

FOCUS ON DANCE EDUCATION:  
Collaborations: A Mosaic of Possibilities

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Chicago, Illinois

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS  
National Dance Education Organization

Kirsten Harvey, MFA  
Editor

# **Focus on Dance Education: Collaborations A Mosaic of Possibilities**

## **Editorial Introduction**

The National Dance Education Organization's 2014 national conference in Chicago, Illinois celebrated and honored the beauty, history, and legacy of the NDEO dance community. The individuality of each dance educator and artist that came together in Chicago, truly created a strong and impressive whole. Each member of the community was able to share and reinvigorate their practice in the Windy City. In partnership with the American Dance Therapy Association, the conference offered paper presentations, panels, and workshops in a variety of dance techniques, pedagogical methods, ideologies, and research experiences.

Contributions to *Focus on Dance Education: Collaborations: A Mosaic of Possibilities* Conference Proceedings include paper presentations, panel discussions, workshops, and movement sessions presented from November 5-9, 2014. The proceedings include 7 abstracts, 18 full papers, 6 movement session summaries, and 8 panel discussion summaries. The NDEO top paper selection committee selected Sarah Lockheed's paper titled "Collaborating Pasts, Speculative Futures: Isadora Duncan and John Dewey's Ideas in Conversation" for the honor of Top Paper Citation. Congratulations to Ms. Lockheed on this wonderful achievement. Thank you to all who offered their full papers for this prestigious honor as well as the JODE Ed Board: Cheryl Palonis Adams, Marty Sprague, Heather Vaughn-Southard, Robin Collen, and Wendy Oliver, who reviewed the documents. Also, to Pat Cohen and the Research Liaison on the NDEO Board, Gill Wright Miller who aided in the reviewing process.

The Conference Proceedings contain multiple tables of contents, which allow readers to find papers and presentations with ease and efficiency. The proceedings are listed in alphabetical order by lead presenter and/or author as well as referenced in additional tables of contents by categories recognized in NDEO's Dance Education Research Descriptive Index (DELRdi)-- Title, Educational Issue, Population Served, and Areas of Service.

**Educational Issues:** Affective Domain, Arts Education, Brain Research, Certification, Children at Risk, Creative Process, Equity, Funding, Health, Integrated Arts, Interdisciplinary Education, Kinesthetic Learning, Learning Style Theories, Multicultural Education, National Content Standards, Policy, Student Achievement, Student Performance, Teacher Standards, Uncertified Teachers

**Populations Served:** Admins & Policy Makers, After School Programs, Artists, Community and Family, Differently Abled, Early Childhood, Grades 5 to 8, Grades 9 to 12, Grades K to 4, Higher Education, Outreach Programs, Private Studios, Senior Citizens and Elderly, World Cultures

**Areas of Service:** Advocacy, Artists in Schools, Assessments- Nat'l, State & LEA, Assessments- Programs, Assessments- Programs, Assessments- Stud & Teachers, Certification, Child Development, Cognitive Development, Create and Choreog Dance, Creative Process, Critical Analysis,

Curriculum & Sequential Learning, Dance Science & Medicine, Dance Technique, Historical and Cultural Contexts, Interdisciplinary Education, Licensure, Nat'l- State & LEA Standards, Opportunities to Learn, Pedagogy, Performing Dance, Research, Resources, Somatics & Body Therapies, Teacher Prep & Training, Technology, Thinking Skills and Problem Solving Techniques

A national conference of this scope is only possible with the contributions and service of many. A special thank you to all of the NDEO 2014 conference committee, staff, and volunteers, and especially to Susan Lee the Host Site Chair and Professor at Northwestern University Dance Department. Also the assistance and efforts of the Chicago Public Schools, Department of Arts Education, Dance Center of Columbia College, HMS Media, Ingenuity Inc., Joffrey Ballet, Jump Rhythm Jazz Project, May I Have This Dance, Northwestern University Dance Program, and the Roosevelt University, Auditorium Theatre. The proceedings are made possible by the National Dance Education Organization Staff including Susan McGreevy-Nicols, Executive Director, Jane Bonbright, Director of Online Professional Development Institute, Melissa Greenblatt, Director of Marketing & Membership, Betsy Loikow, Director of Programs, Gill Wright Miller, Director of Research, Vilma Braja, Director of Finance, Lori Provost, Special Projects Coordinator, Shannon Dooling, Associate Director of Finance and Programs, Helene Sheff, Conference Planner, and Anne Dunkin, Coordinator of the Dance Ed Literature & Research descriptive index (DELRdi).

Thank you to all of the contributing authors this year. Without your work, the Conference Proceedings would not be possible. It has been a pleasure reading through your materials for publication and I hope that you will continue to share your research and teaching discoveries. Documentation of the collaborative methods and educational experiences from the conference is a critical component of sharing the legacy of dance education for the artists, dance educators, and students of the future.

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## Abstract of Paper

### The Choreographic Lineage Resource: Collaboratively Created, Globally Sourced

Melanie Aceto, MFA

#### *ABSTRACT*

The Choreographic Lineage (CL) project presents an interactive web-based network illustrating connections between modern dance artists, their teachers, their students, their collaborators and people who they were influenced by. The main goal is to establish a knowledge base documenting and preserving 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century modern dance lineage that is searchable and mineable and that will continue to grow as new generations of artists are added. CL is intended as a global resource for investigating artistic influences, career paths, choreographic connections both complex and obscure, and as a hub for choreographic materials on each artist. Dance scholars can trace the migration of modern dance techniques and styles both from teacher to student and from choreographer to dancer. Dance researchers will be able to access a choreographer's teachers as well as students they taught revealing artistic connections in both directions. CL illuminates shared influences. The work of several choreographers may have similarities due to studying with the same teacher or dancing for the same choreographer, and CL would reveal these connections. Dance educators can further their study of a particular dance technique by seeking out teachers who have danced for and studied with that particular technique's originator. CL is a place where artists can contribute their history and have it be accessible to the world without waiting until they have a book written about them. Dance students can see who their favorite dancers studied with in order to seek out parallel training. Dance students unable to study with a choreographer abroad can find a choreographer to study with nationally who has danced for that international choreographer and has a similar style. Dance audiences can find more of the kind of work they like through revealed connections.

Choreographic Lineage not only includes information about dancers and choreographers, but the composers, designers, writers and artists with whom they have collaborated and therefore is intrinsically connected to contemporaneous movements in these other disciplines. A broad goal of the project is to develop a template that can be utilized in other disciplines, from music to physics, to capture their own lineage. As well, CL seeks to develop a model for multi-disciplinary collaboration among artists and computer scientists to explore creative avenues for promoting the arts and engaging the next generation by leveraging emerging technologies.

#### *BIOGRAPHY*

**Melanie Aceto, MFA**, is a modern dancer, choreographer, educator and researcher who earned her Master of Fine Arts degree in dance from New York University's Tisch School of the Arts. Her creative interests are in interdisciplinary solo and large group works. Her choreography has been performed internationally and nationally in Toronto, Guatemala, Germany, Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, the Studio Museum in Harlem, and the Ailey Citigroup Theater, among many others. Melanie's research interests include investigating models for teaching dance composition and modern technique and creating resources for both. Current projects include Choreographic Lineage, a web-based resource presenting the lineage of choreographers and dance artists. [www.choreographiclineage.buffalo.edu](http://www.choreographiclineage.buffalo.edu). She is currently an Associate Professor at the University at Buffalo. [www.melanieaceto.com](http://www.melanieaceto.com) [aceto@buffalo.edu](mailto:aceto@buffalo.edu)

## Summary of Special Interest Group Meeting

### K-12 Special Interest Group Meeting

Abigail Agresta-Stratton, MA, RDE

#### *SUMMARY*

The conversations, questions, issues, and concerns spanned the spectrum from.....

- 1) How do you move from a general dance program to a more specialized, "conservatory" or performing arts school approach.
- 2) How do you get administrators to think an idea of your own was really his or her idea.
- 3) How do you get support and funding for appropriate facilities and supplies
- 4) How do you deal with scheduling..... Semester course or year long course, credits, successful models.
- 5) How do we deal with the Dance vs PE issue?

What do we do about the differences in credentialing or certification from state to state? Does dance fall within the Arts or PE or both in your state? At this point in time, this is a state to state issue. In NY, the answer is very simple and very complex. There is a specific NYS Dance K - 12 Certificate. There is also a specific NYS Physical Education K - 12. Dance as an Art must be taught by a Dance Certified K - 12 Dance Educator and the student must receive Dance as an Art credit. If dance is a small component of a varied PE program, it must be taught by a PE certified educator, and PE credit must be earned by the student. This is true for NYS.

I must send a special thank you for Kelly Berick for taking notes.

#### *BIOGRAPHY*

Abigail Agresta-Stratton, MA, RDE, attended NYU Steinhardt and has taught dance and created curriculums for PS161M in the NYCDOE and WIHS in on LI in NY and SCDC at TDHS in Chester, VA. Abigail is a graduate of DEL and was a member of the NYCDOE Blueprint Writing Committee, a scorer of the NYS Dance CST, Chair of NYCDE/UFT, President of NYSDEA, and was on the board of CREDO. Abigail received the 2013 Dance Teacher Magazine K – 12 Award. [abigail0103@verizon.net](mailto:abigail0103@verizon.net)

## Summary of Panel Discussion

### K-12 Task Force Panel: Embedded and Meaningful Assessment of the Student and the Teacher

Abigail Agresta-Stratton, MA, RDE

#### *SUMMARY*

This panel encouraged the dance educator to be a leader in assessments. Our focus was on how assessment is a natural component to dance and something dance educators should embrace. We focused on how assessment relates to promoting dance education as well as the link to teacher evaluation.

We addressed the issue that assessment should be an integral part of the curricular design, aligned with the standards, goals, and instructional activities, all working in sync.

We discussed the need for multiple assessments strategies from formative to summative to assessment of teachers, and how these coordinate.

Assessment of what is taught and what is learned is inherently tied and should be organic, not forced.

Assessment of dance students and dance educators should be intertwined in a positive and productive manner.

Dance educators need to show that we assess learning in valid and reliable ways, so that dance will be considered a discipline worthy of K-12. We need to understand and document how we assess dance so that we can be the leaders in what constitutes good assessment.

Dance Educators are natural innovators. Dance Educators have been innovators in the teaching and learning necessary and desired for success for many years and will continue to be the leaders in education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Lynn focused on teacher evaluation and how that is hooked to having those assessments

Dale focused on formative and summative assessment, as a pedagogical tool which has many applications including using to set learning goals and determine student growth outcomes.

Marty focused on "The Positive and Negative Effects of Teacher Evaluation on Student Evaluation and Course Content".

Kelly focused on practical applications in the classroom.

#### **Summary of the Link between Teacher K-12 Evaluation and Student Assessment**

The Race to the Top grant and the waiver for NCLB for which states could apply required states to develop rigorous teacher evaluation plans. State evaluation plans had to include evaluation of all teachers, and assessment of student achievement and growth was a major requirement in evaluating teachers. Most states had to rush to develop and implement evaluation plans.

The question became what student assessments to include as part of the evaluation plan. Most states and districts opted to use math and ELA scores for all teachers. This could have been for ease and that it is perceived that dance did not have valid and reliable assessments. Using math and ELA scores for dance does not give us useful/valuable information on student achievement. Therefore, it won't give us useful or correlating



information/data on teacher effectiveness. Do you know of any business/org that evaluates an employee on another employee's job performance? Just as we want to administer fair and balanced assessment to our students, we want and need fair and balanced assessment for dance educators. Evaluations for dance educators must be based on the content we teach and on multiple measures, and support for teachers before sanctions.

And we need to be the ones educating and advocating for this.

## *BIOGRAPHIES*

**Abigail Agresta-Stratton, MA, RDE**, attended NYU Steinhardt and has taught dance and created curriculums for PS161M in the NYCDOE and WIHS in on LI in NY and SCDC at TDHS in Chester, VA. Abigail is a graduate of DEL and was a member of the NYCDOE Blueprint Writing Committee, a scorer of the NYS Dance CST, Chair of NYCDE/UFT, President of NYSDEA, and was on the board of CREDO. Abigail received the 2013 Dance Teacher Magazine K – 12 Award. [abigail0103@verizon.net](mailto:abigail0103@verizon.net)

**Lynn** completed Hartford Ballet's Teacher Training Program, and earned a BA in Dance at ASU. She taught dance to all ages, and is a certified Labanotation teacher. She managed an arts-based charter school, and currently, performs administrative duties for arts organizations. Lynn helped revise the Arizona Dance Standards, and worked on developing state assessments for dance. Lynn is a member of the Dance Notation Bureau, International Council of Kinetography Laban, and National Dance Education Organization. She served as Secretary and President of AzDEO and is currently Executive Assistant. Lynn served as the State Affiliate representative on the NDEO board.

**Kelly Berick** formed and has directed the collegiate-model Akron School for the Arts dance program at Firestone High School in Akron, Ohio for 19 years. Prior, she performed professionally and taught dance in public schools and universities in SC, PA, and OH. She served on Ohio's Arts Content Standards and Model Curriculum writing teams. She was named Ohio's Dance Educator of the Year in 2001 by OAHPERD, and is this year's recipient of the OhioDance Award for Contributions to Dance Education. Berick holds dance degrees from Columbia College, Temple University, and the University of Akron.

**Marty Sprague MA, BFA** has over 40 years of experience in dance education. Marty holds an MA in dance education from the Teachers College, Columbia University and a BFA from Boston Conservatory. She has taught all levels from early childhood through higher education. She has been involved in program, curriculum, professional, and policy development. She has written and reviewed standards at the district, state and national levels. Marty is co-author, with Helene Scheff and Susan McGreevy-Nichols, of five dance text and resource books. Marty is currently serving on the executive editorial board for NDEO's Journal of Dance Education and editorial board for Arts Education Policy Review.

**Dale Schmid** is an NDEO past president and project coordinator for DELTA. He's been the Visual & Performing Arts Coordinator for New Jersey's State Department of Education since 1999. An active member of the State Education Agency Directors of Arts Education, Dale was SEADAE's delegate for NCASS's Dance Standards. During his tenure at NJDOE he's held numerous leadership positions including the governance

committee of the New Jersey Arts Education Partnership, and executive committees of the national Arts Education Partnership, States Collaborative on Assessment and Student Standards, SEADAE, and NJN Public Broadcasting. Dale's a Doctoral candidate at the University of Pennsylvania.

## Summary of Movement Session

### Jazz Dance Choreography – Historical Collaborations with Dance Luminaries

Barbara Angeline, MA

#### *ABSTRACT*

Historical collaborations with dance artists from our past create new possibilities for choreography. We know there is much to learn from the historic struggles and creative artistry of the many dance luminaries who have come before us. How can we make dance history relevant to our students and performers, expose them to distinctive styles and dances from significant contributors to history and teach them about collaborating with, rather than appropriating from, other artists? This workshop forwards ideas for dance educators with students of all ages:

1. Collaborations with historic dance luminaries provide expanded possibilities for teaching and choreography.
2. Dance history and the value of past works need to be forwarded through our students. Making dance history relevant is essential to students' dance education.
3. Students need education on the difference between inspiration by and appropriation of another artist's work. Participants will work through a step-by-step, collaborative process. We will analyze the work of a past dance master, glean the essence and characteristics of that artist's history and contributions, then apply information to our own short composition.

Issues of inspiration vs. appropriation will be discussed. This process fosters choreographic collaboration with past artists, opportunities to “work” with and understand these artists, and a means to make dance history relevant to our students and performers. Many choreographers do a beautiful job of incorporating history in their dance works and continuing the legacy of artists from the past. The choreographic and educational process forwarded in this workshop makes collaboration with history “user-friendly.” Teachers and choreographers of any dance genre can use the process to expose their students and performers to the historical and artistic significance of “old” artists, teach students/performers how to choreograph “in the style of” without appropriating, and model current relevance for dance history, placing students and performers inside—rather than outside—a continuing historical legacy.

#### **Intent of Workshop**

As a choreographer and teacher, I live in a technical jazz dance and choreography land with a clear, historical voice and a sense of myself as a contributor to that history. This is important to emphasize to performers and students. I think sometimes they see history as what is over and dead, not as a living interaction and a continuing story. This process was developed for my own explorations and studies, with the intent of choreographing pieces that linked me to the legacy of those who have come before. Most often I look for choreographic ideas with an eye towards what I want to know or learn or do--that which I have not done before. I enjoy challenging myself to find new ways of thinking about movement, history and what happens in the myriad ways these two can collide.

Though it began as a choreographic working process, I believe it can be used quite well for dance educators teaching composition, history,

and technique/movement classes to students of all ages. The worksheet is purposefully open in its format to allow for many interpretations and iterations.

### **2 ways to connect history to dance work today...**

PARALLEL HISTORIES - I think this is happening quite a bit “See how dance composition connects to what is happening? Social

issues, politics, etc. impact what the choreographers felt was important to express (e.g. Alvin Ailey/ “Revelations”). What do you feel is important? How will you express that?”

EMULATION: Study of a choreographer or performer to emulate his or her style. This is often done in visual arts – Study Monet’s life;

Study Monet’s art; then “Paint in the style of Monet”. More often in dance and music, it’s done through reconstruction: Play Bach or perform a dance choreographed by a famous choreographer.

### **Historical Collaboration**

- Creates new possibilities for choreography.
- Helps performers/students learn from and collaborate with dance luminaries through interactive participation.
- Makes dance history “alive” and relevant to our performers and students, exposing them to distinctive styles and dances from significant contributors to history and challenging them to contribute to the next chapter of dance history.
- 21st Century Challenge! Sets an example for collaborating with, rather than appropriating from, other artists.

### **WHAT DO I MEAN BY COLLABORATION?**

- INTERACTIVE RELATIONSHIP
- CONTRIBUTIONS FROM ALL

### **Historical Collaboration – The Process**

Introduction of our topic: Josephine Baker and my work on “eat Crow” (Please go to [www.BarbaraAngeline.com](http://www.BarbaraAngeline.com) for information)

1) RESEARCH (Discussed but did not do in workshop. Go to References and Resources at [www.BarbaraAngeline.com](http://www.BarbaraAngeline.com) for list)

- a. SUPERFICIAL SURFING vs. STUDY of the luminary and how/where the luminary was situated in the world
- b. EXAMPLE: SHOW LIST OF RESOURCES FOR FOSSE PIECE AND BAKER PIECE (history, dance, and him)
- c. If students work in groups, have each bring in a book, an article, a documentary video and a dance video link (they can post on a Google doc or blog to avoid repeats.)

2) DANCE ANALYSIS

a. BACKGROUND

- i. Appropriation vs. Inspiration and Collaboration – Creative Responsibility

- ii. The blessing and curse of YouTube
- b. ANALYSIS OF BODY OF WORK
  - i. HAND OUT AND GO OVER WORKSHEETS/PENCILS
  - ii. ANALYSIS OF BAKER VIDEO
  - iii. Pull out key concepts/adjectives/movement elements/mood/staging (relationships of performers)
- c. COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIP (Quick summary): As the choreographer for your piece, what is your role?
  - i. DECISIONS: HOW AUTHENTIC? HOW FAR REMOVED FROM THE ORIGINAL PERSON/STYLE STUDIED? HOW ABSTRACTED? OR FUSED? OR DOES IT JUST PROVIDE A NEW ESSENCE/WHIFF OF INSPIRATION FOR YOUR OWN STYLE, A WAY TO FILL BLACK HOLES?
  - ii. A detailed list of collaborative relationship is on your worksheet. Similar to apprenticeship.  
The farther removed the original relationship, the stronger the new choreographer's voice.

### 3) CHOREOGRAPHY

- a. Talk about "eat Crow" – Choreographer 1 for me
- b. PUT PAPERS ASIDE
- c. Teach Kevin's solo
- d. Groups of 4 use analysis to choreograph next phrase (Assistant Choreographer 2?)
- e. KEEP CHECKING THE PAPER to incorporate as much of your study as possible.
- f. PERFORM IN GROUPS.

### 4) SHARING THE RESEARCH, ETC. WITH PERFORMERS/STUDENTS

- a. How much of research, etc., you share with performers is in direct proportion to what degree you want the performers to emulate your subject. Do you want them to "be the Josephine"? or do you want them to create a voice within her style? Intent? Culture? Or do you want a brand new piece inspired by the essence of the inspiration of the Josephine? Or has Josephine, with all of her qualities, taken up break dancing? These match up with the 1-5 scale of collaborative relationships on the worksheet.

Q&A: GREAT DISCUSSION – THANK YOU!!!

## RESEARCH

20 Resources – I have looked at multiple types of information related to my luminary and related history and dance topics (books, videos, articles).

Citations – I have written down all of the citations for all of my resources.

## DANCE ANALYSIS (Complete for each dance viewed)

Name of Luminary:

Title of Dance:

General Ideas/Impressions:

Historical/Cultural Information:

Staging, Pathways, Relationships:

Movement elements (dynamics, kinesphere, body parts, etc.):

Adjectives (movement):

Adjectives (mood, connection to story):

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COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIP – How close will your choreography relate to that of the luminary? (See below for details)

Assistant Choreographer 1 - I am choreographing within the choreographer's work (e.g., his/her assistant filling in a section of the studied, choreographed work.

Assistant Choreographer 2 - The choreographer is letting me choreograph a dance in his/her musical or concert.

Choreographer 1 - I am choreographing my own dance "in the style of" the studied choreographer/performer.

Choreographer 2 - I am fusing the choreographer's/performer's style with my own to develop a new vocabulary.

Choreographer 3 - I am choreographing my own style, with hints of inspiration from the choreographer.

## CHOREOGRAPHY

Assistant Choreographer 1 - I am choreographing within the choreographer's work (e.g., his/her assistant filling in a section of the choreographed work.

a. Choreography stays in the studied time period.

b. Choreography examines vocabulary of the dance to replicate or closely parallel the original.

c. CLASS ACTIVITY (example) – teach original choreography, leaving out 16 – 32 cts. for groups of performers/students to choreograph.

Assistant Choreographer 2 - The choreographer is letting me choreograph a dance in his/her musical.

a. Choreography stays in the studied time period.

b. Choreography examines vocabulary of the studied work to replicate or closely parallel it.

c. CLASS ACTIVITY – Same as above

d. EXTENDED CLASS ACTIVITY - Provide 2nd piece of music, originally choreographed by the studied choreographer for performers/students to choreograph (study intent and structure of the piece).

Students follow the structure/intent. Discussion of how much personal “flare” can be added while remaining authentic to the time period/original.

Choreographer 1 - I am choreographing “in the style of” the studied choreographer/performer.

- a. Choreography can be in studied time period or any other.
- b. Choreography uses as many of the elements from the dance analysis as possible to relate closely to the style, dynamics, etc. while developing a related, but new vocabulary.
- c. CLASS ACTIVITY – Same as above
- d. EXTENDED CLASS ACTIVITY - Use a current piece of music for choreography.

Choreographer 2 - I am fusing the choreographer’s/performer’s style with my own to develop a new vocabulary.

- a. Choreography can be in any time period.
- b. CLASS ACTIVITY – Discussion of different ways to accomplish a “fusion.” Should I use all of the elements/ideas/adjectives, etc. that I got from my analysis of the video? WHY is it important to me to include the collaboration of the past choreographer? What in my choreography will be expanded/stated/enhanced/etc. by my collaboration?

Choreographer 3 - I am choreographing my own style, with hints of inspiration from the choreographer.

- a. CLASS ACTIVITY – Discussion. How can you be inspired without stealing? Is the essence of evolution appropriation?
- b. CLASS ACTIVITY - ONE COOL THING – Choreograph a short dance using 1 element from the dance analysis.

## *BIOGRAPHY*

**Barbara Angeline, MA**, Instructor of Dance Arts, Rutgers University. Teach: Jazz, Broadway Jazz, History of Broadway Dance (author, fully online), Improvisation, Dance Studies, Dance History, Choreography for Theater. Jazz Dance Choreography includes: "Tightrope" - choreographed in the style of Bob Fosse; "eat Crow" - inspired by Josephine Baker; “Mi Maschera (Mask Me)” - explored female identity and the use of Venetian Masks in the Baroque Period. Performance credits: Broadway Backwards 5 (featured dancer @ Lincoln Center), 6 & 7 in NYC; Oakland Ballet Company, Equity musicals/national tours; Radio City Christmas Spectacular (5 years), RCMH Easter Spectacular (4 years – dance captain/adagio feature). Research/ Presentations: Critical Thinking for Dancers in Post-secondary Education; Jazz Dance in Higher Education; Jazz Choreography and Historical Collaborations with Dance Luminaries; Online Pedagogy and Assessments for Dancers. Member of Writing Committee for the NDEO "Vision Document for Dance 2050: The Future of Dance In Higher Education.” Full bio at [BarbaraAngeline.com](http://BarbaraAngeline.com). [barbara.Angeline10@gmail.com](mailto:barbara.Angeline10@gmail.com)

## Summary of Panel Discussion

### Jazz Dance in Higher Education and The Professions: Where Do We Go From Here?

Moderator/Panelist: Barbara Angeline, MA

Panelists: Patricia Cohen, MA, Melanie George, MA,  
Karen Hubbard, MA, Beth Megill, MFA

#### *ABSTRACT*

Jazz dance is situated in popular culture, leading to passionate debate and discussion about jazz dance in higher education and its connections to social dance and dance professions. Jazz dance is often seen as an elective in post-secondary dance departments and programs, with limited requirement for student study of the genre. Dance departments also face challenges surrounding the types of jobs available to their graduates. Students who want to work in the field increasingly demand commercial dance, hip hop and theatrical styles.

This panel—with combined areas of expertise in jazz dance history, jazz dance education, jazz dance choreography, jazz dance techniques and jazz dance styles—collaborated with audience participants to bring perspective to compelling questions:

- How do we define jazz dance? Is it solely a social dance genre?
- How should we forward jazz dance in higher education? Should jazz class be an embodied history class? Are there codified techniques/styles that can be taught?
- If teachers/choreographers take jazz and "make it their own," is it still jazz?
- Can jazz dancers/choreographers be developed or does training lead them away from the historical, social legacy?
- What is the relevance of jazz dance for today's students, choreographers and performers?
- What shifts do we need to make to maintain the relevance of jazz dance?
- Do innovations in jazz dance expand the art or dilute it?

The panel and audience explored, discussed and shared thoughts on ways educators might collaborate to ensure a meaningful future for jazz dance in higher education and foster expanded connections to jazz dance in popular culture and professional dance. The panel was dedicated to continuing a conversation to bring together diverse, significant considerations about jazz dance education into a vision for the future.

#### **Introduction of Panel**

Barbara Angeline (moderator) introduced herself and each panel member (please see bios), and gave a short contextual statement about the direction and logistics of the panel discussion. Prior to the start of the panel, pre-printed index cards—inviting audience questions and perspectives—were placed on audience chairs.

BA: Welcome! Today, we'll be continuing a conversation about jazz dance in higher education. Last year, at NDEO 2013 in Florida, we had an informal gathering of jazz dance educators who shared ideas about furthering jazz dance in our various institutions. In order to continue, rather than repeat the conversation, I'd like to begin by sharing a few of the ideas that came up:



1. There is never enough curriculum space devoted to jazz. Several reasons were offered, including the idea that jazz is often seen as commercial rather than artistic and fun rather than as a topic of study.
2. Even when jazz dance is valued in a curriculum, limited time is allotted and there is a belief and expectation that “all jazz” (vernacular, historical, technical, commercial, etc.) can be taught in a semester.
3. As jazz dance educators, our own definitions and the values we place on areas of study within a wide spectrum of versions of and ideas about jazz dance, impact what we teach or don’t teach in the classroom.

I put together this brilliant panel of jazz dance educators who are all passionately driven to forward jazz dance and who come at it from different perspectives. I want you to know that I know there are also incredible jazz dance educators on this side of the table [gestures around room], and we’re depending on your perspectives as well.

Each of our panel members will give a brief, introductory statement about her background in jazz dance and her definition of jazz dance in and outside of the context of education. All of them have extensive biographies that would take up much of our time to recite. So, I invite you to read their bios in the NDEO booklet. As you’re listening to these statements, feel free to write down your questions on the cards.

### **Introductory Statements**

#### **Karen Hubbard**

##### *Dance Background*

I grew up in Columbus, Ohio where I participated in black vernacular dance from about the 6<sup>th</sup> grade through college. I studied Vaganova technique through 10<sup>th</sup> grade. During my senior class trip to NY, I took my first jazz class with Jamie Rogers at the June Taylor School. Summer following my freshman year at Kent State University, I returned to the June Taylor School where I was pulled out of a jazz class and invited to join the *NBC Hullabaloo/Motown Tour*.

In June 1968, I graduated Kent State University with a BA degree in Sociology and innumerable hours in the Theatre Department via musicals. Summer 1969, I attended ADF at Connecticut College where I auditioned for Talley Beatty, and I was selected to perform his piece *Bring My Servant Home*. (Debbie Allen, future Ailey Dancer, Ed Love, and current NDEO member Linda Cleveland Simmons were also in Beatty’s cast.) I was awarded a scholarship at NY Clark Center for the Performing Arts, where I studied modern dance with various teachers including James Truitte, Eleo Pomare, Rod Rogers; and authentic jazz with Pepsi Bethel. I also studied modern jazz dance with Fred Benjamin, ballet-influenced jazz with Luigi and funk jazz w/Dunham warm-up with Jo Jo Smith. Additionally, I had jazz classes with Phil Black, Frank Hatchett, and Betsy Haug.

In the early 1970s, I performed with two modern dance companies: Cleveland Modern Dance Association and Karamu Concert Dancers (artistic director was a former Limon Dancer who taught Hawkins technique).

I relocated to NYC where I continued to study dance. I appeared as Ermengarde in Pearl Bailey's company of *Hello Dolly!* (Nat'l tour & Broadway). I was also a dancer in NY Actor's Equity productions of *Finian's Rainbow* and *Showboat*. My last professional dance job in NY was as a Paper Doll prototype/dancer in the film version of *The Wiz!*

In 1978, while living in Lynchburg, VA, I took daily Graham classes at Randolph-Macon Women's College with Helen McGehee. Helene invited to teach a modern dance residency at RMWC, and I also performed in one of her pieces. In 1984, I auditioned and was awarded a Graduate TA in the Dance Department at Ohio State University. In addition to teaching elective courses in modern dance and jazz dance, I was given a freshman majors' class to begin working on developing a Vintage Jazz Dance curriculum. That work has been ongoing since 1985.

### *Philosophy of Jazz Dance in Higher Education*

My dance training and experience are varied. During the process, I have embodied a variety of jazz styles. As a mover, jazz dance is not my preferred style. I consider myself a modern dancer; my aesthetic is modern dance. However, my mission as an educator is to honor the legacy of my dear teacher and mentor Mr. Pepsi Bethel (former Savoy Lindy Hopper and Artistic Director of the Authentic Jazz Dance Theatre) by making information about historical jazz dance available to teachers and students.

I believe if students are to be educated in dance, they must know the history and practice of historical jazz dance as an indigenous US dance form. Being educated in dance also includes the ability to make distinctions and connections between/among jazz dance and other dance styles and forms. How jazz is situated in the curriculum depends on the program and faculty. At UNC Charlotte, we offer two classes in jazz dance: Vintage Jazz Dance is required for majors and minors AND Contemporary Jazz Dance is offered as an elective. In the early days when I taught Contemporary Jazz Dance, it was a course in modern jazz dance. When teaching Vintage Jazz Dance I have always had a musician. When I make a dance in the style of historical jazz dance, I refer to myself as a *dance arranger* because I have no interest/talent in utilizing historical jazz dance vocabulary as a point of departure for invention. Rather, I do my best to maintain the integrity of the vocabulary.

When it comes to jazz dance I believe the past is prologue. The jazz dance past resides in US vernacular dance from the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. US vernacular dance from any era is the prologue for the future of jazz dance. The measure of success for future dance programs in higher education will depend in part on how US vernacular dance, as well as vernacular dance from around the world, is incorporated into experiential and theoretical learning.

I feel fortunate to have made contributions to the discussion/practice of jazz dance at NDEO.

### **Patricia Cohen**

#### *Background Information*

In the early days – mid 1970s – jazz dance in higher education was barely tolerated, “oh you teach that!” Now, I teach in two distinctly different environments:

- a) Undergraduate liberal arts, in which an Arts course is a requirement for graduation
  - a. Acceptable to school's curriculum committee only when reassured of academic content and connection to school's mission
  - b. Students connect jazz music and dance with their (limited) knowledge of American history
  - c. Primary conception of jazz is SYTYCD; a few may know of African roots; none are familiar with vernacular/traditional
  - d. Using a variation of Karen's interactive warm up is empowering, in that it is non-judgmental and safe. Big Apple and final Hip Hop battle become major events
- b) Graduate dance education program with 3 cohorts, 2 of which are required to take Jazz Dance: Culture and Pedagogy
  - a. In terms of syllabic content, I differentiate ABT and Professions semesters
  - b. Problem of ballet dancers in jazz – I place an emphasis on versatility and non-judgment; understanding the relevance in their careers as performers and educators

### *Vision for Jazz Dance in Higher Education*

My vision for jazz dance education is to acknowledge and accept it as part of our American cultural heritage. It is an ever-evolving art form that is embedded in the social fabric of this country. Therefore, it is incumbent upon institutions of higher education to include it in the curricula of Performing Arts and departments and other departments that address the social and historical evolution of America.

The challenges I see for the future of jazz dance in higher education: developing educators in all sectors who are sensitive to, and able to communicate the essence of jazz as an evolving cultural and artistic entity.

The strengths I see in Jazz dance education: the increasing number of people who are influenced by those on this panel and other like-minded educators.

What I see the field needs most: better communication to the public about the “real jazz dance.”

### **Beth Megill**

#### *Background Information and Vision for Jazz Dance in Higher Education*

I am most interested in how we are cultivating jazz dance artists in our higher education programs. I believe that we cannot expect the field to change until we create an educational infrastructure for our emerging jazz dancers and jazz dance choreographers. Most higher education dance programs developed their course work (and specifically their improvisation and composition classes) from a modern dance perspective. Modern dance artists are cultivated through this process, and we see the benefits of such training in college festivals, such as the American College Dance Association (Formerly ACDFA). Jazz dance artists, on the other hand, lack an opportunity to invest in the aesthetics and craftsmanship of their art form. I believe the voices of the future jazz dance artists must be given space to experiment, grow, examine, and shine within our educational programs, if we ever expect to see the art form flourish in academic environments.

Time is the biggest challenge for giving jazz dance students desperately needed opportunities to develop their artistry in improvisation, performance and choreography. Time given toward the study of jazz dance as an art is time that cannot be spent on other dance course work. We need a paradigm shift in our thinking that would mean a redistribution of unit requirements within our programs to accommodate the curricular needs of the jazz dance arts. Jazz dance needs to be given the time and space for its emerging artists to study technique, history, improvisation, and composition through a jazz dance lens.

I believe thoroughly in the power of jazz dance history to inform and inspire our students. The social nature of jazz dance's vernacular heritage requires that we study the people of jazz dance, the ideas of the era and the values of the era as manifested in the movement. In addition, I believe the spirit of jazz dance is not an historical relic. If we relegate jazz dance to being studied as an historical phenomenon, I believe we will have effectively "killed" the future of jazz dance. The spirit of jazz is present, in the now, of the moment. It is an improvisation! Therefore, when we study jazz dance, we must learn to use our history to springboard the genre into today, while maintaining the integrity of the jazz dance essence. In order to change our approach to the study of jazz dance, we must move away from a mere study of the different eras, and move toward a deeper understanding of the unifying aspects within the field. The unifying aspects are the essential principles that made jazz what it was originally and continue to make jazz dance what it is today.

One possibility for shifting the pedagogical values and practices behind jazz dance training is to work from a dance theory and dance literacy perspective. I have recently collaborated with Teresa Heiland, Paige Porter, Susan Gingrasso, Laura Smythe and Tina Curran on defining and notating the Africanist Aesthetics as they appear in jazz dance in its many forms. Working with motif notation, we have been able to drive the discussion of jazz dance aesthetics and practices from a dance theory perspective. The tools of dance literacy offer a framework for deepening the investigation of jazz dance as an art form both improvisationally and compositionally. I have since incorporated the African Aesthetics and the corresponding motif notation into my jazz dance classes, giving my students a new way to intellectually interact with jazz dance that is rich, thought provoking and empowering.

Jazz dance continues to be a driving force in commercial dance scenes, from cruise ships to commercials. Concert jazz dance, on the other hand, is a less known animal, and yet I believe it could be the bridge between the commercial dance world and the more abstract modern and contemporary concert dance scene. I believe that dancers who train in the artistry of jazz dance in an academic setting will be able to shift the values of both the concert jazz world and the commercial jazz world. The dance industry of LA (where I live) is a powerful force in defining our current American culture. I would love to see more informed jazz dancers and choreographers shape that realm from the inside out. If we offer our students rigorous training in the eternal principles of jazz dance, they will better understand how their collective voice is a part of the jazz dance continuum and how they can be the carriers of this legacy into the future.

## **Melanie George**

### *Background Information*

I've always defined myself as a jazz dancer. It is the style in which I was allowed the most dancing. My jazz training started in a dance studio. The aesthetic was musical theatre jazz with a heavy Fosse Influence, as well as the styles of Luigi and Joe Tremaine (by way of Julie Adler). My training continued in college, at Western Michigan University, with the late, great Lindsey Thomas (who I believe a strong Giordano influence). In grad school, I found *my* voice in jazz dance through my teaching as adjunct faculty member and through my thesis work. Billy Siegenfeld's "If Jazz Dance, Then Jazz Music" was seminal reading during this time.

### *Vision for Jazz Dance in Higher Education*

I consider myself a collage artist, rather than an innovator or an iconoclast. This approach aligns with jazz's ever changing perspective, but also leaves room for my pre-disposition to historically based styles, and my inherent nostalgia (which starts with learning about jazz music at a early age from my father).

As the program director of a university dance program, I have the luxury emphasizing jazz in our curriculum, alongside modern and ballet.

My approach to teaching jazz is filtered through my interest in the connection of jazz dance to the roots and development of jazz music, improvisation, and applying Laban Movement analysis to jazz dance styles. To that end, I teach what I refer to a "Styles" class. In the course of a semester students do learn "my style" of jazz (which is heavily informed by the work of others before me), but it is positioned along side many others, included by not limited to 30's Swing, 80s commercial/music video, 70s classical by way of the Luigi technique, Musical Theatre jazz – which has included learning original repertory from West Side Story and A Chorus Line, Latin, Afro-Cuban, Matt Mattox Freestyle. The goal is to get them to move to in variety of ways germane to jazz dance, rather than making them experts in "Melanie's style"

In a typical semester we analyze 5-6 styles. My warm-up includes improvisational moments that allow it to be adapted to each style. All center floor and progressive movement phrases are created around the aesthetic values and movement profile of the style.

Teaching jazz in a liberal arts institution has afforded me the luxury of emphasizing analysis and historical context in my jazz classes. Classroom discussions often focus on how we are defining "technique", consequently, upsetting the Eurocentric, ballet-based hierarchy in jazz teaching.

Most recently, I have been researching a new style that I am calling Drag Jazz – based on the work of Yanis Marshall and Jonté (a choreographer who has worked extensively with Beyonce), and influenced by pop culture and the drag ballroom scene of New York City. The style allows me to address commercial, contemporary concert, and 21<sup>st</sup> century vernacular styles, how to dance in heels, while touching on gender and queer theory, as this style presents jazz as hyper-feminine through the lens of a queer male perspective. Adding this contemporary component has been instrumental in keeping my students engaged while connecting them to history and evolution of the form.

### **Transcript of Panel/Audience Participant Discussion**

[Note: After the introductory statements for each panel member, audience participants were given an opportunity to write down additional questions that were provoked by the panel introductions. Information on the cards indicated that the audience was a blend of graduates students in dance education; jazz dance educators from private studios, K-12 schools and post-secondary dance departments; and dance program/department directors and chairs. While Barbara Angeline gathered and organized the card handouts, panel members had a chance to respond to their colleagues' introductory statements.]

KH (in response to MG): I'd like to bring up the idea of the jazz technique? When you say you teach jazz technique, what is a technique class? Because I've never had a jazz class where I was given any kind of technical correction, never any anatomical information. So I'm just wondering, is that what you do? Is that why you call it a technique class?

MG: This evolving styles class that I teach requires me to analyze what's being asked of the body by any given kind of work. So, if we're looking at a 30's swing vernacular base, I'm talking a lot about how you ground your weight and how you bend your limbs. I'm getting [students] to really move from the pelvis versus if I'm teaching... We did this sort of 70's "classical" jazz thing for the past couple weeks and [we talked] about the incorporation of ballet and how that's going to be more about center of levity instead of center of gravity and where your shoulders are placed in relation to your ribcage. So, I'm putting my hands on them... It's a real technique class.

I want to just say one more thing about technique. One of the discussions that my students and I have been having recently—because they compared this 30's swing with the 70's classical—and they said that 30's swing is less technical; it doesn't involve technique. So, we've been having a dialogue about what that actually means because what they're saying is that it doesn't involve ballet technique... [Big nods from all panel members.]... and I've been talking with them about how there's a technique to everything, and if it didn't involve technique, you would be able to do it, and you don't do it so well. So it's not about that. I teach at an institution that is a very big, international service institution—that's the thing that they do there. It's a remarkably Euro-centric perspective to talk about something not having technique at an institution like mine. So let's upset that balance of "what is technical" and what is valued and the hierarchy of what makes certain types of jazz more valuable than others in our perspective. What is contemporary? What does "contemporary" mean? Why in the hell are we still calling it "jazz" if you're going to talk about it being from a ballet perspective?

PC: Can I add to that? In terms of technique, and I agree with you [Melanie], and that's maybe a separate conversation, but in terms of the graduate level course that I teach, we do explore the techniques of Luigi, and of Matt Mattox, whose work I know, and Lynn Simonson. Lynn, of course, her technique is not a jazz technique. It is generic, and she will admit that. People can use it to inform their work any way they wish. Having said that, because her work is so steeped in anatomical correctness and alignment, that is valid. Also, all this comes about in the 50s, when jazz becomes codified, so before then, yes, there was technique, but there was no technique that had a name: "Matt Mattox Technique," "Luigi Technique". So, I think things do shift then in the discussion of technique.

MG: Well, I think there's an approach to how we use our bodies, though, and that's what I mean when I'm saying "technique." What do you have to do with your body to do what this particular style is asking of you?...

PC: Exactly.

MG: ...and that means you also have to eliminate some other things. I think that's sort of how technique is formed; it's about what you choose and don't choose.

BM: And I'm interested in the thinking behind all of the "technique". How are we training jazz dancers as thinkers and also as thinkers who identify with the artistry of the process behind jazz dance? So "technique" is not merely just the "how", but [it's] "How are you thinking about what we're doing?" We're analyzing beyond specific forms or styles. We're looking at links; [gestures to Melanie] that's why your LMA work or any theoretical work that's not genre-specific is a fun lens to use to look at jazz dance because you're looking at the structure of how things are composed and put together and how different combinations will yield different styles and different value sets...So that the thinking behind their choice-making is setting them up to take the next step in jazz dance. Because I have seen some of my jazz dancers really consider themselves "dancers", and beyond being told what to do, there's not a whole lot of them taking the time and carrying the genre forward, necessarily, because I don't know if they've been taught how to think about carrying on the baton and [to think about becoming] the next generation. They might do it by default, and certainly people do, but we aren't, necessarily, cultivating the artistry in that way, as we do in modern dance, for instance. We really take semesters with our [modern dance] students to cultivate them as artists.

MG: And I have to say that that's why I use so much jazz music in my class, why I align myself with a jazz music model because in order to be virtuosic in jazz music, you have to know how to improvise, so it requires you to take ownership of what you're doing in the work. And I find that the more "pop-centric" the jazz, the less ownership there is of the material, so in many ways, for me, I don't call that work "jazz" anymore. I'm not saying it's not valid and wonderful and interesting. It just doesn't value what I consider jazz should [MG covers her mouth with her hands]...I shouldn't say "should"...what jazz values. "Shoulds" are dangerous. [Nods from the panel.]

BA: Good! So, let's take a couple of these questions [from audience cards]. They're fantastic, and I think universal as well:

[Note: Comments, questions, etc. written on the index card handouts were submitted anonymously. They were organized and presented to the panel by the moderator.]

BA [reading audience question to panel]: In a short window of time, what is most important to teach to students about jazz?

PC: Hmm. I think it's along the lines of what Beth said: how to think about it in terms of the continuum; how to think about it in our American cultural history—the negatives and the positives. Do we think about appropriation? Or do we think about blending the forms throughout the eras?

BA: And I would say that's a big gap in understanding when students come to the university and learn jazz; the biggest gap in learning is knowing where it came from and the cultural/historical aspect of it. It was [a gap] for me until grad school, when I had Pat's class, and she talked about this and [Big "eyes wide open" gesture with

hands and eyes], and it was like “Wait...WHAT??? I thought people just picked a cool piece of music and did ball changes to it.” [Room full of laughter.]

BM: Kick, ball changes!

KH: Yes, I think if students are to be educated in dance, they need to understand that jazz is indigenous to the U.S. [Room full of nods.] And I think in discussing and in teaching jazz, we need to be specific about the context. Is it authentic jazz—meaning from the first part of the twentieth century—or is it contemporary? You know? Where does it fit in? Is it popular entertainment, jazz-influenced dance? It is jazz-influenced ballet? Jazz-influenced modern dance? I think we can get students to make distinctions, not for negative reasons, but just so that they have an understanding, a context. And I think as educators, we need to articulate the context. We can sit here and talk about “jazz, jazz, jazz”, but what kind of jazz are we talking about? What era are we talking about? And here’s me; I’m going to become a lightning rod here. I don’t think there’s any such thing as jazz dance technique. [Puts both hands up in “don’t shoot” gesture.] I think there’s jazz-influenced ballet technique and jazz-influenced modern dance technique, and the technique that gets taught in the jazz class relates to...[Turns to Melanie] Your dancers couldn’t do the work without having that ballet or modern dance. My dancers, the students I teach authentic jazz to, they may have had modern or ballet, but it doesn’t matter. And so I don’t consider myself teaching technique; I’m teaching style, and there’s nothing technical about what I do.

PC: And if I can just bounce off that very briefly...One of the things that I have found really interesting: in the undergraduate courses I teach, I teach from the vernacular because they’ve not had dance. It is safe; it is not judgmental; and it is incredibly empowering to take ownership of something that you do on the spot, in the moment, and make your own. [KH nods]

BM: I would answer, and it’s arguable whether or not this could be achieved in a short amount of time, but it should at least be, for me, brought out...and that would be musicianship, the idea of rhythm, syncopation. Because, for me, that is the backbone of whatever we’re choosing to do, and when we start thinking from rhythmic structures, the movement changes. If we look at a modern dance and the extended, sustained timing, and then once you change to quick timing, and you start talking about rhythm or rhythm state and moving your weight and shifting, you start to embody the physicalisation that I think is at the crux of authentic jazz and at the crux of many jazz styles.

MG: I simultaneously agree with you and disagree with you. [Room laughs.] I think, in general, understanding weight is really important to jazz dancing, and I think that musicality is really important to effective performance and embodying, but I’m thinking about one of my peers, who teaches a very contemporary jazz style, where neither of those things are valued, so I don’t know what the two things that are important to teach in a jazz class are because those things aren’t relevant to her class, and if you focused on those things, you couldn’t do her work.

BM: I guess I was thinking to contrast what they are likely already getting because they’re likely getting ballet and modern technique. So, it’s different if we’re talking about a first-time dancer or a dancer who has other exposure.



MG: I feel like the key, the thing that's...not problematic, but that we're going to keep kind of running into is that the nature of jazz is that it is vast, and it is diverse [Nods from the room and panel] and the question that I'm always asking when I'm approaching a new style in my class—which requires me to constantly be changing the way that I move and the way that I think about my work—is “What does this particular thing value?” And so that's the point I'm making [Melanie turns to Beth] is that what you're saying, I agree with because I value those things...

BM: Right.

MG: ...but if someone else is teaching a class in which those things are not valued, I don't feel that there's a commonality among all of these different ways of teaching jazz that we could find the two/three things that are important. I just don't know if that really, truly exists.

BA: And I find—now I guess I'm jumping in as one of the panel—the way that I link technique and culture and history in my jazz class is to say that jazz reflected what was happening in the culture. And the movements that were happening and the ways in which a body felt that movement were different. [To Melanie] And it seems like you do the same thing with your 30's swing, etc. So my job as a teacher is to take the students back in time to the lives those people were living, to the dancing they were doing and why they were living it and doing it in that way and see if we can replicate those bodies, and that's the technique. The technique is “Wait! Are you dancing like a ballet dancer who is pretending to be back in that time, or are you living the life of that person through your body?” Which is really important to what I feel jazz shows: it reflects the culture; it reflects the issues; it reflects what's happening. [Pointing to audience participant]: Do you have a question?

Audience Participant (AP) #1: So I know, and I agree, that jazz mirrors the temperature of the times, and I think that what's cropping up now is because dance is sensationalized by shows like “So You Think You Can Dance”, so there are styles like krumping and hip hop, and those are all valid techniques, but the kids, that's what they want. So, I think history is important, but for the young kids, they just want a “post-modernism” of jazz dance. “Let's take something traditional and switch it up a little bit.” So that's where I'm concerned.

BA: I think Karen has something to say about that.

KH: Well, yes. But that's exactly what the ballet dancers and the modern dancers did with jazz dance. Roger Pryor Dodge was a music critic who danced with Mura Dehn. He said, “None of the authentic jazz dance developed onto the professional stage.” (I disagree with that.) “Dancers trained in ballet and modern dance took over show business and danced to some form of jazz music. The dancing became the choreographer's idea of what the dancers with ballet and modern training should do with jazz music.”

AP #2: ...I wish the Pepsi Bethels and Mama Lou Parks were here because it was all a feeling and an expression. You put the music on, and it was how you interpreted it. And Pepsi had his awesome style, and Mama Lou Parks was like “Put on a girdle and a padded bra, so for the women, you're into it, feeling that torso”...I just wanted to bring that up because we have a tendency to take technique and put it into a box. I think jazz is such a personal self-expression, and these were the people that I studied with and danced with... and it's just a feeling. It's a feeling...So, with the torso, it's low and close to the ground. I think we have to remember that the influences are so important.

MG: I want to say that I don't separate those things either. I think that you have to be a citizen of the classroom, so you can't talk about 30's swing and not talk about the fact that it's social dance. My warm-up specifically has improvisational moments that cater to each style. For 30's swing, we start with a walk; [turns to Karen] I know you also start with a walk in your warm-up. For that one, they have to face somebody else, which is different from what's going to happen if we're going to do "Cool" from *West Side Story* that day.

BM: In terms of through-line that is shared by everything, I think there are. A group of us got together three years ago, and we started looking through the lens of Laban theory at jazz styles, and at the Africanist aesthetics, and how one would notate the Africanist aesthetics, using Labanotation or Laban Theory Notation. And what was interesting is then we categorized, according to style, which values and which physicalisations were shared. And one of the universal principles was a personal relationship to music. That it's not just any music. That it's not just: "I'm going to play some music, and you're going to do some combination." [It's:] "I'm playing this music, and you're dancing to this music because you have a personal relationship to this music, and you aren't just going to up and change it because then it's no longer the same conversation. Ideally live [music], but of course we use recorded music. So, that was shared, and also, I would argue the ephebism and high affect juxtaposition exist universally, but rhythm state does not always. [Pointing to Melanie] You're right; you're absolutely right. That does not. It's just that is my advice.

KH: Do any of you use live musicians? Or do you use recorded music?

MG: Primarily recorded, but when I can get a combo together...

KH: I feel really fortunate because I've always been able to have live musicians.

BA: That makes a big difference.

KH: Yes, it really does.

AP #3: I think that what I'm experiencing for the first time, because I am teaching a cohort now of freshmen only...my particular lens is to help them shift from their cultural attitudes about what jazz dance is to them to how to study it in higher education. What does that shift mean between taking class and studying something? So, when I overlay that idea, that developmentally a ten year old experiencing jazz and then the twenty year old, we have a totally different experience happening because as the artist and dancer is developing, some things, I think, are out of order. So, the way we are doing things culturally, where everything is about competition in the private sector, there's not a balance on the other side of competitions so much. Then, we're setting up very specific definitions for what jazz dance is to a student. And then they show up at a university, and then there is quite a bit of untangling to be done to start again. So if we have that one semester [to teach jazz dance], half of that is just to find out "What do you think about jazz?" Because without the thoughtfulness and the engagement, we never get to "Where would you like to put your body today for this particular style?" We can't even have any of these discussions until we find out what they think because they just want to take class. So I think the developmental arch over it is really important.

MG: I find that that is why higher education is the best setting for me because I'm allowed the space in which to talk about jazz dance as an academic subject. The nature of how our curriculum runs, and the luxury that I have, is that there has to be an academic component to each of our technique classes. So thank God for this book. [Now] we have a text we can actually use. But in the private sector, I don't have that luxury.

BA: Do you want to mention the name of the book? Some people here aren't sure what you're talking about.

MG: Oh, sure. It's called *Jazz Dance: A History of the Roots and Branches* and several authors and two of the editors are in the room... So finding ways to infuse private sector teaching with that, getting them to think about what's being asked of them... I have a student right now who came from a competition background, and he said, "We never had to think. There was only one way of doing." So going back to Laban study, it's the same effort level the entire time, all strong, direct, quick. And... I'm going to stop and let someone else speak... Because I could go on, I get so jazzed about this.

BA: I want to give Pat a chance to go ahead and respond, and then I'd like to let Emily ask her question and tell a little about the exciting things that she's doing.

PC: Yeah,... I am always concerned that we disassociate jazz dance, as we understand it, with thinking in higher education. I've had students come into the elective class, undergraduates, saying "What? We have to think?" "Yes, you have to think." But that doesn't mean that we lose the essence of jazz, and I think it's our job in higher education—since that's what this panel is about—to be sure that we don't lose it.

AP #3: I think that's what so additionally hard. We have one semester, and we need to invoke the cognitive and who [students] are as human beings because if we don't do that, then we're not doing jazz because it's so separate from the humanity. But that's the whole point: we've got to get to embodiment, then, too, so I feel like we're doing a Herculean task that can barely be...

PC: We can't do it all.

AP #3: We can't do it all, but we have to start trying.

AP #4: I was actually going back to the idea of technique, and feeling like—and I'd like to bounce this idea off you guys [gesturing to panel members]—that a lot of vernacular dance techniques are socially mediated because they have come up in social groups. Like krumping, too [looks at AP #1], would be a good example, that what makes good technique is what the participants decide makes good technique and it's implicit. But that doesn't mean it doesn't exist. So, to acknowledge that there's almost a secret, hip technique that you have to do it to know is a compelling idea for young students to know, in my limited experience. Also, the idea of ciphering, with vernacular movement especially, sort of lends itself to replaying, reenacting, reimagining the continuance of that branch.

BA: Will you give the two-sentence version of what you're doing?

AP #4: I am starting a dance major at a small, liberal arts college in West Virginia, who was just like, "Oh, come start a dance major!" And I [said], "I think I'll start an American Vernacular dance major." So, that's my project

now, very broad. I'm trying to create survey courses that give some framing to different ways that dance in the United States breaks down, sometimes in terms of the industry and sometimes in terms of the composition, and then support students' taking their own track and making their own work in the second two years. So, I just have my first class of five dance majors this fall. [Applause from the room.]

BA: It's exciting!

AP #5: I have a brief comment on the technique as well in that I'm assigned as a teacher in jazz, so I do have that technical component, but I have found, teaching all over the country and abroad, that the more classically trained [students] are, the harder it is to teach style. So, again, I believe that technique is important. I stylize the jazz music to the period I'm teaching about, so they learn all kinds of different periods of jazz music and instrumentation. And I stylize the combinations. Our classes are freshmen and sophomores. One thing we do is that, off the books, the first day they come in, I ask them, right out of high school—or if they haven't had jazz in college yet, if they're sophomores—I ask them to define jazz for them...

AP #3: That's the first thing I did, too.

AP #5: ...and then we're lucky. The first two semesters, Jazz Styles 1 and 2, do have a history component: roots in African dance and rhythm to the present. Then, in the spring, they redefine how they know it developed in America. Then, after Jazz 4, I give them back those definitions [laughter], and by then they've had to define again what they've had...In Jazz 3 and 4, they delve more into the styles of whoever's teaching...Melanie's taught. We had a Luigi teacher; we've had a Mattox teacher. And so they go more into those styles with them. But that first year, [the student definition of jazz dance] really changes. I stuff them into a file folder, and I close the drawer for two or three years, and when I bring them back out, it's very interesting.

AP #3: I'm doing the same thing at the end of the semester.

AP #5: It's a low tech way to see how they're learning. The last thing I was going to say is part of the reason passing the torch is [hard]. There aren't jobs. I have kids, they want to be in jazz; we're a modern program; they still love jazz. We have performing opportunities in jazz, but there are fewer and fewer companies. There are fewer and fewer positions in the university. And to teach the kind of jazz where they learn it's important where jazz comes from...There's more chance for them to teach competition jazz...

