

Danthology

A collection written by the Spring 2013 Danceaturs

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Dance Division

Department of Theatre & Dance

Montclair State University

Modern Dance Legacy - Caitlin Knowles

I believe the modern dance legacy to be the expansion and exploration of movement and how it can affect others. People are able to strongly connect with modern dance within their own bodies and through watching performance. I think that eliciting an effect on people, be it physical, emotional, psychological, or intellectual, is the most important part of ensuring the modern dance legacy. The modern dance world is constantly progressing and delving into new ways to move and affect others. Choreographers and dancers have the chance to affect the way people feel and think, which is a heavy responsibility. This is why I find it so important that the modern dance legacy should be shared with everyone through education. Making dance easily accessible and keeping records of choreography and choreographers' and dancers' lives is essential to ensuring that the legacy remains.

As a dancer, I hope to ensure the modern dance legacy by bringing dance into the lives of people who would otherwise not be exposed to it. My dream is to be in a dance company with a large outreach program that works with the underprivileged. I find it incredible how dance can have such a positive tangible effect on people and it inspires me to be a part of changing people's lives in such a way. I want to teach dance and educate adults and children about the dance world and how it can help them to express and learn about themselves and the world. I feel that through educating the people most in need, dancers would be ensuring that the modern dance legacy not only prevails, but also is an active part of our suffering culture.

I think that everything that we are working on through the danceaturgy workshop is very important in ensuring the modern dance legacy. Researching and keeping archives of information on the modern dance world is an invaluable resource. I feel that dancers as a whole are very under-educated about our own field. It is far too common for the average dancer to be unable to talk in an informed manner about the past and even the present dance world. It should be assumed that dancers know the up and coming choreographers and dancers along with where they came from. As I go through my career I plan to keep myself educated and write about my experiences. I would like to have the chance to work on different modern dance documentaries and help continue facilitating and recording events like Bill T. Jones having an open rehearsal and Q&A.

Today's meeting proved to be very productive. The first thing on the agenda was for me to present my "Hero's Journey" idea which was well received by the seniors! They suggested that I create a guideline of questions that would be made available for them to voluntarily answer either in essay format or interview format. They thought it would be more productive to have it be college focused because these responses would be available through the MSU archive, and their journey up until college would be more of a segue into the rest. It was also suggested that they could discuss what it was like to work with the many choreographers that have come and gone throughout their four years at MSU, and I would add to that what the experience was like to create their own choreography for those who have. Linda suggested we keep it to a maximum of about 3 questions so I was wondering how you think the best way to go about this would be.

Next we spoke about the informance. Linda said that originally, only three pieces were discussed, but the consensus today was that all six should be presented. We want to involve all of the dances so that everyone is more open-minded about the experience, and doesn't feel shunned. There is value in seeing an excerpt of the dance as well as hearing about its background so it was decided that each piece would present a five minute excerpt with a short explanation beforehand, as a transition between the dances (this was Colleen's fantastic idea). Each introduction could talk about what makes it unique, what the choreographers' process or intent was, a summary of the background, what brings it to life, what it's like to be a part of the original pieces (versus the ones that were set on the dancers), and end with a thought provoking question. Each danceaturgy should discuss with their choreographer if there is anything they would like to be presented at the informance. After all six pieces, Tori would present a short introduction about the overall theme of Myth and Transformation, and would then open the floor up for discussion. Linda suggested we could post questions to ponder (relating the dances to the overarching theme perhaps) in the programs. We think the black box studio would be a more welcoming environment, and conducive for discussion afterward than the auditorium. Linda was wondering if we should videotape the informance for archival purposes, or if that would hinder the comfortable environment we want to create. The seniors referenced how the Graham piece has evolved over time, and is more physical now. Unlike what people think, it's a compilation of only the chorus segments. We also talked about Bill T. Jones coming tomorrow, and how the dancers are nervous. We discussed the Danceaturgy letters that are sent out and why or why not people read them. We think in order to let people know about the informance, we should put a sign up on the board, as well as sending out e-mails.

Here is a list of the requests from the danceaturs regarding which piece they would like to cover for the Informance:

Powers of 10: Mark Willis

Night Journey: Marissa Aucoin, Colleen Lynch, Crystal Rodriguez

I See You: Heather Pollak

Silence: Nickolas Harney, Tori Sexsmith

Runaway: Felicia Geran, Julie Cullen, Colleen Lynch, Crystal Rodriguez

Continuous Replay: Caitlin Knowles, Malcolm McMichael, Haley Yacos

- Heather Pollak

Hi Neil,

The student scribes will give you their synopsis of today's class, but I wanted to let you know that your key is in an envelope on your desk. The students signed an attendance sheet and they requested to list their preferences on a separate sheet of what dances they would like to be assigned to. They understand that these are requests and that you will make final assignments. Those 2 items are in a manilla folder in your mailbox.

Everyone is excited about Heather's proposal and she will contact you on how to move forward. The danceaturs felt that all 6 pieces should be included in the performance. They came up with a possible order. Attached is a draft of the danceaturs' ideas as well as my thoughts on how Heather, Tori, and Haley could have a "role" in the Informance. **- Linda Roberts**

My Gift to the Modern Dance Legacy

As a dancer and artist in 2013, I have come to realize that my craft possesses a very rich and remarkable history. Between the phenomenal works of Alvin Ailey, Martha Graham, Trisha Brown, and countless other dance visionaries and pioneers, I am truly blessed to be able to look back through time and be exposed to such masterful inventiveness and creativity in my dance training today. But that leads me to a question that I never really asked myself before: what do I have to offer to this already astounding legacy? How can I give back to the art form that has already given me so much?

Almost immediately, I think, "Well, by teaching!" I have had some truly eye-opening experiences in the dance studio that I know have the potential to greatly impact someone else on their journeys through dance and through life. If my students learn nothing else from me, my goal is to instill the passion and fire of modern dance in them so deeply that every step, turn, and leap across the stage takes their soul to the heavens and back again. I want my students to always remember that without a strong commitment to being better than they were yesterday and a burning passion to give their whole selves to the movement, they defeat the purpose of dancing in the first place--finding oneself on one level and completely losing themselves on another.

My second gift to the modern dance legacy comes forth simply in myself as a performer and a choreographer. There is only one me in this world, so it is safe to say that every time I step onto the stage, I am giving thanks to all the fantastic dancers who came before me, to my fellow dancers and audiences of today for accompanying me on this artistic journey, and to the dancers that will come long after I am gone. I am continuing a beautiful, soul-enriching tradition of moving because my love for it compels me to. Even though I've had my fair share of life experiences, with a plethora of different interests and possible career choices, dance is the only thing I can happily give my entire being to. My passion and my unique artistry are my gifts. My only hope is that one day, someone will see me on stage and feel the spark that ignited my journey years ago. With these things in mind, I know without a shadow of a doubt that my gift is a flame that cannot be extinguished. **- Malcolm McMichael**

If preeminent dancer-choreographers are writing “chapters” in the very substantial book of (modern dance) life, then our college careers are “chapters” in Montclair State University’s (MSU’s) dance program. We pass in and out of the doors of Life Hall as professionals pass in and out of the limelight. Some of us in the program go straight through from 8:30-4 (with other academic classes interspersed, I suppose), while others don’t quite “live” here. Trisha Brown’s retirement is her reason for exiting the limelight – but because her legacy is so very enduring, she will not be forgotten.

As hinted above, our department is a microcosm of the world of dance. Thus, by being enrolled in this school program, and giving my all in classes, rehearsals, and most especially onstage, I am currently leaving a modern dance legacy. This personal statement is not made of conceit, for I believe that each dancer is leaving his or her own individual legacy. We constitute a new MSU modern dance legacy, year after year, program by program. It is our role, our responsibility, as a collective unit, to continue the tradition.

As for contemplating wider-scale modern dance legacy, names, and the images I associate with them, are conjured in my mind – Martha Graham with her contractions, Horton with his flat backs, Limón with his rises and falls, etc. These three happen to all be considered pioneers of modern dance, but Trisha Brown of the postmodern era was a pioneer, in her own right.

Legacy, to me, when speaking about an artistic context, means commitment to the field. Today, it seems the race is on to be choreographically new and exciting, and those people who pull ahead that way are recognized more quickly and/or more fully. However, legacy can also be about leaving a mark, perhaps in carrying on the warm-up exercises, the dances, the favorite sayings, the tips and tricks of the trade, the laughs, etc. of those who come before us. The torch is not only an Olympic Games symbol, of course. Some legacies are more fleeting, but others, like Trisha Brown’s, are historic, supported by usually long careers that gathered strong followings. The former is like footprints in the sand; the latter is like imprints in wet pavement (Think the Hollywood Walk of Fame!). –

Kelly Vaghenas

Dance is, in my opinion, one of the hardest art forms to keep records of, simply because it is an art that is done through the body. Once the bodies that have performed are gone and passed on away from this world, the movement can be lost forever unless it was physically brought to the attention of others. Luckily for us, we have the technology nowadays to record what it is that we do and work on...along with such arts as Laban Movement Analysis and records passed on from dancers of the past to those of today. Dance in and of itself is a legacy, because there is a very good chance that it could have been lost to us if no one had taken an interest in what was being done.

