

# HIP HOP

## DANCE ALMANAC VOL.2

Edited by  
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**FEATURING:**

Dickson Mbi

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# COPYRIGHT

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# DICKSON MBI

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**IA: I'm interested in hearing your thoughts on crews as alternate kinships and families.**

DM: What do you mean by that?

**IA: Fiya House is a family. We have our blood family, but then we find families in crews that aren't blood but they give us something else.**

DM: Of course, yeah.

**IA: I'm interested in your thoughts on that.**

DM: I started street dancing in 2004. I only started dancing cos of girls. I was interested in women at the time. I met Kenrick and Boy Blue in Seven Kings Green Lane. Boy Blue at the time had so many crews. They had a crew called Bratz a crew called...there were so many crews I can't remember them now! So many levels of Boy Blue, like Juniors...there was so many levels. But I knew I didn't want to do choreo. It's not that they did choreo, they did Street Dance, but they did a lot of routines and stuff. I just wanted to be free...a lot of it at the time was focused on routines and they would train a lot on different things; they would train on flips and different styles. I didn't know what I wanted to do but I knew I wanted to be free. At the time I made friends with a guy called Ricardo Fernandez,

and he's like...at the time we were nothing, know what I mean? There were four of us, Ricardo, Carlos who has just passed away, Kevin, he called himself Static and myself, Dickson. Kevin had a lot more experience because he did a lot of different things and was in different circles. But me, Ricardo and Carlos were just starting, literally, just starting and we just found a friendship in wanting to learn. That's what helped us. That family. That togetherness helped us to do things. I went more into popping and Carlos came with me at that time, about 2005. Krumping was starting to be BIG in the UK and I started krumping; at the time it was me, Ricardo, Kenrick as well as Carlos - we were the first krumpers in the UK. It's weird I don't do krumping no more, but all the guys that were there at that time. They knew. That was the beginning of my journey with those guys. Those guys helped me a lot. From there Carlos and I went into popping. Static was doing his own thing, street dancing, and Ricardo went big into krump. Then from there we sort of broke off and I joined a crew called IP, which is a popping only crew. It stands for Immigration Poppers and we were all original...our family were not from England, apart from Becky who was quintessentially British. My parents are from Cameroon,

Carlos' parents are from Angola, Alex 'Mechanikool' Peters' parents are from the Caribbean, Alan...his parents are from Hong Kong, James' parents were from South Africa, Anthony's parents were from Hong Kong, Zac's parents are from Nigeria, Adrian's parents are from the Philippines, Alper's parents were from Turkey, Lukas is from Poland, Alex - we call him Alex White - and Olly's parents are from Italy. So, we were a mix of so many things. You know like we were all just a group of guys and girls. Supriya from India, Julia's from Hong Kong, Jonathon mixed heritage...there was a lot of us and we just met outside Pineapple Studios. We didn't go in, James Painting who passed away in 2014, was teaching popping at Pineapple Studios. So we would meet at Pineapple every Saturday outside the studios and practice popping. Those times was the biggest times. You know 2005-2006, going into 2007. IP was my main crew. Even though it started from like four of us (me Carlos, Ricardo and Static) we used to call ourselves Nitrous or something like that...and that split off. That family is a family of best friends that went different ways to do different things. Then we found a different family. I know.. I know a lot people saw IP as the main popping crew but at the time there was no poppers...you

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could count them by hand. Now you probably have about 100-200 poppers around the UK. That's how it started for me; then there was Brooke and the other guys. We were doing competitions...Flawless was not around at the time. KI was a competition group, that was Kenrick, Marlon, Mukhtar, Brooke etc. Most of them also came from Boy Blue at the time as well. Now we're older and broken off. Brooke and I started Fiya House and from Fiya House there's other people. You know there's Frankie J, who was one of the original members of Fiya House and he left to do house. Kieran doing his own thing with Lite Feet crew and stuff. A lot of people breaking off and it's cool. Same thing when I went to London Contemporary Dance School and Lewisham College. I broke off, did my own thing and carried on. That's important. The most important thing is we all know each other in the circuit and can support each other because it's a long history. It's not just competitions and rivalry. It's a long history of brothers and friendship that we keep and I think it's important that we support the next generation. It's deeper.

