

A COLLABORATION: DANCE AND THEATRE

by

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STATEMENT OF THESIS APPROVAL

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the potential and the origin of dance and theatre as performing arts. I examine the relationship of the audience to performers, discuss the possibility for ritual and the sacred, and develop ideas for meaningful and effective collaboration of theatre and dance. It is through the lens of my own choreographic work and process of creating *Another Night* that I explore ideas, methods and theories from theatre and dance practitioners who have paved the way in their investigation and integration of these two ultimately interdependent art forms. Through my research I have come to understand that when the four areas of audience, the sacred, dance and theatre are integrated, artists create more possibilities to communicate with their audiences.

For:

My Father whose life and passions allowed me to see a different kind of world
that I will continue to embrace and pursue,
and for my Mother who has supported me every step along the uneven ground.

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PREFACE

My first word at eleven months old was “stage.” Okay, not really: it was “no.” And it was at sixteen months. However, considering that the theatre was my second home, it should have been “stage.” Along with having grown up in dance studios in rehearsals and classes, the other half of my everyday was spent in the theatre in rehearsals and performances. I could sit through an entire theatrical production at age two, totally engaged with what was being presented onstage without being disruptive. The theatre has continued to captivate my attention as I have transitioned into adulthood. I knew from age five that I wanted to dance, and that knowledge continued to reach beyond merely a young child’s fascination with tutus and pointe shoes. I realized in my early teens that I wanted to pursue dance as a career and eventually teach within the university setting, which would necessitate a college degree. I was willing to dedicate all of my time to this art form, but I was still spending an equal amount of time acting in the theatre. Although each of these two performing art forms demands an embodied dedication individually, I could not leave one or the other behind. This dual focus continued through my college years, and as an undergraduate student, I double-majored in theatre performance and modern dance.

I have recently asked myself why I could not abandon one art form for the other. After careful thought, I have come to realize that theatre and dance are much more integral to one another than what was originally instilled in me during my undergraduate training, which was why I continued to be drawn to both. I knew that I needed somehow

to knit both of them together in order to create my honest and complete artistic voice. Both art forms fuel me, and thus my art; for me, there should be a collaboration of both genres in performance. I wanted to bring this realization into the thesis exploration so that I could dedicate significant time to understanding my process as both a dance and theatre artist, and hopefully contribute to further integration in both areas.

As I choreographed *The Bacchae* for Casper College three years ago, I witnessed drama and dance melding together into one entity as they historically used to be. The Greek drama, about women dancing, celebrating, praising and sacrificing on a mountaintop for the God Dionysus, called for deeply physical movement that would assist in telling the story through text. I began to wonder why these two performing arts were often separated from one another in educational and professional study when they were initially, and are still, so dependent on one another.

Theatre and dance have many similarities, and at their core, both intrinsically depend on their relationship with their audiences. As an audience member who has watched both theatre and dance performances, I have reflected on why specific performances reach me and inform me in my own personal journey more powerfully than others. It is through the years of watching these performances that I have begun to address my intrigue with the interplay between performance, audience, theatre and dance.

As Atlas held up the world, I owe many thanks to the Atlases in my life who have helped share the weight in holding up my own world. First, I want to thank the University of Utah's Department of Modern Dance. I want to thank each faculty member in this department who continually, and collaboratively encouraged growth, offered

support and guidance, and cheered me along the way while I created goals, navigated challenges, and embraced new opportunities that made me both nervous and excited.

I want to thank my community of friends and colleagues who together created a family that I always knew I could depend on. Specifically in this group, I want to thank my roommate who endured and embraced my tears, curses, laughter, and little successes along this journey, and also the theatre tech crew that always offered a breath of fresh air and a healthy dose of reality.

Most of all, I would like to thank my thesis committee who offered their unending support and direction, and who so graciously guided my vision. A thank you goes to Bob for his fresh perspective, positive encouragement, and helpful theatre knowledge. Another one goes to Brent for his advice, his detailed eye, and his inspiration to me as an educator, an administrator, and a friend. Thank you also to Ellen, the chair of this wonderful committee. I want to thank her for her intellect that always questions and encourages students to investigate further, for her drive that pushes boundaries, and her sense of humor that makes the creative process manageable. I want to thank these three educators for allowing me to carry on with the vision and ideas I had, while constantly encouraging me to uncover new pathways along the way. Thank you.

INTRODUCTION

As I stood in the freezing cold, with the crisp autumn wind rushing by my shivering body robed in a brightly colored Lycra unitard, I felt a recognizable warmth. That warmth certainly was not the sun shining down on the six dancers willing to participate in an adventure, but a warmth from the familiarity of spiritual cohesion. As the other dancers and I ran into the shot joyously screaming and celebrating with movements that told the story of accomplishment, we ceremoniously stripped ourselves of our everyday clothing as we neared our dancing place. On top of a cold mountain just brushed with the first snow of the approaching winter, we were creating a ritual, a spiritual celebration of life, and we were worshiping through movement. Our dance began in a canon that was interrupted with a unison phrase that brought the dancers into whirling turns of excitement. As the celebrating continued, a voice-over of God projected over our yelled exclamations: “Stop. No. This is not right.” Looking confused, dejected, bewildered and suppressed, each dancer gathered his or her belongings that moments before had been thrown off in ecstasy, and exited the frame of the camera.

In my twenty-five-plus years of dancing, I had never experienced the kind of dancing that the film “Mountain Dance” generated. This dancing felt strangely religious, and reminded me of the Greek tragedies I have read where women went into the hills to sanctify themselves and to worship a particular god. I had always been curious what the maenads of Dionysian ritual had experienced, and I believe this mountain dance was a true taste of it.

I have definitely had spiritual experiences while dancing. I think any time that you are offering your authentic, honest self as a performer onstage, you have the ability to perform for the audience in a manner that is spiritually enlightening to yourself. However, this particular dance was strangely religious, not strangely spiritual. And I don't think it was the voice-over of God that made it feel that way, but instead the community and collaboration in the moment of the ritual itself. We weren't just moving together. We were moving and talking and celebrating together. The expression of the moment came from a combination of movement, words, music, and the setting. In other words, our contemporary mountain dance, created for a film project, became a clear example of a collaboration of theatre, dance, music, and art, and in this particular instance, religion, or the sacred.