The modern dance legacy as a whole is still fairly young, but it is so strong with many branches that one would never have guessed it was anything but a mighty willow grounded with deep roots, an immovable grounded force. To know where we are going, we must first know where it is that we come from...by looking to our past in dance, we learn to appreciate what we have and what is expected of us in this discipline. To me, the legacy of those before me leaves me wanting to follow in the footsteps of many great and powerful men and women who were able to change lives with their bodies, be intellectuals, artists, and fantastic global citizens pushing culture and expanding the thoughts and minds of anyone who saw what they created. One of my favorite quotes is by Ruth St Denis, “Our bodies are at once the receiving and transmitting stations for life itself. It is the highest wisdom to recognize this fact and train our bodies to render them sensitive and responsive to nature. art and religion.”

The word legacy to me is all about the personal gifts and tidbits that you leave behind...almost like an imprint that you can make on someone or something. They are the acts that will be remembered and that I will be known for. As an artist and as a dancer, anything that we create tends to be what we wish to be remembered for, although sometimes what we create is not what we love but what others truly come to appreciate. Each movement, step, and work of choreography is a gift from the brain, to the body, and then to the eyes of anyone who sees it. To me, it is one of the blessings of life, and becomes a religious practice. Dancing is far larger than who I am...but the impact it has had will have overlapping ripples on those around me.

As a dancer and choreographer, I am passing on the knowledge I have of the past and mixing it with the experiences I have encountered from this life to expand thoughts in a communication that is purely based in the body. Sometimes there just are not the right words to get the point across, or the emotion, the feeling that is within me. Logically my body can take it all in and then send it out through every pore of my being. The importance of carrying on the legacy that could be forgotten at any moment is of the utmost important to me. It is why I share what I create with others, and record what I do, along with observing the dances that are being done, to get a feel for what is happening even if I cannot always literally put the information into my body in the form of muscle memory. The work of record keeping in the more literal sense will allow for this information to be passed on, without a body. At the same time, without teachers working to pass on the body portion, the legacy will also die off. It is not an easy task to take on alone, but luckily no one has to, because the dance community does not wish to fade away. It is why many pursue an educational track: when they realize within themselves lives a teacher. I know that for myself someday I would like to teach and pass on my experiences to students who are willing to listen and ask where I came from. Because my legacy is just as much tied to those who I respect and who give me techniques to study, and books to read, as it is to what I choose to do within my time on this earth. – **Tori Sexsmith**

Being so fortunate to have been taught an important variety of modern techniques, such as Limon, Horton, Taylor, Graham, it would be silly to never utilize the amount of information I've learned. Whether I am involved in modern dance, jazz, or contemporary, and whether I'm doing commercial work or company work, modern dance is a foundation needed in all styles of dance. The use of breath of Limon collaborated with the strength and endurance of Horton is a perfect match, as well as the content feel of Taylor and the down-and-dirty feel of Graham. Put any of those qualities together, and you have pure dance technique.

Whenever I teach a dance class, no matter what style I'm teaching, I like to incorporate the different techniques of modern dance. I'm doing my job when I teach younger, blossoming students something different than what they've been hearing ever since they started dancing. Most students who are not yet learning at a college level haven't been taught how to properly contract, which is a tool needed in all styles of dance because engaging the strength of your core is so vital as a dancer. Graham technique is crucial when teaching a proper contraction, even when I am not specifically teaching a Graham-based dance class.

My sophomore year at Montclair was when I was introduced to the Horton technique. I clearly remember my first day of class with Karen Gayle. It started with a roll down – chin drops to the chest, the upper back rounds, gradually works its way down the middle back and then the lower back, until your hands are on the floor. Karen stops us, and says, "When I am judging an audition, and we tell the dancers to start with simple roll downs, we automatically know who to cut first by seeing who does them correctly." If a dancer does not start a roll down with his or her chin to the chest, it is incorrect. Karen's short story on day one taught me a lesson, and I make sure I always do roll downs correctly and teach them correctly, no matter what setting I am in. Modern dance can teach specific qualities and dance technique, and it can also teach the simple things that we do every day.

Modern dance technique, along with any dance technique, can be passed down to many generations of dancers. I definitely plan to do so. Just as almost every one of the pioneers, I suppose, before they were well known, they did not know that this would be their future. Years after they've passed, their styles are still being taught and performed. Possibly one day any of my peers or I will be fortunate enough to stand in similar shoes, which would be one of the most important things anyone can do to ensure this legacy. - **Felicia Geran**

The *Continuous Replay* rehearsal last Saturday was thrilling to observe. I was particularly interested in the improvisational nature of the work, and how Bill T. Jones fluctuated between directing the dance and just letting it happen (he often made comments about needing the 'trust' the dancers). Because the movement was a structured improvisation it seemed the piece itself was a force just as strong as the dancers or Bill T. Jones. It was fantastic to watch this exchange between, Bill T, the dancers (who acted like a thinking, reacting medium that he molded) and the rules of the piece. Although the dancers were influenced by Bill and the structure of *Continuous Replay* it was their choices that ultimately determined the structure of the piece. Watching all the gears churning, sometimes awkwardly sometimes beautifully was something that made this rehearsal extremely thought provoking. Besides this I was just excited to observe Bill T. Jones in rehearsal and to hear him speak to the dancers afterward. He is extremely thoughtful, eloquent and authentic. He somehow was down to earth and not of this world at the same time, maybe it just seemed that way to be because I have been studying his work since high school and could not believe I was now in the same room.

Continuous Replay Rehearsal NOTES

Warm Up

- Entered room to see dancers moving around in all directions, walking purposefully directed by Stewart.
 - * Focus exercise to bring dancers into the present
 - * Told dancers to increase speed, then make eye contact (“see/be seen by other dancers”), then to have a genuine moment of physical contact (nothing forced).
 - * Urged them to be the “most aware, most perceptive, most seeing most deciding you have ever been”.
 - * Sudden stillness after exercise, no sweat yet.
- The dancers ran “45 though”, they were told to keep in mind “photographic and martial arts detail” and to let the audience “see your face”
 - * It was my first time seeing the piece; they reminded me of a machine with all sorts of individual parts repeating the same task in relation to each other.
 - * After reading about the piece I thought the set up almost sounded like a game but there was not a playful feel when it was performed.
- It seemed more systematic.
 - * “This is it!” “THAT’S ALL!”
- In response to the run Leah had the dancers move around the room again this time *running* full out.
 - * “Run like hell” “What is at stake?” “Get into your legs” “Don’t be beautiful, get angry” “be animals” “find your threshold”.
 - * She egged them on like a drill sergeant and the room was transformed. The dancers dashed around the room with a raw, frantic, animal energy, they slid on the floor, darted and spun, nearly colliding driven to push harder and move faster by Leah’s authoritative commands.
- There was a change in the way they looked around at each other, they looked more panicked and more motivated.
 - * When the dancers stopped they were breathing heavily but still not visibly sweating. “Nice to meet you” Leah said as they all stood there panting.
 - * Her critique of the first run was that it seemed like the dancer were mumbling the movement rather than speaking clearly and that they had “dead skin” rather than energy throughout their body. “This is a manifesto” she urged them. Stewart told them to run through again saying, “last chance before Bill comes”
- In this run the dancers move with a more noticeable intensity, they contort their faces, stand rooted on their legs and moved with purpose.
- Leah coaches the adagio section with love and support, strongly intoning “You’ve got this” to the dancer, in contrast to her abrasive warm up.
- About three quarters of the way through I notice Bill T. Jones was watching through the window of the door.
- After this run he walked into the room, now the dancers were sweating, red faced and breathing heavily.
- Bill T. Jones shook each one of their hands and the dancers introduced themselves, some were already know to him from D-man last year or from a summer intensive he ran at Skidmore.
 - * He made a comment that was something like ‘look at all the trim bodies’ asked, “Why do we want to see more trim bodies” moving on stage,
 - * He spoke about the dancers “creating problems on stage” and this meant something along the lines of some choice (made by a dancer) that would cause the dancers around them to make more movement choices.
 - He said, “The dance will not invite you in” it was all about choices.
- He sits down to speak with Stewart and Leah he asks if there are two casts, who is the clock, will there be nudity. Bill decides he would like to start the dance is less clothes, build up to black then change to white.
- First run with Bill: He sits up straight, ignoring circling cameras.
- He speaks occasionally telling dancers to “find the sensuality in weight shift” and singing the counts during the duets again urging dancers to “find the counter balance” between each other.
- The dancers do right into working on the individual parts of the dance after the run.