**IA: It's a set of super connections. If you traced it in terms of who worked with who.**

DM: Yeah it is. I met Kenrick and Mikey in 2004, then I did Blak Whyte Gray with them in 2016/2017, so it's like, it's like a long journey. There's always been connections, but we never did anything. There's a competition called Stylefest that was run by East London Dance at the time. East London Dance was an integral part of a lot of the East London dancers and crews

and stuff in the Hip Hop world. This centre called the Harley Centre...a youth centre...was the biggest thing for all of us training in East London.

**IA: Was there a person there who was driving that?**

DM: There was different people. There was a guy called FM, who was in Boy Blue. He was running the breakin' thing. Flips and stuff like that. Boy Blue used to have a session where anyone could come. Even this girl - she's so famous now, her name is Cynthia Erivo

**when you're performing?**

DM: I guess for me, before I became who I am today, everybody knew me from the competitions; me and my best friend Carlos - it was just me and him going to so many competitions. We were some of the first dancers to make pre-selection for a competition called Juste Debout in the France. That was 2007 and that was a big thing because the UK had never passed prelim and we did that in popping and went out at the quarter finals. I sort of made

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who used to be in Boy Blue at the time - practiced in Harley Centre. It's a long journey. It's a lot. It's a lot man.

**IA: You have this urge and desire for freedom in your work and in the battle scene. But working with Blak Whyte Gray - a mix of choreo and impro, how does that sit**

my name in the world of Hip Hop through competitions and battles. We'd do small choreos but it wouldn't be like so choreo. In 2008 we did Breakin' Convention with IP. We did something called Choreographer's Ball with IP to honour a pioneer of street dance culture...Skeeter Rabbit passed away. We did

some choreo things with Sugar Pop but I never really did anything. My first time performing on a proscenium stage was with IP for Breakin' Convention in 2008. Around that time, I started going to Lewisham College and it was there I learned routines and choreography and from there I went to The Place. While I was there, I was going to a Russian ballet school in Clapham Common. In school you learned choreography and stuff. And then Russell Maliphant offered me a position in his company whilst I was in dance school, I left, and from there I had to pick up choreo...what I did with Russell at times was structured improvisation. In doing it all the time it became set material and it's helped my work. Doing Blak Whyte Gray I was really rubbish and it took me a while to get the choreo...I'm still not very good at it, but practice makes - whatever - perfect. You just get used to the timing, because it's someone else's timing that you're putting into your system. I think that helped, working with Boy Blue, that sort of intricate choreography helped me pick up more of that sort of language. There was no improvisation in my part. There was parts where I was free to do my thing, but that freedom became set and I had to keep doing it all the time.

**IA: You've worked with Kenrick and Russell.**

DM: Russell you know is my teacher. I spent eight years with him. Kenrick I spent a year and a half. Yeah...so Russell, is you know, my teacher. I left school after a year to join his company. Russell is my teacher. Everything I know about lighting, choreography, spacing, staging - a lot of it is

from Russell.

**IA: Eight years. That's longer than a degree, longer than a masters and even people who study to be a doctor.**

DM: It's huge! And you don't get it often. So I feel really grateful for him. To be honest I feel really grateful for anyone who has been part of my journey. Kenrick, Boy Blue, Mikey J, my teacher Stuart Thomas, my crew IP, Fiyahouse all of them. Carlos, Static, James. They've all been a major influence. But Russell came at a point when I needed to develop a lot more as an artist. Not just in terms of choreography, but in terms of how I see myself. Because I was heavily...battles were my thing. I went to dance school to learn different things and I learnt I can do other things other than battles.

**IA: What is your relationship with your body now?**

DM: There's so many ways I look at myself. Since I became vegan in 2011...I joined Russell in September 2010. No I joined The Place in September 2010 and joined Russell in May 2011 after he saw me at Breakin' Convention...after he saw me doing a freestyle. I joined Russell and I became vegan straight after that. My relationship has changed a lot. I don't go and eat burgers and stuff like that. Russell taught me how to take care of myself, stretching more, massaging the body you know. Anatomically understanding different things about the body. You know deep things like that. He makes you think of flow, not just putting this move and that move together. See how it is compositionally. The body not just the work. Those things yeah, the relationships with my body changed with

things like that.