BM: Exactly. So I guess our next task would be create jobs for this upcoming [newly informed] generation. And [that] we're going to have expectations of them, not that that's super easy, but...[laughter]

MG: Shenandoah University in Virginia is doing something really interesting with their curriculum in that they have two different jazz teachers. They have Bob Boross, whose doing a classical perspective, and now Tiffany Carson, who teaches commercial, "get a job" jazz because they want their students to work, but they're also acknowledging that it's important to understand the range of things. Frankly, the stuff that I'm teaching isn't going to get them work in California, and I'm totally aware of that, but I'm also in a liberal arts institution where we're not really focused on doing that anyway. [To AP #5] But I think you're right. I think we're in a really interesting period; we're just beginning to have really rich jazz scholarship, and we will figure out where its place is in terms of our teaching as we continue to go forward. The thing that is challenging for jazz, that

modern doesn't have, and that ballet definitely does not have, is that it is always changing. So the thing that would have got you a job ten years ago is not the thing that's going to get you a job ten years from now, unless you're exclusively doing Broadway. And even that...if you're doing revivals on Broadway, then, yes, there's a certain kind of place for you there,...

AP #5: A senior said to me, "I want to be a professional jazz dancer; I want to be in a jazz company..."

MG: There are three.

AP #5: Right.

BA: Karen?

KH: [To MG] Yes, I just wanted to know, the "classic jazz style", I mean the Lindy Hop is the classic...

MG: So now we're getting into semantics...

KH: That's the classic jazz. So is that the style you mean?

MG: Right, so Bob's teaching a Mattox perspective.

KH: Okay.

BA: A classic codified style.

MG: Yeah. He's a great, Mattox-style teacher. So then, what you're really saying [looking at Karen] is that there really should be a third jazz teacher,...

KH: Yes.

MG: ...someone who's dealing with a social, vernacular perspective, so that they're getting a full range: now, forty years ago, and origins.

KH: [Nods]

From audience: Does anyone have a jazz major?

MG: If you do, will you hire me because I would love to do that.

AP #6: I'm at East Carolina University. We don't have a major, but we have a concentration and a large jazz program...

PC: Also, there's another perspective, if I may, and that's through pedagogy programs, like those at NYU at the graduate level. People go through our program, like Barbara, like...[waves to back of audience] there are some

people hanging out back there...If they didn't come in with the knowledge, they go out with that knowledge. If they're K-12 [educators], they can add a unit. If they're in college, they can establish a program. [Pointing to Barbara] You established a program through your course at Rutgers, didn't you?

BA: Yes, and at the top of my History of Broadway Dance course, which is very culturally based, it says "Thank you to Pat Cohen for educating me about the history of jazz."

PC: So there is a trickle-down effect where people are not getting jobs because they know jazz; they're incorporating jazz into what they're doing, and that's going to trickle down to the next generation, and so forth and so on.

MG: But I'm also going to counter what I just said. If I hadn't been a jazz teacher, I wouldn't have gotten my first job in education.

BM: [Points to self and nods] Same here!

BA: [Raises hand "me too!"]

MG: I'm fully aware of that. And I think part of that also is that there's a lot of bad jazz teaching that's happening out there because there hasn't been the cultivation of "How do you think about how to teach jazz dance?" which is a thing I've always done. I remember speaking to peers of mine who were applying for jobs, who were like "They want me to also teach a jazz class, so I'm just going to go teach it. I'm a modern dancer, so I'm just going to go teach the jazz class." Jazz is this one weird area where you can seemingly have no experience and no understanding and still be about to teach it. I mean, we would never let that happen in ballet. [Many nods].

AP #3: But that's the thing. How do we say, "This is a human expression. This is indigenous to America. This is...not something that you have to go into a studio to do. We all share movement in the same way, and it's closer to jazz than it is to ballet or modern. The movement that we all just share right now is more jazzy than anything." But how do we do that and also say, "Yes, but there's a craft to it"? So acknowledge that it's [a dance for] everyone, and then we also need to refine and tweak and give it honored discipline. You know, that's what I find is really hard to get through to people.

AP #4: I also find increasingly that urban dancers are interested in jazz as a point in their own history. To legitimize hip hop culture, to trace it back through the jazz era, is, I think, an emerging trend. And as jazz dancers, I think it's responsible to look at contemporary urban dance as a legacy, and it also maybe creates a deeper, more commercially viable...well, maybe not commercially viable...more complex nuance for artists in those genres as well.

BA: When students study ballet in college, no one is expecting them to go dance in a ballet company. There seems to be an assumption that if you study a semester of jazz, you're going to be able to go get one of those commercial jobs. Jobs seem automatically attached to the reason for study, where they aren't in other forms. Students take African Dance; no one's saying, "You're going to be able to go be in an African Dance company off of one semester of African Dance. So it is an interesting question: Do we have that responsibility in addition

to all of these other things in jazz dance education? Do we have to get them jobs? I don't know the answer to that.

AP #6: This just makes me think about, in terms of future jobs for our students and how we're training them... As part of our composition series...I say "composition" but what I mean is two semesters of Intro to Composition, Composition, and then the final Senior Thesis Project. And a lot of universities think that modern is the vocabulary for the thesis, which is very...I don't want to call it problematic, but it is problematic in that jazz is not valued as a way to create a voice to be used. So, in terms of creating artists of the future, we need to include [jazz dance] as part of our composition and composition sequences; we can't just look at technique. We have to look at how we're talking about the process. So we need more of us [gesture around the room] to be in on the ground floor, in the composition classes. I think that actually might be the key for us to maybe create more jobs that are not necessarily always just commercially focused. Just a thought, but I think that maybe should be part of our mission as we develop future artists.

MG: [To Beth] I remember a conversation with you last year about "What is jazz choreography?" Or the idea of jazz choreography, and does jazz choreography have the same aesthetic choreographic values as modern? Because when you teach composition in the academy, you teach how to create modern dances. We think that we're teaching how to create effective dances, but it's through the lens of what is happening in modern dance.

BM: It is through the lens of modern dance. And it's a beautiful lens, and there's crossover. And there's lots of reward. But what I often discover is that because you're in a composition class, you're dancing in silence. Often. "Make up a phrase!" "All of you make up a phrase!" [Laughter] In silence. So just that alone has divorced a whole thought process about why we're making dance to music, and there is often an emphasis of "Detach from the music. Detach from the music." While I want to say "Become strong and independent and interactive with the music." Which is a whole other practice. And that takes time to cultivate. It takes risks in a different way. So yes, I think that is the hook, is if we can cultivate an aesthetic structure, which Laura Smyth has done. Laura Smyth just graduated from U.C. Irvine, and she was studying under Sheron Wray, who's also...

MG: An author in the book.

AP #3: Has a chapter in the book.

BM: Right. There you go. So it's starting to happen, but we need a specific curriculum.

AP #6: Well, we've been playing with it, but I'd love to develop something more specific, creating that work would be cool.

AP #7: I want to ask—because so many universities are modern heavy—how do you think jazz dance is viewed within a dance concert that has mostly modern dance pieces. Jazz dances show up every once in a while in these concerts. I've always heard negative reactions when a jazz piece is being presented within a concert for a university; it's kind of looked at as a watering down of the performance for that evening.

BA: For faculty concerts or for student concerts?

AP #7: Either/or actually. I've always gotten a negative kind of feel whenever a jazz dance is presented in within a four-year university dance concert that's modern heavy.

BA: Sometimes, when my choreography has been included in a concert, I've been asked to "not be too theatrical."

KH: In my experience at UNCC, we have two jazz courses: traditional jazz and contemporary jazz. Contemporary jazz can cover a whole range of dance styles [beginning in the 1940s to the present]; I used to teach contemporary. You had jazz pieces on the program. Melanie set a piece for us; I recently did a piece; my arm was twisted because I don't like to choreograph. I call myself a "dance arranger" [because I utilize vernacular vocabulary from the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. I am not interested in utilizing vernacular vocabulary as a point of departure for choreographic invention]. It has never been an issue that jazz is on the concert or that we needed to "tone it down" or anything.

PC: And anyone who saw Karen's contribution to the children's showing Wednesday night...what you saw was incredible jazz and appreciation by the audience, with vocalization, with individualization.

KH: But you know what, it wasn't sexual.

PC: No!

KH: It wasn't "JAZZ" [makes dynamic "jazz hands" gesture]. I'm sorry. It wasn't what some people call jazz, which is hyper-sexuality. It wasn't any of that at all.

PC: But the kids loved it. The audience loved it.

MG: [Pointing to AP #7]: Can I ask...What portion of the audience was saying that to you? Is it the general audience?

AP #7: I've always generally gotten a feel...You know, I've been to many university dance concerts, and when there's more weight toward the modern dance genre in the concert, and then all of a sudden the concert ends with a big jazz dance, usually from the educators. I think there's almost a stigma that "Oh jazz is not meant to be in this concert because it doesn't hold water with modern dance."

PC: It's about diversity!

AP #7: I agree, but I find this an issue.

AP #8: I think there's an undercurrent of some real issues with the Africanist aesthetic, looking at "art is life" versus "art as a theatrical form" that has to be in that one place.

AP #7: Even for students sometimes, there have been instances where...I'm part of Dance New Jersey, and there's something called "Show Up and Dance" and there's many different styles that are presented, and I



definitely getting a feeling/sense from certain groups or individuals that when a jazz dance is being performed that it's not as "serious" [Mimes air quotes] as modern. And I'm not saying that's my perspective.

BA: The same gap in learning that students coming to college have—about the cultural aspects, about the historical aspects—many people have that.

BM: And it's an "us versus them" mentality, which just creates more division and more ignorance.

KH: It's part of the education process.

BM: Yeah!

MG: I also want to say, though, that part of that for me is that sometimes the presentation of concert jazz dance is narrow, and I think we can do jazz dances about lots of things. It doesn't just have to be "the big jazz dance at the end." You know, we can give ourselves permission to use dance as a conduit to get at lots of different things. It doesn't have to just be [Shakes jazz hands]. It can be [Shakes jazz hands], but it doesn't have to be.

### **Continuing the Conversation**

Topics discussed in the panel will continue to provide compelling and necessary conversations. In addition, challenges, comments and questions from audience participants—written on the cards provided—will also invoke new directions for future consideration:

- Jazz dance is under-acknowledged as an American art form, and is undervalued and underappreciated in the hierarchy of dance genres in education.
- Are the labels we give to jazz-influenced dances important to attitudes about jazz dance? How? Why?
- Jazz dance is often seen, by students, by faculty and by society, as solely a commercial enterprise. It is not seen as art.
- What is the place of "commercial jazz" in the post-secondary conversation?
- How is sexualized dance situated in jazz and what are its implications?
- How do we advocate for and advance the interests of jazz dance in higher ed and the professions? And which "types" will be/should be prioritized?
- What do we think is the "future" of jazz dance, and how can we prepare ourselves and our students for this vision?

### **Conclusion**

Achieving solutions to the challenges addressed during the panel session will take continued conversation, evolving ingenuity and educational effort. However, a clear sense of individual and communal responsibility swelled in the meeting room, and a universal resolve was cemented: to explore, advocate for and act on ways to forward jazz dance education, creation, performance and professions for our students. Finding a current meaning to unite, rather than divide, those students, artists and educators who dance in diverse ideas about what defines jazz dance is a strong step down that path. Navigating the murky waters of what defines a jazz dance student/artist and what is added to that definition by our passionate characterizations of "vernacular", "authentic", "classic", "contemporary", "commercial", "concert" and "art" will continue to provide educators with opportunities for reflection and debate. But it was clear to all session participants that action must be taken

—and taken now—to ensure that jazz dance educators’ intellect, creativity, and expertise more strongly influence, impact and enact our students’ and society’s vision of jazz dance.

### *BIOGRAPHIES*

**Barbara Angeline (Moderator), MA** in Dance Education (NYU); BA in Dance (U.C. Irvine.) Full-time Instructor of Dance Arts, Rutgers University: Teaches Broadway Jazz, Jazz Dance, History of Broadway Dance Online (author), Dance History, Dance Improvisation, Dance Appreciation Online, Dance Studies. Previous: Adjunct Professor, Hofstra University: Choreography for the Theater; Faculty, American Academy of Dramatic Arts; Substitute instructor, NYU and Lee Strasberg Institute: Ballet and Musical Theatre Dance. Research: “Cultivating Critical Thinking in Post-Secondary Dance Technique” presented at conferences and university dance programs nationwide. Publication: Member of writing committee who compiled and synthesized NDEO’s “Vision Document for Dance 2050: The Future of Dance In Higher Education.” Performance credits include featured roles in Broadway Backwards, Radio City Christmas Spectacular, and Oakland Ballet Company. Choreography includes: Fosse-inspired jazz work “Tightrope”; Josephine Baker-inspired jazz work, “eat Crow”; “Mi Maschera (Mask Me)”, a jazz piece that examined the use of Venetian Masks to unwrap hidden female identities. [BarbaraAngeline.com](http://BarbaraAngeline.com) [barbara.Angeline10@gmail.com](mailto:barbara.Angeline10@gmail.com)

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**Melanie George, MA**, Dance Program Director at American University. She holds a BA in Dance from Western Michigan University, an MA in Dance, a Graduate Certificate in Secondary Teaching from American University, and she is a Certified Movement Analyst. Melanie has presented her research on jazz dance improvisation/pedagogy throughout the U.S., Canada and Scotland. Publications include “Imbed/In Bed: Two Perspectives on Dance and Collaboration” with Joan Meggitt for Working Together in Qualitative Research (Sense Publishers) and “Jazz Dance, Pop Culture, and the Music Video Era” for Jazz Dance: A History of the Roots and Branches (University of Florida Press).

**Karen Hubbard, MA** in Dance, The Ohio State University; B.A. in Sociology, Kent State University. Associate Professor, UNC Charlotte: Teaches Modern Dance, Writing for Dance, The Arts and Society: Dance. Certificate in African and Kenyan Studies - University of Nairobi as a Fulbright - Hays Scholar. Evolved innovations in teaching Vintage Jazz Dance. Curriculum Consultant for interdisciplinary course: The Jazz Century (Temple University). Teaches master classes nationally and internationally. Performed with Karamu Concert Dancers. Artistic Director/Dancer of Dance-By-Two. Professional credits: musicals, daytime serials, commercials, films, including NBC Hullabaloo Dancers; Hello Dolly! (Broadway and tour), and film version of The Wiz!

**Beth Megill, MFA**, UC Irvine; BFA, UC Santa Barbara; Language of Dance® Specialist; Co-President, CDEA. Co-Director of Dance, Moorpark College. On sabbatical, working on Dance literacy tools for lower division technique courses. Teaches variety of dance styles. Interests in Higher Education: Teaching methodology, pedagogy; role of dance literacy; dance notation and theory to support dance research and performance. Teamed with Dave Massey (MiraCosta College) to publish online dance appreciation course. Completed Stage 3 Language of Dance certification for her work on utilizing LOD in teaching dance appreciation online as a general education requirement. Writes on dance and life at: [www.dancingpoetess.blogspot.com](http://www.dancingpoetess.blogspot.com)

## Merging Dance with Poetry Through Collaborative Learning

Mary Lynn Babcock, MFA, PhD

### *ABSTRACT*

Our notions of how learning about dance can deepen in collaborative creative problem solving through dance-making. Collaborative learning methods encourage students to synthesize information from ongoing accountability of its group members, while promoting an exchange of ideas. Utilizing integrated and collaborative learning environments, a progressive strategy is investigated which merge dance-making with Japanese Haiku. Japanese Haiku provides a way of looking at the physical world as seeing a spontaneous brief moment of life. Poetry is basically compressed language that is full of rhythm, feeling and imagery. Dance parallels poetry through movement.

The vehicle for collaborative learning is framed around the use of metaphor as found in Haiku, a short form of Japanese poetry, and how metaphor can be translated into dance-making. The strategy is threefold: each group is to collectively find an entry point into the poem, identify moving prompts that capture metaphoric connections, and translate that into movement. One lesson plan is provided.

The conclusion of any lesson should include time for reflection for learners to recall, process, analyze and understand knowledge acquired. Reflections occur individually, and in group form with brainstorming questions addressing how they worked in a group, and how did they grow as learners. This work is useful for dance students and teachers because they find and participate in a variety of collaborative approaches, develop community building and listening skills, and, they learn the significance of why it is important to know how to work together.

### *BIOGRAPHY*

**Mary Lynn Babcock MFA, PhD.** Case Western Reserve University. A dance professor at UNT, she is choreographer, teacher, and Certified in Laban Movement Analyst. Her work has been presented across the U.S. and The Netherlands, Brazil, Jamaica, Egypt and Portugal. At UNT Babcock created a unique digital media learning lab allowing explorations in novel interactions. She teaches Laban Studies, modern dance, improvisation/choreography, and dance and technology. Her publications focus on the dialectic between the live and virtual body through the lens of the Embodiment Paradigm. Babcock brings dance to the community through curating and performing in outreach events benefiting victims of domestic violence. She is founder and artistic director of Satellite-Dance, an interdisciplinary, interarts/intermedia dance collective. [www.satellite-dance.com](http://www.satellite-dance.com) [mlbabcock@unt.edu](mailto:mlbabcock@unt.edu)

## Inside/Outside: Bridging the Gap between Choreography and The Alexander Technique

Marsha Barsky, MFA, ATI

### *ABSTRACT*

As a teaching artist, and as a teacher of the Alexander Technique (AT), I'm interested in both the gap between the two practices, and in the idea of envisioning a bridge that could link the creative process and the process of recognizing movement potential. This can be made clear in technique class, but the problem is that when it comes time to rehearse, students are unaware that AT is connected to the rehearsal because they enter the mode of "end-gaining." There is an inside-outside dimension here: as an AT practitioner, I work with students in the role of an observer, a teacher, someone who stands outside of the work; as a choreographer, I work inside, to craft pieces that follow an aesthetic, and what I consider important for students' education. For me, AT is always there, guiding me, informing my choreographic choices. The practical issue that arises relates to the mosaic of roles, complementary and overlapping, but also in some ways mutually exclusive, that I undertake. I am a choreographer, building images and connecting movements, while as an Alexander teacher, I'm constantly aware of my students' use. At any given moment in the choreographic process, I am therefore occupying two very specific roles. It's not that AT and choreography are incompatible, but I notice that many students don't link these two practices together. They think of the art and performance first, and then AT second. This isn't the imbroglia it seems to be, as I will demonstrate through concrete examples of how we can be "conscious choreographers", which implies this two-way awareness that doesn't betray the technique at issue, nor the responsibility of offering somatic approaches to our work as teaching choreographers. In this talk, I will explore this overlap between movement and understanding, and between action and reflection. In so doing, I will place heavy emphasis upon notions including responsibility, answerability, and internal reflection while offering useful tools to share with students in the choreographic process. As I articulate this distinction and overlap, I'm looking forward to a future of dance education that doesn't compartmentalize related and crucial areas, but rather brings each out of its respective domain, and integrates them into a conscious choreographic whole.

As a teaching artist, choreographer and as a teacher of the Alexander Technique (AT), I'm interested in the idea of approaching and teaching contemporary dance choreography from a place of somatic awareness, both in terms of the aesthetic qualities of movement and promoting healthy movement practices for student performers. Each semester, I work with student dancers at my institution to create original choreography for our biannual concerts. My aesthetic choices are informed by my many years of practicing and teaching the Alexander Technique. During the rehearsal process, and finally on the stage, I ask that my students cultivate an increased awareness of themselves. For me, AT is a

complement, an approach worth studying and practicing as a way of ameliorating our work, in the studio and in performance; however for students who are new to somatic practices accessing this space is often very difficult. As I've developed an approach, that I'm calling "conscious choreography," I've also encountered significant realms of overlap, and as such have envisioned a bridge that could link the creative process and the process of recognizing movement potential. The source of this bridge is surprising, in that it comes from a domain outside of the dance and somatic world, but is nonetheless connected thereto through its insights on the body: the work of Mikhail Bakhtin, a philosopher of

language, whose work has been used broadly in language studies, as well as cultural studies, sociology, philosophy, theology, and education. For me, Bakhtin's theories, alongside the work of F.M. Alexander, have served as a framework on which dance educators can build "conscious choreographies" for their students.

Born in 1895, Bakhtin was an ardent foe of the formalist work undertaken in Russia beginning in 1915, for reasons that relate to our own work in dance: he refused the mechanistic study of language and cultural production, favoring instead the idea that language, or interaction, are organic practices that unfold in time and in space. Communication, from his perspective, doesn't mimic the transmission of messages from one individual to another, but rather it's a process that includes all aspects relating to the message, including the body and the environment in which it is placed. This challenges the idea that communication is clearly directed to particular ends, that the ultimate objective is the final product, and is instead a process for which the end is just another part of the continuum.

The overlap in the realm of the Alexander Technique is obvious, and it's an important starting point when introducing students to somatic practices in the technique class, particularly with inexperienced dancers. In *The Use of the Self*, Alexander's seminal book on the technique, he states "when a person has reached a given stage of unsatisfactory use and functioning, his habit of 'end-gaining' will prove to be the impeding factor in all his attempts to profit by any teaching method whatsoever." Both approaches help students recognize "end-gaining", a part of our culture that is deeply engrained through sports, and the general task-oriented lifestyle we can be made to lead. However, the prevalence of this mindset often resurges during rehearsals and in performance, because once again, the idea of accomplishing a task can override Alexander's and Bakhtin's efforts to consider the process. The task of the somatically aware choreographer, then, from an AT perspective, is to work from the inside and the outside

simultaneously. As an AT practitioner, I work with students in the role of an observer, a teacher, someone who stands outside of the work, intervening and teaching as appropriate and required through each step in the process. As a choreographer, I work from the inside, to craft pieces that follow an aesthetic, and what I consider important for students' education, but here too the Alexander Technique is always there, guiding me, informing my choreographic choices. The practical issue that arises relates to this mosaic of roles, complementary and overlapping, but also in some ways mutually exclusive. I am a choreographer, creating images and connecting movements, while as an Alexander teacher, it is my responsibility to attend to my students' use. At any given moment in the choreographic process, I am therefore occupying two very specific roles, one that embodies the work and one that views it from a different place, "situated", as it were, on the outside.

Herein lies the challenge, and again, this is a place where Mikhail Bakhtin's insights begin to play a role. He speaks of the utterance as being informed by the situatedness of the individual, and he describes the artistic process as a kind of dialogue between author and hero, the title in fact of one of his seminal essays. At the same time, he talks about being party to a dialogue, in which the situated self is outside of the realm of creation, looking at it from a space askance. When this latter process occurs, the party to the dialogue views from a different place, just as we might view our own work choreographed upon our students as observers, from the outside. Bakhtin talks about parties to such a process as able to "fill-in" for the other, in this case the student. By "filling-in," he means that I, from the outside, can see everything that the student cannot see, most notably the manner in which (or the 'means-whereby') the student executes the movement sequences and the space behind her or around her, and at the same time, my presence to the student completes her, suggesting that the performance of the movement requires a kind of dialogue.

This is valuable and insightful, I think, because it's a way of thinking in the abstract about the inside/outside and, in this example, about the complementarity and necessity of the AT-choreographic link. As I've considered this overlap, with Bakhtin as a kind of intermediary, I've put forward the idea of "conscious choreography", an approach that implies two-way awareness that doesn't betray the technique at issue, nor the responsibility of offering somatic approaches to our work as teaching choreographers. As you can see, this approach refuses the separation of somatics, dance education and choreography, but envisions instead a constant dialogue amongst them. Refusing compartmentalization in these related and crucial areas helps bring each out of its respective domain, and integrates them into a conscious choreographic whole. We can look to the specific ideas of F.M. Alexander, and the ideas of Bakhtin, in order to offer more precision to this work.

One way to approach more specific insights by these two thinkers is through the idea and action of "inhibition" and "direction". Inhibition is F.M. Alexander's term for a process that facilitates effortless, natural movement. By using inhibition, dancers learn to recognize habitual, unembodied movements and to choose not to do them. The concept of inhibition is most simply understood through private A.T. lessons, yet it is easy to offer this notion in a technique class when the work at hand is to facilitate kinesthetic awareness and movement efficiency. However, I have found that in a choreographic setting, students quickly resort to their habitual way of moving because of the overriding stimulus to complete the work. Unfortunately, I do not always have the time to address individual inefficient movement patterns so I rely on my ability to communicate in multiple ways the means-whereby they can awaken kinesthetic trustworthiness and 'direct' themselves to be fully, inwardly and outwardly expressive. This requires that I not only attend to myself and my use, implying that I need to always be thinking from an Alexander perspective, but that I also communicate efficient use

to my dancers. This is a complex task, but from Bakhtin's perspective, I can "communicate in multiple ways", in language and in movement. But just as my ability to "attend to use" from an AT perspective is premised upon self-knowledge, my ability to simultaneously communicate to my students is contingent upon my understanding how my dancers understand me. Bakhtin has an interesting and related concept that he calls "words with a sideward glance," which is words that are conveying messages, but also convey other ideas by, say, the way in which those words are expressed. I find I can do the same thing in the studio, as long as I am having a dialogue with students I know well enough, for example, students whose "habits" I know well.

Mikhail Bakhtin theorizes dialogue, as we have seen, by considering different parties to interactions as being situated in the same time, but occupying different spaces. Communication of any sort, and movement of any sort, when viewed from the perspective of Bakhtin's work, exists in constant dialogue, on a range of levels: the self is in dialogue with the body, the kind of inner-outer dialogue usually described as the mind-body relationship, or psychophysical unity from an AT perspective. Beyond that, there is in the realm of creation what he calls the author-hero relationship, that I described previously in terms of the choreographer and the mover, but could be extended further, even to the relationship between the self and the self as a mover or a dancer. Then there is the dialogue between self and environment; we move through space, but we also move in relationship to space, and we are always "situated" in a given place, and not in another, and each movement, and even non-movement, unfolds in time.

So standing still is still moving, but moving through time; I'm not moving, now, and now, and now. This is a fascinating insight for our students, to help them recognize that we don't exist in a move-not-move compendium, but rather in a situated space, what Bakhtin calls a "chronotope", that ties our selves to both time and space. Then there is our

relationship to the Other, including the choreographer or the teacher or members of the audience, as well as, of course, other dancers. This is the self-other relationship, and because it's a relationship, it unfolds, but it also happens in relation to the bodies around us, rather than simply as one body performing its tasks, as it were. This too is a crucial part of this idea of "conscious choreography", because described by Bakhtin and inspired by Alexander, it insists upon the process, the 'means-whereby' and the whole self's relationship to it.

Another provocative overlap inspired by Bakhtin is the idea that each "pure" utterance, or movement, is imaginary. Every utterance is in fact impure, because it is imbued with all other utterances or movements that have informed it, or surround it, it is, as Bakhtin says, "saturated" in its surroundings. There is no such thing as purity in language, for Bakhtin, no point of origin, because everything exists in relation, through time, and through space. In the realm of language, Bakhtin calls this heteroglossia, the multiplicity of voices and texts constituted by an array of speech genres that are combined artistically in (say) the dialogic novel, or even the public square.

The same of course is true for movement. From the perspective of a dancer, I find similar realms of interaction, since all movement is linked to other movements in the body, and in the bodies around it. From the perspective of choreography we can see the same thing, because the process of choreography is also deeply embedded in a comprehensive training, in a variety of dance styles, that is constantly reinvigorated, changed, inspired and shifted. For me, I can think about this inspiration in reference to the multiplicity of information students are receiving from their various teachers. This is purposeful, and invigorating, in the way that Bakhtin would suggest that the author gains new voices from other texts; but it's also intentional, and here I would come back to the Alexander Technique, which is an intentional practice that inspires and otherwise guides my choreographic process. And

essentially guides students to make sound and efficient choices on the way in which they choose to perform movement regardless of where their information is coming from.

The inverse of the dialogic for Bakhtin is the monologic, embodied in the single voice of poetry, or political discourse, or propaganda. Here too, it's not a huge stretch to say that we can find concomitant relations to movement practices. Just as Bakhtin rejects a single formalistic approach, with reference to the formalist project articulated in the early part of the 20th Century, I too seek out "dialogue" or, more precisely, dialogism, as I aspire to create a space of 'conscious choreography' for my students.

In short, I have come to realize that my own process can be discussed as regards some of Bakhtin's seminal work and ideas, and as I move from my own research, to my choreography and to the studio, I envision a growing space for exploring this fascinating overlap, to expand notions such as language, vocabulary and communication to spaces beyond linguistic ones. As we teach material for choreography with these types of paradigms in mind we achieve the objective that was for Alexander primary, psychophysical unity through mindfulness in action.

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## *BIOGRAPHY*

**Marsha Barsky, MFA** is a dance educator, performer, choreographer and administrator. Her choreography has been presented at venues throughout the US, and at the Pavillon Noir in Aix-en-Provence, France. She received her BFA in Dance from Arizona State University and her MFA in Performance, Choreography and Somatics from the University of Colorado at Boulder. She is currently the Director of Dance at Middle Tennessee State University, where she teaches classes in technique, somatics and choreography. She has taught dance history at Vanderbilt University, and modern dance technique at the University of Colorado, Western Kentucky University, Vanderbilt Dance Program, and the Tennessee Governor's School for the Arts, as well as at a host of workshops, festivals and studios in the US and Europe. She is the Artistic Director for Company Rose, a certified yoga instructor and a Certified Teacher of the Alexander Technique.  
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## Summary of Panel Discussion

### International Panel

Moderator: Jane Bonbright, EdD

Panelists: Minami Hara, MA, Eugene Joseph, Debra Kapp, BA, HBFA, BEd, Christina Patsalidou, MFA, Jackie Smith-Autard, PhD, MA, Boon Fong Yam

#### *SUMMARY*

Panelists were asked to respond to two questions:

Question #1: What is your country doing to support the teaching of dance in your national curriculum? If you don't have a national curriculum: What is your country doing to support the teaching of dance in your country?

Question #2: What infrastructure are you building in your country to support this goal?

#### **DANCE IN CANADA**

Debra Kapp

Question #1: What is your country doing to support the teaching of dance in your national curriculum? If you don't have a national curriculum: What is your country doing to support the teaching of dance in your country?

In Canada, we do not have a National Curriculum. Education is in the portfolios of the Provinces. In my province Ontario, we have a provincial curriculum for Dance. This curriculum is relatively new and was introduced only in 2009. Before that, there were 3 Art forms: Visual Arts, Music and Drama/Dance. Other provinces have made a similar change. The themes in the Dance Curriculum are Creating and Presenting, Reflecting, Responding and Analysing, and Exploring Forms and Cultural Change. The intent is that 80% of the curriculum should focus on the Creating and Responding theme.

The Physical Education and Health document from the province has also recently added Dance as one of the activities provided in the Phys Ed curriculum. The overriding themes in the Provincial curriculum for Physical and Health Education include Movement Concepts and Movement Principles which are all the basic Elements of Dance. The vision for Physical Education is moving away from skill acquisition and moving towards Movement sequences which will eventually lead to skill acquisition. There is a new term that is being used called "Physical Literacy". The concepts of that are essentially the fundamental concepts of Dance.

Question #2: What infrastructure are you building in your country to support this goal?

There really are no plans to build an infrastructure to support Dance Education. The only small step that is taking place is within the Faculties of Education in the provinces. Since each province is responsible for the Education portfolio, I will focus on my province Ontario. There has been a change made in the delivering of an Education certification. Instead of a one year program following an Honors Bachelor of Arts degree, there is now a two year program following the HBA. Included in the Education certification will now be mandatory training in the Arts. In the past it was up to each individual University to offer Arts training as they deemed wise. Now there must be some training in Drama, Music, Visual Art and Dance. Some programs offer a combination of Dance and Drama and some programs offer the stand-alone Dance component, but it is very minor. I believe there is a total of 8 hours of teacher training in Dance Education for the whole 2 years in some places.

## **DANCE IN CYPRUS**

Christina Patsalidou

Question #1: What is your country doing to support the teaching of dance in your national curriculum? If you don't have a national curriculum: What is your country doing to support the teaching of dance in your country?

### Facts/Dance in the public school system (pre-elementary, elementary, high school):

1. Dance is not taught as a subject in the national curriculum of Cyprus (or Greece).
2. Dance is only introduced through physical education classes.
3. Physical education classes are taught by classroom teachers with no background or specialization in physical education or dance in public pre- elementary schools. Physical fitness trainers are teaching physical education classes in high schools.
4. Dance is only experienced through creative movement games and traditional ethnic and folk dances in pre-elementary, elementary and high schools.
5. Ministry of Education Cultural Services supports and provides funding to individual dance artists and dance groups for the production of performances, dance festivals and dance workshops/seminars.

### Facts/Dance in private schools (pre-elementary, elementary, high school):

1. Dance is taught by a guest dance instructor as an extra curricular activity.

### Facts/ Dance in higher education

1. 2007 Establishment of the Dance Programme leading towards a BA in Dance , Department of Music and Dance, School of Education, University of Nicosia, Cyprus. (ECPU accredited program)
2. 13 Registered Conservatories with Ministry of Culture and Sports (private and public in Greece)

### Facts/ private dance studios in both countries

Teaching mostly ballet (RAD, IDTA, Cecchetti) contemporary, hip hop, modern, jazz

## Dance Associations/Organizations in Cyprus

### 1. Cyprus Dance Association

The artistic Cyprus Dance Association was founded in 1988, with founding members, dance teachers from Lefkosia and Lemesos, 28 in number. It currently has more than 100 members from all the Cyprus towns.

The main objectives of the Association is to protect the dance profession in Cyprus, to improve the level of services offered by teachers, dancers, and choreographers, to the advancement of the art of dance in Cyprus, and the regulation of relations among members of the association and also other individuals who love, and are related to dance. So far the association has organized and keeps organizing many events, seminars and competitions in collaboration with the Cultural Services of the Ministry of Education and Culture and other private entities.

### 2. Dance House Lefkosia (founded by Lefkosia Youth Ballet, Dance Gate, Dance Lab)/Dance House Lemesos

**Dancehouse Lefkosia's** purpose is to bring together the whole dance community in Cyprus for the development and promotion of the art of dance on a local and international level. Its chief aim is to provide dance and dancers a home/a building and a structure that fulfills the needs of professional contemporary dancers, dance companies, dance students within a wide range of services. Furthermore it aims to provide the possibility for rehearsals, performances, classes as well as information and consulting services for young dancers. Amongst its programs will be opportunities for residencies exchange and dialogue with other dancehouses from the European and International Dance scene.

Question #2: What infrastructure are you building in your country to support this goal?

Further examination needs to be conducted in order to conclude how it is best to introduce dance as an art form in schools. Introducing dance art programs in private and public schools will require legislation, founding of organizations, and collaboration to engage other established programs and educators that will lead new initiatives. In addition, grant opportunities will be explored through the European Union and Cyprus local funds. The possibility of introducing dance in the pre-elementary schools will be examined as a first “contact” step due to the fact that their curriculum allows room for further exploration on different subjects. It is important to note, that the Ministry of Education and Culture is currently revamping the educational system and encourages cross-curricular (thematic) teaching in Cyprus.

The following initiatives will be thoroughly examined before their implementation or establishment:

- A. Establishment of Project:connect in the private and in public schools. PROJECT:connect is an internship-based program that will provide students from the Dance Programme of University of Nicosia with the opportunity to teach, observe and create dance within the framework of a classroom setting in public or private pre-elementary schools in Nicosia. The program will seek to integrate academic concepts taught in the pre elementary school and 1<sup>st</sup> grade. (Potential of becoming a research study based on the results of the pilot study to be conducted in the academic year 2014-2015)

- B. Founding Cyprus Dance Education Organization (international participation- acknowledgment of the need to collaborate with dance educators from Europe and the USA. (Examining the possibility of getting affiliated with already established Dance Arts Organizations)
- C. International collaboration with other university dance programs and dance organizations in Europe and the USA to build dance education programs in order to apply for funding through European Union. (Dance Connect Initiative USA-Europe)
- D. Development and establishment of a National Dance Teacher Certification program. One option is to develop an arts education certification program offered through the newly formed University of Nicosia Teaching center in collaboration with Cyprus Dance Education Organization. Second option will be to initiate partnerships with already established programs.
- E. Post-graduate certificate in dance education.
- F. Development of National Dance Standards according to Cyprus National Curriculum
- G. Acknowledgment of the need to conduct scientifically based research and documentation in dance education in Cyprus in order to provide evidence to support the argument that dance needs to be introduced and recognized as a core subject of equal value as other academics.
- H. Introduce dance to pre-elementary and elementary schools through:
  - a. One-day creative movement workshops throughout the year.
  - b. Collaborations with academic teachers, preferably the ones teaching physical education to teach a series of dance classes during their physical education classes.
  - c. Collaborations with academic teachers, colleagues from the education department to identify academic concepts to be explored through dance activities. Development of Evaluation Measures for the Programs/Research Studies.
  - d. Organization of professional development workshops for dance teachers on dance education
  - e. Organization of professional development workshops for academic teachers on integrating dance standards in school course curriculum.

## **DANCE in JAPAN**

Minami Hara

Question #1: What is your country doing to support the teaching of dance in your national curriculum? If you don't have a national curriculum: What is your country doing to support the teaching of dance in your country?

In Japan, dance (or sometimes referenced as creative/expressive movement) is included as a field of studies in physical education (PE) from 1-12 grade national curriculum. PE is a compulsory subject throughout 1-12 education in Japan. In 2012, dance became compulsory in grades 7-8 and now dance is compulsory from grades 1-8. Dance is an elective in grades 9-12 within the PE curriculum. *Elective* means that a school or the teacher building the PE curriculum can choose what the students will do. Nevertheless, the concept of dance is explored

throughout the 12 years of education in Japan. I must point out that, in Japan, national curriculum has a legally binding force that requires all schools from elementary to high school to follow the curriculum, regardless of public or private. This system allows everyone who receives education in Japan to experience dance.

Within the ‘dance field,’ there are components such as creative/expressive movement, folkdance which includes traditional Japanese folkdance, and rhythm dance. Depending on the grade, compulsory contents vary. For instance, in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade, the ‘field of dance’ is compulsory but the components are elective. So a school may choose folkdance, and another may choose rhythm dance and creative movement as components to be covered.

Since dance is a part of PE curriculum, a PE teacher becomes the instructor of dance education in school. The advantage of this is that the students are familiar with the teacher so they feel comfortable to express and to communicate with their teacher and among themselves. On the other hand, because most PE teachers are not specialized in dance, they don’t feel comfortable teaching dance (Yonezawa, 2012, p. 56-57). Perhaps to ease the distress, the field of dance is often covered as a performance in athletic carnival or school performance. In most cases, there is a set choreography, which a teacher teaches to students in command style; or even students copy the choreography from a readymade dance available to them (e.g. via YouTube). In this method, however, the students do not get to experience the creative aspect of dance.

Japanese national curriculum in PE provides abundant opportunities to encounter dance and its creative activities in education throughout grades 1-12. However, the curriculum does not effectively reach its goal in teaching the creative aspects of dance. It falls short due to vague dance instruction and pedagogy in PE, and the lack of PE instructors understanding the educational significance of dance outside that of physical activity.

In order to improve the situation, we have two suggestions. One is to create and provide forums where teachers and dance specialists discuss the issues. The other is to refine dance pedagogy for teachers in higher education and for teacher training in Physical Education.

#### Citation

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## **DANCE in SINGAPORE**

Ms. Boon Fong Yam, Senior Specialist Dance, Ministry of Education

Question #1: What is your country doing to support the teaching of dance in your national curriculum? If you don't have a national curriculum: What is your country doing to support the teaching of dance in your country?

Singapore does not have a national dance curriculum. However, there are currently a few different platforms for students to learn dance.

In Primary school, all students have the chance to explore and learn basic dance movements through Physical Education (PE) lessons, Programme for Active Learning (PAL) lessons as well as music lessons. Though the proportion of the PE curriculum devoted to dance is small (around 10-15%), students are provided with opportunities to explore both creative movement and cultural dances. There are also specific movement concepts and dance sequences that students learn through Physical Education lessons each year. Additionally, Programme for Active Learning lessons provide students with 14 hours of dance activities in either their first or second year in primary school. Dance movement activities have also been infused into music lessons with dances specially choreographed to some local folk songs. This provides primary school students with a variety of opportunities to explore movement and dance.

For students who have an active interest in dance, schools at all levels of education offer dance as a Co-Curricular Activity (CCA). Students undergo more intensive dance training through weekly CCA sessions. Some schools provide training in more than one dance genre by having Ballet, Malay, Chinese and Indian dance clubs in their schools.

The Singapore Youth Festival (SYF) Arts Presentation, organised in April annually by the Ministry of Education, serves as a formal benchmarking platform for students to showcase their achievements in the performing arts. Most performing arts CCA groups participate in the SYF Arts Presentation. This is a criterion-referenced assessment and schools are awarded certificates of distinction, accomplishment and commendation according to their performance levels. The annual SYF Arts Presentation is followed by the SYF Celebrations in July, held to celebrate the diverse arts talents of Singapore's youth and provide multiple platforms at various venues for these youth to perform.

The Ministry of Education also co-organises the Dance Talent Development Programme with the National Arts Council to provide opportunities for talented secondary school students to learn more about dance. In this 6-month programme, students are first exposed to six genres of dances before specialising in a dance genre of their choice. They develop skills and acquire knowledge in these dance genres through technique training conducted by professional companies. They then work with their peers and apply what they have learnt through the programme to create pieces for their graduation showcase.

Question #2: What infrastructure are you building in your country to support this goal?

1. Training courses, workshops and dialogue sessions are being conducted to engage and train all Physical Education teachers to teach dance. The learning outcomes for dance in Physical Education include the specific movement concepts and dances that students will explore, learn and perform each year. Schools also receive resources such as teaching cues, music and video recordings to support their teaching.
2. To help teachers conduct enriching and meaningful dance activities for Primary 1 or 2 students during Programme for Active Learning (PAL) lessons, the Ministry of Education has designed a PAL dance package as a teaching resource for the programme, and organises workshops for school teachers to try out the various activities in the package. The Ministry also conduct visits to schools to provide support and consultation services. Should schools desire, they can also design their own PAL dance module and engage external dance professionals to conduct the dance lessons using grants provided by the Ministry.
3. The Ministry of Education also organises training courses on the management of dance Co-Curricular Activities (CCA). These include safe dance practice and strategies to engage students in creating and presenting dances, as well as appreciating and responding to the dance works of others.
4. The National Arts Council - ArtsEducation Programme provides a pool of specially selected programmes that schools can participate in. This ensures that all our students are given opportunities to experience dance through quality arts programmes and watch professional dance performances at a subsidized rate.

## **DANCE in TRINIDAD and TOBAGO**

Eugene Joseph

QUESTION: What is your country doing to support the teaching of dance in your national curriculum?

The Republic of Trinidad and Tobago is a twin-island country, located off the coast of Venezuela. It has one of the most dynamic economies in the Caribbean. It also has a rich complexity of cultural traits and traditions, which stem from our multi-ethnic, multi-religion and multi-racial society.

The Trinidad and Tobago Government Ministry of Education has the primary responsibility of developing a quality education system and national curriculum. As a result, the Ministry is addressing issues such as qualified teachers, new or improved school infrastructure, relevant curriculum, appropriate legislation, enabling teaching and learning environments. These issues are part of the Ministry's priorities aimed at improving the quality of the teaching and learning, and directly support their goal to "Design and Develop a Quality Education System."

To graduate from primary to secondary school, the students undergo the Secondary Entrance Assessment (SEA) which is a national summative assessment conducted by the Ministry of Education. At present the Ministry is conducting a pilot program to introduce a Continuous Assessment Component into the SEA. A Continuous Assessment Component (CAC) of the SEA will add value by ensuring that the varied abilities, learning styles, interests and talents of primary school students are identified and met through a system of delivery of specified curriculum objectives, support for differentiated instructional approaches, and the application of activity-based,



authentic assessment tasks. The Continuous Assessment Component will carry 20% of the students' final SEA marks.

Although dance and creative movement were part of the CAC pilot project, subjects such as physical education, music, and visual arts were given priority in the assessment portfolio. The dance industry is however still lobbying to make dance education part of each student's formal education.

At the Secondary school level, dance, music, drama and visual arts make up the Arts syllabus.

- Forms One to Three (ages 11 – 14 years) use the Trinidad & Tobago Visual and Performing Arts (VAPA) syllabus.
- Forms Four & Five (ages 14 – 17 years) use the Caribbean Examination Council's (CXC) Theatre Arts syllabus.
- There is also a draft framework to formulate and implement a Theatre Arts syllabus for the **Form Six** (ages 16 – 18 years).

There are also national and private dance competitions, which give students of dance the opportunity to perform and to be assessed. One such competition is the Annual Secondary Schools Dance Festival, which was started in April 2009 by the Trinidad and Tobago National Dance Association, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education. To commemorate International Dance Day, April has also been designated National Dance Month in Trinidad and Tobago. The Secondary Schools Dance Festival includes categories of: Classical Dances, Traditional Folk Dances, Contemporary Dances, Recreational & Social Dances, and Student Choreography. The Student Choreography category focuses on the traditional dances of Trinidad and Tobago and the Caribbean, as emphasized in the Caribbean Examination Council's syllabus for the Theatre Arts.

The Arts Council of the city of San Fernando also hosts an annual national secondary and primary schools competition (SANFEST) in dance, drama, music and visual arts.

At the tertiary level, both the University of the West Indies (UWI) and the University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT) offer programs in the Performing Arts. The universities offer short intensive courses, as well as one-year certificates, two-year diplomas and four-year Bachelor of Fine Arts degrees. All these programs and courses have a strong emphasis on Caribbean dance and focus primarily on the preparation of teachers for both Primary and Secondary schools.

Question #2: What infrastructure are you building in your country to support this goal?

There is a real need in the dance community for performing spaces. As a result, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago built two national theatres - the National Academy for the Performing Arts – North Campus and South Campus. These structures feature a vast array of open vistas for the enjoyment of the performance arts, as well as, contemporary classrooms, teaching halls and other practice spaces for the cultivation of the performance artistes of tomorrow.

The Ministry of Arts and Multiculturalism also manage (through executive boards) theatres of smaller seating capacity: Queen's Hall (700) and Naparima Bowl (500). Other venues are the San Fernando Arts Council Creative Arts Centre, the University of the West Indies Creative Arts Centre, the Little Carib Theatre (privately

owned), Central Bank Auditorium and auditoriums of schools and university campuses. Most of these performance venues offer special rates to primary and secondary schools that wish to use their spaces to mount productions. In Tobago, the major theatre is the Shaw Park Cultural Complex, which stages most of the major dance and cultural productions in Tobago.

Another of the major resources that we need in Trinidad and Tobago is more qualified and dedicated teachers. At present, teachers are trained in three major institutions: The University of Southern Caribbean (privately owned), Corinth Teachers College (a campus of the University of Trinidad and Tobago), and Valsayn Teachers College (also a campus of the University of Trinidad & Tobago).

Although these institutions provide excellent teaching resources, their programs do not offer enough specific training in dance and dance education. In this light, I have founded the Trinidad and Tobago Centre for Arts Education and Integration. One of the Centre's aims is to provide professional training in all genres of the Arts, with emphasis on the integration of the arts in the academic curriculum.

## **DANCE in the UNITED KINGDOM**

Jacqueline Smith-Autard

Question #1: What is your country doing to support the teaching of dance in your national curriculum? If you don't have a national curriculum: What is your country doing to support the teaching of dance in your country?

### **Dance in the National Curriculum in England**

- From 1988 - 2013 the teaching of Dance in the National Curriculum has been supported by Government by the very fact that there exists a statutory content to be taught to pupils aged 5-16. However this content is submerged within the subject of PE.
- In the new National Curriculum for England 2013 it is still part of the National Curriculum but even more submerged. (Ref to and quotations from - *National Curriculum in England - Framework Document - July 2013 - for pupils aged 5 - 16* and the following publication of *Statutory Requirements and Programmes of Study for- Physical Education* in September 2013.)
- Since 1983 to the present at 16 - 18+ there has been provision for the option of studying Dance as an examination subject. GCSE is the exam at 16 at the end of Year 11 and therefore has to be studied in Years 10 and 11 as a separate subject. AS and A Level also exist for study in years 12 and 13 - There are other examination equivalents but these are not as closely controlled by Government. The qualifications gained at both levels count towards higher education entry requirements in the form of points scored.
- Currently, both examinations test students in performance of set dances, composition of solo and group dances and appreciation of choreographers' works. In GCSE the latter is examined externally by a written paper and all the practical work is examined internally and moderated externally.

[www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/drama-and-performing-arts/gcse/dance-4230](http://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/drama-and-performing-arts/gcse/dance-4230)

GCSE: Unit 1: Critical Appreciation of Dance (42301)

Written Paper – 1 hour

50 marks – 20%

Unit 2: Set Dance (42302)

Practical Examination / Solo Performance 1–1½ minutes  
30 marks – 20%

Unit 3: Performance in a duo/group dance (42303) 3 – 3½ minutes  
Controlled Assessment  
30 marks – 20%

Unit 4: Choreography  
Task A: Solo Composition 1–1½ minutes; 20 marks – 15%  
Task B: Choreography – solo/duo/group; (Solo – 1½ – 2 minutes; duo/group; 2½ – 3 minutes)  
40 marks – 25%  
Unit total: 60 marks – 40%

- In A level there is much more assessment in both years' of study.  
A LEVEL

Unit 1 –Understanding Dance / 20% of A Level / 1 hour 30 minutes examination / 60 marks  
Section A – structured questions (20 marks)  
Section B – two essay questions (40 marks)  
Available in June only

Unit 2 –Choreography and Performance / 30% of A Level / Practical coursework – internally assessed / 90 marks  
Section A – solo choreography and performance (60 marks)  
Section B – performance in a duo/trio (30 marks)  
Available in June only

Unit 3 –Dance Appreciation: Content and Context / 25% of A Level / 1 hour 30 minutes examination / 80 marks  
Section A: one question on chosen area of study (40 marks)  
Section B: one question on set work studied (40 marks)

Unit 4 –Group Choreography and Solo Performance / 25% of A Level / Practical examination / externally assessed / 75 marks  
Section A: group choreography (45 marks)  
Section B: solo performance (30 marks)

- Both examinations came under review by the Government.
- In 2014 the National Dance Teachers Association called for us to respond to the Government's consultation documents concerning changes they proposed in both GCSE and AS/A level Dance. (Ref and quotation from the Government Proposals and NDTA's response:

While the National Dance Teachers Association and Youth Dance England are largely supportive of the new proposals, there is one major issue concerning the assessment of GCSE Dance with which we do not agree.

Thus, it is proposed that the new GCSE examination be 60% practical and 40% final written paper instead of the previous 80% practical exam and 20% final written exam.

We consider that this proposed change in weighting shifts the balance of the qualification too far away from the practical skills, undermining the essential nature of dance as a practical art form does not reflect the equal importance of our three stranded model of dance education: creating, performing and appreciating is likely to force teachers to spend a disproportionate amount of time in preparation for the written exam at the expense of developing the core practical skills on which the subject is based.

### ***Proposed assessment arrangements***

In current GCSEs dance, 80 per cent of the assessment is non-exam assessment. Having considered the draft content, which sets out the knowledge, understanding and the performance required for the subject, we believe the amount of non-exam assessment should be reduced. This will enable content that can be validly assessed by exam to be assessed in that way and make sure sufficient weight is given to all aspects of the content. Nonetheless, creative and performance elements are clearly essential features of the subject content. Non-exam assessments allow for the direct assessment of the practical skills of performance and the application of the creative process in the form of choreography. Non-exam assessment must therefore remain an important feature of the subject. We propose that non-exam assessment should account for 60 per cent of the marks for new GCSEs in dance.

Developing new GCSE, A level and AS qualifications for first teaching in 2016

Ofqual 2014 The DfE is consulting on the content for A level and AS qualifications in dance.

### ***Proposed assessment arrangements***

Only one exam board currently awards this qualification and they permit 60 per cent of the marks for their AS in dance to be allocated to non-exam assessment. The figure for A level is 55 per cent. The draft content for A level and AS qualifications in dance on which the DfE is consulting, while retaining a significant element that requires the direct assessment of practical skills, places greater emphasis than the current qualification on knowledge of genres and periods of dance. This focus distinguishes the A level and AS content from the draft GCSE content.

To reflect the new focus on knowledge of genres and periods of dance we propose that the marks for A level and AS qualifications in dance should be equally distributed between exam and non-exam assessment – that is, 50 per cent to each form of assessment.

These examples show how far Government is intervening in the delivery of Dance in the Curriculum in England.

In my view, a critical problem is the lack of teachers!!

Question #2: What Infrastructure is your country building to support teaching dance in the National Curriculum?

A) Training of Teachers for Dance in the National Curriculum

- Dance is still within PE - Primary sector - very poor provision of teachers due to shift from 4 year B.ED degrees to one year PGCE training.
- Secondary/further still problematic - since 3 year degree students may well study aspects of dance not related to the NC content and then train in 1 year only. (Talk on this....)
- On other hand there is a shift towards schools appointing dance professionals on a part-time visiting artist basis though not many schools will spend the money to do this.
- The NDTA attempts to fill the gaps in training by providing CPD courses - (Picture) but making national provision is hard - teachers have to pay or be paid for...

#### B) Provision of pre-training dance experience in and beyond dance schools.

- Performing Arts Academies - Dance is taught in some high schools that have achieved the status of Specialist Arts Schools
- Department for Education - government - runs Centres for Advanced Training to support dance education for the gifted and talented

Professional training for young people - Centres for Advanced Training in dance identify children with exceptional potential in dance and develop their talent through pioneering programmes; creating and inspiring future generations of world class dancers and choreographers. Through the national provision of highly specialised training for young people, we cultivate artists at a critical stage in their development, in order to prepare them for entry into the world's leading vocational dance schools and onto successful and rewarding careers in the arts.

#### Youth Dance England

Our aim is to increase access, raise standards and improve progression routes in dance on a national scale both in and out of school settings.

We deliver national programmes that inspire, raise aspirations and celebrate excellence. Our programmes provide essential platforms for engaging young people in dance from first steps to training for a professional career. We create lifelong dance participants and audiences as well as the next generation of dance artists and leaders.

We do this by working closely with national and regional partners to ensure that all things dance including events, performances, programmes and training opportunities are developed and delivered in each region across the country.

We also create new partnerships between those providing and supporting dance activities for children and young people through working across the arts, community, education, sport, youth and youth justice sectors.

YDE also offers advice, training, support and resources to both young people and those who have developed, or are thinking about developing, a career in dance.

Youth Dance Companies ; For example Bedfordshire Youth Dance Company

## **DANCE in the UNITED STATES**

Jane M. Bonbright, Ed.D.

Question #1: What is your country doing to support the teaching of dance in your national curriculum? If you don't have a national curriculum: What is your country doing to support the teaching of dance in your country?

In the United States, we do not have a national curriculum. Education is state-driven which means decisions about education are made at the state level, and they are primarily funded by the states at the state level. The federal government contributes some money to the education budgets in each state. In addition, we have a federal agency – the US Department of Education – that serves as an umbrella over the collective 50 states, territories and commonwealths. It supports the public education of all children in the United States but it does not dictate curriculum. It can advise, but not mandate. A caveat is when policy is connected to federal funding.

At the state level, we have a 501c3 called the State Education Agency Directors of Arts Education (SEADAE) that is a collective body of the 50 states arts coordinators and it serves to support state work involving the development and implementation of state policies in standards, assessments and curriculum. In addition, SEADAE strives to collect, coordinate and disseminate research collected by individual states for the national good. Most recently, in June 2014, SEADAE released the National Core Arts Standards for Dance, Media Arts, Music, Theatre and Visual Arts.

The release of the National Core Arts Standards (NCAS) is a good example of infrastructure developed by the public sector to support arts education at the national level in lieu of federal mandates. The NCAS 2014 arts standards were produced and funded by a coalition of arts and education organizations: the National Dance Education Organization, National Association for Music Educators, National Arts Education Association, Education Theatre Association and the American Alliance for Theatre Education, the College Board, SEADAE, Young Audiences, the Kennedy Center, and Americans for the Arts. Collectively it is called the National Coalition for Core Arts Standards (NCCAS).

Currently, 37 states certify in dance at the K-12 level. There is no mandatory national certification for private sector teachers, community/cultural organizations, or performing arts organizations that do outreach programs in the U.S. Post-secondary credentials are regulated by degree granting colleges and universities. In turn, they often require teachers hold terminal degrees such as a MA, EdD, PhD, or similar degree.

Statistics differ in dance on the number of children receiving dance education. Most surveys agree about 52% of children in the U.S. do not receive any education in dance within school programs, and about 48% do receive some training in-school. Of these, approximately 7% at the elementary level are taught by dance specialist while the remaining students are taught under physical education programs. At the high school level, students fair a little better with approximately 12-14% of students having opportunity to study dance as part of school curriculum. We know the majority of students studying dance do not have adequate facilities and the dance educators teaching need and desire a lot more professional development.

The federal government supports arts education with legislation, policy, and grant that fund arts programs across the country. Such grants are highly competitive.

The private sector plays an important part in the development of standards in dance and in the professional development of teachers. However, implementation is executed by the institutions many of which are public and private. The private institutions work to change policy, legislation, and funding opportunities spearheaded to the dance in arts education.

Question #2: What infrastructure are you building in your country to support this goal?

