

HIP HOP

DANCE ALMANAC VOL.1

Edited by
Ian Abbott

FEATURING:

Duwane Taylor

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DUWANE TAYLOR

IA: Hey Duwane. I want to ask you about the process of care and the idea of the krump community as families and alternate kinships. How do you practice self care?

DT: I think the process of care is rooted in its foundation. When it was founded, in South Central LA, it was a family and community environment. It's rooted in the community. When I teach people or share knowledge about krump it's trying to share a knowledge of that community too. Within my own community it's important to share that with your lil' homies as we call them; it's important to take that outside of the dance too...it shouldn't just be helping them in their dance life, it should be helping them in themselves. In terms of myself? I've never had a big homie or a mentor; I've had different mentors along the way in the dance community - like Kenrick (H2O Sandy) and Hakeem (Onibudo) - when I was coming up in my younger days, but in terms of relating to krump there was no one else I looked up to. I did it for myself. I've been a teacher for so long now, I think that's my calling... to help and lead young people and try to develop them.

IA: In terms of the origins of krump what was it about community that was so important?

DT: I think that was all they had. Living in a deprived ghetto or the hood is where they come from and there wasn't a lot else. If you wasn't academic at school there wasn't much else; you could join a gang, sell drugs or you could dance. Krump came from clowning, from Tommy the Clown. What he used to do...he used to pick up all the young people from the community in his clown car - he used to have a van - and he used to take them to a park or party and entertain them. Krump was born out of that, because it was a more aggressive form of clowning; Tight Eyez felt he could express more in krump, clowning was more about entertaining people. The emphasis was in helping kids to stay safe and you had one older figure, Tommy, who looked after younger ones. It's about being stronger together. If you have nothing to do, the devil will make work for idle hands; it's sharing it with someone else and saying 'Look we've got something here, we can hold it together, keep each other safe and develop each other.'

IA: In your crew (Buckness Personified) how is that demonstrated? How do you look after them through dance or other ways?

DT: The crew can always call me for advice - whether that's

for dance or for other things. They are semi-professional dancers and we have a couple of them who are trying to become professional. I saw one of them at a competition I was judging and she was 18/19 and she had a lot of potential; I said if you want to come to London and train with us, you can come. So she came for a couple of days, had a good energy and was a good fit for the crew, so I brought her in. She would come from Wales every single week to train...she's now moved to London, has had professional work and she's starting to get into popping as well with Brooke (Milliner) - another pioneer. I've always tried to support her whether she goes to an audition, wants advice on contracts, how to develop as an artist or anything...even personal matters. It isn't so much a director relationship...I feel like they can depend on me and I can depend on them.

IA: In other interviews you've talked about your early training in ballet and contemporary in 2006; then you grew closer to krump in 2009. How do you go from there to a UK champion three years later?

DT: It's crazy! I think I found it on YouTube when it was starting out. It wasn't even that big a thing, but it matched something in me. I really liked

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the style and I started copying moves; it wasn't even on YouTube it was on the Krump Kings website. I used to look at the videos and try and imitate what they did; Kymberlee Jay was the first person to teach me the basics and foundations. They were old school foundations and back then there wasn't any krump crews at all. It was a very small group of us in the UK. There were maybe 20 krumpers in the UK that we knew of. Kymberlee would hold these sessions in her studio - 50p a session - it was crazy... three hours, she would get everyone in and we would just share with each other. Then you had crews who developed over time...Wet Wipez, I think Krump Idol was the first krump crew...when Wet Wipez developed I joined them for a short while before I left to join Style Fest. Again, a lot of this was through watching videos, trying to get better

“Internationally there was no crew of female krumpers. I decided I wanna bring females to the forefront because I felt they could be as powerful as guys. We had six weeks to teach them the technique and create a piece.”

and watching how krump developed elsewhere. We couldn't get any workshops over here; we would just get ignored by people when we were messaging people on Facebook, emailing them... they'd just ignore us because we were from the UK. I got my first workshop over to the

UK in 2009? Someone came from America and taught us... the first time someone other than Kymberlee...and it wasn't great, he didn't really know how to teach.

IA: Who was that?