- * Bill T. pays special attention to the duets calling it a 'human pas de deux', reminding dancers "we aren't at the races". Focus was on knowledge of the pelvis, using the other partner for support, and getting a good grip when weight sharing was needed. The choreography fit together so naturally and smoothly (physics-wise) that the dancers natural momentum carried the duet. It was just a matter of pulling and supporting each other enough.
- * Urged dancers to find most up in every up and most down in every down.
- During the second run, Bill T. prefaced the dancers with the idea of 'honoring Arnie Zane' and reminded them that their bodies were taking his 45 counts. (what was the motive for this?)
- Dialogue about improvisation with dancers: "to talk about improv is to talk about the dance"
 - * It terms if improv Bill urged dancers to start very minimal, he did not want the contact to be "social" but for relationships to happen "with design, angles and proximity".
 - * He described the group as a comet, the clock as the head and the other dancers as the tail.
 - * Told dancers not to be "self referential" in their improv, that any sort of design or moment that happen should be purely by accident and not premeditated or figured out before hand.
 - * Kept speaking about creating a 'problem' on stage using the word over and over again, why does he think of dance in terms of problem solving?
- * Bill T. asks Jon (clock, who starts dance) to take a chance of boring him in the next run and try to add a minute to the dance. Says "a minute on stage is a long time" reminder of the last work I saw of his Story/Time.
 - o After this the talks about dance in the 70's, saying the audience didn't mind being bored, or seeing work that moved so slow and abstractly.
 - o Jon's part is the part of a man with an impossible task. And that was something being explored in the 70's so Bill T. said.
 - o For this run he gives the dancers the option of starting shirtless. A few over half do take off their shirts.
- Before this run the dances circle up and make eye contact with every one of their fellow performers as a focus exercise.
- Many times during the run Bill T. would call out for someone to support the clock.
- Afterward he had the dancers stand in the places they ended the dance "stand up, close your eyes, where are you?" He asked them to confront themselves for a moment.
- He gave some notes on the improving of the group, reiterating that he did not want any of the contact improv to be 'social' or to have a narrative story.
- He mentioned how Arnie Zane never used negative space in his choreography and said duet sections became a controlled dialogue after Arnie's death.
- He calls out the "stylishness" of the student's improv; it seemed like maybe he wanted less style.
- Q/A section:
 - * Made a comment about art being "like life but not life".
 - Spoke about Arnie Zane, (made one dancer say his name rather than refer to him quietly as 'he', he asked her "WHO choreographed this piece?")
 - He Arnie was unsentimental but that it was juxtaposed with romanticism and always minimalistic.
 - When the piece was a duet Arnie was the clock and Bill was the improviser
 - Called out people always trying to 'see Arnie' in his work, says its because it is what the want to see.
 - Said he was interested in the chemical change that happens in an individual as the perform the dance, that the performer goes through a journey and comes out transformed in a physical way. That is why he asked dancer to confront themselves at the end?
 - He answered a question about what he thinks a good choreographer needs and he said 'generosity' and something to say.
 - At one point calls himself a blabbermouth.
 - Cautions us to be careful what we give to the world ("you the age of facebook).
 - Speaks about nudity, reminding the women they do not have to be victims to be naked. Says he is a little regretful it could not be performed nude.

- Speaks about dance as a needing to be “utilitarian” and functional, what does the group need, how and your choices aid the group. Very metaphorical for life and society?
 - Support the clock, or get out.
 - More minimal
- Says audience should trust their decisions as to where they focus in a piece with so much ‘going on’. That whatever they see is enough, that they are not missing something they need to see.
- Ends talk dramatically/humbly by telling us to walk out the door and be free and “not be scared of *any* motherfucker”. **Haley Yacos**

Inspiration is nothing to be afraid of, and it is nothing to be ashamed of. At this moment, in the year 2013, it is impossible to find any piece of art that is completely original. Everything has an influence from somewhere else; but this is something that has been going on since the beginnings of art. Years ago, artists were influenced by nature and its wonders; now, we can be inspired by the abundant works that have come before us, as well as the wondrous works of nature. As a choreographer, without influence, I am lost. Dance movement doesn't just exude from my body like it does for some others, and so I purposely try to find some sort of muse, even if it's from a song, or an emotion, or practicing for a signed language exam. Choreographing is so much more to me than just dancing around, liking what you did, and then teaching it to others. I approach it in a very calculating manner, but step one is always to seek a form of inspiration. To me, influence is what is or was that helps you to create what will be.

- Heather Pollak

I wanted to look up the definition of “influence” to begin writing my response, but because I was at work at the time (several days ago), I did not have Internet access and therefore, the next best thing to do was to use Microsoft Word's Thesaurus. The list that resulted from the search turned out the following four main synonyms: power, manipulate, effect, and affect. When I think of influence in terms of dance, the first two synonyms quickly drop out. Although I am sure that some dance schools and choreographers operate with a strict system of “power” and “manipulation,” influence that rises out of such an atmosphere is not instinctive but rather forced. I believe that influence, as it pertains to the world of dance, is mainly – and should be – one of effect and affect. The word “inspire” was the first synonym for influence that came to mind, before consulting resources like the Thesaurus. A teacher or professor of dance, a rehearsal director, and/or a choreographer will inspire a dancer in myriad ways. Ways of knowing, ways of teaching, and ways of moving all *affect* a dancer and will eventually *effect* his/her own personal belief and movement system. It is not necessary to meet every person of influence; surely, a mentor with whom one-on-one contact occurs is preferred. However, one can follow role models or icons – their history, their whereabouts – in reading or finding relevant media. The deceased can be influential, of course. As my previous Danceaturgy responses to “legacy” indicated, those who do leave this world having left a mark for future generations to muse over exert influence indefinitely. As with legacy, influence lies in the middle of a continuum; there is an input and an output, a come-and-go situation. A dancer/choreographer can be both influenced and the entity doing the influencing. It is important to note that the idea of influence in dance is not limited to the inspiration of fellow movers. A visual artist, a photographer, even a scientist, etc., can be extremely influential in the work of a dancer. Even more, the influential agent need not be human. It can be a poem, a type of calligraphy, or even a concept, like gravity. One could argue that the poet, the calligrapher, or Newton (and Einstein) is the influential power, but it could surely swing both ways. For my solo in this year's Dance Collage, *Barely, A Trace*, I was mainly influenced by a concept and a prop. The concept I wanted to communicate was negative body image; my character displays symptoms of anorexia and falls into a sort of frenzy at the climax of her anxiety. The chalkboard serves as a kind of mirror; in having the function of being the object on which I can trace myself in a way that portray warped reflection of my shape, it is truly a dueting partner. .../...

This work started as an assignment. In the studio (LI123) on the Saturday afternoon I resolved to start and finish my prop study for Choreography III class, I saw the chalkboard in the corner and it immediately had an effect on me. I tacked it to the concept of body image almost instantaneously. Had it meant something special to me before that moment? No. I was in the right place, at the right time, (and perhaps in the right state of mind) to be influenced to create a piece with clarity of intent and resonance. I would like to close with the relatively obscure, astrological definition of influence, according to www.dictionary.com: “the radiation of an ethereal fluid from the stars, regarded as affecting human actions and destinies,” and the subsequent definition: “the exercise of similar power by human beings.” Is the nature of our influence a matter of fate? As dancers, we feel that we have unlimited choice in terms of what school of dance we adhere to, what path(s) we follow. We’ll leave the karma talk to the astrologists...

Kelly Vaghenas

February 14, 2013

Dear Montclair State University Dance Community,

Each year the Dance Division presents an *Informance* which provides the dance students, faculty and invited guests with an opportunity to view and discuss dances from the year’s repertory that relate to an overarching theme.

The theme for this year's repertory is **Myth and Transformation** and includes six dances that will be performed in the Danceworks 2013 concert.

The *Informance* afternoon program will be composed of *informal performances* of excerpts from these works interspersed with commentary and analysis by this year's danceaturgs about contextual background of each dance, as well as the rehearsal process that *enables the dance to come to life*.

We will conclude with an open ‘Q&A’ for the entire Dance Community.

Join us for a wonderful and rare opportunity to examine the relevance and relationship of this year’s theme to each of the dances listed below -- as well as to our lives.