**IA: If that changed you as an artist. Has that changed you in the battle world?**

DM: Yeah it has actually. I don't go straight in...I take care of my body a bit differently. Before I wouldn't take care of my body, I wouldn't stretch and I'd get cramps. Now I take care of my body...I warm up before and it's strategic planning. Sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't. The body works in mysterious ways. I don't know, it's changed a lot. A lot of things have changed for me. I'm older. My drive for the competition is not what it was. In 2007 it was the only thing I could do. Now there are so many things I can do. So that drive is a bit different.

**IA: If Dickson was a stick of rock what would be the words that run through you?**

DM: Most important thing to me man, is my family, friends and what I do. You know? When I say...what do I mean? Staying true to myself and not selling out. And when I say sell out, I mean so many things come to you at different points in your life...there's so many things that came to me. Because of the money or I could take them because of I believe in them or not. Staying true to myself is what...is the most important thing. Family of course and friends. I mean without them I dunno man I'm nothing. I could never repay. I don't know if someone can, but I could never repay the sacrifices my parents made for me. I owe a lot to them as much as my friends. A lot of my friends have made a lot of sacrifices. Even when I was a real donut you know at the beginning. I was...listen I was a different Dickson now to what I was.

Other people that knew me before like Kenrick and Mikey and my old friends, they told me how I used to be. You know.

**IA: Is there a particular time you made that conscious switch?**

DM: I think my first teacher, Stuart Thomas, he was really hard on me. He made a big change for me. I remember my first time performing a solo, at a theatre called The Cochrane in Holborn. It's closed now. I did a solo just in my jock-strap. [laughs] Oh man. That was one of the biggest lessons. When it came to the bows I was like 'yeah yeah' there was like over 300 people watching. He got upset with me on stage at that time saying 'What you doing? This ain't no street dance show. The last thing people see is the bow, don't fuck up my bow.' My ego just went...

**IA: Crumbled.**

DM: Yeah. That's what smashed it for me that there were so many people watching. Those were the turning points.

**IA: The idea of ego is present in Hip Hop.**

DM: It depends how you see it. Some people are really confident. Some people are really shy so they act a certain way. Some people are really insecure and so they act a certain way so you don't see the insecurities. Doesn't mean that they are arrogant or they have a lot of ego. But I think we all have ego. It's just how we use it. Channel it in different ways. Have friends who do take the piss out of you some days. It's different ways of looking at it and it's easy to point the finger and say this is this, this is that. There are

deeper things running. I can only speak for myself.

**IA: What is it like to be Dickson at the minute?**

DM: I don't know. For me right now it's the next generation you know. I care so much about the legacy that our generation leave. Because the generation before us, a lot of things changed. A lot of sacrifices, friends and family moved away. So we lost that connection. So, it was hard for us in a way. The time we started bouncing, was the time social media and all that started. It wasn't as big as it is now. And videos and VHS and all that. The generation before us they didn't have none of that stuff. It was you know...I saw this and I'm gonna do this and all that. But we have the connections. We have a duty to pass it on and we remember the people before us. We need to learn from the experiences and do it the way we believe it should be done. Whether it's right or wrong we don't know until the next generation, I guess. That is my biggest thing right now as well as making a lot of work and touring. I literally want to connect with as many people all over the world as I can. But I have to stay strong in the community I am from, because I am only here because of them, the street dance world. The contemporary world is sort of enjoying...I'm benefiting too. I know that in the world you know, you mention my name in the street dance world, people know who I am or have heard of me. But in the contemporary dance world, only the UK, and Europe...no and some parts of Asia they have heard about me and I've got to push that more. But most importantly I've got to stay even stronger in the street dance world. Because

a lot of people, I don't want to name names, but they started contemporary dance and they just left street dance world because they can make a living and they can do different things. But I can't do that. I have to make it a priority even if I'm doing other things. And that's why the next generation is important. That's why Fiya House is important.