DT: His name was Rascal. It happens in all styles of dance. They can be an amazing dancer, but teaching is another skill. Especially as it's such an underground style, they're used to learning from the street in a session and when it came down to a workshop environment they didn't know how to break it down. I was taking bits I'd seen and learn how I can apply it to my scene; we had another workshop when I brought over Tight Eyez' brother - that was the first time we had a workshop with a pioneer of the style. From then on I was forming my own ideas...I was already teaching at this point

I threw my plan out the window and taught them some krump and they took to it so well; we had a week with them to teach a piece that was to be performed at Sadler's Wells. They just took to it. The next day we came back and they had improved so much... they'd been practising all night and then we just kept going back. They developed at an amazing rate, they were 14-18, were improving in school and making a difference in their community. I decided to take it a step further and form a crew - Radical. We started performing in different places, made some waves, but as it goes with teenage boys, they grow up and things happen. I'm still in contact with a lot of them, some of them are doing music or other things. So... Radical...it moved on in 2011 and it was just me, trying to see what I could learn about krump. I travelled a bit, went to Germany, took a few workshops and then I formed Buckness Personified in 2012. That was for me. I wanted to see what females could do in krump and at that point there were no female crews.

IA: Up until that point had you not come across females in krump?

DT: Yeah. There was a few, maybe five who knew what they was doing, but internationally there was no crew of female krumpers. I decided I wanna bring females to the forefront because I felt they could be as powerful as guys. We had six weeks to teach them the technique and create a piece...it went really well, we put the video online and it started to go about between international krumpers. People were like 'Oh my god it's a female crew it's crazy.' I think there's now

six or seven all female crews in the world.

IA: Was Buckness the first female crew?

DT: I 100% think that...although there's no proof. There's some crews out there who will say they were, they might have seen us in 2011/12 but there was no crews performing at that time. I know because I've messaged people, asking veterans and they were like 'There's no all-girl crews and I've always wanted to do this.' As far as I know there were no female crews...which for us was amazing. It wasn't for me to hold them up and be like 'Yeah look what we made.' It was to say 'Look what we started.' Which I always remind the girls if they feel down. Look what we started.

IA: What was the motivation?

DT: I just felt like they could bring something else to the krump world. With krump there's a lot of egos, it's a male dominated style and there's loads of egos involved. I thought they'd bring a different energy. They can do something that's gonna be out of this world and so interesting. They're representing strong females. I've always had strong females in my life...I started to think about this the other day actually...why did I want to support women? I think it's because of my mum and two sisters; I have a brother, but my mum and sisters are a strong influence in my life. That was me. I'm always trying to bring something different to krump, with Radical, with Buckness or with krump theatre. We were doing it at a time when we were getting criticism for it.

IA: From the community?

DT: From the community. I was considered as coming up back in the day...it seems incredible now...people didn't want to see krump choreography - it was frowned upon. Even with Radical we were shunned for a long time because we were told you can't choreograph krump or 'Why are you krumping to classical music?' It's amazing that those same people are now doing it...I'm like 'OK.' I don't need recognition, but at least we tried doing something. I want the scene to be better and for it not to be one dimensional. I met Tight Eyez in 2013. I went to LA for a holiday and I got in contact with some members of his crew; I went, I battled and I met Tight Eyez. I went to his house, we chilled, chatted and it turned out he already knew about Buckness...which was amazing! For us it was like looking at a celebrity, the unattainable; I'd been watching him dance since 2008 when I first started to find krump...I never thought...I mean it's different now with social media...but to see someone before social media was like 'Whoa.' We ended up having a talk, sitting in his house and him saying what we'd done is important for the style he created. It meant a lot. Then I came back to London, started training and along came Breakin' Convention. They knew I was going to LA so they asked me to have a word with him, to try and get him over; they'd been emailing and not getting an answer. So I spoke to him and said they were legit. They'd had a few different experiences with international countries and were like 'We don't know who these people are, who Jonzi is or this Breakin' Convention.' I was like 'They are trustworthy.' They came over, we linked up and that's my timeline.

IA: When was your first battle?

DT: First? I can't remember. I used to battle all the time, especially in college. After college a couple of people would come down and we'd battle in clubs. There was a guy who used to have a night at a club called Storm, that's where my battle skills were honed. People didn't like krump, they thought it was raw, too aggressive and they didn't want us to dance. Especially the B-Boys.

IA: In the club?

DT: Yeah, the club. On a dancers night there'd be cyphers going and if we went into a cypher people would give us problems, especially B-Boys.

IA: What's the beef?