Repertory for Danceworks 2013

Powers of Ten; choreographed by May O’Donnell; danceaturg: Mark Willis

Night Journey; choreographed by Martha Graham; danceaturgs: Marissa Aucoin, Colleen Lynch, Kelly Vaghenas

I See You; choreographed by Earl Mosley; danceaturg: Heather Pollak

Silence; choreographed by Rebecca Stenn; danceaturgs: Nick Harney, Tori Sexsmith

Runaway; choreographed by Larry Keigwin; danceaturgs: Felicia Geran, Julie Cullen, Crystal Rodriguez

Continuous Replay; choreographed by Arnie Zane and restaged by Bill T. Jones; danceaturgs: Caitlin Knowles, Malcolm McMichael, Haley Yacos

The Informance is Wednesday, March 20th from 2:30-4:30pm in the Life Hall Dance Studio (LI-123). All dance majors are expected to attend.

Sincerely,

Neil Baldwin, Linda Roberts, and the 2013 Danceaturgs

The words choreographer and influence go together so powerfully. A choreographer needs some sort of influence to create, and from the influence comes choreography that could possibly influence another choreographer to create. The cycle can continue forever.

Influence can come from an emotion you get from a personal experience, something you read or saw, or any situation that makes your heart jump and your mind think twice. As dancers, we express many things physically. Most of the time, we communicate through body language and actions better than we do through words. When we feel something strong enough, it will trigger our heart and mind and influence us to move. This movement can or cannot be used to choreography, but if the dancer feels strong enough about what influenced him or her, the movement should become choreography.

Choreography usually makes a statement, which had to have been caused by a certain influence. The statement will most likely trigger an emotion of some sort in at least one person. Whether that person is a dancer or not, it could influence him or her to do something – create, choreograph, change his or her attitude, have a new perspective on a situation. Cause and affect is exactly like influence and choreography. Influence being the cause, and choreography being the affect. – **Felicia Geran**

As a choreographer, the word ‘Influence’ could be regarded as sacred. If asked, many choreographers will say their particular style of dance or the intent behind their piece is “influenced” by something or someone. For me, influence defines how my creativity expands and how I grow as an artist. I am influenced by many objects and people every day. The meaning of influence is “the capacity or power of persons or things to be a compelling force on or produce effects on the actions, behaviour, opinions, etc., of others...”. Much of my progression as a dancer and choreographer has been due to keeping positive influences in my life. Positive influences such as teachers, art, music, and nature are a source of inspiration for me.

When choreographing, I sometimes find myself doing similar movements to a modern dancer I studied under for a while. I realized recently that I have a tendency to create movement like him because he had such a strong influence on me as a dancer. His style was influenced by Limon and a few other choreographers he studied with. Having him as a mentor for a short time helped me in becoming a better artist. The way he articulates his movement, how he teaches, and his choreographic intelligence still inspires me today. Another influence of mine is music. Being a musician, I am very biased to using music to accompany my movement. My knowledge in music has influenced the way I approach creating a dance with music.

Being a choreographer, I take the many different influences in my life and use them for inspiring new ideas. – **Mark Willis**

The word influence elicits the concept of how choreography can affect other people and what inspires it. There are so many factors that are considered in creating a work of art. We have come to a point in our society, where almost nothing in the dance world is actually new; the movement has all been done somewhere. I think what makes dance pieces stand out is it being inspired and having depth, meaning; something to communicate to the audience. Just as all the words we use aren't original, but the conversations that we have with each other can literally change lives. I think it's humbling to find a work of art that changes the way it's audience thinks or profoundly effects them emotionally. That communication is what is essential to influence other people.

I also think of the things around us in our every day world that change who we are, how we view things, and essentially how we create. This is one of the reasons that multimedia art fascinates me. I deeply appreciate the concept of incorporating technology into dance. Technology integrally effects each person in our society and I think it is important to address that in art. Different world events, simple household items, or people in our lives can all create a spark in our minds to start the fire that we need to show the world. Everything in our lives can influence our artistry. – **Caitlin Knowles**

Influence is all around us..as human beings we are influenced by the natural beauty of the world, the architecture around us, art and so much more. The beauty of the world we live in is that anything has the potential to become influential and inspiring. In choreography this is no different. For example, a while ago Caitlin Knowles and I created a duet for choreography class based off our two separate solos. My solo was based around an air high five I had seen two of my friends do where they added an audible cue to the high five by slapping their forearm while they from a distance gave each other a high five. The lovely thing is that when looking back at the video of the two of us, we saw this little motif over and over again. Some of the feedback we got as to what the rest of our class thought the dance was about, they said we could have been siblings fighting or possibly self harm, where Caitlin and

I had had so much fun being playful and taking influence from the friendship of two males in our life to make a fun dance. To me, however, influence and inspiration go hand in hand. There have been many choreographers and works that I have seen performed before me that have left an impact and influenced my choices. For a while, I very much enjoyed the style of Koresh, Lar Lubovitch, and Bob Fosse. So when I was first starting to choreograph, I would often find myself trying to take from them styles and things before I could do my own thing. I am influenced now by almost everything and one of the best tools is Tumblr. I spend time on this website and see different shapes, artists, dance and anything else possible. Putting these visuals in my head and mixing them with what is already there, I often am able to find inspiration enough to move. With the type of mind I have, everything that I wish to do I can see in my head before I do it, and it all must be seen first. So when I am creating as a choreographer, the main stimulus is external and has a great deal of influence on my work. The whole concept of influence is a vital part of the creative process. I very much enjoy pulling from internal and external forces that influence me to create and manifest new things in my body, and really allows for a new experience. Choreography Links

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5_OVfamFtqg - Solo

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kVlqoaDC6h0> – Duet

-- Tori Sexsmith

Dear Tori - see the links below.

the core of your work should be the exemplification of the myth & transformation theme in each of the featured pieces of the danceworks repertory.

these prompts will get you going...

<http://www.shaganarts.com/Martha-Graham-Dance-Company>

<https://ira.le.ac.uk/jspui/bitstream/2381/3206/1/Artikel%20ISMO.pdf>

<http://www.dance-enthusiast.com/onthewire/all/view/481/>

<http://honors.uoregon.edu/node/12640>

keep me posted.

thanks for your courage in taking this on.

of course your remarks will be published in the DANTHOLOGY. - **NB**

2/18/13 Danceaturgs: please read!

You should get to work on your chosen repertory pieces and talk among yourselves and with your fellow dancers about our five **INFORMANCE** questions:

1 What makes your dance unique?

2 What does it take to bring the dance to life? (Linda's famous concept)

3 What is the difference between being in vintage/set vs. devised pieces?

4 How does your dance pertain to the *Myth & Transformation* through-line?

5 What lasting insights does dancing in "your" piece give you into this year's theme?

At our seminar @ 9 am on **Friday 2/22** we will continue our discussion of **influence** as it pertains to **DANCE COLLAGE**; and set the stage for **NIGHT JOURNEY**.

-- NB

Renowned choreographer Bill T. Jones revisits Montclair State University

On February 3, 2013, twenty-two dance majors were treated to another special afternoon with Bill T. Jones.

Accompanied by his associates, Jones rehearsed his iconic improvisational piece, *Continuous Replay* with the students for two hours, and then led a lively, informal discussion. The entire session was filmed for The Creative Research Center *Danceaturgy Archive* by Kenneth Spooner. MSU dance majors will be performing *Continuous Replay* – originally choreographed by Arnie Zane and Bill T. Jones in 1977 and revised in 1991 -- in the April 4-7 *Danceworks* concert in Kasser Theater.

MSU Dancers perform at The Joyce Theater in NYC

Montclair State University was selected as one of only five colleges to appear in the Martha Graham Company's annual *University Partners Showcase*. On February 23, 2013, seven MSU Dance Majors performed the "Chorus" from Graham's classic *Night Journey* (1947) at The Joyce Theater in New York City. This austere, theatrical piece depicts the ancient Oedipus tragedy from the point of view of his doomed wife and mother, Queen Jocasta. The students will present the work again in the forthcoming *Danceworks 2013* concert at the Kasser Theater, April 4-7. For more information and tickets visit the Peak Performances website.