Todd Johnson, a professor of theology and arts, writes that theatre allows the audience to be

confronted with story, character, language, and ideas that engage the emotions and intellect together. Not just the content of the performance (the script, story, etc.) but the total experience can have a profound impact on audiences; for this reason theatre has endured for centuries and continues to thrive even with competition from its electronic offspring. Theatre, as interactive experience, connects with a deep human need for community and for interaction with other humans. (Johnson 2009, 10)

This community was traditionally created from religious intentions: "All the performances which, in the genres of dithyrambs, tragedy, comedy, and satyr play, were the glory of the Athenian theatre in the classical period, had their ultimate origin in primitive rituals of song and dance of one sort or another" (Lawler 1964, 1). Furthermore,

In nearly all surviving tribal cultures, we find dances that are not merely spontaneous outbursts of feeling—jumps of joy or stamps of anger—but patterned, rhythmical sequences, performed in a special place and designed to make a particular impression on the spectators. Most often the place is just a

clearing in the grass, and the spectators are the gods whom the dancer beseeches to make the rain fall, the crops grow, the tribe increase. (Cohen 1974, 1)

Although we cannot place an exact time of creation on the historical origins of dance and theatre, the most accepted view of western origin dates to the Athenian Dithyramb, performed through song and dance as a spring festival to the god Dionysus, in the sixth century B.C.E. “At first the celebration was wild and improvised, but in time it began to conform to the more set structure of ritual, using composed songs and dances” (1).

As someone who is versed in both dance and theatre, I have become extremely familiar with theories of the origins of these crafts, as I have attended course after course of theatre history, dramatic literature, and dance history. Although these many classes were offered through the separate departments in which I have studied throughout my formal college education, I find it interesting that in the history of the art forms themselves, they are not separated. When we describe the origins of theatre and dance, they are most frequently listed together. Historically, these two art forms were co-dependent. It was the marriage of the two modes of communication, both movement and speech, that created classical Greek performances.

However, contemporary academia oddly finds it prudent to compartmentalize theatre and dance, while arguing that they both have the power to stand alone and still effectively reach an audience. Although they may have the ability to be separated and still have the force to reach an audience individually, I question if that is the best course of action, or if there is indeed a reduction in effectiveness when the two disciplines are separated. I believe that if it is an artist’s intention to create strong, effective, bonded

relationships that are needed in performance, attention must be paid to the methods by which we bring our audience to a catharsis.

As stated, I recognize that dance can stand alone as its own art form, and that theatre also has that ability. In the field of modern dance, each dance is created by an individual choreographer who is essentially writing their own movement language. Theater works from the text of a play, while dance IS the text. Ballet consists of a codified movement language that has evolved over centuries. In modern dance, the movement vocabulary is unique to each creator and the only rules that a choreographer must follow are those that are determined by the restrictions of biology, anatomy, and the physical laws of nature. There is no universal method by which a viewer can decode meaning in modern dance (which is more possible within the codified language and structure of classical ballet), but even though meaning in dance can be more ephemeral and abstract, I submit that there can exist an over-arching structure that can guide the audience toward understanding the choreographer's unique vocabulary within the greater scope of interpretation and meaning-making in a dance. Modern dance, just as modern art, has the ability to express what there are no words to explain. The careful balance in creating art in any form, is to find where those outlines of structure can give enough sense of the concrete for an audience or viewer to enter, engage and at some level, comprehend the work. This is a basic premise of this thesis.

I acknowledge that there are many aesthetics that have carried the age-old art forms of theatre and dance through the centuries and that these aesthetics continue to evolve naturally, through social and cultural processes by both its creators and its audiences. Through this thesis I simply expound upon my aesthetic and the ideas that

follow are an introduction to my questions and thoughts, and are not meant to discount other ways of approaching theatre and dance.

I believe that the collaboration of theatre and dance, and the exploration of each as individual yet symbiotic art forms, can achieve a proactive and engaging approach to performance. I think the marriage of both art forms is necessary in order to increase options for possible communication of a complete idea or thought to the audience.

After giving these issues considerable thought, my desire and challenge were now to put these thoughts into form in the studio.

As I stood in the empty space with one arm draped across my body and the other hand supporting my head in the thinking position, I contemplated where to begin the physical venture of interweaving the individual threads of these theories, forms and passion. *Another Night* is the result. This work premiered at the Marriott Center for Dance in the graduate concert, *The Odds*, November 19-21, 2009.

This piece was not just about conventionally choreographing particular movements for a dance, but instead about embodying and interweaving elements of the theatrical into the dance. I needed to employ gestures and movements that brought the physical relationship into a new realm I had not yet experienced; a realm that broached subjects of the spiritual, and that confronted the audience. I wanted the movement itself to become the narrative, and not just to be a physical representation of the spoken ideas. I also wanted the dialogue to become an extension of the physical movement, rather than being a separate form of expression. It is through the lens of this choreographic process and completed work that I will examine the collaboration of theatre and dance, ritual and audience relationship.

I. AUDIENCE

I can take an empty space and call it a bare stage. A man walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and this is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged.

(Brook 1968, 9)

I have often heard dance and theatre practitioners question the necessity of an audience in the process of creating their art. However, as Peter Brook, a legendary theatre artist who has affected the course of theatre and ever-changing thought on theatre in contemporary society, states, true theatre, or any performing art for that matter, can really only happen when someone is witnessing the event. Otherwise, it is just a bare stage, and the performance is narcissistic self-indulgence. Everything we do as performing artists, ultimately, is for the audience. The audience must be a part of the equation of creating a performance. The word performance has evolved to be defined as: a presentation of an artistic work to an audience, indicating that a performance is a two-part relationship. In Greek culture, the space where an audience sat to watch a performance was named the “theatron” or “seeing place” (Jacobus 1997, 9). This word alone indicates that the entire space of the theatre is named after the essential role played by the audience, not the performer. It is the relationship performers build with the audience that makes for a performance, not the work of art by itself in isolation.

In 1968, Brook observed that “all through the world, theatre audiences are dwindling. There are occasional new movements, good new writers and so on, but as a whole, the theatre not only fails to elevate or instruct, it hardly entertains.” He continues,

“the theatre has often been called a whore, meaning its art is impure, but today this is true in another sense—whores take the money and then go short on the pleasure” (Brook 1968, 10). Brook goes on to assert that

Audiences crave for something in the theatre that they can term ‘better’ than life and for this reason are open to confuse culture, or the trappings of culture, with something they do not know, but sense obscurely could exist—so, tragically, in elevating something bad into a success they are only cheating themselves. (11)

The question may be asked then, how do we provide as many opportunities as possible for our audiences to become more engaged in the work at hand so that they are not “cheating themselves” in the experience, and so that we as artists, are not ignoring the potential of connecting to them?

I can’t believe that I am going to admit the following, especially since I have committed my collegiate educational studies to the art form of dance, but I feel it is an important part of my creative and artistic journey: although I am a dancer, and have spent most of my life thus far in a studio, I have always been more comfortable in the area of theatre. I have always preferred to watch a theatre performance, whether it was a play or a musical, than to be an audience member at a dance concert. Now, this is not true for me as a performer. If I am the one onstage, I always prefer dancing to acting. I have never been able to make sense of this paradox, other than the fact that I feel I can connect more with the audience, and to myself, while dancing. However, as an audience member, I always feel more connected to actors I watch onstage than I ever do to dancers.