DT: I think it's because it's similar in style, in terms of aggression and the way they were formed in a hood environment...it's a battle environment primarily. I think they had that 'We're the original aggressive style.' Or 'We're the ones who are cocky on the floor and aggressive in battles.' So I had a lot of battles with B-Boys. My first proper battle was at a night called Throwdown in Brixton. A guy called Charlie used to organise it, again krump wasn't as respected as it is now, so it wasn't present at every event... but it started to get more as the scene grew. Krumpers would turn out and try to grow a scene. Throwdown was my first one and Stylefest was my first massive one...I never expected to win.

IA: Who were you battling against in the final?

DT: I can't remember his name...but there was a big divide because I was the only one who was a professional dancer. I was on tour with Pied Piper by Boy Blue at the time so I wasn't really around much and they didn't expect me to win. When I came it was all 'Hey, how you doing?' Through the course of me beating people from their crews I started to see it change; people stopped supporting me, they would walk out when I won a round, it was crazy. That was a bit of the long-standing...what's the word...rivalry that happened with us. Thankfully we've all matured and grown up now, but again, that's the male ego.

IA: Who were the judges?

DT: I remember some of them. Kimberlee, Kenrick and a guy called Carlos. Carlos was from Portugal and he was here for a while. He had trained with Tight Eyez, had done krump before and Hip Hop...so he was quite versatile. There was someone else judging house and a popper from France.

IA: How did your krump name originate? You were Big Discipline and now you're Discipline? Is that right?

DT: It's still kind of the same, I'm still Big Discipline. With krump families, you have your 'Big' so whatever your name is you're 'Big' and that name. I'm still Big Discipline and you can have 'Twin' someone you think is on your level; it might be their movement, their mindset or way of thinking...they're your right hand. Then you have your 'Little.' They're the next level down and you can have your kid, tiny, princess, girl and it goes on and on and on...there's new ones being developed every day. It came from bible scripture...I think

it was Proverbs 1 verse 12...I dunno why it stuck in my mind; when I was in Radical I needed a name. I'm known as Duwane as a dancer and when I was starting I had my crappy dancer name, 'Sparxx' with two xx's, it was horrible so I was like I need a krump name that fits. Because I'd been teaching dance since I was 17/18 I'd always tried to have a leadership mindset; I think it was one of Radical who said it should be 'Discipline' because when I teach I always want to impart knowledge. Especially as they were boys from SE London, I had to be disciplined with them at first; krump made me disciplined in my body, my mind and my training. That's where my character built from.

IA: How many do you have in your family?

DT: I've got a twin, I've got lady...and I've got a kid but we haven't officially discussed it. I've got five at the moment; we had a junior and a little but they were busy and had to go and work on other stuff, your family can go on for so long. Your style and intention can influence your krump name too, your name is your character while you dance. But if you wanted to form another style or another character then you can have that name. You might have another family with that character, because they might have learned another style better suited to that character.

IA: Can you talk about when you're in a battle, how do you support others?

DT: Krump has a massive element of hype; it's basically encouragement for the person that's dancing. When we krump we give 100% energy and commitment to

our movement. When I teach, my explanation of it is when someone performs on stage if you have people shouting, screaming and giving a standing ovation it feels better than someone clapping politely. We're giving 100% to the movement and we need an energy back; krump is about a feeling...it's not just about the movements, it's the energy behind it and the feeling being projected. It comes from a real place, so we hype people up and exaggerate those reactions. Krump should build an intensity so people can get to their best place. Sometimes a battle is what we call a 'Beefy Battle.' When krump was formed it was used to settle differences; if you have a problem with someone, rather than fight them, you settle it with krump...because it's true expression. My biggest thing with the next generation of krump is they find it difficult to see the line...a lot of people will do things and say 'Yeah because it's krump. There can be trash talk.' I always try and educate everyone who is under me, because when it gets personal, it crosses a line and that's when it turns to beef...or a 'Beefy Battle.' The generation coming up has to remember we're people first, dancer second. I've seen animosity die down and come and go. I'll probably see it come round again.

IA: How does a judge decide who wins?

DT: Judging krump isn't like judging a normal battle, there's rules to it. It's travelling, material, foundations and technique. There's get offs and kill offs too. You've got rules to judge by, but when it comes to 'Beefy Battles' it all goes out the window; it comes down to that moment, getting

it out and settling a score. Sometimes you'll have judges present and make an event for when two people have issues with each other and you're settling it there and then...but that hasn't happened in the UK for a long time.