Approaching Silence

Rebecca - my msu email isnt working at the moment and i wanted to get a few words off to you this morning before the impressions of last night's performance faded.
seeing the piece fully-realized in the capaciousness of mem aud was a great thrill - but the feelings i had during the piece were of a different kind.
i literally had a physiological response.
i realized about 2/3 of the way through...or what i thought was 2/3 of the way...that my heart had "stopped" beating and i was hardly breathing.
i felt very anxious, fearful.
i felt that the piece was scary.
then i laughed to myself incredulous that a performance could have such an immediate effect.
visually the grey costume tones were subtle and fitting.
the quasi- formality - the lovely swinging dresses - was perfect, knowing HP's affinity with fashion and the meticulous way he describes what his characters are wearing in all of his plays.
the dance/theatre interplay was so well-executed even to the extent that at times katie, david and isaiah were dancing within and through the actual "dancers."
i liked that alot.
the counterpoint between dance narrative and text narrative was impeccable to my eyes.
at times they moved forward in tandem, at others in disjunction, but there was always the sense of a guiding hand and eye.
all the more reason that my anxiety was full-blown; i think in reflection that the paradox between the unsettled state of the viewer and the seamlessness of the piece work in its favor.
this kind of disjunction is rare.
it was embodied in mirela's motif at beginning and end - the slap of her hand threw the play of silence into relief for me:
as my fave poet william carlos williams once wrote, "dissonance leads to discovery." - **NB**

Neil,

I truly appreciate your thoughts about my piece. It is really thrilling for me to hear your response. I was quite moved on Wed night when I saw the cast perform the piece for the first time. As I told Kim, the dancers and actors seem to have a calm, serious maturity and sophistication beyond their years in the gravity with which they are approaching the piece, the material and the performance. I loved their commitment. I told the cast to try to approach each performance as if its their first, to re-discover each moment anew, each time they step on stage. I'm hoping this will make the experience very fulfilling for each cast member. I am extremely pleased and grateful with the way the final product has turned out, but I still maintain that the most important thing is something you and I talked about when we first met – namely, that the students have an experience, an exploration, a growing of some sort, during the creative and performative process. I feel as if, in some ineffable way, that has happened here, and it is for that, I am most grateful of all. – **Rebecca Stenn**

The Danceaturgy Workshop
“Hero’s Journey” Project – Heather Pollak

TO: Mirela Amaral <amaralm2@mail.montclair.edu> , Marissa Lynne Aucoin <aucoinm1@mail.montclair.edu> , Katelyn Mary Ascolese <ascolesek1@mail.montclair.edu> , Shannon Leigh Beaver <beavers1@mail.montclair.edu> , Kristen Leigh Calder <calderk1@mail.montclair.edu> , Justin James Campbell <campbellj4@mail.montclair.edu> , Nicole L. Calandriello <calandrieln1@mail.montclair.edu> , Beatrice Capote <capoteb1@mail.montclair.edu> , Dina Angela Crupi <crupid1@mail.montclair.edu> , Melanie Sue Donovan <donovanm3@mail.montclair.edu> , Brittany Febus <febusb1@mail.montclair.edu> , Krystal Alexis Galiczynski <galiczynskk1@mail.montclair.edu> , Lisa Graziano <graziano13@mail.montclair.edu> , Leanna Marguerite Grennan <grennan1@mail.montclair.edu> , Kristy Angelique Hall <hallk5@mail.montclair.edu> , Nicholas Ryan Harney <harneyn1@mail.montclair.edu> , Melanie Brianne Jackson <jacksonm8@mail.montclair.edu> , Colleen Elizabeth Lynch <lynchc4@mail.montclair.edu> , Emily Marti <martie1@mail.montclair.edu> , Marcella Maysonet <maysonetm1@mail.montclair.edu> , Kaitlin Narlis <narlisk1@mail.montclair.edu> , Caroline Ogando <ogandoc1@mail.montclair.edu> , Allison Marie Pirrone <pirronea1@mail.montclair.edu> , Larissa Elizabeth Reynolds <reynolds17@mail.montclair.edu> , Ashley Alyssa Seidel <seidela1@mail.montclair.edu> , Jacqueline Elizabeth Selesky <seleskyj1@mail.montclair.edu> , Kristin Nicole Seneca <senecak1@mail.montclair.edu> , Jennifer Lynn Sroka <srokaj2@mail.montclair.edu> ,

To all of the SENIORS, you are each your own hero with a story to tell. I hope you will consider responding: As the final months of your senior year approach, I am requesting that you reflect on the experiences you have had thus far. Discuss what the dance program at Montclair State University has helped you learn about yourself and others. Please select **one or more** of the following prompts to respond to (feel free to expand on any one question, or any topic related to those provided):

- 1) Discuss the journey that lead you to pursue dance in college. What was your main motivation? Did you encounter any significant struggles along the way?
- 2) What was it like to work with renowned choreographers, as well as faculty choreographers? What were their processes like, OR your own if you had the opportunity to choreograph for Dance Collage? What were some of the similarities or differences between being in a set piece verses an original work?
- 3) What has your overall college experience been like? Have you gone through any type of transformation? What have you learned? What are your plans or hopes for the future?

Submit all responses to me via email at: pollakh1@mail.montclair.edu

[Heather: the hero's journey survey is good. why don't you *also* write up [again for the longer DANTHOLOGY version] a brief intro paragraph about the meaning of the hero's journey as *you* see it - the *bildungsroman* concept as well as the jungian/joseph campbell archetype? that will be quite fascinating when put into juxtaposition with the lives of our graduating seniors! – **NB**]

Dear Neil: I am going to quote these words from **Martha Graham** in my introduction to the *Informance*:
I am a dancer. I believe that we learn by practice. Whether it means to learn by practicing dancing or to learn to live by practicing living, the principles are the same. In each it is the performance of a dedicated precise set of acts, physical or intellectual, from which comes shape of achievement, a sense of one's being, a satisfaction of spirit. (pg 3 Introduction *Blood Memory*)....you must keep your vessel clean – your mind, your body;
I think that is what my father must have meant when he wrote to me when I was away from home; “Martha,” he said “you must keep an open soul.” (pg 10)
It is that openness and awareness and innocence of sorts that I try to cultivate in my dancers. Although as the Latin verb to educate, *educere*, indicates, it is not a question of putting something in but drawing it out, if it is there to begin with.” (pg 11) **Linda Roberts**

Department of Theatre and Dance
INFORMANCE

Wednesday, March 20, 2013 – 2:30-4:30pm
Life Hall 123

2012-2013 Montclair State University Dance Repertory Company theme:
Myth & Transformation

Welcome and Introduction of Danceurgs: Neil Baldwin and Linda Roberts

Excerpts from the *Danceworks* 2013 program introduced by the danceurgs

Dances

Danceurgs

Powers of Ten (1984)
by May O'Donnell

Mark Willis

Daughters of the Night from
Night Journey (1947)
by Martha Graham

Marissa Aucoin, Colleen Lynch, Kelly Vaghenas

I See You (2012)
by Earl Mosley

Heather Pollak

Approaching Silence (2013)
by Rebecca Stenn

Tori Sexsmith, Nick Harney

Runaway (2008)
by Larry Keigwin

Julie Cullen, Felicia Geran, Crystal Rodriguez

Continuous Replay (1977)
revised by Bill T. Jones (1991)
by Bill T. Jones and Arnie Zane

Caitlin Knowles, Haley Yacos, Malcolm McMichael

Open Discussion – Following the performance of excerpts from the dances, there will be an open discussion introduced by Tori Sexsmith and moderated by Neil Baldwin: How does this year's repertory reflect or illuminate the overarching theme of *Myth and Transformation*?

Prompts for the audience: *Does seeing repertory under the umbrella of an over-arching theme impact your appreciation of the body of work presented?*

Describe how you go about preparing for a dance role. Does learning about the historical or contextual information improve your performance of the dance?

3/20 - Informance - NB Brief Remarks

Good afternoon.

Welcome to the 2013 Informance – and a special welcome to our guests Sabatino Verlezza and Elizabeth Auclair and let me quote LR – who invented this event – “Each year the Dance Division presents an Informance – an informal performance – [or informational performance – or both!] - which provides our dance students, faculty and invited guests with an opportunity to view and discuss dances from the year’s repertory that relate to an overarching theme -- this year it is **Myth & Transformation** and includes six dances that will be performed in the Danceworks 2013 concert – as well as Haley Yacos’ piece, *Body Language*, which will *not* be performed today [give round of applause for Haley]. The program today will be composed of excerpts from the six works interspersed with commentary and analysis researched and written by this year’s danceurges about the contextual background of each dance as well as the rehearsal process that enabled these dances to *come to life*.” After the excerpts, Tori Sexsmith will give an overview of the repertory theme; and then, in the time remaining, we will open it up to Q&A and discussion with our thirteen danceurges – let me introduce them to you now – Mark Willis, Marissa Aucoin, Colleen Lynch, Kelly Vaghenas, Heather Pollak, Tori Sexsmith, Nick Harney, Julie Cullen, Felicia Geran, Crystal Rodriguez, Caitlin Knowles, Haley Yacos and Malcolm McMichael. I would also like to mention that the Informance is being taped by our excellent team of Lindsay Rassmann and Mike Mee for inclusion in our Danceurgy Archive at the Creative Research Center here at MSU.

Powers of Ten

The piece you are about to see, Powers of Ten, was choreographed by early modern dance pioneer May O’Donnell, and premiered at the Joyce Theatre in New York City in 1984. It is based off the film entitled “Powers of Ten” by Charles & Ray Eames which approaches with the concept of a changing one’s perspective of the universe through factors of ten.