**IA: There's a thing I'm noticing more and more. The relationship between the edge and the centre. If you look at Hip Hop as the edge, everything else is trying to pull it towards the centre. Be that people, culture or concepts.**

DM: I mean I don't know. You say people are trying to pull from it...that happens everywhere man. There's cultural appropriation in everything. Look at the food I'm eating, you know what I mean? I think it's important that we share what we have but I also think it's important people understand what we have. But that doesn't mean that I'm more of a person than the next person who is doing something from my world. You know? If someone is doing what I'm doing because I'm genuinely from that world, doesn't mean I'm better than them. My parents are from Africa man, Cameroon. I didn't know much about it until I went there, to the village in the rainforest where my parents are from. I learned a lot about myself, about my name. The name Dickson means 'Strong Leader.' I didn't know what that meant. I didn't know that. Things like that gave me strength. I could stand in a place and be a bit more confident about who I am. People pulling into Hip Hop or stretching different things



or jumping into it because it's famous...you know we've built the culture as a community, and it's not ours. It belongs to the world. Today it's Hip Hop, tomorrow it's something else. Before it was jazz. There're so many things man. Soul music. Motown. What can you say? I don't have an answer for that. All I would say is we're brothers and sisters mate even though we look different. Except sometimes it's hard because the people with power that makes answers, make certain decisions that go against that whole thinking. However, they still wanna benefit from the thing. What can we do man? We can't do everything. I know sometimes I speak metaphorically. If you don't get it just ask me and I'll...I don't know man. That's a hard one. But that's what it is. You just gotta keep it moving.

**IA: One of the things that is surfacing a bit more in Hip Hop theatre works is around mental health and self-care. I'm interested in your practice of self-care and thoughts on mental health.**

DM: I think mental health is a big issue. Not just in Hip Hop but in the whole world. If you think about it. When I talk about being quintessentially British. I'm not quintessentially British but when you think about it there's a lot of things from my parents. There's a lot of ethnic minorities that have that pressure of doing well in school. Parents sometimes have two jobs so they're not around and they don't have a lot of people around. So many factors. Then there's racism. There's so many different factors, so many different pressures, and so many different things to feel about things. If they don't have so many people around them, to

give them a strong grounding, they can fall in different ways. Hence why we have things like gun crime, knife crime. I'm not saying only ethnic minorities have those things - depends what area you from, but quintessentially White people that are British live in areas that are affected. But for me I'm lucky that my mum and dad have been together almost 50 years, to be married and that has been a strong grounding for me. Even though they do work - my mum still works two jobs - my dad's retired now and I have three brothers and one sister, there's a lot of us. We sort of support each other

hard as them? They've worked so hard for me to be happy in what I do. I keep doing that and empower the next generation to do what I do. In terms of mental health, it's talking about different things and opening up. In our society it's 'boys are gonna be boys and be boisterous' 'men don't cry' and those sorts of things, they aren't an ethnic minority thing, it's not an immigrant thing, it's the whole society. It happens all over the world, like a rite of passage. Boys have to do certain things you know, women have to do certain things. I think those things have to be preserved

**"If young kids wanna come, bruv I will smoke you! It's because...look, in the UK we love the underdog. If you see a young kid coming for Dickson who has won a lot of things or has a lot of reputation, you want Dickson to lose! That's the UK culture. I love it. Because I was part of it at the beginning."**

in different ways. We don't talk all the time, but you know if something happens to me or anyone else, the way we come down to support, it's...when it's really needed it's different. And that is what I have to know. Not just my family my friends. I do a lot of meditation. I have a lot of pressure. Life pressure. Status pressure. But the thing that keeps me going, is that my mum and dad made so many sacrifices for me. I know I could never ever repay them. So what do I do? Do I work as

and we have to understand the impact those things have in the long term. I don't have all the answers mate.

**IA: You mentioned status pressure.**

DM: Bruv, I'm Dickson, bruv. If I go to a competition with a lot of the young guys...

**IA: They want your scalp?**

DM: Yeah they want me. If young kids wanna come, bruv

I will smoke you! It's because... look, in the UK we love the underdog. If you see a young kid coming for Dickson who has won a lot of things or has a lot of reputation, you want Dickson to lose! That's the UK culture. I love it. Because I was part of it at the beginning. When I was battling the older guys, I was getting so much support. And now I don't get it as much and I know what it is. You look at boxing and you look at Anthony Joshua...at the beginning everyone was supporting him. Now he's got like four belts everyone is supporting the other guy... what's his name?

### **IA: Fury?**

DM: Fury. Not just Fury, what was the other guy who was like a long time rival? Dillian Whyte. That's what I mean it's supporting the underdog. It's a British thing. And I'm happy with it. That's what I mean by status pressure. But that's always in the community, it's never outside. Because the people outside to me don't really matter. I just do what I do and I am what I am. Know what I mean?