As an audience member I feel that theatre brings the audience into the process of the work onstage. The very timing and construction of the experience of the play is usually dictated by the audience. Comedic timing, moments of tragedy that call for dramatic pauses that allow the audience the same reflection, song endings that ask for

audience applause before the scene continues, all are examples of the need for an audience-to-actor relationship. Ballet also generally demands an audience response due to the training of its audiences through history. The applause after solos, the “bravos” called from the audience, the million and one bows during the formal curtain call - all serve as examples of performances that are dependent on audience-performer relationships. However, in most modern dance, I find that the dance is only altered when the dancers change it themselves, but that the quality of the performance is rarely dictated by the audience. I remember exiting the stage after a theatre performance and saying, “the audience is really dead tonight” or, “the audience is really making me feel alive this evening.” Never once have I left the stage from dancing and experienced either of those two reactions. The purely visual art form of dance does not as directly depend on the link to the audience to create the performance, although there is a more subtle energetic exchange.

For this reason, I am naturally drawn to witness and to create dance that has a heightened theatricality in the choreography. I find that this heightened theatricality then allows for an awareness of the presence of the audience. Elevating theatrics usually prompts audible responses from those witnessing the performance—e.g., laughter, applause, talking, whistles, catcalls, exclamation, people leaving, or my favorite, stunned silences and tears that are so quiet you know all audience members have their eyes affixed on the action, anxiously awaiting the next moment (Stourac 1986, 20).

James Nicola, a theatre practitioner, asserts

What we really do when we stage a play is orchestrate the journey of how we hope to play with the audience. This play—or interplay—is *theatricality*. Theatricality means playing the audience—not necessarily playing *to*, but *with*—whether you let them know that you are doing it or not. (Nicola 2002, 1)

When performances do not actively acknowledge the presence of the audience, then all those involved—the artist, the performer, and the audience—lose out on a possible relationship that could enrich the experience and strengthen understanding of the concepts, messages and thoughts presented on the stage. Historically, we see this exemplified by the advent of western drama as part of the Athenian religious festivals that established an inextricable link to the religious experience of the involved spectator (Bennett 1990, 2):

The chorus in the orchestra shows that no physical barrier separated performer from audience; the presence among the spectators of the cult statue of a god (Dionysus) who might also be active on the stage further reveals that the absence of a physical barrier was matched by the absence of any “spiritual” barrier. Stage, orchestra, and auditorium formed a single unity and so too did actors, chorus and spectators, all of whom were sharing in a common act of devotion. (Walcot 1976, 4)

Vsevolod Meyerhold, an innovative theatre practitioner in the early twentieth century, challenged the conventions of his time and paid direct attention to the creativity of his audiences. In 1930 he wrote:

Nowadays, every production is designed to induce audience participation: modern dramatists and directors rely not only on the efforts of the actors and the facilities afforded by the stage machinery but on the efforts of the audience as well. We produce every play on the assumption that it will be still unfinished when it appears on the stage. We do this consciously because we realize that the crucial revision of a production is that which is made by the spectator. (Meyerhold 1969, 256)

Through my experience of creating the piece *Another Night*, I began to understand the concept of leaving things “unfinished” in the studio. Only when the audience is factored into the final composition is the piece complete. In fact, I always found it more valuable to rehearse my choreography with an audience than without. The elements of theatricality built into the piece, the timing of the recited lines, and the

actors' physical relationship to one another were consistently more engaged when an audience was present and authentically gave their reaction audibly. Often these enhanced elements did not even need to be prompted by audible responses, but just by the mere presence and energy in the room given by the audience. When the audience was missing, the dancers often relied on their inner-connectivity to carry their performance and were only able to connect with the other dancers onstage, thereby creating a product that lacked energy, excitement, risk, immediacy and a heightened sense of relationship.

The creative process we employed confirmed that the audience gave the critical feedback I needed for the direction of the piece. Through the evolution of creating the work, the audience became almost a creative partner in my dramatic process (Bennett 1990, 5). I would use audience members to gage the progress of my work and use their reactions to assist in determining what direction and mood I wanted my piece to embody. Those audiences that included friends, professors, and peers allowed me to sculpt my choreography according to the reaction I wanted from them. For example, if laughter occurred at a moment when I wanted it, I would leave the section alone or try to push it further in that direction. Conversely, if laughter or any other type of reaction occurred at a point I did not feel was appropriate, I would adjust the moments of the dance so that they would evoke a different reaction.

As with all audiences for performance, they become the critical eye that determines if the work continues to be seen and publicly presented. It often doesn't matter what professional critics write; it is the audience who determines the ultimate popularity or impact of an artist's work. Stephen Sondheim captured the essence of this dilemma through the lyrics sung by George and Dot in *Sunday in the Park with George*:

“Stop worrying if your vision is new/ Let others make that decision/ They usually do./ You keep moving on” (Sondheim).

Susan Bennett, an author and professor of English warns, “Dramatic theory has often neglected the role of the addressee, the process of an audience’s interpretation” (Bennett 1990, 4). She further explains that while the community nature of Greek theatre fostered an interest in the spectator’s contribution, the earliest and most influential theorists paid little attention to this central aspect of their theatre. Aristotle’s *Poetics* identify the audience as the chief interest insofar as they prove the power of good tragic texts/performances (4). Horace in *Ars Poetica* names the audience as the recipient of the poets’ work: “Poets intend to give either pleasure or instruction or to combine the pleasing and instructive in one poem” (Horace 1977, 333-4). I suggest that this scant attention paid to our audiences, recommended by classical writers, is not enough. It does not provide the full and enriched experience that performances can indeed facilitate. The audience is simply not there just to impart insight onto them, but for the audience and performer to develop a relationship from which both will benefit. In order for that beneficial relationship to develop, the artists and the audience must demand more from one another.

While recently stage managing a theatre event, I spoke with a sound designer about audience reaction in watching dance. He revealed his irritation with the modern aesthetic of separating the audience from the performers in all areas of the design of dance. He then detailed how he facilitates a sound design for dance in a performance space. He insists that the design goes far beyond how the music is heard, and reaches into how dance can be mic’d so as to make the audience feel that they are a part of the action.

With the use of microphones throughout the space onstage, the movements and the air between the movements can be amplified so that the audience is drawn into the space and their kinesthetic senses are awakened. This enlightening discovery again manifested to me just how important the audience is in a performance. Their involvement is crucial to their reaction.

As I have indicated with my own work, I find it necessary that the audience emerge as a tangible, active creator of the theatrical event in the sense that their very presence changes the performance given by the actors/dancers on stage. Jerome Rothenberg agrees:

Along with the artist, the audience enters the performance arena as a participant—or, ideally, the audience disappears as the distinction between the doer and viewer...begins to blur. For this the tribal/oral is a particularly clear model, often referred to by the creators of 1960's happenings and the theatrical pieces that invited, even coerced, audience participation toward an ultimate democratizing of the art. (Rothenberg 1977, 14)

It is the democratizing of the arts that I find so essential to forming this relationship between viewer and participant. “Drama is that art whose subject, structure, and action is social process” (Schechner 1977, 121). If the lines are blurred in performance, then the dramatic experience is strengthened by familiarity of language and events that both the audience and performer experience simultaneously. If this occurs, then the breadth and depth of what one can perceive and take away from the performance has been strengthened by the symbiotic relationship that has developed between the performer and the audience.