Imagine: a man in a Central Park, a child looking through the window of a plane flying above, a satellite encircling the Earth, the moon, our solar system, the Milky Way Galaxy -- and beyond. This transformative perspective of space is manifested through the movement and landscape of the piece. Ten platforms supporting ten dancers occupy the stage at varying levels. Each dancer is suspended on a small box, representing the individual’s bodily solitude as well as the momentary space they occupy. Together, all ten dancers form a community in which we create an idea as we affect and become influenced by others. There is an intimate dialogue among the dancers as they take a transcendent journey toward the horizon of the unknown, each with individual paths, on different levels, with different dynamics. We fall in and out of current with one another, standing out to make a statement apart from as well as amongst the crowd.

There is a shift in relativity as we view things from different planes. Space, time and dimension become more evident as we move exponentially closer or farther away from the core. The movement in the piece, although grounded, is not bound by gravity. It suggests that we are all akin to deities, with complete control of the space above, below and around us. The piece concludes with us all together, as a community of cells, bound together by the breath of life, to experience a transformative journey into the infinite horizon... -- **Mark Willis**

The Rehearsal Process of *Runaway*

Not yet aware of the true intensity this piece required, the cast of Runaway dove head first into rehearsals. At the start of our first day, Jackie Walsh asked us to review the choreography she had taught us at the audition. The men tried to perfect their section of choreography while the women did the same at the opposite end of the studio. Jackie analyzed how we worked together and how we moved as individuals, took five minutes to deliberate, and came back to us with the casting set in stone, identity-based off the dancers she herself had performed with. She would call us by the name of that original dancer whose identity we were learning to portray and whose shoes we would fill.

Learning the material took seven days. Looking back now, it's still hard for us to understand how Jackie -- this tiny powerhouse dancer -- taught various choreographic phrases to twenty of us in such a condensed time. If she ever felt any doubt about what she had taught us she brought in fellow Keigwin and Company dancers Gary and Brandon to clear up the confusion. With the guidance of these three role models, and the choreography turning to muscle memory, we were able to dig deeper into our individual characters.

But transforming ourselves was not the most complicated part. We practiced, and still are trying to master, the counting in sixes we all must do backstage. It is so vital that we pay close attention to the music, the cues in the choreography, and the other dancers who are counting, because if one set of six is off it's overwhelming to have to get re-focused. As much as we're trying to transform into our own individual identities, teamwork is the "MVP" in this piece.

The rehearsal process now consists of focusing on smaller details. Now that we're comfortable with how we reinvent ourselves for and throughout *Runaway*, we can add some personal touches. For example, one of our dancers asked Jackie if it's okay to make eye contact with another person while we dance with them. Jackie's response was: "That's my favorite part about performing *Runaway*." Making eye contact makes the dance come to life even more, and especially in the last half of the piece, it helps us look less like mannequins and more like humans. – **Felicia Geran**

The next piece you are about to see is an excerpt from Rebecca Stenn's *Silence*, choreographed here at Montclair State in Fall 2012. This all-new, original dance is a collaborative piece between theater and dance. It explores what was, what is, and what could be. You will see certain phrases done throughout the piece several times, but each time differently. It's almost as if the movement is a memory and each time it's shown it's remembered differently. The dancers, myself included, had to work very hard on changing the movement quality throughout the dance, whether we were doing it faster, slower, more aggressively or in a canon. Everything changes -- just as a memory is almost never the same twice. Even the actors change the way they recite their lines, going from a calm talk to a screaming fight in seconds. Although it does require a viewing in full to see the changes, try to notice in this excerpt the differences in movement qualities and scenes between actors. – **Nick Harney**

"Silence" - Rebecca Stenn

Silence by Harold Pinter has a lot to do with the concept of memories, telling the story of a love triangle (an older man, a younger woman, and a young man). And so, when the actors came in to audition they were asked to tell a memory and move through space...which is not entirely typical -- or so I am told.

Rebecca Stenn chose to use only fragments of the script. This meant that instead of preparing with the whole play before they came in, the actors were handed a selection of lines to be used to narrate the story. In an interview with one of the actors, I learned that they saw themselves as "The text...and the dancers were the subtext...the nuances of the story that could not be told through words."

There are many things that can happen in a creative process between theatre and dance...we are blessed to have both departments housed in the same place and possessed by the willingness to collaborate. As a whole we can learn from each other. Dancers are kinesthetically aware while actors are more cerebral. In observing rehearsals I found that many of the actors felt a different energy and were appreciative of the professionalism the dancers brought, and even moreso that no one seemed to have to stifle their creative choices...Our leader, Rebecca Stenn, was very interested in seeing what everyone could "bring to the table"...but at the end of the day still had the ultimate say. This made the work original and totally our own. – **Tori Sexsmith**

Myth And Transformation

The overall theme of this year is **Myth and Transformation**....for some of you this might be the first time that you are even hearing or realizing that there is a theme connecting all of these pieces together. We are "borrowing" this idea from the Martha Graham Dance Company which during their recent season showcased some of the classic work by Graham that is based upon mythic tales such as Phaedra, Cave of the Heart, Night Journey, Errand into the Maze and Diversion of Angels. Our dancers in Night Journey, the Graham piece this year, had a first hand experience of living through this movement, going back to steps that had been done before -- the privilege of being able to learn history...therefore contributing to the transformation of the piece and also adding their own *personal* mythology.

Myth, according to the Dictionary, is...a traditional story especially one concerning the early history of a people or explaining some natural or social phenomenon and typically involving supernatural beings.

- a collective of stories
- misrepresentation of the truth

Looking at these three definitions alone, one can make connections to the works performed today...because we have a collective of different stories each with its own statement to be made.

- Night Journey is based upon the age-old story of Oedipus and Jocasta and the chorus has powerful involvement
- Powers of Ten looks in on a community and sees how they grow and function and could certainly be a more primitive place..changing perspective...and deities
- In I See You - the concept of all being in business suits...is a misconception that all professional people can do is be so-called professionals

Collectively there is so much more to myth...it can also be personal. Being a dancer is so much larger than who we are as individuals; we are giving life to the work of those who came before us. Dancers are the athletes of GOD -- that alone explains why what we do is so important to us -- because it is far larger than we understand. Each time work like this is performed we get in touch with a higher power and add to an ongoing history.

Which leads into the transformative part....we currently are living in a society where change and transformation is constant...one minute we have one type of technology and style and five minutes later there is a new fad that takes its place. so how could dances that have been done before possibly be transformative?...quite simply because no dances are ever done the same

- continuous replay has 45 shapes....22 other shapes are done but never in the same order and it is always changing and evolving....just people and their bodies
- Runaway is about watching people turn from humans and models into a more plastic self...learning to take on different selves
- silence is the transformation and evolution of relationships

but above all is the transformation of ourselves as dancers and performers...most of the time we come in not knowing what it is that we are going to end up doing...we have to train for it -- and this transforms us with experience...we bring steps to life by transforming them. No one in here will walk out the same person after this year that they were at the start. We are all, as dancers, growing and expanding...

-- Tori Sexsmith

Informance Piece: “I See You” by Choreographer: Fredrick Earl Mosley

Earl Mosley’s “I See You” is a dance that, like most of you, I have seen many times, and yet it never gets old. This work shows the jubilation you can feel when finally tasting freedom after being stifled at a menial shirt-and-tie job. Earl Mosley displays this idea by intermixing solos, small group work, and partnering with the synchronized precision of the entire group.

The thing that interests me the most about this piece is the way the dancers portray their individualism, even within the empowered group sections. I got this idea, “What if I could get into the heads of each dancer, and see what they think about during the piece?” Now this is no easy feat, and with everyone so busy I could not speak with all 19 dancers, but the ones I did connect with told me a lot about what it feels like to perform the piece.

According to the dancers, this work is one that Mosley choreographed on them; the way he constructed it was by teaching the group sections first, in random order, with the help of some of his company members, then incorporating the solos. Although he said that the dance was “all about the jacket,” he didn’t reveal much else about the backstory, leaving it up to the dancers to create for themselves. Some of them did, and they thought about letting loose in the club (maybe it’s happy hour) after a long day of being cooped up in a city work environment, while others with no story simply thought about being relaxed, funky, and “feeling it”.

I also asked whether they thought the piece was about the individual, or the group -- and the consensus was that it’s about both. The group sections are crisp and clear-cut, while the solos and featurettes are distinctive, places where the dancers can demonstrate their personalities. They are also able to do so when they groove at the end of the dance.

