultural ambassadors could not continue their work effectively due to lack of funding as well as opposition from British society. George Fiawoo, one of these Ghanaian cultural ambassadors, revealed in an interview I conducted that in going about their usual practice to do Ghanaian dances in schools in the early days, they thought it wise and culturally appropriate to be in African costumes. These costumes rather became objects of mockery as, Fiawoo recalled, even students made the most derogatory statements about them, such as "Look at the black monkeys; here they come again in their pyjamas"[1]. At the time many discouraged the development of ethnic minority arts with a general claim that efforts to do so would bring about division in society.

The Adzido Pan-African Dance Ensemble

In 1984, Dzikunu mobilised a few other artists and formed Adzido. My interview with dance scholar and choreographer Francis Nii-Yartey suggests that the formation of Adzido had always been the dream of George Dzikunu during his days of working as a freelance dance artist with many Caribbean dance companies in the UK. Nii-Yartey, who was working with the Probation Service in Britain prior to the formation of Adzido, explained in an interview: "George had a great idea and we used to discuss it in my room. Later it turned into a reality"[2].

The name *Adzido,* in Anlo-Ewe language, refers to the Baobab tree. This name was taken from the Ewe proverb that goes; *Nunya Adzidoe, asi metune o.* (Knowledge is like the trunk of a baobab tree that a single person's arms cannot encompass). To further understand why the Anlo-Ewe chose the baobab tree for this example of folk wisdom, one would have to investigate what qualities the tree possesses and what it stands for.

Significance of the Baobab Tree

The Baobab is among the largest and longest-lived trees on earth. It survives prolonged droughts by storing water in its massive, fibrous, sponge-like trunk which can be up to thirty to sixty feet in diameter. That trunk can be hollowed out to make a shelter, or cut into water containers. When in leaf, the Baobab produces an edible fruit that has the highest concentration of Vitamin C of any plant. The leaves themselves are rich in Vitamin A and the shade of those leaves and branches provide a relatively cool refuge for other living things in the sub-Saharan heat. Anlo-Ewe traditional scholars, with whom I worked in Ghana including Dartey Kumordzie, explained that, in addition to the above attributes, the size of the baobab tree represents the length, breath, height and depth of African indigenous knowledge, a knowledge that transcends the understanding of a single human being. Therefore the name *Adzido* may be conceptualised as a symbol of endurance, conservation, creativity, greatness, ingenuity and dialogue. African music scholar, Gbolonyo (2009) considers the baobab tree with its Ewe proverb as a symbol of the greatness of Ewe indigenous knowledge and asserts that its scope can never be reached by any single person. He explains,

> The proverb, like the tree, has been with the Ewe since time immemorial. In the simplest terms, the proverb underscores Ewe indigenous perception and concept of knowledge and wisdom. It shows the limitlessness of human knowledge and that there is always more knowledge, both old and new, to be learned. In Ewe indigenous philosophical conception, there is a limit to what any one individual can know; but there is no limit to what can be known. In other words, no one individual can claim monopoly of knowledge and wisdom; no one is omniscient. Upon this philosophy, are Ewe indigenous knowledge and cultural values based. (Gbolonyo, 2009: 19)

Gbolonyo's explication provides orientation through which we may understand the African conceptualisation of knowledge.

Adzido came into being initially as a Ghanaian traditional dance group and its early performances were Ghanaian dances that are usually to signify a rite of passage such as a child moving into adulthood, a marriage or to signify love. An example is *Tokoe*, a puberty dance of Dangbe people in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. However, before Adzido got hold of this dance, the Ewes from the Volta Region of Ghana through two Anlo-Ewe dance artists and scholars, Kobla Ladzekpo and C.K.Ganyo, had already taken *Tokoe* and adapted it into Anlo-Ewe social dance in the 1960s.

Tokoe songs play various roles in educating and developing the Ghanaian/Ewe youth. Here an example below:

1. Nyonuvi ade tso Ge gbo	1. A pretty young woman returns from Accra
2. Ye wo flea mi vevi ade	2. And she buys a special perfume
3. Ye wotso nko ne be	3. And she names it
4. Lorlor le mudor me	4. Love is in the mosquito net (in bed)
5. Lorlor le Africa	5. Love is in Africa
Yiye dekapuiwo mi bia eta	Handsome men, ask about the cost
Ne miayi Lome mia flee	And travel to Lome (Togo) to buy it.