Audience is necessary for performance, by the very definition of the word. Peter Brook discusses the fact that without audiences, performers would lose their substance: “the audience is always the challenge without which a performance would be a sham”

(Brook 1968, 62). So the question then arises, how do we capture our audiences' involvement with the action onstage so that the maximum audience/performer relationship can develop?

Peter Brook and Jerzy Grotowski suggest that it is by sacrificing.

II. RITUAL IN PERFORMANCE

The Theatre...cannot be an end in itself; like dancing or music in certain dervish orders, the theatre is a vehicle, a means for self-study, self-exploration; a possibility of salvation. (Brook 1968, 59)

Jerzy Grotowski asserts that the actor has himself as his field of work. He claims “the field is richer than that of the painter, richer than that of the musician, because to explore he needs to call on every aspect of himself. His hand, his eye, his ear and his heart are what he is studying and what he is studying with” (59). An actor allows a role to “penetrate” him:

The actor does not hesitate to show himself exactly as he is, for he realizes that the secret of the role demands his opening himself up, disclosing his own secrets. So that the act of performance is an act of sacrifice, of sacrificing what most men prefer to hide—this sacrifice is his gift to the spectator. (60)

Both Jerzy Grotowski and Antonin Artaud, theorists and practitioners who radically changed the way theatre associates with an audience, valued an aesthetic that eliminated distance in the theatre, and encouraged a direct assault on the psyches of the spectators. For them, theatre should be a deeply religious event, a sort of ritual.

Grotowski compared the performance by an actor to a religious sacrifice: “The actor completely strips himself to the audience, to make a total gift of himself to the spectators” (Chaim 1984, 40). For Grotowski, “this is a technique of the trance and of the integration that an actor must conduct of their own psychic and bodily powers in order to emerge from the intimacy of themselves as humans, and “spring forth in a sort of translumination” (Grotowski 1965, 16). He further describes this sacrifice:

The actor's wretchedness can be transformed in a kind of... "secular holiness." If the actor, by setting himself a challenge, publicly challenges others, and through excess, profanation and outrageous sacrilege reveals himself by casting off his everyday mask, he makes it possible for the spectator to undertake a similar process of self-penetration. If he does not exhibit his body, but annihilates it, burns it, frees it from every resistance to any psychic impulse, then he does not sell his body but sacrifices it. He repeats the atonement; he is close to holiness. (Grotowski 1964, 34)

It is this familiarity with giving of oneself as a performer that I believe creates the best art. One must be generous of spirit. However, performers cannot reach this level of self-sacrifice without knowing themselves deeply enough to then give of their authentic self purely. Knowing ourselves in this manner does not just happen psychologically, but also physically. We cannot give fully of ourselves by including just the mental portion of the body. The physical self must also be bestowed.

Given my beliefs about performance as discussed above, and as seen in *Another Night*, I find it important to embody all of what one is giving to one's audience. I did not want to see smiles or any sort of pretense that the dancers' physical action was easy or without effort. I asked for lines that were to be delivered during a physically exhausting movement phrase be delivered from that authentic place of exhaustion. I did not want them to pretend that they were experiencing something different, either in another frame of mind or physically, from what they were truly experiencing. Unlike ballet, where smiles are usually ushered in to mask the pains of the physicality of the movement, or even modern dance, which often uses the blank moody stare, I wanted the dancers' emotions to be evident throughout the piece. Through this alignment of realities, through being present in the moment, I believe the performers were able to reveal the layers of their intimacy that are usually undisclosed. I expected the dancers to challenge themselves physically and mentally in order to bring about a challenge to the audience in

their unique viewership to see something different, or to focus their interpretations in a new light.

I deliberately made the performers feel uncomfortable in rehearsal by encouraging the audience to feel uncomfortable and experience the unexpected. The context of *Another Night* included the existential concept that sleep is waiting, and waiting is sleep, among other things. If waiting and sleeping are all that a human does, what is it then that entices us to wake in the morning? The theatricality of this concept naturally invited the use of pauses and lengthened moments of silence that would allow the performers, as well as the audience, to feel the weight of waiting and sleeping without purpose. I opened the piece with a forty-five-second moment of stillness and silence while a performer hung precariously upside down from a ladder. Further silences, both audibly and physically held within frozen action, persisted throughout the piece, to allow, as Grotowski indicated, “self-study and self-exploration.” I choose the word “allow” carefully, with full realization that this option for self-reflection may not be everyone’s first impulse. However, I believe that when multiple actions and layers occur simultaneously, one cannot hear oneself think. Because I as an audience member would prefer this option; it was important to me to provide moments of silence in this piece for breath and thought.

I also found through the construction of this piece that unusual, risky, and awkward movements required the performers to unveil pieces of themselves, to reveal a certain nakedness of both their character, and themselves as individuals. The farther from their comfort zone the dancers traveled, the more raw and honest the piece became. The choreographic work also gained a greater sense of theatricality during these times because as the stakes of the dancers’ characters were enlivened and raised, their

performance embodied the “larger-than-life” principle of theatre. The drama became heightened and exciting. I believe this is due to the sacrifice of self that Artaud and Grotowski emphasized.

This sacrifice of self has to come from an emotional connection to the action, to the character, or to the concepts of the work. Even Bertold Brecht, a theatrical visionary, practitioner, and reviser of theatre practices, admitted that his productions that included the “alienation” technique, also translated as “estrangement and distanciation,” did not have enough feeling or warmth for the majority of the spectators (Chaim 1984, 27). Early in his career, Brecht was concerned with subtracting emotion from both his audience and performers. He insisted that his characters were to be played “coldly, classically, and objectively” because they were not meant for the audience’s mere emotional experience, but instead for a “superior type of involvement” (26). By the 1940s, after many years of practical work in the theatre, Brecht’s perspective changed. He no longer rejected the use of emotion, but instead embraced it and used its qualities to his advantage. He no longer criticized emotion for increasing distance between the spectators and the true and essential content of the piece, but rather considered it a crucial element for accomplishing his theatrical objectives.