### **IA: Can you talk a bit about the big new kung fu musical?**

DM: Shit. How do you know about that? I'm playing Bruce Lee. The Black version. At the Shed Theatre in New York. For a month. From June 27th to July 27th. What more do you want me to say?

### **IA: Talk to me about fight training**

DM: Mate, I went to China. A Shaolin monk temple to learn martial arts. So yeah I do a certain style called tiger style for my character. They want to use what I do, plus the martial

arts, to create something new so. It's not just a thing where I'm just doing Chinese martial arts because they could have just got a martial artist. But I think they saw a video of me, and thought the role might be great for me. So they contacted Farooq Chaudhry, my producer...actually he sent them the video first and then they contacted me.

### **IA: Had you done any martial arts training before?**

DM: Nah just little bits and pieces. You go do a class, bit of boxing, bit of muay-thai and my body was hurting for two weeks. Nah mate I'll stick to dance. Little things not major things, but this thing is serious. It's good. I look at it like dance, just different actions, different muscle tonality how you do things. It's sort of snappy and punchy not much room for air, sort of. You know, it depends what style you do of course. If you do Tai Chi it's different of course. But what I'm doing is tiger style.

### **IA: Is it using the same muscles or...**

DM: It's hard to explain. You have to contract, you have to release. It's difficult. But I'm finding my way through it little by little. I can't give you the full thing because I don't really know it yet.

### **IA: What about your work? The forthcoming show in November at the Lowry.**

DM: I've been doing that since 2015, it's alright you know. You just gotta do what you gotta do. I never look outside for inspiration. When I say I never look outside that's hard to say, but I always look within myself. Because Michael Jackson said if you want to change the

world you have to look within yourself. Yeah a lot of things I do are personal and deep things and from there I hope people will understand. I'm never trying to teach things or educate...with what I do it's more moments of things or processes of things I've gone through put on stage. That's all I want to do, connect with people. I don't want people to get what I do or understand it...I would just love them to feel it. In terms of...it is what it is. If I don't do it who is going to do it? It's all in my head and it's all in my heart. Nobody knows it but me. Or until I explain to people. But still the magical bit, it can only be done by myself you know.

### **IA: If that desire for connection to put out into the world...what do you connect to, what feeds you? Where do you find those energies?**

DM: It's interesting you ask me that question because before I start making a piece of work, I go into a state of mind. The first thing I did 2015, a duet with Joseph Toonga called It's Between Us was when I just broke up with my girlfriend. It was a relationship talking to another guy about that...but there was a part of it, a solo where I would really go into the deepest state that I had from that emotion, just to connect with the audience. I think that helped the movement that comes across. Or helped the body language that comes across. That usually is connecting to myself. I become a gate for people to see the world in a way. Sometimes I feel connected to my ancestors in a way. Or to my old friends or my family even if they're not there. Yeah that's what I connect to. So you know for example the last piece I

did, Duende, it was about a life force coming into me. I associate that with Flamenco dance. It's usually a thing that a performer gets and everybody just leaves them alone. Because they are possessed by something. And in the Philippines mythology Duende means gremlin hence some of the movements that I was doing. But it's about that deep connection with something beyond yourself and the deeper you go in that state, the deeper people come into you. I'm literally a gate or a door when I'm on stage, and I'm watching them go in and then I go in with them while I'm on stage. And then everybody goes back out. Then I have to close the door. But closing a door is hard sometimes after a performance because I'm drained. You know all that stuff. That's really what I wanna do. Connect with people...so they can see that world I'm in. It usually starts with that state. For me I need to go in myself a lot more. It's not about a specific movement it's about finding a state of mind. Maybe it's because I come from the street dance world, because I come from popping and battling...you have to go in a state of mind to do it. There's no hesitating you can't be like 'maybe' it's like the Samurai, if you're maybe, you get killed. You have to read things that are happening. You just be like 'I think he's gonna hit me here.' To be honest with you I've been trying to explain it and then I met a monk who said 'If you're trying to explain it then it's lost. Just let it be.' I thought you know what mate, I'm having that.

