

ABSTRACT**From Orisha Yard to Juilliard:
Peter London's Journey – Stages, Frameworks and Pathways****Nancy Herrera**

This thesis explores a pivotal case of the evolution and expression of Trinidad identity in dance, through a focus on the experiences of Trinidad dancer, teacher and choreographer, Peter London. It discusses the factors that propelled him from the Orisha/Shango Theatre of Laventille in Trinidad, West Indies to the elite, private New York conservatory, Juilliard School, documenting his journey and locating it within spiritual, social and theatrical dance practices in postcolonial Trinidad and Tobago in the 1970's and 1980's. This study analyses the impact of Afro-Trinidadian folk dance, American modern and European classical ballet on the training of dancers and choreography. It draws on the theories of transculturation by Fernando Ortiz and Nancy Morejon, and creolisation by Edward Braithwaite. This thesis examines dance as a language system and analyses movement as a primary social text to argue that the lexicons of movement deployed by London, as with so many other Trinidadian dancers, demonstrated a bodily multilingualism.

“From Orisha Yard to Juilliard” conceptualises a hybrid state for both dancer and dance forms and interprets dance theatre and choreography as a set of dance practices with creative contradictions and conflicts whose end result is a hybrid inter-textual dance phenomenon. It explores dance identity by focusing on the fragmentary character of dance culture, on embodiment, and on Trinidadian bodily

expressiveness. Peter London's dancing body emerges from changing dance relationships that determine self, identity and belonging. This thesis employs photographs, video footage, and ethnographically informed insights to generate a perspective on the cultural dynamic of his journey.

Keywords: traditional, dances, bodily multilingualism, transculturation, creolisation, embodied performances, Peter London, Orisha, Shango, Trinidad and Tobago