Audience members who are open to sacrificing themselves through their investment of time, their open minds and open hearts, and performers who are willing to do the same and more, are apt to create new electrical charges in the environment that can become personally transcendent. The theatre has the potential to deliver newer, deeper and loftier understandings of the world in which we live. These understandings and feelings, often referred to as transcendence, allow our time spent in the theatre to exceed

the limits of our known experiences, and therefore allow us to escape the limits placed on us by the constraints of the familiar. As artists, we must create material that can do this for all participants, and that allows emotions to surface and be manifested. In Antonin Artaud's endeavors to create a new type of theatre, "Theatre of Cruelty," he searched for a holiness that was absolute:

He wanted a theatre that would be a hallowed place: he wanted that theatre served by a band of dedicated actors and directors who would create out of their own natures an unending succession of violent stage images, bringing about such powerful immediate explosions of human matter that no one would ever again revert to a theatre of anecdote and talk. He wanted the theatre to contain all that normally is reserved for crime and war. He wanted an audience that would drop all its defenses, that would allow itself to be perforated, shocked, startled, and raped, so that at the same time it could be filled with a powerful new charge. (Brook 1968, 53)

The theatre can become a holy place in which a greater reality of life and feeling can be found. The theatre has a certain presence, "the sense of the holy, the taste of grace. From its beginnings theatre has existed to invoke or examine the transcendent" (Johnson 2009, 7). I have found that it is only through the performing arts, philosophy, and religion that we seek answers to the life questions of "Who am I?", "What am I doing here?", "Where am I going?", and "What does it all mean?" Artists have a responsibility to challenge assumptions and instill questions in people.

Near the end of Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*, the character Emily asks, "Do any human beings ever realize life while they live it?—every, every minute?" The Stage Manager replies, "No," and then pauses before he continues: "Saints and poets, maybe—they do some." Art and religion are the activities that give humans that perspective: "saints and poets" provide the path (Wilder 1958) (Johnson 2009, 16).

It is when we take a risk of revealing our emotion and vulnerability that we more deeply experience and share our humanity and when we can most truthfully connect to our audiences. In creating my piece for the graduate concert, I often felt that it was at my most vulnerable times that I created the most authentic work. Many times I had to completely surrender any preconceived ideas I had for the direction of the piece and follow the information and emotion the dancers gave during the rehearsal process. If I had not done this, then many sections of the dance would have seemed contrived and insincere.

I allowed the life questions I mentioned earlier to also guide my artistic vision. The more familiar I became with my own spiritual quest, the more open and interpretive my piece became. At times I did not have ideas for the ends of a phrase or section, just as I don't always have answers to those life questions. But I allowed the piece to find its own voice and its separate endings. Just as the title indicates, there will always be another night, but it is what ensues during the day that leads us to awaken to the next day.

A performer who portrays a character, or a playwright or choreographer who constructs the character, must reveal the character through self-giving and sacrificing. Through this sacrifice of self, redemption follows. That redemption can ultimately occur in multiple ways that are tailored to each individual or character's own need and life experience, but it is through the vulnerability of the character giving of themselves that they are revealed and liberated. This journey is the epitome of the human cycle, and it is through watching the nuances of characters and how they react to their situations that an audience becomes entranced by the action onstage.

III. THE COLLABORATION OF THEATRE AND DANCE

Every Tragedy, therefore, must have six parts, which parts determine its quality—namely; Plot, Character, Thought, Diction, Song, Spectacle. (Aristotle's *Poetics* Ch. 6)

Aristotelian structure is what most Western drama has been modeled on since Aristotle wrote the *Poetics* in the late fourth century B.C.E. Aristotle discerned a clear, foundational structure that has proved relevant until even now. There has been much scholarly debate through the centuries as to the order of his elements of tragedy. Some scholars and critics have tried to prioritize the six elements according to their agenda and new ideas in theatre. However, the order has prevailed as thoughtful theatre practitioners and theatre goers realize the implications of Aristotle's analysis. I want to only address the first four elements of the Aristotelian structure since these are the four that I find are inadequately considered in dance. The remaining two elements, Song and Spectacle, are ultimately a given in any live production and therefore I do not feel the need to address them individually.

Aristotle listed Plot as the most important element. Plot is the imitation of an action; the arrangements of the incidents (Butcher 1951, 25). It is, in fact, the “stuff,” the substance, the essential element of which theatre is made. In discussing the relevance of his listed order, Aristotle stated,

Again, if you string together a set of speeches expressive of character, and well finished in point of diction and thought, you will not produce the essential tragic effect nearly so well as with a play which, however deficient in these respects, yet has a plot and artistically constructed incidents. (27)

Character is the element listed second. Aristotle explains character:

By Character I mean that in virtue of which we ascribe certain qualities to the agents. Character holds the second place. A similar fact is seen in painting. The most beautiful colours, laid on confusedly, will not give as much pleasure as the chalk outline of the portrait. Thus tragedy is the imitation of an action, and of the agents mainly with a view to the action. (25, 29)

It is essential that the chalk outline precede the color. Therefore it is also essential that the events be laid out before the characters who enact them are detailed. The plot determines character. Although Aristotle lists his elements in accordance to drama, I propose that the same structure be used for dance. The application of this structure would imply that there must be an overarching purpose in the choreography. Dance must have a structure, a chalk-outline, in order for the other elements to be interpreted correctly. The outline of the dance, or the plot, must have a through line. That through line does not need to be a narrative per se, but it must include the Aristotelian structure of a beginning, middle, and end, a *meaningful* ordering of events that emphasize the causal connection between the elements of the plot, and be developed far before the other accoutrements.

I myself have contemplated why Aristotle chose to list the elements in the order he did. I have wondered why he doesn't prioritize "thought" as first in importance. After all, thought seems to be where the depth of the play, or any material is manifested. Aristotle states, "thought is required wherever a statement is proved, or, it may be, a general truth enunciated" (25). It seems to me that thought is what Aristotle was most interested in. In practice, however, thought doesn't come into play in the audience's reception until the characters, the agents, each of whom has character, actually *do* something—that is, until the character agents engage in *action*. Regardless of what Aristotle concluded was most interesting, or even most important in any ultimate sense, this careful observer of the natural world perceived that something had to be *done* first,

and that it had to be accomplished by the agents or characters, in order to develop into the engaging material he called “thought.”

In my years of watching dance, I feel that many dances become so enraptured with the characters’ dancing, or the costumes, or the message the choreographer wants to deliver, that the actual fundamental elements of the dance, the choreographic plot and thought, get brushed aside. However, without paying attention to the string of events in the dance itself, the movement loses its voice and its ability to most powerfully reach the audience.

In reference to dance, Aristotle argues in Chapter 1 of *The Poetics* that the purpose of dance is to “imitate character, emotion, and action by rhythmical movement” (Copeland 175). Roger Copeland, an editor for the *Performing Arts Journal*, further analyzes Aristotle’s intent with regard to his statements on dance:

He thus conceives of dance as a mimetic medium, one obligated to “represent” the world beyond the immediate limits of the dancer’s own body. Mimesis or imitation is so central to Aristotle’s conception of art that he had very little sympathy for the notion of movement as an end-in-itself. (175)

As Aristotle suggests, movement should not be an end-in-itself. Rather, movement is one basic element among several means for achieving important artistic and communal ends. I suggest that the six elements of tragedy be one of the concrete foundational steps taken in making dance. Its historical success persuades me that this method can virtually assure a more profound audience/performer relationship because it creates terms and vocabulary for an audience to employ as intimacies of the play or dance are revealed. Dance conforms to Aristotle’s theatrical specifications because dance, too, “represents men’s characters as well as what they do and suffer” (175).