The song above is a popular Tokoe tune in Ewe language. There are two major concepts glaring in the song. These are the concept of beauty, displayed by the woman's ability to spend so much money on a special perfume; and the concept of being in love which according to the Ewe cultural norms must not be expressed in public but in the mosquito net. The existence of mosquitoes in many African communities necessitated the use of *mudor* (mosquito net) in Eweland to prevent the malaria giving parasite from biting both young and old. Therefore, in Eweland, the word *mudorme* (in the mosquito net) refers to the bed and its mosquito net.

Relating these two concepts to the song above reveals a three point advice for young women and their potential lovers pointing to views of gender and gender relationships. First, it tells all young women that natural beauty is not enough and therefore, there is the need to employ the many make up options available to them including a special perfume for freshening up. Secondly, it tells the men to be aware that to be in love with a woman, they must be ready to foot the bills of such extra beauties including the special perfume. The third point is the most important of all. It emphasises the Ewe and African cultural norms to both the woman and her lover that the expression of being in love must be done in the mosquito net (in bed) and not in public. Ewe norms forbid publicly

expressing romantic acts such as passionate kissing in public which may be considered in other societies as an impressive way to affirm love to your partner.

There is the question of whether it is possible to use African dance performance to reinforce moral teaching (as demonstrated in the above *Tokoe* song) in non African societies. Performing *Tokoe* in Britain poses a great challenge to not only *Adzido* but also to any Ghanaian group that may attempt to represent this social dance in the diaspora. In the Ghanaian communities where *Tokoe* is natively performed, singing of the songs and dramatisation of their meaning form an integral part of the performance. In Britain, it is no more authenticity but so much of how you transform the dance into a theatrical performance, a practice that has the potential of separating the dance from its native cultural values. Reconstruction of these dances in Britain changes their entire choreographic structures as well as the movements, making them completely new creations which the Ghanaian custodians may deem unacceptable.

Despite the above challenges Adzido continued to reach local schools and communities. Music teacher David Ruffer has documented how *Adzido* became a real highlight of African week celebrations at William Parker School in April, 1991. He stated,

> The main feature of African Week was the residence of Adzido, the Pan African Dance Ensemble. We were most fortunate in getting Adzido to take on this residency, but this left us with a major problem. Multicultural weeks have to be self-financing, and Adzido's fees and accommodation alone would cost the best part of £3,000, so we had to attract paying customers to the events in African Week to avoid a deficit. (Ruffer, 1992: 163-164)

Ruffer's statement underscores two factors that are very vital to the discussion of *Adzido*. These are the company's essence in the celebration of multiculturalism and a confirmation that *Adzido* had virtually no financial support even at a time diversity and multiculturalism found a place in the British school calendar.

Adzido's first full length piece was *Coming Home*, with 28 dancers and musicians telling the story of the son of a chief who returns home to Africa from the West and discovers he has forgotten his tribal dances. This show was performed at Sadler's Wells Theatre in 1988. Significantly, this production became one of the demands for GCSE and an educational pack was produced by the National Research and Centre for Dance. *Adzido*'s expansion from small-community impact through national to continental/international status put the company in the limelight for

support and encouragement, thereby attaining Arts Council funding from 1991. Their major productions apart from *Coming Home* included *Under African Skies* (1990), *Siye Goli* (1992), *Akwaaba* (1993), and *Thand Abantwana* (1995). Small-scale productions included *Behind the Mask* (1993) and *Shango the God of Thunder* (1996). *Adzido* saw significant development with further expansion of their repertoire to cover dances from many parts of the African continent and the membership increased up to thirty-two dancers and musicians who continued to showcase different types of African traditional dances until 2004 when the company folded following the withdrawal of their funding by the Arts Council.