Infrastructure consists of the U.S. Department of Education, the 50 state departments of education and their 50 state arts coordinators, Boards of Education, and parents and students. In addition, infrastructure is supported by private organizations whose focus is dance/arts education. In turn, the dance arts organizations, such as the NDEO, network with arts/education organization to influence policy, legislation and funding at local, state, and national levels. I believe, it is a powerful infrastructure but impact can take years to funnel down from the federal system to the state and local systems (with over 15,000 local school districts with some autonomy); and, vice versa, from local and state levels to the federal level.

#### *BIOGRAPHY*

**Jane M. Bonbright, EdD** is Founding Executive Director of NDEO (1998-2012). She dedicated fifty years to dance performance, education, research, administration, and dance/arts advocacy at national and state levels. She began her career as a professional ballet dancer and toured the U.S. and Europe with major ballet companies. She taught for thirty-five years in professionally-oriented training academies, K-12, and postsecondary education before serving as an administrator in dance/arts education at the national level. Throughout her tenure, she worked to impact US policy, legislation and funding for dance art education in the U.S. and spearheaded NDEO networks, programs and services. Jane is now Director of the NDEO's Online Professional Development Institute and is expanding NDEO's international involvement with global arts education. She is the recipient of NDEO's Lifetime Achievement award (2009), CODA's Alma Hawkins award for Excellence in Dance Education (2007), and CORD's Outstanding Research in Dance Research award (2003). [jbonbright@ndeo.org](mailto:jbonbright@ndeo.org)

**Minami Hara, MA** from Tokyo, Japan, is a Fulbright scholar at New York University's Steinhardt Dance Education M.A. program. Hara trained in classical ballet at the Matsuyama Ballet School in Tokyo and expanded her dance studies to include other genres in Sydney, Australia. As an overseas undergraduate student, Hana attended SUNY/Stony Brook where she studied tap, Laban Movement Analysis, and dances of the African Diaspora. These experiences allowed her to see dance as both art and life, and sparked interest in how dance impacts one's holistic development. Hara obtained an MA in Humanities from Ochanomizu University in Tokyo while pursuing research in dance and personal development. Currently, Hara is studying relationships between practice and mastery of movement form and personal development in classical ballet. At NYU, Hara is studying the American Ballet Theatre National Training Curriculum and is a certified teacher from Pre-Primary level to Level 5.

**Eugene Joseph** has over 45 years of experience in transforming and bringing new perspectives and dynamics to peoples' lives. He received national awards from the Government of Trinidad & Tobago recognizing his work in culture and dance, and an Honorary Distinguished Fellow Award from the University of Trinidad & Tobago. He has traveled throughout the world conducting seminars and workshops in Cross Cultural Training,

Communication Techniques, Movement and Dance, Arts Education and Integration, and serves as a Consultant, Master Instructor and Arts Presenter in the field of Dance and Culture. He has dedicated his life to the study of dance and the use of dance as a catalyst for transformation (Mind, Body and Spirit). Eugene brings creativity and innovation to performance and choreography. Through Outreach Programs, community work, and special interest groups, he takes “dance to the people,” reaffirming that dance is for everyone – no one should be excluded.

**Debra Kapp, BA, HBFA, BEd**, has been teaching Dance at L.B. Pearson School for the Arts, London, Ontario since 1991. She graduated York University’s Dance Program (1979) and taught Ballet and Creative Dance at the Thornhill School of Ballet. Debra is co-author of “Action Pak: Dance Education Resources for Teachers”. Deb writes Dance curriculum for the Thames Valley District School Board and regularly presents workshops for teachers on how to teach Dance in the school setting. Outside of her role as Dance Educator, she is the Producer and Artistic Director of the show “Art Harvest” which showcases Dance Education programs. In 2005 she won an Award of Excellence from the Jewish Community Centers Association of North America for the innovative and creative programming of “Resilience in the Face of Trouble and Despair.” Deb is co-founder of The London Alliance of Dance Educators, and an Executive Board member of Dance Ontario.

**Christina Patsalidou, MFA** is a researcher in the Dance Programme, University of Nicosia, Cyprus. She received an MFA in Dance from University of Arizona. Patsalidou received multiple grants and awards including the Medici Scholar Award, Graduate Fellowship Award, Tucson Pima Arts Council, and Cyprus Youth Organization; and participated in the Opening Minds through the Arts Federally Funded Research Project as a Dance Specialist in Tucson USD. Patsalidou has been a member of Lefkosia Youth Ballet Board, Cyprus Dance Association and other international dance associations. Patsalidou is an active researcher in the field of dance education, dance wellness programs, ballet technique and dance multimedia production and has been invited to present her research in international dance conferences in USA and Europe. In 2013, she co-founded 35° 33° Dance Company, a contemporary ballet based company in Cyprus. She is the founding member and director of Outplay Dance Space in Nicosia.

**Jackie Smith-Autard PhD, MA**, founding member of NDTA and NDEO USA 'Outstanding Leadership Award' recipient (2011), has worked in dance education over 50+ years. Practical work is the seedbed for her research resulting in books, many articles and digital interactive resource packs. Her books in many editions have remained seminal over 38 years. As Director of Bedford Interactive, she is currently engaged in Arts Council funded research projects to produce the software titled FORMotion, pilot it with two major UK dance companies and to create and test world-leading interactive digital dance education resources featuring their professional dance works.

**Boon Fong Yam** is a Senior Specialist (Dance) of the Student Development Curriculum Division, Ministry of Education, Singapore. Her interest in dance has led her to develop her knowledge and skills in various genres including Chinese dance, contemporary dance and Bharatanatyam. Before working at the Ministry of Education as a dance education officer, she taught dance in a secondary school for more than 14 years. Boon Fong has a Masters of Education from the University of Adelaide and a Bachelor of Science (Mathematics) from the National University of Singapore. She has led a research project on the assessment of dance and the development of dance assessment rubric for Singapore Youth Festival Arts Presentation in 2013. She has also adjudicated the Malaysia National Chinese Dance Competition in 2008, 2013 and 2014.



## The Craft of Teaching through Service and Collaboration: A Case Study

Krista Bower, MFA

The call for papers for this conference invited us to examine the “art and craft of teaching” by considering how we pass knowledge to our students, peers, and audiences. As a dance faculty member at Belhaven University, a Christian institution, I continue to investigate the craft of blending faith and art within my teaching practices. I must consider how my courses and teaching methodologies support the larger mission statement of the university, which states: “...By developing servant leaders who value integrity, compassion, and justice in all aspects of their lives, the University prepares people to serve, not to be served.” In 2012, I began a journey to deepen my understanding of *service* in relationship to my dance practice. I sought to answer the following questions: How am I serving my students and my community through my teaching and choreographic practices? How can I pass on a legacy of using dance as mode of ministry within the community surrounding the university? How can I hone the craft of training students through process-based, service-focused community work?

The uniqueness of the Belhaven University Dance Department’s integration of faith and learning attracts students who have solid technical backgrounds in dance along with an interest in *dance ministry*. Among the American Protestant Christian dance community, the term *dance ministry* is commonly used to signify service to God and service to others through dance. The term, *ministry*, as used in The Bible, refers to both spiritual and secular acts of service. For the purposes of this paper, I will use the terms *dance ministry* and *service through dance* interchangeably because as a Christian, I believe any act of service is *ministry*. Ultimately, service should be guided by a specific intention to help, benefit, and meet the physical, spiritual, and/or emotional needs of others.

As I have observed it, *dance ministry* within the American Protestant Christian dance community predominately takes a presentational form as performances are shared with underserved or underexposed audiences. For example, Belhaven University facilitates a Dance Ministry Ensemble, a group that performs in local churches, nursing homes, and children’s homes throughout the community. The ensemble shares dance works, often driven by a Christian message, with the aim of serving and encouraging audience members. While *service-through-performance* or *faith-sharing through performance* are certainly valid, I question the degree of actual ministry that may occur in this format. To add to the dialogue surrounding service through dance, I conducted a case study engaging community members (untrained dancers) with university dance students in the process of creating and performing a dance work. My aim was not to prove that a process-focused model of service is better than preexisting methods of dance ministry, but to simply explore another way of blending faith and action. By involving university students in this work, I examined how processes of service, engagement, observation, participation, collaboration, and reflection helped to deepen their assimilation of knowledge and experience.

The case study included a collaborative dance-making process involving eight females from the Belhaven University Dance Ministry Ensemble and seven female teenagers who resided at the Methodist Children’s Home, a foster-care group home in Jackson, Mississippi. The university students involved in this project were enrolled in a course at Belhaven called *Performance*, which aims to train students through processes of dance-making, rehearsing, and performing. Within this course, faculty members are free to choose their preferred

methods of teaching and developing students' performance skills. Some choreographers work as sole-creators, while other artists use more collaborative methods. My decision to take students into the community for a service-focused, process-oriented experience involving untrained dancers was a radical departure from the normal format of the *Performance* course within the Belhaven University Dance Department. Fortunately, I received the enthusiastic support of both the chair of the BU Dance Department as well as the CEO of the Methodist Children's Home as I embarked on this journey.

To develop a plan for this service-learning experience, I began by building relationships with the directors of the Methodist Children's Home during the summer of 2012. We outlined details of scheduling, confidentiality, facilities, transportation, and the selection process for participants. We worked to develop a contract that detailed the parameters of the project, but we also acknowledged the importance of improvisation and responsiveness within the process. Just as the final form of a choreographic work emerges over time, I realized that I could not dictate the form or direction that this community-university partnership might take over the course of the seventh-month process. In preparation for our work within the community, the university students and I explored and discussed what it means to be a servant-artist. We dialogued about how to *minister* to the needs of the adolescents in foster care, while also remaining open, vulnerable, and teachable. We aimed to develop personal and collective definitions of *service* while also acknowledging that our understanding of *dance ministry* might evolve during this service-learning experience. Beginning in August of 2012, the Belhaven University students and I travelled to the Methodist Children's Home for dance-making sessions each Monday afternoon for seven months.

My methodology for this project included a review of literature, movement exploration, participant interviews, observation, video and audio recording, and a culminating performance alongside

formal and reflective writing. I recognize that there are numerous pre-existing models for community service in diverse fields. Additionally, many contemporary choreographers and companies, such as Liz Lerman and Urban Bush Women, have developed unique methods of engaging untrained dancers in the creative process. My approach was informed by researching existing methods, but my model was also uniquely designed to meet the specific needs of my project participants. Moreover, my project was a personal attempt to discover my relationship to the concept of *dance ministry* within the context of the Christian university in which I teach.

As I considered how to best serve my university students and the community members involved in this project, I realized that each participant needed to be activated as a valuable contributor to this choreographic process. I engaged the trained and untrained dancers in a collaborative approach based on my research surrounding the power of inclusion in community service projects. I hoped that the university students would recognize that the creative ideas of the untrained dancers were just as valid as their own discoveries.

In *Dance and the Performative*, authors Ana Sanchez-Colberg and Valerie Preston-Dunlop define *co-authorship*:

Co-authorship or collaborative choreography requires that the dancers share the making process as well as the embodying process. They are expected to find material, to offer ideas and to solve technical problems, to invest something of themselves in given material. They are both performers and makers (2010).

Each participant within our project had an equal right to participate, and we had a shared responsibility to accept one another's contributions. During the first several sessions, I facilitated improvisational "games" to aid the dancers in the process of building relationships, identifying movement possibilities, and establishing trust. The dancers gradually built a common language, they

transferred physical experiences, and they developed an understanding of self and others. While viewing the participants as both “performers and makers,” we used a variety of choreographic mechanisms to arrive at form. We investigated the interrelated roles of creator, performer, and spectator as each participant spent time making, sharing, observing, and editing movement. Three months into our process, I placed the participants in small groups and assigned them the task of building choreographic structures collaboratively. Each group was encouraged to share memories, present circumstances, and future hopes as the starting place for creative activity. By identifying both commonalities and differences through words and action, the groups made collective movement and structural choices. The university students and the MCH teenagers were actively involved in decision-making processes; thus, they were challenged to think creatively and critically. As I gave more and more creative license to the participants, I began to observe that the trained and untrained dancers were *serving* one another: listening and responding to each other’s needs.

Jawole Willa Jo Zollar, founder of Urban Bush Women, states that within her community dance projects, movement experience “is at once real life, rehearsal for performance, rehearsal for life and performance” (George-Graves 2010). I feel that the lines between rehearsal and real life were blurred within our sessions at the foster care facility as well. Too often, university students become puppets in the master plan of a choreographer. When university students are brought into the community to work with untrained dancers of various ages and abilities, they are asked to bring their whole-selves into the work; they must practice communicating, problem-solving, negotiating, and creating in an environment that reflects “real life.” As participants are empowered as co-creators, the assimilation of knowledge is deepened through practical experience.

Following each Monday session at the foster care facility, I met with the university students to

debrief about our experience. This provided opportunity to discuss and record our experiences, to analyze any conflicts that arose, and to celebrate the personal and collective growth that we felt. In personal interviews with the university students, they revealed a sense of pride about their ability to co-author the emerging choreographic work. One student, Nadia, felt simultaneously empowered and humbled by the experience. She recognized that she needed to be both a leader and a follower at different moments in the collaborative process (Nadia Booth, pers. comm.). During our first several sessions, the untrained dancers inevitably looked to the university students for guidance, but as the project progressed, the adolescent participants felt emboldened to contribute their creative ideas. I witnessed the university students truly function as servant-artists in this process as they negotiated complex roles as leaders, followers, listeners, observers, participants, and co-creators. The notion of *service* implies an understanding of humility; as we collaborate with others, we must acknowledge that the ideas, experiences, and body histories of others are significant. As a dance educator, I feel a sense of responsibility to exemplify these values of service and collaboration in all of my courses and interactions with students.

Collaborative art-making processes in the community also train students to be adaptable and responsive to unexpected events. While we began the project working with seven teenagers residing at the Children’s Home, only three of those teenagers remained for the duration of the project. Adolescents in foster-care have lives characterized by instability and unpredictability. One project participant was placed in a foster-family in a different community, another reunited with a biological relative, one participant was removed from the project due to poor academic performance, and yet another girl left the home without explanation. Dealing with the loss of these participants became one of the most challenging aspects of the project. The university students and I had developed close relationships with these girls, and they often left without warning.

Furthermore, the continually changing configuration of dancers required that the choreography stay *in-process* as sections of movement were altered or removed. The university students and I questioned whether the choreographic work should be performed because several of the co-authors were no longer present. We wondered if we could authentically share the movements and ideas that the absentee dancers had contributed. The university students were very invested in this process, and they experienced both the joys and challenges inherent in community service projects.

There are aspects of our lives and of our choreographic processes that we can control and also aspects that we cannot govern. By inviting co-authorship and emergence in this project, we were releasing control of the choreographic outcome. In some small way, this enabled us to empathize with the loss of control that the teenagers in foster care experienced on a daily basis. The physical maneuvering involved in the participants' past and present circumstances began to impact the emergent choreography. We ministered to one another as we collectively adapted to change and invited uncertainty to inform our process. We were able to serve one another by being a consistent presence in each other's lives. As we collaboratively and physically explored each other's stories, we validated one another's experiences.

The details of the challenging transition from the creative to the performative phase of this project are beyond the scope of this paper, but the opportunity to watch the participants grow in self-confidence and boldness as performers was an incredible gift. The university students and the adolescent participants built a strong sense of community and trust as they *served* one another in the choreographic process, and they were able to successfully transfer this sense of safety into the performance space. As we prepared for the presentation, the dancers explored how to *serve* within the performance context by empathetically and spontaneously responding to one another. The dancers made real-time choices to support each other

physically and emotionally. The trained and untrained dancers performed beautifully and confidently. They were at once daring and vulnerable; most importantly, they were authentic and honest on stage. Daniel Johnson, a member of the audience, emailed me his response to the performance. He wrote:

The enactment of the art was not ministry as messenger but ministry as compassionate, empathetic activity. The meaning of the work was the actual changes each participant underwent. The meaning was aesthetically revealed through movement which actively engaged the past in the present on terms dictated by the participant. Successful use of art for practical means is validation that nonlinear thinking - creativity in engaging relationship - is an efficient and practical tool for growth and change (Daniel Johnson, email message to the author, February 16, 2013).

I was thrilled that this audience member could *see* "ministry as compassionate, empathetic activity."

In final interviews with the participants at the Children's Home, I was amazed to hear personal stories of restoration, vulnerability, and freedom. The names of the participants have been changed to protect their identity. Shannon, an untrained dancer, stated, "I learned how to trust people again, how to express and talk about how I feel, and how to leave past pain behind." She continued, stating that she "felt more confident and cared about" (Shannon Smith, pers. comm.). Olympia said she felt like a "bird released from a nest...given the opportunity to fly" (Olympia Waters, pers. comm.). Bianca felt "loved, appreciated, beautiful, and proud" (Bianca Fuller, pers. comm.). Katie, a university student, reflected that the project participants are now "different girls inside and out...[this process] brought healing to our lives," she said (Katie Acker, pers. comm.). These responses are testimonies to the ministerial power of a collaborative process. Although dance is an ephemeral art form, shared choreographic acts can make a lasting impact.

Following the performance, the university students and I traveled back to the foster care facility for several debriefing sessions with the adolescents. We watched the video of the performance, we discussed the strengths and weaknesses of our project, and we considered changes that we might implement in the future. Over the next three months, all but one of the adolescents from the project were placed in homes outside of MCH, and we were not able to continue our relationships with them. Three of the university students involved in the project graduated and moved out of state. While it was difficult to move forward after such a transformative experience, I feel confident that the seven months that we spent together left a positive impact in the lives of those involved. I have since become the co-director of the Belhaven University Dance Ministry Ensemble, and I have begun a second collaborative project involving a new group of university students and teenage residents at the Methodist Children's Home. I hope that this partnership will continue to grow over the next several years and that many of the university students will have the opportunity to experience the benefits of collaborative dance-making within our community.

When I consider the term *ministry*, I believe it involves meeting people where they are, accepting them, relating to them, loving them, and sharing life with them. Ministry should be authentic and meaningful, attending to the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of others. The continual exchange of ideas, movements, words, and images involved in a collaborative process is the perfect ground for serving and supporting others. A choreographic process, when framed by a desire to relate to, serve, and benefit the participants, can indeed be *dance ministry*. Inviting untrained dancers to participate as co-authors in the choreographic process is an excellent way to serve our communities and train our students. Every person has a unique story and experience to offer, and we can all benefit by being more inclusive in our creative projects.

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## BIOGRAPHY

**Krista Bower, MFA** has an MFA in Choreography from Jacksonville University and a BFA in Dance from Belhaven University. She currently serves as a Specialty Instructor of Dance at Belhaven University, teaching modern dance technique and

theory courses. Krista is co-founder and co-director of Front Porch Dance, a contemporary dance company based in Jackson, Mississippi. Krista is also the owner and director of the Yazoo City School of Dance, teaching students of all ages. In 2010, Krista served as the Dance School Administrator for the USA International Ballet Competition Dance School and Teachers Workshop, and she will return to this role for the 2014 USA IBC. The Mississippi Arts Commission granted Krista a Performing Arts Fellowship in 2011, a merit-based award given to "professionals producing works of high artistic quality." In 2013, the Mississippi Business Journal selected Krista as "One of Mississippi's 50 Leading Business Women."

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## Summary of Panel Discussion

### Dancing “Woman:” Perspectives on Gender in Isadora Duncan's Dance

Moderator/Panelist: Meg Brooker, MFA

Panelists: Alice Bloch, PhD, Andrea Mantell Seidel, PhD,  
Pattee Russell-Curry, MFT, BC-DMT

#### *ABSTRACT*

In June 2013, the Isadora Duncan International Symposium convened over fifty professional practitioners of Duncan dance. Continuing conversations that developed out of the Symposium, this panel explores collaborative, scholarly inquiry as a professional practice for furthering discussions related to Duncan dance in contemporary contexts. This panel aims to serve as a model for other historical dance practices reflectively engaging in conversations addressing contemporary issues of representation and identity.

The proposed panel, comprised of Duncan dance educators, artists, and scholars, examine Duncan’s vision of a free and independent “Woman” as expressed in her writings and speeches on the dance within the socio-historical context of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, as well as from the perspective of contemporary concepts of gender and female identity.

Understanding that today’s gender landscape is very different than it was a century ago, this panel addresses the following questions: What is the role of gender in contemporary Isadora Duncan dance? Are we reaffirming, redefining, or deconstructing Duncan's ideal "Woman" in our contemporary approaches to teaching Duncan technique and repertory? What role does our perspective on Duncan’s conception of “Woman” play in how we negotiate gender in our current studio and classroom spaces?

Four panelists, representing multiple lineages and generations of Duncan dancers, share their perspectives on gender in Duncan dance practice from a variety of contexts ranging from higher education, to professional concert performance, to community-based and therapeutic dance settings. Some of the issues to be addressed include analysis of masculine and feminine movement qualities in Duncan choreographies and an examination of how Duncan’s movement choices physically illustrate her feminine ideal. Other panelists, drawing on their experience with male dancers, seek to expand the notion that Duncan dance is limited to expressing female experience. An artist/scholar examines the construction of female identity in the dancing body in staged performances of Duncan’s “Bacchanal” while a dance therapist reflects on her experiences teaching Duncan dance to disabled teen girls and the confidence and sense of personal power they develop as a result. The range of perspectives represented by this panel presents a complex, contemporary picture of the notion of “Woman” and gender within Duncan’s work that hopefully will shed greater light and clarity on the construction of gender identities in contemporary Duncan dance practice.

## PANEL INTRODUCTION

Welcome to *Dancing “Woman”: Perspectives on Gender in Isadora Duncan's Dance*. We are bringing together today four professionals in the field of Isadora Duncan dance. The viewpoints we are going to share grew out of conversations at the first Isadora Duncan International Symposium in June 2013 at George Washington University in DC. IDIS is working to professionalize the field of Duncan dance and our second conference will be at the Joffrey Tower, June 11-13, 2015. Saturday, this weekend, there will be a free community class and showing from 2:30-5pm at Joffrey to promote the June event.

Our focus today is Isadora Duncan's vision of “Woman” and how we translate that historic vision in a range of twenty-first century educational contexts. Understanding that today's gender landscape is very different than it was a century ago, this panel addresses the following questions: What is the role of gender in contemporary Isadora Duncan dance? Are we reaffirming, redefining, or deconstructing Duncan's ideal “Woman” in our contemporary approaches to teaching Duncan technique and repertory? What role does our perspective on Duncan's conception of “Woman” play in how we negotiate gender in our current studio and classroom spaces?

We will each take a few minutes to share and save time for cross-panel questions at the end. Our panelists include Alice Bloch, PhD, faculty at Washington University, COCA Arts Integration specialist, and board member for Missouri Dance Organization and the Missouri Alliance for Arts in Education; Andrea Mantell Seidel, PhD, Professor of Dance, Associate Professor of Religious Studies and founding director of the Intercultural Dance and Music Institute housed in the Latin American and Caribbean Center at Florida International University; Pattee Russell-Curry, MFT, BC-DMT, Board Certified Dance Movement Therapist with the American Dance Therapy Association; and Meg Brooker, MFA, Assistant Professor of Dance, Middle Tennessee State University, and steering committee member for the Isadora Duncan International Symposium. In addition to roles as scholars and educators, all of our panelists are active practitioners of Isadora Duncan dance.

## ADDRESSING ISSUES OF GENDER IN A UNIVERSITY LEVEL DUNCAN CLASS

**Alice Bloch**

Isadora Duncan said, “I have always danced my life.” Thus, a university level Duncan class must encompass not only technique and choreography, but address the interrelationship of her art and life in its socio/cultural context. This lays the groundwork for considering her contemporary relevance. Reflections on key cultural substructures like race and class are interwoven with student's learning elements of Duncan's technique and selected choreographies. When considering gender, they analyze why they consider certain movement qualities masculine or feminine, and how their opinions may be culturally determined. They look at different dance styles to become aware of their own preconceived notions of femininity and masculinity in dance. They compare gender definitions of Duncan's era with our own to study the question: “Is Duncan dance inherently feminine?”

Duncan developed her movement from several sources, such as the basic locomotor movements. Students discuss whether movements like running and skipping are inherently gendered. They explore performing these movements with a variety of weights, flows, and shapes to see how that affects their perceptions of gender. They then learn archetypal Duncan ways of doing these movements, and examine if that changes their responses on if or how the movement is gendered.

Gravity and wave forms permeate Duncan's movement. Students again address whether these natural manifestations are inherently gendered, the degree to which gender has been culturally ascribed. The above issues are considered in movement, discussion, and writing throughout the course as students learn and watch



selected Duncan choreography including the Chopin “Prelude” and “Mazurka,” “Blessed Spirits,” “Furies,” and Scriabin’s “Mother.”

Throughout the course we discuss Duncan’s influence on gender markers such as clothing, and scrutinize Duncan’s role as feminist icon. Students observe and dance in Greek-inspired tunics of varied colors and design to determine how costuming affects their perceptions.

Isadora Duncan is an iconic figure in gender studies. She danced at a time when gender roles were undergoing a drastic transformation. Her revolutionary art and radical life style incorporated and challenged conventional notions of gender and continue to do so today as gender parameters continue to evolve.

### ***BACCHANAL: A CONTEMPORARY MODEL FOR FEMALE SENSUALITY IN DANCE***

**Dr. Andrea Mantell Seidel**

Part of Duncan’s mission was to not only elevate the status of women in society but to dismantle the perception of women as split and fragmented between body and mind, intelligence and sexuality and to elevate the dancing body to the status of a religion. My premise in this short presentation is that Duncan’s image of Woman, particularly as depicted in her dance *Bacchanal* choreographed to the music of Gluck’s ballet suite from *Iphigenia* can serve as a model for contemporary woman’s dancing bodies who unfortunately in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are still depicted as fragmented and an erotic object of sexualized desire.

It was primarily in Nietzsche and his concepts of Dionysian and Hellenistic ideals that Duncan found a justification for her mission to realize her vision of the whole woman, the “highest intelligence in the freest body. For Duncan, dancing was “the Dionysian ecstasy which carries away all” (Duncan 63, 139).

Duncan’s *Bacchanal* is perhaps the most ecstatic and freest of the dances in the repertory, largely inspired by Sacred Dionysian fertility rites in ancient Greece where the *maenads* or worshippers of Dionysian became filled with *enthousiasmos*, a state of being possessed by the gods and sought union with the rhythmic forces of nature and the divine creative energy.

According to Nietzsche, an encounter with Dionysian energies of nature reaffirms a person’s sense of his or her bodily self. In a world stripped of mutually shared and agreed upon sacred rituals and myths, with few role models of healthy female identity, young women in the contemporary world are left adrift to discover and construct their identities from a massive sea of commoditized, commercialized, and objectified body images.

Dancers often suffer from one of three conditions that disconnects them from a healthy sense of female identity. One type of disconnect arises from inauthentic constructed images of the embodied self as imagined and invented by the ‘other.’ In this case, the dancer falls prey to female role models fostered by the fashion industry, music videos, commercial jazz, movies, and popular culture icons such as Rihanna, Miley Cyrus etc. Here the imagined ideal woman is the objectified seductress. Hyper sexualized dance movements are constructed to titillate, attract, or allure both male and female audience members or to arouse oneself. The dancer, practicing in front of the mirror, learns to cultivate a seductive smile and gaze and to exhibit and accentuate her hips, breasts and buttocks. A second disconnect may occur when movement is ‘neutered’ and heavily abstracted from emotional awareness and deeply felt bodily sensations. For example, many post-postmodern choreographies strip the body of its inherent sensuality and the ecstasy of movement by focusing only on the structure and dynamics of the movement. The lack of deep sensory awareness and feeling is often reflected in the soullessness of the eyes. A third type of disconnect is when the dancer is overly self-absorbed in her own sensations and feelings for her own pleasure only. She often lacks the awareness or the vulnerability to move from self to other, to connect with something greater and beyond herself. We may be invited to watch but we are not invited into her conscious experience.

Ultimately in these portrayals, the dancing Woman is fragmented from her own unique sensual identity as both a thinking and a feeling human being, in essence as a whole self. Female identity, as conceptualized in Duncan's *Bacchanal*, on the other hand, is rooted in an ancient notion of "sacred sensuality," where bodily sensations are organically connected to the primal, creative and rhythmic forces of nature, to the fertility and gods that sustain all life. Here is a model of an elevated sense of the feminine, woman as a contemporary embodiment of the goddess who recognizes the wisdom and the will of the body, with the strength of Artemis, the beauty of Aphrodite, and the wisdom of Apollo. In *Bacchanal*, the dancer is lost in the ecstasy of the dance, and the desire to unite flesh and spirit. Consciousness is not obliterated in a mindless abandonment, but rather, intoxicated with spirit, the dancer's 'self-conscious' ego dissipates. *Bacchanal* is a rite of communion and a community of women seeking bodily union with the forces of the natural and divine world. As the chest and solar plexus yearn upwards towards heavenly spheres, the arms fold and unfold across and through the center of the body in an embrace of the transported Self. As the dancers mime drinking cups of red wine with their palms, they imagine indulgently allowing the sweet nectar to cascade down the front of the body, bathing the naked skin in the dark red spirits. Sensuality then pervades the body like an elixir, as if nectar pours forth from the pores and veins. The 'self' is not conscious of itself, but is abandoned to a higher Self. It is act of an ultimate surrender, a giving up of oneself to a greater, external force, to the imagined invisible powers of Dionysus. The embodied experience then becomes transcendent; the fullness of ripe breasts serves not to titillate and arouse but rather become emblems of fertility, metaphorical milk and honey. The pelvis yearns not just for physical pleasure but for a more intimate union and communion that transports one beyond herself, while remaining fully grounded in the earth.

As the dancer stomps the earth miming the crushing of grapes, she seeks to feel the power of the earth pulsating and vibrating through her body like a flamenco dancer responding to the *duende* described by Federico García Lorca as the spirit of the earth, a mysterious power that climbs up inside you, from the soles of the feet. So may we all learn to awaken the *duende* and find our wholeness in the real ecstasy of the dance.

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### ***ISADORA DUNCAN DANCE IN THERAPY* Pattee Russell-Curry, MFT, BC-DMT, LPCC**

Over the past 15 years, I have developed a dance component to a Summer Youth Arts Intensive program for disabled youth, and open to community members, offered through the local county schools special education "Extended Year". Teens 13-21 participate in the program, male and female, ambulatory, paraplegic, quadriplegic. Some use manual, power, or head controlled wheelchairs, walkers, braces, or other assistive technological devices. Some can't speak, or write, feed themselves or toilet themselves, but these youth are mostly intelligent, several obtaining Master's Degrees, others with cognitive or memory impairment. They have had multiple operations, have poor memory and coordination, spatial organization problems particularly with traumatic brain injury, and most have been sheltered, pampered, and never on a date. Some have been referred with other disabilities such as Autistic Spectrum Disorder, Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Blindness, or Cognitive or Developmental Delays.

As part of an extensive process, I incorporate Isadora Duncan dance principles into each year's program, such as 'Greeting and Parting' exercises between opposite and/or same sex partners. Many of these participants are uncomfortable with eye contact, and have poor social skills. 'Greeting and Parting' encourages acknowledging another person, caring for or being cared for, guiding, responding to and separating from one

another, with long glances and engaged bodies. This process has a bonding effect, which draws the participants close to each other. This connection becomes the glue that makes everything we do later, cohesive and nonthreatening. Both males and females benefit from these experiences.

Many of these teens are self-conscious, awkward or shy. Those with TBI may have led a normal life up until their injury, and are now suffering from depression, frustration with new limitations, and feeling socially isolated, struggling to adjust to a new identity. Using Duncan Dance running, skipping and leaping qualities, students discover ways to fly across the floor, on their chair; putting the rhythmic qualities into their bodies, leaning forward with urgency, exhilaration and determination. Out of chairs or in, students discover the power of the solar plexus in lifting them literally out of their heavy, tight bodies, into an exhilarating and liberating sensation, that is described in Delsarte's work of lifting and moving up into the 'spiritual zones' of space over the head. Connecting the breath to the solar plexus, encouraging movements engaged and connected, these students discover a more authentic Self both in the dance, as well as in the process of building dances, and building dance communities in the intensive experience, which culminates in a VSA Day performance.

Many of the teen girls believe they are unattractive, and are very self-conscious. Helping them to discover the lift in the solar plexus, the use of upper body lightness, flowing arms, lifted necks and heads, out of their chairs, reclining on the floor 'near the waters edge, among the reeds' or 'basking in the sun', Duncan work is so fond of capturing the experience of being outdoors, or embodying the elements of the earth. Through the intensive, I have seen many teen girls bloom, feeling pretty, attractive, desirable, lovely, as they move through these sequences. The sense of community support in holding hands in a circle, or surrounding a seated sister, have been loving, inclusive and empowering. Duncan's Russian Revolutionary dances have allowed dancers to discover their power and earthy strength.

Males experiencing the Duncan work have also developed strength through the strong lower body movements that pound into the earth in skips, or the solid grounding in drawing energy from the earth as it is pulled up from the roots and drawn into one's Self, or sent out to the community, or up to the Gods. Tenderness, and gentleness have also developed, in the male dancers ability to be attentive to their female partners, or to be engaged and friendly to their male counterparts through movement.

While Duncan's work is both gentle, and powerfully strong, I find her work to encompass the lifespan of Woman, and yet, as I have experienced in the work with teens with disabilities, the Duncan work is powerful in allowing both genders to tap into their own anima/animas, powers of yin/yang qualities that all men and women have in varying degrees. Personally, I have found Duncan's pedagogy to reflect what it means to be human, and for these teens, I have witnessed them wake up, come alive, and become engaged not only with themselves, but with each other, and ultimately with their communities in new and aspiring ways. The Duncan work is empowering for both males and females. It is about engagement with the Self, with the Earth and elements, and with a Higher Power.

Under the Scarf, a Duncan children's dance using a long silk scarf creates an imaginary "other world" in which the dancer enters another world entirely. They must time their entrance and exit under the scarf so as not to get entangled in it, to multi-task with another dancer as they pass through the scarf shelter, and again, to part either as partners, or with a long engaged look goodbye. These interactive and relational qualities of Duncan's work are incredibly therapeutic for all dancers, but present new challenges for those who look down, or avoid eye contact. Yet, by developing these skills, they discover new confidence, and pro-social behaviors that will serve them well in the community. Self-Esteem pre-tests and post-tests support improvement through this program.

The promotion of independent behavior and improved self-esteem encourages these students to take risks physically, emotionally and socially. These experiences are extremely valuable for them. Through the

promotion of skills exhibited in society as a whole, we empower girls to become strong women, and boys to become aware and attentive men. Duncan Dance is conducive to establishing intelligence in the body, engagement, relationship, a sense of Self and of Other that lead to a fully realized human being able to navigate their life with vision, intention and curiosity.

**RECONSTRUCTING DUNCAN'S "WOMAN"**  
**IN A TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY MASTER CLASS**

**Meg Brooker**

For several years, I've had the opportunity to give a Duncan technique master class to a group of dance history students at The University of Texas at Austin. I completed my graduate studies at UT Austin, and I know that the dance history curriculum asks students to consider dance through a range of theoretical lenses, including representations of race, gender, sexuality, class, and other frameworks, that give them the tools to explore dance as a rich cultural process, as well as a cultural artifact. Towards this end, the students read the "Early Modern Dance" chapter from Sally Banes' *Dancing Women: Female Bodies on the Stage*. My task is to experientially illustrate Banes' reading of Duncan's "Woman."

So, who is Duncan's "Woman" and how does Banes interpret her? "Woman" is a theme for Duncan in writings and speeches over the course of her decades-long career. For Duncan, natural movement, strength, and freedom are essential characteristics of her conception of "Woman." This freedom is evidenced through her silk tunics, her breath-initiated gestural dance technique, the choice she exercised in selecting music, and in negotiating venues for her work. This freedom of choice starts with freeing the body, and not just in dance movement. She also acts on this freedom in her choice of lovers, of fathers to her children, of how she expresses herself through movement, and even of where, geographically, she travels and works in pursuit of her ideal.

In *Dancing Women*, Banes contextualizes Duncan within the woman movement of the early twentieth century, and she closely reads three iconic Duncan choreographies, as performed by dancer Annabelle Gamson, citing them as evidence of her analysis of Duncan's stance on love, nurture, and liberation. According to Banes, "These three themes intertwine in Duncan's rhetoric and choreography to create a specific emblem of woman: innately procreative, patriotic, and passionate" (Banes 75). For the theme of love, she watches the Brahms waltzes, "The Many Faces of Love," for nurture and liberation she focuses on choreographies of two Scriabin etudes, "Mother" and "Revolutionary Etude," respectively.

In her analysis, Banes cites contradictions in Duncan's vision for "Woman." She notes that Duncan calls for a free, emancipated woman; however, by aligning woman with nature, and celebrating the reproductive aspect of her sexuality, Banes reads Duncan as reinforcing the limited idea of woman in the roles of mother and nurturer. Banes asserts, "her feminism was a conservative one, linking sexuality, nature, procreation, and motherhood as women's innate biological and social destiny" (Banes 80). From a contemporary gender studies perspective, this reading suggests that Duncan's brand of feminism (if we can call it that) is quite conservative. In this reading, Duncan is creating a space for women to explore and express their sexuality and to gain some independence by rejecting the marriage contract, yet women's social functions as child-bearers and child-rearers, educating and modeling moral standards for future generations, is unchallenged.

In her analysis, Banes is building on Ann Daly's reading of Duncan's place in feminist history. According to Daly, "Duncan combined, paradoxically, the Feminists' emphasis on radical individualism, on the one hand, with the woman movement's sense of social responsibility and the suffragists' social identification with women" (Daly, 163). Both Daly and Banes argue for Duncan's contributions to a subjective, rather than objective, space for women as choreographers and performers of early modern dance. Daly notes that by emphasizing the movement of the torso, Duncan shifted focus onto the dancing body and away from the legs

(Daly, 162). Banes credits the early modern dance with “construct[ing] new social relations, partly because it produced a new, predominantly female audience” (Banes, 66). Yet both complicate Duncan’s contributions to female subjectivity by noting Duncan’s conscious aligning of her body with symbolic iconography representative of high ideals, such as liberty. Banes even titles the section devoted to Duncan “La Liberté” as a gesture to Daly’s recognition of Eugene Delacroix’s *Liberty Leading the People* in Duncan’s heroic dance to *La Marseillaise*.

While Daly and Banes offer similar readings of the scope and limits of Duncan’s contributions to the woman movement, they differ in their readings of sexuality in Duncan’s work. Daly reads Duncan’s dancing as asexual, deemphasizing the body and aligning with the spirit. Banes reads Gamson’s interpretations of Duncan’s work, particularly the Brahms waltzes, as overtly sexual in expression, citing gesture that aims “to present the self to the spectator in a deliberately sexual way,” and even reading the movements as “indulging in self-touching” (Banes 76). It is important to note here that Banes’ interpretations are of Gamson’s filmed performances of Duncan’s work. Banes allows for no distance between Duncan’s female body and the themes in her dances, noting, “these images of strength and freedom cannot be separated from their performance with her woman’s body” (Banes 78). Yet, Duncan’s technique and her repertory *has* separated from her physical body; in the last century, her technique and dances have been passed down through generations of dancers to many different bodies.

So, what happens when bodies who are not Isadora Duncan, try on the movements? How do contemporary bodies experience Duncan movement patterning? Do they feel gendered in the dancing? Do they read as gendered from the observer’s perspective? There are certain conventions that read as feminine in Duncan dance: the traditional tunic with an over-scarf, bound by elastic beneath the breasts; loose, free-flowing hair occasionally bedecked by flowers, indicating girlish youth; the contrapposto line, emphasizing the physical curves of the body; the graceful, harmonious quality of movement; the exposed neck and upturned palms that indicate submission and vulnerability. There are also aspects to Duncan dance that read as masculine: the bound force and strength in the heroic movements; the violent tension in the “Furies;” the intentional charging through space of the marches; the powerful solo figure directly confronting the audience in “Revolutionary Etude.”

My task is to experientially convey the nuance and complexity of these gendered readings of Duncan’s work in an hour-and-fifteen-minute technique class. What am I intentionally foregrounding, and what am I deemphasizing? Why do I feel that teaching Duncan’s work through the lens of her specific gender identity somehow limits the breadth of her contribution to dance as an expressive art? If we understand gender as constructed, trained behavior, then can we not consider Duncan dance as distinct from Isadora Duncan’s historic persona? When female bodies dance Duncan’s work, they are female bodies dancing, but as dancing bodies they are not always cast in the character of “Woman.” The dancing body in Duncan’s work expresses a range of gender-identified and gender neutral roles, from bacchantes to mothers to furies to laborers and revolutionaries.

Knowing that the students’ historical context for Duncan is Banes’ interpretation, I make choices to both reinforce and challenge Banes’ reading of Duncan’s work. I teach in a tunic. I begin class in a circle, focusing on breath, identifying the solar plexus, awakening a sense of internal awareness. We explore slow movements, discovering an up and over weight shift that settles into the contrapposto position, opening the line of the neck. I introduce the idea of natural forces as we successively work through the joints to create Duncan’s gestural waves. We open the torso, taking Duncan sways from a stationary experience into full locomotion. We shift through levels with weighted, bobbing movements and explore the laying-down pattern of Duncan’s full recline. I allow the students to experience and absorb the qualities, whole-body coordination, and feeling of these movements. Rather than picking a piece of repertory that indicates a human character, I introduce Duncan’s “Waterstudy.” I foreground the theme of nature in Duncan’s work from a physics perspective, asking students to

observe and recall movement as a result of natural forces like wind, waves, momentum, gravity, inertia. I give students an experience of the strength, plasticity, and freedom inherent in Duncan technique.

As a twenty-first century dance theorist, I am uncomfortable with the female/male binary. I am also very aware that the students whose experiences I am facilitating represent a range of gender and sexual identifications. In the early twentieth century, Duncan was addressing an historical need to create visibility and independence for women in a patriarchal-dominated economy and society. While the feminist project is certainly not complete, it is also more varied and nuanced as scholars and activists call attention to queer experience. As a twenty-first century Duncan dancer I am uncomfortable evaluating Duncan's artistic contributions solely within the confines of the turn-of-the-twentieth-century woman movement. I am interested in distinguishing between what Duncan's dancing body represented over a century ago and what the experience of Duncan dance technique has to offer dancers in today's contemporary context.

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### **CONCLUSIONS**

This performance-oriented panel sparked relevant questions and lively debate. Panelists and attendees discussed including dancers and bodies in the work who represent differently from how Isadora Duncan's body is historically read, as well as how dancing Isadora Duncan's technique and movement patterns can be an empowering experience for a wide range of dancers, from differently-abled teenagers, to university students, to dancers and movers identifying as LGBT. Panelists Alice Bloch and Andrea Mantell Seidel demonstrated Duncan movements as evidence to support their arguments. Bloch modeled Duncan walks with blue and pink toned scarves, as a visual challenge to gendered notions of color, while Seidel performed a compelling comparison of sensuality in Duncan movement, sexuality in contemporary popular dance, and gender neutrality in a post-modern aesthetic. Pattee Russell Curry shared moving images and video of her application of Duncan dance technique to dance therapy, and Meg Brooker challenged scholars and historians of Duncan's work to create space for the embodied experience of contemporary Duncan dancers and choreographers creating new work in Duncan technique.

### **BIOGRAPHIES**

**Meg Brooker, MFA**, Assistant Professor, Middle Tennessee State University, stages and performs Duncan repertory and new choreography in the United States, Europe, and Russia. Meg has presented scholarship on Duncan contemporary Florence Fleming Noyes for Society of Dance History Scholars and Congress on Research in Dance, and she contributes to *Dance Studio Life*. Meg served on the faculties of the Isadora Duncan Dance Foundation and The School at Steps on Broadway, is a Steering Committee member of the Isadora Duncan International Symposium, and is Secretary of the Noyes Rhythm Foundation Board. She holds an MFA from UT Austin and a BA from Yale. [MegBrooker@gmail.com](mailto:MegBrooker@gmail.com)

**Alice Bloch, PhD**, has a doctorate in dance history from Temple University and a choreographic MA from UCLA. A 4th generation Duncan dancer, she presented her lecture-performance, *I Always Dance the Chorus: Duncan and the Dance of Democracy* at the Isadora Duncan International Symposium in 2013. She adjuncts at Washington University and is a COCA Arts Integration specialist. She is on the Boards of the Missouri Dance Organization and the Missouri Alliance for Arts in Education. Her concert, *DanceLife: Celebrating 50 Years of Dancing*, was presented at COCA in March. Alice is honored to be a Regional Arts Commission Artists Fellow.

**Andrea Mantell Seidel, PhD**, is Professor of Dance, Associate Professor of Religious Studies and founding director of the Intercultural Dance and Music Institute housed in the Latin American and Caribbean Center at Florida International University. She serves as trustee of Eleanor King's choreographic legacy and as artistic director/soloist of the critically acclaimed Isadora Duncan Dance Ensemble, performing and lecturing worldwide. She is a recipient of over 70 state and national grants, NDEO's Visionary Award, and Fulbright Senior Scholar award. Her forthcoming book *Dancing Duncan: The Art and Soul of Isadora in the 21st Century* will be published by McFarland Press, 2014.

**Pattee Russell-Curry, MFT, BC-DMT**, is a Board Certified Dance Movement Therapist with the American Dance Therapy Association and trained in Duncan Dance since 1986 with various lineages. She studied with Lori Belilove in Manhattan, NY and the Isadora Duncan Dance Foundation 2+ year teacher program. Pattee trained in Integrated Movement Studies (Groth, Meaden, Hackney), holds a BA in Women's PE: Dance: Dance Therapy Emphasis; MA Clinical Psychology, Dance/movement therapy specialization, and teacher certificates in Cecchetti Method, Classical Ballet. She has provided dance, choreography, dance therapy, and performance for orthopedically handicapped teens for over 15 years in Summer Youth Arts.

## Collaboration in Development: Listen, Observe, Connect

Melisa Clark, MFA Candidate

### ABSTRACT

The relationship of mother/child may be the origin of our first movement collaboration. Through observation of Developmental Movement Patterns observed in my infant daughter Vivienne as the starting point, this study expanded from this core to identify areas of application within the creative processes of making and teaching. Through digital documentation and experiential and observational journal entries, this presentation shared the progress of my daughter's developmental stages from age three months to one year, reflecting also on my personal journey as an artist and mother and the impact it has had on both these roles.

During the session, I underscored the importance of witnessing the human embodied being in development. How we individually put this into practice may vary, but creating meaningful relationships/collaborations on any level of an artistic/professional life may be most impacted when we are able to listen, observe and connect in the common language of the body.

The focus of this research was three-fold: to better understand the developmental process; to support my confidence as a new mother; and to allow this experience to infiltrate my creative and artistic process in dance. My presentation focused mainly on the ways in which the research experience moved into a creative and artistic process.

I presented a brief video introducing Vivi and a fast-forward through her progressive stages of movement development. I hoped all viewers would be reminded of patterns they experienced and remembered, as I did. While Vivienne developed in a way that matches the milestones described for her age, I spoke to what I learned through close, regular observation of my daughter's unique developmental journey.

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### RESEARCH – SET-UP AND STRUCTURE

As mentioned, the study took place during the ages of 3 months to one year (September 2013 – July 2014). I documented Vivi's movement development through photography, video, and written journal observations, reflecting also on my responses to what I was experiencing as "co-researcher."

Research tools and theoretical constructs helped me frame and interpret what I was noticing, observing and feeling with Vivi. These sources came through a variety of texts:

- *Body Movement: Coping with the Environment*: Irmgard Bartenieff with D.

Lewis, 1980. Classic textbook on *Laban Movement Analysis*.

- *Making Connections: Total Body Integration through Bartenieff Fundamentals*: Peggy Hackney, 1998. Well-known text on developmental movement.
- *The Meaning of Movement*: Janet Kestenberg Amighi, et al, 1999. Developmental and clinical perspectives of the *Kestenberg Movement Profile*.
- *Sensing, Feeling, Action: The Experiential Anatomy of Body-Mind Centering*. Bonnie Bainbridge-Cohen.



1994. Describes BMC's approach to how the mind is expressed through the body in movement.

- *Amazing Babies: Essential Movements for Your Baby in the First Year*: Beverly Stokes, 2002. A month-to-month description of a baby's first year of movement development.
- *The Interpersonal World of the Infant*: Daniel Stern, 1998. A developmental psychologist describes the developing self in relation to primary caregivers and to relationships throughout life.
- *Art and Intimacy: How the Arts Began*: Ellen Dissanayake, 2000. An anthropologist argues for the joint evolutionary origin of art and intimacy, commonly called love. Art encourages us to show what is important to us. Dissanayake's *Homo Aestheticus* (1995) also posits foundational significance of the arts.

In particular, the *Kestenberg Movement Profile*, developed by Judith Kestenberg and colleagues, was informative as an observation tool. An offshoot of *Laban Movement Analysis*, KMP provides detailed developmental movement criteria for the broad categories of body, effort, shape and space.

As a new mother, I was getting caught up in routines and agendas, losing the moment-to-moment details. In not attending to details, 'the bigness of the smallness' is lost. KMP helped focus the lens through which I was observing Vivi's development on video. The framework of KMP allowed me to see a totality of where Vivi had come from, what she was currently experiencing, and what she was moving towards. I could see that while she was immersed in the moment, she was also building upon previous experiences and orienting towards new ones. The *Kestenberg Movement Profile* prepared my eye for what to look for bodily, energetically, and spatially, which heightened my fascination.

Specific KMP observation categories related to the first year of life include (Amighi et al., 1999):

Tension Flow: children learn to purposefully regulate flow to produce rhythms composed of a) alternations of free and bound blow; b) frequency and fluctuation in intensity of tension; and c) degree and rate of tension increase and decrease. For Vivi in her first year, it was predominantly sucking (oral indulging) and snapping/biting (oral fighting).

Shape flow: the reflexive, continuously changing symmetrical or asymmetrical form or spatial relationship of body parts towards or away from each other in a growing and shrinking pattern. Breathing is a symmetrical shape flow.

Pre-efforts: the relatively ungraded efforts employed by young children as they cope with external forces. Vivi was working mainly with the space pre-effort of channeling, employing even flow of tension.

Directional shape: movements of the body and body parts into three dimensions and directions of space. In the first year, horizontal predominates.

## CREATIVE PROCESS

### The Creative Process in Everyday Life

Through the observation process and readings, specific areas of interest emerged that influenced my approach to art-making and conceptual aspects of current work. Rather than separating it out for allotted time in the studio, my artistic process has most often gathered inspiration from day-to-day living. This is one reason I wanted to bring focus and draw my attention more consciously to the specific life event of becoming a mother. By tracking and documenting Vivi's first year, I highlighted the 'specialness' of this time period. In Ellen Dissanayake's theory of 'making special,' art is described as the taming of the unruly world by exaggerating it. Art engages with the everyday world yet intensifies it. The following quote from her book

*Homo Aestheticus* describes the experience I encountered:

*Art is a normal and necessary behavior of human beings and like other common and universal occupations such as talking, working, exercising, playing, socializing, learning, loving, and caring, should be recognized, encouraged and developed in everyone. Via art, experience is heightened, elevated, made more memorable and significant.* (Dissanayake, 1995: p. 225).

Through witnessing, close observation and embodiment of Vivienne's movements, I have gained a deeper experiential understanding of the human drive for movement expression and knowing. This has infiltrated and redefined aspects of my creative process and choreography.

#### PARALLELS BETWEEN

##### **Developing Movement and Creative Process**

In my approach to art making, I have been reminded to **be present and trust the process**. Through **consistent practice** and **allowance**, the natural progression of development unfolds. In relation to Vivi, I would become excited and anxious for her to reach the big milestones (lifting her head, rolling over, pushing to sitting, pulling to stand, creeping on all fours, cruising and eventually walking). I could see that she was going through the natural development process yet I needed to trust that she would find the right way and best time for her to figure out how she was going to do this. In this way, I relate it to the creative process. There is a creative intention or drive through research, rehearsal and performance that leads to development of material; through consistent practice the performer moves intention through the body. There are doubts and uncertainties – these are the ebb and flow of a time-based process; but with focus, persistence and consistency, trusting that a natural process will lead to a productive outcome is useful in staying present to each moment.

#### **Challenges in Collaboration from the Perspective of the Mother/Child Dyad**

I am a mother and creative art director. I am responsible for creating boundaries and allowing space for growth and development to take place. As a director/mother, there are inevitably going to be clashes and a sense of being out of tune with another while working together. So, when the experience of the process becomes out of tune, how do we attune to each other? One way that has helped me is through close listening and observing in an effort to find an entry point – possibly through matching intensities of movement, rhythm, tension, flow or sound.

The roles of mover and witness can be clearly defined in an adult situation, but become blurred in working with young children. Although as a mother I might identify most often with the role of witness, a caring role, this study showed me that I am also a mover who my daughter witnesses. In the slipperiness of these roles, we watch each other and learn about each other through our moving selves. In the presentation I showed several slides of dancers mirroring Vivi during a rehearsal she accompanied me to. The dancer is a dance therapist and has great facility in connecting with Vivi through movement. During this particular rehearsal, Vivi had become upset that I was working with the dancer and not offering her the attention she sought. The dancer opened her space to Vivi and they began mirroring each other's movement until it became unclear who was following whose movement; they moving in sync. Vivi became very calm and attentive to the movements they were dancing together. It was beautiful to witness the calm that enveloped the space through their improvised dance.

When I begin working with dancers, I usually select them per project. Although some work with me from project to project, others are new to my process each time. So, I often find myself learning who the dancers are throughout the creative process. Rather than impose my creative agenda on them from the start, I often begin with exploring movement in a mover and witness structure. This

allows the opportunity to watch without judging or influencing the dancers' movement impulses and to let go of the choreographic 'desire' to create something. Starting in this manner creates space and allowance for each individual as well as an opportunity to experience each other in a nonverbal way. This process is analogous to my collaboration with Vivi. Without imposing a specific movement I witness the unfolding of her movement explorations from within.

### INFILTRATION OF RESEARCH

INTO CREATIVE PROCESS: Specific Examples  
Accessing Pre-Verbal Communication as Mother and Dance Performer. In working with KMP's Tension Flow Rhythms and Attributes, I have developed a number of movement scores that reveal the body's capacity for **making meaning through non-verbal communication**. In movement research and performance this is the essence of what we do as dance artists – communicate and express through our bodies. Tension Flow Rhythms and Attributes, as manifestations of feeling states, can place limits on expression to drive a specific quality or potential character type for performance. I have used a mix of complimentary and clashing attributes for this type of movement score. Here are some examples of possible couplings based on the natural elements:

- Widen/Bulge (Wind)
- Free Flow/Channel (Water/Ice)
- Gradual/Hollowing (Caverns)
- Light/Ascend (Smoke)
- Indirect/Spreading (Fire)

Rather than present images for movement, I ask the dancers to improvise based on KMP Rhythms and Attributes that could describe the images. This approach seems to draw out a quality of embodied attunement, not the result of a conscious thought process trying to figure out how to do it. We talk about eating the *image* and letting the image come out the pores versus putting the image on like a coat. The language of KMP helps to embody the image inherently.

**Structural score.** In observing a video of Vivi, I analyzed her predominant movement qualities using a KMP lens as *direct, widen, sudden twist, gradual, biting, bulge*. This became a movement score I used in developing a solo dance movement. Although my movements are vastly different from Vivi's, I can visualize her doing the patterns as an entry point in remembering the quality behind the movement. Instead of copying the movement, I took the movement descriptors and pushed them into new movement unique to my body and intention.

**Navel Radiation.** Another way I have been able to embody Vivi's developmental movement in the creative process is through navel radiation, a construct of *Body-Mind Centering* (Bainbridge-Cohen, 1994). As I explore this movement in improvisation, lying on belly, breathing, limbs to and from the navel center, it naturally progresses into rolling initiated through the navel. I can feel the connection through my back and through my belly in its connection to the floor surface. I reflect on the navel as the connection between mother and baby, providing nourishment for the growing baby *in utero*. As the baby begins its movement phase out of the womb, her arms, legs and head extend and radiate outward from the navel center.

Much of my creative research over the past two years has centered around reincarnation and the cycle of birth, life, death and rebirth. Navel radiation became an inspiring part of my piece *The Veil is Thin* in which I laid down on a pile of string representing the umbilical cord and the nutritive flow and connection between mother and child. Later in the piece, string was unwound to show the passage of time, walked on as a tightrope on the floor in the approach to death, the eventual release of attachment to body with the release of the strings and ending with exiting the space with the pile of string representing rebirth.

September 4<sup>th</sup> 2013 – (2.5 months old)

### Horizontal to Vertical: Journal Entry

*I lie down on my back and notice what I can see. I experience the near and far. I feel my body – arms, legs, head and torso. I can turn my head to the side. I turn my head slightly further to see behind me. My body adjusts into a spiral and an arch comes through my spine. I push into my legs and start to ground into my hips. I start to lift my head now to see the space behind me, my arms follow around and find the floor. I push them into the floor to lift through my head. I continue to spiral, turning my head and folding in one leg. I am able to find a sitting position. I continue spiraling through the head and find my hands and knees. I don't stop here, I keep spiraling to step one leg forward. Pushing down through my leg, I follow my gaze upwards. My body continues to turn until my other leg finds its way under my trunk. I am now vertical.*

I drew a picture of this improvisation that became a road map explaining my creative movement concept for reincarnation. Birth and death are described on the horizontal, vertical represents life and the spiral connects both lines representing the space in between – the after life, re-birth or *bardo*, the Tibetan Buddhist construction of the *space between*. (Coleman and Jinpa, 2005). I began paying more attention to the places I observed: horizontal, vertical and spiral patterns and accompanying emotional responses including vulnerability, desire and expectation. I became interested in researching spiral patterns in nature and began to develop improvisation scores for horizontal, vertical and spirals. One structure has been to place photos of spirals in nature throughout the space and as the dancers improvise through the space, they take with them information from the photos they encounter along the way.