In *Another Night*, I felt it was important to construct a plot that made sense sequentially as well as emotionally. Each movement choreographed laid the groundwork for movements that came later. The physical gestures and movements aligned themselves sequentially with what was happening in the text as well the context of the material. As the written text slowly developed in timing, in vocal strength and confidence, and magnitude of the subjects being spoken, the movement mirrored these concepts, thereby creating a doubled approach to the plot. The performance's sequence was now iterated through two methods of communication: vocal and physical.

The movement began with gestures that were simple and pedestrian in nature and finished with exaggerated physical relationships among the dancers onstage. The dancers went from standing and walking to running and dancing. They progressed from everyday gestures that reflect our normal humanity to embellished movements that included abusive moments, lifting, sharing weight, and odd body architecture.

The text recited through the piece supported and amplified the physical plot. The beginning of the piece started with a simple discussion about dreams and ended in an existential dilemma over waiting and moving, sleeping and waking. I combined texts from sources that included Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, David Sedaris' *Me Talk Pretty One Day*, Shakespeare, and other unpublished material. Aristotle's fourth element of theatre, Diction, is the "expression of the meaning in words" (Butcher 1951, 29).

As Aristotle emphasized with its inclusion in the list of elements, I believe that diction, or the chosen words and meaning of those words, needs to strengthen the creative work. I selected text that was framed around questions I am always seeking answers to personally, and wanted to try grappling with in a creative setting. I intentionally created

different tracks of dialogue for each character that would best reveal their inner workings as well as further the plot and thought of the piece. I chose to repeat certain words like “waiting” to not only emphasize their importance, but to echo the waiting and pausing that was happening in their physical movement. I wanted to make the movement itself become another form of diction. Each movement was layered together to create phrases, in the same manner that words and ideas are layered to form complete sentences.

Aristotle’s second element, character, embodies the moral and ethical content of the work, and entails the agents who pursue or imitate the action. I believe that character is the reaction to the action, or plot. The old theatre adage “Acting is reacting” truly assisted the three dancers in my piece to find new levels of character discovery. As long as they stayed true to the action of the moment, they would stay true to the elements of the characters they created.

David Alberts writes in *The Expressive Body* about the connection between physical action, character, and words:

The audience comes to know and understand the character through the interaction of verbal and nonverbal behavior. The lines that a character speaks either confirm or deny what is being expressed by the character’s body. The interrelationship of words and action are what define the character, whatever that interrelationship may be. Every movement a person makes reflects the character of that person as a whole. It demonstrates his relationship with his emotional and psychological states—his relationship to himself. (Alberts 1997, 8)

My three dancers had not done much theatre work in their years of dancing, and therefore I realized I needed to emphasize the acting fundamentals about motivation, objectives and obstacles. Uta Hagen, an actress, teacher, author and originator of acting principles, lists six steps or questions that help actors discover the dimensions of their characters: “Who am I?”, “What are the circumstances?”, “What are my relationships?”,

What do I want?”, “What is my obstacle?”, and “What do I do to get what I want?” (Hagen 1991,134). I find it interesting that these six questions resemble the life questions mentioned earlier. These questions allow us, both as humans and as actors unveiling a character, to learn how to associate with the outside world and make sense of it through our relationship to it.

These questions, when applied to both their physical and mental/verbal responses, allowed my dancers to delve into the material and find their motivation through the struggles of their characters. I found it vital that the dancers give thought to their characters physically—not just how one might walk or touch another person, but how one does it through the elevated and intensified style of dance.

I feel that this principle is not often applied in dances that are outside of the “theatrical” category. But if dancers (even in a purely physical dance without words) would develop their character inside the directives of the choreography, they would be able to speak the physical language more clearly and thereby strengthen their communication to the audience and their dancing partners onstage. So often, because dancers do not receive a map (like actors do with a script), they lack the tools to navigate the investigation of their character, or their role in the greater picture of the choreography. And if the dancers have difficulty understanding their character or the general map of the dance, how then will the audience be able to empathize with the intentions of the choreography if it is just about imagery?

This does not mean that character cannot strictly exist through manifestations of energy patterns, spatial design, rhythmical ideas or the development of abstract movement themes as it does in many dances. It does however mean that it becomes the

responsibility of the dancer, as well as the choreographer, to find the motivation behind the changes and transitions in the dance, if they exist, and allow those intentions to be manifested physically in order to create a greater sense of clarity. Attention to Uta Hagen's questions, as well as Aristotle's emphasis on character, would facilitate enhanced communication by demonstrating a language that the audience can understand because it utilizes action and reaction, cause and effect.

Even when working in pure abstraction, as many dance artists do, the choreographers and dancers must still create motivation for movement out of action and reaction. Whether that action and reaction come from a personal narrative for each dancer, or from the movement motivation itself, in terms of one physical gesture or movement initiating the next, an attention to that detail of the character still needs to exist.

When emphasis is given to the wholeness of a character and the action onstage by using multiple methods to initiate that completeness of the potential depth of the performance, a certain harmony develops. David Alberts observes that, "In terms of their effect on an audience, verbal and nonverbal behavior are total and inseparable elements of the same communication process" (Alberts 1997, 3). The author of *The Body Speaks*, Lorna Marshall, speaks to the significance of both speech and action to communicate ideas fully:

We communicate our desires and ideas outwards through the physical activities of speech and action. We may plan and consider in the privacy of our mind, but it is the body that puts those plans into motion through spoken words, phrases, gesture and movement. In addition, we receive all our incoming information about the world via the body's sense organs; through our eyes, ears, skin, nose and tongue. It is a two-way process; from the world through our physical senses to our inner landscape, and then from our reactions and thoughts back into the world through physical action. (Marshall 2001, 12)

I selected the dancers in *Another Night* specifically for their ability to embody a character and develop their own boundaries and insights of that character beyond just my direction. I wanted to work with dancers who could be independent in the creative process and who had the maturity and performance skills to develop a relationship with each other onstage as well as with their audience. I also needed to cast dancers who were not intimidated by using their voices onstage. Through my research, I have found that many theatre practitioners agree on the importance of equally developing their verbal and non-verbal communication. Anne Dennis, a professor and director, confirms that

Movement must never be seen as a separate skill, something which can be added on as an after-thought. It must be seen to be a part of the acting craft, well integrated into the task of acting.... Words must come out of the physical need to communicate and offer a further language. (Dennis 1995, 22)

However, I have found that the idea of adding voice onstage for dance, and equalizing the communication levels in a dance performance, has been greeted with some apprehension.

