

Tanzrecherche #44

I recommend reading this text alongside this Album: SoKo by McIntosh Jerahuni

<https://open.spotify.com/album/17Q6wGck8NoDkZeXxF015R?si=nYnZjvPVRq2sITn-zA27YA>.

As Avery Gordon states in *Ghostly Matters* that life is complicated may seem a banal expression of the obvious, but it is nonetheless a profound theoretical statement. This quote seems fit to describe the complexity of trying to answer questions of belonging as a German born mixed race woman with Bangladeshi and Czech heritage who grew up in Bochum right in the center of post industrial Ruhrgebiet.

How does one build a relationship to ones roots if there is not simply one branch to hold onto from which to decent towards the ground, where roots spread their gazillion minuscule extensions into the soil. And how does one do so if the roots spread less in an orderly manner and more like rhizomes? Multiple adventitious roots spreading out simultaneously. And how does one do so if the witnesses of the past are no longer amongst the living? And yet multiple paths, multiple beginnings, multiple historical events, raptures, unlikely journeys and border crossings have brought me to where I am today.

My *Tanzrecherche* is set out as a quest to answer long felt questions of belonging, and a desire to address a kind of ghostly presence of the past that I have often felt in my dancing. More precisely this research foregrounds my urge to be in conversation with the past, that is not past and to address the absence of certain kind of knowledges when it comes to my background and cultural heritage that are nonetheless felt. With this I am addressing my family history on my paternal side which is filled with absences. These absences are - but not only - a result of histories making, geopolitical conditions caught in the whirlwind of the British empires aftermath and the repercussions of the Soviet Union.

How to make graspable a feeling of belonging to something that is absent? I have always felt a connection to my origins on my paternal side through movement. This may sound esoteric to some, and I am even hesitant to put this in writing but the figure of my grand father a former entrepreneur and wrestler would often show up in my dancing. What some may call Grand-Daddy issues is key

to this research. However the training I was perusing in western dance establishments did not leave much room for this ghostly presence, even though as I can safely say now, this ghost is the very motor of my dancing and the reason for my moving in the first place.

Finding myself in this conundrum I set out to find a branch to my roots in a contexts where spirits are part of daily life and the very origin of movement and are invited to show up. For this very reason I sought out the help of dancer choreographer and musician McIntosh Jerahuni aka SoKo from Zimbabwe.

Why did I choose to work with a Zimbabwean artist when I wanted to connect with my Bangladeshi roots you are wondering? Why not travel to Bangladesh? Why not dance there? The answers to these questions are complicated. But it is fair to say that shifting towards the Jena practice gave me a needed freedom to zone into my quest that I would not have had otherwise. The Jena practice addresses our ancestors through dance and music and gives room to each individual to work from their own personal stand point. It is through the frequencies and vibrations that we are able to feel the past resonate in our body. What is normally thought of as absent becomes present in the moving body.

While we were originally supposed to work in Zimbabwe we ended up working in Montpellier France at the ICI CCN due to a shift in our schedules. During our four week research phase we engaged in a daily listening practice as a starting point to our movement session. During this time SoKo was either playing his Mbira instrument or we would listen to recordings of his extensive library of self composed and produced music. During this time was fortunate to witness the creation of his new album SoKo . From listening we shifted towards moving letting things unfold in the moment. Dance in the Jena technique is led not merely by an emphasis to perform movement according to aesthetics but rather as a technique that considers us as humans and with that keeps in mind our ancestors. Imagining them walk behind us with every step we take, every gesture we make. The process felt like a different kind of writing of history. A history that can be felt rather than witnessed from a distant stand point. It is a moving with the ghosts reminding us how we came to be here in this very moment. Helping me to not forget those which have been forgotten.