Engaging the Issues

In *The Telegraph* edition of 5th April, 2005, dance critic Ismene Brown wrote:

> And so farewell then, Adzido. The African dance company that soaked up a million-pound annual subsidy (and for three years produced nothing on stage) gave its final performances last week. I wrote about this sorry state of events a year ago, and the Arts Council, which had turned a blind eye to the scandal, finally turned off the tap. (Brown, 2005: 7)

It would be difficult if not impossible to believe that a whole company with full funding never produced any stage work in three solid years. What is more striking is the absence of official statement from Adzido to confirm or deny this report. At this stage, it is important to consider the company's mission statement below:

> Adzido Pan African Dance Ensemble exists to promote the appreciation, understanding and practice of African peoples dance, its music and its cultural heritage, in Britain and abroad. Adzido seeks to promote the richly diverse heritage of all cultural groups of Black Africa by presenting dance, together with music, in forms which both respect and illuminate traditional values and have relevance in a contemporary, multicultural context.[3]

The mission statement of Adzido places the company at a very difficult position. First of all, the promotion of diverse heritage of all Black Africa through dance is a dream that appears to be extremely difficult if not impossible to realise. Secondly, to create dance forms which both respect and illuminate African traditional values and at the same time have relevance in contemporary multicultural Britain is indeed a challenging

endeavour. Although, *Adzido*'s multi-dimensional role in this challenging enterprise puts the company in a very complex situation, regular funding from the Arts Council could be seen as a source of motivation for this herculean task.

In the *Stage News* of 7th October, 2004, Jeremy Austin wrote:

> Formed by George Dzikunu in 1984 as Adzido Pan-African Dance Ensemble, Britain's only large-scale black dance company has received regular funding from Arts Council of England (ACE) since 1991, supporting a full-time group of dancers and musicians with a remit to tour Britain and overseas. This has risen from an initial £386,250 to £1,011,555 by this year. (Austin, 2004: 4)

Austin's report suggests that Adzido's funding from the Arts Council had not only been regular, but also it had received consistent incremental jumps. Certainly, one would have thought the twenty years of operations by Adzido Pan-African Dance Ensemble in Britain served the conditions attached to their funding, thereby warranting the gradual increment of their annual funding from the initial hundreds of thousands to over a million pounds. While it is important to acknowledge the fact that regular funding is one of the wheels that propel such artistic companies to realise their goals, it is equally important to be aware of the challenges that confront these companies, such as pressure to compromise their philosophy and direction in an attempt to satisfy funding requirements.

Adzido's primary aim as an African group as indicated by the mission statement was not only to exhibit the cultural diversity of Black Africa through dance, but also to educate Britain and Europe in the wisdom and good values embedded in the art form, which can be harnessed and used in building a peaceful and united contemporary multiracial society. A few questions arise from this. Where did Adzido members place their primary aim against the expectation from their funders? Did the company represent African philosophy? Did they consider and respond to the dynamism of British urban society, which was totally different from the pace of their African origin? What effect did all the above challenges have on their choreographic pieces as well as their general creativity? In order to answer these questions, let us consider the point that if the artists cannot have the freedom and support to be in control of their materials and creative processes, then their dance companies cannot assume that feeling of belonging which fosters a sense of identity. This and other social factors, including their position as a Black company in British society, could be considered as the main feature that significantly undermined their primary aim of representing the philosophy of Black nations, Black

regions or the Black continent through bodily expressions that were once labelled barbaric and immoral by their host/colonisers.

It must be stated clearly that a frustrated dance artist in London can work in a cleaning company in order to survive but clearly, not all cleaners can easily become dance artists. The point here touches on the process of creativity and innovation, which seemed to be lacking at the beginning of Adzido's life and operations. There is context to all of this. First, we must understand that the Ghanaian notion of dance as a communal activity and its principles may have restricted these practitioners from embracing change and adopting contemporary elements in their forms. Secondly, their British audiences, who had already accumulated much experience of watching theatrical dances on stage, may have developed a perception of what constitutes a dance performance that is stage worthy. With this in mind, one can conclude that practitioners of dance, no matter what their background, have a responsibility of making sure that the language they speak with their art form is familiar to their audiences; and consideration of this appeared to be less significant in the choreographic pieces of Adzido.