### Conclusion

Many other experiences and reflections have come out of collaborative research and observations with Vivienne. Life has been full of discoveries and learning for both of us. As Vivi is making new discoveries, I am observing and re-experiencing them alongside her. In witnessing and observing the early development of my daughter, I have sensed a deepening connection to my experience as a human being. As a dance artist/educator, I am motivated to keep defining and refining my observation skills, particularly of the early developmental movement patterns. Not only do remnants of these remain with us throughout life, their conscious re-embodiment can be transformative. The creative process is both dynamic and reflective. As we move through life, constantly gathering information and experience, we can learn to embody what is important and special.

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#### *BIOGRAPHY*

**Melisa Putz Clark, BFA, MFA candidate**, is a dancer and choreographer based in Philadelphia. She has been a dance educator for over 15 years in the public and private school sector. She is the Artistic Director and Co-Founder of PIMA Group, a non-profit dance and music performance company. Her work has received funding from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, Philadelphia Cultural Fund, Puffin Foundation, Dance USA Philadelphia, the Leeway Foundation, among others.  
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## Summary of Panel Discussion

### ABT & NYU: Artistic and Administrative Collaboration

Moderator: Patricia Cohen, MA, RDE

Panelists: Susan R. Koff, EdD, Carla Flores, MA,  
Meghan Love, MA, Raymond Lukens

#### *SUMMARY*

In September 2008, two strikingly different institutions, American Ballet Theatre and New York University's Steinhardt School of Culture, Education and Human Development inaugurated a program that resulted from the combined efforts of educators, artists and administrators from each of those organizations. By definition, ABT and NYU/Steinhardt have differing administrative structures, visions, demographics, and faculties. Yet, this singular collaboration, the NYU Master of Arts Dance Education Program with ABT Ballet Pedagogy, has produced graduates who capably integrate the critical missions of each institution: a deep understanding of dance as art in education with the ballet teacher's extensive training in ABT's National Training Curriculum (NTC).

The panel presentation explored the administrative and artistic rewards and complications of the collaboration. In *Beyond Enrichment*, Remer provides criteria for successful partnerships, which are applicable here. Strategic planning and revisions, based in mutual respect and awareness of the two cultures, are necessary to ensure that the program endures. Ultimately, we believe that this partnership model may inform others in the field of dance education.

Each of the five panelists has distinct, yet collegial roles in the ABT/NYU collaboration. Raymond Lukens, with his colleague Franco De Vita, envisioned a partnership with an institution offering an MA degree in dance education, and brought their proposal to NYU/Steinhardt. The first cohort began its combined studies in 2008. Lukens continues as Artistic Associate of the joint program and primary instructor of our students at ABT. Susan Koff, Director of the NYU/Steinhardt Dance Education program, has contributed administrative expertise, advising the Dean's office in its financial and educational negotiations with ABT. Carla Flores and Meghan Love are unique in their shared history, having graduated from the ABT/NYU program. As the program administrator for NYU's Dance Education program, Flores is responsible for all administrative aspects of promoting and informing prospective students about the program, and communicating with the ABT faculty regarding upcoming events and student/applicant information. Love is Flores' counterpart at ABT, where she coordinates all aspects of ABT's National Training Curriculum for the combined program. Together, their experiences as students at both institutions allow them to understand the perspectives of NYU and ABT students and faculty. Patricia Cohen, panel moderator, is the academic advisor to the ABT/NYU cohorts, and as such is also a liaison between the programs.

#### **Towards a Partnership**

In Raymond Lukens' absence due to recent knee surgery, Meghan Love read his submitted statement, in which he addressed the creation of the National Training Curriculum (NTC) by American Ballet Theatre (ABT), as follows:

In 2005 the ABT Artistic Staff held a retreat to discuss pressing issues, most importantly dance training and injuries. They concluded that:

- 1 – Dancers who had been trained in a highly specific style have great difficulty changing styles and techniques of dance.
- 2 – When dancers move in totally unfamiliar ways they are more prone to injury.
- 3 – The negative consequences of unbalanced training practices, such as overemphasizing form over kinetics or visa-versa.
- 4 – Frequency of stress fractures.
- 5 – Serious hip problem in dancers.
- 6 – Mental health concerns such as eating disorder, burnout, depression and substance abuse.

For these reasons American Ballet Theatre created the National Training Curriculum, a set of guidelines, one for ballet training and one for dancer health. The program is a curriculum since it provides the material that needs to be covered as opposed to a syllabus, which is a structured program, which exposes how the material should be covered. There are no set steps and combinations in the NTC textbook, *The Whole Dancer, Guidelines for Ballet Training and Dancer Health*.

American Ballet Theatre and New York University Steinhart School of Education entered into a unique partnership and created a Masters Program to train dance educators of the highest caliber. The students are supplied with tools and are instructed to appreciate that it is each individual teacher's onus to develop appropriate syllabi and courses that take into consideration students' skill level and stage of development and thus produce an environment where the learner can achieve his or her maximum potential. The ABT/ NYU graduates are indeed the standard bearers of the National Training Curriculum because the training they receive is all-inclusive and in depth. It is evident that dance educators who have a comprehensive preparation and a Masters Degree would be best prepared to address the concerns of the ABT Artistic Staff of the retreat of 2005.

ABT and NYU share the belief that training must not only be exclusively for the training of professional dancers but that dance training must be inclusive for the entire population of dance students. Like the training in professional sports, professional dance training is extremely demanding and when young people are forced to try and achieve positions and movements beyond their natural abilities it can be physically and philologically damaging. But when dancing is taught with responsible and informed practices it can have remarkable benefits, such as, improved coordination, posture, cardio-vascular health, discipline, self esteem and better cognitive abilities such as reading and mathematics.

### **Definition of Partnership**

Patricia Cohen based her description of partnerships on the work of Jane Remer, who in *Beyond Enrichment* (Remer, ) explores the various facets of successful partnerships. In the beginning, it is essential, albeit seemingly obvious, to identify the potential partners in terms of their mutual purposes and significant differences, as well as the financial support each might bring to the table. The checklist begins with the mission statements of each institution, whose goals must be compatible, and whose leaders have sympathetic personalities. In Bennett Tarleton's colloquial language, "it takes more than 2 to tango" (Tarleton). The key players' pursuit of excellence incorporates their commitment to their students, each program's goals, and to the partnership itself. Clear and ongoing communication, both within each organization and with each other facilitate clarification and understanding of each other's needs, priorities and roles: "building bridges for 2-way traffic" (Tarleton). Shared responsibility is essential for the initial, as well as ongoing planning and extended professional development of the participants, including graduates of the program. It implies that each partner brings something unique to the table; each understands the other's role, resources and limitations. To assure

continuity, the partners each leave the table with something new and unique: “the sum is greater than its parts” (Tarleton). This includes expansion of the funding base, trying new ventures and promoting further collaboration. A successful partnership constantly evaluates its effectiveness by documenting outcomes and identifying potentially changing goals. Challenges and opportunities will be identified, resulting in possibly revisiting written and tacit agreements to “tell the story” (Tarleton).

### **Creating the Partnership**

Susan Koff reviewed the financial and administrative steps towards partnership between the two institutions, defining the roles of each, from her position as NYU/Steinhardt Dance Education Program Director and liaison with the Dean of the school.

It is important to recognize the missions and general operating concepts of two different organizations that come together for a partnership. American Ballet Theatre is primarily a non-profit performing arts organization, which functions on a calendar that supports performances first, and everything else is secondary. There is a strong commitment to education, exemplified by an Education Department and a director of that department. When ABT wrote the guidelines for the National Training Curriculum, they approached us with the idea of a degree program that incorporates this sequentially developed training for the ballet dancer with the medical guidelines to insure healthy training.

NYU is a non-profit educational institution committed to degree granting in higher education. The Dance Education Program in Steinhardt School of Culture, Education and Human Development defines its direction as: “The mission of the Dance Education Program is to provide high quality professional development in the theory and practice of dance education for teachers, administrators, performing artists, and research scholars in the fields of dance and education.” My job, as Director of the Dance Education Program, is to understand the role of each of the two partners, translate between the two partners, and ensure that all academic content of this partnership is in accordance with the mission of this program.

Translation is important because this is the meeting of two cultures with different values. Though the value that brings us together is high quality dance education, the day to day functioning of the two entities is completely different including scheduling, use of jargon, and pay scales. Since both organizations are non-profit, they each have a list of funders and these are to be kept separate. My position as Director of Dance Education is to work with my counterpart at ABT and constantly translate the differences, find places for compromise and ensure the smooth functioning of this partnership.

A partnership is a living and breathing entity that cannot be implemented, and then ignored. Just as students change over time, we must constantly be aware of small changes that are needed in implementation. Since this partnership began in 2008 there has been one large curriculum revision, and several smaller ones. We are constantly evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the degree to ensure that it is the best representation of these two institutions. The academic and administrative personnel on both sides have been consistent, ensuring open communication that leads to an effective partnership.

### **The Ongoing Partnership**

As the program administrator for NYU’s Dance Education program, and as an alumna of the NYU/ABT Ballet Pedagogy M.A. program, Carla Flores speaks from two perspectives. As a student, I hardly could have imagined that I would be honored with opportunity to one day be a colleague with my mentors and represent the program as faculty. Now that I am faculty, I could hardly imagine that I could be as successful in my current position if I had not once been a student. I continue to view situations from both perspectives.



My foremost responsibility to this program is as the initial voice to prospective students. Beyond referring applicants to the appropriate offices or websites for more information about becoming a graduate student at NYU, many candidates prefer to speak to someone directly. If at all possible I schedule appointments for them to meet with an academic advisor, observe classes, see the facilities, and meet with me. Whether we meet in-person, by phone, or through email, I always reveal that I am an alumna of this program, which instantly initiates an extended discussion that seems to ignite their interest even more and makes them more ready to pursue the program. There seems to be an instant trust and encouragement that comes from speaking to someone who both reflects the intentions of the faculty and speaks first-hand from the student's perspective. I find my role most valuable to this partnership in this way, and once these students matriculate, this connection remains, and I continue to guide them in an unofficial capacity.

In addition to my administrative and advising responsibilities for applicants and students, I also interact directly with the ABT cohort as faculty at ABT's Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis (JKO) School. To become certified teachers in ABT's National Training Curriculum (NTC), students are required to observe classes, become teaching assistants at the school, and take written and oral exams. As faculty of the JKO school and as a proctor of the NTC oral exams, I get to mentor them educationally as well as follow their progress.

My dual representation as faculty and alumna, as administrator and educator, and as a representative of both the NYU and ABT entities permits me a unique perspective into the partnership. Alongside the respected NYU faculty, Susan Koff and Patricia Cohen, the distinguished ABT faculty, Meghan Love, and the words and contributions of the NTC co-creator and master teacher, Raymond Lukens, I believe we fully represent the mixed cultures and collaborations that make this a successful partnership. The NYU/ABT Ballet Pedagogy M.A. program is continually evolving and gaining recognition, and I am excited to be a part of it's past and present. It was wonderful to share this with those who attended our panel session, and to intrigue both dance educators who will recommend this program to their students, and attendees who hope to be part of the future of our program.

Meghan Love spoke next: My first experience with the ABT/NYU Masters program was as an entering student in the Fall of 2010. I then became the first ABT National Training Curriculum (NTC) intern in the winter/spring of 2011. I was hired part-time, and then offered a full-time job with the NTC on my last day of grad school. I began as the NTC Assistant, then NTC Associate and I am now the NTC & ABT/NYU Program Manager. I truly believe that if I hadn't applied for the Masters Program and then to be an ABT intern I would not be where I am today.

Now that my job responsibilities have expanded to include the ABT/NYU Program, I interface with NYU staff and faculty on a regular basis to ensure that the program and students are getting the best of both organizations when it comes to their education. For this ABT/NYU partnership, I

- Act as Associate Instructor for the program, updating syllabi and calendars for the course, managing communication with students and faculty, and assisting with grading
- Guide the students through their time in the program, using my unique experience as a graduate of the program
- Hire & schedule guest lecturers (faculty management)
- Hire ABT/NYU students (6 as of this writing) as interns for the National Training Curriculum
- Encourage current students to reach out to Carla Flores (my counterpart at NYU) or Patricia Cohen (ABT/NYU Academic Advisor) when they have specific NYU questions or issues that I am unable to assist them on
- Recommend ABT/NYU program graduates for specific jobs; they are the first teachers I consider
- Schedule program auditions in cooperation with Carla Flores (auditions occur at ABT)

I firmly believe that the collaboration between NYU/Steinhardt and ABT thoroughly prepares graduates to be successful dance educators and dance advocates. I am truly lucky to play such a huge role in the continuance of this partnership.

Patricia Cohen added that as Academic Advisor, my role was initially limited to advising students on academic course progression and registration (or so I thought). In fact, the role includes communicating and collaborating both within the dance program's core faculty and out to the ABT faculty and administration to follow our students' progress. In conjunction with Susan Koff, I troubleshoot problems that may arise, and ultimately act as mother hen to the students.

### **Living Partnership – Current Status**

Susan Koff summed up our evolving partnership which “breathes, changes, and is not yet fixed.” Each year, we review our achievements and challenges, in order to maximize the benefits to our students. A lively sharing of questions and responses concluded the panel session.

### *BIOGRAPHIES*

**Patricia G. Cohen, MA, RDE**, is a faculty member in the NYU/Steinhardt Dance Education Program and academic advisor for the NYU/ABT Masters Degree Program with ABT Ballet Pedagogy, and serves on the faculty of the Fine and Performing Arts Department at Iona College in New Rochelle, New York. Pat participated in development and revisions of NDEO's online PTSDA and transitional Mini courses, which she teaches. She was a contributing writer and co-editor with Elsa Posey of a special topics issue of the Journal of Dance Education devoted to dance in the private sector. She has presented internationally and nationally at daCi and Corps-de-Ballet International conferences, as well as at NDEO annual conferences. She is active in UNITY, an organization that brings together dance and dance-related communities. Pat serves as Treasurer on the NDEO Board of Directors. She is the recipient of the 2011 NDEO Leadership Award. [pc76@nyu.edu](mailto:pc76@nyu.edu)

**Susan R. Koff, EdD**, is a clinical associate professor and director of the Dance Education Program in the Steinhardt School at New York University. She previously was at Teachers College, Columbia University Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, University of Denver, Pennsylvania State University, and the Jerusalem Rubin Academy of Music and Dance in Israel. Dr. Koff's academic and service activities are in the area of dance education, within the United States and in an international arena. She currently serves as the secretary of the board for Dance and the Child International (daCI).

**Carla Flores, MA**, is originally from Austin, Texas, but moved to Houston to attend the distinguished High School for the Performing and Visual Arts as a dance major. She later graduated from the University of Oklahoma with a BFA in Ballet Pedagogy, and later completed her Master of Arts in Teaching Dance in the Professions with a concentration in American Ballet Theatre's (ABT) Ballet Pedagogy from New York University (NYU). Ms. Flores currently serves as Program Administrator, Assistant Director for the dance concerts, Director of the Summer Dance Intensive, and as an adjunct professor for NYU's Dance Education program. She is a fully certified teacher in ABT's National Training Curriculum, and currently teaches at ABT's Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis School in the children's division and as part of the educational outreach program.

**Meghan Love, MA**, began dancing at 9 in Las Cruces, NM; soloist with the Las Cruces Chamber Ballet; began teaching ballet and tap to 3-7 year olds, jazz to 12 year olds and taught in after school programs at age 19;

Adjunct Professor of Dance at New Mexico State University at age 22; BA in Theatre Arts, NMSU (2001); MA in Dance Education and American Ballet Theatre Ballet Pedagogy from NYU (2012); assists the ABT Masters program; ABT National Training Curriculum Associate; faculty of the Children's Division at the Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis School at ABT, teaching 3 - 6 year olds.

**Raymond Lukens** Artistic Director, American Ballet Theatre National Training Curriculum, had an international career as a ballet dancer; co-authored the ABT National Training Curriculum with Franco De Vita and created the syllabi for the ABT/ NYU MA Program. Currently, he is faculty member of the ABT JKO School. Before joining ABT, Lukens was Ballet Master for Boston Ballet and Director of BB II. He has taught for ABT, The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, The Juilliard School and Dance Theater of Harlem, and in every continent in the world, has judged for international dance competitions, translated into Italian Joan Lawson's book, Ballet Class, and has written several articles. Lukens has choreographed in America and abroad, including two televised UNICEF galas, Veils for Intermezzo Ballet Company, for BB II and ABT's Opening Night Galas at the Metropolitan Opera House season featuring the ABT Studio Company and JKO School dancers.

## The 2013-2014 Michio Ito Immersion Experience at DeSales University

Timothy Cowart, MFA, MS

### ABSTRACT

This presentation will describe a year-long collaborative project that focused on the relevance of preserving the pedagogy and repertoire of modern dance pioneer Michio Ito (1893-1961). The project is a good example of a practical approach to expressing the theme of this conference, "Collaborations: A Mosaic of Possibilities." This presentation will describe the linguistic challenges along with the logistical, technical and pedagogical demands we faced along with the successes we perceived. The presentation will advocate for the importance of these types of collaborations in our field and will offer encouragement and advice so that others can embark on similar ambitious projects. For the 2013-2014 school year, dance majors at DeSales University immersed themselves in the life, work and technique of early modern dance pioneer Michio Ito. This multi-layered collaborative project involved partnerships with the Michio Ito Foundation, the Doomonkai (Michio Ito Association in Japan), the Washington University St. Louis's Dance Department, The Lehigh Valley Association of Dance Presenters, DanceNow/NYC's Silo artist retreat, the Repertory Dance Theatre of Salt Lake City, Utah, and The Toukanaga Dance Company of New York City. The project involved bringing two master teachers, Ryutani Imura and Kumiko Komine, over from Japan to train students and professionals in the Michio Ito dance technique and to set Ito repertoire that was later performed by DeSales dance majors in the Lehigh Valley and in additional workshops led by the Repertory Dance Theatre that continue to happen all around the country.

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Thank you, for taking time to come to my little discussion. In my talk today I plan to tell you a little bit about my story and my personal interest in Michio Ito. I will introduce some of the important aspects of Ito's life, because the fact is that many dance educators are still in the dark about him and the impact he had on the development of modern dance. From there, I will discuss an ambitious project that I initiated last year called *The 2013-2014 Michio Ito Immersion Experience at DeSales University*, and will emphasize the true collaborative nature of the project. To wrap things up, I will give you a few practical steps you can take if you are interested in participating in these types of projects.

My name is Tim Cowart, I was a professional dancer with the Bella Lewitzky Dance Company, and now I am an Associate Professor, and Chair of the Dance Department at DeSales University in Center Valley, PA. My graduate degrees, both from the University of Oregon, are in dance and in arts

administration with the focus on the administration of dance in higher education. For the past 10 years I have served as the Chair of the Dance Department and have played a significant role in shaping the curriculum to include a robust guest artist program, where we bring in over 20 guest artists per year, and where the reconstruction of historically significant works is an important thrust of our department. In the recent past we have restaged work from such notable choreographers as Gerald Arpino, Loie Fuller, Alwin Nikolais, Twyla Tharp, Doug Varone, Charles Weidman, and this year, Doris Humphrey. We firmly believe that by embodying our past that we are bringing that lived experience into the present moment where we can examine its inherent lessons and we can become better artists because of the experience.

But let me tell you about my connection to Michio Ito. I knew nothing about him prior to

graduate school. Let me take a brief moment here to take an informal survey of the room.

- How many of you here learned about Michio Ito from a dance history class that you took as an undergraduate major? (No one in the room raised their hand)
- How about in a dance history class in graduate school? (Only two people in the entire room raised their hand at this question)

I find the responses to these questions to be very interesting. He was never mentioned in any dance history classes that I took as an undergraduate, or as a graduate student. But I was fortunate enough to work as a research assistant for Jennifer Craig, who is Chair of the University of Oregon Dance Department, and who is writing a book on Bella Lewitzky. While conducting research for her, she asked me to look into any information I could find on Michio Ito. I was amazed by what I found.

Michio Ito was a pioneer in the early formation of modern dance in this country. A visionary and an optimist, he sought to blend the philosophies and artistic sensibilities of the 'East' and the 'West' into a style of dance that could be harmonious. He developed a codified dance technique that is somatically based and stresses musicality, synchronization and performance quality. He was teaching this technique in New York City in 1919, at least five years prior to Graham's leaving Denishawn.

I learned that he had been born in Tokyo in 1893, that he studied music as a boy and at the age of 18, he left Japan for Europe. He was inspired by Isadora Duncan, Ana Pavlova, and Vaslov Nijinsky and turned his attention to dance. He trained at the Dalcroze Institute in Germany, the only Asian dancer among more than 300 students there. At the outbreak of World War I he escaped to London, was embraced by William Butler Yates and Ezra Pound, and in 1916 was offered a contract to choreograph in America. He settled in New York where he began teaching and performing in the city. He spent

over a decade in New York codifying his technique and teaching it to others. In 1929 he relocated his dance company to Los Angeles. In his career he worked on no less than 6 Hollywood films, created 120 dances and theatrical productions, some involving hundreds of dancers and full orchestral accompaniment with thousands in attendance. Audience members flocked by the thousands to his performances, where he would fill outdoor auditoriums such as the Hollywood Bowl and the Rose Bowl. He influenced man dancers who went on to have long and impressive careers including Lester Horton, Bella Lewitzky, Luigi, Angna Enters, Pauline Koner and the list goes on.

Then his career in the United States ended abruptly in 1941, with the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Within twenty-four hours Michio Ito was arrested, labeled an enemy-alien, sent to an internment camp and erased from our history books. He was eventually sent back to Japan, never to return to the United States.

What an amazing story, and what an intriguing life. I felt I had been robbed! How come I had never heard of this guy? How come no one ever mentioned his influence, his contributions, taught his technique, or described his artistic goals? What was his choreographic voice? Who in the United States of America is familiar with his work? Why was he still unknown? Why don't we talk about him?

He was not the focus of my research as a graduate student, I was simply trying to help out Jennifer Craig as her assistant, but I made a vow to myself to look into him further when I had a chance. I started to read anything I could find on him. At the end of this paper, I will include a reference list of resources for finding information on Michio Ito.

- He is briefly mentioned in several books on dance history with simply a passing reference that alludes to his importance without going into any substance.

- There is one biography about him entitled *Michio Ito: The Dancer and His Dances*, written in 1977 by Hellen Caldwell, one of his former dancers when he lived in Los Angeles.
- There are several articles written by Mary-Jean Cowell, dance program coordinator at the University of Washington in St. Louis Missouri. I consider her to be the foremost Ito scholar in the country/world today. She also teaches classes in the Ito technique and is able to reconstruct some of his choreography. She is a faunt of knowledge about him and if you are at all interested I advise you to reach out to her.
- There is a small book with a good description of some of his early works from a music theory perspective written in 2006 by Midori Takeishi and translated by David Pacun. This book is entitled: *Japanese Elements in Michio Ito's Early Period (1915-1924): Meetings of East and West in the Collaborative Works*.
- There is a Michio Ito Foundation that was established by Michele Ito, Michio Ito's granddaughter. Michele holds the authority to grant permission to teach his technique and to re-stage his choreography. <http://www.michioito.org>
- The Repertory Dance Company out of Salt Lake City, UT has been given permission by Michele Ito to be the repository of Michio Ito's works. They are tasked with keeping his choreography up, running and in active repertory. They continue to perform his works and teach workshops in the Ito technique.
- Recently, a couple of short video documentaries have been created that are very helpful and that I highly recommend. Together these two short documentaries provide a glimpse into

Ito's amazing life and his choreographic style.

- One by Bonnie Oda Homsey, former Graham dancer and founder of the LA Dance Foundation and ARDC. A link to Amazon where it can be purchased or streamed is here: <http://tinyurl.com/pbqqd5s>
- Another documentary by the Repertory Dance Company is available on Vimeo can be found here: <http://vimeo.com/82415891>

So it is clear that some research has been conducted on his life, and there is a general interest in his contributions, but we have only just scratched the surface. There is more work yet to be done. Hopefully, some of you here today will be interested enough to get involved and to spread greater awareness and understanding about Michio Ito.

There is some urgency about this. The stakes are high because Kyoko Imura, is the only living student of Michio Ito alive today who is still teaching his technique and repertory. She is in her 80's now, she does not speak English, and as far as I know has no further plans to travel outside of Japan. Two years ago she came to the United States with Kumiko Komine to give a Michio Ito technique workshop at an NDEO conference in LA. I attended that conference specifically with the intention to take her workshop and to learn the Ito technique first hand. It was an amazing experience and part of the genesis of the ambitious immersive project I conducted last year.

I will give you the details of that project in a moment, but first I want to mention something here. Something that may be obvious but nevertheless needs to be expressed. Some people question the very relevance of dance in higher education. They cite how dance curriculum does not fit easily into the administrative structure of a university setting. The interests, concerns and needs of dance faculty members are so vastly different from our colleagues in different departments that they have a difficult

time understanding or valuing what it is that we do. We spend a great deal of time explaining ourselves, and becoming advocates for our profession. On the other side, there is a lack of respect from some in the professional arena towards our roles as well. It leaves us questioning exactly what our role is, what value we as artists, educators, academics, and administrators can bring to bear on the field.

How we view this dilemma is fundamental to the programming and curricular choices we are able to make for our students. I choose to look at the relationship between the university and the professional dance world as one that is essentially symbiotic in nature. The professional dance community provides us in academia with an endless well of resources to study, inspiration, and experiences to engage in. We on the other hand in academia provide something of value also. We provide something of significance. We provide an infrastructure. We provide a physical location, eager and interested students, and a limited budget to create opportunities. We are building an audience for, and participants in future artistic explorations. It is important work. Without the infrastructure that we provide, some of the voices from the professional dance community would be lost to history. So it is up to us to keep these voices alive and available for a new generation.

As dance department directors and program administrators, we have a lot of choices with regards to where to allocate our resources and our time. Of course these choices are dictated by the funding and resources that are available to us at any given moment, but we are all tasked with doing the best we can and making the most of the resources that we have. When I was serving in the Marine Corps, this ethos was drilled into me, “Improvise, adapt and overcome the obstacles in your path.” I think this type of mindset can serve an arts administrator well in their programming choices.

Last year, I instigated an ambitious project that had a lot of moving parts on an international scale and I would like to describe some of the challenges and successes we had. I want to advocate

for the importance of these types of collaborations and encourage other arts administrators/educators to reach beyond their own walls in order to establish collaborative partnerships because our field will be that much richer for it.

For the 2013-2014 school year, dance majors at DeSales University immersed themselves in the life, work and technique of early modern dance pioneer Michio Ito. This ambitious project involved partnerships with the Michio Ito Foundation, the Doomonkai (Michio Ito Association in Japan), Mary-Jean Cowell from Washington University St. Louis, the Lehigh Valley Association of Dance Presenters, DanceNow/NYC’s Silo artist retreat, the Repertory Dance Theatre of Utah, and the Toukanaga Dance Company of New York City. The project involved bringing in two master teachers, Kyoko Imura and Kumiko Komine over from Japan to train students and professionals in the Michio Ito dance technique and to set Ito repertory that was then performed by DeSales dance majors in the Lehigh Valley and in additional workshops lead by Repertory Dance Theatre that happened in various places around the country.

On a side note, one of the programming choices I made early on in my tenure at DeSales was meant to supplement our dance history curriculum. The idea was to get everyone reading the same book. It is called our *Reading Together Project*, and it has proven to be very successful. Every semester we have all dance majors read the biography of a particular ballet dance artist, and a particular modern dance artist. Having all of the students reading the same biography is a means of fostering community. It gives the freshman and seniors something to talk about. In addition, we will make a point to bring in the author of the book, and/or guest artists who teach the technique, or have choreography set on the dance majors that had been choreographed by the artist they are reading about. So, we try to engage the students on multiple levels with regards to their learning about these artists. We want them to embody the knowledge and to come away more informed about who these choreographers were,

what struggles they had, what their lives were like, what was important to them, and what kind of work did they make. It means that by the time our dance majors graduate they will have read 16 different biographies of dance artists.

Last year began in August with all dance majors reading Helen Caldwell's biography of Michio Ito. They wrote papers, created projects, and were tested on their reading, understanding, and comprehension of the biography in their individual technique classes.

I had contacted Michele Ito early on to request that my students be able to perform some of the Ito repertory, and I knew that this was going to be a bit of a challenge as none of them had been trained in the technique. I only had a cursory understanding of the 10 gesture series from my exposure to it at the NDEO conference I spoke of. I decided to begin work with a select group of students, to prepare them for the residency with our friends from Japan that would occur in January. So, I selected 15 students to participate with me in this Ito adventure. All of the 60 dance majors at DeSales would be exposed to Ito's work but these 15 would have to commit to more of an in-depth study. I started working with them right away, we met weekly and I began teaching them what I had learned of the 10 gesture series.

In October, Emmy and Yani Toukanaga, of the New York based Toukanaga Dance Ko. Arrived to give a lecture demonstration entitled: *Japanese Dance and Culture – Its History and Comparison with the U.S.* This lecture/demonstration helped to set the tone and give us a general 10,000 foot view of Japanese history, culture and artistry.

In November, Professor Mary-Jean Cowell, Coordinator of the Dance Program at Washington University in St. Louis, spent a week giving master classes, lectures, teaching the Ito technique to all of the DeSales dance majors. She also worked one-on-one with me on some more advanced training in the 10 gesture series and in some of the Ito repertory. She taught our dance history class, and worked with the 15 dancers I had selected who would have the

opportunity to later perform Ito's repertory in our March Dance Ensemble Concert (our main concert of the year that is choreographed by faculty/guest artists).

All of this preparation was foundation for the two-week *Michio Ito Immersion Workshop* in January 2014. My 15 students came back from their Christmas break early for an intensive study of the Ito technique and repertory. Michele Ito, Michio Ito's granddaughter, founder and president of the Michio Ito Foundation, came for the first week to serve as our translator and to oversee the project first hand. I did not want to let her down.

The fact that she could not stay for the second week of the workshop posed some logistical challenges because I needed to come up with a translator for the second week. I have been learning and studying the Japanese language, but my command of it is rudimentary at best, so I needed to find someone fast. DeSales University does not offer Japanese as a language course, so I had to look off-campus. I first looked to a nearby college where Japanese was taught. The instructor there however was not interested in participating in this project. An instructor from another college was interested, but was out of town during the workshop. So, I looked online, for translation services, and learned that it is easy to find someone to translate Spanish, or French, but Japanese proves to be a bit more difficult. I reached out to a local Aikido martial arts Dojo that advertised Japanese lessons, but that was an old advertisement and they no longer had an instructor there. Eventually, I did find someone by joining an online social networking community called *MeetUp*. Found here: <http://www.meetup.com>. This social networking site had a group in that met in Philadelphia that was for Japanese speakers, and for those who wanted to learn to speak Japanese. I advertised on their site and found a graduate student, originally from China, who had lived in Japan and spoke it fluently. She was in the United States studying business administration and expressed an interest in what I was doing. I offered to pay her \$20 per hour for around 38 hours of time



for the week (about \$750 total), and I offered to take care of her lodging and meals. I wanted to pay her for her time and efforts, but the fact that she was here on a student visa meant that she was not allowed to accept monetary compensation. I thought about finding another way to pay her (i.e. through an intermediary non-profit, or buying her books for school, or perhaps an iPad, etc.). In the end, she ended up donating her time, because she loved dance, and loved the project. I am so thankful for her and for her selfless generosity.

She was not the only one who donated time and energy for this project. Michele Ito, did not charge me for her translation services, and Mary-Jean Cowell did not charge for her time with me as well – I am immensely grateful for their generosity and labor of love.

As I mentioned, Repertory Dance Theatre (RDT), a professional modern dance company from Salt Lake City, Utah has been the official repository for the Ito repertory since 2009. There has been some turnover in the company since their first introduction to the technique and so they were invited to be part of this project in order to help refresh and refine their Ito technique.

For the two-week residency, dance majors from DeSales took company class with the RDT company members, had individual training and rehearsals with Imura and Kumiko and were able to observe (and take part in) the RDT Ito choreography rehearsals. I was able to work one-on-one with Imura and Kumiko and over the two-week time we collectively learned 15 pieces of repertory. My students and I performed nine of these pieces in our annual Dance Ensemble Concert in March. While in residency, the RDT company members stayed at Silo, the DanceNow/NYC's artist's retreat in Bucks County and gave master classes, lectures and demonstrations at partner institutions in the Lehigh Valley. After leaving DeSales, RDT continued on a nationwide tour of workshops and performances in the Ito techniques and choreography and they continue to spread the word about this pioneering choreographer and performer.

Lets shift now to talking about some things you can do now if you want to help spread the word about Michio Ito. I would recommend getting the biographies, checking out any of the articles that Mary-Jean Cowell has written and looking at the biographies. All of these things are easily accessible. I encourage you to include him in your dance history curriculum.

To understand the question of why he has been excluded from dance history lectures and why he is still unknown, we must first ask ourselves this question. Why is anyone remembered, or included in the canon of important figures in dance history?

I believe people are remembered primarily for two reasons: First people are remembered for their choreographic output. They have contributed works of choreography that are seminal and that encapsulate the feeling, concerns, and thoughts of a particular age. So, people are remembered for their choreographic products that contribute to our collective world of ideas.

Secondly, I believe that people are remembered for the influence they have had on others. It is a fun exercise to trace your 'dancesestors' back through time to see who taught your teachers, and their teachers, etc. We place pride and importance in the connections we have made and collectively we value and recognize the contributions of those persons who have been especially influential to others.

Michio was an artist who accomplished both of these criteria. Regarding his choreographic outpouring, he created over 120 dances with performances in London, New York, LA, and Tokyo. His dances made headlines in newspapers across the country, and he had performances everywhere from small intimated salons to places like the Hollywood Bowl where thousands came to watch. He had a dance company that toured across the country and he starred in Hollywood films. Starting as early as 1919 he had a codified, somatic based, modern dance technique that he taught for over a decade in New York and for another decade in LA.

Including Michio Ito in your dance history curriculum is appropriate. It expands the dance history narrative we tell ourselves beyond artificial boxes, like 'pioneers' and 'forerunners.' We tell ourselves this narrative of how modern dance is an American art form, willingly ignoring the influence of Asian voices such as Ito and Nimura. In the 1950's there was such a push for an authentic American artistic voice, and the country was wrapped up in nationalistic pride after having won WWII, that we forgot, even turned our back on the influence from abroad and claimed it as our own.

How many of you, include Lester Horton in your dance history discussions as someone who just sort of appears on the west coast? As someone who springs forth with fresh ideas about performance, technique, costuming, and composition? He is an inspiration to Bella Lewitzky, who develops and codifies the 'Horton Technique' on her body; he is an inspiration to Alvin Ailey and to many others. How many of you in your lectures ever mention Lester Horton's teacher, Michio Ito? Horton took classes from Ito at Perry's dance studio in Hollywood and went on to perform for him.

I bring this up to illustrate the influence Ito had on the early development of modern dance. In addition to Horton, the jazz dance legend Luigi credits Ito with inspiration as a teacher. Luigi has an arm gestures warm up that stems from Ito's 10 gesture series. Pauline Koner danced in his company, as did Angna Enters, Helen Graham (Martha Graham's sister). Ito shared concert performances with Martha Graham and with the Humphrey-Weidman Company during the 1920's.

Another reason for including Michio Ito in your dance history lectures is the fact that it allows you to talk about key moments in American history that are often overlooked, such as the internment of 120,000 Americans of Japanese heritage during WWII. Ito's experience can shed some light into this dark time.

So, I urge you to start including him in your dance history lectures. One good way would be to get a hold of the documentaries and show them in

your classes. They are 20 minutes long, just long enough to show them and talk about them in class. Doing so will help him to be remembered and allows us to introduce Asian influences in early modern dance development so that we can be more inclusive, and erase the revisionist history we have told ourselves. Michio Ito deserves to be examined and considered in greater depth. Thank you, for your time: I will take some questions.

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#### BIOGRAPHY

**Tim Cowart, MFA, MS, BFA**, is Chair of the DeSales University Dance Department. His research interests include modern dance partnering, Dance Film, and the life, work and influence dancer/choreographer Michio Ito has had on the development of Modern Dance. He has performed nationally and internationally as a company member of the Lewitzky Dance Company, The Pittsburgh Dance Alloy, and has also performed with Elizabeth Streb/ Ringside, Minh Tran and Company, and The Dance Theatre of Oregon. He teaches coursework in Modern Dance Technique, Dance on Camera, Sr.

Research Seminar, Dance History, Kinesiology for Dancers, and Dance in World Cultures.  
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## Loosening Those Tight Hip Outward Rotators Through Collaborative Efforts

Shelley Cushman, MA, LMT, NCMTB

### *ABSTRACT*

This session will explore soft tissue manipulation techniques on the posterior muscles surrounding the hip joint providing greater mobility, feeling of weight through the pelvis, and alignment efficiency. Because the outward rotators and extensors of the hip joint are antigravity muscles they become shortened and tight due to continued low grade contraction with a tendency to go into spasm creating pain in that area. Often they become so tight and compress the sciatic nerve causing pain all the way down the leg. This condition affects the individual's efficiency in forward tracking motion and creates a chain reaction affecting the whole mosaic of the body/mind system including stress on the supinators and plantar flexors of the tarsus and foot, the hip flexors, the quadrates lumborum, the connective tissue netting of the entire body, the electromagnetic field/chakras, and muscular balance between the anterior and posterior muscles.

Massage therapy by its very nature is collaborative. It requires a myriad of techniques developed by many people throughout the history to be embodied by the practitioner into an art. Tissue manipulation sessions require both the manipulator and the person being worked on to listen to make the changes. They must both work together. No changes can be made without listening and cooperating. Additionally, the body systems must collaborate with each other to make the session productive.

The methodology employed to reach the expected results will include visual assessment, walking for somatic listening of alignment, points of tightness, and kinesthetic sense of center, soft tissue manipulation, breath, and imagery followed by reassessment of the body visually, somatic walking experience, and discussion for sharing and reflection. Soft tissue manipulation will include connective tissue manipulation over the entire body netting followed by trigger point and myofascial release on the gluteus maximus, medius, and minimus and the six deep outward rotators. Imagery and breath will be used to promote relaxation. Participants will need to wear loose, comfortable clothing and be willing to touch and be touched.

This session is designed to emphasize the collaborative nature of massage therapy to make changes in the body/mind system. The role of the client is not passive. Quite the contrary it is very active. Participants will gain a better understanding of how to receive tissue work and leave with greater sense of clarity throughout the entire body.

### *BIOGRAPHY*

**Shelley Cushman, MA, LMT, NCMTB**, has been a Professor at the University of North Texas for 36 years. She performed with the Sara Rudner Dance Ensemble and the Theatre Vanguard Improvisational Company in Hollywood, California. She is a prolific choreographer with well over 160 works. Her collaborative film work, Cinematic Caricatures, involving 30 dances, has been presented in, competitions, conferences, and performances throughout the world. The project has been supported by NEA funding, Ohio University, and UNT grants and is published by Carl Fisher in NY, in the New York Dance Library holdings at Lincoln Center.

In 2008, En I Me was included by selection the National College Dance Festival in NYC. She was awarded the NDA 2010 University Dance Educator of the year award. Among her professional research and teaching interests is the investigation into the fusion of bodywork and performance to create clarity and purpose in the body. [cushman@unt.edu](mailto:cushman@unt.edu)

## Summary of Panel Discussion

### (a + b) x c = ?\*!:) Dynamic Collaborative Exchange Leads to Unexpected Creativity

Moderator: Laura Donnelly, MFA

Panelists: Amit Chakrabarti, PhD, Marlene Skog, MFA, Bryce Craig, BM,  
and Daniel Phillips

#### *ABSTRACT*

Collaboration is stimulating and energizing. Choreographers Laura Donnelly and Marlene Skog, composer/musician Bryce Craig, physicist Amit Charabarti, and undergraduate dance/physics researcher Daniel Phillips shared experiences from several different collaborative projects. Methods for utilizing technology to manage real-time rehearsal between Kansas and Michigan were included. Different types of projects were discussed presenting a variety of collaborative options and styles. The teams managed distance issues utilizing multiple communication tools including videoconferencing, shared folders, cell phones, and email.

Charabarti and Donnelly initiated the Crystal Ballet Collaboration from discussions in which Chakrabarti shared a cherished dream of seeing a ballet based on the movement of glass molecules. Donnelly captivated by the choreographic possibilities in these ideas organized a meeting with musician/composer Craig with whom Donnelly had a history of successful collaboration. Adding a third member expanded their pool of creative ideas. In the dance studio, Phillips's experience as a dancer combined with his knowledge of physics provided valuable insight during the choreographic process.

Donnelly and Skog, friends from graduate school, have a compatible understanding of music as a partner in the choreographic process. They planned to create a collaborative dance, blending their choreography so that the finished work would be made from two separate dances combined into one in time and space on the same stage. Panel discussion focused on the exchange of ideas that leads to the evolution of new creative work as well as methodologies they found most successful in getting from idea to final performance.

#### **Panel Synopsis – Best Practices for Successful Multidisciplinary Collaborations**

During our panel discussion several qualities were mentioned repeatedly. From this list, a selection of attributes that lead to successful multidisciplinary collaborations was developed. These are not hierarchical; each one connects directly to several others. Additional conclusions indicate that while every person on the team does not need to have prior experience working on a multidisciplinary team, it is helpful if at least one member has completed a successful collaborative project. Also, one member who is able to manage project details, set meetings, and send updates to team members facilitates organization. This is especially helpful for long distance collaborations.

Panel members recommended that the following attributes be reviewed when beginning a collaborative project. While teams will develop a unique identity and working methodology based on the goals of their projects, starting with these ideas will set the stage for success.

Definition of beneficial attributes in relation to multidisciplinary collaboration:

### Communication

- All members of the team must be committed to open, honest, and timely communication related to the project.
- Members need to have a tolerance for civil disagreement and be willing to remain in the conversation until a conclusion or consensus is reached.
- It is important not to take general project related comments personally.

### Trust

- Team members must trust the skills of each individual member.
- Members must trust the commitment of other members to the overall goals of the project

### Openness

- A basic openness to ideas, process, discussion and change is necessary.
- Members need to be open to moving in new directions and working in new ways.
- Acceptance of the idea that the product of the multidisciplinary collaboration will be a combination of input by all members yet uniquely different from the work of individual group members.

### Risk Tolerance

- Members need to be comfortable with (or at least able to tolerate) not knowing what is going to happen in the next phase.
- Enjoying the state of “not-knowing” is helpful.

### Ability to accept change

- Members need to be able to change midstream when new opportunities arise out of the creative process.

### Non-attachment

- Members need to be able to let go of attachment to their ideas, their old ways of doing things, and even to sections of the project that were great but no longer fit as the project develops.

### Flexibility

- Multidisciplinary projects can require that individuals work differently than when they work alone.
- Individuals must respect other members’ working styles.
- Members need to be open to working in new and different ways.

### Commitment to larger project goals

- Everyone on the team must commit to the overall project goals and be willing to let of individual ideas in the service of the group project.
- After a disagreement/conclusion all members need to remain invested in the project goals.

### Organization and time management

- Members need to be able to complete work within the timeline established by the team.
- Each person’s work is interdependent; a delay in one area will cause rippling delays throughout the project timeline.

### High level of skill in individual specialty

- Each team member must possess a high degree of skill in their specific discipline.

## *BIOGRAPHIES*

**Laura Donnelly, MFA**, choreographer, teacher, dancer, Assistant Professor at Kansas State University, also writes and creates community based public art involving visual and word art. Published research includes pedagogy, collaborative process, music for dance, and the Alexander Technique. She has presented at the Congress on Research in Dance, the International Association of Dance Science and Medicine, the National

Dance Education Association, the Hawaii International Conference on Arts & Humanities, and the University of New Mexico Mentoring Conference. Her essay Meditation in the Dance Studio is published in Teaching with Joy: Educational Practices for the Twenty-First Century, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers. Donnelly's recent collaborative work includes the physics inspired "Crystal Ballet" and "Sorrow/Redemption" which used sign language as the basis for the choreographic movement.

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**Amit Chakrabarti, PhD**, is the William and Joan Porter Professor and Head of Physics at Kansas State University. Chakrabarti is a soft matter physicist and has published over 150 peer reviewed articles. He has received Kansas State University's Commerce Bank Distinguished Graduate Faculty Award (2009) and Presidential Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching (2002). Chakrabarti's interdisciplinary work is directed toward appreciation of Nature through physics and various artistic expressions. He is interested in creating art and dance forms based on physics research and fundamental concepts of physics. "Crystalline Moments and Moving Science" a lecture/demonstration developed by Chakrabarti and Donnelly has been presented as part of Educator Enhancement Training at K-State and in the "Beyond the Classroom" series.

**Marlene Skog, MFA**, Assistant Professor of Dance, University of Wisconsin Madison, worked professionally in Sweden. She collaborated with Swedish choreographer Birgit Cullberg, founded Uppsala Dansakademin, directed an international dance company, choreographed for International Arts Festival Norway, Scandinavian Cultural Conference, International Women's Convention Uppsala University, and historical theater and folk opera. Skog received the Peoples University Cultural Prize, Gosta Knutsson Cultural Award, NordBanken's Cultural Award. Her work was performed at King's Palace Edinburgh Scotland, World Dance Alliance Vancouver, American College Dance Festivals, and Madison Ballet. Skog received University of Arizona's Creative Achievement Award, Green Valley Concert Association Fellowship Award in choreography. February 2015, Skog will premiere "Dionysian Sea" an ensemble work for six dancers with an intoxicating percussion and vocal score commissioned for the dance.

**Bryce Craig, BM** earned a B.M. in Music Composition from Kansas State University and is currently a Masters student in Music Composition and a Graduate Fellow at Central Michigan University. He works as a free-lance composer, private theory/composition instructor, and as Staff Composer/Arranger for the non-profit Kansas City Youth Percussion Ensemble. His works have been performed nation-wide at events such as the National Conference on Percussion Pedagogy and the Society of Composers Inc. Region IV conference. Craig is also active as a freelance percussionist and percussion instructor. Craig premiered "The Crystal Melts" the second movement of the "Crystal Ballet" in December 2014.

**Daniel Phillips** began study at Kansas State University directly following his active duty commitment with the United States Air Force. Phillips has been dancing, mostly ballet, since age 15 and has been interested in physics since childhood. He is pursuing a dual degree in physics and nuclear engineering while dancing with the university. Phillips's research done, under the guidance of Laura Donnelly and Dr. Amit Chakrabarti, focuses on the effects of dance performance on science education. Using the realm of performance as an aid in teaching other subjects is an area of education that excites and inspires Phillips. He will present his research at the Kansas Undergraduate Research Day at the Capitol in February 2015.



Embodied Learning, Somatic Education and Multimodality:  
Transformation through Interdisciplinary Collaborations in Dance, Theater and Music

Donna A. Dragon, PhD, SMT, CMA, Beth Murray, PhD, Alissa Deeter, PhD

*ABSTRACT*

In interdisciplinary collaborations, K-12 and higher education artists and educators are at the forefront of investigating and developing new strategies to negotiate the skills and challenges of multi-modal experiences. What happens when we engage in artistic and intellectual efforts through somatic, multimodal and embodied relationships?

This interdisciplinary panel examines practical approaches to collaboration in dance and voice to create the dance and embodied vocal score for *Go 'round* (2013); and, cross-cultural movement/choreography in the creation of an original bilingual children's play, *Mamá Goose* (2013). Dr. Dragon examines choreologic processes with Dr. Deeter and Dr. Murray to identify and deconstruct somatic education philosophies and practices and their impact on developing "synergistic knowledge". Dr. Murray utilizes the *Mamá Goose Project* to chronicle multimodal challenges and successes as a co-playwright/theatre director and a choreographer/movement director encounter movement through an artistic partnership. Focusing on *Go 'round*, Dr. Deeter, examines processes of singing/sound-making as embodied practice to determine skills that transfer from dance into vocal technique; transferring processes; and, correlations between pre-existing skills and transferences.

Collaborations through embodied learning demands action, exploration, deconstruction, and synthesis. We can recognize the body as a source of knowledge and intelligence; empower creativity; and, develop empathy, respect, and confidence. Through somatic experiences, individual ideas undergo transformations that are unique and inspired not only by the participants, but by the journey of the collaborative work itself. Shifts to synthesis of creativity with new, more complex conditions can transform understandings of disciplines and ourselves as artists, educators, researchers and sensing, feeling human-beings.

*BIOGRAPHIES*

**Donna A. Dragon, PhD, SMT, CMA**, is the Dance Education Specialist at Bridgewater State University in Massachusetts. Donna is a researcher, curriculum consultant, pedagogic innovator and educator in somatic education, embodied pedagogy and transformative teaching and learning. She has developed and implemented somatic and embodied education paradigms for infants to elderly people and for beginners and professionals alike in public, private, urban and rural environments, corporate settings, hospitals, rehabilitation centers, psychiatric facilities, and in K-12 and higher education. Her current research and practices focus on the development, assessment and use of embodied education for transformation and social justice in education. [ddragon@bridgew.edu](mailto:ddragon@bridgew.edu)

**Beth Murray, PhD**, is an Assistant Professor and Coordinator of Theatre Education. Beth works extensively at the intersection of arts, diversity and multi-modal literacy with publications in the *Youth Theater Journal* and *Stage of the Art* and in the volume *Process Drama and Multiple Literacies: Addressing Social Cultural and*

Ethical Issues. She has been a public-school theatre teacher, freelance teaching artist, program development facilitator, and playwright/author for young audiences. With practical roots in K-12 and community-based arts, Beth's current creative activity explores where young people and their teachers use theater and all the arts for learning and cross-cultural understanding.

**Alissa Deeter, PhD** is a nationally recognized performer with a penchant for French *mélodie* as well as the treasured compositions of Gershwin, Porter, Berlin, and Weill. Her book, *The Méloides of Francis Poulenc: A Study Guide*, was recently released with Scarecrow Press. Understanding human physiology and anatomy has been a methodology cornerstone for Dr. Deeter, and she studied therapeutic massage during her doctoral work to integrate that knowledge with her singing and teaching practices. She is a regular contributor to the *Journal of Singing* and she presents and teaches at conferences and academic institutions nationwide.

## Collaboration Within: A Study of Two Rhythmic Choreographers

Anita Feldman, MA, Billy Siegenfeld, MA

Many choreographers take in disparate influences, and then process and meld them to create their own personal style. In a sense there is a collaboration going on internally. During the NDEO conference, some important characteristics about the process of collaboration struck me, including the necessity of give and take; flexibility of ideas; and having to let some things go. All of these strongly apply to what goes on in my head during my personal process of choreography, making me even more convinced that choreographers who's works are hard to categorize because they combine different art forms, individually use a collaborative process.

Billy Siegenfeld and I presented a two-part movement workshop that demonstrated and compared our two examples of rhythmic choreographic process. We have each created a unique style of percussive dance influenced by tap, jazz and modern dance, as well as varied musical forms.

### **Anita Feldman**

I have been developing my choreography for thirty-five years, first with my dance company, and now with my undergraduate dance students at Hofstra University. My work is the product of an internal collaboration between contemporary dance (based on abstract movement elements, or image); rigorous mathematical structures and sounds of new music; rhythms and steps of tap dance or body percussion; with the philosophy of post-modern dance's use of repetition as an important element.

In the interview by Heidi Henderson titled, "Collaboration in the Process of Bebe Miller's *Verge*," (Henderson 2004) a work created by a choreographer, a composer, a dramaturge and a visual designers, Talvin Wilks, the dramaturge, stated that it is always important in a collaboration to understand where the process of creativity begins. This is also an important question for choreography that is a fusion of different forms and styles of the arts, with the melding happening internally within one choreographer. That is how I approached the choices of excerpts to include.

I taught an excerpt of the *Rhythm Walkers*, 2010. The process of creativity began with a movement element. It is an audible rhythmic work, performed in sneakers, in which the rhythms are very exact, but come from the physical unpredictability of falling and propelling. The rhythms in this section were played by the hands, hitting, swishing, clapping and sliding on the body and floor, and one sound by a foot.

The second excerpt that I taught was from *City Scraped*, 2007. This piece originated from images and the energies of commuting between the suburbs and New York City. The section that I shared with the participants started with a contrapuntal rhythmic score that I wrote for three dancers. In this piece the music of the dancers was where the process of creativity began. I asked the dancers to realize the score with their feet and hands, and some composed verbalizations, suggesting certain images such as impatience, waiting, bored, hurried, and crowded.

In the workshop, I first taught the participants how to use my notation, and everyone practiced each of the three composed rhythms together by clapping. The rhythms included different divisions of the beat, including eighth notes, eighth note triplets, and sixteenth notes, as well as syncopated rests and accents. The dancers then divided themselves into three groups, choosing their favorite of the three composed rhythms, and "realized" the score by choreographing the rhythm as a group with the images in mind. These three rhythms

were composed to be performed in counterpoint. Therefore the workshop ended with the three groups performing their choreography together, creating a contrapuntal rhythmical section.

Each work that I choreograph begins with a different element of my interests, whether it is body movement, structure, tap dance, spatial design or the music of the tap dance, so that each piece is a new form of internal collaboration. My work has not resulted in a technique, but rather new body and rhythmic challenges for the dancers, and the philosophy of experimentation.

### Billy Siegenfeld

Billy Siegenfeld, on the other hand, has created the Jump Rhythm® Technique and the vernacular-bodied, gravity-directed alignment concept called Standing Down Straight®. He has developed a “rhythm-first” approach to dancing which fuses the moving body and scat-singing voice into a percussion instrument that “plays” the rhythms common to syncopation-infused music like jazz, hip hop, and folk-inspired world music.

Billy Siegenfeld writes about his workshop (edited by Anita Feldman):

I started the workshop by leading an improvisation that asked for people to walk through space using triple-rhythm-based movement — meaning, the kind of motion that naturally subdivides the quarter notes into three parts, which musically can be described as eighth note triplets. I mentioned that the contrast to this kind of movement is the hard-hitting, sharply percussive movement, which is often found in the duple-based rhythms common to funk and hip hop. To get the participants to do the quality of triple-rhythm-based work, I used a term “swing-bounce.” Swing-bounce is the easy bouncing quality common to actual swung music and partnered swing-dancing when the dancers are actually swinging — that is, when the partners dancing with each other are really letting go, getting down, and doing actual *swinging* through their bodies and handholds, not just *indicating* swing by doing it only in their feet with partnered hand relationships they learned at the local dance studio.

To induce this quality more instinctively I suggested the image of what their bodies would feel like if they were holding an infant or toddler and gently bouncing it in their cradling arms to calm it down. I also had them accompany the movement with scat-based vocalizations meant to carry the same kind of easily bouncing quality, such as the nursery-rhymish singing, adults use to soothe cranky infants or to play fun vocal games.

The kinesthetic goal was to get the group to let go of whatever unconscious muscle-holding patterns might have been habitual with them individually, particularly the kind that, in academically trained dancers, tends to lock up their joints and result in their NOT letting their body-weights fall down their bodies' axis of gravity (as infants and animals instinctively let happen).

I then focused on the contrasting dynamic of the duple-based rhythms and sixteenth notes – dividing the quarter note into fours. I encouraged sharply accented, strong motions to “affirm” their individuality; really nailing, with unashamed conviction, whatever accents they were improvisationally sending through their bodies and voices.

Combining the two, I structured an improvisation using that old stand-by (at least for swinging-jazz-influenced people): the 4-measure, 3-and-a-break rhythm pattern. I use the break to teach how individuality, at least the kind of individualizing that is taught in African or African-American-based dancing-singing forms, rhythmically must **first** come out of the communal rhythm pattern, in this case at NDEO, the beat I set vocally. Other options for the communal beat could be the principal drummer in African dance, or the beat of music.

In the culmination of the workshop, first I had the participants do three measures of 8/4 as a community, building their improvised movements and accompanying vocalizations out of the triple-rhythm-based “swing-

bounce.” Then, at the break — the 4th measure — I directed them to do the qualitative contrast —sharply accented, syncopated sixteenth note motions through their hands and voice to "affirm" their individuality. Those staccato hand-voice gestured moments can translate metaphorically into tasting what it feels like to “speak one’s own voice” within the constraints of a communal conversing — shaping the rhythmic articulation to the agreed-upon “beat” set up during the three measures they swung-bounced before doing their individual break- away.

The goal, pedagogically, is for teachers to use this community-individuality model as a way to teach their students how to let go and, musically in their bodies and voices, learn what it means to syncopate against an existing beat — and then use that as a springboard into helping the students feel how syncopating against an agreed upon beat can become a way of expressing individuality within the context of communal conversation.