IA: You mentioned krump allows a form of expression and release where people can act freely. But sometimes people who have nothing to do with the scene will come, take and appropriate. Have you noticed that?

DT: I've very recently started to have a massive issue with it. What's happening now is a lot of Hip Hop theatre work is becoming krump influenced, which is fine, because I really want krump to spread to every corner of the globe; I want people to respect it for the style it is. It can be used as a massive form of expression. I had this conversation with a pioneer from France, that krump - in its style - is closer to contemporary than Hip Hop because everything is conceptual. When we're freestyling and battling, everything is conceptual. My thing is people who're using krump techniques are not going to a source of reputable information to learn it properly. They're taking an idea or a couple of moves they know and putting it into choreography. I wouldn't want them to go and live the life of a krumper, but you should really train in a style so that you can dissect the movements...then you can change them and find your own approach to krump. Then you can do whatever you need to. What's happening is people are getting a general idea and they're deconstructing it; people are saying 'Oh I really like the krump feeling.' But

we have to respect the style...ballet and contemporary have that respect because people study and understand them. Martha Graham has her way, Hofesh has his way, if you don't respect it first...it's going to be nothing. People are saying 'It's krump.' The purists are sitting there going 'No it's not.' I know you have contemporary purists, but if someone's studied it and

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knows exactly what they're doing, they can do what they want with it. That's what we need with street dance styles, not just krumping; I've worked with Hofesh and I taught Far From the Norm a krump class because they wanted to learn from the source rather than second hand knowledge. I've seen some companies who are just using the style, which is great that you're interested in it...but there's four or five krump classes in London, I don't understand people haven't been to class. When I see krump movement in a work and you haven't learned it from a krumper, I don't understand it. It's the same as tap...tap is something you have or you don't. You wouldn't just throw a shuffle in.

IA: Can you talk some more about the relationship with contemporary dance?

DT: I've always thought it since getting into krump. I had a conversation with a friend, a pioneer of the style from a French crew called Madrootz; he did a workshop and said it's like the roots in contemporary and I was like 'I've been saying this for years and krumpers rejected me for it.' The reason I say it is, with Hip Hop freestyle you can just dance with your head down, your movement

can be technically perfect and that can be an acceptable freestyle; with krump we have characters and your intentions have to happen...that's why our faces look a certain way. The nature of the style is raw...so even if we're happy we look a certain way. Your character is your why, and your concepts are your what. Every time you move, you have concepts behind your movement...it's not just throwing out the moves and the technique being perfect. A true krumper can look at your movement and see there's nothing behind it.

IA: It's empty.

DT: I can look at some krump and tell you it's empty...tell you it doesn't mean anything and there's no thought process there. It's the same with contemporary, a lot of contemporary movement

stems from a thought process and the creativity is having a stimulus. We want to make it accessible...but in terms of the creativity and conceptual stimulus, it is behind everything we do; it doesn't have to be literal, it can be abstract too. We have physical theatre in our movement, our character and body language, we have pedestrian movement in it as well. All of these things are things I've studied, coming up in college and seeing it in krump is like doing it all again. You can have character and concept here and there but it's not drilled in. With this it is. It's the foundation.

IA: That's a great segue. What is your relationship to the history and foundation of krump and what knowledge or experiences haven't been documented?

DT: There's a lot hasn't been documented. A lot of it is word of mouth. I've had conversations with Tight Eyez and I've seen videos where he's posted saying this time that happened, this happened there etc. Which is good because there's a lot of conflicting information. For instance...Rise. Rise is an incomplete history of krump. It's a great starting point to understand the feeling and where it was, but in terms of historical information there's a lot of inaccuracies. Tight Eyez is in Rise and he said that...I think he was 16/17 at the time...he had Hollywood producers saying 'Say this, say that because it'll look good on camera.' I know it's real because working in TV in a documentary series they say that too, so I can imagine a Hollywood setting would be worse. There was a lot of things that was fishy about that. I would say Rise is a good

place to start for the feeling of krump and understanding where it was at that time; in terms of information it isn't the greatest. It's a difficult one because I feel like the whole beginning...the first three to four years of krump is missing.

IA: From the US or worldwide?

