



# VIA INJABULO

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## INTERVIEW WITH MARCO DA SILVA FERREIRA

**You were invited by the South African company Via Katlehong to create a show, together with choreographer Amala Dianor.**

About a year ago, Via Katlehong, a company I wasn't familiar with, invited me. They commission choreographers from all over to work with them, then go on tour throughout the world. A major influence of the company is pantsula dance, which has been practiced since the 1970s, mostly by young people from South African townships. One could define it as a socially committed dance of contestation. After Gregory Maqoma or Christian Rizzo, Amala Dianor and myself were the latest to be invited. That's why we're sharing an evening with two creations of about thirty minutes each. We agreed to work with eight dancers, who will take part in both shows. When I learned who Via Katlehong were, I couldn't help but admire this project by Buru Mohlabane and Steven Faleni who, in the 1990s, decided to make dance their way of life, but above that to consider dance as a discipline that could also be a job. The dancers, in their townships, would be able to practice their art, but also to earn a living.

**You weren't thinking of becoming a professional dancer yourself when you first came to urban dance, right?**

That's right. I started dancing a little late, when I was about 16. I was self-taught. I studied to become a physiotherapist, but I never got to work as one, because I was quickly hired for professional dance projects. Little by little, I moved from urban dance to something more improvised, closer to contemporary dance. The way I approach dance is to always question my contemporaneity: the relationship to the body and to our life instincts, as well as the way our cultures express themselves through us. That's what dancing means today. Ever since I turned 23, I started putting all those questions in movement with short pieces, I work on dancing bodies in clubs, on our bodily memories and legacies... My shows are rarely narrative or literal, they're more concerned with our perceptions and senses, linked to our cognitive functions and emotions, a little like abstract Expressionism.

**Can you tell us more about your interest in the idea of urban legacy, and more largely about our bodily memories?**

With my show *Brother*, created in 2016, I began a research about urban dances. Many of them were influenced by the legacy of people of African descent. So I started looking for potential bridges between modernity and an ancient legacy. You see that in krump, in kuduro, in voguing. Those dances all tell of an urgency. They were born of an immediate need but also express a strong link to an African past. It led to a strong questioning for me about the possible temporal or geographical bridges between the various ways of practicing dance, and their connections at a more cosmic level. In my work, I try to speak of the meeting between cultures, territories, and the legacies of dance and all the struggles it contains, as well as all the ceremonies which allow for their expressions. I wonder about the permanence of that practice and about what I'd call transtemporal experiences, because the causes and manifestations of a dancing body haven't changed since Ancient times. We're still in the same constant relationship to gravity, to our environment, we dance, jump, sweat for the same events: funerals, weddings, social struggles... We exorcise our fears, and to do so we need to be together. Of course, external elements have also caused changes in our dances, such as our relationship to music, to costumes, to drugs.

**For *førm Inførms*, pantsula dance is your greatest source of inspiration.**

Due to my self-taught background, my relationship to dance has always been tied to a search for pleasure, caused by a certain level of intensity. It can make the border between pleasure and pain very thin! I like to work with dancers who have the same expectations. That's why working with people who grew up in pantsula culture is so exciting. It's a vertical, individual dance, but it's never danced alone, always in pairs. It's also a physical dance, footwork has to be fast, staccato and precise, and the bodies can be seen as fragmented, dissociated. The figures it creates are often distorted, angular. And if the movements create deconstructed images of a body apparently on the verge of breaking, it also always mends itself back together... It's a body that moves to fight trauma, to heal scars and wounds. The primordial image of the scar of the umbilical cord is what interests me here, that scar that marks our entry into a never-ending process of healing. I want to question what a scar is, be it physical, emotional, collective, personal, or cosmic (ancestral fears, the unconscious, our reactions when faced with a disaster, etc.). As well as the concept of "speed for speed," this contemporary fault of accelerationism: action for action's sake, with no goal in mind. It's a modern theory that comes from the political sphere. If we apply that reasoning to biology, the body could produce as many cells as possible to heal as fast as possible. However, regardless of the healing process used, the shape of a scar is always going to be random and hazardous. We might try to create order, but chaos always prevails. That's what I like about it. I'm trying to fight the idea that a scar is often seen as ugly. Jonathan Uliel Saldanha's music, which accompanies the dances, is a mixture of electronic and jazzy sounds, with a lot of trumpet. What I like about this instrument is its direct and physical relationship to breathing, and its symbolic history as a herald for important events, dramatic ones in particular. But although we're trying to be precise and connect to each other, we can't take ourselves too seriously. Pleasure is the gateway.

Interview conducted by Moïra Dalant