### **Conclusions: Outcomes**

All the participants in the workshops agreed that, despite the fact that Billy and I work with rhythm, and have been greatly influenced by tap dance and music, we could hardly be more different. Pedagogically, however, we both stressed that when students work with us, a main benefit, in addition to learning rhythmic, dynamic, expressive and technical skills, is that they learn to be brave enough to find their own individual styles and voices.

At Hofstra I am not the only choreographer who combines different art forms. The dance faculty particularly value choreographers whose works are hard to classify. Guest artists have included David Parker, who’s choreography juxtaposes vaudeville, musical theater, tap dance, ballet and pointe, vigorous structures of post-modern dance, Merce Cunningham, gay culture, relationships and comedy, to make his original style. Claire Porter combines words, often comedic monologues, with idiosyncratic movement shaped with the help of Laban Movement Analysis. Sean Curran has been influenced by his early dance training in traditional Irish step dance, and his experiences as a lead performer with the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company as well as with Stomp.

Brian Uzzi wrote in “Collaboration and Creativity”, in the American Journal of Sociology, “Creativity aids problem solving, innovation, and aesthetics, yet our understanding of it is still forming. We know that creativity is spurred when diverse ideas are united or when creative material in one domain inspires or forces fresh thinking in another.” (Uzzi 2005)

Hofstra’s modern dance program philosophy to respect all and teach many styles of dance, and to provide the students the opportunity to work with choreographers who make uncategorizable work that unites different arts domains, has resulted in a hotbed of creativity. The students are making very interesting tap work that is combining their modern training with tap; and there is the beginning of experimentations with hip hop, and the inclusion of words. They know that, as long as they are trying to experiment, use choreographic craft and find their own voice, any style and combination of influences is valid and appreciated.

I put out a questionnaire to my previous dancers about the effects of working with me, on their own choreography, philosophy and dancing. Two of the quotes are:

“It definitely opened up my mind to creating a bigger picture with everyone involved in the piece and not just one individual. I also loved the timing of movements and that sometimes holding a position in silence before moving to the next one creates quite an extraordinary moment.”

“Working with you has definitely influenced my personal artistry. When choreographing now, I like to experiment with different rhythms coming from each dancer, so that they complement each other. Also, I loved

how you used a lot of movement of the upper body, which was something I was not used to before being in your piece. I now consider adding modern movement into my choreography.”

Providing students with the opportunity to work with professional choreographers who internally collaborate with many disparate influences, has inspired students both at Hofstra and Northwestern to find their own choreographic voices.

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## BIOGRAPHIES

**Anita Feldman, MA**, Associate Professor, designed and directs the Dance Education Program at Hofstra University, and teaches and choreographs contemporary tap dance. Ms. Feldman gained an international reputation as a leading innovator of tap dance, choreographing pieces in collaboration with new music composers that incorporated electronics and the patented "Tap Dance Instrument." Anita Feldman Tap, a company of musicians and dancers, performed in the U.S., Canada, Japan and Germany, at such venues as the Colorado Dance Festival, the Whitney Museum, the American Dance Festival, the Village Gate, the Smithsonian, and Seibu's Studio 200 in Tokyo. Her work was supported by numerous grants, including six N.E.A. Choreography Fellowships. Feldman was one of the tap artists featured in a documentary by Jenai Cutcher, titled *Thinking On Their Feet: Women of the Tap Renaissance*. *Inside Tap: Technique and Improvisation for Today's Tap Dancer* by Anita Feldman is published by Princeton Books.

**Billy Siegenfeld, MA**, is the artistic director, principal choreographer, vocal arranger, and ensemble performing member of Jump Rhythm Jazz Project ([www.jrjp.org](http://www.jrjp.org)), a national and international-touring company of performers who use vocally generated rhythmic movement to explore the instinct-driven roots of human behavior. He is a Charles Deering McCormick Professor of Teaching Excellence in the Department of Theatre at Northwestern University where he teaches among other subjects Jump Rhythm® Technique, a rhythm-generated, vocally accompanied system of dance and theatrical movement training, and Movement Awareness, an injury-preventive system of postural and motional health based on the gravity-directed alignment concept of Standing Down Straight®.

## Nurturing the Mindful Organization

Elisa Foshay, MFA and Jessica C. Warchal-King, MFA

### ABSTRACT

During the summer of 2013 Elisa Foshay spent 3 months working with Philadelphia's Kun-Yang Lin/Dancers, examining possible avenues for enrichment of their current studio programming in ways that aligned with the company's vision and mission. However, as she dug deeper into the research, she came to understand that developing studio programming was only one piece of the picture: The real meat of the investigation was in cultivating ideological and practical alignment between all veins of the company. That discovery led to the focus of the research leading to this presentation: Using KYL/D as an example, how might one integrate mindfulness into all parts of an organization, hopefully bringing that organization into greater alignment, reflection and dialog within itself and among its members? These questions emerged after a research period including field work and secondary research. The lead researcher attended classes and performances in the community, including mindful movement practices of several types. Relevant literature was reviewed and leaders in mindfulness and arts administration were interviewed. This paper is a dissemination of the information originally generated for organizational development. It identifies areas in which mindfulness impacts organizational structure, administration and communication. It offers suggestions for mindfulness practices that may be implemented in an arts organization to increase open communication, awareness and connection between employees.

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*Before we dive into the research and its revelations, we wanted to engage in a practice of mindfulness, acknowledging that theory and practice go hand in hand.*

### DO THE #HASHTAG CIRCLE

What brought us to this point: During the summer of 2013 I spent 3 months working with Philadelphia's Kun-Yang Lin/Dancers, examining possible avenues for enrichment of their current studio programming in ways that aligned with the company's vision and mission. However, as I dug deeper into the research, I came to understand that developing studio programming was only *one* piece of the picture: The real meat of the investigation was in cultivating ideological and practical alignment between all veins of the company.

That is the focus of our discussion today: Using KYL/D as an example, how might one integrate mindfulness to all parts of an organization, hopefully bringing *that organization* into greater

alignment, reflection and dialog within itself and among its members

**(Jess)** As a longtime performer with KYL/D as well as a part-time administrator, I helped offer background and context to the research as it related to our work in the company. As an outsider Elisa offered a unique perspective, but it was also important that she gain an understanding of our work, and quickly. Our collaboration helped to generate new and different ideas with regard to how the company could start to unify its vision and mission of virtuosity, community-mindedness and awareness of the body-mind-spirit.

### WHAT IS MINDFULNESS?

**(Elisa)** When I first came to Chi Movement Arts Center, studio home of Kun-Yang Lin/Dancers, I was given two folders piled thick with newspaper clippings, printouts from websites, notes scrawled on scrap paper, and various pictures culled from myriad sources. I imagine that many organizations have

some version of these folders lurking in their offices: a series of examples collected over time, the sum of which articulate the essence of the organization, or what it desires to be. It may not make logical sense to an outsider, but to the creator of the folder it is *this* that represents the identity of the living, breathing thing that is the small to mid-size arts organization.

KYL/D's folders contained resources on the big idea of mindfulness, an concept deeply embedded in their artistry. But, how did the company translate this concept to its audience in ways beyond performance? That essential question was the jumping off point of my research.

Articles on contemplation, spirituality, mindful living, authenticity, and mindful movement all danced with this big idea of *awareness*. Awareness of the self and the other, awareness of one's living and working environments. As defined by these writings, "being aware" meant allowing oneself to notice both subtle and obvious cues from other persons and the environment, and responding with sensitivity and awareness to the needs of all involved. At the outset of my time with KYL/D we called this contemplation, but shifted over the course of the research period to the word *mindfulness* as this invited both awareness as well as action, and attempted to neutralize the potential for outsiders to make the leap from contemplative practices to religious dogma. Whereas contemplation indicated toward consideration, which could become an unending state, mindfulness suggested transformation as the mindful entity remained actively involved in the doing, while increasing awareness and sensitivity. Mindfulness is also a term accepted in sectors other than dance, such as psychology.

This idea of mindfulness also better aligns with the mission of KYL/D, which places *Chi* at its center. It states:

*Chi, Mandarin for "breath" or "vital life source", is at the core of our artistry and our educational activities..., we invite and challenge the community to experience this essence and discover the power of art to*

*transform ourselves, our schools, our workplaces, and our world.*

Mindfulness integrates discipline of the mind with nurturing of the spirit. It allows us to be aware of how our body, our mind and our spirit exist, both alone and in relationship to others and the environment which we inhabit. Mindful practices encourage full involvement of the physical and spiritual self, acknowledging the brain, body and energy of an individual. Each of these parts of the self deserves attention and consideration, and during the research period I dug into ways in which they may or may not be served by various mindful movement practices. The research revealed the many ways in which mindfulness practices might be applied within a dance organization wishing to reflect deeply on how it contributes to the dance community in which it thrives. Chi Movement Arts Center, or CHI MAC, the home of Kun-Yang Lin/Dancers in South Philadelphia, sought to be a space that bridged the gaps between people who identified as dancers or professional dancers and those who did not. In this way, KYL/D provided an entry point for new audience members and friends to partake in the "present moment" experience and the CHI, vital to KYL/D's artistry. In order to accomplish this goal, the directors of Kun-Yang Lin/Dancers bravely welcomed an outside eye to help them consider how the company and studio's structures and functions served their mission and vision.

#### **IMPLICATIONS OF MINDFULNESS IN KYL/D'S CREATIVE PRACTICE**

**(Jess)** The origins of this research lay in the creative practices of the KYL/D company, as described by the company's mission. Each time the company members come together we connect with the multiple layers of our awareness, integrating a sense of mindfulness into our concert dance practice. Kun-Yang begins each class with a guided improvisation designed to bring awareness and attention to our own bodies within the design of his intention, and awareness of the positive and negative space around us, including the other dancers in the room. We connect with our own bodies through traditional



Western dance practices such as pliés, tendus, dégagés, swings and the like. Our attention, however, is on the intention of the movement, our use of breath and the life force in our bodies that remains active, not stagnant, as we practice the most familiar of movements. The class ends in a circle with the dancers focusing on the community we developed, paying attention to our breath, and dropping our weight. CHI Awareness Technique, Kun-Yang's blending of mindfulness with traditional Western dance movement and class progression, has become an essential part of KYL/D's performance practice. Audience members leave performance having had an experience that has been described as "spiritual," "peaceful," or that the performance allowed them to connect with themselves and the people around them.

CHI Awareness Technique immediately combines dance and mindfulness practices, but it is just one way in which creativity and mindfulness dance with each other. The research revealed myriad ways in which mindfulness: allowing for a flexible, aware, reflective state of mind and the time and constructive space in which to do so, supported a variety of creative practices, both directly and indirectly. Consider how opening a creative practice or a meeting with a 5-minute meditation might help all participants to calm and refocus their intentions, opening themselves up to offering and receiving new creative possibilities.

### **IN THE OFFERINGS: HOW NON-CORE CLASSES FIT INTO THE MINDFULNESS CULTURE**

**(Elisa)** Part of the mission of KYL/D is to bring the cultivation of life force energy to the South Philadelphia community in which they are embedded. While open company class and dance classes for professional dancers served the Philadelphia professional dance community with opportunities to integrate mindfulness into rigorous dance training, in my research I also examined mindful movement practices that may appear inviting to those with little or no formal dance training. I found a magnificent variety in form,

including: yoga, contemplative dance, authentic movement, 5 Rhythms, Nia, Tai Chi, Labyrinth Walks, Qi Gong, and Kyudo. They all invited awareness, spaciousness and opportunity for calm and reflection through movement that could be performed by students with a broad range of experience and ability. In addition, we considered how Kun-Yang's training principles could be adapted for young and adolescent dance students, and developed classes to serve those populations. In 2014, KYL/D integrated CHI Dance into its CHI MAC program schedule - a movement class for children with a focus on mindfulness and Kun-Yang Lin's CHI Awareness Technique. What was important here was finding a large variety of options in hopes that community members from a broad cross-section of the neighborhood might be enticed into the studio and join us for a class.

**(Jess)** We wanted the studio to truly be open to everyone, and we reflected critically on our current offerings with that in mind. The studio provides space for use to Spanish-speaking Zumba classes, and whether or not those classes fit the mold of a Mindful movement practice was a source of ongoing debate during the research period. While these classes may not look or sound the same as some of the other mindfulness classes Elisa researched, we concluded that the Zumba classes also provided the students a chance to reflect on their own bodies, be present with each other and cultivate a community. The practice of meditation may come in many different forms. The instructors of these particular classes demonstrate an awareness of the needs of their students - providing alternative movements for more challenging steps. The music is loud and the movement is constant for the duration of the class, but this allows participants the opportunity to "lose" themselves in the moment, to fully connect with the mind and body, while developing a sense of joy through community and the moving body. Students often stayed after class to chat with each other, and it was clear that a community had been formed around these classes. To break that up by eliminating the

classes from the studio schedule would have seemed a violation of the community.

### **THE SPACE PRINCIPLE: CONSIDERING AND CREATING MINDFUL SPACES**

(Elisa) As the research continued, I began to realize that the concept of *space* was continually emerging. I considered the space we inhabited at Chi MAC, both in the studio as well as the offices and lounge areas. I compared it with the way we used space as dancers and dance makers. The space we connected to outside our building, the community of South Philly and the diverse populations that call it home. In the realm of mindfulness practices *making space* can take on a whole other meaning of creating emptiness and spaciousness in the self by clearing out the “clutter” that fills our minds and our time. Through mindful movement practices we can begin to cultivate internal space. Space for creativity, for awareness, for reflection. Time and space in this way of working are conceptually interconnected and work directly against the dominant cultural American paradigm of *Achieve, do more, work harder, make more, more more*.

Several Mindful Movement practices and healing-art programs feature, at their core, possibilizing open space for the individual participants. These practices offer the participant a gift of time that is theirs. During Labyrinth walks, for example, suggestions and landmarks exist in time but the time itself is only loosely structured. There is no expectation of achievement of an end or mastery within a time constraint, but rather an offering of time and space. Practitioners walk the path laid out in the labyrinth contemplating questions or ideas, but the goal is not to *complete* the path or *answer* the question. Rather, the intention of the practice is taking the time and space to contemplate.

Consider how these ways of offering individually-determined periods of time within an organized class or meeting work against the highly structured and regimented American work paradigm, but aligns perfectly with creative pursuits. Artists know that space HAS to happen for art to be made.

That is why we have artist retreats, why artists often find themselves working jobs with flexible or non-traditional hours and why some people feel inspired after taking time off, whether on a vacation or otherwise. We KNOW we must allow space for the time it takes to make deeply investigated art. We also know that the opposite, a life too full of time-and-energy-sucking obligations can inhibit creativity. As more and more artists manage multiple demands on their time, some feel that the quality of their art seems to suffer. It fails to develop because the artist lacks appropriate space and time to nurture the work.

But how can the space itself support contemplation and practices that encourage mindfulness? We examined the Chi Movement Arts Center, KYLD’s home, with a critically reflective eye for how we really inhabited our space, and whether we were actually living the mindfulness we hoped to cultivate in the young professional and pre-professional dancers that came to our studio during the 12-week summer program that was going on during my research.

With regard to program delivery, how can we create space for others to engage in practices of self-determination, creativity, reflection and diligent commitment to oneself and one’s work? How might these be considered with regard to the space, the classes and programs themselves, our policies with regard to how those programs are delivered by instructors and staff? Examples included maintaining an uncluttered foyer with the gentle smell of incense and the sounds of our cascading water fountain, staff speaking with a calm voice when interacting with students and visitors, ample transition time after each class so that folks can take a few moments for reflection before moving on with their day, or lighting incense at the top of each class, and targeting programming that can integrate these ideas.

In order to truly complete a vision, our work environment also needed to integrate principles of mindfulness. Administrators needed opportunities for taking space similar to the artists, as this is also how they tap into their creativity. Piles of papers to

be sifted through sat as lingering reminders of work not done. How can the workspace be decluttered, allowing for more empty space and therefore more spaciousness? What solutions could we provide?

**(Jess)** To address this, at CHI MAC, there has been a shift toward creating a more uncluttered environment for everyone who uses the space. We have reduced the amount of paper through more efficient filing, recycling documents that are no longer useful or have been compiled into meaningful data (ie, class lists) and using online document sharing tools like google drive. While initially time-consuming, organizing the flow of information has allowed us to communicate more smoothly and work more efficiently, thus providing us more of the benefit of time.

### **IN THE STRUCTURE: HOW THE ORGANIZATION CAN INTEGRATE MINDFULNESS: THE TOP SETS THE TONE**

When looking at how mindfulness is integrated into the structure and administration of an arts organization, it is worth considering whether the employees have their minds full, or time to be mindful? We all know Arts and arts education organizations often run on shoestring budgets, making do with as few administrators as possible and often having those few individuals serving in multiple roles. Following are some ways that arts organizations can integrate mindfulness into their working structure, based upon our research at KYL/D.

As stated earlier, it is just as important that the administrative staff have time to cultivate mindfulness as it is to the artistic staff, and this is especially true when those groups of people overlap. These may mean different things: for administrators, it may mean taking a walk during lunch rather than working through the hour sitting at a desk; it could also be allowing time to take a dance class or engage in another mindful movement practice. This was encouraged at CHI MAC. Interns and administrators were encouraged to participate in the classes, if they were interested, during the time they were there. It

may also mean setting limits on working hours, stifling expectations that staff respond to email at all hours of the day. As difficult as it may be, these measures demonstrate that the organization respects the time of its workers, and desires to afford the same unregimented spaces to its administrators as it does to its creative community.

In addition, good old-fashioned live interpersonal communication across staff members will cultivate an environment of awareness and sensitivity to each other better than one which is dominated by electronic communication. We all know that, though sometimes more efficient, with text messages and email something is often lost in the translation. By interacting in live, ongoing, formal and informal ways administrators within an organization have more and better opportunities to make collaborative decisions, think creatively and minimize the chances for misunderstood communication.

Inviting opportunities to connect artistic and administrative staff enhance the overall sense of community and communication within an organization. It is easy to agree that the administrators are just as important as the artists or teachers in an organization, but too often they can become siloed away from each other and lack opportunities to share challenges, concerns, goals and ideas. At Chi MAC the door from the office to the dancer's lounge was intentionally kept open whenever possible to invite communication, quite literally an "open door" policy. While not perfect, keeping a line of communication constantly open made it easier for all members of the organization to connect with each other without the absolute formality of a meeting or an impersonal email, allowing ideas and creativity to flow more freely between and amongst everyone.

### **NEXT STEPS**

**(Elisa)** Since completing this research I returned home to Chicago and have since begun teaching at Walter Payton College Prep high school. There I lead a seminar called Mindfulness Through Movement, in which 26 students gather periodically

throughout the semester to engage in mindful movement practices, meditation and reflection. Payton is a top-rated selective-enrollment school, and its high-achieving students universally identified the need to alleviate stress as a primary motivator for joining our seminar. With this seminar my intention is to have the students engage in mindful creative practices in part because a concern regarding the development of Payton students is that they need to develop stronger creative thinking. They are teenagers, however, and the student's own self-consciousness can and does get in the way of self-awareness. I try to allow space for them to lose and regain focus, and also work to retain my own patience with them as they develop a sense of themselves that is less self-centered. The students have engaged in practices of yoga, Qi Gong and Authentic Movement as well as several guided and freeform meditations. With each practice as a group they inch a little closer to letting go of self-consciousness, moving toward a more fully realized consciousness.

### **CLOSING THOUGHTS AND QUESTIONS**

**(Jess)** Reflections at home- small changes you can make in your organization, without the overhaul  
Suggestions for creating a mindful environment

1. Create space - is your space cluttered? Are there elements that could be removed to create more space for this particular moment (ie, a meeting or a class). Are those elements distracting or necessary for this moment? Turn off or remove cellphones, tablets, or laptops unless they are needed for the meeting or class.
2. Take a moment to see everyone in the space. Is everyone present physically and mentally? Are there "check-in's" that need to happen before the meeting or class can begin? Jessica uses the "Hashtag Circle" - each participant provides a 140-ish character "tweet" on a particular topic. Examples include #itsmonday #alignment #myimagefortoday
3. Take a few moments to breathe together as a unit. This could be a five minute guided

meditation, a reading of a quote, or a guided improvisation with a focus on the breath.

4. Take inventory of how the group is communicating. Are there multiple text messages going out to the group when a singular email might be sufficient? Are multiple emails circulating when a conversation might be most effective?
5. Close the meeting or class in a circle - again, "seeing" everyone and provide a thought or reminder from the meeting or class to "take away" from the moment and into their everyday life and own practice. Suggest and encourage people not to immediately turn to their phones or electronic devices after the meeting. (This may need to be modeled and might take time).

### **BIOGRAPHIES**

**Elisa Foshay** is a Chicago-based dance artist and educator. She earned a BA in Dance from Columbia College Chicago and a MFA in Choreography and K-12 teaching license in Dance from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, where she was also a graduate teaching assistant. Elisa has performed with numerous Chicago-based companies and independent artists. Her improvisations and choreographies have been presented in venues throughout Chicago, Philadelphia and North Carolina. She has over ten years of teaching experience in studio, community and school settings. Elisa is currently the founding dance educator at Walter Payton College Prep in Chicago, IL and teaches in the CPS Advanced Arts Program at Gallery 37. She has presented on topics of dance and dance education at annual conferences of the National Dance Education Organization and the South Eastern Women's Studies Association and led professional development workshops for educators of all kinds throughout Chicago.  
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**Jessica C. Warchal-King**, a Philly-based performer, choreographer, educator, and arts advocate, is a member of Kun-Yang Lin/ Dancers and Nora Gibson Contemporary Ballet. Jessica has toured nationally and internationally and performed at some of the premier dance venues in the US. Her choreography has been presented throughout the East Coast. Jessica is the co-founder and curator of the InHale Performance Series, presented by Kun-Yang Lin/ Dancers. She teaches at several universities, studios, and arts centers offering Master and ongoing classes. Jessica earned her MFA from Temple University and her BA from Muhlenberg College. She is a trained instructor in Dance for PD, and a Power Pilates Mat I & II Certified Instructor. The Embodiment Project is Jessica's ongoing research project combining education, physical dance practice, and performance. Using dance as its medium, The Embodiment Project investigates the relationships between kinesthetic, somatic, and anatomical understanding, self-awareness, art-making, joy-creation, and social justice. [www.jcwarchalking.blogspot.com](http://www.jcwarchalking.blogspot.com)

## Research Collaborations in a Study About Kinetic Awareness®, with Women with Breast Cancer

Jill Green, PhD

### *ABSTRACT*

This research brings together the areas of dance, wellness, and somatic educational practices, in an effort to use a particular somatic approach as a tool for dealing with health issues. The specific purpose of this study was to explore ways that Kinetic Awareness®, a somatic body and dance practice, can help women with breast cancer deal with the symptoms of their treatments, particularly with fatigue and sleeplessness. In addition, the research investigated how the work may enhance the quality of life of the women in this somatic teaching project. The qualitative investigation involved interviews, video observation, and field notes. The presentation is divided into two main areas. First, I address issues related to collaborative research, and how I negotiated working with other researchers in different fields, who brought different theoretical frameworks, methodology, and ideas about research to the project. Second, I present the findings of the research through a multifaceted case study approach, using postpositivist displays of data such as narrative and split page format. This strategy embodies an approach, which does not attempt to find generalized solutions or prescriptions; portray the researcher as an authority figure; or attempt to speak for the participants. Rather, it offers a multitude of voices, viewpoints, and possibilities. Through this qualitative approach, the study focuses on finding agency within a medicalized system of care.

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Since the theme of this conference addresses collaboration, I thought I would first talk about my collaborative experiences working on this interdisciplinary topic and how I negotiated working with other researchers in different fields, who brought different theoretical frameworks, methodologies, and ideas about research to the project. I will discuss what I learned from this collaboration and how such a venture provided me an opportunity, as well as certain angst, about working with others with different ontologies and epistemologies. Then I will address my negotiated approach to the findings of the study and how I accommodated the researcher goals of my collaborators, as well as my own research inclinations.

This relationship with other collaborators occurred when I was asked to collaborate with scientists on a somatics project. For years, I provided rationales about how qualitative research

was a legitimate way of approaching dance scholarship, and I was a bit skeptical about science being the only way to ask questions. My doctoral research methodology courses taught me that no knowledge is value-free and that there has been an established hierarchy in academe that embraces and rewards the hard sciences and rejects other methods of gathering information. Although many scientists do recognize the value of postpositivist methods and embrace different ways of knowing the world, I felt that the sciences are often used as the gold standard in research and I was concerned that the ways I do research might conflict with the ways others wanted me to do it. While I did not wish to reject science or its contributions to health, I was aware of differences in theoretical grounding between the scientific method and postmodernism, or between positivism and postpositivism. (Please see Green, 2014 for more discussion about this

topic). As stated in a chapter I wrote with Sue Stinson,

Generally, positivists tend to assert that reality is found – that there is a real truth or big truth that we can know. Postpositivists, on the other hand, tend to believe that reality is socially constructed – that we construct reality according to how we are positioned in the world, and that how we see reality and truth is related to the perspective from which we are looking. (Green and Stinson 1999: 93)

Epistemologically, positivists tend to assert that we can *know* a “true” reality and by using “objective research methods, we can uncover the “truth.” In contrast, many postpositivist researchers reject the claim that research can be value-free or that one sole truth can be found through objective research methods. Furthermore, some postpositivists believe that subjectivity is not only unavoidable but may even be helpful in giving researchers and participants a more meaningful understanding of people and research themes. In accepting a socially constructed reality, we realize that our belief systems, or the stories we tell of who we are, may not be consistent and reliable in the positivist sense, because they vary each time we tell them.

Thus, coming from this perspective, I was deeply grounded in thought centered around the social constructions of bodies. It did not seem likely that I would work in a scientific fashion or give up my work with social somatic theory. (Please see Green 2014, for more discussion about this issue). However, after sharing my interest in somatics, particularly in Kinetic Awareness® and health with a collaborative group in the areas of Public Health Education and Kinesiology, I was asked if I would be interested in collaborating on a study focused on women with breast cancer. My initial reaction was to kindly refuse the offer. But for some reason, I indicated that I might be interested. After the group brought in a consultant from exercise science and the project began to be framed around science and grant money, I was about to bow out gracefully because I felt I would have to give up the socio-cultural aspect of my work. This consultant spent much of her time

writing grants and doing scientific studies that support alternative interventions in health care. I felt I could not possibly do this kind of research, because I was not trained to do so, but in addition, it would mean giving up everything I learned about qualitative research. Again, I valued that research greatly, but was wondering if I was the right person for the project due to my focus on qualitative research.

But then I began to think about how this project may be helpful for women with breast cancer and also bring somatics and what I was doing in Kinetic Awareness® into a more public sphere. I let everyone know that I did not do scientific research and they said it would be interesting to have one person from Exercise Science do the quantitative part of the study and I do a qualitative part of the study. I still had reservations due to my take on the subject but I figured I could write up my piece from my perspective and that I would have authority to shape my writing, but I was still concerned because I was asked to address thematic areas such as sleep, quality of life etc. and I did not do interventionist research as done in the health professions. But I figured that I could attempt to bring in my socio-cultural slant while suiting their needs.

Although difficult, the boundaries began to become more fluid for me. I began to combine both aspects, (health findings and social issues) in analyzing the data and writing my article, and I attempted to find the data that indicated particular health findings but also found social implications beyond the hard sciences. So I found a way to do this. However, in attempting to be more open, but still hold my ground epistemologically, I found myself in a difficult position. I ended up with a manuscript that I was not happy with because it did not sufficiently reflect my research approach.

I am not saying that I would not want to go this route again because it did not allow me to have a consistent research agenda and positionality. Rather, I recognized the complexity of the issues and how we sometimes have to break what we see as binaries

and not always look at everything as an either or proposition but allow for theoretical fluidity.

But again, I know from reviewing many manuscripts from new researchers, who seem to pick and choose aspects of paradigms that fit their needs, that there is a danger in fluid boundaries as well. First, it may be important to understand the differences and respect the boundaries before opening them up and moving through them.

### THE STUDY

The project brought together scholars from diverse areas and approaches to research. Additionally, it brought together the areas of dance, wellness, and somatic educational practices, in an effort to use a particular somatic approach as a tool for dealing with health issues. The specific purpose of this study was to explore ways that Kinetic Awareness®, a somatic body and dance practice, can help women with breast cancer deal with the symptoms of their treatments, particularly with fatigue and sleeplessness. In addition, the research investigated how the work may enhance the quality of life of the women in this somatic teaching project. The qualitative investigation involved interviews, video observation, and field notes.

My concern was to organize my writing in a way that would address this purpose but also communicate a postmodern voice through the presentation of multiple voices. I decided to tell the stories of the women through a multifaceted case study process, using postpositivist displays of data such as narrative and split page format. This strategy embodies an approach, which does not attempt to find generalized solutions, or prescriptions; portray the researcher as an authority figure; or attempt to speak for the participants. Rather, I wanted to offer a multitude of voices, viewpoints and possibilities. Through this qualitative approach, the study focused on finding agency within a medicalized system of health care. I came up with a way to answer the initial questions, yet provide a post-structural attempt to display multiple meanings and a triangulation of perspectives. I used a first person style to demonstrate that I was invested in the project,

indented the voices of the participants, and added my own responses in italics, with a double-indentation, to demonstrate ways the reader could negotiate multiple realities and thoughts while perusing the data and findings. Thus, I did not attempt to present a type of causal or linear knowledge but rather a multifaceted knowledge through juxtaposed voices. These are meant to be partial knowledges and truths depending on the perspectives of the participants and the reader, and depending on how the reader enters the text. Here is an example of how I displayed the data within the narrative case study format. The examples I use below come from a recent article (Green 2012). All names are pseudonyms:

### CASE STUDIES

#### Example 1:

Patricia is a woman in her early 40s. She is a mother and owns a trucking company with her husband. During the time of the study, her cancer metastasized and was in her bones.

*I gained a great deal of respect for these women. It appeared to me that they had such courage under such life threatening situations. They were my teachers.*

*Patricia appeared to be a strong woman. She carried herself with confidence and intent.*

Patricia heard about the study in her support group where one of the other participants, someone who has studied with me earlier, announced the programme. I introduced the research to the participants by describing KA, letting them know that I was looking to see how it could help with the side effects of their medication, and asking them what other practices they had experienced and why they wanted to do take the class. Patricia said, she thought the project ‘sounds cool’. She came with some experience in meditation and yoga and indicated that she believes in body–mind work. But she also wanted to work through her pain and take some control over her body. As she said,

Obviously I want to feel better because of how it [the cancer] has metastasized in the bones and stuff; I



don't know if that's ever going to go away. For me, if I can find some other way to alleviate the pain or control it in a better fashion, that was what I was really looking for... So it's just the whole concept of being able to do something because even though I take some medications, I just never want to get to the point, of just popping a pill before we start; I don't want to get to the point where you are just dependent on drugs and are spaced out and that's how you have to live to get through the day. I still want to have some quality of life and be able to find some alternatives to the pain and being able to alleviate it.

Patricia thought of herself as a physical person and sensed a loss of her physicality when she undertook treatment for her breast cancer. As she said in her first interview,

We own a moving company and I've always been a very physical person. I've always had this attitude that I can do anything that anyone else can do, especially my boys. [her sons] I mean, I can go out and do stuff that my boys can do. I can pick up the other end of a triple dresser or carrier or whatever needs to be done, so the hardest thing for me is accepting [what is happening]. They told me I'm in a five-maybe ten-pound weight limit of lifting and doing stuff... I would like to feel normal again... because sometimes it's very frustrating for me not to be able to grab the water jug and slap it on the cooler. You know, somebody has to do this for me, because I've just always done what needed to be done.

*The loss of the ability to function physically and the loss of strength appeared to be a great byproduct of the condition and treatment. This greatly affected quality of life as well as a sense of agency.*

Some of Patricia's symptoms when entering the programme included fatigue, sleeplessness and lack of energy.

#### **Example 2:**

Pain was another issue major issue for Claire, although it came and went with particular surgeries and medications. She explained that she had a great deal of pain in her shoulder right after her surgery but that it went away after the lumpectomy:

It wasn't until my treatment finished in December that I started feeling the pain and I didn't know I had .....

*Like Patricia, medications and manipulation of the function of the body seemed to be primary issues for Claire. There seemed to be a lack of participation in her treatment process.*

#### **Example 3:**

Lisa directly addressed the medicalization of cancer treatment:

I'm an avid reader and seek out well-being, and one of the things I've found is, what are we going to do if the typical response is carve, poison, and burn, which means surgery, chemo, and radiation. But the holistic approach talks about .....

*I find it interesting that Lisa used the language of holism, as if something was missing and grieved for. We seem to value wholeness rather than embrace the postmodern fragmentation and asymmetry of life.*

## **FINDINGS/DISCUSSION**

During the discussion section of the article, I directly addressed the main themes and outliers in order to directly address the topics most valuable to the people who were supporting the research.

### **Discussion**

Although the participants shared a number of experiences, this study indicates that there are multiple ways of dealing with breast cancer. However, some patterns may arise. These include pain and discomfort, fatigue, sleeplessness, quality of life, movement limitations and range of movement, and body awareness and stress.

#### **Pain and discomfort**

All three women experienced pain from treatment and were able to find a number of ways of dealing with the pain and using balls to alleviate it, although some pain remains. KA was often used as a tool to stop and/or deal with the pain.

#### **Fatigue**

All the participants were having a difficult time dealing with fatigue. Lisa suggested that she actually felt more energy after treatment but then crashed later. The balls helped her to focus and work better when lying on the ball. Breathing techniques also helped with fatigue. The effects of KA were not direct but helped participants in little ways and helped them regain control and structure their lives better.

Sometimes they can do nothing when they are so tired but KA is helpful because it does not take much energy and helps them feel their bodies moving when muscular effort is difficult. KA did little to directly deal with fatigue but it was used by Lisa to help when she experienced fatigue.

### **FINAL THOUGHTS**

My final thoughts included larger issues and themes that arose during the project such the medicalization of health care, and body ownership:

#### **Final Thoughts**

There were some larger issues and themes that arose during the project. For example the medicalization of health and fear became prominent threads throughout the study. All three participants found

that they had to balance medicine with more empowering ways of dealing with their bodies. Much has been written about the medicalization of women's bodies and dependence on drugs. Of course drugs may be necessary, particularly in the cases of the three women studied during this project, but sometimes women feel like they are giving their bodies to medical professionals.

Some writers have addressed the necessity of patient participation so that we become "more adept at thinking critically about politics and issues in women's health (Di Palma, 2003). Rager (2007) suggests, "More and more patients are assuming the responsibility to conduct their own information searches and are not on the advice of health professionals." According to Gray et.al. (cited in Rager, 2007: 567), "This seems to be the result of converging influence, including a growing distrust of medical authority, historical failures by the healthcare system to provide adequate information, and the ascension of a consumerist philosophy."

### **CLOSING**

In closing, this is a tale of aligning the needs of collaborative partner researchers with my own need to maintain the integrity of my theoretical stance and way of doing research. I did this by including required findings with a case study approach that allowed for multiple meanings. I am not sure how successful I was but I did learn to open the boundaries a bit and realized that theories can be fluid and open. I also realized how these kinds of partnerships can help one grow and appreciate where other collaborators live.

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## BIOGRAPHY

**Jill Green, Ph.D.** is a professor of dance at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro. She is Director of Graduate Studies, conducts research and teaches somatics, body studies, research, and pedagogy. In addition, she is a certified Kinetic Awareness® Master Teacher and directs a teaching program at her studio. Her work is published in a number of journals and books. Dr. Green is a Fulbright Scholar (Finland) and former co-editor of *Dance Research Journal*.

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## Summary of Movement Session

### Intergenerational Dance Program

Cynthia Hanna, MA

#### *SUMMARY*

The Intergenerational Dance Program combines senior citizens and students in a unique situation, using dance as the common denominator. The combination creates an extraordinary opportunity where bonding and learning of life skills take place. Learning about the differences and similarities in the generations. The atmosphere allows for a range of character, physical and social development as well as touching on dance elements. The presentation and movement workshop demonstrated the effects of the program on the school, students, senior citizen, curriculum, community and administration. These effects based on a twenty-years of implementation.

The workshop included information needed for uniting Senior Citizens and students in a school building, including vocabulary list, goals, pictures and sample movement lesson. The workshop included short video clips. It was a pleasure to share and have such a positive response from the participants, thank you.

#### *BIOGRAPHY*

**Cindy Hanna holds a BA, MA, NYS** certification in Physical Education and Health, LPN. She is head of the Dance Department at Nardin Academy Elementary and teaching artist for Young Audiences. Previously, Cindy was head of the Dance/Movement based program at St. Mary's School for the Deaf. She continues to teach workshops for Buffalo schools. The Interactive Dance Programs she is most proud of are: Intergenerational Dance, Fun Fundamentals Phoneme and Phonics Program, and the Interactive Dance Party. In 2009 Young Audience Teaching Artist of the Year, 2012, Nardin teacher Spirit award and on March 8, 2013 honored with “Cindy Hanna Day” for promoting art in the community. [channa@nardin.org](mailto:channa@nardin.org)

## Integrating Jazz Dance Technique and Emotional Connections in the Classroom

Kirsten Harvey, MFA

### *ABSTRACT*

“Integrating Jazz Dance Technique and Emotional Connections in the Classroom” allowed dance teachers and researchers a new experience into how to teach emotional connectivity and intent alongside traditional jazz dance training methods. The process of teaching dancers how to tap into their inner character while honing their technique can and often is a collaborative process. This method of connecting inner self to the aesthetics of the outer self can also be employed in the choreographic process. I discussed my collaborations with dancers and how I create dance works from the same model utilized in my technique classes. The movement presentation offered participants new lesson plans to take with them, along with choreographic tools that can employ emotional connectivity for performances. Please see lesson bullets below.

### **COMPONENTS OF A JAZZ CLASS**

The first is the relationship between the music and the movement. This differentiates jazz from modern and ballet. Jazz dance does not exist without the music, a specific kind of music. The range of that music is arguable. The second is the relationship of the movement to vernacular or social dance forms.

### **MOVEMENT CHARACTERISTICS OF JAZZ DANCE**

- Movement that initiates from multiple locations in the body
- Delineation of various body parts (isolations) – seeing body parts moving independently from each other
- Multiple meters
- Angularity – Broken Lines
- Asymmetry as balance – Opposition
- Percussiveness
- Improvisation – relating to social dance roots and the creation of the music
- Swing – what happens between the beats
- Pulse through the entire body
- WHERE DOES THE EMOTIONAL CONTEXT COME FROM??

### **WHAT ARE THE GOALS IN A JAZZ DANCE CLASS?**

- Individuality and self-expression. In Africanist derived forms, there is always a lot of room for individualization. The steps do not exist outside the person. The development of a neutral physicality so the dancer can choose what stylization to overlay.
- Development of a strong understanding of the relationship between movement and music. Jazz dance does not exist without the music. Musicality has nothing to do with counting. It is about understanding melody, rhythm and phrasing.
- The ability to articulate and initiate movement from all body parts.
- The ability to do multiple co-ordinations.

- Footwork – the ability to master directional changes, and to negotiate where the weight is on different parts of the foot.
- The ability to spiral from the pelvis upwards against the direction that the legs are going.
- The ability to move between parallel and turn-out safely and quickly
- The ability to drop the center of gravity and keep it there, moving the weight through the heels
- The appearance of muscular attack while working with ease and efficiency in the body
- Soulfulness, Expressiveness, Grit and Passion- HOW DO WE CREATE THIS?

## **HOW TO TEACH EMOTIONAL CONNECTIVITY IN A JAZZ CLASS**

### **Suggested Exercises**

- 1) Gifts (Warm-Up)- use with music that is distinctly jazz and creates the “soulfulness, expressiveness, grit, and passion” of the other person
  - Pick a partner and face one another
  - One partner leads and the other follows in a mirror game
  - The leader begins improvising what is expressive, soulful, gritty, and passionate about the music? I then call out switch, and the follower then replicates what they saw as soulful, expressive, gritty, and passionate in the other dancer’s improvisation experience.
  - I always remind the dancers to always be mindful of the other person and respect their unique improvisation with an open mind.
- 2) Improvography- Blend the class material with elements of improvisation and structured material- give the students a task such as come up off the floor like a butterfly with a broken wing but with the confidence of Beyoncé.
  - Examples- From abdominal work, invite the dancers to rise off the floor with the improvisation suggested above. After a set tendu exercise, have the dancers move to one another and perform a series of steps dancing to the other person. This breaks the jazz class out of facing the mirror and focusing on aesthetics.
- 3) Inner Rhythm
  - Leading Directions: Go into the space within you and in that silence, feel, sense, hear what you can. You may find a rhythm. If you don’t find it, please do not make one up. Shifting positioning can help but wait to find it. When the dancer finds the inner rhythm invite them to begin moving to it. After a while of working through it, have them create sound to the rhythm.

## **PROBLEM SOLVING- EXERCISES TO ASSIST WITH DANCERS WHO STRUGGLE**

- 1) The Obstacle
  - Put a folding chair into the middle of the space.
  - Pick a dancer for who appearance and charm are of the utmost importance to them.
  - Tell him/her that you would like to see whether he/she is able to pass under the chair without moving it. Or devise any task that is so demanding that the dancer will for once think only of doing without appearing to be doing.
  - I invite students to utilize the vocabulary of a particular style, for example ballet, and then ask them to touch every surface of an object dancing with that vocabulary.
- 2) Your First Performance Instructions

- When technique begins to overshadow performance, it is important to remind the dancers why they dance.
  - Ask the dancers to think about their first performance instructions and ask them to re-create their first performance. I have done this with a new piece of music or sometimes they like to bring in the original music.
- 3) Dedicate Your Motion
- Ask the dancers to take movement that they have already developed and dedicate their motion to their closest friend. Now ask them to perform the same movement and dedicate it to their first dance teacher. See what changes for the students.
- 4) Investigate and ask the students what makes a performance intriguing compelling. Create an exercise to address these suggestions. Is it focus, drive, passion, musicality, commitment? Watching videos of professional companies can help them find this if there isn't an example in the classroom.

## **CHOREOGRAPHIC PROCESSES- INFUSING EMOTIONAL CONTENT**

### **Creating Choreography Based on Emotion**

- 1) Self select a group of 4 or more dancers
- 2) Develop an across-the-floor exercise that is inspired by a word that is given.  
\* You can select any emotionally charged/ physically engaging word that would help the student to create movement.

### **Performing Choreography with Emotional Intent**

- 1) One group teaches another group their choreography and the dancers then perform it for the group.
- 2) Then ask the dancers to perform the same choreography with a different inspiration word. (See Appendix A- Emotion- Vocabulary List)
- 3) Ask observers what helped to enhance the movement and what did not.

## **CONCLUSION**

There were approximately 30 dancers (teachers and students) participating in the movement session and all were positive and invested in the investigation process. At the end of the session, feedback was overwhelmingly supportive and several attendees said this is dance training that is very necessary and isn't being addressed in dance schools. Many teachers said that they struggle with infusing emotional content into their technique and choreography and that this workshop gave them a place to start from. In the future, I anticipate continuing this research in writings as well as in practice.

### *BIOGRAPHY*

**Kirsten Harvey, MFA, BA** received her degrees from the University of California, Irvine. She is currently an Assistant Professor of Dance at Western Michigan University and began her dance career studying with some of the best from the School of American Ballet, Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre, American Ballet Theatre, Opera National de Paris, Tremaine Dance Center and the EDGE Performing Arts. Ms. Harvey danced with the Marla Bingham Contemporary Ballet Company and has performed professionally in numerous commercials, music

videos, and movies in LA. Ms. Harvey's concert and commercial choreography has been performed in New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, and Toronto and she has taught master classes nationally in jazz, ballet, hip-hop, and musical theatre. Most recently her piece titled *Black Iris*, was selected as the winner of the Inaside Chicago Dance Choreographic Sponsorship Event 2014. She was the first choreographer invited to set a new concert jazz dance work on Inaside Dance Chicago for their 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Performance last year. Current choreographic projects include METRICS a jazz dance and music collaboration for the Donald P. Bullock Music Performance Institute and Ritmo Interno a Brazilian concert jazz dance work based on the internal rhythms of the jazz dancer. Ms. Harvey has presented extensive research work on jazz dance improvisation and teaching emotional connectivity to dancers in Germany, England, Australia, and Austria.  
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## The Choreographer's Notebook: A Software Tool for Collaborative Creative Process

Sybil Huskey, MFA

### *ABSTRACT*

The Choreographer's Notebook, specialized video software that enables creative teams to communicate asynchronously, was designed through a multi-year collaboration among choreographers, computer scientists and dancers. As part of the Dance.Draw project, an interdisciplinary investigation funded by a 3-year National Science Foundation/CreativeIT grant, the software was a serendipitous by-product of teamwork that primarily focused on technology infused choreographic work. The interactive dance pieces examined how different types of portable, low-cost sensing devices and specialized coding could enable the dancers' movements to control the motion of projected visualizations in real-time. Because the design and kinetics of these images were integral to the choreography, the technologists attended all rehearsals. The team merged the artistic and scientific vocabularies and methodologies in the production of eight original works. Early in the process, the computer human interaction specialists observed how technology might enhance the collaboration inherent in the choreographic process. Thus the Choreographer's Notebook evolved as a secondary collaboration, developing in tandem with each subsequent choreographic process. The benefit of the software to choreographers, technologists, dancers and designers was immediately apparent. The software functionality allowed the collaborators to work conveniently from any location and at any time, augmenting the studio rehearsal time with specific, contextualized communication around the latest rehearsal video.

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To borrow from the conference title, my "mosaic of possibilities" began in 2008 with 2 gyroscopic wireless mice. A serendipitous meeting with Dr. Celine Latulipe, in the Department of Software and Information Systems at UNC Charlotte, ushered in collaborative research between computer scientists and dancers and ultimately led to the development of the Video Collaboratory software. This software allows collaboration and annotation around video artifacts with all text and sketch comments on the same screen. Its incremental evolution occurred in the context of making interactive choreographic works under the auspices of a 3-year National Science Foundation grant.

"Exquisite Interaction" was the pilot project where dancers holding gyroscopic mice controlled the kinetics of the projected visualizations through their movements. The pilot led to a longer, fully staged collaboration where dancers exchanged

wireless mice during the course of the piece, controlling the motion of artist-created visualizations that were subsequently coded by a technologist.

The piece was aptly titled, "A Mischief of mus Musculus,"-- "mischief" being the term for a group of mice and "mus Musculus" denoting the zoological name for the common house mouse., "Mischief," as double entendre, could also be seen as the collaborative activity of stakeholders, with varying experiences with dance and/or technology, as they collaborated, merging artistic/scientific vocabularies and methodologies. That "mischief" ultimately produced 8 increasingly sophisticated staged choreographic productions using combinations of gyroscopic wireless mice, accelerometers and overhead surveillance cameras.

So how does the Video Collaboratory software figure into this mosaic? It goes back to Celine, the human-computer interaction scientist

whose objective is to design technological solutions that solve problems, enhance efficiency, and streamline work in any domain. Because the interactive dance works necessitated “exquisite interaction,” within the scope of the sensing hardware and coded algorithms and between the corporeal movement of the dancers and the kinetics of the visualizations, more collaborative time was needed than could be accomplished in the studio rehearsals.

Celine recognized how the computer scientists could optimize our studio time by providing an asynchronous, distributed platform for extending the team’s creative interactions. Thus, the Choreographer’s Notebook, nicknamed “ChoNo,” evolved as a secondary collaboration, developing in tandem with each subsequent choreographic process. The benefit of the software to choreographers, technologists, dancers and designers was immediately apparent as the software functionality allowed the collaborators to work conveniently from any location and at any time, augmenting the studio rehearsal time with specific, contextualized communication around the latest rehearsal video. With each new project, the team would contribute new mosaic bits, thus making ChoNo increasingly robust and productions steadily more sophisticated.

To date, two multi-year NSF grants and university allocations have funded this dance technology work. At the point of patent application, ChoNo became the Video Collaboratory because of its applicability to domains other than dance and for emphasis on video as the collaborative artifact discussed in a laboratory or work-like setting.

Since my colleague, Celine could not be here, I’d like for you to hear her demonstrate the features and functionality of the Video Collaboratory at (<http://www.videocollaboratory.com>). Subsequently, we can navigate and annotate a video in real time so you can witness how the “mosaic possibilities” of technology can enhance the choreographic process.

## *BIOGRAPHY*

**Sybil Huskey, MFA** Professor Sybil Huskey was recently a Co-PI and lead choreographer on a 4-year National Science Foundation/CreativeIT grant. She was selected for the NSF Innovation Corps (I-Corps) Program and the Groundwork Labs startup incubator. Her technology research produced eight interactive choreographic works and the Video Collaboratory software that is under patent review. Sybil has worked as a teacher, choreographer and performer throughout the USA and internationally with her work receiving many grants and commissions. As a Fulbright Senior Scholar, Ms. Huskey was resident artist at Finland’s Theatre Academy and choreographic resource developer for New Zealand’s national arts curriculum. While serving as a Visiting Professor in Drama at Kingston University in London, she co-authored the initial curriculum for the new dance degree program. Sybil has held faculty and administrative positions at Cornell University, Arizona State University, Winthrop University and UNC Charlotte and served as President of the American College Dance Association. [sdhuskey@uncc.edu](mailto:sdhuskey@uncc.edu)

## Summary of Movement Session

### Crossing Boundaries: Collaboration and Integration across the Elementary School Curriculum

Andrew N. Jannetti, MA

#### *SUMMARY*

This workshop presented methods for creating a dance curriculum for elementary school that is collaborative and integrated into the overall academic environment. Through a PowerPoint presentation, the first part of the workshop outlined a basic structure for a dance curriculum coordinated to elementary school academic expectations while staying true to the creative and aesthetic principles of dance. The *NYC Blueprint for Dance* and the *Common Core Standards* were used as reference points. The presentation focused on how to reach across boundaries to build lessons in collaboration with classroom teachers that supports students' acquisition of language, math, social studies, technology, and science. Lessons for a variety of classes and topics were presented, followed by participation in a number of the lessons discussed. Some of the unit plans that were discussed were language acquisition for kindergarten and first grade, comprehending mathematical concepts for second grade, enhancing social studies for third grade, poetry in motion for fourth grade, and a cross section of technology, science, culture and dance for fifth grade.

Participants went through an abbreviated version of the unit on "Poetry in Motion" and then brainstormed ideas for future lessons or other units of study that cross the curriculum. A brief question and answer period followed and participants were given handouts of various lessons and unit plans for adaptation into their school curriculum.

All information was posted online along with a link to my blog Dance in Performance and Education (<http://dancetech54.blogspot.com>) for participants to access at their convenience.

#### *BIOGRAPHY*

**Andrew Jannetti, MA** is based in NYC and has had a distinguished career as a choreographer, dancer, educator, fitness instructor, and producer for the past 30 years. He has presented work at DTW, St. Marks's Danspace, 92nd Street Y, Alvin Ailey Center, The Duke, DIA, BAX, Cunningham, DUMBO Dance Festival, CoolNY Festival, ADG Festival, NY International Dance Festival, as well as venues throughout the U.S. and Europe. He's received grants from NYSCA, NJSCA, MCAF, Meet The Composers, the Field, and Harkness Center. He received a BAXten and a PASEtter award for his work with NYC youth. He was an adjunct professor at NYU Gallatin and is currently employed by the NYC Department of Education and at the Brooklyn Arts Exchange, as well as at various studios and fitness clubs around the city. His teaching is informed by his extensive knowledge of dance, proper body mechanics, and various somatic mind/body techniques.

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## Summary of Movement Session

### Collaborative Touch: Facilitating Awareness, Direction and Tensile Resiliency in Dance Pedagogy

Elizabeth Johnson, MFA, GL-CMA

#### *ABSTRACT*

Touch and tactile feedback are part and parcel of student-teacher interactions at all levels and specialties of dance teaching in technique and beyond. As teachers implement touch as a means of re-directing and correcting students, they frequently “pass down” the history and qualities of their own teachers’ touch as well as their beliefs about how it’s utilized. In addition to these handed down traditions, in pedagogical training where touch is acceptable and used, specific information about how to touch effectively and sensitively is often overlooked or omitted altogether. In this absence of information, a trial and error approach often leaves teachers feeling overly manipulative or responsible and the student either passive or overly reactive to correction.

In the Alexander Technique, teacher training cultivates a sensitivity to touch as well as practical means to cultivate its sophistication. In the AT student-teacher relationship, touch often facilitates the concept of “direction”—the translation of the thought/intention and organized physical use of the “toucher” to the person touched. This collaborative, communicative, spacious and energetic relationship, gives rise to awareness, inherent coordination, and a natural physical resiliency. When wanting to address specific corrections or issues, teachers can begin by sending their initial attention and energy towards checking in with their own habits, muscular tension, and overly engaged desires to “fix” or help students. Instead of immediately reacting to students’ needs, teachers can redirect to attend to themselves first. This inhibitory response creates a subsequently freer channel for non-verbal, tactile communication between teacher and student and enables a clearer transference of the teacher’s awareness, intention, and organized coordination to the student before the actual “correction” has even taken place.

I would like to present a movement workshop guiding participants through experiential exercises and games based in my Alexander Technique training as well as complementary concepts from Laban Movement Analysis. Through this experience, the participants will explore their own beliefs about a “teaching” touch, define their preferred qualities of touch, and uncover their prejudices about how touch should be used in the service of pedagogy. We will work in pairs and small groups to experience how to have “listening” hands that generate clear, supportive touch. Clarity of touch facilitates both teachers’ and students’ awareness, broadens our capacities to give and receive touch without overreacting or over-correcting, and shifts teaching paradigms away from tired hierarchical models encouraging instead mutual respect and learning.

#### *SUMMARY OF MOVEMENT SESSION*

Because of my training history (especially in high school conservatory), I have been thinking for a long time about how teachers use (or abuse) touch. We could look at touch from many lenses (feminist, gendered perspectives, therapeutic, etc.). This movement session focused on somatic and shared awareness concerning touch in a specific dance context: the student/teacher relationship.

Regarding touch, what are our responsibilities as teachers/pedagogues and our responsibilities as students of dance? How we can explore the exchange and develop tools to share the burden/responsibility of a mode of communication/correction/connection that is integral in Dance teaching? How can we take care of ourselves in recuperative, mindful, and compassionate ways?

- Exertion/Recuperation - LMA paradigm
- Self-care, avoiding over responsibility/burnout
- Clarifying intention and communication

I. Language shift in the LMA influenced by Laban student/peer Warren Lamb: the active verb based “ing” or doing-ness rather than the descriptive or adjective. I used this language for the Effort Factors/Qualities right off the bat.

- Weight = classical language: Light/Strong. Lamb influenced: Increasing and Decreasing Pressure
- Space = classical: Direct/Indirect. Lamb: add “ing”
- Time = classical: Quick/Sustained. Lamb: Accelerating/Decelerating
- Flow = classical: Free/Bound. Lamb: add “ing”

This shift is about subjective interpretations of the adjective based language and strives to be more objective in the service of accurate observation (with the least personal prejudice possible).

### **Body Knowledge/Body Prejudice:**

A well articulated explanation of this concept can be found in Chapter 4 of Carol Lynne Moore’s Beyond Words: Movement Observation and Analysis. We can look at touch from an Effort Factor/Quality perspective: Weight, Space, Time, or Flow. For the session, we dealt with preferences in Weight/Pressure. Which do you prefer? How might that already affect or differ from the person receiving touch?

Example from the text: Carol Lynne’s mother’s touch = less pressure = love. Her husband’s mother’s touch = more pressure = love. Even in fundamental non-verbal interactions, how we perceive and interpret touch is all over the map based on our pre-verbal bodily experiences.

- The two “warm up” exercises included a little “shiatsu” body pat down also noticing the ways the pressure of our touch changes depending on the part of the body that we are patting, i.e. we don’t seem to treat our faces/heads the same way we treat our trunks, pelvis and legs (face in most cases was much more in the decreasing pressure range and trunk in the increasing pressure).
- We also performed the Dimensional Scale in the Octahedron to ground and stabilize ourselves in our bodies and in space. We noticed and mentally noted what ends of the spectrum we preferred, especially in Weight/Pressure.

II. Active Alexander Technique principles:

The following definitions of these Alexander Technique principles (in bold) were taken from this web site: <http://www.hilaryking.net/glossary/> (I have added a few asides here and there)

**“Inhibition** comes from the Latin for *restraint* and in Alexander Technique terms, has nothing to do with repression (Freudian ideas of inhibition = repression, shame, etc.).”

- “In physiology, this term refers to the restraining of an organic process, or the prevention of its initiation by neurological or physiological means (Penguin Dictionary of Psychology).”
- “In the Alexander Technique, the term refers to a learned process, in which a person chooses to stop or inhibit a habitual reaction to a stimulus. This allows the individual a moment’s pause, in which to choose whether or not to respond to the stimulus and if so, how to perform an action in response.”

### ***Before we even touch...***

**Activity:** In partners we alternated roles of “teacher” and “student.” Directions were as follows: **Student:** stand in a way that skews what you understand to be a “proper” alignment. **Teacher:** Notice and mentally catalog your reaction to the student’s alignment but say and do nothing. How did this feel from both perspectives? Switch roles and discuss.