DT: Everywhere. Tight Eyez is still dancing and you can see when you watch him dance

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he's definitely one of the creators. There's debate over who created it and people around the world who were pioneering it at the time claim to be the creators as well. As someone from England who doesn't know what to believe, I'm looking at the evidence and you can see an inherent understanding of the style, it's in and out of his body. It's clear to me and to a lot of krumpers around the world but that information isn't readily available. You can look up videos and see it but it's

difficult to find anyone saying 'It was created, then it went to here, then here.' I'm still looking at the missing holes.

IA: You mentioned other Hip Hop forms have a codified language. How would you describe a codified language of krump?

DT: I would say you have your three basics: your chest, your stomps and your arm

swings. I say arm swings... that includes jabs as well as other movements. But you have your three kinds of movements. These movements will be happening but not all at the same time. A lot of krump is about action and reaction; about how these foundational movements work together. You have to have concepts behind your movement and you have to have your character and your intention. That's the simplest way. It's about expression and expressing your feeling

through these movements. That's the easiest way I break it down. I always say that krump is a feeling...an expression of a real feeling that's raw. It's the rawest of feelings. It's the feeling when you say 'Ugh.' You feel it, mean it and then we exaggerate it. It comes back to when I'm teaching contemporary companies, linking it to physical theatre, if we're acting a handshake but doing it in a ugh way...it's exaggerated. Then we add the physicality, musicality and adapt it afterwards. We always come from a real concept, a raw place and then express it.

IA: What's troubling you? What's going against the idea of generosity in the scene at the minute?

DT: In terms of the krump community it's getting better, but lots of the respect was lost for what came before it. The new generation are hungry... they've formed a community and love krump and really, really want to see it develop; but it gets a bit difficult to accept when they're like 'Hey why don't you want to battle?' I say 'Because I'm 30!' There's not a lot of respect for the fact that I've been where you are now six or seven years ago and I don't want to battle every minute. It's that type of respect that's bothering me, but it's getting a bit better. Even the krump theatrical style is getting better but it's a bittersweet pill; more and more people are pushing the style but are saying 'We're the first to do this.' I'm like 'That's funny cos I did it at Breakin' Convention in 2010.' I'm happy you're doing it, but when we were trying to push it we were literally shunned with people saying 'Krump isn't that.' Now we've got the recognition from both the creators; both

of them have said what we do is important. We weren't doing it for them - we were doing it anyway - but we are respected by them and then we weren't getting respected in our own back yard. Some people are very closed minded...we had a debate with someone, and they didn't understand what the point of krump theatre was; it's so short sighted to be 'Battle, battle, session, session.' That's just one aspect of it. If we perform, we bring more people to it who want to learn and then the community grows. We had a massive debate and there's a divide.

IA: Purists?

DT: The thing that annoys us is that we do battle and we do session...but it's not our main focus. It's OK to have a different focus. Whatever your focus, you should try to be the best at it; a lot of us were winning battles but it's not our focus. We are trying to be the best we can be in theatre and educate people about krump theatre; these guys would be focusing on battles but not really winning anything. You shouldn't be focusing on someone else when you're not succeeding in what you're doing; we had that debate and I was like 'Battling doesn't do anything for what I want to do - it just goes in a circle.' I want to build a community, share and get people interested in the style. I blame that partly on the international krump world; a lot of them are battle, battle, battle - that's all they do - they have a regular job and then it's just krump, session, battle. I have less patience as I get older. If you win every battle in the world...then what? If it isn't paying you...then what? If you're winning and getting paid and that's your

living, amazing. Like Frankie J - I get it. He and Brooke and Dickson (Mbi) - all these other styles, I understand why they are battling all the time. Even in krump, Tight Eyez is at the highest level and is battling all the time, but he's winning, teaching and doing what he needs to do. People in the UK don't even want to teach. I feel like I see that bigger picture, and they're just looking at the next thing and the next day.

IA: The idea of the community and connectivity. Who are your three people who you go to, who you respect?

DT: Is that in krump or dance?

IA: Either.

DT: I don't really have anyone anymore. I have people who I respect and stuff, but not in a mentor kind of way. It was Hakeem for a while and then I left Impact Dance, growing older and stuff. I did a lot of shows with Boy Blue and I would speak to Ken a lot. I think I rely on myself a lot now and I have people on a peer level in my crew. Claire (Hough), she's Twin Discipline...she's my right hand and I'll talk to her about any ideas I have. I have people outside like Botis (Seva), though I haven't really spoken to him in a while...he's on a peer level, we used to battle together and have created pieces together. I haven't really spoken to anyone in the last couple of years about stuff.

