

When Things Fall Together: A Performance as Research Project in a time of Catastrophic Pandemic

Presented by Warren Nebe, Bongile Lecoge-Zulu, Moeketsi Kgotle, Jermaine Johnson, Karen de Kock and Tlotlego Gaogakwe

While Covid-19 has had a devastating impact on theatre life at the University of the Witwatersrand, specifically and South Africa, generally, leaving theatres closed mainly for business, Warren Nebe decided to lead a new creative research project taking performance out of the theatre into a safer space. This Performance as Research project – a site-specific performance ritual – was supported by Drama for Life, Wits Theatre, and Wits School of Arts. Nebe assembled a professional team of artists in 2020 to undertake this challenging work in a time of the pandemic. The diverse Southern African group consisted of professional Drama for Life Theatre Company, Music Therapists, performer/musicians, performer/dancers and a writer. The support team came from Drama for Life and the Wits Theatre. As the principal researcher, Nebe sought to investigate the relationship between Covid-19, ecocide and the contemporary global fight for social justice. "I can't breathe" was conceived and understood as an intersectional plea for life, a plea that fundamentally impacts all of humanity, and an appeal for a new psychological, social and environmental contract. The performance evolved within the context of the global community's collective grief. Nebe framed the Performance as Research within an eco-participatory approach. This approach acknowledges the participatory nature of the research process with the performers and participants and the 'living planet' as equal and significant participants in the research. The project took place at the Johannesburg Botanical Gardens at Emmarentia.

This Performance as Research presentation of *When Things Fall Together* seeks to illuminate the critical role PAR played in restoring health and wellbeing in and through the act of art making within the context of an ecological encounter at a time of catastrophe.

The creative research team involved:

Director and Principal Researcher: Warren Nebe. Writer: Tlotlego Gaogakwe. Performer/co-researchers: Pertunia Msani, Sithembiso Khalishwayo, Luthando Jamda, Moeletsu Kgotle, Karen de Kock, Jermaine Johnson, Bongile Lecoge-Zulu and Nsamu Moonga. Photographers: Matt

Nkofo and Warren Nebe. Alison Green was the project manager, assisted by First Rand intern Keoagile Segapo.

Presenters:

Warren Nebe – Drama for Life, Founder. Performance as Research, Researcher.

Bongile Lecoge-Zulu – Performance Artist, Musician, Educator, Curator. Wits Music alumnus

Moeketsi Kgotle – Drama for Life, PhD Performance as Research Researcher. Musician, Performer, Theatre Artist.

Jermaine Johnson – Dancer, Drama Therapist, Performance as Research researcher

Karen de Kock – Music Therapist, Musician, Clinical Supervisor

Tlotlego Gaogakwe – Writer, Educator, Artist