**IA: In your orbit who are the three people most important to you and why?**

DM: Three people? It's hard

man. Most important to me right now? Persons or people? My crew of course. We support each other. My family. And then I would say my mentors. My mentors being my Godmother Mrs Malcolmson. Um. Farooq. Stuart Thomas. Those three have been (apart from Farooq who has joined my journey two or three years ago) on my journey since 2008, since I started the contemporary dance thing. They've been there since the beginning. My friends, you know my friends and family have been there since day zero. My crew...they've been there from zero. And those mentors they challenge me. Even politically when I say certain things they challenge me and I'm like 'Argh.' Even in my work when I say certain things. They're like 'What do you mean by that?' They help me see certain things. I'm an animist you know, we believe in trees, mountains, buildings, energy. Certain people don't. We have a correlation, certain people don't so you don't end up being judgemental. So those things have been good. I'm just learning man.

**IA: What is troubling you at the minute?**

DM: To be honest with you. There's nothing really troubling me these days. So many things come my way and it's just like 'it is what it is mate' got to keep it moving. I mean it's always pressures on different things. Financial pressure, social pressure. Oh yeah your getting older mate. Parents pressure, you ain't got a kid, you ain't married, all those things. But they not really troubles. When I find out what my name meant, find out the who I am, the lineage that I come from, I walk differently you know. I used to joke when

I was in the Boy Blue show 'When I take a step I plant a seed, when I take another step I plant another seed, when I take three steps a tree grows underneath my feet.' They were like 'What?!' and I'm like 'That's just the power I have on things.' It's just a joke, but that's how I think about things. But yeah when you know where you're from, people that were there before you. Who you are and what you represent. And then you're in this culture filled with loads of things. It's just a different state to be in. Like I said to you I stand with a whole village of people behind me. I'm not scared of anything, or troubled by anything. Shadows of a whole village.

**IA: Did that sensation come from when you went to Cameroon?**

DM: Yeah yeah yeah. It did. I guess maybe...I don't know. I don't know what Mikey and Kenrick would say, but when we were doing Blak Whyte and Gray I just came back from Africa, and a lot of the things they were talking about were literally real to me. It was just fresh. And emotions I go through...what they asked me to go through, is heightened from different experiences I'd been through and seen. I don't know if it helped the piece, I hope it did. I know when I perform it's different. And when I do things I go into a state of mind. It's not an act, it's a part of me that you get to see.

**IA: You're revealing a part of yourself.**

DM: Yeah always. And that's why doing this musical is a different challenge for me. Which is great. I get to learn how to act which I've never done before.

**IA: You're speaking?**

DM: Of course I'm speaking mate. I play a rogue monk. But the story, the character is inspired by Bruce Lee and stuff but I got to do it my way. Obviously, I can't talk the way I talk on the musical I've gotta keep it neutral so everyone can understand. I can't give it a bit of a London accent. Yeah man it is what it is bro.

**IA: I've got a few more questions. But is there anything you've not spoken about that you want to say?**

DM: Nah mate to be honest with you I don't have anything I'm dying to come out. Or wanting to say. I'm in this really strange place at the moment where everything is just everything. I've been like this since 2015-16 learning about my culture, learning

**music - intellectually, bodily, and what you feel?**

DM: Now for me there's different ways we feel music. If we go to a competition, most of the time it's about music visualisation. You know. We want to see the music in you. We want to see you do the music. Sometimes we cross over into music correlation. When you're doing that, he's doing that, and that's what contemporary dance does sometimes, they do a big juxtaposing, do like a John Cage thing...not saying he was not a don but still. A lot of dancers now don't really understand composition of music. So, if they work with a composer, they're like 'I want this bit and that bit and this bit as well.' But they don't really understand the composition. How do you make a blancmange of layers

of them. The stage is one of them. Costume can be one. But it's hard. Some tracks it's just...what you doing mate? But other people love it. So, I dunno what to do. It's just got to speak to me. Or I've got to listen. Maybe I'm not listening enough. You know. But it changes all the time. But that's just who I am now. Maybe in like 10 year's time I'll be like 'yeah mate those guys what they were doing is revolutionary' but right now I'm like 'nah.'