IA: What is your strongest memory related to dance?

DT: There's two things. Career wise it should be performing at the Olympics and all of that malarkey. We were dance captains and worked with a 1000 volunteers...something

like that. Every week for six months and the performance in front of 80,000 people. It was crazy. That's what it should be. I also did a performance with Tight Eyez and that was my 'Oh my god what is happening?' moment.

IA: Where was that?

DT: UDO World Champs 2015. He came over and I'd already met him from when he did Breakin' Convention and I went to LA. We'd already made contact online and we were there; he didn't know anyone except me so I tried to look after him. It was really crazy, he did his judges demo the day before and he was finished. It was my judges demo the day after and there was a song I wanted but I didn't know what it was called, and I described it to him and he got it for me. I was going though it, thinking what I was going to do, freestyling and just before I was about to go on stage he was like 'Do you want me to jump in with you?' I was like 'What? Yes. But you're Tight Eyez?' He was like 'Cool'. I had my headphones in and was going through it, but he knew the music so he was just...and we went on stage and everyone was like 'What? When did you plan that?' It just happened. We just connected. It was history for the UK; no one has reached that level and no one has come close. It's not a boasting thing for me, but it's putting the UK on the map; like him having respect and saying these guys know. He suggested it. If there's three krump judges they might perform all at the same time, but he wasn't supposed to be doing anything at all that day.

IA: How long was that? 10 minutes?

DT: He gave me the track the

day before and I was planning it with just me doing it. I was in my hotel room whatever, then literally 20 minutes before I was going on stage, I was going through it and he was like 'Want me to jump in with you?'

IA: 20 minutes!

DT: 20 minutes but he joined in knowing the musicality of the track; we only did it two or three times. Five minutes of connection...then on stage. No one knew it was happening because it had my name in the background and then Tight Eyez came on. They paid a lot of money for him to come over and had everything set up for him the day before. When he joined in, it was like 'This is too surreal.'

IA: That's better than the Olympics...

DT: That's my career highlight. Technically it should be the Olympics but in terms of when we used to look at Tight Eyez online...it was unachievable to meet this person, we were like groupies back in the day. When we'd find a krumper's Facebook we'd add them and try to message them, tag them in a video and be like 'Hey man watch my video.' When I shared the Buckness Personified video that was the first point of contact...I had sent videos of Radical but never had anything back. Then I sent this around, went to sleep and it was being shared around; all these krumpers from abroad that I'd inboxed messaged back. From that to performing on stage with Tight Eyez. Now we're friends. I don't take it for granted because social media is bigger. Krumpers from the UK are working with krumpers from abroad and they keep in contact with WhatsApp,

Social Media etc. It's a lot more accessible...

IA: Outside of krump you do lots of other things. Can you give me a flavour of some of those things?

DT: I was performing with Zoo Nation for...I think for 6 years. Part of The Mad Hatters Tea Party, Into the Hoods - which is Into the Woods remixed. That's a lot of theatre work... West End type theatre work; it's a different side of Hip Hop theatre or street dance theatre I call it because it encompasses all styles. That was a massive thing for me, because before I started dancing I went to see Into the Woods in 2006. I think it was the dress run, because it was a double bill with Hakeem's show...I didn't know Hakeem then but I knew someone in it so I got a ticket for the dress run. I was like 'This is amazing. I want to be on that stage one day.' That's what triggered it. I would love to be on the Peacock Theatre stage...and four years later I got into Zoo Nation and we did something at the Peacock. That was huge for me. I remember thinking I wanted to be the wolf, and Ken was the wolf. Ken was the first wolf; I thought being the wolf would be sick. I didn't know who Ken was then and I was scared of him.

IA: Why were you scared?

DT: Cos he's Kenrick! He was just being Kenrick. He doesn't speak to anyone. Even when I go to his classes, his Kenrickisms are sick. I was like I want to be the wolf. Fast forward to 2016 and I actually played the wolf; achieving those goals is amazing. It's more West Endish, a bit more commercial, a bit more narrative and involves so

many elements. I also worked with Boy Blue on their theatre shows: Pied Piper, Over the Edge and The Five. Pied Piper has a narrative element but Over the Edge didn't work

Tower of London, Hofesh has given us complete freedom.

IA: Can you perform in any part of the Tower?