### **Doing**

“This term refers to the common but unhelpful tendency to physically make changes with our muscles in order to *do...*” in our specific focus, going to actively correct a student. “This often results in a person stiffening, tensing and even pushing with their muscles, rather than thinking...”

### **Non-doing** – not doing anything extra

“When we inhibit and give ourselves directions, we then allow the muscles to act. Indeed, the very directions given, incorporate this concept of non-doing”

#### **Activity:**

- Looking at hands and fingers in flexion and extension (both palms down and up—mention martial arts). Hands on self. Hands on partner. \*\*Note from Rebecca Nettel-Fiol: remember you are touching your leg but your leg is touching you too. I believe it’s the same thing the other way: when you are being touched, you are also touching the toucher.
- Play with the difference between an active “doing” flexion (sometimes “grabby” hands) and allowing hand to be quiet, extended, lengthened and “listening.” Discuss the difference (sensations for both partners, etc.). During this activity, there were mentions of people releasing into breath with a little more freedom.

### **We did not get to this exercise which has to do with states of mind, touch, and receptivity to touch:**

- Hands on partner thinking/moving exercise: With the intent to move your partner slightly, “student” role will **think**: 1) “Fix me” 2) “I don’t want to move” 3) “I’m listening.”

**“The means-whereby’** (process) is the term F M Alexander used to describe how we use ourselves when performing actions.”

- “Instead of focusing purely on the goal we wish to attain and forcing ourselves towards it at any cost, in Alexander lessons we learn to have an *‘increased consciousness of the physical means employed to gain the ends proposed by the will’*” (Aldous Huxley ~ Ends and Means).

**Activity:** with the lengthened, “listening” hands, pay attention to yourself as you let your hands remain on someone else. Crunch down into your spine, “pull down”/slump and lock your neck. Next, overly straighten to overextend or hyperextend your spine, perhaps exaggerate your lumbar curve and lock your knees (traditional over extension of “pulled up” dance posture). For the third “experiment,” while your hands

remain on the “student,” imagine your head floating on your neck/spine, your back lengthening and widening down the entire spine, and your feet stable and grounded to the floor. Discuss the “student’s” experience.

“The term ‘**Directions**’ is used in the Alexander Technique with two different but frequently overlapping meanings”:

1. “‘Directions’ are the mental instructions we learn to give ourselves before and during an action, in order to bring about changes in the way we use ourselves whilst performing the action.”
2. “The instructions that are given also indicate the ‘direction’ in which we wish to release and lengthen muscles – for instance, allowing our knees and thighs to release out and away from our hip joints.”

## AND

**End gaining:** “End gaining is the tendency we have to keep our mind and actions focused on an end result whilst losing sight of, and frequently at the expense of, the means-whereby the result is achieved.”

**Activity:** The “student” will again present an alignment or basic technical “problem” to the “teacher.” “Teacher”: *don’t* inhibit but rather go straight to the problem or area that you want to fix. Use touch or manipulation (along with verbal cues) to get the result you want. How did that feel? “Student”: how did that feel? Now, do the sequence again but first: inhibit an immediate reaction to the student’s misalignment, look at the “whole,” quietly and then intuitively decide where you would like to use a couple of moments/places of guided touch. Practice the lengthened hands/fingers without grabbing towards flexion. What is your sense of touch telling you about the problem? Do you really need to “fix” or can your touch even by thinking redirect what the “student” is doing? Pay attention to yourself: are you exhibiting/modeling freedom, a lack of overly tense musculature, and dynamic alignment in the part of yourself (or whole self) that you are wanting to address in the student?

This is what we got through in the hour. Many of these activities were devised/derived from exercises I experienced during my Alexander Technique Teacher Training with Chesapeake Bay Alexander Studies, Director, Robin Gilmore. I am forever grateful and indebted to her, the wonderful teachers who rotate through the training course, and my many other mentors during both my GL-CMA certification and continued training with AT teachers (Carol Lynne Moore, Warren Lamb, Cate Deicher, Stacey Hurst, Lisa Goldman, Luc Vanier, Matthew Ventura, Clay Schaub, Sarah Barker, Glenna Batson, Bill Conable, René Jackson, and Robert Lada.)

Are there identifiable elements of body action, use of space, movement quality, and relationship that are characteristic of the genre of jazz dance? If so, where are these elements found within the diverse styles of jazz? How do these core elements reveal relationships between the social, commercial and theatrical contexts of jazz dance? Can the identification and classification of these elements promote the effort to “legitimize” jazz dance as a meaningful and rigorous component of dance education and training in the academy? How does being literate in a dance genre reveal deeper physical, social, critical and artistic dimensions and connections?

These questions shaped our inquiry or emerged from our investigation as artist/teacher/researchers in the process of collaborative research to uncover what makes jazz dance count as a cultural, theatrical and commercial dance form. Using the frameworks of Laban Movement Analysis and Language of Dance<sup>®</sup>, we identified core characteristics of jazz across jazz styles in a multi-layered analysis of performative and written literature. Through this content analysis, experiential investigation and shared knowledge, central characteristics emerged that we refer to as “Africanist Aesthetics”.

Our goal in this workshop was to experientially, analytically, playfully and collaboratively explore selected Africanist Aesthetics elements in the context of three jazz dance styles and to examine the merit of these elements in an interactive dialogue with our jazz dance and dance education colleagues. The aim of this investigation was to build upon prior and ongoing conversations about jazz dance practice and pedagogy. It was our desire to interrogate and expand the scope of our creative research and practice to advocate for jazz dance as a valued facet of dance education. A playful movement experience, lively critical reflection, active dialogue and thoughtful sharing comprised the experience.

#### *BIOGRAPHY*

**Elizabeth Johnson BFA, MFA, GL-CMA.** Johnson's education includes North Carolina School of the Arts, George Mason University (BFA), the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (MFA), and Columbia College Chicago (Graduate Laban Certificate of Movement Analysis). She is also a certified teacher of the Alexander Technique (ATI, AmSAT). The founder and artistic director of Your Mother Dances, a contemporary repertory company, her choreography has been produced in New York City, Washington, D.C., Chicago, Minneapolis, Louisville, New Haven, CT, Urbana, IL and in Gala performances at ACDA. Johnson has danced in the companies of David Parker and The Bang Group, Sara Hook Dances, and Molly Rabinowitz Liquid Grip. Her research includes the integration of anatomy/kinesiology and somatic inquiry into dance technique teaching, Improvisation and Composition pedagogy, and juxtaposing feminist theory and embodiment ideas with popular culture ironies in her choreography. Johnson has served as dance faculty at the University of Illinois, UW Madison, UNC-Greensboro, and UW-Milwaukee.  
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## Beyond Space and Time: Collaboration and Distance Learning in Musical Theatre Choreography

Michelle Johnson, PhD Candidate

### *ABSTRACT*

In 2013 I accepted the offer to choreograph for a full-length staging of an Off-Broadway musical at an American University. After circumstances arose preventing my physical presence, I arranged to work remotely with an on-site secondary choreographer for the rehearsal process. Through this collaboration, facilitated via the practical integration of Internet communication systems (Skype, YouTube, etc.) within a traditional theatrical rehearsal process, I encountered myriad methodological, pedagogical, and artistic challenges and opportunities presented by remote collaboration.

Throughout this process several distinct issues regarding autonomy, authority, and power arose. These issues were ultimately connected to the ever-present challenge of maintaining clear lines of communication between the remote choreographer and the rest of the artistic team. Integral to supporting this communication is the role of secondary, on-site choreographer as intermediary between primary choreographer and performers – the secondary choreographer must not only establish a relationship with the primary choreographer as well as with the performers, but also facilitate the relationship between the performers and the primary choreographer, and I explore the effect of these relationships on the rehearsal process. As research in practice, my findings include personal reflections and draw heavily upon my own experiences as a remote choreographer, interviews with both the secondary choreographer and the director, and questionnaires distributed to the performers. Understanding the experiences of the performers was key in creating a full picture of the choreographic process, and their responses have illuminated many avenues for the exploration and improvement of the integration of digital technology as a choreographic tool.

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### INTRODUCTION

In the spring of 2013 I was given the opportunity to choreograph for a reproduction of an Off-Broadway musical at an American university, to be produced the following October. After learning that I would be moving away before the rehearsal and performance run of the show, a compromise was reached to facilitate my involvement as a long-distance choreographer. I would choreograph the main dance numbers, film my choreography, and send it to an on-site rehearsal assistant (later renamed “secondary choreographer”), who would then teach the choreography to the performers and make adjustments as needed. It was through this arrangement that I worked for the first six weeks of the rehearsal process, until I was able to return for

the final two weeks leading up to the show’s opening.

The goal of this paper is to analyze my first foray into long-distance choreographing and reflect upon the efficacy of long-distance teaching in this particular context. I find that the distinction between the terms “teaching” and “choreographing” becomes somewhat blurred in this situation given both the cast’s often limited experience with dance and the process of passing information through the secondary choreographer, who had a different dance background than myself, as intermediary. It was often necessary for me to teach basic steps and principles of the stylized movement required of the production, not only to the performers, but to the on-site assistant as well.

Through the research process I have examined which aspects were successful and why – I could already think of several disadvantages (or perhaps challenges) to this system, but were there any advantages? I have focused on the particular challenges of developing and sharing musical theatre choreography in this way. Long distance dance education can be a broad topic, and I noticed that a significant percentage of writings on long-distance teaching or choreographing were related to situations that differed from my own: contemporary or modern dance styles, concert dance pieces, and collaborative projects were the norm. Indeed, my own limited experiences involving dance and technology had all been defined by similar parameters.

I found myself overlaying the reflections and insights of these cases onto my particular research, wondering how effective similar processes would be (or would have been) in this context. In expanding my field of research to include how online technology is used in modern and contemporary dance composition and presentation, I turned to artist-scholars such as Lisa Naugle and Sita Popat, both of whom have written extensively on dance and technology, highlighting some of the different technologies that have been used in the choreographic process, as well as how such technologies have been utilized and to what ends. The most common method of conveying choreography long-distance was through live-feed video communications such as Skype, although Popat has also written at length on ventures such as the TRIAD Project that rely on asynchronous sharing of choreography.

### **CHOREOGRAPHIC PROCESS**

For the project I was involved in, my process for transferring the choreography from my mind and body to the performers focused around creating pre-recorded videos and notes that would be used by the on-site assistant, who would then teach the cast, adjusting and refining details that I could not foresee. Having taken several classes on utilizing computer and Internet technology in dance, I was willing to work with synchronous methods such as connecting

via Skype to teach the choreography during actual rehearsals, but ultimately the system was arranged based on what the director felt comfortable with. She was concerned that using live feed video would create confusion for the cast, only a handful of whom had any kind of dance training, and in the end I agree that it would have been a challenge and not the most effective way to teach in our situation – as it was, the cast's feedback confirmed my suspicions that the situation was already considerably more challenging for those with less dance experience. Given the limited resources of a student-led production, facilitating a live, interactive experience with the choreographer would have significantly cut into rehearsal time, posed challenges in the given rehearsal space, and ultimately further frustrated the performers.

Working with an assistant or co-choreographer is by no means unusual in musical theatre or the dance world at large; it was the lack of frequent, in-person interaction that caused this situation to veer in the direction of the non-traditional. After working out the choreography for a particular musical number, I would film myself both demonstrating the specific movements as well as explaining aspects such as spacing, partnering, and timing details that could not be shown with just one body (although I found that a coat rack often made an acceptable partner in a pinch). After I had filmed every aspect of the number, I would edit the clips into cohesive instructional videos using Final Cut Pro, splicing detailed demonstrations of footwork with broader explanations of the piece and often adding text or voiceovers to clarify. The videos were then uploaded to a private YouTube channel, and the links were sent to both the assistant and the director, along with fleshed-out copies of my personal notes, which provided a less transient and more consolidated reference for the assistant choreographer. I had thought these notes would not be of much use, but they turned out to be an integral part of the assistant's teaching method, as she often referred to them while explaining the choreography to the performers. The on-site assistant and I also

conducted weekly Skype meetings between the two of us to discuss any questions or concerns with the choreography on her part, as well as to keep me updated on the rehearsal process and how my choreography was being received.

### REFLECTIONS

Being somewhat isolated from everyone else involved in the show, it was important for me to find ways to reflect on the rehearsal process from points of view other than my own. I knew very well what I was experiencing as the choreographer isolated from the cast, stage, and every concrete aspect of the performance that I was helping to build, but what was happening on the other side – the performance being built without the primary choreographer present? After some consideration, I chose to circulate an anonymous questionnaire to the cast of the show, asking several questions regarding their experience learning choreography in this way, how it compared to past experiences, and how effective they felt it was. It was important to me that the questionnaire remain anonymous so that the cast did not feel that their responses would affect their standing in the show (although the questionnaire was circulated after all choreography was set and the responses were not read until the show had closed). I found that the general consensus amongst the cast was that the arrangement was ultimately successful but not ideal, and that there was no reason that long-distance would be preferable to a more traditional setup if it could be avoided: in the words of one performer, “it worked although I don’t prefer it.” Within this overarching sentiment, more detailed responses ranged from “I thought it was cool and I was impressed [with] how much we learned over the course of the show,” to “I didn’t notice anything different [in the long-distance process],” to “the rehearsal process was frustrating... [and] created a lot of confusion and uncertainty.”

Most complaints were related to the secondary choreographer/on-site assistant and the feelings of confusion and inefficient use of time that arose from the arrangement. I hypothesize that, rather than a reflection of her abilities, this focus was

most likely because she was their primary learning tool and thus their only contact to the choreography. Knowing that there were many more pieces to the puzzle that the cast was not involved in, I found my task in reflecting on this experience critically to lie in translating these complaints and struggles into the bigger picture – what could I as the primary choreographer have done differently to make things run more smoothly on their end?

In an effort to get a clearer picture of the process I had missed, I also conducted interviews with the director and the secondary choreographer. One issue in particular that I found to be significant had to do with the concept of “ownership” of the choreography. By “ownership” I refer to the choreographer (or in this case secondary choreographer) feeling confident and comfortable with not only the choreography itself, but with having the authority to answer questions, refine details, and make changes as she saw fit. The director stated in our interview (as well as having mentioned this concern to me several months earlier in the process) that she did not want the secondary choreographer to be afraid to make significant changes to my choreography without first feeling the need to consult me, as there was simply not time in the rehearsal period to go back and forth waiting for my approval.

While I seldom received any communications that particular aspects of the choreography were unclear or further instructions were needed, the director as well as several cast members expressed that they often felt that the secondary choreographer was not confident or comfortable in making changes or speaking with authority regarding unclear details. When I interviewed the secondary choreographer and asked a question related to this topic, she indicated feeling significantly less hesitancy in “taking ownership” than the director perceived, which I found to be an interesting incongruity (although she did recollect several times during which she would have an idea about the movement in a particular scene but wasn’t sure if she should say anything – an interesting observation in light of the

director's desire for more of such moments). Rather than reflecting on her competence as a choreographer or assistant, I believe that this discrepancy was related more to her lack of experience with this particular field of choreography, combined with the differences between our two personal styles of teaching and communicating.

I believe these conflicting reports on the secondary choreographer's comfort with changing and confidence in teaching the choreography is also strongly related to differing perceptions of autonomy: despite both women experiencing the same situation, the secondary choreographer, who was responsible for working out my semi-theoretical choreographic imaginings on actual bodies and in actual space, felt that she was making plenty of changes, whereas the director, who was able to look on the teaching process from a relatively outside perspective, wished that she had exuded more confidence in taking ownership, both in terms of teaching and changing choreography.

#### **DIS/ADVANTAGES**

While one of my goals in this project was to uncover potential advantages to long-distance musical theatre choreography, I have yet to see a reason to choreograph in this way other than as a last-resort option. I did, however, discover several small, unexpected advantages. In the process of the secondary choreographer translating my choreography onto the cast and stage, inadvertent changes were made that I found I actually preferred to my original ideas, changes that may not have developed had we been able to communicate instantly in person or had there been only one choreographer. Having two choreographers allowed for several unexpected fusions of ideas, and having them seldom in the same place at the same time (the secondary choreographer was out of town for the majority of my visit) kept us from stepping on each others toes, as it were, allowing for both of our individual strengths and fewer of our weaknesses. In the few days when we were both present at rehearsals, our vastly different relationships with the choreography led us to notice completely different

things when giving notes to the performers, meaning that fewer details were overlooked.

Another interesting possible advantage to the long-distance system we utilized is demonstrated in the second quotation: if I had been present throughout the entire process, I doubt I would have garnered the level of awe that I seem to have received (which was very flattering). I am confident that I would have maintained mutual respect and motivation with the cast, but certainly the novelty of only having me present for two weeks and the buildup of having only heard of me as the "mythic choreographer" would not have existed. While I have mixed feelings regarding this distancing of my position from both the secondary choreographer and the cast, in this case it provided the performers a helpful burst of motivation and energy in the final weeks before the show opened, and I was impressed with how they rose to the occasion and took advantage of our limited time together. In fact, the director, secondary choreographer, and cast members all agreed that the dance numbers "really came together" in the two weeks that the primary choreographer was there – in the words of the director, "It was vital."

#### **FUTURE IMPROVEMENTS**

While the cast's overall lack of dance experience and the secondary choreographer's lack of experience in musical theatre choreography were certainly challenges, my own lack of experience, both in choreographing a full-length musical and in working remotely, was also a limitation, and there were several things that I would execute differently in future situations. While not an option in this particular case, it would be helpful for the primary choreographer to work in person with the assistant/secondary choreographer ahead of time, before the rehearsal process even begins. The ability to interact in the same physical space, perhaps with the director present as well, would help to give a more thorough understanding of the vision and direction of the choreography, which would benefit the assistant going into the rehearsal process.

Once rehearsals are underway, multiple sources of learning for the cast would ease the responsibility of the secondary choreographer. In responding to the questionnaires, several cast members suggested that it might have been helpful to have access to my notes and videos themselves, rather than having the information relayed only through the secondary choreographer. Indeed, I would have been happy for the stage manager to share those resources with the cast, but perhaps in my failure to explicitly give such directions, it was inferred that they were for the assistant's use only. On the other hand, upon my recent return and reflection with the director a year later, I feel that granting the entire cast access to these instructional videos would have had the potential to cause dissent and confusion, as performers might dispute the secondary choreographer's authority in making changes to my choreography or feel that they knew the choreography better than she did (something which, according to the director, was already an issue with certain cast members).

Along similar lines, the long-distance process could have benefited greatly from better communication both to and from the primary choreographer. I was not kept up to date regarding several practical aspects, such as the ever-changing stage layout, but likewise I often failed to be specific in certain details such as blocking and spacing. The only updates I received on the rehearsal process came from my weekly Skype meetings with the secondary choreographer, and, reflecting on these meetings after visiting and working with the cast in-person, I found that they were not as helpful as they could have been – many issues and concerns had not been brought to my attention, precluding me from problem-solving until my arrival two weeks before the show. Conversely, there were many times when I should have planned and prepared the choreography further in advance, which would have allowed me to spend more time on not only the choreography but the videos as well.

In past musical productions I had been involved in as a performer, the stage manager often

filmed dance rehearsals and immediately uploaded the videos to a website for the cast to practice with. Such was not the case for this production, despite my requests. If I had been able to see rehearsal videos immediately after the choreography was taught, I might have been able to better clarify issues or know how to communicate differently for future pieces – at the very least it might have helped direct the focus of our Skype meetings. Of course now, having a better understanding of what issues might arise, I believe I could take more initiative and responsibility in problem solving from a remote location and establishing a more reciprocal communication stream.

Ultimately, with a bit more planning, the project would have been more successful with more collaborative, interactive communication. As it was, with the exception of some emails and Skype conversations, it was largely a one-way feed of information from me to them, until I arrived on-site for the last two weeks of rehearsals. I believe it would have been helpful to communicate with and utilize the stage managers more to help with facilitating this reciprocal communication, creating, to use Popat's term, a "mediated bi-directional communication."

## CONCLUSION

I have mixed feelings about the efficacy of this project, but in many ways it was successful in achieving its basic goals: I was able to stay on as choreographer despite my geographic distance, which was very important to the director as well as myself, as we had established a strong collaborative relationship over the previous several years; I had the opportunity to gain experience in a new method of choreography dissemination and use of technology in dance; and the show received an order for an extension, previously unheard of for the theatre in which it was held, which indicates that all the elements (choreography included) came together successfully in the end.

As one of the cast members intimated in their questionnaire responses, what the performers got out of this arrangement was largely dependent on what

they put into it, in terms of having a positive attitude, and open mind, and patience for experimentation. I find this observation to be just as valid in my own case: while this collaborative process was far from perfect, I learned and grew through this opportunity beyond my expectations, as did my fellow production team members. The presentation of this paper is quite well-timed, taking place almost exactly one year after the show's run, as well as immediately following my return trip to the town and university in which it took place, where I was able to reconnect and chat with several members of the cast and crew. Revisiting the notes, recordings, and cast and crew feedback periodically over the past year in preparing for this conference, I am amazed at how my reflections on this project continue to evolve, some solidifying and others shifting.

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## BIOGRAPHY

Michelle Johnson received a B.A. in Japanese Language and Literature from the University of Wisconsin – Madison in 2009 and an M.A. in Dance (Culture and Performance Studies focus) at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa in 2013. She has

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## Abstract of Paper

### A Digital Map: Locating Embodied Cognition and Computational Thinking Research Within the Field

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Contributors: Shaundra B. Daily, PhD, Sophie Joerg, PhD, Sabarish Babu, PhD, Nikeetha Dsouza PhD Candidate

#### *ABSTRACT*

To what extent does an embodiment-centered curriculum support the development of computational thinking? To what extent does an embodiment-centered curriculum support interest in STEAM fields? Recently, the National Science Foundation awarded our team of professors/researchers in education and the School of Computing a 3-year grant to pioneer the design, development, and testing of a virtual environment and associated curriculum for blending dance and programming as a novel and embodied way to engage 5th and 6th grade girls with computational thinking. We hypothesize that girls creating dance performances for their virtual characters and using their bodies to think through the actuation of the characters should bootstrap their intuitive knowledge in order to learn computational concepts, utilize computational practices, and develop computational perspectives. This symbiotic relationship of dance choreography and computer programming can be a motivating context to attract girls who might not typically be interested in computing by broadening their perspectives on computing applications. We also seek to examine the field of dance education, examining other projects that have merged dance as a form of embodied thinking and knowing with digital media for two reasons. First, what are the connections between our project and others that can inform and inspire our research? Secondly, in what ways does our research explore new terrain and fill important gaps in dance education research on learning and embodiment? In part, utilizing the Dance Education Literature and Research descriptive index, we map the field of dance education and digital media, locating computer programming and computational thinking.

#### *BIOGRAPHIES*

**Alison E. Leonard, PhD, MA, BIS**, is the Assistant Professor of Arts & Creativity in Teacher Education at Clemson University. Her work explores arts education, theories of embodiment and learning, and dance in education. Her work has been published in the *Journal of Dance Education*, *Journal of Arts & Learning*, *Curriculum and Teaching Dialogue*, and others. Currently, the National Science Foundation funds her research to study computational thinking and embodied cognition in collaboration with colleagues in the School of Computing. Prior to her scholarly work, she danced professionally and taught PK-16 students. Many notice that she is always dancing, even at her laptop. [aleona2@clemson.edu](mailto:aleona2@clemson.edu)

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## ***TOP PAPER CITATION***

### **Collaborating Pasts, Speculative Futures: Isadora Duncan and John Dewey's Ideas in Conversation**

Sarah Lochhead, BFA

#### ***ABSTRACT***

Collaboration can be temporal. This presentation gathers pieces of Isadora Duncan's ideas on dance education as expressed in her own voice through primary source material, the works of her students, and questionnaire responses gathered from current Duncan based practitioners, and examines them alongside the educational philosophies of John Dewey. The tone of Duncan's passionate remarks on dance and the education of children can seem somewhat romantic or pontifications – but the word pontificate comes from the Latin roots of pons (bridge) and facere (to do, to make) eliciting an arc towards action. John Dewey notes, “... the principle of continuity of experience means that every experience both takes up something from those which have gone before and modifies in some way the quality of those which come after.” (Experience and Education p.35) Like Duncan's desire to look back to the Greeks and forward to her vision of the dancer of the future, we as dance educators may find ourselves at impasses between old and new – between the dance icons and histories we admire and the desire to find contemporary relevance rather than harbour them as nostalgic references. In addition to connecting Duncan and Dewey's work, this presentation discusses current initiatives in the field of Duncan based movement education and speculates the ways in which Duncan's philosophies could further extend towards innovation in the field of dance education. More broadly it aims to bring forward a theoretical framework for connecting past discourses in dance and education as a means of creating space for and informing contemporary approaches to teaching and learning. As dance educators we embody our past training, how can we collaborate with the mosaic of our own histories to create rich educational opportunities for our students?

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*Poised in the upstage left corner, draped in a pink silk tunic, I wait for the opening note of Chopin's Prelude - wait for the sound to fill my body and move in response to the internal impulse to change form. I breathe and soften before three high steps forward on the notes that follow. My arms reach to trace the side space and frame my upper body as I look out along the diagonal. The opening moments of a dance of searching and discovering, of inquiry and offering ...*

The experience of dancing Isadora Duncan's earliest known choreography (Kane 2013, 8), *Prelude*, feels like a microcosm of my desires as a dance educator – the desire to act on the impulses of enquiry and expression through kinesthetic

experience. After all, as Duncan (2013) famously wrote in her autobiography *My Life*, “What one has not experienced, one will never understand in print.” Stemming from my experiences learning Duncan repertoire and participating in Duncan classes, I became interested in being able to clearly articulate a picture of her philosophies on dance education.

Although Duncan's ideas are credited as revolutionizing dance and creating the basis for what we now call Modern concert dance (Gottlieb 2008, 540 & 544; Levien 1994, viii), they did not exist in a vacuum. I felt it important to examine her ideas in relation to those expressed by a contemporary in the field of educational philosophy, in particular John Dewey. Dewey is considered to be the founder of

pragmatism – an American philosophical movement that proposed, “[...] ideas are essentially instruments and plans of action” (Encyclopedia Britannica 2013). The connection between the definition of pragmatism and the previous quote from Duncan’s autobiography are what initially drew me to place their ideas in conversation, as well as the corresponding time period in which they both actively wrote on education. Both are said to be inspired by or share similar lines of thought with Nietzsche (Kurth 2002, 23; Magrini 2009), however I was still curious to see in what ways their ideas intersect or diverge. It also seems fitting to present this initial research here in Chicago, home of Dewey’s Laboratory School and the city where Duncan relocated in 1895 with the intention of launching her career (Kurth 2002, 34).

Dewey lived a much longer life than Duncan and so has a larger body of written work. Although Duncan wrote much about her ideas on dance, the volume of primary source literature is not as extensive as that of Dewey’s. Therefore to aid in the articulation of Duncan’s ideas, I chose to gather primary source material, written works of her students, and questionnaire responses from current Duncan based practitioners. The combination of which are presented here in comparison and contrast to Dewey’s writings.

I have not yet found a direct physical connection between Dewey and Duncan to know if they even met. However, Duncan and Dewey both visited or took up residence at Byrdcliffe - the utopian arts colony in Woodstock NY (The Catskills Review 2013). Though, I cannot say they were ever there at the same time.

What the connection to Byrdcliffe does present is a shared sensibility of a larger cultural and artistic movement of their time. Byrdcliffe was formed out of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Arts and Crafts movement in America, which served to critique the ongoing industrialization of modern life through advocacy for reform often expressed through community level social experiments including the education of young girls (Obniski 2013). As was

noted in a 2012 art exhibit *Century of the Child: Growing by Design 1900-2000*, at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, “Like the New Art the new pedagogy emphasized authentic expression; the inspiration of the natural world, and the creative potential of every individual, every child. [...] children were the living symbol of the sweeping changes that ushered in the birth of the modern” (Museum of Modern Art 2012). Reform to the education of children was widespread at the turn of the last century in part because of this popular cultural belief. As Duncan educator Julia Levien summarizes, Rudolph Steiner and Emile Jaques-Dalcroze established their respective schools, and Marie Montessori was advocating for access to education for all children regardless of class (1994, vii-viii). Levien notes:

“[...] The opening of the Isadora Duncan School in Grunewald, Berlin in 1904 predated all of these efforts. When Isadora and her sister, Elizabeth, created their live-in school, it was indeed the beginning of a new era in education. Isadora was at the forefront there, even as she was in the art of dance” (1994, vii-viii).

Dewey’s University Elementary School (later called Laboratory School) was established in 1896, two years after he joined the faculty of the University of Chicago as a philosophy, pedagogy and psychology professor (Dewey 1990, xii). Yet, despite the fact their published works are in some cases a century old, it has been said that the ideas of both these influential figures’ have not fully been understood or realized. (Dewey 1990; Levien 1994; Sano 2013)

The sheer volume of literature written about Duncan makes a fully comprehensive definitive statement on Duncan’s education philosophies a large task to say the least. This is further problematized by the many claims even by Duncan herself that she was not the most gifted teacher (Daly 2002; Duncan 1970; Dikovskaya 2008). Levien

noted that in fact, “ [...] little is known of her actual process of teaching.” (1994, viii), though former Duncan pupil Lily Dikovskaya recounts a simple practice of mimicry as she and her classmates tried to follow the movements Duncan demonstrated (2008, 21). Duncan’s ideologies with respect to education may not have been the reality of the student/teacher experience in her schools. Duncan is reported to have said she had no specific method of instruction (Levien 1994, 96) but this does not mean her approach did not afford educative opportunities. In Duncan’s speech at the Kamerny Theatre in Moscow she referenced Jean-Jaques Rousseau’s *Emile*, and stated, “I don’t “teach” children. I have no special systems and methods. [...] You saw their movements are not taught – they grow like plants. They unfold like flowers” (Rosemont 1994, 81). When reading Duncan’s speeches such as this one, her ideas come across as pontifications, however the root of the word pontificate comes from the Latin word *pontifex* which breaks down to *pons* (bridge) and *facere* (to do, to make) (Dictionary.com 2013), a point I will come back to later. From the speech at the Kamerny Theatre we learn that Duncan was interested in Rousseau’s child-centered approach, which proposes autonomous discovery occurs at a pace suitable with each child’s development (Bertram 2013).

Dewey also expressed that a child’s natural impulse to do expresses itself first in play and then in movement (1990, 44). But he also points out that “Just because traditional education was a matter of routine in which plans and programs were handed down from the past, it does not follow that progressive education is a matter of planless improvisation” (1997, 28). Despite Duncan’s rejection of the title “teacher,” her dances were not improvisations or lost when she died and the content of a Duncan class has also been notated, published and passed on by Duncan dancers such as Irma Duncan and Julia Levien. Her work has also been kept alive of course through the physical passing on of material from mentor to pupil. As explored in the

section that follows the material, method and philosophy of Duncan’s work are inseparable.

Last fall I conducted ethnographic research in the form of a short questionnaire that was distributed to various Duncan dance practitioners and organizations. Over a two-week period I received 12 responses from participants ranging in age from 34-72. Some answered the questionnaire and some provided recent articles on their work, notes from recent presentations, and organizational documents outlining missions and mandates of their various practices. One of the questions was: “Based on your experiences with Duncan based movement practices, what do you feel are the essential ideas about dance education presented in her work?”

This question elicited some responses about educational philosophy but primarily the physical aspects of the technique were addressed leading me to glean that in the eyes of the practitioners, the theory and practice of Duncan work are inseparable. Back to the writings of Levien, “The method is in the learning of the movement itself” (1994, 96). Similarly, Dewey’s primary influence on educational philosophy was the belief in the ability to unify theory and practice (1997, 7)

So, what are the defining aspects of Duncan’s movement? Susan Au in *Ballet and Modern Dance* summarizes these major features concisely stating:

Duncan was a serious artist with well-defined goals. She sought the wellspring of dance, which she found in the inner impulse, centered in the solar plexus, that initiates all movement. Nature was her inspiration and her guide. In advocating naturalness, however, she did not intend to abolish formal structure or order for, as she observed, the forms of natural objects reveal design. Rather she opposed anything that was contrary to nature, among which she classed the turned-out positions of the feet in academic ballet. She found ideas in natural phenomena such as movement of wind and waves, and her dancing drew upon ordinary actions such as

walking, running, skipping and jumping: The normal 'movement repertory' of human beings (2002, 89).

When unpacking this summary provided by Au, the connections to Dewey's ideas become clearer. This inner impulse, which Duncan saw coming from the solar plexus, an expression from the inside out is echoed in Dewey's writings in *Art as Experience* when he states, "[...] there is no expression unless there is urge from within outwards, the welling up must be clarified and ordered by taking into itself the values of prior experiences before it can be an act of expression." (1958, 61) His calls for considering the values of prior experiences are in turn highlighted in the questionnaire response of Laura Pravits who is involved with the Isadora Duncan International Institute. She writes: "With its call for movement from the inside out, Duncan dance offers a connection to self and soul that is sustaining and therapeutic to modern life." Valerie Lee Durham of the Isadora Duncan School for Creative Movement & Dance said what drew her to Duncan's work was that, "It mattered that *I* was dancing the dance. I wasn't just a body in space."

Duncan's desire to look to nature for structure, from personal experience, provides a frame of reference when learning Duncan movement vocabulary. The resulting aesthetic is a natural simplicity, but as Cherlyn Smith noted during a class, simple and easy are two very different things. Dewey notes this distinction as well when articulating that the principles of new education are simpler. He states, "But the easy and the simple are not identical. To discover what is really simple and to act upon the discovery is and exceedingly difficult task." (Dewey 1997, 30) Independent Duncan practitioner Christina Cornell-Pape responded that this is what drew her to the form, "I liked the seeming simplicity and the involvement of the solar plexus as the basis for the movement. The resulting natural look and connected physical architecture were appealing." From my first experience in a Duncan class, the movement felt familiar and easeful

- the way I always wanted to move but never felt I was allowed to in classes.

Duncan's opposition to the unnaturalness of ballet, when viewed alongside Dewey's ideas on education, may help shed light on why a philosophical theory of education is not explicitly named in Duncan's work. Dewey writes: "There is always the danger in a new movement that in rejecting the aims and methods of that which it would supplant, it may develop its principles negatively rather than positively and constructively." (Dewey 1997, 20) Duncan used ballet as a way to construct a negative argument (Daly 2002). In one of her famous essays *The Dance of the Future* Duncan said, "The school of the ballet of today, vainly striving against the natural laws of gravitation or the natural will of the individual, and working in discord in its form and movement with the form and movements of nature, produces a sterile movement which gives no birth to future movement, but dies as it is made." (Duncan, 1969, 55)

So, what has come from this increased freedom in movement offered by Duncan's rejection of ballet? What is done with increased liberty, notes Dewey, is what everything depends on so far as education is concerned (Dewey 1997, 61). Contemporary Duncan dance educators are utilizing Duncan's movement approach in a variety of ways including classes for new mothers, seniors, differently-abled individuals, helping to heal children exposed to psychological trauma, for persons with sensory processing disorders and autism, children exposed to violence and homelessness as well as to dance students from beginners to professionals. Dicki Johnson Macy director of the Boston Children's Foundation / Rainbowdance and affiliated with the Isadora Duncan International Institute points out that " [...] focal to the work [of Duncan] is understanding and experience of the individual as unique and simultaneously part of a greater reality." – a concept illustrated in the current therapeutic and broad applications of Duncan's movement approach.

Lastly in relation to Au's summary, the ordinary movements on which Duncan's work rely –

“The normal movement repertory of human beings” (2002, 89). provides accessibility to the work. Duncan never intended her schools to be a place of professional training, they were intended as a way for every child to be nurtured in a way that maintained beautiful and moral living (Daly 202, 10). Dance was for all, not just for some. This has influenced Lori Belilove’s class offerings with the Isadora Duncan Dance Foundation, “From everything I read about Isadora and her ideas on education, she stressed the notion that anyone can dance. This concept inspires me to teach open-level classes for anyone interested in experiencing an Isadorian approach to learning and dancing” (Isadora Duncan Dance Foundation 2012, 29).

Current Duncan dance educators are actively engaging with Dewey’s key concept of continuity of experience meaning, “ [...] that every experience both takes up something from those which have gone before and modifies in some way the quality of those which come after.” (Dewey 1997, 35) Duncan looked back to the Greeks for inspiration as to what the dancer of the future might become – making a bridge (*pons, facere*) from the past through action towards the future. It is in this mode of speculative thinking the current Duncan dance educator could relish in Dewey’s concept of pragmatism, which is future oriented. Learning theorist Bente Elkaer points out that “This includes the ability to act imaginatively in situations of uncertainties” (2009, 74). Ann Daly suggests that our notion of Isadora is a product of projections both personal and collective and that she “ [...] insisted on mythologizing herself, because she longed to be noticed and remembered. That is why she refused to be filmed, because she wanted to become a legend: an absence rendered perpetually present.” (2002, *Preface*) I argue that this mythologizing in fact serves a positive function alongside Dewey’s notions of experience as speculation. Duncan’s work will continue to provide fertile grounds to re-imagine, redefine and reassess the aspects of her ideas that will most readily provide meaningful educative experiences for our students.

The speculative aspect of Dewey’s works was brought to the forefront of philosophical study in the 1980’s in particular by the work of Sandra B. Rosenthal. Her writings on what she termed Speculative Pragmatism, offer a philosophical alternative to Realism and Idealism. Speculative Pragmatism does not simply oscillate between the two extremes but rather, focuses on the cyclical connections between actions and thoughts, multiple subjectivities and opportunities for knowledge formation and experience that elude the dualities and binaries presented in Realism (Reck et. al 1987; Rosenthal 1988).

Speculative Pragmatism is illustrated in a response from Carrie Ellen Tron, who has been dancing and teaching Duncan work for 27 years:

I often worry as I work that I am not being true enough to her aesthetic or methods and without a guiding hand to check my results I often feel a bit lost. Without a codified reference or an academic resource I believe to be totally reliable anymore [...] I find myself turning more and more to my own instincts of what is right and what will both inspire and challenge today’s children. Strangely I believe she (Duncan) would not have wanted us to ONLY imitate and preserve her dances, so I try to use her movement language as much as possible in the creation of new choreography that sends the same archetypal and universal messages.

Several respondents to the questionnaire noted using Duncan movement concepts to teach other forms of dance and also as a starting point to build their own choreography. Lori Belilove states: “There really was no exact coherent whole from my teachers, as they all painted part of the Isadorian picture, with different strengths and viewpoints on how to interpret the legacy. In my process I realized I was not interested in being an archivist or historian with the work. I wanted to experience it, know the

truth of its essence as an artist”(Isadora Duncan Dance Foundation 2012, 28).

June 2013 saw the development of an inaugural Isadora Duncan International Symposium in Washington DC and another symposium is happening in 2015 here in Chicago. Why is there, at least in my opinion, a resurgence and interest in Duncan’s work? Pravits writes, “ [...] Duncan dance offers a return to an appreciation and embodiment of beauty and integration - a counter to a predominance, in modern dance, of deconstruction, fragmentation, and abstraction.” It seems to me that this desire to centre education on experience and embodiment in general, even beyond the scope of dance, is a way to reassert the human experience in a continually changing increasingly technology driven world.

In Dewey’s essay *Philosophy and Civilization* there is a passage that resonated with me as a dance educator. Although he is speaking about American Philosophy, the following could, I believe be said in connection to my early experiences with lesson planning. He says, “Because we are afraid of speculative ideas, we do, and do over and over again, and immense amount of dead, specialized work in the region of “facts.” We forget that such facts are only data; that is, are only fragmentary, uncompleted meanings [...]” (1981, 10) Furthermore, Dewey’s reminder brings up questions for me about codification, syllabus and other such structures.

Through instigating a conversation between Dewey and Duncan, I’ve come to see collaboration as temporal. The way in which we mobilize the mosaic of our own dance histories need not be repetitive regurgitation or historical reconstruction of past material but can instead be an act of Speculative Pragmatism - a launching point to allow for in studio physical experimentation, remembering Dewey’s caution to develop our principles positively and constructively. We can bring together a hybridization of our experiences not as “planless improvisation” (Dewey 1997, 28) or a haphazard mash-up of styles but a conscious collaboration of our past experiences with our present interests, and with an eye toward the future of our craft. With

inspiration from the Isadora I’ve imagined, speculated and formed both through my physical studio experiences and through this preliminary body of research, it is my hope that I will in turn be able to better articulate the layers and influences of my own teaching praxis in order to provide my students multiple entry points to class material, choreography, and perhaps find rich implications from their studio experience to other aspects of their lives.

...

*Arms outstretched in a high “v” with palms sensitive to the upstage space. I take on an iconic posture seen on the cover and in pages of books about Duncan. Movement from my solar plexus guides a turn towards the audience, folding over. I unfurl my body and arms skyward in a “universal gesture.” The dance of seeking and searching has resolved for now, until it is danced again, with the conclusion of finding the answers sought from within oneself and sending them out into the world.*

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#### *BIOGRAPHY*

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## Movement, Music and Media: Exploring Collaboration in the Creative Process

Kim Brooks Mata, MFA, CLMA

### ABSTRACT

The academic emphasis on interdisciplinary approaches has been prominent in higher education for some time now, and dance educators as well are asking questions about the value of interdisciplinary collaboration and its place in our field. With funding increasingly made available to faculty who engage in such endeavors, dance artists are forced to consider whether such collaborations will be fruitful, or instead inhibit artistic intention and expression. The goal of this presentation is to share with you my recent experiences in collaboration with musicians. Collaboration has the potential to expose us to new kinds of problems, new ways of thinking and perceiving, and ultimately artistic growth. Although this rarely unfolds without interpersonal tension and fears of expressive restraint, I would argue that these frustrations are worth the effort and that collaboration between disciplines can ultimately lead to fascinating multi-perspective explorations that participants stand to benefit from in unexpected ways. Though I realize that collaboration can take on many forms, it is my hope that by sharing my personal experiences others will gain some insights to assist them in their future collaborative projects.

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As the Head and Artistic Director of Dance at the University of Virginia, I have over the past two years, collaborated with musicians on two separate dances for camera and a live work that integrated video projections. This semester, I am co-teaching an interdisciplinary, project-based class entitled *Electronic Identity and Embodied Technology Atelier* with Amy LaViers, a colleague from the School of Engineering. These collaborations have been different in process and result, and each experience has provided me with distinct insights into the nature of collaboration in relation to the creative process. What I have come to realize is that much can be gained from these collaborations, whether the actual process is perceived by either party as primarily a positive or negative one. Either way, if one is open to pushing personal and artistic boundaries, we can expose ourselves and our students to new possibilities within our own art-making process while also modeling collaboration and communication strategies for all involved. The goal of this presentation is to share with you my recent experiences in collaboration with musicians. Though

I realize that collaboration takes on many forms and is highly dependent upon those involved, it is my hope that by sharing my personal experiences you will gain some insights to assist you in your future collaborative projects.

It can be a difficult task for artists to find common ground, and discover ways to allow both art forms the space to co-exist without over shadowing the other. Cage and Cunningham's answer to this was to maintain complete independence of their distinct disciplines. They agreed upon the length of a creative work only, allowing each artist full independence and autonomy over his process and the final creation. Though I appreciate the example set by Cage and Cunningham, I am drawn to the interaction and the interplay that can come about as a result of collaborating with an artist from another discipline. I enjoy the challenge that comes with being able to successfully communicate one's intentions, to play off of one another's ideas and find ways to develop different interpretations and manifestations of the same themes/concepts through different media. One of the major concerns that I

have faced when working with musicians in particular, is how to communicate my vision of this interplay between the choreography and the music without resulting in mere ‘music visualization’, but an amplification of our independent forms through mutual realization and co-creation.

As someone with a very diverse background, having not only a foundation in dance but also in music performance, visual arts and art history, I have an appreciation for the similarities and commonalities amongst each of these disciplines. Each area informs me as an artist and an individual, and, as a result I am drawn to the idea of collaboration between various artistic disciplines as a means for potential artistic growth. This does not mean that I view collaboration as inherently productive or effortless, or that I enter it freely with no concerns for the outcome. In fact, I find collaboration both challenging and risky, especially when entered into with new collaborators. However, as I challenge my students regularly to take risks and step outside of their personal comfort zones, I feel the need to model this behavior as well. This enables me to keep my creative research fresh and evolving in order to introduce new ways of knowing and creating in the hopes of preventing creative stagnation and repetition.

The first collaboration that I would like to discuss was the result of a grant project entitled “*An Exploration of Perspective, Proximity and Presence through Dance, Video and Collaboration Technology*,” which required artistic creation in relation to collaboration technology in Cisco TelePresence conference rooms in the U.Va. libraries. I was intrigued by the restrictions of that particular environment and the opportunity to explore movement in a highly restrictive, structured setting. The room is consciously designed to instill a sense of a shared space whereby one room is meant to mirror a counterpart situated elsewhere. Three large screens are suspended in the front of the room with cameras positioned in such a way that one can be fully seen by virtual conference participants only when seated. The proximity and purpose of the

screens can cause some measure of discomfort, with the size of the on-screen image so large as to make one self-conscious. It adds an ironic sense of intimacy to this virtual interactive experience, which aims to emphasize the nearness of those who are in reality far away. Although participants are aware of the fact that they are observing while being observed, there nonetheless is a bit of a voyeuristic atmosphere established within this ‘fishbowl’ environment.

These ideas led to my question - what is the meaning of ‘presence’ in virtual encounters? During a time in which interaction with fellow human beings increasingly involves some type of digital technology, I have become more and more interested in the concept of ‘presence’ and how we choose to communicate and express ourselves through virtual media. Technology is enabling new means for subjective presentation and social interaction, but what exactly are the implications of such experiences, which are at once direct but distorted, intimate but distant? I believe that this issue of ‘ambiguous presence’ is something that one is also confronted with in dance performance.

These thoughts led to the creation of *Minutes*, a dance for camera work that plays with perspective and perceptions of proximity, communication and presence in relation to collaboration technology. Working with 6 dancers, I along with two other cinematographers filmed original choreography in the two Cisco TelePresence locations on U.Va. grounds. I generated movement based on the central themes of the project and taught these to my dancers. Additionally, I provided them with opportunities to manipulate my movement phrases and create some original gestural movements based on prompts dealing with communication and miscommunication.

For the music, I sought out my colleague Michael Rasbury, Associate Professor of Sound Design in U.Va.’s Department of Drama, to collaborate with me in the hopes of generating a soundscore that would reflect the themes of this work and help to bring the various elements together. Michael attended rehearsals in the TelePresence

conference rooms and recorded live sounds of the dancers rehearsing in the space, as well as, my voice reciting the ‘rules of engagement’ that were supplied in the space regarding etiquette in Teleconferencing. He incorporated these recordings into a broader soundscape including other found sounds that formed an original soundtrack for the work.

As I began to edit the footage, I sent approximately a 60-90 second draft of the film to Michael to use as inspiration on his end. After this first sharing, Michael created a draft of his composition and sent that to me. We went back and forth like this over the course of a few weeks and ultimately came together in the same room to watch the entire piece and discuss artistic editing and sound choices and how they were in alignment with one another or not. In the film, I was struggling a bit with clarifying which sections were considered ‘live’ moments and which were being filtered through a virtual connection. I had already employed an effect or ‘filter’ using editing software to emphasize these virtual sections and Michael came up with ways to manipulate the sound such that the chosen effects highlighting these moments were made clearer, thereby increasing their overall effectiveness. Unavoidably, in a few instances we had different opinions on how the sound and the film were relating to one another. We talked through these points and on a few occasions the explanation from our counterpart altered our perceptions of particular elements as they related to the work’s theme.

Though the restrictions imposed by the locations of this work were frustrating and stifling artistically, all who were involved in its making were challenged to reconsider personal aesthetics and artistic style, and forced to approach the work and the creative process in new ways. The musical/sound collaboration with Michael was key in bringing together the various elements of this dance for camera work. Once I had reached the filming and editing stage, this particular collaboration was based upon a synchronous, dependent creative process. What I appreciate about this type of collaboration is that each of us influenced the others artistic choices,

and this led us to a place we would not have necessarily gone if we had remained autonomous in our creation. This is not to say that I do not appreciate autonomy in choreography, I certainly do, but I have come to realize that by peppering my creative projects with collaborative opportunities I am able to expand upon my artistic voice and vision.

The next collaboration I will discuss resulted from an invitation for dance faculty to work with the Composition and Computer Technologies Program, faculty and graduate students from the Department of Music at U.Va. This collaboration began with multiple meetings during which individuals discussed creative interests and how they might fit together. I mentioned my interests in creating a dance for camera work that explored *interpersonal relationships amongst women, foreground vs. background and possibly touching upon issues surrounding memory and reality*. Kristina Warren, a graduate student in Music had “for several months wanted to make a musical piece that centered on semi-nonsense text, looping, and layering...and [she] sensed that our interests dovetailed well.” As a result, Kristina and I paired up for this collaboration.

We began the creative process with a discussion about the artistic concept and the creation of a tentative timeline. In these first meetings, one of our tasks was to establish a common language through which we could discuss our artistic goals. Kristina has said of these discussions that “Especially useful to [her] was that [I was able to express myself in a] clear, non-jargon-y [way] to describe the content and goals of the choreography (e.g., here the dancers are doing pair work, and later they are shown more as individuals, thus questioning the reality of each other’s presence, etc). These sorts of descriptions helped [her] make music that better complemented the dance.” As the choreographer and director of the film, these conversations helped me to clarify my intentions and Kristina’s insightful questions further informed my creative process.

After our concept was established, Kristina attended a rehearsal to see my initial movement vocabulary in development, which guided her

composing. To begin the choreographic process, my dancers and I wrote about some of our personal relationships with women and notions of femininity and gender. I used these texts to generate phrases and duets for the initial choreography. After the first rehearsal, Kristina generated a sample of composition ideas for the piece. I was inevitably influenced by this sample of music as it tended to linger in my mind as I continued to develop choreography for the piece. Kristina continued to attend rehearsals and would intermittently share sound bites and drafts of scores with me as the choreography continued to develop.

Once filming was complete and editing had begun, drafts of the film were shared with Kristina and she then sent new versions of her work in response to my edits. Ultimately, Kristina recorded my dancers' voices speaking words from the texts they had written at the beginning of the choreographic process. She then integrated these recordings into her musical composition, such that the final product included not only the dancers images, but their voices as well. This process required significant back-and-forth communication, and, as a result, each participant (dancers, choreographer and composer) contributed greatly to the shaping of the final work. Kristina shared these thoughts regarding our collaboration:

*Kim's and my hybrid language...crucially shaped the pacing of the piece. I attribute this to the fact that, despite their differences, dance and music both deal intimately with the passage of time. For instance, in an early musical draft I included a repetitive vocal line: 'You won't get sad about me.' The first two words were shouted, the second two spoken, and the last two whispered, forming a linear progression in volume, musical pitch, and tone of voice. Though on the surface this line seemed to fit well with the spirit of the piece, Kim pointed out that the flow of the work was disrupted in this section. I ultimately replaced this text with the repeated*

*vocal line 'Bodies that made sense to me,' with crunchy distortion sounds applied. Though neither Kim nor I articulated it in this way, I think the 'Bodies' line worked better because it foregrounded both the physicality and, somehow, the surreality of the choreography in that moment. These questions of what could or should happen when, comprised much of Kim's and my dialogue about the piece.*

*I also appreciated that this collaboration seemed to thrive on experimentation. In several cases Kim and I surprised each other by working as-yet-undiscussed material into drafts, and while the attempts didn't always work, this spirit of openness led to some interesting new developments. It was refreshing to work in a collaborative environment in which I could create first and assess later.*

This collaboration resulted in a diptych entitled *Liminal State*. The first part was the dance for camera piece just discussed that premiered in the TechnoSonics XIV: Motion collaborative concert in October of 2013 and presented again in our December dance concert. The second part was a live dance on stage that integrated videos projected onto panels of fabric with a second composition created by Warren.

One of the most difficult things for me to manage during these two collaborations was projecting the length of a work prior to having made it. When working with musicians, they too need to consider the arc of a piece and this is contingent upon the amount of time that they have to realize their compositions. I continue to find this aspect challenging since I do not typically work with a length in mind when I begin the creative process. However, I am beginning to figure out how to work with this restriction in order to continue to explore collaborations in the future.

As for my collaborative counterparts, they both wished that we had had more time to polish and hone our final works once both parts were completed. Kristina said: “If I could have asked for anything more out of this collaboration, it would simply be more time. I am about 94% proud of my musical contribution to *Liminal State* (which is a good amount!), but I think given more time I could further refine the sound. In particular, I’d like to re-visit the vocal recordings I made of the six dancers who participated in the piece. At the time I decided to sonically process these voices differently from the rest of the music, in order to make these sounds stand out. But now that I have some distance from the piece, this amount of difference seems a bit exaggerated. I wish I’d had the time to weave the dancers’ voices into the fabric of the sound in a way that better reflects the subtlety of the visual portion of the piece”.

Overall, I feel that I was extremely fortunate in these two particular collaborative situations. The musicians and I were able to find common ground and communicate about our opinions in respectful and productive ways, although we certainly had our moments of divergent thinking. Navigating differences and honoring the perspectives of other participants in our joined efforts, while maintaining personal artistic integrity, is no small task. Collaboration, I have found, has the potential to expose us to new kinds of problems, new ways of thinking and perceiving, and ultimately artistic growth, but rarely does this unfold without interpersonal tension and feelings of expressive restraint. But I would argue that these frustrations are worth the effort and that collaboration between disciplines can ultimately lead to fascinating multi-perspective explorations that participants stand to benefit from in unexpected ways. These are the types of experiences I believe we should encourage our students to engage in, with the goal of expanding minds, honing skills, and increasing the perception

of dance as a creative, multifaceted and critical art form.

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## BIOGRAPHY

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## Abstract of Paper

### Creating a Mosaic of Curricular Transformation Through Language of Dance

Rachel Murray, MFA, Tina Curran PhD, MFA, Brazie Adamez

#### *ABSTRACT*

Fall 2013, was the beginning of a partnership between faculty at The University of Texas at Austin department of dance, and The McCallum Fine Arts Academy dance department. Our initiative explored the underlying question “How do we create vertical alignment in a high school dance curriculum to develop dance literacy using Language of Dance (LOD) as the framework? Supported by a mosaic of local and national partners, this initiative supported the first phase of our evolving process from idea to implementation. We share how The McCallum Dance Department initiated the integration of the Language of Dance (LOD) approach throughout their dance curriculum as a response to the Austin Creative Classroom Initiative. We reveal through best practices the mosaic of how the Language of Dance use expanded pedagogical strategies, transformed the curriculum framework, and deepened student creativity, communication, critical thinking and collaboration. This presentation revealed how interweaving LOD throughout the curriculum connected with the artistic processes of creating, performing, reflecting and connecting. Included in both specialized and general dance classes, LOD served to develop dance literacy knowledge and skills while fostering a model of diversity, inclusion and rigor. We share a glimpse of the classroom and performance environment to illustrate how vision and concept interface with desired outcomes. The image of our mosaic features participating students, the experiences they had, and how the LOD approach transformed their skills and cultivated their development as learners and as creative collaborators. Next steps aim to expand the curricular alignment to middle and high school students.

#### *BIOGRAPHIES*

**Rachel Murray MFA**, danced with the critically acclaimed Mark Morris Dance Group for over 12 years and performed extensively both nationally and internationally as a principal member of the dance group. She has taught at The Juilliard School, Jacobs Pillow Dance Festival, Skidmore College, The American Dance Festival-Korea, Ballet Austin, George Mason University, The Korean International Summer School of Dance, and The University of Texas at Austin, where she received an MFA in dance in 2006. A committed arts educator, she has worked extensively in a K-12 setting and has created dance education curriculum in diverse locales such as Brooklyn, New York, Edinburg, Scotland, Honolulu, Hawaii, Berkeley, California and Manor, Texas. Ms. Murray can be seen in the videos *The Hidden Soul of Harmony*, *The Hard Nut*, *Falling Down Stairs* and *Dido* and *Aeneas*. She is currently working on a book about Polka Dance in Texas. [rachel.murray@austinisd.org](mailto:rachel.murray@austinisd.org)

**Tina Curran PhD, MFA**, is a Clinical Assistant Professor in the Department of Theater and Dance at The University of Texas at Austin where her research focuses on dance literacy, dance legacy and dance teacher education. She is the coordinator for the BFA Dance - Dance Studies program for students pursuing their Texas

state Dance Teacher Certification. Additionally, Curran teaches on the faculty of the Dance Education Laboratory - 92nd Street Y Harkness Dance Center in New York City providing professional development for pre-service and in-service dance educators. As a Language of Dance (LOD) Certification Specialist, she has conducted LOD certification courses in the United States, Mexico, United Kingdom, and Taipei. With Dr. Ann Hutchinson Guest, Curran is co-author of *Your Move: The Language of Dance Approach to Movement and Dance* (2nd Ed.).

**Brazie Adamez** is in her 10th year at McCallum Fine Arts Academy. Prior to McCallum, Brazie was a Kilgore College Rangerette then transferred into the highly regarded dance program of the University of Texas. She has worked with the Waco based Out on a Limb Dance Company as well as for Austin's up and coming theatre company, Half and Half Productions, as choreographer. Brazie recently completed her certification in Language of Dance practices and has since begun to implement the ideals into the McCallum Dance curriculum at all levels within the study of differentiating genres, enhancing quality of movement, composition, and integration of academic studies.