The way this dance fits into our overarching theme of Myth and Transformation, is clearly more on the side of transformation. The dancers begin very upright until Tracy starts off with his moves. They transform from being stoic professionals to swaggified individuals. “I See You” is as much about individualism, as it is about community. It gives the dancers the chance to relax and celebrate on stage after a long day in suits. – **Heather Pollak**

“Daughters of the Night” is not a portrayal of the whole myth of Oedipus (as it is an excerpt from Night Journey). However, it clearly captures the sense of horror experienced by all characters in the Greek tragedy. The leader of the chorus, played by Jay/Crystal, likens herself to Jocasta and thus embodies the most intensified alarm as she carries the fervor of the group. We can see into a dark future of Thebes (the city where Oedipus became King) and we struggle fruitlessly to express the blood-curling omen. During one rehearsal, Elizabeth Auclair said, “Tension is the physicalization of drama,” and I think this piece is a perfect example of a well-known classic drama being physicalized by bodily tension. As you watch, look for opposing physical forces, especially in Martha Graham’s signature element: “*contraction*,” and its counterpart, the *release*. Twists and spirals heighten the frenzied mood. Note the sense of the inevitable that is apparent. Giving in to shifts of weight to travel or fall to the floor represents the big concept of *fate* – the idea that, whether you like it or not, what’s meant to be is happening, is unfolding. To commit to dancing this piece means to blaze fire in the eyes and make fangs of the teeth. Who ever knew that our group of ladies could be so formidable...!”

-- Kelly Vaghenas

-Continuous Replay started as a duet, called the *Hand Dance* and was choreographed by Arnie Zane who was the clock

-It was performed first in 1977 at the American Dance Asylum in Binghamton, New York

-The company grew to include more dancers and the group version was called Pink Dress/Blue, performed in 1978

-In 1982 Arnie Zane wanted the piece to be sharper and clearer and he changed it into a solo which brought us to the title of our piece, *Continuous Replay*

-It eventually expanded to 10 people and was performed at American Dance Festival in 1991 and finally for its 20th anniversary it was reworked by BTJ

-The piece itself transformed to become what we'll see in the Danceworks performance in April.

-Mr. Zane had two major influences that inspired his choreography

-He studied Karate under Hidy Ochiai and Film under Ken Jacobs, the avant-garde film maker and teacher at Suny-Binghamton

-Arnie Zane appreciated task oriented movement along with the repetition, discipline and exacting movement quality that karate stressed.

-He was inspired by Eadward Muybridge's experimentation with motion pictures. Muybridge used trip wires on a track that a horse would set off to capture pictures fast enough to see the horse galloping with all four hooves in the air at the same time.

-This modernist idea of individual frames accumulating speed to create a motion picture is the backbone of the piece.

-The piece starts with the "clock-character" who performs the pure accumulation of the 45 shapes

-He sets the speed and gradually increases it as more dancers come on stage and costumes accumulate

-The dancers are placed with the task of making decisions and helping the group. They are encouraged to solve problems and use utilitarian movement.

-From the beginning to the end of the piece the dancers are transformed as a community. They start and end as individual dancers who make their own choices; however, in each performance they create something together -- fulfilling their task and using their individuality

-- Caitlin Knowles

Bill T Jones Rehearsal Process

- 45 shapes, 22 shapes

- improvisational score/game that layers

- Focuses tremendously on the clarity and arrival

- Always remember the specifics of the movement and quality of the HANDS

- Difficult process ; finding the freedom in the structure

Maintaining the openness of the face, being people vs. dancers, dancers must speak

- layers of clothing

- LEA the day Bill arrived: "You guys are dancing with all this dead skin... Wake up! Go BEYOND yourself! Push yourself beyond what you think your limit is.. until you feel like you're going to die. You'll find out that you actually won't die."

-- Malcolm McMichael

Continuous Replay

During the rehearsal process the dancer had the opportunity to work with Bill T. Jones directly. As an observer this was a fascinating rehearsal. Bill T. Jones coached and corrected the dancers individually, helping them

find counter balance in partnering and purpose in their improv. But he also instructed the group as a whole to be the most aware of each other and the most efficient in their improvisational choices. One of the aspects of Continuous Replay he brought to light was the “utilitarian” nature of the piece. This was a word he used multiple times to remind the dancer do only do “what the group needed”. Instead of improvisation with a narrative or any social context Continuous Replay requires the dancers to constantly ask “how can I help the group?” This is a dynamic to watch for during Continuous Replay.

In the talkback after rehearsal Bill T. Jones was asked by an audience member something like “What should I watch for in a piece that has so much going on all at once; aren’t you worried about the audience missing something?” His response was that the audience should trust their own focus while watching the piece, that they will see as much as they need to see no matter where they look. With a piece such as Continuous Replay this is certainly true.

-- Haley Yacos

Daughters of the Night was set by Elizabeth Auclair who danced with the Graham Company and performed *Night Journey*.

We had a challenge learning this piece because none of us had formal Graham training.

So while teaching us the piece Elizabeth had to explain and demonstrate the proper way of executing the movement with Graham technique.

In rehearsals we constantly focused upon the contraction of the lower abdominals because it is a main source in deepening the emotions; that deep contraction radiates to the rest of the body.

Elizabeth explained that we all needed to find our own story in order to try to relate to the horror that the Chorus is witnessing because while it is important to perform this piece as a *group*, at any given moment the audience should also see us *individually* expressing the extreme emotions within the movement.

This piece helped us learn to *transform* as artists. – **Colleen Lynch**

Martha Graham’s *Night Journey*, choreographed in 1947, is based upon the Greek tragedy, *Oedipus Rex*, in which, despite all efforts to escape his prophesied fate, Oedipus unknowingly kills his father and marries his mother, Queen Jocasta. In Graham’s retelling of the myth, Jocasta becomes the central character. The evening length suite opens as the Queen, holding a rope, prepares to hang herself until Tiresias, the blind seer interrupts -- forcing Jocasta to relive the horrific events that led to this tragic moment. The piece unfurls as a flashback, with the female chorus foretelling and reacting to the horror of the relationship between Jocasta and Oedipus. The chorus from Martha Graham’s *Night Journey*, also referred to as the “Daughters of the Night” focuses solely on the movement of the chorus, meant to express an emotion appropriate to each stage of the dramatic conflict within the play. Isolating the choral voice, Graham provides a compressed and vivid reflection of frenzied emotions. We watch as the chorus members with their single leader cast a contemptuous gaze upon the budding romance, and witness their disapproval transform into inescapable turmoil as they struggle to shield their eyes from the incestuous relationship. Through extreme body shapes and percussive energies this group of women expresses what the main characters themselves dare not say. – **Marissa Aucoin.**

Runaway

The theme of transformation is touched upon in every aspect of *Runaway* through the use of voluminous bee-hive inspired hairstyles, dramatic makeup, neon-colored 60’s styled dresses for the women and suits for the men – by no means the typical, contemporary look we are used to. The dancers are also given the opportunity to interpret a change of character as several strip down to their color coordinated undergarments.

The atmosphere changes as well - beginning with one dancer, barely lit, moving to music that can hardly be heard, and progresses toward a brighter scene where multiple dancers join in creating intricate spacial patterns. The lighting crescendo provides the audience with a feeling of epiphany-like change.

By the half-way mark, the music that began composed of sporadic sounds has reached a constant pulse that resonates throughout the space. Dancers stray from initial rigid and formal gestures and move toward more visceral, full-bodied and continuous movement. The energy exerted throughout the piece transcends the dancers, moving from a quiet grumble to a loud roar. Adrenaline kicks in.

The title itself -- *Runaway* -- is a play on words. The energy, gestures, phrases of movement are inspired by mannequins and runway models. Other phrases evolved out of more natural actions such as running: Runway, *Runaway*.

What we found so interesting and unique about this piece was the juxtaposition of transforming through the use of stripping away instead of putting on. Larry Keigwin didn't need props or the accumulation of clothing to support his intent.