"I don't like fitting a mould. I said before I'm not a typical alpha male; in terms of where I'm from, Tottenham - a high crime area, I don't fit in. I wasn't always a dancer but I was never a bad boy. Even when I tried to be 'Acting the part...' That wasn't how I was raised."

as well because it had an abstract narrative edge. The Five has a martial arts, manga narrative edge. It's nice to be more rounded in that stuff. The reason I bring it up is I like to be rounded in everything I do. From battling to freestyling to more commercial theatre. I want to show I do more than krump. We've got East Wall now and that's going to have over 100 participants. We've got a 60 piece marching band, an actual marching band...I was watching their footage today it's going to be wild.

IA: What's your role in East Wall?

DT: We each have a group of young people we're working with and we have eight professional dancers; I'm working with a group of 60 young people which is going to be interesting. We had the auditions last week and it went smoothly, we had 180 come down. It's about anything you want to do in the

DT: We're going to be in the moat; we had a day with the Beefeaters and they told us about the history and people got some interesting ideas. Mine is about the peasants revolt, when they stormed the tower and got past the first line of defence because of their living conditions. A lot of my stuff is about rebelling against the system, the earliest piece I created in 2008 was crap but...

IA: What was that?

DT: I used to have a crew called Prototypes, a Hip Hop street crew; we were cyborgs 'Never to dance. Never to feel.' It was cheesy but it worked. It was about one cyborg who rebels against the system and then she dies. Seven minutes. Somehow it formed a massive story...I've always been about rebellion but I didn't realise that every single piece has to be about it.

IA: What are you're rebelling against?

DT: I dunno! I don't like fitting a mould. I said before I'm not a typical alpha male; in terms of where I'm from, Tottenham - a high crime area, I don't fit in. I wasn't always a dancer but I was never a bad boy. Even when I tried to be 'Acting the part...' That wasn't how I was raised. I knew that amongst my friends there was a mould that I wasn't fitting; I was always rebelling and now the peasants revolt I can finally create the ultimate against the system, bursting into the tower and through the gates.

IA: How does the relationship with Hofesh work?

DT: He's directing it. At the moment we're having loads of meetings, logistics and that. Hofesh is actually a great guy and he gives you a lot of freedom. He's not one of those people who is like 'I think it should look like this.' He'll just question you to make sure it makes sense...he's like 'I'm gonna let you guys do your thing and I'll link it to make sure it makes sense. He's quite laid back in that sense.

IA: So you've got that at that scale and then you've got your recent solo 'It's Time to Speak' about the unjust killing of Black men. Where did that come from?

DT: It was 2016 and it was coming out in so many videos... it was ridiculous. I opened my laptop and I started writing spoken word. I wouldn't even call it that, I started writing poetry; I had some music on that was making me feel something and - this is ridiculous - I just literally wrote it. I wanted to film it...I didn't want to make a piece...I just wanted to film it. So I went and filmed and danced a little bit...

IA: In the car park?

DT: Yeah. I said I don't want this to go anywhere in terms of performance. It wasn't about response...I didn't care how many views I got it...it was just about responding. That was the original thinking and a year later Tony (Adigun) was curating a festival and he asked me if I had any pieces I wanted to perform...I said no. He was like 'Please...I really want you to perform something. Can you create a solo?' I said yes [laughs] thinking it was three or four days before and he said it's got to be 10 minutes. By this point it was two days before the show. OK I will perform this and add a bit to the beginning. I go there for the tech and he asked me what it was about for the programme so I said a bit. He gave me this lectern, because there was lecterns lying around and he said just stay there, dance around it and then speak from there. Ricardo Da Silva was there and he said 'Throw these papers.' I started developing it on the spot with all this improvisation. I didn't set anything. Whatever happens, happens and it started there. I performed it in the foyer area of Southbank. Claire who used to be a producer for Zoo Nation sent me a message saying it was so powerful, people were crying. I was like OK I guess I need to get this out there. Artists4Artists approached me to apply for Resolution and I said I've got a piece I can perform - I was going to use Buckness - but it was easier with Resolution to do a solo. I started to form it, extended it to 15 minutes and started to research. I thought about Martin Luther King, about famous speeches and how to deliver a speech; I started to put together iconic

speeches, Winston Churchill, MLK, Obama and Trump. In one of the speeches you have Martin Luther King talking about freedom of speech next to Donald Trump talking about the NFL players that were kneeling saying 'Get that son of a bitch off the field.' I was getting more fired up watching this online...it's ridiculous. Silencing someone's protest. I watched Colin Kaepernick...