**IA: So for example with Duende and your relationship with the composer, how was that dialogue and getting to the point it is now?**

DM: Well with the composer, Roger, cos I got in contact with his music when I went to a competition and when I wanted to use it I had to get through to contact his company and then I contacted Roger. At the same time there was a track by a composer called Armand Amar and he made music for me before when I was dancing for Russell, and he made a track for me for a solo I did called Still. There was one track online which had like an Arabic calling to wake up and that's the part we used at the beginning. So I did that and I asked Roger to come and watch the show, and he said fine, and so I had to contact Armand and he said 'Dickson it's fine you use that and I like your dancing.' The original track was 10 minutes only, and we had to extend it to 20 and Roger would bring lots of different ideas. And I'd be like well I can go deep on this part but I need a break, so you know we bring it down, bring the cello up on this one, we need a climax to be here and after that climax I need to just chill. We had

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meditation, doing a lot of meditation. Things are what they are, you don't take it too personal, and you move on.

**IA: Can you talk about music and your relationship to**

of things? It's hard. Music plays a big part in my work, my process. Just as much as the state. Sometimes I say, when I do things, there's four keys. Golden keys. Music is one of them. Lighting is one

certain dialogues and we have a really good relationship. I met him earlier on today to talk about the next project. Yeah, we became friends as well. We understood each other as well. He helped the music for Company of Elders the piece I was commissioned to do. When you know someone, you know how they think and it makes it easier to collaborate with them. Roger is an easy guy to work with.

**IA: Going back to music visualisation. How does that work? So you're on the edge of the circle, the music comes on...**

DM: Well first of all mate, if the music goes boom, slap boom, boom boom slap slap boom boom slap. That is music visualisation. How you do that is up to you. We don't care, but we need to see you do it. Because most of the time music in competitions is 4/4 time signatures. So if you don't do it the first time, alright mate. Or there's people who are like so in tune with music that they can hear things you can't hear. That's one of the beautiful things about competitions... you hear the layers. That's why I talk about music visualisation, because we need to see it. That move was great mate but was that on the music though? It's not a move thing, it's a feeling thing. This is the culture I'm from. Maybe that's why I'm interested in feeling all the time in my work rather than being so intellectual you know. That's not saying that it's not intellectual, it can be in its deepest form. But I try to keep it basic. I'm a basic guy. Working family guy. Working. Class. Person. You know what I'm saying.

**IA: That leads to my penultimate question around**

**class in Hip Hop. What does it mean?**

DM: What do you mean by class though?

**IA: There's working class, middle class, upper class and there's a perception that Hip Hop is working class. How does the class we are affect the things we do?**

DM: To be honest with you mate, the one thing about Hip Hop that I love is that it doesn't look at things like that. It doesn't look at culture, it doesn't look at colour, it doesn't look at class. If you can do the thing, you can do the thing. And they let you know if you can do the thing by the reaction. You know. If you're doing a circle, no matter what class you're in you're supported. It's different man. The energy you get in a Hip Hop event is different from a contemporary dance event. The feeling you get being in a circle is completely different to what you get being in contemporary dance. Supportive, not saying contemporary dance circle isn't supportive, but it's different. I'm in both in different ways...I represent both in different ways. I wouldn't say one is bad and one is good. It's just different. Once you feel that thing you know. But I don't think Hip Hop really sees class. Unless it's a snob that comes in like I wanna do this, I wanna do that, and you're like 'Who are you mate?' That's when things start to get a bit funny. But I've never experienced it, and I've been doing it since 2004. That's almost 15 years. You know what I mean, I've not seen it and I've been all around the world. There's people who do it whose parents are like Tom, Dick and Harry whose parents are the top top top

and there's people that do it, whose parents are nothing. When I say nothing they have literally nothing in borders of Afghanistan and Calais and still they want to do popping.

**IA: It's 2019. Who is Dickson 2029?**

DM: Honestly, it's have a lot of kids mate. I know they'd probably be the same like me... cause a lot of trouble. But I will hopefully learn from them. Yeah have a few kids, married I guess, I hope. For me man, my mum and dad are my heroes. So if I can be a bit like them, I'm winning. They argue all the time, but they are together all the time. They make me laugh all the time. They're just pure Africans and they say the most funny things. I just start laughing. With dance, the next generation I wanna see the younger guys doing amazing things. Some of them are but I wanna be in a position where I can say 'I was in your journey.' For me I just wanna make connections with different people. If I get bigger, I do, if I don't it's alright mate. I'm ambitious and passionate and I wanna do different things. But I know how everything is. It's all about timing. If it happens great, if it don't happen fine. But Dickson says, every step I take I plant a seed. Three steps, alright a big tree is growing. So that's it really.