The above observation, nonetheless, does not in any way reduce Adzido to a company without focus. Of course, their choreographers and the entire membership of the company knew and understood in Ghanaian and African sense what they were giving to British society in terms of dance performance. The real point is that theatrical dance production in Britain can be very sophisticated and its evaluation often influenced by value judgment perhaps with or without consideration of the sociocultural background of the producers. Commenting on the effects of racism on dance in the UK, Grau (2008) explains,

> Looking at dance production in the United Kingdom, one can see that some dance forms are perceived as having an existence independent of the sociocultural background of the various individuals involved, while in other cases, people often conflate the choreographers' backgrounds and the aesthetic underlying their dance works. The emphasis is different, depending on whether individuals are perceived to be aligned or nonaligned with a 'mainstream' artistic practice. (Grau, 2008: 239)

This orientation from Grau provides a deeper understanding of Adzido's performances and how they were or may have been perceived depending on whether their performances were considered as 'mainstream' artistic practice or anything less than that. I would argue that while Adzido's performances were designed to represent Ghanaian and African mode of traditional dance performance, this may have been

regarded by their British audiences as exotic, perhaps based on the level of theatricalisation and not necessarily movement quality, style and their significance. Another part of the argument may focus on critical thoughts whose enquiry may want to know what constitutes 'mainstream' artistic performance and who sets the criteria for evaluation. These issues were some of the complexities Adzido may have had to deal with in an attempt to make an impact in British society. Dance scholar Theresa Buckland (2006) summarises it below,

> Performances of traditional dances in international festivals and in tourist displays owe much to a twin embracing of the powers of nostalgia and exoticism. Audience and performers are locked in a manually constitutive framework of interpretation and appreciation in which they, the modern, gaze at dance, the tradition. In this respect dance is emblematic of another culture or another past that the audience cannot access through normal travel. As such, the art of dancing has become a piece of repertoire, an object of aesthetic appreciation and a symbol of a way of life. (Buckland, 2006: 14-15)

As the artistic director of the company until 2000, Dzikunu used his initiatives to bring music and dance artists from all over the African continent to work with the company. This move saw a significant development of the company with further expansion of their repertoire to cover dances from many parts of the African continent and the membership increased up to thirty dancers and musicians employed on full time basis who began embracing a rounded production format basically showcasing different types of African traditional dances. Company publicity material in 1985 stated,

> Dzikunu was born into the Ewe community in Ghana and was steeped in the rituals and symbols of his group's traditions. He was able to crystallise his own values through movement and music and later in his own professional company, was able to utilise his spirituality in creating work for the stages in England. He shared ideas and concepts that increased awareness and highlighted the spirituality of traditional African values.[4]

It may be argued that Dzikunu's Ghanaian/Anlo-Ewe background of using dance to reinforce social ethics and moral state of living had largely influenced the company's productions. It may also be argued that the pre-mature exit of Dzikunu may have had a significant impact on the company in terms of their choreographic styles and general stage

performance. At the various meetings that I had with him in Accra and in London, Dzikunu gave me so much orientation into dance practice in Britain, using his experience with Adzido. Although he understood and acknowledged that contemporary elements will inevitably form a significant part of traditional African dance performance in Britain, Dzikunu was not ready to transform what was considered as a Pan-African group into a contemporary dance company. Built on Anlo-Ewe Ghanaian wisdom and philosophy by the virtue of its name, Adzido's success could not be realised in Britain without combining Ghanaian/Anlo-Ewe indigenous knowledge and British modern knowledge in their productions. The new management may have tried to capture some Ghanaian and African indigenous elements into their later choreographies but arguably, these representations may have reinforced Western stereotypes of African cultures. Adair (2007) describes Adzido as an "African ensemble of twenty-eight dancers, funded by the arts council that had become the example of Black British dance that was promoted and that reinforced stereotypes of black arts" (2007: 98). Although Adair's description was based on earlier reviews of Adzido, it is possible to conclude here that it was indeed a very complex situation of entertainment versus arts in a contest of articulating African peoples' knowledge and values in Britain through dance.