IA: He's a leader...

DT: He's just donated a million dollars to different charities and he's furthering it when other celebrities give \$10,000 he gives \$10,000. I don't understand how that is being downplayed and Trump is being uplifted. It got me angry. That's the reason I want to make work. When I make something about movement it's whatever...but when it makes my blood boil, it feels right. I used that in the solo. We had feedback from a sharing and they were like 'Why don't you write about the Black British experience. This is about the American experience.' I thought about it when I was creating it and I'm not creating this as a Black man I'm creating this as a person who is seeing this foolishness. Obviously I'm Black...so there's a slight Black take on it because we do experience it to a degree over here...but if I did it on racism we'd be here all day. If I did it on the Black British experience the other comment would be, it should have been developed better. It's not about racism in America...I didn't talk about KKK or Jim Crow...I talked about Black shootings and how is it even a protest if can be suppressed.

IA: Where does race and class sit in your thinking,**making and teaching?**

DT: I try and stay away from... not stay away from, that's the wrong word. I haven't been pushed to make things on race. To some degree I live in a fantasy world; I like movies, comics and I touch on real issues but I do it in an abstract way. I don't always like to be 'This is about this experience.' Rebellious is a theme and race/class is underlying. Coming from a lower class background as a Black man, I have had to go through adversity and rebel against the system. It's in my work. I don't create work that's specifically about race...with this solo I'm not trying to take it much further; I've applied for the festival in San Francisco because I feel like it's relevant there. I'm not going to try and take it here and there and there. That's something I struggle with...to make...if I don't have a jumping off point. If it's not music or seeing something I don't make it. It sits on my laptop.

IA: What's your relationship to music? Where is it in your mind and body?

DT: With me music is the most important thing. I don't know how choreographers just get in the studio and move.

IA: So you can't work in silence?

DT: I hate it. I hate it so much. If you gave me a track that is amazing I could make a piece in two days. If you give me a track, some dancers and it inspires me I can create like that (clicks) - it's a trigger. One of the first pieces I performed at Pavilion Dance South West has a piece from Inception in it. I heard it and was like 'What is this music?' At some point in my life I need to dance to

this track. It took two years for it to come out in Open Art Surgery but I had all the ideas, light and dark, and was asked 'What track will you use?' This one. It took two years, but it has to fit perfectly for me to create it. Your soundscape should match the feeling on stage. Films create so many emotions, but if you take the soundtrack away it's like... the soundtrack builds your emotions, your anxieties. When you're making a work it should be the same - the two should go hand in hand... it should take you out of the theatre and you're engulfed.

IA: What was it about that Hans Zimmer piece?

DT: It was the strings; people say I use strings all the time in my work. I used to play piano and I come from a musical family...I used to love Classic FM. Even though I was listening to grime and Hip Hop, I also was listening to Classic FM before I went to sleep. It was a massive juxtaposition. Tottenham. 15 year old boy. Slightly ghetto. Listening to Classic FM. I used to love it and now it draws something out of me. I watched Inception again a couple of months ago and I realised it's there from the beginning and then it goes into a minor key...it's that genius. Composers are geniuses because they know what it's going to do to a human brain...you know you're not going to notice but it's going to be there.

IA: Is there anything you want to speak about or lay down as part of this?

DT: Maybe? Not really...I can't believe I've spoken so much. (pause) Versatility is my thing. It's key. I try to put my finger in different pies, I try to do

commercial stuff, theatre stuff, be a battler, and I feel like we're losing that. People go into one box 'OK I'm gonna be a commercial dancer.' I teach at a lot of colleges and it happens a lot, especially when you come to London. The best students are the ones who aren't really around Hip Hop. I was teaching krump and Hip Hop just outside of London and it took a long time of me having to cuss them, give them push ups, work them harder...there was a lot of complacency and they are closest to London - they can take classes any time. I'm teaching in Kent and they are eyes open, ready to work. I have my krump class on Monday's and I have people coming from Kent to take classes, whereas aren't even turning up. What happens is a lot of dancers who come to London get complacent and are closed minded 'Oh I want to do this and that's it.' They don't realise this can influence that and it makes you a unique artist. Anyone who is listening...be an artist, be unique, be bold and take all influences from every single style you can learn. Express it in your own way. You need to be versatile and look at the bigger picture, that's my advice.

