

Sarah Trist
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A new Hip Hop dance work by Joseph Toonga.

“Toonga’s choreography sits neatly alongside the cultural signifiers of black culture” Lorna Irvine, fjord review

Joseph Toonga works at the forefront of Hip Hop in the UK and internationally. He describes himself as being in a continual search for an authentic reason to choreograph, and frequently draws on real life stories which make his work resonate with people under-represented in audiences for mainstream arts.



Born to Exist is the final part of Toonga’s acclaimed Hip Hop dance trilogy that aims to challenge racial stigma. Following on from *Born to Manifest* and *Born to Protest*, this third production analyses representations of women of colour through the individual stories of immigrants to the UK. Joseph draws on the collected lived experiences of the three female dancers and his own memories of coming to the UK and growing up with resilient, independent-minded female relations to construct and reflect portraits of Black, Asian and ethnic minority women. Joseph Toonga uses his activist choreographic style to go beyond the cultural trope of the “strong black woman” to dismantle presumptions about female physicality, and invite change.

This work brings together a powerhouse of creatives, lighting design by Simisola Majekodunmi, an original score from Michael ‘Mikey J’ Asante and dramaturgy by Peggy Ollislaegers.



Originally from the Cameroon, **Joseph Toonga**, was born and raised in East London where he still lives. He founded **Just Us Dance Theatre** in 2007 with Ricardo Da Silva and Rudeen February. A major part of the company's ethos is to inspire, support and nurture others and it has established two mentoring programmes, Lets Shine and New&Notable, to provide tools and opportunities for young emerging hip-hop dance theatre artists.

In 2021 Joseph was appointed Emerging Choreographer with The Royal Ballet and was Movement Director for *Fair Play*, A Bush Theatre Direction by Ella Road. Other achievements to date include his Secret Cinema collaboration for the premiere of French film *Les Misérables*, and commissions for Boston Conservatoire of Dance, Bundesjugendballett (Germany's National Youth Ballet) and Richard Alston Dance Company.

'I feel a responsibility as a black male to empower the younger generation as a role model and example of how dance can provide a positive, successful route. Mental health and black men's experiences of it, are little discussed, which is why I am passionate about creating awareness to shift stigmas' – Joseph Toonga

Wraparound/workshops

Joseph Toonga's workshops explore the fundamentals of popping, Krump and freestyle within a contemporary dance context, whilst looking at tension in the body, parts of the body in isolation, and intention behind movement. Workshop participants will learn repertoire from ***Born to Exist*** as part of the session.

Joseph Toonga is also committed to engaging with local youth groups and providing professional performance opportunities through curtain raiser performances. **Joseph Toonga** delivers this activity over two days in the immediate run up to the performance.

Born to Exist is commissioned by Theatre Boulevard, The Place & DanceEast, and is supported by Redbridge Drama Centre, South East Dance and Arts Council England.

Booking Details

Availability:	from October 2022 into spring 2023
Touring Company:	three dancers, technician and producer
Running time:	60 minutes (approximate)
Get in	On the day of the performance (with lighting rigged in advance)
Performing Area	ideally 10m x 10 m with black dance lino on sprung or semi-sprung floor
Minimum technical requirements	Good quality sound system with CD player (for back up) and professional lighting with provision for side-lighting
Technical staff required by promoter	two staff
Video trailer	R&D trailer available in February 2022
Full Length Performance Video	Available October 2022
UK touring fees	£1850 inclusive.
Overseas touring fees	£4000 per performance plus international travel, transfers, visa costs, COVID testing costs, accommodation (single en suite rooms) and catering/per diem, to be paid net of local taxes.
Fee for Curtain Raiser	£800 plus travel and accommodation for one person
Fee for masterclass	£300 plus travel and accommodation for one person (if scheduled on a different day to the performance)
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