## Teaching Students to Collaborate Using Dance and Media Technology

Chell Parkins, MFA

### *ABSTRACT*

This paper presents strategies to engage at risk youth in a collaborative, project based dance unit working with video and social media. There are four main goals for using technology in the classroom in this way. First, dance educators keep pace with twenty-first century teaching technologies and learners. Second, a media based project is used to form collaborative groupings and a positive dance community. Third, technology is used as a means for students to explore a variety of dance works beyond their personal experiences. Fourth, dancers and teachers are left with a permanent product of an ephemeral dance created by the students. The project described in this paper was driven by the demand from administration that all teachers in my school interweave technology into daily lesson plans and the need for community building within the classroom and school. I work at a Title 1 High School in rural Texas with a violent history and an overgrowing population, creating overcrowded and shared classrooms and a variety of behavioral management issues. This paper details the successful development of a Dance 1 unit that culminated in dance videos created in collaborative student groupings. The video projects explored socially relevant topics chosen by the students.

### *BIOGRAPHY*

**Chell Parkins, MFA** has traveled the globe collaborating and performing with various artists. She received her BA in Dance and Acting from Washington University in St Louis and her MFA in Dance from the University of Texas at Austin. Since 2009 she has been investigating various ways to integrate technology in the choreographic process. As Artist in Residence at AZALA and ZAWP in La Sierra and Bilbao, Spain she performed technology integrated dance works, hacking into the microsoft kinect. Parkins currently teaches dance and coaches drill team at Manor High School in Manor, Texas where she guides students to use dance as a vehicle to overcome trauma and build positive communities. Students use technology in the classroom on a daily basis, as a part of the iPad initiative. She currently teaches Dance and Media Communications, a new public school course that guides students in the process of creating transmedia danceworks.  
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## Frenemies? Commercial and Concert Jazz: An Unintended Collaboration of Pedagogy

Paige Porter, MFA and Beth Megill, MFA, LOD® Specialist

### *ABSTRACT*

Frenemies? Commercial and Concert jazz: an unintended collaboration of pedagogy. The complex and dynamic study of jazz dance creates a living, embodied experience for today's student who often asks what kind of jazz path to take, namely, commercial or concert? The opportunities and experiences in each often seem mutually exclusive. A common pedagogical conversation surrounding jazz dance is the relevance and impact of one realm in comparison/relationship to the other, promoting an "either/or" attitude amongst many educators and students. This paper looks at the development, relevance, potential implications and possible necessity of a jazz dance pedagogy that considers both concert and commercial jazz arenas for the student. Framed by the experiences of Los Angeles based dance educators, Paige Porter and Beth Megill, inquiry into their search for methods to meet the distinct demands of each training path in a single curriculum is shared. Both educators have encountered a wave of environmental, cultural, professional and academic agents influencing the study of jazz dance. What does this integrative pedagogy look like? Attitudes and opinions gathered in interviews of jazz dance educators, choreographers and students, in the private sector, K-12, and the academy, working in commercial and concert environments, will provide additional commentary on this overarching question.

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### **JAZZ DANCE FRENEMIES**

The Urban Dictionary defines a frenemy as "an enemy disguised as a friend" (2004). However, this flexible term can be defined in a number of combinations of acting like a friend while in fact being an enemy or vice versa. The definition most suited for this discussion comes from Wikipedia and defines frenemy as "someone who really *is* a friend but is *also* a rival" (2014). When discussing commercial and concert jazz dance practices, frenemy depicts the uncertain relationship between the two arenas in which they are simultaneously related and at odds with each other. Educators Porter and Megill identify the rivalry between commercial and concert jazz dance as derived from the differing value sets, training methods, employment opportunities and aesthetic preferences of the two jazz dance arenas. While the sectors share some overlap and identity, there is still a strong conceptual and practical divide that creates an uneasy armistice between them. The question of friend or foe provided the impetus behind this investigation.

This paper attempts to unearth the potential developments, implications and relevancies in pursuing a collaborative commercial-concert jazz experience for students. The authors of this paper are college dance educators located in the greater Los Angeles area who frequently interact with the commercial dance arena and have been working to understand the demands of the spectrum of jazz dance experiences. Independently and collaboratively, both educators have been exploring new approaches in teaching and advancing jazz dance as an art form within academia. Their five-year ongoing investigation of the potential for a complementary or even unified pedagogical approach for teaching jazz dance that serves the artistic needs of both the concert and commercial realms offers a unique perspective of jazz dance. They acknowledge that there are exceptions to some of the statements made here about commercial and concert dance practices, but for the purpose of problem solving the concerns regarding jazz, have chosen to paint broad brushstrokes of their practices

and characteristics of the field in order to facilitate this initial conversation.

### **TOWARD A DEFINITION**

Porter and Megill define concert jazz as jazz dance practices in which the goal is specifically aesthetic or conceptual. Concert jazz utilizes heritage, movement innovation, stylistic pursuits, and artistic concept as drivers for the art form. In this way, concert jazz values often align more closely with the theatrical values of other concert dance forms such as ballet and modern, although the stylistic manifestations are distinctly different. The conceptual, cultural and historical framework of concert jazz can be seen in some university departments and a select number of independent jazz dance companies.

Porter and Megill define commercial jazz dance as any jazz practice in which the ultimate goal is the sale of a commodity. Musical theater performances, commercials, television, film, music tours, shows in Las Vegas, on Broadway, and cruise ships, mark the pervasive ways commercial jazz originates and perpetuates itself in popular culture. These situations where dancers are paid per job fall within the scope of dance being sold as the commodity or as the agent for selling a commodity (product, brand, etc.). Other dance styles contribute to a dancer working in these sectors, however, the blend of styles often comes together to form what is collectively known as commercial jazz. The resulting amalgam of styles has generated a thriving sub-industry of dance competitions, conventions and studios in the private sector. Commercial jazz exists at some universities as occasional course work for dance majors or in dance teams that may or may not be a part of the fine arts or liberal arts dance program. It seems its definition, perceived artistic value and reflection in popular culture disconcerts academic environments, thus limiting inroads for more frequent study in academia.

To gain additional perspective on defining concert and commercial jazz dance, Porter and Megill drafted an informal survey. They customized and administered approximately 150 surveys to

reflect the diverse developmental stages of the jazz dancer's experience in private sector/ high school, at universities and as working artists/educators. In the survey, participants were asked to define commercial and concert jazz dance, as well as indicate their preferences and needs for training as a jazz dancer. The results revealed a number of conflicting reports not only between the sample groups: 1) private sector / high school students 2) university students 3) active auditioning dancers/ educators, but also within each group. The results revealed a level of confusion about how people effectively define commercial and concert jazz. The following is a sample list of distinctions revealed through the surveys between commercial and concert jazz listed respectively: selling/feeling, two-dimensional/three-dimensional, a large audience/a limited audience, no message/ having a message, current/historical, and short/long. In general, those who took the survey more successfully defined commercial jazz than they did concert jazz. Many dancers in the high school and university categories were uncertain on how to define concert jazz, while others were entirely unfamiliar with the term. A few of the youngest participants revealed a complete misunderstanding of concert jazz dance, defining it as back up dance at music concerts like Beyonce. In conclusion, the surveys revealed a large degree of uncertainty and confusion on the issue, implying a need for the field of jazz education to define itself more clearly so it can in turn be clarified to those outside of jazz dance practices.

### **SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES**

With the intention of fairly reconciling the differences and honoring the similarities, Porter and Megail began exploring the nature of the frenemy relationship with an investigation of their own experiences. The training methods, including respective benefits and liabilities, used in each sector provided a solid resource for identifying these differences as they manifest in the art form and its pedagogy.

Commercial jazz dance training is commonly characterized as rigorous, with an emphasis on

repetitive physical patterning that is conducted with speed and urgency. Classes often include a brief warm up with the emphasis on learning a highly stylized combination. Educators emphasize immediacy of the learning process, teaching students to pick up the material as quickly as possible before turning around to perform it, developing quick learners, adaptable performers, and excellent mimics of their instructors. These practices are intended to prepare the student for a professional lifestyle that requires speed and excellence in performance on demand. Training in commercial jazz styles begins at an early age (as young as 2 or 3 years old) in a studio setting. This physical training may outpace the developmental stages of young dancers and overlook or minimize cognitive learning in favor of physical execution of movement to meet an aesthetic goal. The movement can be high risk for the dancers and may not include explicit training in sound anatomical practices or self care. Porter and Megill have occasionally witnessed haphazard pedagogy in the absence of codified systems of training, which has led to a 'spotty' technical foundation.

Current trends in concert jazz contrast greatly with their commercial counter parts, perhaps due to its arrested start within the dancer's training. Concert jazz dance training often begins at the collegiate level, which is relatively late for such a complex and varied dance style and can come as a sudden shock to dancers who have primarily trained in commercial practices. As dancers move into an academic setting from a commercial emphasis, there is often a period of culture shock as they encounter an abrupt end to the particular physical rigor to which they are accustomed. Dancers may find themselves underprepared for the new demands in cognitive and affective learning and may feel confused or even affronted by reflective practices that question the nature of jazz as they have come to understand and love it. Training in concert jazz dance may include study of historical jazz dance forms, cultural influences, personal narratives, musicality, and anatomy. The training may emphasize the cognitive and affective learning processes of the dancer as an

artist. The addition of theory, history or music lectures into the jazz classroom may slow the physical pace of the class in favor of a constructivist learning environment based in observation, reflection, and exploration.

### **CURRENT CONFUSIONS AND CONDITIONS**

Many post secondary dance programs struggle to find space for jazz dance, in either form, in an already robust curriculum of modern and ballet courses. If jazz dance is offered within a dance major, it is often minimally required and educators are faced with limited time to achieve their curricular goals. Because commercial jazz dance typically values product over process and mass appeal over artistic exploration, academic dance programs often shy away from its inclusion in liberal and fine arts programs. The frequent treatment of commercial dance practices as separate from formal academic dance training results in a shadow being cast over jazz dance as a whole. When academia mistakenly conflates all jazz dance into one entity, it tends to marginalize the whole of jazz away from its potential as a true artistic endeavor. Against the broadly accepted backdrop of academic study of Western concert dance forms, the assertions and assumptions that commercial jazz has no place and no value in the scaffold of post secondary studies can finish the conversation regarding its inclusion before it has begun.

The dismissal of commercial jazz dance from university settings further drives a wedge between commercial and concert jazz practitioners. Those educators who want jazz dance offered in their program may intentionally alienate themselves from the commercial industry to avoid being cast out. The result is that commercial jazz dance is driven farther away from academia and concert jazz dance remains siphoned in the classroom. Students then see this divide and venture off campus in search of commercial dance training where there is little infrastructure for deeper investigation of the art form and its pedagogy. When students are forced to leave the university setting to seek additional skills, it dilutes the power of their university dance education.

Such outside sources for training are readily available in Los Angeles, and thus the current conditions are perpetuated and affirmed.

Many dancers and aspiring choreographers come to L.A. specifically for training in commercial dance forms. In order to successfully make their way into the industry, they must learn to compete in the commercial dance arena. Universities geared toward job-placement of their graduates can see this practical need for offering commercial jazz training, however, the values intrinsic in the commercial form often chafe against the liberal arts study of dance as previously described. The justification of jazz course offerings from an industry perspective is a double-edged sword in that it minimizes the academic potential and artistic depth within the genre as it supports its inclusion in dance major curricula. The precarious balance to include or exclude jazz, ultimately still lumps together all jazz dance practices. Jazz dance educators are then challenged to select one over the other or nimbly negotiate between the disparate goals of commercial and concert jazz dance practices within a single curriculum. This pedagogical challenge is what prompted Porter and Megill to investigate the possibility of a curricular collaboration between commercial and concert jazz and fuels their ongoing development.

### NEXT STEPS

A collaborative pedagogy must start with clearer definitions and deeper understandings of the various forms within jazz dance arts. Luckily, a newly published jazz dance textbook can help further this process. *Jazz Dance: A History of the Roots and Branches*, edited by Lindsay Guarino and Wendy Oliver, is the first of its kind and offers a toe hold for processing through these challenges (Guarino and Oliver 2014). The field also requires a refinement of the educational purpose of jazz dance within department curriculum before reconciliation between the disparate pedagogical styles can be made.

Relevance of the jazz dance arts within a fine arts and liberal arts dance major as complimented by the needs of the industry will shape the decisions for

making space within already robust dance programs. Once the space and time is made for a comprehensive jazz curriculum, the lens for studying jazz dance will need to be widened to a degree that will serve both concert and commercial goals for performance, improvisation, composition, and cognitive development of the jazz dance artist. Utilizing and honoring the Africanist aesthetics as balanced by European concert influences may provide such a lens if further developed and explored.

Regardless of the lens used, jazz dancers will need course work and performance opportunities dedicated to their growth as jazz dance artists. Jazz will need to have stronger and more consistent representation in department concerts with a range of opportunities for dancers to hone their craft. Dance majors are typically not offered dedicated courses in jazz based improvisation or composition and may even be encouraged away from jazz dance aesthetics in the improvisational or compositional curriculum that is available to them. This aesthetic bias will need to be directly addressed departmentally in order for students to be given latitude for exploration and tools for composing and performing within the jazz idioms.

Through their investigations, Porter and Megill regard the commercial-concert frenemy relationship as untapped potential for the development of the jazz dance form. Envisioning the potential, one can speculate that the benefits of such a collaborative curriculum could include increased longevity of the dancers who will have a stronger foundation of integrated theoretical and embodiment practices. There may also be a more fluid exchange between the two sectors as cross over is made more available for dancers and choreographers. This may result in a deepening appreciation of the jazz dance arts among concert dance artists and its audience. Broadening the relationships of commercial performers and concert audiences, and, reciprocally, concert performers and commercially inclined audiences, promises a new space for vibrant

exchange between artistic viewpoints and appreciation of diverse dance practices.

A collaborative curriculum heralds a comprehensive study of jazz that will yield dancers who are informed, embodied and intellectually engaged as artists. These newly educated and empowered dancers will become the next generation of teachers, performers, and choreographers within the field of jazz dance, encouraging its growth and development as an artistic practice. It ushers in an increased valuation of diversity, history, compositional crafting, and metacognition to create real and meaningful connections for the individual and make the frenemy relationship within the vast landscape of commercial and concert jazz dance a thing of the past. Porter and Megill envision an inclusive pedagogy to create richer dialogue between dance colleagues in other styles and forms as it deepens the study of what jazz was, is and can become.

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**Paige Porter**, MFA candidate University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, BA Loyola Marymount University. Educator, artist and choreographer, Paige specializes in the study of Jazz dance, developmental practices and its relevance to current popular and dance culture. Faculty LMU Dance Program (2002), she has initiated innovative methods of study,

curricular design, program assessment and autonomous practices jazz dance. She has created multiple programs and pre-professional companies enriching movement efficiency and skill development in secondary education/private sector environments. Paige works in the cross disciplines of competitive figure skating and gymnastics, focusing on integrative movement practices and artistic development. [paigeporter@prodigy.net](mailto:paigeporter@prodigy.net)

**Beth Megill**, MFA, LOD® Specialist, is currently on sabbatical from Moorpark College in Southern California, where she enjoys teaching a variety of dance styles, theory and history courses. Beth’s primary interests lie in the role of dance literacy in Higher Education and the presence of dance notation and theory to support dance as an area of research in addition to performance at colleges and universities. She has co-authored the first adoptable online dance appreciation course utilizing functional dance literacy, and exercises her creative voice as Co-Artistic director of a jazz and modern dance theater company, Megill & Company.  
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## Arts\*Lab - Collaboration, Integration, Community and the Common Core

Denise Purvis, MFA

### *ABSTRACT*

Education is increasingly focused on experiential and integrated learning. Arts\*Lab illustrates successful methodology in both arenas, with a strong focus on community service. Conceived by Denise Purvis and developed through collaboration with Michael Bahr and Alisa Petersen, Arts\*Lab is an integrated-arts workshop offered four times each year to children in and around Cedar City, Utah. Participants ages 3-11 experience high-quality classes in art, dance and theatre, designed and implemented by elementary education and arts education majors at Southern Utah University. The free program served over 400 children in 2012-2013, and promises to serve over 600 children in 2013-2014. Those who attend this paper presentation will explore Arts\*Lab's foundation in experiential education and its success in facilitating pre-service educators' understanding of the relevancy of arts education in the elementary classroom. This program is a highly successful example of faculty and students collaborating to provide a population with a high-quality arts experience while focusing on the common core. Purvis will present data identifying a need for the program among education majors, and an increase in preparedness for future coursework as a result of participation in Arts\*Lab. She will discuss the contributions of her collaborators and explain program logistics. Through sharing this project, Purvis will empower fellow dance educators to envision and implement similar activities within their own communities.

Collaboration offers one an opportunity to see education from several perspectives, to utilize the best each collaborator has to offer, and to constantly better the collaborative project. Arts\*Lab is a process oriented arts workshop series envisioned by dance educator Denise Purvis and strengthened by art educator Alisa Petersen and theater educator Michael Bahr. Four times each year, children from the Cedar City, UT area are invited to experience free workshops including dance, theater and visual art. These workshops are organized by Bahr, Petersen & Purvis and implemented by elementary education and arts education students from Southern Utah University. Fliers are sent to all district schools, e-mail invitations are sent to past participants, press releases are sent to local media, and anywhere from 150 – 200 students register for each Arts\*Lab event. In a typical year, 600 – 800 students, many of whom return time after time, are given a high-quality arts experience through this program. The program also gives future educators

invaluable experience designing and implementing arts-integrated lessons.

Arts\*Lab began in the fall of 2012 as a dance workshop. Students in Purvis' DANC 3900 - Creative Movement for Children class taught integrated dance lessons focused on the common core in lieu of a pen & paper final exam. The course is a half-semester, 1.5 credit class that Purvis teaches twice a semester. The first workshop served 65 children, 22 elementary education majors, and 2 dance majors. It was considered a success by all involved. However, Purvis desired a more inclusive workshop series, envisioning a program offering children a comprehensive arts experience. She invited Petersen and Bahr to her next offering, as they taught the corresponding courses in art and theater. Unfortunately, the music professor was unable to join the team. After witnessing the second workshop, Bahr & Petersen enthusiastically joined the process.

In February of 2015, the three collaborators launched the first comprehensive arts workshop. Each professor leads students through learning experiences focused primarily on the standards within their own field and secondarily on the remainder of the common core. Education students are then coached in lesson design and implementation. Toward the end of the course, they divide into teams of 2-4, dependent upon class size, and are assigned a group of children for whom they design an integrated lesson. The level of integration varies from course to course, with dance being the most focused on the general core.

Community children sign up via an online registration form and are grouped according to age. Children ages 3-4 originally only experienced two art forms due to their age, and eventually this was reduced to a single dance class. In an attempt to offer developmentally appropriate instruction, children this age receive a briefer experience, and dance seems best suited to meet their needs. Children ages 5-6, 7-8 and 9-11 participate in three 45-minute lessons, one in each art form. Theater classes focus on improvisation and theatrical play with games, songs, and brief movement experiences. Art classes focus on creative expression and communication through the elements and principles of design. Dance classes focus on connecting elements of dance to science, language arts, social studies and math.

After the first collaborative Arts\*Lab, professors Bahr, Petersen & Purvis met to discuss ways to improve the experience for SUU students as well as community children. Most decisions were logistic, such as how to improve registration and sign-in. This is also the point where post-mortem meetings with SUU students were incorporated into the course. In these hour long post-mortem discussions which occur immediately following the event, students from all three courses celebrate their successes and investigate less successful moments, brainstorming ways to improve their pedagogy.

Arts\*Lab is now in its third season. The collaborative team has organized 7 workshops, and the program is so popular that registration typically fills three weeks prior to each event. Students repeatedly express the value of the teaching experience in honing their pedagogy. The professors find having a concrete purpose for lesson plans increases relevancy in their classrooms and helps focus the course. Children return again and again, and parents increasingly request information about further art education for their families.

Perhaps most important is that Arts\*Lab is often one of the first experiences teaching integrated arts lessons for Southern Utah students. It provides a real-world platform for future educators to put into practice concepts learned in the pedagogy classroom. Prior to this workshop series, it was common for elementary education majors (who comprise the majority of course enrollment) to feel as though the required arts courses wasted their time. Students expressed they would be teaching in a “normal” classroom rather than an arts classroom. As Arts\*Lab develops, it becomes clearer to the professors that here is an opportunity to show education majors how effective the arts can be in the classroom. Rather than being an abstract concept, arts-integration is a very real pedagogic tool for these students.

Today, students who express their discomfort with teaching the arts in the beginning of the course often express that they feel competent enough to teach arts lessons. However, they frequently express the desire to have longer in the course so they can learn more skills and gain more arts experience. In the classroom, they find new and exciting connections between all core subjects. This semester, Creative Movement students are applying the arts to their non-arts education courses, integrating them into lessons assigned in general pedagogy classes.

Though the arts 3900 courses are often considered some of the most labor-intensive courses our education majors take, they are becoming more and more valued among the students. Before



Arts\*Lab, students would sometimes arrive in Creative Movement for Children with a look of resignation and a clear desire to get out of the course with as little work as possible. Today, students may still wear that look of resignation because they consider themselves non-dancers and are overwhelmed by the idea of incorporating movement in lessons. However they understand when walking into class that they will be learning skills directly applicable to their classroom. They have begun purchasing their texts with the intent to keep them as a resource when they begin teaching. They also often ask to take the Arts\*Lab experience to other segments of the population. For example, this semester two DANC 3900 students organized a dance workshop focused on opposites for a group of Special Education (SPED) students from a local home. These same students have completed the course, but are currently planning a workshop series for SPED students at a local high school. These are students who never had a dance course before this, but are now so excited about the many ways they can incorporate the arts with the SPED population that they are creating new projects completely outside of their required coursework.

DANC 3900 is also required of all dance education majors. Because of the prevalence of elementary education majors in the course, there can be a tendency among dance education majors to feel that the course does not apply to those who will be teaching in secondary education settings or the private sector. However, Arts\*Lab brings into focus the importance of teaching students from a wide variety of backgrounds, and develops integral lesson planning and class management skills. One example of the far-reaching effects of this program is dance education major, Shannon Marshall. Marshall is the ballet specialist at a respected Cedar City private studio. She teaches the RAD syllabus, and recently began integrating other subjects into her classes. She finds this helps her students who have strong logical/mathematical, linguistic, interpersonal and visual intelligences. She will sometimes focus on the patterns of barre exercises to engage the logical/

mathematical intelligence, or write down parts of the lesson to engage dancer's visual and linguistic intelligences. Most recently, Marshall handed students flash cards with various locomotor & non-locomotor ballet movements and invited students to create a dance incorporating the movements on their cards. As the children created their dances, they reviewed each step and became very engaged in the process. When watching each other perform, they determined whether the dance was comprised of locomotor or non-locomotor movements, and defended their decision. Children who were antsy at the barre became very engaged in the dance-making process and indicated a clear understanding of the ballet vocabulary they incorporated in their dances.

Arts\*Lab is a first step in building a lasting understanding of the value of arts-integrated teaching. Students who complete the 3900 series then continue to ELED 4000 – Arts Integration in the Elementary Classroom. In this course, Professor Carrie Trenholm guides students through the creation of integrated lessons involving all four art forms. The students then have multiple teaching experiences in elementary classrooms in Cedar City's STEAM school. Prior to the implementation of Arts\*Lab, students would have completed the 3900 series with no hands-on teaching experience. This program gives them an opportunity to dive into the educative process early on, testing the waters and discovering their strengths and weaknesses so they are ready to develop their teaching skills as soon as they walk into the 4000 class.

Arts\*Lab is an invaluable learning opportunity for all involved parties. Community members engage in the arts and develop a desire for future arts education. Through constant collaboration, Petersen, Purvis & Bahr improve the experience for both the community and Southern Utah University students. Post-mortem meetings with students help clarify weaknesses in the organization of the arts courses and workshop implementation so both can become stronger. The meetings also encourage students to reflect on and improve their pedagogy. By creating a real-world

arts education experience, Arts\*Lab increases relevance for future educators, setting the stage for a continuing practice in arts-integration as well as core integration in both the elementary classroom and the private sector.

#### *BIOGRAPHY*

**Denise Purvis, MFA** is an Assistant Professor of Dance and Dance Education Specialist at Southern Utah University. Prior to joining SUU, she designed and directed the dance program for the Chesterfield County Specialty Center for the Arts at Thomas Dale High School in Chester, VA. A choreographer and dance artist as well as educator, Purvis is the founder and artistic director of Shifting Velocity Dance Company. Purvis holds a Master of Fine Arts degree in Dance Performance/Choreography from the State University of New York at Brockport, where she was on faculty from 2000 – 2004. She was also on faculty at Hobart and William Smith Colleges, in Geneva, NY, from 2003-2004. In addition to her MFA, she holds an undergraduate degree in dance from Mary Washington University in Fredericksburg, VA; and she studied dance at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, VA. She is also certified to teach the Bill Evans Method. [denisepurvis@suu.edu](mailto:denisepurvis@suu.edu)

## Summary of Panel Discussion

### Walking Our Talk: How Layered Collaborations Lead to Quality, Integrity and Possibility

Moderator: Patricia Reedy, MA

Panelists: Nancy Ng, MFA, Jochelle Pereña, MFA, Cherie Hill, MFA, Deborah Karp, BA,  
Katherine McGinity, MA

#### *SUMMARY*

Luna Dance Institute was founded on principles of shared inquiry and accountability to deliver high quality dance to our community. We collaborate in multiple ways to help each other “walk the talk” of increased creativity, integrity and multi-cultural respect. Our panel of six dance teaching professionals share collective efforts to create curriculum; partner with classroom teachers; co-teach in family dance classes and co-direct a mid-sized non-profit organization.

Our standards-based school programs and our composition-based studio laboratory define developmentally-appropriate progressions of learning. Speakers on this panel shared how we use national and state dance standards and our understanding of the creative process to align dance curriculum to our mission, core values and strategic goals and how we embed evaluation along the way. The presentation began with an overview describing Luna’s process of a 3-year rolling cycle strategic planning, leading to goal setting for each year, leading to measurable outcomes for each program area. Data collection is determined during the orientation/objective naming session at the start of each year and then analyzed and evaluated at mid-year and end-of year all staff meetings. This informs, then, the program offerings of subsequent years and keeps us efficient—we continue to evolve our programs without having to break service.

Luna faculty described our process for developing and sustaining the artist-teacher partnership in our work with urban, public schools. Resisting the short-term residency approach common to our field, we place the artist-teacher partnership at the center of the work in model school programs, believing this relationship essential to sustainability.

Our MPACT program (now in its 14<sup>th</sup> year) is designed to strengthen relationships between parents & children as they reunify after separation. Cherie Hill and Deborah Karp co-teach those classes and spoke about that experience. Strengthening relationships is at the core of MPACT and while our curriculum is designed to promote connection, teaching in partnership allows faculty to hone their own skills and empathize with the vulnerability inherent in any authentic union. The teachers shared the collaborative reflection tool MPACT teachers use to increase self-awareness, improve communication and deepen curricula.

Finally, our co-directors shared the unique organizational structure that has allowed Luna to evolve over 22 years. We share executive director functioning and then Nancy Ng is the Director of Community Engagement, Patricia Reedy, Director of Teaching and Learning. Because each is skilled to do both, we can take advantages of opportunities that come our way. For example, Nancy had a connection with a Head Start program, when they returned the call Patricia was able to learn what they needed. Together with the partner/client, we shape the

program and pop out an authentic budget and write a narrative. Nancy can put it into the platform of a particular funder and the evaluation that Patricia holds emerges direction out of that process because it is already woven into the goal setting established at the beginning of the year. Even though collaboration takes time and even more so when done with mindful multi-cultural communication practices, in the end it is extremely efficient. Because everyone understands the goals at the outset, we can simply do high quality work--we don't spend a lot of time problem-solving after a fiasco. Practices that allow us to work this way include:

- Weekly meetings are sacred between co-directors
- Weekly meeting with program managers
- Bi-weekly meetings with entire staff
- Everyone adhering to the planning/evaluation cycle above, including multiple day orientations and evaluations
- Intentional use of multicultural communication tools
- Commitment to reflection—after MPACT class, at several points between teaching artist and school staff, as a whole staff, an annual retreat

While initially puzzling to funders and other stakeholders accustomed to separation between Administrative and Artistic staff, Luna's unwavering commitment to placing art at the center of the organization and artists as stewards of the mission has resulted in recognition of Luna as on the vanguard of effective, efficient and authentic program implementation and evaluation. Increasingly, leaders in all fields recognize the central tenet of interdependency. At first we merely wanted to employ dance teachers full time, all year, with benefits and we wanted to utilize their skills as art-makers in service of administering our programs. It just made sense. Ultimately, we're learning that our programs are stronger and evaluation is easier as we approach every aspect of the organization through this collaborative, relational lens.

The information may be new to many working in arts education. Non-profit organizations typically separate Administrative, Artistic and Development departments. Luna puts art at the center of our work; thus, programs are managed by the very artists who teach in them, allowing constant interaction in funding, structuring, implementing and evaluating them. Also, working as a team, the student experience becomes about the dancer in each child rather than the personality of the teacher.

For more information, please see reflection tool and other documents on portal; the January 2015 issue of InDance with teacher reflections on dance education <http://dancersgroup.org/indance/>; Nancy Ng's blog about our organization design <http://blog.lunadanceinstitute.org/2014/11/18/teaching-artists-applying-the-breadth-of-their-skills/> or visit our website [lunadanceinstitute.org](http://lunadanceinstitute.org).

## *BIOGRAPHIES*

**Patricia Reedy, MA** is the Director of Teaching & Learning at Luna Dance Institute. Since founding Luna in 1992, Reedy has been responsible for designing and evaluating all program components. She writes curricula, develops staff and provides professional development to community clients. Reedy has been a dancer,

choreographer, educator and performer throughout her life. Reedy was on the dance faculty at UC Berkeley for five years before joining the dance department at Mills College as an adjunct professor. With co-director Nancy Ng, Reedy won the first Generous Heart award by Dance Spirit Magazine in 2014. She was named 2008 Outstanding Educator by the National Dance Education Organization and won their first award for mentorship in 2003. Reedy writes regularly, and published *Body, Mind & Spirit IN ACTION: a teacher's guide to creative dance*. Reedy received an MA in Education & Creativity from Mills College in 2000.

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**Nancy Ng, MFA** is the Director of Community Engagement of Luna Dance Institute and serves on the faculty of the Professional Learning Component. She was co-creator of Luna's MPACT program and develops professionals to build family dance programs in their own communities. Ng has worked as a performing artist, choreographer and educator for her entire life. She received her teaching credential from San Francisco State University, and following three years as a classroom teacher received her MFA in Performance and Choreography from Mills College. As a national arts education leader Ng serves on the advisory councils for the Teaching Artist Support Collaborative and the National Guild for Community Arts Education, and is a past president of the California Dance Education Association. She was recently appointed to the editorial review board for the National Dance Education Organization's *Dance Education in Practice* journal.

**Jochelle Pereña, MFA** is a teaching artist in Luna Dance Institute's SCA, Studio Lab and Professional Learning programs, and is the Professional Learning Manager and Studio Lab Manager. She has trained in the studios of Seattle, the farmlands of California's Lost Coast, the nightclubs of West Africa, and more formally at Laban, London (Professional Diploma in Dance Studies, 2005), and at Mills College, Oakland (MFA in Choreography and Performance, 2011). A choreographer, dancer and educator, she has performed and presented works internationally and has taught dance, drama and performing arts education to children and adults at Cornish College of the Arts, Mills College, Laban, Artis, and West County Community High School. She co-directs the dance theatre collective, *The Thick Rich Ones*, is co-founder of the Mills Dance Alumni Group, and annually produces *Ebb+Flow*, *The Mills Dance Alumni Concert*.

**Cherie Hill, MFA** is a teaching artist in the SCA, MPACT, and Studio Lab programs, and is Luna Dance Institute's Communications Manager, and Chief of Staff. She is a long-time lover of dance and has taught dance to children in the Bay Area since 2005. She received her BA in Dance and Performance Studies from UC Berkeley where she performed with Bay Area Repertory Dance Company and won numerous awards for her choreography and research. She has published dance research in journals and presented at international conferences. She presented her dance teaching project, "Creative Movement and the African Aesthetic" at the 2013 National Dance Education Organization Conference. She is former Co-Vice President of the Sacred Dance Guild, and a research assistant for hip-hop legend, Rennie Harris. Cherie holds an MFA in Dance Choreography and Performance from the University of Colorado, Boulder & graduate certificates in Somatics, and Women and Gender Studies.

**Deborah Karp, BA** is a teaching artist in Luna Dance Institute's MPACT, SCA and Studio Lab programs, and is the MPACT Program Coordinator. She brings her passion for movement investigation, creative somatic inquiry and love of community-building through dance to her work as a teaching artist, choreographer and performer. She is the Artistic Director of Deborah Karp Dance Projects, and has taught with Jacob's Pillow Curriculum in Motion, San Francisco Ballet's Dance In Schools and Communities program, University of San Francisco, and

in Honduras with Arte Acción. Her choreography has been presented in theaters and site-specific locations throughout New York City and the Bay Area. Her article *Choreographer in the Classroom: At the Intersection of Dance and Academic Curriculum*, was published in *In Dance* in May of 2013. Deborah holds a Bachelor of Dance Arts from the University of Michigan.

**Katherine McGinity, MA** is a teaching artist in Luna Dance Institute’s SCA and SL programs, and supports the organization with fundraising and development as the Development Associate. Since joining the Luna staff in 2013, she has worked with the Director of Community Engagement to increase individual giving, enhance Luna’s visibility within the community, and helped to facilitate an OUSD Visual and Performing Arts Professional Learning Community. Katherine is passionate about dance education, and has taught movement to all ages for 20 years. Katherine holds a BA in Dance and Performance Studies from UC Berkeley, an MA in Dance Studies from Mills College and is a Certified Laban/Bartenieff Movement Analyst. A former professional ballet dancer, Katherine currently performs with The Thick Rich Ones and inkBoat, and has presented her own work at CounterPULSE, and at The Garage with “Molissa Fenley and Friends”.

## Isolating the Parts to Strengthen the Whole: Teaching Collaborative Skills through Dance

Karen Schupp, MFA

### *ABSTRACT*

Collaboration is inherently part of many dance pedagogies, dance practices, and dance careers, which is why dance students are frequently required to work and learn together in the dance studio and classroom. Outside of dance, in a variety of disciplines, the ability to collaborate is prized as a highly valuable competency. As interdisciplinary and trans disciplinary approaches and projects become more common inside and outside of dance, the facility to collaborate in diverse roles is key to a successful career in the twenty-first century. This research presentation posits that explicitly teaching collaborative skills within dance classes can better prepare students for success outside of the academy, regardless of their career choices. The primary research question, “How can dance education explicitly cultivate collaborative skills?” is addressed through surveying, comparing, and contrasting published research about collaboration, tangible aptitudes needed for collaboration and how those are developed, and the implicitly collaborative aspects of dance careers. Suggestions regarding new teaching methods, specifically for technique and creative classes, that stem from the research and specifically foster proficiency in collaboration are offered.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Collaboration is inherently part of many dance pedagogies, dance practices, and dance careers, which is why postsecondary dance students are frequently required to work and learn together in the dance studio and classroom. Outside of dance, in a variety of disciplines, the ability to collaborate is prized as a highly valuable competency. As interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches and projects become more common inside and outside of dance, the facility to collaborate in diverse ways is key to a successful career in the twenty-first century.

Collaboration is a central part of dance learning as well as dance careers. Therefore many dance educators regularly provide students with numerous opportunities to collaborate. In other words, it could be argued that collaborative skills are implicitly addressed through learning dance. However, as the ability to collaborate becomes increasingly valuable inside and outside of dance, it is critical to closely examine how collaboration can be directly addressed in dance classes. This research presentation posits that explicitly teaching

collaborative skills in dance classes may better prepare students for success on campus and post-graduation, regardless of their career choices.

### **IMPORTANCE OF COLLABORATION**

From education, to industry, to the arts, the importance of collaboration is everywhere. The facility to work effectively with diverse groups of people to develop new solutions to emerging problems or questions is what drives innovation in contemporary society.

In 2002, the Partnership for 21st Century Skills, a coalition of educators, leaders in business, and policy makers, worked together to assess what aptitudes students need to flourish in the 21st century (Partnership for 21st Century Skills n.d.). Learning and innovation skills form the cornerstone of their framework. Collaboration is one of their four foundational competencies, along with creativity, communication, and critical thinking. This educational emphasis on collaboration is further supported by methodologies presented by Bernie Trilling and Charles Fadel (2012) who emphasize the importance of teaching students to create together

and the adaptive school model which argues that collaboration is critical to improving our schools and student learning (Garmston and Wellman 2009).

Collaboration is also viewed as an essential strength in contemporary society and the workplace. Digital technology makes it easier for collaboration to occur. Clay Shirky (2010) argues that our access to technology and the opportunity to communicate asynchronously with people around the globe has moved us from consumers to collaborators, and that by creatively working together, people have the power to transform our world. Daniel Pink (2006), a public intellectual whose work focuses on changing the work place to meet the demands of the twenty-first century, includes “symphony” or the dexterity to “put the pieces together” as a critical component of the conceptual age. Additionally, researchers at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology found that there is a measurable “collective intelligence” that exists for groups of people who work together, and that groups with a higher level of “social sensitivity” are more collectively intelligent (Wooley et al 2010). It is clear that as a society, we value our collective knowledge and the potential of what may come through working together.

In dance, collaboration has long been a part of artistic practice. Outside of artistic practice, dancers use their knowledge to contribute to the advancement of other disciplines. Dance artists are not strangers to collaboration, and it could be argued that the talent to collaborate, whether it be with other artists or experts outside of the arts, is critical to a successful artistic career.

In postsecondary dance education, the collaborative opportunities that students encounter impart rich opportunities for students to learn and create together. What students inherently learn through collaboration is valuable to their education and future pursuits. Empathy, leadership and stewardship, communication, initiation and follow through, and negotiation can be implicitly gained through these collaborative opportunities. Students who already possess these aptitudes can readily call upon and strengthen them through engaging in

collaborative projects. However, students who do not naturally call upon these strengths may need more assistance. Extracting, naming, and examining the different skills needed to collaborate while completing group projects can make students more aware of what they learn through dance and better prepare them for opportunities outside of academia.

### **WHAT MAKES COLLABORATION SUCCESSFUL?**

Although each collaborative situation is unique, there are common skills and processes that contribute to successful collaborations. Literature from education and business provides ideas about how to draw attention to these competencies and processes in the dance studio.

The Partnership for 21st Century Skills (2009) offers three skill sets that students should master to be effective collaborators. These include the abilities to “work effectively and respectfully with diverse teams; exercise flexibility and willingness to be helpful in making necessary compromises to accomplish a common goal;” and share responsibility for collaborative work while valuing the individual contributions made by each team member” (Partnership for 21st Century Skills 2009, n.p.). The Partnership for 21st Century Skills advocates for focusing on these aptitudes in relationship to core subjects to best prepare students for the future.

Thinking Collaborative (2014a), an organization dedicated to teaching collaboration, aims to maximize the capacity of individuals and groups through teaching people how to “collaborate with each other and tap into individual and collective strengths in ways that lead to organizational success” (n.p.). In their seminars they address the “Norms of Collaboration” and they teach people how to use these processes to strengthen collaborations. These norms include pausing, paraphrasing, posing questions, putting ideas on the table, providing data, paying attention to self and others, and presuming positive intentions (Thinking Collaborative 2014b). These seven norms are motivated by the goals of encouraging “thinking, problem solving, and group



development;” cultivating the full attention of group members; deepening the “linguistic skills” of the listeners and responders, and promoting a sense of inquiry (Thinking Collaborative 2014b).

Anita Williams Wooley (2010) and her team at MIT found that there is a collective intelligence factor that can determine how well a group will solve a given task. These researchers found that while the individual intelligence of a group’s members did matter, the social intelligence of a group was more influential in determining a group’s collective intelligence (Wooley et al 2010). A group’s ability to take turns conversationally was also a large determinant (Wooley et al 2010). This research suggests that in a successful collaboration the finesse to tactfully interact within a group is equally if not more critical than a person’s individual expertise.

Additionally, there are several informal pieces about collaboration available on the Internet. For example *Edutopia*’s Rebecca Alber (2012) lists four components to teaching collaboration: establish group agreements, teach students how to listen, teach students to ask good questions, teach students to negotiate, and model expectations for students. Timothy Quinn (2012), writing for *Education Week*, lists “collaborative strategies” to teach students, which include the capacities to listen to others, establish common goals, compromise, assign roles and responsibilities, determine measures for accountability, give constructive feedback, and assess the group’s progress (n.p.). Both writers promote the benefits of teaching collaborative skills so that students are well equipped to deal with the challenges of working with others outside of the classroom.

While the motivations and contexts for each of the previously listed examples of teaching collaboration are varied, there are common themes that can be distilled and applied to dance. These are:

- The ability to establish shared goals for the collaboration and individual participants
- The capability to form shared and individual informed lines of inquiry

- The capacity to listen, take turns offering ideas, and honor the ideas and positive intentions of group members
- The ability to negotiate
- The facility to offer constructive feedback and reflect on one’s own and the group’s progress
- The aptitude to see how the separate parts of a project relate to the whole.

Content knowledge, creativity, and critical thinking undergird each of these components and are perhaps what relates each to the others. Finding strategies to build these aspects in the dance studio by drawing attention to these processes in established projects can deepen students’ collaborative dexterity in variety of contexts.

### **IN THE DANCE STUDIO**

Most dance educators would agree that the previously listed themes are inherently part of collaborating on a dance project. Just as somatic practices provide an inroad for students to better understand their movement from an internal perspective so that they can become more efficient movers, expressive artists, and empowered learners, explicitly drawing attention to what is occurring inside the collaborative process will help students become better communicators, broaden their creative thinking skills, and further empower them as learners. Because these themes are already present as students collaborate, illuminating these skills is less about creating new projects for students and more about creating parallel procedures.

#### **Establishing shared goals for the collaboration and individual participants**

For most groups, establishing a goal for the project is inherently the first step. While there is no uniform way for groups to work collaboratively, getting everyone oriented towards a shared goal is important for building community within the group. Setting goals for each individual participant acknowledges what each participant brings to the collective process and creates accountability.

There are several ways that dance educators can bring more attention to establishing shared goals for the collaboration and individual participants.

After students are in groups, the teacher can designate a specific amount of work time for students to establish their goals and then report back to the larger class. Specifically designating part of students' work time to establishing goals helps them see this as an essential early step of the collaborative process. Sharing the goals with the larger class can create a sense of responsibility and a support system within the larger class. Taking the time to check in on this step also establishes a baseline that students can use to assess their successes, challenges, and evolution of ideas. Students become aware that working collaboratively is an opportunity to make a unique contribution to a project when they take time to set individual goals in relationship to the group's goals. Highlighting the interrelationship between the interpersonal and intrapersonal aspects of collaboration demonstrates the symbiotic nature of collaboration.

#### **The capability to form shared and individual informed lines of inquiry**

Somewhat related to establishing goals is the capability to devise informed lines of inquiry for the project. Essentially, this part of collaboration comes down to articulating what the group wants to explore and how they want to explore it. Similar to writing a research paper, students will benefit from selecting a topic, researching that topic, forming questions, and then evaluating the questions. Ideally, questions will be focused and complex meaning that they are specific but allow for multiple outcomes. Stating the intention of the project as a question encourages students to stay open to new possibilities and to feel that their unique answers have a place within a larger project.

After students have found their shared goals, dance educators can set aside work time to address this specific step. Dance educators can remind students that there are several ways to research an idea, including physical research such as improvisation, non-linear approaches such as drawing and doodling, as well as more scholarly means, before finding specific questions for a project. Encouraging students to really investigate an

idea and to resist the urge to "just start doing" can help them become more aware of their creative process as individuals and as a group. Forming shared lines of inquiry also keeps everyone on similar pages as the project progresses.

#### **The capacity to listen, take turns offering ideas, and acknowledge and honor the ideas and positive intentions of group members**

Although some students may possess more interpersonal intelligence than others, dance educators can help all students become more adept voicing their ideas and responding to others in conversation. Similar to how dance educators facilitate students' improvisational proficiency, which involves listening and informed responding, dance educators can help students become better discussants. Strengthening the application of these ideas to speaking and dancing makes students better prepared to collaborate.

Dance educators can develop students' conversational fluency by establishing discussion parameters. Offering guidelines about how to engage in a discussion, along with or instead of guidelines about what to discuss, can help students better articulate their thoughts, hear each other, and see how their ideas relate to the group's ideas. Dance educators may consider using the "three then me" strategy which requires students to hear from three other students before they can speak again (Alber 2012) as a way to bring more voices into a discussion. Teaching students to paraphrase when responding to each other requires them to listen more carefully and assists students in seeing how their ideas are coming across. The adeptness to respectfully listen and respond to others, both in discussion and in movement, is at the heart of collaboration.

#### **The ability to negotiate**

Coming to group consensus is necessary for any collaboration to move forward. The more students can view negotiation as shared problem solving instead of a battle about who has the best idea, the more productive a collaboration can be. Teaching negotiation as part of collaboration helps students

become aware of the “give and take” process and how that leads to new solutions.

Roger Fisher, William Ury and William Patton (1991) recommend a four step method of negotiation that can lead to shared solutions that are equally satisfying to all participants. The four steps are: separate the problem from the people, focus on interests not positions, invent options for mutual gain, and insist on using objective criteria (Fisher, Ury, and Patton 1991). Successful negotiation often goes unnoticed in collaborations, but difficult moments when there does not seem to be a shared solution in site can stop a collaboration dead in its tracks. Creating a worksheet for difficult moments can help students learn to negotiate from a principled position. A reflective worksheet that asks *What is the problem you want to solve? What is the goal of this particular aspect of the project? What are three new solutions for this problem? and What criteria can you use to measure your solutions?* can be especially useful. Each of these questions removes the personalities and egos from the equation and can be a beneficial way to help students get “unstuck” yet learn from these often uncomfortable moments.

#### **The facility to offer constructive feedback and reflect on one’s own and the group’s progress**

Developing the facilities to offer and apply constructive feedback and self reflect are the cornerstone of many studio dance courses. Many dance educators develop guidelines for exchanging non-prescriptive feedback so that students and teachers can objectively discuss each others’ work. When working collaboratively, it can be beneficial for students to learn how to apply these methods to their own work, both as individuals and as a group. Learning to objectively assess what is working and not working as a project can assist students in navigating collaborative projects and foster reflection in students.

To promote the development of offering and applying constructive feedback, dance educators can require group check-ins as part of the collaborative process. At one or more points in the development of a work, the instructor can require students to have a

showing of their work in process. Unlike other showings, however, the work is not shown to others; it is only shown to the collaborative group members. Students can then apply a feedback process they are familiar with to the collectively made work. These check-ins can also include assignments that promote reflection, the act of taking time to objectively observe, consider, and evaluate an experience (Amulya 2011). Students can take time to free write responses to the questions *What is working? What is not working?* and *What additional information is needed?* as a way to check-in on their own progress. Students can then use the information culled from the group and individual check-ins to steer the next steps of their project.

#### **The aptitude to see how the separate parts relate to the whole**

The collaborations that are perhaps most satisfying are those where each person has made a noteworthy contribution to a project that could not be individually achieved. Developing the previously listed components will help students become more aware of how they contribute their individual strengths to a larger project. Conceptually, it is also important for students to value the complexities, both in the processes and products, when collaborating. The power to create new realms that exist between fields is critical to driving innovation and leadership in the future, as is the ability to collaborate with people inside and outside of your area of expertise.

To facilitate students’ awareness of and assessment of their role within a specific collaboration, dance educators can create wrap-up assignments for students to complete both as individuals and as a group. Individually, students can be prompted to consider *What did you contribute to the project? How did this manifest in the project? What area is your strength? What area is most challenging and how can you strengthen it? How do your strengths and challenges relate to the final project?* The group can be prompted to consider *What was the most satisfying aspect of the collaboration? What was the biggest challenge?*

*What would you do differently next time?* From here, students can compare their individual answers with the shared group response to see how their individual experience contributed to something larger with an awareness of how they can continue to grow as collaborators.

## CONCLUSION

In closing, collaboration has a long standing presence in all areas of dance practice. Dance students are already engaged in collaboration as they learn to make, perform, respond to, and critically think about dance. As such, drawing students' attention to the separate and sometimes hidden components of collaboration offers a tremendous opportunity to strengthen those skills. Because dance education naturally calls upon collaboration in the dance classroom, increasing students' awareness of collaboration and proficiency as collaborators is less about creating new classroom experiences and more about making the implicit aspects of dance learning explicit. Creating parallel assignments, deconstructing the collaborative process, and helping students better articulate what they are doing as they work together, brings more attention to the skills students use when collaborating. Increasing proficiency in these components will not only lead to increased capability and dexterity as collaborators, but can develop competencies that are needed for success in the twenty-first century inside and outside of dance.

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## *BIOGRAPHY*

**Karen Schupp, MFA**, is an Assistant Professor in Arizona State University's School of Film, Dance and Theatre. Her creative work ranges from self-portraiture, to interdisciplinary dances, to conceptual works for non-dancers. Recent performances include the Guangdong Modern Dance Festival, WestFest, and the Attakkalari India Biennial. Karen's scholarly research focuses on effective pedagogical practices for dance majors and reframing the purposes of studio courses. This has been published in the Journal of Dance Education (JODE); Theatre, Dance and Performance Training Journal; and the Brooklyn Rail. She is the author of *Studying Dance: A Guide for Campus and Beyond*. For more information, please visit [www.karenschupp.org](http://www.karenschupp.org). [karen.schupp@asu.edu](mailto:karen.schupp@asu.edu)

## International Collaboration in Choreography: Bringing Together Artists with the Use of Technology

Victoria Shadle, BA

### *ABSTRACT*

The dance education systems in Italy compared to the United States are vastly different, so what would happen if an Italian choreographer collaborated with American undergraduate students to recreate and reinvigorate an original piece of choreography that premiered in 2013 in Florence, Italy? This experiment stems from a curiosity in the evolution and progression of dance as a celebrated art form and how it has been steadily growing in popularity and interest in the U.S. while declining in Italy over the last century. This “distance collaboration” is highly dependent on technology, which may be a key to expanding opportunities for audiences to experience quality dance work of populations from dissimilar cultures. This presentation will explore these countries two diverse dance education trends and show through primary sources and anecdotal evidence how collaboration is possible despite the significant geographical separation. Interviews from throughout the process will show what can be learned and gained through collaboration such as this- both for the student and the choreographer.

While studying abroad for a semester in Florence, Italy, dance brought me into the heart of the city. By taking dance classes and performing with Italians I noticed aspects of Italian life that had otherwise evaded me. Simple observations about Italian dancers taught me about facets of their culture such as their value of quality time rather than timeliness, the conservative style associated with proper dance attire, and the family-like atmosphere backstage and in dressing rooms. These experiences on and off the stage not only gave me a true sense of Italian life, but also made me question why some of their cultural norms were so different from what I was used to and what I considered “normal” and “right”.

Upon returning home to the United States, I found myself paying attention to dance etiquette and movement quality that I previously had not thought to consider more deeply. Additionally, through conversations with Italian dancers I learned about the broader picture of the dance field in Italy and discovered a vastly dissimilar infrastructure in place there compared to the U.S. It is from this positive experience of talking and learning from Italian

dancers and choreographers that I decided that a project surrounding the cultural differences in dance was a valuable study. Beyond a desire to learn more about the differences and similarities in these two dance fields, I wondered if the connective powers of dance that I witnessed firsthand would be diluted if the collaborators had never met and would only communicate through technology. This was just the beginning of an in-depth research project intended to dive deeper into the topic of dance being used to cross cultural barriers.

The overview of my research consists of a literature review on the presence of dance in Italy and interviews with Italian dancers on dance education structures. I also conducted a survey of American dance students to gather reactions on the state of dance in Italy today and included reflections of my personal experience abroad. Additionally, I conducted an experiment at Hofstra University that brought together an Italian choreographer and American dancers on a collaboration project where their only method of communication was through technology. In the

midst of the experiment I began to ask if there was a practical method for inspiring students to learn about other cultures through dance. I wanted to determine if the model I had set up could potentially be used in a number of schools and studios as a supplementary project to enhance students' education and broaden their perspectives.

To begin my preliminary research, I read dance history sources that are used in Dance History and Appreciation courses at Hofstra University. I found very limited evidence of the role of dance in Italy throughout history from these initial sources so I then consulted a librarian at Hofstra University and looked into the resources at the Jerome Robbins Dance Division of the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. Despite reaching out to scholarly libraries I found few references of modern dance in Italy and only minimal explanations of ballet's current presence in Italy. Every source acknowledged that ballet grew from theatrical court dances in Italy and that Catherine de Medici was a major player in establishing the art form, however, further information was limited. Other notable Italian figures included in those texts were Carlo Blasis who wrote dancing manuals in the 19th century, Enrico Cecchetti whose ballet technique is still taught today, and Bathasar de Beaujoyeulx who choreographed what many consider to be the first ballet in history. An important note about choreographers such as Cecchetti and Beaujoyeulx, however, is that they both made their careers outside of Italy, in Russia and France respectively. They worked abroad because they believed their dance careers would be more prosperous outside of Italy. Beaujoyeulx even changed his name to the current French interpretation so that his Italian ancestry would not hold him back professionally. Considering these facts, the significance of Cecchetti and Beaujoyeulx does not necessarily heighten the reputation of the Italian dance field as their careers were built outside of their home country.

Through continued research of online databases and numerous internet searches, I still

found incomplete information about the current infrastructure of dance education in Italy.

Discovering even prominent modern day companies with an international appeal was difficult. To try to attain this type of information I began interviewing Italian dancers, starting with those I know personally and their connections, focusing on Italian dancers who have worked professionally in America.

From interviewing Giada Ferrone, a native Florentine and current dance professor at New York University, and Valentina Nocciola, a current student at Florence Dance Center in Italy, I learned they both attest to the opinion that the Italian dance field is isolated from the American dance world. Two other Italian dancers, now working professionally in New York, both said their first experience with American dance was upon moving to the U.S. on scholarship at the Martha Graham School. Overall from interviews I have gathered, it looks as if Italians are aware of the prestige associated with American concert dance but are not commonly exposed to it through touring performances of American companies or American teachers, thus, these worlds are isolated. One interesting budding festival, however, does appear ready to take on that challenge of isolation. The Italian International Dance Festival recently hosted their second annual festival in New York City following a successful inaugural year in 2013, and many years hosting a dance festival and summer school in Southern Italy. In Italy they are quickly becoming the company that bridges the gap for Italian dance students wanting to pursue a career in America. Unfortunately, there are not many other dedicated organizations also providing services that directly enrich the Italian dance field and bring it back to being an active participant in the greater international field.

The producers of the Italian International Dance Festival, Antonio Fini and Tabata Caldironi, both raised in Italy, explain that the main deterrent of professional dancers' building a career in Italy is the lack of appropriate spaces to perform due to a severe shortage of arts funding. Regarding quality education, there are a handful of academies that

properly prepare students for professional careers in dance, however, they are not nationally recognized because they do not provide graduates with a diploma. Furthermore, once talented Italian dancers graduate from one of these academies they find nowhere to dance or present work regularly in Italy. To make a living in the dance field in Italy the most viable options are to become a ballerina dancing with the historic company such as La Scala in Milan or to work as a hip-hop artist commercially. This leaves little options for the growth of emerging modern dance companies or artists wishing to have more stylistic options in creative forms of dance theater or contemporary dance. The interest of dance students is present yet the infrastructure is not supporting a wide-spread growth of a diverse dance field.

Dance education as a whole in Italy is very different than in America. None of the Italians I interviewed cited Italy as being a place conducive to dance training for the masses. There was no perception of dance being available in public schools or at more than a few academies and one isolated university. Dance is mostly found recreationally in studio environments and there is no practical way to enter the dance administration realm or even start a dance company due to the bureaucracy of government funding and resistance by individual donors, as explained by the choreographer Luigi Ceragioli. Regarding the types of students that attend dance classes, those interviewed were divided on the subject of adults dancing recreationally. While I viewed what seemed to be many adults studying dance purely for enjoyment and exercise, I cannot support that with data. Unlike the Survey of Public Participation in the Arts in the U.S. there is not nearly the range of data reporting methods on dance in Italy. A number of Italians I interviewed confirmed Antonio and Tabata's sentiments, citing the prospect of working professionally in Italy as a dancer as practically impossible and less friendly than the U.S. dance field for example. In contrast to the prominent private donor base that is present in America, the most viable contributed income stream

in Italy is state funding and for that to happen an organization has to be very large and have a reputation in the field, a feat not possible for an emerging company. This lack of financial support is stunting the growth of the overall dance field in Italy and segregating it from other well established dance fields.

