

ARTIST BIO - LEILAH KIRSTEN



Leilah Kirsten is a movement and dance artist with a necessity to express her experience as a human being through the moving body. She was born in Cape Town, South Africa and has been working as a freelance artist since 2012 having previously been engaged with two of South Africa's most prominent dance companies, Jazzart Dance Theatre and The Cape Dance Company. She first became interested in dance as a young child and eventually managed to convince her apprehensive mother to send her to dance class when she was eight years old. Her love affair with the performing arts has been ever-present through the decades.

Leilah started her formal dance studies during high school when dance was introduced into the curriculum as a subject (2000). She undertook her tertiary dance education at The Cape Academy of Performing Arts (2005-2007) where she graduated with a Certificate in Contemporary Dance and Theatre Studies. Post-graduation she successfully auditioned for Jazzart Dance Theatre's Young Adult Training and Job Creation Programme (2009-2011) where she experienced a variety of cultural dance and music training alongside participating in outreach programmes and performances. Together with her dance education, Leilah holds qualifications in Pilates and Personal Training.

In 2013, Leilah was selected to perform in the touring cast of "I Hit the Ground Running", a collaboration between The Baxter Theatre (South Africa) and Scenkonst Sormland (Sweden). In 2015 and 2016 she had the privilege of performing with Yoatl Physical Art Company (France) in their productions "LUKAS" and "With Eyes in the Nape of My Neck". Leilah presented her first solo work "Present Tense" as an artist in residence with Any Body Dance Lab in Cape Town in April 2018.

Travelling to Berlin, Germany in July 2018, Leilah participated in workshops at the B12 Festival with artists, Amy Schulman and Tomislav English. In 2019 she participated in workshops facilitated by artists, Tom Weksler and Roser Tutusaus as part of Movement Immersion in Cape Town, South Africa which she co-hosted and organized. In February of 2020, Leilah alongside Brazilian artist, Rafaela Sahyoun was involved in organising PERA School of Performing Arts' (Cyprus) first South African audition, of which there were eight successful young South African artists to be offered scholarships.

Leilah is actively applying for international artistic residencies and seeking performance collaborations with artists and organisations who are interested in engaging with conversations around what it is to be human and creating works that transport audiences into a space of personal reflection and curiosity. Her long term vision is to create exchange opportunities for South African artists that offer both artistic development and exposure to various approaches to dance training.

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