For this particular piece, he chose to reveal rather than conceal. – **Crystal Rodriguez**

“Runaway” Background

Artistic Director Larry Keigwin founded Keigwin & Company in 2003. This is the creative outlet for Keigwin, where he creates and presents his electrifying brand of contemporary dance. Since the company's premiere performance at Joyce Soho in 2003, Keigwin has created 24 dances, including “Runaway”. The piece was commissioned by the Dance Division at the Julliard School, and premiered there on December 8, 2008. The Julliard students were involved in the creative process of “Runaway.” A 25-person class-based improvisation became the building blocks for the choreography. From the beginning, Keigwin wanted to *collaborate* with the students, not *instruct* them, and so, he asked the students to ‘walk’. This exercise developed into Keigwin's interest in a fashion-forward choreographic intent, including rapid spatial patterns and onstage crossovers. Students also incorporated personality into their walks, an integral theme in the gradual progression from a world of mannequins and suits to human interaction. Students were also asked to spell their names with various body parts. “Runaway” has since been restaged with 16 dancers, and is Keigwin & Co.'s most frequently-commissioned piece among college dance divisions seeking to engage aspiring dancers in dynamic movement and the choreographic process. James Wolcott wrote in Vanity Fair magazine that “The current catch word in fashion, courtesy of Tyra Banks and Project Runway, is ‘fierce,’ but *Runaway* exemplifies true fierceness, and laser focus, utilizing poses to go beyond poses into new enigmatic terrain.” – **Julie Cullen**

Congratulations on an excellent Informance. The danceaturs really carried the program. You each presented interesting information and insights about the dances. Everyone was organized, professional and spoke well. (We may need to use mics in the future because the acoustics are so bad in LI-123, but the videographers did capture all of the narratives for the video.) I think it might be a nice idea to post your narratives on the dance bulletin board next to Neil's Letters to Lori so people could read them before Danceworks and also be available for Dance Day. (something to discuss on Friday) The format enabled the audience to actively participate in the discussion by exploring ideas and asking questions. Neil did a great job in facilitating the conversation. This was the best Informance yet! Everyone take a bow. =

Linda Roberts

Hi Neil,

I just wanted to take a second to say how much I appreciate being involved in the Danceatursy Workshop. It was viewing last year's Informance that first piqued my interest in Danceatursy so being on the other side of the stage for today's Informance was especially enjoyable for me. It has meant a lot to me to be able to discuss and question what makes dance worth doing/watching over this semester. I am always interested to know the perspectives of my classmates and am so pleased to have more insight into their artistry. So thank you for the great class.

I also wanted to share a short random thought I had during the Informance. I am so grateful for the respect and interest that has been directed toward my choreography. When I was asked about my piece today it hit me for the first time that having people watch movement that I created is actually very personal and it's incredible to me that everyone understands what they see in their own way. I think it is interesting that what started as a piece trying to express the frustrations of not being able to articulate one's self to another has evolved into a piece that people have told me they identify with and can draw their own feelings from. This sounds a little trumped up maybe? But it resonated with me today for the first time, that this is a beautiful part of creating and performing. That people understand each other, relate on some level, and have moments of recognition through movement. It's nothing concrete really but it's a great feeling.

See you in class on Friday...hope this isn't too much rambling. From, **Haley Yacos**

Hi NB,

As I was telling you, my friend who is a film major had some interesting ideas when it came to the new pieces of *Dance Works*.

For *Powers of 10*, she thought that the two in the center that were on the highest platforms, (Mark and Angelica) were the King and the Queen, and the dancers on the lower platforms were their children who were each ruling over a different country or region.

The *Graham* piece reminded her of Geisha girls, probably because of the costumes, but also because when they were hiding their faces from the horror they are foreseeing, they could be using fans instead of their hands.

Finally, *Continuous Replay* reminded her of a board game because of the linear lighting patterns, but more specifically one of those memory board games because of the way each shape is accumulated and added on to the one before it.

I find it so interesting to get the perspectives of non-dancers, and see what stories they can create in their heads.

-Heather

On 03/20/13, Crystal Lynn Rodriguez <rodriguezc17@mail.montclair.edu> wrote:

Hello Neil, I know you probably have quite a bit still on your plate even after the *informance* today - which felt great as a danceaturg, dancer, and audience member - but I just figured to ask you for some guidance. For my dance history II class I am writing my term paper on the shift from "modern" to "contemporary" dance; it's differences, the reasons behind the shift, what the time periods have to do with it, etc. There is so much to talk about, I feel very overwhelmed. Yet, I am also very interested in this topic and want to get to the bottom of it, if there is a "bottom". If there is any way that you suggest I should take my paper, I would very much appreciate the direction. Or even if you have sources that you think I could possibly benefit from, I would greatly appreciate those references as well.

Anything would be helpful! **-- Crystal R.**

4/7/12

Dear Crystal - another great *danceworks* show!

janet eilber from martha graham - as you know - was there - sitting next to me and my wife - she was awed by the graham piece, *truly awed*...

ok here is how you should proceed as per yr question of 3/20:

go to the library and get a copy of *dance words* by valerie preston-dunlop.

it's in reference so it does not circulate.

SPRAGUE REF **GV1585.P74 1995** .

look in the index for "contemporary" and "modern."

you will see *alot* of terms related - using these words in combination with others.

read the entries for these words, and you see that they, in turn, are linked to references that are found in the bibliography, which leads you to more books....etc etc etc

this should get you going on your path of research.
let me know if you have any more questions as you get into it.

nb

ps - in my opinion, the transition from one dance "movement" to another is about certain choreographers doing certain things that influence others - - -

Danceaturgy @ Duke University: a brief email correspondence

Has anyone ever dramaturged a ballet? – Jaz Dorsey

This is a message from the Dramaturgy discussion list, a service of the Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of the Americas (LMDA).

For information about LMDA, upcoming conferences, or to join our membership, go to: <http://www.lmda.org>

On 04/05/13, "Jules Odendahl-James, Ph.D." <jao@duke.edu> wrote:

> Jaz,

>> I think "**Danceaturgy**" is becoming more widespread. **Montclair State U** has a whole program, which is about 5 years old now: <http://www.montclair.edu/arts/news/article.php?ArticleID=7845&ChannelID=177>.

> It's not for a ballet but I've been doing my first turn as a danceaturg for a world-premiere modern dancework being developed by Thomas DeFrantz and his SLIPpAGE multi-media performance troupe (details below). I think one reason it has been a fairly easy process for me is the piece draws much of its inspiration from a novel (Jean Toomer's CANE) and, as such, I've been giving input on larger themes, character dynamics, adapted aggregated plots, and through-line that the dancers have been pulling into their expression of the choreography & we've been expanding to resonate with the multimedia imagery and narrative. Even though it's been a more segmented process -- working one-on-one w/Tommy more than in general rehearsals as choreography has been created, it's been a wonderful learning experience.

> --Jules

Dear jaz and jules & fellow-dramaturgs - thanks for your interest in danceaturgy.

fyi, we now have a seminar that meets weekly and also have begun an archive:

<http://www.montclair.edu/arts/creative-research-center/thedanceaturgyarchive/>

all the best,

neil baldwin

What do you have to do to make a dance come to life?

A collective response by all the danceaturgs, dedicated to Linda Roberts with gratitude 4/12/13

first you need to rehearse and develop the movement qualities – get it into your bodies, your muscle-memory – then you perform – it has to be automatic – you don't want to have to think – you have to make a physical and mental commitment to the piece – without judging yourself – be ready to work – understand the group and understand the nature of self-sacrifice – focus all of your energies, both mental and emotional – put your life into it – ask yourself what you want to communicate – strive for perfection – step up to the plate & then go on stage – pull it all together – give something of yourself – be honest – don't just show off what you can do – have something to say – live with the people all around you – be sincere – be vulnerable & be aware that it can hurt emotionally to be vulnerable – use your insecurities to push yourself forward – there must be a sense of community between the choreographer and the dancer and a strong bond between the cast mates – you should not have to look at each other – the adrenaline helps you find new ways to get your message out – it's like being a jet fighter pilot -- you have

to be ready on the spot to solve issues and things that go wrong – the performance is the moment when the dance comes to life — the movement has to look like what the piece means – you have to adjust constantly while it is going on – you have to let it go – relate the movement to something personal in your life – think back to something that happened to you – recreate the emotion inside the movement – bring the humanity through into your gestures – be aware of your breathing – in the moment of communication with the audience the dance really comes alive – it is the moment of real human interaction when a dance comes alive – you have to find the story – and dance is different every single time because it is presented by people and people are always different –

Hi Dancers,

What a year we have had!!!! But it is not over!

On Tuesday, April 16 from 4-5pm Neil Baldwin will interview *Jasmin Vardimon* in the Kasser Lobby... read about it here!!! On Tuesday we will also perform *I See You* for the BFA auditionees from 2:20-2:30. On Wednesday, April 17 we will have a run-through of *Continuous Replay* in preparation for the performance at the 92nd Street Y Theater. On Thursday, April 18 we will have a rehearsal for Earl Mosley's *I See You* from 4-5. We have to replace a few dancers who are unable to attend the performance. We may not need the whole hour but please plan to be there. On Friday, April 19 we will catch the bus for NYC that we have chartered at 8:45am outside the Kasser Lobby on ground level. Please be there at 8:30. Enjoy these last few weeks! There is still much to learn and enjoy together! Hooray for Spring!!!!

Lori

The Danceatrgy Archive Video links [A project of The Creative Research Center
<http://www.montclair.edu/arts/creative-research-center/thedanceatrgyarchive/>]

Jasmin Vardimon <http://youtu.be/PZgKhknXEeo>

Continuous Replay <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bPZmjl9pq5c&nofeather=True>

Informance 2013 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bpJvYMBfPS8&nofeather=True>