I believe these factors of isolation in the Italian dance field contribute to the reason that the American dancers participating in my collaboration experiment knew virtually nothing about dance in Italy beyond that ballet originated there before becoming codified in France. Compare that seemingly brief footnote in history with the progression of professional dance in America. While those American dance students I surveyed are split on defining the American dance field as diverse and thriving, one cannot deny we are a nation with world renowned dancers and companies dominating the field in a number of disciplines. In the U.S., dance is an art form taught alongside music and art in a growing number of public schools, readily accessible for students of all ages in private studios, and found in Bachelors of the Arts programs at over 250 universities throughout the nation. Beyond working as professional dancers, students can also become educators, choreographers, researchers, administrators, critics, and dance specific health practitioners, among other occupations. In Italy, however, few of these are realistic professional options for dance students. There is to the best of my knowledge nothing like the National Dance Education Organization's Conference in Italy, either. There are few support systems for those dedicating their lives to the education and presentation of dance.

After learning all of this information through my literature review, survey, and interviews a question emerged. Can these two diverse dance cultures be brought together through collaboration? Can an Italian choreographer and American dance students learn from each other and collaborate on a piece solely through technology, or is the cultural barrier too great to cross and this experiment a fruitless project?



The idea of international collaboration merged organically upon my return to the U.S. after dancing and studying abroad in Italy. The choreographer I danced with in Florence, Luigi Ceragioli, had limited experience working professionally with American dancers and was very interested in continuing our conversation to find opportunities to bring our cultures together through dance. We discussed some ways to keep up communications and I proposed conducting an international collaboration project using technology to connect him and American dance students. Two dancers participate in this experiment and they were told they needed to learn the first section of a piece which was a duet that Luigi choreographed on myself and Valentina Nocciola. Then for the second section, originally a trio, the American dancers were tasked with collaborating together to alter Luigi's choreography for themselves and were given free artistic range. Dancers were made aware of their technological resources to connect with Luigi and were in complete control of how they wanted to alter the second section of movement.

The American dancers met on a weekly basis for seven rehearsals, each between an hour and an hour and a half. It took two of those rehearsals to learn the first minute and thirty second section from a video tape. When it came time to choreograph/ collaborate the dancers found the process to be a valuable way to engage with a foreign style of movement and an interesting method to learn about the international dance field. This project was unique because they had material to work with but still had the challenge of making their second section of collaborative choreography. Through the multifaceted nature of this experiment they were given multiple channels to learn about dancing in another country and what that means in regards to the culture as well as the movement style. Interestingly, little initiative was taken to initiate conversation with Luigi. Because they were given free range this was not a requirement and I observed a level of nervousness and self-consciousness regarding contacting Luigi. It appeared they were

cautious to show their adaptations and didn't know if he would like their choreography or if it was clean enough to be shown. Interestingly, their one suggestion following the experiment was to communicate more with Luigi.

Following this experiment both American dancers encouraged this project to be adopted by dance educators as a supplementary project in schools/studios. The dancers found it to be an innovative technique to engage students on a matter that when simply read about or viewed in a documentary comes across as distant and unrelatable. This project has the capacity to spark interest in international dance fields and gives students the opportunity to learn about a foreign culture on a more personal level. Going into this project each dancer only thought of Italy as the nation where ballet began and had no real knowledge of the current state of dance there. This project was not only informative of dance in Italy but also gave them a greater appreciation of their opportunities in America. It is by beginning to understand other cultures through hands-on international projects such as this that we truly understand our own culture and are able to critically reflect and ask question.

I feel strongly that should this process be repeated in schools and studios, the freedom for students to take charge of their own rehearsal was a good decision though I would suggest mandatory skype meetings with the international choreographer be planned in advance. Direct communication between students and the international artist is an important step in the process and should be a necessary and frequent event. As far as practical adaptations of this project that can be used in curriculum and lesson planning, I am confident the unique benefits of this project can be replicated by dance educators with students of an intermediate to high level of experience. I believe if the spirit of collaboration is maintained then this is probably best for mature students with a higher level of technical ability who can fully contribute to the collaborative aspect of the program. If the focus is less on collaboration and more about getting to know

another culture, I could see this concept translating loosely into other international discussions with the help of guest teachers/choreographers who were trained abroad. No matter the exact form this type of project takes it should somehow include dancers being given the responsibility of developing meaningful communication with one and creative, problem solving choreography.

The important topic to keep in mind when designing an international collaboration project is to make it engaging and fun for students while still challenging them to think outside of the box. To me, the most value aspect of this research and experiment was the need to find alternative methods to learn about a dance field that seemed inaccessible by traditional academic resources. The limitations I faced throughout this project challenged me to think originally about how to solve problems in regards to my technique to gather information and test theories. Through this work I was able to make personal and professional connections and gain confidence in my ability as a dance researcher. It is my hope that through projects inspired by my experience dance students will think critically about their perceptions of the dance field at home and abroad, make lasting connections, and be able to gain confidence in themselves as open-minded, “thinking dancers”. It is a truly amazing art form we are practicing, one that can be used as a bridge across cultural differences and as dance educators that unique attribute should be fully exploited as a tool for learning and engagement.

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## *BIOGRAPHY*

**Victoria Shadle** holds a B.A. in Dance from Hofstra University and graduated with the highest honors from the University's highly selective Honors College. She has experience in the dance community as an arts administrator, researcher, dancer, and choreographer. Shadle currently works in the Education Department at New York City Ballet and in a variety of administrative capacities at REVERBdance. In the past, she has interned at Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival and in the Research Department of Dance/USA. Shadle completed an Honors Thesis on dance research and independently presented an international research project at the National Dance Education Organization's Conference. She has been awarded an Undergraduate Student Scholarship by the NY State Dance Educators Association and is the recipient of multiple dance scholarships from the Hofstra University Dance Faculty. As a dancer, she has performed choreography by Karla Wolfangle, Catherine Turocy, Robin Becker, Ellie Kusner and Linsey Leduc in Hofstra University Faculty Concerts.  
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## Taking Flight: Aerial Dance in Higher Education

Elizabeth Stich, MFA, Julianna Hane, MFA

### *ABSTRACT*

In this paper, we investigate different models for collaboration between the aerial arts and dance in higher education. As the aerial arts have grown in prominence and popularity over recent years, several schools have incorporated some type of aerial arts into their dance programs. However, we have found this to be mainly in the form of guest artist residencies and not as dance educators who are also professional aerialists. Our practical experiences working in a variety of university settings as both dance faculty and aerialists lends a unique perspective for a more integrated approach to and long-term sustainability in the relatively young field of aerial arts in higher education. Through our work in several university settings over the course of five years, both together and independently, we have found a number of benefits for our students through the inclusion of aerial arts in their dance training. Choreographically, the aerial arts expand the possibility of movement into the vertical dimension and encourage students to conceptualize a more three dimensional approach to space. Technically, they promote a deeper understanding of body mechanics by putting students into the air and a different relationship with gravity and the floor. Finally, aerial training broadens students' physical skill sets in preparation to meet the demands of today's dance market for technical and expressive versatility. Because of these important outcomes, we conclude by proposing our ideal model of collaboration between the aerial arts and dance in higher education.

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### INTRODUCTION

The visceral satisfaction of moving in the air affirms and connects the aerial dancer to his/her true nature. As dancers, aerialists, Laban Movement Analysts, and educators, the authors (Elizabeth Stich and Julianna Hane) have collaborated over the past five years implementing aerial arts programs into higher education. This collaboration has been fruitful in the creative, technical, and expressive development of our students. It has also offered another marketable skill set for students as they transition into careers in dance. This analysis of our collaboration focuses on our practical experiences and personal reflections, which have revealed complementary perspectives on the work. These perspectives continue to generate new knowledge and ideas, which are then incorporated into the next residency or project.

#### **Defining Aerial Dance**

While our work in higher education focuses on aerial dance, there are institutions that offer circus

programs to students. The key differences between aerial circus arts and aerial dance are the goals, the level of danger involved, and the use of both ground and air spaces. In the language of circus, the goal is to execute a series of dangerous tricks. The audience viscerally becomes part of the action by feeling both the performer's triumphs and failures. However, "Aerial dance uses traditional circus apparatuses like silks, slings, and trapezes as well as suspended objects like ladders, nets, and steel window frames. Performers, while highly skilled in executing tricks, also focus on the transitions and meaning behind the movement" (Hane 2008). Since the goal of aerial dance is to express an idea through movement, the element of danger is much lower. Aerial dance also incorporates movement on both the ground and in the air, as well as transitions between the two spaces. Aerial circus acts may have ground movement as an introduction or conclusion to the act, but shifting

between the ground and the air is not a traditional focus of the form.

### **Purpose of Aerial Dance Study**

The study of aerial dance promotes a deeper understanding of technique, creativity, and expression. In the technical realm, the altered relationship with gravity and the floor further develops function and body mechanics. The apparatus becomes an elevated floor, or a new base of support allowing dancers to find suspension, inversion, and new possibilities for rotation. According to one aerial dance student, “The fabrics really do emphasize the skill or habits a person does on the ground.” A new awareness of movement habits presents the ability to choose, reflecting Laban’s theory on expanding one’s movement range. This element of choice also aligns with the democratic pedagogy used in many higher education dance programs today.

Due to the change in relationship with gravity, the body must develop new patterns to cope with weight shift. Grounding different parts of the body into the apparatus (such as the back, knee, elbow, or foot) allows many options for reaching the free limbs out into space. One student stated, “I can choose how much of my weight to place on the fabric as well as how much I don’t want to place on it. By putting a certain part of my body fully supported by the silk, I can give more range of motion to another part.” The dancer also develops a new understanding of the core-distal pattern since the hands and feet are the most common connection points with the apparatus. The core, as the central organizer, deals with a different type of stress than what is encountered on the ground and thus becomes stronger. Upper body and back strength develops from using the arms to bear full body weight and propel motion.

Since the aerial dancer uses both the ground and the air in performance, a third space is explored - the connection between ground and air. Transitioning from a flat surface such as the ground to a vertical surface or suspended object demands a very specific technical skill set involving weight

shift from the hands and arms on an apparatus to feet on the ground. This third space becomes particularly interesting when the apparatus is swinging or circling, requiring the dancer to make a transition through momentum and literally hit the ground running. Similar to contact improvisation, the aerial dancer must learn to listen to the apparatus, its weight and mobility, and make changes in the moment to create continuous movement from one surface to another. The body must accommodate weight shift incrementally in order to have smooth takeoffs and landings. In addition to developing weight shift from ground to air, aerial dancers also develop extensive spatial awareness. Inverting often causes confusion about where the body is in space, and the mind/body needs time to “map out” space while upside-down. Proprioception expands as the aerialist learns where the apparatus is in space without having to look at it.

Choreographically, the aerial arts expand movement into the vertical dimension and encourage students to reconsider meaning and representation through spatial relationships. With new access to vertical space that is unavailable to the ground dancer, the aerialist can explore themes supported by suspension, ascending, descending, and a host of other spatial concepts. The artist can also relate to the apparatus as it represents either a physical being or an abstract concept. While the apparatus may at first appear to be a limiting factor to creativity, this limit can actually yield new and insightful movement as it pushes both the dancer and dance maker into new territory. For example, the apparatus may inspire the mover to mold or shape the body in very different ways, or even discover a theme such as “conceal and reveal” as is common with aerial silks where the body can be partially or fully hidden from view by the wide panels of fabric. The initial moment of contact with the apparatus is a key player in the narrative arc of a piece, as well as the range of heights used within the piece and where the piece ends spatially.

Expressively, the aerial arts expand a dancer’s movement palette to include new emotional

connections to time, space, and energy. In the air, time slows down and the dancer must use time very differently so the audience does not have to “chase” the performer through a piece. With a change in relationship to space and gravity, new constellations of texture and quality of movement emerge. The aerial dancer must also maintain a sense of spontaneity as the apparatus seems to have a mind of its own and never reacts in the same way twice. Outside factors such as temperature, humidity, airflow and lighting can all change the way the apparatus moves and even appears to the mover. The choreography of an aerial dance may be set, but the dancer must think of it as a highly structured improvisation, where the dancer will be called upon to respond creatively in the moment to any change in circumstances, and still perform it with full confidence.

Aerial arts study also expands the marketability of students by equipping them with a specific skill set used by various performing companies. In addition to aerial dance companies such as Brenda Angiel, Project Bandaloop, Frequent Flyers Productions, and Zaccho Dance Theatre, other performing companies such as Pilobolus and De La Guarda have incorporated aerial work into their repertory. Aerial work has been featured on Broadway in revival productions of *Pippin*, *Peter Pan*, and *Mary Poppins*. For students who aspire to work in fields outside of performance, other aspects of the training enhanced their education. One student stated, “As an aspiring physical therapist, I took special interest in our injury prevention discussion. As a teacher, I take care to note the stretches and exercises that might be useful for my students.”

Finally, when returning to a ground-based technique class, the aerial trained dancer has access to new patterns and strengths that were not available before. One student, originally a ballroom dancer, stated, “I believe that all kinesthetics are interrelated and help your body achieve more in other areas when you use it in different ways. [In this class] I am far beyond my element, but I am grateful for the

challenge.” Just as the self is defined by the other, one dance technique also defines another. Having explored new relationships to gravity and space, the aerial dancer returns to ground dance with a new appreciation and awareness of movement on the floor.

## **METHODOLOGY: MODELS FOR AERIAL DANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

As we have incorporated aerial arts into the university dance setting for the past five years, we have developed several different models that highlight both quality of work and practicality. The following models are based on a residency and a semester long course at Snow College, and a summer course at Northwest Vista College.

### **Snow College**

Our first model was a forty-hour choreographic residency at Snow College in Ephraim, Utah, which developed into a three-year relationship of subsequent workshops, choreographic consulting, and a full semester aerial fabrics technique course. Snow College initially approached us in Spring 2009 as co-directors of Revolve Aerial Dance in order to set a piece of choreography for their 2010 Spring Concert. Since we both received our introduction to aerial dance through such a guest artist performance opportunity, we felt confident that over the course of an academic year, we could safely prepare the students to perform in this capacity.

During the fall semester, we focused on skill building and strength conditioning with the Dance Company members. In between rehearsal weekends, we gave the dancers specific exercises as homework to prepare them physically for our next meeting. We used a piece of Revolve Aerial Dance repertory in order to maximize our contact time focusing on aerial dance technique, rather than the creative process, for this initial residency. We also began teaching the specific skills required in the choreography to the specific dancers cast in each role in order to reach our first semester goal that each dancer would be able to safely and confidently execute the aerial skills required of their part.

During the spring semester, we focused on re-staging the choreography *Shifting Vistas*. Since the dancers had ample time to prepare physically for the skill set required, this stage of the process went very smoothly and allowed time to coach for artistic expression including the dancers' interactions with the aerial fabrics as an evolving set piece. This early command of the technique required to execute the choreography also left time to troubleshoot the inevitable logistical issues that arise when rigging for aerial dance and transitioning from rehearsal space to the theater. This first aerial dance performance was very well received by the Snow College and Ephraim communities and was performed to sold-out crowds for the entire run of the concert.

The following academic year, the dance director selected several students who had performed in *Shifting Vistas* to choreograph an aerial dance for the American College Dance Festival that spring. The dancers modeled our approach of developing an aerial work over a longer timeframe than a typical dance choreographic process in order to promote safety. I was invited to work with the dancers again for two weekends of workshops, both to offer feedback on choreography and to help ensure safe practices for all the aerial skills involved. Although the logistics of the technical rehearsal schedule of the AC DFA conference did not allow for rigging aerial equipment in the theater, the Snow College dancers presented their student aerial choreography via video, helping to bring awareness to the larger conference community of their exploration of this emerging dance genre.

Snow College continued their commitment to incorporating aerial dance into their program by offering a semester long aerial fabrics technique course for fall semester 2011. I taught three sections of the course including two sections of Beginning technique for dance majors and non-majors and a section of Intermediate/Advanced technique for dance company members with prior aerial experience. As a part of the technique class, I also focused on personal expression with a creative presentation for the final exam in which students

explored a movement sequence from the ground to the air and back to the ground again.

Unfortunately, the long distance between Salt Lake City, and Ephraim, where Snow College is located, prevented me from teaching the course beyond this initial semester. However, the department has continued to offer an aerial technique course instructed by senior members of the dance company. These students have pursued additional aerial training by attending my Advanced Fabrics class taught at Aerial Arts of Utah and eventually participating in a teacher-training program offered through the studio.

Over the following years, we have been approached by several other college and high school dance programs about the possibility of setting an aerial dance piece for their student companies. However, in most cases, these requests have not allowed for the full academic year time frame of the Snow College residency, which we feel was a main factor of its great success. Our forty contact hours were spread out over the course of nine months with the expectation that students would be working independently on assigned tasks between rehearsals, allowing them the time to gradually build the strength and confidence to perform safely in the air. When we have been offered guest artist residencies in an intensive format, over one to two weeks of rehearsal prior to a performance that same semester, we have felt that even though it may be a similar number of contact hours, that model does not set the students up for success and have declined these offers. Just as a student would expect to train extensively in pointe technique before being asked to perform in front of an audience on pointe, so students of aerial dance must train extensively in the technique of their apparatus before confronting the added pressure and safety concerns of performing.

We have also found that an aerial dance choreographic residency works best when a dance program is interested in incorporating aerial into their curriculum long-term, as in the case of Snow College. The initial financial investment for the aerial apparatuses and rigging equipment is difficult

for some programs to justify for only one performance. Our concern is that many programs choose to continue using the equipment for performance without continuing the necessary investment in aerial training from qualified instructors. Because of this, we have chosen not to work with programs that are interested in a one time only aerial performance as we feel it presents the possibility for future safety concerns.

### **Northwest Vista College**

As opposed to the Snow College choreographic residency, I had the opportunity in summer 2014 to teach a semester long survey course on Aerial Dance at Northwest Vista College in San Antonio, Texas. This 3-credit hour special topics course included aerial fabrics technique as well as history, aesthetics, anatomy/injury prevention, rigging, and the creative process of aerial dance. The book *Aerial Dance* (2008) by Nancy Smith and Jayne Bernasconi served as the text for the theory portions of the course. This was the third summer that Northwest Vista College has offered the course in collaboration with local studio Aerial Horizon and every semester the course has reached the maximum enrollment.

Teaching this course afforded a very different opportunity to introduce aerial dance to students in a university setting. The course was open to both dance majors and non-majors, although the majority of students had some kind of dance background. I feel that this course would be an ideal introductory-level requirement for a university dance program seeking to incorporate an aerial dance track into their curriculum. Ideally, students would complete this course before moving onto intermediate level aerial dance technique, composition, and repertory classes.

### **Other Programs**

In recent years, many schools have incorporated some form of aerial dance into their programs, mainly in the form of guest artist residencies. In fact, we both received our introduction to aerial through such opportunities as undergraduate students. Through such personal experience, networking, and Internet research similar to that of a prospective student, we have familiarized ourselves with dance

departments that currently incorporate some form of the aerial arts into their programs. While this is by no means an exhaustive list, we feel it is important to mention these models in order to compare and contrast with our own research in designing a best practice model for incorporating aerial dance into higher education dance curriculum.

In undergraduate dance programs, oftentimes, a current faculty member is interested in aerial dance for creative research and will enlist the help of an aerialist guest artist to work with students. Examples of professors interested in this type of choreographic research include Bala Sarasvati at the University of Georgia, Mary Beth Young at Winthrop University, and Gay Nardone at the University of New Hampshire. Another model for including aerial in a program is by hiring an aerialist/dancer to teach a course adjunct as we have done at Snow College and Northwest Vista College. Another example of this model is Annie Bunker, former Artistic Director of O-T-O Aerial Dance company in Tucson, Arizona, who currently teaches the courses Aerial Dance I and Aerial Dance Fitness through Continuing Education at the University of Hawaii, Hilo. According to the University of Wyoming's website, dance professor Margaret Wilson teamed up with Neil Humphrey, Professor of Geology and Geophysics, avid rock climber, and dance enthusiast to offer a vertical dance class that utilizes rock climbing rope and harnesses to suspend dancers above the ground and is often performed both inside and out-of-doors.

According to the University of Colorado Boulder website, the school offers a unique opportunity for Graduate students to pursue an Aerial Dance Track in collaboration with the Boulder-based aerial dance company Frequent Flyers Productions. Students pursuing this track work towards the completion of the Professional Training Program at Frequent Flyers while simultaneously pursuing their MFA degree. Ten of the sixty required credit hours for the degree are completed through the Frequent Flyers Professional Training program off-campus. Students have the option to focus either on



Performance or Teacher Training in the Aerial Dance Track.

Finally, although not specifically in the dance setting, several institutions of higher education have a rich tradition of Circus Clubs. Most notably are the Florida State University Flying High Circus and the Illinois State University Gamma Phi Circus. According to both of the clubs' websites, these long-standing student organizations offer training opportunities for members and regular public performances.

### **OUTCOME: AN AERIAL DANCE TRACK**

Incorporating an aerial dance track into a university dance program is more accessible and affordable than some might believe. Aerial fabrics are the least expensive apparatus, easy to rig and maintain, and provide a wealth of training and choreographic options. Introduction to Aerial Dance, a course offered for three credit hours, would serve as the foundation of the track and covers history, choreographers, and injury prevention in addition to technique and basic composition. A program could then add a 200 level Aerial Technique and Composition course for those who successfully complete the introductory course. The 200 level course could be offered every semester with a different apparatus focus each time, so that students would become well-rounded and grow without necessitating multiple separate courses. The existing repertory dance course leading to a concert of faculty choreography could involve an aerial piece to give students performance opportunities in the form and allow faculty to invest in creative research. One professor could run the entire start-up program and still maintain a course load in other areas of the department.

### **Conclusion**

As educators ourselves, our research is firmly rooted in being experts in both fields - aerialists and dance educators. We believe this dual perspective offers a more integrated approach to this relatively young collaboration. Rudolf Laban states, "We should be able to do every imaginable movement and then select those which seem to be the most suitable and

desirable for our own nature" (Bartenieff 2002). By offering aerial dance in addition to other dance tracks, a university dance program demonstrates a value in training multiple movement perspectives. At this point in our work, we want to know more about what other programs are doing, what models are successful given varied circumstances and funding options, and where we as a community of aerial dance educators can go from here to continue growing the form and serving students.

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### *BIOGRAPHIES*

**Elizabeth Stich, MFA** is the Artistic Director of Aerial Arts of Utah and dance faculty member at Salt Lake Community College. She holds an MFA in Modern Dance from the University of Utah and is a Certified Laban/Bartenieff Movement Analyst through Integrated Movement Studies. Liz is a graduate of the Professional Training Program at New England Center for Circus Arts and has completed Nimble Arts Teacher Training in Aerial Fabrics and Trapeze. In addition to her work as a dance educator, she also performs professionally as an aerialist, most recently in the show Cirque de la Mer at Sea World San Diego. Her research interests include the application of Laban theory to aerial dance and the integration of aerial arts into university dance curriculum.  
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**Julianna Hane, MFA** is the Artistic Director of Revolve Aerial Dance and dance faculty member at the College of Charleston in South Carolina. She received an MFA in Modern Dance from the University of Utah and is a Certified Laban Movement Analyst through Integrated Movement Studies. She is also a K-12 Certified Dance Educator, and a graduate of the Professional Training Program at the New England Center for Circus Arts. Julianna serves as a teaching assistant for aerial dance pioneer Susan Murphy, and has co-authored several aerial dance manuals with Rebekah Leach. Recently, Julianna has taken on the role as Director of Teacher Training with Born To Fly™ Productions offering professional development for aerial arts instructors. Her research focuses on the functional and expressive elements of Laban theory as inroads to aerial dance training and choreography.

## Dance Bach Double Rough: Music Learning via Internet Choreographic Collaboration

John Toenjes, MA

### *ABSTRACT*

Music Theory for Dancers is a specialized subject for dance majors. Seeking to let dancers have a broader experience with music for dance teaching methods and pedagogies, Professors John Toenjes of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC), and William Moulton of NYU, designed and implemented into their Music for Dance classes, an online choreographic project between undergraduate dance students at both institutions, which culminated in a live Internet performance. The project involved studying the structure of a piece of music together through joint lectures, distance collaborations between students via social media, and mounting a final performance of the joint dance. This paper outlines the pedagogical goals of the project, technological planning and implementation, student responses, and seeks ways to improve the experience.

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### INTRODUCTION

Designed to enhance the “Music Theory for Dancers” class, “Bach Dance Double Rough” was an online choreographic project, culminating in a live Internet performance, between undergraduate dance students at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts and at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. This paper describes the project, and outlines pedagogical goals, class schedule, technological implementation and difficulties, and student responses to it.

### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

For years NYU Professor William Moulton and I had discussed how to co-teach a unit of our Music Theory for Dancers classes through Internet collaboration. Three semesters ago, our class times finally overlapped, so we took the opportunity to mount a learning project online. Since each of us has his own syllabus for teaching Music for Dancers, we had to identify some common focus, and find a good time in the semester for the project. We eventually decided to focus on musical form and melody, through an exercise that paired students to create a series of short duets, that strung together would comprise a complete dance, to the third movement of the Concerto for Two Violins in d minor, by J.S. Bach. This music has been notably choreographed by Paul Taylor and George Balanchine, so we thought it

would be interesting and instructive to let our students have a go at it, too.

### GOALS

This project had two categories of pedagogical goals: Educational and Professional/Technological.

Educational goals were

1. To use the project as a vehicle for collaborative study of a music score, examining how students with different educational experience would hear and approach choreographic solutions to the same music, and
2. To experience real-time and asynchronous long-distance learning and teaching.

Professional/Technological goals were

1. To gain experience in long distance online collaboration, and determine its usefulness, and
2. To foster professional relationships among our students for possible future collaborations or encounters.

### CLASS SCHEDULE

The project took three-and-a-half weeks, with two meetings per week. The first bi-directional online class was an icebreaker between the two populations of students as well as a rather casual informational lecture about the project, delivered by both

professors. We played up our friendship as well as our differences of opinion about music, in a playful yet focused manner. Then we paired students at NYU with a student at UIUC, and had them exchange names and tell just a little bit about themselves. This was a source of both embarrassment and surprise—one pair of students actually knew each other from a dance workshop they had taken a couple of years prior. At the end of the session we played the music recording, and cursorily talked through it.

This first class was successful in beginning the process of fostering relationships, as was the assignment given, which was to contact your partner via email, text, Facebook®, or other method, and just get to know each other. We also demonstrated how a high-speed Internet connection could be a dependable tool for long-distance real time learning.

The next class was designated as a local class, where each class analyzed the music in depth on its own. The NYU students did this, but UIUC students had an unexpected scheduling conflict, and so did not get this in-depth look into the music. This was an interesting difference, which added some flavor to the question of differing student populations hearing the music differently.

The music was divided into quite short segments so that students could listen very deeply for musical elements, and to very nearly insure guaranteed success at finishing the choreography. Class #3 was another online group session, where we went over the sections each team was to choreograph. We also took time in class for each pair of students to directly touch base with each other to plan how they would accomplish the task. It was clear that students had, indeed, made contact with each other; some had shared quite a bit of personal and professional information. This part of the assignment was working!

Classes #4 and #5 were working sessions, where students worked on their choreography together online. Students spread out throughout the studio, in the hallways, in other rooms, to work via SKYPE or FaceBook or some other social media to

share choreographic ideas and rehearse their performances.

The sixth class was the performance, where the dancers were finally able to perform the dance together. We played the music via the YouTube video on Google Hangout, and the strung together tag-team dance was done. Cameras mounted at each screen position, pointing directly at the dancing area, enabled students to watch each other as they were dancing. As there was only a minimal lag time between our institutions, this turned out to be a rather successful way to dance across long distances together. At the end of the dance we also improvised along with the music, using elements of our dance phrases as the basis for the group improvisation. This was a fun ending to a good collaboration.

### **DOCUMENTARY VIDEO**

Here is a short documentary video of the project:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=apIScHxIG1k>

### **TECHNOLOGY AND DIFFICULTIES**

After a lengthy period of experimentation, the technologies eventually used were a combination of Google+ Hangout for music, and a custom Max/MSP patch to send and receive video. We'd located a video with appropriate tempo and stylistic treatment of the music on YouTube, accompanied in real time by a scrolling score (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bVw8w5ROXLw>). In order to have this video play at both locations at (roughly) the same time, we used the YouTube "Share in Google Hangout" feature to play the video simultaneously at both locations. In each location, one screen in each space was used for projecting the Google+ Hangout, and another was used for projecting the image of the dancers.

We were attempting to use HD video with minimal lag time for our collaboration, so that dancers could dance in unison to the music. This is not possible with SKYPE or Google+: the quality is quite low compared with HD, and lag time is many seconds. We wrote a Max/MSP patch that uses peer-to-peer TCP/IP technology to send and receive video, which is much faster and allows for higher

video quality. However, a lot of pre-semester testing proved necessary to get this to work reliably. We finally got our best results using our custom Max/MSP app and Mpeg2 compression. At the end we still weren't satisfied on the UIUC end, for even though each frame was of a good quality, we were receiving rather choppy video. In further testing for another subsequent performance, I discovered that the problem at the UIUC end was the low power of the graphics cards, as the Max/MSP program was using the Graphics Processor Units for rendering. Later on, I discovered a way to use the CPU for rendering, instead of the GPU, which increased performance significantly. In contrast to my setup, NYU was using separate, newer computers for each task, so the video arriving at NYU from UIUC was very high quality, and very satisfying to dance with.

Audio was problematic coming from NYU to UIUC. Not enough care was taken to properly mic the voices at NYU. Only the omnidirectional microphone built in to the MacBook Pro was used to collect the voices at NYU, which fed back and was nearly unintelligible to us at UIUC with all the people talking at once at NYU.

#### Recommendations:

For High definition peer-to-peer video, we recommend engaging network specialists at your institution to really know Internet data rates in your facility, as well as firewalls and port conflicts that could wreak havoc with your experience. An advanced, geeky tweak was experimenting with different compression types, and specifying the video rendering engine. Taking care with microphone and speaker placement is also vital to a successful experience.

#### STUDENT RESPONSES

At the beginning of the project, the students at UIUC were quite fearful of the idea of long distance collaboration. Some said "I hate SKYPE", or were generally reluctant to speak into the microphone to their new partners in New York. The first class icebreaker then, turned out to be a necessary

component of this project, in order to get students comfortable with each other, and with the idea of collaboration on a project over a long distance. Pains were taken to emphasize that the collaboration need not always occur in real time. Emailing videos, or posting to FaceBook or YouTube and waiting for a response turned out to be a viable way of working. Texting was also one preferred mode of communication. The students really valued the classes where we allowed them to work with their long distance partners during class, making use of the universities' high speed WIFI Internet connection. They expressed that they only needed one class together as a group, and that the rest of the time should have been devoted to this one-on-one experience. At the end of the performance, there was unanimous consent that it was a good experience. They expressed surprise that there wasn't much difference between the aesthetic in New York and in Illinois. Some really enjoyed working with partners in New York, because of both friendships developed and the idea of professional networking.

#### QUESTIONS

This was the end of the paper/presentation, and at this point, conference attendees were asked for questions and comments to see if some conclusions could be drawn. Here is a short report:

#### CONCLUSIONS/IMPROVEMENTS

NDEO conference attendees, who attended the paper presented above, were fairly unanimous in their contention that a project like this, at the very least, raises awareness in students that such collaboration tools and ways of thinking exist, and that they are available to experiment with in their own art if so desired. Thus, this was a mind- and conceptual-expanding experience that surely benefitted the students involved. The professional networking connections were also cited as a real benefit to the students. In terms of a collaborative learning experience, it was suggested that it might be good for the students to have to pour over the music score online together, for an even deeper distance learning experience. On a purely technical note, I related that

I was surprised that the students were not very enthusiastic about setting up the projectors, screens, computers, audio gear, and cameras to make this project happen. It was generally agreed that perhaps a lack of familiarity with the technology engendered a fear of breaking something, or "messing things up," which may have dampened any enthusiasm for connecting gear to make the technology run. The technologies with which they were familiar—smart phones, Internet browsers and apps—were certainly not fear inducing, rather, just the larger apparatus in the theater setting. Perhaps requiring the students to set up the equipment would also be good for them, to really teach them how to make distance collaboration over the Internet work for them in the future.

#### *BIOGRAPHY*

**John Toenjes, MA** is an Associate Professor/Music Director of the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign Department of Dance, and past President of the international Guild of Musicians in Dance. John has accompanied classes internationally for many teachers, and has received over 30 dance score commissions. He now focuses on his own dance theater works that make extensive use of computer technology. John wrote the score and designed the wireless sensor networks for Trisha Brown's *Astral Convertible Reimagined*. He served as Technical Director for the Illinois-Japan Performing Arts Network (IJPAN), overseeing online broadcasts, culminating in "Timings," an online dance with dancers in Tokyo and Northern Illinois University. [jtoenjes@illinois.edu](mailto:jtoenjes@illinois.edu)

Diversity. Opportunity. Community.  
A Case Study Bridging Student and Professional Artists through Service Learning

Jessica Warchal-King, MFA

*ABSTRACT*

The *InHale Performance Series* is a program presented by Kun-Yang Lin/Dancers (KYL/D) at the CHI Movement Arts Center (CHI MAC) in Philadelphia, PA three-four times each year. The mission of this non-profit, professional and internationally recognized modern dance company is to “to continue to be a singular voice in dance movement by drawing upon an Asian American cultural perspective to enrich Western contemporary dance. The company creates and presents uncommon works that, while inspired by the traditions and aesthetic of Eastern Asia, transcend cultural boundaries and speak to the universality of the human experience. In celebrating the ability of dance to integrate body, mind, and spirit, the company invites viewers to engage in their own journeys of self-discovery” ([kunyanglin.org](http://kunyanglin.org)).

The *InHale Performance Series* reflects the mission of the company through producing the work of established and emerging performance artists. In its six years, over three hundred artists from PA, NJ, CT, MI, NY, MD, Washington D.C., IL, NC, WI, and Mexico have presented their work at the *InHale Performance Series*. Applicants submit a narrative information sheet, a work sample, and an application fee. *InHale* Artists receive professional performance space, technical assistance, and formal audience feedback. In 2010, students from Alvernia University participated in a Service Learning project to assist KYL/D and the *InHale* Artists produce the performance. This research looks at the immediate reflections of the students and the impact of the project, four years later.

During and after the project, the students were able to interact with professional artists and apply skills they had learned, through Dance Appreciation and other academic dance classes I led at Alvernia University, to the work of producing a professional dance performance. Students received hands-on experience and practice working in a professional theatre. Students developed an understanding of the energy needed to produce a professional, artistic production through collaboration with professional artists. The students better understood the role of art-making and art-production in performance art, storytelling, creating social justice, and building community.

KYL/D benefited through an influx of new volunteers for other performances. One student developed a long-term relationship with KYL/D. The *InHale* Artists benefited from the opportunity to show their work in a professional environment and to be teachers and mentors to the students. Three years later, the students, now alumni, reported an increase in self confidence and self awareness, and a commitment to social justice and active involvement in community building activities in their present environments.

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**BODY**

**What is InHale?**

The *InHale Performance Series* is a program presented by Kun-Yang Lin/Dancers (KYL/D) at the CHI Movement Arts Center (CHI MAC) in

Philadelphia, PA three-four times each year. The mission of this non-profit, professional and internationally recognized modern dance company is to “to continue to be a singular voice in dance movement by drawing upon an Asian American

cultural perspective to enrich Western contemporary dance. The company creates and presents uncommon works that, while inspired by the traditions and aesthetic of Eastern Asia, transcend cultural boundaries and speak to the universality of the human experience. In celebrating the ability of dance to integrate body, mind, and spirit, the company invites viewers to engage in their own journeys of self-discovery” (kunyanglin.org).

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### **What was the Service Learning Project?**

In 2011, students from Alvernia University participated in a Service Learning project to assist KYL/D and the *InHale* Artists produce the performance. Alvernia students prepared the CHI Movement Arts Center for the performance. The students laid marley, a special dance floor, placed and hung lights, set up risers and audience seating. The students ran the lighting and sound for the technical rehearsal and performance, directed the performance, provided house management, and took photographs of the artists during the performance. After the performance, the students engaged in striking the performance space.

### **Student Engagement**

The *InHale Performance Series* planning has several elements. First, artists apply to the Series. Work is selected through a curated process. Artists are notified and a program order is developed through careful attention to the physical, emotional, and psychological needs of the program. As curator, I selected the artists for the performance and then shared them with the students. The students were involved in the careful planning of the program prior

to the performance day, itself. I led them in looking at the written application and the work samples of the artists. We discussed the artistic intent of the works and how they might fit together to create a cohesive program where each piece would be best viewed from an audience’s perspective and in reflection of the mission of KYL/D. In class, I also described and prepared the students for the type and amount of work in which they would engage during the day of the performance.

The students arrived at noon to prepare the space and set up for tech. The performance was at 7:30. They laid marley, placed and hung lights, set up risers and audience seating, they cleaned and cleared the lobby, the performance space, and the dressing room for the performers and audience. They stuffed and folded programs. The students ran the lighting and sound for the technical rehearsal and performance, directed the performance, provided house management, and took photographs of the artists during the performance. After the performance, the students engaged in striking the performance space.

After the day of the performance, the students and I discussed the experience and reflected on the successes and challenges of live performance.

### **How did *InHale* relate to Service Learning?**

The students were able to interact with professional artists and apply skills they had learned through Dance Appreciation and other classes to the work of producing a professional dance performance. Students received hands-on experience and practice working in a professional theatre. One of the challenges of the project was the length of the day. Teching a performance, rehearsing a performance, and executing a performance take a lot of time and patience on the part of everyone involved. Additionally, the venue is in Philadelphia, which was not an issue, but did require the students to travel away from their campus in a small town, 70 miles away.

### **Who were the students? (class year & major/job description in 2011 & 2014)**

The students were all sophomore and junior undergraduate students in 2011. At the time, four



were Theatre Majors, one Criminal Justice Major, one Elementary Special Education Major, and one Undeclared. Of the seven who originally participated, I was able to contact six of them and received follow-up reflections in 2014 from four of them. The Theatre Majors are working in Retail and Health and Human Services. The Criminal justice major is also working in Retail. The Elementary Special Education Major is teaching Special Ed in an elementary school setting. The Undeclared student is completing a degree in Communications.

### Reflection questions

1. What were some positive experiences you had while working with the *InHale Performance Series* and Kun-Yang Lin/Dancers?
2. What were some challenges?
3. Describe your role during the *InHale Performance Series*. What was your role in regard to the other roles? How was your role important? How did your role inform the larger whole – or, what about your role provided a specific service to the Performance?
4. What did you learn about Dance Performance as Service? What did you learn about Theatre Technical Work as Service?
5. What did you learn about the non-profit community? How did your work provide a service to this community?
6. What did you learn about the professional, artistic community that you did not previously know?
7. Kun-Yang Lin/Dancers is a non-profit, professional dance company. “The mission of Kun-Yang Lin/Dancers is to continue to be a singular voice in dance movement by drawing upon an Asian American cultural perspective to enrich Western contemporary dance. The company creates and presents uncommon works that, while inspired by the traditions and aesthetic of Eastern Asia, transcend cultural boundaries and speak to the

universality of the human experience. In celebrating the ability of dance to integrate body, mind, and spirit, the company invites viewers to engage in their own journeys of self-discovery.” How has working with Kun-Yang Lin/Dancers and the *InHale Performance Series* inform your understanding of Service Learning? What have you taken away from the experience?

8. Why is it important to reflect on dance, theatre, and art as service?

### Additional reflection questions asked in 2014 included:

- Have you continued to incorporate dance, theatre, or service into your professional life? How?
- Why is it important to reflect on dance, theatre, and art as service?
- Is there anything else you’d like to add or share about your experiences with InHale, Service Learning, or your own growth and development as you see it, resulting from your Dance Appreciation Service Learning experience?

### Student reflections in 2011

“I thoroughly enjoyed working with the dancers who were performing, both during the technical rehearsals and during the performance. They were very appreciative of what we were doing as a tech crew to help with the production of the show, and it was a pleasure to be able to watch and learn about the world of dance from them. Working with the Kun Yang Lin/Dancers was also a positive experience, as their welcoming attitudes and willingness to work with us and allow us to learn from them and from this experience was key to our success in helping with the production.... Through this experience I learned that dance performance is service in that it allows viewers a break, a chance to take a breath and be in a place where they can view dance for artistic or entertainment purposes, or both. In fostering joy, exploration, and contemplation, dance performance

reaches the community on an internal level. In terms of theatre technical work, I learned how important the technical side of dance and performance is to those who are performing, and truly enjoyed serving the performers throughout the production of this show... Our technical work in this production also helped the non-profit community in that it allowed the Kun Yang Lin/Dancers, a non-profit organization, to produce the work of other artists and reach out to the larger Philadelphia community to make dance accessible to everyone who wants to be a part of it.... As a dancer and a student I have learned the importance of reflecting on dance, theatre, and art as service, as each of these taps into elements of humanity that many other disciplines cannot reach. Through the arts and serving through the arts, we are able to portray and view emotions, ideas, and the human connection in a unique way that allows viewers the chance to explore a different perspective. In this way, dance, and the arts as a whole, can help to foster peace and social justice throughout communities, a concept I have found at the root of every service project I have been blessed to be a part of.” ~Theatre Major, Junior

“A positive experience from working with the InHale Performance Series was to experience the work of professional artists and be able to work in a professional setting with different choreographers from Philadelphia to even New York. The ability to be known by some of these performers is a great honor because of the chance to make connections for when we are out of college that can help lead us to the right direction.... My part was working with the sound and the different pieces of music that each choreographer gave me the task of. The sound seemed like a simple task, which in essence is a very simple task, but the importance of the sound can make or break a piece. The use of music is to tell a story and to help the dancer convey a message through the rhythm of music. Music and sound take an audience into a different realm of perceptions that can be appreciated for their challenging viewpoints.... Dancing in nature is service. You are serving an audience the capability of being a part of

the journey as an artist. Being an artist and the discipline you must give to the art is a service in order to express.... The service of free use of the space to display different dances is a service that the Kun Yang Lin Dancers are giving to the community and giving the outsiders of the dance community a way to see the dedication and hard work. With my service, they don’t have to “hire” someone else to do work and my genuine dedication to the arts is something that is more valuable than money or anything can be.... The Kun-Yang Lin dancers are phenomenal. I have known them since June and they have taught me so much about the humanity being of dance. The body and the energy and space that surrounds us even when I am not dancing. How do I portray myself to the world, how is my energy being executed; how is my story being told? I am constantly challenged by them and to be a better dancer and a better understand for the movement of dance. They have welcomed me into their home and made me feel a part of them which is a big, big, big, big comfort and deal for me. I have never felt such a welcoming presence like I do when I enter the CHI Movement Arts Center. The arts have many faces to it. The beauty, pain, and mysterious influence it has on us, the participants of performing arts. Whether we are watching, being a part of the technical side of things, or the performers we are entering a different realm of the human mind. Instead of words and a simple story, we enter the artists mind on conveying a message and capturing an audience into following our vision and story. The importance of reflection of the arts is to see how a piece of work is differently portrayed to each person who experienced it. The experience we engage in the arts is so different from the person next to us and to find the uniqueness and difference is what being an artist is about. The differences that brings the beauty out in their dedication, their passions.”~Criminal Justice Major, Sophomore

“I think my role provided a service that came after the performance, which was to preserve a memory for the dancers. They now have visual evidence of their performance and hard work. InHale

specifically provides a service to the groups it chooses, by allowing them to dance for feedback. This is a unique opportunity that many groups do not have to opportunity to take advantage of. It is beneficial to receive input from outside sources that are impartial. Dance also provides joy to a community. It gives the audience an hour or more of entertainment and contemplation.... I learned it is a lot of hard work and based on teamwork. The studio had to be transformed into a professional looking performance space and for this to be successful, each and every person had to participate. Non-profits depend on the community. When I first think about non-profits I immediately think about the betterment of the community, but this goes both ways. The community needs to support the non-profit, but the non-profit must also be an institution the community wants to support. Lastly, I learned non-profits have a lot of power. They have the power to influence, inspire, and make a difference.... Being in Reading, it feels like the dance world is very limited and small, but while at InHale I discovered there is a whole world of dance either right in Philadelphia or relatively nearby. I do not have to travel hundreds of miles to experience and participate in dance at a more professional level... When I first learned about the service learning project I was extremely apprehensive. I thought I was going to be completely out of my league and completely lost; however, I discovered that even if I did feel lost I had the ability and confidence to be out of my comfort zone. Fortunately, I did not feel this pressure, but I think I learned a lot about people. For the most part, people want you to succeed and do not expect you to know everything. You may run across scary people, but that just reaffirms what kind of person you want to be and the kind of people you want to surround yourself in. Those “scary” people do not define you, but defines them. By learning this, I relearned things about myself. I put more pressure on myself than most people expect of me. When it comes to new experiences I need to just relax and learn from the opportunity. I think that is what service learning is about. Helping others discover themselves by

providing them with a new opportunity. Service learning is not just about helping others, but helping oneself (in an unselfish manner).”~Undeclared, Sophomore

“For years I viewed dance as entertainment. Although, I felt the love of dance and always knew it meant something special to me I always thought about dance as how it made other people feel (in terms of entertainment enjoyment). Now I know it can affect so many people’s lives in so many different ways. Just as dance has influenced how I live my life, it can inspire others in the same way. Dance, theater, and art can inspire people beyond words; influence their way of life through a feeling, not solely through spoken words.” ~Theatre Major, Junior

“I served specifically as the lighting technician during the show, however it is more important that I served as a member of a general technical crew. I say this because one person could not have laid all of the marley down and prepped the performance space as nicely as the whole team did. It also takes several people to make sure things go smoothly back stage, with sound and lighting and in the house. I feel as though dance will always be service whether it is intended or not. After seeing the dances performed, each one had a different message to convey, which caused me to think about that message. I believe by performing and raising awareness of these messages/issues it allows the affected community to be served. Dance also brings pleasure to people and by making another person happy, that becomes service in itself. The technical work helps to bring the performance “to life” so it also plays a huge part in the service of performance.... The non-profit community tends to have a greater & deeper intrapersonal and interpersonal mission which leads to more opportunities for everybody to serve the community. For example, we did not have to be part of the actual company to serve, we were able to present what we had as community members. By doing this, it allowed us to grow as artists, but also allowed the community benefit from our talents and interests. I

appreciated the mutual respect among the whole group that is required to produce a performance/show. I have taken away so much from this project that I don't think I would have otherwise. I believe service learning is the best way to learn because it presents different challenges and viewpoints that are not presented in classroom settings. This project gave me the opportunity to experience interaction with professionals in a calm and respectable (and sometimes hectic) setting. It also helped me learn about the art of choreography/story telling and thinking about how what dance means/what it can do both for an individual as well as a collective community. I believe I understand more about what it takes to put a dance together and what it takes to put a show together. I think my favorite part of this whole experience though is that I am better able to appreciate and understand dance as a form of art and service before a form of entertainment now."

~Theatre Major, Sophomore

#### **Student reflections in 2014**

"Honestly, it was great to feel a part of a company even though we were volunteering our services. Being with other artists allows me to keep my own creative self motivated and ticking. Also, being able to meet so many new people who share similar interests is always exciting. Another point I'd like to make is that you are working on a production that promotes a message in which you can understand and get behind. As a performance artist, one element that is needed is to find that spark that motivates you towards that specific project. I think working on a project with a mission such as Inhale promotes a community feeling even though you may not directly be a part of it. Having the chance to stage manage a dance concert is exciting and something that I never got to do before. With that being said it was challenging due to not knowing the ins and outs. I don't consider myself a dancer so managing the stage in which dancers are performing on was certainly challenging. Networking is so important and Inhale lent itself to that nicely. I've dedicated my professional career to nonprofit work. I work for a

non profit that focuses on adults with disabilities. I create programs and activities that fit individuals goals and needs in life. Even though I'm not directly involved in theatre or dance, I'm still using creative skills and abilities. I never imagined I'd be doing this work but my life pushed me in this direction. Inhale certainly fueled the fire for this direction. I have worked professionally as an actor now. And look forward to doing more. I've been a part of three professional productions and honestly it's not enough. My experience at InHale gave me a push to keep performing and being a part of a community that accepts me and I accept them. Have you continued to incorporate dance, theatre, or service into your professional life? How? Absolutely! Every day I am challenged at work to keep on my dancer feet and work and develop creative programming. Everyday I'm able to use my skills and keep honing them to improve." ~Former Theatre Major, currently working in Health and Human Services

"I think the best feeling during the InHale performances are after the show when you are able to step back and have the sense of accomplishment at successfully completing a show and receiving that reassurance from dancers and audience members as they thank and congratulate everybody involved. One of my favorite moments that occurs from time to time When working on the series is when you see a dance that not only inspires you to do your best work during that performance, but inspires you to grow and push yourself as a person and performer on a regular basis. One of the most difficult moments i experienced was when there was a clash in preparation/work styles while teching a piece. I didn't appreciate the way the choreographer was talking to the tech team and the dancers, because it was a different way than I was used to. In experiencing this, it not only reinforced patience, but also taught me how to adjust my energy to appropriately handle the situation In a professional way. I also have learned and continue to learn how to troubleshoot and adjust when things go awry so as to keep the show moving. I think by being able to do this while teching it has translated a bit when on

stage and something gets off track. I am still able to stay in that moment while improvising to get back on track without panicking. While I still help with inhale performance series, I try to use all performances to benefit everybody involved from performers to audience members to directors. Because every show requires a collective effort I think it's important for each individual to not only take something away from each experience, but to also leave something to benefit and help improve for the next time or next dance or performance whether it be in the same format/space or a new one. In working with KYLD, it taught me a lot about my own energy and taught me how to use dance and performance art as a form of reflection not just of my own experiences but also my personal reflections on other research and other friends/family/colleagues experiences. I think my greatest accomplishment in approaching a piece with this frame of mind was during my senior capstone when I choreographed the contemplation piece and the service piece. I was able to find a comfortable approach, through the same processes I picked up during dance appreciation and inhales to focus on reflection of each individual as an individual, and the group as one large individual not just in the physical form, but also through a mental capacity and through energy.” ~Former Theatre Major, currently working in health and human services. Continued relationship with KYLD.

“During our service projects with KYLD, I served as house manager. I enjoyed this role because I was able to work directly with the artists and the community, helping to ensure everyone had what they needed in order to enjoy the performance. I have continued to work within the nonprofit community as an Elementary Autistic Support teacher in the Reading School District. Interestingly, my role at Inhale was great practice for me to be able to connect with people and find out what they need. Whether I am working with my students or their parents, I now find myself constantly working to find out what needs exist and how I can help to meet them. I still frequently explore movement on my own, and more often share it with my students. It is

amazing to be able to share alternative means of expression with my students who face constant challenges with expressing themselves, especially my nonverbal students. I love watching my students' faces light up when I put music on for them, and I love that I am able to allow them that time to be silly, wild, and free- to be perfectly themselves. This in turn helps them to gain confidence in themselves, which directly correlates to their social skill improvement. Individuals with Autism typically struggle to develop the social skills necessary for day to day interactions, but through expressing themselves through the arts, I can see my students gain the confidence in themselves to positively interact with others outside our classroom walls, which is, in essence, the goal of education: teaching children to appropriately engage with and learn from the world around them.” ~Former Elementary Special Education Major, currently working as an Elementary Special Education Teacher

“A positive experience from the InHale Performance Series was the technical importance of live theatre. It was such an intense measure of work that needed to be done for such a short time frame of work. I became aware and more appreciative of work that others do for me. In particular, work that is done by others that I rely on their talents to execute my task properly (ie. The dancer needs me to hit play in order to do a piece). It was always a great experience meeting such talent from all over the city and even across the country. Everyone's energy was amazing and very supportive of the work that was being done in the studio by all players in the element.... With Kun Yung, his presence is an experience on its own. His intensity is intoxicating and you can get lost in power that man demands from space. It is from him that I learned my energy surroundings, the basis of presence and how to attain a positive presence. How to exhume energy and let the environment take it in and use it to power my performance are some other valuable lessons I have walked away with. With meeting most of the dancers, I have fallen in love with the passion and the drive of the company. It kept me coming back for so long and driving miles

just to be in the space that changed so much of my perspective of the world. I can do anything, I can be anything, and I was never more confident in myself as I was when I stepped into that studio as a student.... I learned the importance of chi awareness and the importance of blue and amber lights. How they can affect mood, emotions, or just give vibrancy to a plain space. The transformation of performers as they enter to a piece or exhale is important. The living experience is something that can be translated into dance. We are constantly in awareness of our energy and how it is broadcasted to the world... A job as a server is nothing of what I want to consider a career. But I guess me doing pas de bourree around customers can be considered incorporating dance into my job. I am constantly also finding my center for support when I am leaping over luggage and carrying trays and plates full with food and drinks. As for service, my title is a server. It is nothing of what I consider service and the empowerment that service brings to the forth front of development for the human experience. It's funny how employment changes the experience of what service is meant to be." ~former Criminal Justice major, currently working in retail

### **Conclusion**

The *InHale Performance Series* Service Learning Project allowed the students to develop a long term relationship with a professional dance company (KYL/D). Through the experience, the students gained a greater sense of community. They began to understand dance as art, not just entertainment and recognize and experience the ability of dance to transform the body, mind, and spirit of not only

participants, but also of audience members. Despite time and distance, the students have remained long-term audience members and supporters of dance and civic minded individuals.

### **BIOGRAPHY**

Jessica C. Warchal-King is a Philly-based performer, choreographer, educator, and arts advocate. She is a member of Kun-Yang Lin/ Dancers (KYLD) and Nora Gibson Contemporary Ballet. She has performed for many independent choreographers in Philadelphia, New York, and the Virginia/ DC area. Her choreography has been presented throughout Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, the Washington DC area, and Virginia. Jessica is co-founder and curator of the InHale Performance Series, presented by KYLD. She teaches at several universities, studios, and arts centers offering Master and ongoing classes. Jessica earned her MFA in Dance from Temple and her BA in Dance and Anthropology from Muhlenberg College. She is a trained instructor in Dance for PD, developed by the Mark Morris Dance Group, and a Power Pilates Mat I & II Certified Instructor. *The Embodiment Project* is Jessica's ongoing research project investigating the relationships between kinesthetic, somatic, and anatomical understanding, self-awareness, art-making, joy-creation, and social justice. [jcwarchalking@gmail.com](mailto:jcwarchalking@gmail.com)

## Dancing as a Team: Exploring Collaborations in Competition Dance Pedagogy

Lindsey Grites Weeks, MA, PhD Candidate

### *ABSTRACT*

This practice-based report draws on the presenter's work at two private sector dance studios in New Jersey during the 2013-2014 competition season. In each studio environment, teachers worked in collaboration with each other and with students to improve students' technique and performance skills and to create choreography. In informal conversation settings, teachers discussed their experiences in these collaborations, successes and challenges of working collaboratively, and possibilities for the future.

In discussions of teacher-and-student collaborations, teachers viewed time constraints, class size, scheduling, and age/maturity of students as challenges of collaborative work in competition dance. Teachers reported it more feasible to work collaboratively on choreography with more experienced students (age 10 and older) who felt comfortable with improvisation and movement invention. Teachers also found it difficult to collaborate with larger groups and preferred to work collaboratively on solos, duets, and trios. In dances created through collaborative processes, teachers discussed establishing an open space for students to generate and experiment with movement ideas before choreography was set. Teachers reported that students' performances of choreography based in students' own movement material were successful in competition.

Student-and-student collaborations were facilitated in classes and rehearsals through emphasis on leadership and acknowledgement of students' individual strengths. For instance, a student with strong musicality would call out the timing of choreography, or a student who excelled at a particular skill would demonstrate and explain that skill to team-mates. This created opportunities for students to teach and to learn from their peers. Teachers reported that students could rely on each other for help and encouragement, which reinforced the idea of dancing as a team.

Overall, teacher-and-teacher collaborations were seen as constructive. Teachers generally viewed their colleagues as resources for sharing of classroom management strategies, choreography ideas, and music and costume suggestions. They also kept an open dialogue with each other throughout the competition season to assess students' individual technique challenges and to address them consistently in technique classes, rehearsals, and private lessons. Time constraints and scheduling issues were identified as major challenges of teacher-to-teacher collaborations.

Strategies for team-building were also discussed; these included in-studio special events (team sleepover, team ice cream social), summer dance intensives and boot camps, participation in community performances and fundraisers, and attendance of non-competition dance workshops and conventions. Teachers identified trust, respect, willingness to invest time and energy in collaborative processes, clearly-defined responsibilities and goals for all participants, development of co-constructed boundaries, open space for participants to express themselves, and modeling of collaborative behaviors and attitudes for students as elements of successful collaborations in competition dance pedagogy.

## *BIOGRAPHY*

Lindsey Grites Weeks is a PhD candidate in Dance at Temple University. At Temple, she has worked as a Teaching Assistant/Academic Intern, serving on the first NDEO Dance2050 Conference planning committee. She was the 2012 recipient of the Sarah A. Hilsendager Professional Educator Award from the Temple Dance Department. Lindsey holds an MA in Dance Education from New York University and BA in Dance and English from Rutgers University. She is an Associate member of the Cecchetti Council of America and is certified in ballet through Associated Dance Teachers of New Jersey. Lindsey teaches in private studios in New Jersey. [lindsey.weeks@temple.edu](mailto:lindsey.weeks@temple.edu)