It is a cliché that theatre is a “mirror to life.” But it is indeed true that dance, and all of the arts for that matter, have the potential to and often actually do succeed in mirroring life. I ask that we abandon the self-absorbed art of the modern age that has been popular among art critics and high society and which is only created for the artist’s sense of self and proof of artistry, and refocus our efforts into creating art that can mirror, and then improve, the viewership. This mirror to life is not limited to narrative art. This mirror can be reflected through any type of work that demonstrates energy, relationship, ideas, spirituality and any other element that encourages an audience to make new connections and self-discoveries, be it abstract or literal. Federico Garcia Lorca, in a

deceptively simple, short poem, provokes us to contemplate the power of the fine and performing arts and their ability to educate profoundly:

the poem
the song
the picture
is only water
drawn from the well
of the people
and it should be given back
to them in a cup of beauty
so that they may drink
and in drinking
understand
themselves.

To “understand themselves” is the outcome most artists desire for their audiences. It is an Aristotelian principle that society’s best art has delivered. Horace directly stated that theatre had two purposes: to entertain, and to teach. It is this “teaching” that allows the audience to view the performance onstage and relate it to their own lives. In doing so, they begin to “understand themselves.” Centuries earlier, Aristotle foreshadowed Horace’s thought on theatre’s two purposes by observing that “to learn gives the liveliest pleasure” (Butcher 1951, 15). In order to entertain and teach, artists must keep the audience at the forefront of their work. When we combine elements of theatre and dance we create a more complete experience for our audience because there are more resources, a fuller, richer vocabulary for communication. Thus, bonding relationships are created through the collaboration between the audience and the artistic work they are witnessing, and therefore, a full purification of self and emotion can occur because all senses have been reached.

IV. CURRENT AESTHETICS

“Less is not more.... Less is a bore.”

—Architect Robert Venturi

“The anti-theatrical doctrine of ‘less is more’ has given way to the more expansive and accommodating belief that ‘less is a bore’” (Copeland 184). Roger Copeland discusses in his article, “Theatrical Dance: How do we know it when we see it if we can’t define it?” the quest for “purity” in each art medium. He writes that forty years ago, the remaining sensibility among serious experimental artists was this particular quest, and the desire to determine what each art form can do uniquely well. The art critic Michael Fried, a disciple of Clement Greenberg who is the most influential theoretician of minimalism, wrote, “The success, even the survival of the arts, has come increasingly to depend on their ability to defeat theatre” (178). Copeland continues to explain this sentiment in his article:

Clearly for critics like Fried, theatre was conceived of as an eclectic art of synthesis and therefore constituted the ultimate impurity. Painters who utilized single-point perspective to create the illusion of a third dimension were accused of having committed two cardinal sins: (a) misrepresenting the (essentially two-dimensional) nature of their medium and (b) encroaching upon the turf of a genuinely three-dimensional medium, sculpture. Choreographers were expected to emphasize the bare-bones essence of their medium, the human body in motion, unembellished by theatrical trappings. Music too was regarded as eminently dispensable. Silence was golden. (178)

Even Merce Cunningham, who is probably the most prominent exception to this idea during the minimalist period, created his collaborative ventures with independently conceived elements. The sound, dancing, and décor, although sharing the same space and

time, never fused into an organic whole. Copeland writes that it has been in the last few years or decade that there exists a “new commitment to collaboration on the part of choreographers, composers, and visual artists” which adds up to “a new theatricality” (178). This new theatricality echoes numerous cultures that keep collaboration at the forefront of their community. Some choreographers are reviving the idea of collaboration in the arts, in which they classically originated, and that which several international cultures have embraced for centuries.

Consider the Hindu Bharat Natyam. “Natya” literally means “dance and theatre.” Bharat Natyam is one of the oldest of the classical dance forms in India. Bharata Natyam has three distinct elements to it: *Nritta* (rhythmic dance movements), *Natya* (mime, or dance with a dramatic aspect), and *Nritya* (combination of *Nritta* and *Natya*) (Bharat Natyam website). Kabuki serves as another example of integrated, collaborative forms of art. The etymology of the word reveals the very spirit of collaboration. In contemporary Japanese, the word is rendered in three characters: Ka, which denotes “song,” Bu, which signifies “dance,” and Ki, which means “skill” (Copeland 180). Prior to the Grand Kabuki’s American tour of 1982, Rand Castile, director of performing arts at Japan Society, emphasized his enthusiasm for mixed arts that were “impure” in the minimalist sense. Castile was quoted in the *New York Times*: “Take an actor like Utaemon, for instance, who is trying to be both Mikhail Baryshnikov and Laurence Olivier. It is that combination I find so thrilling in Kabuki” (180).

“The Living Theatre” in New Guinea’s Highlands is another example of cultural collaboration. “The Gimis possess an elaborate performing art, staging short dramas and

farces with costumes and props” (Gillison 147). These dramas include dance and song to help tell the stories:

The songs that the guests must sing loudly until dawn are more than an entertaining way to pass the long night hours. “Songs are our spirits,” Gimis say. By singing, the revelers release their spirits into the rafters. The owners of the houses thus acquire these spirits, and so regain some of the life-force they themselves have expended by staging the rituals. In the Gimi way of thinking, a host community that entertains others thereby gives up part of its own life-force, part of what collectively enables the community to bring forth new life, to bear and raise future brides and initiates, to herd more pigs, to raise new crops. When members of other settlements and clans come together to sing all night long, they help replenish the hosts’ precious supply of life-force. (165)

Bill T. Jones, a fiercely experimental choreographer, is a master at creating that same kind of life-force. He recently won his second Tony for Best Choreographer of a musical. He has been in the contemporary dance scene for over thirty years, but I find his recent work most intriguing. Jones’s latest projects are of the collaborative nature that I so firmly believe in. He received his first Tony Award for *Spring Awakening*, where narrative, text, and modern dance were so humanly combined. *The New York Times* observed:

Mr. Jones’s choreography for “Spring Awakening” creates a seamlessly integrated, vivid gestural vocabulary that gives force and life to the repressed physical urges of its teenage characters. Only their bodies, it suggests, can express those feelings, for which they have no words. In some ways it’s a perfect fit for a choreographer concerned with storytelling, the power of gesture and sexual identity. (Sulcas)

Yes, musical theatre has always integrated story, dance, and dialogue, but I feel it is not until the last few years that musical theatre has actually merged both theatre and dance so that the plot requires both to be told correctly, honestly, and fully.