Representing an African dance may be problematic but one can achieve a certain level of accuracy by using both emic and etic perspectives in such an endeavour. The work of dance scholar Francesca Castaldi (2006) on the National Ballet of Senegal is a good example of quality work that demonstrates the appropriateness of using both insider and outsider perspectives in representing African dance cultures. Drawing on African philosophers and anthropologists, including Mudimbe (1988, 1994), Castaldi brings to the field a new understanding, especially, in the study of folk dance or ethnic dance both locally and cross-culturally. She explains, "the temporal dimension of tradition in relation to ethnic dance repertory acquires a different valence from that given to tradition on the proscenium stage" (Castaldi, 2006: 203).

Many dance practitioners and scholars have made reference to Adzido from different ideological perspectives in their works. Grau's article 'Dance and the Shifting Sands of Multiculturalism'(2008) which touches among other things on the chronology of events as well as factors that contributed to the economic crises of Britain in the late 1970s leading to change of government, describes Adzido's stage works as "exuberant performances that were enjoyed by their audiences" (Grau, 2008: 234). Grau's view was based on the way Adzido's work was generally reviewed. Hilary Carty writes "Adzido sought to mould the traditional dances around a theme or poetry, creating a more epic style with a

company of over 30 dancers and musicians" (Carty, 2007: 19). Rowell (2000) locates Adzido's representations within African traditions with emphasis on "roots, homeland and difference" (Rowell, 2000: 190). The mass commodification of dance and its related arts may have virtually reduced Adzido to a low status of an entertainment group just as in the case of its predecessor, *Les Ballet Nègres*.

Furthermore, lack of documentation on the company had left the review of Adzido's performances to the mercy of British dance critics who often analysed the group's performances within European frame work. The other side of the debate may argue that they were rather seen as British company and not a company with Ghanaian identity. This invites the relevance of the concept of double consciousness- a situation where a Black company will create works to express White dreams. While this may have worked for a group like Adzido, does it not, at the same time, amount to giving away one's own identity? Would that not undermine their sense of belonging and identity? Chin (2011) articulates the point using Jackson's famous four-minute panther dance to underscore the complexity and impossibility of being a Black performer for popular audiences whose tastes and priorities are "largely constructed along the lines of White normativity" (Chin, 2011: 59). Jackson in his practice invented his own style of combining music and dance which falls within popular culture. Furthermore, he was seen more as a celebrity rather than a mere entertainer. Katherine Dunham was another black artist who created and established her own African American dance technique, not only in performance but also in the field of dance education. In discussing African American dance pedagogy anthropologist Ojeya Cruz Banks (2012) identifies the primary aim of Dunham's practice. She notes, "a primary goal of her pedagogy was to cultivate positive self-esteem, intercultural understanding, community harmony and link Black people and others to an African dignity and a spiritually enriching education" (Cruz Banks, 2012: 159). Crux Banks also refers to Dunham as a dance practitioner who unified her scholarship to her activism through anthropological development of dance. Certainly, these qualities may have helped her to appeal to all audiences in spite of her Black background.

Positioning Adzido's case against the two African American successes reveals one significant difference. While Dunham and Jackson were African Americans born in America, Dzikunu and his group members were Africans born in Africa and relocated to Britain purposely to practice dance. In this vein, one could argue that Adzido was spiritually, emotionally, psychologically, geographically, historically and culturally connected to Ghanaian traditions; and this prevented it from transforming itself into a contemporary dance company.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have discussed the emergence and re-emergence of Black and African dance in Britain basically through two Black dance companies- Ballet Nègres and Sankofa before narrowing on Adzido Pan African Dance Ensemble. I have used the experiences of these companies to re-open academic debate on the lack of documentation of the significant contribution Black dance and its related arts have made to the development of multicultural Britain. Finally, I conclude that while mass commodification of dance has gradually reduced African dance forms to mere entertainment activities, the situation could improve by lifting up African creativity as well as focusing more on theatricalisation and its modern technological advancements.

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Notes

[1] Interview with George Fiawoo at the Caribbean Centre, Holloway Road, London on 16th April, 2010.

[2] An informal conversation with Prof F. Nii-Yartey at the University of Ghana in Accra on 20th June, 2012

[3] Adzido Pan-African Dance Ensemble, 'Company Information' Promotional Material (1985, 1) See also Ramdhanie (2005, 192)

[4] Adzido Pan-African Dance Ensemble, Publicity and Promotional Material (1985, 1)