Bill T. Jones recently conceived, directed, and choreographed *Fela* for which he won another Tony award. This musical is about Fela Kuti whose “soulful Afrobeat

rhythms ignited a generation” (*Fela* website). Jones himself acknowledges that this particular show speaks from both the body and the head, and that it is this integrated communication that most benefits an audience. In discussing the understanding of his musical, he states, “You have to listen with your head and you have to listen with your hips” (Bill T. Jones Interview). Although Jones says that conventional narrative has never really appealed to him,

I take it to be a necessary evil, quite frankly, for the promises that I see in the commercial theater. I’d like to talk to more people. Some of it has to do with race, some of it has to do with class. I think I would like to be really connected, and at least have a working knowledge of how to tell stories, and I dare say even entertain. A lot of the art I’ve given myself to is belligerently committed to not entertaining, although in my heart I’ve always been an entertainer. (Siserio)

The collaboration trend of Bill T. Jones’s work reaches beyond just musical theatre and stretches into the realm of the dance world. The latest project for the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company is also rooted in the collaboration of theatre and dance. Bill T. Jones has created a work named *Fondly Do We Hope...Fervently Do We Pray*. This groundbreaking work, which will tour internationally this upcoming year, is a dance drama that reimagines a young Abraham Lincoln in his formative years. Jones asks the insightful question that theatre should prompt in reflection of any performance, “How can we use Lincoln and his time as a mirror through which we look darkly at ourselves?” (Bill T. Jones Interview). Bill T. Jones is not the only example of a choreographer who is integrating theatre and dance, but he is one of the few American choreographers who is investigating the collaboration.

The experimentation and progression of theatre dance has mostly been European. For example, Wim Vandekeybus, a Belgian director, choreographer, actor and photographer “connects to dance via a background in theatre.” He discusses a theatre

workshop that he took during his collegiate studies that changed his life. He then “discovered dance, and a desire to mesh principals of mind and body.” He came to discover that “his approach to creating his earlier work came about less from a choreographer’s perspective than from a theatre director’s. Each work was built by him and his dancers after he presented them with his avant-garde ideas on movement” (Sucato).

Wayne McGregor, a British choreographer and founder of Random Dance, employs a “drastically fast and articulate choreographic style.” His theatrical choreography incorporates multiple elements like animation, digital film, 3D architecture, virtual dancers and electronic sound into the live choreography in order to enhance the audience’s experience and utilize multiple methods of communication (Random Dance website).

Akram Khan, one of the most acclaimed choreographers of his generation working in Britain, is famous for his theatrical elements of choreography. He continues to create projects that alternate between spoken sessions with dance sessions in order to produce an eclectic experience that bridges his interests in his traditional Bangladesh heritage and contemporary ideas (Akram Kahn Company website).

Lloyd Newson, the creator of DV8 Physical Theatre, one of the most famously physically, emotionally and mentally challenging dance companies, stated in an interview with David Tushingham:

One of my concerns in forming DV8 was to broaden the perspective of dance and try to make it more relevant to people’s lives. I prefer the term ‘movement’ to ‘dance’ because I feel that dance is only one type of movement. That’s another reason we call ourselves Physical Theatre, not a dance company: because I think the word dance has many limiting associations. (Newson Interview)

It is these limiting associations identified with each individual art form that I am trying to bridge through the collaborative process and combination of several art forms.

CONCLUSION

I have chosen these few choreographers to mention because they so aggressively and passionately share the concerns which underpin my making of *Another Night*. Although I have been developing my personal aesthetic for the past couple of years, I had not had the opportunity to present work that demonstrated my personal thoughts, beliefs and passions about the collaboration of theatre and dance until I created this particular piece. The creative freedom of the experience, having cast talented and advanced dancers, as well as the lengthened time I was given to create, allowed me to play, correct, adjust, reconfigure, develop and embrace discoveries and develop new personal theories that will forever change my view, my understanding, and my personal manifestations of dance theatre, and for that matter, art in general.

After the public showing of my piece in November, I have contemplated the effectiveness of my own work as a voice for my constructed theory of dance, theatre, ritual and the sacred, and audience. Did I accomplish what I wanted with my seventeen or so minutes of work? I don't think that I can directly answer that objectively. As an artist I am satisfied with the material, the movement, the dancers' performances, and the elements of theatre that guided the construction of the piece, as well as the audience's reaction to it. However, because my work encouraged individual connection to the audience through multiple languages, I will never be able to completely answer that question for anyone but myself.

What I can say regarding the discoveries I made in this creative process and through the research of the topics discussed, is that I have continued to create work that keeps the audience at the forefront of the artist's mind and purpose, as well as utilizing the interwoven connection of theatre and dance to speak to the audience.

My most recent work was a collaborative piece, entitled *What if (...) meant something*, that used the combination of dance, theatre, and film to tell a story. This work, created by three other artists and myself, appeared in a collaborative concert that I co-produced with a Film Department graduate student, Chris Lee, for the College of Fine Arts. The purpose of the concert was to create, with other departments in the College of Fine Arts, a new work that was a collaborative experience across disciplines. This is apparently the first time in the history of the College of Fine Arts that this vision had been realized. Not only was I enthused about the outcome of the concert and the possibility of this type of collaborative experience continuing to develop at the University of Utah, but I was most pleased to see an evening of work that used multiple languages of the fine arts to reach its diverse audience.

Reflecting upon the last couple of years of research, I am content with the results of this investigation, but realize it is indeed just a beginning. I would like to continue with creating works of dance that incorporate the Aristotelian structure of which I have only started to dissect. I would like to push the boundaries of my own work even further, and be able to risk going too far, or not going far enough in the theatrical elements that I find so vital to performance in order to find an equal balance between theatre and dance. I would like to experiment with the distinction of juxtaposing these two art forms and interweaving them, because I find those ideas to be very different. I would like to create

dance that has theatre organically rooted in its development where the audience cannot decipher which parts of the piece belonged to which discipline. I feel that I was only beginning to understand how to articulate these specific concerns when it was already time to premiere our graduate concert. For this reason, I recognize that I have only scratched the surface of a subject that could become a continual, and life-long investigation.

As I continue developing my choreographic and artistic voice, I hope to continue this line of research both through written theory and in the studio. The more creative research I do in both theatre and in dance, the more I am able to further my developing theories on paper. I am continuing to create work, witness others' work, and prompt discussion that will both challenge and promote my personal aesthetics.

David Mamet, an evocative and provocative contemporary playwright and screenwriter, makes a statement in *True and False* about acting that I believe applies beyond the constructs of just acting. This statement can extend to include the purpose of the arts in general, and for the specificity of my ideas about dance and theatre directly. I wish these words and ideas were mine, for they so profoundly summarize the collaborative potential of theatre, dance, audience and spirit:

Acting is not a genteel profession. Actors used to be buried at a crossroads with a stake through the heart. Those people's performances so troubled the onlookers that they feared their ghosts. An awesome compliment. Those players moved the audience not such that they were admitted to a graduate school, or received a complimentary review, but such that the audience feared for their soul. Now that seems to me something to aim for.

As I now metaphorically stand in the empty studio, with empty pages before me as well, I am intrigued and excited about where my research and investigation of theatre

and dance will take me. The three-year dedication to this subject that graduate school has provided me is just the beginning of developing a lifetime of aesthetic preferences and passions, which I know will continue to unfold, develop, and evolve. I am eager to fill the empty space and blank pages.

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